Gonna Drink, Get Drunk
A History and Ethnography of Alcohol in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Key Centre for Women’s Health in Society
Department of Public Health
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.
ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the place of alcohol in the lives of people from Rarotonga, Cook Islands. It incorporates historical and ethnographic analyses to provide the broad context of drinking by people aged from their teens to late thirties.

The historical component of this study describes specific accounts of alcohol consumption, and situates these with regard to changes that occurred in Rarotonga from the early 19th century. Prior to contact with Papa’a (Europeans), people of Rarotonga neither produced nor consumed alcoholic beverages. Thus, the use of alcohol was a phenomenon intimately bound up with global exploration, proselytisation and trade. I trace historical changes in the distribution of power, resources, religious practice, and social discourse, and show how alcohol practice, distribution, and trade was linked to these changes from missionary contact onward.

This history informs the ethnography of contemporary drinking practices. Individual and group practices and understandings of alcohol are described. I also describe the contribution of state policy, commercial interests, government institutions, and religious organisations to the place of alcohol in Rarotonga. Alcohol is a transformative substance that changes the comportment of drinkers. But its effect is ambiguous, and recognised as such. ‘Drunken’ behaviours are often explained as originating in concerns and desires that pertain in sobriety. Thus, the status of alcohol consumption as an explanation for specific behaviours is equivocal, and contested.

Drinking is a means by which relationships between friends, kin and strangers are initiated and/or maintained. The particular significance of alcohol to the maintenance of (drinking) relationships is not only due to social constructions of meanings and practices associated with drinking; pharmacological effects of alcohol increase the social salience of drinking. Drinking both alters bodies and alters relationships between drinkers. In this sense, it embodies social meanings and understandings of drinking practice.

Finally, I suggest that in Rarotonga, the association of drinking with emotional experience and behaviour is also, in part, attributable to the ‘embodied’ experience of alcohol. The form of emotional experience, and the form of embodied experience of alcohol, are similar. These are associated with one another through analogy (and so by the social construction of each) by embodied experience.
This thesis is based on 12 months of fieldwork conducted between April 2000 and March 2001 in Rarotonga, one of fifteen islands of the Cook Islands group. The Cook Islands are located in the Pacific Ocean, east of Tonga and Samoa, and west of French Polynesia. Rarotonga, which lies to the south of the group, is the largest of the islands. It is just 32 kilometres in circumference and has the largest population of all the islands, with about 8,000 people resident in 2000/2001. It is the administrative centre of the Cook Islands, where the government sits when in session, and through which most trade in the islands flows.

Figure I: The Cook Islands.

The Origin of the Argument

The location for this research, and its focus, arose in a somewhat haphazard manner, so it is difficult in retrospect to reconstruct the ‘genealogy’ of the impetus for this thesis. In 1998 I had completed a Masters degree in Social Anthropology at Auckland University, was teaching part time at the University, and employed as a research assistant. Although encouraged by colleagues and mentors to begin PhD studies, I was unable to find a topic that interested me sufficiently to embark on extended research. It was, in fact, a colleague and friend of mine, a Cook Islander, who
suggested that I consider conducting research in the Cook Islands. He was completing his PhD thesis at the time, and mentioned to me (prophetically, it turned out, over beers at the University Pub) that he had come across very few anthropological studies on the health of Cook Islands people. He told me,

“Vaughn, you should do your PhD in the Cook Islands.”

So I did.

‘Health’ seemed too broad a topic, even for PhD research. More discussion followed, with many people, as I decided on a more limited field of research. By the time I became a PhD candidate at Melbourne University (the process by which I came to Melbourne is yet another circuitous story, unnecessary to recount), the topic I was considering was that of mental illness in the Cook Islands.

Anecdotally, people with mental illnesses did exist in the Cook Islands, although very little was recorded about these people, either in academic or popular literature. According to one study (Murphy 1978), mental illness in the Cook Islands hardly occurred at all. As I conducted reviews of historical and contemporary literature on this topic during the first months of my candidature, I became increasingly concerned at this lack of written material. Newspapers in the Cook Islands, for example, never addressed mental illness, which implied that the topic was not one of considerable public interest. On the other hand, I was struck by how often alcohol and alcohol-related issues were addressed. Historical documents are replete with references to alcohol use by Cook Islanders, as are contemporary newspapers and (compared with mental illness) academic publications. The ‘problem’ of alcohol is a persistent discourse in all of these sources. Increasingly, I was swayed to change the course of my research and consider alcohol use, which was of considerable interest to the authors of historical accounts, academics, and Cook Islanders. When I contacted the Ministry of Health in the Cook Islands, they said they too were interested in alcohol use, and would very much like me to choose that for my research. A topic was born.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PhD candidature at the University of Melbourne, and the research I undertook for this degree, were supported by a Melbourne Research Scholarship from the University of Melbourne. I am very grateful to the University for providing me with this assistance. The Key Centre for Women’s Health provided travel expenses and ongoing support throughout my candidature, which was very much appreciated.

In Rarotonga, many people contributed their time, opinions, and goodwill to this research. Most cannot be named, but all should know I am indebted to them for sharing their stories with the strange Papa’a who wanted to know what drinking was like.

Among those who can be named are Pa Ariki, the Hon. Dr. Terepa’i Maoate (then Prime Minister), the Hon. Norman George (then Deputy Prime Minister), and the Hon. Sir Geoffrey Henry (then Leader of the Opposition). All shared their views with me, and I am grateful to them for providing me their valuable time and their considered opinions. Thank you also to the representatives of Rarotonga’s churches who described their stances toward and practices concerning alcohol use.

Dr Teariki Tamarua, Edwina Tangaroa, and Repaio Puroku from the Department of Public Health, and Secretary of Health Tupu Araitii, were very helpful. Henry Wichman, Superintendent of the Cook Islands Prison Service, was especially welcoming and candid. Teokotai Joseph and the staff at Probation Services were friendly and insightful. Secretary of Education Ken Matheson, and the principals of Rarotonga’s high schools, generously put aside time for administration of the quantitative survey. Students at these schools were equally generous in their response, which is much appreciated.

Staff and associates of the Cook Islands News were reassuring and supportive during my stay in Rarotonga, particularly Alex Sword, Jason Brown, and Florence Syme-Buchanan. Nick Henry of the Bond and Teariki of CITC Liquor generously provided me with a business perspective on alcohol in Rarotonga.

Elena Tavioni and everyone from TAVs were wonderful people to meet, know, and occasionally eat with. Sarah and I were pleased and privileged to have spent time in your company. Paddy Walker was precious. Paddy, thankyou for slowing momentarily from your quest for world peace to bring us your special warmth.
From across the oceans, the Bailey and Koops families were always supportive. Alan, Arend, Catherine, Dorothy, Gabriel, Georgia, Samantha, Wendy B and Wendy K provided the emails, phone calls, and gifts that sustained Sarah and me throughout this research.

In Melbourne, some colleagues deserve special mention: fellow students Alex Gartrell, Celia McMichael, Katie Ramp-Vasey, Holly Buchanan-Aruwafu, Jamileh Abu-Duhou, Liz Hoban, Narelle Warren and Sari Andajani-Sutjahjo; and staff Anne Edmonds, Joni Law and Dr Martha Morrow – thank you.

Professor Lenore Manderson was my supervisor for this thesis. I am tempted to wax lyrical, but my acknowledgement is simply put: Lenore was great. She has been a true mentor, improving quality of life and quality of candidature. Her encouragement and support exceeded, and continue to exceed, all expectations.

Wilkie Rasmussen was a good friend, and helped us out of a few sticky situations.

Connor Joseph Koops was a source of quiet joy in the final months of writing.

Sarah Bailey did not write this thesis, but it could not have been done without her. Sarah supported me in every way throughout this research. She was, and remains, the best thing that has ever happened to me.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Alcoholics Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AACNZ</td>
<td>Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALS</td>
<td>Auckland Law Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOG</td>
<td>Assembly of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>American Psychiatric Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>Auckland Trades Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AusAID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>The Banana Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIHR</td>
<td>Cook Islands House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIANGO</td>
<td>Cook Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICC</td>
<td>Cook Islands Christian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIMH</td>
<td>Cook Islands Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Cook Islands Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPA</td>
<td>Cook Islands Progressive Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISO</td>
<td>Cook Islands Statistics Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITC</td>
<td>Cook Islands Trading Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITV</td>
<td>Cook Islands Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Alliance Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCI</td>
<td>Government of the Cook Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>(Church of the) Latter Day Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTSA</td>
<td>Land Transport Safety Association (NZ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>New Alliance Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZHR</td>
<td>New Zealand House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZODA</td>
<td>New Zealand Official Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZP</td>
<td>New Zealand Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIM</td>
<td>Pacific Islands Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAC</td>
<td>Religious Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>Secretariat of the Pacific Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WYSD</td>
<td>Women, Youth and Sports Division (Cook Islands Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ara tiroa</td>
<td>An obligation to provide food and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Are korero</td>
<td>A house of titled leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariki</td>
<td>High chief, titular head of a tribe (vaka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aro’a</td>
<td>Love, pity, greet, forgive, gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atinga</td>
<td>Gifts or tributes in the form of food, labour, or goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Council, group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au va’ine</td>
<td>Women’s committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aue!</td>
<td>Alas!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ei</td>
<td>Necklace, garland, wreath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngati</td>
<td>Descent group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapu</td>
<td>Descent group (New Zealand Maori)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ika mata</td>
<td>Raw fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iti tangata</td>
<td>“Little People”, commoners or untitled persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaikai</td>
<td>Eat a meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiou</td>
<td>Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karakia</td>
<td>Prayer, incantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kava maori</td>
<td>Locally-brewed alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kava papa’a</td>
<td>Imported alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kava patu</td>
<td>Large feasts where drinking occurred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiato</td>
<td>A segment of a minor lineage, or the head of that lineage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komono</td>
<td>The deputy of a mata’iapo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kona</td>
<td>Drunk, intoxicated, poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kopu tangata</td>
<td>Kin group/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koutu</td>
<td>Royal court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maki tupapaku</td>
<td>‘Spirit illness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>Power, authority and/or influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapu</td>
<td>Young adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>Sacred site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mata ‘iapo</td>
<td>Chief of a major lineage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metua ‘anau</td>
<td>Biological parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metua ‘angai</td>
<td>Adoptive parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu</td>
<td>Coconut/Coconut milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pange kava</td>
<td>‘Bush beer schools’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa’a</td>
<td>European/non-Maori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potiki</td>
<td>Young child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puaka</td>
<td>Pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puna</td>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra’ui</td>
<td>Customary prohibition on the use of resources or facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangatira</td>
<td>Sub-chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rukau</td>
<td>Cooked taro leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ta’unga</td>
<td>Priest, advisor, or expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamariki</td>
<td>Child, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangata ‘enua</td>
<td>People of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangata kapu</td>
<td>‘Barman’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapere</td>
<td>Sub-district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapu</td>
<td>Sacred, ‘potential for power’1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teina</td>
<td>Junior, Younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiaki</td>
<td>Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tua</td>
<td>Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuakana</td>
<td>Senior, Older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuati</td>
<td>‘Barman’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumunu</td>
<td>Coconut trunk / ‘Bush Beer Schools’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupapaku</td>
<td>Ghosts or spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uanga</td>
<td>Extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umu</td>
<td>Earth oven, oven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urikava</td>
<td>Dazed, crazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ute</td>
<td>A form of song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaka</td>
<td>Canoe, tribe, district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Derived from Shirres (1982).
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use is an appealing topic for medical-anthropological research. In the words of Margaret Mackenzie, who conducted anthropological research in Rarotonga in the 1970s, “Cook Islanders use so many criteria to define the proper uses of alcohol that they include most items an anthropologist might want to study” (Mackenzie 1974:1). As I found, alcohol use by Cook Islanders in Rarotonga encompassed many and varied aspects of their lives, and the investigation of alcohol use was, simultaneously, an investigation into virtually all of the things that were important in the everyday social lives of Cook Islanders.

This thesis describes some historical and contemporary aspects of alcohol consumption in Rarotonga. I show how political economy, discursive construction, and personal experiences of alcohol are interdependent, and mutually constitute practices and understandings associated with contemporary alcohol use. In particular, I consider the place of alcohol in the lives of mapu – youth, aged between 16 and 35 (and older), and generally unmarried, although not exclusively. This account is necessarily partial, as phenomena of alcohol use are complex and heterogeneous, and, as I will demonstrate, contain substantial ambiguities for anthropologists and Cook Islanders alike.

‘Alcohol’

This thesis, by virtue of its topic, not only engages with other scholarly works on Rarotonga and, more widely, anthropological studies of diverse societies: it addresses some of the issues debated by scholars who consider the role of alcohol in society. For this reason it is appropriate to describe briefly how I have defined ‘alcohol’, as while most scholars (critically or otherwise) agree on what alcohol is, some have questioned whether the term (and its referent) are applicable cross-culturally (Mintz 1985; Douglas 1987; Schivelbusch 1992; Hugh-Jones 1995; Sherratt 1995a; Bennett and Cook 1996).

In this thesis, I assume that ‘alcohol’ possesses at least some of the qualities described by pharmacological and physiological analyses of ethanol. These include impairment of cognitive and psychomotor function, the development of alcohol

2 See footnote 255, page 227.
tolerance, and at high concentration, nausea and unconsciousness (White and Humeniuk 1994; Gonzales and Jaworski 1997; Behar, Rothman et al. 1999). During fieldwork, I observed all of these effects in people who were drinking, and so consider their association with the consumption of ‘alcohol’ to be relatively unproblematic. Moreover, ‘alcohol’ was used as a descriptive term in Rarotonga, and corresponded with the way this term is used in other places, so I have no valid ethnographic reason to discard it in this study. Historically, alcohol (i.e. ethanol) was not used by Rarotongans prior to contact with Europeans (Papa’a), so that categorical uses of the term coincide with those typically employed in the English language, and in academic literatures. For these reasons, and because there is no compelling reason not to use ‘alcohol’ as a descriptive term, I use it throughout this thesis to refer to beverages intended for consumption, which are comprised in part by ethanol, such as wine, beer, spirits and liquers.

**Alcohol and Anthropology**

Anthropological works that focus specifically on the topic of alcohol are a comparatively recent development. Discussion about alcohol is replete in many older anthropological accounts, but is rarely the focus of ethnographic analysis. Prior to the 1970s, anthropological studies tended to regard drinking as an ubiquitous activity that was unworthy of sustained investigation (Heath 1975; Marshall 1976; Douglas 1987). Nevertheless, the past three decades have witnessed an increased interest in alcohol by anthropologists (Lemert 1967; MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969; Lemert 1976; Honigmann 1979; Mandelbaum 1979; Marshall 1979c; Marshall and Marshall 1979; Nason 1979; Sansom 1980; Marshall 1982a; Room 1984; Douglas 1987; Pernanen 1991; White and Humeniuk 1994; Sherratt 1995a; Bennett and Cook 1996; Baer, Singer et al. 1997; Willis 1999; Hunt and Barker 2001; Room 2001).

This increased interest in alcohol and drug studies has coincided with research by anthropologists into the socio-cultural context of risk behaviours, particularly in response to the AIDS epidemic, and increased funds made available for such work (Bennett and Cook 1996). This occurred largely because alcohol and other drugs are associated with ‘high risk’ patterns of behaviour, and ‘deviant’ groups in society. Despite the unity of all ‘drugs’ as ‘risk’ factors, accounts considering alcohol and tobacco have separated discussions of those substances from those on other drugs. A number of historians and anthropologists note that this method of differentiation is not justified by chemical composition (Mintz 1985; Douglas 1987; Schivelbusch 1992;
Hugh-Jones 1995; Sherratt 1995a; Bennett and Cook 1996). Rather, these distinctions are typically formulated from ‘Western’ cultural categories, such as those that divide ‘legal’ from ‘illegal’ substances (Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Bourdieu 1984; Hunt and Barker 2001).

Some analysts have attempted to overcome these theoretical biases by defining their field of interest more broadly as ‘psychoactive’ substances (Room and Collins 1983). This definition is conceptually useful, as with it the validity of differentiations of legal from illegal ‘drugs’ may be interrogated. Nevertheless, it also relies on Western traditions of substance categorization; namely, those derived from chemical and physiological analysis. Thus, cross-cultural analysis centred on specific substances (such as alcohol) relies on the proposition that pharmacological categorisation is adequate as a means of discerning one substance from another.

Even with such agreement, the differentiation of psychoactive substances from non-psychoactive substances is justified on relative, rather than absolute, grounds. Some commentators acknowledge that specific substances are particularly amenable to acquiring social meaning, and subsequent social importance, due to their psychoactive properties, but stress that this does not preclude non-psychoactive substances from acquiring similar meaning and importance (Mansell Pattison 1981; Sherratt 1995a). Indeed, some scholars suggest that the attribution of psychoactivity to specific substances may be culturally, and individually, determined (Mansell Pattison 1981; Mintz 1985; Valverde 1998). For this reason, it has been argued that the anthropology of drug and alcohol use should be regarded as an aspect of the anthropology of consumption (Hugh-Jones 1995; Sherratt 1995a).

Nevertheless, virtually all theorists agree that alcohol causes loss of co-ordination, vomiting, and unconsciousness in sufficiently large quantities, subject to the specific qualities of the drinker, such as gender, age, the presence of liver disease, whether she/he is stressed, and genetic variations (White and Humeniuk 1994:17). Most anthropological and sociological accounts argue that, whatever the pharmacological effects of alcohol, the social and behavioural effects of its consumption are variable and heterogeneous, and dependent on the social and cultural environment in which it is consumed or used.
All anthropological (and most cross-cultural) analyses of alcohol pay explicit attention to its meaning and symbolism, and most regard these as integral to the effects and behaviours associated with it. These accounts are distinguished from the ‘universal’ accounts to follow because they do not argue that alcohol has the same effect on comportment, or the same function in society, wherever it is consumed.

The text which is repeatedly described as ‘seminal’ is MacAndrew & Edgerton’s *Drunken Comportment* (1969).³ This text was one of the first to examine ‘taken-for-granted’ understandings of alcohol in ‘Western’ societies critically. In the 1960s, contemporary physiological-psychology theory proposed that alcohol interfered with ‘higher brain function’, and so suppressed inhibitive functions of the drinker’s brain. Thus, alcohol caused the ‘animal instincts’ of people to be released (Neil 1962; Block 1965; Kessel and Walton 1965). MacAndrew & Edgerton challenged these assumptions by employing cross-cultural comparison to show that the ‘disinhibitory’ effect of alcohol was culture-specific.

MacAndrew & Edgerton proposed that there were two components of drunkenness: first, the effect of alcohol on sensorimotor capabilities, such as locomotor ability, co-ordination, visual acuity, and reaction time; and second, changes in comportment. In regard of the latter, they showed that diverse peoples have variable ways of acting when they consumed alcohol, and these demonstrated three recurrent characteristics: 1) that people acted in a prescribed manner when drinking, 2) that drinking behaviour could change over time, 3) that the same people exhibited different behaviours in different social (drinking) contexts. Thus, they argued that the comportment of people while drinking was not determined solely by the pharmacological effects of alcohol, and that the social context in which drinking occurred was largely deterministic of drinking behaviour.⁴

A number of the scholars have provided evidence in support of the ‘drunken comportment’ model. Brady (1988), for example, documents how injuries sustained by Aboriginal women in Tennant Creek during altercations with drunk men were largely

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³ In fact, MacAndrew and Edgerton so propose a ‘universal’ function of alcohol consumption, which I discuss at page 319. I have included them here because they do not state this argument in a particularly strong or explicit manner, and because most scholars focus on their contention that drunken comportment is “culturally constructed or determined” (Room 2001:189).

⁴ Paton-Simpson (1996) also provides an extensive overview of various forms of drunken comportment cross-culturally, pointing out that the practices of one society are sometimes contradicted by another (drinking and alcohol as a sign of virility, and as an emasculating substance, for example), and that such contradictions are sometimes found within, as well as between, societies.
consistent with traditionally sanctioned forms of control. Other commentators have remarked on the apparently arbitrary relationship between alcohol and behaviour (Heath 1975; Marshall 1979b; Heath 1988; Paton-Simpson 1996); and Room & Collins (1983:v-vi) have noted generally that “psychoactivity does not determine whether behaviour is disinhibited or controlled: it simply provides an empty vessel of altered consciousness for culture, circumstance and personality to load with meanings and explanations”.

In most places where alcohol is consumed, it is invested with symbolic significance, and is also an important item of exchange. Adler (1991) for example, examines the importance of alcohol to pre-capitalist exchange in England, where the use of beer and/or money differentiated givers and receivers from employers and employees: “with beer one thanks, but with money one pays” (1991:388). She describes how the capitalist wage-economy changed the meanings (and relationships) of work and employment, by removing of the symbolic component of alcohol. d’Abbs et al. describe Australian Aboriginal drinking practice as “a meaningful act embedded in norms and bonds of reciprocity” (1994:12), and O’Connor (1984), Sansom (1980), and Collmann (1988) all describe the importance of alcohol to group membership and exchange in the context of drinking by Australian Aborigines. In Ohuave, Warry (1982) notes how beer has become a ceremonial equivalent of pork in traditional exchanges, particularly in ritual events of importance such as funerals, marriages, and circumcisions. Marshall also remarks on the importance of beer in exchange in Papua New Guinea:

As a prestige commodity, beer, and to a lesser extent other forms of alcohol, has been woven into traditional exchanges. Alcohol givers gain prestige and the exchange system has a built-in dynamic to increase the amount of each presentation. In many parts of the country alcohol has now become the centrepiece of exchanges, supplanting pork. Statements describing two highlands societies aptly describe a situation that is becoming nationwide: “A party without beer is no party at all”. The quantity of beer involved now determines the success of the party (Marshall 1982a:9).

Alcohol is often symbolically linked to specific categories of people, objects, and occasions. Lepowsky (1982), for example, describes contrasting meanings and practices associated with alcohol, betel, and tobacco use in Vanatinai, Papua New Guinea. Alcohol was associated with uncontrolled behaviour, sexual licence, and aggression,
and was contrasted with the use of “betel nut”, which was a symbol of “peaceful and friendly relations” (Lepowsky 1982:337). Alcohol was consumed primarily by young men who participated in the wage economy, who drank in secret, and for whom alcohol was symbolic of a lack of integration with the community. Madsen & Madsen (1979), in their work with Mexican Indians, and Escalante (1980), writing about his experiences as a social worker and member of Yaquis and Papagos tribes, also stress the importance of alcohol consumption as a practice embedded in symbols of group membership and participation. Throughout Papua New Guinea, alcohol is commonly associated with modernisation, and is often consumed partly as a demonstration that the drinker is “officially modernised” (Marshall 1982a:5). Marshall also remarks on the importance of drinking as an act of sociality:

Alcohol’s symbolic importance in contemporary Papua New Guinea would be rendered meaningless by solitary drinking. Moreover, the lone drinker would quickly be branded as mean, stingy and antisocial by his friends (1982a:5:9).

For Mekeo people in Papua New Guinea, new-found wealth acquired through trade of betel pepper in the early 1990s led to vast consumption of beer by men folk, partly as a demonstration of wealth and prestige (Mosko 2001). In addition to these qualities, however, the conspicuous consumption of alcohol was significant because it was regarded as evidence that former sorcerers were no longer practicing “peace magic”, or for that matter, “love magic”. In Fiji, young men, who are often excluded from kava ceremonies, drink beer instead (Walter 1982). As they grow older and marry, however, they find themselves under pressure to give up drinking. Here, alcohol consumption is frequently associated with youth, and thus has meanings and qualities associated with a particular age group and role (Walter 1982). Marshall (1979c) notes a similar phenomenon in Truk in the 1970s, where older men were discouraged from drinking in the manner of younger men.

Finally, some authors describe the relationship between the symbolic qualities of substances (principally alcohol), missionisation, and colonisation. Ambler (1991) suggests, in his consideration of colonial Kenya, that alcohol consumption may not have been an especially important issue to indigenous Kenyans. British colonists, on the other hand, were very apprehensive about Kenyan alcohol consumption, because they feared it would lead to widespread social disorder. Drunken whites were considered no threat to social order, but in the minds and correspondence of administrators and
bureaucrats, the “thin veneer of rationality” possessed by indigenous Kenyans was particularly vulnerable to the “demon rum” (Ambler 1991:173). Ambler suggests that the administrators’ concern with alcohol appeared to be a rhetorical device to explain and allocate blame for failures in social policy, rather than referring directly to problems “on the ground” (Ambler 1991). Regarding Australian Aborigines, Brady (1991) also describes colonial views of alcohol as a “dissolver of rationality”. She argues that the consumption of alcohol acquired a symbolic association with citizenship for some Aboriginal people as historically they could only claim citizenship (and so the right to drink) if they relinquished “tribal and native affiliations” (Brady 1991:180). Finally, Marshall (1976) and Marshall & Marshall (1979) note that in the Pacific, the teetotaller status of missionaries was symbolically crucial as a means of differentiating themselves from early, resident populations of ‘beachcombers’. Drinking alcohol rapidly became an important marker for participation in missionary society, and was a symbol and practice around which many political struggles were enacted (Maude 1964; Marshall and Marshall 1979).

**Social-functional approaches to alcohol and tobacco**

One of the first social scientists to systematically argue a general function for alcohol in society was Horton (1943). He proposed, “as levels of anxiety increase in a society, drunkenness increases” (Horton 1943:293), basing his argument on statistical analyses of rates of drunkenness, alcohol consumption, and means of subsistence. ‘Anxiety’ was assumed to be greater in societies with more ‘primitive’ means of subsistence, and so was epitomized by Hunter/Gatherers. Subsequent studies yielded equivocal results (Field 1962; Shaefer 1976), although most critics accepted a priori that subsistence method should be positively correlated with anxiety. Honigmann, in support of the ‘anxiety’ hypothesis, argued that in general, ‘stress theory’ holds up relatively well cross-culturally, particularly among ‘deviant’ groups in society (1979:31).

Barry (1976) suggested that within particular societies, dependency and self-reliance are nurtured or repressed during childhood and youth, and where either is over- or under-emphasised, alcoholism and alcohol abuse occur. Boyatzis (1976) also builds on anxiety theory by focusing on alcohol consumption as a way of producing “feelings of power” among people with ambiguous status in society. Boyatzis hypothesised that cultures with high degrees of concern for issues of power and influence will also have
greater rates of drinking, as people drink to achieve feelings of power and influence. His thesis was that alcohol is adaptive for males in social situations where social status and influence is ambiguous, as a behavioural and psychological mechanism for coping with the environment, and as a means for people to ‘blow off steam’ in a socially acceptable way (see also McClelland, Davis et al. 1972). In this formulation, and in those preceding, functionality of alcohol is primarily for those who drink, rather than for society in general.

In *Weekend Warriors* (1979c), Marshall considered the models above, or versions of them, and decided that they were relevant to the experience of drunkenness in Truk, at least for young men in the mid-seventies. Marshall argued, in accordance with Boyatzis (1976), that drinking provided young men with a means to confront relatives and elders in ways that were not available to them in everyday life.

Another influential theory of the relationship between society and drinking behaviour was offered by Lemert (1967). In his study of three Pacific societies, Lemert concluded that the incidence of ‘pathological’ drinking was inversely related to its degree of integration in the norms and practices of society. Lemert saw alcohol as possessing contrary characteristics: that by bringing ritual and convivial groups together, alcohol was potentially integrative, but that it had associated economic cost, and constantly threatened to destroy societal and individual values by means of violence, dispute, and confrontation. Other writers had adopted this theme, particularly in comparative studies of ‘dry’ and ‘wet’ drinking societies, exemplified by Irish Americans and Jewish Americans, and Irish and French respectively (Lolli 1958; Snyder 1958; Bales 1959). These studies focussed on rates of alcoholism, and proposed that socialisation and the everyday use of alcohol were less likely to produce alcohol abuse in a population. This hypothesis has since been questioned, following evidence that societies where alcohol consumption is ‘integrated’ (where people drink wine with meals, for example) have high rates of alcohol-related morbidity compared to ‘utilitarian’ drinking societies (de Lint 1976). Nevertheless, Douglas (1987) suggests problem drinking may be correlated with the extent alcohol is used to signify inclusion and exclusion in social groupings.

Alcohol consumption has also been considered by some theorists as a form of political protest and resistance by marginalised groups. In their summary of anthropological literature regarding violence, alcohol, and Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islanders, d’Abbs et al. (1994) remark that drinking is “often a political act of defiance
against what are seen as oppressive mechanisms of the modern state.” Marshall & Marshall (1979) and Lemert (1967) also describe how Pacific people signalled their non-compliance with missionaries and colonial administrators by means of drinking and drunkenness. Sargent (1979), in a more radical stance, suggests that drinking is a threat to the status quo, and thus the state is mobilised to control and regulate drinking practices, to prevent “communities of drinkers” mobilising to disrupt societal power.

Another body of theory correlates alcohol consumption with anomie, acculturation, and the destruction of societal values. Escalante (1980) and Langton (1992) both remark that the context of drinking for ‘fourth world’ people is one in which there is “an absence of incentives and motivation for meaningful activity, either in employment or traditional activities” (Langton 1992:12). Thus, as suggested by Douglas (1987), alcohol use arises out of a condition of anomie, rather than causing it. Price (1981) and Levy (1973) remark that processes of urbanisation and consequent weakening of traditional and familial relationships may contribute to increased alcohol consumption in the Pacific.

Problem deflation and problem exaggeration

In 1984 Robin Room (Room 1984) suggested that anthropological studies of alcohol consumption were guilty of ‘problem deflation’, that is, they had, by and large, ignored negative aspects of drinking in society, and instead emphasised positive and integrative aspects of alcohol use. Whereas often epidemiologists, doctors, and alcoholologists tended to voice concern about the problems of alcohol use, anthropologists tended to downplay the issue of alcohol-related societal problems. This dichotomy was pervasive, according to Room, and was epitomised in Heath’s (1975) review of alcohol studies in anthropology. Heath (1975) was of the opinion that anthropologists provided a more balanced perspective on alcohol issues, as epidemiologists tended to exaggerate the negative consequences of drinking at the expense of equally important, positive, and integrative aspects of alcohol consumption.

Room’s comments led to a re-examination of method in studies of anthropology and alcohol, and to a call for a more comprehensive approach to assessing the role of alcohol in societies (Douglas 1987). Debates about the cross-cultural definition of ‘problems’ and means of assessment also dominated discussion. Valverde (1998), in tracing the history of alcohol studies in America, describes the split between epidemiological and “hedonistic” approaches occurring after the theoretical demise of
the ‘disease’ model of alcoholism popularised by Alcoholics Anonymous, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, and incorporated into academic theory by Jellinek (1946; 1952; 1960). Valverde suggests that “within epidemiology, alcohol’s specificity was lost in the larger domain of drugs and health risks, whereas within critical studies of culture, drinking became just another area of consumption” (1998:115).

**Deviant and pathological models**

Bennett & Cook (1996) address the issue of alcoholism in their review of alcohol as a ‘licit’ drug. They note that studies of alcoholology are often dichotomised regarding alcoholism, adopting either a disease concept or a ‘moral’ model, in which alcoholism is primarily interpreted as arising from a particular weakness in individuals (Bennett and Cook 1996:246). The disease concept of alcoholism was largely abandoned in alcoholology in the 1970s, due to serious challenges as to its cross-cultural validity (Valverde 1998). Heath has summed up the ambiguous position of the disease concept of alcoholism as follows:

If alcoholism is a disease, it is a most unusual one inasmuch as an individual can often bring an end to it by modifying his/her behavior even in the absence of any other intervention. Most of the reasons commonly given for calling it a disease are fallacious (1988:117).

Valverde (1998) and Bennett & Cook (1996) note that although the disease concept has become somewhat less popular in academic discourse, it remains a particularly salient concept in popular discourse and within particular organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Sargent (1976; 1979) suggests that alcoholism is caused by the exercise of political and state power over specific groups of individuals. The relationship of people in positions of political power to alcoholism and alcoholics is complex, because often the economic interests of the powerful are tied up in the alcohol industry. For Sargent, alcoholics are primarily the product of societal power relations ‘writ small’. Alcoholics are ‘created’ by factors such as socialisation, ‘unknown’ physical causes, mental handicaps, emotional and physical trauma, disturbed relationships, homosexual needs, and so on (Sargent 1979:97). It is unclear how these factors are related to dominant power relations in Sargent’s work, and whether they constitute independent components of the aetiology of alcoholism or not.
Mansell Pattison (1981:72), writing on alcohol and social policy, questions the status of alcoholism as a disease, stating that evidence for the validity of alcoholism categories is not supported by studies and literature. He describes alcoholism as a ‘denotational’ term – one which is quite useful as a social category, but which has subsequently been reified.

Valverde (1998) describes historical changes in social responses to alcohol ‘problems’, from 19th century ideas about the effect of alcohol on the will (often semi-somatic, in which alcohol rendered the will unable to control the passions) to Alcoholics Anonymous’ ideas about the achievement of ‘inner peace’ to cope with the ‘disease’ of alcoholism. Alcoholics Anonymous, according to Valverde, “came up with the notion that physicians should not have the monopoly on disease, and… first succeeded in turning a disease into a full-fledged, lifelong social identity” (1998:122). Will power, according to Valverde, was the central concept around which discussions about alcoholism were articulated.

This notion is much in evidence in contemporary classifications of psychiatric illness. The DSM-IV (APA 1994) has dropped the term “alcoholism” as a term of diagnosis, but retains many of the criteria associated with this condition, most associated with the inability of the alcoholic to control her/his drinking. Thus, the DSM-IV remains in uneasy moderation between public and academic discourses about pathology and the use of intoxicating substances.

**Political economy approaches**

As Douglas notes in her introduction to the anthropology of drinking practices, “the manufacture of alcohol is an economic activity of consequence” (Douglas 1987:8). Historically and contemporarily, alcohol plays a significant role in world trade and taxes. In Kenya, Ambler (1991) documents changes through colonisation, from traditional elder-focused exchange to a wage-working economy, in which young men participated. During this time, introduced technological improvements in sugar refinement, the introduction of machinery, and access to cheap imported sugar increased access to alcohol for the general population. ‘Chiefly’ bureaucrats were supported by the colonial administration, and selected for their pro-colonist sentiments, which contributed to erosion of the authority of ‘traditional’ leaders. Thus changes in technology, economic organisation, and the diminished authority of chiefs altered the character of drinking in Kenya, so that beer was produced all-year round, by younger
men. In response, colonial administrators attempted to bolster ‘traditional’ political institutions as a means to control the alcohol ‘problem’ – apparently unaware that Kenyan society had been progressively centralised through the processes of colonisation, to the point that ‘traditional’ structures of control were either largely ineffective, or had been replaced by the newer, colonial structures of control (Ambler 1991).

Mintz (1985) and Alder (1991) both describe changes in the dietary composition of people in England, linked to changes in relations of production and international trade. Mintz (1985) shows how the provision of increasing quantities of sugar to the English public, at cheaper prices, along with the importation and adoption of other ‘exotic’ products (such as coffee, tea, and chocolate) contributed to a change in people’s everyday meals (see also Schivelbusch 1992; Goodman 1995). He suggests that the patterns of distribution of sugar in society (or any substance for that matter) is indicative of the distribution of power in that society (Mintz 1985:154).

Sherratt (1995b) also describes how substance regulation and political economy interact. Legislation regarding alcohol consumption in the workplace first arose in England following World War One, with an ostensive aim to improve industrial productive capacity – but in practice, it was used as a means to control undesirable minorities. Marshall & Marshall (1979) comment how in the early-contact Pacific, chiefly power was often tied up in the economic control of tobacco and alcohol, along with beachcombers and traders. Consequently, the antagonism of missionaries to these substances served to undermine the religious and symbolic authority of chiefs, as well as their economic influence.

**Theory and This Thesis**

This research does not focus on deviant forms of alcohol consumption in Rarotonga, although these are considered periodically. I am mainly concerned with unexceptional uses of alcohol, that is, people’s ‘everyday’ experiences of drinking, which sometimes are, and sometimes are not, problematic. In the discussion to follow, many of the themes addressed by other scholars emerge from Rarotonga: its importance to the maintenance of some relationships, and the strains it puts on others; historical changes in practice, distribution, and meaning; a substance that produces, in some people, ‘feelings of power’; a substance that produces states in drinkers that are relatively ‘disinhibited’; the list goes on. I will not explicitly address these themes in
analysis, although it will become clear that each proposition is only partially true of Rarotonga. Where alcohol is concerned, ambiguity (or rather complexity) is the only general rule. Nevertheless, in chapter thirteen, I identify some themes I consider important in consideration of the place of alcohol in Rarotonga, and propose some means by which these can be understood.

This thesis is constructed in a mode that is best described as historical-interpretive. The interpretive approach to the description and analysis of people’s ways of life was most famously popularised by Clifford Geertz in the 1970s, when he likened ‘cultures’ to texts that were to be interpreted by anthropologists with particular emphasis on symbols and significations surrounding people’s discourses, behaviours and practices: “Analysis is sorting out the structures of signification… and determining their social ground and import” (Geertz 1973:9). This approach was subsequently adopted by many anthropologists, although it emerged as somewhat problematic – for example, the role of the *interpreter* in the construction of various representations of culture (i.e. via the anthropologist), was relatively unacknowledged in Geertz’ work. In the pages to follow, I have attempted to acknowledge my own agency in these descriptions of drinking in Rarotonga – a different person would tell a different story, although I believe the story that person might tell would be similar to that which follows.

Another fault of the ‘classical’ interpretive approach to ethnography is its conceptual weakness in the consideration of social change. Rosenberry (1982), for example, criticised Geertz on these grounds, and argued that by treating culture as text the productive effect of historical and material social processes was ignored – a given culture was thereby examined for its internal relationships and consistencies at a particular moment in time, without due consideration for historical circumstances that contribute to ‘the way things are’. Geertz’ work also had a tendency to homogenise the component persons and practices of what he called a ‘culture’, thus undermining the potential for interpretive anthropology to explore conflicts and tensions arising from the exercise of power.

Nevertheless, interpretive approaches to the analysis of people’s ways of life are a valuable and rich tool for anthropological enquiry. In this thesis I have combined these with historical analysis to provide a context in which to examine contemporary and past change and group conflict surrounding Rarotongan drinking practice. This approach emphasises the fact that this description of contemporary drinking practice is by no
means a definitive description of ‘the Rarotongs’ – when examined against an historical context of substantial change in political, economic, and drinking practice, this account should properly be regarded as a component of Anthropology’s great “work in progress”. Moreover, I have moderated the tendency for interpretive approaches to understate the dynamics of conflict and change within society by explicitly considering the various agendas and perspectives of groups and persons within Rarotonga throughout the historical and contemporary components of this thesis.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised in thirteen chapters. Chapter two comprises a description of the fieldwork location, research participants, and the methodologies employed in this research. Following chapter two, the thesis is divided in two parts, the first of which encompasses chapters three to seven, and describes the historical context of alcohol use in Rarotonga. Part two, covering chapters eight to twelve, presents a contemporary ethnography of alcohol use. Chapter three provides a general description of Rarotongan society prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries in 1823, based on scholarly and other documents, followed by a brief description of the place of kava (Piper methysticum) in ‘that’ society. Prior to contact with other peoples in the 19th century, Rarotongans did not produce alcohol, although a number of the practices associated with kava later re-emerged in practices associated with alcohol consumption. Chapters four through seven follow a similar structure to chapter three; each considers consecutive periods of Rarotongan history. Here I describe some general features pertaining to key aspects of social life (such as legislative, political, and economic change), and then demonstrate how these affected, and were affected by, practices associated with alcohol.

Chapters eight through eleven comprise the ethnographic component of this research, and in them I describe some aspects of alcohol use in contemporary Rarotonga. Chapter eight describes pragmatic aspects of alcohol use by Cook Islanders, and mapu in particular, such as where people drink, at what times, the types and quantities of alcohol consumed, and drinking companions. This chapter concludes with

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5 Obviously, Rarotongan society was not isomorphic prior to European contact, and this characterisation is best understood as a representation of the island’s history from the perspective of various commentators from missionary contact onwards.
a brief consideration of ‘alcoholics’ in Rarotonga; a category which is primarily defined by Cook Islanders in reference to how much, and how often, a person drinks.

Chapter nine is largely comprised of information derived from interviews with Cook Islanders living in Rarotonga, and their description of behaviours associated with, and experiences of, alcohol consumption. These included: an increased propensity for people to talk and interact with people they did not know very well; the opinion that, in general, drinking was ‘fun’ and made people ‘happy’; the association of alcohol consumption with sexual activity and arguments; and the general characterisation of alcohol as a ‘transformative’ substance.

In chapter ten I describe how age and kinship relationships affect what people regard as ‘appropriate’ drinking behaviour, and the reasons why some decide to abstain from drinking alcohol. In chapter eleven, I consider the complexity of values associated with food and alcohol, and the importance of ‘shouts’ and ‘barmanning’ for maintaining interpersonal relationships through alcohol.

Chapter twelve considers the place of alcohol in media, and policies of various public organisations (including state, religious, health, and private sectors) regarding alcohol. I also describe some politicians’ opinions on the use of alcohol in Rarotonga, and the relationship of these to legislation and policy.

Chapter thirteen is the last chapter of this thesis, and in it I build on observations and descriptions from previous chapters to examine how political-economy, social discourse, and the ‘embodied’ experience of alcohol are mutually constitutive, and how an ‘embodied’ perspective on alcohol can enhance theoretical understandings of the relationship between alcohol, behaviour, and political economy.
Dusk was approaching when my wife Sarah and I, in the company of one hundred or so tourists and Cook Islanders returning to the islands, touched down at Rarotonga International Airport, courtesy of an Air New Zealand 737 direct flight from Auckland. Boarding ramps rolled out to the plane across the runway, and soon Rarotonga’s newest arrivals found themselves trooping across to the terminal. On the seaward end of the runway, tourists were firing up hired scooters to make their way back to resorts, having experienced one of Rarotonga’s most exhilarating ‘extreme sports’ – standing under the massive jet as it swoops in over the lagoon opposite the Golf Club, screaming onto the runway just metres above the heads of clustered thrill-seekers.

The catalogue of sensations we felt upon our first steps into Rarotonga were those of thousands of visitors before us – hot, humid air, tinged with smoke from burning rubbish heaps, the lagoon and the Pacific Ocean – visible wherever the towering mountains, which dominated the interior of the island, did not block our view. The six-string ukulele of Jake Numanga, airport entertainer, was increasingly audible over the engines of the Boeing as we walked toward the terminal.

Inside, we joined the ‘visitors’ queue for customs processing, while Cook Islands Maori were directed to their own queue, to our left. Through the windows of the terminal we saw people smiling and waving, trying to catch the attention of (I assumed) friends and relatives. Outside, courtesy buses from the tourist resorts lined the roads, and bus drivers waited with ‘ei (necklaces made of flowers) ready to drape around the necks of their guests, one for each. One ‘ei was nowhere near sufficient for Maori who returned to the island; most were embraced by joyful relatives, each with their own ‘ei, so that the necks of returnees were scarcely visible underneath a profusion of flowers, and in some cases, of necklaces artfully constructed from boiled sweets and string.

Soon even we received an ‘ei apiece, from our landlady-to-be, Ura, who easily identified the only Papa’a (Europeans) in the crowd looking lost and unwanted. We bundled into her van, bags in tow. As yet, Ura told us, she didn’t have a house organised for us to move in to. There was a place just across the road that seemed ideal, but unfortunately it had just been occupied, and so she was trying to find us somewhere else to live. Her aunty, she said, had built the house with a loan from the bank, but was now finding it difficult to make the mortgage payments, so she and Ura had been very keen
for us to move in. But her aunt’s daughter had returned from New Zealand recently, shifted into the house with her boyfriend and refused to leave, so there was nothing they could do – we were out. Ura was trying to find us another house, but in the meantime, we could stay in a unit on the other side of the island. We drove from the airport toward Arorangi, or the “wild west” as Ura called it, in between conversations on her cell-phone – “wild west”, she said, because lots of houses were robbed in this village.

The village, it must be said, did not look all that wild. The street of Arorangi was lined with a low wall constructed of lime, with immaculately tended yards in front of the houses, the school, and the CICC (Cook Islands Christian Church) church – also constructed of lime, whitewashed, and with graves of prominent church members who had since passed away crowding the churchyard. After a short drive, Ura brought us to Wigmore’s Supermarket, which was an outlet for produce from Wigmore Farms – still a viable business, many years after William Wigmore (once the subject of scandal involving alcohol, a gun, and an unfortunately deceased Maori youth), had passed away.

By now it was dark. After buying some rudimentary provisions, Ura completed the trip around the island to our unit in Muri – in just half an hour, we had circumnavigated almost two thirds of Rarotonga. Ura bade us farewell, and we settled in to our new house, listening to Radio Cook Islands belt out Maori ballads (all with ukuleles strummed at epileptic speed) before a closing prayer at 11pm. Unaccustomed to the heat, which did not seem to diminish with night-fall, we tried our best to sleep, and were moderately successful, but only once the thin cotton sheets had been cast aside and the ceiling fan charged up full blast. As yet, I hadn’t seen anyone drinking, but there was plenty of time for that later. For the time being, we were content to lie on our bed, sweating in paradise.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in and around the town of Avarua, at the north side of Rarotonga. Avarua is the main commercial centre of Rarotonga, where most of the island’s government departments, shopping centres, media organisations, liquor wholesalers, bars, nightclubs and population are located. This was partly fortuitous, as housing was in short supply when Sarah and I arrived in Rarotonga. The flat we found in Takuva’ine, a village immediately inland of Avarua, was just a few minutes walk

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6 Houses were rented out to tourists for substantial amounts of money. I knew a few people who had actually shifted out of their homes to live with relatives, in order to obtain rent from visiting tourists.
from all of these amenities. Being able to walk to drinking venues was of critical importance in this research, given that driving after participation in a drinking session carried obvious risks to my personal safety – not only because my own ability to drive may have been impaired, but also because there was a chance that other drivers on Rarotonga’s roads would have been similarly affected. Nevertheless, we did acquire a scooter for transportation during our year on the island, so that I was able to travel easily around the island to meet people for interviews, and conduct research at agencies and departments that were not located in Avarua (such as Rarotonga Prison, the island’s high schools, and the Cook Islands Parliament, for example).

Perhaps the most fruitful means of obtaining data in this research was participant-observation. Tonkin (1984) refers to the usefulness of participant observation as a means by which one may confirm information derived from interviews, and draw attention to disjunctions between what is said or thought, and what happens. In the case of my research, participant-observation proved valuable in both respects. I participated in drinking sessions, and as an anthropologist, my experiences and observations from everyday, ‘sober’ life provided important information about the meaning and context of drinking in Rarotonga. This research ‘technique’ was not entirely unproblematic, given the topic of this thesis. It was important, in order to build rapport during research, not only to be physically present at drinking sessions, but also to drink with people as they drank. Participant-observation was also contextually complicated by the fact that the major churches and medical organisations of Rarotonga were opposed to excessive consumption of alcohol by Cook Islanders. Due to the stance of these organisations toward alcohol, many people assumed that as I was researching their use of alcohol, I was also opposed to drinking and consequently viewed them in a negative light. The fact that people could observe me drinking alcohol with them implied that I was not necessarily opposed to drinking per se, and that I had not decided that all drinking was bad drinking, as indeed I had not – although there were a number of potentially serious consequences associated with alcohol consumption in Rarotonga. Had I not participated in drinking, it is unlikely that I would have gained as much insight into people’s drinking practices. Although the majority of people I met accepted me as a fellow drinker, some did not, and in these cases I elected to leave them alone, rather than antagonise the situation.

Another, almost unavoidable feature of conducting participant-observation on alcohol consumption, was that it was often difficult to write comprehensive fieldnotes
immediately after participation in a drinking session. Most of the time I did not drink to the point of becoming drunk (although this did occur on a few occasions), and so was capable of writing down my observations after a drinking session, but these notes were often rudimentary, as drinking sessions would often continue through the night and into the early hours of the next morning (usually, 2am – 4am, and occasionally longer). By the time I arrived home I was often very tired, and so would sleep first, and write notes when I awoke. This practice produced acceptable results.

Fieldwork Considerations

Most Cook Islands Maori are bilingual, speaking English and the Maori dialect of their island. A number of mapu, particularly those who have grown up in New Zealand, speak only English. Although I intended to learn Maori during fieldwork in Rarotonga, I did not pick up more than a rudimentary grasp of this language. This was due to the fact that most people spoke to me (and, indeed, generally) in English, and also because the lingua franca of drinking was English (see chapter nine). For these reasons, all interviews were conducted in English.

As I have already stated, the focus of this research was on the practices of mapu regarding alcohol. Most of the people I interviewed, and drank with, were from the general age group of mapu (16-35 or older). Although I refer occasionally to drinking practices of older Maori, this component of the research is largely derived from mapu’s perspectives on the ‘old people’.

Methodology

I obtained research data by a number of different means. Some of the most important information was derived from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 56 Cook Islanders resident in Rarotonga. Of these, 25 were women and 31 men, 33 were current drinkers and 23 former drinkers or people who had never consumed alcohol on a regular basis. Ages ranged between 19 and 39 years. A total of 17 people had spent their childhood (or youth) living in islands of the Cook group other than Rarotonga (referred to as the ‘Outer Islands’), and had moved to Rarotonga to live in the last 2-32 years. Eight had spent their childhood in New Zealand, and had lived in Rarotonga for 3-26 years. These people were recruited through personal contact, or introduction by a mutual acquaintance. All interviews were conducted privately; most
were tape-recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Notes were kept for each interview.

Key-person interviews were conducted with representatives from a variety of organisations and institutions in Rarotonga, including staff from Rarotonga’s hospital, the Ministry of Health and Department of Public Health, and from the Department of Corrections (Probation Service and Prison Service), politicians (the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, and Deputy Prime Minister / Minister of Health), religious spokespersons, a spokesperson for Cook Islands traditional leaders (Pa Ariki), the Cook Islands Women’s Counselling Centre (*Punanga Tauturu*), and business people involved in liquor retail on Rarotonga. Some of these interviews were conducted as focus groups, although these proved difficult to organise and so were employed infrequently.

Other data were obtained from various agencies and organisations (including newspapers, television and radio coverage, and statistics and documents from government departments) in the course of this research. This was also difficult on occasion, as within the state sector, many persons (or bureaucratic structures) were unwilling to divulge information. Since 1996, state ministries and departments suffered cuts to budgets and staff, and often these people were too busy to help, or unwilling, or both. There were a number of notable exceptions to this rule, however, particularly from staff in departments and services subsumed by the Ministry of Justice. In many cases statistics had not been compiled by a number of state departments – the Ministry of Health had not published health and hospital statistics since 1996, for example, and the Cook Islands Statistics Office had been unable to obtain personal income and taxation statistics since 1997 – primarily because the Ministry of Internal Revenue had an enormous backlog and had not processed personal income tax since then.

Historical components of this research are derived from documentary sources. In general, *mapu* did not know, and did not discuss, the historical place of alcohol in the Cook Islands. Occasionally, I discussed the past use of alcohol with older Cook Islanders, when they recounted to me their experiences of alcohol in earlier decades of the 20th century. These are not discussed in detail in this thesis. Fortunately, as I have already noted, alcohol was a recurrent concern of historians and contemporary commentators throughout the period of Maori contact with Papa’a, so there is ample information for an historical consideration of alcohol. Historical documents concerning Rarotonga are not impartial records of the past ‘as it was’, and so in the process of writing this history I have, inevitably, moulded histories with diverse agendas to my
own ends. Where these sources have been used, I have attempted to reveal the propensities of different authors. Thus, while I have not disentangled a ‘true’ history of Rarotonga, I have attempted to situate these histories in the context of their creation.
PART ONE INTRODUCTION:
A HISTORY OF KAVA PAPA’A AND KAVA MAORI

These chapters describe the historical context of alcohol in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Alcohol was unknown on the island before the arrival of European explorers and traders, but quickly occupied an important place in the social, economic, and political lives of Maori. Indeed, such was the significance of alcohol that an historical account that attempts to consider alcohol as a discrete substance, or as a discrete set of practices, would be guilty of masking the full extent to which alcohol emerged as a salient social force in Rarotonga. For this reason, a large proportion of the chapters that follow is dedicated to aspects of social life that may appear peripheral to alcohol at first glance: such as political and religious practice, traditions of land inheritance, and the impact of disease and natural disasters. The reason for this broad perspective on alcohol practice is crucial: it allows us to understand the context in which alcohol came to occupy an important place in the life of Rarotongans – not only for those who consumed alcohol, but also those who, for various reasons, did not drink alcohol.

Changes in the distribution of political structures and political influence are a recurrent theme in this history. Rarotonga has undergone four major changes in political organization since the 1820s, from pre-contact social organisation to a society principally governed by foreign missionaries and indigenous chiefs, to a British Protectorate and colonial administration primarily governed by New Zealand, and finally to the principle island of an independent nation, the Cook Islands. Economic influence was closely correlated with the ascendance and decline of key political groups on the island, and along with it access to imported alcohol – a substance that, from missionary contact, has been of particular symbolic, social, economic and religious importance on Rarotonga. Very often struggles between various groups were played out with reference to alcohol: whether as a symbol of allegiance to Christianity (through abstinence), an integral part of uniquely Maori interaction (in the ‘bush beer schools’), a means of undermining persons of political importance, or as a symbol of civic participation. Alcohol was also a substance that, through its consumption, brought many Maori into contact with systems of governance that they otherwise would have had little direct experience of – such as the criminal justice system of the colonial administration, or that of the missionary laws that preceded it. The organisation of these chapters
around various structures of political governance is apposite because the way that alcohol was regarded by each polity determined, to a large extent, the status of alcohol in Rarotongan society.
CHAPTER THREE:
PRE-MISSIONARY RAROTONGA

In this chapter, I provide a brief account of Rarotongan society prior to contact with missionaries in the 1823. This should not be taken to mean that Rarotongan society has always possessed the forms of social organisation described here. Although some of these characteristics of Rarotongan society may have been extant for some time, this account properly refers to Rarotongan history as it stood immediately prior to the arrival of missionaries. A large part is based on R.G. Crocombe’s *Land Tenure in the Cook Islands* (1964).

Alcohol was not used prior to contact with Papa’a (Europeans or non-Polynesians), and so this account does not describe a history of alcohol in Rarotonga. Its main utility is to provide a context for changes and continuities following the arrival of missionaries, and later, the introduction of alcohol. In this regard it is partial. Some of the most prominent changes were political and economic, particularly in regard of the influence of ariki (high chiefs), the distribution of land and title rights, and warfare between various social groups. The state of these prior to missionary contact are briefly mapped in this chapter.

**Early Settlement**

The earliest inhabitants of Rarotonga came from Iva, and were referred to as Mana’une or Tangata ‘enua (Crocombe 1964:8). Initially, rights to land were claimed by discovery and settlement, but in the face of continued immigration by other groups, rights derived from conquest assumed precedence (Crocombe 1964:8,9).

Traditional Maori accounts of ‘the’ Rarotongan past are genealogically constructed, and pay particular attention to ancestors who define rights of precedence. Simultaneously historical and political, they emphasise events and figures directly

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7 Specifically, Rarotongan society prior to 1823 as interpreted in accounts created throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.
8 Of course, partiality is a feature of all histories.
9 The time of first settlement has been variously estimated at 400-500AD (Duff 1969:327) and 900AD (Bellwood 1978:62). Archaeologists have estimated the age of Te Ara Metua (the ancient road, which traces an inland circumference of Rarotonga) at 900-1000 years BP (Duff 1969: 323).
10 Variously identified as Nukuiva, Hiva’oa, and Ra’iatea, all located in French Polynesia (Crocombe 1964:8).
11 Tangata ‘enua lit. “people of the land”.
12 There is no singular account of ‘the’ history of Rarotonga.
relevant to contemporary political organization. Consequently, little is known of the Tangata ‘enua. The first figure of particular (and so, political) significance was Kainuku, who migrated to Rarotonga and established the primacy of land rights by conquest. He was followed by Tangi’ia and Karika, who arrived on the island at around 1200AD. Tangi’ia came from Ra’iatea in the Society Group; Karika from Manu’a in the Samoa Group. Both arrived with a contingent of warriors, and Karika is said to have brought a daughter with him, whom Tangi’ia married prior to arriving at Rarotonga. Tangi’ia and Karika formed an alliance, probably in order to repel an invasion by Tangi’ia’s brother Tutapu, who had pursued Tangi’ia from Tahiti to Rarotonga. There Tangi’ia finally defeated him (Maretu 1911:203).

Kainuku, Tangi’ia, and Karika became the forebears of Rarotonga’s three tribes: Takitumu, Te-Au-o-Tonga (Avarua), and Puaikura (Arorangi). The Rarotongan word for tribe is vaka, and this is also the word given to the three major districts of Rarotonga, each concomitant with one of the three tribes. Political organisation in each vaka demonstrated considerable variation, as described below.

Social Organisation

In Rarotonga, land and social organisation were intimately bound up with one another, and so in many ways it is inappropriate to discuss, for example, ‘politics’ or ‘land tenure’ as discrete analytic phenomena. Rarotongan social organisation was hierarchical, comprised of groups within groups, with each level of hierarchy headed by a different type, or types, of title holder. Within this hierarchy, the distinction of junior (teina) from senior (tuakana) was of particular significance, as it is throughout Polynesia (Goldman 1970). The estimation of relative seniority ranked descent groups,

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13 Compare Siikala (1991:16-18), Sahlins (1985), and Howard (1993:91): “Genealogies are, in essence, family histories, which coincidentally at times are also political histories.”
14 Such estimates, which correlate genealogical accounts with the Gregorian calendar, should be taken with caution. This date was estimated by Percy Smith (in Maretu 1911:202), whose technique has been criticised by later scholars (Simmons 1976; Sissons 1991:53). Smith gathered as many genealogies referring to a specific historical figure as possible, took the mean number of generations between that person and contemporary ancestors, and multiplied by 25 years (the ‘average’ generative age) to arrive at years before present: “The mean number of generations from Tangi’ia to the year 1900, is twenty-six, which would make him to have flourished about the year 1250” (Smith, in Maretu 1911:202).
15 Tangi’ia and Tutapu were the adopted brothers of the chief Pou-te-vananga-roa, of Ra’iatea. The brothers disputed rights to the fruit of a breadfruit tree, which escalated into a conflict that eventually forced Tangi’ia to leave Ra’iatea in search of another place to live (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:1).
16 Vaka is also Maori for canoe. Takitumu was the name of Tangi’ia’s vaka, after which the tribe and the district are named.
17 The treatment of these and other categories as discrete is, of course, problematic with regard to any social organisation.
their members, and relatives of the same sex and generation (teina, for example, referring to the younger brothers or male cousins of a male, tuakana to the older sisters of female cousins of a female).\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Vaka (tribe)}

The largest stable social group was the tribe (or \textit{vaka}), which was ideally comprised of people who could trace their descent to persons who had arrived at Rarotonga in the same canoe (\textit{vaka}). Over time, groups that aligned themselves to a certain tribe became part of that \textit{vaka}, and groups that broke away were regarded as belonging to separate \textit{vaka}. The titular heads of \textit{vaka} were the \textit{ariki}, who were treated with great veneration due to their descent from the gods, and supernatural powers.\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ariki} were descended from the founding ancestors of the tribe, ideally by direct descent through the male line. However, the \textit{vaka} was not the most important social category in Rarotonga (see below). Occasionally matters concerning the entire tribe were discussed at \textit{koutu} (royal courts),\textsuperscript{20} and sometimes war parties were organised on a tribal basis. Although the \textit{ariki} were the titular heads of the tribe, and the lands of the tribe were referred to as ‘lands of the \textit{ariki},’ the \textit{arikis’} rights to land were largely symbolic.\textsuperscript{21} An exception was the extinction of a lineage: when this occurred, the \textit{ariki} could claim rights to that land, and either allocate it to himself or a member of his descent group, hold it for collective use, or allocate it to another descent group. Rights of tribe members were relatively few: they had right of access to tribal land, provided they entered during daylight, kept to appropriate pathways, and were on good terms with the local lineage; they had rights to lands specifically set aside for tribal use, such as \textit{koutu} and \textit{marae} (sacred sites); and they had the right (or rather obligation) to provide labour and produce for the tribe’s feasts. Aid from other groups within a tribe was probably expected in times of conflict, but this was not always forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{18} Compare Mahuika(1992) and Salmond (1991) regarding New Zealand Maori, and Levy (1973:26) regarding Tahiti (\textit{hua ana and teina}).
\textsuperscript{19} “In 1858 I asked a serf why he looked aside when interrogated by Makea. The reply was – ‘Did not my father tell me never to look Makea in the face, lest the regal glance should devour me?’ The angry glance of the high chief was believed to induce that frightful disease, lupus, or cancer of the nose and face” (Gill 1890:629).
\textsuperscript{20} “The koutu is...the seat or royal court of a reigning ariki....It was the special place where all offerings to the ancient gods were first assembled...where all the chiefs and persons of note were buried... where all tribal annual feasts were held....The ariki would ex officio be the head of his particular koutu....It was the property of the tribe, and the ariki as head of the tribe was the trustee...” (Savage, N.D. in Crocombe 1964:39).
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ariki} may refer to chiefs in both singular and plural – the same is true of all Maori nouns, which remain constant whether singular or plural.
Ngati (major lineage)

Ngati were descent groups that occupied sub-districts (or tapere) of the vaka. Rights of membership were dependent on descent and residence. Gilson (1980:7) describes ngati as “ambilateral local descent groups with a strong patrilineal emphasis.” According to Crocombe, prior to the arrival of the missionaries at Rarotonga, primary membership could be claimed of only one ngati at any given time. Primary lineage affiliation was usually established at birth and confirmed at the naming of the child, who became affiliated to one parents’ ngati. Usually, lineage affiliation was to the descent group of the father, although children remained affiliates of the descent groups of both parents as members of kopu tangata (kin group/s).22 Crocombe (1964:28) noted that “while pre-contact instances of tracing through the mother are not uncommon, no pre-contact cases have been noted wherein descent was traced through females for two consecutive generations.” Adoption was also a means by which membership could be acquired, and anyone who could trace descent either patrilineally or matrilineally could claim ngati membership. This was always contingent on residency within the tapere, and continued acceptance by the group (Crocombe 1964:29-30). Regarding adoption in the late 1970s, Baddeley describes that children belonged to the kopu tangata of both of their parents at birth, but were conceptually divided between ‘the side of the father’ (te tua o te metua tane) and ‘the side of the mother’ (te tua o te metua va’ine) (Baddeley 1982:130). Generally, the first-born child belonged to the father’s tua (side), and subsequent children were shared alternately between each parents’ kopu tangata. Ideally, children could only be adopted by the kopu tangata of the tua to which they belonged, although in practice this was not always the case (Baddeley 1982:130).

Tangi’ia is generally credited with establishing Rarotonga’s tapere – blocks of land that spread from the mountains to the coast in a segmented fashion. Tangi’ia also organised the construction of marae at various intervals around the island. Crocombe describes the importance of tapere as follows:

Each tapere of land was associated with a particular descent group which, conquests apart, traced its connexion with that land back through generations of ancestors to founder chiefs who were held in such veneration that they assumed some of the qualities of deities (1964:20).

22 Gill states this case more strongly, however: “Children, unless distinctly adopted into another clan, always follow the father” (1979:6).
Occupants of a given tapere were not necessarily members of the ngati possessed of that territory; the term matakeinanga encompassed all of the people resident within a tapere. Each tapere was allotted to a mata’iapo (chief), a ta’unga (high priest), or an ariki. Mata’iapō were virtually autonomous in their tapere, and each had their ‘own’ marae within the boundaries of the tapere, where most religious activity took place. Religious activity in general appears to have been centred at the level of the major lineage, as only a few minor lineages possessed their own marae. In Te-Au-o-Tonga (Avarua), which had a different structure of titles from other vaka, some rangatira (sub-chiefs) were also allotted tapere, and in this regard held positions similar to the mata’iapō of Takitumu and Puaikura (Arorangi). Most tapere were named after either the founding mata’iapō or some event with which he was associated. All ngati were named after their founding ancestor, prefixed by the word ngati. Crocombe refers to descent groups that occupied tapere as ‘major’ lineages; most of these were further subdivided into smaller, ‘minor’ lineages, which were also called ngati.

Mata’iapō were responsible for the allocation of land within tapere to minor lineages, although after this was done, the rights of the major lineage were limited. The major lineage retained symbolic rights over the land, the right to re-allocate land should the minor lineage die out, rights to participate in matters affecting the tapere as a whole, and rights to use the lagoon.

**Ngati (minor lineage)**

Most major lineages were divided into smaller groups, also called ngati, which traced their descent to an eponymous ancestor. These groups also tended toward patrilineal descent – often the eponymous ancestor was the real or classificatory younger brother of the head of the major lineage. Crocombe suggests that the establishment of the minor lineage was a means through which a mata’iapō could safeguard his title, by allocating potential rivals responsibilities at a lower level (Crocombe 1964:30). Ariki and mata’iapō were also the heads of minor lineages.

There were two categories of minor lineage head (excluding those who already held the title of ariki or mata’iapō): komono and rangatira. Both belonged to the

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23 Some ta’unga fulfilled this function in addition to their religious roles (Crocombe 1964:10).
24 Mata’iapō were representatives of their respective ngati.
25 Komono were the deputies of mata’iapō.
heads of minor lineages under both ariki and mata’iapo. In some large minor lineages, further subdivision occurred, with smaller segments headed by kiato, who were generally junior relatives to the ariki. The core members of minor lineages lived in one or more hamlets within the tapere. The minor lineage was responsible for organising entertainment, transfer of gifts, and provision of feasts during important events such as births, deaths, and marriages of persons of rank. Organization of events concerning an ariki or mata’iapo, however, occurred at the level of the major lineage.

**Uanga (extended family)**

Extended families shared a common progenitor who had died some generations earlier, although occasionally this person was still alive. This progenitor was referred to as the metua (elder). Uanga were essentially residential groups, focussed around a household (kainga tangata or nga tu‘are tangata). Each household could accommodate three or four generations of people, and was represented by an elder (also known as metua) who was ideally the senior, although not necessarily the eldest, male. Each ariki, mata’iapo, komono and rangatira was metua in their own household. A household lived on the lands from which it subsisted, and sometimes had rights to specific portions of land located elsewhere within the tapere. The territorial boundaries of uanga were more flexible than those of major and minor lineages; and as household composition changed, more or less land was allocated for the subsistence needs of each uanga.

Within uanga, distinction was made between puna (nuclear families) and mapu (unmarried youth). A puna consisted of a husband, wife, and their born or adopted children. If a man had more than one wife, each union of man – woman – child was considered a separate puna. Metua was the term used to denote parents, and was further differentiated by father (metua tane), mother (metua va’ine), natural parents (metua ‘anau), and ‘feeding’ or adoptive parents (metua ‘angai). Children (tamariki) were differentiated in a like manner (tamariki ‘anau and tamariki ‘angai) (Baddeley 1982). Puna and mapu appear to have been insignificant regarding production and exchange prior to the arrival of missionaries, with most of this activity taking place at the level of the uanga (Crocombe 1964).

**Tribal Variations**

The hierarchy of titled persons in each of the three vaka varied. The form of hierarchy described above (see Crocombe 1964) relates particularly to Takitumu and
Puaikura. The structure of titular heads within Te-Au-o-Tonga vaka was markedly different to that of Takitumu and Puaikura. In light of this, it is worth briefly reviewing variations between the vaka.

Figure II: Map of Rarotonga

Takitumu (Ngatangi’ia)

The Takitumu district encompasses the south-eastern portion of Rarotonga, stretching approximately from Matavera village in the east to Rutaki passage in the south (figure II). Takitumu has two ariki (high chiefs or titular heads), Pa Ariki and Kainuku Ariki. Pa was adopted by Tangi’ia, but was a son of Iro, a renowned Tahitian chief. As such, Pa was of higher rank than Tangi’ia, and so became ariki after Tangi’ia died. Consequently, the Pa Ariki line of chiefs trace their descent to Pa. The Kainuku Ariki line of high chiefs trace their descent to the Kainuku people, who were resident on Rarotonga before the arrival of Tangi’ia, and subsequently formed an alliance with him. As noted by Crocombe (1964:10), the Kainuku people were afforded a minority role in the affairs of Takitumu, but retained their own territories and identity as a separate group within the vaka.
Some or all of the men who arrived with Tangi’ia became mata’iapo, and each was allocated a tapere in which to establish his own ngati. The title of komono (deputy) was created after Tangi’ia settled in Rarotonga; titleholders became spokespersons and deputies to specific mata’iapo. Below komono were rangatira, who were the heads of minor lineages.

**Te-Au-o-Tonga (Avarua)**

Te-Au-o-Tonga stretches from the north-eastern border of the Takitumu vaka, and around to Nikao (Black Rock) in the north-west. Te-Au-o-Tonga trace their descent to Karika, who formed an alliance with Tangi’ia, and arrived in Rarotonga at approximately the same time as him. When the missionaries arrived in 1823, the Karika and Tangi’ia lines had become discrete political entities, but apparently this division was of recent origin (Crocombe 1964:11).

Makea was the ariki title of Te-Au-o-Tonga. This vaka was directly descended from the original Makea, who was either the son of Karika, or his grandson by marriage of Tangi’ia and Karika’s daughter, Te-mokoroa-ki-aitu (Maretu 1911:202). There were no mata’iapo or komono in Te-Au-o-Tonga. Immediately below the ariki in rank were the rangatira, who were generally appointed from the junior ranks of the ariki family, and traced their descent to Karika through a holder of the Makea Ariki title. Rangatira in Te-Au-o-Tonga were the titular heads of tapere, much as mata’iapo were in Takitumu.

During the 18th century the Makea people attained their position by defeating two ariki who had previously occupied the tapere located in the Takuva’ine and Avatiu valleys. Crocombe suggests that the peculiar structure of authority in this vaka is best understood by regarding Te-Au-o-Tonga as an over-grown tapere, that absorbed tapere contiguous with it by means of conquest (1964:12). These tapere were incorporated into an existing structure of titles under the ariki, and as a result rangatira came to occupy roles as tapere heads. The ariki secured support from the vaka’s two most powerful families by taking wives from each. He bestowed an ariki title on each of his eldest sons by them, creating three ariki titles in the district. This distribution of titles was

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26 In the early missionary period however, some mata’iapo from Takitumu, who occupied lands adjacent to Te-Au-o-Tonga, realigned themselves with Te-Au-o-Tonga.
politically unstable, and would likely have led to more conflict but for the arrival of the missionaries, when this structure was crystallised.  

**Puaikura (Arorangi)**

The titular structure of Puaikura was essentially similar to Takitumu, although there was only one *ariki* title immediately prior to the arrival of the missionaries. This was the Tinomana title, and traced descent through Matoro, a son of Tangi’ia, who was born before he arrived at Rarotonga. The people of Puaikura belonged to Takitumu until a chief from that *vaka*, Rongo’oe, broke away and became the progenitor of the Tinomana title. Oral accounts indicate that Rongo’oe was banished from Takitumu for his aggressive and despotic behaviour, and thereafter formed the people of Puaikura into an autonomous *vaka*. At the time of missionary contact Puaikura had suffered a number of defeats in battle, and its people had retreated inland to the mountains where they were able to defend themselves more easily.

In Rarotonga, when family members were killed, those who survived would entreat their relatives and descendants to exact revenge on the perpetrators. Revenge could be satisfied by killing any of the perpetrator’s family, either of the current generation, or of those to follow. Tattoos were used as mnemonic devices to record such wrongs over many generations, awaiting a time when circumstances might allow revenge to be exacted.

Oral accounts indicate that Puaikura had killed and eaten people of Takitumu and Te-Au-o-Tonga during a time of famine, when they put themselves under the stewardship of Puaikura. In the context of reciprocity described above, the historical misdeeds of Puaikura were integral to their later decline, as this extract from Maretu, from Takitumu, illustrates:

> I myself have seen my father’s human oven. There were four of Ngati-Kati killed by Ngati-Manea at Arorangi, and four of Ngati-uinga were payment for those four, including a lot of children. I have actually seen cannibalism, for some of our family gave us flesh to eat from that oven, and instructed us never to forget that revenge

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27 There is considerable controversy surrounding these titles to the present day. In 2000/2001, there were at least two contenders for the title of Makea Nui Ariki (Makea Pini Ariki) – the debate on who has sufficient rights to this title has been deadlock for some time, and the Makea Palace (the residence of the title holder) has been unoccupied for a number of years.

28 Rongo’oe “commenced the killing of men….and likewise the eating of them; then evil and trouble spread throughout the land” (Te Aia 1893:275). Maretu (1911:207) states that *ariki* and chiefs were not permitted by the gods to eat human flesh; this was a practice ideally restricted to warriors.
was to be taken by us. In consequence the people of Arorangi were chased to the mountains, and it was whilst they were there living in their fort that the Word of God was brought to the land, which saved them from revenge (1911:206).

Kava

Prior to the arrival of European visitors, the people of Rarotonga did not produce or consume alcoholic beverages. In common with the residents of many Polynesian islands, kava (*Piper methysticum*) was consumed as an intoxicating beverage in Rarotonga. Literature on pre-missionary kava use is sparse, mainly consisting of incidental references to the plant or the beverage. These accounts allow some general observations on the use and significance of kava in pre-missionary Rarotonga.

Kava was prepared from the rootstock of *Piper methysticum*. It was masticated or grated prior to infusion with water, forming an intoxicating beverage. Older accounts of kava preparation universally describe mastication as the means of beverage preparation (Gill 1880:144; Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1920:117,122; Savage 1962:96; Maretu 1983:44-45), although some later accounts suggest that grating may also have been employed (Buck 1944:18; Mokoroa 1984:73). Most accounts indicate that women, and occasionally young men, were responsible for preparing the beverage, and all indicate that the beverage was consumed solely by men (Gill 1880; Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1920; Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1921; Buck 1944; Savage 1962; Maretu 1983; Mokoroa 1984). This accords with practices of kava preparation and consumption throughout Polynesia and Melanesia, which are often differentiated by rank, gender and/or age, and are typically salient to the categories of people found in society (Bott 1972; Brunton 1989:64-65; Lebot, Merlin et al. 1992:119-120; Turner 1995:98-99).

The consumption of kava was an important component of religious activity in pre-missionary Rarotonga. In particular, kava was associated with *karakia* (prayers, incantations and spells), and communication with gods and the spirits of ancestors. Drinking kava also signified the investiture or inculcation of a person into a chiefly title, or marked symbolic acknowledgment of expertise in the supernatural (Gill 1880; Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1920; Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1921; Sissons 1989). It was a valued exchange item at important events. Feast foods were pork, chicken, kava, root crops and bananas. Of these, the pre-eminent medium of economic and social exchange was (and is) the

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29 In the latter case, however, it is probable that notions of hygiene following contact with *Papa’a* (European or, more generally, non-Maori people) and the introduction of Christianity had ‘sanitised’ memories (and practices) of kava preparation.
pig, or *puaka*. Kava and pigs were of primary significance during ritual ceremonies, and were associated with *ta’unga*, chiefs, and warriors. Accounts describing ceremonies and ritual events explicitly mention pigs and kava, whereas other foods are only occasionally cited (Te Ariki-Tara-Are 1920:126; Gill 1979:13; Maretu 1983:33,45,51).

The consumption of kava appears not to have been solely associated with formal, ritual events. After missionary contact, groups of Maori would consume kava in drinking circles with little accompanying ceremony (Savage 1962; Mokoroa 1984), and prior to missionary contact, kava was consumed in relatively informal circumstances, principally by warriors (Buck 1944; Maretu 1983; Siikala 1991, regarding Ma’ouke). Kava and pigs also appear to have possessed symbolic equivalence with human flesh. In this regard, kava shared some of the symbolic associations with death found in other Pacific societies (Brunton 1989; Lebot, Merlin et al. 1992). *Ariki* were restricted from consuming human flesh (Maretu 1911), and to them, kava and pigs were offered as ritual replacements. Warriors were subject to no such restriction, and Buck (1944:19) states that human flesh was regarded as a fitting accompaniment to kava.

The word *kava*, in Rarotongan, has a number of meanings: the first referred to *P. methysticum*, and the beverage prepared from its roots. *Kava* is also the word used for alcohol.30 Another meaning of *kava* is “sour, bitter, acrid, stinging, venomous” (also Savage 1962:96; Buse and Taringa 1995:165). *Kona* was (and is) a term meaning drunk or poisoned, or stupefied by poisoning or intoxication. Maretu (1983:38) uses the term *urikava*, literally meaning “under the influence of kava”, to describe the people of Takitumu and Te-Au-o-Tonga when they put themselves under the stewardship of Puaikura (referred to above). *Urakava* is translated in this context as equivalent to ‘insane’, ‘dazed’ or ‘possessed’ (Crocombe, in Maretu 1983:38).31 The terminology associated with kava and drunkenness in Rarotonga correlates with the terms and connotations associated with kava in Eastern Polynesia. Lebot, Merlin & Lindstrom’s (1992:131) speculations about the possible cognates of ‘kona’ in Tonga (meaning

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31 These meanings also link kava to notions of the supernatural – very often what is called ‘mental illness’ in Western medical traditions was categorised as *maki tupapaku* – “spirit illness” (these categories were not identical, however). It was (and occasionally, is) thought that a spirit had either possessed the afflicted person, or caused the illness, due to some transgression of *tapu* or other such reason (Lange 1982:376; Baddeley 1984). *Urakava* also shares meanings similar to *sakau* in Chuuk, where *sakau* is the Pohnpeian name for *kava* (Marshall 2003).
‘drunk’), the Tikopean ‘kona’ (meaning bitter) and the Tannese ‘akona’ (meaning ‘to poison’) are drawn together in Rarotongan, where *kona* encompasses all of these meanings.

The drinking circles that developed when Rarotongans (and other peoples of the Cook Islands) began to consume alcohol reflect some of the characteristic forms of Polynesian kava circles – a master of ceremonies controlling the distribution of alcohol to the group of drinkers, a single cup filled and quaffed by the drinkers in turn, and so on (Bott 1972; Marshall 1976; Brunton 1989; Lebot, Merlin et al. 1992; Pollock 1995; Turner 1995; Young 1995). These drinking circles will be discussed in chapters to follow, but for now it is sufficient to note the likelihood that these drinking rituals were modelled, at least in part, on those pertaining to *P. methysticum* in ‘the’ pre-missionary period.32

Lebot, Merlin and Lindstrom have stated that “kava acts to transport imbibers to the realm of ancestors and gods” (1992:7). According to them, everywhere that people used kava, it served as a means of religious inspiration. In Rarotonga, *P. methysticum* was an important component of religious activity, and complimentary evidence from other islands of the Cook group indicate that kava was associated with the evocation of gods, ancestors, and spirits (Williams 1838; Gill 1880; Gill 1979). According to Firth (1970), in Polynesian societies, new knowledge was thought not to be the product of individual creativity – rather, it was the product of inspiration. New knowledge was derived from ancestors, and as such clever people were those who were most open to communications from their ancestors (Firth 1970). Dreams, and drinking kava, were altered states in which these people were most open to inspiration – hence, the association of kava and the learned men, the *ta’unga*.

Kava was linked to chiefly authority as an exchange good in other islands of the Pacific, particularly in Fiji, where Turner (1995:102) notes that *P. methysticum* is a compulsory gift at any meeting with people of rank.33 Kava is also essential to the reparation of relationships and the resolution of arguments in Manawata (Papua New Guinea) (Haddon 1912) and Wallis and Futuna (Pollock 1995:145). A metonymic relationship between kava, rank, and the supernatural here applies, as chiefs and persons of rank are typically those most imbued with supernatural powers, and with *tapu*

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32 It is probable that practices from the Society Islands also influenced drinking practices, as it was from there that methods for the domestic production of alcohol were introduced. Alcohol consumption practices in the Society Islands were also modelled on forms of drinking associated with *P. methysticum*.
33 See also Pollock (1995:6) for discussion of the political importance of kava in the Pacific.
(sacredness, or ‘potential for power’) and mana (power, authority and/or influence) derived from descent, the deeds of their ancestors, and their own accomplishments (Firth 1970; Goldman 1970:9; Shirres 1982:29; Shore 1989). Reverend William W. Gill notes:

The mythical account of the origin of the regal name Makea is this: “Atea married Papa. To them were born Rongo and Tane; also Ruenuku, Tu-the-Great (Tu-nui), Tangaroa, Teuira [the lightning], and Aa [the cyclone]. The sign of royalty being the (bowl of) intoxicating pepper, shouts ever following (the king)” (Gill 1890:629).

Kava was also symbolically linked with warriors, and subsequently, with cannibalism. It appears that, particularly regarding the ‘informal’ use of kava, death and kava were closely intertwined.

One of the most interesting aspects of kava use in Rarotonga, from a modern perspective, is the speed with which its use was discontinued. In 1823, the Tahitian missionary, Papeiha, began the process of converting Rarotongans to Christianity, and by the time his superior, John Williams, returned in 1825, most Rarotongans claimed to be Christian. Many pre-missionary practices had changed in this short period; warfare was abandoned, as was cannibalism, idolatry (at least among the majority of people from Puaikura and Te-Au-o-Tonga), and the widespread use of kava, both as a ceremonial beverage and as an exchange item.

Two factors contributed to the rapid abandonment of kava in Rarotonga. First, the missionaries understood its importance, both to indigenous religious activities and the political influence of the chiefs (although, as I have mentioned above, these were not discrete phenomena), and regarded the use of kava as a barrier to the Christianisation of Rarotonga; hence, they were antagonistic toward its use. Second, the symbolic association of warfare, warriors, and cannibalism with kava probably meant that when the former practices were abandoned, the latter also diminished in importance, and so in practice.

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34 Ironically, it appears that Papeiha employed methods of religious conversion that held a great deal in common with Rarotongan practices of war and retribution.

35 While this was certainly not the universal policy of Christian missions in the Pacific, Protestant Christian missionaries often regarded kava use as undesirable, particularly because of its significance to indigenous religious practice (O'Brien 1971:55; Marshall and Marshall 1979:230).
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE MISSIONARY PERIOD

What has he [God] to offer? Will he give a shark, a punupunu, eutare, paraara [species of fish] or perhaps a whale? Is it food [your god will offer]?36

The Word of God was introduced to Rarotonga by Polynesian teachers who were, technically, under the auspice of European missionaries from the London Missionary Society. The London Missionary Society (hereafter shortened to LMS) was formed in London in 1795, and comprised of representatives from all faiths except Roman Catholic. The LMS undertook, as one of its main objectives, the evangelisation of the Pacific. It was relatively unsuccessful until around 1810, when it started to make progress in Tahiti (Maretu 1983:18). A Ra’iatean teacher named Papeiha was landed on Rarotonga by Reverend John Williams in 1823. Papeiha was soon joined by Tiberio, also of Ra’iatea, and together they instigated profound changes in the organisation of social life. Within two years they had convinced ariki to destroy their idols and marae, and had brought a large proportion of the population to live as an aggregate community in Avarua – a radical break from traditional patterns of residence, as Rarotongans had previously lived in dispersed hamlets within their own tapere (Crocombe 1964:65). These changes in religious and residential organisation were accompanied by changes in the distribution of political and economic influence. Although this period is often characterised as that of the ‘missionary’ (Beaglehole 1957; Crocombe 1964; Gilson 1980; Maretu 1983), it was also a period in which the ariki of Rarotonga achieved a degree of influence unmatched in earlier, or later, times.

This was also when alcohol was introduced to Rarotonga. Initially, the distribution of alcohol correlated closely with the distribution of political and economic influence. Thus, people of importance were uniquely privileged in their capacity to acquire alcohol (generally, ariki and other chiefs), or to prevent it from being acquired (the missionaries). Alcohol marked a site of contestation between chiefs, judges, missionaries, and later, the iti tangata (‘little people’), which in a number of respects reflected with struggles taking place between these persons generally. For the missionaries, the widespread use of alcohol was palpable evidence of their pre-eminent, and then diminishing, authority; for ariki, opposition to alcohol signalled their

allegiance to the missionaries, and access to alcohol their privileged position in external trade; for the *iti tangata*, drinking was both a popular pastime and a financial burden (in the form of fines) through which their subordination to *ariki*, judges, and missionaries was exemplified. These qualities of alcohol, and the context in which they occurred, are the focus of this chapter.

**Pre-Missionary Contact**

The LMS missionaries were not the first Papa’a with whom Rarotongans had contact. Some historians speculate that the Bounty called on Rarotonga in 1789, and local histories suggest Rarotonga’s first orange seeds were obtained from this vessel. Although a number of European vessels sighted Rarotonga in the early 19th century, no European set foot on the island until Captain Goodenough of the *Cumberland* visited Rarotonga in 1814, and traded goods in exchange for nono (*Morinda citrifolia*) wood (Maude and Crocombe 1962). Goodenough’s visit to Rarotonga was disastrous, culminating in the death of five of his crew (including his female consort) and at least one Rarotongan, with tensions brought to a head after the visitors stole some coconuts that belonged to Makea (Maude and Crocombe 1962:42-43; Maretu 1983:44-45). But by a strange twist of events, Goodenough and his crew probably facilitated the introduction of Christianity to Rarotonga, as New Zealand Maori and Tahitian crew members recounted stories about the Christian god, which thereafter circulated around the island (Beaglehole 1957:19; Maretu 1983:42). These stories were embellished when a woman, who was either a Tahitian who arrived with Goodenough (Maude and Crocombe 1962:53), or a Rarotongan returned from Tahiti (Beaglehole 1957:19), brought news of Jehovah and Jesus Christ. According to Reverend John Williams:

> The king, Makea, called one of his children “Tehovah” (Jehovah), and another “Teeteetry” (Jesus Christ). An uncle of the king, whom we hope is at this time a truly good man, erected an altar to Jehovah and Jesus Christ, and to it persons

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37 Rarotonga also has a long history of inter-island contact. It appears that for some time prior to the arrival of the LMS missionaries, however, there had been little contact between the people of Rarotonga and other inhabitants Pacific islands, including those of the Cook group.

38 The trees that grew from these seeds eventually provided fruit that formed the primary ingredient of ‘orange rum’ some years later. Details regarding the Bounty are far from certain. After referring Captain Bligh’s log books, scholars have suggested that the Bounty may have visited Rarotonga, as he found Aitutaki (also of the Southern Cook Islands) on 11 April 1789, seventeen days before his crew mutinied (Beaglehole 1957:12; Maude and Crocombe 1962:37; Maretu 1983:46). Some oral traditions also indicate that a large ship visited the island, although Maretu (1983:46) places the arrival of this ship after Goodenough.

39 At least one of the crew, armed with muskets, assisted Takitumu (Ngatangi’ia) and Te-Au-o-Tonga (Avarua) in their war against Puaikura (Arorangi) (Maretu 1983:46).
afflicted with all manner of diseases were brought to be healed; and so great was
the reputation which this marae obtained, that the power of Jehovah and Jesus
Christ became great in the estimation of the people (1838:107).

If this account is not apocryphal, it is possible that Rarotongans’ contact with
outside peoples prior to missionary contact disposed them favourably toward the
introduction of the Christian god.

**Initial Missionary Contact**

One of the most successful, and conspicuous, missionaries of the early 19th
century was the Reverend John Williams, whose efforts facilitated the introduction
LMS Christianity to islands throughout the Pacific. In Tahiti, Williams formed an
opinion that the LMS would be best served employing Polynesian missionaries to
evangelise the Pacific, and one of Williams’ most successful ‘native teachers’ was
Papeiha, who was from Ra’aiatea. Papeiha’s first missionary experience was at Aitutaki,
in the southern group of the Cook Islands. The LMS oversaw his progress from Tahiti,
but by 1823 Williams was keen to introduce Christianity (and missionaries) to
Rarotonga and the Cook Islands. Williams did not know the geographical position of
Rarotonga, although he was sure it existed. On Aitutaki, he found a number of
Rarotongans, some of whom had been kidnapped by Goodenough as he left Rarotonga
(Maude and Crocombe 1962:45,46). Williams collected Papeiha, Vaineino and his
wife, and the Rarotongans (now Christian converts) while visiting Aitutaki, and later
obtained directions to Rarotonga from Rongomatane, *ariki* of Atiu, who knew
approximate bearings from oral traditions (Williams 1823; Rere 1980:21). Also onboard
was Tamatoa, *ariki* of Aitutaki, and convert to Christianity.

The initial Rarotongan contact by the LMS expedition was turbulent. Papeiha,
Vaineino and his wife, the Rarotongans from Aitutaki, and Tamatoa went ashore to

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40 Captain Cook originally named what is now the Southern Cook Islands the Hervey Islands – the group
was later renamed in honour of the memory of Captain Cook by a Russian cartographer.
41 Gilson (1980:4) states that Captain Cook sighted Rarotonga in September or October 1813, and that
another vessel sighted the island in 1814. Crocombe (in Maretu 1983:42) writes that Goodenough was
given information by a Captain Walker that sandalwood was to be found on Rarotonga, although
apparently Goodenough and his crew were the first to set foot on the island.
42 Two of these Rarotongans, Ta’iri and Teiro, had arrived by canoe some years earlier. None of the
Rarotongans were able to provide directions to Rarotonga.
43 Another missionary to Aitutaki from French Polynesia.
44 As dispossessed persons, with no hereditary rights or relatives in Aitutaki, the Rarotongans were
possessed of few rights and little status. Throughout Polynesia, such persons quickly aligned themselves
to Christian missions, as their status would often improve by doing so.
address the people at Avarua, where Tamatoa described how his gods, Rongomatane and Tangaroa, had been burned on Aitutaki, and how the Christian god had been adopted there. They were greeted with some scepticism, but Makea Tinirau agreed to take them under his protection, so that the Christian teachers’ safety was assured (Williams 1823). Makea Tinirau toured the Endeavour later that day, and Papeiha, Vaineino and the Rarotongans stayed on the island with him that night. Although the safety of the male missionaries was guaranteed by Makea Tinirau, apparently the safety of Vaineino’s wife was not, for Makea Tekao attempted to sleep with her that night and a scuffle ensued, which was defused only by the intervention of Tepaeru, one of the Rarotongans from Aitutaki, and a classificatory sister of Makea Tinirau. The next day, Williams decided against remaining on the island, and made preparations to set sail. Papeiha insisted that he would prefer to remain in Rarotonga, and as the ship set sail he returned in a canoe, with just a few texts and scriptures. The Rarotongans from Aitutaki also remained (Rere 1980:21-28; Maretu 1983:55-56).

Social changes in Rarotonga, 1823-1827

Four months after landing on Rarotonga, Papeiha was joined by another Ra’iatean missionary, Tiberio, and together they proved adept at introducing at least some of the practices associated with Pacific evangelisation. Beaglehole (1957) recounts a number of factors that proved conducive to Papeiha’s evangelisation of both Aitutaki and Rarotonga. Perhaps the most important was the state of conflict which enveloped the island, and was often expressed in acts of war between rival tribes and lineages:

Tinomana, to put the matter bluntly, decided to ask for instruction from Papeiha because that course must have seemed to him the only possible way in which he

45 According to Maretu, this included all the ariki of Rarotonga (in Maretu 1983:55).
46 Maretu (1983:56), see quote at the beginning of this chapter.
47 Makea Tinirau held the senior Makea title (Makea Pini or Makea Nui), and Makea Tekao was junior to him (holding the Makea Karika title).
48 Maretu (1983:56) states that Papeiha, Vaineino, and his wife stayed with Makea Tekao, although Rere (Rere 1980:28) says that only Vaineino and his wife stayed with Makea Tekao – Papeiha spent the night with Makea Tinirau. Often “Makea” is the only term used in the texts, and probably refers to Makea Tinirau, who was senior.
49 There is an interesting correlate with this event, which may (or may not) be significant. Maretu (1983:54-5) mentions a man, Tika-i-te-ope, who prophesied the arrival of a ship and new God before the arrival of the missionaries. He was regarded as demented by the Rarotongans, as he eschewed his own gods, and threw rocks at people. He also said that the ship would bring food and useful articles, and that god would share out a shipload of women for the people to ravish. Perhaps Makea Tekao had this in mind as he made advances on Vaineino’s wife.
50 According to some versions of this event, Papeiha swam ashore.
51 Of course, it is impossible to estimate the extent to which this characterisation of pre-missionary Rarotonga was a product of post-missionary views on ‘heathen’ society.
could save his own life and those of his defeated people not killed in previous wars. Other chiefs followed Tinomana, both defeated and conquering, the former because of Tinomana’s reasoning, the latter because they probably felt they could not afford to miss teaching that might open the door to the possession of the secrets of the new faith’s superiority (Beaglehole 1957:21).

As recently as 1822, Rarotongans had been at war with each other. Pa Te Pou (of Takitumu / Ngatangi’ia) had conquered Te-Au-o-Tonga and Puaikura in battle, but subsequently returned their lands, which was regarded as a magnanimous gesture and probably contributed significantly to his mana (Gilson 1980:23). Puaikura, under Tinomana Enuarurutini, was in an extremely precarious position, as this vaka had been decimated through conflict with Te-Au-o-Tonga and Takitumu. Extended periods of peace had prevailed at various times in the history of Rarotonga,52 but this was not the case in the early 19th century. Warfare was frequent prior to the missionaries’ arrival, with rival groups competing for land and resources, and motivated by obligations to requite the deaths of relatives, recent and ancient (Maretu 1911:206). In this context, with the possibility of conflict, leaders of descent groups were pressed to secure the loyalty of related groups. Ariki, for example, were dependent on the support of mata’iapo (or rangatira), as the latter enjoyed autonomy and authority over their respective tapere, subject to their aptitude for leadership. As a consequence of war, and due to the constant threat that they be intercepted and slain by warriors of rival groups, Rarotongans rarely travelled far from their native tapere. Soon after Papeiha’s settlement on Rarotonga, warfare – at least in the form practiced prior to his arrival – had been abandoned. There are indications that the constant state of conflict caused a great deal of anxiety for many Rarotongans, and most viewed the opportunity to eschew warfare favourably. A number of commentators, contemporary and otherwise, remarked that the conclusion of warfare was one of the most positive products of Christianity – many Rarotongans indicated that they had lived in fear prior to the arrival of the mission (Gill 1880:68).

In addition, a number of the techniques employed by Papeiha (and later, Tiberio) proved effective.53 First among these was a focus on winning the support of high-status individuals. Papeiha secured the protection of Makea Tinirau immediately upon his

52 Crocombe (1964:13-14) notes that there was “ten generations of relative peace” following the defeat of Tutapu by Tangi’ia and Karika (see page 25), followed by spasmodic warfare.  
53 These evangelical ‘techniques’ were not restricted to the Cook Islands.
arrival, and continued to enjoy his favour and that of his successor, Makea Pori, even though the latter did not formally convert to Christianity for some time. Papeiha’s initial alignment with Makea Tinirau was probably facilitated by Tepaeru, Makea Tinirau’s classificatory sister, who returned from Aitutaki (Maretu 1983:46). The support and protection of ariki allowed Papeiha to accompany the ta’unga to their maraes and debate inconsistencies in their beliefs, such as the failure of the gods of Tahiti and Aitutaki to destroy Christian converts who burnt their idols and maraes, and the (apparently) unanswered question of where the first woman came from (Beaglehole 1957:14; Gilson 1980:21). The focus on persons of high status was politically pragmatic for reasons other than guarantee of protection – the conversion of a chief simultaneously represented the conversion of his entire lineage, who were declared (or ordered to become) Christians (Beaglehole 1957:23). The high status that Papeiha and Rio eventually achieved was confirmed when they married daughters of Tinomana and Makea Pori (Gilson 1980:24; Maretu 1983:73).

Another important ‘technical’ aspect of missionary evangelisation was the promise of peace to converts, accompanied by promises of food, material wealth, and prosperity. These were substantiated when vessels arrived with supplies for the mission – ariki and other persons of high status were the main beneficiaries.

As various chiefs agreed to join the new religion, Papeiha ensured that the principal symbol of allegiance was the burning of idols and maraes, which was simultaneously dramatic and a demonstration of the inability of Rarotongan gods to visit retribution on transgressors. The destruction of sacred sites and objects was doubly significant, because after insulting the gods in such a manner, many Rarotongans were probably reluctant to risk their gods’ vengeance by returning to them (Beaglehole 1957:21,22; Maretu 1983:61,62).

An equally dramatic change was the establishment of a single settlement in Avarua, where newly aligned chiefs and their followers domiciled. Avarua was under the jurisdiction of Makea, and he allocated separate plots of land for the people of each tapere to live on. This strategy proved effective for Papeiha and Tiberio, because it ensured regular access to their newly-formed flock, and simultaneously isolated

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54 Makea Pori’s unwillingness to convert to Christianity may indicate that he regarded the establishment of the mission on Rarotonga as primarily of political and economic importance.
55 This was also the case in Ma’uke, in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands (Williams 1838:76).
56 “In precontact Rarotonga the two principal ways in which alliances were made were marriage and adoption, that is, the exchange of women and children” (Baddeley 1982:123).
Christians from sceptical neighbours and kinfolk, among whom they were previously dispersed in traditional patterns of land settlement (Crocombe 1964:64,66; Gilson 1980:22). Furthermore, disquiet had developed among chiefs who had not become Christians, and there was talk of imminent war – so it was prudent for the dispersed Christians to be brought together and find strength in numbers.

Papeiha and Tiberio also encouraged their congregations to engage in practical activities, which initially centred on the construction of churches and later, a house for themselves.57 In addition to the material merits of these endeavours, the organisation of labour may have been intended to encourage a group identity in Christian converts. If so, it was only partially successful, as the political alignments of various groups continually resurfaced, particularly between members of vaka who only a few years before had been at war with one another (Crocombe 1964:65,66). These tensions were compounded (or perhaps exemplified) by the political struggles of ariki. Makea and his supporters entertained the idea that he should be declared the king of Rarotonga, and so be entitled to collect atinga (gifts or tributes in the form of food, labour, or goods) from people who were presently living on his land.58 This suggestion was unacceptable to Pa Ariki, who had recently asserted his mana over Te-Au-o-Tonga by means of war, and was unwilling to acknowledge the ascendancy of Makea in this (or any) matter (Gilson 1980:22).59

Papeiha and Tiberio became very powerful figures in Rarotonga between 1823 and 1827, and a number of commentators have described their ‘rule’ in Rarotonga as despotic (Morrell 1960:280; Crocombe, in Maretu 1983:19-20). Elizabeth Pitman (wife of the missionary Charles Pitman) commented that “they usurped so much authority that they were the objects of fear more than love” (quoted in Maretu 1983:19). In many respects the role they assumed was equivalent to that of the ariki – as was that of the European missionaries who followed. Evidently Papeiha and Tiberio were keen to retain their autonomy on Rarotonga. They told traders and missionaries that Rarotonga was poor in resources and could not support the needs of Europeans – missionary or otherwise – and actively concealed pigs and foods from visitors to confirm this

57 After these buildings were completed, the ariki built houses for themselves as well – but this time, of course, intertribal co-operation was not necessary. The houses of the ariki far surpassed the missionary homestead in grandeur.

58 That is, in the newly established mission settlement.

59 Gilson (1980:24) suggests that Pa Ariki took up residence in Avarua to try and gain a more secure hold over the people of Tupapa – and succeeded in doing so after his conversion. Thus it appears that the motivations of most of the ariki in this matter were primarily political, rather than religious.
impression (Maretu 1983:20). Despite their efforts, the first European missionary was brought to Rarotonga in 1827, and the second phase of missionisation began.

The European Missionaries, 1827-1888

The arrival of John Williams with Charles and Elizabeth Pitman in 1827 was regarded by the *ariki* of Arorangi (Puaikura) and Ngatangi’ia (Takitumu) as an opportune moment to return to their own *vaka* and establish separate settlements there, each under the guidance of their own missionary. After some discussion, the Pitmans accompanied Pa Ariki and Kainuku to Ngatangi’ia, while John Williams and Papeiha remained in Avarua. Reverend Buzacott and his wife arrived the next year and took control of the mission in Avarua, and Papeiha and Tinomana established another settlement in Arorangi. Williams left the island later that year (Maretu 1983:87). The return of Puaikura and Takitumu to their territories did not signal a return to traditional patterns of land occupation, and new villages were constructed following the model established in Avarua. The European missionaries also objected to the practice of extended families living together: they insisted each house be occupied by one nuclear family, and that parents, sons and daughters sleep in separate rooms, to avoid the temptation of ‘immorality’ (Crocombe 1964:67).

The missionaries were scathing of Papeiha and Tiberio’s accomplishments. Pitman described the period from 1823-1827 as ‘worthless’, and Buzacott later wrote:

The great majority of the chiefs and people had renounced idolatry, and expressed their readiness to be instructed in the ‘Evangalia a Jesu’. Hope grew strong and bright in the hearts of all the Christian labourers; but still, not one conversion had taken place; not one Rarotongan mind had been opened to the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Idolatrous practices had been laid aside; the adults were fairly clothed, and ‘the reign of peace and good will’ had begun in the island. These were wonderful changes in the short space of two years, and augured well for the future. But with these the natives seemed satisfied, and could not comprehend what was meant by ‘being born again’ by ‘becoming new creatures in Jesus Christ’. They were eager to learn the novel arts of civilization, but seemed to have no conception of their need of regeneration by the Holy Ghost (Buzacott 1866:31,32).

In fact, the changes wrought were profound. Although the hierarchical structure of Rarotongan society remained recognisable, albeit with the inclusion of missionaries as a
new class of ‘chiefs’, the distribution of power was altered significantly. The influence of *mata‘iapo, rangatira*, and particularly warriors had diminished with the advent of peace in the island. *Ta‘unga* were also deprived of much of their religious authority, although they appear to have remained influential in their role as advisors to the *ariki* (Maretu 1983:96).

**The Code of Law**

The end of warfare on Rarotonga was not the only change to political, religious, and economic practices. Prior to missionisation, restrictions on ‘antisocial’ activities were intimately tied to beliefs and practices surrounding religious activity, and the potential for social transgression was limited by *tapu*, and the specific character of lineage gods. Papeiha, Tiberio and the European missionaries had demonstrated to Rarotongans that the efficacy of their gods was, at least, limited by the power of the Jehovah, and at most, that their gods had no power over people whatsoever. For Christian Rarotongans, an important source of ‘legal’ sanction against certain activities had effectively disappeared. Christianity did not provide a moral replacement for the religious sanctions it had removed, relying as it did on self-regulation and conscious awareness of sin – which, according to the accounts of European missionaries, Rarotongans did not yet possess. The social regulation of behaviour on Rarotonga was not exclusively based on supernatural sanction, but the missionaries considered pre-missionary standards of behaviour and methods of punishment inappropriate, and made it clear to Rarotongans that these practices would have to be abandoned. *Ariki* and other chiefs soon complained about the waywardness of the people, and desired guidance to establish Christian standards of behaviour:

It was evident to the chiefs that none of their sanguinary modes of punishment were in accordance with the merciful spirit of the religion they now professed; and wishing that their civil and judicial polity should be so, they very naturally applied to us for advice…. we gave the chiefs clearly to understand that our objects were purely of a spiritual character, under existing circumstances it was as much a duty to direct them in the formation of a code of laws as it was to instruct them in the

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60 In time the missionaries also sought to discourage *ariki* from consulting their *ta‘unga*.

61 This does not mean that practices and beliefs surrounding *tapu* and *mana* had disappeared, of course, only in relative degree. There are many instances, persisting until the present day, of the importance of the considerable *tapu* and *mana* of possessed by chiefly persons, the power of *ta‘unga* in performing magic and controlling spirits, and indeed in the existence of ghost / spirits, or *tupapaku* – who are the cause of *maki tupapaku*, spiritual illnesses (Lange 1982:51-59; Baddeley 1984).

62 Of which ‘guilt’ is a major component.
principles of Christianity itself; for, in thus acting, we were simply advising them
to apply those principles to social life, and to substitute them for the ferocity and
revenge by which all classes were previously influenced (Williams 1838:128,129).

The philosophy of the LMS in Britain was that ideally, wherever the LMS gained
a following, its representatives should only intervene in religious and spiritual matters,
and leave secular matters to native governance (Gilson 1980:27). While this philosophy
may have appeared sound from the ‘civilised’ isolation of 19th century England, in
Pacific societies there was no comparable demarcation of ‘secular’ from ‘religious’
practice. In Rarotonga, authority relied on supernatural sanction, and persons of
authority were also persons of religious (and genealogical) significance.63 Thus, the
LMS was obliged to maintain existing structures of political authority while
simultaneously removing the religious sanction on which it was, in part, based – an
inherently ambiguous endeavour. The missionaries were well aware of this ambiguity,
but nevertheless supported existing hierarchies.

Laws were formulated in 1827, derived by Williams from those previously
established for Ra’iatea. He presented a modified version to a meeting of *ariki*,
*mata’iapo* and *rangatira*, and they agreed upon a legal code after a great deal of debate
(Gilson 1980:28). Initially these laws were directed against fornication and offences
relating to marriage, theft, tattooing, breaking the public peace (by working on the
Sabbath, for example), the consumption of raw fish64 and kava (*P. methysticum*)
(Beaglehole 1957:57). Administration of the laws centred on the authority of *ariki*. The
principal *ariki* appointed a judge over each of the island’s districts, and originally, two
police officers per district to enforce the new laws. The failure of the LMS ideal of
secular and religious segregation failed even at this early stage – the judges and police
were exclusively members of Christian congregations, and most were deacons of the
Church. Moreover, the *ariki* appointed trusted allies, and so exercised a great deal of
influence over administration of the law. Punishments and fines were introduced.
Proceeds were thereafter distributed between the *ariki*, judges, and police, comprising
gratuity for their respective efforts, and also boosting their personal income
substantially. Originally, the missionaries had intended that those accused of crimes
should stand trial by jury, but this was quickly abandoned. Jury members were guided

63 See pages 25 and 35.
64 The missionaries often confused cultural practice with Christianity. This is also evident in the
imposition of European standards of dress, against those of ‘immodest’ Rarotongans.
exclusively by the outcome they thought the *ariki* desired, and kinship obligations toward either those accused or those prosecuting rendered any show of impartiality farcical. After the jury system was discarded, court procedure usually comprised prosecution by the police, and summary punishment by the judge. With a few exceptions (usually where discovery by one of the missionaries made avoidance impossible), the *ariki* were immune from prosecution and punishment.

Some time later, in 1894, the British Resident of Rarotonga, Mr FJ Moss, summarised the administration of the law in Rarotonga during the missionary period:

They [the missionaries] formed a code of laws, but did not attempt to embody in them any of the Maori usages with reference to land or inheritance. The new code related to persons, and chiefly to moral offences or breaches of the Church law. A Judge was appointed for each division of the island, and trial by jury decreed; but, so far as I can learn, never carried out. The Judges were assisted by a numerous body of police appointed by the Ariki, enrolled in the records of the Church, and consisting only of Church members. This police, irresponsible and under no direct control, incessantly spied upon and harassed the people. The fines that they could extract from delinquents formed their sole pay, and were divided at stated intervals between the Ariki, the Judge, and the police…. The most severe public floggings and confinement in wells dug in the ground were common punishments for offences which the new law had created, but which public sentiment had long regarded no offence at all (Anonymous 1900:253).

Beaglehole (1957:37) suggests that Rarotongan principles regarding sexual behaviour and the possession of goods contrasted starkly with the introduced Christian morality. A permissive attitude toward premarital and extra-marital sex perplexed the missionaries – apparently Rarotongans were selective of which aspects of everyday life they decided to eschew or retain, and those they retained were not easily discouraged. Excommunication from the Church was another means of controlling ‘immorality’ (Beaglehole 1957:57; Maretu 1983:191,194). Prosecution in courts of law, frequently accompanied by excommunication from the Church, became an important means by which aspirations to power, and desires for revenge, could be exacted on rivals by the new legal ‘profession’. Nevertheless, Mrs Chalmers complained some years later that the social repercussions of prosecution were not severe enough to discourage disobedience:
When anyone has been proved to have been guilty of such offences [drunkenness, adultery, and theft], they are put out of Church membership, and are fined by the judges; but there it stops. After the fine is paid, they are received as formerly. Real shame for such sin they do not feel, nor can it easily be impressed upon them that such deeds are truly great sins in God’s sight (in Beaglehole 1957:97).

Originally, as indicated above, there were just two police appointed in each district. Over time the number of police increased markedly, and at the height of Reverend Buzacott’s ‘reign’ in Rarotonga (1828-1857), there were upwards of 50 police in each district, or 1 for every 10 to 20 persons (Beaglehole 1957:57).

The introduction of the legal code almost led to open rebellion by non-Christian Rarotongans. Their influence had been undermined by the end of warfare, and many of them had suffered the humiliation of trial in court by ariki and their followers:

The introduction of Christianity amongst any people is speedily followed by the establishment of a code of laws. Crime meets with certain punishment. This enthronement of law and justice immediately brings about a great many changes in the relative position, influence, and resources of many native chiefs. Old warriors, who have been the terror of a whole settlement, feel their importance lessened, find themselves unable “to levy blackmail on the unoffending and helpless” and become very discontented. At Rarotonga a numerous party of this description grew secretly into strength, and at length determined to crush the new religion and the new code of laws. Instinctively they ascribed the law to the religion, and hence directed all their fury against the missionaries, and all who favoured their views and work (Buzacott 1866:39-40, italics in original).

Despite Buzacott’s characterisation of this “numerous party” as anti-Christian, it appears they were primarily incensed by the administrators of the new laws – the ariki, judges, and police – and the missionaries, as allies of these people, were implicated by association. In missionary accounts great significance was attached to the arson of Ngatangi’ia church in 1829 as an example of ‘heathen’ attacks on Christian missionaries. In fact, the arson was committed on the house of the Chief Judge, Tupe, and thereafter spread to the church, and so was probably an incidental repercussion (although no doubt welcomed). Williams later recalled that Tupe, as Chief Judge, was not well liked, and that people who passed his house as it burned were heard to say “‘Eitoa kia ka – serves him right, let him burn!” (in Gill 1880:81). Clearly, tensions...
were mounting between Christian and non-Christian Rarotongans, as more people became dissatisfied with social and political changes. Events may well have come to a head as dissident chiefs conspired against the *ariki*, but for the arrival of disease to the island the next year.

**Acts of God**

Another upheaval occurred some years after the introduction of the code of laws – in the form of dysentery. This disease was brought by ship from Tahiti in 1830. During the epidemic many people died, and even the European missionaries Buzacott and Pitman were bed-ridden. They attempted to explain this catastrophe as a manifestation of Jehovah’s displeasure at ‘heathenism’ still extant on the island, but it appears that most non-Christian Rarotongans were sceptical of this claim – the disease had affected Christian and non-Christian alike, after all (Beaglehole 1957:34-37). The next year a hurricane devastated the island, leading to widespread famine, yet the non-Christian faction still resisted interpreting the event as tangible evidence of Jehovah’s displeasure. The year after that, however, another epidemic swept over the island – this time carried to Rarotonga by a member of the anti-missionary party who returned from Tongatabu. Disease struck the anti-missionary party first, killing many of its leaders and supporters and weakening organised resistance to Christianity. This time the attribution to divine vengeance was widely accepted, and the anti-mission movement effectively ended (Buzacott 1866:46).

Estimates put the population of Rarotonga at this time around 7,000 (Beaglehole 1957:45; Crocombe 1964:63; Gilson 1980:37). Outbreaks of disease throughout the following decades decimated the population of Rarotonga:}

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65 Buzacott reported that there was a conspiracy to kill the *ariki* and missionaries around this time, and a group of men assembled for this purpose, and “had not discord entered their ranks, they could have easily effected this purpose” – the source of the discord being that none were willing to volunteer for the task of killing Makea (Buzacott 1866:44).
66 Beaglehole (1957:34) estimated 800-900 people; Williams (1838:220) 600; Maretu (1983:85) 1,600.
67 The Christian / anti-Christian distinction (and variations upon it) is here retained as the most convenient way to differentiate these two factions. The only other defining characteristic of the ‘Christian’ group was that all of Rarotonga’s *ariki* belonged to it (although not all were confirmed Christians).
68 The ill-fated Ngatangi’ia church, recently rebuilt after it was burned down in 1829, was once destroyed by this hurricane (Maretu 1983:83).
69 Population figures are derived from missionary records and correspondence, and as such are estimates of demographic changes only.
Table I: Population of Rarotonga, 1827-1872.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>7000a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>909a</td>
<td>199a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>746a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>273a</td>
<td>87a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>442a</td>
<td>100a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>220a</td>
<td>73a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>166a</td>
<td>95a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>280a</td>
<td>131a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>168a</td>
<td>66a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>2800c</td>
<td>119a</td>
<td>93a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>159a</td>
<td>95a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>171a</td>
<td>152a</td>
<td>Mumpsbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>119a</td>
<td>70a</td>
<td>Influenza b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>83a</td>
<td>87a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>91a</td>
<td>92a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>2374a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>88a</td>
<td>80a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>2400a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1856a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>1936b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Population decline was primarily due to mortality from epidemic disease, although from the 1840s migration from Rarotonga contributed also. Population increases were largely due to the migration of people, mainly men, from the outer islands of the Cook group. Not until the early 1900s was a consistent surplus of births over deaths recorded in Rarotonga.71

The rapid population decline had a marked effect on the influence of *ariki* and chiefs of higher status. In ‘the’ pre-missionary period, it had been the prerogative of *ariki* to allocate and distribute the lands of lineages that had died out, and this occurrence increased markedly with the rise in mortality. When a *tapere* or a subdivision of a *tapere* became vacant, *ariki* were quick to grant titles, either to themselves or trusted members of their descent group. Over time, *ariki* were even able to acquire or extinguish titles from lineages that were not extinct, but politically weakened by attrition of disease. With armed resistance no longer a viable course of action, the ability of a descent group to resist the will of an *ariki* was severely compromised. As the population diminished, and the pool of chiefly candidates

70 Of, or resembling, tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands.
71 Depopulation followed European exploration and colonisation throughout the Pacific (Rivers 1922; Jolly 1998; Stuart 2002).
decreased, individuals were also able to assume multiple titles. Persons of high status were also able to acquire titles in different vaka; previously this did not occur. Women also began to acquire chiefly titles – previously only men held these, although chiefly descent was occasionally traced through the maternal line. The appearance of titled women was largely due to religious and demographic factors, although the characteristics of key individuals no doubt played a significant role. Perhaps due to the low proportion of women to men in Rarotonga, they became more valued as members of society, and consequently their political influence increased (Beaglehole 1957). The Church also contributed to the status of women, by opposing practices they regarded as ‘degrading’, and allowing them Church membership, which facilitated their participation in what were essentially political affairs. Finally, the titular status of women was increased by the fact that, through attrition and disease, there was a diminished pool of suitable male candidates for chiefly titles. The first female ariki to be invested in Rarotonga was Makea Te Vaerua in 1845; she was also the wife of Tiberio, one of the original Ra’iatean Christian teachers. Makea Te Vaerua was a strong supporter of the church and the favoured candidate of the missionaries. Once this precedent was set, a number of women held ariki titles, although it was still uncommon for women to possess lesser chiefly titles (Crocombe 1964:90-94).

Economy Matters

Don’t provoke trouble, then we’ll get more cloth.

Prior to the arrival of the missionaries, productive surpluses were stored against the possibility of famine, or for use in feasts and ceremonial activities. On the whole, Rarotongans relied on subsistence production, and had little incentive to accumulate large surpluses of food or material goods (Crocombe 1964:85; see also Goldman 1970:476). According to Crocombe (1964:85), trade was irrelevant prior to missionary contact, as everyday goods could be produced within each tapere, and no single tapere held a monopoly over the production of any good. Persons with important titles were

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72 Often, genealogies of such descent later omitted the reference to the woman, and traced descent directly from a grandfather to his grandson (adopted or otherwise).

73 There was another, male candidate for the title – Daniela (later, Makea Daniela). He was a drinker of kava maori (orange beer) however, and for this reason, fell out of favour with the church.

able to exercise their right of atinga over people living on lineage lands, and this was also a disincentive to produce conspicuous surpluses.

In the early years of the mission, the procurement of labour for the construction of buildings was the most significant form of atinga. Ariki organised this labour, first for the construction of churches, and later for houses for themselves and the missionaries. Later, the projects of missionaries and ariki grew more ambitious, and some Rarotongans complained of the demands put upon them by the aspirations of missionaries and chiefs. Later, atinga was delivered in the form of produce to chiefs and ariki, which in the context of emerging trade with foreign vessels, contributed to the material wealth of title holders (Crocombe 1964:88,89).

Trade with Europeans commenced at first contact, as encounters with the Bounty, Cumberland, and other vessels attest. Early trade encounters probably disposed Rarotongans to later trade, and provided motivation to accommodate the missionaries, who would provide them with more Papa’a goods. This quickly proved to be the case: in 1825, the missionary, Mr Bourne visited the mission to check on its progress, and brought with him axes and mattocks that Rarotongans were able to ‘buy’. In four days he baptised 1,000 people, who had been rounded up by ‘police’ and compelled to attend the ceremony (Maretu 1983:67).

In 1831, following a hurricane which resulted in famine, Reverend Buzacott resolved to introduce crops that were more resistant to extreme weather conditions. The missionaries favoured sweet potato, so Buzacott prepared a plot and encouraged Rarotongans to do likewise. Apparently they were not keen on the idea, as they did not find the taste of sweet potato very appealing. But some months later a whaler arrived, and Buzacott traded his potatoes for coloured calico, inspiring a “perfect mania for

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75 Pitman (in Beaglehole 1957:31), partly in reference to the demands of atinga: “One of the Chiefs in private conversation said to me, and I could scarcely refrain from weeping, that they were more happy in their heathenish state, than since the Word of God came to them, alluding to the manner in which they had been treated by the native missionaries”
76 Mr Bourne was also a passenger on board the Endeavour, the vessel that delivered Papeiha to Rarotonga in 1823.
77 Maretu in translation uses the term ‘buy’ in his account of early missionary enterprise – it is likely that food was used in exchange for these items.
78 Davies (in Newbury 1961:320) states that Bourne baptised 194 adults and 102 children. These baptisms were later criticised by the Pitmans – again, on the grounds that these people did not the Christian implications of the ceremony, and thus were nominal rather than actual Christians (Maretu 1983:67). During this visit Papeiha and Rio told Bourne that there were not adequate supplies of food to accommodate a European missionary, and that the people were fractious and ill tempered – despite the fact that recently a feast of hundreds of pigs had been prepared to celebrate the opening of the Avana church (Maretu 1983:67).
79 Buzacott also encouraged the construction of new houses, and European-style clothing, on the same grounds (Buzacott 1866:84).
planting potatoes" (Buzacott 1866:84). Thus, Rarotongans began to engage in economic activity that was largely focused on foreign trade, in contrast to earlier, subsistence-focused production. Ironically, sweet potato proved to be vulnerable to salt water. As such, it was a poor substitute for taro as a ‘hurricane’ crop, so alternate crops were introduced and/or encouraged, such as arrowroot, cassava, rice, and coffee.

The missionaries also began to pay wages, in the form of cloth, tools and other goods, to descent or family groups. Goods were given to the ariki, who distributed them to the people. This practice contributed to the influence and material wealth of the ariki (who decided the quantities distributed and to whom) because often the ariki retained a large share for themselves. Rarotongan pastors were also paid in cloth. As more people joined the Church, the missionaries could not provide sufficient cloth for their congregations. They favoured obtaining cotton by trade with visiting ships, but LMS headquarters insisted that Rarotongans be protected from the ‘evil’ influence of non-Christian European traders. Subsequently, an expert was brought to Rarotonga to teach the people how to grow and spin cotton, to replace their bark cloth garments (Gilson 1980:26,36). This cloth was rough and labour intensive, and compared poorly with the manufactured cloth whalers brought with them for trade. By 1840, this industry was abandoned, as servants and workers refused to be paid in locally produced cloth, and no one on the island was prepared to buy it – in particular, weavers complained of being paid in cloth that they had produced (Buzacott 1866:92,93; Beaglehole 1957:67; Gilson 1980:40). Despite this failure, in later years raw cotton became an important trade commodity, along with coconut oil and coffee.

Initially, visits by foreign vessels were infrequent, occurring every six to eight months (Gill 1880:251). Between 1830 and 1860 American whaling peaked in the Pacific, however, and Rarotonga became a regular supply stop for whalers from 1835. On average, fifty to sixty vessels would arrive per year, and sometimes as many as seventy-five, most trading goods for fresh produce. By this time trade had come under the jurisdiction of ariki, and to a lesser extent, mata’iapo (Gilson 1980:40,41).

By the 1840s the ariki had established market houses, one in each of the three vaka, through which all offshore trade was conducted. Exchange prices were controlled

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80 During severe cyclones, sea water may wash up onto the low lying areas of Rarotonga – the salt water would enter the taro crops, thereby destroying them.
81 Coffee was an ambiguous crop, with regard to the missionaries’ stated aims; possibly, it was justified on the grounds that coffee was regarded as an appetite-suppressant – reference to 19th century European ideas about coffee may be found in Goodman (1995:134), for example.
82 Marshall and Marshall (1979) also note the presence of American whalers in the Pacific.
through the market houses, and by centralising the conduct of trade the *ariki* also secured wealth and influence to themselves. The missionaries supported a policy of European exclusion, and foreign crews had to abide by certain restrictions: they were not permitted to spend the night on Rarotonga, or take women aboard, on threat of boycott. Typically, the captain of a visiting vessel would go to the market house and exchange goods (such as iron and manufactured cloth) for “potatoes, yams, bananas, pumpkins, coconuts, hogs, fowls etc.” which would be conveyed to the ship by a store-master (Gill 1880:251; Beaglehole 1957:90).

With missionary encouragement, and under control of the appropriate chiefs, village and lineage cash crops were planted. Produce from these crops was channelled to the mission to aid with its upkeep, or traded through the market houses. Imported cloth was in high demand, and was distributed among the people, but scarce commodities and money tended to accumulate to the *ariki* and *mata’iapo* (Gilson 1980:54). Produce was collected by lesser chiefs from their lineages, passed to their respective *mata’iapo*, who in turn presented it to the *ariki* to contribute to the mission.

The frequency and form of tributes changed markedly, as lesser chiefs and lineages were asked for goods and produce for export, in addition to those normally demanded for traditional ceremonies and activities. Commerce was firmly established on the island by 1845, and the mission was required to pay cash for labour, as Rarotongans no longer accepted cloth or other such goods as payment (Lovett 1912:116; Gilson 1980:48,49).

Chiefs of high status were not the only ones to profit by trade – Reverend Pitman and his wife also engaged in private enterprise. European residents complained the missionaries would overcharge Rarotongans for cloth, telling them that it cost as much to produce in England as they charged in Rarotonga. Mrs Pitman operated a lucrative business in credit, and when the accounts were wiped upon their retirement in 1854, the Pitmans were owed money in Arorangi, Avarua, Titikaveka, and Ngatangi’ia (Maretu 1983:190). According to Beaglehole (1957:77,78), the Pitmans’ entrepreneurial

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83 An ordinance had to be passed to ensure that the chiefs distributed cloth to the people, as they initially kept a large proportion for themselves.
84 Mission contributions were comprised of arrowroot.
85 In 1877, upon completion of repairs to a church, the deacon refused to open the doors until all debts on the repairs had been paid – although this may have been partly a stalling tactic, to prevent the popular Reverend Chalmers from leaving the island (Lovett 1912:116). However, in 1878, W.W. Gill wrote that “The contact of foreigners with these islanders has driven the commercial spirit into the very heart of the people, so that in too many instances the crown of life dims in their vision before earthly reward. Thus the small repairs of a church which formerly would have been cheerfully done without the expectation of payment must now be paid for” (in Gilson 1980:48).
enterprise annoyed the other missionaries, and their public arguments about this issue contributed to a decline in church attendance.

Increase in trade was accompanied by an increase in the use and popularity of money. By 1839, when Reverend Williams returned to Rarotonga with the first Rarotongan translation of the New Testament, these texts were first distributed to those that were able to make immediate payment of three shillings; next, to those able to provide an equivalent quantity of dried bananas; and finally to those who promised to pay the amount at a later date (Maretu 1983:94). Similarly, money had become an important component of the legal system, as the following examples of fines (taken from Beaglehole 1957:57) demonstrate: 86

Table II: Examples of ‘Blue Laws’ Offences and Fines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Fine 1</th>
<th>Fine 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crying over a dead woman 87</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$1 cash plus trade goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fornication</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$1 cash plus trade goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Inappropriate] Village conduct</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$1 cash plus trade goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another consequence of increased foreign contact was that many young men sought employment as crew of visiting ships. By the 1850s, up to 100 young men were leaving the island annually (Beaglehole 1957:71). Ariki prohibited Rarotongans from leaving on foreign ships, and were somewhat successful, but emigration remained a constant concern for chiefs and missionaries alike. Young people were not the only ones to leave the island. By the 1880s overseas trips were popular among ariki, who also began to travel around the island in horse-drawn carriages. Tinned food became popular, as did European-style dresses and parasols for women, and uniforms for men (Crocombe 1964:86; Gilson 1980:51). The increased wealth and influence of ariki meant they were less dependent on the missionaries for personal prestige.

Land

Issues surrounding the allocation and custodianship of land were (and are) of critical importance in Rarotonga. The arrival of the LMS, and the whalers and traders who followed them, contributed to profound changes in the relationship of Rarotongans to land, which favoured Rarotongans of higher social status. The missionaries were integral to this process, as it was their policy to accept an ariki’s claim as paramount, so that the rights of other claimants were often disregarded. The detrimental effect of this

86 The principal currency of Rarotonga in the latter half of the 19th century was the Chilean dollar.
87 To whom the ‘criminal’ was not related (taken as evidence of adultery/fornication).
policy on low-status Rarotongans was accentuated by the advent of epidemic disease and the abolishment of warfare (Crocombe 1964:77).88

Another development was the arrival of large numbers of people who had no hereditary claim to land on the island. Originally these people were the missionaries, but later included people from the outer islands of the Cook group, and occasional non-Polynesian traders.89 It was the prerogative of ariki to admit and accommodate strangers, and by and large people from the Cook group were allowed tenure by the ariki. Ariki were able to charge non-Polynesian residents rent for land leases, and this soon became an important source of revenue to them. The population of non-Polynesian residents was relatively small until around 1865, largely because the missionaries did not favour such people to stay on the island. From 1865 this population gradually increased, until in the 1880s there were upwards of seventy non-Polynesian residents.

Kava Papa’a and Kava Maori

The introduction and distribution of alcohol was closely correlated with the distribution of political and economic influence. The first alcohol was named ‘kava papa’a’ – ‘European’ alcohol. It was obtained by trade with whalers and merchant vessels, and generally took the form of spirits (principally rum) and wine. Later, techniques for brewing alcohol were introduced from Tahiti, and locally produced alcohol became known as ‘kava maori’ – maori alcohol.

The missionaries were opposed to all alcohol consumption, with the exception of communion wine. During early missionary settlement, bans on alcohol were not necessary, as alcohol was not available. Nevertheless, missionaries feared the disruptive effects of alcohol, particularly given the experience of the LMS in Tahiti, and laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol were introduced.90

Alcohol was introduced primarily through trade, and thus was a phenomenon bound up with the 19th century global economy. Kava papa’a was (and to some extent, still is) a scarce and precious good, and as such found its way into the hands of those chiefs of high status – principally ariki – who controlled offshore trade on the island.

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88 Crocombe (Crocombe 1964:90,91) notes that Land Court investigations of leases by ariki prior to 1899 found that in 20 cases the ariki had no proprietary right to the land, and in 13 cases the ariki was one right-holder among others – in the remaining six cases ownership was awarded solely to the ariki. However, of these six, the ariki was found to be the unambiguous owner of the land in just one case.

89 Although “European” is a more convenient gloss, by the latter half of the 19th century the non-Polynesian resident population of Rarotonga included some Chinese and Black American traders.

90 The date of the introduction of these laws is unclear, but certainly occurred before 1839, and pre-dated any widespread use of alcohol.
Early accounts of missionaries and their ‘native teachers’ (principally Maretu and Papeiha) refer exclusively to the drunkenness of chiefs prior to the advent of *kava maori* on Rarotonga, with no mention of drunkenness amongst the ‘common’ people. In the early 1830s Makea Pori visited the Society Islands (Gilson 1980:26) and presumably became aware of the substance during this visit. Makea Pori died in 1839 and was succeeded by Makea Davida, who was “very knowledgeable about the Word of God and well versed in hymn singing, but he became addicted to alcohol which he first experienced in Tahiti” (Maretu 1983:95). Beaglehole (1957:76) states that Makea Davida died around 1845 due to alcoholic excess, although Maretu (1983:95) contends that Makea Davida died at sea. It was widely acknowledged that Davida was partial to *kava papa’a*, and this ‘addiction’ undermined the Christian message of the missionaries, who were staunchly opposed to it. The political position of the *ariki*, that made them essentially immune to prosecution by the law, excused them from outright deferral to the missionaries – so long as their misdemeanours were not observed in public places, or by the missionaries, they were free to do as they pleased.

After Makea Davida died, the missionaries supported Rio’s wife, Te Vaerua, as contender to the Makea Ariki title, instead of her brother, Daniela. Te Vaerua was a teetotaller, and loyal to the Church, and so was preferable to Daniela, who was known to drink *kava papa’a*. Subsequently, Makea Te Vaerua was appointed as *ariki*, and so was the first woman to hold an *ariki* title, which would normally have been bestowed upon her brother (Crocombe 1964:89). More women acquired *ariki* titles over the coming years, until in 1882, four of five *ariki* were women.

In 1845, the American whaler *Tacitus* was wrecked on Rarotonga, and the crew’s behaviour set a bad example, according to the missionaries. Moreover, the captain of the vessel sold a 36-gallon barrel of rum to one of the chiefs, which caused the missionaries much consternation (Beaglehole 1957:71). The imminent threat of alcohol was becoming ever more urgent:

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91 Most of the missionary accounts of life in Rarotonga focus primarily on the chiefs. This is no doubt due to the fact that the missionaries were largely dependent on the support of the *ariki*, and so it suited their purposes to actively support the incumbent hierarchy – consequently, their stories are usually ones revolving around the lives of themselves and the *ariki* of Rarotonga. Nevertheless, when alcohol become more widespread on the island, missionary accounts were replete with references to drinking, regardless of the social status of the drinkers. Given the moral imperative against alcohol, it seems unlikely that any use of this substance would be ignored by the missionaries.

92 This difference in accounts may be due to a misreading of the Maretu manuscript by Beaglehole, as it had not been translated at the time of his publication.

93 The church was not integral to the appointment of all women (or men) to *ariki* titles – Makea Takau (of the Karika line) was Makea Te Vaerua’s classificatory daughter, but did not favour the mission.
That with deepest concern we record the clandestine introduction of New England Rum having been purchased from Captain McClure of the George, an American Whaler off the island, April 1845. While we are happy to find that orders have been given by those in authority, to pour the said barrel into the sea, and that a strong public feeling has been expressed against its introduction, yet we have much reason to fear that as temptation increases among the people, and Captains are disposed to make it an article of barter, it will become a trend, of no ordinary character, to our stations and lead to results as awful as those over which we mourn among the Society Group. That, deeply impressed with these views and feelings, we continue to exhort the churches and the people against its use and steadily to maintain the existing laws which prohibit its introduction (Minutes of Brethren, in Beaglehole 1957:75-76).

If public feeling (inspired by missionaries or otherwise) was against alcohol, in private some of the chiefs continued to acquire kava papa’a from merchants. For the most part, importation of alcohol was controlled by the missionaries, and alcohol acquired by ariki and chiefs was distributed only to people they could trust not to betray them. Alcohol remained a substance restricted to persons of influence and prestige.

The limited distribution of alcohol ended when brewing techniques were introduced from Tahiti in 1851. The exact mode of introduction was unclear, even as it occurred, but there can be no doubt the people took to alcohol with considerable vigour:

… a party of ungodly young men came from Tahiti, and secretly taught some of the natives of Rarotonga how to mix and ferment orange juice, so as to make ‘orange rum’. This being prohibited by the law of the land, the parties detected were fined. For some eight months the right and power of law were sharply contended with by those who wished to introduce drunkenness and disorder (Gill 1880:253).

Some of the wild young men had been to the Tahitian Islands, where they had learnt to make what the natives call orange rum – the juice of the orange in a state of fermentation, which is highly intoxicating. Drunkenness, a new vice for Rarotonga, made its appearance in almost every part of the island simultaneously, and required the strong arm of the law to quell it…. These very young men, who were taken away by police in a state of intoxication, to be confined in ‘durance vile’, to prevent their injuring each other in their drunken bouts, are now in church, changed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind (Gill 1880:265).
Alcohol was destined to occupy a pre-eminent position in the missionaries’ catalogue of sins, and from the 1850s correspondence and records were rarely complete without some reference to ‘orange rum’. Coincidentally, the influence of missionaries waned, and although they were still an important political force, church numbers began to fluctuate, with occasional bouts of renewed interest.

Young men were the most conspicuous consumers of kava maori, but some ariki and high-ranked Rarotongans also drank locally-brewed alcohol. William Gill expelled Makea Daniela and members of the Ekelasia (church organisation) from the Church when they refused to give up alcohol and went to live in Tupapa. Maretu was sent by Gill to Tupapa to retrieve the ariki:

Makea therefore lived permanently at Tupapa where the youths of Avarua, Matavera and Ngatangi’ia assembled to drink maori beer…. Putangi and I therefore went to Tupapa. He called out, “Go away.”

“Is that beer there?” I asked

“It is. How did you know?”

“From you, because you intentionally left the village and the missionary. I only know about your intentions [the implication being that he had good intentions], but I didn’t know you had regressed into stupid behaviour. You were chosen as the ariki, but what you are doing will only turn you into a silly boy. Why don’t you follow in the footsteps of your sister [Makea Te Vaerua]? You will become a ‘bad head’” (Maretu 1983:191).

Makea Davida subsequently apologised to the missionary and returned to Avarua village, where he was readmitted to church.

By 1857 the Pitmans and Buzacotts retired and departed from the island, and the only European missionaries to remain were William Gill, and Buzacott’s German replacement, Reverend Krause. When Krause arrived in 1857, “two thirds of the young men of Rarotonga were drunkards and there were no young men in the Church”

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94 Makea Daniela then held the title of Makea Karika, a less influential title than the Makea Nui title, for which he had been passed over in preference of his sister, Makea Te Vaerua. He contested the Makea Karika title with Maretu’s father, Tuaivi – the dispute ended only when the title was conferred upon the former Makea Karika’s son (Makea Pa), thus neither Daniela or Tuaivi came to possess this title.

95 Makea Daniela’s residence in Tupapa was interpreted by the missionaries and Maretu as motivated by his desire to drink alcohol. However, it is also possible that he took up residence there to register his disappointment at not being conferred the Makea Nui title, which in former times he might have expected to assume after the death of his brother (Makea Davida) (Maretu 1983:191).

96 Compare Levy, of Tahiti: “There was… a woman from one of the other villages in Huahine who was described to me as having “a bad head,” upo’o ‘ino, one of the terms for mental derangement” (1973:405).
(Krause, in Beaglehole 1957:94). To the missionaries, the use of alcohol by Rarotongans was a dramatic and tangible act that exemplified non-adherence to the mission. Possibly, some of the drinkers regarded their conspicuous consumption of alcohol as a demonstration of disenchantment as well. Maretu described drinkers of alcohol at this time as displaying “contemptuous arrogance” (Maretu 1983:196), which in the context of missionary standards, probably meant that they drank alcohol freely, and did not heed the admonitions of the missionaries. It is unlikely that many of these drinkers considered themselves ‘lapsed’ Christians, however, let alone ‘lapsed’ Christians demonstrating their disenchantment by an act of rebellion. While alcohol consumption was the most dramatic symbol of disenchantment with the Church, at least to missionary eyes, it was by no means the sole factor in the diminution of Church influence. As previously noted, public arguments between the Pitmans and the other European missionaries had damaged the reputation of the Mission. More importantly, the high chiefs, and to a lesser extent untitled Rarotongans, accrued personal wealth, and along with it, a greater degree of autonomy from the missionaries. The ariki-controlled merchant stores had been replaced by general trading stores in the 1860s, so people of lower status had limited access to foreign trade, and consequently, more money. As whaling in the Pacific increased and more foreign vessels visited Rarotonga, it was increasingly apparent that the material prosperity of Europeans was not confined to those who were Christian – Reverend Krause was troubled in this period by a Captain Irvine, who took up residence in 1862, successfully engaged in trade, and encouraged the people not to give to the Church, insisting that the practice was a “sheer waste” of money and goods (Gilson 1980:43).

The legal code was a source of frustration to many Maori, and to some European residents. Two of the latter, Turner and Chare, charged that the execution of the law was cruel, and it was interpreted one way for Europeans, and another way for Rarotongans. The latter of these criticisms was certainly true for alcohol, as Krause introduced laws which prohibited alcohol to all Rarotongans, yet permitted Europeans three bottles of alcohol, provided they did not sell any to Maori (Maretu 1983:194).

97 Beaglehole (1957) suggests that drinking was adopted by Rarotongans as a way to release themselves of the restrictive controls of the mission, and indulge in older patterns of sexual activity.
98 Turner and Chare recounted one incident where a woman convicted of fornication was tied by her wrist to a large log for three months (in Beaglehole 1957:60). Punishments for adultery for women included: 1) cutting their hair short, and 2) lowering them into a dry well for several days on small rations. For men, flogging was regarded as sufficient punishment (Beaglehole 1957:62). Earlier in the mission, a woman murdered her husband, and Mr Williams prevailed on the people not to take her life – instead, she had the word “murderer” tattooed across her face, and was exiled to Tahiti (Martin 1981:126).
By the 1860s, Rarotongans were returning from mission settlements to their own lands, and drinking ‘bush beer’ was becoming more popular; despite that, church attendance remained high (Gilson 1980:42). Large numbers of young people were expelled from the church after they were discovered drinking – in 1859, from the Ngatangi’ia Church alone, twenty-eight young people were expelled for this reason. Reverend Krause was not a popular missionary, and the Church suffered as a result. He was replaced in 1867 by James Chalmers, under whom the Church in Rarotonga underwent a revival of sorts. Chalmers was concerned at the incidence of alcohol consumption on the island, and strongly opposed to its use. His resolve was tested soon after he arrived; remarkably, Krause had prepared a proposition for consideration by ariki and mata’iapo, that restrictive alcohol laws should be abolished, and that alcohol should be landed on the island, subject to a heavy tax, with sale controlled by the issue of licenses. Perhaps his failure to control alcohol consumption had weakened his resolve in this matter, particularly under the pressure of diminishing Church attendance. The chiefs were in favour of this change to the law, and a meeting was held just days after Krause departed, to ratify the new law:

I went to the meeting. There sat all the chiefs and great men with a number of foreigners. I felt that a trial of strength was at hand. All were assembled in full expectation of the promulgation of the new law, and the foreigners were all ready to take out licenses. The parliament was opened by prayer. The chief judge of the Avarua district [Manarangi] laid the matter before the neighbouring chiefs, and only asked them for their assent. He sat down, and as he was addicted to drink himself he was pleased with the thought that he could now drink as much as he chose. At the time I myself did not know he was given to the evil habit. Next, one of the chiefs – a known and confirmed drunkard – was asked to speak. He declined, saying, “What does my missionary say?” I tried to avoid speaking at this stage, and wished that some other chiefs should speak first; but they all pressed me to give my views. At length I said that I had earnestly prayed to God that the law might not be

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99 Beaglehole (1957) argues that the personal qualities of key individuals was an important aspect of societal change in Rarotonga. Certainly, the hierarchical structure of Rarotongan society gave prominence to the actions and attitudes of key individuals (such as the judges and ariki), and Chalmers’ charisma was integral to the revival of interest in the Church during his posting in Rarotonga. “For years, I had longed to get amongst real heathen and savages, and I was disappointed when we landed on Rarotonga, and found them so much civilized and Christianized. I wrote to the Directors stating my disappointment” (Chalmers, in Lovett 1904:79).

100 Chalmers’ fascination with alcohol is fortuitous, given the subject of this work!

101 The chiefs probably saw this as a perfect opportunity to test the mettle of the new missionary, and perhaps push through the new laws while Chalmers was still familiarising himself with the politics of life in Rarotonga.
changed so long as I was in Rarotonga. I added a few words to this, but my speech was short.
It was sufficient; nothing more was said by the chiefs, but the chief judge of Avarua was enraged. The missionary holds great power in cases of this kind (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:84,85).

Typical of missionary accounts about alcohol is the focus on the personal disposition of key persons to drinking – in this case, Chalmers implies the primary reason the Chief Judge desired change in legislation was so he might be free to drink without fear of public reprisal. This may well have been an important consideration for those assembled, but the failure of the proposed legislation did not mean that they would no longer drink alcohol – they just had to keep their drinking from public view, which they had been doing in any case. For chiefs and foreigners alike, the primary impetus for law change was, most likely, financial – they would benefit substantially from the legal exchange of *kava papa’a* by trade.

Another observation derived from this incident is that *kava papa’a* was a product much in demand in Rarotonga by the late 1850s, despite the fact that alcohol could be obtained for much less cost in the form of *kava maori*. It is doubtful that foreign traders would have been interested in this legislation if their only potential market was that of the chiefs, as this trade was already well established, albeit clandestine. Trade in *kava papa’a* appears to have extended beyond Rarotongans of high status, and Chalmers noted that foreigners secretly brought alcohol ashore, to be sold to local people by Rarotongans acting as agents. No doubt the traders and chiefs desired an expansion in this trade, which would be facilitated by legalisation. The popularity of *kava papa’a* even extended to the activities of the Church – Chalmers discovered after his arrival that Church members were in the habit of drinking large quantities of wine mixed with coconut milk during communion ceremonies. As Beaglehole observed: “It is ironical that with the Church so opposed to drinking alcohol, people should have been joining the church for twenty-odd years partly for the purpose of drinking alcohol at the communion service” (1957:97). Thereafter wine was excluded from communion, and coconut milk alone was used.

Rarotongans of high status were largely immune from censure for drinking, unless they were discovered in the act by a missionary, or in peculiarly public circumstances. Discovery was difficult for the missionary, because members of the Church would drink
heavily the night before the Sabbath, yet still attend Church the next day. Thus, although it was well known that Makea Daniela\(^{102}\) and Manarangi (the Chief Judge of Avarua) were frequent drinkers, it was not until Chalmers fortuitously discovered them in the act of drinking that they suffered any repercussions. They were tried, fined and admonished by the judges, and Manarangi was “disrated of” (i.e. removed from) his position (Lovett 1912:86). The high status of the missionary was no guarantee of compliance by ariki, as the following account attests:\(^{103}\)

I remember once getting some of the inferior chiefs together and going on deputation to Makea and Manarangi, who was chief justice, and had lapsed from Church membership, and from his social position through drink. They both received us well, and listened to all we had to say. One of the mataiapos spoke very seriously to Abela, and Manarangi pulled him up by asking, in a bit of song, “Whence is Makea?” and the old mataiapo replied in song, “From heaven he came,” and then old Manarangi wound up with, “who then can speak?” and we returned, forced thus to remember that Makea was beyond and above all law and all human beings (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:80).

Chalmers provides some good descriptions (albeit missionised) of the practices and behaviours of untitled Rarotongans regarding alcohol, one of which follows:

Many people seem to think there can be no harm in orange beer, and that the natives might be allowed to drink it. I read lately in a newspaper that the attempt to put it down was only a puritanical whim of the missionary’s. If these flying visitors had seen one half of what I have seen of the evils arising from so-called harmless orange beer, they would soon bless the missionary and sober chiefs for trying to stop its use, unless they be visitors who delight in hellish scenes and think wife-beating is a pleasant pastime. I have seen the natives in the bush in large and small companies in all stages of intoxication. I have seen them in the thirsty stage, the talkative stage, the singing stage, the loud talking, quarrelling stage, the native fighting stage, and the dead drunk stage. I have seen them fighting among themselves, I have seen them after returning to their homes beating, kicking, and cutting their wives, and pitching their children out of doors. I have known them to set their houses on fire, or to tear up every stitch of clothing belonging to their

\(^{102}\) By now Makea Daniela held the Makea Nui title, as Makea Te Vaerua had died.
\(^{103}\) This event occurred after the death of Makea Daniela, when Makea Abera (or Abela) had assumed the Makea Nui title.
wives and children\textsuperscript{104}. I have heard cursing and swearing in English (a native when drunk talks and swears in English more than in native)\textsuperscript{105} in a manner that would make the hardened English swearer blush (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:107).

It appears that drinkers were able to maintain some restraint during these sessions: I have frequently been in the midst of the large drinking meetings, when they existed, and found the natives in all stages of drunkenness, and fighting, yet I always felt quite safe, and never met with the least insult or abuse from any Rarotongan (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:101).

Chalmers never succeeded in eliminating alcohol consumption among Church members, much less all Rarotongans, but he was successful in mediating what he regarded as some of the worst excesses of alcohol use. He employed unorthodox methods to achieve this end. For example, he would go to bush drinking sessions and encourage those assembled to give up drinking and join the Church – although he made it his policy not to fine or prosecute the people he found, believing this role to be properly that of the judges and police, and apparently the chiefs agreed. One case that attracted some disdain from fellow missionaries concerned a group of young men who had become conspicuous in their drinking. They had formed themselves into a kind of volunteer corps under the guidance of a man who had returned from Tahiti, and who led them in drill practice (Lovett 1904). “The majority were men who for many years had never attended any service of any kind. I knew them only by seeing them in their sacred grove at night, around orange beer barrels and a great fire, naked and fierce.” (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:95). Chalmers’ tactic was not to prohibit the drill, but to encourage the men to “make Christ their portion, their captain, and believe in Him as their Saviour” (Lovett 1912:95). Gradually the group accepted Chalmers’ offer to become involved in Church activities, differentiated by their drill, and eventually, by uniforms they bought to perform drill in. Their drinking parties became less frequent, and eventually (according to Chalmers), stopped altogether.

\textsuperscript{104} Beaglehole (1957:98) suggests that the choice of objects here supports the contention that drinking was a means to register disenchantment with Christianity. While this is a possibility, the choice of objects was certainly significant to Chalmers, and perhaps he employed these examples to demonstrate how alcohol induced the “primitive / heathen” to destroy objects of the “civilised / Christian”.

\textsuperscript{105} This ‘effect’ of alcohol also occurs in contemporary Rarotonga, and has also been observed throughout Oceania (Marshall 1982b). At page 192, I consider the practice of Maori speaking English while drinking as one of the ‘transformative’ qualities of alcohol evident in Rarotongan drinking practice.
By 1872, after five years on the island, Chalmers was able to describe some of those changes that had occurred in local drinking practices:

Strong drink still does much harm, yet it is not nearly so much used as formerly. The traders do not sell it in such large quantities, and some of the chiefs seem anxious to put down the use of it altogether. The large meetings for drinking are now unknown. Two or three drinkers now meet at a time, but generally in hidden places. Women do not now join such assemblies. Formerly a large number of women met with the men in places cleared in the bush for these meetings, and the scene then enacted had better be left in the dark. In former days a drinking meeting on the Sabbath would frequently number as many as four hundred. These large meetings are now entirely a thing of the past (Chalmers, in Lovett 1912:105).

Pressure by missionaries influenced this change of practice, but other factors are likely to have intervened to change the dynamic of drinking. Large groups of drinkers were easily detected by police and missionaries. Neither police nor missionaries risked breaking up drinking sessions when they discovered them, as they were likely to suffer personal injury as a result, but police did observe who was drinking from a distance and record their names for later prosecution. There was also increased potential for conflict at these large gatherings. Arguments concerning family rivalries, land rights, jealousies sparked by adultery, etc., were more frequent in large groups, with people from diverse lineages and sometimes, tapere and vaka, gathered together. It is possible that the incidence of sexual relations between male and female participants during drinking sessions, and the consequent arguments concerning these, contributed to the exclusion of women from drinking sessions. In these circumstances, restricting drinking groups to trusted relatives (and to a lesser extent, friends) was the most practical means of minimising cost and conflict.

Chalmers’ departure from Rarotonga in 1877 signalled an end to the Christian ‘revival’. Due in part to their increasing wealth, ariki began to take the mission less seriously. In 1883 the British warship Kingfisher visited Rarotonga, and the commander told the chiefs the British government would not tolerate any disobedience of the law by European residents. Moreover, he treated the ariki as an independent government, in which the mission played no part, and intimated the British Navy would support the ariki if any dissent arose. This gave the ariki considerable confidence in their own authority and autonomy, and the mission suffered accordingly, as the ariki determined
to proceed in matters without securing approval from missionaries. Church membership dropped to just one quarter of the population, the system of fines broke down (Rarotongans and foreigners refused to pay), and the capacity of the legal constabulary to coerce the people into compliance was increasingly compromised by favouritism and corruption (Gilson 1980:50-53). In the early 1880s Chinese traders depleted the local currency (the Chilean dollar) by conducting an extensive trade in imported spirits from Tahiti. Alcohol, both locally produced and imported, became increasingly easy to procure, and by the 1890s liquor was sold openly – up to twenty saloons had opened on the island (although the existence of these was later contested – see below), and production of ‘bush beer’ was rife (Gilson 1980:51). Thus the period of missionary political domination (and to a lesser extent, that of ariki) came to a close.

**Alcohol and Health, 1823-1888**

In the moral model or belief system about alcoholism, drunkenness is perceived as primarily immoral or irresponsible or derelict behavior (or all of those) and only secondarily as a health problem (Ames 1985:36).

The effect of alcohol consumption on the health of Maori was rarely mentioned in early accounts, primarily due to the fact that the missionaries, who were largely responsible for written texts of the period, tended to view alcohol consumption as a matter of morality, rather than mortality or morbidity. Analysis of the health repercussions associated with the introduction of alcohol to Rarotonga between 1823 and 1888 is impossible, because there is no reliable evidence regarding the frequency of alcohol consumption, how much was consumed, or the prevalence of drunkenness and alcoholism (Lange 1982:94,285). Statements by missionaries that persons such as Makea Davida were “addicted to alcohol” (Maretu 1983:95) are far from conclusive evidence of pathological drinking, as no symptomatology is mentioned, and in any case Maretu may have meant that the ariki was merely unwilling to give up drinking, rather than implying that Makea Davida was unable to stop. In his discussion of colonial and contemporary beliefs about the misuse of alcohol in the USA, Levine (1978:147) suggests that in colonial times, “addicted meant habituated and one was habituated to

106 Likewise, Pitman wrote in 1845 (after the landing of rum from the American whaler, mentioned above) that following the introduction of kava papa’a “a more successful plan for the destruction of the population in their present state could scarcely be conceived” (in Lange 1982:91). The missionaries tended not to regard social disruption and health as discrete phenomena (and in this their views were somewhat similar to those of Rarotongans).
drunkenness, not to liquor.” This distinction may also grasp missionary descriptions of Makea Davida’s “addiction” – his fault was in his immoderate liking for drunkenness, rather than an inexorable desire for alcohol. Gilson suggests that the dubious quality of popular alcoholic beverages may have been a potential cause of untimely death, although there is no direct evidence of this occurring (1980:40). Chalmers ventured the opinion that “all the people are scrofulous, so that firewater takes effect sooner upon them” (in Lovett 1912:83), and upon a return visit in 1890 wrote that he was “deeply grieved to find the fearful mortality amongst men of middle age, who in their young manhood were drunkards” (in Lange 1982:285). Apart from these references, there is little evidence pertaining to alcohol and chronic disease. In any case, the devastating mortality and morbidity caused by introduced disease would have overshadowed any accurate comprehension of deleterious effects due to alcohol consumption.

Alcohol use was associated with various forms of conflict, and so with the possibility of injury. Fights and arguments between fellow drinkers were relatively common, particularly when large groups of people drank together. Wives and children were the victims of domestic assault associated with drunkenness, and injury was a consequence of these altercations. Sexual activity was also associated with drinking sessions, at least when women were permitted to join men, and it is possible that this facilitated the spread of sexually transmitted disease through the island. Sexual congress between Rarotongans was relatively free during the missionary period, however, as the missionaries’ constant laments attest, but this was irrespective of religious alignment or participation in drinking sessions, and so it is impossible to speculate whether alcohol consumption had deleterious effects in this regard – with the exception that a large proportion of drinking altercations were attributed to accusations of adultery, inappropriate advances, or comments regarding the wives or female relatives of participants.
CHAPTER FIVE:
THE BRITISH PROTECTORATE, 1891-1901

Here is the pit for the land, the grave for it, the one grave, and that is the foreign spirits.
It is the pit that causes all the sorrow to the mothers and children, the foreign spirits.
The church members that fall do not fall by the orange beer, but by the imported spirits.107

The British Protectorate was established when the system of laws introduced by missionaries and ariki was breaking down. Under the Protectorate, the authority of ariki was increased, while the LMS did not maintain its previously pre-eminent position. In the 1890s, socialist philosophies were emerging internationally, and through Frederick Moss, Rarotonga’s first British Resident, they were briefly applied to the Islands. Ultimately, he was undermined by the struggles of various groups (including ariki, resident Papa’a, the New Zealand government, and the LMS) for increased political influence. Moss’ successor, Colonel Gudgeon, pursued a more orthodox program of colonialism, which was supported by people who opposed Moss, and led to annexation under New Zealand rule.

Alcohol assumed a prominent position in political discourses. Throughout the world, the moral and physical decline of colonised peoples was attributed to, among other things, disease and the consumption of alcohol. Political discourses about the role of alcohol in society provided a salient point of articulation between diverse groups. In Rarotonga, this concurrence provided people who opposed Moss an opportunity to remove him as British Resident. In this chapter, I describe the process by which the struggle for power was manifest in the moral and political prominence of alcohol.

Prelude to the Protectorate

In 1864 and 1865, Rarotongan ariki petitioned the New Zealand Governor and British Colonial Office respectively to establish a British Protectorate. This request was ignored in 1864, and in 1865 the Colonial Office rejected the proposal, as in its estimation, benefits to British commercial interests fared poorly against the expense of establishing a protectorate.

In the 1860s, desire for British protection by ariki, missionaries and resident European traders was primarily attributable to the increased influence of French

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107 Makea Nui, quoted by Reverend Hutchin (NZP 1898, A3:61).
interests in the region (Ross 1964:67). Traders and missionaries feared French competition in their respective fields, and both Maori and Papa’a were concerned by the active sponsorship of labour recruitment – Maori had been recruited to work for French interests in other islands of the South Pacific, and workers were often treated badly. Peruvian slave traders also patrolled the Northern Group, and their presence caused concern throughout the Cook Islands (Maude 1981).

From 1865, a succession of New Zealand politicians expressed an interest in annexation, but were continually thwarted by the British administration, which justified its decisions fiscal grounds. The Colonial Office was also concerned that it not enter into unnecessary conflict with other foreign powers that were active in the region (France, Peru, Germany, among others), and was loath for conflict to be initiated over islands in which it had few strategic or commercial interests. In other islands of the Pacific, such as Samoa and Tonga, the presence of Germany and the United States, and France and Germany respectively, precluded overt action by Britain (Gilson 1980:58). Nevertheless, New Zealand politicians actively campaigned for a ‘British Pacific’, and their expansionist aspirations had to be held in check by British authorities. This state of affairs obtained for more than a decade, until in 1881 the French warship Hugon arrived in Rarotonga and demanded that the island trade only with Tahiti.¹⁰⁸ Later that year the appointment of a British consul was approved following a request from Papa’a traders in Rarotonga. The British consul was an unpaid position, and was granted to C.E. Goodwin, who had been resident on Rarotonga since 1870, and was the son of an influential LMS patron.

Mr Goodwin was not the preferred candidate of the ariki and the missionaries – he was openly contemptuous of the law, and drank heavily. His replacement, upon returning to England in 1883, was held in little more esteem – Richard Exham was a trader who was “careless of the laws and also no stranger to the bottle” (Scott 1991:37).¹⁰⁹ That year another warship arrived – this time British – and its Captain warned Papa’a residents to obey the laws of the ariki (see also page 65).

The ariki of Rarotonga were encouraged by this support, and in 1885 Makea Takau (the Makea Nui Ariki) voyaged to Auckland in the company of her husband

¹⁰⁸ Apparently, the captain acted without authority from his Ministry in Paris (Ross 1964:234).
¹⁰⁹ In 1890, the “Queen, chiefs, and petty chiefs of Rarotonga again petitioned Queen Victoria on the subject [of the British Resident], saying that they wanted Exham, the unpaid acting-consul, removed as he had been selling drink to the natives, had struck both men and women and had failed to deliver mail” (Ross 1964:242).
Ngamaru Ariki (paramount chief of Atiu, Ma’uke and Mitiaro), a number of mata’iapo, and Rarotongans who had attained office in her ‘court’. She met John Ballance, who was Minister of Native Affairs, told him that she was afraid of the French, and wished to secure the protection of Britain for Rarotonga. Although he was not formally sanctioned by the New Zealand or British governments, Ballance promised her that if a request for a protectorate should come from all the principal ariki of the islands, the British Crown would agree, guaranteeing local government and institutions in exchange for reciprocal trade with New Zealand (Ross 1964:236-237).

Makea Takau’s request did not result in an agreement, and ultimately the British protectorate was inspired by events external to the Cook Islands: the rumour of the construction of the Panama Canal by the French (Scott 1991:43), New Zealand’s colonial aspirations in the Pacific, and the increasing influence of French interests in the region (Ross 1964:240). Consequently the British Consul, Exham, was instructed to proclaim a British protectorate over the islands (Ross 1964:240). He did so on 27 September 1888, and a month later the HMS Hyacinth voyaged to the Cook Islands to confirm the action. The Colonial Office subsequently approved the appointment of a New Zealander as British Resident to the islands. According to Ross (1964:241):

Most New Zealanders greeted the proclamation [of the Protectorate] with enthusiasm, more especially because it followed on a period of French successes and removed the danger of a French occupation of Rarotonga. The Herald claimed that ‘very general gratification will be felt throughout New Zealand, and more particularly in Auckland.

Frederick Moss was the first person to be appointed British Resident. He had served in the British army, travelled widely in the Pacific, been a cotton planter in Fiji, and was a former member of the New Zealand parliament (Ross 1964:243). A number of provisos were put against Moss – sale of land was to be prohibited, and labour export was permitted only with his approval. Furthermore, the Resident had to be acceptable to ariki, laws established by them had to be obeyed by all Europeans, and liquor imports were to be strictly controlled (Gilson 1980:61; Scott 1991:41).

110 ‘Queen’ Makea Takau was also accompanied by two ‘maids of honour’, the ‘Keeper of the Great Seal’, and the ‘Usher of the Red Rod and Keeper of the Royal Mat’ (Ross 1964:236).
111 Rarotonga, Atiu, Ma’uke and Mitiaro excepted, it is not known which other islands were discussed.
112 By 1885 the vast majority of Rarotongan trade was with Auckland, with French and German vessels accounting for less than twenty percent of gross vessel tonnage that year (Scott 1991:41).
Prior to his appointment as Resident in 1891, Moss familiarised himself with some of the southern islands during a special visit in 1890 (Ross 1964:254). His brief was to investigate two matters: first, the expulsion of agents of a company, Donald and Edinborough, from the islands of Aitutaki and Mangaia, and second, Rarotonga’s liquor trade. Upon reaching Rarotonga, he met with Papa’a traders who complained of Maori drunkenness attributable to ‘bush beer’:

Some of these Gentlemen laid the whole of the blame on the home-made “orange” and “bush” beer and protested so vehemently that I am disposed to think that beer is not so much to blame (Moss, quoted in Scott 1991:46).

Moss raised this issue with his Maori hosts, and they were of the opinion that the traders’ objection to kava maori was principally that it deprived them of revenue derived from selling imported spirits. They complained that Europeans were holding the courts in contempt, by refusing to pay liquor fines, or offering trade goods of dubious quality in lieu of cash payment. Moss backed the ariki to increase the fine for liquor offences to $150 (Chilean dollars), with payments only in cash. Moss returned to New Zealand, and in the months before his return, traders in Rarotonga were compelled to hand their stocks of alcohol to an appointed licensing officer, J.H. Garnier. He received 1,000 gallons of rum, gin, brandy and whiskey, and 310 gallons of beer, cases of wine, and absinthe during this period. This was not the entire quantity of imported liquor held on the island, as Garnier complained:

…the new laws are treated with open contempt and even ridicule. No liquor has been sent from these parts whatever…. Some of the debauched and drunken Europeans are encouraging the natives in their defiance of the new and reformed laws and impressing on their minds that you have no power to make them conform to anything against their own will (quoted in Scott 1991:47).

Arguments and disputes about alcohol were to prove a consistent challenge to Moss. Although liquor laws and their administration were technically under the jurisdiction of ariki and judges, disenchanted Papa’a residents (and later, even the ariki) repeatedly attributed Moss with this responsibility.
The Protectorate Under Moss, 1891-1898

The position of British Resident was an important one, but the resources and authority allocated to the post were limited. The protectorate recognised the authority of the *arihita* government, and the British Resident’s role was to help the *arihita* establish law and order. Persuasion was the principal means by which this was achieved. Initially this state of affairs was sufficient for Moss, as the *arihita* held Britain (or more particularly, Queen Victoria) in high esteem, and wished to emulate her wealth and influence through similar forms of governance. Consequently, they accepted Moss’ guidance, particularly regarding the re-organisation of district-level councils, the institution of an island council, and a federal council. The *arihita* were anxious to prevent their influence from being eroded, and any attempts to do so were rigorously resisted – in particular, Makea Takau, Tinomana, and Pa Ariki were very competitive.

Political Organisation, 1891-1898

Prior to Moss’ official posting, the three *vaka* of Rarotonga were under the jurisdiction of their respective *arihita*, who presided over the district council of chiefs (the *au*). Other islands of the Cook group were controlled by their respective chiefs or resident missionaries. There was no taxation, and Europeans contributed little, if anything, to public monies. The primary source of funds to *arihita* and people in positions of authority was derived from fines and subscriptions for specific purposes (Gilson 1980:64). Once Moss became British resident, he convinced the chiefs to establish a Federal parliament responsible for matters that affected all of the Cook Islands equally, such as customs duties, postal services, education and immigration. Makea Takau was appointed Head of Government, and an executive council was formed of all the islands’ paramount chiefs. Treasury funds were obtained from the sale of postage stamps, and a five percent *ad valorem* tariff.

In 1891 the Rarotonga Council was established, and became the executive body for domestic administration. It was comprised of the six *arihita* of Rarotonga, the chief judge from each *vaka*, a representative *mata’iapo* from each *vaka*, and one Papa’a representative. The Rarotonga Council presided over matters that lacked uniformity throughout the Cook Islands, and those that were beyond the competence of the district councils (*au*). In practice, it was responsible for administration of the liquor trade, marriage and divorce, and land tenure. The most significant contributor to Council funds was the liquor tax; funds available to the Rarotongan Council were about half that
of the Federal government. This provided for public servant salaries, public works, and expenses of the judicial system.

The au, or district councils, were reorganised to comprise of district ariki, and two representatives from each of the following: mata’iapo, rangatira, and commoners. The au were responsible for road maintenance and district buildings; were empowered to control harvests ‘in the public interest’; able to charge fees for mooring and harbour use; and to introduce local laws for the maintenance of order (subject to the Resident’s approval). Control of police was maintained by the district councils.

The Rarotonga Council was not a stable organisation, due to arguments between ariki and mata’iapo, and in 1893 it was reorganised. Moss was keen to provide increased representation for commoners in the island Council, and as a compromise with the ariki the Council was divided into lower and upper houses – the lower house comprised of the three district judges, three appointees of the ariki, and two representatives elected by the men and women of each district. The upper house was comprised of the ariki of Rarotonga, who were empowered to accept or reject legislation introduced in the lower house. District judges were appointed by their respective ariki, and so were strongly influenced by them.

Reforms Under Moss

Moss was able to introduce a number of reforms in league with the ariki. These were accomplished in spite of the fact that his influence was limited to the power of persuasion, and his financial resources were extremely limited. The latter circumstance was due to the policy of the New Zealand Premier, R.J. Seddon, who favoured annexation of the Cook Islands to New Zealand. His plan was to starve the protectorate of resources until annexation was the only viable administrative option:

In short, Seddon committed his Government to allow the Maoris a considerable degree of self-determination in the administration of the Islands. When he said that the Maoris might keep their “local self-government”, he did not use the term self determination, but that is clearly what he was taken to mean…. at most, such a proposal should be regarded as the Premier’s over-simplified statement of a long-range goal, i.e. that of the political unification of the new territory and the Colony (Gilson 1952:178).
Moss was remarkably liberal, and attempted to devolve as much power as possible to all Cook Islanders. He favoured appointments of Maori to public servant positions, and attempted to give commoners a voice in the governance of the islands. Moss was anxious that adequate education and health services be provided. He was able to start a school for higher learning on Rarotonga, and scholarships were granted for students from the outer islands to attend. In the course of these events, Moss aroused the ire of the LMS missionaries, who had previously controlled schools and remained an important voice in island politics. Health care was virtually non-existent until the arrival of a Seventh Day Adventist, Dr J.E. Caldwell, in 1894.

**Alcohol, 1891-1897**

In general, Moss was opposed to legislation that concerned itself primarily with moral behaviour, including a number of missionary-inspired laws, although he was not in a position to repeal them. Nevertheless, one form of ‘moral’ law was favoured: the control of alcohol. In his view, widespread alcohol consumption was a cause of illness and premature death, and interfered with cash crop production. When Moss arrived in Rarotonga, Reverend Chalmers was also visiting the island, and together they advised the Council to enforce existing alcohol laws, prohibiting the use of alcohol by Maori. Only Maori were prohibited from receiving spirits, as they feared Europeans would protest if denied. Both Europeans and Maori were prohibited from brewing ‘bush beer’, and lighter fines were allocated for this offence (Gilson 1980:71-73).

These proposals were not accepted some *mata’iapo*, who resented unequal treatment of Maori and Papa’a, and demanded uniformity in administration of the law. As earlier prohibition legislation had failed, and very few Europeans supported it, a licensing law was passed instead. Bush beer was prohibited, public houses were closed, and a bonded liquor store was established. Europeans were allowed to purchase alcohol for their own use upon securing a permit from the licensing officer. Maori were able to purchase alcohol upon receiving a permit signed by the *ariki* of their district. Infringements incurred fines of up to $150 (Chilean Dollars), and a $5 fine would be incurred by anyone who was guilty of drunkenness. Provision was also made for certain persons to be prohibited from purchasing alcohol:

16. The friends of any person habitually getting drunk, or to whom intoxicating liquor is know to be injurious, or, failing such friends, the Licensing Officer or a
policeman, may apply to the Court of the district for an order prohibiting the sale or gift of liquor to such person (NZHR 1914, 1898 #386, A3:43).

Although Chalmers (the former missionary to Rarotonga) regarded this course of action as a suitable compromise, the contemporary LMS missionary, Hutchin, did not. Unfortunately for him, the ariki, while ostensibly prohibitionists, did not oppose the legislation. He eventually found cause to complain when the ariki delegated their right to issue permits to their district judges, and they began to charge a fee for their ‘service’.

**Alcohol and Scandal**

*These Islands are great places for plotting and scandal amongst the civilised community.*

The beginning of the end took the form of two brothers, Mr. William and Dr. George Craig, who arrived in Rarotonga in 1897, and quickly exploited the enmities and grievances of European traders and LMS missionaries toward Moss. Dr Craig expeditiously rid the hospital of Dr Caldwell and took his place by allying himself with two hospital board members, Adolf Kohn and Emil Piltz. Kohn disliked Moss for denying him permission to start a bank in Rarotonga, and Piltz had been convicted and fined for abusing the liquor permit system, when he supplied alcohol to a European who had been prohibited from drinking (Scott 1991:66). Moss roused Dr Craig’s ire when he rejected Craig’s call for Dr Caldwell to be dismissed, as he was not on the British medical register. Moss noted that Dr Caldwell received his qualification in the United States. Unphased, Dr Craig became hospital superintendent when he agreed to provide free medical services in exchange for a retainer, but having installed himself in this position, convinced the hospital board to abolish free health services unless Moss increased his allowance. As the hospital board refused to release its accounts, Moss refused, and Dr Craig became his firm opponent.

Matters came to a head when the colonial office and the New Zealand governor decided, due to the increasing complexity of legal cases coming before the Rarotongan court, a Federal court should be inaugurated, with the British resident presiding. The Craigs and the Papa’a husband of Tinomana, Salmon, prepared a petition to reject the Federal Court Bill and circulated it around the island. Reverend Hutchin convinced Makea Takau that Moss intended to circumvent her power, and so secured her

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113 Sir Peter Buck, letter to Apirana Ngata (Ngata and Buck 1986:20/09/1926).
opposition to the bill.\textsuperscript{114} As public opposition to Moss increased, members of parliament voted not only to reject the bill, but to petition for Moss to be removed from office. This petition was rejected by the New Zealand governor, but an enquiry into the matter was held in December 1897 by the Chief Justice of New Zealand.

The enquiry was a strange affair. A large proportion of discussion surrounded the liquor trade, and the drunkenness of Rarotonga’s inhabitants. This controversy, coincidentally, was initiated by Dr Craig. It was inspired by his report on alcohol-related disease, in July 1897, to the hospital board:

\begin{quote}
GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with your request that I should furnish you with a report upon any cases of disease directly or indirectly the result of alcoholic indulgence, I herewith give you the following particulars: –

In sending this report the Board should remember that, while a special group of diseases is directly attributable to alcohol, the excessive use of alcohol has a baneful influence on disease in general, increasing the liability of individuals to disease, and weakening their natural powers of resistance and repair.

In going over my diary and selecting cases I have noted all cases in which I can recognise alcohol as an important factor. The proportion of such cases is large, but it must be remembered that in this community there are special facilities and encouragement given for the liquor traffic among natives.

With regard to the white population, it is so small, and the habits of the individuals are so well known, that it is inadvisable to present statistics on this subject.

The following statement applies solely to the native population: Of the seven native in-patients, two were alcoholic. One of these has recently died from the effects of disease due to alcohol. Out of 130 out-patients of different ages and sex there were twenty-four cases in which disease was the result of, or influenced by, over indulgence in alcohol (NZP 1898, A3:48).

The cause of consternation was Dr Craig’s statement that “there are special facilities and encouragement given for the liquor traffic among natives”, which in the context of contemporary (European) ideas about Maori drunkenness, was a serious charge indeed. A flurry of letter-writing ensued, and a number of individuals, all Papa’a, from Rarotonga and New Zealand, added their opinions to the debate:

\textsuperscript{114} According to Scott (1991:67), Makea Takau was already inclined against Moss, as she resented his appointments of the rival Vakatini family to positions of authority.
Whatever opinions might be held as to the propriety or otherwise of sanctioning the supply of intoxicants in civilised communities, he [Hon. Mr Jones] thought it would be generally admitted that it should not be sold to savage races – to those who knew no restraint, but were guided by their natural passions. He thought he might assume that if there was any suggestion to sell liquor in New Zealand under the same legislation and principle as that which obtained in the islands under Mr Moss’s administration it would be rejected by all righteous and proper-minded men. They had legislated to prohibit the sale of drink to the Natives of this country [New Zealand]; and, seeing that the natives in the Cook Islands belonged to the same race as the Maoris of this country, and were endowed with the same characteristics and natural philanthropy, dictated that the way to treat the natives in the Cook Islands was the way in which we treated our own (NZHR 1897:222).

In Rarotonga, opinions on the extent and seriousness of alcoholic excess among Maori correlated with political allegiance of the commentator, as pro- or anti- Moss. Dr Craig and Reverend Hutchin spoke against Moss, Garnier (the Licensing Officer) and Moss spoke in favour. Dr Caldwell also participated in the debate.

It was common knowledge that the *ariki* delegated authority to issue liquor permits to their judges, and that judges charged a fee for those permits. Moss defended this practice, as in his opinion the *ariki* were exercising customary practice by appointing a person (in this case, persons who were both chiefs and judges) as their mouthpiece. Although this vindication of the *arikis’* authority endeared Moss to them, it did nothing to placate Reverend Hutchin. Dr Craig later explained: “the encouragement I refer to lies in the fact that the chiefs have a direct interest in the sale of liquor to the natives. I allude to the open and indiscriminate sale of permits” (NZP 1898, A3:45). While Moss was not entirely satisfied with this state of affairs, he regarded it as an improvement on that obtaining prior to the protectorate:

> These agents [the judges] are in the habit of paying themselves by charging for the permit. Great care will have to be taken in effecting a change or we shall only reproduce the bribery and corruption which prevailed prior to the initialisation of the present form of government in 1891, and in the face of which the open charging of a recognised and fixed fee, however reprehensible in itself, is a clear advance (NZP 1898, A3:46).

115 According to Rev Hutchin, the fee was 20 cents (Chilean) (NZP 1898, A3:62).
116 This practice was advantageous to *ariki*. They were able to placate their people by providing access to *kava papa’a*, and as they did not personally issue permits, they maintained their status as prohibitionists.
Apparently, a number of foreign traders also provided liquor to Maori and Papa’a customers – a practice which was, technically, illegal. Dr Craig referred to this trade as the ‘special facilities’ given to liquor traffic. Moss claimed that there were nineteen liquor houses on the island in 1890, which was disputed by Hutchin some eight years later.\footnote{The veracity of claims is debatable – Moss and Chalmers only briefly visited Rarotonga that year, and Moss was unable to provide particulars on the establishments. However, Hutchin had an interest in denying the existence of public houses – he was, after all, the resident missionary when the Church and \textit{ariki} were responsible for law enforcement.} During the enquiry, Maori and Papa’a witnesses confirmed (and occasionally, denied) the existence of public houses in 1897:

\textit{Katea:} I received one bottle of gin from H. Nicholas in payment for one barrel of oranges. Taraerae was with me, and was paid in the same way…. I had no permit….I bought liquor by the glass from Ah Foo – 5d.

\textit{Tinirau:} I have brought drink on the sly from Mrs. Scard, John Banks, from Mr. Nicholas. I have paid $1½ to him for rum. I have bought from Mr. Wallis. Kiritea was with me. I was drunk last at Christmas. Rum from Ah Que. One bottle of rum for $1½. I have been drunk twenty times this year. We heard we could get drink from Mrs. Scard, so we went to her (NZP 1898, A3:71).

Moss admitted administration of the law had ‘relaxed’; although the permit system was initially effective, it had been circumvented by traders, Maori, Papa’a and police (NZP 1898, A3:46). Judge Tepou O Te Rangi stated that convictions for drunkenness ranged from fifteen to twenty per month, with none in some months.

Accounts of the frequency of public drunkenness were varied, with most indicating that public drunkenness occurred, but that it was not rife. A number of respondents, including a police officer and Moss, suggested that public drinking occurred during particular events and ceremonies, such as Christmas or celebrations associated with the visits of distinguished guests:

No one can go about Rarotonga for a week without noticing the disgracefully drunken habits of natives. It is impossible to walk 500 yards any evening in the week without meeting at least half a dozen natives the worse for liquor, sometimes considerably more (Dr Craig, in NZP 1898, A3:47).

As put by Dr Craig, I have no hesitation in describing them [Craig’s accounts of drunkenness] as gross exaggerations. My attention was first drawn to an evident
relaxation of the law by passing several tipsy natives returning from the “May” Mission meeting at Arorangi…. The time selected by Dr. Craig for his comments must be considered as exceptional (Moss, in NZP 1898, A3:46).

I have never met half a dozen drunken men in a walk of 500 yards (Tepou, in NZP 1898, A3:72).

I went down to Awatu. Once I saw five drunks. On another occasion, on a Saturday, Rev J Cullen, of Mangaia, went down to the post-office and saw seven drunks…. I occasionally have seen drunken people, but only on one occasion as many as five (Rev Hutchin, in NZP 1898, A3:72).

A common observation was that Maori were incapable of drinking in moderation, so that inebriation was the result of any drinking session. Dr Caldwell also contended that displays of drunkenness observed in public places contrasted with behaviour in private drinking sessions:

I cannot recall the name of a single native who has been able to restrain himself to habitually drink in moderation. Even the best of them who drink at all have been known to drink to intoxication…. Among the rank and file who live in the “bush” there really seems to be no self-restraint as long as the intoxicant lasts. No one who has confined his observation to the street and public places could form an idea of the degrading effects of the Sunday “beer-barrel” in back bush land. Men, women, and sometimes children, gather round the barrel and drink until crazed by intoxication. Then half naked – sometimes wholly naked – they sing lewd songs, called “ute”, until continued drinking stupefies them, and stupor and sleep put an end to their shameful conduct (Caldwell, in NZP 1898, A3:48).

In general people felt that locally brewed beer (*kava maori*) was less harmful than imported liquors. Caldwell’s reference to ‘fortified’ bush beer described beverages in which imported spirits were mixed with locally-brewed alcohol. According to him, Maori preferred imported spirits; locally brewed alcohol was “almost abandoned on a Sunday afternoon by those who made it when they learned that a little way off another barrel had been made and ‘fortified’ with ‘kava papaa’” (NZP 1897, A3:48). Hutchin reported comments by Makea Takau from a meeting in which the relative harms of *kava maori* and *kava papa’a* were discussed:
The wrong was in the imported spirits, and not in the home-made beer. The one also was a thing in which her people spent their money and were ruined, the other they made at little cost to themselves. She named several who had recently died from drinking imported spirits, and urged that something should be done quickly (Hutchin, in NZP 1898, A3:61).

The dubious quality of imported beverages was also noted by Moss, who suspected it might account for some of the serious effects of drunkenness among Maori:

Lately there has been very cheap, and, I fear, very bad, rum imported and sold here by the bottle at 1s. 8d., of which half goes for duty and permit fees. If this liquor be as bad as the price would indicate, it might account for much of the mischief from drinking the bush beer (NZP 1898, A3:47).

Even Dr Craig regarded *kava maori* as less injurious to the health (or perhaps morality?) of Maori drinkers:

As long as these facilities for the traffic of imported liquor are allowed to exist it is impossible to attribute any of the blame for the drunken habits of the natives to the much less potent beverages of native manufacture. These are to be ranked with such an English beverage as cider – wholesome and, even in excessive quantities, doing infinitely less harm than the poison that is retailed to the unsophisticated natives as rum (NZP 1898, A3:45).

Despite requests from Moss and Makea Takau for Dr Craig to provide a more specific catalogue of alcohol-related disease, none was forthcoming. Moss sought advice from Dr Caldwell on which diseases could be attributed to alcohol. Although his notes were sketchy, he furnished Moss with a list of diseases, which he regarded as:

*Table III: Dr Caldwell’s Catalogue of Alcohol-Related Diseases.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyspepsia</th>
<th>Boils</th>
<th>Anasarca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gastritis</td>
<td>Phlegmon</td>
<td>Ascites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastric ulcers</td>
<td>Enlargement of the liver</td>
<td>Mania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eczema</td>
<td>Bright’s disease</td>
<td>Jaundice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatty degeneration of the heart</td>
<td>Ulcers</td>
<td>Carbuncles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General debility, inviting disease of every nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NZP (1898, A3:49).

In a letter to the New Zealand government, Moss noted this catalogue of diseases did not include those that “mark the habitual drinker”, such as “*delirium tremens*, hobnailed liver, and others” (Moss, in NZP 1898, A3:47).
Dr Craig and Reverend Hutchin attempted to highlight the fiscal importance alcohol had acquired, arguing there was no incentive for officials to limit the importation of alcohol, as a large proportion of the Rarotonga Council’s treasury was derived from liquor permits and import tariffs. This was a valid criticism. There is no evidence that ariki benefited from permit payments to their judges, other than the political allegiance they secured by providing their judges with an additional source of income. Indirectly, however, all ariki benefited from the increased treasury obtained by liquor imports. In 1897, Council revenue was £763 5s., of which £192 2s. was derived from sales of liquor permits to Maori, and £210 15s. from permits to ‘others’. Thus liquor permits alone accounted for more than one half of Council revenues. Hutchin, in a letter to the Chief Justice of New Zealand, argued that under the permit system, imports of liquor had steadily increased:

**Table IV: Imports of Liquor to the Cook Islands, 1891-1896.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spirits</th>
<th>Wines</th>
<th>Beer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1891 – June 1892</td>
<td>£253 18s</td>
<td>£60 5s</td>
<td>£142 12s</td>
<td>£456 15s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1892 – Dec 1892</td>
<td>£324</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>£153</td>
<td>£502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1893 – Dec 1893</td>
<td>£410</td>
<td>£54</td>
<td>£89</td>
<td>£553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1894 – Dec 1894</td>
<td>£531 15s</td>
<td>£59 2s</td>
<td>£39 18s</td>
<td>£630 15s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1895 – Dec 1895</td>
<td>£481</td>
<td>£77</td>
<td>£27</td>
<td>£585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1896 – Dec 1896</td>
<td>£552</td>
<td>£67</td>
<td>£96</td>
<td>£715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NZP (1898, A3:62).

**Table V: Fees Levied on Permits for Liquor, 1891-1893.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spirits</th>
<th>Wines</th>
<th>Beer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1891 – June 1892 (No. dozen bottles)</td>
<td>£236 18s</td>
<td>£8 17s</td>
<td>£17 4s</td>
<td>£262 19s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1892 – June 1893 (No. dozen bottles)</td>
<td>£281 6s</td>
<td>£7 3s</td>
<td>£8 15s</td>
<td>£297 4s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1893 – June 1894 (fees not itemised)</td>
<td>£249 15s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NZP (1898, A3:62).

The volume of liquor imports continued to increase, as Mr Kohn, who was the manager of CITC and a hospital board member, stated he sold 12,000 bottles of liquor in 1897, which contributed £456 18s in Council fees.

Moss’ detractors focussed on alcohol matters because by this means they could prove his unsuitability as British resident. In fact, Moss pointed out, legislative

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118 This table properly refers to the fees accrued to the Rarotongan Council by import duties, and not aggregate import value.
119 Mid-1892 the Chilean dollar devalued from 4 shillings to 3 shillings to the dollar. Hutchin took account of this in his calculations.
120 Cook Islands Trading Company.
responsibility for administration of liquor laws lay with *ariki* and judges, and any shortfall in this regard was legally attributable to them. While technically true, his opponents vigorously contested this—and, predictably, *ariki* and judges were inclined to share their view. For his part, the Chief Justice determined that Moss had not exceeded his instructions, but recommended that Moss be recalled, as his authority with the *ariki* was undermined, and without their support he would be unable to perform his duties.

**The Protectorate Under Colonel W.E. Gudgeon**

Colonel Gudgeon, who replaced Moss, was a former native land court judge, ex-armed constabulary officer, and former Commissioner of Police in New Zealand. Unlike Moss, he spoke Maori fluently (Ross 1964:257). Gudgeon was also preferred by Prime Minister Seddon. In addition to his recommendation that Moss be recalled from Rarotonga, the Chief Justice formed an opinion that the protectorate was unsustainable in its present form—in future, it would have to be abandoned, or alternatively, the Cook Islands would have to be annexed (Ross 1964:260). Seddon favoured the latter course, and encouraged Gudgeon to secure annexation. Gudgeon determined that his aims best remain secret, and his most sound tactic would be to “adopt the cause of the *ariki* as my own” (Gudgeon, quoted in Scott 1991:73) in order to secure a request for annexation (Ross 1964:260). Thereafter, he intended to usurp the power of the *ariki*, and attach it to the office of the Resident (Wilson 1969b:28).

Within sixteen days, Gudgeon persuaded the Federal Council to approve the Federal Court Bill that had been (ostensibly) responsible for the downfall of Moss (Ross 1964:257). He tamed Papa’a who opposed Moss by appointing their leaders to positions of importance. Dr Craig became medical officer with the power to act in Gudgeon’s stead should he be absent from the islands. William Craig became court registrar and quarantine officer. Both were appointed Justices of the Peace (NZHR 1901:100). By this time, Makea Takau had adopted Dr Craig as her *potiki*, or youngest son, and she was instrumental in facilitating the new appointments—despite objections by members of parliament, who were upset when Gudgeon fired all of Moss’ staff (some of whom were Maori) and replaced them with Papa’a. Gudgeon was also able to secure the support of the mission, primarily through the introduction of strict controls on the

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121 His fluency was in New Zealand Maori, which is sufficiently similar to the various dialects of the Cook Islands for him to converse freely with the islanders.

122 Gudgeon did not hold Maori in high regard, but he concealed his contempt to achieve his purposes.
distribution of liquor. Permits were only honoured if signed personally by the ariki, import taxes on spirits were increased, and Gudgeon proposed that all liquor importation be controlled by a government monopoly.

Gudgeon’s determination to ‘adopt the cause of the ariki as my own’ was realised in 1899, when he abolished the Rarotonga Council. Duties performed by this body were subsumed by the Federal parliament, comprised entirely of ariki.123 Thus, the Federal parliament (the ariki) took responsibility for administration of laws, maintenance of police, and collection of duties and fees, that had been the island council’s responsibility. These actions further endeared Gudgeon to ariki (Ross 1964:265).

Ariki remained unconvinced of the value of annexation to New Zealand, preferring annexation to Great Britain. This tide was turned when Premier Seddon visited the Cook Islands – officially, he required time away from the constant interruption of telegraph and telephone in order to recover from a ‘health’ problem. Seddon’s ‘recovery’ was effected by touring the Southern Cook Islands, visiting chiefs and dignitaries, and promising New Zealand aid, whilst making oblique references to the possibility of annexation (Anonymous 1900). Within months of his departure, some (but not all) ariki signed a petition for New Zealand annexation – although it is likely most or all of them believed they were to be annexed to Great Britain. Gudgeon noted, at the meeting to sign the petition:

Tinomana, however, began to shuffle and pretend she did not understand. She, however, signed the paper I have prepared, but when the letter is written in Maori, there will, I know, be trouble (Gudgeon, in Scott 1991:83).

Seddon wasted no time. He introduced the Pacific Islands Annexation Bill unannounced, so that there was no time for parliamentary opposition to consider the legislation. The bill was pushed through in one sitting, and thus Seddon expediently achieved the first step toward his vision of a New Zealand Pacific (Wilson 1969b:25).

123 As previously noted, the Rarotonga council was a body comprised of judges, ariki representatives, elected men and women, and a European member.
CHAPTER SIX:
NEW ZEALAND ANNEXATION AND ADMINISTRATION, 1901-1965

The islanders [sic] of Rarotonga regard Auckland as the centre of civilization, and its people, represented by Captain Daldy and Paora Tuhaera, as their protectors and best friends  

Under New Zealand rule, political power was soon vested in the Resident Commissioner. Legislation was intended to mould Cook Islands Maori into productive and profitable agricultural producers, for the benefit of New Zealand trade. However, legislative intention was undermined by inadequate infrastructure, and results of these changes were equivocal. Maori were largely divested of any meaningful role in political and economic management, although disquiet with their subordination was occasionally made known to their colonial superiors. Throughout the first decades of the 20th century, Maori ways of life became increasingly separate from, and invisible to, those of Papa’a rulers and administrations. This disjunction was evident in the consumption of alcohol, where ‘bush beer schools’ became, for Maori men, increasingly popular. The intersection of the ‘two worlds’, of Administrators and the ‘bush beer school’, was restricted to legal procedure and the means by which revenue was raised, as men were fined for drinking kava maori. Some Maori were dissatisfied with discriminatory practices by the colonial administration, and this was articulated in complaints about the differential treatment of Maori and Papa’a access to alcohol, among other things. Ultimately, however, it was dissatisfaction with trade and the state of exports that provided the impetus for Maori protest against the New Zealand Administration.

Early New Zealand Administration, 1901-1935

Annexation of the Cook Islands secured, Gudgeon assumed the title of Resident Commissioner. Gudgeon’s most important task was to develop the Cook Islands economically, primarily so that New Zealand might derive wealth from its newest territory.  

124 Capt. H.B. Sterndale, quoted in Ross(1964:120).
125 That the New Zealand Government’s interest in the Cook Islands was strictly commercial is evident in the allocation of Ministerial responsibility for administration of the territory – held initially by the Commissioner of Trade and Customs and then by the Minister of Industries and Commerce.
entirely by the Islands. The New Zealand administration held the opinion that if untitled Maori were granted freehold tenure, they would be inclined to develop agricultural production for trade – as it stood, ownership of land and produce by untitled Maori was precarious, as it was constantly subject to claims of *ariki* through injunction by *ra’ui* (Crocombe 1964:109; Gilson 1980:117). 126 Gudgeon instituted the Cook Islands Land Court in 1902, with himself presiding as Chief Judge. He saw the Land Court as an effective instrument to curtail the power of *ariki*, and to ensure greater security of tenure for the *iti tangata* (the ‘little people’). 127

Gudgeon was effectively installed as Head of State after annexation. He assumed power of sanction over the Council of Ariki; any legislation passed by them required the Resident Commissioner’s approval. 128 The New Zealand Government controlled the public service, public funds, and in time, the police. Thus, functions which Gudgeon had encouraged the *ariki* to transfer from the Rarotonga Council to the Federal parliament while the Cook Islands were a Protectorate, were transferred to the Resident Commissioner after annexation (Stone 1965:81).

The *ariki* maintained a significant role in governance for some years after Gudgeon’s appointment. This was, initially, crucial to Gudgeon, because under terms of annexation the Resident Commissioner required their approval. The Rarotonga Council, which had been abolished in 1898, was re instituted – but this time the *ariki* comprised sole membership (Stone 1965:81; Wilson 1969b:25; Gilson 1980:112).

The requirement that legislation passed by the Council of Ariki be sanctioned by the Resident Commissioner, had a flip side – namely, legislation desired by the Resident Commissioner had to pass through the council first (Wilson 1969b:25). A number of Gudgeon’s legislative proposals were rejected in this way by the *ariki*, and he soon chose threat over diplomacy to secure what he saw as necessary legislation. 129 Relations between Gudgeon and the *ariki* soured. Ultimately the tension generated by resistance of the *ariki*, and Gudgeon’s belligerence, led him to become opposed to the *ariki* courts altogether, and he availed himself of every opportunity to undermine them:

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126 *Ra’ui* was a restriction on the use of a resource (usually land or produce) that could be imposed by the owner of that land – *ariki*, as titular heads of respective *vaka*, held widespread powers in this regard.
127 *Iti tangata* here referred to untitled persons.
128 “Although Makea Ariki remained ‘Head of Government’, the Resident Commissioner became chief executive in practice, because although the Federal and Island Councils were authorised to pass ordinances for the government and welfare of the islands, they did not put them into effect” (Wilson 1969b:27).
129 Measures the *ariki* refused to introduce included bills aimed at the compulsory development of land, and the taxation of undeveloped land (Wilson 1969b:29).
The Arikis’ Courts are a survival from the old times. I do not think that there is any institution in the Cook Islands that better deserves abolition than the Arikis’ Court (Gudgeon, in NZP 1903:55).

**The Land Court, 1901-1935**

Changes in land tenure, initiated by the Land Court, were to have a significant effect on Rarotongan society. Rulings of the Land Court tended to increase the economic influence of *ariki* as individuals, while reducing their political influence over the *iti tangata*; the economic and political autonomy of the latter was also largely expanded by the Land Court.

As Chief Judge, Gudgeon transposed his experience as a Land Court Judge in New Zealand to his rulings in the Cook Islands. Thus, he referred to the corporate descent groups of a tribe (*vaka*) by the New Zealand Maori term *hapu*.130 *Hapu* membership was comprised of all descendants of a founding ancestor, which gave precedence, but was not restricted to, patrilineal descent (Gilson 1980:137-139).

In practice, Gudgeon granted freehold titles to descent groups, and favoured the rights of ‘occupants’ over the rights of non-resident chiefs, who claimed land by virtue of their ‘trusteeship’ over it. The interests of chiefs were legally maintained by vested co-ownership, or by a requirement that *atinga* [tribute] be levied by the descent group in question for the period of the chief’s life. By granting *atinga* or co-ownership only for the lifetime of a chief, Gudgeon intended that once the incumbent chief died, freehold land rights would revert entirely to the descent group. Thus, rights of *atinga* and chiefly co-ownership were not inheritable. By vesting ‘inalienable rights’ at the level of the *hapu*, Gudgeon anticipated that agricultural production would increase, as descent groups would no longer be subject to the direct authority of *ariki*. In this way the political ascendancy of the *ariki* was eroded through the administration of the Land Court. In cases where an *ariki* claimed unoccupied land, it was granted to the descent group of the *ariki*. *Ariki* did accumulate an increased number of freehold rights to land through the Land Court, however – freehold was granted to an *ariki* title for village house sites (such as the missionary settlements), and blocks of land associated with the title (Crocombe 1964:112-114; Gilson 1980:141-143).

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130 As described on page 27, the analogous term to this would have been *ngati*, although according to Crocombe (1964), *ngati* could be distinguished into ‘major’ and ‘minor’ forms. ‘Minor’ *ngati* were a subgroup of ‘major’ *ngati* – in this case Gudgeon’s use of the term *hapu* is more appropriately applied to the former.
Gudgeon’s stipulation of lifetime rights for *ariki* was later contested. Judge MacCormick presided over the Land Court from 1912, and he determined that freehold rights could not be restricted in this way. He compensated *ariki* for loss of *atinga* and/or co-ownership by granting a portion of contested lands to *ariki* as freehold title (Gilson 1980:145-147). Under these rulings *ariki*, rather than their descent groups, came to possess freehold title over land in their districts. In return, the descent group of the land in question was released of all obligations to the respective *ariki*.

**Political Changes, 1901-1935**

The diminution of the political authority of *ariki* was particularly evident regarding *atinga*. Despite provisions that *atinga* be provided by various descent groups, in 1910 Makea Takau complained she had asked the people of Avarua to repair her house and many had refused (Gilson 1980:143,146). Similarly, Makea Takau had not received *atinga* from the Uritaua people of Avatiu; they refused to pay her despite a Land Court order to that effect. These were not isolated cases. The control of land by *ariki* had been a primary component of chiefly influence, but now *ariki* were no longer able to compel obedience by threat of expulsion, and their influence suffered. In 1920, they complained to a Parliamentary party visiting Rarotonga from New Zealand:

> MAOTE, acting as a spokesman for the Arikis, asked that the power, the mana of the Arikis and the Mataiapos should be returned to them. They did not know why their mana had been taken away from them…. The people were previously under the Arikis, now they were free. Now the Arikis and Mataiapos commanded no power whatever: the people now said they were as good as the chiefs and took no notice of their authority (NZP 1920:3).

A number of changes to the administrative and judicial system were introduced after annexation. These had the effect of centralising authority in the Resident Commissioner and, in the outer islands, the Resident Agents. The outer island *ariki* courts were abolished in the 1904 Amendment Act, and the Resident Commissioner and each Outer Islands’ Resident Agent assumed the right to hear cases under island ordinances (Wilson 1969b:29; Gilson 1980:122). In 1907 their powers were extended to preside over all criminal cases, with the exception of murder and manslaughter, and all civil cases, with the exception of divorce and claims less than £50 (Wilson 1969b:31; 131 The Resident Commissioner, Captain Eman Smith, sided with the people on this issue.)
Gilson 1980:122). In Rarotonga, Gudgeon abolished the *ariki* court by refusing to appoint new judges when the incumbents died.

Legislation was introduced and approved by the Federal Council to govern the appointment of chiefs of all ranks. Subject to the approval of the Resident Commissioner, new title holders were appointed by unanimous vote of the respective Island Council. If unanimity was not achieved, a candidate was appointed by the Resident Commissioner. *Ariki* could be removed from office subject to unanimous vote by the Island Council (excluding the titleholder concerned); once again with the approval of the Resident Commissioner (Gilson 1980:122).

The disempowerment of *ariki* was justified on grounds they were unable to effectively execute the few functions remaining to them, such as road maintenance (Gilson 1980:124). This was largely due to the Administration’s policy regarding law and land – *ariki*’s political authority was largely derived from their influence in matters of land tenure, and their prominence in the administration of law at a district level. Land Court rulings, and the abolishment of the *ariki* courts, undermined the capacity of *ariki* to effectively coerce people to comply with their authority.

After annexation, the most important legislation to pass through the New Zealand Parliament was the Cook Islands Act (1915). Under this Act, the Federal Council was disbanded, although there was provision for Island Councils, which were comprised of *ariki* and additional members nominated by the *ariki*, with the approval of the Resident Commissioner (Stone 1965:81). These Councils were responsible for matters such as the compulsory planting of land (for export crops such as oranges and bananas), rating of properties, curfews and sanitary inspections (Wilson 1969b:31; Gilson 1980:130). The Land Court, rather than the Island Councils, assumed jurisdiction over *ariki* succession. The role of island leaders in governance was diminished by the Cook Islands Act.

By 1915 the New Zealand administration was firmly established, and little legislative change occurred in the Cook Islands for some time. The Cook Islands received very little political attention from New Zealand in years to follow – the islands were generally neglected until the movement toward independence, in the 1960s.

**Economy, 1901-1935**

This neglect was most evident in shipping (Wilson 1969b:37). New Zealand held a monopoly on all exports, and although agricultural production had increased since
annexation, measures put in place for the export of produce were inadequate. Shipping was irregular and unreliable, so that produce rotted while waiting for overdue ships, or alternately, when the ship did arrive, the Captain refused to take cargo (Scott 1991:116-117). Despite these impediments, exports increased throughout the 20th Century, declining only during the First World War and the 1930s Depression:

*Table VI: Cook Islands Exports, 1901-1945.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>27819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>34890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>90749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>63057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>94697</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>151939</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>109438</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>53599</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>90397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>106246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Growers in the Cook Islands, both Maori and Papa’a, benefited from increased trade following annexation – although the benefit to Papa’a growers and traders was disproportionate to Maori. In 1910, Sir Peter Buck noted that Rarotongans were “a happy crowd and much better off than we [New Zealand Maori] are…. They’ve plenty of tucker and every adult female has a sewing machine and every male has a bicycle and an umbrella” (Ngata and Buck 1986:27). Maori who were dependent on wage income received little benefit. Wages remained static from the 1900s, with increases actively discouraged by the New Zealand administration; in the 1920s wages were at rates similar to those in 1900. In Rarotonga, workers from the outer islands were particularly disadvantaged, as they had no claims to land, and thus had little option but to work under prevailing conditions. As non-Rarotongan Maori, they also lacked the political clout and representation necessary to improve their lot.

Although agricultural exports grew in importance prior to World War One, Maori growers typically grew cash crops as a supplement to subsistence production. The amount of land dedicated to agricultural production increased rapidly from annexation until 1906, but thereafter the proportion of new land cultivated for production only slightly exceeded the rate of population increase (Gilson 1980:154). On Rarotonga, bananas, citrus and tomatoes were the principle exports: most of outer islands produced copra (Wilson 1969b:34,36). European traders dominated export trade – profits were
returned to growers only once costs of freight, handling, and commission were deducted. Maori-controlled growing co-operatives were formed, and enjoyed some success until the beginning of World War One. When war began, shipping diminished, and indigenous growing co-operatives went out of business.

The traders’ monopoly was facilitated by a new system of allocating shipping space for fruit: five traders and fifteen European growers were allocated no less than half the total shipping space available and the 700 or so Maori planters had to share the remaining half. The New Zealand auctioneers began buying through the traders, stopping their previous practice of sending their cases direct to the Maori growers, and thus sending most of the Maori companies out of business (Wilson 1969b:39).

As there was invariably a surplus of produce, traders only accepted produce from Maori who owed them money (in order to recoup their debt), which disadvantaged debt-free growers (Gilson 1980:160-161; Scott 1991:155-156). Wireless communication was also available, and Papa’a traders used it to set prices with New Zealand wholesalers before shipment, which effectively ended local competition for produce (Gilson 1980:161). Nevertheless, the 1920s marked a period of comparative wealth. Returns from the export of fruit were good until the latter years of the decade, when prices plummeted.132 Trade slumped from then to the early 1930s, and most of the islands’ inhabitants were forced to return to subsistence as a primary means of household production (Scott 1991:199-201). In the outer islands, this was possible, although by no means easy, to accomplish. But a significant proportion of the Rarotongan economy had become dependent on foreign trade, and the effects of the depression were keenly felt. Most housing consisted of imported materials, such as corrugated iron, and when these could not be replaced, the people resorted to constructing roofs from coconut leaves.133 Coconut palms were stripped of leaves, which reduced their capacity to produce nuts, which were ordinarily an important subsistence food. Subsequently, people decimated fish stocks in the lagoon (Scott 1991:201). Maori from the outer islands who had emigrated to Rarotonga to find wage work were severely affected, as they did not possess land, and had no secure means of achieving subsistence production.

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132 After a peak in the mid-twenties, prices declined to about half. Orange exports were a case in point – returns halved when Australian oranges flooded the New Zealand market toward the end of the decade.
133 Pandanus, which was a superior roofing material, had been neglected when superior, imported materials for building were made available. What little pandanus remained was afflicted by blight.
**Social Development, 1901-1935**

Education and health provision did not improve. After annexation, the LMS (which ran most of Rarotonga’s primary schools) recommended the New Zealand Government take over education, that instruction in English be adopted, and that European teachers be placed in charge of the island’s main schools. Gudgeon provided teachers’ salaries, and a subsidy of £330 to Tereora College (which remained under LMS control), but all other expenses, such as building maintenance and lodging for teachers, were paid by local people. Gudgeon was antagonistic toward island education, and in 1907 recommended to MacGowan (then Minister responsible for the Cook Islands) that the New Zealand Administration take no part in education, with the exception of the £200 subsidy paid to the LMS for administration of Tereora College (Gilson 1980:169-171; Scott 1991:104).

The LMS struggled to provide education. Moreover, the standard of education provided was unsatisfactory to Maori. When a New Zealand parliamentary party visited the islands in 1903, people spoke of their desire for an English, secular education (Scott 1991:102). This was not forthcoming, and interest in education waned significantly. The Adventist school closed prior to 1908, and attendance at the remaining LMS schools slumped, excepting Avarua Primary School and Tereora College. By 1910, Tereora was closed by LMS directors, who could no longer sustain the cost of keeping it open. Fifty years passed before Tereora re-opened (Crocombe 1979a:1; Gilson 1980:172).

The Administration took responsibility for education in 1914, when the LMS granted its school lands to New Zealand. Education was primarily in English, with Maori used only as a means to facilitate proficiency in English. In 1916 compulsory attendance for children aged between 6 and 14 was introduced, and over 400 children were enrolled at Avarua and Ngatangi’ia primary schools (Gilson 1980:172-173). Over the next decade, the curriculum was centralised, a Superintendent was appointed to standardise education, and by 1928 eighty-five percent of children aged between six and fourteen living in Rarotonga were enrolled. More children became proficient in English, although most children were skilled only in Maori (Gilson 1980:175-177).

Health facilities, like education, were not considered important by Gudgeon. He regarded Maori as a ‘dying race’ that would benefit little from health services (Wilson

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134 However, while attendance at Tereora had not suffered a significant drop during this time, by 1908 no pupils from the outer islands attended the Cook Islands’ only secondary school.
Piped water was introduced during his term of office, primarily to control the transmission of dysentery, but in general, hospital and medical services were not a priority (Wilson 1969b:49, 50; Gilson 1980:179).

Medical services developed slowly, particularly prior to 1917, as the New Zealand Government was not willing to fund salaries for medical staff. Nevertheless, health campaigns were waged against yaws (which had been misdiagnosed as syphilis in the early part of the century) and mosquito control, and in 1919 efforts were made to improve housing (Gilson 1980:180). Medical services expanded in the 1920s, and hygiene was introduced to the primary school curriculum (Wilson 1969b:51; Gilson 1980:180). Dr S.M. Lambert visited the islands in 1922, and recommended mass treatment for hookworm, which was implemented the following year (Lambert 1941:266; Gilson 1980:180). Mosquito control was improved with the introduction of larvae-eating fish to swamps. Additional personnel were provided to health: assistant medical practitioners were trained at the Fiji Medical School from 1928, nurse training was introduced at Avarua hospital, and the au va’ine, or women’s committees, were recruited to help improve community hygiene. Rarotonga received a free school dental clinic in 1926 (Wilson 1969b:51, 52; Gilson 1980:180-181).

Demographic information between 1901 and 1935 is sparse, as the Administration did not prioritise censuses. In the early 20th century the Maori population remained static, but between 1906 and 1915 it began to recover (Wilson 1969b:48). In 1903, Gudgeon claimed between four and five hundred Cook Islanders had migrated to Tahiti, so it is probable that emigration and immigration (or the return of expatriate Maori) was demographically significant. In 1918 the influenza epidemic reached Rarotonga and killed 45 people, although the outer islands of the Cook group were unaffected – quarantine measures were quickly introduced. By the 1920s, the death rate had fallen in Rarotonga, due largely to improvements in health facilities provided by the Administration (Gilson 1980:180-182).

When Dr Lambert visited the Southern Cook Islands in 1925, he regarded Cook Islanders as having a good health, relative to inhabitants of other Pacific Islands. This did not mean that their general health was good by Papa’a standards:

135 The notion that Cook Islands Maori were a ‘dying race’, ill-suited to the onslaught of civilisation and disease, was a popular view in New Zealand regarding New Zealand Maori as well.
136 Dr Lambert worked on behalf of the Rockefeller Foundation (Stuart 2002). This organisation introduced hookworm programs throughout the Pacific (Farley 1995; Stuart 2002).
137 Dr Lambert was integral to the establishment of the Fiji Medical School in 1927.
As an inquiring physician I noted the fine condition of the men; handicapped by imported disease, inadequately defended by a medical system not yet well organized, they seemed to be building up their bodies against many of the ills that attacked them. The principal occupational disease among them was hernia, result of lifting heavy loads (Lambert 1941:269).

In addition to hookworm and filariasis, leprosy was a problem, particularly in the Northern islands of the Cook group (Lambert 1941:279). Lambert’s special mention of hernias as ‘the principal occupational disease’ among men should also be understood in the social context in which he wrote – the prevailing conception of Polynesian peoples in New Zealand and other colonies was that they were lazy and unproductive. A number of contemporary commentators realised the fallacy of this conception after visiting the islands, and some strove to impress on others how wrong these ideas were. As late as 1954, tuberculosis was an important source of morbidity and mortality in the Cook Islands, affecting 36 out of every 1,000 Rarotongans and accounting for 17% of deaths in the Cook Islands (Wilson 1969a:101). Its effects were keenly felt in Rarotonga, due to an increased concentration of people who had moved there to find employment and enjoy the benefits of its (comparatively) metropolitan facilities and access to imported goods (Lambert 1941:268). Overcrowding in housing was common in Avarua, and was accompanied by increased transmission of tuberculosis (Lambert 1941:268; Wilson 1969a:53). Despite calls for a sanatorium to be established separate to the hospital, it was some years before funds were provided for this purpose.

The child welfare, sanitation, and women’s committees (au va’ine) were organised and/or encouraged by a New Zealand Maori, Dr E.P. Ellison, who was Chief Medical Officer in the 1920s. The inclusion of the au va’ine in health measures was one of his successful initiatives. Women organised themselves into groups and visited houses and plantations to encourage good housekeeping and agricultural practices. They

138 “I have been familiar for many years with many Rarotongan natives. I know their language and can talk to them, and I know their habits. The food supply on these islands is a constant incentive to them to an idleness and disinclination to toil that does not exist among the natives of New Zealand, though you can better persuade the Natives of New Zealand to continuous labour than you can the islanders. The fault of the New Zealanders is that you cannot induce them to toil continuously for more than a few weeks or a month, and then they want to go to their kaingas [homes]” (Mr Monk, in NZHR 1902:453).
139 Sir Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) was one of these.
140 Many Maori from the Outer Islands also travelled to Rarotonga in order to procure money for their families, which were remitted back to their families.
urged people to plant crops for daily subsistence, rather than rely on imported foods (including canned foods), which were becoming more popular in the 1920s (Wilson 1969a:52; Gilson 1980:180-181; Scott 1991:181).

In the 1920s, one of the premier attractions in Avarua was a cinema, which attracted many patrons and screened movies three times a week. According to Scott (Scott 1991:176), cinema in Rarotonga stimulated economic production, as families sought to increase their plantations in order to obtain money to attend, and young men sought wage work for the same purpose. Entertainment was not restricted to those with enough cash to spare; those who could not afford to pay the admission price were able to pay with a case of oranges:

The fun and games on picture nights started about four o’clock in the afternoon, when (facilitatory) Uncle Willie Browne, the proprietor of the theatre, would climb onto one of his trucks (the one that was in working order) with a sheaf of mimeographed notices about that night’s showing and, with numerous members of his drum band, start around the Island. While the drums beat out a hot Cook Islands’ drum tune, Uncle Willie, sitting like a king in an armchair, would cast the mimeographed notices to those that the beat of the drums had brought to the roadside. More often than not, those waiting on the roadside would not be able to resist the drums and spontaneous dancing would break out with great abandon (Davis 1992:10).

Lambert suggested that 1920s commerce brought less palatable consequences, such as a desire for imported goods, which led to moral laxity:

Gonorrhoea, already gaining in 1925-6, was not entirely blamable [sic] on that old scapegoat, Tahiti. The Hollywood movie had become the popular notion of European behaviour. Imitate clothes, imitate morals. The local girl had acquired a craving for silk stockings and high heels, things that must be paid for with pakeha\textsuperscript{141} money, however she got it. Disease-bearing Tahitian boys were coming over with a bribe which few Rarotongan girls could resist – bottles of French perfume (Lambert 1941:268).\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Pakeha} is the New Zealand Maori equivalent of \textit{Papa’a}.

\textsuperscript{142} It is notable in historical commentaries regarding the sexual ‘immorality’ of Rarotongans that various authors attribute a loss of morality to contemporary influences such as loss of culture, social structure (Gilson 1980), or in this case, contact with the ‘outside world’ – as indicated in previous chapters, this characteristic of Rarotongan sexual practice has existed since first contact with Europeans. The failure of commentators to acknowledge this perhaps reveals more about individual agendas than it does the history of Rarotongan sexual relations.
Late New Zealand Administration, 1935-1965

In the decades prior to the election of the first New Zealand Labour Government in 1935,\textsuperscript{143} the aims of the Cook Islands Administration shifted toward provision of adequate educational and health facilities. A number of these measures were relatively successful, but other aspects of island administration remained inadequate – with shipping foremost amongst these. In 1935 M.J. Savage, the new Prime Minister, assumed the Cook Islands portfolio and, initially at least, determined to improve the status of produce trade in the islands (Scott 1991:223). In 1936 a parliamentary delegation was sent to the southern islands to investigate local agriculture, and found that traders persisted in providing preferential cargo space to growers who were indebted to them (Wilson 1969b:39-40; Gilson 1980:187-188). They recommended a tribunal review existing debts and that future debts incurred through traders’ advances be made non-recoverable by law (Scott 1991:207).

Initially, the efforts of the Labour Party to encourage trade, including the establishment of a growers’ association in Rarotonga, led to renewed enthusiasm for production among Maori. Local enthusiasm was short-lived, however, as the first voyage of a new, refrigerated ship provided by the New Zealand government failed to load more than 10,000 cases of fruit from Atiu and Ma’uke, and the price offered for cases of fruit was similar to that offered previously. Prices were kept low to recoup initial marketing expenses, and to provide cheap fruit to New Zealand consumers. Maori growers were not informed of this, and became dissatisfied with the new regime (Wilson 1969b:43-44; Gilson 1980:189-190; Scott 1991:214). Over the next decade exports of bananas (and other produce) dropped markedly:

\textit{Table VII: Cook Islands Banana Exports, 1926-1949.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>84451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>62390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>49431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>46265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>17319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>3136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wilson (1969b:44); Scott (1991:221); NZP (1926:5).

\textsuperscript{143} This was New Zealand’s first ‘socialist’ government, and introduced, through the Social Securities Act (1938), universal entitlement for all citizens to minimum health care, and minimum income for the unemployed, widows, and retirees (Koops 1996).
In part, this decline was also due to World War II, which diverted attention from the Cook Islands. The war also sparked emigration by young Cook Islanders to New Zealand, where labour was in demand, and working conditions were better (Wilson 1969a:60; Scott 1991:227). The experiences of Cook Islanders during the War also gave rise to the most significant Maori political organisation to emerge prior to independence in 1965 – the Cook Islands Progressive Association (CIPA).

CIPA was formed in Aitutaki in 1943, and gave voice to widespread, but previously muted, discontentment with treatment of Maori by New Zealand (Gilson 1980:192-193; Scott 1991:231-232). In 1944, a Rarotongan branch of CIPA was formed. Initially the association advocated the provision of adequate shipping and means for an effective export trade. Soon other issues entered the agenda, such as demands for elected representatives on the Island Councils, the (re)establishment of a Federal Council, and debates on whether the Cook Islands should have a representative in the New Zealand parliament – all of which were ignored (Wilson 1969a:61; Gilson 1980:193; Scott 1991:232). In New Zealand, a branch of CIPA was formed by Albert Henry in 1945 (Gilson 1980:194). Henry was a Maori of Aitutakian descent who was politically active in the islands before migrating to New Zealand in 1942. In Aitutaki, Henry distinguished himself as a teacher, a leading community figure, and a supporter of socialist philosophies. In New Zealand, he became a member of the Labour Party, the Cook Islands (NZ) Party, and a key member in the establishment of the (then) Pacific Islanders Church. He also forged a relationship with the Auckland Trades Council (ATC). After encouragement from the ATC, Henry established a branch of CIPA in Auckland (Gilson 1980:184; Scott 1991:216-221).

In 1945, CIPA allied itself with Cook Islands watersiders who were demanding an increase in wages, and were successful in extracting concessions from the Administration (Wilson 1969a:61; Gilson 1980:194; Scott 1991:234, 237-242, 245). Subsequently, an industrial magistrate was sent to assess conditions in Rarotonga, and his report vindicated CIPA’s demands for improved conditions (Wilson 1969a:61). This report was not released to the public, New Zealand or Cook Islands (Scott 1991:240-242). In response, the Labour Government set up its own union to distract Maori

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144 Wages had not increased in the ten years the Labour Government had held power, and were the lowest in the Pacific, even though Avarua wharf was regarded as one of the most dangerous in the Pacific.
145 One of the most successful was a strike organised by Avarua waterside workers, who obtained a slight wage increase from the Union Steamship Company and the New Zealand Administration – the latter party had leased the government ship, the *Maui Pomare*, to the company (Scott 1991:237-238).
attention from CIPA, and sent two officials to effect this purpose, who were singularly unsuccessful (Wilson 1969a:62; Scott 1991:243). CIPA recommendations, including a call for the waterfront wage to be raised to 8/-, were eventually approved, but credited to the recommendations of New Zealand representatives (Wilson 1969a:62; Scott 1991:243).

CIPA’s influence increased, and it continued to raise public grievances, particularly regarding working conditions and the lack of Maori representation in legislative and administrative institutions. Popular support for CIPA was palpably demonstrated in 1947, during another watersiders’ dispute. Earlier that year, the New Zealand Government had unionised government workers, intending to undermine CIPA’s influence, and toward this end introduced wage rates recommended by their Government-sponsored union officials (see above) (Scott 1991:248). At Avarua wharf, CIPA members refused to work with Union members while servicing the *Maui Pomare*, claiming that CIPA possessed the sole right to appoint labourers (Wilson 1969a:63). In response, public works staff (now Union members) were brought in to service the ship. Two CIPA representatives rowed out to the *Maui Pomare* to ask the seamen not to work the cargo. The seamen agreed – and the Administration arrested and jailed the two CIPA representatives, for stealing the canoe they used to visit the *Maui Pomare* (Wilson 1969a:63). CIPA responded swiftly – over 300 Maori gathered at the post office and demanded the prisoners be released, on threat of violence. The prisoners were released by order of the Resident Commissioner (Davis and Davis 1955:157). The next steamer did not unload cargo at Avarua because the wharf was blockaded by another CIPA picket line, and the steamer after that was delayed when women picketed the wharf for two hours. They were dispersed by a squad of armed police flown from New Zealand to ensure waterside labour was carried out (Wilson 1969a:64; Scott 1991:243-253; Davis 1992:157). Later, another shipment was stalled at Avarua by a women’s picket. The next ship was accompanied by more armed police, who ensured loading went ahead. From that time on, CIPA adopted a policy of non-compliance (Wilson 1969a:64; Scott 1991:255-259).

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146 As already stated, it was CIPA that initially made this recommendation.
147 These charges were questionable, to say the least. The so-called “owner” of the canoe had filed no charges, and one of the CIPA activists was a member of the family who owned the canoe, and had helped build it – so they had every right to use it (Scott 1991:254).
In part, antagonism by the New Zealand Government toward CIPA was due to the perceived affiliation of CIPA with militant trade unions in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{148} In the early years of the cold war, militant unions were largely communist organisations; whereas the New Zealand Labour Government adopted a more moderate approach to socialism. In 1948 Prime Minister Fraser met with Albert Henry, and thereafter promised to provide funds for establishment of a CIPA-controlled scheme of co-operative trading (Scott 1991:260). Subsequently, CIPA purchased a £13,000 vessel, \textit{La Reta}, with an £11,000 loan from the New Zealand government. This venture was initially popular among Maori, but quickly failed, costing the New Zealand Government £9,000 in the process, and all CIPA shareholders’ investments.\textsuperscript{149} The \textit{La Reta} was ill-suited to inter-island trade – its tonnage was inadequate, and it was fitted for passenger transport rather than cargo. CIPA leaders had little or none of the skills required for managing such an operation, nor were they possessed of sufficient expertise to identify the inadequacies of the \textit{La Reta} (Gilson 1952:364). Moreover, they received little useful advice from their benefactors on any of these matters (Scott 1991:266-267).

Apparently, the loss incurred by the New Zealand Government was acceptable. It had been advised of the unsuitability of the \textit{La Reta} both prior to and during preparation of the vessel for service (Scott 1991:267). Despite its commercial failure, CIPA remained a politically potent force. Other community organisations suffered under New Zealand Administration. The \textit{au va’ine} (women’s committees) were relieved of their semi-official duties by the Administration, as it feared that this organisation, like CIPA, might provide a foundation for the organisation of political resistance. Later, community-based organisations proposed by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Davis, were also disregarded on these grounds (Gilson 1980:203; Scott 1991:247,270).

During this period the Islands benefited from increased annual grants to the Administration. This occurred concurrently with the Government’s conflict with CIPA, and was substantial – if only in comparison with previous grants. Most funds paid expatriate salaries and housing, although large amounts were distributed to health, education, and public works services (Wilson 1969a:68). Government-fixed prices for oranges increased from 1945-1950, and large subsidies were provided for replanting

\textsuperscript{148} Albert Henry received support and advice from the Auckland Trades Council. He supported them despite criticism, as the ATC had assisted CIPA while protesting for the rights of sewing labourers.

\textsuperscript{149} Some 2,000 CIPA shareholders held £4,000 in shares.
fruit trees. Roads were improved, water tanks installed, and school children received free milk (Wilson 1969a:68-69; Scott 1991:270).

From the mid 1940s, the most significant improvement to health provision was attributable to the influence of a Rarotongan Maori, Dr Tom Davis. Dr. Davis received his medical degree in New Zealand, and was appointed Medical Officer in 1945. Health services had suffered from professional and financial neglect. Both Maori and Papa’a preferred to visit ta’unga (indigenous medical experts, or in Davis’ translation, ‘witch doctors’) rather than biomedical practitioners, whom they generally distrusted.

Dr Davis’ success was partly attributable to the fact that he was Rarotongan, and so had some influence on the island, but also because he was not partial to the racism espoused, and practiced, by his colleagues. Unlike his predecessors, Davis did not regard biomedical techniques as ineffective or inapplicable to Maori patients, and was able to persuade sceptical Maori to participate in biomedical treatment by virtue of kinship, and his personal mana. He was able to perform injections, for example, after establishing the reasons behind Maori reticence for treatment:

I thought this [fear of injection] strange because I did not remember them being particularly afraid of anything. Later in conversation with some old friends and people in general, I gleaned their opinion of the medical service. In regard to injections it was simple. When patients were moribund, it was the custom of the doctor to give them an injection of morphine, “To ease their going,” Matron explained when I talked to her about it later. Naturally, some Islanders assumed either that the patients were dying as a result of the injections or that it was a last resort. It was in effect a pronouncement of death (Davis 1992:34).

Davis better utilised the skills of the Assistant Medical Practitioners and nurses, and enjoyed increased funding from the Administration. Improvements were introduced to health services, but they were still inadequate – later, Davis’ successor resigned in protest at the sub-standard condition of the hospital (Scott 1991:282).

Antagonism between the Administration and Maori, articulated by CIPA, was further aggravated with the arrival of tax collectors in 1954. In 1939 the New Zealand Government passed legislation to include the Cook Islands in New Zealand tax revenue. Prior to 1954, however, labour shortages in the Tax Department had precluded tax collection. Upon their arrival, Maori protested strongly, so tax collection was put on hold (Wilson 1969a:70-71; Scott 1991:178).
In the 1950s, New Zealand newspapers began to report events in the Cook Islands. For the first time in many years, the New Zealand public was informed of the inadequacies, and on occasion, incompetence of the Administration by a critical media. In 1958, the New Zealand Government introduced a new Legislative Council. It controlled all revenue collected within the Cook Islands, and thus went some way toward power-sharing, although New Zealand grants remained under the Minister’s control (Wilson 1969a:87; Scott 1991:282-283). International politics also affected New Zealand’s administration of its colonial territories. In 1960, the United Nations made the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Powers; New Zealand voted in favour of the Declaration, and thereafter was committed to decolonising the Cook Islands (Stone 1965:82). This was desirable for two reasons: first, New Zealand would be saved the expense of maintaining its Pacific territories, and second, strategists suggested that New Zealand’s interests “rested heavily on the degree to which the country identified itself with the island nations of Polynesia” (Scott 1991:285) as a co-operative, rather than controlling, state.

The course of devolution proceeded quickly. In 1962 powers of the Legislative Council were extended, so they controlled all revenue – domestic and New Zealand grants and subsidies (Stone 1965:81-82). An executive committee was established in 1963, which functioned as a cabinet for the Cook Islands. It was comprised of members elected from the Council and three official appointments, including the Resident Commissioner (Stone 1965:82). In 1964 the Resident Commissioner and officials were withdrawn from the Council and the executive, and in 1965 elections were held, along with a referendum to decide the relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

Throughout this process, commentators argued that the Cook Islands were not ready for independence, as Maori were unaccustomed to democratic representation (Syme 1975:199-200; Scott 1991:290). They argued that few Maori possessed skills required for government administration; a legacy of the Administration’s policy of employment discrimination. These objections were disregarded on two grounds: first, the Declaration stipulated that lack of preparedness was not sufficient cause for delaying independence, and second, that the only way to obtain sufficient experience for independence was through independence: if the former criterion was pursued,

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150 Western Samoa was also a colonial territory of New Zealand. It was granted independence in 1962.
independence would never occur. In the Cook Islands, most people did not favour full independence from New Zealand. They preferred a government in which the Cook Islands retained control of its internal affairs, and New Zealand was responsible for external matters, such as currency valuation and defence. Cook Islanders would retain New Zealand citizenship, and also become Cook Islands citizens.

The election of representatives to Government gave rise to the only significant controversy in the Islands’ first elections. Albert Henry, who returned to New Zealand in 1950 after the failure of the La Reta, signalled his intention to campaign for a seat in Government. He was still immensely popular in the Islands, particularly through his work for CIPA, which he continued in New Zealand. The incumbent members of the Legislative Council were aware of Henry’s popularity, and in an effort to thwart him, introduced a requirement that each electoral candidate must reside in the Cook Islands three years prior to the election (Stone 1965:98; Scott 1991:289). Henry, the CIPA central committee, and their supporters were the first to form a political party prior to the elections. The Cook Islands Party was inaugurated in 1964 in Avarua, at a meeting attended by 600 Cook Islanders. A charter was established, but as the assembly was about to vote for Henry as president, the meeting was interrupted by Makea Nui Teremoana Ariki, who complained the meeting was held on her land without her consent, that she did not favour self-government, and that she desired recognition of the ariki by government (Stone 1965:94-95). Events that followed illustrated the increasing ambiguous role of ariki. Henry criticised Makea Ariki for her lack of advocacy on behalf of Maori as a member of the Legislative Council, but offered her the presidency if she agreed to support the Cook Islands Party (Stone 1965:95). She agreed, although there was considerable reluctance by people to nominate, and then elect, her as president. Stone, who was present at the meeting, wrote that it “was noticeable that some did not vote and a few raised their hands to oppose her election” (Stone 1965:95). Eventually all the ariki were appointed to the party committee, but they insisted on reviving old grievances during meetings, and in due course were relegated to token positions within the party. Makea Ariki resigned from her position just one week after her appointment – contemporary accounts indicate the Resident Commissioner had pressured her to resign, and Stone suggests that her involvement with the CIP was regarded as disloyal to the New Zealand Administration, which had supported the

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151 A constitutional advisory committee had recommended just three months – a requirement that Henry could have easily fulfilled.
interests of Makea Ariki titleholders since annexation (Stone 1965:95; Scott 1991:294). Subsequently, Henry assumed the presidency.

In 1965 the first democratic election delivered fourteen of twenty-two seats to the Cook Islands Party. As Albert Henry was not able to stand, his sister, Marguerite Story, was elected in his place. Story remained an elected member of parliament until the 3-year residency requirement was amended, and then resigned in favour of Henry, who was elected in the following by-election. The Cook Islands parliament voted in favour of self-government, which was subsequently proclaimed by New Zealand. Henry was sworn in as Premier of the Cook Islands on August 4, 1965.

Alcohol During New Zealand Rule, 1901-1965

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, alcohol maintained its value as a politically salient symbol. Dissatisfaction with legal discrimination of Maori from Papa’a regarding access to kava papa’a was a recurrent cause for complaint. Often, the status of Maori regarding alcohol was compared with their disempowerment under New Zealand rule. Moral recriminations of alcohol use, predominant during the period of missionary ascendance, persisted as an important component of debates surrounding alcohol.

Representation and the Bottle

The expressed policy of the New Zealand Government was that alcohol should be prohibited to Maori, but that Papa’a should maintain the right to purchase and consume alcohol (Gilson 1980:102). Legislation proposed in 1899 (prior to annexation) increased taxes on the import of alcohol, made permits available to Maori only if the relevant ariki signed them personally, and introduced a Government monopoly over the distribution of alcohol. Papa’a were able to obtain alcohol by means of a permit issued by the Licensing Officer. The Licensing Officer was merely responsible for the distribution of alcohol – it was purchased and imported by traders, who were required to store it on Government premises. Papa’a were allowed to purchase three bottles of spirits per person per week. Although these recommendations were approved, they had not entered

152 The Makea Nui title was considered the most senior ariki title by the New Zealand Administration, following the precedent set by the Rarotongan mission in the 19th century. As the Administration would be disbanded on independence, an important source of political support would be removed from the Makea Ariki – Makea Nui Teremoana Ariki did not relish the probability that she would stand in equal stead with the other ariki should the Cook Islands become self-governing (Stone 1965:95).
legislation at the time of annexation. For four years after annexation, the distribution of alcohol was controlled by legislation introduced by Moss, although Gudgeon ‘encouraged’ the ariki to restrict the number of permits they granted (Gilson 1980:182).

In 1904, laws regarding the distribution of alcohol were changed twice in quick succession. The Administration planned to build a tourist hotel, and this required changes to the law. The 1899 legislation was reintroduced as the Licensing Acts Amendment Act (1904) unaltered, except that Maori and Chinese\textsuperscript{153} were required to obtain liquor permits from the Medical Officer, rather than ariki. Ariki agreed to these changes, apparently because the contrary wishes of missionaries and Maori regarding the issue of permits was more trouble than it was worth (Gilson 1980:183).

Later that year this legislation was amended, and the private sale of liquor was prohibited. The Administration became the sole (legal) purveyor of alcohol to Maori, Europeans, and Chinese, provided they obtained a prescription from the Medical Officer, or required alcohol for sacramental or industrial purposes. Europeans maintained the right to import liquor for personal consumption, subject to approval by the Administration, but private sale or manufacture of alcohol was outlawed (Gilson 1980:183).

Under this legislation the quantities of kava papa’a distributed to Maori became a function of the Medical Officer’s views on liquor. Thus, liquor permits were issued relatively frequently between 1904 and 1914, but slumped in 1915 with the appointment of a new Medical Officer (Davis and Davis 1955:59-60; Gilson 1980:183). Special provisions for Papa’a did not impress Maori, who were of the opinion that Maori and Papa’a should be treated equally in law.\textsuperscript{154} As the following example illustrates, Gudgeon was aware that Maori did not favour the legislation, but social conditions meant that Maori did not entertain public opposition:

Previous to the arrival of the first British Resident the will of the resident missionary had practically been the law of the island, and prohibition was supposed to be the rule. But it existed in name only, for the people, with one or two exceptions, were opposed to it, and assisted European traders to break the Law whenever it suited them to do so. The Maoris do not desire prohibition. At any

\textsuperscript{153} If anything, Chinese were held in less regard than Maori by the New Zealand Administration and the New Zealand Government. Seddon, on his visit to the Cook Islands in 1899, spoke in vituperative terms of the evil influence Chinese would bring to the Islands, if permitted to settle.

\textsuperscript{154} Agitation by indigenous people that associated access to alcohol with equal political representation and citizenship rights has often been noted in the Pacific region and beyond – see Marshall (1982b), Room (1982:443-444), Valverde (1998:162) and Brady (1991:180).
general meeting every man will, for the sake of appearances and the safety of his church membership, speak against the sale of liquor, but privately they, as a rule, favour it, and cannot see why a Maori should be treated differently from a European (Gudgeon to the Minister, 1904 in PIM 1977:31)

Maori support for the legalisation of liquor was not universal, as heard during the Parliamentary visit to Rarotonga in 1911:

Some time ago a man was killed by a lot of drunken people. He was a policeman. He was doing his work as a policeman, and was killed. There was also another European policeman assaulted by drunks, and another of our Native policemen was assaulted – Parau. It was all through drink. This drink is causing a lot of trouble among the Maoris. It is a great evil on this island. That is why I make this request to prohibit liquor altogether (ÔAddress by NativesÔ, in NZP 1911:22).

The legal status of alcohol did not change until 1916, when an amendment to the Cook Islands Act re-established the Administration’s monopoly on alcohol, and Papa’a were again permitted to purchase alcohol for personal consumption:

The Hon. Dr POMARE. – [Cook Islands Bill, second reading] The manufacture of bush-beer is absolutely prohibited under a £50 penalty. It should have a very sobering effect on the people. I admit you cannot make people clean by Act of Parliament, but it is going in the right direction if we provide the soap.

Mr ISITT – Is a European who purchases liquor debarred from selling it to another European?

The Hon. Dr POMARE – All sales must be through the Customs, except, of course, alcohol for medicinal purposes, which must be prescribed in the ordinary way by a medical man (NZHR 1914:252).

Maori still required a prescription from the Medical Officer to purchase kava papa’a. This time, Maori discontentment was made public, coinciding with the return of Cook Islands soldiers from World War One. In 1920, a visiting delegation from the New Zealand Government consulted with the Rarotonga Island Council in an attempt to repair the rift between the Administration and Maori, and to consider a request by Papa’a residents to have a representative on the Council. When asked what concessions might restore goodwill between Maori and the Administration, the counsellors said they would agree to a European representative on condition that liquor and immorality laws
be applied to Maori and Papa’a equally (NZP 1920:15). In 1921, the Cook Islands Act was amended so liquor could only be sold for medicinal, sacramental, or industrial purposes to all Cook Islands residents (Gilson 1980:133; Scott 1991:162).

Maori discontentment with liquor laws did not extend merely to the distribution of kava papa’a, but to the punishment meted out by the court to offenders. Europeans were treated far more leniently by the Court than Maori. A case in point occurred when a prominent Papa’a plantation owner, William Wigmore, shot and killed a Maori youth during a drinking party. At the initial inquest, Wigmore had not been compelled to surrender his guns, the victim’s family was not represented in court, and no evidence other than Wigmore’s own testimony – that he had shot More accidentally – was heard. Maori were incensed. Earlier, another Papa’a trader had assaulted a Papa’a Government Engineer, and had not been charged. Yet Maori were fined heavily for drinking kava maori, and a short time prior to the Wigmore murder, four Cook Islanders had been sent to jail for four months and six months, after assaulting the police chief when he interrupted their bush beer party (Scott 1991:121).

Subsequently, and following reports of the scandal in New Zealand newspapers, a new hearing was called. Court procedure was complicated because legislation required trials of Papa’a to be conducted with all-white juries. As Papa’a formed a relatively close-knit community, and there were only thirty-three eligible candidates, the impartiality of the jury was inevitably farcical. Maori and Papa’a witnesses were called to give evidence, and delivered accounts incommensurate with one another. The only common ground between Maori and Papa’a accounts was that each agreed that the Papa’a were drunk when the shooting took place. Maori witnesses claimed Wigmore argued with Cowan, another Papa’a, after drinking heavily. Later, Wigmore shot More (a Rarotongan Maori) as he attempted to protect Cowan from being shot by standing between the two. European witnesses claimed Wigmore slipped and accidentally shot More. Despite Chief Justice Stout’s opinion that Papa’a witnesses had lied and Maori told the truth, the jury delivered a verdict of manslaughter with a request for leniency (Scott 1991:121-123). Criminal convictions were dominated by alcohol-related offences throughout this period. In 1926, 701 of 1054 criminal cases concerned alcohol-related offences (NZP 1926:12).155

155 Manufacturing intoxicating liquor, 106; consuming intoxicating liquor, 578; drunkenness, 10; illegally handling intoxicating liquor, 2; unlawfully importing intoxicating liquor, 4; having in possession intoxicating liquor, 1 (NZP 1926:12).
Legislative changes introduced in 1921 did not lead to an appreciable change in the relative distribution of alcohol between Maori and Papa’a. Medical Officers favoured the issue of permits to Papa’a, and wholesale imports of alcohol remained relatively constant, at £500–£600, throughout the period of New Zealand rule (Gilson 1980:184). The discrepancy between the allocation of permits to Maori and Papa’a was by no means concealed, and was the subject of considerable discussion in the late 1940s, when Maori again demanded prohibition be enforced for Papa’a. At this time, special provision of alcohol to Papa’a was defended on grounds that the restricted quantities of alcohol available in Rarotonga limited wide-spread drunkenness (presumably drunkenness was best limited to European residents of the Islands), that Europeans had a greater tolerance for alcohol than Maori, that Europeans required alcohol for life in the tropics, and that Maori had access to bush beer (kava maori) through their own manufacture (Gilson 1980:184).

The ‘medicalisation’ of alcohol in the Cook Islands had considerable effect on health services to the islands. As discussed in the previous chapter, health provision was held in poor esteem by Maori, and the Medical Officer’s main function was the provision of kava papa’a. T.R.A Davis’ recollections of his initial experiences in Rarotonga attest this point:

…I obediently followed the Matron to my office which [sic] was next to the clinic. There I was surprised to see a sizeable crowd already waiting for me. This was cheering. I began to think that the stories I had heard of people refusing hospital treatment might after all be an exaggeration. When I had seated myself at my desk, I had another surprise. Matron installed herself firmly by my side, in hand a small pink booklet, which I took to be out-patients’ records of some kind. Here at last was efficiency.

‘Ready to begin, Doctor?’ the Matron said starchily.


‘Come in, whoever got here first. Doctor’s a busy man, no dawdling there.’

Perhaps after all my reputation as a doctor had preceded me.

‘Good morning, what can I do for you?’ I asked.

In reply I got one word, ‘pamati.’

Matron was writing busily in her little pink book. She tore out a page and placed it before me.

‘Sign here, Doctor,’ she said, pushing the pen into my hand.
I didn’t know what *pamati* meant, so to cover my ignorance of this mysterious symptom I picked up the paper and here is what I read:

*I hereby certify that Uti requires 1 bottle of whisky for G.H.P.*

_Signed ......................_

_Medical Officer_

Turning to Matron I asked, ‘What’s this all about?’ (Davis and Davis 1955:58).

As Davis describes the situation pertaining in 1946, permits for alcohol were provided for ‘G.H.P.’ – General Health Purposes. Europeans received differential treatment, as they obtained permits to purchase a standard quantity of alcohol every month from the Customs Officer, and when this ran out they would apply to the Medical Officer for ‘specials’ (Davis and Davis 1955:59-60):

I was astounded at the crowds packed outside the office door and window and I must have shown my amazement.

‘Oh, Doctor, this is nothing. Wait until Saturday. We really get a crowd before the week-ends.’ (Davis and Davis 1955:60).

The legislative status of alcohol changed little with the Amendments to the Cook Islands Act (1921). The unequal distribution of *kava papa’a* remained relatively constant, and so was consistently dissatisfaction to many Maori. Maori lacked meaningful political representation, and were unable to redress the situation even if they could achieve consensus and desired to make changes. In addition, there were more pressing deficiencies in the Administration of the Islands, particularly regarding trade, that were more inclusive of the Maori interests. Church membership, particularly among men, had fallen significantly in the 20th Century, yet opposition of the churches to excessive (and in some cases, any) consumption of alcohol remained an important political and moral consideration (Crocombe 1970:7). Meanwhile, alcohol consumption maintained an important place in the lives of Cook Islands Maori, but in the form of *kava maori*, rather than the imported *kava papa’a*.

**Home-Brew Politics**

‘Bush beer schools’, *pange kava* or *tumunu*, are one of the most interesting forms of alcohol consumption to have evolved in the Pacific. ‘Bush beer schools’ developed from drinking practices of Maori during the period of missionary control, and before
that, from ceremonies associated with the consumption of *kava*, and were influenced in part by Tahitian practices of alcohol consumption.

Practices associated with bush beer schools were elaborated on the southern island of Atiu, although they were also popular on Rarotonga and Aitutaki, and were extant to some degree on all of the Cook Islands (Lemert 1976:565). Beer produced for these drinking sessions followed a similar recipe to that used in during the ascendancy of the LMS Mission – that is, it was typically brewed from the juice of squeezed oranges, which were left to ferment for a few days before they were consumed (Lemert 1976:572; Mokoroa 1984:78). Sometimes honey was added in order to speed fermentation, and less often, other substances such as coconut-blossom nectar, nono fruit, *paru* (yeast) or arrowroot (Lemert 1976:566, 578-579). This alcohol was known as *kava maori* – *maori*, or indigenous, alcohol.

**Bush Beer**

‘Orange rum’, as the missionaries called it, was brewed by one of three methods. Sometimes a hole was dug in the ground, and lined with leaves (taro or banana), into which the juice of oranges was squeezed. Alternately, wooden barrels from ships were used as brewing tanks, and as time progressed, biscuit tins and demijohns also became suitable brewing containers for *kava maori*. Often these were buried and covered with leaves, and according to Lemert:

…a ti leaf or a rip hook placed on top – ‘to keep the ghosts from stealing the alcohol’ – indicating that fermentation was not always successful. A sling with a harness around the barrel was contrived from the inner bark of the lemon hibiscus tree and a carrying pole of wood from the same tree was used to lift the barrel from the hole and move it quickly when necessary (1976:566-567).

In addition to the intervention of ghosts in the brewing process, the intervention of police, missionaries, and thieves necessitated concealment of the brew. The third type of container used in brewing *kava maori* was primarily employed in Atiu, although it was used in the other islands, where the base of a coconut tree was (and is) hollowed out for

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156 Although less common, home-brew was also prepared from pineapple, bananas, and other fruit that was available for the purpose.
157 Lemert (1976:566) translates *paru* as “food scraps”. It is unclear how he formed this translation.
158 Large bottles with narrow necks, often with small handles at the neck, and encased in wickerwork.
the purpose of brewing kava maori. The phrase tumu nu literally means “the trunk of the coconut tree” (Lemert 1976:566-567; Mokoroa 1984:74).

Maori gathered to drink kava maori in groups. They sat in a circle and drank from a single coconut shell, which was filled and passed in turn around assembled drinkers. Distribution of the brew was controlled by a barman (tuati or tangata kapu), who was responsible for the conduct of drinkers, and was able to eject those who became unruly from the circle. During New Zealand rule, consumption of kava maori was illegal, and so a guard or tiaki was appointed to watch the trail for intruders, especially police, and the occasional unwanted visitor (Lemert 1976:567; Mokoroa 1984:79). In the late 1800s / early 1900s, as often as four times during the orange harvest season, villages would host each other for large feasts in which consumption of kava maori followed the provision of food to a visiting village. In Rarotonga, two eponymous groups in Titikaveka159 competed with each other in the provision of food and beer at these feasts, called kava patu (Lemert 1976:567). Accounts of whether women participated in these feasts are conflicting, although Lemert records a statement from a mata’iapo of Rarotonga who claimed that he was instrumental in leading his people to exclude women from drinking in 1895 (Lemert 1976:568). During the first decades of the 20th century, women were largely excluded from drinking kava maori, but the reasons why people chose this course of action are unclear. The most common speculation is that the presence of women in drinking circles led to conflict, as men fought over women, and marriages were threatened by adultery and flirtation (Beaglehole 1957:250; Lemert 1976:568). Certainly, missionary rule in the Cook Islands led to the introduction of a number of laws that governed conduct between men and women, at least wherever those laws were obeyed – including those that prohibited a man to walk with his arm around a woman at night without carrying a light in his other hand, the presumption of adultery should a man cry at the funeral of a woman to whom he was not related, taking an unmarried woman inland, and so on (Davis and Davis 1955:10; Gilson 1980:29; Maretu 1983:88). Although these laws were largely regarded with indifference by Maori, it is possible after seventy or eighty years of missionary influence they achieved some validity in Maori estimations of marital fidelity.160 If this were the case, the presence of

159 Significantly, Titikaveka was a village that had resisted the influence of the missionaries, and so was probably not as vulnerable as the other villages of Rarotonga to fines imposed by the Church for drinking.

160 Although many years removed, these tensions were demonstrated in the late 1960s. Mackenzie (1974:15) noted that: “Women should never attend drinking schools…. Women who are not married that
women in the relatively informal context of drinking sessions may have led to increased tensions among participants.

Large gatherings of Maori for the purpose of feasting and drinking were discontinued from the early 1900s, mainly due to the increased surveillance by the New Zealand Administration (Lemert 1976:568). As mentioned earlier, the ability of ariki and missionaries to enforce the law suffered in the latter years of the 19th century, which probably facilitated the organisation of drinking events deemed illegal under missionary law. Eventually public displays of drinking were no longer possible, unless the drinkers were prepared to suffer fines incurred from the Court:

Whatever there may have been of drunkenness during the last five years has been due to bush beer, which is almost invariably drunk on Sundays with the full knowledge of the chiefs of the tapere, police and church members, but the offenders are never brought before the Court, unless they have been so foolish as to exhibit their drunkenness on the public road where they may be seen before Europeans. Police sympathy is with the beer drinkers (Gudgeon to the Minister, 1904 in PIM 1977:31)

For the majority of drinkers, the risk of legal repercussion for drinking could be reduced by merely going into the bush to do it. This pattern of drinking was a continuation of the covert drinking practiced earlier, when missionary law and surveillance had been more effective. Nevertheless, discovery by authorities, freeloaders, and rivals remained a threat, despite Gudgeon’s claims that drinkers who left public places were safe from prosecution (Lemert 1976:579-581; Mokoroa 1984:75). As a result, in addition to drinking groups becoming comprised of men, smaller groups of drinkers also became predominant (Lemert 1976:568,570). Tensions between drinkers were not restricted to men and women, as men from different villages, or men who did not know each other well, were also prone to conflict under the influence of alcohol, which made drinkers relaxed, less restrained in their relations with other persons, and inclined to goad others in ways they would not under sober circumstances. Over time Maori limited drinking companions to people they could trust, in small groups of close friends or relatives (Lemert 1976:576-577; Mokoroa 1984:76). Economic changes in the transition between missionary influence and New Zealand administration may also have influenced the composition of drinking groups, favouring

are looking for a man [at a drinking school] are assumed to be his sexual partner. I have seen reckoning of a woman who did used as evidence that she had an incestuous relationship with the man.”
those of a smaller size. Oranges assumed more importance as an export, and therefore money-earning, crop, and there may have been an increased opportunity cost, so to speak, associated with using oranges for the production of alcohol rather than income.161 More importantly, from 1910 onward imported ingredients – such as sugar – were increasingly used in the production of *kava maori*. The cost of supplying these ingredients favoured smaller groups of drinkers (Lemert 1976:566,568).

*Tumu Nu / Pange Kava*

*Pange kava* has stimulated the interest of scholars, writers, and travellers primarily due to its ceremonial and ritualistic elements. The practice of drinking circles governed by a barman (*tuati* or *tangata kapu*) resembles earlier Cook Islands practices, and those of the wider Pacific, regarding the consumption of kava (*Piper methysticum*). Lemert notes that drinking participants were principally young men (*mapu*), and older men occupied a marginal role in the bush beer schools (1976:568; Mokoroa 1984:76). Titled persons tended not to take part in drinking sessions, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they often had access to imported spirits obtained through trade or personal influence, and the informality of drinking sessions meant that participants might not be inclined to offer due respect to *mata’iapo*, *rangatira*, and *ariki*.162 Bush beer schools, in addition to becoming the province of men, were associated with commoners rather than titled persons – nevertheless, a number of titled Maori were known to participate in bush beer sessions (Lemert 1976:571). In Rarotonga, where drinkers appear to have had a more relaxed view on whom to admit to bush beer schools, some Papa’a also participated – ironically, some of them held positions of comparative influence, such as the High Court Judge, A.M. McCarthy (Lemert 1976:571; Scott 1991:211,232).

Bush beer schools were typically governed by rules and practices that ordered both the distribution of the beverage and the comportment of the drinkers. Before 1910, drinking sessions were heralded by sounding a conch shell and ringing a bell, and once

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161 There is some evidence that this may have been the case. In the 1940s, at a time when Cook Islands exports were dropping significantly, in no small part due to Maori dissatisfaction with poor returns on their produce, officials took special steps to ensure that export quotas were met – they complained that oranges otherwise fit for export were going into beer-barrels. The opportunity cost of using oranges for beer or export worked both ways (Lemert 1976:572).

162 More obviously, *ariki* would have been restricted partly on the grounds that many of them were women. Titled persons often held positions of influence in the church, and while most took these roles seriously, those that didn’t were unlikely to risk their public reputation by submitting themselves to the gossip of the bush beer schools.
participants were seated, the conch was sounded again to commence drinking (Lemert 1976:572-573). As police surveillance grew more pronounced, this practice was abandoned. Once drinkers were seated in a circle, a prayer and hymn were recited, and one of the participants would make a speech, thanking the host and requesting that those assembled have a good time and not cause any trouble (Lemert 1976:573; Mokoroa 1984:80). Then the *tuati*, or *tangata kapu*, would serve beer by dipping a half coconut shell into the beverage container (usually a tin) and, passing it to the person on his left, and then to each other participant in sequence. Important people were often served first. Each person was expected to drink their portion of beer without sipping, and without taking an undue amount of time. Usually individuals would drink until they lost consciousness, sleep, and wake to continue drinking. People who caused trouble were ejected and blacklisted for a number of weeks (Lemert 1976:572-573; Mokoroa 1984:79-80).

During drinking sessions, men sang *ute* (song concerning a narrative or love interest, or commemorating an event), danced, and talked. Conversation centred around topics of importance, from discussions on the relative merits of brewing techniques and ingredients, and organisation of the next session, to talk about sports, agriculture, politics, and stories about village quarrels and crimes (Lemert 1976:574-576; Mokoroa 1984:75-76). Single men talked about old and forthcoming sexual conquests, although married men preferred not to engage in this conversation: “We came here to drink not talk about women!” (Lemert 1976:576). After New Zealand rule, talk turned to matters of genealogy and land inheritance:

In 1910 talk in the group turned to genealogies. It was in there that I first learned my own genealogy from my uncle. Later I mentioned what I had been told, such as so-an-so being my cousin. My father then corrected what I had heard and taught me correct genealogies. After that I decided whom to admit to the group depending on how they were related to me (Aitutakian pastor, in Lemert 1976:576).

Fights and arguments were not infrequent in bush beer schools, particularly as participants became drunk and orderly drinking deteriorated. Some drinkers would boast of their prowess at drinking, or goad other participants for not keeping up with them, which frequently led to fights. Sometimes during talk about sex, particularly the sexuality of certain women, a man referred to a female relative of another drinker, which would also lead to trouble. Talk about genealogies also risked insulting other
drinkers, if for example, one person’s ancestors had been at war with those of another drinker, or if contentious land inheritance claims were made, and so on (Lemert 1976:576-577; Mokoroa 1984:76). Fights would also occur if drinkers met other men returning from bush beer schools, and fights that occurred when one group stole another’s beer were particularly serious. Women also suffered from drinking-related arguments, when men returned from drinking sessions desiring something to eat. If they found nothing prepared for them, they beat their wives (Lemert 1976:577).

**Men and Beer, Women and Beer**

Sometimes wives who were the victims of assaults were able to obtain revenge by informing the police where their husband was drinking, although this form of retaliation was by no means unproblematic, and fines incurred by the husband would affect the whole family. One remarkable development was the formation of the *au va’ine* – the women’s committees. Before these groups were co-opted by Ellison to assist with public health measures, the *au va’ine* accosted men while they were drinking, knocking over beer barrels and singing hymns (Lemert 1976:579; Banwell 1986:27):

On occasion they walked four abreast wearing garlands of crimson hibiscus and scented leis [sic\(^{163}\)] of frangipani, beating drums and stopping to propagandize wherever groups of men congregated. They patrolled plantations to prevent theft and to scout out beer groups. At times they gave information to the police and testified against beer drinkers (Lemert 1976:579).

Although a number of men still attended the church in Rarotonga, missionaries noted that male attendance at services, particularly among young men, had dropped significantly. In addition to sports and picnics, Sunday bush beer drinking sessions were a common pastime for men (Crocombe 1970:7).\(^{164}\) Thus, a high proportion of women attended church while their husbands and male relatives spent time drinking. Given the view of the church on alcohol, and the personal experiences women had with drunken husbands, it is likely that attitudes to alcohol and drinking practices became somewhat polarised around gender. This is not to imply that attitudes toward Christianity were polarised between men and women. As already demonstrated, *pange kava* began with prayer and hymns, and Mokoroa states of the Atiuan *tumu nu*, that prayer and readings

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\(^{163}\) The Cook Islands Maori term for the Hawaiian *lei* is *ʻei*.

\(^{164}\) In the Outer Islands of the Cook Group, church attendance remained high however (Crocombe 1970:7).
from the Bible were conducted during the drinking session (1984:80). Also, men who arrived at drinking sessions after attending church were asked to summarise the sermon for the other drinkers. Moral opposition to alcohol in the Church was by no means unanimous, at least in the early years of the 20th century. In 1907, Gudgeon asked the mission to encourage their congregations to report violations of the liquor laws, but church-goers refused to do this unless they were paid for their efforts (Gilson 1980:185). Although women were generally restricted from participation in bush beer schools, consumption of *kava maori* was not unknown to women, nor was it universally condemned. Davis recounts an episode that occurred as he was about to finish his employment (and residence) in Rarotonga. Toward the end of his last day, he was called to the laundry house:

No sooner had I put my head inside the door of out washing-premises that I found myself showered in *ei* [flower necklaces]. On a spotless white cloth, laid over a borrowed table, stood an array of bottled goods. An enormous tea-kettle held a generous supply of home-brew. The old washer-women stood, their faces wreathed in smiles, while they waited for the oldest of all to act as their spokeswoman.

‘Our son,’ began old Mama Manu, ‘you are our guest…. Our love for you is not only as a doctor but as a man as well and to-day we are joining together to show you our love in the way we know you like best. Puia, bring the guitar, and all the glasses.’

….I joined my voice with theirs as we sang the mournful chants of old-time Polynesia. When my *ei*, quite drenched in tears, had to be replaced with a fresh one, our mistress of ceremonies called for a riotous drinking song, and interspersing our melody with belly grunts I showed them that I had not lost the art of dancing a hula. The tea-kettle was filled again and again (Davis and Davis 1955:250).

**Imprisonment**

Through the period of New Zealand rule, offences relating to the production and consumption of *kava maori* comprised the majority of cases brought before the court (Gilson 1980:185). In 1908 there were 324 arrests for alcohol offences, 725 in 1924, and 1277 in 1948 (just four years before Davis’ account, above). Offenders were fined increasing amounts for each consecutive conviction, but after one year fines were reduced to their original level. This system of fines led Lemert to state that the administration of home-brew liquor laws was, in effect, a form of taxation on the Maori
population (Lemert 1976:584). A large proportion of convictions for drinking, drunkenness, or manufacture of *kava maori* resulted in fines for the perpetrator, but imprisonment was also a possible consequence of conviction (this quote courtesy of Lydia Davis, T.R.A Davis’ wife):

‘If these boys are such fine fellows, why are they in prison?’ I asked.
‘Well, you see, it’s the beer. They like to make a little brew now and again, so much cheaper than bond liquor, and our native fruits make wonderful beer I can tell you. The missionaries and the police think its bad for them, but the boys enjoy themselves. And of course a lot of the lads are in prison because of the girls.’
‘But how on earth could girls put them in jail?’
‘They make love to them. That’s against the law here, but then young people can have their own thoughts on these matters and they can’t help being caught’ (Davis and Davis 1955:73).

Imprisonment was introduced by Gudgeon after annexation. Punishment for habitual offenders (including those who persisted in habitual drunkenness, and who were convicted of making bush beer) was hard labour, served on a previously uninhabited island, to undertake plantation labour for copra production. Gudgeon was opposed in this matter by Moss, his predecessor, as until that time ‘Maori Law’ was based on restitution – punishment of offenders had typically comprised of compulsory labour or financial reimbursement; convicted criminals were allowed to sleep in their own homes at night, to serve sentences during the day (Gilson 1980:185; Scott 1991:77). The imprisonment of offenders was politically expedient for Gudgeon, who availed himself of the opportunity to remove agitators from Rarotonga – he also regarded this system as a means to free up land for settlement by European settlers (Scott 1991:93-96). In 1915 a jail was constructed in Rarotonga for petty offenders, with persons sentenced to more than six months imprisonment sent to New Zealand. The latter group were mostly comprised of people who had committed theft, sexual offences, or common assault – a large proportion of these offences were committed by people ‘under the influence’. For most offenders, sentences took the form of fines or compulsory unpaid labour for the Public Works Department (Gilson 1980:184-185;

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165 Gudgeon had a financial stake in this system of law. In 1906, E.G.B. Moss, Frederick Moss’ son, discovered that, as Land Court Judge, Gudgeon had leased the penal island. As Resident he declared it a prison, as High Court Judge he supplied it with labour, and as a private individual he financed and profited from the commercial operation. Gudgeon was maintained as Resident Commissioner despite these revelations, as his superiors considered progress in the islands would stall without his influence.
Scott 1991:149,254). After the jail was constructed, imprisonment was a common sentence for various offences (Gilson 1980:185).

**Making Sense of Kava Maori**

Regarding the period of missionary dominance in the Cook Islands, Beaglehole (1957) suggested drinking was adopted by Maori as a means to release themselves from the influence of the mission, and to indulge in older practices of sexual activity. While it is true that many Maori who indulged in *kava maori* were not aligned with Christian groups, and did engage in such sexual activity, it is by no means clear that those Maori regarded their actions as reactionary to Christianity or the missionaries. Indeed, developments in the form of alcohol consumption seem to indicate that religious antagonism and desire for sexual expression were not integral to Maori drinking. If these sentiments did exist for Maori initially, they ceased to be a *raison d’être* in later times. The ‘bush beer school’ that emerged in the early 20th century incorporated elements of Christian practice and a general exclusion of women from drinking, which seems to undermine both of these proposals (Lemert 1976:582).166

In 1947 Davis suggested that the pervasiveness of alcohol consumption among young men was a consequence of the erosion of traditional structures and practices that provided a purposeful place for *mapu* in Cook Islands society:

All the factors which meant most to youth disappeared; his cultural schools, his professional and craft instruction; his balance of work and play; these had all gone . The new leaders did not suggest any adequate or attractive displacements of the old ways. The result as apparent today is that a good deal of time is passed in brewing and drinking fruit beer (Davis 1947:199)

While certainly true for *mapu*, these conditions generally applied to Maori during New Zealand administration. As described previously, Maori were ill-served by educational facilities, trade was irregular and often unprofitable, and political engagement by Maori was suppressed by the Administration. Superficially, Lemert (1976:582-583) agreed with this analysis, but argued that the bush beer schools were not primarily a symptom of the failure of social structures to accommodate the needs of *mapu* (or, more generally, Maori), but were rather a means by which *mapu* became

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166 Bush beer schools were not a venue for homosexual activity, although Lemert notes that occasionally conversation in *pange kava* might veer to this topic (1976:576).
inculcated into aspects of life denied them through formal structures of government and social life. Bush beer schools provided:

…informal sex education for young Maori, opportunities for expression in singing and dancing, acquaintance with the Maori past, learning genealogies, and a testing place where he could establish himself as a man among peers. Moreover kava ainga [the practice of village groups presenting alcohol and food to work groups of young men] structured the work of the mapu and gave it meaning according to older values of social reciprocity and conviviality. Insistence on a supply of brew as an indispensable part of agreements for their labor signalled refusal of the mapu to be drawn into pure economic exchange relationships and also forced others to acknowledge the independent existence of their groups (Lemert 1976:583).

Both views contain some valid points. The absence of formal, governmental accommodation for mapu did not mean they lacked social participation in general, as implied by Davis. Social participation was instead manifest through informal means.\textsuperscript{167} Lemert perhaps overstates the case when he suggests that the insistence of mapu to be paid, at least in part, with home brew signified an active resistance to the cash (or wage) economy.\textsuperscript{168} Most obviously during this period, there was simply not much cash to go around – but there were a lot of unused oranges.

The consumption of kava maori is perhaps most remarkable for its qualities as a specifically Maori, and predominantly male, activity. Papa’a encounters with both bush beer schools and kava maori occurred irregularly, or by accident, when Maori displayed their drunkenness in public places, and on occasions when Papa’a police discovered drinking sessions while searching the bush, or after being informed by disgruntled wives or men who had been ejected from a drinking session. Predominantly, the only venue where the gaze of European officialdom met Maori drinkers was in Court, where Maori were fined and sentenced. By comparison, there was no such concealment of drinkers from Maori chiefs, police, church members, or villagers. If the exact whereabouts of a drinking session were not known by the people, then the sight of men staggering home afterward was a clear indication of who had been to bush beer schools, and any arguments that occurred between drunken husbands and wives were known to

\textsuperscript{167} In the sense that the lack of Maori participation in government of the Cook Islands meant that most Maori activities were ‘informal’.

\textsuperscript{168} Today, workers often insist on being paid with alcohol in addition to, or instead of, wages. However, as imported alcohol (which must be purchased with cash) is preferred, the proposition that this exchange signals a rejection of ‘pure economic exchange’ is somewhat problematic.
the whole village. Yet the social isolation of Papa’a from Maori meant that Europeans were rarely party to information that every Maori knew. Within bush beer schools, relations between men were governed by Maori understandings and practices. Genealogies were discussed, along with agricultural methods, news, politics, song, and dance. Drinking companions were friends or close relations. Kinship also affected whom the Maori district police would pursue, whom they would let alone, and whom they would join for a beer. Law enforcement was relatively relaxed, so that a drinking group would often arrange to pay the fine of an arrested companion, or in the case of men who were multiple offenders and risked imprisonment, arranged for a relative to take the blame instead. Above all, drinking *kava maori* was an enjoyable experience.

This practice was not without its ambiguities. Women did not, in general, benefit from it. They were not party to the conversations, or activities, that occurred within drinking circles. Moreover, they were the victims of husbands who returned home angry that there was nothing to eat. Across Maori as a whole, the burden of court fines and sentences was significant, comprising the majority of all convictions processed by the Court. Although the legal status of *kava maori* and its effects on the form of drinking (that is, away from public places) may have moderated deleterious effects of alcohol consumption, policies formed by the Administration were only effective as a control measure, and authorities encouraged restraint, preferring to regard drinking fines as an informal means of taxation. However, many Papa’a feared that crop and fruit production suffered when too many men drank home-brew. This is a debatable point, as low production was more likely a consequence of low prices offered by traders, and the dismal state of export shipping, than a desire to withhold large amounts of fruit in order to produce beer.

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169 Lemert notes that “Administrators were known to regard the total revenue from fines as a measure of the health of the island economy” (Lemert 1976:584).
CHAPTER SEVEN:
INDEPENDENCE

After independence, the importance of alcohol as a focus of legal and moralistic struggle diminished. Although alcohol remained an important component of religious, political and moral debates, it no longer provided a forum through which political dissatisfaction was articulated. Increasingly, the use of alcohol was normalised, if contested, in Rarotonga. This change in the status of alcohol accompanied multiple changes in state organization, in international and domestic trade and exchange, and in the form of political representation. Independence also marked further diminishment in the influence of ariki. The practice of public drinking, which under previous forms of governance was regarded negatively, assumed some positive connotations. Thus, the place of alcohol in the Cook Islands became increasingly ambiguous, even while its importance to the everyday lives of Maori increased.

Albert Henry and the Cook Islands Party

Henry achieved his success by providing, in the confusing situation of rapid change, two elements which had been absent from the evolving political system. Firstly, the provided, in his person, the kind of leadership that persuaded the majority of Rarotongans that he was the sole agent through which they would achieve a new world and a better life under self-government, a leadership which, because it successfully implied his unique power, drew him widespread support and, among his closer followers, intense loyalty. Secondly, he provided, in his party, the practical means of demonstrating this support and loyalty and thereby achieving the better life; the opportunity, moreover, for people to come together as a solid, purposeful group to which all could belong, bound to each other as they were to him (Stone 1970:127-128).

The Cook Islands Party (CIP) was elected to Government with a total of fourteen seats from a legislative assembly of twenty-two. Albert Henry, after the resignation of his sister, became the first Premier of the Cook Islands. He personally selected members for Cabinet, ensuring the most important portfolios remained under his control, including finance, economic development, trading departments, communications, justice, immigration and overseas affairs (Stone 1970:132), and maintained tight control
over his Ministers and backbenchers. The opposition was comprised of independent members, who were uncoordinated and offered little effective criticism of the Government. Initially, most CIP supporters were in Rarotonga, which had nine seats in the Legislative Assembly, all of which went to the CIP. In addition, five of the thirteen outer islands seats went to the CIP.

When the CIP was formed to contest the 1965 elections, its major goal was to develop a nation that was ‘self-dependent’ and did not have to rely on the aid and grants of foreign powers. Both human and material resources were to be improved and increased, so that “we would not be below the standards reached by the rest of the world” (Strickland 1979:8). Toward this end, the CIP produced a party manifesto, primarily to “convince our own people that everything touching their lives would be taken care of” (Strickland 1979:8):

**The CIP Manifesto and Policy.**

1. To ensure the election to Government of those men and women dedicated to the cause of greater prosperity and increased social welfare of the Cook Islands.
2. To extend to all the outer islands of the Cooks Group, opportunities for greater economic development.
3. To maintain ties which exist between New Zealand and the Cook Islands.
4. To re-establish some of our traditional ways of life, culture, and to restore recognition to the holders of traditional titles.
5. To plan facilities for the encouragement of our young people to remain in the Islands.
6. To strengthen our economic resources by good planning.
7. To ensure the establishment of good laws for all people in the Cook Islands (Strickland 1979:9-10).

This manifesto, agreed on by the CIP executive prior to the elections, was to govern the political administration of the Cook Islands. One of Albert Henry’s primary objectives, also endorsed by the Cook Islands Party, was to establish a sense of nationhood in Cook Islanders, which had been absent due to the attention paid to

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170 Albert Henry introduced 43 bills to the Assembly, compared with just 11 introduced by his Ministers (Stone 1970:133).
171 No ‘Leader of the Opposition’ had been elected, so use of this term is more a matter of convention than practice.
Rarotonga as headquarters of the New Zealand Administration, and general neglect of the islands as a group. He attempted to nurture corporate purpose through the introduction of community work groups for the construction and repair of roads, drain clearance, and village beautification. Community groups, centred on Village Committees established under the Local Government Act (1966), contributed free labour in the interests of building the new nation, while equipment and resources were supplied by the government (Sissons 1997:169-171). The sense of participation in the governance of the state was, at least in Rarotonga (where Henry lived, and where these programs were most efficacious), evident in Henry’s policy of making himself personally available to Cook Islanders who wished to approach him, for any reason. His constant refrain was that he was spokesperson for the ‘little people’, the iti tangata, and through these acts he captured the allegiance of many Cook Islanders:

I’ve always been a Cook Islands Party supporter – Sir Albert was my idol. Sir Albert in my mind was the Cook Islands (Tavioni 1979:79).

By actively encouraging community participation in public beautification and maintenance, Henry hoped to Cook Islanders would regard themselves as citizens of a collection of islands, rather than parochial, island-based identities. Shared enterprise and group accomplishment was a means toward this end.

The fourth ‘clause’ of the CIP Manifesto and Policy (“…to restore recognition to the holders of traditional titles”) implied that means would be made available for the empowerment of ariki in the state. Sissons (1994) argues that the inclusion of traditional leaders in governance was an important component of Henry’s push for a national identity. Initially it appeared as though the CIP leadership desired to install the ariki, through the newly-instituted House of Ariki, as equivalent to the British House of Lords – wherein ariki would review and comment on legislation passed in the Legislative Assembly, act (in addition the High Commissioner) as representatives of the Queen, and have limited powers of veto over legislation that contradicted traditional land usage (Sissons 1994:378-379). When established, the House of Ariki had none of these powers. It was allowed only to comment on legislation referred to it by the Legislative Assembly, and had limited powers to make recommendations on matters relating to “customs and traditions” or “the inhabitants of the Cook Islands”, provided the premier or his representative was invited to attend discussions. The House of Ariki was,
ultimately, a body of “toothless national figureheads” (Sissons 1994:381) with very little legislated capacity to affect governance of the Cook Islands.

The status of ariki was brought to a head in 1970, when the House of Ariki presented a paper to the Legislative Assembly demanding increased powers. It called for unoccupied village land titles to revert to titled leaders, for the establishment of an ‘are korero (a house of titled leaders to consider matters relating to district or island administration), and measures for the re-institution of ‘ara tiroa – a customary duty to render labour to an ariki on request. The penalty suggested for refusing to render ‘ara tiroa was banishment and seizure of the offender’s home and property. These proposals were rejected by the Legislative Assembly.

In response, the CIP Government introduced a new forum in 1972, called the Koutu Nui, in addition to the House of Ariki. This forum was comprised of mata’iapo and rangatira, who were largely supportive of the CIP. Like the House of Ariki, the Koutu Nui was empowered to make recommendations on matters relating to customs and traditions, and to forward these recommendations to the House of Ariki, or directly to the Legislative Assembly, for consideration. Thus the House of Ariki was partially circumvented by another group of traditional leaders who were supportive of the CIP.

National identity for Cook Islanders was most palpably demonstrated in public spectacles and events, largely organised and supported by the government. These focussed on visits by foreign dignitaries, such as the Duke and Duchess of Kent in 1967, the Governor General of New Zealand in 1969, the Duke of Edinburgh in 1971, and the Queen in 1974.172 The annual Constitution Celebrations (Maire Maeva Nui) became the Cook Islands’ major event, and were celebrated from the first Friday before August 4, for ten days. During the Maire Maeva Nui, float parades were held on Rarotonga, along with sports and dance competitions, with islands and districts represented in each event. The Cook Islands government played a significant role in the organisation and support of all of these activities.

Sissons (1997:174) describes how, during the initial years of Albert Henry’s Premiership, the Church, the nation, and the Cook Islands Party were regarded as the primary means by which a measure of national unity could be achieved. ‘Ethnicity’ – the differences between peoples of the corporate islands of the Group – was regarded by Henry as potentially divisive, and so inappropriate for the project of nation-building.

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172 The Queen’s visit coincided with the official opening of the Rarotonga International Airport, and the conferment of a Knighthood on Albert Henry.
The major church of the Cook Islands, the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC), became closely aligned with the Cook Islands Party following independence. In 1969, properties of the Congregational Church for World Mission (formerly the LMS) were legally transferred to the CICC by a Private Act of the Legislative Assembly. The CIP government formalised its close association with the CICC in the Act:

> The Assembly is responsible for the payment of a regular stipend to Pastors who are appointed by the Assembly to serve in a Church. The local Church is responsible for the continual support of Pastors by prayer and fellowship, and by contributing to Assembly funds, and by gifts of food to the amount laid down by the Assembly (Cook Islands Christian Church Act (1968/9) 5,b)

Albert Henry’s rhetoric changed in the 1970s as he adopted an alternate view on the utility of ‘ethnicity’ for building a Cook Islands identity. The CIP began to regard tourism as an important component of future economic development, and Cook Islands ‘culture’ was an integral part of that development. “‘Tribal customs’ (plural) now became ‘our local culture’” (singular)” (Sissons 1997:176). Thus cultural diversity was no longer regarded as creating divisions within the State.

A new secondary schools curriculum was introduced, dedicating a significant proportion of education to ‘customary’ practices such as dance, carving, weaving and story-telling. Maori ‘traits’ such as friendliness were encouraged through ‘Kia Orana’ day, which occurred every Friday in schools, where traditional practices were taught and children were encouraged to smile and be friendly to one another. A Culture Division was appended to the Ministry of Social Services in 1974 to encourage the development of distinctively Maori practices. Although aimed at the development of tourism in the Islands, such innovations were popular in the community, and Cook Islanders were enthusiastic participants in the revival of Maori cultural practices that had been, by and large, disparaged by the Administration prior to independence.

Henry’s efforts to encourage a national identity for Cook Islanders were successful at first, particularly in Rarotonga, as both the iti tangata and ariki were enthusiastic participants in the building of nationhood. Nevertheless, a number of Maori from the outer islands, and many educated and salaried Maori on Rarotonga, remained

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173 Friendliness, for example, is still regarded as a distinctive trait of Cook Islanders, particularly in the context of tourism. I attended a ‘preparation session’ for contestants in the 2000 Miss Cook Islands Beauty Pageant, during which answers to sample ‘tourism’ questions were practiced. A consistent reply to the question “What makes the Cook Islands so special?” was that Cook Islands people are among the friendliest in the world, and are always smiling and happy toward strangers.
unconvinced by Henry’s program of nationalism. The influence and resources accorded to the Cook Islands government were used by Henry to bolster support for the Cook Islands Party, and to further the interests of his extended family and associates. This change of emphasis occurred as a new and effective opposition was formed under the leadership of Tom Davis, who had returned from overseas to enter politics in response to requests from his family (Davis 1992:214). Maori who were not close associates of Henry, or did not belong to the CIP, became frustrated with the Government, as they were excluded from positions of authority and employment, and later victimised for their political affiliation. Increasingly, Cook Islands society became polarised around political allegiance to the Cook Islands Party or the Democratic Party.

**Look After Every Member of Your Tribe**

During the course of my fieldwork I conducted an interview with Sir Geoffrey Henry, former Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, cousin to Albert Henry, and then Leader of the Opposition. He described to me what was to become the new Manifesto of the Cook Islands Party, and in the course of this conversation, the issue of nepotism came up. It was difficult, he said, to reconcile the contrary pressures of kinship and democracy, particularly when the maxim that governed Maori relationships was “look after every member of your tribe”. This maxim applied primarily to members of extended families, secondly to members of political parties, thirdly to marginal electorates, and finally to Cook Islanders as a whole. In 1965, only one close relative of Albert Henry was in the Legislative Assembly – Mana Strickland, who by all accounts was qualified for the position. In general, the election of candidates to the Legislative Assembly did not comprise strong evidence of nepotism, although in practice a number of close relations to the Premier sought, and gained, seats in the Assembly. Crocombe (Crocombe 1979b:32-33) notes that Albert Henry’s son, Tupui Henry, was elected to the Ma’uke seat primarily because of his relationship to the Premier:

Tupui Henry does have a trace of Ma’uke blood, but it is a small fraction indeed – enough to legitimate him if he was wanted on other counts. He had never lived there before or since, apart from temporary visits. The Catholic community on Ma’uke met to decide how they would vote. The over-riding consideration, I am assured by persons involved, was that the Premier was the source of “all power”, that he would give his son a ministry, and that their small island (with a population of only 700) would gain most from having a member with such close leverage…. 
He was elected with a big majority.... In part this could be described as “nepotism from below” – the preference of even a subordinate group for a member who has blood ties to a person of power and prestige. This is a common phenomenon in the Cook Islands and carries over from the former aristocratic tradition...

Once in the Legislative Assembly, relatives of the Premier were usually allocated posts in Cabinet, so that the Henry family dominated the executive functions of government. By 1976, Albert Henry, Tupui Henry (Albert Henry’s son) and Geoffrey Henry\(^{174}\) (Albert Henry’s cousin) held 19 of 27 ministerial portfolios. Three of the four other members of Cabinet were related to the Premier, accounting for six of the remaining eight portfolios.

Outside the Legislative Assembly, the extended family of Albert Henry held a number of key posts and positions. Tupui Henry’s son, Howard Henry, became the painting contractor to the Housing Authority, despite the fact that he was 19 years old and had worked only on sundry small jobs before his appointment (Crocombe 1979b:39). Tupui Henry was the Minister at that time, and had appointed members of the Housing Authority who offered Howard Henry the contract, without putting it out for tender. Following public dissatisfaction, Howard Henry was appointed to a new External Affairs division within the Premier’s ministry, and at 23 he was appointed as Acting Director, despite the fact that he had neither tertiary qualifications, nor experience, to justify his appointment.

In the 1970s the Cook Islands had three media (Radio Cook Islands, Cook Islands News, and an illustrated weekly paper), all dominated by members of the Henry family. Following complaints about the degree of control exercised over the media by the Henry family, and its misuse for the ends of the CIP, the government established an ‘independent’ Cook Islands Broadcasting and Newspaper Corporation. In practice, members of the Henry family were appointed to key positions in all the various media.

Patterns similar to these persisted through most of the public service sector during Albert Henry’s ‘rule’. Affiliates of the CIP also benefited from their association with the ruling government. Interest-free loans were offered by the government to selected Cook Islanders, and of 21 loans granted between 1973 and 1977, 17 or 18 went to supporters of the Cook Islands Party, the remainder going to supporters of the Democratic Party

\(^{174}\) In 1965, Geoffrey Henry was elected to the Legislative Assembly as a member of the opposition. He left the Assembly in 1968 to pursue studies in New Zealand. When he returned in 1972, he stood as a CIP candidate and was elected into the Assembly as a member of the Government.
(formed in 1971) – despite the fact that the public was evenly split between CIP and Democratic Party voters in prior elections (Crocombe 1979b:44). Discrimination was also evident in the allocation of other public monies:

Of the 7 Cook Islands students who passed the New Zealand University Entrance examination in 1977, 5 were from Demo [Democratic Party] families and two from CIP. The 2 CIP students received lower marks but both received University scholarships. None of the 5 Demo students received scholarships to University (Crocombe 1979b:46).

The allocation of aid to the outer islands was similarly influenced by affiliation to the CIP. Islands that supported the CIP received power-generation facilities by 1978, and attempts were made by the Government to install power on a marginal island, Atiu, prior to the general elections. A neighbouring island, Mangaia, which supported the Democratic Party, still had no electric power at the end of Albert Henry’s premiership. CIP ministers told Mangaians that as they did not support the CIP, they would not receive power generation facilities (Crocombe 1979b:46).

The political aspirations of the CIP, and Albert Henry in particular, were not restricted to employment and benefits offered to the party faithful. By 1969 Cook Islanders who worked in the public sector and did not support the CIP were threatened with job loss. The government announced plans to create ‘Special Posts’ within the public service, occupied by recommendation of Cabinet, and not subject to appeal. Heads of Departments, Resident Agents, and Clerks-in-Charge were all to be categorised as Special Posts – so that, in effect, all of the most senior posts on each island were to be occupied by political appointees. In 1970 legislation was passed, and the Special Posts were appointed. Following the general election in 1972, a committee comprised entirely of CIP members was formed to investigate the Public Works, Agriculture, and Health Departments. Subsequently, a list of fifty-seven employees was produced, most of who supported opposition candidates, and all were dismissed. Later, all public servants were informed that they were not to engage in any political activities against the government (Utanga 1979:97-98). In time it became clear to public servants that security in employment could only be achieved by offering allegiance to the CIP, particularly by assisting with campaign programs. The status of expatriate public

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175 Members of the Henry family who had broken the law also received lenient sentences in the courts, allegedly due to the influence of pressure exerted by representatives from the CIP.
servants was precarious; legislation required all non-Cook Islanders to obtain residence permits, which were subject to cancellation at the discretion of the Premier.

Toward the end of the CIP Government in 1978, Albert Henry also attempted to secure political domination within the Legislative Assembly by requiring all public service employees who intended to stand for election be placed on leave of absence for the duration of their campaign. If elected, they would be required to resign. This legislation was primarily aimed at weakening the opposition, as its most effective members were, without exception, employed in public service – many who took leave of absence in order to contest a seat found there was no job upon their return. The public service was a primary source of candidates and voters who opposed the CIP, and later, of people who supported the Democratic Party (Utanga 1979:89). For these Cook Islanders, career considerations became an important (and sometimes over-riding) factor when deciding to stand for election or which candidate to support (Stone 1970:164).

**Accomplishments of the First CIP Government**

By the end of (then) Sir Albert Henry’s government in 1978, very few of the objectives listed in the original CIP Manifesto and Policy had been accomplished. The Manifesto outlined the intention of the CIP to develop the economy of the Cook Islands so that foreign aid would no longer be required. Increased agricultural production, fisheries and growers’ co-operatives were encouraged, but in all cases, progress had been entirely opposite to that originally intended. Foreign aid increased substantially in order to support public expenditure, of which a bloated public service comprised a large part. Fisheries had not been developed at all – most of the fish consumed in the Cook Islands was imported. Growers’ cooperatives were all bankrupt by 1976, having received no government assistance. In general, agricultural production was neglected, and overall production dropped markedly, due to politicisation of labour, production, and distribution in the agricultural sector, and the allocation of aid to programs with short-term political benefit, rather than long-term economic development (Strickland 1979:10-12). Entry into business was regulated by government, which set up committees to approve businesses. These committees were largely comprised of representatives from existing businesses who did not desire competition, and so turned down many applications.

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176 Albert Henry was stripped of his Knighthood following the “flying voters” scandal of the 1978 election (see below).
Cook Islanders became increasing polarised around political affiliation, either to the Cook Islands Party or the Democratic Party. Large numbers of people emigrated to New Zealand because opportunities for employment were better there than in the Cook Islands – young people who supported the Democratic Party, or whose families supported this party, found it difficult to find employment in a society where the public service dominated the job market, and jobs were allocated according to political, and family, affiliation. Papa’a also tended to hold senior positions within the public service, despite an early commitment by the CIP to accommodate Maori in these institutions. This was partly due to the lack of adequately skilled Maori (highly educated Maori tended to support the Democratic Party, and so many had re-settled overseas) and also because Papa’a were more easily manipulated by government, as they lived under constant threat of residency and work permit cancellation, at the Premier’s discretion.

Nevertheless, Albert Henry nurtured a sense of national identity, albeit of a specific variety: nationalism was identified with the CIP, and Albert Henry in particular. As time progressed, this identity was restricted, so that it encompassed only Maori, and tended to exclude non-Maori residents. In the latter years of Henry’s Premiershi, affiliation to the CIP took precedence over a more general Cook Islands identity.

The Democratic Party

In 1978 the Democratic Party, led by Thomas Davis, was elected to government. Within a few years, Davis introduced a number of radical changes to the administration of the Islands – most centred on the re-organisation of the economy around ‘free-market’ reforms. Taxes were reduced across all areas of the economy, including corporate taxes, import levies and duties, and income tax. In 1980 a Turnover Tax was introduced at a blanket rate of 4%, which was subsequently increased to 10%. Barriers to private enterprise were removed, so that Cook Islanders were relatively free to enter private business ventures. Education facilities were also increased during this period, and Island infrastructure was improved. The latter were principally manifest in the provision of radio communications, and construction of airstrips.

177 The Democratic Party were installed in government only after a court ruling that Sir Albert Henry and the CIP had illegally obtained funds from the Philatelic Society to provide free air travel for “flying voters” from New Zealand. “Flying voters” were Cook Islanders from New Zealand who were eligible to vote in the elections, and who were flown back into the country for a short visit, specifically in order to vote. The Democratic Party also used “flying voters”, but they were required to pay their own fare, and seats on aircraft were not restricted to Democratic Party supporters (George 1979).
These policies were generally successful, and key economic indicators improved through Davis’ economic strategies. Real personal spending, real income per capita, GNP, and GDP increased by average rates of around 10%. The proportion of the state budget derived from New Zealand aid decreased, from a high of around 40% during the latter period of Albert Henry’s Premiership, to 30% through the 1980s (Davis 1992:280, 291-292). Global integration of the economy was not restricted to international trade and aid, and in 1981 Davis’ government introduced legislation to support the establishment of offshore banking facilities. As a consequence, large sums of monies were channelled through the Cook Islands, and contributed substantially to the economy – from 2.4% in 1982 to 12% in 1990 (Sissons 1997:180).

While these policies improved the aggregate economy, the distribution of wealth among Cook Islands residents was not equal. The number of income earners who met the minimum threshold for tax doubled, but the average real income per taxpayer remained relatively stable during the 1980s. Moreover, most growth in the Cook Islands occurred in Rarotonga, so the distribution of wealth across the Islands as a whole was unequal (Davis 1992:298). Between 1982 and 1991, tourism-related industries accounted for 55% of total employment, and by the latter year contributed one quarter of government revenues (Sissons 1997:180). Money allocated to education was increased, which contributed to an increased number of residents with higher education. Emigration also slowed, reversing high net losses of the 1970s, to show a net increase by the 1980s. State-sponsored cultural programs were discontinued under Davis’ administration. Nor did Davis support the Koutu Nui, which he believed was not a legitimate ‘traditional’ organisation.

The Democratic Party did not enjoy the same degree of autonomy as the Cook Islands Party under Albert Henry. In 1983 Davis’ government lost a general election to the CIP, led by Albert Henry’s cousin, Geoffrey Henry. The new CIP government was short-lived, as internal struggles over who should become Prime Minister fragmented the government. When no resolution was found, a general election was held, and the Democratic Party was returned to power. Discontent within the Democratic Party led some members to set up their own splinter party, so a coalition government was effective from 1983. In 1987, Davis was removed by a vote of no confidence:

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178 In 1981, the title of Premier was replaced by Prime Minister, and the Legislative Assembly became the Cook Islands Parliament.
I had firm rules about how public money should and should not be used. One of these was that it could not be used for personal reasons other than that established for sickness, emergencies and catastrophes and then only after approval by cabinet. This my colleagues tended to view in a sense much broader than I could reasonably accept. Nearly all of it for personal reasons. Constantly there was a cry for increased allowances for members. These covered travel, personal automobile mileage, repairs and maintenance, members representation allowances and, of course, salaries….

Norman George [Member of Parliament] used my refusals to acquiesce to such requests to sow the seeds of discontent which culminated in a motion of no confidence in me as Prime Minister. The budget was used as a reason for bringing it about, but after the deed was done, they simply continued to pass it without change (Davis 1992:333-334).

After Davis’ removal from office the economy began to decline. Exports dropped, as did tourism, the number of operative businesses, and gross retail sales. The Coalition Government was unchecked in its manipulation of public funds toward personal ends.179 By way of example, the Prime Minister, Dr Pupuke Robati, took as personal property the house he occupied in that role. At the next general election, in 1989, the Coalition lost to the CIP, and Geoffrey Henry became Prime Minister.

**The Third Cook Islands Party Government**

Tourism continued to expand, both in volume and economic importance, and remains a major component of the Cook Islands economy to this day. Under Geoffrey Henry’s leadership, a “second wave of ethnicization” (Sissons 1994:387) was initiated, and a new Ministry of Cultural Development established with a substantial budget. Developing his own version of nationalism, Geoffrey Henry characterised the Cook Islands as a “Maori nation” (Sissons 1997:182). Eleven million dollars was spent on a new Cultural Centre in Rarotonga, and justified on the grounds that it would contribute to the tourism industry.

179 However, this is not to imply that Davis was himself beyond temptation. After the 1987 no-confidence vote, Davis retained use of the Prime Minister’s car – a Jaguar – which he eventually registered under his wife’s name (Cook Islands Star 31/03/2000:25).
Public services throughout the Cook Islands were also expanded, with positions filled largely according to allegiance to the Cook Islands Party. By 1991, 44% of persons employed in the Cook Islands were public servants (SPC 1999:26), many in ‘phantom jobs’ – people would arrive for work but do very little in return for their wage. Often there was insufficient work for employees, and they lacked resources:

Chris Bullock: By phantom job, that means that you signed on at the beginning of the day, and you signed off at the end of the day, and did nothing in between.
Jason Brown: Just about. I mean quite often there was no petrol to drive the tractors, there was no money to buy paint to paint the schools. So yes there was a lot of sitting around card playing or just going home and planting your own fields (from the radio broadcast Islands of Debt, ABC 1997).

The government secured the support of the islands’ major religious denominations, assisting the construction of churches by making labour and building materials available through the Public Works department. This encouraged church leaders and their congregations to support the Government.

Government overspending in the early 1990s was largely financed by overseas loans, but in 1996 the Government was forced to cut back on expenditure as financial resources available to the country became overextended. Cook Islands credibility with New Zealand politicians and public was weakened following a lengthy investigation into its offshore banking practices; the so-called ‘Winebox Affair’, and a scandal regarding ‘Letters of Guarantee’ issued by Geoffrey Henry. In the former, companies deposited monies in Cook Islands offshore banking services, which were subsequently transferred to onshore banking enterprises, upon which a withholding tax was paid and a tax certificate issued. In the case of New Zealand companies, this tax certificate was then presented to the Inland Revenue Department as a tax credit – the policy being that monies on which overseas taxes were paid would not be taxed again. But, in the course of these transactions, the Cook Islands government returned its tax revenue to the company, less a standard fee. Thus, the company in question was able to claim a tax credit on taxes it had, effectively, received back (Wishart 1995:147-151). A Commission of Inquiry was held on the matter, but found no evidence of criminal tax avoidance or evasion – although this finding was criticised by some parties in New Zealand.

180 This state of affairs applies largely to all political parties, as one person remarked to me in Rarotonga – “if you’re not in politics, you’re not in the economy!”. 

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Zealand.\textsuperscript{181} In the ‘Letters of Guarantee’ scam, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and the Cook Islands Treasury issued letters to individuals, which committed the Cook Islands Government to pay US $100,000,000 to specified institutions.\textsuperscript{182} These letters were to be used as security in business dealings – despite the fact the Cook Islands Government was in no position to redeem the letters if called upon to do so, as it was already millions of dollars in debt. The Cook Islands Government (or rather, politicians in Government) was led to believe that substantial profits could be obtained from this transaction, although ultimately the scam was detected and no income was generated. These scams were eventually brought to the attention of the New Zealand public, and caused considerable scandal. The mass media and politicians expressed the view that the Cook Islands was ill-treating the New Zealand public, by receiving foreign aid on one hand, and rorting the New Zealand tax system on the other.

Subsequently, the New Zealand government applied pressure on the Cook Islands to account for its increasing debt, and in 1996 a ‘financial crisis’ was declared. Partly as a result of the ‘Winebox Affair’ revelations, the New Zealand Government decided to reduce its aid commitment to zero over a period of ten years from 1996, forced the Government to appoint a financial secretary, and pushed for new laws to open up national accounts to public scrutiny. During the economic reform state assets were sold off, GST taxes were introduced, and the public service was reduced by two-thirds. Almost two-thirds of employment in the Cook Islands was in the public service, so the effect of the mass lay-off was that about 40\% of employed people lost their jobs.

Consequently, a large proportion of Cook Islands residents migrated to New Zealand, Australia, and further afield. Between December 1996 and December 1998, upwards of 3,395 residents left the Cook Islands to live overseas (SPC 1999:5, 47). By comparison, 3,100 resident Cook Islanders emigrated between 1971 and 1976 under Albert Henry – and the opening of the International Airport in Rarotonga in 1974 was likely to have contributed to this earlier decline (\textit{Cook Islands News} 17/02/2001:1). Although the effects of the financial crisis were dire, they were by no means unanticipated in the Islands:

\begin{quote}
Gill Vaimene: It had been predicted for quite some time. Everybody knew that the public service was vastly over staffed. Everyone knew that the Government was spending money that they didn’t have. And so people weren’t that surprised. We
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{181} A statement by the Auckland Law Society, for example, claimed that “the major conclusions of the Commissioner were based on principles of law which were fundamentally wrong” (ALS 1999:1, 6)
\textsuperscript{182} These institutions were Bahamas shell companies, or nominees of those companies.
had no unemployment system, but we didn’t need one, everybody had a job in the public service.

Chris Bullock: Well that was the unemployment system (from the radio broadcast Islands of Debt, ABC 1997).

In practice, the ‘unemployment system’ that operated in the Cook Islands under the guise of public service employment was transported offshore when surplus workers emigrated. Another effect of the high rate of wage employment was that Cook Islanders increasingly made use of imported commodities, including food, rather than rely on subsistence production. After the ‘transition’, many sought wage employment overseas as there was little work in Rarotonga or the Outer Islands.

The Cook Islands Party, under Geoffrey Henry, was able to maintain Government until the general elections of 1999, which were proximate to my fieldwork. The Third CIP Government was defeated in these elections, but only after a number of power struggles had occurred between rival political parties and individual politicians.

A number of themes have emerged in the practice of Cook Islands politics since 1965 that are worth noting here. First, policy platforms are not, for most voters, a crucial determinant of affiliation to political parties. Although political parties have produced manifestos and policies, by and large these have not governed the conduct, or policy, of elected representatives. This was the case during the first CIP government, and in the governments following the vote of no-confidence in Prime Minister Davis. Instead, parties or candidates receive support from constituents through other forms of affiliation – kinship, church affiliation (to a person or a party), or with a view to benefits that will flow directly to a supporter and/or his/her family in the form of employment, development of island resources, or increased influence within the community.

Second, there is an expectation that support for a particular candidate should be directly reciprocated. There is considerable pressure for politicians to ‘repay’ their supporters with benefits in kind, as listed in the previous paragraph. The maintenance of grassroots support by politicians is dependent on their ability to satisfy the demands of supporters, particularly when the politician is a member of Government. In this way, the maxim ‘look after every member of your tribe’ is not merely an obligation on the part of the politician, but a demand from his or her supporters (indeed, they have ‘looked’ after that person with their vote, and often with fundraising and campaigning as well).
Third, there is tendency for politicians who have become members of Government to act with ‘arrogance’ (the word used by some of some of my informants). This is derived largely from their increased status, attributable to their ability to direct the considerable resources of the state toward their personal interests in particular, and those of their supporters in general:

Borrowings made by one or two parliamentarians from the Development Bank were being made for personal needs far in excess of that allowed normally. It had been the practice that parliamentarians did not use development bank funds for their personal ventures, but as Norman George said loud, clear and often, “We have the numbers and that is what counts. We can do anything we like.” He was voicing the feelings of nearly all of the members in government (Davis 1992:334).

The lack of adherence to policy by politicians complicates governance in this regard. As the influence of opposition members is considerably less than members of Government, the aim of all politicians is to gain a place within government. Without a clear and binding mandate provided by means of party policy, there is considerable amplitude for allegiances to be formed and dismantled. The ultimate effect is the formation of highly unstable governments, which have from time to time been embroiled in multiple shifts in composition following elections or other periods of political crisis. Historically, the CIP has been least subject to this kind of political manoeuvring. Political instability was best illustrated in the 1983 general elections, when the Second CIP Government assumed power. When the Prime Minister was to be appointed, three members of the CIP were nominated as candidates, and none could obtain a majority to confirm them to that position. Subsequently the Queen’s Representative declared government by edict in order to attend to the budget, followed by a caretaker government while another general election was organised. Finally, the Democratic Party was returned to power – the fifth government to be formed that year.

Alcohol and Independence

One of the few ethnographic accounts of drinking in the Cook Islands was written by Margaret Mackenzie in 1974. She conducted fieldwork in Rarotonga in the early

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183 The Cook Islands Constitution stipulated that the leader of the victorious party was not automatically appointed Prime Minister, but had to be confirmed by a vote of parliament. Geoffrey Henry attempted to challenge this requirement in court, which failed, but in the months that had passed before the ruling other members of Parliament had decided that they were suited to be Prime Minister, and put their names forward for consideration.
1970s on childhood development, and upon her return to the US, wrote a short working paper on alcohol use. Her work is useful, as it provides a means of comparing contemporary drinking practice with those obtaining in the period after independence, and prior to the development of Rarotonga as an international tourist destination with legal alcohol consumption (i.e., without a medical certificate) for Maori, and increased participation of the workforce in wage or salaried employment. Mackenzie’s observations must be taken with caution, as alcohol consumption was not the focus of her fieldwork, and because a number of her observations appear to describe public discourses of Maori alcohol consumption. In addition to the comments to follow, Mackenzie’s assertion that women were excluded from alcohol consumption stands as a case in point. There is anecdotal reference to consumption of alcohol by women in Rarotonga prior to independence (see Davis and Davis 1955; Syme 1975; Davis 1992), although it appears not to have occurred in men’s ‘bush beer schools’.

Mackenzie describes alcohol consumption during the 1970s as an essentially male occupation. It was not considered a reprehensible activity in itself – rather, drinking was considered to be ‘bad’ only when performed by the wrong people, at inappropriate times, and in inappropriate places:

Acceptable drunkenness is a happy medium. It is not wrong to lose some co-ordination or to do things never done in sobriety. It is wrong only if people make fools of themselves and are shamed. The whole point of drinking is to get drunk, but the definition of drunkenness falls somewhere around a point I should call ‘tight’, ‘tipsy’, ‘merry’. Fear and shyness disappear, relaxation and courage increase, people dance and sing ute (love songs with erotic words), and they find the boldness to speak to people they’d never dare about things they’d never mention otherwise (Mackenzie 1974:5).

Many men, according to Mackenzie, would wake up at dawn to fish and feed their pigs, and start drinking at 10am, falling asleep by dusk. On Sundays they would attend the early session of Church, then go home to light their ovens, change into “drinking clothes” and “settle down to serious drinking at 8 o’clock….They stagger home to bed in mid afternoon. Their wives protest constantly” (Mackenzie 1974:6). At these drinking sessions, men would discuss ‘serious matters’ such as the management of crops, fishing, and politics – and, Mackenzie suspected, sex as well. The reason men drank was to enjoy themselves among other men, as “people never mention coping with
worries as a reason for drinking. Instead, drinking is fun” (Mackenzie 1974:7). Mackenzie also noted the tendency for Maori to drink in secluded, non-public venues. She described how in former times, villages would host one another in mass drinking sessions, and these would always occur far away from the villages. Accordingly,

The atmosphere of privacy and concealment persists today. People usually drink in the grounds of their homes – their wives manage most of the time not to let them inside – but they drink where they cannot be seen from the road (Mackenzie 1974:11-12).

Mackenzie argues that alcohol consumption among men was a “quintessential symbol of the profane on Rarotonga today” (1974:8). This argument was justified on grounds that alcohol was not used in communion, pastors and women were not allowed to drink, drinking was concealed from pastors, and pastors entreated people to cut down on drinking, or quit. She noted also:

There was one other drinking proscription I heard: a young male taunga told me he had given up practice temporarily because his spirit which helped him diagnose and treat patients had told him to stop drinking. Taunga have access to the supernatural; the causes of illness often lie in the realm of the sacred. It is consistent that they may not drink alcohol (1974:9).

Chiefs, noblemen, and politicians need observe no drinking restrictions because of their offices. Many have time to drink very little, but a few drink heavily occasionally. Nevertheless, it would be a profanity to hold a drinking party in the Chambers of the Legislative Assembly: it would make them noa, common. Their purpose is for discussing serious affairs: recreational drinking is inappropriate there (1974:10).

While this argument contains a surface plausibility, it does not appear to be sustained by other ethnographic accounts and my own field data – or even by the information provided by Mackenzie. Lemert (1976:573) and Mokoroa (1984:80) both describe how prayer was a regular component of drinking sessions, with Lemert going as far as to argue that pange kava (‘bush beer schools’) encompassed a number of elements that suggested “cultlike affinities” (Lemert 1976:571). Although association of

184 See the reference to kava patu, page 109 (Lemert 1976:378). It is by no means clear that these celebrations were confined to ‘non-public’ venues at this time, although subsequent drinking was certainly conducted away from public areas for a variety of reasons.
alcohol and the supernatural was not mentioned often during fieldwork, a couple of my informants suggested that some of their relatives’ alcohol-related deaths were influenced by *tupapaku* (ghosts or spirits). In one case, the *tupapaku* was an ancient goddess from Tahiti, and in another, a girl who committed suicide after drinking had earlier passed by a graveyard where a number of cancer patients were buried. Moreover, another person told me how he was visited by an ancestor (who he referred to as his “guardian”) while drinking alcohol. Mackenzie’s argument, that alcohol is a ‘symbol of the profane’, is also weakened by inconsistencies in her own account; she describes how men often drank alcohol on a Sunday – a day widely regarded as ‘sacred’ in the Cook Islands. If alcohol was not the ‘quintessential symbol of the profane on Rarotonga’, it was certainly antithetical to the values of the established churches, and public Christianity. Alcohol consumption was concealed not only from the church, but also from police and persons with the power to prosecute for alcohol offences.

**Legislation**

Prosecution for alcohol offences was legislated under the Cook Islands Amendment Act (1961), in which manufacture of intoxicating liquor was prohibited. This continued the New Zealand Government’s policy of prohibiting the manufacture of liquor to all residents of the Cook Islands. This legislation also retained a monopoly on the importation of alcohol for the High Commissioner (later, the Resident Commissioner, under the auspice of government). Just a few years later, in 1963, the Liquor Control Ordinance introduced a number of changes to the distribution of, and access to, alcohol – although this legislation was not brought into force until after independence had been achieved. A state monopoly on the importation of alcohol was maintained under this legislation, as was a prohibition on the manufacture of alcohol. Protocols were introduced for license issuing, so that the Executive Committee of government could authorise other persons to sell alcohol, subject to various conditions and fees, including minimum standards of hygiene, limits on hours and venues at which alcohol could be sold, and maximum prices for the sale of alcohol – all subject to the discretion of the Executive Committee. As private importation of alcohol was illegal, liquor retailers purchased alcohol from the state – from the government ‘Bond’ – and this monopoly (as in earlier times) provided a significant proportion of revenue available to the state. The purchase of wine and beer was no longer restricted under this legislation: “…there shall be no restriction on the quantity of beer or wine that may be
sold to any person” (Liquor Control Ordinance 1963:6b). Restrictions on other forms of liquor (principally spirits) were retained, and a permit system, administered by the Controller of Customs, restricted the sale of these liquors. The Executive Committee also maintained the right “to prohibit or restrict the sale of liquor to or the consumption of liquor by any person or any class of persons” (Liquor Control Ordinance 1963:5b). Under these provisions, the purchase and consumption of liquor in hotels, bars, and motels was restricted to the guests of the establishment in question, or the guests of guests – effectively preventing most Maori purchasing or consuming alcohol in these venues.185

In 1970, the Cook Islands Amendment Act addressed an omission in earlier legislation, where the consumption of liquor in public places was not prohibited. From this point onward, the consumption or sale of alcohol in any public place or means of conveyance was made illegal. Administration of these laws was the responsibility of the Island Councils, although the Rarotonga Island Council was less than fastidious in its responsibilities from the mid-1970s onward:

There is a law prohibiting locals from drinking in hotels and motels but if there is a guest in the house who invites a local to drink with him it is permitted. Unfortunately, this law is not being enforced by the Island Councils. There is a law against purchasing liquor on Sunday but the councils did not enforce that (Hon T. Simiona, CIHR 1980:1185).

In 1982, the condition that only guests or guests of guests be allowed to purchase and consume alcohol in these venues was dropped, and subsequently Maori began to attend hotels, motels and bars in increasing numbers. By the late 1980s the number of liquor licenses granted in the Cook Islands had increased, as had the amount of revenue taken offshore due to the increasing value of liquor imports, and a lack of regulation concerning liquor trading hours. This state of affairs caused concern within Parliament:

…on this island we have a population of approximately 8,000 people in Rarotonga. Now of those 8,000 people, last year I believe there was 143 liquor licenses operating on this island. Now that would mean one license to every 56 persons and that includes children…. You only have to cast your mind back to about five or six years ago, hotels closed at 11.30 and what is it now? There are kids coming home drunk at 4.00 o’ clock in the morning and when you ask them where they’ve been,

185 The law in this regard was intended to provide principally for the tourist industry.
they’ll say they’ve been drinking in a nightclub. At certain times you drive around in the bush, sometimes on the back roads, you will see kids with cartons of beer on their motorbikes and this happens even on Sundays (Mr V. Tairea, CIHR 1987:1040).

Mr Speaker, alcohol has been made here illegally; it has been imported here sometime [sic] illegally but it’s imported here for a total value of 6.5 million dollars, which is ½ million more than we export…. Maybe we shouldn’t give a damn. I do Mr Speaker because I happen to be a Minister of Finance as well as a Prime Minister. And I am interested in the economic welfare of the country, and we gain nothing by buying liquor from overseas; we gain a lot by import substitution (Hon Sir T. Davis, CIHR 1987:1057-58)

These comments were made in relation to the Amendment to the Cook Islands Act (1987/8), which made the manufacture of alcohol in the Cook Islands legal, provided a license was obtained if alcohol was manufactured for sale or reward. Thereafter, the production of home-brew became legal – a number of MPs hoped this measure would increase the hygiene of home brewed alcohol, as it would no longer have to be hidden:

It is really the prohibition…. It is really the restrictions placed on people that forces them to conceal their drinks in unhygienic places. It is because they try to hide it from the law that they take it to these terrible places, like pit toilet to conceal the booze, and I have seen it when I was a policeman in Rarotonga. I can tell you I was in a liquor raid when I found two tins of homebrew inside an old pit toilet which because of its conditions you wouldn’t be tempted to think people would hide it there; we found it there and we found maggots all over it and the same homebrew would have been rinsed in sugar sack; put in a brown bottle and in the evening when you buy it you wouldn’t see anything wrong with it, I have seen it (Hon Norman George, CIHR 1987:1071).

In 1988, a Liquor Licensing Authority was established, comprised of various representatives of government and the community, including three representatives from the Religious Advisory Council,186 and three from the Aronga Mana (traditional leaders). Licenses were categorised into different classes, with variable fees applicable depending on the type of license granted. No provisions were made for specified trading

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186 This organisation was comprised of the principal churches of the Cook Islands – the CICC, the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Apostolic Church.
hours, or the right to refuse alcohol to customers or intoxicated persons, until introduction of the Sale of Liquor Act (1991/2). From this time, alcohol trading hours were restricted to 11am – 12am from Monday to Thursday and Saturday, and 11am – 2am on Friday / Saturday morning. Persons aged 18 years and over were legally permitted to consume and purchase alcohol, and the display of licenses was required in each establishment. In the Sale of Liquor Amendment (1995/6), membership of the Liquor Licensing Authority was reduced to between 4 and 6 members, with the Commissioner of Police the only compulsory member. Other representatives were selected by the responsible Minister.

**Who Stole My Tamaka?**

The relaxation of the liquor laws relating to purchase and consumption of alcohol in hotels, bars, and motels was initiated by Geoffrey Henry, who at that time was a Minister in the Legislative Assembly. In the mid-1970s, Geoffrey Henry walked into the Banana Court (a Rarotongan bar/nightclub), ordered a bottle of DB (a New Zealand beer), and proceeded to drink it – with a nervous bar manager and bartender looking on. Word of Geoffrey’s deed quickly spread, and when he later met with the Albert Henry, the Premier was angry with his cousin for attending the bar. Technically, the act was illegal – although the Island Council was unwilling to pursue Geoffrey Henry over the matter, given his status as a close relative of the Premier, and the fact that he was a Minister. Apart from the illegality of Geoffrey’s action, the CIP maintained a close relationship with the Cook Islands Christian Church, which was generally opposed to any consumption of alcohol. As a compromise, and so that he would not become embroiled in the scandal to follow, Albert Henry said that if Geoffrey wanted to go to the Banana Court, he should wait until the Premier left on an overseas trip. Geoffrey Henry duly waited, and when the Premier left the Islands he and Hugh Henry went back to the Banana Court. From that time onward, Maori were admitted to the bar, and eventually it became famous throughout the Pacific, due to the dancing, joking, and card playing that Maori brought to the establishment.

Although Albert Henry was widely acknowledged as a frequent drinker, the influence of the CICC (Cook Islands Christian Church) was an important consideration.

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187 Tamaka, shoes.

188 This information is derived from an interview with Sir Geoffrey Henry, conducted in 2000.

189 It is likely that a Maori of lesser status would have faced prosecution for this act, if indeed the bartender and manager had deigned to provide alcohol at all.
in matters of public policy. As stated earlier, the relationship between the CIP and the CICC was actively nurtured by the Premier, particularly through support provided to the Church by the Cook Islands Christian Church Act (1968/9). The Church maintained the earlier LMS antagonism toward alcohol consumption, so the Premier had to tread a fine line in issues were alcohol was concerned.

The relationship between politicians and alcohol has always been problematic, particularly since independence. Public broadcast of parliamentary debates by radio, and the fact that many Cook Islanders listen to these debates as they occur, means that during debates on matters relating to alcohol politicians are conscious of contrary audiences – particularly, the moralistic audience of the Islands’ churches, who generally oppose the use of alcohol, and the majority of Cook Islanders who like to drink (often a single person may comprise both of these audiences!). These considerations affect the content and tone of debate in consideration of all matters pertaining to alcohol. In some cases, the irony generated in Parliament is appreciable, such as when Geoffrey Henry spoke on the proposed Amendment to the Cook Islands Act (1987/8), which was to make domestic manufacture of alcohol legal (also see above):

We are in the situation now, Mr Speaker, under the policies of the Prime Minister, young people can enjoy themselves all hours of the night. Liquor outlets, night clubs, hotels; no control over them anymore. There was once a time Mr Speaker, when these places closed down at 11.30 at night at the very latest. Now they continue till all hours of the morning, 2.00 o’clock or 4.00 o’clock in the morning…. That particular bar down at Avatiu is one of the most fragrant slap [sic] in the face of the Christian values of this community. And it happened right in the eyes of everybody and in front of the eyes of the Government, this Government. And this Government allowed the slap in the face, the Christian values of our community to happen…. Speaking however to the merits of the Bill, I want to say Mr Speaker that even though it appears as if what the Bill is seeking to do is encourage the consumption of liquor in our country, it seems to me that if we are going to continue, we might as well drink our own rather than some imported product (Hon G.A. Henry, CIHR 1987:1042).

These tensions reached public prominence in 1998, when two alcohol-related incidents caused the CIP Government some embarrassment within the space of a fortnight. In the first incident, the Minster of Finance and Women’s Affairs, Papamama
Pokino, was reportedly discovered by police in a government vehicle, parked in the middle of the road, having sex with a woman from Niue:

The Minister was allegedly so drunk he was unable to put his pants back on – and didn’t do so until he and the woman were driven to the Central Motel by an officer…. the Minister was disoriented and had difficulty understanding where he was. Officers had to collect the woman’s underwear from the road (Cook Islands News 11/10/1998:1).

Later that night, police were called to the Central Motel in response to a complaint that Pokino and the woman were discovered having sex in public once more:

The eyewitness alleges he first saw Pokino and the woman on the motel staircase and again later after stripping naked in front of the motel’s Jacuzzi, smack in the centre of the property. He says the minister and the woman were in full view of some other guests who came out after waking up to outside noises from the couple (Cook Island Press 11/10/1998:1).

These events were not recorded in police records and no charges were laid. Pokino left the country soon afterward to attend a conference in New Zealand, and extended his stay for four additional weeks in the hope that matters would die down. When he eventually returned, he retained his cabinet position in the CIP Government.

A few weeks later, Pokino and another Government Minister, Vaine Tairea, caused further embarrassment when they arrived in New Zealand from Rarotonga, and argued with Quarantine Officials there:

Two senior Cabinet ministers are said to have gotten so drunk on a flight to New Zealand, that one got off the plane in barefeet because he couldn’t find his shoes and both were abusive to Quarantine officers there…. A source says Vaine Tairea didn’t have shoes on as his son had forgotten to deliver them to the airport here before his departure….The Consular General says Vaine Tairea was upset because the airline had lost his bag and Mau Munokoa’s. Quarantine officers also rechecked pawpaws the minister took, which further displeased Vaine Tairea who kept telling them he’d had the fruit checked in Rarotonga (Cook Island Press 25/10/1998:1).
Once again, people in the Cook Islands complained that the actions of Pokino and Tairea had brought shame on the Cook Islands, which was after all a Christian nation, and its international reputation would suffer as a result:

“There are signs that the people of this country are fed up with a government driven by pride and arrogance,” he [Dr Pupuke Robati, MP] said. Robati says the Prime Minister has no choice but to terminate the Cabinet appointments of Vaine Tairea and Papamama Pokino now…. Pokino has already come under fire from various quarters of the Cook Islands community for his very public sex-exploits. Robati says “The actions of our Cabinet members has caused great embarrassment and shame to our people, and made us once more the laughing clowns of the South Pacific.”…. “Isn’t it enough that this same Cabinet has driven this country into bankruptcy – do they have to destroy completely our reputation and the good name of this country as well?” (Cook Islands News 26/10/1998:1).

In 1998, Geoffrey Henry was struggling to retain control of his government in the wake of the financial crisis and subsequent ‘transition’. Pokino, for one, had been appointed Minister of Finance partly in an effort to secure his loyalty to the CIP Government. Given Henry’s tenuous grip on the Government, he had a very real interest in keeping Pokino from prosecution. A complaint was submitted to the Police Commissioner, who said that the police officers had acted appropriately, and refused to open an investigation into the incident – despite an argument from the Solicitor General that under the Police Act, the Commissioner did not have the power to quash complaints that had not been investigated (see also page 280). The failure to charge the Minister with any offence was not a departure from the standard procedures of the police, as the issue of a warning was (and is) the most common response of police to such episodes. What was unusual was the public nature of these events, and the fact that a Cook Islander of high status had been publicly revealed. Many years earlier, Sir Albert Henry was also implicated in a drunken incident – but not without political repercussion:

While drinking in the Are Rau [a community house on Mitiaro] it was made apparent to those present that Sir Albert wanted other companionship. Twenty dollars changed hands, but the person to whom it was given informed Papa Raui, who was deeply offended. The money was returned. Because his wish was not granted, Sir Albert got wild and smashed all the remaining bottles of liquor. Papa Raui felt that Sir Albert’s behaviour was an insult to him and his people. It was so
serious that Papa Raui and his wife decided that very night to leave the Cook Islands Party, and withdraw their support from Sir Albert (Tavioni 1979:78).

**Alcohol Consumption in the Cook Islands**

In 1997 a study was published which suggested that the per capita consumption of alcohol in the Cook Islands was the highest of six selected South Pacific nations.\(^{190}\) By obtaining data from sales and production figures, per-capita alcohol consumption for persons over the age of fifteen was estimated, assuming the strength of alcohol in beer was 5\%, wine 12\%, and in spirits 37\%. Results obtained from the study did not account for the production of ‘home brew’ or toddy, and so were likely to underestimate the extent of alcohol consumption in all the countries surveyed. The authors stated anecdotal evidence suggested that ‘home brew’ may account for up to 90\% of alcohol consumption in Western Samoa and the Cook Islands.\(^{191}\)

**Table VIII: Estimated Per-capita Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages in Selected South Pacific Nations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Western Samoa</th>
<th>Cook Islands</th>
<th>Solomon Islands</th>
<th>Tonga</th>
<th>Fiji</th>
<th>Kiribati</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pure Alcohol Per Capita (l)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(MacDonald, Elvy et al. 1997:385)*

These figures were, by admission of the authors, estimates of total consumption only, as “difficulty in obtaining data on both imported and locally produced alcoholic beverages and scarce resources available to government statistical agencies for collecting and publishing data in this area, means that accurate and comprehensive information on alcohol consumption is not always available” (MacDonald, Elvy et al. 1997:387). This is certainly true of data for the Cook Islands – although statistics concerning the import of alcohol are available from 1995 onward, statistics on the domestic production of alcohol were not made available to me. During the ‘transition’ in 1996, State assets were sold to private interests – including the Government Bond liquor outlet – and present owners of Rarotonga’s major liquor outlets consider production and sales figures to be commercially sensitive information. The impact of

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\(^{190}\) Comparison was made in this study between the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga.

\(^{191}\) My own impression is that, while this may have been true in the past, consumption of home-brew in the Cook Islands now accounts for a substantially lower proportion of total alcohol consumed.
tourism on alcohol consumption figures was considered negligible, as “in 1994 it was estimated that tourists spent only 1200 person-days in the nation” (MacDonald, Elvy et al. 1997:384).

It is difficult to assess the impact of visitors on alcohol consumption in the Cook Islands, due to the limited range and comprehensiveness of available data. The best source of data on alcohol consumption is information relating to the monetary value of imported alcohol, obtained from the Cook Islands Statistics Office (CISO). I obtained itemised statistical data on revenue derived from tariffs on alcohol and tobacco imports from CISO during fieldwork for the years 1995-1999. Unfortunately, the reliability of these data are suspect:

Table IX: Comparison of CISO Alcohol & Tobacco Value of Imports Data, 1995-1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>My Data</th>
<th>CISO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3495121</td>
<td>4326000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2547284</td>
<td>3176000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3193251</td>
<td>4112000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2040118</td>
<td>2526000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1370807</td>
<td>1974000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CISO, CISO 2000).

With these discrepancies in mind, an examination of ‘my’ data seems to indicate that changes in imports of beer and spirits between 1995 and 1999 (the years for which statistics are available) follow changes in the resident population of the Cook Islands more closely than that of visitors. This is a supposition, as the data are very ambiguous:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resident Population</th>
<th>Number of Visitors</th>
<th>Beer (NZ $)</th>
<th>Wine (NZ $)</th>
<th>Spirits (NZ $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>19400</td>
<td>70000</td>
<td>1741957</td>
<td>78347</td>
<td>452953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>48354</td>
<td>1155316</td>
<td>46966</td>
<td>303066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>18300</td>
<td>49866</td>
<td>1539414</td>
<td>137872</td>
<td>443533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>17400</td>
<td>48629</td>
<td>997368</td>
<td>40365</td>
<td>244086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>16100</td>
<td>55599</td>
<td>609707</td>
<td>62786</td>
<td>185625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(SPC 1999; CISO 2000).

By 1997, two major competing alcohol wholesalers had opened in Rarotonga following the sale of the state-owned Government Bond. These competing companies entered into a price war, and these exceptional conditions contributed to the increased importation of alcohol into the Cook Islands. Despite cheaper prices of alcohol to the public, the Cook Islands News reported in 1997 that the Bond liquor store’s sports

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192 The managers of Rarotonga’s liquor wholesalers were reluctant to supply me with data on their businesses, because it was ‘commercially sensitive’ information.
193 Unfortunately, after a number of requests, this was all I was able to obtain from CISO.
sponsorship would be reduced, because “while the cost of beer may have dropped consumption has remained the same” (Cook Islands News 26/03/1997:1). Consequently, imports of alcohol during this period exceeded market demand.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resident Population</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Alcohol and Tobacco Imports ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>16500</td>
<td>29503</td>
<td>4370000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>30349</td>
<td>3804000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18200</td>
<td>39976</td>
<td>4215000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>19000</td>
<td>50190</td>
<td>4716000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>19700</td>
<td>53569</td>
<td>5189000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>19500</td>
<td>57293</td>
<td>4668000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>19400</td>
<td>47889</td>
<td>4326000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>43354</td>
<td>3176000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>18300</td>
<td>49866</td>
<td>4112000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>17400</td>
<td>48629</td>
<td>2526000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>16100</td>
<td>55599</td>
<td>1974000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CISO 2000).

Many Cook Islanders attribute the high rate of per-capita alcohol consumption to the large numbers of tourists relative to residents who visit the Islands each year. Nevertheless, it would appear that alcohol and tobacco imports (of which tobacco comprises about 20% of landed value) are relatively unresponsive, both to annual visitor numbers and changes in resident population.194

Following reductions in the Public Service in 1996, a large number of Cook Islanders emigrated in search of employment. Most of these were younger people, aged between 15 and 30 years old – 69.3% in 1996 (SPC 1999:47) – who tended to have money available for purchase of alcohol and other commodities:

Jason Brown: I mean the early 90’s were great. It was sort of party time, the Government was loaning lots of money. Everyone had jobs. The place was really booming. Our economic growth was just sort of obscene. But it was all a house of cards, fun at the time, we had a brilliant time. People were just drinking, eating and building themselves silly. But once the loan money ran out everything just collapsed (ABC 1997).

Crime, Health, and Alcohol

The most graphic impact of alcohol consumption in the Cook Islands is evident in alcohol-related vehicle accidents and police prosecutions. Except for vehicle accidents, statistical data is generally limited to that provided by the police – the Ministry of Health maintains no records on the proportion of hospital admissions that are alcohol-related. A statistician in the Ministry of Health told me that the inclusion of such data was mooted at a board meeting of the Rarotonga Hospital, but rejected on grounds that collection of such information would be an ‘invasion of privacy’. Among police, numbers of alcohol-related infractions and accidents are under-reported due to the practice of issuing ‘warnings’ at the discretion of police officers, and their failure to identify or report the use of alcohol by persons involved in such incidents. I knew of eight such cases in 2000/1, where people I knew (or knew of) were involved in vehicle accidents where either they or another party had been drinking, yet the police did not report the incident as alcohol-related. Of these, one person died, and four were admitted to hospital with serious injuries. There are also discrepancies between data collected by the police and the Ministry of Health; there is little effective information sharing between these departments, and often people who are involved in vehicle accidents present to the hospital without reference to the police.

There were no breath or blood testing facilities for alcohol use in the Cook Islands, so the police identified drunken persons by use of the mnemonic ‘MAN SEEMS FULL’ –

M – Memory Loss
A – Admission of drunkenness
N – Notes for police: date, time, place etc
S – Slurred speech
E – Eyes bloodshot
E – Erratic behaviour
M – Movement abnormal
S – Slow reactions
F – Flushed face
U – Unsteady on feet
L – Lack of coordination
L – Liquor smell

The maximum penalties under the law for drinking and driving were up to $200 fine, three months imprisonment, and possible disqualification from driving or suspension of license. In practice, the allocation of fines and penalties for drinking and driving between 1996-1999 ranged from $40 to $100 (plus $10 court costs), and in one case, court costs alone were claimed by the court. Most incidents concerning drunk
driving were resolved with a warning to the driver, and an order not to drive until 8am (Cook Islands News 1996-1999). Domestic disputes involving alcohol were the most common cause of police call-outs, and in the majority of cases parties to the dispute were warned or ‘counselling’. In cases of alcohol-related assault, 62% resulted in arrest or detention. Fines for domestic assault ranged from $20-$30 – although a number of wives / spouses withdrew their complaints before the case was heard.


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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Related</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Alcohol Related</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Cook Islands Police)

Statistics from the Ministry of Health regarding hospital care in Rarotonga show a greater incidence of alcohol-related vehicle accidents than that indicated by the Cook Islands police. At the time of writing, only statistics for 1989-1996 were available:


<table>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Accidents</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Related Accidents</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Related Deaths</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CIMH 1997).

Table XIV: Alcohol-Related Vehicle Accident Death Rates per 100,000 Population, Rarotonga & New Zealand, 1989-1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarotonga</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CIMH 1997; LTSA).

There were a number of reasons for these high rates of vehicle related injury and death. A large proportion of vehicles\textsuperscript{195} in the Cook Islands were motorcycles or scooters, which were particularly vulnerable to larger road vehicles and (on Rarotonga)

\textsuperscript{195} 65% of vehicles imported to the Cook Islands between 1994 and 1999 were motorcycles (CISO).
wandering dogs. While not wearing a helmet was technically illegal when travelling in excess of 60 kilometres per hour (the ‘open road’ speed limit), this law was not enforced by police. Very few Cook Islanders wore helmets while driving motorcycles or scooters.\(^{196}\) While lower average speeds may have reduced the severity of injuries sustained in most vehicle accidents, riders of motorcycles did not wear protective clothing, so that in the event of an accident, the chance of injury or death was increased.\(^{197}\)

Alcohol use was also implicated in offences committed by people on probation (and thus supervised by the Cook Islands Probation Service). ‘Alcohol related offences’ were those committed by a person who consumed alcohol, or was drunk, while committing the offence for which they were convicted. In these cases, probation restrictions included a prohibition on consuming alcohol, and on attending any public drinking establishment.

\textit{Table XV: Probationer Offences, Alcohol-Related and Non-Alcohol Related, 1998-1999.}

\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
  \hline
  \hline
  Alcohol Related & 10 & 15 & 16 & 15 \\
  Non-Alcohol Related & 39 & 53 & 52 & 23 \\
  Total & 49 & 68 & 68 & 38 \\
  \hline
\end{tabular}

(Cook Islands Probation Service)

The collection of statistical data in the Cook Islands has improved since the 1996 ‘transition’, mainly due to requirements of overseas aid agencies for increased transparency and accountability in state bodies, following the widespread misappropriation of monies by the Cook Islands Government prior to 1996.\(^{198}\) While much of the information is incomplete, it is sufficient to demonstrate that alcohol consumption is strongly associated with crime and negative health outcomes in the Cook Islands. The likelihood that many alcohol-related incidents go unreported in the Cook Islands only serves to strengthen this claim.

\(^{196}\) The only people I saw wearing helmets in Rarotonga were tourists, and one expatriate.  
\(^{197}\) Compare Barker (1999), who discusses similar themes in her analysis of motor vehicle accidents on Niue.  
\(^{198}\) For example, a superannuation fund was raided by the CIP Government prior to 1996 for more than $5 million dollars. This money was to be paid into the New Zealand Government Superannuation Fund, and is still owed to it by the Cook Islands (\textit{Cook Islands News} 15/05/2000:1).
PART ONE CONCLUSION:
OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF KAVA IN RAROTONGA

One of the most notable features of the history of alcohol use in Rarotonga is its persistence as a substance, and practice, of political significance for both Maori and Papa’a. The often contrary movement to regulate and control the use of alcohol by political and religious authorities, and the desire of Maori (or more generally, Rarotongan residents) to possess and consume alcohol, have been a site of enduring tension. In the early missionary period, religious and political authority were synonymous, and alcohol use was prohibited to all Maori. This was consistent with the isolationist policy of the LMS missionaries, wherein alcohol joined a compendium of substances, persons and practices that were regarded corrupting influences on Maori inhabitants of the island. Missionaries feared that visiting whalers and traders would turn Maori away from Christian practice, induce women to immorality, and introduce an ethic of mercantilism that would undermine their dream of a God-fearing community. Notably, they regarded alcohol as possessed of the same potential – to the missionaries, the substance of alcohol alone could induce immorality, even when Maori were divorced of a context in which to learn what alcohol did to drinkers. To the LMS missionaries, alcohol was indeed the “demon rum”, which had the potential to possess those who drank it. The missionaries realised that isolation was not sufficient, however, and also undertook to prohibit indigenous practices and substances they considered incommensurate with Christian life. Prohibition and control of indigenous practice was ultimately achieved through regulation, where local structures of authority were co-opted to make and enforce laws, and new systems of governance were introduced to ensure compliance to the law. While the missionaries were able to achieve political ascendance following these changes, they were not able to maintain it, and the missionaries eventually became executive ‘rulers’ of Rarotonga only in certain prescribed matters – including, among others things, the use of alcohol. Ultimately, economic and political influence accumulated most substantially to the titled Maori of

199 Of course, some forms of alcohol, such as communion wine, were not believed to possess this characteristic – although in time even this changed, when Chalmers’ prohibited the use of alcohol in communion.
Rarotonga – particularly the *ariki*, some of whom opposed, and others supported, missionary laws that outlawed the use of alcohol.

The Christian mission and the churches that followed have not since enjoyed such political influence in Rarotonga. The relationship of the churches to governance became increasingly peripheral through the period of the British Protectorate and the New Zealand Administration, but strengthened slightly in the contemporary era, with Cook Islands independence. The role of the churches during these periods was principally advisory, although on occasion they were able to assert political pressure through their congregations. Alcohol, however, remained (and remains) a political topic in which the Christian churches have considerable influence – notably, church representatives are effectively *ex officio* members of any political consideration on matters concerning alcohol. It is most revealing, then, that in 1998 the Cook Islands churches effectively disengaged from criticism of the inappropriate behaviours of Cook Islands politicians who had been drinking. By the 1990s, the Cook Islands churches appear to have been at least partially co-opted by the state, particularly through legislation such as the Cook Islands Christian Church Act (1968/9).

During the period of ‘missionary rule’ in Rarotonga, alcohol was expressly prohibited to all residents of the island. This circumstance changed with the establishment of the British Protectorate and the New Zealand Administration. Alcohol use was made legal only to select residents of the island, with policy determined principally on the basis of race and (ostensibly) on the effect of alcohol use on Maori productivity. Various forms of racial discrimination were extended to political practice in Rarotonga and the Cook Islands, and *ariki* and indigenous organisations were also relegated to a more peripheral role in governance. During the British Protectorate, this process was not accepted passively by *ariki*, and they (and their allies) were able to draw on various discourses about alcohol in order to undermine the status of the British Resident, Frederick Moss. The social significance of alcohol is particularly evident in this account, for there were no legally substantive grounds for removing Moss from office (other than the fact that he had lost the confidence of the *ariki*).

During this period, and the New Zealand Administration that followed, alcohol imports and permits became an important source of revenue to the state, as did the fines imposed on people who manufactured, and drank, alcohol. This was a significant change to that obtaining during the early missionary period, when state (or rather, *ariki*) revenue from alcohol was derived from fines alone – as well as that in place
immediately prior to declaration of the Protectorate, when the system of fines for alcohol offences had essentially disintegrated and free trade dominated the import of alcohol, as both *ariki* and missionaries lacked the capacity to enforce laws of control the people. Under their colonial administrators, Maori became increasingly discontented with state discrimination on the basis of race – Maori were well aware of their limited political participation, and discriminatory policies concerning alcohol were a perennial sore point. On more than one occasion, these issues were protested in concert.

With independence, full civic participation was afforded to Maori – over time, access to alcohol was also permitted. Initially, the influence of the churches, and possibly that of the Cook Islands’ former colonial administrators, curtailed proposals to liberalise Maori access to alcohol. These influences were eventually overcome, however, as the new state assumed the monopoly on alcohol imports established under the New Zealand Administration, removed the permit requirement for alcohol purchase, and legalised Cook Islands residents’ access to public drinking venues. Initially, these changes were focused on policy related to imported alcohol, and only much later was the manufacture of alcohol legalised. As the population of Rarotonga became increasingly integrated into the cash economy – first through extensive state patronage, then through private sector development – the popularity and use of imported alcohol increased substantially in proportion to indigenously manufactured alcohol. Participation in the cash economy brought new hazards, as alcohol consumption was combined with a proliferation of motor vehicles, and alcohol-related morbidity and mortality increased. In this context, one of the most interesting features of political and economic change in Rarotonga is that it has not led to an increased interest in *kava maori* over *kava papa’a*. As the direct political intervention of foreign powers and organisations in the Cook Islands has reduced, and Maori have obtained political autonomy, there has not been a complimentary interest in the indigenous alcohol, *kava maori*. While political structures and agendas have moved ‘on-shore’, as it were, alcohol has increasingly moved ‘off-shore’.

Maori practices in alcohol consumption have maintained a number of features over time, although there have been significant changes as well. Some of the drinking practices that emerged soon after techniques for brewing alcohol were introduced to the island most likely incorporated practices associated with the consumption of kava

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200 Reasons for this development are discussed in detail at page 311.
(Piper methysticum) prior to the arrival of the LMS mission, and/or the practices of other drinking groups – such as Tahitians (who modified their own rituals associated with Piper methysticum). The institution of the barman (tuati), the seated drinking circle, the passing of a single bowl from drinker to drinker, and the pressure to drink an entire bowl in one swig are evidence of this continuity. However, some aspects of early drinking practice are somewhat more problematic – such as accounts of large gatherings of Maori (sometimes comprising people from entire villages, and both men and women) to drink. It may be that alcohol was also associated with feasting and feast foods during this early period – where large quantities of alcohol, and large quantities of food, provided a means for people to associate (and compete) with each other. These large groups may also have reflected, to some degree, the new living arrangements of many ‘Christian’ Maori, who had shifted to live in communal villages under the aegis of the missionaries and the ariki (see page 311).

After some years had passed, however, the size of drinking groups reduced dramatically, and were largely restricted to men who were related to one another. There are a number of possible explanations for this occurrence, including increased surveillance by (church) police, increased cost of ingredients, as an attempt to avoid conflicts caused by close association with non-kin or intimate association with women, and so on (see page 111). It may also be the case that exclusively male drinking groups were similar to the ‘informal’ kava circles of pre-missionary warriors, and the association was more comfortable for this reason.

While ‘bush beer schools’ are the most famous form of alcohol practice in the Cook Islands, they were not the only drinking practice of Maori. It appears that both men and women sometimes brewed beer for consumption by friends and family, at least in the latter years of the New Zealand Administration. Restrictions on alcohol consumption determined by gender appear to have been confined to particular situations – such as the ‘bush beer schools’ – rather than as more general prohibitions on drinking by women. Nevertheless, less women drank than men throughout the historical period considered here, and indeed, groups of women occasionally organised to oppose alcohol consumption by men (see page 92).

The ‘disinhibitory’ effects of alcohol consumption appear to have been remarkably resilient over time – throughout the historical record, people who drink are described as having a propensity to violence, as talking loudly and more often (including in English), as inclined to engage in sexual relations, as happy, as laughing,
as singing, and as argumentative. The ‘stages’ of drinking described by Chalmers in the late 1800s (talking, singing, loud talking, quarrelling, fighting, dead drunk), though negatively biased, are still applicable today. In most cases, of course, the descriptions are broad, and rely on stereotypical characterisations of drinking behaviour – so that they could very well apply to drinking comportment in a great many places.

In Part Two to follow, I will describe contemporary aspects of drinking comportment among Maori in Rarotonga, and explore the meanings of alcohol and drinking practice for Maori in detail. I will also examine aspects of political and economic life in Rarotonga that affect, and are affected by, drinking practice in Rarotonga.
PART TWO:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF DRINKING IN RAROTONGA

In these chapters, I consider the place of alcohol in the lives of mapu in contemporary Rarotonga. As a lived practice, the meanings and behaviours associated with drinking a somewhat varied, and there is considerable scope for people to argue about the significance of drinking, or to associate specific effects with certain people or places. Nevertheless, a number of themes and patterns emerge in consideration of Rarotongan drinking practice – not only in terms of the basic ethnographic questions of what, where and whom, but also in people’s interpretations of their own and other people’s behaviour while drinking. In general, Maori who drink find that they talk more often, loudly, and on different topics; they find that they are more likely to argue and fight with one another; and they find that alcohol makes them happy and relaxed. They also consider drinking to be an important part of their social lives, and in the course of drinking, form obligations and expectations of one another to reciprocate favours and ‘shouts’. Friends can be made just as quickly as enemies through drinking. These broad themes, and others, are considered in the following chapters. As in the historical chapters of Part One, this section ends with a broader perspective of drinking in contemporary Rarotonga, where political, economic, religious and other factors that affect alcohol use on Rarotonga are described and explored.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
WHERE, WHEN AND WHAT, HOW MUCH AND WITH WHOM

The cat was rubbing against my legs, craving attention as cats do. She was a dwarf by Western cat standards, but here in Rarotonga she was Jane Average, sharing the island with the midget chickens, and dogs with Alsatian bodies and Corgi legs – a remnant of two German dogs’ contribution, some thirty or so years ago, to a rather limited gene pool, or so the story goes. The roof fan was turned off, because its only purpose was to push humid air down from the roof, baking the house like a fan-oven. It was Friday, about eight o’clock, and I was finishing off a Heineken from earlier that evening, when Tony and Henry came over for a few beers after they finished work. A good way to relax and stop going crazy after work, that’s how Tony described drinking. We sat out on the porch in wrought-iron chairs, drinking some beers and talking about who was doing what, and the latest scandals to hit the island – even Henry, who was normally quiet and shy, regaled us with stories of his life in New Zealand, before he returned to look after his family lands in Rarotonga. Before he and Tony left, two or so hours ago, we could hardly get a word in edgewise, what with Henry telling us about Wellington, his work on the production line, and even the very personal reasons why his wife was in hospital – a consequence, apparently, of some risqué sexual experimentation.

While we drank, the stereos cranked up, one across the back hedge, and the other past some of the chestnut trees on the other side of the village. A curious mix of Dire Straits and Venga Boys drifted over the village. Tony looked at me and said:

“He’s the brother of the Minister over there,”

Nodding toward Dire Straits:

“Brother of the Minister and he’s making homebrew.”

We chuckled for a while, talked some more. Apparently the house on the corner of Te Ara Metua (the ancient road) was another homebrew house, and there the ‘proprietor’ was a deacon of the Cook Islands Christian Church. This warranted another chuckle. By now we could hear men and women talking over Dire Straits as they drank. The place where the Venga Boys was playing was known as the Mango Tree – you never heard talking from there, though, because the music was always too loud. When the music started it would often go twenty-four hours a day, Friday until Sunday. Drink, sleep, get up, drink. Being an anthropologist, I had to ask:
“Why is it called the Mango Tree?”

“Because there’s a mango tree there.”

“Is there a reason they decided to name it after the Mango Tree?”

“Dunno.”

It was getting on toward six o’clock, when the Assembly of God Church across the road added another voice to the cacophony. It also had a large and powerful sound system. That congregation, like many Cook Islanders in Rarotonga, was not drinking tonight. I remembered, with a sense of irony, the romantic description of Rarotonga offered by a friend before I arrived here: “During the evenings, all you hear is the Cook Islands drums echoing around the village.” If anyone were playing the pate tonight, he would need at least a thousand watts of amplification to hear himself over the neighbours.

Sarah, my wife, invited Tony and Henry to stay and eat dinner with us. They told us it was too early to think about eating, now was the time for drinking. “We’re going to go to BCs (Banana Court, a bar) – why don’t you meet us there later, when you’ve eaten?” I said I’d meet them there, and they picked up what beer they had remaining, and made their way through the bushes to Tony’s house, which was next door.

Now, at eight o’clock, I had finished dinner, and pulled on some boots in preparation for my night on the town. Sarah decided she didn’t feel like going out tonight, so I set off alone from our flat toward town. We lived in Takuva’ine, which is a village in Avarua, and the Banana Court was just a few minutes walk away.

Soon I reached the end of Happy Valley Road, which leads up into the Takuva’ine Valley. A fellow waved to me while driving past on his scooter – I didn’t know him, but people often waved to tourists in Rarotonga, just to be friendly – so I waved back. He slowed down, turned around, drove back toward me and stopped:

“Kia orana, how are you tonight?”

“Good, and you?”

“Oh meitaki, good, good… are you a tourist?”

“Oh no, I live up in Takuva’ine, I’m here doing research on drinking – I’m just going to see what’s happening at BCs.”

“You want a drink, my name’s Albert, come drink with me.”

“Oh yeah, whereabouts?”

“Just up there, up the road.”

“OK then.”
“Hop on.”

I hopped on the back of the scooter, and we started driving down Takuva’ine Road, stopping after about twenty metres or so at a green, wooden house with a large sandy courtyard, and a white-washed grave just off to the left of the building. I’d hardly been on the scooter, and it was time to get off. Albert introduced me to Tei, who owned this house, and some local boys who I’d seen sometimes working the banana plantations opposite the green house. I shook hands with them as Tei suggested we bring the barbeque table around to the front of the house. There were a few used nappies on the table, which we cleared away before we shifted it, during which Kena, one of the boys, managed to smear some chicken shit over his shirt. This couldn’t pass without comment – everyone made a few jokes at Kena’s expense. Kena, for his part, made a show of being repulsed by his new odour, and took off his shirt, which mainly had the effect of spreading it over his hands, and making the smell unavoidable. By now Tei had positioned the table a few metres from the road, so he could see who was passing by. We all sat down.

One of the boys poured out decent sized tots of Jim Beam, mixed with Coca Cola, into some glasses bought out from the house, and passed them around to everyone seated at the table, and the talk began. Everyone was interested to hear who I was, what I was doing on the island, where I lived – all the important information. Tei in particular seemed pleased to have me there. He proudly announced that it was his house that we were sitting in front of, his grandfather in the courtyard grave, and now that I was one of his guests, he was going to look after me.

Tei sensed he had a willing listener in me, and he was keen to make a good impression. A good, tough, impression. It turned out that Albert, the man who picked me up, was the son of a prominent politician, and it was Tei’s job to keep him out of trouble – to act as his guardian. Tei’s grandmother took him aside a few years ago and told him that he was to be Albert’s guardian, and Tei took his role very seriously. Anyone who messed with Albert, anytime and for whatever reason, had to answer to Tei. It didn’t matter what the other person had done, or what his reason was, because the family came first.

All of this took a little while to explain though, and we ran out of Coke, so Kena went across the road to the local shop, which was his family’s shop, to get some more mixers, have a shower and change his clothes. By the time he got back Tei had softened a bit, and told me all about his wife, who was in New Zealand having an operation, his
desire to have more children, and the trouble he and his wife were having trying to conceive. He was also rather proud of his Christmas lights, which were specially imported from New Zealand. Albert was getting a bit restless by now – he wanted to go to TJs or BCs (both drinking establishments) and see what was happening there. Also, a couple of women from the village had joined us, after Tei called out to them as they walked down the road, and everyone was drinking, sharing jokes, and occasionally singing along with the stereo – which was alternately playing Tahitian pop music and the latest dance music from the United Kingdom and the USA. Tei even went to the trouble of translating one of the Tahitian songs for my benefit – a love song, sung by a man who keened for his lover, separated from her by the ocean. It was, he said, a beautiful song.

At about eleven, the police drove by and stopped. One of them was Tei’s cousin, so he arose and walked over to the four wheel drive to see what the story was. The officers shared a few jokes, declined the offer for a drink, and asked us to turn the music down. After the police left, Albert decided it was time to go to BCs, and so after shirts had been changed and shoes put on, we began the walk into town.

Friday night at the Banana Court was Orama Dance Troupe night, and the performance was just winding up as we walked to the nightclub entrance. Buses were waiting for the swarms of tourists to emerge from Banana Court, and those with hired scooters wobbled down the road, accidentally flicking indicator lights and struggling to find gears. We walked down the corridor into BCs, the smell of beer and tobacco rich in the air, like any bar or nightclub the world over, but with the humidity pegged up a few notches. There was a mixture of Cook Islanders and tourists dancing on the sunken dance floor, and crowded around the walls and the bar, located on the far side of the room. On the right, as we walked in, I saw Tony and Henry, each clutching a large, almost empty, Steinlager. It turned out that Albert was good friends with Tony. Tei and the boys, however, kept walking toward the bar. Henry asked me:

“What do you want to drink, Vaughn? My shout.”

I told him a beer would be OK, thanks – Henry offered to buy drinks for everybody. I joined him as he walked toward the bar, to help him carry some of the bottles back. One of the bartenders was a woman who Tony called the “Black Widow” – when I asked him why, he said it was because “she creeps in your window at night.” Tonight, she had a black eye. Henry paid for some large bottles of Steinlager, and began talking to the bartender about his tab – apparently, it was large, and it had been a while
since he had last settled his accounts. I quietly waited while he and Dave, the bartender in question, entered negotiations.

Meanwhile, a girl had started dancing lasciviously to my right, demanding attention, swinging her hips side to side:

“You’re good looking, you should come home with me!”

I smiled, and took a step back. Tei, who was watching the spectacle, winked at me, took a sip of his whiskey and coke, and turned to talk to one of his friends crowded around a table next to the bar. I’m not a great dancer.

“I’m married.”

“That doesn’t matter, dance with me!”

“Hi Vaughn.”

I turned around to see Sera, a woman I interviewed a few weeks earlier.

“That’s my sister, Tere.”

Small island, Rarotonga. Sera and I caught up for a while, as Tere danced before and around us, soon attracting the attention of one of the men from Albert’s table, and they started dancing. Sera looked at me, and nodded at Tere, and we shared a smile. When we last talked, during the interview, Sera was telling me about drinking and flirting. If she had been drunk, she said, she would probably have been trying to hit on me, because she wouldn’t have been shy anymore. Tonight Sera wasn’t drinking, but her sister was. They had been here since about 4 o’clock, which was nine hours ago. We talked for a while about Sera’s new job, until Tere accidentally walked into a stool and fell over, taking a few patrons’ drinks with her.

“I better take her home.”

“Yeah OK, see you later Sera.”

Sera gathered Tere up with one arm around her waist, and led her toward the door. Tere was unsteady on her feet and shuffled along beside her sister. Tei grinned.

By now, I was thinking I should find Tony and Henry, and buy them a drink in return for the earlier “shout”. By the time I had threaded my way back through the crowd, Tony was talking to a young girl, and a few people I didn’t know had joined the table. Tony turned to greet me:

“Hey Vaughn, you see that girl, she’s fourteen, from the Mango Tree. Her name’s Gina, you should talk to her.”

Tony had a case study in mind for me. I wasn’t sure that this was an appropriate occasion for an interrogation.
“I just saw the Black Widow. She’s got a black eye.”
I knew it wasn’t PC, but I couldn’t remember her real name.
“Oh yeah, she had a fight with her boyfriend when they were drinking. He was jealous of her going with another man.”
“Wasn’t you, was it?”
“No, I won’t go there again.”
“Where’s Albert gone?”
“He went to TJs. Too hot in here.”

Before long I found myself in conversation with Beth, an older cousin of the fourteen year old Tony was talking to. Beth was also from the Mango Tree. The Mango Tree was just a house where lots of parties were held – they didn’t sell alcohol there. The fella who owned the house had recently got a new girlfriend who had a few kids, so he was under a bit of pressure from her to stop holding parties there every weekend. But tonight the party was on, and they were just going “outing” before they headed back to his house. By now the music in BCs had stopped – two o’clock was closing time on a Friday night / Saturday morning. Beth asked me if I would like to come over to the Mango Tree for “afterhours” – a party after the bars and nightclubs were closed. I accepted, and Beth walked outside to meet her friends while I said goodbye to Tony and Henry, and then followed.

When I arrived outside, Beth and her boyfriend were talking to each other, and it was clear that he wasn’t happy for me to join them. Beth walked over to me – she looked upset:
“I’m sorry. You can’t come.”
“That’s OK, don’t worry about it.”
“I would like you to come, but my boyfriend, he’s jealous. He saw us talking and he is jealous.”
“I don’t want to cause any trouble between you two, so don’t worry about it, OK?”
“I’m sorry.”

Cars, scooters, and four wheel drives were rumbling off now, drivers and passengers in various states of intoxication. A barman I spoke to once, who had recently returned from New Zealand, said that the best thing about living in Rarotonga was that you can get pissed and drive home afterwards, and not have to worry about the police catching you.
“Vaughn, what are you doing?”
It was Tony, leaving BCs through the side door.
“I gonna head home now I think.”
“Don’t do that, mate. Come with us, we’re going to a party.”

Six of us piled into Tony’s four wheel drive. We pulled out onto the main road, heading eastwards for a short time before pulling into a short drive heading toward the coast. We passed one of the dilapidated lime houses that were sprinkled around the island, and stopped beside a blue house – a plain wooden affair. We could hear music and singing from the other end of the house, and followed it to find about fifteen people crowded around two barbeque tables. Some young men were talking quietly at the first, and at the second were five women and a couple of men, all singing and clapping along with Destiny’s Child blasting on the stereo. They were all laughing, drinking, smoking and joking. A few waved out for us to join them, and Tony pointed out his cousin, in the thick of the singing, whose house this was. Tony grabbed a couple of cans of beer from a tub full of ice, and brought one over to me. We sat down at the quieter table, where the men were talking about last week’s soccer game – all of them played in the local team. They dissected, analysed, and re-analysed the game in detail: plainly, they had been doing so for many hours. A couple were slurring slightly, and it was difficult to follow the conversation. Soon Tony had enough, and we moved over to join the singers. Tony introduced me to his cousin, Kevin, who put down his beer to shake my hand:

“Boring talking about soccer, eh? I play rugby.”

…and he started singing again. I needed to go to the toilet, and after some instructions from Tony, I found my way through the house. There were four children sleeping in the lounge area, aged about four to eight, on mattresses on the floor. Later, I found out that one of them was Kevin’s son, and another boy and a girl were Kevin’s fiancé’s. I tried not to wake them, although it was hard to see how I could succeed where the stereo had failed. By the time I rejoined the party, all the soccer boys had gone – jumped on their scooters and driven off. I sat down with Tony and Kevin for a while, enjoying the singing and the laughter, but by now I was becoming tired, and decided to make my way home. I thanked my host, said goodbye to Tony, and walked home.
Where

Predominantly, drinking sessions occurred at people’s homes, where Maori gathered with friends and relatives, either for an entire evening (and beyond), as a precursor to going ‘outing’ to a bar or nightclub, and/or after licensed premises had closed for an ‘afterhours’ party. Typically, drinking sessions took place outside people’s houses, in the yard or under the shelter of an outside porch, where drinking companions would sit around a table (see page 234). Often a stereo (portable or midi) would play music while the drinking took place.

Figure III: Beers at the Nu Bar.

Most of the bars and nightclubs in Rarotonga were situated in, or near to, the island’s commercial centre, Avarua. Within Avarua were eight major drinking establishments (working east to west): The Staircase, Metua’s, TJs, Trader Jacks, The Banana Court (or BCs), Hideaways Bar, Marama Lounge, Ronnie’s, and the Paradise Bar. The RSA (Returned Services Association, also known as the ‘RASA’), and the Fishing Club, were a short drive or walk west and east of the town centre, respectively. Another bar, called the Nu Bar, opened in the early months of 2001, and was located a short distance from the RSA, west of Avarua. The Golf Club was located at Nikao, at the northwest of the island. On the east side of the island, in Muri, the Yacht Club also provided licensed bar facilities.
Most resorts and restaurants were also licensed to sell alcohol. Resorts were popular among locals and tourists, particularly for ‘Island Night’ performances, where Cook Islands dance groups would stage shows for appreciative audiences. Dance groups would also perform regularly at certain nightclubs and bars – at Avarua, The Staircase and The Banana Court provided ‘Island Night’ shows once or twice a week. Sports clubs were licensed to sell alcohol, on the premise that revenue from alcohol sales and sponsorship by liquor companies (and their representatives in Rarotonga), provided additional financial support for the clubs.

A large number of retailers sold alcohol, including most small shops, supermarkets, grocery stores, and cafes. Two establishments manufactured liqueurs (coconut and coffee flavoured), which were marketed to tourists. In addition to licensed premises, *kava maori* was produced in a number of households, and this was primarily sold to people who could not afford to purchase imported alcohol, or (less frequently), those who preferred home-brewed alcohol over the manufactured products. Finally, Rarotonga had two liquor wholesalers, The Bond and CITC Liquor, located on the western edge of Avarua, and two kilometres west of Avarua, respectively.

Most of my fieldwork at drinking establishments took place in Avarua. There were a number of reasons why this was the case; all to do with the practicalities of conducting this kind of research, where participant-observation (and rapport) was vital. First, I lived in Avarua, so the bars and nightclubs in this village were most accessible – generally, I walked to these establishments, rather than drive. As Avarua was where the most popular venues were situated, I believe my focus on this locale was justified – nevertheless, there were other venues situated further around the island that I did not attend on a regular basis (and in some cases, not at all). Second, most people who became my drinking companions tended to go to Avarua when they went ‘outing’, so it was convenient for me to accompany them there. Again, as Avarua was the most popular ‘night spot’ for Cook Islanders to drink in public, I do not think that this hampered my research. In fact, I often met people who did not live in the village ‘outing’ in Avarua’s bars and nightclubs.

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201 Among those bars I did not attend, or attended just once, were the Yacht Club, the Golf Club, and all of the sports clubs, with the exception of Avatiu. None of these were located in Avarua, and so all would have required me to drive some distance to get to them.
Most bars and nightclubs were situated on the northern side of Rarotonga, in the township of Avarua. Various establishments catered for, or were frequented by, different types of clientele (discussed below). Nevertheless, all these establishments shared some common elements of structure and design. All had bars located within the main structure of the building, with tables and chairs for the use of patrons. In all of these establishments, the bars were either situated inside walled rooms (Staircase, TJs, Trader Jacks, The Banana Court, Hideaway Bar, Marama Lounge, RSA, Fishing Club, Yacht Club, Golf Club, and the Nu Bar), or under un-walled roofs (Metua’s, Ronnie’s, Paradise Bar). All had a section that was ‘outside’ – that is, that either had no walls, or no roof (even The Staircase, which was located on the second story of a building, had a balcony) – where patrons could sit and drink, in some cases around chairs and tables (Marama Lounge and the Nu Bar), but in most cases, around timber picnic or barbeque tables, constructed so that the table and seating benches were part of the same structure:
Outside areas were used by patrons during day and night, depending on various factors, such as weather and outside (or inside) temperature. Most bars and nightclubs also had large televisions, which were tuned in to popular sports events (principally rugby union and rugby league) whenever an important game was showing.

The bars and nightclubs of Rarotonga were distinguished by the type of clientele they attracted. Two bars (Trader Jacks and Marama Lounge) charged higher prices for alcohol, which tended to discourage Maori with limited incomes from drinking there. The remaining bars and nightclubs had fairly comparable alcohol prices – nevertheless, most people observed that different ‘types’ of people frequented various bars:

Hideaways [Bar] is the real local kind of place. There’s lots of, not really yelling, but lots of noise and – well, everywhere you go there’s lots of noise, but it’s more local – I don’t know how to describe it. Whereas if you go to BCs [Banana Court], there’s lots of tourists, and you get the younger guys looking for chicks, and trying to be cool, whereas at the Hideaways everyone’s just normal getting wasted, and getting wasted and more wasted [laugh]. Whereas at the BC, most of the locals that go there are either looking for something, or being upper-class – not upper class, but they like to think they have more class [laugh].

*Compared with people at Hideaway?*

Yeah. They’re [the people at BCs] the ones that like to mix with tourists, or they’re the ones in the dancing groups, the people with names for themselves on the island. Then Trader Jacks is the business people, they’re the rich ones on the island. TJs is kind of for the young ones, not teenagers but, we call mapu, it’s for people who like to dance and move, and have a few drinks while they’re doing it. Then Staircase, that’s kind of like the BC but a bit different, ‘cos you get a bit more locals there. And then the Paradise Bar, that’s for old men (Female, 22, drinker).

In many respects, this characterisation concurs with my own observations of clientele. The Hideaway Bar was one of the most popular drinking establishments for Maori, and it was rare to see Papa’a drinking there. Outer Islanders, in particular, would patronise this bar because it was considered to be the ‘local’s bar’ – in general, regulars at ‘Hideaways’ were wage earners, and were at the lower end of the income scale.  

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202 This assertion (and those to follow) is based on my own observations of patrons at the bar, in cases where I had a general idea of the earnings of particular people who were known to me. A number of informants were also of the opinion that this was generally the case. In addition, Cook Islanders (who I knew) with higher incomes rarely visited this bar – instead, they preferred BCs, Staircase, and Trader Jacks.
Metua’s and the Paradise Bar attracted older, Maori, clientele, also of mid to lower income – although these bars were visited as part of the itinerary of a commercial ‘pub-crawl’ bus service, which attracted large numbers of tourists, few of these people remained in either bar after quaffing their token bottle of alcohol. Ronnie’s Bar, which had, apparently, been the most popular bar in Rarotonga a few years before, was largely deserted throughout the period of my fieldwork.

TJs also attracted a largely Maori clientele, and was the most popular venue for mapu to drink – particularly those aged in their teens and early twenties. TJs was one of Rarotonga’s few nightclubs – it was dimly lit, had the greatest array of dance-floor lights, and was the only drinking establishment that regularly closed off the doors that led to the ‘outdoors’ drinking area. The music here was loud, and featured the latest dance hits from overseas charts (particularly those of Australia and New Zealand). It was also the only establishment that charged an entrance fee, NZ $2 for the night.

Patrons of the RSA and the Fishing Club were a mixture of Papa’a (generally expatriates) and Maori, and tended to be aged forty and older. On Fridays and Saturdays these clubs would also attract younger, Maori, drinkers, who were attracted by cheap alcohol prices, and by the fact that these venues were often less crowded than those located in Avarua. Both venues were prefabricated buildings, although the Fishing Club had been renovated and extended.

The Staircase and the Banana Court were the most popular drinking venues in Avarua – the Banana Court was also the largest, and it was frequently filled to capacity (in the order of 200 people) on Friday and Saturday nights. Both bars featured ‘Island Nights’, where professional Cook Islands dance troupes would perform, and a fee would be charged at the door for the duration of the performance. Large numbers of tourists attended the ‘Island Nights’ – special bus services couriered tourists from the island’s resorts, and tourists would also drive to Avarua on hired scooters. Although Cook Islanders would occasionally visit these bars to view the latest performance by a dance troupe, most locals who were drinking before the performance left for its duration, and returned afterward to continue drinking. Generally, Cook Islanders drank at home until these performances were over, and only then attended these bars. Most tourists left these bars after the ‘Island Night’ performance had ended (in order to catch returning busses), but on occasion some would remain behind to drink and dance. Both of these bars had dance floors, and played popular music from overseas. Bars generally attracted
unmarried Maori aged from their teens to late thirties, who were employed with waged or salaried income.

The clientele of Trader Jacks\textsuperscript{203} were people with high income, who were also high-profile personalities in Rarotonga – lawyers, business people, and the occasional politician. Alcohol prices were the most expensive of all Avarua’s bars – in contrast to Rarotonga’s other drinking establishments, beer was sold only in small (330ml) bottles, rather than in small and large (750ml) bottles, and wine was served from bottles, rather than from casks, as was the case in most of Avarua’s other bars.\textsuperscript{204} The Marama Lounge had similar bar prices, but was less popular than Trader Jacks, and did not attract as many high-profile clientele.

\textbf{Retail and Wholesale Outlets}

Most food retailers on Rarotonga stocked alcohol for sale to the public. Family or privately-owned grocery stores and dairies usually offered 750ml bottles of two imported brands of beer – Steinlager (New Zealand) and Fosters (Australia) – and, less frequently (because it was less popular) Cook’s Lager, a locally manufactured beer. The alcohol content of these beers ranged between 4.5 – 5\% by volume, and light beers were rarely stocked. Larger grocery stores and supermarkets stocked larger quantities of alcohol, and a greater variety, including light beers, spirits (such as vodka, gin, rum, and whiskey), and bottles of wine. Like most of the products in these stores (with the exception of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables), these products were imported, principally from New Zealand and Australia. The two wholesale liquor outlets on Rarotonga – The Bond and CITC Liquor – sold a large range of beers, wines, spirits and liqueurs. Cook’s Lager was sold only by The Bond, which also manufactured this beer. The Bond was the wholesaler of Lion Breweries (New Zealand) products in the Cook Islands, and CITC Liquor held rights over the sale of Fosters products. Most Cook Islanders would buy alcohol from one or another of these wholesalers, as they had the cheapest prices. The Bond was not the same commercial entity as the government-owned Bond that had held a monopoly on the importation of alcohol prior to the ‘transition’ of 1996. The former ‘Bond’ had been sold in 1996, as part of the measures to reduce government participation in commercial enterprise following the threat of

\textsuperscript{203} TJs and Trader Jacks are separate drinking establishments.

\textsuperscript{204} In general, wine was not a popular beverage among Maori. My wife, Sarah, asked for a glass of wine in the Banana Court one evening – once the bartender had managed to find the cask (which took some time) – she drank some, only to find that it had gone rancid.
bankruptcy due to mounting overseas debt (see page 132). Subsequently, the new owners had shifted premises from central Avarua, to a building on the western edge of the town. Cook Islanders did not express any particular preference for one or another of these businesses – although it is possible that the political alignment of individuals may have influenced their choices, as the Bond was managed by Nick Henry, who was married to the daughter of its owner, a nephew of Sir Geoffrey Henry, and (at that time) president of the CIP (Cook Islands Party) youth branch.\footnote{On one occasion, a friend of mine, who was closely aligned with the Democratic Alliance Party, refused to purchase alcohol from the Bond – because he ‘didn’t get along with the people there’.

\footnote{Legislation allows the domestic manufacture of alcohol, but not manufacture for sale unless a licence is obtained (page 139).}

\footnote{Effervescence in beer is produced through fermentation, usually over a few months, in bottles to which sugar has been added.}

\textbf{Homebrew Houses}

‘Homebrew houses’ were private residences that were not publicly advertised, but nevertheless known to most people in the community, who would knock on the door to purchase alcohol. These (domestic) manufacturers of homebrew were typically unlicensed, so that the sale of alcohol by them was, technically, illegal.\footnote{Legislation allows the domestic manufacture of alcohol, but not manufacture for sale unless a licence is obtained (page 139).} The manufacturers were usually older men. In Rarotonga, most homebrew was made from imported brew-kits (such as Coopers Ale), and thus constituted of malt and hops, rather than the ‘traditional’ fruit-based beers:

\begin{quote}
I don’t drink the Raro stuff, because no one makes fruit homebrew anymore. They make all the bloody Coopers Ale. We’ve got all the ingredients here – we’ve got bananas, we’ve got pawpaws, we’ve got all this fantastic stuff – and no one makes use of it. It’s like, oh, they want the real one.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{So people make the home brew kits now?}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Getting the home brew kits, it’s a shame, ‘cos the fruit stuff, if it’s done properly, is so much nicer (Male, 35, drinker).
\end{quote}

Brewing techniques were similar to those employed in the production of fruit-based beers – the brew was rarely bottled,\footnote{Effervescence in beer is produced through fermentation, usually over a few months, in bottles to which sugar has been added.} and was usually consumed just a few days into the brewing process – so that the malt-and-hops brews were flat, although they often possessed a high alcohol content:

\begin{quote}
They made it [homebrew] out of yeast, malt, and sugar.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Malt and sugar and yeast?}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I think malt, something like that anyway.
\end{quote}
So it was more like a beer, a Papa’a beer?

Yeah, a Papa’a beer, but not really – it hasn’t got that fizzy [pops mouth], what do you call it, the fizziness inside. It’s like an orange juice but it’s not the same. You get the drink, they leave it for a couple of days, or maybe a week – the longer you leave it the stronger it gets.

Right.

Yeah, and then its percentage of alcohol inside increases, homebrew for me is too strong, way too strong (Female, 25, drinker).

When

The frequency of drinking by Maori exhibited a great deal of variation. Two factors generally considered regarding when a person drank (although not exclusively) were work and money. Drinking during work hours was not practiced in Rarotonga – even people who described themselves as ‘alcoholics’ said that they did not drink when they were at work. Most people would not drink from Monday to Friday (or occasionally, Thursday or Wednesday), at least partly because of the impact this would have on their ability to work. Friday and Saturday were drinking days (and nights). Often drinking would commence on Fridays from 4.30pm, when the working day finished – many employers would provide a ‘shout’ to mark the end of the week. Other Cook Islanders might take a few hours to do odd chores at home before drinking.

The availability of money also constrained people’s choices about when to drink and when to abstain (see page 239). While a number of people drank every week (or more often), those on lower incomes would drink once every two weeks, or once a month, depending on their financial resources. For many of these people, drinking sessions coincided with payday – those who received fortnightly pensions, for example, would not drink during the intervening week.

Church commitments also affected the timing of alcohol consumption – at least for those people who were active church members. Thus, Sunday was often a ‘day of rest’ from drinking – although it was not unheard of that Cook Islanders would attend church in the morning, go home and drink in the afternoon. Although there were some exceptions to the rule, most members of the SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) Church and the Church of the Latter Day Saints did not drink at all. For most drinkers, avoidance of Saturday drinking was rarely an issue.

The usual pattern of drinking on a Friday evening was that a group of people would gather at somebody’s house, having bought a sufficient quantity of alcohol for
the night. If the group decided to go ‘outing’, they would usually do this at about 10 or 11 o’clock that evening: by this time, Avarua would have begun to fill up with Cook Islanders, most of the dance troupes were finishing their performances, and tourists were beginning to make their way back to their resorts. On Friday nights, bars and nightclubs close at 2am\(^{208}\) (Saturday morning), and usually a group of drinkers would remain at their chosen bar (or bars) until closing. At this stage, they would decide whether they wanted to go home (to sleep or to drink), or find an ‘afterhours’ party. If the latter course of action was decided, a party would be sought out—either through mutual acquaintances, or by hopping into vehicles and driving around likely spots, hoping to find an ‘afterhours’ to gate-crash.\(^{209}\) If none were found, people would make their way back home, to sleep or to continue drinking.

If an ‘afterhours’ was located, drinking would often continue throughout the night and into the early hours of the morning. Sometimes a party would continue non-stop throughout the weekend, with slight lulls early in the morning (when people would nap for a few hours), and in the evening, when partygoers would go ‘outing’ again. Although accounts of sustained drinking over a number of days were relatively common, most people who had participated in this kind of drinking said that after two days they would usually stop, because they no longer felt like drinking anymore.\(^{210}\)

Drinking would also occur during certain events and ceremonies, such as birthdays and weddings\(^{211}\) – in particular, Christmas and New Year celebrations (and holidays) were an occasion for people to gather and drink together. The holidays surrounding Christmas provided an opportunity for families to gather together, and for many, the Christmas holiday was a time for sustained drinking by adults, in some cases, over the course of two or three days.

\(^{208}\) Closing time on Saturdays is midnight – so that drinking in licensed premises does not continue into Sunday (the Sabbath for the major Christian denominations of Rarotonga).

\(^{209}\) Near where we lived in Takuva’ine, there was one ‘party house’, where parties would start at 4.30pm on Friday (or sometimes Thursday), and continue non-stop until the early hours of Monday morning. A key characteristic of these “afterhours” parties was loud music, so that a keen ear (or often, even a deaf one) can seek them out with little effort.

\(^{210}\) Compare this with Levy’s accounts of Tahitians in the 1960s: “During the two major yearly festivals, people declare that they will drink until they are fiu, “fed up,” until the desire has disappeared. The desire is sure to disappear, sometimes within a day, sometimes after three or four days…. After several days of festival, people in Huahine seem eager to stop “enjoying themselves” and are ready to get back to their usual routines.” (1973:49).

\(^{211}\) For more on the timing of drinking during these events, see page 234.
Beer and spirits were the alcohols favoured by Cook Islands drinkers. Broadly speaking, there was gendered differentiation in the types of alcohol consumed by Maori drinkers, although the consumption of one type of alcohol was by no means exclusive to men or women. Generally, men preferred to drink beer and spirits, whereas women preferred spirits and, occasionally, liqueurs. Most Maori expressed a preference for imported, rather than locally produced, alcohol.

Most men commenced a drinking session by consuming beer, from large (750ml) bottles, or less frequently, cans (333ml – 375ml) or ‘stubbies’ (small bottles, 333ml – 375ml). These were purchased from one of the island’s liquor wholesalers. The most popular beer was Steinlager (known as ‘Stein’), which was produced by Lion Nathan Breweries in New Zealand. Fosters, an Australian beer, was popular among drinkers, and during the course of fieldwork, Heineken (imported from New Zealand and the Netherlands) also became very popular. Beer was most frequently purchased in cartons, containing twelve large bottles, or twenty-four small bottles or cans. Men would usually persist in drinking beer throughout a session, although it was not uncommon for men to begin drinking spirits (principally vodka mixed with fruit juice) later on in the evening. This usually occurred after the beer had run out.

What kinds of drinks do they [your sports team] buy, is it beer or spirits?
Beer, mostly beer. But the girl’s team, over [at] the club, they usually drink spirits.
Will you drink that too?
No. ‘Cos we had this thing, like if you drink beer, that’s for men – so if you drink spirits, that’s for the ladies. So not until I’m with the team, or I’m at the Fishing Club.
Then you might have spirits?
I might have spirits. We have this thing – spirit is for ladies, and the Stein [Steinlager], this is the men’s drink. Stein, not the DBs [a rival brand of beer], but Stein. The big Stein.
Big bottles of Steinlager?
We always call that the killer.
How come?
Cos they said, this is what I find out, it’s gonna get [you] drunk fast (Male, 22, drinker).
Women tended to drink spirits throughout a drinking session, and these were mixed with fruit juice or various soft drinks, such as lemonade or Coca-Cola (also imported). *Laelae*, men who perform the gender roles of women (which is not necessarily concomitant with sexuality), also tend to drink spirits with mixers.\textsuperscript{212} Preferred spirits were vodka and rum, although brandy was also consumed by a number of women. A small number of women drank whiskey and gin. Some women also drank liqueurs, of which Baileys and Kahlua were the most popular. All of the spirits and liqueurs preferred by men and women were imported to the Cook Islands, and were purchased in 750ml and 1125ml bottles.

Men and women rarely consumed wine.\textsuperscript{213} All of the people I spoke to also preferred commercially produced, imported beers over homebrew and Cook’s Lager (which was brewed and bottled in Rarotonga). Homebrew was usually consumed because there was nothing else to drink, or because people were unable to afford commercial alcohol:

Homebrew was what you drink after you’ve finished all the beer.

*So that was the backup?*

Yeah, like Plan B – homebrew. So that’s what that was.

*You don’t drink it so much any more?*

I haven’t had homebrew for years. I actually wonder if I could even take it down any more.

*What’s changed?*

It’s because I’ve been more exposed to alcohol-alcohol, as opposed to homebrew-alcohol. Yeah, a lot of things have changed – like I think homebrew is also a status symbol.

*Oh, like lower status or?*

Well, yeah. You don’t see it on the shelf of any bloody bar, you never see it behind the bar anywhere in the world. I think what’s so popular about it is just its affordability and availability. You can get it any day of the week you know, at five bucks a pop.

*Is there anything else about homebrew that’s distinctive?*

The smell, and that first taste of that first glass is unforgettable – it’s just a gas [laugh] – you’ve got to gag, man. You don’t smell it – that’s what we used to

\textsuperscript{212} I do not focus on *Laelae* in this thesis. Alexeyeff (2000) considers *laelae* in Rarotonga; Shore (1981) has discussed gender and *fa’afafine* in Samoa.

\textsuperscript{213} However, the consumption of wine was increasingly common among Maori who were wealthy or influential. These people tended not to be *mapu*. A brief consideration of these people is provided at page 316.
advise people that were new to it – don’t smell it, just drink it down. Just drink it, don’t worry, as soon as everyone gets passed around you’ll be right (Female, 25, drinker).

Um, well you only take it [homebrew] because, like if you’ve been drinking and having a good time on a Friday night, and you want to go after hours, and you’re in that mood, you just don’t want that night to end – so you have to get bush beer. But by the time you get the bush beer, and people are coming over, and people have got the beer and spirits, just put the bush beer aside. You drink that beer and spirits, and when that’s gone you just bring the bush beer back [laugh] (Female, 27, drinker).

Reasons for the preference of kava papa’ā over kava maori were not determined solely by cost and availability – kava papa’ā was also preferred because, as a substance, it was more valued that kava maori. The ownership and display of valued goods was a means by which Cook Islanders could demonstrate their wealth (and influence) in a public manner. The more lavish the (perceived) expenditure, the more ‘status’ or ‘class’ a person could claim – in conjunction with other aspects of social ‘prestige’, such as political and kinship status. This was evident in the expenditure of money on vehicles and household electrical appliances – particularly televisions and stereo equipment. During fieldwork, an issue that was the subject of media attention was the large proportion of personal loans that were spent on the purchase of vehicles (Cook Islands News Business Monthly 05/2000:8-9). During our twelve months in Rarotonga, there was a proliferation of four-wheel drive utility vehicles among business people (particularly Maori) and upper-income, salaried Cook Islanders. Of those people I knew who had recently bought these vehicles, most were very proud of them, and they also were a topic of conversation among people who could not afford them. One person who bought one of these vehicles had done so just before a local car dealer brought a large number of utilities to Rarotonga, which were all of the same make and model as hers. After the car dealer had brought in his consignment of new vehicles, she expressed to me how annoyed she was that ‘everyone’ now had a utility just like hers.

With stereos, louder was better; with televisions, bigger was better. When a neighbour of ours in Takuva’ine bought a new stereo for his house (known as the ‘Mango Tree’, where parties occurred every weekend, often continuing throughout the night and day from Friday to Sunday, see page 161), a number of people remarked to
me that this fellow had bought an ‘awesome’ new stereo – it was impressive because it was loud and expensive (more than NZ $2000 / US $940).

Expenditure on imported goods did not comprise the sole means by which a person could improve their status by public display. For women, the acquisition of distinctive clothes could also fulfil this function. This aspect of social prestige became particularly apparent through the activities of my wife, Sarah. Sarah was a clothing fashion designer in New Zealand, and when this was discovered by women of Rarotonga, she was constantly approached to design and make outfits. By the time we departed, Sarah had become very popular among Rarotonga’s influential women – a large proportion of her popularity was due to the fact that she could create unique garments that would attract comment from other women, and were relatively inexpensive compared with imported clothes, or those that could be acquired from other clothes designers on the island. One of Rarotonga’s most popular, and established, designers, was Annie Bonza, who had lived intermittently in Rarotonga since Albert Henry was Premier, and regularly charged NZ $1500 (US $705) for garments. She too was in great demand by Cook Islands women, who would wear her creations to important public and events – and when they did so, other women would invariably comment “she’s wearing an Annie Bonza”, in rather reverential tones. Other valued (and valuable) items included black pearl jewellery.

In addition to these, people in Rarotonga were also very careful to ensure that their gardens and houses were well-maintained and tidy. The sound of hand-held weed trimmers was ubiquitous throughout our stay in Rarotonga, as men trimmed lawns, hedges, and trees. My neighbour, no matter how hungover he was, would always get up early on a Saturday morning to trim the hedges around his property. Across the road, another neighbour made a point of washing the asphalt every morning.

It was not the case, therefore, that imported goods, *per se*, were more valued than those produced locally, or that goods were the only source of status through display. It was the case that the display of expensive items would add to the public prestige of individuals – coincidentally, most of the expensive goods available in Rarotonga were not produced there, but overseas. Most people agreed that the only people who preferred homebrew to imported alcohol were old people, who had a sentimental attachment to it, and often, a characteristic way of behaving while they drank. However,

*But younger people prefer the bought alcohol over the homebrew?*

Yeah. It seems cooler than homebrew, which is really warm and bitter.
Oh, cool as in colder?
No, cool as in seen to, it looks better (Female, 29, drinker).

Because, in the case of younger Cook Islanders, homebrew was the last resort of those who either could not afford imported alcohol, or who had run out of imported alcohol when licensed retailers were closed, people who were able to purchase imported alcohol were simultaneously demonstrating their economic proficiency.

How Much

‘Binge’ drinking was the general pattern of alcohol consumption. Most people did not drink every day (and if they did, they were often considered to be ‘alcoholics’ – see below), but did drink at relatively regular intervals. When Cook Islanders did drink, they would consume large quantities of alcohol in one session, which (as previously stated) would continue for at least an entire evening, and on occasion, until the next day and beyond.\(^{214}\) In the Cook Islands, the ‘traditional’ purpose of drinking was to ‘get drunk’ – sometimes, Cook Islanders’ drinking styles were contrasted with drinking styles thought to be characteristic of Papa’a in this regard – Papa’a could drink just one or two glasses of alcohol and stop, but when Cook Islanders drank, they continued until they fell asleep, until they became ill, or until the alcohol ran out:

One thing you should know about the Cook Island people, when they see the beer, they want to finish that whole lot of beer at a time. I mean, they don’t care, whatever the beer, they go and drink it up, that’s what I’ve seen.

They drink it all?

What’s been bought here today, it doesn’t matter how rotten, drink up the lot.

So you won’t see someone stopping half way through?

No you won’t get near it. You see the eyes closing, but still drinking [laugh] (Male, 32, drinker).

Most of the time I drink vodka, and just sometimes, I drink beer.

And how much do you normally drink?

Normally I don’t drink one bottle by myself.

No, that would be pretty hard work.

Normally, I drink seven glasses, but sometimes we can finish a bottle, and carry on with the next.

How often do you have a bottle and not finish it?

\(^{214}\) This pattern of drinking is found throughout the Pacific (see also Marshall 1982b; AACNZ 1997b:10).
Only when I’m tired, or I don’t feel like drinking.

*When you don’t feel like drinking, is that because you’re feeling ill, or is it just because you decide to stop?*

Sometimes when I feel ill then I decide just two or three glasses, and that’s it, and when I’m tired, that’s when I just drink a little bit.

*If you’ve got a bottle left, do the other people you drink with want to finish it, or would people say, “oh well, we’ll have half and then stop”?*

No, they like finishing the bottle, and then carry on with the next one.

*So it’s not the done thing to stop?*

No [laugh] (Female, 19, drinker).

This was the case for a number of Maori, and in drinking sessions I attended, it was rare for alcohol to remain unfinished, unless the participants had become too tired to drink more and had subsequently gone to sleep (see page 235, 326). Beer and spirits were present at most drinking sessions, and among men in particular, beer was consumed before spirits, so that often a drinking session would end with everyone consuming spirits, mixed with fruit juice or soft drinks. This pattern of consumption was only the case when people gathered to drink at home – either for an entire evening, or at an ‘afterhours’. Often, people would stop drinking after they had been ‘outing’, and then go home, occasionally eat, and go to sleep. In these circumstances, a drinking session would be completed before people became too drunk, or too tired, to continue.

At most drinking sessions, there was little overt pressure for people to drink at a prescribed rate, or to drink any specific quantity of alcohol. People generally drank at their own pace, and I did not observe any situations in which a person was teased for not drinking as much as his or her companions. Nevertheless, when a person had emptied his or her glass, can, or bottle, these were quickly refilled or replaced either by that person or his/her companions. Generally, drinking by Cook Islanders was measured, so that high levels of intoxication (as evidenced by uncoordinated movement and slurring, for example) would tend to occur only after a person had been drinking over long periods of time, rather than within a few hours of commencing a drinking session.

There were no criteria applied universally by Cook Islanders to differentiate between drinking and being drunk (or kona). The effect of drinking on people’s behaviour was not initiated by the first taste of alcohol, but would occur after a few

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215 Teetotallers, however, were subject to occasional goading and teasing to induce them to try alcohol. See page 184.
drinks had been consumed. Some people described these initial effects of drinking in terms of making people ‘tiddly’ or ‘relaxed’. All agreed that the initial (and most conspicuous) effect of alcohol consumption, on themselves and in others, was to make people more talkative (see page 192). These behaviours would emerge after consuming between two and six measures of alcohol – that is, two to six small bottles or cans of beer, or glasses of spirits with mixers:

One of my mates, see when he’s sober, he doesn’t talk – he’s quiet. But after one or two cans, then he started talking, eh. That’s when you know. That’s how I look at him, that’s when he’s started talking, and that means he’s getting drunk, when he started talking (Male, 22, drinker).

‘Drunkenness’, or being kona, as described by participants regarding themselves and others, did not necessarily occur at a point where intoxication caused physical coordination to deteriorate, although these were regarded as characteristics of drunkenness. Drunkenness could also include certain characteristic behaviours that were observed in others, or experienced in one’s self. Some people regarded a propensity to be talkative as an indication of drunkenness, that would occur after a person had consumed just a few glasses of alcohol. For most people, drunkenness occurred later in a drinking session, and apart from changes in physical coordination, was also indicated by a loss of ‘control’ in terms of social and/or physical comportment. When a person was drunk, they were also ‘silly’, and acted ‘crazy’. Becoming talkative, by itself, was not a sufficient indication of drunkenness – although certain forms of talk did indicate that someone was kona. This was the case when people began to talk about problems they were having in their relationships or with members of their family, either with ‘strangers’ or acquaintances with whom they would not normally share this kind of information. Drunk people would also become argumentative and enter into fights (see page 204). The quantity of alcohol that people would have to drink before they became drunk was variable, and depended on the peculiar characteristics of individuals (their natural tolerance), as well as how often, and how experienced, a person was regarding alcohol consumption. Most drinkers remarked that when they first began ‘drinking’ (as distinguished from merely ‘trying’ alcohol, often as children), they would get drunk on just a few glasses of alcohol. As they began to drink regularly, the amount of alcohol they could consume before becoming drunk increased:
My personal tolerance for alcohol has gone way up since I started drinking. Like, before it would take two or three cans to get roaring drunk, but now, that’s not even the appetiser (Male, 32, drinker).

*What would you drink, when you went out?*
Ah, rum and coke.

*Rum and coke.*
That’s the only one I drank, rum and coke, just rum and coke.

*How much would you drink in a night?*
When I drink – you know, every fortnight – I drink five glasses. You know, the more you drink, you won’t get drunk easily when you drink two glasses, two or three, but when I started last year, just one glass or two glasses.

*That was all it took?*
Just those glasses, yeah (Female, 21, drinker).

Everyone agreed that different people had different tolerances to becoming ‘drunk’, not solely due to conditioning through exposure but also to the particular qualities of an individual:

One of my very close friends, he’s a hard drinker. He can drink one whole night, and he can take up to one carton. What I’ve seen from his practice is he’s a hard drinker.

*So is that a carton of cans?*
Yes, those are cans, he can take up one carton.

*Is that twelve or twenty-four?*
Twenty-four.

*That’s quite a lot.*
That’s a lot, and one thing I’ve seen is that some people get drunk easily, it takes about two cans, three cans, and they’re out. But some, especially this friend of mine, he finish that one carton, and you can hardly tell the sign that he’s been drinking. Because he’s been drinking and drinking, so he’s used to it (Male, 22, non-drinker).

For the most part, the evaluation of whether a person was drunk, or not drunk, was based on observation of that person’s behaviour. The quantity of alcohol consumed was a secondary consideration in this regard. Where the quantity of alcohol consumed by a person was high (as in the above example), and no signs of drunkenness were evident, that person was not considered to be drunk. In cases where people knew the quantity of
alcohol consumed was low (that is, in the region of one or two glasses or cans of a given beverage), and yet the person acted in ways characteristic of drunkenness, some observers were sceptical that the person’s drunkenness was genuine:

Some people, it’s sort of like, they’re just using drink to get them to do something. They just have two or three glasses of something, and they think they’re really drunk, or they pretend they’re really drunk. So they do something that they might [otherwise] get into trouble for, ‘cos they’re drunk, or something like that.

So do you think they would do that on purpose?

Yeah, I think that they do that on purpose.

Have you seen that happen?

I’ve seen some of my friends, they do that.

What kind of things would they get up to?

Mostly they go talk with the girls. It’s like, we started drinking at the same time, and probably they finish three glasses, and when you look at them when the girls come and join us, sometimes you see them pretending that they’re really drunk, and I just crack up when I see that [laugh].

How does acting drunk help?

I don’t know what happens with them [laugh]. I think it’s probably a way that you want to score someone, and probably that’s the only way they can pretend to score, is to act like they’re really drunk (Female, 21, drinker).

When a person said they were drunk, and offered this as an excuse for things they did during drinking sessions, it was generally accepted as an explanation of that behaviour. But in private, some people expressed reservations about the veracity of these claims.

According to self-reports by Cook Islanders, the average number of drinks consumed during a drinking session was seven or eight. From my observation, very large quantities of alcohol were often consumed at people’s homes and at ‘afterhours’ parties. Most men who attended these drinking sessions would arrive with between one and two dozen cans, or stubbies (small bottles), of beer, or with a carton of large beer bottles (holding 12 bottles). Women, and occasionally men, would bring a bottle of spirits (750ml or 1125ml) to these drinking sessions. All of this alcohol would be consumed in the course of a single drinking session. Individual drinkers usually paced themselves while drinking, so they did not become excessively intoxicated – at least,

216 Drunkenness did not always succeed in excusing a person from the repercussions for that behaviour, however.
that is, to the point of becoming nauseous, falling unconscious, or drinking so much that they were unable to walk without staggering. Nevertheless, these consequences of drinking did occur after a number of hours had passed – typically, at least five or six hours. Most people employed strategies to avoid becoming intoxicated – some would stop drinking, or switch to non-alcoholic drinks if they felt they were becoming too drunk. Others would go to sleep for a few hours, and then get up and rejoin the party:

If I’ve been drinking for six hours, then I know I’ve drunk heaps, and it’s time for at least a nap, or drink some water or juice, or something like that. So then you start mixing it down, so it’s time factor basically. If I started off at ten o’clock at night, and at five or six in the morning I’m still going, then my mind starts telling me, whoa – you’ve been going that long, it’s time you take a rest.

So you might change what you’re drinking, or you might take a nap?

Yeah, more often than not I’ll have a meal, drink lots of water, and have a nap. Then if the party’s still happening, then I’ll get back into it.

So how long would you nap, if you can think of sometime when you have had a nap?

Oh, an hour, two hours.

So not too long, really.

Yeah, five hour power nap [laugh]. I don’t want to miss the action if the party’s still going (Male, 39, drinker).

These strategies meant that a group of drinkers could continue drinking for many hours, and consume large quantities of alcohol, in the course of one drinking session.

With Whom

On most occasions when Cook Islanders gathered to drink, they would drink with people of similar age, and very often, similar socio-economic status. Drinking companions were usually peer relatives, spouses, old or recent friends, of whom some were friends from school, fellow members of sports teams, and work colleagues. Cook Islanders would also drink with other relatives on occasion, although they drank with these people less frequently than with their peers.

In general, the kin that mapu Cook Islanders drank with were confined to immediate brothers and sisters, the sons and daughters of parent’s siblings, and occasionally, peer relatives of grandparents’ siblings’ descendents. Typically, kin who drank together were the same generation removed from a common ancestor, although it was not uncommon for peer (age) relations of different generations to drink together:
‘ Relatives’, in this sense, were those people considered to be members of one’s *kopu tangata*, which, as already stated on page 27, was potentially a very large group of people, incorporating the descent groups of both parents’ families. Recognition of kinship was dependent on the knowledge people possessed of their *kopu tangata*, which varied between different people and families (see footnote 235, page 200). It was not unusual for relatives who were distantly related to drink together.

Generally speaking, younger *mapu* and their natural parents, *metua ‘anau*, did not drink together. As children grew older, they would occasionally begin to drink with their parents and older relatives, and in some cases this occurred after the child had left home and/or married or met a spouse – the latter of which was associated (although not unambiguously) with becoming an adult, and leaving the status of being *mapu* behind:

Last Christmas, I drank with my family – with my dad, my mum, my uncle, and my grandfather.

*Was that different?*

Yeah that’s really different because, this is your parents.

*So what’s different?*

You just drink slow and you know, don’t do anything stupid [laugh]. I had a boyfriend then and just, you know, they just don’t act to control over me anymore, they just let me do what I want, ‘cos I have a boyfriend.

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*Figure VI: Kinship and Peer Drinking Companions.*

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217 This kinship chart is based on a drinking session that I attended. For illustrative purposes, the anthropologist has been excluded.
So that changed the way they thought about you?
Yeah, they changed.

Why was it different?
Because I’m with someone now, I’ve got a boyfriend and I’ve got my own life now, and they’ve got nothing to do with anything anymore – they just leave me to let myself live my life (Female, 20, drinker).

The question ‘who do Cook Islanders drink with?’ is easier to answer in the negative – that is, ‘who would Cook Islanders not drink with?’. By and large, Cook Islanders would not drink with people whom they or their relatives and friends had previously argued or fought (see page 213). Nor would they drink with people who accepted ‘shouts’ of alcohol without reciprocating the favour (page 247), or people who were fractious or argumentative (page 204). Morose people were also avoided whenever possible, unless that person was a close friend of relative, primarily because drinking was regarded as a ‘fun’ activity (page 190), and such people were not conducive to enjoyable drinking.218

Generally speaking, Cook Islanders did not drink with people who they did not know (‘strangers’), unless that person was introduced to a drinking session by a friend or a relative. They also tended not to seek the company of tourists when drinking, although in the course of drinking, people would often meet and occasionally befriend ‘strangers’ (both tourists and other Maori) as they became more extroverted through drinking (see 192). There was only one occasion when a tourist joined a group I was drinking with, and on another occasion, I was invited to a drinking session specifically because I was a tourist.219

Most of the time, women and men drank together. Exceptions were when the drinking group was a sports team, or people who worked together (in predominantly male or female occupations, for example), although in sports with male and female divisions, men and women would often drink together after games and practices.

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218 Toward the end of our stay on Rarotonga, a Papa’a New Zealander arrived on the island to begin work one of the local law firms. He was, for want of a better phrase, ‘culture-shocked’, and after just one day was openly talking about how much he disliked his present circumstances, and what a mistake coming to Rarotonga had been. Later, some friends said they had met him at Trader Jacks – when I asked them what they thought of him, they said he was a “sad sack”, and couldn’t get away from him soon enough. A few weeks later, my suggestion that we invite my neighbour to a drinking session was unanimously dismissed.

219 This event is recounted at the beginning of this chapter.
Solo drinking was uncommon, and I learned of only one case where a person drank alone on a regular basis. Drinking was almost universally regarded as a group activity on Rarotonga – a feature it holds in common with drinking patterns across the Pacific (Lemert 1967; Levy 1973; Mackenzie 1974; Marshall 1979c; Marshall 1979a; Walter 1982; Warry 1982; Awatere, Casswell et al. 1984; AACNZ 1997b).

People who abstained from drinking (whether for religious or personal reasons) were not excluded from drinking sessions. Usually when such people joined drinking sessions, it was because they were related at least one of the drinkers. They were sometimes pressured to drink, but if they declined, they were not excluded from future drinking sessions. Although most teetotallers did not socialise during drinking sessions, I met quite a few that liked to spend time with people who were drinking, primarily because they enjoyed the (ordinarily) convivial atmosphere of drinking sessions.

**Alcoholics**

Pacific peoples do not appear to become alcoholics in the way we [i.e. “Euro-Americans”] recognize alcoholism. Although many may drink heavily most of the time, they do not behave addictively because they abstain easily when they wish (Mackenzie 1974:2).

In 1974, Margaret Mackenzie argued that alcoholism did not occur among Maori in Rarotonga. Addictive behaviours, or physiological symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, were absent, even among heavy drinkers who stopped drinking alcohol. Maori did know of ‘alcoholics’ – but ‘alcoholics’ were not Maori:

In Rarotonga, the concept of alcoholism has its own special characteristic. It is a mysterious phenomenon rather like temper tantrums in children: it occurs only in foreigners (Mackenzie 1974:4).

For Mackenzie, the absence in Maori of behaviours characteristic of ‘alcoholism’ among Euro-Americans, was an artefact of cultural difference. She was not able to indicate precisely what this difference was, but supposed its crucial elements “probably are instilled during childhood. They protect people from using alcohol to solace stress and from drinking in despair” (1974:3). In contemporary Rarotonga, drinking to relieve stress and despair do comprise some of the reasons why people drink – although these are by no means the reasons why the majority of Maori drink.

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220 This person described herself as an ‘alcoholic’ (discussed below).
In 1979, a WHO mental health survey of Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa and the Cook Islands found that delirium tremens was evident among indigenous people of all of these countries, although more serious symptoms of ‘alcoholism’ (alcoholic hallucinations, withdrawal fits, and alcoholic automatism) were not (Price 1981:25).

In contemporary Rarotonga, the term ‘alcoholic’ is applied to Maori, by Maori. I heard it used as a descriptive term in casual conversation, and a few interview participants also mentioned it, although I made a point of not introducing the term during interviews. When people did use this term to describe themselves or others, it was warranted on grounds that ‘alcoholics’ drank more often than people who were not alcoholics – rather than drinking every weekend, or every fortnight or month, ‘alcoholics’ drank every day:

What is the difference [between a heavy drinker and an alcoholic] – is there a difference at all?

I don’t know if there’s a difference or not between a heavy drinker and a real alcoholic person. Probably, a heavy drinker is just someone who, during the weekends, they just drink during the weekends, and they don’t stop to have a rest from drinking. But with an alcoholic, a real alcoholic, they drink all through the whole week. That’s what I thought an alcoholic is (Female, 26, non-drinker).

I working three jobs everyday, and I just wanted to have a drink every night after work. It was just like, down the hatch, down the hatch, and then go to work with a hangover, but still work. And then, going to my second job, and then going to my third job, and by the end of the night you just want a drink you know – and it’s like a pick-up for me. I was a workaholic and then I ended up being an alcoholic [laugh] (Female, 27, drinker).

The frequency of drinking by ‘alcoholics’ was the main criterion by which they were distinguished. A few were of the opinion that an ‘alcoholic’ was a person who drank until they became unconscious – but most people considered this drinking behaviour to fall within the range of ‘normal’ drinking practice, so that it was not sufficient reason to describe a particular person as ‘alcoholic’. The practice of drinking everyday had serious repercussions for ‘alcoholics’ – primarily because it interfered with their capacity to work and be productive, and to provide for their family. Secondly, ‘alcoholic’ behaviour was associated with ill-health, and occasionally, mortality:
If dad’s gonna be an alcoholic, then that’s gonna create problems for the family. All he’s going to be worried about is him getting his next drink of alcohol, in place of looking after the family. And then that claws back on mum, to make sure the kids are fed, and all that sort of stuff. That’s a very, it’s not uncommon in the Cook Islands – that does happen.

**So you know other families where this happens?**

There’s a lot of families where mum’s actually the backbone, and dad just sticks his nose in every now and then (Male, 39, drinker).

My grandfather, my father’s dad, he’s an alcoholic. He’s got this sickness, but he just doesn’t want to stop, he just wants more. So he’s addicted to it, he wants to drink alcohol every few minutes or so, and that really gave him problems with his health. He used to eat healthy food, and now that I went back [to Ma’uke] for a holiday, he’s just gone thin.

**Is that right, so he’s not eating that well?**

He’s not eating so well, it’s just that alcohol he’s addicted to, and yeah, he’s quite sick (Female, 23, drinker).

Some Maori also knew people, or knew of people, whom they referred to as ‘alcoholics’, who displayed symptoms of physiological addiction to alcohol – namely, delirium tremens:

There’s this alcoholic man, he’s an alcoholic, this is my mum’s father-in-law. He say something to us, like if he’s not drunk and he says something, his mouth shakes, it goes like this [demonstrates]. Sometimes, shake the mouth – it shake, yes. But when he’s drunk, then he just come up like that, he explodes.

**So after he’s had a drink he stops shaking?**

It’s when he’s not drunk – drunk, he’s OK, he will be able to say something. He is shaking, [he] start shaking, and it’s hard for him to say something, and his hands shakes – it’s hard for him to roll cigarettes. [But] when he’s drunk, that thing it just flows. And a lady, a lady – see it’s all coming back to me! [laugh] – there’s this lady and this is her thing too, when she says something, her lips flap. When she says something, it’s the same as that man. Everyone is pretty good but not really, but her hands, that’s when she’s not drunk, her hands are like, shakes (Female, 26, non-drinker).

The term ‘alcoholic’ was not applied universally to all people for whom alcohol consumption caused ill-health, or consistent problems within the family. In some cases,
people told me of people (often relatives) who drank every day, who died or became seriously ill from alcohol consumption, or who failed to provide adequately for their families due to the amount of money they spent on alcohol, without referring to them as ‘alcoholics’. For most people, patterns of alcohol consumption that were productive of such consequences were not pathologised – that is, they were not discussed in the language of sickness. ‘Alcoholism’ is traditionally described and portrayed as a disease in Western countries – particularly with the characterisation of the ‘alcoholic identity’ popularised through such groups as Alcoholics Anonymous from the early 20th century:

Recovering alcoholics are not on the way to being cured: AA firmly believes that ‘once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic’…. In contrast to medical usage, then, recovery does not mean getting healthy or becoming normal. It means learning to live with one’s dysfunction as peacefully as possible” (Valverde 1998:125,126).

For ‘alcoholics’ in this context, abstinence is the only means to ‘recovery’, as moderation for these people is not a practicable option:

We in Alcoholics Anonymous are men and women who have discovered and admitted that we cannot control alcohol.

We have learned that we must live without it if we are able to avoid disaster for ourselves and our families (AA 1978).

This construction of an ‘alcoholic identity’ in Rarotonga appears to be absent. One could become an alcoholic, but one could also cease to be an alcoholic. Former ‘alcoholics’ need not abstain from alcohol altogether. Most people who were described (by themselves or others) as ‘alcoholic’ would continue to drink, but in moderation. There was one Alcoholics Anonymous group on the island during the period of fieldwork, but it was attended exclusively by expatriate Papa’a. The first quotation which follows is from the self-stated ‘alcoholic’ on page 185:

Yes I want to drink, I’m still going to drink alcohol, but not as much as I used to drink – I prefer drinking to moderation (Female, 27, drinker).

From my own experience, [concerning] husband and wife problems, my husband used to be an alcoholic, but now he has learnt to grow out of that…. but right up today, in my own case it’s one thing that my husband will always say – he will never stop drinking. But although he’s grown out of his drinking behaviour, it’s always something that he will say to me – until the day he dies, that’s when he’s
gonna stop drinking [laugh]. So, [laugh] I don’t know what to do about it (Female, 27, non-drinker).

Another person, who described himself as a former ‘alcoholic’, told me he would still drink a “few cans” of beer if a new brand was released – “just to see what it tastes like” – but similarly, he now drank in moderation, rather than to the point of inebriation.

The use of the term ‘alcoholic’ in Rarotonga concurs more closely with the definition of alcoholism offered by Jellinek as “any use of alcoholic beverages that causes any damage to the individual or society or both” (1960:35) than with the ‘alcoholic identity’ characterised by disease models of alcoholism. It is also apparent that instances of alcohol-related ‘damage to the individual or society or both’ are not universally regarded as instances of alcoholism – only some cases, where the extent of damage to the individual or society (or rather, family) is extreme.
CHAPTER NINE:
THE SNAKE IN THE BOTTLE

There was a family and the man, who was an animal lover, saw this baby snake and brought it home and looked after it because it was dying, the mother had deserted it. He took the snake home and looked after it and fed it until it became big. This couple had a little girl and this little girl grew to love this snake because it became a family pet. . . . [w]hen this snake matured . . . because it was a snake by nature, one day it turned around and killed the daughter of this couple. The moral of this story. . . is “a snake is always a snake”. And applying this story, this is a true story . . . “liquor is always liquor” (T. Teaurima, CIHR 1987:1051).

We know what the genie is like, in the bottle it is a little harmless monster. But when you let it out of the bottle, it becomes a big strong monster doing what it wants to do because it has the power . . . . The bottle I am talking about is that which contains liquor (N. Puna, CIHR 1988:562-63).

Today, most Cook Islanders who drink do not consider alcohol to be inherently destructive – indeed, a number regard statements such as those above to be extreme. Alcohol is not generally regarded as inherently evil or destructive, although it may produce such effects. Nevertheless, consistent themes emerge in the various ways Cook Islanders regard the qualities of alcohol, its nature, and the effects it produces in those who drink. Essentially, alcohol is a transformative substance – one that alters the actions and behaviours of people who consume it, and on occasion, even the behaviour of people who do not consume. In this regard, a Cook Islands’ perspective on the qualities of alcohol is by no means unique, as alcohol consumption is regarded as transformative in virtually all places where drinking occurs (MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969; Madsen and Madsen 1979; Marshall 1979c; Marshall 1979a; Escalante 1980; Lepowsky 1982; Room and Collins 1983; Paton-Simpson 1996). MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) were among the first to make a compelling case for global, and cultural, variability in the expression of drunkenness. In this chapter, I will attempt a similar endeavour – to map out some of the particular characteristics of drinking comportment as understood, and practiced, by Cook Islanders in Rarotonga.

221 Both Ministers quoted here were committed Christians – and their statements did not, by any means, enjoy unanimous support in parliament.
Talk, Movement, and Relaxation

When I drink, you know, I feel happy\footnote{Male, 25, drinker.}

The effects of drinking alcohol were understood to be complex, contradictory, and heterogeneous, and all of the people with whom I talked were aware of ambiguities in people’s drinking practices. Drinking could make people happy, help them to relax, to find a spouse or a sexual partner, enable them to talk to strangers, and inspire them to sing and dance without caring who saw them. But drinking could also lead to arguments and violence, cause embarrassment, and bring harm either to those who drank or those who depended on them. Although the effects of alcohol as a substance were unpredictable, effects on particular people were not. For interviewees who drank, and all but two of those who didn’t\footnote{One woman had never considered alcohol to possess any positive qualities. She described her mother, father and step-father as “alcoholics” and had viewed alcohol as an irredeemably negative substance since childhood. Another woman was a former heavy drinker, who conceded that alcohol did make her happy when she was a drinker – but in retrospect, she believed alcohol had no positive qualities.}, the default effect of drinking was that drinkers had fun and enjoyed themselves:\footnote{By “default effect” I mean that this was considered to be the effect of drinking that occurred in most people – where people did not become happy after drinking, or did not have fun, this was considered to be a circumstance worthy of further comment or explanation.}

\textit{Do you think there’s anything good about drinking, what’s good about drinking?}

Fun, happy, yeah

\textit{What makes it fun?}

Like with my family, it’s fun when we drink together, and we used to talk to each other or play games (Female, 19, drinker).

\textit{Can you think of any time you were out drinking, and while you were drinking you had a particularly good time, maybe in the last couple of weeks?}

Actually, every time I’ve gone out and drunk I’ve had a good time, if I didn’t want to go and drink and have a lousy time um, I wouldn’t drink, OK? And that’s because if I want to have a good time, then I get drunk. If it’s a very formal situation, then I’ll just drink orange juice, and they’re usually pretty boring situations anyway [laugh], and I’ll be sober (Male, 39, drinker).

Where happiness or enjoyment did not occur, explanation could be identified in the context of the particular person, his or her personality, his or her everyday life, and/or the particular state of that person’s relationships within the family. In this, people
relied either on their knowledge about the particular person concerned, or where strangers were concerned, on a limited number of generic explanations for such behaviour. These will be discussed below.

Drinking was considered to be ‘good’, ‘fun’ and to make people ‘happy’ because of the way alcohol made people feel (in the case of drinkers), and due to observation of other people who were drinking – people who drank talked freely, smiled, joked, sang and danced. My observations confirmed this was a general pattern when Cook Islanders gathered to drink. People would talk with one another about things that had been happening in their lives and in the lives of other people (typically, these people were known both to them and the person they were talking to), discuss politics and sport, relationships, and events that happened throughout the islands and beyond. According to one Cook Islander:

[Drinking] makes people sociable [laugh], yeah, definitely the social benefits you know, mixing with people, having a good time and forgetting the world there for a little while, before you head back to reality (Male, 39, drinker).

Another person – this time, a politician, Sir Geoffrey Henry – told me that alcohol had a “good social influence” because it brought people together, and played an important role in linking family members together, as well as sports teams – in fact, teams of all kinds. Although these propositions are somewhat problematic, and recognised as such by Maori, drinking was generally considered to be an important means of bringing people together to talk, have fun, and share with one another matters of significance in their (and other people’s) lives. As an anthropologist, participation in drinking sessions proved to be valuable for exactly these reasons – I learned a lot about relationships between people, about politics on the island, past events, personalities, and scandals, because these were often a topic of conversation among drinkers. Not everything I learned was reliable – the ‘coconut wireless’ is sometimes a fallible instrument. In the course of time, knowledge I gained (right or wrong) about people in the village, and others around the island, enriched my own experience of life in

225 Domestic violence, to choose one example, which often occurs in the context of drinking, casts serious doubt on the contention that all drinking is “good” drinking.
226 An expression, common throughout the South Pacific, referring to informal communication, or often, rumour.
Rarotonga, and my relations with people in non-drinking situations as well. Drinking sessions were of similar value to Maori who took part in them – although it did not form the sole means by which information about each other, happenings around the island, and so on, were obtained.

Drinking sessions generally took place in one of three venues: at the home of one of the drinkers, at a bar or nightclub, or at one of the beaches around Rarotonga. In most cases, people would begin drinking with people to whom they were already acquainted – for the most part friends, work colleagues, and/or peer relatives (brothers, sisters, cousins, and aunties and/or uncles of a similar age). These people were preferred because they could be trusted, and because they were familiar to one another, their actions while drinking could be anticipated. The behaviour of strangers, by contrast, could not be anticipated, and this was a potential source of conflict.

When drinking sessions occurred at people’s homes, they commonly took place outside the house, where people would sit on chairs or around a picnic or barbecue table. The only time I attended drinking sessions inside a person’s home was when we were watching sport on the television – always a rugby union or rugby league game. Even then, as soon as the game finished, the group would gather up their alcohol and go outside to drink. In general, Cook Islanders regarded television as a distraction that interfered with group interaction by diverting drinkers’ attention from group conversation, and so was considered undesirable at drinking sessions – an indication of the importance of conversation and social interaction as one of the primary reasons for Cook Islanders drinking with other people.

_I like talking to drunk people, I enjoy it_  

When asked if there are any differences in the ways Cook Islanders behaved when they drink compared with when they were sober, the unanimous reply was that most Cook Islanders talk more – some talk loudly and more often, most talk to people they would normally never talk to (that is, when sober), and when they talk, most discuss things that they would rarely talk about otherwise:

> You know our island people, they’re the quiet people, yeah, they are just like us now. They keep quiet, they quiet [laugh], won’t say anything [laugh]. You know

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227 This worked in reverse as well, as people learnt a lot about me through my participation in drinking sessions, and of course, the things I learnt and people I met in non-drinking situations allowed me to contribute to conversations that took place while drinking.

228 Male, 22, non-drinker.
when they’re sober ohhh [laugh], they are the big people [laugh], *aue!* They can’t keep them shut their mouth, they are the only one who can talk [laugh]. So no, in front of me, I laugh [laugh] (Female, 27, drinker).

I go from quiet to loud, like I’m really loud I just talk to anybody, but if I’m like sober I’d be just like, I feel insecure, like when I’m not drunk and I’m at TJs [a nightclub], or something like that (Female, 19, drinker).

Cases of people who were quiet or silent in their relations with all people (friends and relatives included) when sober, and who talked loudly or more frequently while drinking, were remarkable not because most Cook Islanders were silent or reticent in everyday relations with other people, but because the contrast with sober behaviour in particular individuals was so noticeable. My fieldwork provided numerous examples of this – some Maori who I had known for some time and who were reserved and quiet while not drinking would talk freely, often to the point of dominating conversation, while drinking. An even more remarkable change would occur when some Maori drank – people who normally spoke only Maori would speak English while drinking:

  *Just one glass or two glasses.*

*That was all it took [to become drunk]?*

Just those glasses and yeah, and you speak Papa’a all the time [laugh].

*Is that what you did, so you’d speak English all the time?*

No, I speak Maori yeah, my mother tongue.

*But when you’re drinking?*

When I’m drinking I speak Papa’a, that’s the English.

*Was everyone else doing the same as well?*

Yeah, especially people, some people when they’re sober you know they speak Maori, speak Maori to you eh, and sometimes they don’t even speak to you. They don’t even talk to you. But when they’re drunk, you know they’re not embarrassed of doing anything, they’re not embarrassed talking to you. They just speak any language to you (Female, 21, drinker).

*It’s something I always find funny, like somebody normal, say it’s a local, speaks Maori when he’s sober, says everything in Maori, and then after a few beers, you*

229 In fact, a great many Cook Islanders are very forthcoming – I was often pleasantly surprised by the friendliness of some Maori, and by how quickly they would share information that was, in comparison to my experience of conversations in New Zealand and Australia, intimate and personal.
see him coming up and he will not truss up one word in Maori, he’ll be speaking in English. When you say something to him in Maori he always answer in English…. There’s one person hardly ever speaks English, and then one night we just heard, actually us the whole staff [at Hideaway Bar] just couldn’t stop the laugh, [he] just turn around and goes, “and you have the audacity to say such things to me!” We turned around and when we saw the person who was actually saying this, you know that word [laugh], so it’s not, I mean it’s not the normal thing (Male, 26, former drinker).

Another change in the language of Maori was that some would begin to swear after a few drinks. Swearing and rude language were not common in everyday speech, so it was remarkable when ‘rude language’ occurred during drinking. From my observation, people were more likely to swear while drinking, although swearing was by no means common during drinking sessions:

_How do you know when you’re drunk?_
I don’t really know but ah, I feel tired, and [laugh] happy, ‘cos you know I just feel happy and talk.
_OK so you talk more?_
Yeah I talk more than the time I’m sober, I mean that’s normal, yeah [laugh], it’s fun.
_Do you talk about different kinds of things when you’re drunk?_
Yeah, yes, I can talk to strange [laugh], someone that I don’t [know]. I swear [laugh]. I don’t like swearing, I hate that when I hear someone swearing, but I swear!
_So do you swear in Maori or is it in English?_
Maori and English.
_So, bilingual, how come?_
Well, because that’s what it, it sounds good [laugh]. It’s only a cover-up [laugh] (Female, 27, drinker).

As indicated in above, Maori who drank were able to talk to anyone, strangers included, more easily than when they were sober. This was a general rule that applied for most Maori, not just those who were quiet or reserved among friends and relatives. A few interviewees also observed that some people who were loud in everyday conversation became quiet when drinking:
I suppose that depends on the person, ‘cos I mean some really quiet people, when they’re drunk they make lots of noise and all that. And then you get the loud ones, that when they’re drunk they’re all quiet, they don’t really say much (Female, 22, drinker).

Yeah, you can see quiet people, people who are ordinarily quiet become very loud, and loud people become quiet (Male, 38, drinker)

Comments such as these were considerably less common than the reverse – that quiet people become more talkative when drinking. During fieldwork, I cannot think of an episode where people who were talkative when sober became quiet while drinking, although in some cases loud people may have appeared to be quiet because the contrast with ‘transformed’ quiet people had diminished. In any case, the occurrence of alcohol consumption making drinkers quieter than in sobriety was either considerably less common, or of less significance to Cook Islanders, than the reverse.

Yeah, [they drink] so that they can talk about that problem

The form of language and communication was not the only thing altered during drinking sessions – the content of talk while drinking also tended to be different to that of sober conversation. In particular, people were more willing to talk about problems they experienced with families and spouses, and to approach strangers as potential drinking companions, spouses or sexual partners. Thus, I was often told things I would not have learnt had the person not been drinking. On one occasion, a woman who I met for the first time, revealed to me an incident when she had been sexually abused as a young girl. This took place in the course of what appeared to me to be a casual conversation – I did not attempt to solicit such information, either in a direct or indirect manner. On other occasions people (most often, friends or acquaintances I had known for some time) would tell me, or the group in which I was drinking, how much they missed deceased relatives, express their concern over arguments with relatives or partners, or reveal sexual affairs, either concerning themselves or a mutual acquaintance – often involving some form of adultery or infidelity. A number of the people I spoke to had similar experiences:

230 Female, 27, drinker.
231 The topic arose as this woman was telling me about her past, again unsolicited – recounting one’s life is a common topic of conversation (or rather, monologue) when people drink.
They bring up their own, their family problems from home, and they bring it to the party and they talk about it. And then somebody else will say something about it, and then they argue over it you know, things like that (Female, 31, former drinker).

That was one thing that I never like hearing eh, I never like hearing business between women and girlfriend, boyfriend. I never like hearing it, but when I end up in drinking, these drunk people [start] telling me about [it], but I stay there and listen to it. But no, really I never like listening to other people’s business, but most of them that I’ve heard was just about girlfriend, boyfriend. Yeah, the problem and they tell, they just speak it out (Male, 22, non-drinker).

Just because drinkers were more willing to talk did not mean that their companions were more willing to listen – most felt uncomfortable in such situations, particularly when a person they were not related to discussed family problems. Generally, the reason given for this reluctance was that when people drank they ‘should be having fun’, not sitting around listening to other people’s problems – even when those people were close friends, rather than strangers. This was not necessarily the case for all close friends, and not always the case when drinking companions were also family members.

*They move around, or they stand up and they dance with their friends*232

Talking to strangers not only involved conversation with people, but entailed approaching those people in order to talk. In order to do this, a drinker would have to leave his or her own group in order to approach another. Movement, then, away from one’s own group and toward another, was also described as a characteristic of drinking:

> So we’re sitting in a group, having a drink and then, once we go out we’re socialising through town and that. When we get to a certain place, and sort of like, when they see girls and that, they go up to them and start talking. Yeah, that’s what they normally do (Male, 21, drinker).

Some people, when they get drunk they stand up took off, for about five minutes, come back in. When they get drunk they will go off, come back, went, come back (Male, 22 drinker).

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232 Female, 21, former drinker.
In addition to movement between groups, movement in the form of dancing and animated behaviour was described as characteristic of people who drank. Dancing was not restricted to periods of drinking, but for a number of people dancing was an activity that they enjoyed while drinking:

Alcohol loosens you up. It does, it’s a fact, it loosens you up big time, and if you’re having a good time, chances are that when you’re drunk it just magnifies it more. I guess you get a bit more [laugh], you know you really, like if a song is good when you’re sober you’ll dance to it, but when you’re drunk you’ll really dance to it [laugh]. Just it’s one of those things, alcohol loosens you up (Female, 25, drinker).

After a few drinks I can just, like when I am not drunk I couldn’t just go onto the dance floor and dance by myself, but if I was I wouldn’t care.

And you wouldn’t worry about it?

I wouldn’t worry about it (Female, 19, drinker).

In many cases this involved mingling with, or approaching, strangers in order to dance with them. The role of alcohol in the initiation of sexual relationships and, occasionally, the initiation of long-term relationships is discussed on page 200.

It makes me happy, relaxed, and it’s like I can do anything233

Drinking alcohol also allowed people to relax and unwind. The ‘relaxation’ induced by alcohol was of a special kind, because it did not necessarily involve rest – people who told me alcohol helped them to ‘relax’ were the same people who would drink until the early hours of the morning. Drinking was a time when people could forget about work, or ‘relax’ in the sense that they would be able to feel more at ease around other people, or find themselves able to do different things:

[Drinking is] an opportunity to relax, I can relax socially and OK, it does affect the mind, and it affects the mind in a good sort of way, in that you can do things that you would probably not think of doing when you’re sober, because you’re probably too normal. So you probably want to be a bit abnormal, just relax and just do things, and when you’re into your music and stuff like that, to me, music sounds a lot better when you’ve had a few drinks than when you haven’t – bearing that in mind it’s sometimes good to just grab a book when you’re sober and have a bit of background music, but then it’s a different sort of music – so I think relaxation is

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233 Female, 19, drinker.
the main thing, and that’s why I need some alcohol every now and then (Male, 39, drinker).

You said that drinking has some advantages?
I think it makes you happy, relax, relaxed.

Relaxed in what way, how is relaxing good, how is it different from sitting down in a couch and relaxing?
Oh OK, feeling high, feeling high [laugh] – I don’t know how to explain it, but yeah, lying on the couch there like that and relaxing, it doesn’t give you that kick (Female, 25, drinker).

The act of consuming alcohol held considerable meaning as a way a marking off periods of work from periods when work did not take place. This was particularly evident in after-work ‘shouts’, which usually occurred on a Friday afternoon from 4pm onward, and during which employers would provide alcohol, usually in the form of beer, for their employees. These drinking sessions were regarded as periods of relaxation by most people, and as separate from work, even though they often took place at the work venue, with workmates, and the topics of conversation were often work-related.

Although a dichotomisation of work/sobriety and non-work/drinking was apparent in the way people talked about work and drinking, the association of drinking with relaxation was not exclusively contrasted with ‘work’, and thus the domain of drinking was not identical to the domain of leisure. Drinking was also regarded as conducive of relaxation when it occurred after a sports game or team practice. A more accurate descriptive contrast is that drinking was a salient marker of the end of purposeful, or structured, activity:

After sports Monday when, or even, no stress, when you stress with the school work, like myself you know – I have gone through hard times completing my assignments, and after completing that, straight away I go drinking – and same as sports, when they win the game they go drinking, partying.  

As a way to...
Mmm to end.
To finish it?
To end, to finish the sport in a good mood, they [go] drinking (Female, 21, drinker).
Thus, drinking marked periods of relaxation after work, after sports games, after assignments were completed, and after the formal components of celebrations and events took place (see page 234). Drinking was, therefore, discursively associated with informal, unstructured, or un-purposeful activity. This symbolic association was maintained even though drinking was structured (particularly, for example, during instances of ‘shouting’, page 247), and indeed, was a purposeful activity – the purpose being to ‘relax’, to ‘have fun’, to ‘score’, to ‘get drunk’, and so on.

Gusfield discusses the general association of alcohol consumption with leisure, where leisure is characterised as the absence of work (supervised, standardised and utilitarian forms of thought and criteria of action), as a time of release, of spontaneity, and of “action for its own satisfactions” (1987:74). According to Gusfield, alcohol is frequently used as a marker of leisure, such as during “happy hour drinks” as people begin their movement from their workplace toward home. Within the domain of leisure, he also distinguishes a subset called ‘play’:

Play is… leisure characterized by spontaneity, by unscheduled action, by a blurring of social boundaries and by activity which is chiefly unproductive from an economic viewpoint (Gusfield 1987:84).

Most alcohol consumption in Rarotonga accords with this characterisation of ‘play’, within the more general domain of ‘leisure’. However, although ‘play’ encompasses many of the ‘positive’ aspects of drinking experience by Maori (such as a diminished concern for social status, and a willingness to approach strangers), the term should be used in caution – it fails to capture ‘negative’ aspects of drinking experience – particularly violence and arguments, which are discussed in the following pages (see page 204).

When I get drunk, I just want to forget about it.234

Three people also described drinking as a way to ‘forget your problems’ or ‘drown your sorrows’. One was talking about someone she knew, rather than about her own experience with alcohol. In the other two cases, the effectiveness of using alcohol in this way was somewhat ambiguous. First, both had been convicted of offences in which alcohol was described as a contributing factor. More importantly, both also

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234 Female, 25, drinker.
described how they would discuss problems they were experiencing in life with strangers, friends, and family while drinking (that is, drinking allowed them to talk about their problems), so that in practice, alcohol did not cause them to ‘forget’ – which was recognised by both:

   It’s like, because when I get drunk, I just want to forget about it, I just don’t want to deal with it. I think I don’t want to deal with it, just forget about it – but unfortunately it didn’t make me forget about it, it just made me angrier.

   So you would still remember what was bothering you?

   Yeah, I still remember what was bothering me. But it got worse and I could come out of that, but being sober I couldn’t come out of it, boyfriend problems or my parents, I used alcohol to say some things that I wouldn’t say when I’m sober (Female, 25, drinker).

**Sex and ‘Strangers’**

   I think every relationship I’ve had, every relationship or fling I’ve had, has been through alcohol (Male, 34, drinker).

   A recurrent theme was that drinking was a time when men and women (and occasionally, men and men) approached each other with the intention of initiating sexual relationships with one another. Generally, these people were ‘strangers’ to one another – that is, they would not be relatives, friends, or the relatives of friends. For most Maori, this limited their pool of potential partners, because the reckoning of kinship in the Cook Islands can be broad (see page 27), and often members of one’s extended family formed a large proportion of the people that Maori socialised with on a regular basis.235 Although I have used the term ‘strangers’ as a descriptive term, in most cases these people were familiar with one another prior to their ‘first’ meeting: they had noticed one another at parties, at nightclubs, had seen each other while walking on the road, or riding their scooter – perhaps they had waved to each other while riding past.236 Often the person who initiated conversation had some general knowledge about the

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235 One friend complained often to me that he found it almost impossible to find a girlfriend in Rarotonga, because he was related to so many people on the island. In one case, he found a girl in which he was very interested, only to be told by his father that she was a distant cousin, and that he should stop seeing her at once. He was, it must be said, not the most attractive or personable of Cook Islanders, so that in part this explanation could also be interpreted as an excuse for his failure to find a girlfriend.

236 Where ‘strangers’ was not used to describe these people by Maori who took part in these interviews, they were distinguished from friends and relatives as being people “I / we don’t know”.

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other person, by asking friends if they knew what his name was, whether she had a boyfriend, and so on:

_How long would you have to meet up with someone before they decided they’d like to take you home?_ 
Um, usually they’ve decided already.
_Before they even come up to you?_  
Yeah, if somebody comes up to you, we’ve already decided what we want – two months maybe think about it, and they’ve actually got drunk and maybe building up.  
_They’ve already been thinking about it for a while?_  
Yeah, the courage to actually approach you, and then when you’re drunk they try it – and the thing is when they finally make the approach and they’re drunk, [and when they’re sober, [they] follow it up. It doesn’t matter anymore, because they made the move and the alcohol has given them that go, and so it doesn’t really matter afterwards what they do (Male, 22, drinker).

Commonly, but not exclusively, an approach toward a potential partner was made by the man after he had been drinking, because then he would no longer feel shy, and was able to talk the woman freely (‘sweet talk’). For some, approaching potential partners was one of the most important aspects of drinking, for without alcohol the approach would be difficult, and more likely to end in failure:

_You know, when they are sober they can’t really talk or express their way of feelings about this person, but when they are drunk it’s very easy, easy to talk and easy to express in a way that the girl will admire._  
_And they do admire it?_  
Yes.

_What kinds of things are people saying, are there any lines or approaches or anything like that that you’ve seen or noticed?_  
There’s a mix of a, a way of approaching and also, I mean when you are approaching you use different techniques of how to approach effectively, and use some flavours like a line, and also, just trying to get that girl for that man only.  
_Oh, for when?_  
For a one night stand maybe (Male, 25, drinker).
For women, resistance to ‘temptation’ (whether it be the temptation of the man, or their own desire to have sex with him) when they had been drinking was reduced, and they were more likely to give into his ‘sweet talk’ and go home with him:

The men tend to be a bit more, like the guys I know, when they’re around other people they tend to be a bit quiet – around other people they don’t really know – but then when we all drink together, they’ll just out of the blue say something, and they’re real sleazy, trying to hit on you. That’s what the guys are like over here – all they think about is their things down below [laugh]. And girls, when they’re drunk they tend to get sucked in, what I’ve experienced. Like when I was drunk one time, and you just get sucked in by their sweet talk, blah, blah, blah, and wake up the next morning and realise what you’ve done, and you can’t really go back and change it, too bad (Female, 19, drinker).

I had been drinking over at my friends’, and there was this guy standing in front of me – I was so curious of what he would be like in bed, and that did happen – and yes, I was happy but inside I was scared, oh shit what did I have to do this for – yeah, you know, it was just the alcohol that gave me that drive (Female, 27, drinker).

Often, a woman who consented to sex in these situations regretted the incident the next day – mainly because by engaging in such relations she ran the risk of being talked about by people in the village, thus causing her to feel shame. In particular, women were concerned that they should not be called a ‘slut’:

I get really pissed off and it really hurts, it goes very deep you know. [Everyone] starts calling me a loose slut and, you know, this is not a whore house, and that really ticks me off (Female, 25, drinker).

When the boys talk about the girl, he will share [i.e. talk] to those boys, and then that girl doesn’t know that boy was told sometime about her, [and] if that girl heard about it she could feel shame (Female, 37, drinker).

In the end my drinking was increasing, I don’t really care [about being called a slut].

You didn’t think about it?

I didn’t want to think about it so much after that, you know there, there are some girls saying oh she’s a slut, she’s a bitch, but then I just turn around and say to
them, talk about yourself before you go and talk about other people. You know, they only say that when they are drunk, but when they are sober they are my friends – but they’re not (Female, 27, drinker).

In the last case, the woman no longer concerned herself much with what was being said about her, and no longer felt ‘regret’ when she had sex with a man after drinking. In all of these cases, the women described the negative effects of having sex with men in public terms – that is, feelings of regret were directed toward public repercussions for their act (primarily through talk and gossip – “it gets around and the whole island knows the next day what I was up to”). I heard of no such derogatory terms for men who engaged in sex with multiple partners – one man was proud of his accomplishments, and spent some considerable time telling me of them.

Drinking and finding partners for sex was not limited to young, unmarried Maori. All of the people I spoke to told me that (some) married people also attempted to find sexual partners while they were drinking. Most of the time these efforts took the form of flirtation, but direct propositioning also occurred:

Most of the married women, married womens and married mens, they only tried for one night stand to other young girls and boys.

So you see a lot of married people trying to pick up people?

Yes.

Are there quite a few or are there only a couple of people who are regulars?

I think most of the married mens in Rarotonga.

From your standpoint when you’re there at closing time, are many of them successful in their attempts?

Um, there’s quite a few, but they try, they did their best, and quite a few succeed.

But a lot of them are trying?

Yeah, most of the married men, when I saw them, you see they are sort of trying (Male, 25, drinker).

I find, especially being female, you hear all sorts of shit from guys, like they love you after seeing you for five minutes – anything to just to take you home. Or they’ll, if they get drunk enough they’ll actually say that, can they take you home because you know, the wife’s at home but you’re really, I think you’re quite nice,

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237 Female, 19, drinker.
238 While at a nightclub one night a male acquaintance of mine suggested I should find a girlfriend – when I pointed out to him that I was married, he said he couldn’t see why that should make any difference!
and we can do a quick five minutes quickie at your place, and then I’ll go home
and blah, blah, blah.

So men will say stuff like that to you?
Oh yeah, all the time (Female, 29, drinker).

In the first case, the behaviour of married men and women in nightclubs was
described, but a number of the people I spoke to confirmed that this was also the case at
parties which took place at people’s homes:

I know of some people who have actually broken up, because they’ve been
drinking with their best mates, and then they end up going out with their best
mate’s wife or husband, and [that] just breaks up the whole marriage, and the
children are divided, and it’s sad. It’s sad to see that happen, because I think it’s to
do with alcohol, because they’re not thinking straight and maybe because they’re
lustling after that person, and things like that (Female, 31, former drinker).

[My father’s] friend wanted to drink, so he just come up, and this friend and my
mum drink too. Yeah, and when my mother’s drunk, chase my dad’s friend
[laugh]. What he did that day, I don’t know how he [my father] found out (Female,
20, drinker).

Arguments and Violence

While drinking was generally regarded as a time when people were happy,
enjoyed themselves, talked freely and were able to approach other people easily, it was
also recognised that arguments and fights were more likely to occur while people were
drinking. Sometimes arguments would occur between strangers, but most often disputes
were between spouses or among immediate family.

Drinking was understood as having variable effects on different people – some
would talk more and some would not, some would discuss private matters with
strangers and others wouldn’t – and this was also true of arguments and fighting. Some
people would become fractious, and others would not:

One of my friends, she’ll be fine, and then she’ll get really psycho when she’s
drunk. She’ll get really angry at people, and start swearing at them, abusing them
verbally. Yeah, it’s really weird. And then next thing she’ll just be, whoa, totally
different. Some of my friends, their attitude changes from angel to devil – and
some of them devil to angel. It’s weird (Female, 19, drinker).
Sometimes, like [it’s] their different attitude eh, drunk people. This one has a different attitude, and that one a different attitude. Some are very aggressive, some are good, you know, just enjoy it, and laughing – but some are very aggressive, and you don’t talk to them [because] they get angry easy (Male, 22, drinker).

While some people always became argumentative and/or violent while drinking, for most people this was not the case, although on occasion every person could become quarrelsome. When this occurred, intoxicated people could be distinguished from sober people because they were unwilling, or unable, to listen to the opinions of others, or be deflected from their own perspective of the issue at hand.\footnote{Compare Marshall (Marshall 1979c:53).}

He is a different person when he’s drunk because, sometimes they are slow to remember things, and they are quick to get angry. They also think they’re right, and sometimes they have a problem when they’re sober and then they get drunk, and they have so much to drink that when they talk to you, they think they’re right – they’ll be shouting at you and everything is wrong, the food tastes yucky and the food tastes yuck, and the house, the kids, everything is wrong (Female, 28, former drinker).

I don’t know, maybe the alcohol is, it slows [people] down – someone is talking, and you didn’t catch what he was talking [about], or maybe sometimes he went, like you were talking to him and to me, [and] everything just went the opposite way. Like when you are talking, and [you] say to me this thing, but to me, you are teasing me or saying something bad about me, especially when we get drunk (Male, 22, drinker).

People who drank were more likely to express annoyance at other people; if they were not drinking they were inclined not to say anything, or ignore a particular slight they suffered:

\begin{quote}
Do you get emotional sometimes?
No, I just get mad really.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Oh, you get mad sometimes?
Just if I see that something is not right, I just say it, and sometimes when I’m drunk and I find out a friend of mine is keeping a secret from me, and it’ll hurt, and especially if it’s a friend, I usually come ask them about that, and ask how come she didn’t tell me about this (Female, 20, drinker).
\end{quote}
If somebody was to be a bit off-putting to me, I’d actually sort of question it – especially if it was a quite emotional question and it wasn’t in my favour. And I’ll sit there and chew it over at the bar, or I’d get really ratty, and if I was drunk man I’d get really, really shitty – either that or I’d get all wooh, really whoopy or things like that you know, I might be prone to outbursts [laugh] (Female, 25, drinker).

**They tease other people and they fight, they argue**

People who drank teased one another, became argumentative, and were less likely to pay attention to another person’s point of view, so that disagreements escalated and participants became more polarised than in non-drinking circumstances. ‘Teasing’ was differentiated from arguments because it was directed at particular individuals, and involved criticism, ridicule, or joking at their expense. Sometimes teasing focussed on a person’s comportment (particularly if the person was ‘kona’, or drunk, and he or she was a ‘stranger’ to the teaser/s), or on embarrassing things that person had done after drinking. When sports teams drank together, teasing focussed on mistakes made by individual players, or was directed at the failure of a losing team. Teasing also occurred when people were not drinking – but when drinking, they teased people they did not know well. Teasing could be very amusing, but it was risky when people were drinking, because the chances of them becoming (visibly) angry and perhaps even violent were much increased:

Some people when they are [sober], they’re calm, you know. When they are not drunk they’re kind, and they just help people. But when they’re drunk [and] you tease them, they just snap and they get angry easily, and blow at you – but when they’re sober, you just talk to them [and] they’ll just crack up laughing, they don’t do anything (Male, 21, non-drinker).

When they’re drunk, we just like tease them, or say stupid things like, “you can’t handle the jandals” [thongs] and stuff [laugh]. Just things like that, we usually tease them (Female, 22, drinker).

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240 Female, 29, drinker.
241 In virtually all sports teams, the majority of team members drink together on occasion.
This did not mean that all teasing was regarded as ‘water under the bridge’ when suffered by sober people. Rather, when sober, people were likely to conceal any annoyance they felt:

Some [people who tease me] are my friends, but they still do the same thing you know, they cheeky, you know.

To you?

Um, sometimes, yeah – but I don’t take it seriously, I just ignores it, and takes it as a joke or something like that.

But you wouldn’t have to take it as a joke?

Nah [laugh] yeah, but inside, oh yeah, you wait [laugh].

Is that right?

You wait – when you get on the field, I’ll show you – that’s what I normally do, when they tease me, I normally take it on the soccer field, when we play against them then they [slaps fist], yeah (Male, 22, non-drinker).

Teasing also occurred between family members, particularly when one or more members of the household (such as the father) had been drinking. Sometimes this teasing was malicious, and was precursory to arguments or fights. Not all teasing developed into direct confrontation, and often when the subject of teasing became angry, the antagonist/s attempted to defuse the situation, by trying to change the topic of conversation, or by leaving the house, nightclub, or party altogether:

What happens if you start joking with someone and they start getting mad, what do you do then?

For me, if I see if that fella’s getting mad, I change the subjects, change the subjects to church, so that fella can calm down and drink (Male, 22, drinker).

I may jokingly say something to someone, who I would not dare say when I’m not drunk. But when I do say that to somebody, sometimes they react at what I say, and they get very, very annoyed, and they would like to whack me across the face or something. Sometimes it has happened – but I never got knocked across the face, because I thought it was a social function, everybody’s allowed to joke to each other.

But some jokes aren’t funny?

When you do it, they don’t find it funny, and then I know that I – by hanging on by staying on to that party – like I’m a threat to [that person]. I mean, I’m always being in a threatening atmosphere with the others, so I don’t want to say anything
any more, and I pack up and join another party if there happen to be another one elsewhere, or otherwise I go home (Male, 40, drinker).

Avoidance of confrontation was a common means of defusing these situations. In general, avoiding confrontation did not seem to cause embarrassment to the person who left – although avoidance of confrontation was mentioned a number of times, none regarded this action as one that would cause them shame:

With one of the other teams we actually played them, and because we took the trophy off them, they started to cause trouble and we end up in a brawl. So we decided we’re not gonna go, we weren’t gonna go back out – so we just drink and not [go out], because we were pretty close as a team (Male, 23, former drinker).

People are going to be different, you’re gonna get people who wanna fight when they’ve had some alcohol, and some people just want to go to sleep [laugh]. And then between that you get what I call normal people, who can handle their social drinking. So you just weigh it up in that context, and if you don’t like a particular social setting when you’re drinking, then it’s a free country – you can always leave and go to another bar, and find somebody else to drink with [laugh] (Male, 39, drinker).

We’re all trying to be cool you know, trying to be a big man, big woman\textsuperscript{242}

According to some, the tendency for people to talk loudly and more often, to tease one another, and to generally draw attention to themselves by these and other means (such as by swearing, talking English, or ‘shouting’ drinks for other people), was due to the fact that many of these were people of lower status in Rarotonga, and that boisterous public behaviour created an impression they were unable to obtain when sober and hence, in ‘ordinary’ relationships with other people. One person told me that all Cook Islanders want to be important, they want to ‘be somebody’ – and for Cook Islanders of lower status, alcohol “helps them to be somebody”.\textsuperscript{243} The provision of alcohol to others (‘shouting’) could also contribute to other people’s impression of them:

Usually the people that buy a lot is people that is buying for themselves, for other people.

So what’s the good thing about buying for other people?

\textsuperscript{242} Female, 22, drinker.
\textsuperscript{243} Male, 32, drinker.
Status, that’s basically it, you buy drinks, you’re the man – yes, that’s it. And some of these people – like I’m not saying they’re weak or anything like that – but they know they’re pretty small, so they try to get into the big guys, go up to the big boys, and make friends with them. So they buy them drinks, sometimes it’s probably a security thing, so if somebody picks a fight – ‘cos they know they’ll be a target for picking fights – then you can pick some big guys, and they can [defend you] (Male, 24, former drinker).

The desire to be regarded as important or ‘cool’ through the consumption of alcohol was usually associated with youthful experimentation; most people said they first tried alcohol and began drinking in order to be ‘cool’, to show off, to fit in with peers, or to become like adults. None said that this was a reason for their (or other people’s) drinking after they became familiar with alcohol. Nevertheless, for certain people, and in certain circumstances, the consumption of alcohol was a means by which they could enhance (or rather, alter) the impression others had of them.

In the first case, and particularly for (some) males, the initiation of arguments and/or fights with other men was one means by which ‘status’ could be obtained. I met one such person – having met earlier that evening, we returned to his house with some of his friends to drink for a while, where he spent some time telling me about what a ‘tough guy’ he was, among other things. Later that evening we went to Avarua to check out some nightclubs. At one of these, he nudged me and pointed to another man on the dance floor, and said he was going to fight with him. When I asked why, he said it was because he didn’t like this fellow in high school, and now he was going to ‘teach him a lesson’. All this more than two decades after these men had last spoken! I was certain that he intended to fight in order to further impress on me what a ‘tough guy’ he was, and after some time, I managed to talk him out of it – by telling him I knew he was tough, and he didn’t have to beat up this other man to prove it.

Picking arguments and fights in order to obtain a reputation was an ambiguous endeavour, because if a person’s reputation for violence grew too great, others might avoid drinking with him. Generally, such behaviour met with disapproval:

244 These included showing me pictures of his wife, describing some marital troubles he was having, and proudly displaying his Christmas tree (page 158) – a very different kind of ‘tough guy’ to those I have met in New Zealand, for example, where such men are reserved and inexpressive (“staunch”). Some interviewees also remarked on this ‘cultural’ difference, by comparison to other places or people: “People here are not staunch by any means, they don’t do the Samoan sit-down-arms-folded or whatever” (Male, 35, drinker).
I think some people just want to go out and show off basically, that’s um, you can just tell them, they just come in walking, strut their thing around – yeah, they think they’re really tough and stuff, so everybody will look at them (Female, 31, former drinker).

I hate going out with a group of people that, when they drink, and they’re being tough guys and pick on someone, and I just hate that kind of thing (Male, 21, drinker).

During fieldwork, I saw only two fights initiated by such ‘tough guys’. Each lasted for little more than a minute and did not result in any serious (or visible) injury to either person. According to one person:

People here are not fighting people – someone was asking me the other day do bar brawls happen much, I was saying yeah, sometimes there’s a big brawl, but it’s all over in five minutes – no one uses knives or hardly even sticks, let alone guns. But I think the worst thing about being beaten up by a Cook Islander is having to listen to the apologies for four hours afterwards: "oh sorry bro, bro I’m really sorry, oh I didn’t mean it oh, I’m so sorry" – it’s like, “oh shut up, punch me again, just shut up, stop saying sorry!” (Male, 35, drinker).

While ‘bar brawls’ were not particularly severe, people agreed that arguments and fights that took place within, or concerning, members of a person’s family were relatively common, that these often resulted in injury to one or more participants, and often to family members who were not involved in the argument.

*Hurricane storm, go through the storm and the hurricane* 246

Some married people, or people with spouses, occasionally attempted to ‘pick up’ a sexual partner when their spouse was also present at a gathering. In these cases, one of the spouses ‘flirted’ with another man or woman; typically, flirtation was indicated by dancing close to, or in a provocative manner with, a person of the opposite sex who was not that person’s partner, or by talking to that person for a length of time. Subsequently, an argument would often develop between the person and his/her spouse, or with the person the spouse was interacting with. This could occur when no ‘flirtation’ was taking

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245 This is not to say that fights between men causing injury do not occur in the Cook Islands however – there were a few.
246 Female, 37, drinker.
place, but was perceived as such. People described this as a common cause of arguments and fights during drinking sessions where they socialised with people who had spouses:

Sometimes they fight over girlfriends and boyfriends, and stuff like that.

**OK, is that common, did you see that few times?**

Very common, especially here in the Cook Islands. I’ve seen it at the nightclubs happening a lot, especially with drunken um, young people. Say for example like, say if I was going out with you – been going out for say five years – and some other chick comes along and, you know, she tries to score you or something like that – then I get jealous. And say I see you two dancing, and I get jealous and I get angry and I’m really drunk I just come straight up, without questioning anybody and I just grab her and punch her in the face, and we end up fighting ‘cos that, ‘cos that happens a lot in the nightclubs over here. It’s usually to do with boyfriends and girlfriends, yeah, a lot of times (Female, 31, former drinker).

One of my friends and her husband, when they go out, when she gets drunk she just goes mental and really likes to flirt, she really likes to flirt. She likes her other half still, but she just flirtis. She knows she’s gonna go home with him, but she just, I think she just likes attention of the guys and whatever. And he hates it, and they always argue about that so, sometimes you see him dragging her out by her hair because she’s dancing too close to another guy. And [then] they go home and [you] see her the next day, she’s bruises and stuff (Female, 22, drinker).

Arguments between spouses in places other than the home usually centred on infidelity. These arguments were the result of two of alcohol’s influences – first, because alcohol made people more willing to approach and pursue people in whom they were sexually interested, and second, because people who had been drinking were more likely to become angry and argumentative upon seeing their spouse ‘flirting’ with another person. Women, as well as men, fought when one suspected another of flirting with, or having sex with, her partner. One woman sported a black eye twice during my period of fieldwork – not due to the abuse of her boyfriend, but because she had fought with women she suspected were ‘making moves’ on him. Another woman was attacked by a jealous girlfriend some days after she had sex with the boyfriend (see also page 273):

I had a fight, that’s right, you heard about that didn’t you?
A while ago now eh?
I was totally drunk. I could have wasted them easily eh, I could have beaten the crap out of those two girls, but I was drunk.

Were they drunk too?
They were drunk, but they weren’t as drunk as me, I was totally gone. I started drinking at five o’clock, and then I was just totally gone.

So how did that one start?
I think I was getting smart or, it wasn’t my fault – I’m not sure, but [my friend] said I was minding my own business. I think one of the girls was, yeah I think I must have been getting smart to them, yeah so [laugh] (Female, 19, drinker).

Arguments between spouses while, or after, drinking occurred at their home, as did arguments between other members of the immediate family. A common cause of domestic disputes, according to some, was when a father or husband returned from a drinking session to find there was no food in the house for him to eat, whereupon he became angry and argued with, or beat, his wife. A mother or wife might also start an argument with her husband upon his return from a drinking session because he had spent money on alcohol that was meant to purchase food:

Hurricane storm, go through the storm and the hurricane. Well my first husband, most of the time I would see if he drink or, ‘cos he go work and he won’t drink – just take a little bit alcohol just to make his body to give him, affected or strong eh? My husband he need that drink after work in our situation of living together. And also myself, if I get mad with him drinking, like [he] tell me he’s going to drink with his friend so myself, I try to go and drink too. But then my husband came back and we – he said [something] to me, then I start first and then we argue. I would say, “oh you go out and drink, didn’t tell me,” and all that, “you didn’t bring the money home.” His work money, he didn’t want to give it to me to buy food for the children. [He] just finishes work and go with his friend, then he start arguing (Female, 37, drinker).

A few people told me that domestic arguments or violence they had experienced, or that had occurred between other members of their family, developed when one or more member/s of the family was drinking, and began to tease or goad each other – often by bringing up past arguments or dissatisfactions. Sometimes the person who was teased would avoid arguing or fighting, but this was not usually the case:
I was angry, I was really really angry ‘cos she [my mother] wasn’t being fair, she was kind of probing that anger for me, like she was leading [me on]. Oh there are occasions, like in the past, they’ve [my parents] corrected me – and which I thought then, that was in the past and it shouldn’t be brought back up to the surface – but she likes bringing the pasts up and then she will get that anger within you.

*Would that have happened if you hadn’t been drinking at the time?*

I don’t think it would have happened, I think if I hadn’t been drinking my mother wouldn’t have put all of those things out there, she wouldn’t have said those bad things about the past, my past time and past life. She would, nothing would probably occur, but because I was drunk, she wasn’t happy at the fact that I was drunk (Male, 40, drinker).

Then all of a sudden, my mum just brought up a topic. It was just concerning – ‘cos my dad has a son from his second girlfriend [laugh] – just that’s how she brought up the topic, and they just ended up arguing. And then it’s like just them two, it’s only them two drinking, not with the whole group, they just forget about the whole group and they just keep on [arguing] (Female, 26, non-drinker).

Arguments that occurred as a result of past ‘grudges’ were not restricted to people’s homes, and did not always occur between members of the immediate family. They also occurred between members of rival sports teams, between people who had previously argued or felt they had been slighted in some way, and between people whose relatives had been treated badly or slighted by another person. In these cases avoidance was also a way to deal with the situation. The following account is from an interview with a Cook Islands woman who grew up in New Zealand, and had returned to Rarotonga after leaving school:

It’s like, because everybody’s grown up together, and all their siblings have had fights or disputes with different families – because I don’t know all the history of that I find [it difficult]. One friend in particular, she seems to have everything you could possibly want, but even though she works quite hard for it and nothing’s been given to her, to others it may seem that because her family’s well, not wealthy but not poor, but very well educated, they seem to think [everything is given to her]. So if you hang out with that person, they don’t want to talk to you, they won’t come up and they’ll snob you. Then they’ll tell you, the next time they see you, why they snubbed you – [it] was because you were with that person, and they don’t
like that person, and usually it’s to do with their background with their family – it’s always family stuff, or their sister has known their sister (Female, 29, drinker).

It was not uncommon for violence to result from arguments within the family, or within the home. Almost half of the people I spoke to told me of an experience of alcohol-related violence in their immediate family (that is, concerning parents, siblings, or spouses).\textsuperscript{247} Most of these accounts concerned disputes between parents, and usually they were cases in which the husband beat the wife:

[My father] had like ripped her clothes and [was] chucking her from wall to wall, and I took off with my friend and we were drinking, and [when] I came back, that was about eleven o’clock at night – an hour later I think – I came back [and] saw my mum sitting there crying. And I just looked at her, and she was bleeding, and I said “you’ve gotta go, you gotta take your things, go to your friend’s house tomorrow” (Female, 28, former drinker).

You didn’t like that [your mother’s drunken behaviour] so much when you were younger?
I used to hate it.

How come, what was wrong?
Because she’ll just change attitude, and the way she is, she’ll go from nice and funny to this beast – if you make her really angry, or you’ll just be looking at her and she’s angry, she’ll try and do something to you, like she’ll start throwing stuff at you (Female, 19, drinker).

\textbf{Transformation}

As noted earlier, Cook Islanders regard the consumption of alcohol as transformative, in that alcohol changes the person who drinks so that he or she behaves in ways that are extraordinary, regarding ‘everyday’, sober comportment. While the behaviour induced by alcohol consumption is extraordinary, the changes that occur while drinking are comprised of both the effect of alcohol and the particular circumstances in which the drinker finds himself or herself, or the particular characteristics of the person who drinks. In the former case, when a person drinks, alcohol may cause them to argue or fight with a friend or a relative, but the issue from

\textsuperscript{247} This is probably an underestimate. I did not ask people directly about violence within their own family, although I did ask questions about domestic violence in general – for example, whether they knew of any cases of domestic violence when alcohol was involved.
which the argument or fight stems is not produced by the alcohol – the potency of alcohol is that it allows a person to express that issue to another person, through direct or indirect means. Thus, when a person who is ordinarily ‘happy’ drinks and becomes argumentative or violent, the origin of her belligerence is attributed to a problem that is not a property of alcohol itself. The origin of her behaviour has an explanation external to the act of drinking:

You do get the odd quiet person who just sort of explodes for whatever reason – maybe there’s a family crisis and they haven’t actually come out and mentioned it until then – and they just take it out in the wrong way, instead of trying to explain it (Male, 39, drinker).

In the latter case, it may be a characteristic of a particular person to become aggressive upon drinking alcohol. Here the person’s belligerent behaviour was not attributed to alcohol alone, but rather to the effect of alcohol on that person. Wherever inconstant behaviour was observed, the origin of that behaviour was always contextualised by circumstances that pertain in sobriety.

Sexual desire for ‘strangers’ was also present in people when they were sober, but this desire was not publicly expressed until a person began to drink. In general, drinking alcohol removed a drinker’s concern with what other people will think if he follows his desires:

The thing with him is, get him drunk and he shows off, but when he’s sober he is straight. When a guy walks past, “hey!” [he expresses interest], but then he’s drunk. I mean, you’re looking at this guy and, only when he gets drunk, you see him loosening up, and he says he’s attracted [to men] when he’s sober, but when he’s drunk he doesn’t really care.

Do people normally care about whether someone is homosexual or not?
Um, a lot do, but it wouldn’t matter about half the population probably (Male, 24, former drinker).

The separation of the origin of a behaviour, problem, or emotion from its expression during drinking was evident when people talked with others about problems they were experiencing only after they had been drinking. An important aspect of

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248 For example, one person said that aggressive behaviour while drinking was a particular characteristic of people from a certain island. Another person explained the belligerent behaviour of a close friend as attributable to abuse she had suffered as a child – which he had learned because she told him about her childhood experiences during drinking sessions.
drinking behaviour was that for many Maori, this expression took place only when a person consumed alcohol. In many cases, if drinking did not occur, the particular problem or desire was not expressed or discussed with other people, although it may be recognised by them. In practice, drinking often did occur in these circumstances, because alcohol was sought when a problem or desire arose:

Yeah, my mum and my dad – he beat up my mum one time, he was upset because my younger sister didn’t come back from New Zealand, and he blamed it on my mother because my mother was the one that let her go. So he went drinking, he went to the airport picked her up, but she wasn’t arrived, [so] when we came he was waiting and he goes, “oh, where’s my younger sister,” and I go, “she didn’t come back,” but he was angry – we could see he was angry and upset – but anyway we knew that he had [become angry]. He got totally wasted and came back home [and] started swearing, starting accusing my mum and saying, “oh it’s all your fault and you shouldn’t of let have let her go, should have just left her, why don’t you listen to me,” and started accusing her of sleeping around with some one else – with another man while he’s drinking – and he beat her up (Female, 25, drinker).

Thus, comportment did change when Cook Islanders drank, and in this sense a transformation did occur – but the transformation was partial, as the drinker did not become a different person. Rather, the drinker became less constrained in those things he conceals, or attempts to conceal, from others in everyday (sober) life.

Aue, when I get drunk and when they play slow jazz music, when I’m dancing, I remember my relationship which ended last year. When I’m dancing I used to cry, I cry, and if anyone poked me, you know I get mad – I just turn around and swear at them, not nice words.

And you wouldn’t normally, like if I bump into you?

No, I don’t do that! [laugh] No, when I’m sober, when people bump into me – ‘cos I like joking, you know, I like talking to any other people – and then bump into me, I just say, “hey, you know you better watch out,” but I do it in a joking way (Female, 21, former drinker).

The Nature of the Transformation

That is very strong in people, it’s shame eh. For me, when I get to meet new people, shame is the first thing that comes to me [laugh]. But not now ‘cos I, the thing is I’m getting mature. And another thing with drunk people – they don’t feel shame when they are drunk, or when they are not drunk, shame is all over their
body [laugh]. That’s one thing I reckon I’m seeing with my friends, they [laugh]. That’s one thing – I’ve seen them – when they are drunk they are not shame you know, there’s no shame there, or they’re not drunk, yeah.

_Everyday, oh you are [feeling shame] all over the place?_ 
Not with my, not with friends – just with strangers, yeah, but it’s still there (Male, 22, non-drinker).

‘Shame’, ‘shyness’ and ‘embarrassment’ were terms used by a number of people. They said that when they (or other people) were drinking, they would no longer have these emotions/feelings, and be able to approach people they did not know and talk to them, or talk to people about things they would ordinarily keep to themselves:

When they do not have any alcohol in them, they are like sheep, they do not say anything. But when alcohol is in them they just open their mouth and they move, no shame, no shy, they just come (Male, 42, non-drinker).

One friend told me that when Maori contemplated one action or another, they first considered whether they had the ‘right’ to do it. For example, if this person were not pleased with the actions of another, she would first decide whether she had the right to criticise him for his actions. This determination depended on many criteria, such as her relationship to him by kinship, whether or not he was a titled person, a prominent member of a church, and so on. In the course of drinking, sometimes boys would criticise a person whom they did not ordinarily have the right to criticise – when this occurred, people would decide after the event whether they had the right to criticise, and sometimes they would agree, sometimes not. Sometimes the person they criticised would accept their criticism, so their ‘right’ to do so was vindicated. Even if the people agreed with the boys, that person was under no compulsion to accept the criticism – he could say that they were just ‘kona’ (drunk).

_Gonna drink, get drunk, so that shyness in me will just [clap] go away_

Ordinarily, if a person estimated they did not have the right to perform a particular action, or they did not have the right to say a certain thing to another person, but did so, they would feel shame / embarrassment. In practice, however, the estimation alone was sufficient to produce an apprehension of the _potential_ for shame (which was in itself a

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249 Female, 25, drinker.
kind of shame), and this apprehension would usually cause a person to desist from a particular action. Estimations were potentially fallible, so that shame could also result even when people thought they had the ‘right’ to commit a particular action, if they were later to discover through the reactions of others that they had been mistaken. In order to avoid shame, a keen understanding of one’s relationship to others was a crucial component of competent social interaction. However, there were many circumstances in which understanding was not comprehensive. Interaction with strangers, for example, also held potential for shame, because important information about these people was absent – namely, who their kin were, and whether they (or their kin) were important or influential. Lack of familiarity could also cause a person to feel shy or ashamed when they contemplated interaction with someone. In both cases, people said that alcohol diminished or dissolved the shyness or shame a person felt when interacting with these people – although the extent to which this occurred varied depending on the person.

Within families, a person’s right to make decisions about their own conduct and behaviour changed when children became adults, or entered early adulthood. When children were young, parents were generally regarded as having the right to instruct, command, or punish children when they did things of which the parent (or guardian) did not approve. The child’s prerogative in this circumstance was to obey their elders:

*When your grandmother told you not to drink and not to smoke, did she just tell you, or did she offer reasons why?*

Well, she didn’t explain to us, because when an elder speaks and tells us not to do this – don’t question, that’s how we the Cook Islands people [react]. Maori people, it’s hard for them to say something, because as a child, they didn’t have to express opinions, we didn’t have to share our idea, or say your ideas out [loud]. You don’t say it, that’s how it is. So, I felt that when I grew up into [an] adult, I found that it’s hard for me to say back to people. I can say out my idea but, at a certain time, because I was ashamed – you know how Papa’a children will ask questions of their parents – it’s not like that in the islands. It’s hard to communicate, parents to the children, and the children to their parents – it’s hard (Female, 26, non-drinker).

This pattern of socialisation has been noted throughout Polynesia. Ritchie & Ritchie (1989:115-118), in a review of socialisation in Polynesia, note how instruction and learning in Polynesian societies favoured non-verbal instruction and observation as a primary means of education and socialisation:
The traditional Polynesian learning style, as manifested in the learning of crafts, emphasizes observation with a minimum of direct instruction…. It was the responsibility of the observers to learn; if they did not, they were the losers…. The attitude of the novice to the craftsman or performer was one of respect, which was manifested, in part, by not asking intrusive questions. The expectation was that novices would maintain a diligent, wide-eyed watchfulness, then go and practice on their own, To ask questions was not only considered disrespectful, it also implied a shameful lack of understanding and provided an opening for ridicule…. One result of this pattern is a low level of verbal interaction in learning situations, and a very limited degree of questioning (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:115-116).

The reverse of this also applied, for not only questioning was limited – often Polynesian teachers did not offer detailed explanations of the things they did, or the demands or judgements they made. In Rarotonga, these communicative constraints were not only experienced during instruction and education – they also applied to relationships, and resulted in tension between parents, spouses, children, and peers. Throughout Polynesia, strong emotions (particularly anger) also tend to be suppressed, as they are regarded as potentially disruptive of affable relations within the community (Levy 1973; Shore 1981; Gerber 1985; Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:119). As a consequence:

People tend to avoid situations where overt conflict might flare up, and if forced into them tend to avoid confrontations…. Wherever human emotions are subject to powerful cultural restraints the consequences are stressful for the individual. Thus the normally bland pattern of life in most Polynesian communities is periodically interrupted by violent emotional expressions that break through personal constraints and create social control problems (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:119-120).

This statement might also be usefully compared with Metge’s (1986) analysis of the term/feeling “whakama” (shame/shyness/embarrassment) among New Zealand Maori:

*Whakama* – that’s keeping back. It’s what prevents us Maoris from going forward. I feel it here [in the breast]. The only time I don’t keep it back is when I’m angry. – Harata Richards (Metge 1986:109)

*Whakama*, in New Zealand Maori, obviously possesses similar properties to ‘shame/shyness/embarrassment’ as described by Cook Islands Maori – particularly in
the sense that ‘shame’ prevents people from acting, and acts as a prohibitive force on people’s comportment. In Cook Islands Maori, the term for these feelings is *akama*. *Akama* (and *whakama*) are considerably broader than the English words used to gloss them – as Metge (1986) notes, in English the terms ‘shame’, ‘shyness’ and ‘embarrassment’ possess quite diverse meanings, yet in Maori all of these are encompassed by the single term ‘*whakama*’ (and, by extension, *akama*). *Akama* occurs both before an action (and so, in this sense, is probably closest to ‘shyness’), and if the action is committed, afterward as well (English ‘shame’/‘embarrassment’). When drunk, Maori *may* assume a performative role (in Alexeyeff’s sense – see page 255) in which ordinary considerations of what they have the ‘right’ to do are altered, and they no longer feel *akama* in their relations with other people, or during circumstances in which strong feelings and/or emotions are usually set aside or dispersed by non-assertive behaviours (such as laughing off a taunt, for example).

This characterisation accords with descriptions of arguments and fights within Rarotongan families. When people drank, they no longer felt shame/shyness at ‘communicating’ their thoughts and emotions explicitly (given that ‘communication’ is a somewhat euphemistic term in the case of domestic violence). Nor did they feel shame when confrontation occurred in front of people who were not family members, although they may have felt shame later, when they were sober. Although I have here focussed on arguments and fights, a number of the people said they were able to discuss other matters, such as personal problems and relationships, with family members in more detail when (and sometimes only when) they were drinking – so that anger and confrontation are by no means the only, or even the most common, outcome of families drinking together:

*So what kind of feelings will you hear about from other people?*

Well my boyfriend, he when he’s sober he won’t really talk to me, but then when he got problems, he said that he always admire me, so this is what the feelings are [laugh], and he only told me then (Female, 20, drinker).

*During Christmas there’s often quite a lot of drinking?*

Yep, especially the adults. That’s their time to sit around and swap family notes and that sort of stuff, so alcohol is prominent even there (Male, 39, drinker).
In most cases, when children became young adults (*mapu*), they became more autonomous, and were able to make their own decisions about what they did. For adults and *mapu*, the judgments of others were no longer presented, or regarded, as orders or commands, but as advice. Ultimately, the choice to comply with or disregard advice was the prerogative of the particular *mapu* or adult:

*Does your brother know that you drink?*

Mmm.

*And what about your parents?*

Yep my parents, oh I’m the only odd one in the family [that] drinks. Now there’s twelve of us all together, but all the rest don’t drink, except me.

*How does everyone feel about that, do they mind?*

Yeah, yeah. Dad’s always [telling me] stop drinking eh, I just say to him it’s my life, it’s not theirs (Male, 22, drinker).

*You don’t drink so much nowadays?*

Ah not really, since the last six months I don’t drink, last eight months.

*Any reasons for that?*

Any reasons, yes, because my father is a minister now! [laugh]  
*Oh, when did he become a minister?*

Ah, just recently.

*So did that change your mind about whether you should?*

Because he used to encourage and teach me that this is wrong, this is evil and, then I’ll have to ignore him.

*So you decided to stop, but you were drinking for a while in the middle there?*

Yeah, before, yeah (Male, 26, former drinker).

*Probably family business so, you know, ignore it*\(^{250}\)

Although when drinking, people no longer felt the same degree of shame or shyness approaching or conversing with other people, this did not mean that drinkers disregarded estimations of their rights in relation to other people. One right that was rarely challenged was the prerogative of Maori to deal with matters in their families, whether in public or private circumstances, without interference from people who were not family members. This was the case particularly when these matters concerned disputes between spouses. People who were told about family problems during drinking

\(^{250}\) Male, 23, drinker.
sessions would feel uncomfortable, even if this information was willingly divulged to them by the drinker. The most dramatic evidence of this ‘right’ was manifest when spouses argued and fought in the presence of people who were not family members. Often, people present during these disputes would ignore the confrontation; nothing would be done to defuse the situation, even if physical assault occurred:

*What happens if an argument does start?*
Well then, we go away, we go away, or just ignore it, walk away.

*Is that always easy to do though?*
Ignore, oh yeah, because those arguments [are] always between females and males so yeah, probably family business, so you know, ignore it.

*So have you seen that happen before?*
Yeah, many times (Male, 23, drinker).

When the guy’s been drinking, or the couple’s been drinking, and there’s a fight um, people regard it as a private, completely private matter, never step between a man and a woman (Male, 35, drinker).

*Do most people walk away or is it um?*
Yeah, a lot of people I’ve seen have been turning away, they just leave it because they go, “they’re like that when they’re drunk, they’re always like that when they’re drunk.”

*And that’s what people say?*
Yeah, that’s that they say. But I go, “yeah, but it’s not right, it’s not right,” they go, “but it’s none of your business, keep out of it,” you know (Female, 25, drinker).

Ordinarily, ‘family business’ was kept from public examination, because it could bring embarrassment to the family and to members of the ‘public’ who observed it. These kinds of public disputes occurred most frequently when alcohol consumption was involved. In practice, public disputes occurred most frequently when alcohol consumption was involved. However, *akama* was not restricted to those people engaged in the argument – people who observed such confrontations would also feel shame and embarrassment on behalf of those people. Their conscious disengagement from the dispute was an inactive expression characteristic their collective *akama* on behalf of the family. Not all Maori ignored these disputes, although in most cases those people who intervened in other people’s ‘family business’ were also people who had grown up
overseas – and were, perhaps, less inculcated with a sense of *akama* as possessed by Maori who grew up in the Cook Islands.

**They just show their actual self**

The reduction of shame or shyness in people who drank was, discursively, a negative effect of alcohol consumption, referring to the diminishment or absence of a quality or feeling experienced in everyday life. But alcohol was also frequently characterised by Maori, again discursively, as an *enabling* substance. Simply put, drinking allowed people to do things. Drunken comportment was characteristically direct, unimpeded, and ‘easy’, and often expressed in terms of movement – in these cases the ‘movement’ was characterised as *purposeful*, as having a specific aim or goal:

When I am drunk, I just go straight up to them and argue. I don’t, I don’t speak to them, and I’m right all the way [laugh] (Female, 19, drinker).

When I see the girls really wasted and he just go bang on to someone and talk to them (Male, 21, drinker).

It’s not their [young people’s] natural self, it’s not their natural way of speaking, they’re just doing that because they feel they can do it, or they’re free to do it [while drinking] (Female, 28, former drinker).

I have already suggested that for Maori, the consumption of alcohol was not understood to instil people with motivations or feelings they did not possess while sober. Rather, alcohol consumption transformed people in the sense that they were able to express or act upon desires or concerns they had in ‘ordinary’, sober life. In this regard, the consumption of alcohol in Maori appears to be ‘disinhibitory’ – a feature it holds in common with the vast majority of characterisations of the qualities of alcohol consumption, from scholarly and popular analyses (and assumptions) about the effect of alcohol on human beings (Neil 1962; Block 1965; Kessel and Walton 1965; MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969; Barry 1976; Boyatzis 1976; Marshall 1979c; Room and Collins 1983, among others; Brady 1991; d'Abbs, Hunter et al. 1994; Paton-Simpson 1996).

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251 Male, 21, non-drinker.
Instead of going for a coffee, people go for a drink here

The behaviour of people while drinking was contrasted with ‘ordinary’, sober, behaviour and practices. Although this contrast was partially an artefact of the questions I asked during interviews, drinking behaviour was distinguished from non-drinking behaviour in a number of contexts where anthropologists were not present – such as, for example, when drunkenness was offered as an excuse for actions people would not have done otherwise. The contrast between drinking and sober behaviour was not absolute. Some aspects of ‘sober’ social life were diminished or disregarded when Maori drank, but many were retained and informed conduct in drinking and non-drinking contexts. Thus, drinking and drunken practice were not the opposite of sober practice.

To describe the drinking behaviour of Maori solely in reference to sober behaviour, where drunkenness is primarily the absence of sober controls and inhibitions, is useful, but only in a limited sense. This is because such a definition describes drinking primarily in terms of what it is not; but drinking also encompasses practices and behaviours that are not evident in ‘ordinary’ life, and are peculiar to drinking practice, such as ‘barmanning’ and ‘shouting’ (both discussed from page 247).

The contrast of drinking with sober behaviour is most easily identified upon consideration of changes in the comportment of individuals. Thus far, this chapter has focussed not on the ‘default’ characteristics of drinking comportment – being happy and having fun – but rather on exceptions to this, and the reasons people attribute to them. Although the behaviour of individuals has been emphasized in this discussion, most drinking by Maori occurs in groups with friends and relatives, that is, people known to one another. Rather than consider these groups by virtue of their contrast with sober groups, it may be fruitful to consider them as an aspect of social life in their own right.

At the heart of this matter is a question that has concerned all commentators on the effect of alcohol on human beings. To what extent is the comportment of people a function of the pharmacological effects of alcohol ingestion? If drunken comportment is

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252 Female, 28, drinker.
253 Particularly where I asked participants if there were any differences in the ways people behaved when they were drinking as opposed to when they weren’t, for example.
254 Other accounts of Cook Islanders’ drinking in Rarotonga, Atiu, Aitutaki, and New Zealand contend that the occurrence of people drinking alone is rare (if it occurs at all) or antithetical to the communal nature of Cook Islands society (Lemert 1967:181-182; Mackenzie 1974; AACNZ 1997a:21). In Rarotonga, I heard a number of accounts of people who did drink alone – usually the drinking practices of these people were considered to be pathological (i.e., they were ‘alcoholics’). This may indicate that the incidence of solo drinkers has increased in the Cook Islands. In any case, group drinking remains the normal practice, and people who drink alone are considered to be unusual.
primarily due to the biochemical effects of alcohol upon the body, then the best means by which it might be defined is in reference to the unintoxicated body – drinking behaviour thereby acquires meaning in reference to what it is not. It follows that bodies that are not intoxicated are not affected by the comportment of people who drink, that is, they are not affected by alcohol as people who drink are. But among non-drinkers, I spoke to some who described themselves as affected by the company of drinkers, and who felt effects similar to those felt by drinkers, although the did not drink themselves:

Most of the time I go with people I know eh. I find quite it hard, in the different group [that is] drinking, and I hardly talk, you know – I can’t, I can’t open up myself because I don’t know them. Except [when] I know them, that’s when I’m more open to talk to them, and joke to them. But sometimes I meet people that I don’t know, but they’re drunk, and they are open to me – and [even though] I don’t know them, sometimes I open myself to them. So that’s one thing I find with drunk people, they open, and it causes me to open to them. I like opening to other people and talking to them about issues and whatever. I talk to them, and especially with people I don’t know, sometimes I end up with this fella and he’s telling me about his life, or telling me whatever it is, and I automatically talk to him (Male, 22, non-drinker).

An alternate view of drinking behaviour is not to consider it as primarily due to the pharmacological effects of alcohol on individual people, but to the conventions associated with drinking that substance. Ingesting alcohol is, of course, a necessary part of drinking comportment, because it is, if nothing else, the irreplaceable symbol through which the behaviour of the group is symbolised:

The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem (Durkheim 1976:206).
CHAPTER TEN: 
AGE AND ABSTINENCE

A number of common themes of drinking, and of abstinence from drinking, emerged through the course of this research. Particular styles of drinking were associated with particular groups, which were typically articulated with regard to age, religious affiliation, and whether or not a person was a primary care-giver to children. Consideration of these matters entered into the estimation of the appropriateness of a person’s drinking practices. Alcohol consumption became more acceptable when children became mapu, or young adults. Over time, as adults found partners and had children, there was an expectation that they should curtail their alcohol consumption, or even quit drinking alcohol all together. Finally, people’s drinking practices were affected by their affiliation to particular religious groups, their status within their church, and on occasion, the status of close family members within a church.

Young children, up until mid-teens, were expected to obey their parents, to attend church (if their parents were members of a church), and to perform various household duties (toddlers often begin helping by cleaning up tita, or rubbish, from the yards of their houses), whenever their care-givers asked. Typically, disobedience by children was subject to physical punishment, meted out by either the male or female guardian:

My grandmother always told us not to do that, especially smoking and drinking – but it’s not that we don’t want to try; it’s just that we can’t do that.

And why is that?

Because we know if we are going to do it, we are going to get a punching. If you do something wrong, you are going to get a punishment – it’s not just a verbal punishment, stick, you’re gonna get hit by the stick. Yes, mainly stick – that’s what they use in those days (Female, 24, non-drinker).

Around the time a child reaches her mid-teens, she is regarded a mapu, that is, a young adult. In most cases, the relationship between caregivers and children changes at this time of life – now, the youth is generally regarded as a person capable of making his or her own choices, and taking responsibility for them. Physical punishment for disobedience of caregivers is either discontinued, or occurs far less frequently. Usually, when people discuss the decisions mapu make, they say that they have told the mapu
how to behave, and what is right and wrong, during their childhood – but now they are adults, and can only be guided in what they should do, not forced:

I see some young people doing these things [drinking and swearing], and then I talk about it to a friend of mine, and she goes, yeah, she used to do these things. Then she asked me, why don’t I go and tell that person off, who’s so close to me. I said, “put it this way, did I used to do anything like that?” She goes “yeah.” “Well, can’t I have been worse than she was – she knows what she’s doing, so let her have her choice of events now – later on she’s gonna sit back and look” [laugh] (Female, 27, former drinker).

Mapu is a categorical term used most frequently in reference to youth aged from their mid-teens to 30 years old and beyond. One person from Youth and Women’s Affairs was of the opinion that mapu were aged between 15 and 35 years, and sometimes older. The category signified by mapu is rather elusive, but generally refers to people who are both young and unmarried, or not in a committed relationship with another person (see Crocombe 1964:32). From my observation, two criteria are relevant to the estimation of whether one is mapu or not – first, age, which signals when a person becomes a mapu, and second, marital status, which signals when being a mapu ends. Older men and women, up to forty years old, who were unmarried, behaved much like younger mapu, and often socialised with them, although the term was rarely applied to them specifically. The distinction between mapu and adults was usually articulated in terms of responsibilities – adults were married, had children, and were responsible for providing for their children, whereas mapu were relatively unencumbered, and could do what they wished with their money and time, because they were responsible, ultimately, only for themselves (see page 239).

Drinking Through the Ages

‘Drinking’ by children less than 16 years old was generally regarded as undesirable. Nevertheless, in a number of cases, parents or guardians would allow their children to ‘try’ small quantities of alcohol as they drank. Usually this amounted to nothing more than a few sips of beer, from a father’s or uncle’s bottle or glass, with the older relative keeping an eye on proceedings. Alcohol experimentation by children,

255 The Cook Islands Maori Dictionary defines mapu as “young people aged from about 16 to 25” (1995:225); the definition of “youth” by the Youth Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (WYSD) is “all young men and women between the age of 15-35 years” (2001:7).
where parents or guardians did not approve of them drinking alcohol, was facilitated by stealing alcohol from their parents, or receiving alcohol from friends. When people recalled their first experiences with alcohol, they often mentioned that as children, they regarded alcohol as ‘cool’, and drinking alcohol to be a ‘grown up’ activity:

Dad loves a party, he’s a really sociable guy, when he hasn’t had too much. And he used to let me drink the cream, the froth off the top of the beer.

Is that right?

Yeah, so I’d drink it. Because obviously someone’s poured it a bit too heavy, and you’ve got all the froth up the top there, and so he’d let me have the ice cream, as it was called back then, when you were a bit young, the ice cream off the top of it. And I used to get a thrill, but the first time I had actually had a drink, I think I drank it from my dad’s bar.

When you were actually having a drink, rather than the ice cream?

Yeah, because that was my first experience with alcohol – skimming the top off dad’s mug, and that used to be a real thrill, because it was, “oh wow, I’m an adult, he’s letting me do this.” It was just one of these kid-thrill things, but to actually consume alcohol itself, that was [laugh], that was taboo, I was doing something really wicked (Female, 25, drinker).

In many cases people’s first experience with alcohol took place without their parent’s knowledge – particularly when parents were members of a church, and forbade their children to drink alcohol under any circumstances.

Most people differentiated between the first time they tried alcohol, and the first time they began ‘drinking’. Generally, their first experience of ‘drinking’ was with friends or peer relatives (cousins, brothers, and sisters), and was characterised by the consumption of a number of measures of alcohol, which caused them to become drunk. The first time these people ‘tried’ alcohol was usually at a young age – from three to twelve years old – but most people did not try ‘drinking’ until they were in their mid- to late-teens. Until the age of about 17 or 18, most drinking took place at home, when care-givers were not present, or in discreet public places – beaches were particularly favoured by young drinkers:

We all used to go out on a Friday night, we were the little rebels. We used to tell our parents we were going to the movies, and we would be trying to get into TJs [a nightclub in Avarua] or somewhere else, though we were fifteen years old. And if we weren’t allowed in, we would go behind the rocks.
Around there by the wharf?
Yeah, and just sit behind the rocks until we were absolutely wasted.
Right.
Yeah, that was bad.
That was bad, how come?
I suppose it was because we were so young, and we thought we were really cool and all that (Female, 19, drinker).

‘Curiosity’ and ‘peer pressure’ were the most commonly stated reasons why people decided they would start drinking.

In general, youth drinking met with disapproval only when the drinkers were underage – that is, less than the legal drinking age in the Cook Islands, which is 18. Older mapu were considered to be responsible for their own alcohol consumption, and as already stated, were relatively free of obligations to others – particularly, because they were adults, but had no family of their own to care for. In one case, a woman who had children from a prior marriage experienced difficulties in her relationship with a mapu boyfriend, due in part to differences in assumed responsibilities:

When he came home, he got drunk all days. But ages, eh, because he’s twenty-four, and I’m thirty-three, it’s really hard for me to tell him how to get an object like money.
Oh, to keep the money in control?
Yes budget the money. Because he’s still a young adult so, he was thinking about himself. There’s no family beside him, only himself. I always mention to him, it’s because him and I, we are not balanced – we are not the same age (Female, 33, drinker).

Alcohol consumption by mapu was characterised by binge drinking, occurring regularly every weekend, or fortnight, as described previously (page 170). This was also the case for married couples who had children, or husbands of such couples, aged in their forties or younger – although for these people, participation in drinking sessions was typically subject to the availability of surplus monies, after living costs for the family had been deducted. By and large, when Maori married and became responsible for their own families, they changed their patterns of drinking – sometimes choosing to forgo alcohol altogether. Very often, this change in responsibility was associated with an increased involvement in religious activities, so that marriage (or a commitment to a
relationship), children, and increased involvement in the church occurred around the same time. Increased involvement in a Church was, with very few exceptions, concomitant with abstinence from drinking – particularly where one or both of the couple were frequent drinkers as *mapu*:

*Why did you stop?*

Alcohol was easy to stop, my husband, well he was my boyfriend then, he started taking me to church. He was an alcoholic too, and then he slowly stopped drinking, and I saw the change in him, like he’s ready to give up. So I looked at him and observed him – one month, two months, three months he went without it. So I thought well, if he can give up then I think this is what he wants, he actually wants a new life, so I stopped drinking (Female, 28, former drinker).

*When I got married and I got pregnant, I just stopped drinking.*

*That’s when you stopped?*

Yeah, I just stopped drinking right up until today, after I had my children, and I can’t bring myself to drink any more, it’s like, I don’t want to.

*So you don’t drink at all any more?*

No, I mean it’s like, I just feel like I’ve just grown out of it. I’ve been there, done that – I know what it’s all about you know, I don’t want to do it any more (Female, 28, former drinker).

Often, children preceded abstention from alcohol consumption, and in most cases a couple would reduce their alcohol consumption after joining, or attending more seriously, a church. Marriage did not always precede abstinence – long-term spouses with children would often get married after they had joined a church, and abstained from alcohol, because the Christian churches (or family members) encouraged these people to get married.

Children were not always sufficient reason for young Maori to change their drinking practices. As described on page 240, people who chose to continue drinking as they did before they had children would often rely on their parents or relatives to take over a large proportion of child care, and to provide them with necessities if they spent too much of their money drinking. Nevertheless, the expectation of family members and the community was that when people became caregivers, they would make sure that they provided adequately for their children – and often this meant that regular consumption of alcohol was no longer affordable. In one case, the expectation that
caring for children would lead a person reduce to their consumption of alcohol, or abstain altogether, led a family to force the adoption of a child upon a heavy drinker:

Some people, they don’t have family before, and when they have their own families, then that’s when they started changing slowly.

When they start drinking, or stop drinking?
Not stop, but actually getting out, or slowing down, stop drinking.

Do you have any idea what has changed for that person, so that by having a family they might stop drinking?
Yeah, there’s a young man, he hasn’t got any family, he hasn’t got any partner. So there’s nobody there to tell him when to stop his drinking…. And his habit of drinking gradually got him down, so what the family members did is give their children to him, and that makes him spend more time with his family than [with] the alcohol. We have seen some of these cases happening, and it’s really worth [it] you know, it’s sort of punishing, this is how this helps…. I feel strongly that some people change because they have families, and children come along, and they have responsibilities to deal with – unlike when they were single (Male, 37, drinker).

As already stated, increased involvement with one’s church could also induce people to cut down, or abstain from, the consumption of alcohol. In a few cases, people who were drinkers decided to stop after they became elders, or assumed special positions, within their church (on occasion, this would also cause them to ask other family members to stop drinking alcohol):

Have any of them [your cousins] stopped drinking and smoking?
Yes.

What are their reasons for stopping?
Two of them, they are taking on responsibility in the church. When [you are] put into a position within the church, you wouldn’t want to do things that will make elders or church pastors take away that position from you. When you are put onto a position within our church, you are well off you know – you’re perfect, you’re good – they only put perfect people to take positions within the church, to take responsibilities. They only choose people who are up to the standard of the church, and now I am happy to see my two cousins taking that responsibility.

So presumably the church hadn’t heard that they were drinking and smoking before?
No [laugh], no (Female, 21, former drinker).
Of Rarotonga’s six major churches, three encouraged their members to abstain from alcohol and tobacco consumption entirely – the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and the Apostolic Church. The Roman Catholic Church preached moderation, as did the Assembly of God Church. The Cook Islands Christian Church encouraged all of its members not to drink, although alcohol consumption was only prohibited to senior members of that church, who risked losing their privileged positions if their drinking became public knowledge.256

**Drinking by the ‘Old People’**

Most people contrasted the drinking styles of younger people with that of the ‘old people’ – that is, people in their fifties and beyond. ‘Old people’ drinking sessions were differentiated by the form of conversation that would occur in them, and by the fact that the ‘old people’ would drink only at their own homes, whereas younger people would also frequent drinking establishments. A common observation of the differences between these groups was that the ‘old people’ would ‘all talk about the same thing’ when they gathered to drink, and that young people would often talk at cross purposes, with multiple conversations on different topics occurring at the same time. Young people’s drinking was also differentiated by the presence of stereos, which would play music, often at high volume – older drinkers would not have loud music playing while they drank:

> I like sitting with the older generation as well, they’ll be about the age of my father. They’ll basically sit around drinking, usually people in their sixties, so you hear the old stories…. Their conversation is different from the ones [younger people] nowadays – nowadays it’s more like, say if you were in a group, and you guys won’t be talking about the same thing, whereas the older generation probably have one topic for the whole lot of them (Male, 24, former drinker).

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256 Religious organisations are discussed in further detail from page 302 below.
CHAPTER ELEVEN:
FOOD, ALCOHOL AND CARE

The provision of food, whether for daily consumption, special ceremonies, or as a marker of significant life-events, is important for Cook Islanders both symbolically and in practice (Crocombe in Mareatu 1983:12; Fitzgerald 1986:81). The use of food as a social signifier has been noted throughout the Pacific, particularly in Polynesian societies, where the prestation and provision of food reflects upon the influence and strength of social relationships, including kinship and descent (Goldman 1970; Fitzgerald 1986:81; Pollock 1992). Food at feasts is an important marker of the functioning of a social group, and the inability of a group to provide adequate food for guests at the celebration of life-events is regarded as a serious failure:

Food was and still is the beginning and end of everything…. [Food] has a direct relationship to the social, economic and personal mana (standing) of the individual or group instigating the occasion…. Food is… the mortar that provides the bond to establish the strength and unity of a family, a clan and a tribe. Any weaknesses in the administration of any of these shows up their [the family, clan or tribe’s] inability to meet this social and economic fundamental social requirement (Davis 1992:95-96).

Feasts in the Cook Islands complete all important events, such as funerals, investitures, weddings, birthdays, and haircuttings. For these events, the most important food is pig, which is either cooked in an umu (earth oven) or roasted on a spit (see also page 33). Some men invest considerable effort to raise sufficient pigs and other valued foods, such as taro tubers and leaves (the latter of these is cooked, most often with coconut cream, to make a dish called rukau), to sustain demand for these goods from immediate and extended family, members of one’s ngati (major or minor lineages), and one’s church groups. The ability of men to provide such foodstuffs reflects on their personal status and that of their ngati or family. Consequently, the demand for, and moral imperative of, food provision is greatest for men of higher status, particularly those men in ‘traditional’ political roles, such as rangatira, mata’iapo, and

257 Pig is not always provided at birthdays. These are not regarded as ‘traditional’ events of the same order as funerals, investitures, and haircuttings, although they are observed in the Cook Islands.
Nevertheless, all members of a social group contribute to these feasts – through labour, fishing, foods raised or grown domestically, and/or by contributing money for the purchase of food (particularly frozen chickens) from local markets or supermarkets.

Food was generally differentiated from alcohol, so that drinking would not take place while people were eating, and vice-versa. Most people described how in some situations where food and feasting played an key role – such as birthdays, weddings or haircuttings – a group of people would wait until after the feast was finished, and then move off from the main group to drink. Thus, the activity of drinking was often physically, and discursively, removed from a particular ceremony or event. Alcohol consumption in these contexts was not regarded as an unrelated activity. For most people, drinking afterwards was important, and was generally regarded as part and parcel of the event. There were exceptions to this rule, particularly where alcohol consumption was not approved by the family (if, for example, they were members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church), where the event was regarded as especially sacred (such as during title investitures), or where drinking was felt to be inappropriate due to the solemnity of the occasion (in the case of funerals).

The separation of eating and drinking was not confined to the special occasions mentioned above. In everyday, domestic contexts, eating and drinking were also separated in time and space. By way of example, one day my neighbour in Takuva’ine – Tony – telephoned me and asked me to come over for a kaikai (i.e., to eat), because they had some food left from a family gathering the night before, when his sister had returned to Rarotonga from New Zealand. When I arrived a few minutes later (I was hungry), I was ushered into the dining room, seated with brothers, sisters, nieces, aunts and uncles, and told to help myself to baked fish, taro, chicken, ‘ika mata (raw fish), potato salad and so on. I was given some orange cordial to drink. When we had eaten

258 A rangatira of Te-Au-O-Tonga told me that it was very difficult for him to balance his job and his obligations as a title holder, because he was constantly asked to provide pigs for various events in his tapere (sub-district). Tending to pigs required a lot of effort and money. His typical work day began at 8am, and ended at 3am.

259 There are indications that the exclusivity of food and alcohol are beginning to change. Very few people drank wine or beer with their meals, but many commented that Cook Islanders were beginning to drink like “Papa’a” – that is, drinking a few glasses of alcohol with their meals, and stopping after only consuming a few glasses.

260 This appears to be the case for Cook Islanders in New Zealand as well: “…at a lot of Cook Island gatherings, a lot of them expect to have alcohol. They expect it aye. You know after you’ve had the function. The main part of the meal, and you’ll find that a whole lot of them stay back just because they know there’s alcohol at that special occasion” (AACNZ 1997a:6).

261 The latter case, that of funerals, was somewhat ambiguous with regard to drinking. Most people considered drinking after a funeral as inappropriate, but drinking after funerals was a fairly regular occurrence.
(and I had assured everyone, individually, that I had eaten enough), Tony and his brothers asked if I would like to drink some beer with them. I agreed, and we all got up, walked outside, and took up chairs around a table that sat on the front porch. Cans of beer were duly distributed – and there we stayed. In another case, a friend invited me over to his place for a barbeque and drinks. I arrived late, and so he took me inside and served me a large helping of food, which I ate, with just his nephews and nieces for company. Only when I had finished did he call me outside to sit with his friends, who were drinking there. This was generally the case in circumstances where people were eating and drinking, although a few families drank wine with their meals.

It was not always the case that eating occurred before a drinking session. For many people the consumption of food occurred at completion of a drinking session, or the morning after a drinking session had occurred. Whether one ate straight after drinking or the morning afterward depended on individual preference. Some preferred to eat straight after drinking (usually, that is, on the night or morning when they stopped), because they felt hungriest then. Most of these people said that eating before going to sleep would prevent a hangover, or would moderate the effects of a hangover. Others ate the next morning, after they had slept, again justifying this behaviour by maintaining that if they ate before they went to sleep, they either would suffer a hangover or their hangover would be worse when they awoke. Although most conceded that more people ate substantial meals while they drank than was the case in the past, all stated that for Cook Islands people in general, eating and drinking did not go together:

Some people don’t like eating, well, that’s a national institution. I mean, you’ll hear Cook Islanders say again and again, “Oh, eating’s for after.” People just don’t eat while they’re drinking. It’s like, if you eat, that’s the finish of the drinking, it’s time to go to sleep now, so the pot just sits on the stove. Everyone understands that at the end of the night, after all the piss is finished, or if you’ve had enough, go and have something to eat and crash out (Male, 34, drinker).

When eating did occur, the foods were light, and comprised of imported, packaged snack foods such as potato crisps and, occasionally, locally prepared snacks such as dried fish. These foods contrasted with the fare of ordinary meals, which for the most part comprised of starchy foods (taro and boiled potato), green vegetables

These were not always concurrent events, as drinking sessions would not infrequently continue through the night and into the next day.
(cabbage and *rukau*) and meat (chicken, red meats, and canned corned beef). In most cases, when people ate after a drinking session, the meal would be comprised of these foods, which were usually left-overs from an evening meal or left-overs intended to be re-heated to eat the next day. In addition to these, some people nominated particular foods that they would eat after drinking. After people had been ‘outing’ in Avarua, many would purchase fried chicken, fried chips and/or hamburgers from a late-night takeaway that operated on the west side of the village. Typically, they would stop there to purchase some food before they drove home at the end of the night. Others claimed the best foods to combat hangovers were ‘local’ foods such as *‘ika mata* (raw fish), which could be purchased, or might be prepared by the person himself/herself. Water or coconut milk (*nu*) were considered to be the most appropriate drinks for a person who was suffering from a hangover:

*Do you do anything in particular when you have a hangover?*

Yeah, drink lots of water, more water than usual, [eat] a lot of seafood, and drink lots of fresh coconut milk.

*Do you know other people who do that?*

Um, I think it’s pretty universal. If a whole bunch of us, say a certain group, know we’re going to be hungover the next day, somebody will volunteer to catch some fish and make some raw fish, that sort of stuff, and then we pop around to so-and-so’s place, and everybody gets some raw fish. It’s all sort of organised for the hangover party [laugh] (Male, 39, drinker).

*After you’ve been out for a night, or when it’s time to stop, do you ever do anything before you go to sleep?*

Yeah, I normally have a big feed.

*You eat a lot?*

And only, when I’m over there [Avarua], I drink and when I go home, I’m on my way home, I go to the chicken place down there.

*You go to [the takeaway shop]?*

Yeah, ‘cos that’s the only place open.

*OK, so you grab some chicken on the way home?*

Yeah, buy some chicken to go back home, then I’ll be right in the morning when I wake up (Male, 21, drinker).

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Pollock (1992) notes that starchy foods and meat comprise a large part of people’s diets throughout the South Pacific. Gonelevu, Rush & Laulu (1997) also describe similar diets for Polynesian women in Auckland, New Zealand.
The convention of separating alcohol consumption from eating meant that in some cases, people who were in the habit of drinking for extended periods would not eat substantial meals during that time. If these people ate at all, it was typically haphazard and half-hearted, which was considered to be particularly unhealthy:

*In what ways has your life improved since you stopped drinking?*

Well, we have a more fresh environment at home, as in no more fumes of smoke, no more odour of alcohol, no more smell that, and you feel you can eat properly now, instead of like just eating when you’re drunk, yeah, then you’re just picking at your food (Female, 28, former drinker).

And as for my uncle, his [my father’s] older brother, he got leukaemia. He’s the type of person, I think from Thursday maybe, sometimes Wednesday, to Saturday he drinks, drinks without eating

*That whole time?*

He might have little snacks through, but a proper meal [shakes head]. And yeah, just from our, just recently, last year I think, we just found out he had leukaemia, leukaemia is cancer, eh? (Female, 25, drinker).

Food was also of considerable importance within households, with respect to the everyday provision of adequate meals to immediate and extended family. A common criticism of failure by parents and guardians who drank was that they were unable to feed their children because they had spent all their food money on alcohol.264 Conversely, some people were of the opinion that if parents’ drinking did not interfere with their ability to provide food for their children, then it was not really a serious problem. The premium placed on an individual’s willingness and ability to provide food to relatives and acquaintances meant that it was difficult for him or her to deny requests for such. Requests for alcohol and tobacco were more easily refused:

[When my cousins] don’t have any money, they just go, “Can we borrow some?” “What for, alcohol? No!” When they say alcohol – no. If they say smoke, forget it, they have none of that. I say if it’s food, yeah. So when they go drinking and then they get hungry, they go, “Can we have some money to buy food?” I say, “Where’s your money?” “Oh, we just spent it.” Hah! [I] just go and buy them food (Male, 21, non-drinker).

264 The Maori term ‘to adopt’ is ‘angai, which also means ‘to feed’. Thus, adequate care is equated with the provision of food within the family (see also Baddeley 1982).
Have you ever seen people buying alcohol before they buy food?

Oh yeah, the people, oh that’s a good example – where I live, well I’ve seen it and I don’t appreciate it – all this time the afterhours, after the nightclubs, that’s my worst time, because I don’t go out. I just stay home, and after [the nightclubs close] there’s somebody knocking on the door, disturbing your sleep – I don’t even lock the place, just drunken people.

So people come around to your place?

They [my neighbours] just come around and ask for some food, or if I do afterhour,265 or “can I have some money to buy some more beer?” [laugh]

So do you give them money?

No, ‘cos they’re not good people but before, yes I do.

You give them food or you give them money?

I go and cook their food, yeah, not money, when they come and ask – no. I try and use my money on special, not on beer, so when people come to ask for smoke and beer, no, but food is all right.

Food is OK?

Yeah, food is OK for me, I give to you, I can help (Female, 27, drinker).

In most households, cooking meals was the responsibility of women, and usually the mother or female guardian cooked meals for the family. A common cause of domestic disputes within households occurred when a husband or male spouse had been out drinking and returned home to find that there was no cooked food in the house for him to eat. An argument would then ensue between the husband and wife (or spouses):

When the husband comes home and there’s no food cooked and he’s hungry, ‘cos that’s one thing I’ve noticed, after you’ve been drinking, you get hungry, and feel like having something to eat. The guys, when they come home and the food is not cooked or there’s nothing to eat, they get mad.

So that’s another reason for people fighting [as well as jealousy]?

Yeah, just food (Female, 22, drinker).

Very often, disputes within the household were concerned with anxiety over financial matters, particularly when a husband had spent money that was allocated for household expenses on alcohol. When the consequences of these situations were

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265 That is, sell alcohol when the liquor retailers and licensed premises are all shut.
discussed, the gravity of the man’s behaviour was frequently described in terms of the effect it would have on the provision of food within the family:

[After drinking] he only had a fifty dollar note left, and she [his girlfriend] goes, “You spent a hundred and fifty dollars, are we supposed to live on fifty dollars?” And this woman had nothing for the children, they had hardly anything to eat, but he can afford to go to the bar and buy drinks. So sometimes drinking actually ruins lives for these people (Male, 24, former drinker).

Episodes such as these were considered serious because the amount of money spent on alcohol affected the families of people who drank. This tended only to be the case where the person concerned was a care-giver or guardian with dependent children. For young people, single people, and couples without children, the amount of money they spent on alcohol was considered to be their own business, even if the proportion of income they spent on alcohol was large. Young or unmarried people who drank tended to spend a large proportion of their wages on alcohol. Although in some cases their families became concerned about the amount of money they spent on liquor, and made attempts to limit their spending, in most cases there was no effective regulation of such spending by families. As a result, a number of young and unmarried people who drank periodically let bills go unpaid, and obtained kaiou (credit) from stores in order to obtain goods they needed from week to week. For those on lower incomes (in the order of NZ $200 per week\(^\text{266}\)), little money was left for buying food after the purchase of alcohol and the payment of urgent bills (such as telephone and electricity). Being unable to buy food was rarely a problem for these people, because they could always obtain enough to eat from other members of their families, particularly parents and/or guardians. Thus, the high premium placed on the provision of food to those who needed it meant that even when relatives disapproved of the amount of money spent on alcohol, they would ensure that food was provided to their children or other relatives if they needed it. Young and unmarried people tended not to contribute significant amounts of money toward the purchase of food within households, and some, when considering how to spend their money, placed food low on their list of priorities:

Actually, I don’t even think about buying food for myself during the week, because when I get my wages I don’t put anything aside food wise, because for some reason

\(^{266}\) This is an average weekly wage for many Cook Islanders.
I know I’ll get through. So I’m not really concerned about the food, which is funny ‘cos if you look at me, you’d think I would be [laugh].

**So how do you end up eating?**

I don’t know.

**It just happens?**

It just happens.

**How did you end up eating last week?**

Last week I’ve been having steak and bacon [laugh]. Actually when I think about it, I have no idea.

**Is that because pixies put food in the fridge?**

[laugh] I don’t know, I’ve been having awesome meals. It’ll be because of mum. I’m usually at her place half the time, and because we have a butcher’s shop, so mum brought a hell of a lot of meat down with her when she came here. Maybe it’s my mother’s [food], that’s what we’ve been eating. I eat really well, [but] I don’t know how [laugh] (Female, 25, drinker).

I have already noted that one of the more serious consequences of parents’ drinking, according to most Cook Islanders, is that they do not care sufficiently for their children, either when they have spent food money on alcohol, or when they are too busy drinking to care for their children. In such circumstances, other members of the family would often assume the role of caregiver for that child. However, a large number of Maori residents on Rarotonga are from other islands of the Cook group. Although many of these people come from families that are long established in Rarotonga, and own leases on houses and properties, some Outer Islanders have few family members on the island, and of these, many have no property rights. Most Outer Islanders in these circumstances live on low wages, which are stretched because they have no land for subsistence production and must live in rented accommodation. Where parents in these circumstances fail to provide their children with adequate care (and the most frequent attribution by Cook Islanders for this failure is that the parents have spent their

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267 Adequate care is often expressed in terms of providing children with enough to eat – but may also include responsibilities of keeping children, and their clothes, clean. Children should also not be left unattended for extended amounts of time.

268 Land title in the Cook Islands is inalienable, so that the only people who are able to claim ownership are those who are members of families associated with a particular land title. On Rarotonga those people are, of course, restricted to members of Rarotongan families. All other people, Cook Islanders or otherwise, must lease land, typically for a period of sixty years (and only if land is available for lease).

269 Some people could not afford to rent houses. A number of Outer Islanders lived in Takuva’ine valley, not far from where I lived, and ‘squatted’ in shacks constructed from corrugated iron. The local landowners allowed them to stay, as they recognised these people had few other accommodation options.
money on alcohol), neighbours, rather than relatives, sometimes care for their children by calling them over to eat at dinner time:

They [my neighbours] bought alcohol before they bought food and all that.

*What do people do, when the parents have spent all the money because they were out getting drunk, how do the kids get by?*

Well usually, especially my next door neighbour, where I live now, [during] weekends you hear them go out and then, late at night, you hear a little boy crying and asking for their mother, and they come next door, and then they ask where their mum is or their dad is – probably expecting me to tell them the answer. And, ‘cos they’re just little, we had just a little food from dinner that night, we give it to them just to help out. Then the next morning, they [the parents] just take to sleep and don’t even think about their kids anymore.

*So what about the kids?*

They just survive on anything, that’s what I noticed.

*Do you ever say anything to your next-door neighbours?*

Um, not really, no.

*Not really your business?*

No [laugh].

*Would that be awkward?*

[laugh] Yeah, it’s just, I don’t have the right to tell them what to do and all that, but it’s just, I feel sorry for the kids (Female, 26, non-drinker).

An estimation of what one has the right to do also enters into the practice of care toward others. In general, and as already noted on page 222, people do not regard themselves as having the right to intervene in the affairs of people to whom they are not related. This is evident in the quotation above, but is even more striking in the context of public disputes between spouses who have been drinking. Generally, the strategy of witnesses to such incidents was to ignore the situation, or avoid it. Care for others, then, did not usually extend beyond family members or close friends. Exceptions did occur, as in the case below, but here it is notable that public fights between these spouses had occurred a number of times before anyone else stepped in:

I was with my first girlfriend. She could talk with anyone but for some reason she was deathly shy of talking with me, and I used to get immensely frustrated when I couldn’t communicate with the one that I loved. And for a period of about two to three months, when we’d get drunk, we’d start fighting, and I’d start hitting her, just out of sheer frustration. It shames me to this day when I think back on it. Until
a friend of mine, we were at a party and he sort of stepped in and said, “What the fuck are you doing?” And I said, “Oh, she won’t talk with me, she da da da,” and he said, “Well I don’t give a fuck what she’s doing, but if you hit her again, I’ll deck you.” I was sort of like, “Huh? What?” And then, just sort of the fog cleared from my brain and I suddenly saw it for what it looked like to everyone else, that there’s a guy beating on his girlfriend, what an asshole, and that just blew my mind and I realised how stupid I was being.

*So other people were around as well?*

Ah, it probably happened about a dozen times.

*And was that the first time that someone else came up and said, you know, stop?*

The first time anyone did come up and say stop. That’s when it struck me, I finally became conscious about what I was doing, until then I was in a fog of frustration (Male, 35, drinker).

A few people described situations where they had intervened in violent arguments between spouses unrelated to them; but such action was described as risky, because there was a chance that the person who intervened would become the target of violence himself/herself. It was notable that all of these people were Cook Islanders who had lived in New Zealand for a number of years while they were growing up – most of these Maori also commented on how such arguments were much more common in Rarotonga than in New Zealand:270

I saw a lot of boyfriends or husbands give their girlfriends a lot of hidings, more than I saw in New Zealand.

*What would you do if you saw someone else?*

I would try to stop it, but sometimes people say no, you shouldn’t be thinking of that. Then I try to stop it, and the boyfriend ends up beating me! [laugh]. Yeah and then I found out that you don’t know who your friends are until something like that happens.

*When people won’t come and help?*

Yeah, they can see there’s a fight going, [but] they just leave it, they walk away. They turn their back and walk away. Only for me, seeing that it’s not right you know, I start going off my head, and then I just I don’t care if I get beaten. I just try to save that girl, even though she was wrong or right, he’s got no right to do that to her.

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270 Most Cook Islanders who had grown up in New Zealand did not intervene in domestic arguments, even where violence occurred.
Do most people walk away?

Yeah, a lot of people I’ve seen have been turning away. They just leave it because they go, “they’re like that when they’re drunk, they’re always like that when they’re drunk.”

And that’s what people say?

That’s what they say, but I go, “Yeah, but it’s not right, it’s not right.” They go, “But it’s none of your business, keep out of it” (Female, 25, drinker).

Although friends were generally reluctant to get involved in ‘family problems’ or problems between spouses, this did not mean that friends and peer relatives would not care for one another in other circumstances. Care was usually expressed by looking after companions who had too much to drink and for whom there was a possibility they would be injured (particularly by driving while drunk), or were in need of a place to rest. Often, people who were drunk were willing, or expected, to receive help from their companions when they were too intoxicated to look after themselves adequately. Care between drinking companions was understood as reciprocal – that is, I will look after my friend when he has had too much to drink, and in return I expect the same concern on those occasions when I become drunk. 271 Not all intoxicated persons were happy to receive the advice, or help, of their drinking companions. As discussed on page 204, people who had been drinking often became argumentative, and less likely to accept advice from others. Nevertheless, most of the time intoxicated people in these circumstances would listen to the advice of peers – subsequently, they would allow themselves to be driven home by their companion/s, or would go to sleep in that person’s home (or that of another friend or relative) rather than go home alone. Drinkers would often sleep at the house where a drinking session occurred rather than attempt to make their own way home afterward, and in my experience, there was a general expectation that whenever a person became kona, or drunk, he or she was welcome to stay where they were and sleep it off. 272 Drinking at bars and nightclubs complicated this situation, because patrons who became inebriated were not free to sleep on the premises. Although it did not occur frequently when friends drank together, sometimes a group of drinkers would ask a relative who was not a heavy drinker (or did not drink

271 Reciprocity is also a feature of ‘shouts’, discussed in following paragraphs.

272 According to one informant, the Island Council of Ma’uke passed a law that compelled people who became drunk at another person’s house to stay there and sleep. When this occurred, the owners of the house were considered to be responsible for that person.
at all) to accompany them if they were drinking away from home, and that person would drive them home when the night was over:

I don’t drink, so I try and drive, I do that too for my uncle.

Does your uncle live here?

Yeah, yeah, he’s here, and I’ll take him out. I’ll wait in the car for him to finish his, his nightlife, come back to the car and I drove him home, sometimes I go for a drive and all that [When the] night is finished I come back and pick him up (Male, 22, non-drinker).

How about your friends, when you go out with them, do they drink?

Yeah, both of them, when they drink, they really drink bad.

Is that right?

They get really drunk, and then I have to drive them home. Sometimes that’s why they take me – even my cousins – if they know they’re gonna go really hard out that night, they ask me if I can go. But on Friday night they ask me, I just say no, Church. But on Saturday night, when they go drinking hard out, they always ask me to go with them all the time, [I] drive them back (Male, 21, non-drinker).273

Friends and relatives only intervened when a person was kona (drunk), and when that person displayed some of the characteristic behaviours or signs associated with being drunk – such as when a person began staggering, had red or blurry eyes, slurred speech, and so on. Drinkers who did not exhibit these signs of intoxication did not warrant intervention by companions. In most cases, people who had been identified as intoxicated, and who had been advised to take certain actions (such as going to sleep, or allowing themselves to be driven home) were willing to comply with the wishes of their companions. Ultimately, the decision rested with the drinker, so if verbal persuasion failed to convince him to go to sleep, for example, other forms of compulsion (such as restraining him, or confiscating keys to his vehicle) were not employed.

It was not always the case that people who were kona would be cared for by their friends or relatives. Obviously, this would be the case where a person who was intoxicated was not drinking with friends or relatives – however, as I have already noted, on the vast majority of occasions when people drank in Rarotonga, they did so in

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273 A Seventh Day Adventist Church member.
the company of friends and/or relatives. Some people did indicate that there were occasions when they did not help others who were intoxicated:

When we come out of the nightclub, we see boys lying around, you know, drunk, sleeping. [We] just stare at them and walk away, they wanted to end up in that way, so let them go through it [laugh].

*How about your cousins, do they ever end up like that or?*

Yeah, they do the same thing too. They drink and do that, so the next day you see them coming home, [and they say] “Hey, did you see me, so and so?” “Yeah.” “Why didn’t you wake me up and take me home?” “No, just leave you there, next time don’t do it.” (Female, 21, former drinker).

Others also complained that help from friends was not forthcoming when they needed it:

I think it [drinking] is a problem for me, only because I can’t really control the alcohol I drink. So, when I do, I just go crazy, and yeah, the fact that I can’t control it, it’s like, it’s got control of me, just the opposite.

*How do you feel about that when it happens?*

I just feel really down and angry. I sometimes blame it on my friends for not telling me, stopping me and that, which is not right because it’s my fault that I got drunk, and because I won’t listen to them.

*So sometimes when you’re out, they’ll tell you not to do something and you won’t listen to them?*

Yeah, yep, that happens all the time (Female, 19, drinker).

In these examples, discourses emerge about responsibility for one’s self during drinking. These consider issues of agency in the behaviour of drinkers which while ambiguous, regard the behaviour of a person while intoxicated as a consequence of their decision, while sober, to get drunk. Although these people were not, strictly speaking, held accountable for their actions while drunk, they were held responsible for deciding to drink in the first place – so that in a round-about way, they were responsible for their behaviour while intoxicated. Due to this general understanding of drunken behaviour and drunken responsibility, the ultimate responsibility for any repercussions of drinking did not lie with the people who could, or should, have offered advice or aid to the

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274 Unless people drank alone, which was also rare, the place they would be most likely to drink with no friends or relatives for company was in public drinking establishments. However, as I soon found after a short time in Rarotonga, one is very likely to encounter these people, coincidentally, at these venues too.
intoxicated person, but with the intoxicated person alone. In the final analysis, the autonomy of an individual, whether sober or drunk, was paramount. Companions had a responsibility to influence or aid an intoxicated person, but if that aid was not accepted, the consequences of any drunken actions rested with the person who allowed himself to get drunk in the first place.

Care between relatives also involved protecting one another from potential conflict or (in the case of female relatives) the unwanted advances of drunk men. Most often, the relatives with whom Maori drank were ‘cousins’, or on occasion, ‘uncles’ and ‘aunties’ who were of similar age to their nephews and nieces. Relatives were preferred in this regard because they would not allow their female relations to be ‘tempted’ by other men.\textsuperscript{275} Generally, brothers and male cousins were expected to ‘protect’ their female relatives from the advances of other men – ideally, young women were “virginal”, “ngakau au (peaceful hearted) and tu maru (possessing gentleness)” (Alexeyeff 2000:303,304). As alcohol could facilitate both men and women to act upon their desires (page 200), the support of male relatives to prevent other men from seducing these women was an important consideration:

They [men] keep coming and saying nice things to you, and yet when they are not drunk, they won’t even come up to you and say nice things to you, all they do is just sit around stare at you. But when they’re drunk they come, coming to you, asking you, “Would you like to do this?” “Do you want to experience this?” But I was lucky, I was with my cousins, boy cousins, so they were protecting me [laugh].

\textit{Oh, you might have needed protecting?}
Yeah [laugh].

\textit{Who were your cousins protecting you from?}
From boys, you know, guys who get drunk. You know, when I went outing last year, I found out with my own two eyes. Boys who doesn’t know you, who were acting stupid, doing stupid things to other people, other girls.

\textit{Stupid things, like what?}
Talking and, you know [laugh], that’s not nice, swearing at other people.

\textit{Your cousins weren’t like that?}

\textsuperscript{275} In Maori, kinship terms for brother and sister are applied to cousins as well, who are primarily differentiated with regard to whether the person spoken to is senior (\textit{tuakana}) or junior (\textit{teina}) to the speaker (Gilson 1980:8). When speaking English, people usually referred to their parent’s sibling’s children as “cousins”, although on occasion these people were referred to, in English, as brothers and sisters. In any case, these people were not considered as potential sexual partners, or as ‘threatening’ in this regard, whereas non-relatives were.
No, no. They hate people doing those kind of things to other good people. They’re just sitting around, doing the normal thing. Like, you know, just drink and talking to their friends. Unlike others they, you know, they annoy people by doing stupid things, acting like idiots (Female, 21, drinker).

Care between friends and relatives was also expressed in providing or ‘shouting’ alcoholic beverages to one another, particularly when one person was short of money and unable to afford to drink. Reciprocity was the guiding principle behind the practice of ‘shouting’ drinks – the general expectation was that people whom one ‘shouted’ drinks would either return the favour later on that evening, or at some later drinking occasion. ‘Shouts’ were articulated in terms of relationships between individuals, which is the form I follow here; but in practice ‘shouting’ was often a group activity. Ideally, each person in a drinking group would, in turn, purchase alcohol for everyone else.\(^{276}\) Reciprocity was not restricted to the provision of alcohol, and might be secured by providing food, labour, or the use of property at a later date:

Basically, if someone shouts you a drink then you’re obligated to shout them a drink, so your conscience is clear if you know that person bought you two, and you bought them two back. But you do get the situation where someone doesn’t get paid in a particular week, so you pay for the drink, and the next week they make up so there’s a reciprocal sort of arrangement and um, that’s pretty much how it works... last Saturday, that’s why my driver was there, so it was like a pay off. Basically I said, “If you can drop me back into town, then you can drink some of my beer,” so that was my taxi fare, so there’s also payment in kind, and if you shout somebody a carton, they might pay you back in seafood or something like that.

So it doesn’t necessarily have to come back as beer for beer?

No, but they know that and they bear that in mind, so it’s a conscience thing (Male, 39, drinker).

In this example, reciprocity was explicitly articulated as the foundation of the practice of ‘shouting’. ‘Shouting’ a person some drinks created an obligation for that person to repay the favour at some point in the future. This was a weak obligation, however, for on occasion people could, and did, choose not to return these favours. The

\(^{276}\) In practice, shouts that took place in such groups were not so perfectly organised. The person who bought the next ‘round’ was usually the person that went to the bar first – people did not, for example, tell others that it was their ‘turn’ to shout.
consequence of failing to reciprocate was that, over time, a person would no longer find himself or herself welcome to join in with other drinkers, and would have to find another group of people to drink with. In one case, I had been invited to a birthday party, and told to invite anyone else that I would like to come along. I asked a friend I had made during some volunteer work, and he (Pita) agreed to come along. On the night of the party, though, he did not turn up. When I mentioned to my host, Tama, that my guest had not appeared, Tama said that my guest was probably too shy to come along. A few weeks ago (and unbeknown to me), Pita had arrived at a party that was organised by Tama and his friends. Pita was a performing artist, and Tama and his friends had teased him mercilessly about his quality as a performer, so that he became very embarrassed and left. The reason they did this, Tama said, was that Pita always turned up to parties with no alcohol, yet freely drank everybody else’s, and had been doing so for a long time. Although it had taken a while, they had decided that Pita was no longer welcome to drink with them. In this case, teasing was a means by which to make this known to him – although I was not able to establish whether Pita understood this to be the reason why he was teased, as he was reluctant to talk to me about the episode. Suffice to say, during the nine months I remained on the island, I did not see Pita at any party where Tama or his friends drank together.

In practice, individual monitoring of the extent to which drinking favours were repaid was informal and casual. Favours of any kind between friends and relatives could be, and usually were, construed as reciprocity for past ‘shouts’. When people estimated reciprocity, they always contextualised it regarding their understanding of the personal, and economic, situation of the particular person (or people). If, for example, you knew that a person was broke, or was on low wages and had little money to spare, you would not expect to receive as much in return as you had provided. By contrast, people who were wealthy (or perceived to be wealthy) were expected to provide more ‘shouts’.

Obligations to reciprocate were not generated solely by alcohol – pressure to provide a ‘shout’ could also be incurred if a person (or group of people) had performed the first favour or service, and ‘demanded’ alcohol in return. This was particularly evident in the practice of providing alcohol to workers, and to members of sports teams. In addition, there was an expectation that people who had come into good fortune would distribute that, in part, by ‘shouting’ drinks for friends and relatives:
I used to play for Takuva’ine for rugby, so after every game – drink. After the game all the players get around [to drink]. They do this just to get the players to go training.

*To bring everyone in, to give them some incentive?*

So that is, so it’s good.

*So who would pay for that [alcohol], would all the players put [money] in for that?*

Sometimes, but when I was at the Takuva’ine field, they used to shout me, because they were the sponsors.

*The sponsors would shout?*

Shout over the coach or team manager, ‘cos he had to, otherwise everyone just go and leave that club (Male, 22, drinker).

The majority of the time the reason they have drinking [after funerals] is a thank you to the boys that do the graves, they do the grave.

*OK, so it’s...*

Yeah, a thank you, but also, I think they incorporate it into their own little party (Female, 25, drinker).

I meet Cook Islanders in New Zealand and Australia all the time when I’m over there, and I say to them, “When are you gonna visit, have a holiday or something?” and they say, “Oh, I don’t want to go back with nothing, and everyone will be expecting me to shout and be Mr Moneybags,” or otherwise they’ll say, “Oh, so what did you go overseas for, waste of bloody time, you’ve got no money!” That’s the expectation – you come back from New Zealand, you had better be loaded, ‘cos you’re gonna shout all the brothers and sisters back here who have been doing the hard work while you’ve been living high on the hog overseas (Male, 35, drinker).

‘Shouts’ and drinking between friends and relatives created mutual ties and obligations that were salient not only during those times when people drank, but also when people were not drinking. The obligation to ‘shout’ could be incurred prior to a drinking session, and conversely, ‘shouting’ could create obligations for favours or services that could be called upon after drinking sessions. Generally, reciprocity of this nature, between people who drank together regularly, contained a temporal component – although ‘shouts’ were often reciprocated during the course of one drinking session, they could easily be postponed until later – so long as one’s drinking companions remained confident that the intention to reciprocate remained.
‘Shouts’ also occurred in cases where the people whom one ‘shouted’ were not friends or relatives. When this occurred, the people who ‘shouted’ were principally men, and did so in order to make a good impression on ‘strangers’ who were drinking around them, for whom they bought drinks. These ‘shouts’ also tended to occur in bars or other licensed premises – because in other drinking contexts, one’s drinking companions were, by and large, friends and/or relatives, and so were not ‘strangers’.277 ‘Shouting’ in order to improve one’s status in the eyes of others was more effective than picking arguments or fights (as discussed on page 208), because a person could pick too many fights with other people, but he could never buy them too many drinks.278 This kind of behaviour was likely to form friendships between people, as the recipients of a stranger’s ‘shout’ would reciprocate, and thus a relationship would be formed:

I know a friend of mine… and um, he’s there [at the bar] buying drinks for these big guys this week, and the following week you’ll never see him in the bar [i.e. buying drinks] – these big boys are buying him drinks. So you get a couple of these guys that actually, you know, you buy me a drink and I’ll buy you a drink. I mean it’s amazing how this guy, he even made friends with me, just like that [laugh]. So, we got a pretty good relationship, and we buy each other drinks and that (Male, 24, former drinker).

‘Shouting’ was widely practiced in Rarotonga, so that often a large proportion of the money many people spent on alcohol, particularly at bars and nightclubs, was spent buying alcohol for their companions. Generally, people liked to ‘shout’ drinks for their friends and relatives, although on sober reflection many would regret how much money they had spent. The reason they liked to ‘shout’ was that providing alcohol to others made everyone happy (see page 190). The ‘happiness’ induced by ‘shouting’ was somewhat ambiguous, however, because when people accepted drinks from others, they were aware they were also accepting an obligation to reciprocate at some point in the future. On the other hand, the ‘shouter’ had no such reservations:

I like to shout because I like to see people happy, you know, I like to watch happy expressions. But I like it when they shout you too, especially if I’m a bit broke, it’s like, “Oh thanks, oh choice.” But there’s only so much I like to get shouted, and anything over a certain limit – but I can’t tell you how much that is, because I

277 ‘Shouting’ did not only mean buying alcohol in a bar or licensed premise, but also providing alcohol to others in other settings.
278 Of course, if a man’s family relied on the money he spent ‘shouting’ other people, his family would certainly feel that there was a point at which he could buy too many drinks.
honestly don’t know – I feel a bit stink. Like with our group, we all like to shout each other, and a lot of us get quite seedy with each other when the other one is shouting [laugh]. You know it’s pretty complex, it’s like a complex dance of some sort. That’s something I’m just comparing it to – a complex dance with so many steps to get it right…. I think in percentage wise, seventy – thirty I would shout, and especially when I’m with friends, “Hey man, shout a couple,” you know. Or if someone needed cheering up, you may as well say, “Come on, you look as though you could use a drink.” Yeah, I’d say seventy – thirty I would shout, ‘cos that’s my preference (Female, 25, drinker)

Another aspect of this reciprocal function of ‘shouting’ was its use to attract potential sexual partners. Of all the relationships created by ‘shouting’, this was probably the most tenuous, and the least effective. In bars and nightclubs, men would often buy drinks for women they were interested in. In discussing heterosexual relationships initiated while drinking with my informants, however, neither men nor women discussed ‘shouting’ as a practice that created an obligation or debt between potential partners. Nevertheless, in one case a man did discuss ‘shouting’ as a means of approaching (or securing) sexual partners:

I think I’m not going out there [to a bar] really to drink, but just to meet people. And when I do and they’re there, I just shouted them and let them drink with me and, it’s like there’s a hidden motive you know, sometimes scary, but when I do find them out I’ll let you know [laugh].

You’re not sure what the motive is at the moment?
I do [laugh].

What is the motive?
I am sure of it, but, oh I really don’t know. Like when I go out, I want to have, I want to be with people and with someone in particular, particularly and just to actually enjoy myself with them. And this is my sexual preference this is the guy, and so I just go out and enjoy, and let draw this person to me, and make them relax with me and enjoy my company. That's why I’m, I am out there I think (Male, 33, drinker).

Finally, there was one more kind of shout that was described by most people as distinctive of the Cook Islands – the practice of ‘barmanning’:

Are there any things that people do when they’re drinking that you only see when you’re in Rarotonga?
Yeah, they’re called the barmanning sessions, where one person controls the source of alcohol as one glass makes the rounds – that is a very Cook Islands thing.  

Where would that happen, in what situations?  
Well, in places where people aren’t so ah, fussy about hygiene [laugh].  
Where they’re not so concerned about sharing the glass?  
Well, basically the people we drink with, we prefer drinking out of our own glass, we don’t want somebody else’s spit in our glass and all that. Then there is the occasional sort of lapse where we get somebody going, “right, barman,” and they sort of control the beer – oh, it’s usually beer [that we drink]. You get a lot in shout situations, where it’s a bit like, shout a carton of beer and because it’s their carton of beer, they want to be the bar person. So they handle the bar and sort of dish out the alcohol, so everyone participates (Male, 39, drinker).

During barmanning sessions, beer was distributed among a circle of drinkers by a ‘barman’ who poured the alcohol, and passed it to each person in the circle. Drinkers were usually expected to consume the contents of their glass in a single draught, although not everyone abided by this ‘rule’. Barmanning was clearly a continuation of the pange kava practiced in prior decades on Rarotonga (see page 109), albeit with considerably less ritualistic elaboration – prayers did not usually accompany such sessions, the drinking receptacle was a glass rather than a half coconut shell, and the beverage was not bush beer, but purchased commercially. Moreover, the ‘rules’ of the barmanning session could be broken, without causing undue disruption:

Quite often people will do what they call the barman thing – but I like to drink at my own pace, not at someone else’s, you know. If I become part of the barman circle, I’ll have my own glass, and when my cup comes around I’ll just pour it into my glass and hand it back – because I like to smoke a cigarette when I drink, it’s the only time I smoke cigarettes, so if I don’t have a drink in my hand I can’t have a cigarette [laugh]. So I always have a drink in my hand, so when I want a cigarette, I can.  
So you’ve got to have your drink?  
Oh yeah, I won’t touch a cigarette otherwise – and if I happen to have a cigarette, and I run out of drink, I’ll put the cigarette out.

So when you have been in a barman circle, has that ever been a problem, that you might not drink it as soon as you get it?  
No. They just have to accept it – I mean, if they don’t like it, then too bad (Male, 38, drinker).
In these drinking sessions, reciprocity for the ‘shout’ of the barman was rendered by participating in a form of drinking which, generally, people found slightly distasteful, as many did not like sharing other people’s glasses, and because participants in barmanning sessions were not easily able to control the pace of their drinking.

**Rights and Obligations**

The practice of ‘shouting’ alcoholic drinks created an obligation on the part of those who received, and consequently, rights on behalf of those who gave, to expect some form of reciprocal exchange from those people (see also page 326). The relationship between a person’s right and another person’s obligation was not an equal one, because the onus for reciprocity lay with the person who was ‘shouted’ – the ‘shouters’ capacity to demand recompense was limited. A key virtue of ‘shouting’, and drinking in general, was that a person should be generous to others, ‘each according to his means’. Thus, drinking encompassed a strong ethic of egalitarianism, where the social and economic status of one’s drinking companions should be considered when estimating whether reciprocity had occurred. A consequence of this was that among drinking companions, those with comparatively greater (fiscal) resources would consistently provide more alcohol to the group than those with less disposable resources. This egalitarian, distributive mode was evident, for example, in the expectation that relatives and friends returning from paid employment in New Zealand or Australia should ‘shout’ upon their return. This egalitarian notion of reciprocity was based on people’s *estimation* of the resources available to particular people – although Cook Islanders living overseas often earn more than their counterparts in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands, their expenses are often much higher, and their disposable income limited. The difference between people’s estimation of their wealth ‘back home’ and their actual wealth means that many do not return *unless* they have money to spare for ‘shouts’ (and other gift exchanges) – thus, there is an element of self-fulfilment in this regard.

Although an egalitarian ethic was apparent in the practice of ‘shouting’, this did not mean that drinking groups were regularly comprised of people with diverse economic resources. In practice, Cook Islanders tended to drink with people of similar socio-economic status, because in these groups they were better able to sustain reciprocal exchanges of alcohol with their companions. People of higher socio-
economic status were more mobile in terms of who they could drink with, simply because they were able to ‘shout’ and be ‘shouted’ by a greater range of people. Where people of diverse means did drink together, I was told by those of (comparatively) lesser means that they would sometimes avoid drinking with that group because they did not have enough money to spend on alcohol for themselves or their companions.

These economic constraints on participation in drinking groups did not apply as strongly when one’s drinking companions were also one’s relatives. In these circumstances, cousins, brothers, and sisters would regularly ‘shout’ drinks for their relatives – particularly younger relatives – without the emphasis on reciprocity in kind evident between friends and acquaintances. Generosity within the family did not create obligations between people in the same manner as generosity between non-relatives, because within the family the provision of alcohol (depending on the view of various members of the family toward alcohol) and especially food, were particularly demonstrative of aro’a. Aro’a (and its cognates throughout the Pacific)\(^{279}\) is frequently translated into English as ‘love’. A number of commentators have qualified the use of this term in translation, as aro’a does not encompass, for example, the connotations of sexual love implicit in the English word love (Levy 1973; Shore 1981; Gerber 1985). In Cook Islands Maori, aro’a is translated variously as kindness, sympathy, pity, divine love, and loving kindness. It also means to present somebody with a gift (Buse and Taringa 1995:76-77). Within families, this latter quality is an important aspect of aro’a:

> The connection with giving and helping... appears to be universal in all descriptions of alofa. This is true in intimate relationships as well as more casual ones. The alofa between parents and children, between siblings, and even husbands and wives, is described in terms of giving and helping (Gerber 1985:145).

The provision of food in this context is important as a demonstration of aro’a between family members. To deny food to another member of one’s family was also to withhold aro’a from them.\(^{280}\) The following except from one of the interviews was, I think, particularly demonstrative of the importance of food to aro’a within families:

> I can tell you honestly, I really am not the nice son. My dad passed away just recently, and I really miss my dad. I wish I hadn’t have actually slapped him. I know what’s done is done, and now he’s gone and now I’m saying sorry to him, I did say sorry to him when he was in the hospital, but he wasn’t aware of anything

\(^{279}\) *Aroha* (New Zealand Maori), *Alofa* (Samoan), *Aloha* (Hawaiian), among others.

\(^{280}\) Obviously, in the sense of aro’a as ‘gift’, but in its other senses as well.
because he was sick. One time he was eating, I made meal for him, he was eating away and I was watching Shortland Street, and he was drunk. He was talking about the dog and then [he said], “ah bullshit, fuckin’ shit” [laugh]. And I said, “hey, shut up, keep quiet, I’m watching TV,” and when I started prompting he made it more louder and, and then he turned, looked at me and said something – and he was saying he was going to shoot something, but I thought he was going to shoot me, so I just went and pulled him off the table and grabbed his plate of food and threw it away. But you know dad’s been drunk, and I shouldn’t have reacted (Male, 33, drinker).

As he told me of this episode, this man’s eyes welled with tears, and during the interview he referred to this episode a number of times – which I interpreted as indicative of the significance this event held for him and his relationship to his father.

Within families, less emphasis was placed on the extent to which gifts of alcohol, for example, were reciprocated in equal or proportionate measure, than was the case between non-relatives. The difference, I propose, is that within families a person’s relationship to others is relatively fixed, whereas relationships with non-relatives are subject to negotiation, and require a greater degree of active maintenance. Alexeyeff, in discussing sexuality, gender, and dance in the Cook Islands, describes this difference in terms of ‘modes of being’:

What I am suggesting is that there are two modes of being in the Cook Islands world. The first mode of being is performative. Personhood is what one does; the performance of actions, gestures and practices. Cook Islanders understand these acts are context-dependent and situational and personhood is defined as the relationship between personal and social contexts. The second mode concerns the experience of fixity of relationships. This form of personhood is expressed through ideas of belonging to kin, village and nation, which are seen to be categorical. Before a man is a laelae, he is an uncle, a brother, a son. Before a woman is a potera (slut) she is a sister, a daughter, a cousin. The ties of relatedness, though they are often stretched and realigned (therefore performative), are also perceived as inescapable and concrete. In other words, although deviations from sexual norms are commented on and do affect social standing, they are not always central to a person’s self-definition or others’ definition of the self (2000:304).

281 “…a category of feminised masculinity that is common throughout the Pacific. In many ways the category of laelae is fundamentally different to categories such as homosexual or transvestite” (Alexeyeff 2000:303).
The same distinction is usefully applied to an understanding of the difference between the exchange of alcohol, and behaviours associated with alcohol use, within families, and between friends and acquaintances. The relative fixity of kinship relationships offered Maori more leeway in the degree to which they would enter into reciprocal relationships with other kin – their relationship would not be jeopardised to the same extent as with friends and acquaintances, should they fail to reciprocate in proportion. The numerous examples of (particularly) husbands who spent money required by their families on ‘shouting’ drinking companions were evidence of this. On the other hand, indeed, in most cases, the relative fixity of kinship meant that obligations within the family would be prioritised over obligations to friends and acquaintances. A person could, if she so chose, avoid drinking with friends and acquaintances if there was not enough surplus money to do so, but could not so easily avoid obligations within her family:

I’ve been hounded this week because there’s a [friend’s son’s] haircutting this week. I’ve been hounded, I’ve been run off the side of the road, rung up and stalked, you know, [I’ve] been told about this [laugh]. It was like, “Oh yeah, OK”. And then I’ve got to juggle things around a bit – my sister’s leaving tonight so I’ve got to get her something, so there’s a few things going on. So I really need to look at those things first, and also I’ve got a beer tab which I’ve got to pay off (Female, 25, drinker).

Later, when I talked to this woman, she told me that she hadn’t gone to the haircutting, nor paid her debts at the bar, and instead had bought her sister a present, and gone out drinking with her before she left.

The distinction of these ‘two modes of being’ also offers some insight into a number of issues that have been addressed in this thesis. The reluctance of friends to become involved in ‘family’ matters, for example, reflects the contingent status of relationships with people whom they are not related to – the interference of non-kin in such matters may jeopardise their relationship with the persons involved, whereas the interference of kin cannot be easily disregarded or ignored. Moreover, the centrality of kinship relations meant that in these situations, a person risked the displeasure not only of the people involved, but of their family as well (see also page 222):
I’ve always been taught that you don’t want to get involved in other people’s things, if you see any trouble, you turn around and walk away. The only time I actually get involved is my family.

So, when you’ve got a personal...?

Yeah, it’s my cousin or brother, it’s usually if it’s my brother, if anyone decides they will touch my brother he’s gonna touch me, and I’ve got into numerous fights because of him [laugh] (Male, 24, former drinker).

**Food and Alcohol**

The provision and exchange of food is a core component of the expression of *aro’a*. This is why it is central not only to relations between close kin, but also in events and ceremonies where wider kinship relations, regarding *ngati*, village, and vaka, are cemented, expressed, and reaffirmed. As I have indicated in the preceding discussion, many of the qualities associated with food and *aro’a* are also extended to situations where alcohol is consumed. Reciprocal exchanges of alcohol between friends (and relatives) mirrors the ‘function’ of food between kin. A key difference (at least for people who drink) is that food, or food and alcohol, cement and strengthen relationships between kin, but in relationships between friends and acquaintances, alcohol predominantly fulfils this function. Where alcohol is consumed, people tend to drink without eating. Even where food consumption is associated with drinking sessions, it is typically done after the event is ‘over’ – either at home, on the journey home, or as individuals eating separately after they have decided to stop drinking.

Food encompasses a greater range of meaning than does alcohol. This is particularly evident in the case of funerals. Here, in addition to its other qualities, *aro’a* becomes significant in its qualities of pity, sympathy, and sorrow. These qualities are not commensurate with those primarily associated with alcohol – that is, as a substance that, when consumed, causes people to be happy and to have fun (page 190). Nevertheless, alcohol is increasingly offered at funerals, after the main ceremonies are completed. All of my informants had seen alcohol consumed after funerals, and all but one considered alcohol consumption in this context to be inappropriate, with most regarding it as disrespectful of the deceased person and his/her family. The provision of alcohol at funerals was interpreted by most people as an expression of ‘thanks’ to those who had worked on behalf of the bereaved family, to prepare the grave, and so on. In

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282 I do not mean to imply that alcohol is the only way these relationships are formed.
this regard, the provision of alcohol was a form of *aro’a* – but in the context of the increased meanings of *aro’a* pertinent to these events, the presence of alcohol caused some tension in the way that its consumption should be interpreted.

The presence of alcohol as an adjunct to most important events and celebrations may also be understood in terms of the qualities that it adds to these proceedings. As described above, alcohol transforms drinkers, so that they become happy, and perhaps more importantly, so that they are able to interact with one another in an informal and intimate manner,\(^{283}\) which is not usually the case when people meet in ‘sober’ circumstances. Alcohol transforms people so that they are able to communicate their feelings to both strangers and kin, in ways that they would not normally be able. These understandings construct drinking as an activity that may potentially enhance the reaffirmation of group membership, and to strengthen the bonds between kin, in circumstances where one’s kin relations are formally reunited as a group. Often, such events constitute the only occasions when kin, who are increasingly separated in space (as many live in different islands, or different countries), and socio-economic status, gather together. In this sense, the presence of alcohol at these events dismantles the barriers between kin whose life experiences are increasingly diverse, and increases their experience of significance of the event.

The use of alcohol at these events was by no means unproblematic. Along with increased communication, and the partial disregard of people’s estimation of what they had the ‘right’ to do or say, came the increased possibility that arguments would occur, and people would raise grievances they ordinarily kept to themselves:

> [While drinking with cousins after her grandmother’s funeral] anyway, one guy was moaning about my grandmother, saying she was a bitch and everything, and I said, “Hey, you don’t talk about my grandmother like that.” And then my cousin, he ends up giving him a hiding (Female, 27, drinker).

These ambiguous properties of alcohol consumption have already been noted. In all cases, the dominant discourse about the properties of alcohol (at least among drinkers) stresses its qualities as a ‘good social influence’, and it is in accordance with this discourse that the value of drinking is measured when Maori talk about, and practice, alcohol consumption. Arguments and fights are regarded as digressions from

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\(^{283}\) Though not, in this instance, sexually intimate.
the ‘ordinary’ comportment of people when they drink, and it is this complexity of understandings that informs the way Cook Islanders perceive the use of alcohol.
CHAPTER TWELVE:
WHERE ALCOHOL AND ECONOMY COLLIDE

Most of the alcohol consumed in Rarotonga is manufactured overseas, imported to the island, and distributed through various retail outlets. As such, the consumption of alcohol connects the social relations between people to systems of local and global exchange. Expenditure on alcohol by many individuals and families, particularly young, unmarried Maori (mapu), accounted for a large proportion of their total income – between one third and one half for most active drinkers with low incomes, and in some cases, for unmarried drinkers with moderately high incomes as well. A consequence of this expenditure was that often, regular drinkers and their families would find themselves even more entangled in economic relations, as they obtained kaiou from local stores (and thus, accrued debt), or prevailed on relatives to provide them with money for bills, food and/or housing.

The use of alcohol was supported, and contested, by a number of organisations and institutions in the Cook Islands. Not only did alcohol account for a large proportion of personal expenditure for people who drank; it was also the source of significant revenue to the public, through media advertising, state taxes, and sponsorship of sports organisations. As most of the alcohol consumed in Rarotonga was imported from overseas, it also accounted for a large proportion of revenue that left the country, to be appropriated by foreign companies. The role of alcohol in injury (through domestic assault, motor vehicle accidents, and accidental injuries) also contributed to state expenditure on health services. The state did not bear the full burden of the cost of alcohol-related morbidity, as the most severe cases were also ‘exported’; that is, seriously injured or ill patients were flown to New Zealand (usually Greenlane Hospital in Auckland), so that the remaining cost of medical treatment was borne by the New Zealand government. The Cook Islands government was not required to contribute to the cost of medical treatment provided once the patient arrived in New Zealand.284

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of alcohol in Cook Islands organisations and institutions. For the sake of clarity, I will consider the media, health provision, legal

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284 As Cook Islanders are also New Zealand citizens, they are entitled to free medical treatment in that country. The bureaucratic complexities of differentiating Cook Islands-resident patients from those that reside in New Zealand would be insurmountable, and such measures have never been attempted.
institutions, and political dimensions of alcohol provision and consumption as separate categories.

Media and Drinking

One issue of particular interest in Rarotonga during 1999-2000 was the prevalence of advertising for alcohol and tobacco in the media. In 1997 a Parliamentary Select Committee had considered the role of alcohol and tobacco advertising, and had recommended that advertising be restricted. Little was done in response to this report, until a Special Select Committee reconsidered it in July 2000. The Special Select Committee recommended that a “total ban on alcohol and tobacco advertising be imposed initially on television, radio and newspapers [and that] a grace period of no more than six months be given to those persons or organisations currently relying on revenue from sponsorship or advertising of alcohol and tobacco” (Cook Islands News 24/07/2000:3). Media representatives, particularly George Pitt of Cook Islands Television, agreed in principal with the recommendations of the Select Committee, but argued that alcohol and tobacco advertising constituted a large proportion of total revenue for Cook Islands media, and that its loss would mean that media would be unable to provide adequate coverage of important events (such as New Zealand and Australian Rugby Union and Rugby League). An amendment to the Constitution was required for the proposed changes to take effect, and, as far as I can ascertain, this never occurred. Toward the end of my fieldwork, alcohol and tobacco advertising was still prominent in all of the major Cook Islands media: Cook Islands Television; Cook Islands News; Cook Islands Herald; and Radio Cook Islands FM and AM stations.\textsuperscript{285} The frequency and quantity of advertising for both products continued undiminished through the remainder of my fieldwork on Rarotonga. At the time I had failed to appreciate changes to alcohol and tobacco advertising had not been legislated – but I was not alone in this. Among politicians and staff at the Department of Public Health, there was some confusion as to when the probationary period for liquor and tobacco advertising would end. Even the Prime Minister, Dr Terepa’i Maoate, was unsure when the period expired, although the Minister of Health was kind enough to point out my misapprehension.

\textsuperscript{285} The Cook Islands Star was also sold on Rarotonga. This was a monthly publication published in New Zealand. Advertising and articles generally concerned issues of relevance to Cook Islanders in New Zealand and Australia, and most ‘Cook Islands’ news was republished from Rarotongan newspapers. One Rarotonga-based reporter did make occasional, original contributions to the paper.
All these media organisations were located in Rarotonga, and the vast majority of media coverage concerned issues and events pertinent to that island. Full-time reporters for all media were based in Rarotonga, and in most cases coverage of issues and events in the Outer Islands was restricted to reports received either by telephone, from people resident in the Outer Islands who were visiting Rarotonga, or (occasionally) when Rarotongan-resident reporters visited one of the Outer Islands. Thus, news of the Cook Islands was predominantly news of Rarotonga, as constraints induced by lack of proximity to news providers (where potential informants did not live in Rarotonga), and the high cost of telecommunications hindered in-depth reporting from islands other than Rarotonga. These problems were not restricted to media coverage; a persistent complaint, now and throughout the period the Cook Islands have been grouped together as a political entity, has been the disproportionate focus on Rarotonga to the exclusion of other islands. The distribution of employment and wealth throughout the Cook Group, historically and contemporarily, also falls markedly in favour of Rarotonga – with the recent exception of Manihiki, where the black pearl industry has made large sums of money available to pearl farmers.\(^{286}\)

Diverse accounts concerning alcohol were relatively frequent in all of the island’s major media sources. Alcohol appeared in five aspects of media coverage: Commercial Advertising; Health Messages; Crime, Legal and Accident reports; Entertainment articles; and in Feature Articles. Within each form of media, quite contrary perspectives on the value and quality of alcohol were presented within each of these categories. Commercial Advertising aside (which was present in every media on most days/issues), Health Messages received the most coverage.

**Commercial Advertising**

Most advertising was by Rarotonga’s major commercial importers of alcohol and foodstuffs. The Bond and CITC Liquor were most prominent in this regard, although two of Rarotonga’s supermarkets, CITC and Foodland, also advertised alcohol for sale on a regular basis. The Bond and CITC Liquor sponsored sports clubs and codes in Rarotonga, so that alcohol advertising by proxy was also evident in newspaper coverage of sports competitions, results, and functions. Rarotonga’s bars and nightclubs also

\(^{286}\) Manihiki has also achieved some fame in the Cook Islands for the volume and cost of alcohol which is regularly purchased by residents of the island!
advertised opening hours and special events on a regular basis. Beer, spirits, and wine were products typically advertised by alcohol retailers and wholesalers.

Figure VII: Make It Steinlager This Weekend!

(Cook Islands News 02/02/2001:5).

Figure VIII: This Weekend Only – Pre-levy Increase Sale.

(Cook Islands News 03/08/2000:7).

Beer, as in the advertisements above, was universally advertised for sale in large quantities; ‘trays’ or ‘cartons’ of 24 cans or ‘stubbies’ (330-375 ml bottles), or 12 large bottles (750 ml). Beer was usually purchased in these quantities, and often, customers would purchase a number of trays or cartons at one time.
Television and radio advertising was frequently employed by liquor wholesalers. Two of the most popular, and the most controversial, advertisements on radio and television were the Bond’s “Down at the Bond Store”, and “I Like Beer” songs:

“Down at the Bond Store” (to melody of Billy Joe Royal’s “Down at the Boondocks”).

Down at the Bond Store  
Down at the Bond Store  
We got it all, we got it all  
Down at the Bond Store.

“I Like Beer” (version of Tom T. Hall’s “I Like Beer”).

I like beer, it makes me a jolly good fellow  
I like beer, it’s healthy and white, and sometimes it makes me feel mellow  
[just makes him feel mellow]  
Just come to the Bond and I’ll sing you this song  
It’s something I think you should hear  
Cook’s Lager is fine  
And I don’t mind a Stein  
As a matter of fact I like beer  
Yes I like beer!

The advertisement that featured the latter song starred a local performer, who strummed a ukulele as he sang. The scene for the song was the Bond’s retail shop, with a short cut to one of Rarotonga’s beaches. The advertisement ended with the performer surrounded by employees from the Bond – the “Yes I like beer” ending on a slightly discordant minor-third octave, as the picture blurred and refocused on the performer’s tee-shirt (featuring a Cook’s Lager logo), and that of Nick Henry (the Bond manager, featuring a Steinlager logo). The effect was one of drunken merriment, with the climactic ‘blur and refocus’ shot a visual mimicry of drunkenness.

The latter song was particularly memorable for young and old alike, as the melody was catchy, and the visual effect was humorous. Both advertisements were also a topic of private and public debate, focussed around the popularity of the song to children. ‘Letters to the Editor’ were sent to the Cook Islands News complaining about these advertisements, on the grounds that children were heard to sing it, and bringing calls for
alcohol advertising to cease. A number of people told me that they had heard children singing these songs, and that the advertising was not appropriate for that reason.

Figure IX: Be A Responsible Nation - Ban Alcohol Advertising.

![Image of an advertisement calling for the ban of alcohol and tobacco advertising](image)


Advertising and sponsorship were obtained at considerable expense to Rarotonga’s alcohol wholesalers. Although I was unable to obtain details of expenditure by the Bond and CITC Liquor (this was ‘commercially sensitive’ information), Nick Henry, manager of the Bond, told me that his annual budget for ‘community’ sponsorship – primarily sports events – was in the region of $100,000 per year. Most of this sponsorship was for Rarotongan groups and organisations. CITC Liquor also sponsored a number of sports competitions on the island; so it is likely this wholesaler spent a comparable amount of money on ‘community’ sponsorship. Sponsorship of sports organisations required clubs to be aligned with the flagship brands of each wholesaler (Lion Nathan Breweries products for the Bond, and Fosters for CITC Liquor), so these products were sold exclusively in club bars, and offered as prizes for sports competitions. Liquor sales within club organisations were a major source of club
revenue, so that the financial viability of sports organisations was linked to the consumption of alcohol by club members and clubhouse patrons.

**Figure X: New Rugby League Sponsorship.**

![New rugby league sponsorship](image1)

*(Cook Islands News 07/06/2000:10).*

**Figure XI: Steinlager Round Cup.**

![Steinlager Round Cup](image2)

*(Cook Islands News 15/04/2000:13).*

The importance of branding has been widely discussed in literature on commercial strategies for the sale of alcohol (Mansell Pattison 1981; Mintz 1985; Sherratt 1995a; Valverde 1998). On Rarotonga, the most effectively branded alcoholic product was Steinlager, or ‘Stein’, as it was known. Steinlager stood at the top of a hierarchical chain
of beer products, above DB (Dominion Breweries) brands, Lion Red, and Cook’s Lager. From the perspective of Rarotongan drinkers, the differentiation of beers was usually rationalised by reference to the taste of various products – DB and Lion Red were ‘too sweet’, and Cook’s Lager ‘too flat’. These products received little attention in media advertising. Steinlager was branded as a sophisticated beer, particularly in some television ads (screened less frequently than those described above, usually when sports events were broadcast), with catchphrases such as “They’re drinking our beer here” (with “here” being London or New York), or “The thirsty drink beer / the hungry drink Steinlager” – the latter perhaps particularly apposite given the exclusivity of food and alcohol (page 234). Some people associated Lion Red and DB with drinking in pubs in New Zealand, where both products are generally branded as beers of the common (working class) man. Heineken was an increasingly popular beer during my stay on the island – by the time I left, it was rare for drinking companions to bring anything but Heineken to a drinking session.287 Thus, Steinlager was supplanted by another brand of long-standing sophistication.

Within “consumer society,” the notion of status, as the criterion which defines social being, tends increasingly to simplify and to coincide with the notion of “social standing”. Yet “social standing” is also measured in relation to power, authority, and responsibility. But in fact: there is no real responsibility without a Rolex watch! Advertising refers explicitly to the object as a necessary criterion…. Undoubtedly, objects have always constituted a system of recognition (repérage), but in conjunction, and often in addition to other systems (gestural, ritual, ceremonial, language, birth status, code of moral values, etc.) What is specific to our society is that other systems of recognition (reconnaissance) are progressively withdrawing, primarily to the advantage of “social standing” (Baudrillard 1988:19).

Although I would not characterise Rarotonga as a ‘consumer society’, it is certainly the case that public displays of ‘social standing’ are determined, in part, by the brand of beer consumed. As described in earlier chapters, it is not the sole measure of ‘status’ in Rarotonga, as kinship remains of primary significance to relationships between Cook Islanders. The public display of prestigious goods was an important

287 Heineken was further differentiated into the “green” and “white” top bottles – the former manufactured by Lion Nathan in New Zealand (under license), the latter imported from the Netherlands. Of these, the white-top bottles were preferred, ostensibly, according to some, because they contained a higher alcohol content.
component of status in the Cook Islands, and has been the case for at least as long as first contact with the LMS (see page 55, for example). While these goods are an important measure of status, they are always understood in the context of the person, his/her family, political affiliation, island (or islands) of origin, employment, and so on.

The issue of advertising and sponsorship by companies in the alcohol industry was by no means uncontroversial in the Cook Islands, as indicated by public opposition and concern over the popularity of various brand campaigns among youth and children in the Cook Islands. This opposition was not of great concern to most Cook Islanders, however, who generally attributed agitation on these matters to small numbers of vocal people from high-profile groups and organisations within the Cook Islands community – particularly the Churches (through the Religious Advisory Council), Non-Government Organisations such as Punanga Tauturu (Women’s Counselling Centre) and CIANGO (Cook Islands Associated Non-Government Organisations), and the Ministry of Health and Department of Public Health. Many people were of the opinion that a few representatives from these organisations had a disproportionate effect on public policies toward alcohol. Within the alcohol industry, Nick Henry suggested that the Select Committee proposal to limit alcohol advertising was the result of “four people jumping up and down and making a big deal on the Select Committee”. His own perspective on alcohol advertising was that, without it, Cook Islanders would live in a “cocoon” – if not for alcohol advertising, children would “run wild” when they became old enough to drink legally, and thus, he argued, commercial advertising of alcohol had an educational effect within the community.

Health Messages

Health messages concerning the use of alcohol regularly appeared in all forms of media on Rarotonga, presented on behalf of, or by, the Department of Public Health. Occasionally Non-Government Organisations would also sponsor advertising in the media, usually urging people not to drink and drive. Within printed media, these were usually in the form of short messages (figures XIII-XIV). Television and radio advertising was more limited, but contained similar, short messages (figure XII). The Department of Public Health also had a regular slot on Radio Cook Islands, where various health concerns (not just those related to alcohol use) were discussed. The issue on which the Department of Public Health focussed, usually on a week-by-week basis, was pre-scheduled, and typically coordinated with international agency schedules.
(WHO in particular) – ‘World Tobacco Week’, ‘World Alcohol Week’, and so on. Alcohol was a specific focus during the annual Constitution celebrations, and the period of Christmas and New Year, when a standard article was published in the *Cook Islands News*, calling for host responsibility through the provision of food, low or non-alcoholic beverages, moderation in serving alcohol, and safe transport for guests.

*Figure XII: Makes You An Idiot.*

**ALCOHOL DULLS YOUR JUDGEMENT MAKES YOU AN IDIOT**

*Cook Islands Television 01/01/2001.*

*Figure XIII: Drunk and Ridiculous.*

**BE COOL & GLAMOROUS Not drunk and ridiculous**

*Cook Islands News (21/12/2000:1).*

*Figure XIV: ‘Love Is...’*

**...LOVE IS... A time out with family and friends NOT DRUNK AND STUPID**

*Cook Islands News (23/12/2000:1).*

The Department of Public Health conducted no evaluation of their health campaigns, so that estimations of effectiveness were invariably anecdotal, and the impact of these messages and campaigns was difficult to gauge. Among students from the school study, 32% recalled a Public Health message – ‘Don’t Drink and Drive’ (and various permutations) – as the most memorable from recent weeks. This epithet was also a regular response from interview participants. In the latter group, remembering this message did not mean that these people did not drive after drinking. One staff
member from Public Health also told me that people’s knowledge about the effects of drinking had increased markedly in recent years, due in part to efforts of Public Health. Nevertheless, people’s practices did not seem to have changed. Improved information, this person said, did not appear to be the answer to these problems, “but I can’t think of anything else”.

Crime, Legal and Accident Reports

All of Rarotonga’s media featured reports on police activities and events in court. The Cook Islands News also published legal notices of liquor license applications. The ‘Police Roundup’ recorded callouts by the police on a (mostly) daily basis, with details of alleged legal infractions and the actions taken by police officers in response to them, without identifying the identity of either party (figure XV); the ‘Court Report’ was supplied by reporters from the Cook Islands News, and detailed court proceedings and outcomes, with names of defendants suppressed if so ordered by the court (figure XVI).

Radio and Television reports by the Cook Islands police generally drew public attention to incidents in Rarotonga, and were accompanied by exhortations for the public to pay attention to specific laws, typically related to driving conduct, such as ‘don’t drink and drive’, or ‘always wear a seatbelt’. Notices for liquor license applications were published in accordance with the Sale of Liquor Act (1991/2). (figure XVII).

Figure XV: Police Roundup

Police reports were not comprehensive – on a number of occasions I was aware of accidents that had occurred, and which the Cook Islands police had attended, that did not appear in the *Cook Islands News* police report. The public effect of these notices and reports was difficult to determine. They were rarely a topic of everyday discussion.
Coverage of vehicle accidents was also relatively frequent in newspaper and television coverage, and usually featured photographs of crumpled vehicles, occasionally with a caption to the effect that the driver was intoxicated at the time of the accident. This was not always the case – I knew of at least three vehicle accidents when the driver was intoxicated, where no mention was made of alcohol. Nevertheless, in the course of time the ‘coconut wireless’ would often fill in the details of such events.

**Entertainment Articles**

These included reports on social functions and events in Rarotonga, such as dances, competitions, sports awards, and ‘gossip columns’ which regularly appeared in both of Rarotonga’s print media, the *Cook Islands News* and the *Cook Islands Herald*. Reports on social events typically included pictures, in which participants who were drinking were invariably portrayed as (and no doubt, were) having a great deal of fun, laughing, and ‘acting the goat’. This behaviour was context dependent, and indeed, dependent on the type of function where drinking occurred. In figure XVIII, the function was formal, celebrating the launch of a new shipping company, and attended by politicians and Cook Islanders of a high public profile. The formality of the function was also highlighted by the fact that wine, rather than spirits or beer, was the beverage supplied for the event. Moreover, wine is also increasingly identified as the alcoholic beverage of the middle classes in Rarotonga, and may serve as a means of differentiating Rarotonga’s social elite from the *iti tangata* (see page 311).

*Figure XVIII: Wine at the Wharf.*

*Cook Islands News (20/01/2001:3).*
The ‘gossip columns’ that appeared in Rarotonga’s newspapers were an interesting, and localised, feature of Cook Islands media. These included the ‘Smoke Signals’ (in the *Cook Islands News*) and ‘Chooks Corner’ (in the *Cook Islands Herald*). Some examples of excerpts from ‘Chooks Corner’ are provided below:

Who were the bunch of young chicks throwing ruffled wings in each others faces outside a popular nightclub on Friday night? Rumour has it, one of the chicks’ main rooster was pecking his dirty beak where he shouldn’t have. The rooster in question had also been annoying another chicky by getting touchy feathery with her a few weeks ago, even after she told him more than once to talk a chicken walk. When will this rooster learn that his comb ain’t all that at all? Red thinks the rooster’s girl-friend should dump the useless cock and find a rooster who actually has something to crow about (*Cook Island Herald* 19/08/2000:22).²⁸⁸

Red is becoming concerned about high level Government workers failing to show up for work on Thursdays. Seems that the once slow bar trade on Wednesday nights is starting to pick up. One top rooster didn’t wake up until nearly 3.00 pm on Thursday last week! He couldn’t remember how he got home or where he had left his tax-funded vehicle (*Cook Islands Herald* 17/01/2001:25).

While these articles were amusing as generalised gossip, for most local readers (Papa’a and Maori alike), the persons and events described took on additional meaning because people with adequate local knowledge could easily identify the ‘Chook’ referred to in the article. They provided a means by which the local (and Pacific) phenomenon of the ‘coconut wireless’ was re-presented in the form of print media; ‘news’ that relied on the knowledge of its readers to transform reporting on anonymous persons into knowledge of specific behaviours of specific people. More often than not, these reports concerned themselves with events that were not ‘newsworthy’, but nevertheless of interest to the public (which was not always the same thing as ‘in the public interest’). In Chooks Corner, the gossip column also served as a means by which the *Cook Islands Herald* owners could attack their media and political opponents. Staff of the *Cook Islands News* were often criticised or ridiculed in the gossip column, as were opponents of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Norman George. The owners of the *Cook Islands Herald* were closely aligned with the Deputy Prime Minister – acting as his media consultants and advisors.

²⁸⁸ This ‘gossip’ referred to the fight between some girls while drinking, discussed at page 211.
Presentation of subject matter in this form (as ‘gossip’) was a means by which unsubstantiated information could be presented in public without threat of libel action – due primarily to the lack of specific identification of various ‘chooks’, ‘hens’, ‘chicks’ and ‘roosters’ (the legal status of these gossip columns had not been tested in a court of law). Although these columns were not specific, members of the community often identified the subjects of these columns, and treated the ‘gossip’ as ‘news’. One person complained he had been ‘hassled’ by a number of people following a report in Chooks Corner, even though the ‘rumour’ itself entirely misrepresented actual events (he went on to explain the ‘true’ account to me). In his opinion, it was not worth complaining formally about the story – better just to let it die down naturally. Complaining, inevitably, would just result in increased attention.

Finally, issues surrounding alcohol were occasionally the subject of cartoons in the *Cook Islands News*, penned under the name ‘Kata’:

*Figure XIX: "Back To Bush Beer For Me"*

![Cartoon image](image)

*Cook Islands News Business Monthly (08/2000:2).*

**Feature Articles**

Alcohol was also referred to in a range of print-media feature articles. The *Cook Islands News* published a weekend edition, which regularly featured ‘Island Memories’;
life history interviews with elderly Cook Islanders. In these, people would recount earlier experiences of alcohol in their lives:

I made homebrew – 500 gallon barrels, these were big wooden barrels and I used to make pawpaw and oranges in it. Used to have lots of visitors coming to my place for the homebrew sessions. Every time the boat arrived. My place would always have visitors, papaas from the Maui Pomare used to come and drink my homebrew,” he [John Mateara Ora] boasted (Cook Islands News 02/02/2001:7).

[Mama] Kauru followed [her husband to New Zealand] a year later. It was just after WW2 and the beginning of a life of abuse.

“My husband started drinking and hitting me, he’d get drunk quite often and violent – our life was miserable,” she shakes her head, old tired eyes sad at the memory. “It was also when I got pregnant with our first child but it didn’t make any difference to the beatings…. My husband drank and would hit me over the smallest thing, his money would go to drink, always,” she recalls (Cook Islands News 20/05/2000:7).

With a few exceptions, these life history accounts portrayed alcohol in a negative light; after many hardships (often induced by alcohol), these people gave away drinking and brought their lives into order. The use of alcohol was thus often portrayed as a practice that these Cook Islanders moved into (as mapu), and then through (as they became older) – alcohol, then, was in part an index of aging. While this was a recurrent theme in these articles, it was not the case that all older Maori who participated in these interviews had forgone drinking:

His partner died back in 1967 and Tokoiti has been living alone since. “I prefer being a bachelor,” he says. A cheeky glint slowly lights up his crinkly face. “That way, you can have a bit of drink and talk to whoever you want. If you’re married to a vaine [woman], you can’t have that kind of fun,” he laughs (Cook Islands News 08/07/2000:7).

During 2000/2001, there was one case of alcohol-related crime that received considerable attention in the Cook Islands News, and was considered in a series of full-page articles. A woman had murdered her de facto partner on the island of Aitutaki, after a sustained period of drinking, during which he had assaulted her a number of times. This case was a source of public debate throughout the trial, and for a number
months afterward – the woman claimed that she was a ‘battered wife’, and acted in self-
defence; relatives of the victim stood outside as he beat the woman who eventually
killed him; and the duration and quantity of drinking sessions was openly discussed.

Alcohol and The Law

The Police

Establishing the extent to which alcohol is related to the activities of the police is
difficult, as complete statistics of alcohol-related incidents are not kept, with the
exception of alcohol-related driving incidents. Police activities in Rarotonga are
constrained by the fact that they are members of a relatively small community, so that
considerations of friendship, kinship, and the social status of people who commit
infringements of the law contribute in no small part to the decisions made by police in
the course of ‘upholding the law’. One officer of the Rarotongan police told me that, in
general, they were “pretty forgiving” when dealing with the public, were polite and
never aggressive, because otherwise they would get “a bad name around the island”
(from Fieldnotes 10/04/2000). Leniency was the general rule in dealings with the public.

The effect of this leniency was that in many cases, the police would not pursue
prosecution for ‘small’ infringements they encountered – particularly regarding
domestic arguments, assaults, and drunk-driving. The procedure for establishing
intoxication was, as noted on page 147, the mnemonic device MAN SEEMS FULL.

Officers at the police station told me this method was still used in the Cook Islands:

I asked [Officer X] what the letters stood for. “Ah, well, the M is Memory”, he
said, “and A is Admission [of guilt]. N is… I can’t remember what N is. Ah… E is
Eyes Bloodshot, L is Lack of Coordination, and Liquor Smell… or was it Smell of
Liquor?” Obviously struggling, he called out to the officers next door, “Hey, do
you two know MAN SEEMS FULL?” “That’s the DIC [Drunk In Charge], isn’t
it?” “Yes, but what do the letters mean?” They wracked their brains for a good ten
minutes, but were unable to crack any more of the code. I was struggling to keep a
straight face. I decided to let them off the hook. We moved on to the next
question… (from Fieldnotes, 08/12/2000).

Intoxication was also established by asking a suspect to perform tasks that tested
physical coordination and balance, such as walking in a straight line, standing on one
leg, and placing one’s finger on one’s nose from a straight-arm position. Often people
suspected of drinking would admit that was the case, so that prolonged interrogation
was not necessary in order to obtain sufficient evidence of drunkenness. Admission
would not, in most cases, lead to a charge (see below).

Occasionally, the police would stage vehicle checkpoints to the west and east of
Avarua, in order to test for drink-driving. These were relatively infrequent, and usually
occurred during periods regarded as high-risk; Christmas, New Year, and during the
Constitution Celebrations. Most often, when people were found to be intoxicated, they
were told to ‘drive straight home’ if they said they had consumed just three or four
drinks. If a person was judged unsafe to drive, keys to their vehicle would be
confiscated, and they would be forbidden to drive their vehicle until 8am the next
morning. Arrests occurred, most of the time, only if the person became aggressive or
refused to hand over his (or her) keys. But it was not always the case that aggressive
behaviour toward the police by a member of the public would result in prosecution:

Last Friday, Officer X told me, they [the police] checked about 100 vehicles, with
one checkpoint at the Small Business Centre [toward the west of Avarua] and
another at the Beachcomber [toward the east].289 One fellow was detained from
the checkpoint, had his keys taken from him, and was told he was not to drive until
8am. He was a local, but also a high profile Bank person. He wasn’t happy at all,
and later he walked over to the Police Station to demand his keys back, but Officer
X wouldn’t give them to him. This Bank person became very abusive, and started
swearing at Officer X, telling him he would regret it if he didn’t get his keys back
straight away – but still Officer X did not get mad, and did not arrest him. Finally
the Bank person went home, saying “you better have my bike delivered to my
house before I get there!” When he got home, he rang the station – “Where’s my
eff’n bike?” – “No Sir, you’ll have to wait until the morning.” So he hung up. Later
he rang again, but Officer X told him, “No.” So finally he stopped ringing (from
Fieldnotes, 08/12/2000).

On another occasion, while travelling into town with some friends, we were held
up on the coast road just outside Avarua because an accident had occurred – the police
were in attendance. As one officer walked past, our driver called out and asked him
what had happened; it turned out someone had driven into a hedge on the way home,
and they were waiting for the ambulance to take him to the hospital. Who was it? It was

289 These were the sites used most often by the Cook Islands Police for vehicle checkpoints. Both could
be easily avoided by travelling on inland roads, rather than by the coast road.
‘Y’, a police officer who had been drinking after work. Needless to say, this event was not published in the ‘Police Roundup’, and I was unable to ascertain whether any charges resulted from this incident.

Establishing whether a person was ‘Drunk in Control’ of a vehicle was particularly problematic when accidents occurred, and the driver of a vehicle was unconscious, or unable to stand. The police were unable to take blood samples for alcohol testing without obtaining consent from a person; furthermore, blood samples could not be tested on Rarotonga, and so had to be sent to New Zealand at considerable expense to the police. For these reasons, blood testing was rarely used.

There was a general feeling among Cook Islanders that certain people, due to their status within the community, were able to avoid prosecution for law infringements, while other people could not. Most often, business people were thought to be protected, (but not immune) from police prosecution. The data I have, while anecdotal, supports this proposition. Indeed, this kind of discrimination has a long history in the Cook Islands, as noted in previous chapters. The ideal of police neutrality, while perhaps attainable in locales with large populations, is virtually impossible in Rarotonga, where police officers easily recognise and are recognised by friends, acquaintances, people of power and status, and relatives. The actions of individual police ‘on the job’ follow them home, and affect relationships within their families, with their neighbours, and in their communities. Thus, it was important that they, as professionals and individuals, not get ‘a bad name around the island’.

During fieldwork, one case was particularly illustrative of the influence status has on criminal prosecution. In 2000, Maire Brown, a young Rarotongan woman, won the Miss Cook Islands beauty pageant title, which was precursory for entrance to the international Miss Universe beauty pageant. The Miss Cook Islands pageant is an important event on Rarotonga, and the audience for the final pageant always fills up the National Auditorium with interested Maori, ex-pats, and a few tourists. The Miss Cook Islands title-holder is regularly in attendance at international functions and conferences, and on a number of occasions, I saw Miss Cook Islands escort Government Ministers when they met with foreign dignitaries. The Miss Cook Islands pageant is also a very popular topic of the ‘coconut wireless’.

After winning the title, Miss Browne’s public conduct came under increasing public scrutiny, and soon rumours began to circulate Rarotonga that she was not behaving in a manner befitting her title – specifically, she was attending parties and
getting drunk. In October 2000, Miss Browne caused an automobile accident with a tourist, which resulted in extensive injuries to him, and a number of cuts and lacerations to her:

Miss Cook Islands 2000, Maire Brown [sic], is recovering in the Rarotonga Hospital as a result of being involved in a two-vehicle accident at Matavera early yesterday morning. It is understood from family, that Brown, who suffered a number of injuries, may be able to be discharged from the hospital today (Cook Islands News 07/10/2000:1).

At the time, I heard that Browne had been out nightclubbing that night, and left the Staircase (see page 167) in the early morning to drive around the island. According to most accounts, she had been drinking, and according to some, she was drunk.

The above article was published in the Cook Islands News, despite the fact that family members had pressured the editor, who was also related to Miss Browne, not to publicise the incident. He refused to withdraw the article, because in his opinion Maire was “a public figure”, and so this was a matter of public interest. The tourist was paid $7500 by Miss Browne’s family in compensation, but according to Chook’s Corner, he was still not happy:

Who is the heavily bandaged tourist seen dragging his worse than ruffled feathers through Avarua town on Saturday? And what could he have meant when he took his right wing tip, pointed to his damaged eye and said simply, “Miss Cooks gave me this”…. Red understands it was a case of the right place at the right time with the right person but the method of contact was another story indeed (Cook Islands Herald 14/10/2000:23).

The matter went no further while we were in Rarotonga. But Miss Browne did not give up partying, and public discontentment eventually led to her resignation:

Miss Cook Islands Maire Browne is understood to have handed back her title after two meetings with members of the pageant association last Thursday and Friday. Her resignation comes after weeks of intense scrutiny over criticism of her social life. Browne has also received lots of support from friends and family and fellow contestants. One relative, Internal Affairs and Works Minister Mau Munukoa, recently asked Cook Islands News to count her among those who support Browne.

290 This was the case. To be fair to Miss Browne, so too were most of her peers – justification for criticism of her behaviour was that (unlike Miss Browne) most of her peers were not representing the Cook Islands as a ‘national ambassador’, as one of the pageant organisers put it.
“We were all young once, and she just made a mistake,” says Munukoa (Cook Islands News 23/04/2001:1).

Miss Browne’s star had truly fallen. Just one month later she found herself in court, answering charges that had until then, and for whatever reason, failed to eventuate. One month after that, she was sentenced:

Former Miss Cook Islands 19 year-old Maire Louisa Browne received a suspended sentence in the High Court, Avarua yesterday….. [Last month] a charge against her of drunken driving causing injury was withdrawn. Police prosecution officer Sergeant Teinaki Howard said at the time the charges had been withdrawn at the instruction of his superiors (Cook Islands News 04/07/2001:3).

In arguments between husband and wives, girlfriends and boyfriends, alcohol was “always” involved, according to one officer. In cases of assault, perhaps “two in ten”, the husband or boyfriend was charged with an offence only if the woman insisted that this be done. Otherwise, the practice of the police was to issue a warning, and often, to separate the couple by taking the man to the house of another family member, and telling him to wait there until the next day so that they could both have time to ‘calm down.’ Often, when charges were laid against a man for domestic assault, his partner would withdraw her complaint before a court hearing, so that the charges would be dropped for lack of evidence. According to staff at Punanga Tauturu (Women’s Counselling Centre), once charges were laid, the police had no discretionary powers to rescind them; in practice, this often occurred.

The Courts

All cases heard by the Court in the Cook Islands in 2000/2001 were in the High Court, which was differentiated by sessions over which Justices of Peace presided, and those over which a Chief Justice presided. A single Justice of the Peace could preside over the court in actions for the recovery of debts, damages, or the recovery of chattels, provided not more than $1500 was involved; over criminal offences which were subject to fine only; and other criminal offences provided that the maximum penalty not exceed 2 years and/or the fine not exceed $200. Three justices of the peace, sitting together, could preside over actions for the recovery of debts, damages, and chattels between $1500 and $3000, and criminal offences with maximum penalties of 3 years and/or
$300 fine. All other matters could only be heard before a High Court Judge, all of who came to Rarotonga from New Zealand for this purpose, visiting Rarotonga occasionally throughout the year. There was a Court of Appeal, and ultimate redress could be sought from the Privy Council (although not for matters relating to inheritance of land or chiefly title).

In most ‘minor’ cases (including assault, drink driving, and other traffic infringements), the defendant was not represented by a lawyer. Exceptions occurred, but in most cases access to legal representation was limited by the fact that there were few available criminal lawyers on Rarotonga, and that many people who appeared before the court could not afford legal representation, or did not think that the offence warranted the cost of a lawyer. Throughout the period of fieldwork, one lawyer from the legal firm Clarkes P C was responsible for representing most court defendants. Most of the lawyers on Rarotonga were engaged in offshore banking or property law, and a few (Cook Islands Maori) lawyers were involved in politics. The latter group tended to represent clients from their respective ‘home’ islands, but only when pressured to do so by constituents, supporters, or at the bequest of the family of the accused. Subsequently, people of influence (including business people and people from influential families) often obtained a lawyer, even for minor court charges.

Common assault, assault of a female, drunk-driving and theft accounted for the majority of cases that came before the courts. Overall, the penalties for assault and drunk-driving offences appeared to be greater during 2000/2001 than in the period from 1996-1999 (see page 147). The range of fines for drink-driving convictions in 2000/2001 was $50-$175 plus $10 court costs (median $110), and all but one conviction were accompanied by driving licence disqualification for 3 or 6 months. 291 Where a person had been convicted of drunk driving and causing injury, dangerous driving, or damages, provisions for monetary reparation were also stipulated in judgements, and in two cases, a period of probation was ordered. Convictions for assault carried fines which ranged between $30 and $200 plus $10 court costs (median $85), although most of these were for offences relating to disputes between men. Most charges of assault against a female were dropped by the woman before the defendant’s court appearance, although one case where a conviction was secured carried a fine of $100 plus $10 court costs, and for another, a man was sentenced to 6 months community service, followed

291 This compares with a range of $40-$100 (+ $10 court costs) between 1996 and 1999 (page 147).
by 12 months probation. In three other cases, the court (represented by one Justice of the Peace) charged court costs to the defendants (of $10), although their partners had dropped charges against them. The Rarotongan police also launched a blitz on drivers who ignored stop signs during 2000/2001, so that a large number of people appeared before the court for this offence, for which a fine of $50 plus $10 court costs was consistently applied by JPs.

The administration of the law by the courts appeared to be equal, with similar penalties applied to people convicted of similar offences, regardless of social status – as previously stated, discrimination on the grounds of wealth, political affiliation, or family connections occurred when the police came to lay charges, rather than when people appeared before the court. Domestic violence, particularly where women were the victims of assault, accounted for the largest proportion of cases discharged, due to the complainant refusing to pursue prosecution. Alcohol consumption was associated with most cases of assault, domestic assault, driving offences, indecent assault and sex offences. The court did not accept alcohol consumption as a mitigating factor during sentencing:

By the fourth case involving a man, alcohol and an attack on a woman, Chief Justice Sir Peter Quilliam grew tired of defendants explaining they had been drunk.
Concerning another case involving defendant Colombo Moetaua, Justice Quilliam said “I do not really need to repeat what I have already said about the concern of the court concerning offences committed under the influence of alcohol.”
He said the effect of alcohol was no excuse.
Alcohol, Justice Quilliam said, “is generally to be regarded as making the offence worse.” (*Cook Islands News* 27/05/00:4).

The state sector of the Cook Islands is, historically and contemporarily, closely linked with developments and personnel of the New Zealand public sector. The presence of Chief Justices from New Zealand is a case in point, as their presence, and ultimate jurisdiction over the High Court of the Cook Islands, maintains a close link with changes and trends that occur in New Zealand. The increasing penalties for drink-driving offences, and the tendency to disregard alcohol consumption as an ‘excuse’ for various infringements is evidence of this structural link with New Zealand. Legislation passed through parliament regarding criminal law is also often based upon New Zealand law. Moreover, public sentiments regarding alcohol are influenced by developments
presented in the New Zealand media (particularly via reports in the print media, and broadcasts of New Zealand’s National Radio news, and Television One News on CITV), and by the experience of Cook Islanders as former residents of New Zealand and Australia, or through their New Zealand and Australian resident relations.

**The Probation Service**

People on probation became the responsibility of the Probation Service, in the Ministry of Justice. During 2000/2001 there were three male caseworkers and one female caseworker working in Probation Service, with one coordinator. As with most Ministries, the number of staff in the Probation Service had been scaled back during the transition of 1996, so that the probation officers were typically responsible for 10-15 ‘clients’. In addition to supervision of probationers (i.e. people on probation or on bail), the Probation Service was responsible for the supervision of juvenile offenders, and other matters relating to children, such as custody and adoption. The conditions of probation varied depending on the offence committed, and subsequent sentencing of the High Court. All people on probation were required to report to their caseworker on a regular basis. People who had committed ‘alcohol related’ offences (that is, prosecutors established they had been drinking at the time they committed the offence for which they were convicted) invariably had a probation requirement that they not consume or purchase alcohol, and that they not enter any drinking establishment.

*Table XVI: Probationer Offences, Alcohol Related and Non-Alcohol Related, 2000.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan - Jun ’00</th>
<th>Jul - Dec ‘00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Related</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Alcohol Related</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Cook Islands Probation Service).

Breach of this latter prohibition was one of the most strictly enforced probation conditions. Probation Service staff usually allowed people on probation with alcohol restrictions one warning, but if the person was found to have consumed alcohol once more, their cases were referred back to court. In practice, breaches of alcohol restrictions were the only reason that probationers were jailed for failing to abide by bail or probation conditions (see below). Failure to report to the probation service or the police, for example, was not regarded as such a serious breach:
Brown’s original bail conditions included that he not leave Rarotonga, report to the Police Department daily, not purchase or consume alcohol, and not to enter licensed premises.

Brown told the court that he wasn’t in fact reporting to the Police Department at all.

Prosecution officer Sergeant Teinaki Howard told the court that he had no objections to Brown not reporting to the Police Department and therefore the condition was stood down (Cook Islands News 30/10/00:4).

Staff at the Probation Service discovered whether their clients had been drinking by a variety of means. For ‘clients’ on community service (which was held on Saturdays, and usually involved assisting elderly people and/or widows cleaning around the home), caseworkers could identify probationers who had been drinking because their breath smelt of alcohol, or because people who did not ordinarily wear sunglasses wore them to work. Violators of these conditions were also caught during home visits by caseworkers, or the family of the probationer, or an acquaintance, would telephone the Probation Service to inform them that the person in question was drinking:

The whole island knows what everyone else is doing, so everybody knows that if that person is on probation they actually refer [to us, they] will ring us or tell us about it (Probation staff focus group).

Usually, little effort was required to obtain an admission from probationers who had been drinking. According to one staff member, “their head will go down, and they will know they have been caught”. Thus, alternate means of proof were rarely required by caseworkers when charging one of their ‘clients’ with breach of bail conditions.

The Probation Service also held workshops for probationers with alcohol-related offences, and they would gather for discussion and counselling with representatives from Punanga Tauturu (Women’s Counselling Service) and community leaders (including ariki from Rarotonga). These initiatives were, reportedly, very successful. Most of the problems Probation Service caseworkers saw were not caused by alcohol but by other factors in their lives, such as their relationships with friends or relatives, or lack of finances:

[1]: Alcohol is not the main cause of their problems, because sometimes when I do the writing on my reports, there are other considerations why they commit these offences. It’s not really the alcohol, in fact one of my clients, this person had been
drinking before the offence. He committed the offence but because he was angry
for this other [person], in fact his mate made him commit these offences. It’s not
because he was drunk.

*So he was angry, or he had something he wanted to deal with before he started
drinking?*

[All] yeah.

[2]: Misunderstanding or, miscommunication breakdown, or things like that with
their relationships.

[3]: Sometimes lack of finance. As they drink, and then they run out of finance,
then that makes them start feeling to go and steal some more liquor. There’s no
finance, [that] doesn’t mean [they commit the offence] because of alcohol, it’s only
when he’s got the finance he can afford to go and buy the other beer – that’s why
[he] commit offence, no money. No money (Probation staff focus group).

According to Probation Service staff, most of these people came from ‘broken
homes’; they had come from families that were fragmented, and many were young
people who had grown up in New Zealand and later moved to the Cook Islands:

[3] Those people from overseas, [who are] sent over here to stay with [their]
families, they find it really hard. Because in some of the families, when the people
[are] getting involved in the trouble, sometimes they don’t want to look up to them
[i.e. respect the family], so it is hard for the families to look after them.

[2] To add on to what [3] was saying, since I’ve been employed by this service one
of the major [factors] that I’ve seen relating to the offences, that is children coming
from broken homes. That is one main concern, that we’ve seen from all the cases
that we’ve come across. Broken homes and broken families, and children growing
up and being adopted out to other families, and brought up. We’ve seen that, and
it’s still happening today. And likewise other children, some from good homes and
they still attempt to offend – but the majority [of offences] is by children coming
from broken families, that’s what I see since I’ve been in the service (Probation
Service staff focus group).

One staff member remarked that alcohol-related offenders were much younger
nowadays than they were twenty or so years ago:

[1] Before, alcohol problems in related with adult people, older, grown up like
thirty, forty, fifty years, but now I’ve seen a lot of changes.

[1] It is more young people today coming in the courts, childrens from age of sixteen, seventeen, nineteen those are the age bracket, they are causing from alcohol. But you don’t see many of those older people… only the young people now.

[2] Twenties, thirties and over (Probation Service staff focus group).

**The Prison Service**

In 2000, twenty-eight people were incarcerated in Rarotonga’s prison, on the western side of the island. Of these, seventeen had been drinking at the time they committed the offence that led to their incarceration, and there was one case of a person convicted for forgery who was an ‘alcoholic’ and forged documents in order to obtain alcohol. I have included this offence as ‘alcohol-related’, although it was not officially recorded as such.

**Table XVII: Alcohol-related Offences Among Prison Inmates, Rarotonga 2000.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Alcohol Related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder / Manslaughter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault / Incest</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape / Attempted Rape</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft / Burglary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgeroy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly conducts293</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trespass</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecent Exposure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession (Marijuana)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alcohol related (%)</strong></td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Superintendent H. Wichman, 2000, personal communication).

The Superintendent of the prison periodically arranged for representatives from the Department of Public Health, the Richmond Foundation (a NGO offering mental health care services on Rarotonga), and Punanga Tauturu to conduct workshops with prisoners – alcohol education was one of the topics frequently discussed at these sessions. According to the Superintendent, all of the prisoners who had been detained for breaching conditions of bail or probation were incarcerated for breaking restrictions on alcohol consumption – the police never sent someone to the prison for failing to

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292 Self-reported.
293 This inmate was an Australian tourist.
report to them. Often, when a person failed to appear for an appointment, police or probation caseworkers would go to their houses to check up – and find them drinking.

Prisoners were also encouraged to discuss various aspects of their lives, and the crime that brought them to prison, with prison staff. Although this proved helpful, there was a lack of trained counsellors on Rarotonga to fulfil this need. A representative from Alcoholics Anonymous had been asked by the Superintendent to hold sessions at the prison, but unfortunately the person in question (a Papa’a) was receiving medical attention in New Zealand, so sessions never commenced. Although prison staff, and a number of inmates, agreed that group and individual discussion on the use of alcohol were desirable, there were no formal structures provided for this in the prison.

Although I was not able to establish the family history of all inmates at the Rarotonga prison, many were Cook Islands Maori who had grown up in New Zealand, and come to live in the islands as young adults. A number had come from families that were fragmented, and relatives had cared for these people as they grew up. I was able to speak to five inmates from the prison, all of who had returned to the Cook Islands as adults after growing up in New Zealand. All described how, upon arriving in the islands, they had increased or taken up alcohol consumption. Most attributed the reason for this increased consumption to boredom – in the islands, there was nothing else to do. All were self-confessed ‘heavy drinkers’ or ‘alcoholics’.

**Liquor Licensing Authority**

The Liquor Licensing Authority, under the Sale of Liquor Amendment (1995/6), reduced the Liquor Licensing Authority from 14 members to between 4 and 6 members, with the Commissioner of Police as ex-officio Chairman. The number of Liquor Licenses for Rarotonga remained roughly equal to that reported by McDonald et al. in 1997. Their figures were obtained from license statistics for 1995, of which 44 were for retail licenses, 22 restaurants, 13 sports clubs, 12 for hotels, motels and guestroom bars, and 11 for bars, nightclubs and airport licenses; a total of 102 licensed premises.

According to a report produced by the Ministry of Health in 1998, “a conclusion to be drawn from this background is that the majority of licenses predominantly serve local residents and not tourists” (GCI 1998:4). By 2000, the number of licensed premises in Rarotonga was 107. Comparison of licensed premises from 1995 and 2000 is

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294 Group discussions for prisoners regarding alcohol use may have contributed to this conformity of opinion.
problematic, as a new category, ‘Restaurant & Bar’ encompassed most of the venues formerly designated ‘Nightclubs’ and some formerly designated ‘Restaurants’. In 2000, there were 45 retail licenses, 13 restaurant, 12 sports clubs, 13 hotels, motels and guestroom bars, 14 ‘Restaurant & Bar’ (the new category), and 10 bar and airport licenses. The number of liquor licenses per 1,000 residents on Rarotonga rose from 9.4 in 1995 to 12.6 in 2000, largely as a consequence of emigration.

The Liquor Licensing Authority considered applications for licenses primarily in consultation with representatives from business interests, the Religious Advisory Council, the Aronga Mana (traditional leaders), and the Ministry of Health. In practice, at least during the period of fieldwork, most liquor license applications were approved by the committee. Members of the Liquor Licensing Authority were not immune from public pressure – and in most cases, the pressure was to grant liquor licenses. Pa Ariki, for example, told me that she had been inclined to oppose some applications for liquor licenses in her district, but that refusing a license often made the applicant angry, and on occasion an applicant would accost her over the matter. The recommendations of members of the Liquor Licensing Authority were meant to be confidential, but in practice, the applicant usually found out who had voted for and against the application. Another ariki, I was told, had now adopted a policy of approving all requests for liquor licenses, because she was tired of being abused by people who were upset when she ruled against their application. Liquor licenses and the subsequent sale of alcohol were considered to be an important source of revenue for small and large businesses alike. In terms of care and public responsibility, the discourse of liquor licensing was contradictory – failure to grant a liquor license meant that committee members would often be accused of failing to care for their people (where the ‘people’ were those applying for a license). Alternately, refusing a license could also be understood as in the interests of the (wider) public. In practice, the former view usually won over the latter.

Alcohol, Politics, and Politicians

The present term of government has marked a particularly unstable period of Cook Islands politics, unmatched since the elections of 1983 (see page 129). After the general elections of 1999, two coalition governments were formed in quick
succession. In the race for power and position, individual MPs swapped allegiances between the three major parties (the Democratic Alliance Party/DAP, the Cook Islands Party/CIP, and the New Alliance Party/NAP), it seemed almost on a daily basis. Initially, the DAP was about to form government after three CIP ministers (Dr Joe Williams, Tangata Vavia and Tom Marsters) crossed the floor. The next day, after intense discussions (reportedly taking place over beers at the Rarotonga golf-club), two of these Ministers rejoined the CIP, on condition that Dr Williams (who had left the CIP the day before) became Prime Minister, in preference of Sir Geoffrey Henry. Subsequently, a CIP/NAP coalition government was formed on 29 July, 1999. There was substantial disquiet about the new government, primarily because many felt that Dr Williams, who represented the Cook Islands Overseas constituency, should not be Prime Minister on grounds that he lacked commitment to the Cook Islands. This accusation was well-founded, for even as negotiations were underway in the Cook Islands, Dr Williams was considering standing for New Zealand general elections, and seeking legal opinion on whether he was able to serve in both parliaments at the same time (Cook Islands News 28/07/1999:1). Dr Williams’ government lasted just 16 weeks, when the NAP left the CIP/NAP coalition, and formed a new government in coalition with the DAP. The leader of the DAP, Dr Maoate, became Prime Minister, and the leader of the NAP, Norman George, Deputy Prime Minister in November 1999.

The DAP/NAP coalition government remained in power throughout the period of fieldwork (April 2000 – April 2001), although its position remained precarious. Tensions emerged between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, and a number of CIP MPs were induced, by financial grants and allocations of ‘ministerial, assistant minister and undersecretary’ funds, to become ‘independent’ in support of the government. Both parties of the second coalition government had campaigned for increased government transparency, and reduced nepotism and cronyism in

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295 The Cook Islands News referred to the DAP/NAP coalition government as the “third” coalition government – in fact, although coalition agreements were made between political parties, only one government was formed prior to the DAP/NAP coalition.

296 The Overseas constituency, the only one of its kind in the world, is meant to provide a parliamentary voice for Cook Islanders who no longer reside in the islands. In practice, the Overseas constituency is represented from Auckland, and has always been the subject of intense debate by (resident) Cook Islanders. A common feeling in the Cook Islands is that those people who stayed in the islands demonstrate their commitment to the country, and that the allegiance of those who lived in New Zealand, Australia, or elsewhere, is suspect.

297 With the coup imminent, Dr William’s last act as Prime Minister was to issue cabinet directives, in which government vehicles were sold at undervalued prices to members of Cabinet, Cook Islands Party members employed in the public sector were given pay rises, and for the first time, the government car was allocated to the Opposition (Cook Islands News 19/11/1999:1).
government-sponsored funding and state sector appointments. In practice, however, the ‘phantom worker’ phenomenon re-emerged (see page 131), as the government strategically created state sector jobs for party supporters, and Ministerial budget allocations were increased substantially for ‘travel expenses’ and such like.

These practices were particularly apparent when a by-election was announced for the constituency of Pukapuka/Nassau, which was then held by a CIP candidate. This seat was vital to the coalition government, as if they could secure the seat, they would be able to obtain a clear majority in parliament, and thus be able to form government. Various means were employed in an attempt to obtain the Pukapuka/Nassau seat, although none were confirmed officially. Preceding the by-election in late September 1999, large quantities of alcohol and food were shipped to Pukapuka and Nassau, on one of MP Taio’s shipping vessels, free of freight charges, for distribution to the people:

GROG FOR VOTES.

Prior to the general elections in June last year and the subsequent September 29 by-election in Pukapuka/Nassau, loads and loads of grog and food were shipped to Pukapuka and Nassau on one of the Taio Shipping Co. vessels, free of freight….

What the DAPs, under the leadership of [DAP Pukapuka/Nassau candidate] Tiaki [Wuatai], in fact, did was to keep the mapu and other supporters housed in one of the halls for about a week before the date of voting and fed them, day after day, with grog and tinned food from Rarotonga! Yes, GROG, day after day! (Cook Islands Star 12/05/2000:25).

Sir Geoffrey Henry, then leader of the Opposition, told me that in the months prior to the by-election, Pukapuka/Nassau had imported more alcohol in one year than had been imported during the previous ten. This was done in order to foster support among the Pukapuka/Nassau voters – the expectation being (according to Sir Henry) “here’s your beer, where’s our vote?”

A second by-election was announced for the Pukapuka/Nassau constituency to take place in September 2000, and once again the seat was vital to the (then) DAP/NAP coalition government. The coalition was three seats short of a two-thirds majority in

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298 This seat was originally removed from the DAP candidate after court action established that he had not resigned from public service while standing for election. Later, this decision was reversed, and a by-election was announced for September 1999. The CIP candidate won the by-election, but the result was appealed in court and declared void because votes had been improperly included in the count. A new by-election was announced, but did not take place until September 2000. The DAP candidate won the seat, although this result is still subject to (yet more) court action.
parliament, which was required to change the Cook Islands Constitution. A two-thirds majority was desired in order to remove the incumbent Speaker of the House, who at that time was Ngereteina Puna, a former CIP Minister, and had been appointed to the position during the first (CIP/NAP) coalition government.\textsuperscript{299} The government’s plans to obtain the Pukapuka/Nassau constituency were apparently revealed in a document discovered by the CIP in a rubbish bin, when the CIP moved into the Opposition offices previously held by the DAP. The document outlined plans to relocate Pukapukan DAP supporters from Rarotonga to Pukapuka in time for them to qualify as voters for the by-election, offering them public-service appointments as inducement. The plans named specific people, and at the time it was discovered (24 February 2000), four of the fifteen people named in the document had returned to government jobs on Pukapuka. DAP officials denied the authenticity of the document, and disavowed any such plans for the electorate – but a reliable source told me the plans were made, but were never meant to be written down!

Allegiance within parliament was typically maintained by increased salaries and allowances to MPs aligned with the ruling government. In most cases, the desire of MPs for personal financial benefit superseded allegiance to their various political parties. The stability of government was often jeopardised by the ambitions of individual politicians for positions of increased authority and financial benefit, which consequently ballooned Ministerial budget allocations as MPs were induced to maintain support for the government. If individual government MPs were not satisfied with their roles (and pay) in government, their loyalty became fragile – as this (somewhat ironic) interview with Tom Marsters (a CIP candidate who crossed the floor for 24 hours after the 1999 general elections) demonstrates:

“Tom Marsters will always be loyal to the (Cook Islands) Party. He will never move, doesn’t matter if we kick him left, right and centre, kick him in the backside, kick him in the head. We’ve done it in the past, we’ll do it again. Doesn’t matter, he won’t move.”

That, says Demo Alliance’ [sic] newest ally and future deputy prime minister, Tom Marsters, is how the party and people he served for 30 plus years treated him. Those years of service are now behind Marsters who, like Tangata Vavia say that chapter of their lives is closed.

\textsuperscript{299} The Speaker of the House is not required to be a sitting MP. Ultimately, Ngereteina Puna was not removed as Speaker of the House, until he resigned in July 2002.
Marsters is emotional and close to tears when he recalls, “there I was at the bottom of the table, waiting for the crumbs, waiting for them to fall off the table, and there are the Johnnies-Come-Lately who reap the benefits of my toil and blab about it. There must come a time when patience must run out.”

Marsters was passed over for a ministerial post in the CIP/NAP government [coalition talks]. But most cutting of all, was when Prime Minister Sir Geoff failed to name him in the line-up for assistant minister’s posts (Cook Islands News 28/07/1999).

Ministerial budget allocations, contained during the transition of 1996, once again began to reach disproportionate levels during the period of fieldwork. As stated previously (page 133), supporters of political parties expected tangible reciprocity for their support, so that, for example, the second coalition government was pressured by supporters to remove Heads of Ministries who supported the CIP, and replace them with party affiliates, regardless of experience. These demands were largely resisted by the government, although the issue did create internal instability within the DAP.

Another repercussion of political instability in the Cook Islands was that prestigious Ministerial Portfolios (such as Finance and Tourism) were allocated on the basis of a Minister’s place in the party hierarchy, rather than on experience. For example, Norman George, the Deputy Prime Minister and a lawyer by profession, held the portfolio for the Ministry of Health, although there were two qualified medical doctors within cabinet at the time (Drs Maoate and Woonton). This is not an unusual feature of democratic representation, although the small size of the Cook Islands parliament (25 members of parliament) meant that the skill base of potential Ministerial candidates was very limited. Moreover, the instability of government meant that every time a major shift in power occurred, Ministerial portfolios were shuffled from person to person, so that individual Ministers were unable to familiarise themselves with the complexities of the Ministry bureaucracy, even if they desired to do so. This was evident, for example, in my interview with the (then) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health (among other Ministries), Norman George. When I asked him about his involvement with the Ministry of Health, his answer was that, in general, he let the Ministry “do their own thing” – the Ministry obtained a lot of its funding from overseas agencies, such as WHO and AusAID, so he was happy for them to pursue their own policies in this regard. As Minister of Health, he also held rather different views on
alcohol than those of the Ministry of Health and Department of Public Health (discussed below). George’s opinion was that drink-driving and domestic abuse was not really a problem in the Cook Islands, and in particular, it was not the government’s role to limit drinking by adults. The DAP/NAP government was interested in reducing alcohol consumption by youth, however – recent increases in alcohol import levies, and legislation to ban alcohol and tobacco advertising was intended to achieve this (although the legislation had not passed through parliament by 2002).

Before the 1999 general elections, Geoffrey Henry’s CIP government had mooted plans for a ‘sin tax’ on alcohol and tobacco, whereby levies derived from imports of these goods would go straight to the Ministry of Health. These plans had not been introduced by the 1999 election. The general perception among politicians was that moves to increase prices, or restrict the sale of alcohol and tobacco, would prove damaging at election time – even if, publicly, people supported the moves.

In July 2000, cabinet increased alcohol and tobacco import levies by 30%. This followed broad reductions in import taxes for motor vehicles and vegetable imports, introduced a few months earlier. Wine was exempt from the levy increase, ostensibly due to the importance of wine to the tourism industry, and locally manufactured beers (i.e. Cook’s Lager) were also exempt in order to encourage local industry. This increase was not received well by alcohol importers, who had not been consulted, or even informed, of changes to levies (Nick Henry is the Bond Store manager):

> It was Friday 21 July. Customs had just rejected [Nick] Henry’s clearance papers because they did not reflect the new levy rates.

New levy rates? What new levy rates?

It was only then that Henry found out government had passed a 30% increase to levies on alcohol and tobacco.

> “Even MFEM didn’t know about it,” says Nick Henry. Ministry of Finance and Economic Management officials in the same office as customs were unable to tell Henry where the levy came from or what it was supposed to achieve…. “I’m really disappointed they didn’t consult us and didn’t even consult Revenue Management,” says Nick Henry. “It’s all very well for the government to change the law and that’s not what I’m complaining about. What I’m concerned about is their lack of consultation with the industry.” (*Business Monthly* 08/2000:8).

These levy increases were also not discussed with the Ministry of Health, although they were publicly described as contributing to public health measures. When I
asked the (then) Prime Minister, Dr Maoate, about his rationale for the levy increase, he explained that the reduction of car and food import levies meant that he, as Minister of Finance, had to find a way to make up the shortfall. This was done by estimating the amount of revenue the state would lose, and adding that amount to alcohol and tobacco levies.\textsuperscript{300} I asked why alcohol and tobacco in particular were chosen to make up the revenue shortfall, and Dr Maoate explained that alcohol and tobacco are health hazards, that alcohol caused significant costs to the health system through road accidents, and that increased levies would offset these expenses. Given that the levy increases had been specifically calculated to offset car and food import levy reductions, it was unlikely that any of these funds would be directed specifically into health services.

None of the political parties had any explicit policy regarding alcohol. When I spoke to him in late 2000, the (then) Leader of the Opposition (Sir Geoffrey Henry) said that the CIP had no policy on alcohol, but was now in the process of formulating an explicit policy on such matters. The new CIP policy was also to introduce safeguards against cronyism and the tendency for MPs to act as ‘law unto themselves’. These politicians (Sir Geoffrey Henry, Dr Maoate, and Mr George) all considered alcohol to be, in the words of Mr George, an “excellent way to socialise”, provided that alcohol was taken in moderation (also see comments by Sir Henry, page 124). The views of these politicians regarding alcohol (though by no means shared by all politicians) were similar in many respects to those of Cook Islanders who drank. Mr George told me, for example, that drinking allowed him to relax after work, without which he might go “crazy”. Although these men all conceded that some negative repercussions were associated with alcohol consumption, clearly their political (and policy) actions would be tempered by their own attitude and practices concerning alcohol.

During the period of fieldwork, members of the public and the police raised the possibility of the Cook Islands acquiring evidential breath-testing equipment as a means of controlling drunk driving, particularly on Rarotonga. A recurrent refrain was that the neighbouring island of Niue had breath testing equipment, so why didn’t the Cook Islands?\textsuperscript{301} Mr George, as Minister of Health and Minister of Police, however, vetoed any state-sector efforts to obtain breath-testing equipment. The cost of setting up such

\textsuperscript{300} Although I asked, I was not able to establish the particular means by which this was done – Dr Maoate elected not to explain his methodology

\textsuperscript{301} Niue is a state of one island, and in 2000 had a resident population of 2,100. Like the Cook Islands, Niue maintains a relationship of ‘free association’ with New Zealand – Niueans are New Zealand citizens, and most Niueans live in New Zealand.
equipment, according to statements Mr George made on television and during my interview, was in the order of NZ $100,000 (US $47,000). As such, it was beyond the means of the Cook Islands government to provide facilities for evidential breath testing. The incidence of drink-driving accidents in the Cook Islands was not sufficient to warrant such a large expense, nor was drink-driving a serious problem in the islands.

Nevertheless, during 2000/2001, Mr George was instrumental in obtaining funding for a drug sniffer-dog to be brought to the islands from New Zealand, at an expense of NZ $30,000 (US $14,000). Funding for this was acquired through foreign aid, and was considered important because of international concern that the Cook Islands were a staging point for international drug trafficking. Mr George’s impetus for acquiring the drug dog may have been more personal in nature – several times over the past year he had suggested that staff of the *Cook Islands News* (which was critical of his political performance) were ‘drug addicts’, and had levelled the same accusation at some business people around the island with whom he had an antagonistic relationship.

Changes have occurred in Cook Islands politics since fieldwork that are worth considering at this point. In July 2002, Norman George was sacked from the position of Deputy Prime Minister by Dr Maoate:

Norman George’s persistent demands for increased budget allocations for his office and portfolios led to his sacking yesterday by Prime Minister Terepai Maoate.

“The demands you have made during the budget process for the year 2001/02 have imposed an intolerable strain on Cabinet, Caucus and the government,” wrote Mr Maoate in a letter to Mr George.

Dr Maoate claimed yesterday afternoon that even last year George’s demands were not tolerated by other Caucus members.

Dr Maoate said he had revoked George’s ministerial portfolios and his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister…. In sacking George, Dr Maoate has taken charge of the portfolios held by the New Alliance Party leader…. It is understood George wanted an extra $1.5 million added to his office and portfolios in the budget for the current financial year. (*Cook Islands News* 26/07/2001:1).

A few months later, the new Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Woonton, ousted Dr Maoate and established the third coalition government since the last general elections – this time, a coalition between the DAP and the CIP. Sir Geoffrey Henry was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, and Dr Woonton the new Prime Minister of the Cook Islands. Dr Woonton took over the Ministry of Health portfolio, and by mid-2002 had, in
cooperation with the New Zealand Police, acquired evidential breath testing equipment for use in the Cook Islands. The latest coalition government, with Sir Geoffrey Henry as Minister of Finance, appears to be continuing the long-standing tradition of increased expenditure on perks for government ministers, and the provision of jobs for political supporters. Increased funds have been allocated toward state ‘cultural’ activities, and 109 ‘road and beautification’ and ‘environment’ officers have recently been appointed to the Outer Islands, at an annual cost to the state of NZ$1,000,000 (US $470,000).

Health

The activities of the Ministry of Health and related government departments were adversely affected by the economic reform of 1996. The budget allocation for health remained static from this time, at an annual rate of about NZ$ 3 million until the 1999/2000 financial year, and the Ministry was required to restructure essential services, equipment and personnel. As a result, user charges were introduced for prescriptions, consultations and overnight hospital stays (CIMH 2000:15). According to a review document produced by the Ministry of Health, these reforms had “an adverse impact in relation to the continuity, and at times, quality of health service delivery” (CIMH 2000:15). Difficulties were experienced in the adequate supply of pharmaceuticals, particularly to the outer islands, and staff morale suffered from the abolition of over half of the staff positions extant prior to 1996. In 1999/2000 and 2000/2001, health expenditure had risen to NZ$ 4.2 million and NZ$ 5.6 million respectively. These increases were largely due to the Ministry of Health re-assuming the costs of outer islands personnel, referrals and pharmaceuticals, which had become the responsibility of the Island Councils after the 1996 reforms. Aid donors (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, AusAID and NZODA) also provided considerable funds for protection/prevention activities in the Cook Islands, so that a large proportion of health expenditure was not borne by the government. Nevertheless, funds allocated to healthcare were, in the opinion of the health sector review, “inadequate”:

Current budgetary allocations cannot even adequately address basic needs (especially in the outer islands) let alone address sophisticated recommendations like upgrading the diagnostic capability of the Rarotongan hospital and so forth. Without bias, the current level of spending on health is inadequate (CIMH 2000:66).
As discussed (page 147), alcohol-related disease or accidents were not recorded by the Ministry of Health, with the exception of alcohol-related vehicle accidents. Moreover, I was unable to obtain health statistics after 1996, as staff at the Ministry of Health were reticent in supplying them to me. This was due, I believe, to increased attention on the practices of medical professionals, and specifically, by a public perception that they lacked accountability and sufficient expertise. Matters were brought to a head after some sudden deaths on Rarotonga were diagnosed as ‘myocardial infarction’, and a reporter from the *Cook Islands News* wrote a series of articles criticising the fact that no autopsies were conducted to confirm cause of death, despite legislation requiring all sudden deaths to be investigated by autopsy (Coroners Act 1979/80). The relationship between this reporter and the Secretary of Health became increasingly strained, so that by June 2001, the Secretary had (apparently) “sent a memo to Health Statistician Ngari Munukoa telling him not to release health statistics” (*Cook Islands News* 09/06/2001:1).

Anecdotal evidence through conversations with medical staff at Rarotonga’s hospital, private medical practitioners, and staff at the Department of Public Health, indicated that alcohol consumption contributed to morbidity and mortality in association with diseases and conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, motor vehicle accidents, domestic violence and gout. By estimation of the hospital administrator, alcohol-related incidents accounted for about 10% of patient referrals to New Zealand, although conditions that were primarily indicative of alcohol-abuse were not common, with five cases of cirrhosis of the liver in Rarotonga between 1998 and 2000. Interestingly, the hospital administration adopted a strong moralistic stance alcohol-related vehicle accidents (see below). I heard on a number of occasions (although not from health professionals) that people admitted to hospital with injuries after drinking and driving were not given anaesthetic during treatment for their injuries, because they were ‘drunk’ and ‘wouldn’t feel it’. When I mentioned this to doctors at the hospital, they laughed, but denied that anaesthetic was ever withheld from patients. Nevertheless, one did say that he was not inclined to be kind to drunk people, and that to them he showed “no mercy”. Drunk persons were, according to some people I spoke to, treated harshly by hospital staff, although this may not have been treatment reserved for alcohol-related

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302 The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health argued that autopsies were not culturally appropriate, as did the Secretary of Health, Tupu Araiti. However, this stance was problematic, as the family of one of the deceased desired an autopsy. Nevertheless, none were conducted.
injuries alone – the Ministry of Health report noted that throughout the Cook Islands, “the attitude of many [hospital] staff is hostile and demeaning” (CIMH 2000:18). In general, there was a lack of public confidence in Cook Islands medical services, and (again anecdotally) I came across a number of people who had received what appeared to me as inadequate treatment for various ailments. By way of illustration, a case that received some local publicity in the *Cook Islands Herald* described how a tourist was bitten by a dog when on holiday in Rarotonga, and subsequently received treatment and stitches at Rarotonga hospital. Some days later, her leg became swollen, and when she returned to hospital, the doctor merely removed the stitches which, he explained, were the source of the swelling, and told her to go home, and maybe have a swim. Fortunately she was referred to some American Mission doctors who were visiting the island, who advised her that the “wound had not been adequately debrided and that the skin was necrotic [and] I was then advised to get to Auckland for urgent medical treatment” (*Cook Islands Herald* 12/08/2000:9).

The system of medical referrals from the Cook Islands to New Zealand meant that a large proportion of the medical services costs were borne by New Zealand (see page 260). This was the most practicable means, in terms of cost, equipment, and personnel, of providing adequate medical services to resident Cook Islanders. The Cook Islands Ministry of Health was responsible for the expense of transporting patients to New Zealand (typically, Greenlane or Auckland Hospitals in Auckland), and for providing medical attendants during travel. All patients were transported by plane, unless their medical conditions were so precarious as to exclude flying, in which case, they remained at Rarotonga Hospital. Expenses incurred by the Cook Islands health services for the treatment of alcohol-related injuries were significant, and a cause of general concern for the Ministry of Health and hospital administrators. Some examples of expenses incurred through treatment of alcohol-related vehicle accidents, provided in a report on the ‘Healthy Islands’ project in 1998, serve as a demonstration:

**Example 1. Alcohol Related Accident Cost Breakdown (1993)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient: Male 21 years</th>
<th>Final Diagnosis: Pelvic fracture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Analysis:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital fees 40 days @ $150 per day</td>
<td>$6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication plus 50% surcharge</td>
<td>$3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>$9300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
Example 2. Alcohol Related Accident

Patient: Female 19 years
Final Diagnosis: Intra abdominal trauma / Fracture of spine
Cost Analysis: Hospital fees 6 days @ $150 per day $ 900
Medication plus 50% surcharge $1117
Airfares & Medical escort $5441
Total: $7458

(GCI 1998:6-7)

During my stay on Rarotonga, administrators of Rarotonga Hospital (with tacit approval within the Ministry of Health303) adopted a policy of demanding that drink-driving patients with injuries requiring treatment in New Zealand pay for the cost of their care and transportation. This policy was, apparently, a “collective idea” from the hospital staff that was subsequently adopted by the executive. The rationale was that, as alcohol was a factor in the injury, and because people chose to drink alcohol, they were responsible for any repercussions of their drinking, and should not place a (budgetary) burden on the public health system. Interestingly, no such policy was adopted for any other disease or injury, such as in cases of smokers with lung cancer, for example. Since adopting the policy, one family had agreed to pay for the cost of referral, for a total of NZ $2000. In another case, the family complained that they should have to pay the fare – after some negotiation, the family and the hospital administration agreed to pay half the cost each. Although the hospital administrator was very much in favour of the policy, he admitted to me that implementation was “awkward” for the hospital, as if a person suffered from delays caused by negotiation of payment, the hospital might be held accountable. The situation was complicated by the fact that many families might not be able to raise the necessary funds. These difficulties would, apparently, be overcome if the policy were to be approved by Cabinet, or at least officially by the Ministry of Health.

The system of referrals to New Zealand was also affected by political considerations, so that friends and relatives of influential people were likely to receive immediate approval for health-related travel. Moreover, and although there was no necessity for it, Dr Joe Williams (the Cook Islands MP for the Overseas constituency)

303 That is, although the policy was not official, staff in the Ministry of Health were aware of the ‘policy’.
received government money, in the order of NZ $100,000 per annum, to act as a liaison for Cook Islanders to the New Zealand health system. To justify the grant, all Cook Islanders referred to New Zealand were to be introduced to the health system by Dr Williams upon arrival at Auckland – which was, as some people pointed out, an unnecessary bureaucratic step when arriving patients were admitted to New Zealand hospitals quite adequately under the existing system.304

The activities of the Department of Public Health regarding alcohol were, as already stated, largely directed at media campaigns, and through presentations and talks at schools, and to other community groups in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands. Health promotion messages, and the promulgation of pertinent health information about the effects of alcohol, were largely imported from programs designed and developed for overseas health agencies. The form and content of these advertising campaigns was not free from criticism by other Ministries and Departments that dealt with alcohol-related problems on Rarotonga – staff at the Women’s, Youth and Sports Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for example, thought these campaigns “lacked imagination” and did not appeal to target audiences, and moreover, that the staff in Public Health lacked the necessary skills to conduct effective campaigns against immoderate drinking. Health promotion programs at the Department of Public Health were facilitated by three full time staff and one nutritionist, with regular help from Health Inspectors and Public Health Nurses. The effectiveness of public health messages encouraging people to abstain from, or moderate, alcohol consumption, was also undermined by the fact that a number of staff from the Department of Public Health and the Ministry of Health were seen around the island in bars, drinking:

I have seen people, who talk about alcohol, drink, and they are worse than the people who drinks. They are worse than them, they’re hypocrites, [they think] they’re far more better, and they think they know it all.

Are there certain kinds of people you’re talking about?

Yes, people that work in the Public Health [laugh]. Yes, they’re the worst, I’ll tell you, they’re the worst. I’ve seen them with my own eyes, I’ve actually served them – I used to work in the bar in Paradise Bar, and they drink every Friday night when they’re having card games. Some of them hardly speak, talking to them about bad mouths and loud mouths.

So that undermines the message a bit then?

304 The government at this time was attempting to obtain the support of Dr Williams in order to secure a majority in parliament.
Yes, yeah. They are telling us what to do and yet they can’t even do it themselves. Well, I’m only being honest with what I’m saying (Female, 25, drinker).

V: I’ve heard that people in Public Health drink too.
Ah, yes, they are so stupid, that is stupid of them! How can people listen to them when they are doing the thing that they are saying not to do? (Male, 42, non-drinker).

A number of people mentioned that they had seen people from the health services drinking, and offered similar opinions on the perceived hypocrisy of such activity. Other prominent campaigners for alcohol moderation were also criticised for failing to ‘practice what you preach’.

Staff at Public Health categorised ‘problem drinking’ and ‘alcoholism’ in much the same terms as described by other Cook Islanders, as regular drinking by certain individuals. But there was no pan-departmental definition of what kind of drinking was ‘problem drinking’, and (much as for Cook Islanders in general), staff were free to form their own opinion of what constituted ‘heavy drinking’ and ‘alcoholism’:

How would you describe a “problem drinker”, what kinds of things would they be doing?
Well basically I would say, someone who drinks in excess, maybe three or four times a week. I know that’s happened, although I don’t have up to date information. I have second-hand information there are people who drink regularly three or four times during the week (Public Health Department Staff Member).

There were very few inter-departmental, concerted campaigns concerning alcohol use between the various Ministries and Departments in the Cook Islands. Between 1995 and 1998, the ‘Healthy Islands Project’, initiated with funding from AusAID, was meant to forge inter-departmental strategies, but this campaign coincided with the transition period, and it became a casualty of the reduction of public service workers across all Ministries in the Cook Islands.

305 In the forum of public opinion, of course, people usually did not differentiate between Ministry of Health staff and the staff of Public Health. The majority of staff in Public Health were either not drinkers, or not public drinkers.
The Churches

The Cook Islands’ major churches (Cook Islands Christian Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Roman Catholic church, Church of the Latter Day Saints Apostolic and Assembly of God) all exhorted their congregations to abstain from, or moderate, consumption of alcohol. Of these churches, the SDA (Seventh Day Adventist), LDS (Latter Day Saints) and Apostolic churches required their members not to drink alcohol at all. CICC (Cook Islands Christian Church) members were told to moderate alcohol consumption, with the exception of elders and pastors, who were required not to drink any alcohol. The Catholic Church exhorted its members to practice moderation in alcohol consumption. The AOG (Assembly of God) was the most liberal of the major churches, and regarded the consumption of alcohol primarily to be a matter of individual choice, and so offered no restrictions or proscriptions on the use of alcohol by church members.

For members of the SDA, LDS and Apostolic Churches, members who were discovered drinking alcohol were censured and, technically, expelled from the respective church, even if for only a short time. The stance on alcohol adopted by each church was based, among other things, on the teaching in 2 Corinthians 6:15-17, that each human body is a ‘temple of the living God’, and should therefore be cared for respectfully. Abstention from alcohol was regarded as incommensurate with appropriate care of the body:

*How long have you been a Seventh Day Adventist?*

Oh since, I’m born, and that is probably one of the reason why I’m maintaining on this track, of abstaining from alcohol, because I believe that our body is a temple of God, and you, in your own right mind, should not do something to destroy it. So you respect it and you keep it pure, if that is the word.

*And alcohol changes your body in a way that food does not? What is it about alcohol that means you’re not respecting your body in a way that is appropriate for God?*

Well, ah, first it affects your brain, your mind, because that’s a clear example of why it should not be used. Because God does not want your mind to be under the control of another power, the power of alcohol. He wants you to be in control of your own mind. But when they drink it’s not actually them. It’s alcohol in control of them (Male, 42, non-drinker).
Most members of these churches did not drink alcohol, although through the course of fieldwork I did come across a few members of these churches who drank occasionally. When these people drank, they did so at their homes, and out of the ‘public eye’, so as to maintain their status within the church. Often, when drinkers within these churches rose in status within their respective church (by becoming elders, for example), they would stop drinking altogether – so that drinking was usually practiced only by ‘ordinary’ members of the respective congregation, if at all. In public declarations and opinions, these churches were uniform in their opposition to alcohol consumption, provision, production, and advertisement. The injunction against alcohol consumption by these churches could, on occasion, create tension for church members, particularly when all family members did not belong to the church. In these circumstances relatives and friends would not attend family gatherings, events and ceremonies, due in part to the fact that no alcohol would be provided. This meant that it was difficult, for many people, to maintain friendships with other people who were drinkers, and who were not members of the church.

The CICC and Roman Catholic churches allowed church members to drink alcohol, although (as already stated) moderation was encouraged by priests and pastors. In the CICC, pastors and church elders were not permitted to drink alcohol, primarily in order to provide a good example to the rest of the congregation. The Roman Catholic Church allowed senior church members to drink – the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church told me that he was not adverse to having ‘a glass of wine’ at social functions, provided they were not organised by the church. Nevertheless, there was a general expectation, even within the Catholic Church, that senior members would not drink, and according to the Bishop, people often ‘gossiped’ or expressed surprise to him personally, that he should drink in public. Despite the CICC injunction that elders should not drink alcohol, this did occur on occasion – during my fieldwork in Rarotonga, one elder of the CICC was even known to produce and sell home-brew! Inevitably, the ‘coconut wireless’ would inform the responsible CICC pastor of the indiscretion of the particular elder. When I spoke to the pastor of the Avarua CICC, he knew of one such person, and his practice in such circumstances was to speak to the elder privately, and warn that person to stop drinking. Although he was reluctant to do so, due to the shame it would cause the person in question, this pastor was considering

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306 The Bishop said he was not adverse to providing alcohol at church functions, but that the cost was prohibitive.
removing the ‘elder’ status from one such person, for failing to curtail his drinking after repeated warnings.

Of all the churches in the Cook Islands, the AOG had the most appeal to youth and those people who had become disenchanted with the CICC. The AOG was a charismatic church, employing modern songs and amplified music to attract church membership. The AOG church offered no proscriptive injunctions on the use of alcohol by its congregation, or by its pastors. Alcohol use was primarily a matter for the individual church-goer, although the church did offer support for people who experienced problems from alcohol consumption.

In practice, people who drank and wished to stop drinking achieved their goal by joining one of the churches that prohibited alcohol consumption by members of the congregation – that is, the LDS, SDA and Apostolic churches. A number of people commented that although the Cook Islands’ most popular church, the CICC, preached moderation in the consumption of alcohol, this advice was rarely followed by people who wished to drink, or were in the habit of drinking. Abstention from drinking was, in the majority of cases, accompanied by a change in religious denomination. By and large, calls for regulation or moderation of alcohol consumption by the churches focussed on the ‘problem’ of youth drinking, rather than the drinking practices of adults – a sentiment which was echoed by most people who discussed the ‘problem’ of alcohol use in the Cook Islands.

The views and opinions of the five major churches of the Cook Islands (the CICC, Roman Catholic, SDA, LDS and AOG) were represented in aggregate through a political body, the Religious Advisory Council (RAC). Whereas individual churches held different policies and practices regarding the use of alcohol, the RAC regularly advised the Cook Islands government on alcohol policy, and in general, its recommendations were for increased control and restricted access. The Special Select Committee on alcohol and tobacco advertising (see page 261), for example, was formed in response to a letter from the RAC to the government, recommending that all advertising of these products be banned in the Cook Islands. The RAC also had representatives on the Liquor Licensing Authority, and so on occasion would be instrumental in preventing licenses from being issued – although in practice, the proliferation of liquor licenses throughout the Islands occurred even with representation of the RAC on the Authority.
Conclusion

Aspects of the broader context of alcohol policy and practice described in this chapter clearly demonstrate continuities and contrasts that act in tandem with the meanings of alcohol to ‘ordinary’ Maori. In the media, advertising such as the “I like beer” campaign resonate directly with Maori understandings of the positive qualities of alcohol – the ad shows people having fun, singing, dressed casually, and ends with a blurred camera; while the experience of drinking (at least in its positive forms) is associated with merriment, fun, singing (unrestrained behaviour) and, of course, a transformation of one’s self (the blurred camera). These correlations are not only obvious, but very likely effective: first in increasing sales of particular brands of alcohol, but also in reinforcing public understandings of alcohol and the effect that alcohol has on persons and groups. Similarly, the Steinlager ads (among others) portray beer as sophisticated and international – thus implicitly highlighting the association of kava papa’a with prestige goods and items, and in the process, appealing to Maori (see discussion at page 311). Entertainment articles also resonate with drinker’s understandings of alcohol – they often refer to persons of significance who, in unusual circumstances, have done something embarrassing or shameful while drinking which is also (by no coincidence) amusing. These stories thus capture qualities of alcohol as a social leveller (while drinking, even the best people do ordinary things and make mistakes), as a revealer of one’s ‘true self’ (as stories tell of important people who act inappropriately), and of course, as a source of humour and amusement.

Public Health advertising, by contrast, appears less resonant with public understandings of alcohol practice. To most Maori, the warning that drinking makes one an ‘idiot’ is, at one and the same time, an expectation (within certain limits), and a consequence (that only happens to certain people). However, Maori understandings of drinking are complex, and a simple model that suggests there is a direct causal relationship between drinking and idiocy is likely to be disregarded. Most drinkers have ample empirical evidence to argue that this is not the case; or that when it is, the rule only applies to certain people, and/or under certain circumstances. The bald assertion that drinking is not glamorous is also unfortunate, for most drinkers accept (implicitly or explicitly) that the contrary is true. The groups for whom these propositions are true – namely, some of those who do not drink – are not, obviously, the target audience of these campaigns, and do not need to be convinced.
Police activities concerning alcohol create a context for drinkers in which there is little perception of legal / criminal repercussions for alcohol-related offences. Most Maori drinkers think, quite rightly, that the risk of them being apprehended, much less charged for alcohol-related offences is small. When a person jumps on their scooter to go home after a long night of drinking, his concern (and that of his colleagues) is not primarily that he may be apprehended by police, but that he may fall off the bike and damage it, or worse, be injured himself. There are few transportation alternatives for drunk people who want to return home (or go elsewhere), as public transportation is expensive and often difficult to obtain (particularly in the early hours of the morning). Thus, when a person becomes argumentative after drinking alcohol, there are very few counter-arguments that colleagues can offer to prevent that person from driving, without resorting to physical force.

Even should apprehension and prosecution by the police occur, the consequences for drinkers are not onerous. Court fines are typically low (NZ $200 or less for most offences, and substantially less for the majority of prosecutions), which, given that most Maori now work for wages or are otherwise integrated into the cash economy, is probably little disincentive to engage in ‘risky’ alcohol-related activities.

Some of the ‘special’ qualities attributed to alcohol by Maori are also evident in political practice – the personable and obligation-forming qualities of alcohol are clearly one reason why alcohol was shipped in vast quantities to be distributed to Pukapukan mapu voters. The importance of alcohol in the lives of drinkers also makes it a ‘hot topic’ for politicians, so that alcohol debates are often avoided by politicians if possible (or alternately, sent to the great political never-never, the Select Committee). The implicit endorsement of alcohol (through gifts to voters) could, presumably, undermine efforts of health officials to limit alcohol consumption by Rarotongan residents – particularly given people’s keen appreciation of, and resistance to, hypocrisy by persons with positions of authority.

In this chapter I have described the role of alcohol in some institutions and organisations of Rarotonga. This discussion illustrates the way that the political economy of drinking is integrated with the practices of Maori in their everyday practice and understanding of alcohol. This political economy does not only create a context in which drinking practice is enacted – it is also affected by the understandings of various groups and individuals within Rarotonga (and moreover, the understandings of people and organisations outside Rarotonga). These ways of understanding alcohol are varied,
so that alcohol is a site of contestation between groups and individuals. In this chapter, and those of Part Two of this thesis, I have explored some of these understandings, and described some sites of struggle, and showed how often quite diverse interests and agendas combine to construct the domain of alcohol practice in Rarotonga.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN:
AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF KAVA MAORI AND KAVA PAPA’A

As the preceding chapters indicate, alcohol was and is of considerable significance in Rarotonga, and to Cook Islanders who live there. In the context of anthropological theory, alcohol bridges the conceptual disjunction between *etic* and *emic* perspectives in illuminating ways, precisely because of its importance at the level of political economy, to social relations, and for persons, both drinkers and non-drinkers. Alcohol is also fascinating because the changes that occur with its use, within groups and individuals, are generally interpreted as resulting from the substance rather than those who use it – although, as I have illustrated in this thesis, this is not exclusively the case in Rarotonga.

**Political Economy**

This vice brings in one hundred million francs in taxes every year. I will certainly forbid it at once – as soon as you can name a virtue that brings in as much revenue.307

The history of alcohol in Rarotonga is also a history of the integration of the island into global political-economic processes. Although contact between Rarotonga and other islands in the region occurred before contact with Europeans, it had been sporadic in the centuries prior to the early 1800s. The arrival of occasional merchants, followed by the LMS missionaries, marked the beginning of increased contact between Rarotongans and Papa’a, and Rarotongans and other peoples of the Pacific region, and consequently signalled an increased integration of Rarotonga into a global economy. This was most clearly illustrated in the exchange of goods and products between Rarotongans and European traders, whalers and missionaries; and regarding alcohol, the burgeoning (and illicit) trade of kava papa’a. The LMS’s version of Christianity was another point of Rarotongan integration into global processes. When the LMS was formed, Britain was emerging as an industrial society; and this political and economic context shaped (and was shaped by) religious views on alcohol. Adler (1991) argues that the emergence of capitalist society, the desire of employers for improved punctuality and performance by employees, and the concomitant emergence of a rigid

307 Napoleon III on tobacco, but equally applicable to alcohol! Quoted in Goodman (1993:191).
distinction between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’, was mirrored by the ‘ideological
accompaniment’ of the temperance movement: “By preaching discipline, sobriety, and
self-control, the temperance movement protected capitalist investment” (Adler
1991:387). Roberts (1984) argues that, in the United Kingdom and the USA, the
temperance movement emerged from the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation
of those countries, and the Enlightenment emphasis on ‘rationality’. New techniques of
alcohol manufacture made distilled spirits available to the general population, rather
than just the middle or upper-class elite, and alcohol was slowly transformed from the
“proper man’s pleasure” to the “poor man’s vice” (Roberts 1984:3):

Industrialization and urbanization thickened the web of human interdependence,
enhancing the potential dangers alcohol could pose to the social order while
making its control by customary means more difficult. At the same time, the new
system of production increased the number of people with a material stake in
sobriety (Roberts 1984:3).

This period also saw increased civic participation by groups formerly excluded
from operations of the state. Enlightenment ideals demanded that these new citizens be
rational citizens, and of course, rational workers. In this context, drunkenness became
undesirable, as it tended to ‘release the (irrational) beast’ in workers, citizens, and
church-goers. Thus, in the fifty years prior to 1830, the symbolic value of alcohol
altered radically, from a “good creature of God” (Ames 1985:28) to the “demon rum”.

These perspectives, conditioned half a world away, were subsequently imported to
the Cook Islands under the auspices of the missionaries. Nevertheless, the philosophy of
the LMS, as conceived in Britain, did not reach Rarotonga unaltered – missionary
experiences of alcohol use by Tahitians further galvanised their antagonism to alcohol.
And later, Rarotongan visitors to Tahiti brought home somewhat contrary views of, and
practices concerning, alcohol.

A concern with productiveness in work was explicitly evident under the British
Protectorate, and the New Zealand Administration that followed. During these eras, the
protectorate and colonial administrators were concerned, among other things, at the
impact alcohol consumption had on the productivity of Maori in Rarotonga.
Bureaucratic institutions were, such as the Land Court and the Island Councils (in their
various permutations), were introduced in an attempt to mould the people into
productive and profitable agriculturalists and workers, with limited success.
The heavy reliance of these administrations on revenue obtained from liquor fines was not peculiar to Rarotonga – in New Zealand, 1847, “the entrepreneur William Fox was ‘appalled to find that in Auckland there was one conviction for drunkenness for every eight persons’” (in Awatere, Casswell et al. 1984:3). In 1878, laws aimed at prohibiting the sale of alcohol to New Zealand Maori were “as much to do with [the Government’s] loss of excise revenue through ‘sly-grogging’ as with any humanitarian motives”, according to Awatere et al. (1984:9). Although Moss, during the British Protectorate, claimed that licensing the sale of alcohol was justified primarily because prohibition was unenforceable, his administration required licensing revenues to supplement the minimal funds it received from the New Zealand Government. Later, when Gudgeon and subsequent Resident Commissioners enforced prohibition and a monopoly on alcohol imports, the levies and fines derived from these policies also contributed a large proportion of revenue available to the Cook Islands Administration. Additional justification for laws that discriminated between Papa’a and Maori was provided by European and British ideas about race.

From independence to the present, alcohol remains important, politically and economically, in Rarotonga and the Cook Islands. During the 20th century, religious organisations originating outside the Cook Islands rose in prominence, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Church of the Latter Day Saints, which required their congregations to abstain from alcohol.308 Alcohol has been used to influence political allegiance, and held particular poignancy as a symbol of political equality with Papa’a. These changes occurred during a period of substantial changes to the political and economic organization of life in the Cook Islands, and particularly Rarotonga. Under New Zealand Administration, hotel liquor licenses were originally granted to cater for a potential tourist market, which did not materialise until after independence, when the International Airport on Rarotonga was opened, thanks to grants from the New Zealand Government. The airport substantially boosted the number of visitors to the Cook Islands, and also, the number of Cook Islanders who migrated to New Zealand. Increased revenue from tourism, particularly on Rarotonga, and the large State Sector, drew many Cook Islanders into a wage economy, so that increasingly they were able to purchase imported goods and foodstuffs, including kava papa’a. Imported,

308 Interestingly, when I approached the SDA Church for their views on alcohol, no one was prepared to talk about the issue, but I was given a SDA policy on alcohol – which had been downloaded directly from an American SDA site on the internet!
manufactured products were generally held in high esteem, and *kava papa’a* was no exception to this. Moreover, less people tended orchards and crops, in preference of wage work, so that the fruit required for *kava maori* was less plentiful – and with improved shipping, the fruit that remained was more profitably exported than used for the production of ‘bush beer’.

Alcohol remains an important source of state revenue by taxes and levies, and revenue derived from alcohol sales (to both Cook Islanders and tourists) is used to finance sports coverage in the media (which is very important to many Cook Islanders), and sponsorship of sports organisations. Alcohol sales also bolster the earnings of a number of small, family-owned stores around Rarotonga. State revenue derived from fines for alcohol offences no longer plays a significant role, as most fines cover little more than the cost of court administration. The expenses associated with the support of prisoners who have committed alcohol-related are substantial in comparison. In the provision of health services, alcohol-related accidents also contribute substantially to operating expenses, both in the Cook Islands and New Zealand, through the practice of overseas-referrals. Foreign aid also contributes a large proportion of moneys focused on alcohol-related ‘problems’ in the Cook Islands.

**Continuities and Changes in the Place of Alcohol.**

A number of key themes in the place of alcohol in Rarotongan life reappear throughout the history of the island, and are worth noting. Indeed, some of these themes precede the introduction of alcohol to the island, and are demonstrative of the way that aspects of social life have moulded the experience and utilisation of alcohol. While the nature of historical evidence is too ambiguous to admit arguments for causality (historical causality, as Benjamin (1968) noted, is inextricably bound up with the predispositions of the present), I will here argue, perhaps disingenuously, that continuities in the organisation of experiences of alcohol are apparent in the case of Rarotonga. Of these, one of the most important is the association of alcohol with persons of elite status, or of alcohol as a marker of social importance and consequence. In chapter three, I described how kava (*Piper methysticum*) was a beverage associated with persons of chiefly status, with the precedence of heredity, with supernatural power, and with the resolution of conflict. Kava was also a beverage preferred by warriors, particularly after demonstrating their prowess through acts of war with rivals (whether other warriors, or the inheritors of enmities or grievances). Quite apart from its qualities
as an intoxicating beverage (although this was no doubt also important), kava and pig were the supreme markers of the efficacy of power, or alternatively, produced efficacy through their prestation, exchange, and consumption. However, while kava shared these qualities for both chiefs (including ta’unga) and warriors, I also suggested that there was some indication that the consumption of kava was practiced in both ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ contexts: the former during religious and/or political events by chiefs and people of rank; the latter by warriors, as a means to celebrate or mark victory over their enemies.

These two ways of consuming kava (*piper methysticum*) appear, in some respects, analogous to the qualities that alcohol, in the form of *kava papa’a* and *kava maori*, were later to possess (or strictly speaking, to become possessed of) with regard to Maori. The analogy is partial however, because of the great range and power of complicating factors that arose through the process of missionisation – which not only produced a regular means of obtaining alcohol, but also constructed alcohol consumption as a site of conflict, by implicating it with the demonstration of allegiance to Christianity and the rule of law. *Kava papa’a* was a valued and precious good, at least for some – and for those that favoured alcohol, it was simultaneously a covert good, which had to be concealed from the eyes of missionaries, their police, and their acolytes. The very chiefs that had privileged access to alcohol (because their alignment with the missionaries facilitated their capacity to engage in foreign trade) were also the people under closest scrutiny by the missionaries.

The analogy between kava and alcohol then is incomplete, except insofar as both were largely restricted to persons of certain status, at least in the early years of missionisation. I have noted that in the period immediately following the arrival of the missionaries, the status of warriors changed, along with the end of war as a means of resolving conflict between social groups – the high status possessed by warriors, in essence, was lost. The status of chiefs, on the other hand, was maintained and soon bolstered by the presence of the mission, enabling (among many things) their privileged access to alcohol.

While a proportion of titled men secured access to alcohol (in the form of *kava papa’a*) in the years before the introduction of brewing techniques for *kava maori*, there is no evidence that titled women exercised their influence to access alcohol from 1845, when the first woman, Te Vaerua, became Makea Ariki. Originally, this may have been a consequence of the close alignment between the LMS mission and women who came
to occupy these titles, although in time even titled women who were not strongly aligned to the church appear not to have been conspicuous consumers of alcohol. When techniques for brewing alcohol were introduced in 1851, it is notable that there was no clear association of *kava maori* with people of specific status – while young men (who previously may have been candidates for warrior status) appear to have been the predominant brewers and drinkers of *kava maori*, participation in these activities was not restricted to them alone. Women and older men drank *kava maori*, and on occasion, even titled Maori participated in the consumption of this beverage. *Kava maori* was, relatively speaking, the alcohol for all Maori; *kava papa’a*, by contrast, was the alcohol for Europeans, and for those people who maintained a special relationship with Europeans and shared the prestige that European goods and practices enjoyed – prestige that was extended to, and bolstered by, the association of *Papa’a* goods with titled Maori.

These social qualities of each substance, *kava papa’a* and *kava maori*, changed substantially over time. Mass gatherings for the consumption of *kava maori* were subject to a number of restrictive factors, including (among other things) the antagonism of the mission to alcohol, pragmatically effected by the fines and prosecutions of mission police, by tensions among Maori over past grievances, and by disputes arising from the intimate liaison of men and women at drinking sessions. As the influence of the mission, and particularly of the *ariki*, extended over Rarotonga, *kava maori* was progressively marginalised, becoming a substance and practice that occupied a space (figuratively and literally) outside the immediate domain of Papa’a-influenced life. But as a *maori* practice, *kava maori* was also subject to Maori ways of social life. The mass gatherings of Maori for the purpose of drinking may have been influenced by new ways of living together (in the communal mission settlements, for example), but just as communal settlement proved untenable, so did communal drinking. Thus, over time the large groups associated with consumption of *kava maori* fragmented, with fissures opening around gender (with the tendency to exclude women from drinking sessions), and kinship. Over time these smaller groups of drinkers adopted various rituals described in Part One of this thesis, and the practice of drinking *kava maori* assumed a unique status as drinkers identified themselves as partaking in exclusive activities, as drinking vessels became valorised and prized, and so on (see page 111).

However, while some of the practices surrounding *kava maori* became valued in their own right, *kava papa’a* remained the prestige form of alcohol. Historical accounts
clearly show that *kava papa’a* was preferred over *kava maori* by most people, and was in high demand, even when the imported alcohol was of particularly dubious quality. This reflected a more general desire to possess (or be seen to possess) Papa’a goods (or Papa’a missionaries), and was always exemplified by the *ariki*, who possessed the largest houses (in the ‘*Papa’a*’ style), *Papa’a* clothes, *Papa’a* vehicles, and *Papa’a* food (such as canned goods).

The legal and moral status of alcohol during most of the period of missionary dominance in Rarotonga was unambiguous – irrespective of whether one drank *kava papa’a* or *kava maori*, discovery by authorities would lead to inevitable punishment. But as the influence of the LMS missionaries waned toward the end of the 19th century, the consumption of alcohol was increasingly acceptable, if not in law, then in practice. During the latter era of the missionary period both Maori and Papa’a refused to submit to the authority of the missionaries, or that of the *ariki* and their agents, and this was particularly manifest with regard to alcohol offences.\(^{309}\) When the British Protectorate was established (and the colonial administration that followed) however, this state of affairs altered. *Kava papa’a* assumed a semi-legal status, where Papa’a and Maori were authorised to purchase alcohol through a system of permits. *Kava maori*, on the other hand, remained illegal both to produce and consume. It was during this period that the separation of *kava papa’a* and *kava maori* became most pronounced. The endorsement of *kava papa’a* as a substance that, under certain circumstances, was legal stood in sharp contrast to *kava maori*, which was entirely marginal to the Papa’a administration, with the notable exception of criminal prosecution.\(^{310}\) Thus the right to consume *kava papa’a* signalled, in some respects, the concomitant right to participate in the operations of the state: conversely, restrictions on the consumption of *kava papa’a* by Maori were analogous to the restrictions in civic participation put upon Maori. The symbolic salience of *kava papa’a* was clearly enhanced by this association, and *kava papa’a* assumed a metonymic relationship with citizenship, where the consumption of, and legal access to, the former stood as a marker of the latter. Of all the European goods and products of which Maori were aware, alcohol was one of very few that was restricted by provision of law (rather than by fiscal constraints), yet was also one of the most desired (at least by those Maori who drank).

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\(^{309}\) Alcohol offences, of course, comprised the main proportion of criminal offences in Rarotonga.

\(^{310}\) Criminality is, however, a form of marginalisation.
In these respects, *kava papa’a* signified Maori engagement with the Papa’a world, or rather, Papa’a elements of the Rarotongan world. The social, political and economic history of Rarotonga recounted in Part One of this thesis presents compelling evidence that Maori, in general, regarded themselves as potentially capable actors in both worlds, Papa’a and Maori. Prior to independence, titled persons were most engaged with the Papa’a ‘world’ of external trade, administration politics, and religion (but, significantly, retained their identity as Maori – the difference, once again, between Alexeyeff’s (2000) performative modes of being and the fixity of relationships). Most Maori, by contrast, were largely excluded from Papa’a elements of the Rarotongan world.

It is perhaps notable in this circumstance that the issue of Maori access to alcohol was debated, and legislation prepared (but not enacted) even prior to independence, when the Legislative Council and the executive committee (representing resident interests) began to assume responsibility for the governance of the Cook Islands. Along with independence came the right for Maori and Papa’a to purchase unlimited quantities of beer and wine, and restricted quantities of other alcoholic beverages, provided they did not consume these in hotels, bars and motels. Later, drinking in public places was prohibited for Cook Islands residents, although this was due to an omission in the original legislation, rather than marking a change in attitude to public drinking.

Throughout the early years of Cook Islands independence, legislation concerning the (relative) liberalisation of access to alcohol was concerned exclusively with *kava papa’a*. No doubt pragmatic considerations governed this legislative focus, as they had during the Protectorate and the New Zealand Administration – as an imported substance, *kava papa’a* could be controlled, in principal (but less effectively in practice), by the state. But further explanation for this circumstance may be located in the qualities of *kava papa’a* described above, of prestige and political salience, as it is notable that political activism by Maori prior to independence (and for some time afterwards) never sought the decriminalisation of *kava maori* – that is, the right of Maori to practice Maori activities was never pursued. Political activism focused on the equal right of Maori to practice Papa’a activities.

The last legislative restriction on the consumption of *kava papa’a* by Rarotongan residents was removed in 1982, when Cook Islands residents were permitted to

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311 In contemporary Rarotonga, Maori frequently distinguish between Papa’a and Maori practices, people and products. For this reason, the metaphor I have here employed (i.e. of “worlds”) is apposite.
purchase and consume alcohol in hotels, bars and motels, without the requirement that they be guests, or invited by guests, of the drinking establishment. By this time the law had been a dead letter in Rarotonga for some years. In the account provided by Sir Geoffrey Henry (page 140), the reason for agitation on this issue was essentially political – that Maori should be allowed to drink freely in licensed premises, as Papa’a tourists and their friends were able. It was not until 1988, some 23 years after self-determination, that the manufacture of alcohol became legal (including kava maori), although even in this case legislative change occurred in concert with the intention that local breweries should sell alcohol commercially in order to prevent the (now substantial) off-shore transfer of money through trade in kava papa’a.

Prior to 1988, kava papa’a became a popular product for Maori, as licensed premises for the sale of alcohol proliferated, as did imports of alcohol to the Cook Islands. The legalisation of kava maori has little effect on the kind of alcohol Maori consumed. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that consumption of kava papa’a by Maori has increased proportionally to consumption of kava maori – in 2000/2001, most Maori drank imported alcohol in preference over kava maori. As monetary resources available to Maori are increased as more are integrated into the wage economy, their preference is to purchase the imported form of alcohol over that produced indigenously. Many people in Rarotonga say that this is a consequence of kava maori tasting so bad, and this is certainly a crucial factor, but the historical record indicates that other factors also affect the choice of alcohol by Maori. Indeed, there is some irony with regard to Maori complaints about the taste of kava maori – the convenience (and perhaps prestige) of imported home-brew kits means that a large proportion of modern kava maori is no longer fruit based, and as such contemporary kava maori is more than ever a poor imitation of kava papa’a.313

Given that most Maori predominantly drink kava papa’a, one might surmise a progressive erosion of the symbolic association of imported alcohol with status. We might then ask, if everyone is drinking Heineken, how do you tell the chiefs from the iti tangata? However, emerging changes in the drinking patterns of Maori elite continue to provide a means of differentiating them from the majority of Maori, including those in waged or salaried work – increasingly over recent years, Maori of high status choose to

312 Sir Geoffrey Henry described this as a Maori issue. Legally, however, this restriction applied to all Cook Islands residents.
313 The combination of ‘traditional’ brewing techniques with imported beer kits no doubt exasperates kava maori’s status as a poor imitation of kava papa’a, and as a poor man’s (or woman’s) alternative.
drink wine, and there is a tendency (by no means always observed) toward moderation in consumption. On a couple of occasions I was invited to “wine evenings”, in which Papa’a expatriates and important Maori gathered at CITC Liquor to taste wines and learn the intricacies of becoming a connoisseur. Wine was also the favoured beverage at a number of “drinks” or “dinners” I attended with expatriates and Maori (these people do not have “parties”, and certainly not “afterhours”). Nick Henry, manager of the Bond liquor wholesaler, told me that wine was becoming increasingly popular among his wealthier clients. Deputy Prime Minister Norman George also mentioned that he had recently begun to drink, and very much liked, red wine as an alternative to beer.

The ‘elite’ Maori who nowadays prefer wine over beer and, to a lesser extent, spirits, are not identical to the privileged titled Maori of earlier Rarotonga. Socio-economic status is the unifying factor among these groups of drinkers, with most (although not all) comprised of what might be called the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ or ‘bourgeoisie’ of Rarotonga. Nevertheless, Maori people from this group tend to be from families of some significance in Rarotonga and/or the Outer Islands (though resident on Rarotonga) – often with substantial or prime real estate land titles and established family businesses or industries. This group did not include Maori of influence who were members of Rarotonga’s churches, with the possible exception of the Assembly of God (at least one high-profile member of this church was known to drink – although this person was not, in fact, a Cook Islands Maori). Membership in Rarotonga’s churches remains a constraining influence of the propensity of Maori to drink, whether in the ‘traditional’ manner, or the one that is becoming more common among Rarotonga’s Maori elite.

The assertion that there is a causal relation between the new drinking practices of Rarotonga’s elite and the practices of Papa’a, both in Rarotonga and in their countries of origin (such as New Zealand and Australia) is problematic, but the apparent continuities between these groups and countries is worthy of consideration. The trend for people of higher socio-economic status in overseas countries is for an increased sophistication in consumption practice – not only with regard to alcohol, but also with other foods and beverages (particularly coffee). Maori elite were well aware of this trend, not only through contact with Papa’a expatriates and overseas media (exemplified by cooking programs, such as Jamie Oliver’s The Naked Chef, for example), but also because they
were frequent visitors to these countries\textsuperscript{314} – and indeed, countries further afield. Café’s, restaurants and certain drinking establishments (Trader Jack’s is the most obvious) provided public venues for people to practice their expertise in wine and food, although gatherings at people’s houses (which often superseded public venues in opulence) were more frequent and, of course, exclusive.

\textbf{A ‘Good Social Influence’}

While descriptions of the political economy of alcohol are valuable, and indicate the ways in which Rarotongan practices regarding alcohol were and are shaped by (and to a lesser extent, shape) relations both inside and outside the confines of the island, they do not explain its specific importance in Rarotonga. Practices and debates surrounding alcohol are invested with considerable ambivalence. For drinkers, the particular salience of alcohol is that it comprises a valued context for socialisation and the maintenance of relationships with friends, relatives and, on occasion, strangers. Alcohol consumption is generally associated with positive qualities of sociality – with alcohol, one is able to relax and ‘have fun’. Moreover, alcohol allows drinkers to pursue desires that, when sober, they keep to themselves. Few Cook Islanders are ignorant of alcohol’s less savoury qualities, however – even drinkers are aware that alcohol consumption may lead to arguments, domestic violence, and, particularly in the context of driving, injury. The tension between these contrary (or rather, complex) understandings of alcohol creates multiple sites of contestation, which are typically articulated through religious affiliation, and the atomisation of alcohol-related behaviour. The former is epitomised by a view of alcohol as entirely detrimental; the latter by opinions that the ‘problem’ of alcohol use in the Cook Islands is the product of the Religious Advisory Council ‘jumping up and down’. Also regarding the latter, alcohol ‘problems’ are explained as the peculiar manifestation of individual personalities; or alternately, alcohol itself is viewed as a ‘problem’, but these problems are relocated to specific groups; predominantly ‘parents’ and ‘youth’. Here, alcohol becomes a problem only when it affects dependent children, or alternately, when young people (‘thirteen or fourteen year olds’) are found to drink (see page 240).

Another source of considerable ambivalence, which, incidentally, is also reflected in academic theories of drinking and drunkenness, is the dichotomisation of drunken

\textsuperscript{314} Or had lived in those countries previously.
and sober behaviour. Discursively, drunkenness marks an episode where the normal (i.e. sober) rules of comportment and behaviour do not apply, so that, for example, a person may become aggressive, talkative, or proposition someone for sex, where they ordinarily would not. MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) argue that this widespread association between drinking and behaviour should not be interpreted as due to the imputed ‘disinhibitory’ effects of alcohol as a substance (i.e., ethanol); rather, people learn drinking behaviour, and in most places, drinking signals a ‘time out’ from everyday life, where people cast aside the rules of society. Although MacAndrew and Edgerton are not explicit on the matter, the phenomenon of ‘time out’ (which may also occur without alcohol) provides a valuable pressure valve to society, as people are naturally inclined not to follow the rules of society and, if compelled to do so, will likely rebel and enter into conflict with one another (see MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969:166-167).

This hypothesis, or variations upon this theme, is widespread in literature on alcohol use. In either case, of ethanol-as-disinhibitory, or of alcohol as ‘time-out’, alcohol is attributed functional qualities; in the former case, the function is derived from pharmacology, and in the latter, alcohol functions to maintain social organization. Both may also be regarded as variations on a core ‘folk theory’, which attributes disinhibitory qualities to alcohol. While this proposition appears sound on cursory examination, one may also ask, ‘disinhibited with regard to what?’ The implicit answer, ‘with regard to sober behaviour’ obfuscates the fact that ‘sober behaviour’ encompasses a diverse range of practices, many of which are not qualitatively distinguishable from ‘drunken behaviour’ – except, of course, by the fact that alcohol is not present. The discursive practice of drinking is not so much an inversion of ‘sober comportment’, as a process by which diverse experiences of sober life are homogenised as an inversion of drunkenness.

‘Time Out’, as described by MacAndrew and Edgerton, explicitly draws upon the work of van Gennep (1960), and they imply that drunkenness is comparable to “initiation rites... during which many rules of proper conduct might be broken with impunity” (MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969:98-99). Indeed, their description of ‘Time
Out’ is, in essence, an application of theories of liminality to the practice of drinking.\textsuperscript{315} Drinking behaviour shares a number of features in common with those associated with liminality; particularly, the discursive construction of drunkenness, already described, as a time when the rules of everyday life do not apply; the apparent change in status of drinkers, so that they ‘ignore’ expectations of appropriate social-hierarchical behaviour;\textsuperscript{316} the association of drinking with more egalitarian relations between drinkers; and in respect of the often-observed use of alcohol consumption as an excuse for inappropriate behaviour. While this explanation is intuitively appealing, drinking practices in Rarotonga accord only partially with the characteristics of liminality and communitas famously described by Turner (1982):

The attributes of liminality or of liminal \textit{personae} are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (Turner 1982:95).

What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a “moment in and out of time;: and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties…. It is as though there are here two major “models” of human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of a society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of “more” or “less”. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated \textit{comitatus}, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders (Turner 1982:96).

\textsuperscript{315} More recently, Room (2001:194) comments that it “would be interesting and illuminating to have a fuller explication from the ethnographic record of the relation between cultural models for possession and cultural models for drunken comportment”, thus proposing research into a more specific realm of liminality.

\textsuperscript{316} In fact, such situations mark an implicit acknowledgement of status – certain drinkers, however, just act inappropriately in regard of it.
In Rarotonga, the social construction of drinking is best understood as a kind of ‘hybrid liminality’, where the forms of social life characterised by Turner as ‘structured’ and ‘communitas’ operate and occasionally, conflict. Communitas is the default status of drinking, and is exemplified in the (imputed) egalitarian character of drinking in Rarotonga, where people of diverse status meet to drink:

Can you distinguish different kinds of groups that you might socialize with?

Yeah, all walks of life: professional people, ordinary people, and basically simple people – they’ve all got something to say.

What would separate a simple person from a…?

Oh, someone who has a very simple lifestyle, you know – they’re people from the land, they work the land and they fish, and [they’re] unsophisticated, but just good, decent people.

And professionals?

Well, you're looking at other professional classes, lawyers, any kind of profession. They can be boring too, but some of them are interesting, some of them have a good sense of humour and can hold a conversation, and they usually have something interesting to say (Male, 38, drinker).

What counts among one’s drinking companions is not their social status, but their quality as companions, as ‘fun’ or ‘interesting’ people. It is equally apparent that while drinking, status is ‘gone, but not forgotten.’ Status, in this sense, is not limited to socio-economic status, and includes other considerations, particularly kinship (see page 213). While drinking shares many of the characteristics of ‘liminality,’ no Cook Islander becomes, in Turner’s phrase, a tabula rasa (blank slate), where the attributes of a person are ignored for the period of liminality. Nor does drinking necessarily compel participants to disregard their status to fellow drinkers. This is most particularly evident when domestic disputes between spouses occur at public drinking sessions, and an acknowledgement of the primacy of kinship means that non-relatives are reluctant to intervene because the dispute is “family business” (see page 221).

Communitas is evident when drinking sessions are fun and enjoyable – that is, when drinking sessions possess the qualities that are regarded as the ‘natural’ state of

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317 “Best understood”, that is, by social scientists – participation is a better, and implicit, understanding!

318 For example, I attended a haircutting (which was essentially a drinking session), where one of the guests asked whether Papa Tom (Sir Tom Davis), who was an elder relative of the hosts, was going to attend. “I hope not” was the answer, although he was invited – the reason being that Papa Tom was too serious when he was drinking, and, because he was an important man, he could not be ignored.
drinking (see page 190 on default fun). Levy, writing about, among other things, drinking sessions among Tahitians, notes that:

The common term for having a “joyful” good time is ‘arearea. It refers to the general situation of a group of people who are doing such things as laughing, joking, dancing, and drinking. The term usually refers more to the kind of activity of the group, than to the internal response of enjoyment, but it is used to indicate the latter also. ‘Arearea is a matter of parties, of festivals, of special occasions which are clearly separate from activities of ordinary everyday life (Levy 1973:315).

Although none of the people I interviewed stated this notion in such explicit terms, for Cook Islanders also, ‘fun’ is very much a quality possessed by the group, rather than the individual diner. This is apparent in the preference for drinking with companions, and most cogently, in the fact that all participants in drinking sessions, even if they do not drink, regard it as an enjoyable activity (see also pages 190, 224):319

I like to see other people who are doing it, not me, but I like to sit with people who are drunk because they look happy you know, how they sing and all that, I like sitting with them. It's just the fun, the fun part of it, you know how people get drunk, and they come up with singing song, and things like that (Female, 27, non-drinker).

The significance of communitas is also illustrated by the situation in which it does not apply; namely, for the woman who referred to herself as an ‘alcoholic’,320 and who drank alone:

You would rather be by yourself [while drinking]? I'd rather be by myself.
And you said thinking about things makes you feel a bit worse about yourself? Um. when I think, I think about the negative things about me, I don't think the positive things. Well before, um – yeah, that's it. You know, I prefer drinking by myself, but when I see my friends around, they come and see me, [and] they will try and cheer me up too – but you know I, I'd rather be on my own. They try and force me to go with them, going nightclubbing, and I say no – I'd rather stay here [laugh]… you might think I'm weird [laugh] (Female, 27, drinker).

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319 Communitas also provides a possible explanation for the usual pattern of conflict avoidance, where people avoid confrontation at parties in order to preserve the enjoyment of the group (see page 207).

320 See page 185.
For this woman, drinking was an activity that she preferred to conduct alone, with no-one to bother her – and her experience of drinking was that it was not necessarily enjoyable. Although this is a special case (as I only interviewed one person who described herself as an ‘alcoholic’), it may indicate a qualitative differentiation between individual and group drinking, where the latter is the domain of ‘fun’, and the former, not necessarily so.

The notions characterised by Turner as *communitas* do not structure all drinking behaviour in Rarotonga. Arguments and disputes are frequent, if not commonplace (see page 204). In the social construction of this ‘hybrid liminality’ of drinking, this essential contradiction is resolved, as mentioned above, by attributing the reason for these disputes not to the substance (alcohol), but to the *individual*.

Thus, while alcohol provides the (implicit) cause of communal enjoyment, individual desires and concerns provide the (explicit) reason for failure to realise this (see page 214). In the former case, the consumption of alcohol stands in a metonymic relationship to group experience, so that alcohol, unambiguously, is the cause of enjoyment while drinking. In the latter case, however, individuals provide the *reason* for disruptive or unusual behaviour, but the *cause* of that behaviour becomes increasingly ambiguous; is it solely due to the individual, or alcohol, or a combination of these? All are subsumed under a general discourse (and discursive practice) of drinking, but only the latter require explicit explanation, precisely because they are considered ‘problems’. The social construction of drinking provides a *partial* means to do this without threatening the essential quality of drinking – that is, drinking as enjoyable *communitas*. But the tension between these two modes of understanding – alcohol and individual – is evident in the difficulty most people have resolving this dilemma, where explanation is required, but ambiguity abounds.

The social construction of ‘hybrid liminality’ described above does not apply to all people in Rarotonga, but primarily to those Cook Islanders who drink, although many people acknowledge these qualities of drinking. An alternative, but related, discourse of drinking competed with the understandings described above, and was predominantly employed by people who were opposed to drinking, and did not consider it to have any positive qualities. These people were often, but not always, associated with one of the island’s churches, and in all cases, they were non-drinkers. In this ‘social construction’ of drinking, the emphasis on drinking behaviour was shifted, so
that the problematic practices associated with individuals under ‘hybrid liminality’ became the exclusive property of alcohol as a substance:

*Do you think it’s the alcohol that makes people confident, or is it the people that makes people confident?*

It’s just alcohol, because they don’t really know what they are doing anymore, so they’re more confident I suppose. They’re not in control, they don’t have control over what they’re doing anymore.

*So you see people lose control when they’re drinking?*

All the time [laugh]. Of course, once you’re drunk you’re out of control. Very few people are in control of themselves. All the time!

*How do you know, what kind of things will they do that is different?*

People get loud – people who are quiet who are not normally like that. They get loud, they start trouble, they start fighting – different person altogether. And there are some really nice people, but as soon as they get the alcohol into them it changes them – it does change them (Female, 38, non-drinker).

Between these two positions, people were able to interpret their experience of drinking in multiple ways. The following example, from a woman who was a ‘heavy’ drinker and later became a member of the SDA Church, illustrates the ambiguity, and flexibility, of these two partially competitive discourses:

*My first drink was when I was seventeen.*

*Who were you with when that happened?*

Just with some friends, yeah. With some friends we went out nightclub – that night club’s closed now – just went out there and just drinking, mmm. It wasn't fun, it was, it was just all drink and dance, music, and cigarettes and whatnot.

*What, [do you mean that] it wasn't fun, or it was?*

It wasn't. No it wasn't that much fun – or maybe at that time it was fun, but when I look at it now – yeah, because it was just drinking, smoking and dancing, and just acting like you are free to do anything (Female, 26, former drinker).

My use of the phrase “partially competitive” is purposeful. These means of understanding alcohol were competitive, because they were employed in the context of public discussions about whether alcohol was a ‘problem’ (and if so, what should be done about it), and as such, constituted discourses of power:

Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government. This word must be allowed the
very broad meaning which [sic] it had in the sixteenth century. ‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed.... To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others (Foucault 1984:427-428).

These discourses were only ‘partially’ competitive, as they employed similar means of ‘making sense’ of alcohol, and differences between them were a matter of emphasis, rather than disagreement on the essential relationship of alcohol to behaviour.

**An Embodiment of Obligation**

These ‘social constructions’ (or discourses) of drinking are general in nature. While they provide an important context for the importance of drinking as a means of sociality (and thus, justify large expenditure on alcohol by individuals, or as a means of enhancing reunions with relations, for example), they refer to somewhat abstract notions of drinking and drinking comportment, and do not explain the specificity of people’s behaviour and relationships while drinking. ‘Communitas,’ as I have explained here, is only a partial explanation of drinking, because it refers to generalised goodwill among groups of drinkers, whereas drinking companions are usually comprised of people who know each other well, and have intimate ties and relationships with each other, not only while drinking, but also in ‘sober’ life (page 181).

‘Shouting’ drinks to others is particularly illuminating in this regard. On page 247, I described how the practice of shouting (and barmanning) created obligations to reciprocate between drinkers. This characteristic of drinking directly recalls Mauss’ seminal discussion of reciprocity in relation to gifts:

‘The *taonga* [valued objects] and all strictly personal possessions have a *hau*, a spiritual power. You give me *taonga*, I give it to another, the latter gives me *taonga* back, since he is forced to do so by the *hau* of my gift; and I am obliged to give this one to you since I must return to you what is in fact the product of the *hau* of your *taonga* …. It is clear in [New Zealand] Maori custom this bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons, since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself…. In this system of ideas one gives away what is in reality a part of one’s nature and substance, whole to receive something is to receive a part of someone’s spiritual

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321 See pages 239 and 258, respectively.
The character of the ‘gift’ has particular salience to drinking. As already noted, when Cook Islanders gather to drink, their object is usually to consume all of the alcohol that they possess (see page 176). The obligations created by drinking in this manner do not inhere solely in the abstracted relationships of **hau**; they reside in the **palpable** act of drinking. The ‘gift’ of alcohol in this context, alters the perception of oneself **at the same time** as it alters the character of one’s relationships. In a very real sense, the gift of alcohol has transformed, in multiple senses, both the receiver and the giver. Moreover, the substance of the gift (i.e. the alcohol consumed) is non-returnable, and its effects are immediate, both in the sense of temporal proximity, and in terms of visceral experience, precisely because it has been ingested and thereby incorporated into the being of the person who receives. Ingestion, in this instance, is a crucial component of the construction of obligations between drinkers, because its salience is derived from effects on the drinkers’ perceptions of themselves, as well as its (obligation or debt-creating) effect on their relationships with one another. Cook Islands Maori prefer to drink all the alcohol available to them because its significance obtains through consumption, rather than the beverage alone. Thus, alcohol that remains the morning after a ‘shout’ embodies a failed obligation; it is a palpable demonstration that the capacity of the ‘shouter’ to give has exceeded the capacity of the ‘shouted’ to receive (and, by extension, to reciprocate).

Although I have here implied that these qualities are manifested in relationships between individuals, this need not be the case, as the constitution of these reciprocal obligations depends on the identity of the respective ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’. The ‘gift’ of alcohol to Pukapuka prior to an election, for example (see page 290), did not constitute a relationship between individuals, but between the DAP and Pukapukan **mapu** voters. Moreover, prestations of alcohol do not always initiate reciprocal obligations, as members of sports teams may expect gifts of alcohol from their sponsors (see page 249), employees may expect alcohol from employers, and men who dig graves for funerals expect, and are ‘thanked’, with alcohol (page 249).

The qualitative character of these exchanges is underscored by the symbolic construction of drinking practice, discussed above. The salience of alcohol in the
context of reciprocal exchange is not located solely in the substance, but also in the positive symbolism of alcohol. From one perspective, this social construction of alcohol obfuscates the relationship of people to alcohol in two ways; first, by attributing the inherently social nature of ‘communitas’ as a quality of alcohol-as-ethanol; and second, by associating the qualities of ‘communitas’ with the group activity of persons entangled in differential relations of power, such as employers and employees. In the second case, however, I have noted that acknowledgement of status is never entirely disregarded during the ‘hybrid liminality’ of drinking, so that these relations are not concealed during drinking sessions. Again, in the consumption of alcohol, ambiguity abounds.

**Alcoholic Emotionality: I Desired, I Drank, I Did.**

The embodied experience of alcohol-as-gift exchange, described in the section above, illustrates to some degree the significance of alcohol in altering the quality of relationships between people and groups. The effect of alcohol in altering the quality of persons, however, requires further explication.

For Cook Islanders, the association of alcohol consumption with emotionality (or, more broadly, affect) is a recurrent feature of drinking (see chapter ten). However, as I have noted many times throughout this thesis, the emotions experienced by Cook Islanders while drinking are not thought to arise from the consumption of alcohol, rather, in the context of drinking, emotions and desires already present are expressed and acted upon. In general, Cook Islanders regarded alcohol as a substance which could make what was hidden or concealed within themselves “come out”, so that they would “show their actual self” (page 223). Here, I propose that the embodied experience of alcohol is particularly commensurate with this ‘emotion-eliciting’ quality of alcohol, by reference to the psychoactive qualities of ethanol, the social construction (or discourses surrounding) of action and drinking, and drawing on social-anthropological accounts of emotion. This association of affect and alcohol is not due to any inherent properties of alcohol that produce emotion; rather, the structure of alcohol experience is similar to that of emotion, and so may facilitate the emergence of emotional behaviour during drinking.

In general, social anthropologists and anthropologists of the late 20th century who considered emotion reacted to bio-deterministic theories of affect first proposed in the late 19th century – most famously, by Charles Darwin and William James. Darwin
argued that emotions were a product of the process of evolution, along with intelligence and memory, so that to a greater or lesser extent, these were innate qualities of human (and animal) experience (Darwin 1998). Later, William James (and independently, Lange, a Danish physiologist) suggested that the common sense way of thinking about emotions at the time (1884) was misguided. Contemporary thought supposed that a particular perception gave rise to a feeling of emotion, which was in turn followed by bodily changes. James suggested alternatively that a perception gave rise to bodily changes, and the feeling of those bodily changes were what people referred to as an emotion:

Common-sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep ...the hypothesis here to be defended... is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble (James 1983:170).

In 1970 Walter Cannon challenged the James-Lange theory of emotion on the grounds that, among other things, visceral reactions appeared to be somewhat undifferentiated, regardless of specific emotional expression. Therefore, Cannon (1970) proposed, a physiological state alone was not sufficient to differentiate one emotion from another. Coincident with this, some anthropologists and philosophers questioned bio-deterministic theories of emotion, primarily in the face of variation in affect they had observed in the course of ethnographic research. Theories of emotion from this anthropological and philosophical tradition were described as ‘cognitive’ theories, where some aspect of thought was posited as essential to the concept of an emotion, and often, was required to differentiate one emotion from another (Mandler 1975; Solomon 1976; Averill 1980; Lyons 1980; Rosaldo 1980; Rosaldo 1984; Solomon 1984; Lyon and Barbalet 1994). Most of these theorists proposed that emotion was comprised not only of visceral ‘feeling’ (produced by physiological changes), but also by an element of evaluation:

A feeling does not in itself provide one with a good reason for wanting to do anything…. An evaluation does, particularly the evaluation involved in emotion, for such an evaluation, being of the world or some aspect of it in relation to the subject’s needs, interests or values, generates desires to change the situation vis-à-vis the subject, or else prolong it (Lyons 1980:65).
Anthropologists, in particular, argued that these ‘evaluations’, and the context in which they occurred, were culture-specific, and structured by social and political environments (Mandler 1975; Averill 1980; Lyons 1980; Rosaldo 1980; LeVine 1984; Rosaldo 1984; Jenkins and Valiente 1994; Low 1994; Lyon 1995). According to all of these theorists, with the notable exception of Solomon (1976), the defining characteristic of emotion was that it incorporated some aspect of feeling or visceral response. In all accounts of emotion, both ‘cognitive’ and ‘bio-deterministic’, the essential problem of the relationship between ‘perception’ or ‘evaluation’ and ‘feeling’ or ‘physiological response’ is continually readdressed. It is the causative nature of this relationship that is problematic to theories of emotion, regarding precedence (does feeling or evaluation come first?), and determination (which of these determines the quality of particular emotions?). For my purposes, it is not necessary to define the causative context of emotions, but merely to note that both feeling/physiology and evaluation/perception are integral to this/these phenomenon/a.

This thesis is not concerned with the specific description of affect in Rarotonga, but in the context of this argument, I propose that a similar nexus of feeling and evaluation, both informed by culture, are also relevant to the experience of emotions by Cook Islanders. Most do describe their experience of emotions in terms of feelings and (implicit) evaluation (see pages 201, 202 and 216, for example), so this proposition seems reasonable.

Whereas the issue of causation is intensely problematic in theories of emotion, the location of physiological effect during drinking is somewhat more transparent. Alcohol consumption is a physiological, and hence observable, process. Evaluations of various kinds are also explicit in the ethnographic material I have presented throughout this thesis. The peculiar embodiment of alcohol and emotionality, and their association by Cook Islanders, correlates with the similarities in the ‘core components’ of both phenomena – that is; both comprise of physiological effect and of evaluations, and the latter are situated within a sociological context that contributes to understandings of both alcohol and emotionality. The physiological and psychoactive effect of alcohol creates an environment in which the experience of corporeality is altered:

Psychoactivity does not determine whether behaviour is disinhibited or controlled: it simply provides an empty vessel of altered consciousness for culture, circumstance and personality to load with meanings and explanations (Room and Collins 1983:v-vi).
The state of alcohol intoxication (and this is not restricted to inebriation) is, I propose, experienced as a state of ‘altered consciousness’ that, through the social and discursive construction of drinking, is analogous with the experience of emotion. Both are comprised of physiological ‘feeling’. In both, the experience of these ‘feelings’ is also subject, through the social construction of each, to evaluations that sometimes produce behaviour, and are sometimes resisted. Drinking is not the same thing as emotion, but through the social construction of drinking, and structural similarities in the way they affect bodily experience (i.e. not in content, but in form), drinking becomes a state similar to emotion; indeed, these are entangled with one another, so that in some cases, emotion is experienced most keenly while drinking. The embodied experience of alcohol intoxication contributes a particular saliency to the notion that intoxication is a state where emotions are ‘released’. In a very real sense, both drinking and emotion constitute the embodiment of culture and social discourse. This proposition, if accepted, suggests that any efforts to change the embodied experience of drinking would encounter the same difficulties encountered if one was to attempt to change the embodied experience of emotion. Hence the observation by Room:

How readily can cultural expectations about drunken comportment be changed? The answer is likely to be “not readily”, that expectations about the effects of drinking are tied to relatively impervious cultural features. From this perspective, experiments by clinical psychologists in changing heavy drinker’s expectancies about the effects of drinking are probably taking on a more difficult task than simply getting them to stop or cut down their drinking (Room 2001:196).

Nevertheless, this does occur, although ambiguously, in Rarotonga. To illustrate, I return to the ‘turning point’ in one person’s experience of intoxication (see also page 241):

And for a period of about two to three months, when we’d get drunk, we’d start fighting, and I’d start hitting her, just out of sheer frustration. It shames me to this day when I think back on it. Until a friend of mine, we were at a party and he sort of stepped in and said, “What the fuck are you doing?” And I said, “Oh, she won’t talk with me, she da da da,” and he said, “Well I don’t give a fuck what she’s doing, but if you hit her again, I’ll deck you.” I was sort of like, “Huh? What?” And then, just sort of the fog cleared from my brain and I suddenly saw it for what it looked like to everyone else, that here’s a guy beating on his girlfriend, what an
asshole, and that just blew my mind and I realised how stupid I was being (Male, 35, drinker).

While undesirable, in the social construction of drinking, anger and frustration are regarded as possibilities and consequences of alcohol consumption. This is not the same thing, it should be noted, as the social construction of ‘acceptable behaviour’. Scholars such as Pernanen (1991) have rightly criticised theories that describe drinking as a form of ‘time out’ on the grounds that they do not explain seemingly ‘irrational’ (or rather ‘unacceptable) behaviour while drinking, such as behaviour that adversely affects the ‘sober’ life of an individual (after he commits a murder, for example). In Rarotonga, the social construction of drinking encompasses both unacceptable and irrational behaviour, although it should be noted, the social construction of sober life is no different in this respect.

And Now The Party’s Over

Alcohol is an efficacious substance. Its efficacy, both negative and positive, is determined by many factors: its physicality; pharmacology; social and personal understandings and practices; its role in political economy, which draws individual drinkers, groups, non-drinkers, institutions and the state into wider political and economic relations – through income, government policy, health provision, commercial trade, advertising, international imports, taxes, and so on. Alcohol is not separate from these phenomena; it is constitutive of, and by, them. Above, I have discussed positive aspects of alcohol consumption – but these effects are not always positive:

Like that Aitutaki girl who was being attacked by her boyfriend, and stabbed him to stop from getting beaten up. This was a couple that everyone regarded as being a very loving and close couple, just that they both had too much to drink, and it got out of hand. And the brother of the guy was standing outside while this was happening, and two other guys they’re sort of standing outside [whistles] waiting for the fight to stop, so they can come in and carry on drinking. Stop beating your woman so we can start drinking again. I mean if they’d gone in there and dragged him off her…

One of them would be alive and the other one wouldn’t be in jail?

Exactly, exactly. So, from my own experience, and seeing things like this; just tragic. That’s one of the most tragic aspects of alcohol abuse, and in a country
which, or a lifestyle which encourages it, not only supports it and accepts it, but even encourages it; yeah, the cost is people die (Male, 35, drinker).

The social construction of drinking is not incidental; but nor is its role in political economy; nor, indeed, its pharmacological (and physical) properties. In Rarotonga, drinking has acquired meaning that is indebted to many sources and influences – religious, economic, political, and interpersonal – and this meaning is not derived simply from what people do and say about alcohol, or how they behave having consumed it. It is also derived from processes and circumstances to which alcohol was peripheral at best, but which nevertheless had, on occasion, a profound effect on the values and meanings alcohol acquired in Rarotonga, and those it will acquire as time goes by.

Thankyou to the government
   For the new levy
   When I visit the Bond
   My bags will not be quite so heavy

   Every Friday I’d enjoy
   My favourite beer
   But alas, no longer
   For it is too dear

   I must return to
   The valley of Avatiu
   To drink with my mates
   My levy-free homebrew

   To government I say
   I won’t pay
   I won’t pay
   For me and my mates
   Homebrew is the way

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