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**INVENTING HEALTH:
TRADITION, TEXTILES AND
MATERNAL OBLIGATION IN
THE KINGDOM OF TONGA**

HEATHER YOUNG LESLIE M. A.

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Graduate Program in Anthropology
York University
North York, Ontario, Canada**

March 1999



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MATERNAL OBLIGATION IN THE KINGDOM OF
TONGA

by HEATHER YOUNG LESLIE

a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of York
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a localized, symbolic analysis of the tropes which organize mothers' everyday practice on the Tongan atoll called Kauvai, with particular attention to the language, meanings and practices associated with 'health'. I argue that as mothers, women are active agents in the invention of Tongan culture, figure in the production of a national image of traditional modernity and mediate a structural tension between the roles of sisters and wives. The role of the Tongan mother has yet to be theorized, and I examine her position, and the insights the Tongan mother can provide the analysis of maternal work.

Roy Wagner's theory of the symbolic, instrumental creation of culture, which he called "invention", is evident in the emergence of a system of Tongan governance which is equally traditionally Polynesian and modern. It is also evident in the classification of *faito'o fakatonga* [traditional illness treatments] as a competitor with biomedicine, and in the emergence of a local understanding of health, which prioritises appropriate social relations and traditional Tongan cultural practices, identified as *anga fakatonga*.

Insofar as Tongan health promotion and medical services include a strong focus on maternal child health issues, mothers are placed at nexus points between 'modern' medicalized ways of perceiving bodies, food, hygiene or risks, and the future generation, the children. As mothers therefore, women are key figures in the interpretation of medical and modernizing messages and directions for social practice. Despite the government's official adoption of Western models for representing health, at the level of everyday life in the village, 'health' is played out differently from the illness treatment and prevention focus associated with biomedicine. Locally, traditional practices, including notions of kinship, gendered roles of motherhood and traditional behaviour, counter the orthodox emphasis of biomedical health, and replace it with a more locally meaningful trope of 'living well, according to *anga fakatonga* –the Tongan way'.

As mothers, women are significant to the production of a national image of traditional modernity, insofar as it is their duties as mothers, in addition to their kinship obligations which motivate much of the production of ceremonially significant textiles used to create and maintain the ties which bind together everyday and ritual life in Tonga.

Mothering helps to mediate the structural tension between sisterly and wifely roles, insofar as the one person a father's and mother's side have in common is the child. Women emphasize their maternal obligations, as a means of juggling the multiple calls on their textile wealth, personal labour and time. But in addition, examining mother's practices demonstrates the way in which textiles, sometimes called women's wealth, act to signify the obligation of the entire maternal kindred, through life and death.

Finally, mothers in Tonga are 'good mothers', but their practice and priorities differ from a germinal feminist formulation (Ruddick 1989) for theorising mothering. For mothers on Kauvai, duty to family is a dominant trope, and traditionalism acts to protect, not ensnare the Tongan commoner woman.

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Heather Young Leslie

INVENTING HEALTH: TRADITION, TEXTILES AND MATERNAL OBLIGATION IN THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Map of Tonga	x
<i>PROLOGUE</i>	
Pauline's Hands	-1-
Representation in the Text	-5-
<i>Chapter One</i>	
Considering Mothers	-10-
The Research Question: Mothers at the Nexus of Tradition and Health	-15-
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Women in Tongan Ethnography: Theorising the Mother	-19-
A Theoretical Approach to Mothering	-42-
Preservative Love	-45-
Fostering Growth	-46-
Social Acceptability	-47-
Theorising Mothering in Tonga	-48-
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Ethnographic Fundamentals	-51-
Part I: The People, Their Place	-51-
The Island of Kauvai	-55-
Authority and Influence in the Village	-57-
Livelihood and Lifestyle	-58-
The Household	-59-
The Island Environment	-62-
Physical Infrastructure	-63-
Flows of People and Products	-65-
Part II: The Routines (and Surprises) of Everyday Life	-67-
Death and Health: the Funeral	-69-
Tongan Kinship	-70-
Kinship as Preventative Health Care: The Funeral Revisited	-75-
Signifying Relations: Textiles and the Ties That Bind	-77-
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
In 'The Field'	-84-
Ethical Considerations	-84-
Language Studies	-87-
Data Collection	-89-
Methodological Caveats	-97-
Mis-truths as Cultural Etiquette	-101-
anyone lived in a pretty how town	-110-

Chapter Five

Dynastic Strategies: Invention, 'Health' and History	-111-
Invention and Convention: the Figuration Process	-113-
Invention, Not Compromise	-117-
Stratagems in the Consolidation of a Dynasty: <i>Mo'ui Lelei</i> as Chiefly 'Ofa	-120-
'Health' and the Invention of 'Monarch': The Four Tupous	-124-
Tupou I: Tāufa'āhau	-126-
Tupou II: Siaso Tāufa'āhau	-128-
Tupou III: Queen Sālote	-130-
Tupou IV: 'Health' In Contemporary Perspective	-135-

Chapter Six

The New & the Old : Ambiguities, Inventions & Conventions for Health	-147-
The New Term: <i>Mo'ui Lelei</i>	-148-
Health As Appropriate Social Relations	-151-
Representing <i>Faito'o Fakatonga</i>	-154-
Medicalizing the Tongan Body	-157-
The Ambivalent Status of <i>Faito'o Fakatonga</i> :	-161-
Kinship in Health and Healing	-167-
Illness <i>Fakatonga</i> and <i>Fakapālangi</i> ; the Dichotomy Revisited	-172-
Geographic Indexing: <i>Fakatonga</i> vs. <i>Fakapālangi</i>	-175-
Etiology of Excess: Attributing Cause Without Blame	-181-

Chapter Seven

Countering the Biomedical Message: Health as Appropriate Social Relations	-187-
Public Health Nursing & Maternal-Child 'Health' Training	-188-
Radio Based Health Promotion: Food as Nutrients	-193-
Good Food for Good Health	-194-
Cooking Feast Foods	-195-
A Primer for Mothering	-205-
The Healthy Child	-208-
Not Living Well: <i>Tevolo</i> and Post-mortem Kinship Responsibilities	-221-

Chapter Eight

Maternal Duty and the Social Inheritance of Health	-230-
Identity and Mother's Work	-231-
Fakakoloa: The Wealth of the Family	-235-
The Duties of the Mother	-237-
What is Wealth For? The Material Benefits	-241-
Gendered Labour	-244-
Multiple Uses of Plaited Koloa	-246-
Katoanga	-249-
Plaited Koloa and Children	-250-
"You Can Never Have Enough <i>Koloa</i> "	-252-

Chapter Nine

Pushing Children Up: Gifting, <i>koloa</i> and the Maternal <i>Kāinga</i>	-257-
Gifting	-258-
A Wedding: Textile Gifts and Maternal Investment	-262-

Embodying the Wealth of the <i>Kāinga</i>	-269-
Who Gives? Politics and Pragmatics	-271-
The Maternal <i>Kāinga</i> Pushes UP	-273-
Textile Gifts and the Maternal Iconography of <i>Koloa</i> : A Birthday	-274-
 <i>Chapter Ten</i>	
Making <i>Koloa</i> : The Politics Of Embodiment	-278-
Embodied Knowledge, Cultural & Political Identities	-280-
Making Plaited <i>Koloa</i> : Working Together in a Women's Space	-283-
Pandanus: Gender & Women's Produce	-293-
Only Women	-300-
 <i>Conclusion</i>	
Reconsidering Mothers	-309-
Maternal obligation: doing one's duty	-316-
 <i>Epilogue</i>	
Imagine: Health as Pauline Knows It.	-320-
 <i>Illustrations</i>	
House, Maka Fele'unga Village	Illustrations -322-
Unravelling World: The Funeral	Illustrations -322-
Young Bride	Illustrations -323-
Senior Women with their most precious plaited <i>koloa</i>	Illustrations -323-
Bridal couple walking to Sunday Services	Illustrations -324-
First Birthday Celebration	Illustrations -324-
Toulalānga	Illustrations -325-
Ngatu	Illustrations -326-
Preparing raw pandanus	Illustrations -327-
Mele and Malia sorting	Illustrations -327-
A <i>kapa</i> blade	Illustrations -328-
Preparing <i>fe'unu</i>	Illustrations -328-
Plaited <i>koloa</i> , stacked for gifting	Illustrations -329-
Talahiva sitting on a <i>fala tongi</i>	Illustrations -329-
Two <i>kie tonga</i> made by Vasiti	Illustrations -330-
Close up of two <i>fala</i>	Illustrations -330-
 <i>Figures</i>	
Figure 1: Pauline's 'api	Figures -331-
Figure 2: Folingi's 'api	Figures -331-
Figure 3 : Varieties of Health Professionals in Tonga (1990)	Figures -332-
Figure 4: Health Professions Enrollments 1991	Figures -332-
Figure 5: Faito'o Fakatonga by sex, age and number of recipes	Figures -333-
Figure 6: Income By Source. Maka Fele'unga 1992	Figures -334-
Figure 7: Income By Sex. Maka'Feleunga 1992	Figures -335-
Figure 8: <i>Koloa</i> Income & School Children, 1991	Figures -336-
Figure 9: <i>Koloa</i> Income & School Children, 1992	Figures -336-
Figure 10: Wedding Exchanges	Figures -337-

<i>Glossary</i>	Glossary -338-
	A Note on Glosses, Orthography and Pronunciation Glossary -343-
<i>Appendices</i>	Appendices -345-
Appendix One: Interview Instruments #1- #6,	Appendices -345-
Village Survey #1	Appendices -345-
Interview #2	Appendices -346-
Interview #3	Appendices -347-
Interview #4	Appendices -348-
Interview #5	Appendices -349-
Interview #5 English Version.	Appendices -351-
Interview # 6	Appendices -353-
Interview # 6 English Version	Appendices -356-
Appendix Two: Kinship Terminology	Appendices -360-
Appendix Three: Plaiting <i>Koloa</i>	Appendices -362-
Categories of Plaited <i>Koloa</i>	Appendices -363-
Fala	Appendices -363-
Fihu	Appendices -364-
Ta'ovala	Appendices -364-
Kiekie	Appendices -365-
Kie Tonga and Other Prestigious Varieties	Appendices -365-
Symbolism	Appendices -366-
Appendix Four: Processing Pandanus	Appendices -367-
Tutu'ila	Appendices -367-
Tofua	Appendices -367-
Pāongo	Appendices -367-
Kie/Fihu	Appendices -367-
Fau	Appendices -368-
<i>References Cited</i>	-369-

PROLOGUE

PAULINE'S HANDS

Pauline's hands are old, fleshy and strong. Her fingers are gnarled and crooked like the roots of the banyan tree. The final metacarpal of each finger is permanently hooked, arthritically sealed. These hands proclaim her profession even when lying limply in her lap, or when fanning herself at church.

Vasiti's hands were the same as Pauline's, if a little leaner, more sinewy. "Look at the hands of a plaiter" said Susana softly to the circle of women as we washed and perfumed Vasiti's body for burial. Susana laid Vasiti's slack hand across her own younger, firmer palm and curled her still straight and flexible fingers through Vasiti's. There was at least thirty years age difference between them.

Vasiti and Pauline might have been sisters, and like several women of their generation, are mothers who have lived all their lives, some 60 - 90 years, in the village of Maka Fele'unga², on the island of Kauvai, in the Kingdom of Tonga. These women are easily spotted making their way to church: torsos bent forward at the hips, hands linked at the base of the spine, twirling a coconut leaf fan as ballast and puffing like old steam ships, they waddle slowly, patiently, to prayer.

¹ A note on pronunciation: All Tongan words place the emphasis on the penultimate syllable and final vowels are pronounced. Pauline, for instance, is pronounced Pow - lee- nay.

² Maka Fele'unga is a pseudonym.

Pauline is the oldest woman of *kaupalalalo*, the name for the section of the village of Maka Fele'unga where she lives on her widow's land allotment [*api tukuhau*]. She presides over a network of kin and affines which extends to three households in the village and at least two others in other parts of Tonga. One son-in-law calls her affectionately (but surreptitiously) "*Pule*" [Boss], but her granddaughter calls her by a diminutive: "*Pau*".

Her long hair is grey and soft, wispy at the ends, white at the roots. She usually twists it up into a knot on top of her head, but on Sundays when a daughter or granddaughter combs it out and grooms her, she looks beautiful, despite her sagging body and melancholy eyes. Those eyes are formidable: disapproving sometimes, tired often, easily bright with tears when she is feeling happy, proud or sad. Her tongue is just as formidable, and to the uninitiated ear, her sharp commands and retorts are alarming. But with a baby on her knee, chuckling and shushing as she squeezes juice from a bundle of leaves with one hand, dripping it down her thumb into the open, wailing mouth she is holding with the other, Pauline transforms from a figure of authority to one of nurturance.

In many ways, Pauline is unremarkable as a woman of her generation: a mother, a grandmother, a maker of pandanus textiles; elderly, loved, sometimes feared, respected and physically deteriorating. There are small differences. Of Pauline's nine children, all are alive, and only two have never married. Three daughters live on Kauvai. Another lives just two islands away (It's a forty minute boat trip, but Pauline never visits, because she is too afraid to cross the ocean). In this way, Pauline is more blessed than Vasiti, who had no children with either of her husbands. Vasiti did have two *pusiaki* [fostered children], who lived nearby, but even one of those children died³. Both Pauline and Vasiti were luckier than Loutoa, another neighbour and sometime work partner, whose children

³ Vasiti's adopted son Feinga was lost at sea in 1995, fishing from the new boat we had watched him build in 1993.

have all moved away from Ha'apai: some to Tongatapu, some to Auckland.

Unlike Pauline, Loutoa's faded beauty is easily evident, and her smile more frequent and radiant. Like Pauline, she too has tired eyes, and like Pauline, Vasiti, indeed like most women of their generation, Loutoa suffers from a lower back which is permanently bent, and hands with the telltale hooked digits. They walk the same walk, leaning forward at the hips, chin not much farther from the ground than their waist. When Loutoa is walking, she swivels her head sideways to look up when speaking. To stand upright, she bends her knees, swings her shoulders up, and sticks her chin out.

These elder women preside over their households like queens. They leave their houses only to attend church and spend most of their days seated at home, plaiting pandanus. While Pauline, Loutoa and Vasiti (before her death), walk unassisted, another woman of their generation, Folingi, must use a cane to negotiate the route to her church. Folingi's back is so bent that her hands and a fan can no longer counter-balance her posture. She crawls on hands and knees inside her house, and depends on her grandchildren to run errands. The oldest woman in the village is even more fragile: a fragile, wisp of a woman, Mele 'Ungatea cannot walk, nor cook her own food. Her minister and family attend to her in her house, except once a year, when she is carried to church, and seated at the front in great honour. She passes the time each day, plaiting rough pandanus mats, with hands too weak to make the rows straight and the plaits tight.

All of the grandmothers are active makers of pandanus textiles. Loutoa still works with a "*toulālanga*", the name for a group of women cooperatively making pandanus-fibre textiles. Two of Pauline's daughters work with Loutoa on a regular basis. When I was there in 1992, one or two other women joined the *toulālanga* on a short term basis: sometimes 'Ana, sometimes Laili, sometimes Lisia, who lived at the north end of Maka Fele'unga village. Women of a *toulālanga* work

together on the same piece, sitting in rows, hands flashing, wefts of pandanus fibre flying and rustling. The pace is demanding and each woman must be able to keep up with her partners. There are many *toulālānga* on Kauvai, and a minimum of four in the village of Maka Fele'unga alone. Occasionally, groups disband and re-form as did Vasiti's, as a sign of their mourning for the year after her death.

Pauline retired from the group because she found the pace too exhausting. These days she plaits at home, alone, in the company of Ta'ufo'ou, her unmarried daughter. Ta'ufo'ou is not much help at plaiting though. The work requires too much concentration and consistency of effort for Ta'ufo'ou, who suffers from auditory hallucinations⁴. Folingi also plaits at home, sometimes alone, sometimes with her daughter Susana.

Manu, Toa'ila and Susana are all in their late 30's or early 40's. They are all mothers and plaiters themselves. They have yet to acquire their mothers' bent back, what gets called a 'dowager's hump' in old English novels. The plaiter's bent back is probably due to arthritis and/or post menopausal osteoporosis, conditions exacerbated by years of bending over while plaiting and by the cultural pressure on persons of a certain status (i.e.: women and chiefs) to demonstrate proper behaviour by remaining seated and unmoving whenever possible. But the younger plaiters do show an early sign of their occupation: the permanent crook of the index finger. Like most adult women on Kauvai, Toa'ila, Manu, Susana and Loutoa spend their days plaiting their *koloa*, generally working from dawn to late afternoon. When a deadline looms however, they work late into the

⁴ Ta'ufo'ou experiences auditory hallucinations and sometimes offers 'word salad' type speech. She is described as having *tevolo*. *Tevolo* is a term used to cover a broad range of sensations and inappropriate behaviours, some congruent with the label mental illness, some undescribed by biomedicine. The word *tevolo* is a transformation of 'devil' and reflects missionary influence. The Tongan language includes other, more specific designations for particular constellations of behaviours or symptoms, but in general discussion, these are subsumed under the term *tevolo*. Ta'ufo'ou was treated with pharmacologics at one point, but her family rejected them because, among other things, they made her too sleepy to go to church.

night, plaiting by the light of a kerosene lamp, using the knowledge tacitly embedded in their hands.

It was women like Pauline, Vasiti, Susana and the others, who helped me to understand the links between the key terms in the title of this thesis: tradition, textiles and maternal obligation. They made me consider the relationship between the mother's work of making children healthy and the women's work of producing the traditional textiles they call wealth [*koloa*].

Representation in the Text

Writing an iterative, performative, multi-faceted reality such as I experienced on Kauvai into a linear, ordered form has been unpleasantly difficult. I have many qualms about the coercive potential of projects such as this to construct a fabled place which is unrecognizable to those who live there, and equally romanticizes the experience of being 'in the field' (see Abu Lughod 1988, 1991 and Bell 1983, for similar concerns). Nevertheless, in many ways, Kauvai life is romantic and exotic. It is also mundane, disjointed and fluid.

I try to give a sense of this life on Kauvai, and of the personal element intrinsic to long-term ethnographic research, through my style of writing and the way I've structured the text. To this end I exploit, on occasion, Tongan terms, narratives and poetic analogies to evoke life on Kauvai and to position myself in reference to the text and the research conducted. Also, wherever possible, quotations include the original Tongan in a parallel column to the English translations. I realize the sometimes frequent use of Tongan terms makes scanning a page difficult for readers who do not speak Tongan, or have no familiarity with Polynesian languages. However, there are good reasons for the frequent use of non-English terms. In most cases, the original Tongan terms have only weak or problematic English glosses. Single word glosses almost never convey an accurate sense of the Tongan semantics and semiotics. A trail of conjoined words is even more difficult to scan. In other

cases, particularly with regard to the textiles, no adequate glosses exist. Where I use a Tongan term, I provide a gloss for each initial use in each individual chapter, and again if a term is freshly re-introduced after several pages in the same chapter. Glosses are marked with square [] brackets. A glossary of all unusual terms and abbreviations, and most specifically of key Tongan words is provided at the front of the dissertation. Technical terms are also provided in the appendices with kinship terminology and plaiting koloa information. The glossary lists Tongan words, the English language glosses and describes some aspects of the language and orthography. The one instance where a gloss is consistently absent is with the term “plaited koloa”. I use this term in the latter chapters to refer to the corpus of pandanus or bark fibre textiles plaited by women on Kauvai. No single indigenous term exists for these textiles. I coined the term plaited koloa for the purposes of this discussion because reading lists of the various specific textiles each time I discussed them would prove tedious, and because the sometime usage of the term “fine mats” in reference to all types of pandanus wrapping, draping and carpeting textiles is inaccurate.

‘Mat’ is an inadequate gloss: while only certain types of textiles are “fine mats”, meaning the tiny stranded, named [*kie hingoa*] textiles which are historically valued and protected for royal and other high ranking nobles’ ceremonies (see Kaeppler 1990), that does not change Kauvai women’s perceptions of their textiles as wealth [*koloa*]⁵ which figures significantly in everyday and ceremonial life (For those interested in the specifics of plaited koloa, I have included a discussion in Appendix Three).

Final reasons for including the many Tongan terms in the text include the point that readers

⁵ Although Herda states in a forthcoming paper that not all mats are considered to be *koloa*, and Kaeppler (1997, per. com.) agrees with her, this is not in keeping with linguistic and gifting practice on Kauvai. Herda and Kaeppler are probably representing what Decktor-Korn aptly identified as the “noble view” (1974), while my experience is with commoners.

who do speak Tongan will be better able to evaluate my descriptions of Tongan culture and life on Kauvai if they have access to the original Tongan terms. Also, using the Tongan language helps to insert the voice of those people who supported my investigations. Further, the disjunction it forces upon the reader both recaptures the constant self-positioning and disjointed sense of reality this ethnographer experienced, and helps, I hope, remind one that this text and the knowledge it is supposed to impart is constructed for a particular purpose, in a particular moment (see Goodenough in Leiber 1994:xvii, Escobar 1993, Fox 1991, or Clifford 1988, for a number of comments and critiques on the production of knowledge in anthropology).

Two other glosses require clarification. When referring to the North American construct of 'health' and 'healthy' which pervades the practices and rhetoric of medical and ministry personnel and planners, and which indexes physical capability, absence of disease or perception of illness and which may be combined (somewhat improbably) with the WHO definition⁶, I place the term in single quotes -- 'health' -- , or I use the compound phrases medical health or biomedicine. This is a marker for the fact that 'health' is clearly an ethnomedical construct particular to North America and those influenced by North American biomedical institutions (Pelto and Pelto 1997, Hahn 1995, Allat 1992, Gaines 1991, Angel and Thoits 1987, Maretsky and Seidler 1985). I refrain from the use of semi-quotes when using the term health to represent the local notion of well-being on Kauvai.

I sometimes use the Tongan term *Pālangi* as a replacement for the variety of appellations that appear in literature such as 'Western', 'North-American', 'European', 'Post-industrial', 'Post WWII', 'Modern', 'First-World/ 'Second nation', or 'Northern' people. Those variety of labels appear in the literature, with an implicit assumption that the reader understands what the term

⁶ The key aspects of the definition is: "A complete state of physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease".

means, yet each is rife with contradiction which I do not have the space to resolve here. *Pālangi* is the local phrasing on Kauvai for things that are ‘not-Tongan’ and in a text which privileges the local view, use of the term seems appropriate. Moreover, *Pālangi* is less fraught with hidden assumptions and misappropriations than any of those other possible labels for the assumed majority of readers of this text: an English-speaking, European-background ‘us’ as identified by Strathern (1991:121), who also notes some of the difficulties with the label ‘Western’, especially when trying to represent a so-called ‘Other’s’ reality⁷.

Moreover, considering Tongans’ firm, overt embrace of key ‘Western’ and/or ‘enlightenment’ constructs, such as freedom, Christianity, education, and the Protestant work ethic, I am not at all sure that contemporary Tongans, Polynesians as they are, could be called non-Western (see Worsley 1982 and Stephens 1989 for critiques of the term ‘non-western’) or somehow ‘not-modern’. The fact is that practically every family aspires, and many succeed, to send children to schools in Australia, New Zealand, North America; have ongoing contact with family members overseas; that very many Tongans avidly follow the international (European) sports of soccer and rugby by radio, not to mention the nation’s long membership in the (né British) Commonwealth of Nations; all this belies any applicability of the label ‘Western’ as an absolute antonym to ‘Tongan’. With respect to modernization and changes in localized values, noted Tongan scholar and culture critic Futa Helu (founder of ‘Atenisi University, Tonga) has said “the whole process of transformation is essentially a *Westernization* of both the economy and the psychology of peoples” (1998:37 emphasis in original). While it is true that there are differences, and some of those differences are identified as ‘Western’ (meaning Euro-American) in origin, to use ‘Western’ as a

⁷ Although I welcome the likelihood that Tongans, very likely even some from Kauvai, will eventually read this text, the style and language of this kind of writing is clearly oriented towards a very specific academic-English speaking audience.

simple antonym therefore, constructs a falsely simplistic dichotomy. I also borrow Gordon's (1994a) term "indigenous modernity", which she uses to describe the contemporary figuration of Tongan society which combines localized concepts of traditional practice with ideals and behaviours obviously borrowed, but now firmly Tonganized. What I intend to avoid in my use of the terms *Pālangi* and 'indigenous modernity' is the implication that a culturally 'Western' audience is the 'norm' and that Tongans and Tongan culture and traditions are only an 'Other'. While I was in Tonga, it was clear to me that for the majority of social situations, I, and the North American society from which I came, was the 'Other', on the outside on a number of different levels.

Finally, some visual techniques of representation: I despair of ever making a two-dimensional combination of paper and ink truly represent a human voice, but I do try to put voices, mine and some of the people I came to know well, into this text, while following rules laid out in the guidelines of the institution (York University 1996). I underline words for emphasis, place direct quotes in double quotation marks, set long foreign language passages in columns beside the English translations, use italics to mark *foreign* terms, and use single-quotes to demarcate terms whose meaning is provisional, context-specific or 'so-called'. For ease of location, all figures or tables and all photographs are located in separate sections, at the end of the text, but before the Glossary and Appendices. All photographs were taken and reproduced with permission.

CHAPTER ONE

CONSIDERING MOTHERS

In Tonga, as in many other societies, mothers are expected to act as gatekeepers and nursemaids to children's well-being. Rarely however, are mothers credited with cultural invention (Wagner 1975, 1986), with the creation of meaning. It is more usual, especially in Tongan ideology, to consider women in general, and mothers in particular, as transmitters of cultural concepts and practices already formed, or as protectors of tradition. This dissertation offers a localized, symbolic analysis of the tropes which organize mothers' everyday practice on the atoll called Kauvai, with particular attention to the language, meanings and practices associated with 'health' and the research question which originally drew me to Tonga: "What do mothers do to make and keep their children healthy?". I conclude that the role of the mother and women's production of traditional textiles is a key, and generally unacknowledged, factor in the ongoing creation of Tongan culture within a context of overt modernization.

Mothering, tradition and textiles are interconnected on Kauvai because the emerging conceptualization of the neologism for 'health' [*mo'ui lelei*] references 'living well', meaning living in accordance with the social relations and the everyday practices known as *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way / 'tradition']. Mothers depend upon their textiles to create the social ties, fulfill the kin-based obligations, make the church donations, garner the material necessities and present the public image of the good, industrious and traditional mother which they see as essential to 'living well'. I argue

these points throughout the dissertation, but the ethnographic descriptions in the prologue and in chapters six through nine provide key examples of maternal obligations.

Everyday maternal practices, the way in which mothers 'live well', take place within the context of a nation state which is constructing a public image as equally modern and traditionally Polynesian. Provision of medical services has figured importantly in the formation of Tonga's image as a modern nation. In her analysis of Tongan legal practices, Susan Philips has borrowed Pratt's (1992) term "zone of contact" to characterize the historical emergence of Tongan law "as the result of a dialogue between Europeans and Tongans" (Philips 1994:72-73). Medicine, and in particular maternal child health programs, are also 'zones of contact', nexus points wherein dialogues occur and from which social practices and cultural, symbolically constructed, meanings emerge. In chapter five I indicate the ways in which medical and public health services have paralleled and enabled the image of the ruling dynasty as simultaneously monarchs, traditional Polynesian chiefs and governors of a modern state.

Even though the Tongan state has consistently promoted Western models for representing health and advocated biomedical interventions, 'health' is not understood in the same way by all stakeholders. Biomedicine emphasizes particular ways of knowing the body which have ramifications for illness treatment and prevention. In the Tongan literature, biomedicine has been represented as both superior, and yet in opposition, to local therapeutics, known as *faito'o fakatonga*. Looking at Kauvai villagers' practices at the local level shows that representations of treatment options described in the literature to date is overly dichotomous, setting up a falsely rigid divide between *faito'o fakatonga* [traditional medicine] and biomedicine, called *faito'o fakapālangi*. I argue in chapter six that there exists a greater degree of ambiguity in, and slippage between, representations of indigenous

and Western treatments for illness, than recognized in the literature to date. I dispute the notion of a bipartite, mutually exclusive illness-treatment system and show the similarities: biomedicine and *faito'o fakatonga* both incorporate other practices into their repertoire; both are culturally and historically produced through particular discursive & political formations; and both use illness treatment measures to affirm & reproduce cultural notions of good social practice. The differences in meanings for 'health' are evident also in mother's descriptions of the healthy child, and of the duties of the mother, as I show in chapters seven and eight.

The indigenously managed project of modernization within which medical services and health promotion campaigns figure, make mothers their targets and therefore place women in pivotal positions with respect to reconciling meaning of the health-related messages. Programs aimed at modifying mothers' daily practices for the sake of their own or their child's health include breast-feeding and infant vaccination promotion, family planning, vilification of out of hospital birth and lectures on nutrition, hygiene and compliance with doctors' recommendations. I provide examples of some of these programs throughout the dissertation, and especially in chapter seven.

Mothers sit as frontline workers, interpreting the messages and carrying out the instructions of nurses, doctors, nutritionists and media-based educators. Often, they are required to employ and make sense of different, and sometimes contrasting conventions for everyday practice, in order to reconcile their various roles as sisters, daughters, wives or mothers with that of 'health' messages. I am arguing that, on Kauvai at least, 'health' –translated into the neologism of *mo'ui lelei*– is being semantically re-figured. The emerging conceptualization or 'invention' (Wagner 1975, 1986) of *mo'ui lelei* indexes illness, sickness or disease prevention far less than it does appropriate social relations and the traditional Tongan cultural practices called *anga fakatonga*. For commoner women

in the context of everyday life on Kauvai, kinship, traditional behaviour, Polynesian constructions of identity, gender and the maternal family's role are much more pertinent to everyday health practices. What this means in answer to my original question, is that mothers make their children healthy by living well themselves. In chapters seven, eight and nine, I show that they do this by fulfilling kinship and moral obligations, demonstrating personal industry, skill at textile production and deployment, and other behaviours publically sanctioned as part of Tongan tradition. Textiles are key to women's identity and to the ability of mothers to 'live well' and produce children who are also able to 'live well'. Textiles also signify the extent of the responsibility felt by the maternal *kāinga* [extended family / kindred]. The emphasis of chapters eight and nine, therefore, is the production, use and exchange of textiles, and the relationships of textiles to maternal obligation, gender, identity and living well.

From their position at the nexus of modernizing and traditionalist ideals, Kauvai mothers are inventing their culture (Wagner 1975, 1986). Culture is constructed symbolically and instrumentally by human beings. It is constructed in the present, through the process of living out normal, everyday lives. The creativity to re-apply symbols, to remake one's culture in the process of living it, talking about it, or reflecting on it; to assimilate new ideas while remaining culturally 'authentic' was described by Wagner as a process of 'culture invention' (1975, 1986. I describe the invention process more fully in chapter five). The term 'invention' directly assumes agency, instrumentality. Thus, when I say that Kauvai mothers are inventing culture as they ascribe locally relevant meanings to the neologism *mo'ui lelei*, I am ascribing agency to commoner women, and in particular mothers, in ways that have not been made explicit in the literature on women in Tonga. I discuss the ways in which women appear in the Tongan literature, and suggest a means for theorizing

mothers in chapter two. But Kauvai mothers are not the only culture inventors in Tonga, and health is not the only domain in which invention is operant in Tonga. The contemporary ruling dynasty, and the establishment of the current form and style of governance in Tonga is also invented and chapters five and six, provide other examples of the way in which invention (as used by Wagner 1975, 1986) operates.

Despite the importance, and fundamental humanity implicit in Wagner's concept of invention, there are problems with use of the term, which I recognize. Like Herda, I distance myself from the misperceptions underlying the "debate over the nature of 'invented' versus 'genuine' tradition" and reject the notion that some forms of tradition are 'authentic' and others, not (Herda 1995:47). The debate centred on the fact that a lay public reading of the term 'invention' could be taken to imply that cultural resurgence was inauthentic, and worse, borrowed or inserted from foreign sources. This reading could open aboriginal peoples' protests and claims on the basis of heritage, genealogy and colonial subjugation to renewed political rejection. (See: Keesing 1982, 1982a, 1989, 1991; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Wilford 1990; Trask 1991; Linnekin 1983, 1991a, 1992). Invention is thus potentially political and powerful: it permits differing, sometimes competing, explanations and meanings. While I describe the process of invention in chapter five, at this point I want to point out that Wagner's conceptualization of the invention of culture, actually dismisses the possibility of inauthenticity for any tradition, any cultural practice or ethos, regardless as to whether or not it shows the influence of foreign sources (Wagner 1975)⁸. What is important is the idea that culture, and traditions, are fluid. They are

⁸ This is contrary to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). Toren (1988), Hanson (1989) and Borofsky (1987) provide excellent examples of the kind of creative and authentic innovation Wagner was referring to. See Also Handler and Linnekin 1984

created by societal members, in the present, from whatever symbols they find meaningful, as they try to make sense of their lives.

For women in Tonga, a medical and health promotion system which reproduces the aims and ideologies of the 'West' asks them to make sense of ideas, practices and concepts which were not necessarily a part of their local and historical experience. Women's roles as mothers are particularly significant in the medical and health promotion agenda, as I discuss in the following section.

Invention, as a process of cultural meaning-making, allows women to create locally and culturally Tongan tropes out of introduced concepts as they go about the business of being good, traditional mothers who know how to fulfill their maternal obligations. 'Health' is one such introduced concept, framed in a particular political and historical context, which I describe next.

The Research Question: Mothers at the Nexus of Tradition and Health

My original proposal for research in Tonga was conceived in reference to the upcoming deadline of "Health for All by the Year 2000", the international target accepted in 1978 by the 134 participating government representatives who attended the WHO's and UNICEF's joint conference on Primary Health Care at Alma-Ata. At the 1988 follow-up conference in Riga, that goal was re-confirmed (Evans et. al 1990:6). Demographic and epidemiological research of the era showed that certain factors such as girls' education, nutrition and employment; families' access to primary health care services, fertility control and clean water contribute to the 'health transition' from a population subject to high levels of morbidity [disease], mortality [death] and low productivity to one which is 'healthy'. Since the Alma-Ata declaration, research has emphasized, and several international public health agendas have focussed on, children as markers of population health and their mothers as principles responsible for child care (e.g.: Caldwell 1979, Garenne and van de Walle 1989 [1985],

Lindenbaum, Chakraborty and Elias 1989 [1983], Simons 1989, Cochrane et. al 1980, 1982, Rubinstein and Lane 1990, Lane and Rubinstein 1996). Examples of UN-agency sponsored initiatives focussed on women as mothers have included: Better Maternal Child Health Through Family Planning, Safe Motherhood Against Maternal Mortality, a Task Force for Child Survival, and Strategies For Encouraging Mothers To Have Children Immunized (Evans et al. 1990:6). Other philanthropic agencies have adopted the same maternal emphasis. In 1989, for example, the Ford Foundation sponsored an Interdisciplinary Workshop in Ahmedabad, India on Mother's Education and Child Survival (Simons 1989). Maternal education has been hailed as a development goal and marker because of its direct, linear effect on child survival (Cochrane, O'Hara and Leslie 1980, Herz and Measham 1987) and on reduction of birthrates. The latter are deemed important because of their indirect effect on women's and children's survival (Herz and Measham 1987, Lane and Rubenstein 1996).

Tonga was an ideal site for the research as I detail in the following paragraphs. First, the Tongan government, headed by His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, was interested in encouraging research. Second, despite a very limited economy and economic and geographical disparities, Tonga was reporting good health related indicators: women were reported to be accorded high social standing and to have equal access to schooling and very high levels of literacy. Fertility control was available and sanctioned by the state. Third, maternal and child mortality and morbidity statistics were reported to be very encouraging. Finally, Tonga was a safe place: violence was rare and malaria non-existent (important considerations for any parent considering, as was I, taking an eighteen month old child to the field).

Tonga has a history of relatively progressive social policy and legislation, which has always prioritized education and 'health' services as appropriate to chiefly and Christian practice and as

important keys to modernization (Campbell 1992:141-154 Lātūkefu 1975). That emphasis has paid off with “Literacy levels [which] are consistently high”, as one government publication claims (Kingdom of Tonga 1991b:26). The assumption is that everyone, regardless of sex or social rank, is assumed to be able to read (in Tongan). On the 1986 census for instance, “questions on literacy and age at first marriage were ... not considered necessary” (Kingdom of Tonga Population Census 1986:iii). A report for the World Health Organization reported that in 1976, 77.5 % of females and 79% of males aged 15 and over were literate (WHO 1985. Source: Government’s Report on Evaluating Progress in Implementing the Strategies for Health For All/ 2000 , 1985, see also Moengangongo 1988:66).

At the same time, infant mortality is relatively low (Government of Tonga 1991: 62. footnote one). The Sixth Five Year Development Plan (Kingdom of Tonga 1991:61) recorded the infant mortality rate for 1987 at 6.8/1,000. For the sake of comparison, during 1986 in Canada, the infant mortality rate for communities with high overall incomes was 5.8/1000, but Canadian communities identified as having the lowest incomes had infant mortality rates of 10.5/1000 (Wilkins et. al 1990:38). Likewise, Japan was reported to have a rate of five, Costa Rica eighteen and Indonesia eighty-five infant deaths per 1,000 live births for the years 1987 to 1989 (Evans et al. 1990:5). As a nation with a marginal economic and development position, the fact that Tonga had infant mortality rates comparable to Canada's and Japan's, and different from other ‘developing nations’, seemed of interest⁹. It appeared that Tonga, and Tongan mothers in particular, might tell

⁹ Data collection is problematic in Tonga and all published statistical measures must be read with some skepticism. This is demonstrated by the infant mortality measures. For example, a Ministry of Health report records the infant mortality rate for the same year as 11.1/1,000 (Government of Tonga, 1990). This latter report was only available at the end of the fieldwork period. Which ever number is correct, the statistics are still comparable to parts of the Canadian population, and better than in many poor nations.

an international health development success story.

As the preceding discussion shows, the question of refining 'health' and the role of 'mother' was heavily emphasised in the 'health' and development literature. However, it was clear that the local diversity of maternal knowledge, skills and practices were not clearly articulated. What was needed was a better understanding of Tongan mothers and mothering.

In the following chapter I review the literature pertinent to an ethnography of motherhood in Tonga. Women have always been present in the literature and the theorising about Tonga, but as I argue, the role of the mother and especially the non-elite mother, has been elided by theoretical interests in social structure, rank and power, in ethnographic reconstruction and the interrelation of gender and mystical powers attributed to sisters. This has not been the case in North American feminist literature, where mothers are an area of growing specialization. I discuss two of the germinal contributions to a theorising of motherhood, or maternal work, with reference to their potential to contribute to the Tongan literature.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN TONGAN ETHNOGRAPHY: THEORISING THE MOTHER

Women's roles and social status or position are prominent features in Polynesian ethnography. As Rogers (1977:157) noted "all observers have recognized the privileged status of Tongan women". Issues of gender with relation to hierarchy and descent, female 'pollution' and the brother-sister dyad are fundamental to the literature on Polynesia¹⁰ (eg: Firth 1957 [1936], Goldman 1970, Hooper and Huntsman 1975, Hecht 1977) and of particular interest in the Tongan literature (eg: Rogers 1977, Kaeppler 1978, Ralston, Bott 1981, Herda 1987, Ortner 1981, Gailey 1987, James 1983, 1992). Despite the interest in women, the 'mother' has received little attention: most frequently, 'mothers' appear in the literature as procreators. As socially interactive beings, mothers have been under-represented, overshadowed by the other social roles women live: that of sister (to a man) and wife (child-bearer). A great deal of time and intellectual energy has been devoted

¹⁰ The wider dialogue on gender in Polynesia provides some context for the situation in Tongan studies: Important understandings of the role that female sexuality may have played in pre-contact Polynesian societies, including Tonga, developed after Hanson (1982, 1987) and Hanson and Hanson (1983) which re-analyzed of notions of female 'pollution' among Maori and other Polynesian societies. They argued that pre-contact Polynesian women were conceptualized, not as "polluting", as had been discussed to that point, but as conduits between the sacred and the secular worlds, as pathways –symbolized by the vagina (Hanson 1982)– whence moved gods. Women were therefore a means for channeling godly influence in a society in which "the primary aim of religious ritual ... was to channel the influence of the gods into areas of life where it would be useful, and away from those areas where it might be harmful" (Hanson 1987:426. See also Shore 1989:140). In this analysis, women could be subjected to structural and social constraints, as needed to channel godly 'influence'. These constraints might be quite restrictive and could look to be 'female pollution' (as had been argued for Hawai'i). Whether or not Polynesian women in general were subordinated and viewed as ritually defiling was therefore of special interest (eg: Shore 1981, Hanson 1982, 1987; Hanson and Hanson 1983; Valeri 1985; Ralston and Thomas 1987; Thomas 1989). This question thus informed some of the dialogue in the literature on Tonga (ie: Valeri 1985, 1989; James 1991, 1991a).

to debate about the roles and significance of women as sisters and/or wives, however this debate has been limited because a third element, the work of mothering (Ruddick 1987) has been lacking.

I introduce Ruddick's (1989) concepts of maternal work and maternal thinking, with its potential for theorising about 'mothers' later in this chapter. My objective in this section is to situate an understanding of 'mothers' as theorized in the wider literature on gender in Tonga to date, and to introduce a mediating term between the sister/wife opposition. I frame my discussion of the literature in terms of the following key points:

1] The role of sister has received more attention than any other aspect of women's lives. Where women are recognised as mothers, they are depicted predominantly as wives/bearers of children and pawns in male's strategies; the social roles and work of women who are sisters, daughters, wives and mothers has consequently been under-theorized. Mothering thus unexamined is essentialized as based only in biological reproduction.

2] Analyses of social hierarchy vis-a-vis gender and rank which posit female agency in terms of the transmission through female links (in turn linked to child-bearing) of "*mana*", 'mystical essence' or 'blood' and manifested through chiefly breeding strategies have, paradoxically, essentialized women in ways that are again, ultimately, biological¹¹.

3] An emphasis on social stratification and ethnographic reconstruction of a pre-contact past has provided important insights into contemporary elites' motivations and ceremonial actions. As

¹¹ The use of the term '*mana*' for Tonga is problematic: Currently, it no longer has salience for anything other than the word for "thunder". Nevertheless, the term has great cachet for anthropologists writing about Tongans, especially in the culture history, ethnographic reconstruction, gender and women's status literatures. Anthropologists use the term to indicate a form of sacred essence, potency, magical efficacy or influence which, in the Tongan case, runs in bloodlines and can be distilled through careful marital alliances. Keesing (1982) provides a discussion of the various conceptualizations indexed by '*mana*' in the Pacific. More recently, (1989:35) he has written that "We must infer, if we look carefully at the early texts, that in many regional variants of Polynesian religion, *mana* was not a crucial concept –except in the interpretations of anthropologists like Edward Handy (1927), intent on imputing philosophies of cosmic dynamism to the Polynesians".

interest in modernization and contemporary Tongan identity gains ground in the anthropological literature, research on 'gender' has shifted to liminal figures and away from women altogether; other recent ethnographic work focussing on religion, economy, and even child-rearing have left the everyday lives of contemporary commoner women still under-represented and under theorized.

4] Finally, that analysis of the structural asymmetry between patrilineal and matrilineal sides of a person's family, widely held to be the source of a woman's strategic power as a father's sister, but also productive of a tension between women's roles as sisters and as wives, generally elides the strategies and processual nature of the work of mothering (after Ruddick 1989, which I discuss below). Much of the literature focussing on the cross-sibling dyad recognizes the inherent instability of wifely vs. sisterly obligations, but by disregarding the practice of mothering, the key mediating role is overlooked.

Mothering is therefore crucial, both in structural terms, and in terms of understanding the everyday, gendered, lives of commoner Tongan women themselves.

Shore (1989:162) argued that gender was the organizing principle of Polynesian society, and any discussion of gender relations and women's status in Tonga logically begins (and ends) with the cross-sibling dyad. In Tonga, the principle of 'gender' is elaborated most through the relationship of brother and sister, referred to in the literature as either the cross-sex sibling, or brother-sister, dyad. This is the fundamental unit of social structure in western Polynesia (including Tonga), insofar as all kin group members aim to be able to trace their descent from a set of cross-sex siblings (Bott with Tavi 1982, Wood Ellem 1987). Within any specific kin group, people organize themselves according to whether they are descended from either a sister or a brother of a sibling set. In myth, traditional ceremony and everyday practice, the brother-sister dyad is so culturally elaborated, so structurally fundamental, and in contrast, the husband-wife relation so weakly developed, that it serves to

differentiate western from eastern Polynesia (There, the husband-wife dyad is more structurally significant: see Huntsman and Hooper 1975, Shore 1989, Howard and Kirkpatrick 1989).

Within Tongan sibling sets, sisters are ranked over their brothers and the children of brothers are expected to defer to and channel resources towards their father's sister and her children. The asymmetry in ranking – where a brother's sister, and her children rank higher than the brother and his children and are therefore accorded the 'freedom' to 'do as they please' towards their lower ranking kin is referred to in Tongan as *fahu* [above the law]. In Tonga, the predominance of the sister's role inheres a tension with the structural position of wife, as noted in the literature (Rogers 1977, Ortner 1981, James 1983, Philips 1994, Gordon 1996). The position of father's sister is called *mehekitanga* and she is the highest ranking member in any person's kin group, called the *kāinga*.

Interest in the *mehekitanga* has predominated in the literature on Tonga, since Rogers (1977) essay, "*The Father's Sister is Black*": *a Consideration of Female Rank and Power in Tonga*. In it, he outlines the roles, kin-based responsibilities, forms of behaviour and authority accrued to family members, with an emphasis on brother-sister relations and the father's sister. Roger's concluded that the respect, avoidance and authority accorded to the *mehekitanga* by her brother's children was based on some sort of "mystical powers ... inherited with the blood of the mother" (Rogers 1977:172). The 'blackness' referred to was her ability to lay down a curse (1977:162-163) a power stemming from a mystical, female connection. Rogers' backed up his argument with a combination of ethnology (other Polynesian societies where a sister's power was noted, eg: Firth 1936, Mead 1930, Hecht 1977), finely detailed ethnography (Rogers 1975) and analysis of one particular adage: *ko e 'uli'uli 'a mehekitanga*. Rogers translated this as 'the father's sister is black'. He argued that the

“mystical power”, a metaphorical ‘blackness’, is passed on by women (men may receive it, but, importantly, cannot pass it on). It gave a sister a sacredness in relation to her brothers, and functioned structurally to check the power of males by investing their sisters with a powerful veto: the ability to curse her brother and brother’s offspring (Rogers 1977:180).

This one notion – that a sister’s “mystical powers”, transmitted through female blood links, explained behaviours of respect, avoidance, authority and privilege for both aristocrats and commoners – contributed much to understanding of the Tongan social structure and has ramified through the literature on Polynesian gender roles . It is now a *de rigure* citation when discussing gender and/or social structure. Tongan linguist Taumoeofolau (1991) has offered a caution however: She points out that Rogers ignored the correct translation given to him by Tupou Posese Fanualofanga, and instead surmised that ‘blackness’ was a metaphor for ‘mystical power’, which he then linked to behaviours such as brothers’ avoidance and *faka’apa’apa* [respect] towards their sisters, the selection of ceremonial heads at a funeral (the *fahu*), choice of ritually safe descendants to receive food at a kava ceremony and, even, the linguistic etymology of the term ‘*mehekitanga*’ as “source of disease” (Rogers 1977:163, footnote 23; see also my Glossary). However, according to Taumoeofolau (1991:91), the saying refers to the fact that even if the father’s sister’s personal circumstances were ugly and ‘black’ [*uli’uli*], she would still be a father’s sister and thereby accorded respect, because of her “cultural greatness” in the kinship system. Taumoeofolau’s point is that ‘blackness’ cannot be used as a metaphor for a father’s sister nor does the adage offer cultural confirmation for the notion of ‘mystical power’.

Nevertheless, Taumoeofolau herself refers to the “cultural greatness” of the father’s sister. Even with the new reading of the adage, Rogers’ main thesis is not entirely gainsaid: something about

father's sisters means they hold a position which is structurally and sociologically significant.

Furthermore, Rogers garners some significant indigenous support for the idea of female links with "mystical power". He cites "the Tongan savant Futa Helu":

"... an ethnobiological belief held somewhat secretly at present but which, apparently, was very articulate in ancient Tonga ... the flesh, bones, skin, hair, etc. – in short, the material substance of the child is wholly the contribution of the mother alone and the father has nothing to do with these ... By this belief, it was held that the blood line ends with the male child but is perpetuated through the female one" ... the institution of *fabu* was, ... "as it were, a cultural reward for the woman for her role in perpetuating the blood line and therefore the human species as a whole" (in Rogers 1977:172-173. See also Helu 1975:4).

Rogers' analysis does provide a means for predicting the behaviour of elites with respect to marriage alliances, and at weddings, funerals and in the kava ceremony. But, the rationale underlying the behaviour was not clear. As he said, the ultimate "source of *fabu* powers remains an open question" (Rogers 1977:173). That question was to be taken up by many more anthropologists and historians interested in tracing out the relationship of gender and social stratification. The emphasis on the transferral of the 'power' or 'blood' through 'mystical' but female and bodily means was to become more and more biological in description (even while avoiding Helu's term 'ethnobiological'). This bio-cosmological explanation, dependent upon structural and symbolic analyses, has now supplanted any possibility of a material or economic explanation (ie: as had been argued by Firth in 1936, when he first discussed the sister's power: see Rogers 1977).

In highlighting the emphasis on sisterly 'mystical power', I do not mean to say that this is an inaccurate understanding of Tongan symbolic thinking, of indigenous cosmology, or that Tongan sisters' sociological roles are necessarily being misconstrued. What I do wish to point out is that a interest in sisters has overshadowed thinking about other roles that women who are also sisters, must play, and that insofar as the transmission of 'mystical power' is based in a divine genealogy, the

emphasis on the sister's sacred connections pertains more to elites than commoners. For commoner women, the key sisterly powers were less evidently useful: "Due to her *tapu*, an association with an unchallengeable spiritual order, the status of the Tongan sister was [therefore] one of great honour and respect, with her potency and influence derived from the sacred realm" says Herda (1987:197). But this influence, which, along with "the power to curse" and "the power to influence the choice of successor" to chiefly titles, as well as politically strategic marriage alliances, was unlikely of earth shattering importance for women whose "*kāinga* was [not] chiefly" (Herda 1987: 197), who had no land to allocate, no *fakafotu* [brother's children] looking to marry chiefly wives, no chiefly brothers with whom to share rule.

Elizabeth Bott (1972, 1981, with Tavi 1982), Adrienne Kaeppler (1971), Elizabeth Wood Ellem (1987), Kerry James (1989, 1991, 1991a, 1992, 1995), Phyllis Herda (1987, 1995), Aletta Biersack (1990, 1991) and Christine Ward Gailey (1980, 1987, 1988) have made major contributions to the analysis of gender and women's position in Tonga. In her close relationship with Queen Sālote Tupou III, Bott's work (1972, 1981, with Tavi 1982, and BSP) exists as the basis for all subsequent theorizing about pre-contact Tongan social structure, traditional and ceremonial practices, chiefly lines of succession, and interpretation of ontological stories. While highly regarded and of excellent quality, it is also clear that Sālote was interested in promulgating a version of Tongan history which both substantiated her own title and right to rule (as a female monarch), while providing a vision of Tongan society and culture which would promote cohesion and permit cooperation rather than internecine political strife. This was an strategy of importance for internal as well as international relations (Herda 1995:47).

Research on Tonga demonstrates that in Tonga, gender is most potent in relation to rank

and power, although which aspect should be prioritised has been the source of some debate (Bott 1981, with Tavi 1982, Biersack 1982, 1990, 1991, Gailey 1987, James 1983, 1991, 1991a, 1992, 1995). Queen Sālote's famous statement that "rank overrules everything" (Wood Ellem 1987:209), has been quoted frequently, even when, as James (1992:82) points out with respect to politics and distribution of resources, it was observably untrue. Where some analyses of female 'influence' have denied that women held positions of power, historical analyses by Wood Ellem (1987) and Herda (1987, 1995), in addition to Queen Sālote's life experience (her right to rule as a female monarch was not uncontested) provided evidence to counter the notion that Tongan sisters were 'influential' but not 'politically authoritative'. The Tongan literature has therefore given Shore's (1989) point, that gender is a key element in Polynesian social structure, added depth.

Of the dialogue on gender in Tonga, Kerry James' oeuvre is the most extensive. James has focused on reconstructing Tongan social structure at a point at or prior to European contact (especially, but not limited to the 18th and 19th centuries) and then demonstrating the congruities or changes within the contemporary society. She argues that a pre-contact "socio-religious hierarchical order in which sex and gender figured prominently" still holds explanatory power for "statuses and roles assumed by women" today (James 1995:62 see also 1992: pp 80, 83), and that "rank was primary in the Tongan order, but was articulated closely with gender distinctions and was often expressed through their medium, as metaphor and in practice" (1991a:266). In this, James (1991:81) sets herself apart from Biersack (1982, 1990, 1991) who considers gender rather than rank, to be primary. I will return to the differences between James' and Biersack's analyses below, for the difference with relation to the inclusion of commoner women' into the dialogue on gender roles within Tongan culture, is significant.

While she has never stated as such, it would seem that James has taken Rogers' question

about the original source of the *fahu*'s power to heart in her attempt to reconstruct a pre-European, pre-Christian Tongan polity. In her papers analysing the Tongan myths of ontogeny and their relation to kava rituals, James (1991, 1991a, 1992, 1995) concludes that a “female principle” (1991:287) and “female agency” (1991:289) underlies the ritual and public substantiation of rank and titles in the Tongan kava ceremony. Clearly following in the theorizing of Rogers (1977, but also influenced by Bott, 1972, 1981, with Tavi 1982; Biersack, 1981, 1990; Herda, 1987), James substitutes the term ‘*mana*’ for Rogers’ “mystical power”. In order to illustrate James’ argument for where and how gender and the ‘female principle’ figured in generating and ordering the social system, it is necessary to describe the ritual of the kava circle – a ceremony which can be incredibly mundane and low key, or highly elaborate (Bott 1972) and, as Biersack (1990, 1991), James, and the attention of numerous others (Collocott 1927; Bott 1972, 1981, with Tavi 1982; Leach 1972; Valeri 1989, 1994; Mahina 1990; Filihia 1998) has shown, clearly relevant to the question of gender and social structure in Tonga.

In a kava ceremony, ranked title holders sit in a circle, with a kava bowl [*kumete*] at the ‘bottom’ end and the highest ranked title holder in the top position [*olovaha*], opposite (see Bott 1972:209, or Biersack 1991:241 for a schematic of a kava circle). Titled persons sit in the formal circle. Around the bottom point [*tou’a*] sit another, looser circle of juniors and untitled persons: theoretically anyone may join the *tou’a*. Ground kava root, brought by the *tou’a*, is poured into the *kumete*, water is mixed in (Bott, 1972:, calls this the most sacred moment in the ritual), and the resulting infusion is ceremonially sieved. Then bowlfuls are delivered to the members of the circle, beginning at the *olovaha*, and subsequently in descending order of rank. The ceremony is held to be

the single ritual capable of characterising all Tongan's relationship within the social-sacred order¹².

The kava ceremony symbolizes the re-birth of the first member of the Tongan chiefly elite, the half-divine Aho'eitu, born of a sexual union between an earthly woman named Ilaheva Va'epopua and the sky god Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a. Murdered out of jealousy by his divine brothers while visiting his father in the sky, Aho'eitu is dismembered and eaten by his brothers. His father guesses his fate, and compels the brothers to vomit his remains into a bowl which he covers with *nonu* leaves (*morinda citrifolia*, used today for medicines and textile dyes). After some time, Aho'eitu's body reassembles, and he is regenerated.

In James' analysis, even though it is the father, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a who conducts the resurrection, it is not he who actually re-vivifies Aho'eitu: she argues that the kava bowl is a symbolic womb of Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a's *mehakitanga* [his father's sister], the goddess Havea Hikule'o (1991:301).

James' analysis of the Tongan polity envisions power as constituted by a hierarchical dualism: sacred divine essence (she uses the term "*mana*") and secular, political authority [*pule*]. This duality is captured and re-played in the '*eiki/tu*'a [chiefly/commoner] ranking. Following Dumont (1980), James suggests that rather than a Levi-Straussian pairing of oppositions underlying divine and secular power, which decries an ultimate hierarchy (which she attributes to Biersack's analysis: 1991: 81), the divine and secular must be thought of as the encompassing and encompassed. In this formulation, there are still dual oppositions, but they are hierarchic too, insofar as divine

¹² There are, as Filihia (1998:130) explains, four different types of kava ceremony: the *fuli taunga*, belonging to the Tu'i Tonga, the *taumafa kava* of the Tu'i Kanokupolu, the '*ilo kava* of lower ranking chiefs, and the *faikava* of commoners. Each have similar overall patterns but symbolically significant variations, eg: the sieving of the kava is different in the *taumafa kava* than the *fuli taunga* (Biersack 1991, Filihia 1998); layout of the bowl, presence of a rope with cowrie shells, and movement of persons carrying kava bowls in the *fuli taunga* emphasized complementary left and right halves of the circle, which none of the other ceremonies include (Biersack 1991).

encompasses secular power, blood (*mana*) encompasses political authority [*pule*], female encompasses male, sister encompasses brother, and so forth (James 1991: , 1995:71).

The next point in James' theory is that the divine form of power, despite being described in myth as derived from the (male) sky god, is actually due to the intervention of the deity Hikule'o, a structural father's sister both to Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a and, through their descent from 'Aho'eitu, to all Tongans (James 1991, 1992). This establishes the template for the entire hierarchical Tongan social structure: each dyad can be ranked in relation to the others, from divine/secular through '*eiki/tu'a*' down to husband/wife. Each lower dyad is encompassed within the dyad above, and the entire series eventually, as secular, are encompassed within the sacred.

Thus in James' theorising, rank is the predominant factor. But rank operates in conjunction with gender. It is the high ranking position of father's sister which is the aspect which creates the possibility of all human Tongan life

Furthermore, this father's sister, Hikule'o, also becomes mother to 'Aho'eitu (James 1991:303) through the act of giving him life anew: the kava bowl, says James, is a symbolic womb: the legs of the bowl are called 'breasts', it has a triangular decoration suggestive of a vulva and the attached rope with cowrie shell ornamentation resonate with Havea Hikule'o's name (*biku* means tail, and the Goddess is sometimes describes as having a tail). The pouring of water had sexual connotations (Tangaloa is the sky/rain god) but the life-giving 'force' which magically assembles 'Aho'eitu's body out of bits of blood and bone is none other than Hikule'o. From a symbolically incestuous union with her *fakafotu* [brother's child: the god Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a] therefore, comes the chiefly line from which all Tongan '*eiki*' [chiefs] claim descent, and the generative force which distinguishes chiefs from commoners: *mana*.

Thus, argues James, the “mystical potency” (James 1991:287) –the source of *fāhu* that Rogers was seeking– was derived from Hikule’o (see also James 1992:83). Kava was Hikule’o’s *mana* and therefore the kava ceremony symbolized the regenerative power of Hikule’o and ritually included chiefs into the cosmological hierarchy, as descendants of Hikule’o and Tangaloa (James 1991, 1992, 1995).

While providing a fascinating exegesis for the Tongan origin myth and the kava ceremony which serves as political charter at the national as well as local level, in the total obviation of ‘Ilaheva Va’epopua, the original, earthly woman who bore and raised Aho’eutu before he went to visit his father in the sky, and in very the problematic notion of *mehakitanga-fakafotu* incest, James promotes a vision of the father’s sister as not just authority over brother’s child, but the true life-giving mother of a brother’s child. In addition, she has also perpetuated a model of motherhood itself as relegated to birthing, and the role of mother as simply genetrix to a line of chiefly descendants. As she argues, the potency originally derived from Hikule’o is “transmitted only by females” (James 1991:304). Apparently it has some sort of affinity for female bodies, because *mana* can be marshalled and concentrated into persons through generations of careful marital alliances between high ranking chiefs and equally high ranking virgins, motivations today underlying “trends in Tongan political life and history where the goal has been to...acquire in marriage a high-ranking virgin, the vessel of *mana* (James 1991:287).

James’ use of Dumont’s (1980) concept of encompassing and encompassed dyads, wherein divine power encompasses secular, makes sense for describing ranking and the seeming fluid, diarchic forms of power in Tonga. There is a direct resonance with the perception of chiefly title holders, wherein the current title holder is understood to contain within him all previous titleholders, to the

extent that the first person pronoun is used by one title holder to refer to exploits by a previous holder of the same title. But her analysis of the myths and ritual is problematic, not only for the way in which she characterizes motherhood, and re-privileges a story in which elite women act as progenitors and sacred sisters: Given her insistence that *mana* is only passed on through female links, I wonder, where did it go from 'Aho'eitu? James makes no mention of a sister, a second child of Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a and Hikule'o, or even Tangaloa and 'Ilaheva. Nor is a sister mentioned in any of the other accounts of 'Aho'eitu that I know of. Furthermore, Filihia (1998:139-140) argues that the connection of the rope and cowrie shells (symbolizing Hikule'o's tail) can be explained through a homonym: cowries are called *pule*, which is also the word for 'authority', hence the cowrie shells might be placed in front of the position for the highest authority figure. Filihia also denies that Tongan's call kava bowl legs 'breasts' (1998:139). Mahina (1990) suggests that the characters in the 'Aho'eitu /Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a myth are based on real people, Samoans who conquered or discovered the Tongan islands and have been immortalized in legend and folk tale. He points to the fact, as does Filihia (1998) that the names Havea Hikule'o, 'Aho'eitu and Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a are Samoan, not Tongan.

The association James draws between bowl and womb is not disproved however: Biersack quotes a highly placed ritual specialist to the royal family:

Ve'ehala ,,,[referred] to the bowl as a "she" because the kava root inside it symbolized a female's body. ... Ve'ehala explained that "it is only from a lady's womb that something living comes; and the kava ceremony is a life-giving ceremony" (1991:257).

So whose womb is it? I referred above to the fact that Biersack's (1991) analysis of the same ritual and its relevance for understanding of gender roles in Tonga had relevance because it incorporated commoners. As she explained: "My principle task is to explicate why Kava'onau, a

commoner and a woman, and not 'Aho'eitu dominates the kava myth and ... the kava ceremony" (Biersack 1991:236). In the myth of the origin of kava, a commoner girl named Kava'onau is killed at a time of great famine by her mother and father, in order to provide food for a high ranking, but unexpected guest. He learns of their sacrifice and refuses to eat Kava'onau, directing the parents instead to bury her properly. From her body grows a plant – kava – which becomes the ritual marker for a contract between gods and humans, chiefs and commoners.

According to Biersack, it is internment (proper enclosure in death) and the rejection of cannibalism, which constitutes the key narrative in both the Kava'onau and 'Aho'eitu myths. Cannibalism signifies "boundless parasitical and ultimately homicidal privilege, the rejection of cannibalism affirms kinship's law as the law of kingship" (Biersack 1991:252). What the ceremony does is create the rebirth of a chief, from a position of cosmological divinity (by birth) into a secular authority (by title). It signifies a "contract of mutual service and beneficence that is the moral foundation of the Tongan polity" (Biersack 1991:252). The kava ceremony thus predicates the reciprocal responsibilities, mutual sacrifices and mutual interdependence which commoners and chiefs must both make in order for Tonga to exist. Commoners offer the chiefs their loyalty [*mateaki*], respect [*faka'apa'apa*] and obedience [*talangofua*] especially with respect to certain forms of work [*ngaue*] and obligations [*fatongia*]. In return, chiefs offer their 'ofa [empathy/love/generosity], their personal intercession with the divine, and their willingness to bear a title, with all the attendant secular and administrative duties. Because people die, but titles do not, accepting a title acts to perpetuate the (secular) social order, the Tongan polity, over time.

The commoner parents of Kava'onau sacrificed their daughter out of loyalty and willingness to fulfill their obligations as commoners; the chief's rejection of cannibalism signifies the reciprocal

responsibility of rulers to “acknowledge the *moral* limits to divine right” and to recognize that with acceptance of a titled position comes the responsibility of “chiefly paternalism” (Biersack 1991:251, emphasis in original). Thus, “just as Kava’onau’s life was sacrificed ... [so] a chief’s life is sacrificed to lead the people” (Biersack 1991:251).

Biersack (1991) applied Hocart’s (1970) notion of parallel, dyadic oppositions of divine and secular power. Rather than a serially encompassing and encompassed hierarchy (as developed from Dumont by James), Biersack posits a kind of yin-yang, complementarian notion of the ‘*eikitu’a*, sister/brother, sacred/secular dualities. By including the origin of kava within analysis of the kava ritual and the origin myth of the Tongan polity, and by foregrounding “the place of commoners in the Tongan polity and the relationship between king and people through which the Tongan kingdom becomes cosmic in scope” (Biersack 1991:236), Biersack is able to provide an explanation which recognizes gender roles, but displaces the over-prioritisation of chiefly women as sisters, and instead charts the mutual interdependence of high-ranking and commoner, female and male people.

The ‘womb’ in question is thus not that of Hikule’o, it belongs to Kava’onau, the commoner who gave both her life and kava, the ritual element which chiefs use to both install title holders and to position the highest ranking title holder (ie: the king) as the mediator binding together sky and earth, yoking “the land and all its events to the will of the sky” (Biersack 1991:260) . Thus, in Biersack’s analysis, the myths and ceremonies are perpetuating an “essential pact” which prioritises core cultural values of kinship, mutual aid, and proper fulfilment of obligation.

Unfortunately, for a dialogue which could have included motherhood in greater subtlety, the nuances of Biersack’s analysis have been ignored (eg: James 1994, 1995). Analyses of women’s social position within a pre-contact social structure have therefore emphasized a mystical, sacred ‘essence’

–something intrinsic in women and men, but passed on through women, sometimes called blood, sometimes “*mana*” – and the role it played in the pre-Christian politico-religious arena (eg: Bott with Tavi 1982, Valeri 1989, Biersack, 1982, 1990, 1991, James 1983, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995).

Interest in women emphasised the way in which sisters became the repositories of the sacred aspects required for rule and generativity, and how women’s brothers, as James (1992) has argued, were the ones who ritually bound and socially constrained them, so as to potentiate their sanctity (her argument is based on Shore, 1989, who argued that boundedness indicated the perfect state of sanctity in Polynesian epistemology). The epitome of female sacredness was the high ranking sisters, the ‘sacred maids’ whose virginity was ‘bound’ (ritually or actually) throughout their lives (Hecht 1977, Shore 1989). In Tonga this was the Tamahā, the daughter of the Tu’i Tonga Fefine, the sister of the Tu’i Tonga and highest ranking woman in Tonga. At one time, the Tamahā was forbidden from marriage, both to confine her sacred essence, but also because her children would be dangerously high in rank (Bott with Tavi 1982, Gailey 1987, James 1992).

These analyses are motivated by a notion of an intrinsic female essence – a biological, natural aspect, sometimes referred to as “mana” (eg: James’s analyses) – which can be managed through constraints and manipulations of female sexuality and the female body. So it is almost ‘natural’ that a collateral aspect of the Tongan literature dealing with women should characterize their roles as child-bearing pawns among groups competing for rank and the power which derived from it. This same notion is said to persist in contemporary decisions: “The old idea of a sacred substance intrinsic to women of high birth is rarely articulated; but the sexuality of high-ranking women is tightly controlled. ... Marriage to high ranking women may harken back to the hierarchy, but is still has pragmatic purpose in the present day” (James 1995:80).

Where female ‘power’ and agency is asserted (Herda 1987, 1995; Wood Ellem 1987; James

1991, 1992, 1995) it tends to be symbolic, cosmological, 'blood' and/or elite-oriented (except Biersack 1991). Accounts of agency based in the mundane social relations of everyday life are rarely available. In some ways, Christine Ward Gailey's (1980, 1987, 1987a) analysis varies, in that she prioritises the political and economic rather than religious and cosmological aspect of 18th and 19th century Tongan women's lives. She argued that 19th century missionary and mercantile contact, along with state formation, caused a negative change in women's status, because the role of 'sister' as *fahu* was denied by Christian Missionaries' influence on the legal code. In combination with the outlawing of the *fahu* prerogative, women's position as producers of economically essential textile wealth was devalued, when foreign calico was promoted as morally and socially superior forms of cloth. Finally, in the devaluation of their sisterly powers, women were socially reconstituted as 'wives', a culturally inferior position in which they were economically dependent upon their husbands.

Gailey's work has been criticized for its linguistic, historical and ethnographic errors and misconceptions, an over deterministic modelling of the difference between state and kinship-based societies, a lack of ethnographic resources and general inexperience with the realities of lived practice in Tonga, and a too rigid characterization of 'women's' vs. 'mens' wealth (see: James 1988 and Gordon 1992 for careful reviews of Gailey 1987). However, Gailey does point to the fact that with *fahu* rights, women past procreation age still had the structural means for manipulating the social and political milieu, effects that were perceived by women's children as deriving from their mother (Gailey 1980:301-302), not someone's sister. Nevertheless, even though Gailey is explicit that the potential for women's agency extended to women as mothers past the childbearing stage of life, in her early analyses (1980, 1987, 1987a) this agency pertains only to chiefly, aristocratic

women.

While Gailey is correct that early Christian missionaries then (and since) promoted the wifely role over that of the sister (Olsen 1993), it is also true that the adoption of Christianity led to a democratization of the positions of elites and commoners (women and men). The power of the individual chiefs vis-a-vis their *kāinga* (those who are now more usually called commoners or *tu'a*) was abrogated and subsumed within the power of the monarch. In many cases, chiefly family members moved to the capital of Nuku'alofa, so as to be near the royal family and source of political and economic favour. They thereby left villagers relatively independent of the day-to-day interference from highly ranked people; as it is said on Kauvai, a chief far away is a lot easier to obey (because when present, they are continually making demands). Furthermore, however much the law codes forbid the formalized right of sisters over brothers (ie: *fahu*), the concept of the 'sister' remains powerful, both in symbolic and lived practice in contemporary Tonga (see Phillips 1994, 1996). Only now, brothers emphasize that they do things for their sisters out of 'love' [*ofa*].

To sum up: where mothering is mentioned in the ethnographic reconstructions and analyses of gender constructs, 'motherhood' begins with the politics of the alliance, and ends with the birth of the child (except for Biersack, and to some extent, Gailey). This is understandable in a dialogue with an overall interest in social stratification and rivalry between ranked lines of chiefly people. Clearly also, part of the problem is a lack of resources, insofar as common people did not generally have the opportunity to record their history, and much of the ethnographic literature derives from a very small set of original sources (ie: Mariner 1827, Orange 1840, Gifford 1929), materials with which Queen Sālote, "the architect of modern Tongan tradition" and Elizabeth Bott, her amanuensis

(James 1991a:260), were both quite familiar (Herda 1995:49-50)¹³. A final aspect of the problem is the hold that ethnographic reconstruction has had on the imaginations and interests of Tongan scholars (Marcus 1979:90).

There is no doubt that 'history' is everywhere in Tonga, and that this exerts a compelling influence on thinking about Tongan society, for Tongans as well as outsiders (Evans and Young Leslie 1995). But as all recognize, there have been dramatic social, political and religious changes, beginning with the early Christian missions. Is it to be assumed the pre-contact gendered roles are replayed in the contemporary setting? How is 'gender' and women's position discussed with reference to the process of modernization? This was a question raised by James (1982) in the context of a proposal for research on gender relations in Tonga. As I show in the next paragraphs, while commoner women have received somewhat greater attention, the 'mother' remains essentially untheorized.

While Marcus (1978, 1979, 1980, 1989) followed the oft-given and rarely followed advice to "study up" in his work on the emerging nobility of the 20th century, and Mahina (1990, 1992) has focussed on ritual and tradition from an indigenous and critical perspective, much of the recent ethnographic work on Tonga follows Decktor Korn's (1974; see also 1977, 1978 and with Korn, 1983) suggestion to avoid privileging 'the noble view'. The result has given Tongan studies many new insights. Recent studies by Olsen (1993) and Gordon (1988, 1992, 1994, 1994a, 1996, 1998) have focussed on religious communities, with especial reference to conflict resolution, competition, and identity, but do not specifically focus on women. The same can be said for Evans (1996) and Stevens (1995), whose research was on agricultural, economic and environmental factors, issues more

¹³ Philips (1994:86) notes the influence Queen Sālote has had on scholars, including Gifford, Bott, Lārūkefu, Herda and Wood Ellem.

informative of men's lives. Cowling (1990, 1990a, 1990b) and Morton (1996 and as Kavapalu 1991, 1993, 1995) and Small (1997) have also written on identity, especially in the context of tradition and migration.

Cowling's (1990b) work on Tongan perceptions of tradition and identity refers frequently to wives, to the ideology of family love and to the competing pulls on women as wives, eg: "the wife is to be a good mother and housewife" (1990b:218). Her work is balanced in that she examines men and women, and insightful, in her argument that "traditions related to the maintenance of good kinship relations persist... [and]... that many of these traditions have been fostered by the state because class divisions and relations of subordination can be extrapolated from them" (Cowling 1990b:283). In her examination of responses to ideas of Tongan tradition, Cowling notes the significance of textile production for outer island, traditionalist women (1990b:274-286). Like Gailey (1992), she sees that familial links are centred around females. However, Cowling puzzles that "there is no correlation" between poverty and sale of textiles (1990b:283), thereby missing an important element. Except for her mention of the desire to give textiles at a daughter's wedding (1990b:276) what Cowling fails to recognize is that it is women's motherhood which frequently motivates their intensive textile production, their willingness to sell textiles, and that it is often the mother-child relationship which motivates remittances and formalized exchanges of textiles across the oceans (Young Leslie 1996a, and herein). Finally, despite a discussion of traditional medical treatments and introduced illnesses and 'health' practices, Cowling (1990) does not discuss the links between notions of health as living well, and good maternal practice, including textile production. 'Mothers' in her analysis, are blended into an undifferentiated category of 'woman'.

Morton (1996) has written clearly and accurately on socialization of young children and instillation of Tongan cultural values. But while referring to children's mothers throughout, in

constructing an ethnography of childhood, Morton actually left mothers, and the analysis of what mothers think, feel, desire, strategize, unexamined. My work here thus compliments and balances that of Morton's.

Cathy Small (1997) has produced a sensitive account of Tongan women's lives, in Tonga but mostly in the context of overseas migration. Her work demonstrates the degrees to which Tongan women prioritize maternal and traditional activities, including the production and exchange of textiles. She characterises this labour in terms of kinship obligations, desire to improve their children's lives and identity: it is clear that for many Tongan women living overseas, textile exchanges are key tactics for demonstrating love and maintaining familial ties across oceans, but also for retaining a sense of identity as Tongan women. Small's analysis validates the emphasis I place on textiles in Kauvai women's attempt to 'live well'. It is gendered, in that the majority of the people she discusses are female, and she has an interest in gender, but her analysis not about gender roles *per se* (Small 1997:5-11).

Unlike most of the recent work discussed above, Philips' (1994) analysis of Tongan court proceedings does adopt an explicit gender orientation: in other words, she is interested in the question of how gender is played out in the modern, mundane (as opposed to ceremonial, or traditional) contexts. Philips demonstrates that in legal settings, the concept of the brother-sister dyad is used to evoke moral behaviour, in ways that supercede the image of the husband-wife pair. Philips' careful interpretations of court dialogue show that the ideology of brother-sister relations and the requirement in Tongan tradition for circumspect behaviour on all parties when a brother and sister are co-present (part of respectful *faka'apa'apa* behaviour), pervades prosecutors' and magistrates' speech. It 'inflects the court system as distinctly Tongan' (Philips 1994:84), and

substantiates the brother-sister relation as morally normative. Elsewhere, Philips makes the important point that much of the presence of sister/brother dyads in the literature is due to more than the fact that the husband-wife relationship is 'weakly developed'. The formal registers do not enable discussion of marital relationships: "I ... think the wife-husband relationship is also the most private of the dyads" she notes (Philips 1996:594) . However, courtroom speech shows that from the perspective of the state's legal representatives, women who are married are constructed always in the context of their marriages, and therefore as a member of a collectivity, a family. As such the wife-husband relationship is "considered secondary and subordinated to collective concepts of family" (Philips 1996:594 emphasis added).

Aside from Philips' work, where 'gender' is explicitly examined in the contemporary Tongan setting, the focus is on 'liminal' states of male femineity (Cowling 1990b: 171-200, Besnier 1994, James 1994), a subject which does not concern me here. But Philip's evidence for the use of the brother-sister dyad as morally normative returns me to the place where this discussion began: the cross-sibling dyad and the tension it produces for women juggling matrilateral affections and patrilateral obligations. The inherent conflict between the structural positions of sister and wife is well recognised in the literature on Tongan (Ortner 1981, James 1983, Gordon 1996), ie:

In the Tongan case, the contradiction [is] between the status of the female as sister, who stands as *'eiki*, or god to her brother, and the status of the female as "wife", or bearer of children, who stands in the relation of *tu'a* to the father of the child and his seniors (James 1992:92)

Within a system of competing interests, where "matrilinearity is structurally less powerful than patrilinearity", women experience tension from the contradictions of competition for kinship loyalties (Gordon 1996:58). This conflict is played out in social interactions in a variety of ways: disagreements between wives and husbands, resentment of husband's sisters by wives, competition

between or resentment for children of cross-siblings. One possibility that Gordon (1996) notes, seems to be the potential for sickness episodes called *'avanga* which are often attributed to breeches in kinship ideology (Parsons 1981, 1983, 1984, Gordon 1996). It is surprising to me is that the inherent conflict that resides between the claims on a sister and the claims on a wife could be so well recognised in the literature, but that the mediating position for women who are wives and sisters (and daughters) –that of mother– should be so under-examined. Instead, much of the analysis privileges the unique position of sisters, and expresses concern over the loss of sisters' power, without fully considering the other roles that the same women occupy.

To sum up the points discussed thus far: there have been exciting innovations in analyses of gender and women's status vis-a-vis hierarchy and social structure in Tonga. In this dialogue, sisters have received more attention than 'mothers', and in general, women have been represented in ways which hinge on an essentialized, mystical, and ultimately biologic female nature. This is especially apparent in discussions which claim to be about social structure, political power and hierarchy. Such analyses do much to re-create an understanding of the Tongan past and to explain ceremonial and cultural practice, status rivalry and interplay of blood rank and honorific titles, as understood and mobilized by a particular strata of Tongan society: the elites.

Because the analyses of gender and social stratification have focussed on reconstruction of a pre-contact polity, high-ranking, chiefly women have been over-represented, and *tu'a* [commoner] women, are abstracted from the discussion. Furthermore, in ignoring women's actions as mothers, the conflict which inheres between the simultaneous roles of wife and sister are left unresolved at the level of the individual woman. The living, breathing, commoner woman who embodies multiple kinship and social roles is left unacknowledged and motherhood is untheorized. Slight exceptions

are to be found in the theorizing of Christine Ward Gailey, and Aletta Biersack. Both made explicit, if passing, acknowledgements of women's agency as either mother or commoner. Reading between the lines of Biersack's nuanced analysis of the mutual sacrifices called for in the perpetuation of the Tongan polity, and in Small's (1997) description of women still concerned with being proper Tongans, reveals an impression of the commoner Tongan mother – perhaps as represented by the mother of Kava'onau– as someone who performs her duty, above all else.

A Theoretical Approach to Mothering

While the structural position and everyday life of the 'mother' has remained absent from theorising in Tongan studies, this is not the case in the explicitly feminist¹⁴ and women's studies literature. Feminists have been concerned with motherhood since the early liberal, rationalists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries¹⁵. A recent series of special journal issues and reviews of mothering-oriented literature attest to the degree to which mothers, motherhood and mothering continue to excite interest (eg: Pope et al. 1990; Ross 1995; Adams 1995; Brush 1996; O'Reilly 1999). As to be expected from the variety of feminisms currently espoused in, and feminists contributing to, the literature, the feminist approach to motherhood is diverse. There are some commonalities: Snitnow (1992) has characterized feminist writing of the 1960's through to the 1970's as debates about the assumption of motherhood as every women's destiny, or about strategies

¹⁴ I should make clear that the label 'feminist' is in some respects misleading. Like any label, it implies a singularity of identity which simply is not represented by those who contribute to the literature. This is not the place to provide an exegesis on the various waves and theoretical stances associated with feminism. Suffice to say, feminist studies place "women at the centre, as subjects of inquiry and as active agents in the gathering of knowledge" (Stacey and Thorne 1985, *in* Strathern 1987;277).

¹⁵ The most likely citation of this period in feminist theory is Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly's 1792 tract "A Vindication of the Rights of Women".

for avoiding the reproduction of negative motherhood, in the context of a pervasive societal penchant for mother-blaming (eg: Chodorow 1978). Into the 1980's and up to the 1990's, there has been a trend towards thinking about motherhood's personal, societal and theory-building meanings as well as potential benefits.

Even while celebrating mothering and maternalism (feminist theory based in principles of mothering, of which Bart 1984, and Ruddick 1989 are examples), debates have circled around questions of mother's collective effects in society: What have mothers wrought in the name of motherhood? (With respect to the welfare state and maternalist politics, see Brush 1996.) What is mothering? What exactly is so special about it, and is it different from parenting (Rothman 1989, Ruddick 1989)? Should motherhood be defined biologically, through reproduction, or, by the forms and expectations of the work involved (Trebilcock 1984)?

I focus on two germinal contributions to the theorizing of mothers here, those of feminist philosophers Sara Ruddick (1989) and Caroline Whitbeck (1983). Both have tackled, from different yet complementary perspectives, the task of theorising exactly what a mother and mothering is, and both have been highly influential in subsequent analyses of the work and practice of mothering, sometimes called "mother-work" (ie: Taylor-Ladd 1994).

In an analysis which still seems fresh, Whitbeck (1983) criticised efforts to situate mothering in either simplistic biologic (ie: based in hormones, menstruation and evolution) or sociologic (as espoused by role-learning theory) frames. In her analysis, what tended to be identified as a woman's 'maternal instinct' is a learned skill which emerges from a confluence of social and bodily experience. Whitbeck's analytic constructs women's physical and social experiences as educational, instructive, informative, and valid routes to knowledge. Women learn to be mothers and gain maternal instinct in partnership with their child, who is also learning (to be a child). Men

don't tend to become mothers because they tend not to have the social and bodily experiences that women do (Whitbeck 1983:186). In her rejection of a biological or purely instinctual basis for mothers' knowledge, including their affection and investment in a child, Whitbeck presaged critiques like Eyer's (1993) of mother-infant bonding theory, so popular in obstetrical and nursing circles at present, but which are based essentialist assumptions about human (especially female) biology¹⁶.

In contrast to a construction of mothering as simply based in physiology, Whitbeck (1983) defined mothering processually: a way of doing, something you do with someone else. Following from Whitbeck, mothering may be thought of as embodied, but an embodiment gained through social and physiological experiences, and in interaction with a child.

If motherhood is learned bodily, must that experience include pregnancy and labour, delivery and lactation? Sara Ruddick (1989) separated the work of raising children from the labour of birthing them for analytic purposes, and then proposed thinking of mothering as a form of work, defined not by the biology attendant to childbirth, but by the basic and universal needs presented by any child.

Ruddick argued that mothers are 'mothers' "just because and to the degree that they are committed to meeting demands that define maternal work" (1989:17 emphasis added):

In my discussion of maternal practice, I mean by 'demands' those requirements that are imposed on anyone doing maternal work, in the way respect for experiment is imposed on scientists and racing past the finish line is imposed on jockeys. In this

¹⁶ Eyer (1993) reviews the social construction of infant bonding theory, and its emergence from psychologic attachment theory, biologically-based theories of the mother-child pair and the culture of obstetrics in which pregnancy is a pathology. She demonstrates the persistence of infant-bonding theory (which included the notion that without a bond at birth, mothers would lack the proper hormones to enable them to properly care for their infant) among medical professionals in spite of a lack of scientific evidence. Its effect on nursing, medical and lay practices surrounding childbirth and motherhood, and its implications with respect to post-partum depression, divorce and father's rights, just to name a few examples, have perpetuated a notion of family and society which is decidedly nuclear, middle class and 'white'.

sense of demand, children 'demand' that their lives be preserved and their growth fostered. In addition, the primary social groups with which a mother is identified, whether by force, kinship, or choice, demand that she raise her children in a manner acceptable to them. These three demands - for *preservation, growth* and *social acceptability* - constitute maternal work. To be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance, and training (1989;17 emphasis in original).

Children's demands form part of the interactive equation that Whitbeck (1983) envisioned when she described mothering as a way done with someone else. But Ruddick is more explicit than Whitbeck, in that she clearly defines maternal work as being genderless. That is, "although most mothers have been and are women, mothering is potentially work for men and women" (Ruddick 1989;40 emphasis added). She goes on to lay out a detailed argument about the qualities and potentialities of a form of caring labour that she calls maternal work, and the thinking that derives from that work. There are three interdependent demands of the child, which together are thought of as the basis for maternal work. Each demand acts to "call forth" (1989:61) certain cognitive capacities, ways of thinking which, in Ruddick's estimation, are distinctly maternal. I outline them here, then indicate below, the ways in which Ruddick's formulation of the universal demands of children and the resultant forms of maternal work may not apply in Tonga. I return to Ruddick's description of maternal work again at later points in the dissertation.

Preservative Love

The practice of preservative love depends upon recognizing that children are vulnerable. They therefore "demand" protection. In going about providing protection, mothers watch over and monitor their children. This must be done constantly, but it also must be done in a way which permits the child freedom to develop themselves: Children will not "flourish if they are perpetually watched and guarded" (Ruddick 1989:71). A mother is then faced with a dilemma: She "can never

stop looking, but she must not look too much" (Ruddick 1989:71. Subsequent citations and description all from pp. 71-81). Ruddick terms this cognitive style, the combination of thinking and practice that mother's develop in the process of protecting their children scrutinizing. "The scrutinizing gaze" she says, is pre-emptive, in that mothers are watching for potential problems; it is furtive, so that children do not feel constrained and oppressed by constant monitoring; it is intermittent, so that mothers can carry on other activities, but it needs also be humble: Humility constrains the mother's compulsion to see everywhere and everything, to over-monitor and over-control the world of the child that would otherwise make a mother's life a nightmare. Having humility means mothers recognize that they cannot prevent chance events, they cannot completely control the actions of a (small) human being who tends to "persevere in their own being". In order to retain their humility, to trust that they have done what they needed and must now "respect reality", mothers must have an optimism Ruddick calls "good cheer". Without cheerfulness, mothers would be bowed down with the burden of their labour; they would never have the resilience to deal with adversity, especially when traumas befall their children. It is important to point out that as children grow, the demand for protection does not lessen. Every new skill taught to a child extends and expands the work of the mother.

Fostering Growth

To foster a child's growth is to nurture a normal, or natural unfolding of the child, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and sexually (all references to Ruddick 1989:83-101). It requires the skill of maternal judgement: knowing what is appropriate or not for the child at each stage of life, and being able to judge whether and what intervention is necessary. A central nurturing task is organization and administration of a safe environment: a home base in which the mother is attentive

to the child's needs, and in which the child feels nurtured. Because children change, and even the best attended child can be difficult, unhappy or a failure at something, a mother needs to be flexible, in Ruddick's terms, a mother needs to welcome change. She also needs to have faith that her child has a coherent mentality, that is, that a child's behaviours, as unpredictable as they may seem, actually have rationality, and are oriented by a willingness to be good. In order to "understand a child's mind" a mother develops a capacity for an open-ended, reflective cognitive style called concrete thinking (in philosophy: it is opposed to abstract thinking). But she must also embrace realism and compassion as part of her personal style. Finally, a mother must be able to take delight in a child's life. While this is easy with amusing toddlers, it can be much more difficult with recalcitrant adolescents or children who are severely incapacitated. In order for children's spirit (a lively, embodied self) to be nurtured, Ruddick suggests that children need to hear personal stories –stories about themselves and about their mother, which display a mother's delight in her child– stories which the child can use while building a sense of self-worth.

Social Acceptability

Training children to be socially acceptable, appealing and moral, "to be the kind of person whom others accept and whom the mothers themselves can actively appreciate" (All references to Ruddick 1989:104- 123) is fraught with pitfalls. It requires "intervention and control": A mother training her child tries to manipulate the child's behaviour towards some desired ideal. Some behaviour is accepted, some ignored, some rejected. A mother does best in an environment where she is herself nurtured: The demands for tender, confident judgement that children exert every time they are bad or difficult can create a situation in which a mother questions her own values, an experience which can be "personally unsettling" for the mother. Mothers are typically "susceptible to the 'gaze'

of others" and external authority figures (teachers, spouses, religious leaders, family members) can cause a mother to behave in ways she may not have chosen. It is also inevitable, says Ruddick, that a mother will cause her child emotional, psychic or physical pain. Training is a difficult and unpleasant form of maternal work (for mother and child).

She lays out two types of training systems: one which she calls a "work of conscience"; the other which replaces conscience with the "virtue of obedience". The obedience model results from domination. In this form of training,

...unquestioning obedience is the primary virtue of a trained child and when pleasing behaviour is the principle sign of a training's success, moral and aesthetic differences become signs of rebellions and failure (1986:117).

Ruddick clearly espouses the work of conscience model, which she sees as developing children and mother who are mutually able to maintain reflective judgement and to have proper trust for each other. The way trust is established is through clear judgment, protectiveness and nurturance, a steadiness (avoidance of caprice), and a willingness to take delight in and believe in the inherent goodness of the child.

A final key aspect of training, something which melds together all aspects of maternal work is attentive love: Loving attention to a child, which Ruddick calls attentive love, "is a corrective to many defects of maternal thinking, including an anxious or inquisitive scrutiny, domination, intrusiveness, caprice and self-protective cheeriness" (1989:120).

Theorising Mothering in Tonga

Ruddick has developed a theory of mother's work based on the needs exerted by children. She describes the person acting as primary caregiver as mother and the work of the mother as being based in children's needs for protection, nurturance and training. This is a description of mothering

which includes any number of possible mothers, including father's sisters, mother's brothers, grandparents, etc. In order to fulfill these obligations, mothers acquire or develop certain skills such as scrutiny, humility, cheerfulness, judgement, concrete thinking, flexibility, and especially attentive love. She identifies problems with maternal work: too much scrutiny, dominance and preference for obedience, capriciousness and distrust in the child's willingness to be good. As my descriptions of Kauvai women's maternal practices shall show, some of Ruddick's ideas about mother-work are applicable to Tonga, but there are also differences, and those differences demonstrate degrees of ethnocentrism in Ruddick's assumptions about how children should 'naturally' (Ruddick's term) develop. Kauvai mothers take their job as child-rearers very seriously, and are attentive to what they believe children need. They nurture children according to cultural forms which do not, for example, encourage free or critical thinking. Tongan culture clearly espouses an obedience model of training (see Morton 1996), as indeed is typical of Polynesian child-rearing practices in general (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1989, Ochs 1992). But while some of the results Ruddick predicts (ie: rejection of difference) are evident on Kauvai (ie: children who seem too independent are levelled with the criticism of *fiepoto* – 'smarty-pants'), the negative relationship which Ruddick posits for the mother child relationship is not as problematic as Ruddick predicts. Indeed, Ruddick's (1986:120) contrasts of "attentive love" to scrutiny, domination and intrusiveness, are all one and the same, and part of "preservative love" on Kauvai.

These distinctions point to one of the drawbacks with the analyses of motherhood in the feminist literature: the preponderance of American, middle class perspectives, and mostly white women's voices. The editors of Signs' 1990 special edition on "Ideology of Mothering" rue this tendency for 'Western Patriarchy' to have authored the script about mothers and daughters (Pope et al.1990). More recent work, for example in the area of mothering and the welfare state, is

contributing cross-national perspectives (ie: Brush 1996. Though these are analyses of industrialized countries). This is certainly an area where anthropological research can contribute, both theoretically and empirically.

Furthermore, the differences point also to cultural variation, not only in definition of mother and mother's role in the social structure, but in how cultural identity relates to mothers' other obligations and how roles within their social milieu are framed culturally. This brings me full circle to the questions identified at the outset of this chapter: questions of maternal knowledge, including what tropes and symbols underlie the concept of 'mother', what skills and practices are deemed necessary for mothers to have, and how do mothers balance their other obligations as sisters, wives and daughters. I argue in the following chapters that for contemporary Kauvai women, motherhood is a form of work which is learned through bodily and social experiences, rife with emotions, doubts, obligations and hopes, and predicated, certainly, upon the demands of the child, but also upon other demands, such as the obligations to a network persons that ranges from kin and neighbours to health professionals and other strangers, and the obligations they, perhaps like the mother of Kava'onau, place on themselves.

I introduced some Kauvai mothers (and grandmothers) in the Prologue, and described some fairly esoteric aspects of Tongan cosmology and ceremony in the review of the literature herein. In the following chapter, I return to the village, which I situate within the wider geographic and political dimensions of Tonga. I have suggested that mothers aim to 'live well' and that they do this through creation of maintenance of good social relations, as prescribed within *anga fakatonga* – the Tongan way. Chapter three provides the context and key concepts for understanding how *anga fakatonga* works at the level of the village.

CHAPTER THREE

ETHNOGRAPHIC FUNDAMENTALS

This chapter is divided into two parts. Both are ethnographic in nature. Part one provides an introduction to Tonga and in particular, the islanders upon whom this text is based. Part two delves into one of the preeminent aspects of Tongan cultural practice, arguably the single event which encapsulates, represents and perpetuates Tongan culture. This is the funeral, and I discuss the ways in which the rituals of death demonstrate the importance of social relations, and how elderly, crippled women like Vasiti or Pauline can be healthy, even in death. Kinship is a vital aspect of everyday and ritual life in Tonga, and nowhere is kinship more readily apparent than at a funeral. Part two of this chapter also includes the fundamentals of Tongan kinship, and an expanded discussion of the relations between the invention of health, appropriate social relations and kinship roles and obligations. It has been said that one cannot understand Tonga and Tongans, until one appreciates kinship and the Tongan funeral.

PART 1: THE PEOPLE, THEIR PLACE

Kauvai is the local name for a small atoll in the Kingdom of Tonga. Only 1,626 acres (2.5 sq. miles) and standing a mere 100 feet above sea level, Kauvai is always at the mercy of the elements. The island's population prospered historically because of its superb fish resources, a result of the confluence of reefs and ocean currents which meet in the region. Recently however, economic privation, desire for better education and natural disasters have contributed to a slow but steady

exodus from the island.

There are four villages on Kauvai, which together constitute but one community in a region called Ha'apai. Ha'apai is a cluster of far-flung, low-lying coral atolls and submerged reefs lying in chains in tandem with the occasional, high, volcanic island. It constitutes the geographic centre of Tonga. Like Micronesia, much of Tonga is ocean (see map).

Tonga is a nation of Polynesian people whose population floats between 90,000 and 96,000 persons¹⁷. Tongan people live their lives using 169 small islands and about 750,000 sq. kilometres of deep Pacific ocean for farming, fishing, wild-crafting, manufacture and export. The land base is approximately 739 square kilometres. The largest land form is the main island of Tongatapu, where two thirds of the population live. Tongatapu, specifically the national capital of Nuku'alofa, is the political, economic and demographic centre of the kingdom. The major government offices, the Parliament, highest courts, main hospital, best-funded schools, businesses, banks and the social elites are all to be found in or near Nuku'alofa. Most of the Tongans who do not live by subsistence farming and fishing, are employed in the burgeoning civil service, tourism and small businesses located on Tongatapu.

The many islands are grouped into four clusters: Tongatapu and 'Eua in the south, the far-flung atolls and solitary volcano which constitute the Ha'apai group in the centre, and the larger islands and deep harbours of the Vava'u group in the north. The northernmost islands are the tiny Niuatoputapu and Niuafu'ou, well on the way to Samoa.

¹⁷ The problem with statistics described above is again elucidated by population and death rate numbers which also vary from one Ministry report to another. For example, the Sixth Five Year Development Plan (Kingdom of Tonga 1991:61) records the national population in 1986 as 94,535, while the Statistics Department (Kingdom of Tonga 1991a:) records the 1986 census as 94,649 residents (Kingdom of Tonga 1991a). Even with these caveats in mind, it is clear the population is relatively stable in the long run. Finance reports that Statistics estimates a drop to 90,485 for 1989, similar to the 1976 census of 90,085 (Kingdom of Tonga 1991b:2). Overseas migration accounts for the stability in the census in the face of high fertility and low infant mortality.

Ha'apai, where Kauvai is situated, may be at the geographic centre, but it is at the economic and political periphery. While occupying such a inconsequential position, Ha'apai is also situated and cited as an idealized and mythic centre, the place where, even in the eyes of Tongans, 'old-style', 'true', 'traditional Tonga' persists: as one government official told me, "Ha'apai is where the real Tongan customs are practised" (Fuko 1991). This impression is perpetuated by the residents of Kauvai, who refer to Tongatapu as "*muli*", a term meaning 'overseas' or 'foreign land'. It is an implicit criticism of the predominance of the *Pālangi* [western] ways perceived to abound in the capital of Nuku'alofa.

Internationally, Tonga is not well recognized. Despite the fact that Tongans figured in the drama made famous as "The Mutiny of the Bounty", that Captain Bligh's incredible feat of navigation across the Pacific started from the Ha'apai volcano called Kao, or that Tonga was part of the triangle with Fiji and Samoa where the Polynesian civilization developed, Tonga remains a nation little known outside of the Pacific.

In some respects, Tonga's insignificance has proved to be a boon: her lack of natural resources, strategic location or spectacular scenery in comparison to neighbouring Fiji, Samoa or New Zealand, as well as a series of canny chiefs, made the island group relatively undesirable during the overt political and economic colonization of the nineteenth century (Thaman 1975:2). Polynesian nations like Tahiti, Hawai'i, Samoa, Aotearoa and Fiji, were all to succumb to imperialist expansion, but Tonga was able to avoid overt colonization.

During the Second World War, with the American and Japanese incursions into Micronesia and the Philippines, numerous Pacific peoples were affected. Tongans were protected, mostly by their distance from the Pacific theatre. When the Americans stayed in parts of the Pacific after the

war, bringing even more Pacific islanders under the mandates of an expansionist government, Tonga's remoteness and non-strategic location again served as a form of protection. While there was some war-time activity, the Kingdom's involvement was minor and episodic, mostly as a short-lived staging ground for American or New Zealand forces (Campbell 1992:156-166). Consequently, the effects other Pacific islanders have experienced as a result of economic, political, medical or other contact pressures, were much reduced in Tonga.

However, though inconspicuous, and despite the fact that it is a nation ruled by an indigenous chiefly family and was never officially colonized, contemporary Tonga cannot be romanticized as a Polynesian-island idyll, a destination 'forgotten by time', a land of 'primitive or exotic people': Tongans have dealt with imperialist, religious and mercantile expansionist forces, beginning in the 18th century and ongoing still. They have managed to retain or repatriate their governmental, civil, religious and economic authorities (Campbell 1992, Lātūkefu 1974), partly through selective adoption or manipulation of foreign practices. I describe some of these events, particularly in relation to introduction of 'health', in chapter five.

Tonga is a 'third world' economy characterized by a low GDP, remittances, foreign aid, internal bureaucracy, and out-migration, a complex which is described with the acronym MIRAB (Bertram and Watters, 1985). The Tongan gross domestic product [GDP] in 1989 was just under 160 million (Kingdom of Tonga 1991b:6) for a population of 90,485 persons (Kingdom of Tonga 1991b:2), a GDP per capita of \$176.82¹⁸. Tonga has few natural resources and the main exports are agricultural, marine and human.

As a nation, Tonga labours to mitigate the kinds of economic, educational, medical and

¹⁸ The gross national product for 1983 was estimated at US\$ 354.00 per capita (WHO 1985, source: Government's Report on Evaluating Progress in Implementing the Strategies for Health For All/ 2000 , 1985)

personnel resource disparities which result when regional populations are separated by distance, ocean and poor infrastructural links, and when a lack of natural resources limit the potential for state-based spending. Thus, while Tonga's economy is comparable to that of many 'third world' nations, unlike many other poor nations, literacy in Tonga for both sexes is considered to be close to 100%; reported infant mortality rates are similar to those of Canada and no one is starving. These successes represent no mean feat in a nation with low GDP, poor export links, little infrastructure, geographic disparity and a susceptibility to droughts and hurricanes. These were, in part, the factors which drew my interest to Kauvai. It is one of the many atolls in Ha'apai, but one which periodically suffered droughts and only a decade before had been flattened by the latest of several hurricanes. I went to Kauvai wondering, "in the absence of medical infrastructure, transportation and amenities like running water and electricity, what do mothers do here, to make and keep their children healthy?"

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy and the King retains full political power. I describe the national political system in greater detail in chapter five, including the historical connection between chiefs and the people, and the introduction of 'health'. In the following section, I focus explicitly on Kauvai, and especially forms of authority and influence, livelihood and lifestyle, the household, the environment, infrastructure and movement of people and goods.

The Island of Kauvai

Kauvai is, as I have described, a coral atoll with four villages. The people are mostly farmers, fishers and textile producers. Three of Kauvai's villages are linked historically and politically as the

official estate of a hereditary chief named Havea¹⁹. The largest village of Havea's estate, what I call Maka Fele'unga or 'the village', was my base for nineteen months, in 1991, 1992 and 1993. Maka Fele'unga is the seat of power for the island, and Havea's hereditary home. It has a population which varies between 135 and 150 people. Kauvai's entire population fluctuates severely and frequently, due to out-migration for school or labour. The population from 1991-1993 was roughly 800 - 1000 persons.

I say roughly, because no census data on actual residents exists. The Tongan system of population registration is based on voting registers and birth records, and prioritises the village of one's parent's birth, rather than location of residence. Most of Kauvai's registered voters live in the environs of Nuku'alofa, or Pangai, the town which represents the regional centre for Ha'apai. Thus, the voting population registered to Maka Fele'unga and Kauvai as a whole is greater than that reported here.

The fourth village on Kauvai is a government-administered estate and is not part of Havea's or any other noble's titled holdings. Technically, such lands are administered by the Prime Minister, and the people living there owe no fealty to any particular noble. However, the four villages on Kauvai are populated by people who intermarry, and have done so for generations. Relatives from the government estate may owe Havea nothing, but they may still give things to him indirectly, as they 'help' their relatives who live on land which is part of his estate. All in all, government-administered villages are fewer than nobles' estates and most Tongans live on land which is allocated as part of a titled, noble's estate.

¹⁹ Havea is a holder of one of thirty three noble's titles established under the Tongan Constitution of 1875 (Lātūkefu 1974, Bott with Tavi 1982). The nobles represent the colonial-era codification of Polynesian chiefly systems of authority, using the British monarchy and peerage system as models. They constitute a political power-block but a demographic minority. The majority of Tongans are of non-chiefly or commoner status.

Authority and Influence in the Village

Village authority is threefold: legal, religious and traditional chiefly. Each village elects a town officer [*ofisa kolo*] to act as mayor, town crier, mail clerk and peace keeper. The town officers report to a district supervisor [*pule fakavahe*], and act as village-based voices for the government, their noble (if they have one), the district magistrates and the chief of police. Each town officer convenes a monthly meeting of village residents called a *fono*, at which important news concerning the village is announced. At the *fono*, residents may be asked to vote on specific issues concerning the entire village, or be instructed to prepare for specific events, like the annual village 'health' inspection [*a'ahi*]. The town officers can have someone arrested, and have charges laid, but are not themselves police officers.

The ministers of local churches hold no official political or jural power, but they have great influence in people's lives. In the past, the local chief was the jural and moral authority of a village. In many respects, ministers have replaced chiefs as local authority figures (Decktor Korn 1978), and most certainly as everyday intermediaries with the supernatural, specifically God (Olsen 1993). Tonga officially promotes a Christian orientation and is proud of the missionaries' influence. This is a result of the firm historical integration of church and state, religion and tradition, which extends far into the conduct of everyday life (Decktor Korn 1978).

Other figures with influence, but no formal legal authority, are the traditional 'petty' title holders, such as the *motu'a tauhi fonua* and the many *mātāpule*: men, classed as commoners today, who hold historic names, stories and responsibilities handed down through specific families for generations (see Bott with Tavi 1982:122, and Evans and Young Leslie 1995). There are many such title holders on Kauvai. The hereditary chief, including those contemporarily referred to as a noble

[nopele], has certain traditional obligations to the people of his estate, but nothing that can be enforced legally. In general, the noble's attention is focussed more towards his traditional obligations to the king, than the other way around.

Livelihood and Lifestyle

The majority of Kauvai's residents depend upon fishing, animal husbandry, agriculture, sales of copra [desiccated coconut] and textile production for their livelihoods. Of the approximately 900 people living on Kauvai, only eleven have significant salaried labour. All were in some form of the civil service: teachers, elected officials, a nurse and an agricultural officer.

Another category of people, mostly church ministers and other office holders, collect small stipends. Because the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints had a shifting population of visiting 'missionaries', this group's number fluctuated, but approximately thirteen to fifteen church related stipends were received by people living on Kauvai.

There were also several small shops [*falekoloa*] on the island. These establishments were operated as a family business, and sold basic staples: tinned fish and corned beef, sugar, lard, matches, salt, candies, and other 'junk food' snacks. Specifically, the shops did not sell local produce. Rarely, the person working in the store was actually paid a salary.

Participation in the market economy then, is frequent in that people make and think about cash expenditures daily, but minor in that the monetary amounts are very small, and infrastructural links too poor to allow higher degrees of participation in a market economy (see Evans 1996). In many ways these factors have not changed since the 1920s (Campbell 1992:154).

The Household

The household is referred to as the *'api*. Residents of an *'api* are a fluid unit, composed of persons connected roughly, but not necessarily only, on the basis of kinship, who may shift from one physical space to another, at any given time, for a variety of personal reasons. While the nuclear family is one aspect of a household, it is not the main criterion for membership. Sharing of a cooking hearth and of garden, livestock and textile resources is a better indicator of the extent of the household (See Evans 1996, also Decktor-Korn 1977 and Cowling 1990b for extensive discussion of the Tongan household).

Most people live in two-roomed wooden houses with corrugated tin for the roof. The tin-roofed houses were subsidized as part of a Commonwealth relief effort after Hurricane Isaac blew all their homes into rubble in 1982. Over a decade old now, the *fāle afā* [hurricane houses] still look temporary, perched as they are on cement stilts (see photo #1). Behind most houses is the *peito*, where meals are cooked over coconut-husk fires, and eaten sitting on the floor, or from a table and benches. A very few households also have a second dwelling, a coconut palm thatched *fāle tonga* [Tongan house²⁰]. These buildings are generally used as a spare or boys' house (At puberty, brothers and sisters begin to be separated, both in physical space, and social activities).

In the following paragraphs, I provide descriptions of two households of the village. While the majority of households are 'headed' by a husband and a wife, many are female headed, either due to widowhood, or to husbands residing overseas for work purposes, and many women have at

²⁰ The term *fāle tonga* technically refers to a thatch house, but the styles of house construction have changed greatly over the past few decades (see Campbell 1992:150-151). Campbell labels a house made of plaited coconut fronds with rounded ends and thatched roof a *fāle fakamanuka*, but I was taught to call the same kind of house a *fāle tonga*. Furthermore, the term *fāle tonga* is also being used now, colloquially, to refer to any second, lower quality, building on a site, even if that building is wooden with a tin roof.

sometime or other, been the manager of their home. For these reasons, I provide descriptions of the households of Pauline and Folingi, two of the elder, and socially well-known women of the village.

Pauline holds title to the *'api* site where she lives, since the death of her husband. This is referred to as an *'api tukuhau*. Since inheritance of land is legally passed according to primogenitor in the male line, Pauline's title to the *'api* is really in trust for her eldest son. Also living on the *'api* are Pauline's daughters Manu and Ta'ufo'ou, a granddaughter named Mauvai, child of another daughter whom Pauline has fostered [*pusiaki*], one of Pauline's sons Moli and his wife Mele (See Figure 1: Pauline's *'api*. Named children are residents, un-named ones live elsewhere). The entire group eats from the same gardens, uses the same *peito* [cook house] and cooperates in terms of household duties, tasks and resources.

Moli is not the eldest son, and so will not officially inherit the *'api*. The son that will inherit is living in Auckland. He and his wife regularly send gifts to Pauline, and have occasionally visited, however, they have no firm plans to move back to Tonga. Pauline's granddaughter Mauvai occasionally visits her parents and siblings on Tongatapu where they live, but she refers to Kauvai as home.

Moli and Mele sleep in a separate house, a wooden structure referred to as a *fale tonga*, on the same property. As yet, they have no children of their own, although they hope to do so. Manu has two teenaged sons and has divorced her husband. Her sons attend school in Pangai, and live with a relative of their father's. They never came to Kauvai when I was there.

Moli is the main food producer for the family since his father died and because his other two brothers hold jobs away from Kauvai. Because Moli is not *poto* [capable, skilled] at fishing, Pauline's household depends upon her son-in-law Vili Maea, second husband of Toa'ila, for their fresh fish.

Vili Maea is an avid fisher. He and Toa'ila live a short walk away, on a separate *'api*, but they eat a lot of their meals at Pauline's. In the year after her death, Vasiti's widower Vili 'Aholelei was also a frequent guest at meals, but he never became an actual member of the *'api*.

The second example is the home of Folingi (see figure 2). Folingi is of Pauline's generation, and the mother of Susana, who I mentioned in the Preface. Like Pauline, Folingi is a widow, crippled and an expert maker of pandanus textiles. She shares her home with her son Ika and his wife Vaiola, their two children, Susana (also a widow) and her youngest son. Susana's eldest son attends high school on Tongatapu. He lives with his uncle, Folingi's son Timote.

The quarters are cramped, and sometimes Susana and Vaiola quarrel, but their two sons are good brothers to each other²¹. The *'api* will eventually be inherited by Ika and then, Vaiola says, she will be in control. Until Folingi dies, however, Ika and Vaiola are like guests, sharing two rooms at the front of the house, while Folingi, Susana and her son live in the main part of the house.

Like Moli, Ika is the main food producer for the household. As governmental agricultural officer for the island, he also draws a small (and unusual) salary while living on Kauvai. He does not have a boat, but has a relative with whom he goes fishing on occasion.

As these examples indicate, it is not unusual for households to be multi-generational, with an extended family ranging in age from over sixty, to six or less. Nor is a woman-headed household uncommon, although if one of the deceased husbands were still alive, they would be considered the head of the family and owner of the *'api*.

²¹ I describe kinship later in this chapter and in Appendix Two, but provide some context here. Susana is *Mehakitanga* [father's sister] to Siasoi. This gives her a form of authority over Vaiola, which may be the source of some of their friction. At four years of age, Siasoi was also passing through the stage of infantile freedom, and beginning to be disciplined, a difficult stage for a Tongan child, comparable to the 'terrible twos' in Canadian culture, and another potential source of friction.

There are some other features to point out: As for most of the residents of Kauvai, some children of Folingi's and Pauline's houses are away at secondary school, and at least one primary school aged grandchild lives in the house²². Both households depend on garden lands for their staple and ceremonial foods, and kin-based relations with people of other *'api* help them access fish. The women of both households are ardent and skilled producers of pandanus textiles.

The Island Environment

Coral atolls such as Kauvai depend on rainwater²³, and water is a limited resource on Kauvai. I provide a description of the water and resources here because water was one of the earliest 'health' infrastructure projects undertaken in Tonga, because access to clean drinking and washing water is essential to treatment of illness and diseases, and because the lack of rain was a major public event during the drought of 91-93. Following on from the water situation, I describe other aspects of the local infrastructure which pertain to everyday island life.

In the era prior to the Christian missionization of the eighteenth century, rain was considered a major gift from the gods: Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, the divine father of the first sacred, highest ranked chief (the Tu'i Tonga), lived in the sky, and apparently had some association with

²² What is not apparent from the description is that Ika and Vaiola's first child has been adopted [*pusiaki*] by Vaiola's parents, who live at the south end of the island.

²³ An atoll is an island formed from coral reefs. The reefs form around igneous rock, evidence of ancient volcanic activity. They are like floating gardens, held up from the sea by a lattice of centuries of coral. Ground water is non-existent on atolls, but fresh water may be tapped, either from seeps on the larger atolls, or as a thin layer of rain water which filters through the soil to collect and float on the underlying seawater in which the ancient corals grew. Geologists call this a Ghyben-Herzberg lens. The earlier Tongans dug wells, sometimes puncturing the floor of the atoll, creating small, highly prized pools, which frequently figured in narratives of chiefly people's adventures (i.e.: Collacott 1928;11-12). Twice an archaeologist tried to excavate the well in the neighboring village. The first time was during the drought, when the well was subject to much traffic. The second time, conflicting interests between landholders blocked permission to investigate the site.

rain. One of the fears expressed during the early missionization era was that the gods would be angry with the Christians, and stop the rains (Maywald 1990:127). Today, each village on Kauvai has one or two public reservoirs which store rainwater collected with corrugated tin roofs and eaves troughs. This was an initiative begun as far back as 1909 (Campbell 1992:142), as I describe in chapter five. Most churches also have water reservoirs, a pragmatic use of the largest roofs in the village, although Campbell notes that there were initial qualms about using rainwater from the roof of God's house, because it might be *tapu* [sacred, set aside] (Campbell 1992:142). There are no water catchment facilities in the bush [*'uta, vao*] where the gardens are. Irrigation, if done at all, is done by hand, and only rarely.

The southern half of the island has brackish wells, the northern half, nothing. Numerous attempts have been made to find a well in the village of Maka Fele'unga but the water tapped has always been saline. Most families depend upon their roof and a cement storage tank for their drinking and washing water. Generally, houses have guttering for one half of the roof, meaning they only trap 50% of the rainfall. Often, the water reservoir leaks. Old, cracked water reservoirs of varied styles dot the landscape: breeding grounds for mosquitos, holding tanks for unburnable refuse, sentinels to past development projects, memoirs of home sites now abandoned to the weeds and pigs and distant reminders of the people's dependence on forces not human.

Physical Infrastructure

'Modern' mechanical conveniences are few on Kauvai. Four or five families have gas-powered generators which they use on special occasions, like at feast times. On a daily basis, no-one

on Kauvai, not even the government nurse, has refrigeration or other electric utilities²⁴. Those families with insulated coolers can get blocks of ice from the Ministry of Fisheries office in Pangai, for a few *seniti* [cents]. The half day trip to Pangai precludes any regular use of ice, but it is especially popular at Christmas and *Uike Lotu* [Prayer Week] for keeping fish, mutton and other feast treats, like ice cream, cool. A couple of families have televisions and video machines, gifts from overseas relatives, which are popular sources of entertainment at Christmas time. Many mothers yearn for a 'modern' wringer-washing machine to replace their tubs and washboards. There are a few propane powered stoves, also used on special occasions. Most baking however, is done in the '*umu* [earth-oven].

The most common means of transport on Kauvai are horse and cart, bicycle, and the most common of all, foot. The only motorized vehicle on the island is the nurse's 100 cc motorcycle. Some farmers have expressed the desire for a tractor, but the logistics of getting such a heavy vehicle to an island with no wharf, on 14 foot wooden boats, in potentially rough seas present severe obstacles²⁵.

Communication off-island is difficult. There are two solar-powered, radio-telephones on Kauvai, and residents in the villages without a phone walk to the adjacent village, a trip of 20 - 30 minutes, depending on the weather. The exchange is a simple pick-up-and-wait-for-the-operator-to-answer type. Both halves of the island have their own designated time slots. A schedule of incoming calls is regularly announced on the radio. If you hear a call is coming in, you go to the phone and

²⁴ Our small generator was the only one in Maka Fele'unga, at the time.

²⁵ Other out-islanders (i.e.: on Lofanga) have managed to transport large vehicles like trucks to their islands. Various overseas relatives and development promoters have toyed with the idea of bringing a tractor to Kauvai, but even with the availability of funding, the key barrier is the logistic of transport.

wait. For someone used to a North American phone system, the interminable waits required to use the phone on Kauvai are excruciating. Kauvai residents don't like them much either. Most people agree that the phone is *fakahela* [tiresome]. The main uses are to call overseas family to notify of deaths, marriages or births and to ask for remittances.

Flows of People and Products

Kauvai is usually reached by open fishing boat from a neighbouring island. From that island, the main island of the group, Lifuka, is accessible by foot or by motor vehicle. Most fishermen use outboard engines of fifteen to thirty horsepower. These outboards are a relatively recent introduction to the area. Prior to 1980, much of the fishing and travel from Kauvai was by sail and paddle. The boat trip takes about forty minutes, when the sea is calm. After the boat ride, one must wait for the bus, catch a lift with a passing truck, or walk the reef-causeway to the next island of Lifuka. The causeway too is relatively recent, only being completed in 1990. It occasionally floods in high tides, or becomes littered with tide-strewn rubble.

People leaving Kauvai are generally heading for Pangai, the regional centre of Ha'apai, located on the island of Lifuka. In Pangai there are stores, two high schools (Methodist and Catholic), a hospital, police station, courthouse and jail, a bank, some government ministry offices, a public fairgrounds and a royal residence. From Pangai, travel connections can be made to the rest of the islands in the kingdom. While I was there, Pangai was serviced by Twin Otter airplanes and two ferry boats. The ferries are refitted river boats, imported and converted to open sea vessels. The trip to the capital of Nuku'alofa can take fifty minutes or eighteen hours, depending upon the mode of travel (and of course, the amount of cash one has). Neiafu, the regional centre for Vava'u in the

north, and a popular tourist destination, is another twenty-five minutes or eight hour trip from Pangai.

Ha'apai people rarely travel or visit within their region, and only a few have been to the northern cluster of islands called Vava'u [see map]. This is ironic in that Tongans are descendants of great navigators and sailors, and that historically, Ha'apai people voyaged to Fiji, Samoa (see Kaeppler 1978, Campbell 1992:33) and possibly as far as Anuta (Feinberg 1989). During the seventeenth century, for example, Tongans adopted the Micronesian style of double-hulled ocean canoes called *kalia*, extending and improving their ability to travel and trade (Campbell 1992:33). Many of the old stories revolve around the theme of heroic voyages. Now however, there are women and men on Kauvai who have never travelled any further than Pangai or Tongatapu.

Most who travel are heading to Nuku'alofa. Some women, and many men, have journeyed out of the country. Their destination was usually New Zealand or Australia. The intention was to visit relatives or find temporary employment as guest workers. In the 1970's, many left the country, often taking a freighter to Auckland or Sidney by way of Fiji (the cheapest method). Most worked for a few months and returned with savings of cash and what other material wealth they could manage to bring home.

These days, it is more common for the material wealth to travel alone. Bulky shipments of traditional plaited pandanus or barkcloth textiles called *koloa* [wealth] are regularly sent by container ship to relatives waiting overseas. In return, the émigrés give money, and bring foreign commodities back on their next return visit. As I have indicated, and will describe in greater detail throughout the text, it is the production and flow of this *koloa* which helps Kauvai women to demonstrate their good mothering and to retain ties with overseas kin, thus creating and maintaining the appropriate social

relations necessary for their own and their children's *mo'ui lelei*.

Today, young adults may go overseas for school, sports or church-based gatherings, but labour emigration in the 1990's is more difficult than it was in the 1970's. New Zealand, Australian and American governments faced with severe recessions, high unemployment, and a burgeoning 'overstayer' (illegal aliens) problem, have reduced or withdrawn offers of migrant worker's visas. Most of the men from Kauvai who did leave and returned were of the generation which is currently between fourth and sixty years old. Nevertheless, every family I interviewed between 1991 and 1993 had someone, a sibling, a spouse, a child or a grandchild, living temporarily or permanently, legally or illegally, overseas. Such family members are sources of information, ideas, material goods, currency and potential contacts for children wishing to further their education away from Tonga, or be sponsored as immigrants.

PART II: THE ROUTINES (AND SURPRISES) OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The residents of Maka Fele'unga expect the days and weeks to follow a regular pattern. Monday to Friday, the rhythm of the days merge together and are relatively featureless: families wake before the sun and say a morning prayer of thanks to God. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the Methodists go to dawn prayer service at their particular church, be it the Free Wesleyan, the Chiefly Church, or the Free Church of Tonga. After prayers, people set about their day: Sleeping mats and blankets are bundled away, water drawn, faces washed, teeth brushed and pigs fed. Men prepare to go fishing or to go hoeing in the gardens; young mothers tend to babies and young children; older women or men begin to prepare the day's *me'akai* [food]; Women slice pandanus strips for the day's plaiting, braid daughters' hair or iron their school uniforms. Then, flashes of white and red, school

children run on errands, visit neighbours, fetch water, or linger at the *falekoloa* [shop] hoping for free sweets. Younger siblings tag along, or play at home.

Breakfasts (if desired) may be cabin crackers, leftovers like taro [*talo*] or cassava [*manioke*], or germinated coconut [*'uto*]. Most adults wait until the morning meal to eat, usually around ten o'clock. Members of the 'Chiefly Church' [*Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki*] fast [*aukai*] Friday mornings, and attend a service at noon before going home to break their fast.

Most people have long begun the work of the day, be it plaiting, tilling or fishing, by the time the school children recite their morning prayer, hands folded, circled around the flagpole in front of their school at half-past eight o'clock.

When the sun is high and the ground too hot, even for feet hardened and calloused by years of going barefoot, men sometimes join their wives or nieces in the shade of the weaving house. There they chat and eat the mid-day meal²⁶. Women rarely rest for longer than it takes to eat their taro and fish, but the men's company is usually a welcome distraction. Later, as the sun's intensity begins, infinitesimally, to weaken, the men leave, singly or in pairs, and either return to their gardens, head out to the reef or home for a nap. School children straggle home by 3 pm, but are often sent right out to the gardens, or on an errand.

Saturdays are rest days from plaiting and other forms of work, but no less busy. Saturday is *Tokonaki*, 'preparation' day: a day of laundry, sweeping the grass around the house and burning the week's collection of animal dung and other refuse, fishing, reef collecting and digging up extra root crops, bringing home extra coconuts, ironing dress clothes, reading required bible passages and in

²⁶ Food preparation is often man's work. Christian and modernist influences suggest that everyday cooking is women's domestic labour, but this was not true historically and in Maka Fele'unga men and women cook. Furthermore, because men manage the gardens, tend to livestock and go fishing, they control food production and are responsible for selecting what the family will eat on a day to day basis.

general, preparing for Sunday, the day of rest.

Sunday is devoted to church attendance, eating the Sunday *'umu* [earth oven / meal from the oven], studying the bible, sleeping and *faikava* [communal kava drinking circle, generally a male activity]. Work and distracting activities of any kind are forbidden on Sunday. Banned distractions include reading novels, writing letters, picking fruit, mending clothes, washing one's hair, or swimming at the beach. Sunday is for demonstrations of devotion to, and contemplation of, God. Usually, there are two, often three and, sometimes, four church services on Sunday. Between services, men *faikava*, sleep, or read the bible. Women teach Sunday school or visit relatives and invalids.

The regularity of these days and weeks are punctuated by predictable events like Christmas, New Years [*Uike Lotu*: Prayer Week], the annual church fund-raiser [*Misinale*], the Agricultural and Industrial Fair, and large work projects like building a village fence. But life is also interrupted by unexpected events like Vasiti's death.

Death and Health: the Funeral

When they realized that Vasiti was dead, Manu and Toa'ila cried and wailed and called to her, then dried their eyes, stifled their wailing and set about organizing her house for the funeral, regardless of the fact that it was pitch dark. It was probably about three hours before midnight on a cloudy, moonless night. "Go tell Tevita we need the lamps from the church" ordered Toa'ila, referring to Vasiti's minister. Word of Vasiti's death spread quickly. Soon a party of men and women congregated.

With a death, the inside of the house is women's' domain. Vasiti's iron bed was deconstructed and it, along with all of her and her husband's possessions, was removed from the

house. We swept and dusted floor and walls and lined the walls of the back room with white bed sheets. Other women, young and old, continued to arrive, some from other villages on the island. They filled the front room of the house, lending a hand wherever needed: masticating candlenuts to make a sweet-scented emollient [*tuitui*], hanging curtains, sweeping away rubbish, crying and singing hymns. In the back room, we prepared scented water and carefully, decorously, bathed Vasiti, preserving her dignity even while redressing her in a clean, white gown. Outside the front door, men built a shelter of poles and coconut fronds [*palipali*] and packed the household's contents away into the cook house [*peito*]. It began to rain. The only person unoccupied in the dark night was Vili 'Aholelei, Vasiti's widower, who stood empty, silent, in the sudden rain.

As highly charged events scripted by traditional ideals, funerals fuse social and structural obligations with traditional ideals of kinship and living well. To understand people's actions at Vasiti's funeral, behaviours key to kin-based obligations, but also to the construction of health as 'living well', one must understand Tongan kinship: how it is that personal identity and social status intersects through rank and gender and how being kin is socially expressed. These principle aspects of the social structure have been well documented (Gifford 1985 [1929], Ayoagi 1966, Kaeppler 1971, Decktor Korn 1974, Bott with Tavi 1982, Cowling 1990, James 1992, van der Grijp 1993, Evans 1996, Morton 1996), hence I will provide only a brief overview here.

Tongan Kinship

In everyday practice, kinship is predominantly affective, expressed through demonstrations of sharing, constructed as '*ofa* [love /generosity /empathy] and recognition of *fatongia* [honourable duty]. Both are demonstrated through the reciprocal flow of things, including acts of kindness,

surpluses of food, ceremonial wealth (pigs, textiles, kava, yams) and oratory. Marking of kinship (real or fictive) through affection is typical of Polynesian societies (e.g. Feinberg 1979, Ritchie and Ritchie 1989, Sahlins, 1985), in which personhood is constructed consocially (Lieber 1990). It is these affective, performative, consocial relations that underlie what Parsons (1981, 1984, 1985) identified in her analysis of 'health' in Tonga, which is, as she says, modelled on kinship.

Tongans trace their kin bilaterally, as far back genealogically as memories (or record books) permit. This cognatic kin group is the *kāinga*. The term is usually glossed into English as 'extended kin', but in its original and ultimate meaning, '*kāinga*' links people of a particular locality to each other. In this sense, it describes those who are both 'native' to a place, blood relatives and social compatriots. The same term is used, for instance, to refer to the relationship between persons who live on a chief's estate, and to describe the relationship between them and their chief: all are *kāinga*, regardless of their genealogical relationships (or lack thereof). A more recent usage which demonstrates the way *kāinga* can index compatriots is that of the members of the same Christian denomination: *kāinga lotu*, which might be glossed as 'family in prayer'. The social interactions of *kāinga* are patterned as those of kin and are indexed, as are kin, by displays of affection and mutual obligation.

The term *fāmili* is used today to refer to the nuclear family and genealogically close relatives. The term is a Christian introduction. A comparable term on Kauvai was '*api* [household], which in the past indicated the place of the household, together with its residents. This is now shifting somewhat to refer to the site only, as in 'home'. In general usage, *fāmili* is a subset of *kāinga*, but these are generalizations: definition of the family and kinship terminology are in the process of change. Even among the relatively small population of Kauvai, usage of the terms like *kāinga* or

fāmili varies as others have discussed (Evans 1996, Bott with Tavi 1982:70, Rogers 1977, Decktor-Korn 1974). Generally, on Kauvai, one could expect that the term *kāinga* would be used for ‘distant’ kin, and *fāmili* for ‘close’ kin. By distant, however, I mean those whom one sees at major life events, such as birthdays, weddings or funerals, or those who preferred to be affectively aloof. ‘Close’ kin refers to those with whom one is in frequent, comfortable contact (even if genealogically distant) and to those descended from sibling grandparents.

A father and his brothers are *tamai* [father] and mother and her sisters are *fa’ē* [mother]. Persons of the same generation, able to trace their descent from common ancestors (grandparents or greater) consider themselves siblings. The cross-sex sibling is marked in language and behaviour: Father’s sister, the *mehakitanga*, is high in relative personal rank and mother’s brother, the *fa’ē tangata* or *tu’asina*, is low. Where sisters and brothers are differentiated terminologically as *tuofefine* and *tuonga’ane*, same sex siblings are equated as *tokoua*. As in all of Polynesia, the brother-sister relationship is marked by strong bonds of affection and equally strong avoidance taboos. Brothers demonstrate their affection for their sisters through ‘respect’ [*faka’apa’apa*], but sisters demonstrate it through an acceptance of the authority of their symbolic position and expressions of solidarity for their brothers in the social and political milieu.

While *mehakitanga* [father’s sister] are revered and treated with extreme respect, *fa’ē tangata* [mother’s brother, also called *tu’asina*] can always be counted on to be supportive, loving and generous --the epitome of the maternal side of their *kāinga*-- he is, literally, a ‘maternal male’. For example, as a brother to Pauline²⁷, Vili ‘Aholelei was a favourite uncle [*fa’ē tangata*] to her children. As such, their relationship to Vili ‘Aholelei was “easy” [*fāngofua*].

²⁷ Vili ‘Aholelei and Pauline share the same maternal grandmother, but are descended from different grandfathers.

The brother-sister dyad also marks the principle of rank in Tongan kinship. Gender, and then age are the key factors in determining personal rank: Sisters rank higher than their brothers, and this asymmetry is passed down through the generations so that descendants of a sister will rank higher than those descended from her brother. This rank based skewing, and the responsibilities and privileges that go with it, are termed *fahu* [above the law]. After gender, age determines rank and again, descendants of an elder sibling will carry higher personal rank than descendants of a junior sibling. Husbands are superior in rank to their wives, and they enjoy “the same sort of social superiority” to their wife’s brothers that the woman does (Gifford [1929] 1985:17). The correlative is also true, as when wives are subject to the authority of their husband’s sisters (as exemplified in the tension between Susana and Vaiola).

Pauline's daughters treated Vasiti with the same kind of easy affection that marks the *fa'ē tangata* relationship itself. This is because Vasiti was a contemporary of their mother and, most significantly, wife to their favourite uncle, their *fa'ē tangata*. Their distress at Vasiti's death was no less striking than the distress of Vasiti's own sisters, the son and daughter Vasiti and Vili 'Aholelei had fostered and the children of Vasiti's and Vili 'Aholelei's own siblings, for whom Vasiti was a mother.

Ranking practices are structurally opposed to ideals of independence [*tau'atāina*], and disputes occasionally do occur, especially between children's mothers and their husband's sisters. For children of any family, their father's sister [*mehekitanga*] is given respect because she is the highest ranking relative, and is *fahu*. Conversely, the mother's brother, *fa'ē tangata*, is easy to approach, because he is the lowest in rank. What it means in practice is that one should be ready to give some of the valuables they have to one's father's sister. Likewise, one takes what one desires from one's

mother's brother. These principles also apply to any and all descendants. Fuiva Kavaliku described the privileges and burdens of the *fahu* system to me thus: "mother's side pushes you up, and your father's side pushes you down." This principle of redistribution of wealth according to rank applies firstly to ceremonial flows such as occur in funerals or weddings (of which I give a more extensive example, in chapter nine), but also those valuables of everyday life: food, textiles, children, money, tools, equipment, and so on.

The operant model for ranking practices is the chiefly [*'eiki*] - commoner [*tu'a*²⁸] dyadic relation, wherein 'chiefly' is high in personal and rank, relative to another. Sisters for instance, are described as being chiefly to their brothers, and the elder sibling is chiefly to the junior sibling. Kinship aside, the '*eiki-tu'a*' relation characterizes all interactions: guests are treated as '*eiki*' to their hosts, the doctor is '*eiki*' to the patient, the deceased become '*eiki*' to the living, the King is '*eiki*' to the populace; all Tongans (including the King) are *tu'a* to God. Formally, rank requires displays of respect [*faka'apa'apa*], submission and obedience [*talangofua*] to those who are 'higher', and obligates [*fatongia*] returns of 'love' and generosity [*'ofa*] to those who are 'inferior'. The behavioural expectations of obedience and generosity which are embedded in the '*eiki - tu'a*' relation also characterize the historical interactions of government and the populace. The government is '*eiki*' to the people, but owes them certain gifts. I describe the introduction of state-funded primary education and 'health' services as vehicles of chiefly '*ofa*', in chapter five.

²⁸ There are many euphemisms for the *kau tu'a* [back or behind people], usually glossed as 'commoners'. Most of the euphemisms refer to the land, in particular: *kainanga* - people of the place, or *kai fonua* - usually glossed as 'dirt eaters'. These glosses are too simplistic and literal. *Kai* means 'to eat' but in terms of 'consumption', with overtones of 'experience'. It also indexes 'people' [*kakai*]. *Kai fonua* then, implies people who use, experience, and eat *of* the land. Biersack 1991:257 cites Queen Sālote who said the word for kindred, *kāinga*, referred to "the people you eat from". Like many Tongan phrases, the terms depend upon an unstated reference to something else (Taumoe folau 1991); in the case of *tu'a* the unstated reference is to *hou'eiki* -the corps of chiefly elite- who are likely to be associated with the sea, or the sky (Sahlins 1985, Marcus 1989), and who are backed by the *tu'a* of the land. See also the glossary entry on *tu'asina*.

Kinship as Preventative Health Care: The Funeral Revisited

A key point to be taken from the discussion on kinship is that when mothers concern themselves with their children's health, they are concerned with *kāinga* [extended family] relations. 'Preventative health care' could be said to include gifting to one's *kāinga* at the proper junctures, as well as recognizing what to gift, how to deploy the gift, and how to make or acquire it. When someone is ill, *kāinga* express their support. When someone dies, their *kāinga*, and those of their spouse, give and receive labour, foods, hymns and/or textiles. Actions are motivated by affection as well as duty [*fatongia*] and the desire to demonstrate both publicly. On Kauvai, the gifts proffered were prescribed not only by kinship category (mother's or father's side), but also by personal relationship to either the deceased and/or the bereaved. And this is in direct contrast to the received wisdom on who attends and contributes to funerals. Rogers (1977:167-168 and 173-177) for instance, provides a cogent description of who should accept which tasks at a funeral. He suggests that while aristocratic, *'eiki* families trace their relationships back through several generations, and use that link to identify their role, commoners simply accept tasks based on whether they are related to the deceased through a mother or through a father. This is, indeed the principle that people on Kauvai followed, although they did not confine themselves to a single generation relationship, and in fact, affinal links and ties of friendship or sympathy to the bereaved as well as the deceased, brought people to a funeral. As Cowling says about funerals in Tonga (1990:83):

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

Pauline's role in Vasiti's funeral and funeral re-distributions demonstrates the importance of emotional bonds in kinship relations. As a sister, Pauline was superior in rank to both Vili 'Aholelei and Vasiti. She therefore had no obligation to give at Vasiti's funeral. However, as the person with whom he had the strongest affective bond (despite the formal brother-sister respect), and because her children loved their *fa'ē tangata* (Vili 'Aholelei), Pauline became a conduit to a large amount of the resources that went into Vasiti's funeral. Her giving was out of love and kindness [*'ofa*], not just the honour of kinship-based duty [*fatongia*].

In support of his mother, and love for Vasiti and her still-living husband, Pauline's son Moli traded his young lively horse for a neighbour's older horse²⁹, in order to include horse meat as part of the *pulua* [food and wealth items distributed to guests at a funeral]. Moli also gave pigs; his brother Sione arrived the next day from Tongatapu, carrying a very large sack of flour and another of sugar. Pauline's daughters, Manu and Toa'ila, gave cotton sheets, *ngatu* [barkcloth/ women's wealth], food, and labour. Pauline's son-in-law, Vili Maea, contributed pigs, fish and labour. The distant relatives who had pitied Vili 'Aholelei and Vasiti's childless status and given them babies to foster some forty and twenty five years before, contributed. Vasiti's sisters' husbands and their agnates also contributed pigs, goats, flour, lard, sugar, jam, *koloa*, labour and hymns. Throughout the day after Vasiti's death, long trains of women from all over Kauvai came, bearing carefully folded *ngatu* [barkcloth, one form of women's' wealth or *koloa*], or purchased fabrics, draped over branches of blossoms.

²⁹ This trade is a very clear example of the value of agnatic and affinal connections in Tonga: Moli traded horses with Sione 'Ofa, because young horse meat is too tough and gamey. Sione 'Ofa is a brother to Vili Maea, Moli's sister Toa'ila's husband. Since Vili Maea is the son of Sione 'Ofa's *mehekitanga*, he is higher in rank than Sione 'Ofa, and can take anything he wants from Sione 'Ofa. As brother to Vili Maea's wife, Moli is *hono matāpule* [brother-in-law] and Vili Maea is obligated to help Moli. So even though Moli gave away his strong young stallion, he never really lost the use of the horse.

Vasiti's *putu* [funeral and mourning period] lasted a total of seven days³⁰. She was laid out for visitors on the first day, and buried on the second. For the following five days, visitors stayed with Vili 'Aholelei, and groups of women visited Vasiti's grave each evening to comfort her and keep her from becoming lonely. During this time, neighbours, kin and visitors were fed, morning and night, every day. Women stood over hot boiling lard in sooty cook houses, cooking the Tongan version of the doughnut, *keke*. Younger girls and boys delivered plates of *keke*, with jam and mugs of sweet tea, to the mourners and throughout the houses of the village, morning and afternoon. Men slaughtered animals, dug huge pits and kindled great fires for the *'umu* [earth oven / meal]. Other men, holders of ceremonial titles [*mātāpule*, *motu'a tauhi fonua*] and church elders [*malanga*], came to drink kava [*fai kava*]. The kava circle is a ritual which helps to glorify or elevate [*fakalangilangi*] an occasion, and consequently, the person at the centre of the scene, in this instance, Vasiti.

Signifying Relations: Textiles and the Ties That Bind

One of the workers at the *putu* [funeral] was Pauline's son-in-law, Vili Maea. He provided *talo* [taro] and other root vegetables from his gardens, prepared pigs for the *'umu* [earth oven] during the day and fished at night. He dressed in a short, ragged *ta'ovala* [waist wrap], the sign of mourning, for one not too close to the deceased.

These waist wraps offer one example of the absolute necessity for the textiles women make.

In the wearing of the *ta'ovala*, bodies and ceremonial textiles combine as signs of social relations.

³⁰ The length of time spent in mourning, the amount of food given away, the number of guests and mourners who attend, the presence of a kava circle and the number of ministers who read at the grave side all indicate the importance or public esteem of the deceased. They also help to glorify [*fakalangilangi*] the occasion and the deceased. This is not, unfortunately, the place to discuss funerals in Tonga, a subject deserving of an entire dissertation in itself (see McGrath 1993 for description of the emotional experience of death and dying, and also Kaepler 1978b).

Appearance, silhouette, skin, hair, colouring, size, posture, gestures as well as bodily garments and adornments are read as signs indicating individual genealogical relationships and the quality of contemporary networks. At a funeral, for instance, the pandanus waist wraps called *ta'ovala* publicly signify one's relationship or relative rank to the deceased (Kaeppler 1978b).

They also bind persons into ritual status, by binding the body which, in itself, represents a nexus of affinal and agnatic relations. The *liongi* are those mourners closest and lowest in rank to the deceased, and also most at risk from the tragedy of death. They demonstrate their unravelled world with unbound, wildly ruffled hair (see photo#2), heart wrenching wails and, in the pre-Christian past, with self-induced lacerations of the skin, finger amputations and other mutilations. The *liongi* also wear the largest *ta'ovala*, for the longest period of time.

Officially, the *ta'ovala* signifies respect [*faka'apa'apa*], in this case for the deceased³¹.

However, insofar as *ta'ovala* bind into temporary wholeness the person whose social world is rent; and insofar as deceased persons can reach out to those they are connected to, either out of love, loneliness, fear, or anger at some supposed disrespect (Cowling 1990, Gordon 1996 see also Collocott 1923b); and insofar as a touch from a 'spirit' or 'ghost' can cause a spirit illness [*tevolo*], the *ta'ovala* body wrapper acts as a sort of protective shield for the wearer.

On Kauvai, *ta'ovala* are worn by nuclear family members and *kāinga*, some for weeks, others for months. The *liongi* are especially vulnerable because they are genealogically close but also inferior in rank to the deceased; they also wear the largest, longest pandanus wraps, for the longest

³¹ This among other things. Certainly, *ta'ovala* are formal signs of one's genealogical relationship, as Kaeppler describes (1978b). The closer one's relationship to the deceased, and the lower one's rank in relation to the deceased, the longer and coarser one's *ta'ovala*. I have seen wives, sons and daughters wearing *ta'ovala* which reached from chin to ankle. Young children are exempt from wearing full waist wraps, but may wear black clothes and smaller wraps, called *ta'ovala putu*. In one case I witnessed, black arm bands were adopted as part of a child's Sunday dress, six months after his father had died. Insofar as bodies exist as signs of social relations over time, *ta'ovala* indicate degree and type of relationship of one individual to another, in the present.

amount of time. A widow will wear one that covers her from neck to ankle for a year, until the hair her husband's sister has shorn from her head has re-grown, her ritual state of being un-connected is rectified, her social world is re-configured and her deceased husband has settled in the after world. This process of settling the deceased begins in the cloth wealth gifts and re-distributions, the feasting, kava circle and ministerial eulogies of the funeral.

But the living are not the only ones whose bodies are signs of social relations. The deceased is also ritually marked: Vasiti was laid in state upon *fala*, draped and adorned with a *fihu fārufā* and an *efuefu*: specific, prestigious *koloa* she herself had plaited. That wealth [*koloa*] demonstrated her capabilities as a woman, and marked her as one entering another rank: that of ancestor. As the saying goes, 'Oku 'eiki 'ae taha he'ene mate. "at death, one becomes a chief" (see Kaepler 1978b:174 for a similar quotation).

Because a funeral requires both display, use and gifting of textiles as well as foods, and because death is not always expected, each death serves to remind people of the importance of having sufficient supplies of women's and men's wealth on hand at all times.

As occasions requiring the demonstration of genealogical relationships, deaths are essentially 'family' affairs. But, on Kauvai at least, funerals involve more than 'family'. In a society where appropriate, consocial relations are prefigured by the conventions of kinship (Parsons 1981, 1985), funerals are significant events for all who participate, kin and neighbour alike. They have consistently been described as the paradigmatic representation of social relationships in Tonga, the occasion "*par excellence* when status and rank prescribe the actions of all concerned" (Kaepler 1978b:174, see also Decktor-Korn 1974:9, rogers 1977: 167-168, McGrath 1993). A funeral encapsulates social and emotional relations –affinal, agnatic and simply neighbourly– into an intensely personal,

emotionally laden time and place. Just as death demands re-confirmation of social ties (for the sake of the children if nothing else), it also creates the need to give (or receive) emotional support to (or from) those suffering the pain of bereavement.

Vili Maea explained his own rationale for wearing that *ta'ovala*, and providing pigs and other food for the funeral, despite the fact he and Vasiti were not related: he did it for Toa'ila (his wife), because she wanted to be able to comfort her favourite uncle (Vili 'Aholelei) and his now dead wife, Vasiti. Decktor-Korn (1974:9) has noted that among commoners, *putu* [funeral] participation reflects one's relationship to the bereaved, something that the noble families decry as evidence of commoners' poor grasp of '*ulunganga fakatonga* –cultured, 'high', Tongan behaviour and etiquette. But rather than demonstrating a poor grasp of 'higher culture', and even more than simply indicating the potential for "a belief in the power of the spirits of the dead to see what is happening in the world above ground" (Cowling 1990:83), I would argue that the ritual days of mourning, the mobilization of labour, the prolonged wearing of the *ta'ovala*, the funeral bier of plaited pandanus *fala*³² and drapery of soft, white *fibu* –all forms of women's ceremonial textile or wealth products– and the funeral disbursements of textiles and foods, which go to kin first, but also to neighbours, all serve to mark the importance of social relationships that surpass genealogy, and extend laterally to as many members of one's society as possible. This is very important in a small scale society in which everyone is dependent upon everyone else. To use an old adage, women's textile wealth truly is one of the 'ties that bind'. Funerals, like other social events, condense social relations and offer individuals opportunities to demonstrate their ability to 'live well', both in death and in life. They ensure that people are 'living well'.

³² The sand that covers the grave is also called *fala* (McGrath 1993).

All the kith and kin [*kāinga*] connected to Vasiti and to Vili 'Aholelei felt that particular, idiosyncratic social connections were drawn upon, and they gave of their time and resources. Their rationales were varied. Some gave because they had 'ofa for Vili 'Aholelei and pitied him. Some gave because they loved Vasiti and wanted her to be comforted in her transition from living person to spirit (see McGrath 1993 for discussion of emotions in relation to death in Tonga). They gave out of honourable duty [*fatongia*] and love [*'ofa*] as extended family and compatriots [*kāinga*]. Others gave because they knew that Vili 'Aholelei's grief was his sister Pauline's, too. This included Pauline's children who gave because they felt love and empathy [*'ofa*], and wanted to help their mother and their favourite uncle get through the initial shock of Vasiti's death.

People from across the island offered hymns and food, labour and *koloa* [textiles/ women's wealth] to spread the pain of Vasiti's passing as far, and as thinly as possible. "To bear such a burden alone is too terrible" Manu told me: grief and emotional traumas have been known to precipitate illness and suicide. With Vasiti's death, people felt the threat of unravelment, the jeopardy presented by the loss of a community member: a sister, wife, mother, partner in a *toulālanga* [weaving group], member of the parish, neighbour. Now, people commented, there was one less person left to help *fua kavenga* [carry the burden] of life on Kauvai.

Life on Kauvai is an intertwining of numerous lives, of people fulfilling multiple roles in appropriate ways: people like Pauline, whose hands are old and arthritic. She works mostly with the pandanus fibre called *kie* these days, because, she says, *kie* is soft and flexible. "My hands are weak now" Pauline told me, but she handled the slippery *fihu* fibres with nonchalance, a confidence due to years of practice. Her textiles are so smooth it is hard to distinguish the individual wefts. Vasiti, too, was working on a *fihu* –a kind of textile made from *kie*– when she died. Tongans make an analogy

between the overlapping of the wefts in the plaited textiles they call wealth [*koloa*] and the layering of persons and actions that constitute a society³³. As producers and exchangers of the *koloa*, women like Pauline may complain that their hands are weak, but events like Vasiti's death show that their reach is strong.

In the prologue, I described Pauline as "unremarkable". According to Kauvai's standards, she is a typical Tongan woman: a devoted sister and mother, an ardent Christian and a traditionalist. Through her life's practices, Pauline has created, perpetuated and maintained the social relations that she was taught to think of as the keys to living well [*mo'ui lelei*], the fundamentals of health. Some might not think of Pauline as a person who is healthy, focussing instead on her status as elderly, osteoporotic, arthritic, obese, possibly suffering, from hyperglycemia and (as did Vasiti) hypertension and congestive heart failure. These various categories are not mutually exclusive, as Margaret Rodman points out (1997 per. com.). But in the biomedical 'health' care model most familiar to North Americans, illness tends to be a key characteristic of personal identity (Sontag 1978). The way in which one is defined as 'healthy' –or not– sets the stage for different styles of interactions with our fellows, as others have also noted (Litva and Eyles 1994, MacIntyre 1986, and Parsons 1952). Conrad (1994) has argued that the pursuit of wellness is a fundamentally cultural endeavour, which includes perceptions of virtue and a moral life as key aspects of wellness. Yet when described as a form of adaptation, or virtue (as for example, Illich 1976:273), 'health' becomes a measure of success, or lack thereof. Furthermore, how 'health problems' are defined ultimately determines what counts as 'therapy' (Csordas and Kleinman 1990:12).

In North America, Pauline (and perhaps Vasiti) would be well integrated into the medical

³³ I discuss this analogy in chapter ten, and the relationship of wealth production to mothers' roles in chapters eight, nine and ten.

system as a 'patient', and her family and professional caregivers would worry about juggling her diet, activities, medications and familial visits. Thus, many of her interactions with others would focus on her infirmities.

On Kauvai however, Pauline is not considered unhealthy, nor diseased, nor in need of medicine, treatment or health management. She is a person who can call on a wide net of family and friends to help. She attends church regularly and donates handsomely. Her children are good, dutiful people, some with well-paying jobs. She can offer access to important social and material resources when necessary, as she did when Vasiti died. Her family eats well, and she has made many, many *fala* and *fihu*, ceremonial pandanus textiles or *koloa* [wealth] which now are being laid aside for redistribution at her own funeral. On Kauvai, Pauline's is an example of health, of living well, of *mo'ui lelei*. It is this emerging, local, Kauvai-based understanding of *mo'ui lelei* that I have adopted in attempting to describe how it 'health'figures in contemporary Tongan mother's lives.

Before carrying on with the analysis of 'health' and *mo'ui lelei*, it is necessary to answer certain methodological questions: questions of data collection, negotiation of relationships, and research foci. I describe the methodological aspects of the research in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN 'THE FIELD'

*anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
e.e.cummings*

In this chapter I discuss my reasons for being on Kauvai, and how I learned what I know about the people there. In particular, this chapter presents the pragmatics of the research project with regard to the certain key issues: ethics, the data collection process, language fluency and including caveats about conducting interviews and surveys in Tonga.

Because Kauvai was the site where I conducted my research, it constitutes 'the field' for me: a rather legendary, and liminal anthropological space, which one enters as a neophyte researcher –perhaps a graduate student– and from which one later emerges as an 'anthropologist'. I was constantly being surprised in 'the field', as much by the similarities of Kauvai life to my own family's rural Ontario farming memoirs, as by the differences, both between Canada and other parts of Tonga. As I kept telling myself then, Kauvai life both resonated with, and yet contrasted to, the stereotypical small town 'anywhere' depicted by e.e. cummings (above, and at the end of this chapter). I hope that, however different, far-away and as relatively isolated as Kauvai is, readers of this text will realize it is not entirely alien to other communities.

Ethical Considerations

My research in the kingdom was authorized by an Order in Council from the Cabinet of His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, which granted permission conduct an 18 month research

project on “What Mothers do to Make and Keep their Children Healthy”. I arrived in Tonga in August of 1991. My Order in Council document and a brief interview in a police officer’s office, littered with files and stacks of passports, enabled me to receive an extended stay visa. The police handle immigration matters in the kingdom, and theoretically, could have denied me permission to remain in the kingdom, thereby precluding my research. I also posted a bond of T\$1000.00 *pa’anga* [currency] with the Tongan government as surety against personal misconduct and as a guarantee of a return of my research results (the dissertation) to the Tongan people. In 1993, I received a one month extension of the original visa from the Chief of Police of Ha’apai, enabling me to return from a month of interviewing in Auckland, New Zealand. I left Tonga to return to Canada in February of 1993.

In Nuku’alofa, a Tongan Member of Parliament kindly helped arrange an introduction to the *ofisa kolo* [town officer] of the village where I was to live with my husband and daughter for the next year and a half. Upon our arrival in Pangai, we met with Paula Tuitavuki, the town officer, who granted us permission to stay in Maka Fele’unga. He also helped arrange for our accommodation and subsequently introduced our research projects to the villagers at a *fono* [village meeting]. During that meeting, he admonished people to be kind and good to us, and not to ‘play’ with us with lies or being overly familiar, as was part of *anga fakatonga* [traditional practice].

I refer to the village where I resided and collected the bulk of my data by a pseudonym: Maka Fele’unga. Maka Fele’unga is one of four villages on the coral atoll known locally as Kauvai. However, this is not the name recorded on official maps. While not a pseudonym *per se*, my use of “Kauvai” does disguise the villagers’ location, helping to protect the people’s privacy from spurious investigations, while remaining accessible to future scholars from Kauvai.

While I lived in Maka Fele'unga, I talk about Kauvai. This is because despite the differences between the four villages on Kauvai, there is a great deal of cooperation, intermarriage and mobility between the villages: siblings live in adjoining villages, children move back and forth as they please, and women and men from different villages cooperate socially, ritually and economically, according to kinship, church and other relationships: this makes it unrealistic to talk about one village as being separate from its neighbours. The islanders themselves think of Kauvai as basically one community, with the villages being mostly places where people's houses are located. Decktor Korn (1975) made this same point when she described the way villages are not sources of identities, not motivators for social actions in the way that extended family groupings and church affiliations are. My interviews, observations and everyday experience included people from all the villages. And so I talk about Kauvai, with some specific references to Maka Fele'unga.

When I explained to people that I would be writing a book about what they had taught me, I asked how I should refer to them. To the person, villagers requested that I use their real names when writing about them, and were happy at the thought that their photos would appear in a 'book'. I have therefore used real names, except in cases where I allude to events which, in my opinion, might prove embarrassing to the participants, or where the participants include minors. These cases are disguised, and though I feel some guilt at this *ki'i loi* [little lie], I rest assured that it is not an un-Tongan thing to do. I give examples of obfuscation as etiquette, later in this chapter.

I witnessed significant events and interactions involving the noble whose estate³⁴ is on Kauvai, visited his sisters and mother in the capital, and half-siblings in New Zealand. While I

³⁴ Havea's small, but ancient estate encompasses three of the four villages. The fourth is a 'government estate'. This does not preclude those villagers' participation in the social and economic networks of the rest of the island's residents, mostly because of inter-marriage.

appreciate the generosity I received from the noble's family, I never actually interviewed him, and do not prioritize his mother's or siblings' discussions in the analysis. Nor did I have the opportunity to ask them how they would like to be represented here. Thus in my writing, I use the name "Havea" for Kauvai's noble, rather than his publicly recognizable title of Tui _____. Havea is the personal name he adopted when he acquired his title and is the name used in villagers' everyday talk, but it is also a very common name in Tonga.

The field experience was a graphic lesson, firstly, in the value of language skills, and secondly in the way the people 'of the field' are both actively involved in the process of data collection, as both subjects but more importantly, as instructors in the ethnographic process. This was particularly evident for me in terms of everyday practice -- from peeling vegetables, walking, and proper posture when giving money in church, to speaking the language. Language, of course, was very significant. As a means of verifying the validity of the claims I make later in the dissertation about what I learned and what I know, the following paragraphs indicate the level of language competency that I achieved, and how. The section following describes the data collection process.

Language Studies

English was not spoken on Kauvai. Only a few adults would admit to even a few phrases. The official rhetoric describes all Tongan secondary school education as being conducted in English, implying that most adults have at least some English language skills, and that secondary school students speak English well enough to study (see chapter one). On Kauvai however, there are few opportunities to practice speaking English, and so any competencies obtained in secondary school are easily lost. In other settings, anthropologists have depended upon interpreters to assist them where languages differ, but this was not possible on Kauvai, for a number of reasons. Because all

secondary schooling occurs off Kauvai, either in Pangai or Nuku'alofa, students who may have been comfortable speaking English, were absent most of the year. Furthermore, employment in the largest sector of the economy (the civil service) was usually gained through demonstration of at least minimal levels of English competency. Thus anyone with such skills were employed off Kauvai. Consequently, I was required to learn to speak Tongan.

My language studies began in Canada with a U.S. Peace Corps correspondence course (Shumway 1971) consisting of books and tape recordings. That project intensified immediately upon our arrival on Kauvai, and on the realization that finding an interpreter was going to be problematic. Within the first months, we were depending more on neighbours like the man who was to become our best friend, Vili Maea, for our language and behaviour instruction. Vili Maea is an astute, easy going man, who has seen life in cities like Auckland, and rejected it in favour of life as a fisherman and planter on Kauvai. He had not used his English speaking skills for many years, and Tongans do not display incompetencies gladly. But at the time we arrived in the village, Vili Maea's wife was visiting his daughter in Auckland, their sons were away at school and he was feeling lonely. We became a project for him, to our great benefit, and he became entranced with us, especially our daughter. Having an eighteen month old child, who lost any facility with spoken English within a few months, gave me extra incentive to understand and speak Tongan, both in public and at home!

Thus, I learned to speak with commoners, and despite some slight differences in vocabulary, had few problems using my language skills on Tongatapu, 'Eua or in Vava'u. Tongans use vocabulary to mark the hierarchical structure of the society. The rank and status of the person to whom one is speaking are indexed by code switching, i.e.: Nobles use words specific to commoner's when speaking to commoners, and commoners use noble's terms when speaking to nobles. Royals receive another vocabulary again. There are also slight regional differences in usage and expressions.

Due to a lack of opportunity, I never gained an idiomatic facility for speaking with the deferential nobles' terminology, and unlike many previous researchers (Kaeppler 1971, 1978b, Wood and Wood Ellem 1977, Marcus 1978, Bott with Tavi 1982, Wood 1981, 1987), I had no occasion to interview any member of the royal family. The differences between elite and commoner perspectives analysed in 1974 by Dektor-Korn persist today. Rather than replicating an explicitly authoritative voice re: 'Tongan culture' as it might have done had I included elites in my sample, my research clearly privileges a commoner, albeit a very traditionalist commoner, view. The few noble family members I did speak with used English or a combination of English and commoner Tongan. They kindly excused me from the obligation of using the nobles' vocabulary.

Data Collection

This thesis is based primarily on ethnographic research, centred in the community of Kauvai. With some brief episodes away from the island, I was an interviewer, a participant in community life and an observer of significant and mundane events on or about Kauvai from August 1991 to February 1993. In this, my methodology was entirely in keeping with the standards of traditional, anthropological, ethnographic research (Babchuk 1962, Spradley 1980, Bernard 1988), complete with the anxieties of "incompetence, fear, anger and frustration" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:102), although, as I have written elsewhere (Young Leslie 1998), the "holding back" that Hammersley and Atkinson advocate as integral to "the analytic work of the ethnographer" (1983:102), was very difficult. The difficulties with disengagement that I experienced are congruent with other women's experiences in the field, experiences more valorized in the recent feminist-inspired perspectives in anthropology (There are many examples, such as: Cesara 1982, Golde 1986, Bell 1993, Enslin 1994, Flinn et al. 1998, Abu-Lughod 1988).

While in Tonga, the vast majority of my interviews, casual conversations, observations and participation were with commoners. As a hierarchical society, Tonga has chiefly [*'eiki*] and non-chiefly [*tu'a, kaifonua*] people who are usually described as belonging in one of three strata: royals [*sino'i 'eiki*], nobles [*nopele*] and commoners [*tu'a, kaifonua*]. The former two are 'chiefly', the latter are not. Much Tongan ethnography has to date, privileged the voices of the chiefly elites, placing them as experts of Tongan culture (Gifford 1985[1929], Kaeppler 1971, 1978, 1978b, Lātūkefu 1966, 1974, 1978, Marcus 1978, 1980, 1989, but see Decktor-Korn 1974).

Within the class of non-chiefly people are commoners who hold traditional names, petty titles which are passed down through generations of a lineage. These are the *mātāpule* [literally boss-face, one who speaks for the chief] and *motu'a tauhi fonua* [mature ones who care for the land/people/place]. Maka Fele'unga, indeed all of Kauvai, has a long claim to a chiefly history, and many *mātāpule* and *motu'a tauhi fonua* titles, but no nobles live there now, and hence they do not figure as experts in my analysis.

I also spoke with various Tongan professionals and overseas volunteers, experts in the fields of medicine, nursing, education, development and nutrition. Many of them lived in Ha'apai, and some had kinship connections to Kauvai, but only one, the maternal-child health nurse, actually lived on Kauvai. In addition to daily conversations with women, men and children about life on Kauvai, I collected directed interviews from 68 women, residents of all villages on Kauvai. I spoke with doctors, nurses, a nutritionist and medical records professionals in Pangai and Nuku'alofa. I sent letters to all, and received replies from many of, the town officers and Community Health Workers of Ha'apai. My letters asked about their work, their opinions and advice on the region's developmental needs, including women's involvement with overseas exchanges of traditional

products.

With my family, I spent a month in Nuku'alofa in October of 1992, doing archival and library-based research, and interviews with Kauvai people working in the capital. I also visited other parts of the kingdom, and discussed my questions with men and women of some of the other Ha'apai islands, and the other regions of 'Eua, Tongatapu and Vava'u. Many of the conversations took place on busses, the back of trucks, the sides of roads, or in line-ups while shopping.

In examining the messages implicit and explicit in the messages Tongans receive about 'health', I depend in part on my own experience, and the knowledge I gained as a registered nurse, part of my life prior to anthropology and graduate studies. But more significant than my own past, were the various discussions with medical staff as well as my observations from hospital visits and the community based maternal-child nurse's clinics held on Kauvai.

Key written materials include various Tongan government reports, a maternal and child health manual written in Tongan (Nance 1977), transcripts from the public health promotional radio shows (Ministry of Health, n.d.), and reports from WHO- funded consultants working in Tonga. The latter include a proposal for health legislation (Holt 1991) and the contents of a post-basic nursing education programme (Tenn 1991).

In May of 1992, I spent two weeks in Suva, Fiji, researching at the University of the South Pacific library and meeting other Tongan scholars. The time in Fiji was also a necessary mental respite, from both the exigencies of the drought and the intensity of the local gaze which ensured that potentially every moment of my day was observed and commented upon.

In January 1993, I was a guest of an immigrant Kauvai family living in Auckland, New Zealand. There I interviewed Tongan emigres' participating in formalized gift exchanges with women from Kauvai. In their exchanges, women gifted each other with textiles, commodities and

cash in pre-planned events known as *katoanga* [celebration]. The exchanges provided women on Kauvai with much needed cash, allowed women on both sides of the ocean to maintain important social networks, and gave them prestige, either as producers or holders, of the most significant form of traditional wealth, the ceremonial textiles associated with women, called *koloa*. These items are potentially passed down through generations and are used in every significant ceremonial event: the many varieties of pandanus-leaf fibre textiles called *fala*, *fihu*, *kie tonga* and *ta'ovala*. I have described some aspects of the importance of these textiles in the context of Vasiti's funeral, above.

The first priority in terms of data collection was to acquire language skills, a process I have already described. Because of the language situation, initial interview design and translation assistance came mostly from people living away from Kauvai, and I describe the assistance those people gave me here, rather than in an acknowledgments section, because their assistance contributed to the methodology of the research project.

The regional women's development coordinator Kalisitina Finau, an employee in the then Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries [MAFF] accompanied my family on our initial visit to Kauvai, as a visible show of support for our research, and in the hopes that my research would encourage interest in her own attempts to 'assist women's development'. My presence also made it possible for Kalisitina, an unmarried young woman, to visit Kauvai, something she could not do in the company of her male colleagues or alone, despite the fact that Kauvai's population was part of her mandate. Her concerns centred in her personal reputation including the risk of sexual innuendos and other gossip that might embarrass her family, prevent an eventual marriage, and, even, effect some personal calamity. Kalisitina was supportive and interested in discussing development issues, especially textile production and nutrition.

'Aio'ema Atiola, the wife of the principle and instructor at Tāufa'āhau-Pilolevu Secondary School in Pangai and Dr. Toakasi Fakakovi of Niu'ui Hospital were particularly helpful in initial interview design and translation assistance. Both had an interest in Tongan medicine [*faito'o fakatonga*]. I also received some initial translation assistance from Langilangi Vita of the Fonongava'inga Guest House in Pangai and Tupou Pohiva, the maternal-child health nurse on Kauvai. Later, in 1992, Fanguna Vaitohi, a new 'Elder' with the Mormon church helped me with refining the phrasing of interview questions.

The medical records clerk at Niu'ui Hospital, 'Ofa Potoi, discussed her concerns for the medical services system and, in explaining my presence to people in the hospital setting, helped to authenticate my position as a reputable researcher with those who did not know me. This was particularly helpful in those times when I was observing in the hospital.

'Ema Ivarature, Tongan scholar and wife of fellow graduate student Henry Ivarature, was also invaluable, as a friend, transcriber and as someone with whom we could discuss the academics of 'Tongan culture'.

Eventually, if only for a few months in 1992, I was able to employ an assistant, Vitina Vaitohi. She helped with transcribing tape recorded interviews, and I taught her how to interview. When Vitina conducted interviews on her own, she used the same questions I used, and recorded the answers on paper, in Tongan. The women's voices come through beautifully in Vitina's notes. Vitina only worked for a brief period (the time between her marriage and move to Kauvai, and the middle of the first trimester of her subsequent pregnancy, about four months), but our conversations, like those I had with 'Aio'ema, Toakasi, Kalisitina, 'Ema and everyone I came to know in Maka Fele'unga, helped me in the ongoing reformulation and/or verification of what I was

learning.

Eventually, all discussions and interviews on Kauvai were conducted in Tongan, by me, or my assistant. Vitina's interview notes have been particularly helpful, because I tended to use a combination of English and Tongan in my own notes, while Vitina wrote only in Tongan. The translations provided here, however, are mostly my own, some with consultation from the people mentioned above. While interviews and conversations with professionals like school teachers and physicians away from Kauvai tended to take place in English, we often fell back onto a combination of both languages.

Despite the help with interviews and my contacts with various professionals, my most important tactic was simply listening, watching, emulating and, as I gained language competence, asking village women's opinions in casual conversations. These usually took place while attending church, working at plaiting, travelling to Pangai, walking through the '*uta* [bush/gardens], reef fishing, preparing food for a feast, during choir practice, or in *pō talanoa* - evening chats.

As a participant observer, I watched the other mothers in the village, and consciously emulated their behaviours: I tried to live like a good Tongan mother (Young Leslie 1998). My not quite two year old daughter adopted the language, behaviours and attitudes of our Tongan community very quickly. Because she became culturally Tongan in so many ways, I needed to learn to treat my own daughter as other mothers did. If I didn't, she simply ignored me. So I learned to plead and evoke sympathy, rather than command her as North American parents tend to do with their children. I learned to slick her hair back for church with coconut oil, and not to worry if she urinated in the house. As a 'good mother', I gave at funerals, birthdays, weddings, farewells and various church prestations; I eventually learned the rudiments of plaiting [*lālānga*], as all good

(Tongan) mothers should, and received instruction on how to make and administer some children's herbal medicines [*vai pala*].

My initial questions about making medicines and identifying who owned which treatments for which illnesses were interpreted by our neighbours as part of the normal range of maternal behaviour: as I asked "Who are the healers here?", I was asked in return "what is your treatment?" In other words, as I attempted to categorize members of the community, my new neighbours were doing the same to me. But where I began by thinking that certain people were 'healers', while others were something else, say, 'fishers', they were treating me as someone who, like them, had numerous socially significant skills and abilities. I learned eventually that every adult in the village had a treatment for something, and could be called upon to provide their remedy whenever needed, as long as one knew who to ask for help. This too, is part of good parenting: On Kauvai, it is incumbent upon all parents to know the repertoire of treatments available within their community. I was incorporated into that local repertoire, at first as a source of aspirins and bandages, later as one capable with wounds, skin infections, chest sounds and children's diarrhea.

As I learned to be a Tongan mother and a community member, I listened and watched for signs of 'maternal health activity'. I assumed these signs could be anywhere - in ideas about diet, in aphorisms, prohibitions, prescriptive behaviours, gossip, stories, and perhaps even games. Any place could be an area in which 'health' activity would be evident, as much as would visits to the nurse or clinic and use of local medicines and rituals. In this way, I waited and tried to let the people in the village show me what was important to know about matters of 'health'³⁵. Thus, through this "grounded theory" type of methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967), I learned to 'live well'. I also

³⁵ This is an important point, for reasons having to do with the way questions are interpreted during interviewing, a factor I discuss below under methodological caveats.

learned to value the importance of women's textile products for both every day and for 'living well'.

I lived with my family in the village in a *fale 'afā* [hurricane house]. This is the same house style, described earlier, occupied by the majority of other families in Maka Fele'unga. Like the rest of the village residents, we traded, gifted and were gifted with food and with textiles. The former came, mostly, from the villagers' gardens while the crops lasted, then from the closest town, Pangai. The latter we achieved through funeral prestations, or, like other women, I bought fabric from the millinery section in a Pangai shop. Like our neighbours, we bathed in seawater and drew our water rations at the local reservoir during the height of the drought. We attended church weekly, which meant at least twice on Sunday, often once on Wednesday, Monday and Friday. I joined the choir of one church and performed with them in an annual "Song Evening" competition in 1992.

We attended each of the three Methodist churches and the one Mormon temple in Maka Fele'unga. Our objective was to avoid being 'captured' by one congregation. We began by attending different churches on a weekly rotation, but as my facility with the language improved, I realized that a monthly rotation would provide better continuity to the lessons and activities that centred in the church. As participant observers, we gave gifts of food, cash or cloth at funerals and feasts, and donations of cash to each church at the quarterly and annual collections. Where these events occurred at the same time, my spouse and I split up, so as to be able to both donate, and observe. Judging from the chat about me on buses, in boats and other public situations where I was present with Tongans who did not know me or my family (nor that I understood Tongan), the church and gifting activity was crucial to our acceptance in the village as community members.

In other settings, anthropologists have found themselves categorized as 'fictive kin', or allocated specific community derived roles of 'child', 'learner', 'government agent', or 'missionary' (see Abu-Lughod 1988, Bell 1993, Briggs 1970, Kluckholm and Strodtbeck 1961, Hammersley and

Atkinson 1983, van Maanen 1988, and Flinn et. al 1998 for examples of various ethnographic identities and the problems resident therein). We were frequently compared and then contrasted (favourably so) to U.S. Peace Corps workers, the only other example of foreigner residents that the people of Kauvai could apply to us. Our favourable comparisons seemed based mostly on our church participation, gifting and language competency, social actions many Peace Corps volunteers have little opportunity to perfect.

As mentioned above, my field notes were recorded in English and Tongan. They include transcriptions of interviews and discussions, letters home and observations in my personal diary - anywhere that I recorded descriptions of mundane and special events. Some interviews were tape recorded but most were not: Coral atolls offer no appropriate means to dispose of batteries, making their use environmentally irresponsible. We made do with solar-recharged ones, and hand recorded notes. These were written during the interview, then (mostly) re-written at the end of the day, some surreptitiously on Sundays, the only day for which I was barred from interviewing. Most fieldnotes were recorded in a lap-top computer, powered by a small portable generator³⁶.

My formal interview guides and the questionnaires developed and administered in Tonga, complete with dates administered, person interviewing and English glosses, are recorded in Appendix One. I have some caveats about the use of formal interviewing and questionnaires in Tonga, which I discuss in the following section.

Methodological Caveats

Interviewing in a rural village in Tonga is socially and culturally complex, rife with potential

³⁶ Our generator was powered with the same oil and gas mixture as the local fishing boats. We donated it to one of the local churches when we left.

pitfalls based in the language, and in local, social pragmatics.

Linguistically, there are varying shades of certainty and emotive shading that can be expressed in an answer to the type of question that an English speaker would perceive as requiring a simple yes/no response. At least one hundred and forty-eight pronouns, pronominal adverbs and pronominal adjectives are available to express ownership, intentions, attitudes, actions and numbers of persons speaking or being addressed (see Churchward 1985).

In rhetorical practice the onus on 'the truth' value of any particular statement is the responsibility of the receiver. For instance, an individual may spontaneously compose an elaborate yet false story, in public, for a variety of reasons: to test the knowledge of others, for general amusement, or to cover personal ignorance (Evans and Young Leslie 1995). Furthermore, the moral construction of commitment is such that verbal expressions of solidarity count more than actual truth value or promises (Korn and Decktor Korn 1983) in any given circumstance.

As well, there are legal and religious concerns about talk about others which could be construed as gossip, which is illegal and punishable by a fine or even jail (see Bernstein 1983, and Cowling 1990 for discussions of gossip).

There are also strong social sanctions against displaying incompetence: If one does not know how to do something well, it is best not done at all. Therefore, if one does not know the answer to a question, a common tactic is to say nothing at all.

Furthermore, Tongans interpret questions and frame their answers in reference to considerations of context -- where the question is being asked, who is asking, and who else is present. For example, an indigenous researcher like Bloomfield (see 1986) can ask a question in a village about health, using the term *mo'ui lelei*, and get one type of response ("healthy is *monitonu*"), and ask the same question in a hospital (in her capacity as a nurse) and get another response. Likewise, I, as a

Pālangi [foreigner] can ask the same question, and get a different response. This was why language competence, community gifting and Vitina Vaitohi's brief assistance was so valuable. Finally, social propriety says that in any given circumstance, the person of higher rank or social status is, by default, correct. Guests, including visiting researchers, are accorded high social status, and places the locus of 'correctness' with them. These factors make interviewing in Tonga somewhat difficult. Decktor Korn (1977) and McGrath (1993) also make similar comments on the challenges of cultural etiquette and power relations to interviewing in Tonga.

It is clear from my early interviews that people could not be depended upon to accurately report what they do, nor to actually do what they said they did. But it became equally clear to me that many of the non-answers and mis-representations were due to attempts to preserve a sense of decorum, or to be courteous and accommodating, as Korn and Decktor-Korn described (1983). The 'lies' did not stem from any hostility to me or my research project, or to a lack of personal reflexivity. What is also clear is that commonality of practice was a social ideal, if not an empirical reality. People shared the view that Tongans generally all should (and did) behave in the same (correct) way as a part of 'the Tongan way', glossed in everyday chat as *anga fakatonga* (see Cowling 1990, for extensive discussion of the role of 'tradition' in contemporary Tongan social life).

Ideals as moral and social guidelines for practices are common through-out Polynesia (see Ochs 1988 and Ritchie and Ritchie 1989). With specific reference to Tonga, Gordon (1996:57) notes that:

Polynesian cultures thematize morality as ideal structures, stances, demeanors and behaviors, and as bringing the inner self into line with the conventional obligations, rights and duties of social situations. Studies on Polynesian language and socialization practices note that the qualities that are reinforced are respect for status, conformity, personal constraint and social relatedness.

This way of interpreting social and bodily practices within the realm of morality means that behaviours are interpreted as are objects: social practices, like gifting of textiles or pigs, performing speeches or prayers, are things –objects if you will– which pass between and link people. Thus is identity linked, consocially in Lieber’s (1990) felicitous phrase, with what people do, and passed on to others; In the process, appropriate social relations are associated, through behaviours, with constructions of *mo’ui lelei* [living well].

As Gordon’s point implies, the structure of public knowledge in Tonga is quite codified. Even in instances where it was clear that people had internally conflicting ideas for what was ‘traditional’, there was a sense that all questions have a ‘proper’ answer, and a proper source of information. This proper/good [*lelei*] answer is a formal construct of traditional knowledge, the conventional (Wagner 1986) in Tongan cultural practice. The codification of information is also perpetuated in the school curriculum and church school classes. Both forums for learning depend upon rote memorization and actively discourage individual initiative or interpretation.

Information which is ‘incorrect’ because it does not re-iterate the conventional view may be deemed untruthful [*loi*]. If in public, this can be an embarrassing rebuke. Commoner Tongans are not accustomed to being interviewed nor asked to give their opinions, especially by someone of higher social status (like a *Pālangi* guest). But they are used to being tested, both in the past as students, and as part of normal church practices as adults. The formal interview process then, is generally interpreted as similar to an exam, in which they are being tested for their knowledge of the ‘correct’ answers.

For foreign researchers, this is confounded by a social rule of thumb, mentioned above, that says the ‘right’ answer comes from those who are higher in rank or social status. That includes, for

reasons of etiquette, the visiting (*Pālangi*) researcher. Since commoners are taught that they do not 'make' the knowledge or the rules for what is right and wrong –God and the chiefs do that– it can be difficult to answer a question that says “what do you think is ___”? In the formal interview, the most common effect of these culturally codified social niceties is that 'informants' may strive to give the answer the 'informant' thinks the researcher wants to hear. They determine what they think the researcher wants to hear based on certain preconceived notions and prior experiences. This process of estimation frames the context of any answer. Often then, a *Pālangi* questioner receives an answer which re-iterates what Tongans think *Pālangi* would think proper, because, as Oliver noted: “Tongans long ago learned the best way to remain Tongan was to appear to be modern” (1961:179. Cited in Decktor Korn 1978:395, emphasis added) .

Interviews, then, sometimes revealed more about the conventional obligations of the event as a Tongan social situation which exerted particular pressures upon the individuals involved, than they provided any kind of 'truth' about what the interviewee thought, felt, or knew. The following example of the maternal-child nurse and the mother who bottle and breastfed her baby is an example of the power-relations and problems inherent in formal interviewing, even with a local assistant-translator.

Mis-truths as Cultural Etiquette

The local maternal-child nurse, Tupou Pouhiva, was as I have described, most generous. She offered her services as a translator, then invited me to participate in her 'well-baby clinics'. This was where she talked about infant inoculation and contraception to mothers. Later, she allowed me to look at her medical records. Her English was good enough to help with interviews and, as a local

nurse, she should have been an ideal translator and research partner. But I could not use her as a permanent translator, for two reasons.

Tupou lived at the opposite end of the island. That meant she could not easily be called on to spend her days with me, conducting interviews. Second, I noticed that when Tupou was present at an interview, women gave responses which were overt lies, but also demonstrated their knowledge of what she, as the local nurse, had been telling them they should do.

My first inkling of this problem came in September of 1991 when she and I visited Talahiva, a woman I'd seen with a two or three month old baby in church the previous Sunday. I asked a number of questions about infants and how to keep them healthy, including questions about breast and bottle feeding. Talahiva solemnly told us she fed her baby by breast alone, and would do so until he was four months old. This is what the official health-promotion material in Tonga advocates. The maternal-child nurse beamed, and I pretended I had not seen Talahiva give her baby a bottle when he began to fuss in church that previous Sunday.

Later, I came to understand the position in which I had placed both Talahiva and Tupou: Talahiva could not answer truthfully, lest she embarrass or insult the nurse, someone who held some informal authority in the community, and from whom she might need help at some point. Equally, I had placed Tupou in the unpleasant position of seeming to be 'checking up' on one of her charges, i.e.: on whether the woman was adhering to the nurse's teaching, and with no prior warning: a very unfriendly action. Finally, I had subjected the nurse to possible embarrassment: if Talahiva had answered truthfully, it would have made Tupou's work seem ineffective, in the eyes of a *Pālangi* guest. With a little lie, Talahiva preserved a sense of harmony. Her intentions were good, and as Korn and Deckor-Korn (1983) argue, intentions are important aspects of moral behaviour .

Another common tactic in an interview situation is to simply fabricate an answer. It was this

kind of playing that Paula Tuitavuki, the town officer, warned the people against in the meeting introducing us to the villagers. Sometimes this play is done to see if the jest will be believed (Evans and Young Leslie 1995). Other times, falsehoods are intended as a message in themselves, namely that the researcher should go away and stop asking silly, pointless or inappropriate questions. And sometimes, the object is to try to answer the question, without really giving away any information.

One incident from early 1992 provides a good example of the latter instance. I watched a man from the south end of Kauvai conducting a survey, a short-term contract he had received from a visiting World Bank investigative team. It was intended to lay the groundwork for a potential animal husbandry business initiative (loans for dairy cows). The young man was supposed to count the numbers of animals on the island, and record them, by household, on the form provided by the team. As an 'indigenous researcher' he was assumed to have access to information that foreign researchers would not. I talked to him about the survey, and watched as he made up or 'guesstimated' numbers of dogs, cats, pigs, horses, chickens and cows for the households where he could not find anyone at home on that day (most of the households).

At the time, I was irritated by his disregard for the importance of accurate information, but later, I came to appreciate his nonchalance: if the bank knew exactly how many animals everyone had, they might expect people to use them for defaulted loans, rather than for the far more ethically and socially important functions such as funerals or feasts. Showing respect and maintaining local social relations far outweighed any compulsion a temporary contract with foreigners might have. Another concern mitigating against a really accurate animal census was that the international donors might decide the islanders already had enough animals and needed no further help. Worse still, an employee at the bank (say, a sister's son) might see how many pigs, goats or horses his or her relative owned, and take or beg [*kole*] some. On the grounds of the traditional practice of *fahu*, in which

sister's sons have free and unlimited access to their mother's brother's property, or the ethic of mutual assistance [*fe'ofa'aki*], and in light of the importance of appropriate social relations, such a request could not be refused. But were such a thing to happen, it would deprive that family of the ability to use the pig to their own strategic benefit, at an upcoming funeral, first birthday, or church-based community feast. Furthermore, simply refusing to collect the information would mean someone else would get the job, and someone else's family would benefit from the income, contacts and potential future employment. The best tactic was clearly, to take the job and not worry too much about 'accuracy', truth value being the responsibility of the receiver, after all.

Long term familiarity with people, families, place and language clearly helps considerably in data collection (an anthropological truism underscored by my own experience). Often, the problems outlined above are circumvented with the assistance of a skilled or trustworthy assistant. I, however, experienced great difficulty in finding an appropriate translator for the day to day conversations, as described above. As a woman, dealing with the potentially intimate questioning of women's lives, I needed a woman translator. However, no women (and few men³⁷) with the combination of adequate fluency in English and free time was living on Kauvai. Nor was anyone willing to move there to work. Partly, this was because we were strangers, and *Pālangi* are unpredictable (and, therefore, dangerous). Possibly it was also because moving to a community in which one has no living (preferably maternal) relatives places one at risk from local spirits/ghosts (see Gordon 1996).

Vitina herself had a potentially dangerous experience soon after moving to Kauvai. She dreamed about a stranger, looking at her as she slept. Her husband recognized her description of the stranger as his deceased grandfather, and concluded the old man had come from the nearby

³⁷ My partner also experienced difficulty obtaining adequate assistance with translation.

graveyard to take a look at the new bride. The young couple concluded that Vitina was not in any danger, so long as she remained in the company of her new in-laws, something she was careful to do for the following months.

A third explanation for why a woman capable of being a translator would not move to Kauvai is evident in the female development officer's use of my presence to visit part of her region: no woman of moral integrity would move to a village of strangers without the protection of her brothers, extended family or spouse, for fear of social censure and loss of reputation.

I was able to conduct some interviews with the help of Vitina's husband, Fanguna Vaitohi, but his youth and gender were barriers to certain lines of questioning. By the time I was able to employ Vitina Vaitohi, my facility with Tongan was as good as her facility with English and I did not need her help with translation. However, since the interviews Vitina conducted were in my absence, and the results mirrored what I thought I knew, I gained the confidence that my *Pālangi* presence was no longer biasing women's responses. People knew Vitina was working for me and could have mislead her on some points, but her own pregnancy gave them an excuse to tell her information they thought relevant to her condition. Besides, showing kindness to my research assistant was a way of showing *'ofa* [love/generosity/empathy] to me.

These then are the key tactics I used to gather data: self conducted formal and informal interviews, assistant conducted formal interviews and participant observation. With these techniques, I tried to ascertain how people on Kauvai, especially mothers, thought about certain issues. I characterized some formal interviews as about the topic of *mo'ui lelei*, and asked women to discuss a number of points including: making and ensuring children's 'health', treatment and prevention of children's illnesses, food preferences and sources, parenting responsibilities, knowledge and use of

faito'o fakatonga [traditional medicine] and, their description of the characteristics [*faka'ilonga*] of a healthy child (see Appendix One). While the formal interviews were highly informative, I found the casual conversations and what women told my assistant Vitina, to be most interesting in terms of the information provided. As Bourdieu (1977) has argued, questioning elicits answers with an inherent normative bias, and my own experience confirms this: Questions like "what do you do to ensure your children's 'health'?" often elicited answers which demonstrated the effectiveness of the public health campaigns (for e.g. Talahiva's denial of bottle-feeding), but not necessarily what people actually did.

I describe these situations as a methodological caveat: as I stayed longer, and as my facility with the language improved, I began to depend more on those casual conversations for information. The quality of the information recorded by my assistant falls somewhere between my initial interview attempts and what I eventually learned as a member of the community. On the one hand, the women Vitina interviewed used the process to introduce themselves to her, and to show her how gracious [*anga lelei*] and friendly they could be to a newcomer (she had just married into that village). They wanted to show her that they knew the "right answers" just as their neighbours wanted to impress me. On the other hand, as she was pregnant, women were given the opportunity to tell a new mother about healthy children -- and this they did, with some surprising variability. But their answers tended to concentrate on very young children (as appropriate for a new mother), whereas what I learned in women's work areas and cook houses, in fishing boats and buses, at choir practices and feasts, covered the range of women's ideas and ideals regarding their children from infancy to maturity.

Clearly, long term participant observation (see Paine 1995:114 for a discussion of long term

research and participant observation), including language skills and multiple methods and multiple voices for triangulation of information (Reinharz with Davidman 1992), is as essential for gathering data in Tonga as it is elsewhere. This is even more true for data analysis: as well as being key to any interview event, context is crucial to understanding Polynesian languages and the potentially multiple, veiled allusions which are normal, in fact esteemed, in Tongan speech. This demands long-term familiarity with the people who are the subjects of research (see the Glossary for further description of the variability inherent to the language).

In my analysis then, much is based on fragments, intuitive assessments and the (occasionally direct) voices of informative friends. I have assimilated observations of what people did and said over the long term, their explanations for events or potential events, casual discussions, other ethnographic literature, and the observations and interpretations of others, including those of my temporary assistant Vitina Vaitohi.

While I alone am responsible for the analyses and conclusions presented here, I wish to make it clear that my experience, understanding and interpretation, the version of Tongan culture that I learned, is intimately affected by the way the people of Kauvai related to me, and by who helped me, for instance with interview translation, or by befriending me and my family. These social relationships have methodological implications.

My position as foreign ethnographer was also affected by the presence of my daughter and my husband. My daughter, for instance, became a Tongan child, almost a research subject herself. I have described this elsewhere (Young Leslie 1998). At the same time I was investigating *mo'ui lelei*, my partner was researching agricultural practices and market economics in relation to traditional practices (Evans 1996). We attended church and gave donations as a family, conducted some interviews jointly, and discussed our other interviews, observations and impressions daily. We

reported to each other observations and learned information that we felt were important for the other's research. As a student of Tongan culture, I was positioned (Rosaldo 1989:7) as an ethnographer, but also as a mother, a wife, and a number of other roles. My fieldwork experience was that of an 'accompanied other' (Gilmore 1998³⁸). It was also complicated in that I am a feminist, who was conducting research as a woman (of one social, cultural and epistemological space) with and on women (of another social, cultural and epistemological space). Often the role conflicts of feminist, mother, spouse, student, researcher, neighbour, interviewer, friend, alien, observer, participant, recorder and analyst left me bewildered as to how to resolve the dilemmas (see Wolf 1996 for a number of analyses of problems facing the feminist researchers, also Bell 1993, Michalski Turner 1990 and Flinn et. al 1998 for discussions of the problems facing ethnographers with families).

In closing this chapter, let me sum up: Personal circumstances as well as field conditions affected how I collected my data, and brought home the long-standing anthropological truisms emphasizing participant observation, language skills, long-term research (Paine 1995) and the ability to adapt to local situations (for example of the latter, see Young Leslie 1996), but also demonstrated the dilemmas faced by ethnographers and feminist field researchers (van Maanen 1988, Bell 1993, Wolf 1996, Flinn et. al 1998). Then, as I gathered data, and now as I write, I have had particular ethical considerations. These have included a recognition of my own situation as an accompanied 'Other' (Rosaldo 1989, Gilmore 1997), the need for formal permission to conduct and report on the research, and fair representation of the people who permitted the intrusion of a researcher into their community.

³⁸ Gilmore (1998) did not use the exact term 'accompanied other', but I am indebted to her discussion of the "accompanied ethnographer as repositioned other" for the notion of the accompanied other.

While acknowledgments to friends made in the field usually appear in a preface, cooperation and interest on the part of people in the kingdom were essential to getting the research done, and thus deserve mention in a chapter about methodology. While not participatory research (Maguire 1987, Fals-Borda 1992) in design or origin, my project simply would not have happened without the pro-active assistance, cooperation and input of a number of people, some named in this text, most but not all of whom were living on Kauvai at the time of the research.

A recurring personal theme in my field experience on Kauvai, one running in juxtaposition to my concerns for formulating research questions, and learning to interpret context in interviews -- not to mention dilemmas of identity and authenticity-- was how, despite significant cultural and practical differences, life there resonated with the lyrical flow of e.e. cummings' description of a place called 'how town'. I often found myself murmuring the stanzas to myself while on Kauvai. At first the analogy seemed apropos because of the church bells which pealed in Maka Fele'unga, marking specific hours in a community with few clocks and a sense of a time measured in changes in the light of the sun and the moon and in seasons marked by fish and winds. But as I re-read the poem, other resonances emerged: the way names portray archetypal identities and are layered through history, the emphasis on people making relationships within communities, and the way meanings are open to multiple and cumulative readings in cummings' poem -- these resonate very much with *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way].

For reasons I am still unsure of, this resonance first surprised me, and left me feeling irritated and decentred: how could I be thinking that village Tonga was like a small town 'anywhere' of North America (or for that matter, The United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand)? However, because of this decentring, I am reminded that the business of conducting ethnographic research,

beginning with the initial questions and assumptions I took to the field in 1991 and ending with the writing of the dissertation, has very clearly been a productive, power-laden and artistic process. A kind of artisan's 'making' in which I have controlled the process of the work from beginning to end, even though I, as *bricoleur*, collaborated with others and have drawn on my own experience in the "making" (see Anderson 1994:67). I therefore agree with the call for reflexivity, especially in anthropological writing (Abu-Lughod 1991, Enslin 199 Collier and Yanagisanko 1988, Marcus and Fischer 1986), because ethnography involves making a very particular form of text (Clifford 1988). This chapter, and other sections of other chapters, retain a personal tone, and include some experiential issues with the more academic and pragmatic points, because I have found these issues to be methodologically relevant.

I anticipate that some of the children whose mothers and grandmothers appear here will read this text, and I hope, feel free to point out the differences of interpretation and perception.

*anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did.*

*Women and men(both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain*

*children guessed(but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more*

*when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her*

*someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then)they
said their nevers they slept their dream*

*stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so many floating bells down)*

*one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
litile by litile and was by was*

*all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by April
wish by spirit and if by yes.*

*Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain*

e.e. cummings

CHAPTER FIVE

DYNASTIC STRATEGIES: INVENTION, 'HEALTH' AND HISTORY

On Kauvai, 'health' is a social phenomenon situated within and made meaningful by a cultural system. Research by Parsons (1981 1983, 1984, 1985) and Bloomfield (1986) indicates this is true for other parts of the kingdom as well. Of course, cultural and social phenomenological characteristics for health are not specific to Tongans. This is demonstrated in research conducted in many other cultural settings (e.g.: Kelman 1975, Comaroff 1985, Adelson 1993, Bordo 1993, Litva and Eyles 1995, Backett and Davidson 1995). However, limiting analysis to its social phenomenology only, gives an incomplete picture of 'health' in Tonga. I show in this chapter that the emergence of *mo'ui lelei* as a Tonganized semantic for health is due to a process of invention as understood by Wagner (1975, 1986). This has been a process which is equally social, historical, political and cultural. In order to demonstrate what I mean when I describe *mo'ui lelei* as resulting from invention, I begin by describing Wagner's notion of invention.

Invention

There are different senses of the term 'invention' in the literature³⁹. In some uses (Kessing

³⁹ In much of the literature, the terms 'invention' and 'construction' tend to be used as synonyms, although Linnekin (1991) characterized 'construction' as referring to a process which is symbolic, dialectical and largely unconscious, whereas she saw 'invention' as including a degree of conscious reflection about one's culture. It should be noted however, that Wagner's (1986) explication of the process of invention charts a dialectic which involves reflexivity and creativity, but which may also be unconscious – dependent upon the use of metaphor, analogy and trope and the recursive re-figuring of symbols over time. His use then, collapses the distinction that Linnekin saw. I follow Wagner and use both terms. When referring to the process of symbolic thinking as described by Wagner, I stick to his terminology 'invention'.

1982, 1989, Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983), the terms invention and reinvention imply that where people's traditions can be demonstrated (i.e.: through historical research) to have changed, or to have been based in outside sources, such practices, beliefs, or behaviours, are problematic and best and essentially inauthentic (eg: Keesing 1982, 1989; Trevor-Roper 1983). Used in this sense, invention is synonymous with 'new', 'fabricated', different or never-before-seen. It invokes images of entrepreneurs and charlatans blending lies, forged documents, innuendo and charm to further personal fortunes; or of orientalist exploitation of a romanticized 'savage' 'otherness' for political, military or economic purposes (see Trevor-Roper 1983). This notion of genuine versus spurious traditions has been discounted by most anthropologists (eg: Linnekin 1982; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hanson 1989; Herda 1995, but see Keesing 1982, 1989)⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Critiques of the indigenous use of 'culture' and custom [*kāhuna*] as a political symbol (Keesing 1982, 1989) and a separate but coincidentally-timed use of the term "culture invention" by Alan Hanson (1989) set off a furor in Pacific studies (see: Trask 1991; Wilford 1990, Keesing 1991, Linnekin 1991). Linnekin's (1983) article on defining Hawai'ian tradition was implicated in the debate (Linnekin 1991a), as was an anthology edited by Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983). The furor generated a special session at the ASAO meetings 1991, which I attended. Pertinent critiques centred on the ways in which academic language obfuscated and objectified contemporary aboriginal realities (session participants ASAO meetings 1991). This was particularly true of Hanson's (1989) finely argued but theoretically complex article: It was reviewed fairly in the New York Times (Wilford 1990), but completely mis-represented and mis-understood in the follow-up review in the New Zealand press (Linnekin 1991). Part of the perceived risk was that a lay public reading of the term 'invention' implied that cultural resurgence was inauthentic; this could open aboriginal peoples' protests, and claims based in oral testimony, to renewed political disavowal. As noted Hawaiian nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask complained: "In the Hawai'ian case, the 'invention' criticism has been thrown into the public arena precisely at a time when Hawaiian cultural and political assertion has been both vigorous and strong willed... Two decades of struggle have resulted in the contemporary push for Hawaiian sovereignty ... finally a quasi-governmental agency... was created, partly in response to Hawaiian demands... This kind of political activity has been accompanied by a flourishing of Hawaiian dance, ... language immersion schools and a larger public sensitivity to the destructive Western relationship to the land compared to the indigenous Hawaiian way of caring for the land" (1991:163). The heart of the issue therefore centred around usage of the terms 'invention', 'construction', 'tradition' and 'culture', politics of context and concerns over 'authenticity' of contemporary indigenous practices, and the political ramifications on the ground. Some of the terminological problems have been addressed by adopting the term 'figuration' or referring to "obviation analyses" (ie: Strathern 1991:79). It should be noted that Trask's concerns were not unjustified: Clifford's (1988:277-346) description of the Mashpee Wampanoag people's fight in the American court system for legal identity as American and Indian (First Nations), provides a compelling example of how changes in so-called 'traditional' practices can be used to declare a people's claim to a particular cultural identity as inauthentic: the Mashpee legal claim was denied because they were said to be living and acting just like other contemporary non-Native Americans; their re-adoption of 'traditions' such as spirituality, clothing styles like bandanas as headbands and social gatherings were deemed too recent and too similar to other Americans' practices, to be 'real' traditions. Their ongoing invention of themselves in adaptation, and perhaps resistance, to particular state and social constraints was deemed evidence of the spuriousness of their claims to be 'Indians' (Clifford 1988). A similar case (Delgamuukw) played out in Canada, with the

Roy Wagner (1975) used the term ‘invention’ quite differently. He first coined the term ‘invention of culture’ to describe his insight that culture –the meanings people use to make sense of their worlds and to pre-figure their actions– is constituted symbolically, in the present, by the people themselves. Thus, Wagner was rejecting a received wisdom of the time, that tradition and culture were passively received, and could be objectively identified in what would now be identified as an essentialist way. Rather than use then popular metaphors like ‘construct’ or ‘evolve’, he expanded the term ‘invention’, specifically because it connoted human agency and creativity (Wagner 1975).

Wagner argued that people could not make sense of anything, including having something called ‘authentic culture’, without the cognitive capacity for invention. At the same time, if as anthropologists have argued, culture is the way that humans make sense of their world, the obverse must also be true: “invention is culture” (1975:35 emphasis added). What are the implications of Wagner’s use of the term ‘invention’ for the historical and conservative perspectives, and the debate about authenticity (e.g: Keesing 1982, 1989; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983)? From Wagner’s perspective, to refer to changed practices, beliefs, ideas or stories as invented and therefore spurious, i.e.: outside of ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ culture, is fallacious. Practices may change, but so long as the changes ‘make sense’ (culturally) and work (for the members of that society), they “gain a measure of authenticity” (Borofsky 1987:141) and therefore cannot be inauthentic.

Invention and Convention: the Figuration Process

In explicating the process of through which symbols were invented, Wagner (1986) noted that in everyday experiences, humans use the cognitive ability to create metaphors (analogies or

Gitsan-Wi’suiten people of British Columbia (Culhane 1998).

similes) to bridge gaps in understanding. Metaphors (and including similes) work analogically, in a recursive and dialectic fashion, to arrive at a comprehensible concept for some 'thing' which had been meaning-less. Thus a metaphor mediates between, and links together, that which is understood, and that which is hard or difficult to express or comprehend.

Insofar as the process wherein a metaphor is produced is simultaneously comparative and dialectical, analogy and contrast are both necessary. The metaphor emerges from a contrast to and comparison with a concept (a symbol) already held in the mind. Wagner identified this previous, well-comprehended symbol as an idea, concept or practice which was 'conventional'. Conventions are the figure or 'ground' from which analogies are found and against which contrasts are made. Conventional symbols 'expand' with each analogy, but when conventional symbols can no longer provide meaningful analogies, when the symbols can no longer expand, that is the point at which 'new' meaning must be created – through contrastive metaphorization. Conventional and invented symbols (Wagner used the term 'tropes') therefore, are actually a set, a dyad. Since all 'meanings' are made in the same way, conventional concepts or tropes are simply prior inventions (through metaphorization), tropes which were once new, but have become conventional.

Conventions are a society's communicational base, the ground from which people can assume shared understandings and meanings. These are the 'natural truths', the 'received views', the traditions and social practices that make everyday life and communication possible. In the language of symbolism, conventions are composed of tropes which link "commonly held signs" (Wagner 1975:42) into the semblance of a pattern which, in its very familiarity, is uncontested. As such, conventions are taken at 'face value', they go unquestioned: they are self-evidently real, seemingly transparent. In Tonga, convention is described as *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way].

It is possible, said Wagner, to apply the concept of invention to plot lines in myths, stories

and rituals, but Strathern (1991:79) comments that “not just myth or ritual but social processes in general have been perceived this way” (Strathern 1991:79, emphasis added). In this case, the process is essentially the same, but happens over years instead of the seconds it takes to conceive a thought.

The sequence is as follows: first a concept is expanded, pushed to hold as many variations as possible. Eventually the expanded concepts cease to be recognized as multiple and yet connected analogies –when this happens, the entire corpus of meanings is condensed into a symbol (a trope) which is perceived as a singular, polysemic trope. The condensed, polysemic figuration could be said to encompass all prior expansions. This is a ‘new’ figuration, a new symbol, and invention about to become conventional. Thus new meanings can encompass old. At the level of society, the process carries on forever, one serial substitution after another.

At this scale of invention, metaphor is an insufficient term. Wagner expands the conventional (literature-based) sense of the term ‘trope’, a figure of speech combining ‘meaning’ with ‘turning’, to indicate the underlying recursive phenomenon which, “organizes conditions for the perception of meaning over the whole scale-range of cultural forms” (Wagner 1986:126)⁴¹. In this sense, tropes are newly invented, metaphor-like symbolizations, implicitly carrying the sense that the previous, or conventional symbolizations have been ‘turned’: perhaps condensed, perhaps encompassed. What is especially significant to my analysis, is the way in which tropes (images, symbols, concepts) expand and then condense, and in so doing encompass other, prior symbols in serial (Wagner says ‘recursive’) fashion.

Not all inventions are unconscious or ‘natural’ in their evolution. The social and political

⁴¹ Wagner actually identifies three orders of tropes (1986:127-129). It is sufficient for my purposes here to identify the point that tropes of each order are essentially referential, and productive of 1] meanings, 2] images or, at the highest order, the coherent organizing concept of the human condition

context is always a significant factor as to which analogies, which tropes, which 'traditions' are receive attention, become validated or, as Borofsky put it: "gain a measure of authenticity" (1987:141). Gordon is therefore quite right to point out that "inventions are authorized by the governing bodies" (1999 per. com.), all though I would add the qualifier "often" (inventions are often authorized...). And to be clear, this is not a question of authenticity: Herda's (1995) call for a recognition of the fluidity and interpretive innovation in Tongan constructions of culture and history noted that the present's interpretation of the past is implicated in political ways, but also that the entire endeavour was a normal aspect of Tongan cultural practice. Gordon (1999 per. comm.) has also noted that there are "layerings and varieties of authorized invention that emanate from the Tongan government" which are relayed and re-figured in numerous settings throughout contemporary Tonga. One example is, of course, the re-figuring of the kava circle myth (described in chapter two) so to validate the current dynasty with the imprimatur of cosmological favour (Herda 1995). Another is the emergence of the state dynasty and its uses of western medical institutions and ideas, which I describe below.

A long process of serial metaphorizations, involving dialectical turns in meaning and expansion and encompassment of symbols, has allowed the Tupou dynasty to invent or refigure a modern yet traditionally Polynesian polity. Analyses by Biersack (1991), Herda (1995) and James (1995) all note the extent to which particular pre-contact symbols of chiefly potency have been selected, in some sense or another, in the contemporary Tongan polity. I take this realization further to argue that the current dynasty, especially its paramount leaders, and the state government they have invented, have over the past 150 years, come to encompass both symbols of chiefly potency and, at the same time, symbols of modernity, including Christianity, schools, a legal and medical system.

Invention, Not Compromise

Over the course of a colonially-influenced history, during which European missionaries, merchants, advisors and political liaisons have been heeded, rejected or manipulated by Tongans, certain popular and governmental choices and decisions have resulted in what Marcus termed the 'compromise culture' (1978): The modern yet traditionalist society of contemporary Tonga. In light of the subsequent theorizing about invention, and the mutability and continuity of traditions, I would suggest that Marcus' description of the syncretism of Christian and classical Tongan practice is better understood as part of the ongoing invention (Wagner 1975, 1986) of Tongan culture, what Gordon (1994a) refers to "indigenous modernity".

Choices and decisions; emphases and de-emphases. The re-interpretations and manipulations of European 'Other's' ideas which Marcus (1978) noted and which Keesing (1982) might have derided, are now recognized in the literature to be normal aspects of Tongan cultural practice (ie: Herda 1995). These same processes are also evident in the introduction of *mo'ui lelei*.

Mo'ui lelei has been adopted as the gloss for 'health' in the professional medical and health promotion initiatives in Tonga. Literally *mo'ui lelei* means 'living well'. However, rather than simply inserting the biomedical concept of 'health' into a Tongan vocabulary and meaning system, use of the term *mo'ui lelei* has led to a semantic expansion of the meaning of 'health'. In other words, the combination of biomedical and sociological concepts present in modern medical professionals' notions of 'health' and the World Health Organization's definition of 'health' have been stretched to include Tongan concepts of what it is to be living well.

The trope of 'health', understood from an North American perspective to refer to things like physical fitness, bodily integrity and lack of illness, is, on Kauvai, expanding to include particularly

Tongan ideals associated with 'living well'; 'living well' is based on creating and maintaining appropriate social relations. Thus, through the process of cultural invention, a foreign-based, biomedical trope of 'health', originally translated as *mo'ui lelei*, is being expanded, and is condensing into a contemporary, invented-and-yet-traditional, Tongan trope of health-as-living-well and health-as-appropriate-social-relations.

The process began with the inclusion of medical services in the stratagems used to consolidate one particular chiefly line's hold on political power, and it is those stratagems which I concentrate on in the rest of this chapter. As I see it, the invention of *mo'ui lelei* and the invention of the modern, yet traditional Tongan kingship are interrelated.⁴² I point in particular to the intertwining of foreign representations of 'health' with chiefly stratagems of power, and argue that the former have helped ensure the position of the latter, in which the head of state represents himself or herself as both a modern, Christian leader, and as a traditional Polynesian paramount chief, partly through his/her ability to give or ensure gifts of 'health' for the people. Even while figuring as a dynastic stratagem, health was, and I believe still is, being invented into a more culturally Tongan notion of *mo'ui lelei*.

The neologism of *mo'ui lelei* emerged, I suspect, during the era when a number other practices now accepted as 'traditional' were being invented. I speculate on the term's emergence as the gloss for foreign definitions of health below. Then I discuss the recent literature on healing and illness in Tonga. While diseases and their therapies constitute linguistically differentiated, even

⁴² Gailey uses the term 'kingship' to refer to the contemporary political organization, in which the sovereign "rules as well as reigns" as Marcus phrases it (1993:21). Henceforth however, I avoid the use of the term "kingship" because of its gendered connotations. I prefer the terms monarchy and dynasty, in recognition of one of the key political and social leaders of the modern era, Queen Sālote Tupou III; that Queen Sālote was not an aberration is evident in the emerging power, influence and popularity of the Princess Pilolevu, grand-daughter of Sālote, daughter of the current monarch, and major figure in overseas investments as well as figurehead for the perpetuation of traditional practices in Tonga

opposed categories of *fakapālangi* and *fakatonga*, the contents and boundaries of those categories are actually quite fluid. It is clear that with the influx of medical services and biomedical health promotion initiatives, the traditional Tongan therapies are part of an ambiguous and expanding trope of *mo'ui lelei*.

Finally, as well as figuring as invented symbolizations, it is also clear that in Tonga, biomedical health practices, like religious faith, familial practices, land tenure and education, have been, and are yet subject to, explicit ideals regarding what is 'proper' and 'correct'. There is an 'official view', a medical orthodoxy promoted by the Tongan state or some of its agents. Both biomedical health and *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way] are situated as a kind of conventional ground against which invention takes place.

However, biomedicine is not the only orthodoxy operant in Tonga. Notions of traditional practice, belief and social obligations which are described as specifically and culturally Tongan, play a dominant part in everyday living in Tonga (see Cowling 1990 for a discussion of notions of tradition). *Anga fakatonga* --the Tongan way-- is the term for everyday practice on Kauvai, and indeed in the entire kingdom. People use it, not in the politicised sense of 'The Pacific Way', but rather to mean "this is how we do things here"⁴³. It is a model for and a model of social practice. Like biomedicine, *anga fakatonga* promotes, through social statements and practices, a particular set of facts and ways of knowing about persons and objects. Like biomedicine, *anga fakatonga* conventionalizes the people who constitute --and are constituted by-- the Tongan way.

While both are therefore conventional, biomedical health-promotion initiatives and lessons,

⁴³ The potential for *anga fakatonga* to become politicized is great, of course, but it has yet to acquire the semiotics of resistance that similar constructs, such as *kastom* have achieved elsewhere in the Pacific (see for example, the various papers in Keesing and Tonkinson 1982)

and the everyday practices, beliefs and obligations which characterize *anga fakatonga*, are not necessarily mutually congruent. There are discontinuities within the conventions of the 'Tongan way' [*anga fakatonga*] and within medical interactions and health promotion initiatives. From those discontinuities, emerges the invented notion of *mo'ui lelei*.

Stratagems in the Consolidation of a Dynasty: *Mo'ui Lelei* as Chiefly 'Ofa

The role and powers of the ruling head of state in Tonga are that of a modern constitutional monarch (Lātūkefu 1974). But the position of the Tongan monarch is also publicly essentialized, in Tonga and abroad, as a continuation of a traditional Polynesian style of chiefly leadership, regardless of the dramatic political and social changes that have occurred since the seventeenth century (Marcus 1993). The chiefly line which currently holds the monarchy entered the eighteenth century as first in political and military might, but third in titled rank. Over the reigns of three kings and one queen, the ruling line's title of Tu'i Kanokupolu has risen, from third highest to paramount rank.

The development of biomedical health and education services have paralleled the gain in status, titles and personal rank of the head of state, and have preceded other (economic) forms of development. I suggest that provision of these services –health, education, development– in the kingdom should be interpreted as chiefly acts of 'ofa: gifts or favours of generosity, empathy and love, which are of the same category of 'ofa as required in the sacred/divine contract symbolised through the kava ritual (Biersack 1991. Refer also to description in chapter two). Such chiefly acts are significant to the perpetuation of life –social and physical, societal and personal– in traditional, and pre-contact Tongan paradigms (Biersack 1991), and also figure significantly in the invention of the contemporary dynasty (see Gailey 1987 for a critical, ethnohistorical description of the formation of

the modern Tongan state)⁴⁴.

'*Ofa* is a highly complex concept in Tonga (Kavaliku 1977). According to conventional ideologies of traditional practice, '*ofa* balances the reciprocal of *faka'apa'apa* a term indexing behaviours of deferent respect. '*Ofa* is (in one aspect of its complexity) an unenforceable but highly expected 'answer' [*tali*] from those higher in rank to the reciprocals of respect, and associated behaviours including obedience [*talangofua*], tribute [*polopolo*] and offerings [*feilaulau*], all of which are associated with those of lower rank (See Gifford [1929] 1985, Kaeppler 1971, Kavaliku 1977, Bott with Tavi 1982, Gailey 1987, Cowling 1990 and Mahina 1992, for discussions of traditional practice). This is the essential 'contract' between the '*eiki* and *tu'a*, identified by Biersack (1991).

In the classic expression of the reciprocal responsibilities between the high ranking [*eiki*] and non-chiefly [*tu'a*] persons, all lower ranking [*tu'a*] persons gave the first fruits of the season and their ongoing labour, loyalty and unquestioning obedience to their local chief(s) [*hou'eiki*]. This asymmetrical reciprocity is described as a mutual *fatongia* [obligation/duty which is expected and honourable]. Lārūkefu (1980:65-66 cited in Biersack 1990:50) describes it thus:

The chief's obligations [*fatongia*] were to protect the group from outside interference or attack, to settle their disputes and to provide conditions under which his [sic] people would work and enjoy peace and prosperity. In return, the people performed their *fatongia* to him by working his garden, providing him with the best of everything they produced or possessed and attending to whatever he might want them to do.

In material demonstration of this mutual set of obligations, classically, the chief(s) redistributed some goods as gifts of '*ofa* to those persons of their *kāinga*. The *kāinga* were those

⁴⁴ Gailey's (1987) ethnohistorical work on the social, political and economic effects of the changes from kinship based society to one dominated by a modern "kingship" can be criticized for bending the data to fit the marxian model, and for failing to sufficiently consider the active agency of Tongans past and present. It remains however, the best critical analysis of the emergence of the Tongan state.

people genealogically related, or associated as if kin, by virtue of their association with the land estate of the chief. Weddings and funerals of those in his *kāinga* were common occasions for such redistributions. Bott (with Tavi 1982:71) points out that if the chief(s) did not fulfill their obligations to the people they “would find their contributions of food were not as large as he needed, or his people would begin slipping away to live with their wives’ or mother’s people”.

But each chief was (and still is) part of a ranked hierarchy. They passed along a good portion of the goods received to their own higher ranking chief(s), who followed the same practices. Ultimately, tribute accrued to the sacred paramount chief. In pre-constitution Tongan, this was the holder of the title Tu’i Tonga.

The Tu’i Tonga’s annual ceremony of tribute receipt and redistribution was called the *Inasi*. The ceremony confirmed both the political and the cosmological order, with the Tu’i Tonga ranking above all other Tongan’s, and standing as a mediator of human-god relationships. In the origin myth of the Tu’i Tonga, Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu’a provides “favours” of seed and soil for the nourishment of his lover and their son, ‘Aho’eitu (Thomas MS 1879:231, cited in Biersack 1991:232). The gift thus introduced agricultural products (the yam) to Tongans. Because all title holders are conceptualized as the embodiment of all previous holders of the same title⁴⁵ as well as the current living title holder, each Tu’i Tonga after ‘Aho’eitu embodied both the sexual union which originally prefigured the Tongan world (however explained: Biersack 1991, James 1992) and the connection between the paternal, higher ranking (sky-god), and the maternal, lower ranking (earth-bound), ancestors of all Tongans. In perpetuating the social and cosmological order, through displays of *’ofa*

⁴⁵ The Tongan conceptualization of title holders is analogous both to Dumont’s 1980, notion of encompassment, but also to Wagner’s notion of the condensing or collapsing of separate symbols into one single trope: On Maka Fele’unga, one title holder, for example Hiko, will use the first person pronoun to describe the exploits of previous title holders, because in meriting and accepting the ‘garland’ of the title, the current holder becomes one with all past title holders.

and mutual *fatongia*, the *Inasi* confirmed the contract of the kava ritual and ensured the ongoing fertility of land and society, and re-iterated the traditional model for social relations (see James 1990:95 for a discussion of the *kāinga*, in which she makes a similar point).

Gifts of labour and first fruits of the land were (and still are) used to show respect to those higher in rank and to encourage displays of *ʻofa* to those of lower rank. Yams [*ʻufi*], pigs and textiles [*koloa*] figured prominently in the Tuʻi Tonga's *Inasi*, both as representations of the god as source of all life and as gifts of respect. Thus the dualistic figure of the paramount chief as sacred and yet *kāinga* was associated with the spiritual and natural gifts necessary for the sustained life of the populace, and rationalized the structure of supreme authority over all Tongans (Marcus 1989, Biersack 1990, James 1990).

Relations of respect and *ʻofa* are present in contemporary everyday life too. In the case of rank-related behaviours within a family, the sister-brother relationship replicated the *ʻeiki-tuʻa* relationship prefigured by the *Tuʻi Tonga* and his people. While less ritually charged, a sister can still expect her brother's children to give her respect by deferring to her, obeying her suggestions and directives, and giving her the best of any gifts they receive. As a sister, she has elevated rank in relation to her brothers and their offspring. They can expect that while she is free to do as she pleases, as one who is chiefly, she should be beneficent and gracious, resist being too bossy [*fiʻepule*], or taking extra-advantage of her elevated status [*fiʻeʻeiki*], and show them *ʻofa* [kindness, generosity]. She does this by refraining from taking too much from them. She may even return portions of the proffered gifts. In the eyes of commoners on Kauvai, at least, being willing and/or able to accept and then graciously return (thereby refusing) a highly valued gift, can be a sign of great chiefly (and Christian) generosity.

With the modern nation state, the monarch embodies the state and its populace. Lock (1993) described embodiment as tying the individual to the social world. While her focus was the individual and the fact that bodies as units of analysis are fluid and flexible, the idea of embodiment also applies to the figure and person of the monarch, who as paramount chief ties the mundane secular world to that of the sacred, through receipt and redistribution of gifts, power, authority and control of kinship. The duties of the paramount chief(s) have been split and re-joined along sacred/secular lines on various occasions, both in pre-Christian and post-missionization times (see Bott, 1982, for a detailed history of the high ranking chiefs and the creation of titles from the splitting of higher titles' duties). Now, the monarch's authority derives from a code of laws and the Christian God; nevertheless, the core symbolizations remain: it is a sign of high rank to receive respect and deference and to be able to show *'ofa*. As in classic, pre-Christian Tonga, rank and ultimate authority comes from a god. Thus, in general, the paramount is held up as an authoritative secular and spiritual leader, who may take what ever s/he wishes, but is loved and revered most, when they do not do so. So the people give their loyalty, deference, obedience, and tribute as good commoners should, and the monarch returns certain benefits, as a good chief should⁴⁶.

'Health' and the Invention of 'Monarch': The Four Tupous

The introduction of a *Pālangi* notion of 'health' with its emphasis on non-infirmity, as well as the naturalized, atomized and normalized body, and the interpolation of these ideas into traditional Tongan ideals of appropriate social practice, clearly began with the early missionaries. But European missionaries were not the first foreigners to have influence in Tonga. Prior to the

⁴⁶ As the ultimate chief, the paramount Father and the source of all chiefliness, the Christian God expects and can be expected to give out, the same.

European contacts, Tongans had long been exposed to other societies' ideas and practices. They had sustained extensive trading, tribute and affinal contacts with residents of the Fiji and Samoa Islands (Kaepler 1978, Gunson 1990, Kirch 1984), Wallis and Futuna, and even the distant Polynesian outlier of Anuta, which lies far to the west of Tonga, near Tikopia. There, oral histories tell of Tongan invaders being driven off (Feinberg 1989). In some parts of Tonga, Christian converts from Tahiti and Fiji taught about Christianity in 1826 (Urbanowicz 1976, see also Lātūkefu 1969 and 1974:60), even converting whole communities before the arrival of the European missionaries (Maywald 1990:128). Sporadic contacts with Europeans had begun in 1616⁴⁷, but more concentrated introduction of European ideas –on behaviour, authority, diet, child rearing, education, dress, work, spousal roles, religion, production, marketing, commodification, as well as medicine and health– date from the first beachcombers, captives and European missionaries who dwelt in Tonga, beginning in 1797, approximately (Lātūkefu 1974:25, see also Gailey 1987, Martin [1817] 1991, Maywald 1990, Campbell 1992).

The first Christian mission was attempted by the London Missionary Society in 1797 (Lātūkefu 1974:2). Their attempt was resisted by both local Tongans and the few European beachcombers who warned of radical changes in lifestyle, should Christianity be adopted (Martin [1817] 1991, Orange 1840). This first wave of missionaries fled in fear for their lives soon after their foreign commodities ran out (Lātūkefu 1974:27-28). A second attempt, begun by the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1822, was marginally more effective, and set the ground for the eventual

⁴⁷ Dutch explorers Schouten and LeMaire were the first Europeans to record contact with Tongans, near Tafahi and Niuaotupapu, the two northernmost islands of the Tonga group. They report having shot at least one man. Tasman visited 'Eua and Tongatapu in 1643. Cook visited twice, in 1773-74 and 1777. The best known accounts of the early sojourners are those of George Vason, a missionary (Orange 1840) with the first expedition and William Mariner, captured in 1806 (Martin [1817] 1991). Both men were adopted into the social milieu. Martin ([1817] 1991), Lātūkefu (1974), Bott (with Tavi 1982) and Gailey (1987) provide details of the early contact period.

successful conversion of Tongans to mostly Methodist and later, Roman Catholic, denominations of Christianity.

Tupou I: Tāufa'āhau

The rising military leader of the early mission period was a young warrior named Tāufa'āhau. While intrigued by the missionaries and their message, he proved very successful in managing them, even as they tried to convert and then manage him. He eventually accepted baptism in 1831, and took as his Christian name "King George" (Campbell 1992:64). He went on to subjugate and convert his home region of Ha'apai, then the entire Tonga group, eventually becoming the king he had named himself to be⁴⁸. Under King George's hand, the trans-island chiefly system of authority, based as it was in kinship and rivalry for titles ranked in relationship to the sky-dwelling ancestor god, became transformed into a unified, pro-Christian state based on 'kingship' (Gailey 1987).

Besides biblical teachings, the missions' key imports were writing, material goods (including weapons) and infectious diseases. The imported diseases affected the populace as much as did their proselytization and political machinations with King George (Lātūkefu 1974:57). Even though their medical skills were mostly limited to prayer and purging through blood letting, the early missionaries were sources of treatments and products unusual to Tongans (Shineburg 1978). They were approached for these 'goods' (Lātūkefu 1974:58, Shineburg 1978), just as they were for their other exotic and hard to find commodities (Orange 1840, Lātūkefu 1974, Shineburg 1978, Gailey 1987).

⁴⁸ When he achieved the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu, Tāufa'āhau kept his baptised name of King George, and took the previous title holders name, Tupou, as his surname. Lātūkefu (1974), Marcus (1980), Bott (with Tavi1982), James (1988) and Campbell (1992) provide more more detailed descriptions and analyses pertaining to the emergence of the modern Tongan state.

In this, Tongans were probably acting as they did towards any foreigners. It was certainly not the only time that they shared medical treatments and concerns with others: Samoans and Fijians are recorded as admiring Tongans' skill with surgery, massage and manipulation of bones, but in Tonga, Fijians were credited with better skills at herbal medicines (Martin [1817] 1991). From the missionaries point of view however, the value of medicines went beyond alleviation of suffering, as Nathaniel Turner, one of the second wave of missionaries, described in a letter of May 6 1831:

...our success in this respect has been the means of bringing many over to our cause from different parts of the island. When a cure has been wrought, the individual has gone home to his friends, and they all beholding what has been done for him, the whole family, and, in some instances, families have come over to live at Nuku'alofa, and attend to religious instruction (cited in Lātūkefu 1974:58).

Despite the attractions of medicines, writing, weapons and exotic material goods, the early decades of successful conversion to Christianity were highly dependent upon a chief's personal potency, and the loyalty of a chief's *kāinga* and followers (Lātūkefu 1974:59-60 and 157-158). King George was particularly effective as a proselytizer, because of his skills as a chief: a warrior, an orator, an athlete, a consummate strategist, and a manipulator of people and ideas, he was highly significant to both the Christian mission, and the future of Tonga. Taking advice and examples from various British and Australian missionaries⁴⁹, and seeing the annexation of other Polynesian societies, King George remodelled the political system, the systems of land tenure, inheritance, and hierarchical governance. He introduced taxation, drafted the first legal codes and established an internationally recognized constitution. King George's skills were crucial to preserving Tonga from outright colonization.

⁴⁹ Shirley Baker, in particular was a pivotal figure. As a missionary with British and then Australian roots, he was able to counsel King George in legal and policy decisions, and to support the King in keeping 'Tonga for Tongans' against pro-colonialist forces (Campbell 1992:79-92, see also Rutherford 1971 for more details on Shirley Baker).

King George was primarily a secular (if charismatic) leader who left the provision of medical services to the Methodist and Roman Catholic missions. They were quite competitive in their use of medical services, because of the effectiveness of medicines in attracting recruits and ensuring conversions⁵⁰. However, both taught that Christian behaviour was important to pleasing God, and that all things come from God. Thus, illness and cure were thought to relate to the power of a god (Lātūkefu 1974:58), in much the same way as in pre-conversion epistemology, afflictions and cures were attributed to social demeanours or actions (ie: *habitus*) and the power of familial gods (see Martin [1817] 1991:204-208). Furthermore, while King George promoted the Christian faith, he was prevented by missionary intervention from claiming the status of a sacred leader, such as the Tu'i Tonga could claim on the basis of his personal genealogy. As a result, King George focussed on the secular, political and military aspects of rule, while the missionaries remained the intermediaries with the Christian god. The ramifications of this arrangement during George's reign were that, with the mission dispensary system, the use of medicines in the recruitment and retention process and the lack of any other sacred authority figures, medical efficacy and Christian practice were conflated.

Tupou II: Siaosi Tāufa'āhau

The notion of a sacred earthly and chiefly Tongan leadership did not become obviated in the adoption of Christianity in King George's reign. He was succeeded upon his death by a great-

⁵⁰ In the (sometimes bitter) competition for converts which took place, it is tempting to read the European's denominational ideologies and ethnic rivalries in the early medical practices. As their medicines became popular, and as they were recognized as tools for recruitment, the English speaking Methodists set up specific dispensing times, and charged a small dispensing fee. The French speaking Roman Catholic missionaries, who arrived in 1842, also recognized the strategic value of medicines. They dispensed their medicines free of charge, at any time, and followed the medicine with a house call for immediate prayer, hoping to 'capture' new recruits. The Methodists, hoping to promote respect for their time and the product, maintained a dispensing schedule (similar to the notion of sacred, labour-free Sundays) as well as the fees required to cover their own expenses. They complained bitterly at the Catholics' ability to encroach on their turf because of what they saw as greater financial resources (Lātūkefu 1974:158).

grandson, Tupou II, who took the throne in 1893. There had been some debate over the line of succession, partly because King George outlived his children, partly also because the monarchy was still a relatively new invention, and not all chiefs agreed with the institution. This second king was secure in his position at first, because, from his mother, he had very high personal rank (Campbell 1992:108). But Tupou II soon fell into political trouble. Though embodying very high rank, he was not a descendent of the Tu'i Tonga. This meant that some chiefly families saw him as an inferior candidate for paramount leader, a rival, even an enemy. He also was not a particularly gifted ruler or administrator. There were serious, public confrontations over his lavish personal spending and inability to prevent foreign merchants, ex-patriots and colonialist sympathizers from manipulating national policies. As a result, Tupou II very nearly saw Tonga annexed by Britain ⁵¹ (Campbell 1992: 114-115), a crisis that ended with the compromise of Tonga accepting Protectorate status under a Treaty of Friendship with Britain.

Over the course of his reign however, Tupou II was able to re-invent himself as both the Tu'i Kanokupolu (his personal title), and also as a sacred paramount chief and head of state. He did this in two ways: 1] through genealogically strategic alliances, including his marriage to a woman who, while politically less powerfully backed, was a descendent of the Tu'i Tonga ⁵² and therefore genealogically superior; 2] through demonstrations of state and chiefly *ʻofa*, including initiating a road system, building two hospitals and, quite significantly, a series of rainwater cisterns. Officially,

⁵¹ Every other group in the Pacific “had come under the control of a European power” by the end of the nineteenth century (Wood 1943:62), and the non-annexation is due as much to Britain’s desire *not* to annex, as Tupou II’s ability to avoid it.

⁵² See Campbell (1992: 107-125) and Wood Ellem (1981, 1987) for a discussion of Tupou II’s rationale for choosing Lavinia rather than ‘Ofakivava’u as his bride. In discussing Tupou II’s daughter and successor Queen Sālote’s, and her wide knowledge of the genealogies and tradition, Wood Ellem (1981:129) notes in passing that it was Sālote’s father who ensured her expertise.

to the international audience, these public works were introduced as a means of improving hygiene and protecting the people during droughts (Campbell 1992:116-117). However, to a Tongan audience, Tupou II's institution of public facilities must have been highly appropriate demonstrations of chiefly *'ofa*. Water catchment in particular associated him with the actions of the sky-god progenitor of all Tongans, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a.

In linking the sacred blessings of rainwater (a sky/God's product) with other public works programs derived from the king/state, and by creating a political alliance through marriage which consolidated his power and made his children descendants of the sacred Tu'i Tonga line, Tupou II extended the analogy from the traditional notions of sacred and secular paramountcy to include that of the modern monarch. He expanded the trope of secular 'king' with the symbols of the sacred chief, previously only available to members of the Tu'i Tonga's line.

Tupou II's strategies popularized him with the people, solidified the control of the Tu'i Kanokupolu line as adequately high in rank and perpetuated their right as holders of the monarchy, despite his personal administrative inadequacies. Where his great-grandfather's time saw the conflation of medical efficacy, church participation and 'health', Tupou II's reign saw a conflation, or condensing of the symbols of church, 'public health services' and head of state. So the tropes of *'ofa* and power –both traditional Tongan and contemporary political notions– were condensed into the person and position of the monarch, as highest chief. In other words, the trope of 'the highest chief' expanded, to include the powers and rights of a monarch.

Tupou III: Queen Sālote

The third monarch, Queen Sālote Tupou III, came into her position at a very young age.

Unlike her father Tupou II, Sālote's succession to the throne in 1918 was highly contested, mostly on the basis of her sex than her genealogy. Unlike her father again, she was a very skilled leader, of the calibre of her great-great-grandfather, King George. Indeed, like King George, Sālote is sometimes referred to as "Lo'au", the name signifying a personage who changes the lives of Tongans forever (Bott with Tavi 1982:92-96; Biersack 1991; See also Gifford 1929:131). Sālote reigned from 1918-1965, during some traumatic and far-reaching changes in Tongan society, but she is remembered as a strong proponent of secondary and tertiary education, and as an expert in and staunchly conservative protector of Tongan traditions and cultural artifacts (Wood and Wood Ellem 1977, Wood Ellem 1987).

The appellation "Lo'au" for Queen Sālote is apt: she revised the Land Act (from 1924-27), established women's right to vote in 1951, and renegotiated the Treaty of Friendship with Britain in 1958, setting the parameters for the eventual dissolution of Tonga's Protectorate status (see Campbell, 1992:125-187 for further details of Queen Sālote's illustrious reign)⁵³. She also implemented educational and medical services reforms. After the world influenza epidemic of 1918-19⁵⁴, Sālote established a Department of Health⁵⁵. This was followed with wireless radio stations, set up between 1919 and 1925 and mostly used to broadcast government sanctioned warnings and public health messages. The radio has had, as I discuss below, a significant effect on notions of 'health', and has been unparalleled in the promotion of conventions for social practice, both

⁵³ Formal independence was peacefully achieved in 1970, as previously negotiated by Sālote.

⁵⁴ Eight percent of the population (1800 people) died in Tonga during that epidemic. It was not the first influenza-related tragedy experienced in Tonga: see McGrath (1993:93), Campbell (1992:95) and John Williams (1837). A measles epidemic in 1893 killed over a thousand people (Campbell 1992:109).

⁵⁵ The only documentation I have seen of this department is in English. Thus the establishment of a department does not necessarily indicate the original introduction of the term "*mo'ui lelei*", and thus a sure date for the origin of the neologism.

traditional and biomedical in basis.

In 1929, a school for training medical assistants, called “health officers” (Wood 1943:64, see also Parsons 1985:106), was established with funding assistance from the American philanthropic institution, the Rockefeller Foundation. The Foundation had been engaged in Tonga in an anti-hookworm campaign since 1924 (Wood and Wood Ellem, 1977:200). Clearly though, their work was as much about corporate interest, government agendas and cultural production (Cartwright and Goldfarb 1994:171) as it was philanthropic. Rockefeller had strong personal, economic and political ties to the U.S. government. He had a history of proposing public health philanthropy as a strategy of foreign relations and American propaganda, especially as a means of promoting American ideologies and preventing a German, especially Nazi, presence among America’s neighbours and potential allies (Cartwright and Goldfarb 1994 and Burton-Caravajal 1994 demonstrate this clearly for South America).

While Tonga had trade treaties with Germany prior to the first world war (and familial ties too), and these connections persist (Marcus 1993), the American and British influence has predominated, especially with the Treaty of Friendship (which was also intended, in part, to remove Tonga from a potential German sphere of influence). Tonga was twice a short-lived staging ground for the Pacific theatre during both world wars. These events not only disrupted the trade relations with Germany, but also brought large numbers of English-speaking military personnel into contact with a generation of people who, until then, had very little to do with outsiders (Campbell 1992). Experts came before, but mostly during and after the wars and included the British and New Zealand military, the Rockefeller Foundation, the United States Peace Corps and the WHO. What this meant was that Queen Sālote’s consultants in political, educational and medical endeavours, were generally English-speaking. This presented a challenge to the nation’s sense of identity, and one

which will re-emerge later in the cross-language semantics of 'health' and *mo'ui lelei*.

Juggling foreign influences and competing interests were not the queen's only challenge. As queen, Sālote persistently promoted a view of herself and her Privy Council as the state and spiritual leadership embodied. In her view, Parliament was a subordinate body required only to back up the government –specifically, the monarch (Campbell 1992:184). In this, she was claiming to herself some of the authority of sacred and secular paramount, modelled upon the traditional relations between *'eiki* and *tu'a*. As describe above, as an *'eiki* person, a chief holds all authority while those of relatively lower rank owe deference, respect and obedience; just as the pre-Christian chiefs demonstrated their genealogic and therefore political inferiority to the Tu'i Tonga with gifts of wealth items and first fruits, so Sālote tried to instill in her parliamentarians, the populace and opposing chiefs, her right to political superiority. Her position was legitimized with genealogies, traditional kinship obligations, a politically savvy marriage, and a strong position as the patron [but not head] of the church supported by King George. It was said that she was a great chief, that she had inherited the character of her great-great grandfather, her father's intimate knowledge of the people and the piety of her mother (Wood and Wood Ellem 1977:191-192). Moreover, her church activities gave her detailed knowledge of her subjects, made her more publicly evident to them, and she was able to “associate her constitutional authority with spiritual dignity” (Campbell 1992:131).

However, what has been characterized as the “problem of divided churches” (Wood and Wood Ellem 1977: 192) threatened Sālote's position. Tongan churches were, and still are, extensions of *kāinga* [kindred] and political relations, and Sālote found herself in a situation similar to her father's before her. Her family's church split, and the acrimonious debate which occasioned it, threatened the merging of secular and spiritual sovereignty that Sālote's father had begun to forge for

the Tu'i Kanokupolu dynasty⁵⁶. However, true to her appellation as “Lo'au”, Sālote emerged from the dispute as actual, and not just figurative, head of the re-unified Wesleyan Church. Her personal and formal position now collapsed into one figure, the position of queen, head of the dominant Christian denomination, and holder of the title Tu'i Kanokupolu; the latter, by now, was clearly the ultimate in chiefly authority and rank.

In many ways, Queen Sālote modelled herself upon the classical paramount chief, as epitomized by the then mythic ideal of the sacred Tu'i Tonga⁵⁷ and his ritually more significant sister, the Tu'i Tonga Fefine (Wood Ellem 1987). By championing the value of Tongan culture and traditional practices, and by using the traditional power of her sisterly as well as chiefly position (Wood Ellem 1987), Sālote was able to “facilitate the influence of government into all aspects of life” (Campbell 1992:186). The sister's and the Tu'i Tonga Fefine's role was one she had studied as a young woman with her tutor Losaline Fatefehi, the childless granddaughter of the last Tu'i Tonga (Wood Ellem 1981:129).

Sālote was able to use her secular and spiritual authority to great political ends, but also to encourage educational reforms (Campbell 1992:132), such as medical training for Tongans. Of specific relevance here, is her legacy of educational bursaries for overseas education, the public radio system, the Department Of Health, socialized [free] medical services and a clear construct of Tongan traditions. Also highly significant is the way she contributed to the re-invention of the trope of the paramount ruler. She expanded the symbols of queen, sacred elder sister and mother to

⁵⁶ Her father's marriage to Lavinia had precipitated a similar split in the then Wesleyan church before this, an event which allowed for the establishment of the Church of England (Anglican).

⁵⁷ The actual title of Tu'i Tonga had been eliminated by King George, but continued to carry a mystique. There were also, of course a number of descendants of the line who continued to think of themselves as being *'iki* [chiefs].

include cultural, legal and spiritual authority and condensed them all into one trope: the notion of chief and monarch. More than any previous monarch, Sālote embodied and condensed into one person, secular and sacred tropes of power and authority, morality and spirituality. The distinct titles of Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Tonga Fefine and Hau [secular, military leader] remained as labels, replete with historical value, but their separate meanings were obviated, collapsed into the person of the monarch.

Tupou IV: 'Health' In Contemporary Perspective

This brings the history of 'health' and chiefly stratagems for the consolidation of dynastic power, to the present. Upon her death in 1965, Queen Sālote was succeeded by her eldest son, the current monarch, King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV. Prior to his mother's death, Tāufa'āhau attended college overseas, and then served in the Tongan Parliament as Minister of Education, then Minister of Health. He held positions ostensibly by virtue of his claim to be the first chiefly Tongan to achieve an undergraduate degree, but also undoubtedly, as training in governance.

From his first year as king, and at a time when the post WWII boom in 'modernization' and aid for 'developing nations' was predominant on the international agenda, and up to the present, His Majesty has intentionally sought *Pālangi* advice, funding and investment for Tongan projects (Campbell 1992, Marcus 1990, 1993). Thus, the influence of foreigner experts, in particular English speaking *Pālangi*, that began in his mother's time, has become long standing and well-entrenched in contemporary government and public service, although contemporary Tongans also travel overseas themselves, in search of new, or what are perceived to be better, options for education and medical treatment.

Along with calls for increased agricultural productivity, national self-sufficiency,, international linkages (especially re: foreign aid) and a prioritization of a liberal arts and professional education, His Majesty's government has worked to expand the nation's infrastructure. Roads, wharfs, public buildings and other physical infrastructure projects, begun in the reign of Tupou II, remain high priority. This push for modernization has included development of a medical system structured around, and consistently focussed on, the practices and priorities identified by international biomedical health professionals. In many senses, the Tongan professional medical system fits Foucault's (1972) notion of a discursive formation ⁵⁸, complete with a community of imported and expert professionals who interact verbally and practically, and a distinct domain of responsibility which includes issues of regulation, nutrition, education, inoculation, population control, hygiene, disease treatment and prevention and a physical infrastructure.

Medically oriented physical infrastructure projects established in Tupou IV's reign have included the building of 14 health centres, 33 clinics, and 2 hospitals. Two other hospitals, the oldest in the kingdom, have been refurbished (Kingdom of Tonga 1991:269). There are now a total of four small hospitals in the kingdom, one for each geographic region. These large infrastructural programs are generally carried out under the direction of, or with funding from, bilateral aid donors and the United Nations or their associated agencies.

These same experts offer advice and funding for educational programming too. There is a WHO office in Nuku'alofa, and numerous international experts offer advice on topics such as health professions legislation (Holt 1991), and public health nursing training (Tenn 1991).

In terms of education, gifted Tongan students are offered scholarships for medical schools in

⁵⁸ A field of statements and the practices used to produce, appropriate, and communicate these statements (Foucault 1972).

New Zealand, California and Australia. However, there have been Tongan medical assistants for decades: The Central Medical School established in Fiji in 1929 (Wood 1943:64, see also Parsons 1985:106) under Queen Sālote's reign, trained Health Officers who were supposed to offer basic medical aid in the more remote regions of the Kingdom (areas such as Ha'apai). The school is located in Fiji, but is funded in part by and for the various small Pacific nations, including the Kingdom of Tonga. It began to receive WHO funding for training in 1979. Part of this adoption of Western-style training has been the establishment of several generations of Tongan physicians who have been, and continue to be, trained to be among other things, contemptuous of indigenous epistemologies and therapies, and to emphasize compliance as the key to successful illness-interactions.

A nursing school was established in Tonga in 1953 (McGrath 1993:103), and continues to enroll and train Tongan nurses (see Figure Three for enrollment details). All communities are supposed to be able to access a nurse.

Following the WHO's conference on traditional medicine (WHO 1978), traditional midwives [*ma'uli*] have been strongly encouraged to attend birth attendant training sessions. According to Lesieli Posima, the *ma'uli* practising on Kauvai, the emphasis of the sessions is on potential obstetrical and hygiene problems. Of particular concern were problems stemming from the practice of the midwife in the home. The trainers' goal, she said, was to convince the *ma'uli* that women were better off having their babies in hospital. In a recent article, Bloomfield and Loytvedt (1995) argue that the codification and regimentation of Tongan *ma'uli* 'traditional birth knowledge' and practice has led to their public delegitimation and the creation of more authority and employment for public health personnel. In part this is done through vilification of the birth place,

by describing the home as being dirtier than the hospital. Bloomfield's and Loytvedt's findings confirm Lesieli's individual perception. (In my experience however, the hospital was not any 'cleaner' than many people's homes). Bloomfield and Loytvedt (1995) add that through professionalisation, the birth process is being separated from kinship-based interactions: rather than a member of one's *kāinga* [kindred] a professional (nurse and or physician) attends a birth. Again, Lesieli's experience seems typical of other Tongan midwives. The women whom Lesieli has midwifed are almost entirely members of her *kāinga*, her *kāinga lotu* (Christian 'family': Lesieli is Mormon) or affines of her extended family. As she related them to me, Lesieli's experiences with the local nurse and their attempts to 'work together', clearly substantiate Bloomfield's and Loytvedt's findings: Lesieli felt that the local professional nurse was trying to change and control her practice and unnecessarily send pregnant women to the hospital in Pangai. Lesieli was proud of her skills, and of the times when she breathed life into a still-born infant. For her part, the nurse felt frustrated that Lesieli was unwilling to be cooperative, and was engaging in what she had been taught to think were unnecessarily risky birth-related practices.

In addition to WHO-influenced public health teaching initiatives, and overseas trained indigenous Tongan practitioners, a variety of guest and volunteer practitioners including physician and nurse missionaries, foreign aid workers, the South Pacific Alliance for Family Planning and the Red Cross, are now operant in Tonga. The government-provided medical services are free, but the private clinics charge nominal fees which are considered to be within the capabilities of many families.

Other Ministries in the civil service, such as the (then) Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries [MAFF], and the Central Planning Department have extension officers whose duties verge

on 'health' promotion, mostly through teaching about hygiene and diet. These departments operate with combinations of employees and overseas volunteers from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States.

The charts in **Figure 3: VARIETIES OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN TONGA** describes the medical and health promotion personnel on the government payroll, or in training, either in Tonga or overseas, in 1990 (Govt. of Tonga 1991:6-8) . As the description in **Figure 3** shows, biomedical health infrastructure in Tonga clearly follows a western modernization model, with doctors, nurses, and dentists, etc.

In her discussion of attitudes towards dying and death in Tonga, McGrath (1993:24) notes that "a close association of church and healing continues". McGrath is referring to the missionary sponsored medical clinics and the Catholic nuns active in contemporary nursing and clinic work. I would add to McGrath's point.

Any association drawn between medicine and the church must recognize that the churches have always been institutions which appealed to Tongans for social, political and ultimately therefore, kinship-based reasons: the early mass conversions were, as I have noted, demonstrations of both the solidarity of a chief and his *kāinga* [kindred], and the conventional association of high rank and personal capability with spiritual leadership. The most obvious example is that of Tāufa'āhau/King George, but when the last Tu'i Tonga, Laufilitonga, eventually converted to Roman Catholicism in 1848, his *kāinga* immediately did so too. When he became aware that the Europeans offered an important source of power that was not going to go away, and when he realized that Roman Catholicism was not the same form of Christianity to which his enemy Tāufa'āhau/King George had converted, Laufilitonga chose Catholicism as the denomination of

Christianity to adopt; political rationales were clearly at work in his motivation for conversion (Lātūkefu 1974:150).

More recent conversions to new or different denominations, as well as ongoing church participation have consistently been recognized as strategies for personal and kin-group optimization (Decktor Korn 1978, T. Gordon 1988, Olsen 1993). The church remains a major forum for the expression of social and political relations, aside from any and all constructs of faith or religiosity (Olsen 1993). Insofar as the church is another forum for *kāinga*-style relationships, the social, interactive aspect of church participation must be considered part of any construction of healing and *mo'ui lelei*⁵⁹.

A second and equal point to consider is the lesson the state's dynastic line of rulers has learned from the situation of the early missionaries. In the early days, as described earlier, the protestant missionaries charged nominal fees for their services, and the Catholics did not, leading to competition for loyal converts on the basis of medical services. The value of medical services for obtaining and retaining loyalty has not been disregarded by the Tu'i Kanokupolu dynasty (who are Methodists): medical interventions, like other gifts of *'ofa*, are necessary chiefly obligations to their followers, and the royal chiefs, from Tupou II through Queen Sālote to the current King Tupou IV, each a paramount chief as well as the state embodied, provide medical services free of charge.

Before and after missionization, people were pluralistic and optative in their choice of medical treatment, whether choosing from one god or another, a Methodist, a Tongan, a Catholic, a Fijian, and so forth. This too, is perpetuated in more recent and contemporary practices in which

⁵⁹ In pre-Christian Tonga, some illness was interpreted as a sign of the gods' disfavor, which resulted from a breach of social practice on the part of a family [*kāinga*] member (Martin [1817] 1991:204-217). The emphasis on appropriate social practice as a key to absence of illness persists.

missionaries and churches offer a range of medical services, and medical pluralism persists (Bloomfield, 1986, Parsons 1981, 1985, McGrath 1993). While on the one hand, government is happy to have medical services offered at the expense of outside agencies, on the other hand, those services should not have a higher profile than the ones offered through the auspices of the government, and as gifts of *'ofa* from the ruling dynasty: the result is that the close association of church and healing that McGrath (1993) noted, can be seen to indicate, not just a relationship between the supernatural and healing, but an expanded, politically significant trope, the latest twist of conflated symbols in the contemporary Tongan setting: the association of social group [*kāinga*] relations, as embedded in church denomination, with medical efficacy, state sponsored 'health' promotion and Christian practice.

Certainly, the strategy adopted by past royals in their invention of the monarchy, continues to be part of the current monarch's agenda. Like his predecessors, His Majesty King Tupou IV and his family have adopted the role of chiefly paramounts. Formally, they are like the highest ranking chiefs of old, who demand obedience [*talangofua*], and expect respect [*faka'apa'apa*], but maintain popular loyalty principally through acts, like gifting, which are mostly affective. I have describe some of the means whereby the three previous Tupou royals were able to conflate chiefly and powerful symbols with spiritual and secular authority. Bott (1972:71) gives a similar description for how chiefs retained their followers in the early contact period.

That the current monarchy continues to use biomedical health concerns as demonstrations of chiefly *'ofa* and mediums of state-justification is evident in an example from a Red Cross Aid Tour conducted by Queen Mata'aho, wife of Tupou IV. During the drought of 1992, Her Majesty toured to all the small islands in Ha'apai, including Kauvai. Her visit had been announced on the

radio as a tour of *'ofa* for the frail and sick suffering from the loss of crops and income. There was great excitement in Maka Fele'unga, and many preparations made to welcome Her Majesty. The entire village was tidied up: grass swept, refuse burned, windows washed, Churches and the school were decorated with palm fronds and the best *fala*, *fihu* and *kie tonga* (all prestigious textiles or *'koloa*). My neighbour told me that the queen would go door to door, bringing gifts to the sick and elderly.

Once her ship arrived offshore, it was Her Majesty's attendants however, who came ashore with fifty, one-kilogram bags each of sugar, rice and flour, and some articles of used clothing. The 'food' and clothes were laid out in 50 orderly sets, counted by the attendants and the town officer. One 'gift' was dispensed to every household on Kauvai. The portions were referred to as people's *'inasi*, the same term used for the pre-Christian Tu'i Tonga's annual collection and redistribution of tribute. When it became clear that Her Majesty was not going to come ashore, an entourage including several *māiāpule* [hereditary chiefly attendants], the town officer, the Wesleyan minister and the local ethnographers took our village's offering out to Her Majesty where she waited on her boat. It was presented with speeches of thanks and prayers.

The large roasted pig, and several baskets of root crops and tinned fish that comprised the villagers' offering represented a net loss of food that was more nutritious and more prestigious than Her Majesty's gifts of rice, flour and sugar. This nutritional loss at a time when crops and cash were in very short supply. The sale of the pig for instance, could have brought in approximately T\$100.00, enough to feed a family for a month and pay for a trip to Vava'u to collect plant cuttings for re-planting when the rains came. It was the equivalent of school fees for two children. By contrast, 1 kg. of flour plus 1 kg. of rice would feed one family for 1 day. But rather than

grumbling about the unfair trade-off, the queen's visit was hailed as one of *'ofa*, in which true Tongan *'ulunganga fakatonga* [Tongan culture] was displayed. The visit perpetuated the well-established stratagem of associating traditional and spiritual authority, chiefly *'ofa* and the people's *mo'ui lelei*, with the figure of the sovereign ⁶⁰.

Even while promoting modernization, Tupou IV has, until now, managed to perpetuate the traditional, now-conventional link between biomedical health, Polynesian tradition and the sacred and spiritual authority of the monarchy. His reign has even seen the role expand to include security and nationalist issues as demonstrated in the contemporary national development objectives:

Enhance the quality of life by raising health standards, maintaining national security and continuing to promote the cultural heritage of the Kingdom (Kingdom of Tonga 1991:1)

In the late 1990's however, Tupou IV finds himself in a situation much like his grandfather, Tupou II, where complaints from the populace threaten to discredit the dynasty. With the increase in modernization has come pressure for more income at the national level, with few avenues for employment. Tonga's natural resources and key exports have been, and continue to be, agricultural, marine and human. With a finite land base, but rises in both population and numbers of individual's with overseas experiences⁶¹, has come an increase in demands for governmental accountability (Campbell 1995). Some have begun to criticise those nobles whom His Majesty has selected as Parliamentary Ministers (most are chiefs, a few have been highly educated commoners). This was generally understood to be 'one step short' of direct criticism of the king himself, a very un-

⁶⁰ That sovereignty has become a kind of 'natural resource, and been used to great advantage with outside investors, as Marcus has recently argued (1993).

⁶¹ The vast majority of these experiences have taken place in nations with liberal democratic and post-colonialist political systems: Australia, New Zealand, United States.

traditional thing to do: As described earlier, and as documented by Bott (1972:71), Tongans are more likely to absent themselves and their support of a particular chief, rather than directly or publically confront that person's inabilities.

The ability of the present king to represent himself as both spiritual and authoritative leader, and to show *'ofa* may become more difficult: the period of rapid modernisation was based in a large part on the willingness of international agencies and bilateral donors to invest in the Tongan social and physical infrastructure, and on remittances from emigrants working overseas⁶². His Majesty and the civil service seem to be trying to manage a transition from an essentially agricultural to a tourist and service-based economy, but the transition is slow, and the world-wide recession of the early 1990's has taken its toll on both the infrastructure of past royals' demonstrations of *'ofa*, and the people's perceptions of their chiefly-sponsored services.

In Ha'apai, gossip and complaints about incompetent medical staff was far more frequent than reports of successful visits to the hospital⁶³, or unsuccessful traditional treatments [*faito'o fakatonga*]. Partly, to be sure, a different standard of expectation is applied to physicians than to neighbours or kin who know particular medicines and treatments. It is also true, however, that inadequate supplies, preparation and experience contribute to negligent and incompetent services. At the time of my field stay, hospital administrators were publicly complaining about inadequate

⁶² Remittances are motivated by a sense of *'ofa* and *fatongia* (see Evans 1996, Brown 1998).

⁶³ One of the medical directors of the local hospital was referred to as "Dr. Panatolo" because his most frequent solution for complaints was to prescribe Panadol (a brand name for acetaminophen). Stories of women or newborns dying in the immediate post-partum were particularly rapid to circulate. Blame was usually attached to the physician, either for incompetence, or for ignoring a nurse's call to return to the hospital.

infrastructural, pharmaceutical and hygienic supplies, as well as a shortage of competent staff⁶⁴.

Provision of medical and dental services in Ha'apai as well as Vava'u consistently depends upon overseas volunteers seeking either international development or Christian missionary experiences, and on foreign donations. The only incubator at Niu'ui hospital in Pangai, for instance, was donated by a crew of archaeology students from Simon Fraser University (Canada) in 1992⁶⁵. Military training exercises conducted in 1991 and 1992 by the United States Marines were anticipated by the Chief medical officers at Vaiola and Niu'ui hospitals respectively as a source of (outdated) hospital provisions. I witnessed American and Tongan soldiers carrying boxes of drugs, antiseptics and bandaging at the end of their manoeuvres, while the attending U.S. surgeon did rounds with the Tongan staff. In another incident I witnessed, a 10 year old girl was given an inappropriate spinal (epidural) anaesthetic prior to having a wound in her calf sutured. The attending physician's rationale was that he wanted to save his dwindling supplies of local anaesthetic. Thus, while an impressive medical infrastructure was built up over the last three decades, and biomedical health and other public services have figured as royal *'ofa*, it may be that the expansion of the trope of the contemporary monarch who indexes state, chieflyhood, spirituality, authority and *'ofa* may become increasingly difficult to sustain.

Like medicine and health practices, contemporary Tongan cultural practice [*anga fakatonga*] is viewed as standardized and, despite the historical changes in the socio-political system (Lātūkefu 1974, Gailey 1987, Campbell 1992), as entirely traditional (Cowling 1990). The dictates of

⁶⁴ The Tongans working as medical professionals in the Kingdom, are an overworked, underpaid and over-obligated few. Thus, as is common in many developing countries, many study overseas, then decide to work there, either permanently or for several years, rather than setting up permanent residence in Tonga.

⁶⁵ The crew was part of a field school run by David Burley Ph.D., of Simon Fraser University. He organized the incubator drive after learning of some babies' deaths at Niu'ui Hospital in the previous season.

conventional medical practice and belief do not always resonate with *anga fakatonga*. Yet both are similar, in that they are directions for appropriate social interaction. On Kauvai, people are trying to make meaning from these two sometimes incongruous conventions for social practice. Through juxtaposition to and metonymic association with the constellation of traditional conventions subsumed within the term *anga fakatonga*, the notion of biomedical health [*mo'ui lelei*] is being expanded to mean 'living well', according to *anga fakatonga*, the Tongan way.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEW & THE OLD : AMBIGUITIES, INVENTIONS & CONVENTIONS FOR HEALTH

In this chapter, I discuss the relationship between the body of Tongan medical knowledge and practices called *faito'o fakatonga*, everyday Tongan behaviour [*anga fakatonga*] and *mo'ui lelei*. *Faito'o fakatonga* is marked by a contemporary narrative describing it as ancient, pre-contact knowledge and practices which are oriented towards healing. This is a orthodox perspective of tradition, one that does not overtly recognize the fluidity of traditions that has emerged from the invention of culture literature (eg: Toren 1988; Linnekin 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1989; Wagner 1975, 1986; Hanson 1989) This knowledge is described as having been handed down through family lines to the present. The implication is, that this knowledge precedes European contact and constitutes an example of traditional knowledge which has persisted into the present.

In contrast, *mo'ui lelei* is an obvious neologism, a linguistic convenience which figures in a biomedicalized, state-managed agenda of modernization. Where the majority of everyday medicines and healing advice associated with *faito'o fakatonga* comes from mothers and grandmothers (Whistler 1992:42), dispensed as part of *anga fakatonga*, by contrast *mo'ui lelei*, and the practices extolled through health promotion lessons, are understood to be knowledge and practices owned and controlled by state sanctioned professionals and derived from foreigners, especially Europeans. (I describe and discuss the messages of biomedicine in Tonga in chapter seven.)

I argue in this chapter that despite its' construction as indigenous, family-owned forms of

knowledge, *faito'o fakatonga* can neither be ignored in a discussion of invented conventions for 'health', set aside as indigenous belief, nor simply devalued as superstition to be replaced with scientific knowledge. Like the major emphases in medical and health promotion activities, the bulk of "traditional medicine applies to infants and pregnant or postpartum women" (Whistler 1992:42). As such, *faito'o* is an important aspect of mothers lives, and another point of intersection between biomedicine, mothers and *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way]. Rather than focus on the seeming contradiction between 'traditional' and 'introduced' modes for treating illness, I point out in this chapter that both are cultural inventions. They can be characterized by three themes: their representation in literature, which adheres to a model in which 'health' is achieved through combatting illness; their object of interest (mothers and children); and tendency to assimilate the practices of others.

The New Term: *Mo'ui Lelei*

The Tongan language can be described as a variety of morphemes which are compounded to create meanings. For example, the morpheme *mo'u* denotes something which is long term or perpetual, as in *mo'ua*, a debt, and *mo'ui*, alive, living, life. It is normal for skilled speakers to creatively invent 'new' words, by combining these morphemes in innovative ways, or, by 'turning' the meaning of a term: thus expanding the scope of a linguistic sign, creating that which Wagner referred to as a trope⁶⁶. Neologism creation is a rhetorical skill esteemed at occasions such as feasts or

⁶⁶ Here are other examples of neologisms: some of our *kaunga'api* [neighbours] began to refer to us as *fāмили'aki* and *kāinga mafu*, invented terms meaning those who 'acted like family', and 'compatriots of the heart'. Cowling (1993) reports the use of a term from Ha'apai, which I never heard, nor she notes, did another ethnographer working in Ha'apai (Van der Griyp 1993): "*faka'api*" meaning, she says, one who can treat a household as their own, despite being from another 'api [household]. This is contrary to the meaning given in Churchward's dictionary (1959). It may be that Cowling was misunderstanding the usage of the term, but could also be that her friends were offering the same courtesy ours did for us, by (re) inventing a term for the new relationship: the local ethnographer.

sermons, which are deemed to be 'high culture' [*ulunganga fakatonga*] events. As such, the potential for neologism is a normal part of everyday speech. *Mo'ui lelei* is just such a term, a linguistic device created, I argue, specifically for biomedical health promotion activities, and promulgated through state channels.

The date of the introduction of the term *mo'ui lelei* is unclear. However, it most likely falls during Queen Sālote's reign, either from the date of the introduction of the first Department of Health (1919), or after the release of the World Health Organization's definition of 'health' which first appeared in their charter in 1948⁶⁷. Very likely the term did not have much public prominence until after the second World War. I suggest this for two reasons. The term *mo'ui lelei* is absent from the glossary and discussions of medical treatments in Mariner's narrative (Martin [1817] 1991). Second, while Queen Sālote introduced a Department of Health in 1919, *mo'ui lelei* appears only in the English-Tongan section of the dictionary compiled by Churchward (1959) in the late 1950's. The term's absence from the Tongan-English section, suggests that *mo'ui lelei* had not been fully indigenised when Churchward conducted his linguistic research. His excellent and comprehensive dictionary does include the term *lelei*, which he describes as referring in one sense to a lack of illness. Mariner, however, reported *lelei* as referring to "good", as in virtuous, and described it as being equally applicable to persons or implements (Martin [1817] 1991:318). Today, *lelei* refers most commonly to something being good, in the sense of that which is proper, suitable or nice: The term *anga lelei* for instance, means 'well behaved', 'good (moral) character', 'nice mannered', and/or 'polite disposition'.

Given Queen Sālote's position as "the final authority on genealogies, as well as ... every

⁶⁷ The definition includes the key line of "A complete state of physical, mental and social well being, not merely the absence of disease".

other tradition and custom” (Wood Ellem 1987:221), her role as chief political figure, and her position as key mediator between foreign and national forces, the Queen had an unchallenged ability to introduce, promote, expand or reconstruct numerous traditional practices. It is my suspicion that the term “*mo’ui lelei*” is another of Queen Sālote’s contributions to Tongans’ traditions. Other examples where Queen Sālote’s influence and her interpretations have become accepted as traditional Tongan practice include: i] the daily use of the *ta’ovala* waist wrap (Tielhet-Fisk 1992), ii] the revision to the seating order of title holders in the royal kava circle [*taumafa kava*]⁶⁸, iii] the resultant sacred and secular ranking of title holders which was first played out and codified by that *taumafa kava* (thus establishing a new political hierarchy for the country), and iv] re-naming Her Majesty’s royal kava circle discussions “the Lo’au”, after the ancient culture hero who is credited with changing the course of Tongan’s history (Bott with Tavi 1982:92). The timing of the introduction of such a neologism [*mo’ui lelei*] is difficult to determine, and little documentation yet exists on the local history of the Tongan health services to confirm or deny my suspicion. Two possibilities exist: during the early 20th century, when the Department of Health was formally established [post 1918 influenza epidemic] or during the 1950’s when many public health projects were initiated. It is important to note the Queen’s close relationship during the later period with anthropologists Elizabeth Bott and James Spillius. The former was her confidant and the Coordinator of the Tongan Traditions Committee, the latter became a consultant for the WHO in Tonga in 1958 (Bott 1981:7 and 77). Either could have helped (consciously or not) the queen to create a Tonganized version of the WHO definition of health. Considering Her Majesty’s renown at poetic composition, and her skills in bringing Tonga into an international political sphere while retaining a distinctive Tongan

⁶⁸ She first re-established the formal seating, at the installation [*fakanofa*] of the noble Baron Vaea in 1959 (Bott n.d.),

identity, it seems quite likely that she was also involved with the creation and promulgation of the term to be used for adapting *Pālangi* medical information.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the initial conflation of tropes of chiefly authority, medical efficacy and Christian practice that characterized the establishment of the Tupou dynasty and the entré of a medical system to Tonga. These changes took place in relation to a variety of other sociologic, political and historical events, most certainly. Changes such as the rapid economic and infrastructural modernization were affected by and effected the ongoing consolidation of the monarchy as both a modern and traditional, secular and spiritual, chiefly yet royal form of leadership. I suggest this was also the historical context for the introduction of a linguistic convenience –the neologism *mo'ui lelei*. Looking back to those sometimes dramatic social and political changes, they can be seen to be the figurative background for the current invention of a newly emerging trope: a trope which stretches the notion of biomedical health, to include Tongan constructs of 'living well'. This new trope of 'health' is also identified as *mo'ui lelei*, but, I am arguing, is semantically much more than a biomedical definition, or even the relatively sociological definition adopted by the WHO : this notion of health prioritizes those actions appropriate for social relations, as grounded in kinship (see Parsons 1984).

Health As Appropriate Social Relations

Parsons says the following about health in Tonga:

Health as normality (that which is routinely expected) varies considerably from culture to culture....In contemporary Tongan society, the term used to convey the concept of health is *mo'ui lelei*, and it has no meaning for the people beyond its introduced meaning. The notion of managing one's daily activities in order to improve and maintain maximum physical health is regarded as western. In Tonga, a healthy life is the maintenance of harmony in relationships among family and

community members, both living and deceased (1985:90. Emphasis added).

Bloomfield (1986) criticises Parsons for implying that since the term *mo'ui lelei* has been adopted as the gloss for biomedical health, there is no indigenous Tongan concept of health. Bloomfield also voices objections to both the foreign promoted construct, the *Pālangi* notion of 'health', with its emphasis on the body and illness, and to the term tied to the *Pālangi* construct: *mo'ui lelei*. Based on her own professional training, and her research with people in two quite different Tongan communities, Bloomfield contends the term *monitonu* is a better gloss for the indigenous Tongan understanding of health than is the neologism *mo'ui lelei*. *Monitonu*, she argues, refers to "the feeling of 'freedom', of knowing that one has fulfilled all the expected duties to one's family, land and society" (Bloomfield 1986:48). This is a feeling, Bloomfield states, that incorporates the three aspects of Tongan life: body, brain and spirit, and more clearly defines an indigenous concept of health. Tongans view health, she says, as sense of a freedom which results from the completion of one's *fatongia* [customary duty], and the security of knowing one has lived up to expectations as a sister, mother, wife, and daughter or as a brother, father, son and husband.

Bloomfield's argument is convincing: Tongan is her first language, she has extensive experience with health promotion in Tonga⁶⁹, and her research project included comparative interviews and some fieldwork between an isolated community and a relatively more urbane village, located in different parts of the kingdom. Her criticism of Parsons is somewhat misplaced, however. Their analyses of Tongan notions of 'health' are more in accordance than not. Parsons' (1985:90) describes how in Tonga a healthy life is one which maintains harmony in relationships among family and community members. This is comparable to Bloomfield's own description of how to be healthy.

⁶⁹ Bloomfield was the director of the nursing school in Tonga for many years.

She says, "Tongans are very much concerned with health, but their emphasis is on the social aspect of health, particularly the spiritual side of social life" (Bloomfield 1986:48).

Where Bloomfield herself might be criticised is in offering a definition for health which reifies the dominant, official, construct of traditional Tongan culture, and perpetuates the hegemony of the chiefly/commoner ranking system: her definition prioritises the fulfilment of one's *fatongia* [customary duty] to one's family, superiors and God, a debt incurred as a result of being born and/or living in a particular community. As Ortner (1984), Foucault (1977) and Bourdieu (1977) all remind us, power is at the base of many tacit, received, unquestioned ideologies, the 'givens' of social practice, and this is certainly valid for the Tongan case. A key aspect of *anga fakatonga*, the ideology of *fatongia* serves to control the actions of many people, and to prevent those of inferior rank from denying the signs of power and privilege to senior *kāinga* [kindred] members, their chiefs and now, the royals⁷⁰. But rather than a failure of her analysis, I see Bloomfield's use of such a definition, and her suggestion that *monitonu* more accurately represents a traditional Tongan construction of health because it incorporates body, mind and spirit, as a demonstration of the power of cultural tropes, even in the voice of the indigenous, well-educated, academic researcher. While I would reject calling Bloomfield's analysis biased –any more than any researcher's perspective is affected by factors of gender, age, class, ethnicity– it seems clear that in her criticism of Parsons, the cultural tropes of Bloomfield's natal society and culture are evident, including the overt conflation of Christianity and tradition which is central to contemporary *anga fakatonga*.

Cowling (1990b) and Gordon (1990) both discuss the indigenisation of Christianity in

⁷⁰ The conventional construction of *anga fakatonga* is overtly supportive of those in power in Tonga, but, I would argue that insofar as chiefs depend on largely public demonstrations of support from commoners in order to perpetuate the traditionalist aspects of the Tongan state and polity, conventional practice holds its own, powerful, resources for those who are 'commoners'.

Tonga and the way in which Christianity and Tongan traditional practices have come to be mutually constituting. They do not consider medical services in their analyses, but do show that to be Tongan, one must prioritise a social field which includes traditional attitudes and behaviours, co-mingled with faith in and respect for God. Bloomfield's (1986) emphasis on the spiritual side of life is particularly informative, and resonates completely with what I was taught on Kauvai. For instance, when describing their child care responsibilities to me, Kauvai mothers commonly stated that they were "responsible for raising a healthy Tongan child, with God's help".

Representing *Faito'o Fakatonga*

Tongan healing techniques are known as *faito'o fakatonga*. Practitioners are also known as *Faito'o fakatonga*⁷¹. Both have been either the complete or partial focus of a variety of publications (e.g. Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1941, Bloomfield 1986, Collacott 1923, Cowling 1990, Gordon 1996, McKern n.d. circa 1930, Martin [1817] 1991, McGrath 1993, Parsons 1981, 1983, 1984, 1985, Shineberg 1978, Whistler 1991, 1992, Whitcombe 1930). Documented as an ethnomedical system (Bloomfield 1986, Parsons 1985, Whistler 1992), *faito'o fakatonga* has been represented in much the same way that Samoan (Macpherson and Macpherson 1990), Sri Lankan (Nichter 1989), Japanese (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984), Chinese (Klienman 1980) healing practices have been described as culturally specific medical systems or ethnomedicines, interesting because of their difference from modern, scientific medicine (Although it is very true that North American medical practices are culturally constructed too. See for example, Payer 1996, Good and Good, 1993). Within this body of literature, very little biological research has been conducted (see Yuncker [1959] 1971, Weiner

⁷¹ *Faito'o fakatonga* refers to both the body of knowledge, any particular treatment and an individual giving a treatment. For clarity, I capitalize *Faito'o* when using it to refer to the person.

1971 and Whistler 1992). What has been done consists mostly of botanical categorizations and compilations of recipe ingredients and illness labels. No authoritative documentation of pharmacologic properties of the recipe ingredients has been produced to date although Weiner (1971), and Cowling (1990) offer some minor speculations. Of this body of work, Parsons' (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) and Bloomfield's (1986) are the most comprehensive in terms of description, compilation and analysis of medical choices and therapies, and Whistler (1992) gives the clearest, most concise comparative overview.

In general, representation of *faito'o fakatonga* betrays a pre-occupation with the hallmark characteristics of a medicalized perspective: illness interventions, medical recipes and specialists. Parsons (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) for example, used Tongans' talk about sickness to examine the broad ranging types of therapies [*faito'o*] considered part of a traditional, indigenous Tongan repertoire, and to classify the illnesses [*mahaki, puke*] into discrete categories⁷². Her data was collected from people who identified themselves as *Faito'o* [healers]. Bloomfield (1986) asked people what they felt was being described by the terms *mo'ui lelei* and *monitonu*, but then focussed her analysis and discussion on usage of and compliance with medical professional advice. Thus, even while both Parsons and Bloomfield recognised that Tongans construct health as referring to harmonious social relationships and fulfilled familial as well as divinely mandated obligations, they nevertheless seem to lose this aspect of Tongan culture, when actually discussing health. Their discussions of the semantics of the term for health aside, their descriptions portray health as

⁷² Parsons identifies *āvanga* [spirit] illness, *fasi* [breaks, sprains, ruptures, aches], *hangatāmaki* [skin related - boils, ulcers, tumours, rashes, swelling] and *mahaki*. The latter, she says, is a catchall term, not clearly demarcated from *hangatāmaki* (1995:93-97). In my understanding of the term *mahaki*, it refers to disease or 'illness' in general. Some people explained all illnesses (including fevers) as resulting from some *pala* [ulcer/sore], either internal or external. Parsons categorizes *pala* within *hangatāmaki*.

essentially modalities of illness and injury intervention (ie: 'health').

Parsons (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) and Bloomfield (1986) label and analyse the therapeutic modalities of *faito'o fakatonga* and their underlying philosophies into discrete categories of 'traditional Tongan', 'modern' or 'western medicine', 'religious healing', and 'card-readers'. Rather than describe the Tongan medical system as multivalent, including a variety of treatment options, their characterizations emphasize a disjuncture between 'Tongan' and 'Western' 'medicine'. Whistler (1992) does the same thing, by emphasising the “dichotomy that places in one group ailments thought to be in the realm of Western medicine and, in another group, those thought to be in the realm of Tongan medicine” (Whistler 1992:42). His analysis of the pharmacopoeia identifies “introduced” plants now included in *faito'o fakatonga*, yet interestingly, he does not take this a proof of the breakdown of a true dichotomy. Instead, Whistler's category of 'introduced' plants is used to perpetuate the supposition of a dyad of a pre-[European] contact corpus of traditional medical knowledge, and a separate, contact-based set of practices. (I will have more to say about the 'dichotomy', below).

Overall, representation of Tongan healing practices reflect the organizational characteristics of ways of thinking about 'health' and illness which pertain more to Western, medicalized perceptions. The result of this framing of Tongan practices through biomedical categories is a perpetuation of the idea that, as in biomedical thinking and practice, for Tongans, health is merely the opposite of 'illness', is provided for by specialists, and consists of a unified, specific and socially legitimized corpus of knowledge. I return to the problems of this type of analysis in greater detail towards the end of this chapter. At this point I want to be clear that this representation of *faito'o fakatonga* as a Tongan medical system (see Landy 1977:131), equivalent in structure and focus to the

model of a Western style medical system, confounds an analysis of Tongan's everyday health practices and disguises the process of invention in relation to *mo'ui lelei*. The normalization or conventionalization of everyday practice through, in this case, a biomedical lens remains unchallenged, unrecognized, and potentially hegemonic.

Medicalizing the Tongan Body

Medical practice and health promotion initiatives bring a set of codified ideas, practices and directives targeting personal and interpersonal behaviour. The practical effects of these directives appear in the relations between doctors, nurses and patients, but also other social-relations, such as between mothers and children.

The radio has probably been the single most effective means for representing and disseminating ideas about biomedical health (Parsons 1985:106). Transcripts of lectures broadcast on Radio Tonga include the following topics: Good Food for Good Health, Hypoglycaemia, Dental Health, Family Planning, The Weaning Process, Communicable Diseases, Clinic Appointments (how to keep them), Pharmacologics, Safe Cooking of Feast and Funeral Food, Diabetes, Hazardous Waste Transport & Disposal, Viruses, Children's Diseases, and Diarrheal Diseases (Ministry of Health, n.d. Circa 1980-1993). This weekly Radio Tonga program consistently focuses on topics identified as problematic by medical health authorities: cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer (e.g.: Zimmer et al. 1990). (I examine some of the food-oriented broadcasts in greater detail in the next chapter.)

The informational content of the various programs is the same as would be taught in any health promotion program in North America: hygiene, balancing of four food groups for proper nutrition, breast-feeding, exercise, compliance with medical advice (especially re: prescriptions), and

so forth. While from an epidemiological perspective, health promotion initiatives like radio programs and nutrition seminars fulfill an important need, they also endeavour to convince Tongans to think about their 'health', their social interactions and, especially, their bodies, in particular, routinized ways more akin to that of North American and medicalized perceptions of the body (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

Tongan's bodies in particular are treated by health promotion and medical personnel as something which require disciplining, especially in terms of food and eating. Tongans are phenotypically large people: tall, robust, strong. One could argue that being large bodied was an advantage for the long sea voyages their ancestors undertook. Traditionally, and culturally, a large body is also sign of high rank, of the wealth and extensive relations necessary to obtain the choicest foods. High ranking personages are expected to embody their rank, and this is particularly true for women, in their roles as sisters, daughters and wives. With modernization and democratization of the polity, upwardly mobile people, and economically successful people adopt the same criterion for demonstrating social worth: this is displayed through the creation of a large body. As Malakai 'Ake, noncommunicable disease officer at the Ministry of Health says, "food is the central preoccupation of our culture. Obesity is a sign of nobility and sophistication" (Coyle 1997). Yet this very traditional trope is under particular attack, in the name of 'health' and the Tongan body is being re-invented, modernized as part of a biomedical health agenda. The effort has the full cooperation of the highest ranking title holder of the nation, the king.

For the last 20 years, His Majesty has been engaged in a battle to loose weight. His highly publicized weight-loss and fitness campaign was instigated on the advice of his physician. At his maximum, the king is reputed to have weighed over 200 kg., some 444 lbs. His weight, and his weight-loss regime is now world famous (e.g.: Millman 1992, Coyle 1997) and highly public within

Tonga, too. Postcards of the three-hundred-plus pound king rowing his specially manufactured skiff, or riding his specially reinforced bicycle, are popular souvenirs for tourists and Tongans alike. Depending upon the weather and day of the week, His Majesty can be seen rowing his skiff along the waterfront in Nuku'alofa (the capital), or using the two stories of concrete stairs at the Fua'amotu International Airport as an exercise station. His royal brother, the noble Tu'i Pelehake, can be seen lifting weights at the Teufaiva Fitness Centre, also in the capital. These events are heralded by police escorts' sirens, and the uniformed military guards who cordon off the area while the king completes his workout. Recently (1996, '97, '98), His Majesty Tupou IV lent his authority to an annual national weight loss competition, the only one of its kind in the world. In conjunction with the contest, the American fitness trainer Tony Little, known for his fitness-product late night TV infomercials, was invited to come to Tonga and raise the profile of aerobic exercise as a health measure (Coyle 1997). One of Mr. Little's key tactics was to try to vilify the size of the Tongan body, and disparage the favourite types of foods, those high in fat and salt (and consequently, flavour).

Currently a proposal which strategizes on methods for decreasing the imports of the high fat foods conducive to cardiovascular diseases and diabetes is being circulated within state circles, (per.com., M. Freeman 24/9/1998). Tony Little's advice on this question was simple: "It's a monarchy, right? You just stop the fatty food from coming in!" (Coyle 1997). The 'health' promotion agenda is but one source of *Pālangi* ideas about bodies. Not to be discounted from the ongoing invention of biomedical health and the appropriate body are primary and elementary school curricula, the various martial arts film stars popular in Tonga, international athletic competitions in

soccer, boxing⁷³ and rowing, the home exercise equipment and Chinese medicine advertised in the Tongan newspapers, the advice of overseas relatives, many of whom send pharmaceuticals as gifts, and the national beauty pageant, the contest for Miss Heilala. In all of these domains, 'health' is translated as *mo'ui lelei*, and the focus of activity is on changing –modernizing– Tongan's perception of the body.

As with any other modernizing endeavour, the process of introduction and promotion of the disciplined body and the accompanying concept of *mo'ui lelei* involves the influences of experts. In the Tongan case, most have been foreigners, or, more recently, foreign-trained Tongans. The list includes missionaries, foreign medical practitioners, nutritionists and organizations such as The Rockefeller Foundation and the WHO. Most professionals, regardless of their cultural background, work within a *Pālangi* framework. In this model, 'health' is delivered through medical services oriented towards combatting or preventing diseases. The effort is aimed at re-orienting a person's notion of their body away from a cultural symbol of family status, generosity and power, and linking it to physical absence of disease. This is then defined as 'health'. From this perspective, the 'healthy' body is 'fit' and is not 'overweight'. Yet from an indigenous point of view, the large bulky body demonstrates health too - the health of good social relations, production of food, of, as 'Ake says, "nobility and sophistication".

The message of the modern body and 'health' have been delivered through popular print media, radio and in campaigns such as the weight loss contest. But within this series of discursive interactions, where did, and do, indigenous medical practices fit? What of any existent medical system, what Landy describes as:

⁷³ Tonga won the silver medal in boxing at the 1996 Olympics.

...those cultural practices, methods, techniques, and substances, embedded in a matrix of values, traditions, beliefs, and patterns of ecological adaptation, that provide the means for maintaining health and preventing or ameliorating disease and injury in its members (Landy 1977:131).

As I have indicated in the introduction to this chapter, such a system can be found in Tonga. It is called *faito'o fakatonga*. Yet I am uncomfortable with blithely assuming that *faito'o fakatonga* provides a means for describing indigenous concepts of health.

A more critical review of Landy's description of an ethnomedical system demonstrates, that, in doing medical anthropology, in the not-too-distant past, anthropologists have tended to look for illness and injury-oriented treatments and label them as the corpus of knowledge which corresponds to 'health'. This technique in essence, perpetuates a 'Western' way of identifying 'health' – a state, as discussed above, achieved through treatments against illness. Thus one of the problems with analyses of health and traditional medical practices in Tonga to date is the conflation of 'health' with medicines and the construction of *faito'o fakatonga* as old, static knowledge where biomedicine is modern and effective. As I discuss in the next section, while both 'traditional' and indigenous, *faito'o fakatonga* is not at all static, not a single, ancient, body of knowledge protected and passed down through time. It is more accurate to understand the contemporary notion of *faito'o fakatonga* as a cultural invention which has become conventional within *anga fakatonga*, but which also occupies an ambivalent position in the framework of everyday life and modernization's history.

The Ambivalent Status of *Faito'o Fakatonga*:

I argued above that within the ethnographic and ethnomedical literature, there has been a tendency for researchers to perpetuate a western, biomedical paradigm when describing *faito'o fakatonga*. Researchers have concentrated on categories of illness, illness interventions and specialist

healers, rather than the everyday practices of those who are not ill, and the every day healing tactics of those who are not specialists.

In the older literature, the focus on illness, treatments and specialists reflects, in part, the then mystique of the 'un-colonised Polynesian' and historical efforts to document and salvage their 'exotic' and 'authentic' ways (e.g. Gifford [1929] 1985, Weiner 1971:424). However, it is also clearly due to the interests of modernising advocates, and their need to understand local superstitions, in order to debunk them. Notwithstanding Queen Sālote's protection of indigenous traditional practices, or the WHO's (1978) report supporting traditional medicines in principle; suspicion and derision of *faito'o fakatonga* amongst professional medical personnel was flagrant, and persists to the present. The literature thus also reflects a long standing ambivalence over how to represent *faito'o fakatonga*: whether as superstition-based, medically dangerous practices, as a doomed set of indigenous skills, or, as a respectable and valuable example of Tongan tradition, good *anga fakatonga*.

The historical and political roots of *faito'o fakatonga's* ambivalent position are clearly present in the ethnohistorical record. What is less clear is the actual extent of measures taken to formally suppress indigenous medical practices. Like many 'underdeveloped' societies, especially those with histories of colonialist influences and state-sponsored pushes for 'modernism', foreigners and indigenes advocating and promoting scientific, allopathic, biologically based medicine have tried to devalue, perhaps even outlaw the extant practices associated with *faito'o fakatonga* (Parsons 1981:3, 1985:87-89, Wood 1943:91).

There is, however, some confusion as to the legality of *faito'o* following upon missionary and merchant influence, and into the early part of this century. Parsons says that although it was

never formally banned, many people did not know that it was not illegal (Parsons 1985:89).

However, Wood, a major figure in the development of the early Tongan educational system and a long time resident in Tonga, said the opposite: “It is most regrettable, that, though native treatment is forbidden by law, it is practised, everywhere, even within easy access of Government Medical Officers” (1943:91) ⁷⁴.

Today, when *faito’o fakatonga* clearly is not illegal, medical and educational authorities still bemoan the use of *faito’o*, and consider it to be a sign of backward, uneducated or superstitious thinking. The standard rhetoric is that traditional medical practices lead to more serious forms of illness and even death. Consequently, people in hospital and clinic told me, they tend to keep their use of *faito’o* secret from the doctors and nurses, at least in the formal setting. Parsons (1985:89) and McGrath (1993) report similar data, confirming that this practice is a generalized one. And understandably so: People are wary of being chastised or ridiculed, of contravening some restriction, or of becoming the brunt of a physician’s or nurse’s criticism. In a context in which the legality of *faito’o* may be unclear, medical practitioner’s formal disgust is not!

Ironically, use of *faito’o* is not relegated to uneducated or ‘backward’ members of the population. Well educated Tongans know, and may use at least some of the *vai* [water/ tonic/ medicine], *fotofota* [massage] or *vali* [paint/ topical ointments] that are considered mainstays in of *faito’o fakatonga*. Toakasi Fakakovi, a medical doctor working at the Niu’ui Hospital in Pangai, for instance, informed me that some *vai* [oral, liquid medicines] have proven anti-bacterial properties. Tupou Pohiva, the maternal-child nurse living on Kauvai, admitted she knew how to make, and

⁷⁴ Dr. Susan Philips, University of Arizona, specializes in the Tongan legislative system. She “has never heard of *faito’o* being declared illegal” (1996 per. com.). Wood’s complaint stands as an example of the extent to which *faito’o fakatonga* was perceived to be under attack and illegitimate in the civil service.

herself used, some *vai pala*. Parsons makes a similar observation (1981:11-12). And yet, for people visiting hospital or clinic, the use of *faito'o* remains fraught with ambiguity: On various occasions, I heard nurses at the Niu'ui hospital in Pangai, and at the Vaiola hospital in Nuku'alofa either encourage or discourage visiting family to use or avoid particular *vai* for a hospitalized relative. *Faito'o* use is ubiquitous on Kauvai, and various medicines can be bought openly in the public market in Nuku'alofa. Yet, its status remains ambiguous.

The ambiguity extends further than the illness setting. By the end of the twentieth century, *faito'o* has become enshrined under the category of indigenous knowledge and traditional practice that makes up *anga fakatonga*. Furthermore, The received view is that *faito'o fakatonga* is something being lost in the face of modern, *Pālangi* ways, and requires salvage (e.g.: Weiner 1971, Bloomfield 1986. But see Parsons 1981 and Whistler 1992). Within Tonga, representation of *faito'o* as ancient tradition, draws on an era evoked in the early European visitors' records (e.g. Orange 1840, Martin [1817] 1991, Collacott 1923b).

It is interesting to note then, that the contemporary practice of *faito'o fakatonga* has come to be focussed more on herbal and physiologic interventions, than on the surgical treatments which characterized the skill set of the pre-Christian era. Pre-and early missionary era (i.e.: 1800's) descriptions of Tongan's medical prowess emphasized their surgical skills and the paucity of their herbal knowledge (Martin [1817] 1991:389). Minor surgeries like skin lacerating, urinary tract catheterization and sacrifice (usually of children or amputation of children's or adults' digits), were considered by many to be the most effective treatments for a variety of illness states ⁷⁵.

According to the young sojourner Will Mariner (Martin [1817] 1991), Tongans learned

⁷⁵ Some illness in pre-Christian Tonga was interpreted as a sign of a breach of social practice and/or demeanour which incurred a god's disfavour and required appeasement through a valued gift (Martin [1817] 1991:204-217).

herbal and surgical treatments while in Fiji, or from Fijian's visiting in Tonga⁷⁶. Later, British and Australian missionaries (and their wives) brought both medicines and probably the idea of herbal treatments, although as Shineberg (1978) reports, the earliest (male) missionaries bemoaned their lack of true medical skill, and offered mostly blood letting. Cowling (1992 per. com) speculates that use of herbal remedies began with the missionary wives. It is true that four missionary women in particular (Elizabeth Shelley, Mary Oaks, Mary Lairy, and Sarah Thomas) played significant, and largely unrecognized, roles in ensuring that the early missions happened and succeeded at all. They were all connected with each other through their church parish in Australia, and/or experiences with missions in either Tahiti or Tonga (Maywald 1990:124-125). Maywald surmises that some of these women may have played brief medical roles, along with the other extensions of the "female sphere of labour" that they undertook before the missions could attract specialists like doctors. In other colonial situations, missionary wives have played significant roles in modifying indigenous women's practices (e.g. Bell 1993), and there is no reason to suspect differently in Tonga. This may also help explicate Whistler's (1992:42) observation that everyday *faito'o fakatonga* are mostly women's knowledge.

The relationship between invention, borrowing and representation of 'ancient' knowledge is even more equivocal when one considers the presence of *faito'o fakatonga* in the educational curriculum. Today, Tongan students and teachers are using the early 'salvage' ethnographic records and historical reconstructions as pedagogical sources for school projects and upper-level studies in subjects like "Tongan Culture". As well, along with the genealogies, family stories and other material collected by the Tongan Traditions Committee under Queen Sālote, there is the compilation of

⁷⁶ Tongans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been voyaging to Fiji, both for trade, to practice warfare, and to arrange chiefly marriages (Kaeppler 1978). The royal and elite families continue to have kinship ties with Fijian and Samoan families today.

mostly herbal recipes (Tupouniua et al. n.d.) kept in the Palace Records Office. Figure 5: Faito'o Fakatonga by sex, age and number of personal recipes, shows that, circa 1967, the Tongan Traditions Committee had identified some 141 different recipes for various ailments, from 28 women and 16 men, living in 12 villages. The typescript perpetuates the notion of specialist healers. It is still accessible (within the whims of the office staff) to anyone who asks. Finally, a course in *faito'o fakatonga* is taught as one of several subject offerings in Tongan culture studies by Professor Futa Helu, at 'Atenisi University. One of his former students was Claire Parsons (Helu, per. com. 1992), who went on to write an excellent analysis of Tongan sickness narratives (Parsons 1981).

It is important to stress that Tongans have always gleaned new methods for treating illness, just as they incorporated new ideas about navigation, food, hierarchy or religion, as they interacted with others, be they Fijian, Australian, English, or Samoan. Tongans have a long history demonstrating their cultural flexibility and creative adaptability, something they have in common with other parts of Polynesia. Ritchie and Ritchie (1989:103) argued that Polynesians in general had a history of 'adaptive flexibility' when it came to new practices and ideologies. This, they surmised, arose from the fact that "throughout their long history of migrations, Polynesians were forced to reinvent their cultures over and over again" (1989:103); this type of history and cultural identity, said the Ritchies, produced people who:

"assimilate, but are not easily assimilated ...[They]... draw into their cultural identity (that prepotent fiction 'we are the people who...') all manner of new ideas, techniques, skills and people as they rework their history accordingly" (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989:103).

Decktor-Korn (1978) made the point for Tongans in particular, when she coined the term 'personal re-tooling' to describe the ability of individuals to adopt new practices upon conversion to different Christian denominations. Tamar Gordon's (1988, 1990) analysis of the invention of Tongan

Mormon identity, and the ability of Tongans to adjust context and “shift frames of reference”, even while re-interpreting innovation in one context as tradition in another (1990:218), confirms Decktor-Korn’s point. The Ritchie’s telling mention of Polynesian’s ability to “assimilate” and Gordon’s example of the modern Tongan Mormon provides examples of the capacity for cultural invention that I am arguing is happening with regard to *faito’o fakatonga* and for *mo’ui lelei*.

It should really come as no surprise that the *faito’o fakatonga* practised in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries is no more the same as the *faito’o fakatonga* which operates today than is biomedicine the same today as it was in the past. Reified as both Tongan and traditional, the narrative of a pre-contact body of knowledge nevertheless, indigenous *faito’o fakatonga* has assumed a conventional position in the everyday practices and language of the Tongan way [*anga fakatonga*], but *faito’o fakatonga* and the people who use it, have not stagnated.

Kinship in Health and Healing

One important finding in Parsons’ (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) research was the significance of kinship to learning about and accessing certain medicines. Permission to use, prepare and administer certain treatments passes from parent to child (see Parsons 1981, 1985), and “kinship stories” are significant to diagnosis and choice of treatment (Parsons 1985:93).

Others have confirmed Parsons’ connection of kinship and social relations with illness and healing. As discussed above, Bloomfield (1986) pointed out the interrelation of family, spirituality and physical well-being. Kinship has also been emphasised in the diagnosis and treatment of mysterious, confusing or resistant illness states. Such illnesses may be called *tevolo*, *te’ia* or *’avanga* [devil/spirit illness], and on Kauvai are attributed to a disgruntled spirit, an ancestor perhaps, but

also possibly, a living member of one's *kāinga* [kindred] or *kaungā'api* [neighbours] who has been offended. Father's family and especially father's sister [*mehakitanga*] are easily offended. Cowling (1990) for example, argued that spirit illnesses result from family pressures and social controls which place particular pressures on junior family members. Failure to fulfill the family obligations, a duty referred to as *fua kavenga*, puts one at risk for such illnesses. Gordon (1996:62) for instance, found that "breaches of kinship ideology are indeed major elements in Tongans' constructions of the meaning of an "*avanga* attack".

Because kinship provides an idiom for sickness-based distress and healing, it also places an onus on family members to contribute to a healing through implicit or explicit requests for forgiveness (Parsons 1984). Sunday, for instance, is a day for visiting invalids and those stricken by sickness. One of the points of such visitation is to show –publically– that the sick person has not incurred the anger or displeasure of those who are visiting: any ill feelings which may have been harboured are now forgiven by those who come to sit by the stricken person (see Rogers 1977:163 for a similar example). Often these public demonstrations of love and sympathy [*'ofa*] are enough to encourage the sick person that they are feeling better. If necessary, further treatment of spirit-caused illnesses consists of attempting to determine who is displeased, in order to redress the situation.

Redress can be quite varied, but generally indicates the importance of kinship in living well, thereby pointing to the connection between *faito'o fakatonga* and *mo'ui lelei*.

One example is provided by the example of a mother living on Kauvai and her young son. When I knew them, the boy was eight years old. Subsequent to a high fever at about age three, he had begun having episodes of absent mindedness, where he would stare blankly into the air for a few seconds; then he began to have convulsions. His mother and other family members had tried various

options for his bizarre behaviour, and by age eight, he had been hospitalized, then released on the medications phenobarbital and dilantin. These are strong drugs, used for the treatment of epilepsy. Unfortunately, his mother told me, this treatment made him even more socially inappropriate –sleepy, drooling, stumbling, incapable of being left alone at all. She decided that in conjunction with the medicines given by the doctor, the family needed to employ a treatment of their own –their own *faito'o fakatonga*. They changed the boy's name. As is common within *anga fakatonga*, he had been named after a paternal ancestor (see Rogers 1977:164). When the boy became ill, the family thought that the paternal namesake was displeased with the boy, and so they changed his name to that of a maternal ancestor. In their theorizing, the maternal ancestor's name would be an easier, more suitable burden for the boy than that of his paternal namesake⁷⁷. Rogers (1977:164) provided instances of boys in Niuatoputapu trying out “one name after another, to discover which ones suited them best”. Bott (1960:17) and Rogers (1977) noted that naming a child is something which reinforces a kinship link and which affected that child's future well being⁷⁸.

Other examples underscore the importance of kinship and customary obligations in curing, but also, the conflation of Christian and Tongan ideologies into *anga fakatonga*. In the old stories, humans and their gods are connected through ties of kinship. They were, in essence, part of one great *kāinga* [kindred]. As mediators of the sacred and the mundane, chiefs had a healing capacity. Mariner (Martin [1817]1991) reported that in the 19th century, the touch of a chief's foot could provide forgiveness, and release an invalid from a mortal infraction of a taboo. Illness in this case

⁷⁷ In an analogous situation, we were told that should a man accept or claim a title or name, such as that of a *mātāpule*, *motu'a tauhi fonua* or a noble, to which he was not truly genealogically entitled, the weight of the title, and its lack of fit would cause the man to become ill, and would eventually kill him. Likewise, using a medicine or therapeutic treatment to which one was not entitled by virtue of kinship, would result, at best, in a null-effect, and at worse, in making either the healer or the injured, sick themselves.

⁷⁸ See Morton (1996:45-46) for further discussion of naming.

was cured through contact with the one who linked the mundane and the sacred. Today, church ministers have replaced chiefs in many respects, and this includes their ability to intercede and chase away illness. On Kauvai, I witnessed a woman suffering from severe abdominal pain who sought relief with help from her church minister. He, having blessed some Tongan oil⁷⁹, used it to massage her abdomen, while praying to God to “chase away her pain”. Like the old gods, the Christian God today is an ultimate member of the *kāinga* and may be appealed to for help. Vili Maea told me the story of his first wife, who after suffering a miscarriage and haemorrhage, was taken to hospital, with desperate stops in every church along the route. This latter example shows a striking similarity to Mariner’s eloquent description of a chief making serial invocations from one god after another, seeking forgiveness for some infraction in an attempt to cure his daughter of a mortal illness (Martin [1817] 1991:204-205). Other examples of treatments which demonstrate the connection between kinship and the sacred realm include exhumation of an ancestor’s bones in order to clean, re-bury and therefore comfort the displeased spirit-kinfolk (I describe such a scenario in the following chapter).

Not all illness episodes are attributed to spirits, although some authors have erroneously claimed that in pre-Christian Tonga, all sickness events were attributed to the work of the gods (e.g.: Whistler 1992:42). A close reading of Mariner’s narrative indicates that this is not so (Martin [1817] 1991). In any event today, natural and as Parson’s (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) research shows, non-spiritual social factors are included as causal agents.

Generally however, *faito’o* recipes or techniques of healing are viewed as a kind of gift, a sign of love [*ofa*] from God (Parsons 1981, 1983, 1985, Bloomfield 1986). A similar attitude is

⁷⁹ Oil made from the compressed and heated meat of coconut, scented with a variety of plant substances. Tongan oil is commonly found in every household.

prevalent among Samoan traditional healers too (MacPherson and MacPherson 1990).

Knowing, or in Tongan terms, owning [*ma'u*], a treatment does not confer the power of diagnosis however: that control rests with the person who is afflicted. Herein lies a significant difference between biomedical practice and *faito'o fakatonga*. For the biomedical professional, diagnosis is a power which is jealously guarded. In that system, medicine is the prerogative of a single specialist practitioner with a vital interest in maintaining control and perpetuating their privileged status. But on Kauvai, people diagnose themselves. Sometimes this process was fractious, and people disputed diagnoses, even in public. Sometimes diagnoses were worked out through the process of elimination, and people tried different treatments, prayers, medical visits, all as part of a self-diagnosis process. Like every other part of life, diagnosis is a social practice, and as Parsons (1981, 1983, 1984, 1985) argues, kinship plays an active role in all sickness events, including access to treatment, and knowledge which helps to structure the event. Thus, in traditional Tongan, and everyday Kauvai practice, ultimate control over the sickness experience, and the decision as to which treatment to offer, rests, not with the medical authorities, but with the person who is in need of treatment.

A key point to be taken from these examinations of sickness treatment is how much recourse to treatment duplicates the social hierarchy (Cowling 1990). And this is where *faito'o fakatonga* is congruent, not with *Pālangi* medicine, but with the cultural invention of *mo'ui lelei* –living well through appropriate social relations. The importance of kinship to diagnosis and treatment makes a specific pattern of therapeutic resort difficult to predict (Parsons 1985:93). In general however, recourse to treatment begins with living, physically close kin and neighbours and, if necessary, culminates in petitions to the supernatural, including deceased ancestors, and God. Within this route

of therapeutic resort, lie a combination of indigenous and foreign diagnostic and healing modalities, some described as *Pālangi*, some as Tongan. Which brings me back to the notion of the “dichotomy” in identifying and treating illness.

Illness *Fakatonga* and *Fakapālangi*; the Dichotomy Revisited

Formally, linguistically, Tongans characterize diseases and therapies as being either “Tongan” [*fakatonga*] or “foreign” [*fakapālangi*] (see also Collocott 1923b, Weiner 1971, Parsons 1985, Cowling 1990, Whistler 1992:42). The ethnographic literature also reports a requirement that the appropriate treatment for an ailment must come from the matching ethnic category.

Crossing the boundaries, and giving *Pālangi* medicine for a Tongan illness or vice versa, is reported to be dangerous:

...European therapies are considered not only unsuited to treating Tongan sicknesses but also dangerous. Tongan sicknesses require treatment by a *faito’o* or Tongan doctor, and Pālangi sicknesses require treatment by a *toketā* or western healer (sic. Parsons 1985:91).

Most Tongans who utilize both medical systems firmly believe that Western medicine cannot treat many ailments that affect Tongan infants (Whistler 1992:46).

The analysis of a heterogeneous, dichotomous set of medical systems is based purely on labelling conventions, but it creates a sense of competition and incompatibility between the ‘sides’. For example, while trying to be optimistic about the survival of Tongan medicine, and its ability to co-exist with Western medicine, Whistler, accepts the idea that there are two separate medical systems. But he also seems to approach the analysis of *faito’o fakatonga* with the idea in mind that the indigenous practice could be at risk: “In practice, two systems of medicine currently co-exist. It appears that Tongan medicine is firmly entrenched and is only very slowly, if at all, losing ground to

Western medicine” (992:41).

Demonstrating a similar concern, Parsons (1985:105) argues that the categorical distinction of *mahaki fakatonga* [Tongan diseases] and *mahaki fakapālangi* [foreigner’s diseases] has in fact, contrary to expectation, *faito’o fakatonga* has expanded:

Traditional Tongan healing practices have not decreased since the introduction of western medicine but instead have developed alongside it. This is in part because of the categorical separation of western sicknesses from Tongan ones; the dual classification system suggests that western medicine, largely confined to its own sphere, is unlikely to readily displace or absorb the traditional Tongan healing practices.

Traditional herbal medicine has been described as expanding in scope and practice in Samoa as well (MacPherson 1990). I could go further and say that *faito’o fakatonga* is appropriating and expanding into the ‘sphere of western medicine’, but I prefer to reconsider the actuality of the categorical separation itself.

Parsons’ recognition of the expansion of *faito’o fakatonga* indicates to me that culture invention is visible and verifiable (even if not identified with the same language). But we should not accept the categorical distinction between Tongan and *Pālangi* diseases and cures as being fundamental or inviolable. In my experience on Kauvai, the dichotomy present in the language that Parsons and others have emphasized and taken to indicate separate medical systems (or indeed, everyday practice) is overdrawn (e.g. Cowling 1990:73, Whistler 1992).

These designations may occur in formal speech, as when people are being interviewed about ‘Tongan culture and traditions’. In these circumstances, people are often being careful to give answers which they think the interviewer (usually a *Pālangi*) will understand, and approve. In casual speech and actual, everyday practice, however, I found that the categories of *fakatonga* and

fakapālangi were blurred, the boundaries leaky. This is true for illnesses as well as diagnoses and medicines. As specific items shift from the *Pālangi* category to the Tongan, it seems the categories are more fluid and ambiguous than mutually exclusive. This slippage is noted in passing by Parsons (1985), Cowling (1990:73) and Whistler (1992), but none take this point as a challenge to the notion of a truly dichotomous system of disease and treatment classification. They continue to posit the presence of two separate systems of practice and knowing. The blurring of boundaries is significant, an example of cultural invention in process: the leaky boundaries and slippage of categories indicate that symbolic referents are being conflated and semantic contents are shifting.

Terminologically, *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* continue to be applied to various illness states, especially in interviews and during diagnostic discussions, but not necessarily in everyday understandings: introduced illnesses, such as measles, were included in Kauvai mothers' lists of *mahaki fakatonga 'oe fanau* [Tongan children's illnesses] together with things not considered to derive from the *Pālangi*, like 'separated head' [*mavae ua*] a designation referring to the infant fontanelle, but including other potential symptoms, like yellowing eyes and skin [perhaps a recognition of neonatal jaundice?]. In my discussions with women, the illnesses that consistently were offered as examples of *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* were *tevolo*⁸⁰ (also called '*āvanga*) and fever. Fever, called *mofi fakapālangi* [foreign fever] was contrasted to *mofi fakatonga* [Tongan fever]. But even with the fevers, the prototypic example, individual women's diagnostic and differentiating signs did not always coincide. Some Kauvai women told me that "when the whole body is hot, that is *mofi fakatonga*". Others said "*Mofi fakatonga* is when just the child's head is hot, but he still runs and plays and eats". Parsons (1985:91-92) records a conversation about fever:

⁸⁰ *Tevolo* is a 'spirit illness' much discussed in the literature (Collocott 1923b, Parsons 1981, Gordon 1996, Cowling 1990) and clearly attributed to invasion by or accidental contact with a spirit-like entity.

A. How can mothers tell which kind of fever it is, the *mofi faka-Tonga* or the *mofi faka-Pālangi*?

B: Listen, I'll tell you: There is a time when our children get a fever. If the fever covers all over the body -up to the feet- it is *mofi-Pālangi*. If the mother can only feel the fever in the forehead and stomach, and cold elsewhere, then she knows the child must be teething or something When she's hot all over, they say it's a *mofi-Pālangi*... . If it isn't the *mofi-Pālangi*, it's the other one. The child may have a temperature, and be active, but doesn't lose interest in food. The appetite is alright.

Comparing Parsons' interviewees with women who talked to me indicates that, while mothers are clear that categories of *mofi fakatonga* and *mofi fakapālangi* exist, they are not as clear on which is which. McGrath (1993) notes a similar lack of certitude with relation to distinct categories of illness and intervention.

Geographic Indexing: *Fakatonga* vs. *Fakapālangi*

In emphasizing the *fakatonga / fakapālangi* typologies, ethnographers may be falling into a divide which probably emanates less from old, long-standing and concrete illness categories (i.e.: an indigenous nosology) and more from a Tongan epistemology linking ancestral qualities with contemporary effects, and the experiences their great-grandparents' and grandparents' had with colonialist practices⁸¹. Allow me to explain: It is a common linguistic heuristic in Tonga to label things with geographical markers: head lice for instance are called *kutu fisi*, pineapples are designated as *fainā fakahaamoā* or *fainā fakahauai'i* —referring to Fiji [*fisi*], Samoa [*haamoā*] and Hawai'i [*hauai'i*], respectively. Numerous examples of geographical indexing of varieties of pandanus can be

⁸¹ While Tonga was never officially colonized, the confluence of missionaries, merchants and international 'advisors' has in many ways mimicked some of the effects of colonization.

found⁸². Vili Maea explained to me that the terms indicated a rank order of preference, rather than a true indication of origin. Those things people didn't like, or thought of as inferior –such as head lice– were often labelled as from Fiji, while good things –like pineapples– were from Samoa. This was regardless of their actual site of importation (if at all). The “best things we call *fakatonga*” he concluded⁸³.

Linguistic categorizations of *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* may then, indicate recent contacts with and (perhaps) expressed resistance to unrecognizable symptoms and illnesses⁸⁴. The predominance of fever [*mofi*] as the key example of *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* distinctions probably derives from, or was at least exacerbated by, traumatic events like the 1893 measles and 1918 influenza epidemics which killed large numbers of the population. The events were severe enough in a population of fewer than one hundred thousand people to bring the need for better medical facilities to the fore of the governmental agenda. However, the usage of an adverbial marker should not be taken as hard and fast rule of practice, nor even of perception.

Certainly, embedded in the terms *mahaki fakatonga* and *mahaki fakapālangi* [respectively, Tongan disease and foreign disease] is the idea that some illnesses and therapies are indigenous to Tongans, and others are not. This resonates with the cultural assumption that kinship and curative

⁸² For instance, *tutu'ila*, *lotuma* and *tofua*: *Tutu'ila* is in American Samoa, *lotuma* is the Tongan pronunciation of Rotuma and *Tofua* is an island in Ha'apai. Whistler provides other geographic named *varieties*: *fafa*, *tofua niue* and *hauai'i* (1991:71-73). *Fafa* is the name of a small island near the capital of Nuku'alofa. *Niue* is located due east of Tongatapu, and was at varying times, part of historical Tonga, although separate now. *Hauai'i* is the Tongan pronunciation and spelling of Hawai'i.

⁸³ Vili Maea's explanation reverses a rank order proposed by ethnohistorical reconstructions of Tongan's trading and marriage relationships with Fiji and Samoa, where Fiji is high ranked as wife-takers, and Samoa ranked low as wife-givers (Kaepler 1978, Kirch 1984:238). His ordinals are based on bodily signs of rank: Fijians are considered to be darker skinned, and Samoans fairer, evidence read on Kauvai as indications of genealogical disparity, where dark [*'uli*] is ugly and low; lighter is beautiful and high.

⁸⁴ Where illnesses and medicines in Mariner's time and prior might have been *fakafisi* and *fakabaamoā* [Fijian and Samoan], Europeans are the most recent contacts to have made an impact and to serve as lexical markers.

powers are linked, and that there are appropriate and inappropriate sources for things like names, medicines or titles (see prior footnote # 77). However, Tongans are not ideologically opposed to creative borrowing from others. Many Tongans recognize some *Pālangi* ancestry, and many others would claim an affinity based on membership in the *kāinga* [kindred] of Christianity. To cling to a dichotomous set of categories in which *fakapālangi* and *fakatonga* were exclusive is actually to refuse to recognize the potential for cultural invention, and moreover, to reject for Tongans, the very thing which makes *Pālangi's* medicine –biomedical, cosmopolitan– so powerful: its ability to incorporate numerous medical treatments and ideologies into one system.

I suggest that the diagnostic labels *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* developed in much the same process as descriptive labels for head lice, pineapples and pandanus. They should be interpreted as indices, not of exclusive, geographic origin, but of sense of ownership and culturally based aesthetics. They indicate an evolving, conventionalization of signs and symbols which had seemed meaning-less. In other words, the labels of *fakatonga* and *fakapālangi* are markers of people's sense of familiarity with and hence control over the sickness event; notions which emerge from the confluence of practices as *Pālangi* and Tongans interrelate, in business, school, church, state, and marriage.

Parsons recognizes the option for “reclassification of illnesses” and that the “interpretive process is malleable” (1985:92,93), and uses the dichotomy of Tongan and *Pālangi* categories to explain the expansion of *faito'o fakatonga*. But she does not explain why the linguistic appellation allows for the expansion and shifting within and between categories of *faito'o* and *mahaki fakatonga*. I am suggesting that the Tongan categorization is expanding through the process of cultural invention, in which it is clear that as a disease becomes conventional, it collapses into the trope of other conventional aspects of everyday life: that which is *fakatonga*.

The same would seem to hold true for medicines. Like illnesses that were *Pālangi*, but are now Tongan, medicines most certainly introduced by missionaries (or their wives?), some of whom came via Australia (Maywald 1990), were described to me as *fakatonga*. One particularly compelling example is eucalyptus oil (natural only to Australia) used as part of a now traditional Tongan *vaikahi*. A *vaikahi* is a treatment taken for complaints such as bowel distention, haemorrhoids and constipation (*kahi* refers to localized masses or swellings). Using imported eucalyptus, *vaikahi* is manufactured in Ha'apai, bottled and sold from some of the local shops. It is clearly labelled as "*faito'o fakatonga*".

Finally, in contrast to statements made to Parsons (1985:91, see above) about the dangers of confusing categories and mixing medicines, I was given several examples of instances when Tongan and *Pālangi* medicines could be used cooperatively and simultaneously. Without offering any specific examples, Whistler (1992:42) makes a similar observation.

One man, a Wesleyan lay preacher, former school teacher, father of many children and holder of a *matāpule* title (but importantly, never described to me as a "*Faito'o*"), waited for me to return from the *falemahaki* [hospital] with an antibiotic I'd received for my daughter's middle ear infection. He waited in order to give her his *faito'o*, for the *pala*⁸⁵ [ulcer] causing her crankiness and three nights of fever. He explained to me that he'd learned the medicine from his father. On a previous occasion, the same man had described the ways in which it was "*anga fakatonga*" [the Tongan way] to use the sticky sap from breadfruit trees to hold wounds shut and bandages onto skin. On this day, in the sweltering heat of February (1992), he indicated the ways in which "*anga fakatonga*" was expanding to include *Pālangi* and Tongan treatments. I recorded our conversation

⁸⁵ *Pala* is a common designation for any variety of illnesses, especially those experienced in childhood. Usually, *pala* is a visible ulcer, but an internal *pala* may cause external symptoms, such as white tongue and fever.

cryptically, part in Tongan and part in English later that evening after my daughter had (finally) gone to sleep:

'Io, 'oku 'aunga kihe'ene pala 'eku vai
Yes, my medicine is appropriate for treating her *pala*.

Excuse me Folau, but I would like to try the medicine from the doctor at the hospital. Please do not be angry with me?

Sai pe, te ke 'alu sivi fale mahaki. Tuku ai pe 'ia, ha'u mai, pea fofolo'i ia vai pala."
Yes. That is fine. You go and be examined at the hospital. After that come to me, and we'll give her the medicine for *pala*.

Is it alright to mix the medicines and give them together, at the same time? Perhaps I should wait a while?

'Io, kau lelei fakataha. 'Alu pe koe, tali'atu heni"
Yes, they go together well. You go, I'll wait for you here.

Pala, the most common children's ailment, was frequently cited as an example of how Tongan and Pālangi medicines could work together: many mothers suggested that *panatolo* [panadol / acetaminophen syrup] and *vaitonga* [herbal infusions] were useful for treating *pala*. As a response to my direct questioning as to the advisability of mixing *vaitonga* with *vaipālangi* [any of the doctor-provided liquid medicines] or *fo'i akau* [pills], many parents (mothers and fathers) stated that there was no harm in using both:

'Io, lava lelei 'aupito. Hange koe pala, lava 'o ngaue'aki vai pālangi, sai 'e mofi, vai Tonga, sai ai e hina 'elelo, pea sai ai pē.

Yes, they work very well. Like with *pala*, you can use *Pālangi* medicine for the fever and Tongan medicine for the white tongue, and then its fine. S.M. 20/8/92

Combining *faito'o fakatonga* and *faito'o fakapālangi* was not limited to children's illness.

Many people were able to provide examples of instances when Tongan medicines [*faito'o fakatonga*]

were useful for *Pālangi* illnesses which affected adults, such as *toto ma'ulunga* [hypertension], *suka* [hyperglycaemia/ diabetes mellitus II], *mafu motu* [heart disease] and *niumonia* [pneumonia].

Cowling (1990:73) notes that arthritis, once thought of as a *Pālangi* illness, was described to her as a *mahaki* [disease] treatable with *faito'o fakatonga*. This is clearly a change from Parson's classifications (see Parsons 1985). Some other examples of the ambiguities rather than discreteness of 'Tongan' and 'Pālangi' illnesses and treatments included headache [*langa 'ulu*]:

Yes, they work very well together. For instance, headache: you think of it as a *Pālangi* illness, but it can be treated with Tongan medicine (F.V. 13/8/92).

Note a similar statement in Parsons (1985:98):

It is different from just a headache...maybe you try *faito'o* [medicine] or massage; maybe you try the aspirin...

Again, on Kauvai, the illness called *ongosia* [lethargy/weakness]:

I use *vaihaka* from 'Ana or a *niumonia* [pneumonia] or *panadolo* [acetaminophen] pill and then *nonu* [morinda citrifolia] leaf, which is good for chasing away the devil. You crush and drench the *nonu*, and then drink it (O.K. 7/7/92).

I offer these examples as a confirmation of my point that the contents of the categories are shifting, as certain aspects become conventional.

Not only conventional, but undergoing creative cultural invention too: I was fortunate to come across Vili Maea one day as he was preparing a medicine for his wife's high blood glucose levels [*suka*]. He had been inspired with the recipe after reading a passage from the Old Testament⁸⁶. Vili was proud to be keeping his wife from getting sick [*puke*] and weak [*vaivai*], also, he was proud of his inspiration. He made it clear that the medicine was not a replacement for Toa'ila's oral anti-

⁸⁶ Vili had been reading Isaiah 35 - 37. He was especially taken with Isaiah 37, 30.

hypoglycaemia pills (at least not yet!); rather it was a therapy to help them work better. He was excited about her next check-up, because he viewed it as a test of his new *faito'o*.

Etiology of Excess: Attributing Cause Without Blame

When I asked “where does *pala* come from? How do you get it? Why does my daughter have it?”, I was often told “too many lollies,” “too many bongos,” “too much running out in the sun.” This was in contradiction to the literature on Tongan illness etiology, which asserts that spirits entering the body cause all or most disruptions (Parsons 1981, 1985, Jilek 1988, Cowling 1990, Gordon 1996). Whistler notes that “even today, while Tongans recognize the natural origin of many ailments, they still firmly believe that some illnesses are supernaturally induced” (1992:41). On Kauvai, even while the devil may need “chasing away” sometimes, “too much” of something was a frequent causal explanation: One fisherman had pain in his knees because of “too much going to sea.” Children got colds and stomach upsets because of “too many lollies” [lollipops or candies].

The etiology of excess implied, in a culturally appropriate way, that certain conditions or behaviours were socially, as well as physically inappropriate. This is a roundabout, and hence socially appropriate, way of explaining affliction. Without attributing explicit blame on anyone in particular (see Cowling 1990:90), “too many bongos and lollies” (referring to candy and artificial cheese-flavoured snacks) implied my household’s lack of an *’uta*, the garden land people on Kauvai depended upon for food [*me’akai*]. It may also have referred to the actions of others who plied children, including my daughter, with snacks and candy, as a means of showing them *’ofa*. “Too much going to sea” may have been a reference to that one man’s bumper crop of bonito tuna a few years before, some of which he sold, an action that was later determined to be in contravention of

traditional expectations⁸⁷.

The following example shows how an etiology of excess can merge inappropriate social actions with public and sacred sanction, in the form of illness symptoms. It indicates the way in which *faito'o fakatonga* figures as a part of living well [*mo'ui lelei*] through compliance with *anga fakatonga*.

I was called one afternoon to determine if a young teen (about 13 years) had something that could be cured with one of my *fo'i akau* [pills]. I found the girl, huddled under a wool blanket in the afternoon heat. She reported symptoms of chills, headache, fatigue and photophobia, yet was neither diaphoretic nor shivering. Her good colour, lack of fever or wound, strong regular pulse, normal pupil-reaction and denial of nausea, pain or menstrual flow left me puzzled. As far as I could determine, there was nothing much physically wrong with her. The onset of her discomfort had been swift: she told me she'd been fine, playing with other children at the beach, and swimming just an hour before. I supposed she could be suffering from "too much sun" and recommended some fluids, and removal of the blanket. While I was examining the young girl, her mother (the wife of a Free Church of Tonga Minister) had already sent to a neighbour (an official in the Wesleyan Church, and no family relation) for the treatment for *tevolo*. "Don't worry", the mother told me when I confessed my confusion about her daughters condition: "I know what it is".

Being treated for *tevolo* is an unpleasant experience involving placing infusions of a combination of plants into the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, often against the will of the patient. It is

⁸⁷ Part of the founding myths of Kauvai centre on the bonito tuna, which reportedly ran so strong on occasion as to wash up on the shore of the village where we lived. The tuna are considered a gift to Havea from Sina, the heroine of Samoan mythology. There are strict guidelines for dealing with these runs of tuna, one of which prohibits its sale. A few years previous to our stay there, this man caught a surprising amount of fish in his trap. He gave much away, but sold some in Pangai. The unusually large catch was determined *post hoc* to have been one of the traditional gifts from Sina, and the fisherman was criticized (through gossip and innuendo) for breaking the *tapu*.

an unpleasant and dramatic procedure which has been described extensively elsewhere (Parsons 1981, Jilek 1988, Cowling 1990, Gordon 1996), and I need not describe it here. I asked “how did she get *tevolo*?” and was told “too much swimming. She was swimming and the evil from the devil saw her and came into her”. The daughter of a lay preacher in the Free Church of Tonga, herself only a couple of years older than the sick girl, gave me her description in a combination of Tongan and English: “evil from the devil” was her English translation when I puzzled “*’Oku ha’u mei fē, he tevolo*” [but where does the *tevolo* come from]?

This, too, was a socially embedded explanation. As a young teen, verging on womanhood, young Seini⁸⁸ was caught between the pleasures and past-times permitted to children (daylight swimming), and the preservation of decorum, dignity, chastity and modesty required of women (perhaps especially, the daughter of a minister): Women do not swim in the daylight. They might soak, fully clothed, in small groups, in the shallows near dusk, out of sight of prying eyes, and they may wade while reef-fishing, but they do not swim and play, nor do they “go out too much in the sun.”

There are numerous explanations for what *tevolo* is (Collocott 1923b, Parsons 1985, Jilek 1988, Cowling 1990, Gordon 1996). Most indicate a spirit, perhaps an ancestor buried somewhere near, who either hits, enters or tries to grab the afflicted person. An attack of *tevolo*, whether motivated by too much love (Gordon 1996)⁸⁹ or disapproval (Cowling 1990), is at one level, a warning for socially inappropriate behaviour. In young Seini’s case, swimming and cavorting in broad daylight like a child, and not far from a graveyard to boot, is punishable by an attack of *tevolo* -

⁸⁸ A pseudonym.

⁸⁹ While Gordon does not discuss an ‘aetiology of excess’, her own data supports this observation as when she describes a woman having *tevolo* because a deceased family member “loved her too much” (1996).

-perhaps by someone resident of that graveyard. Her infraction may have been compounded because she was a 'stranger' to the island –there because her father had been posted to a church in Maka Fele'unga, Sieni was an unknown entity to the *tevolo*.

The etiology of excess stands as explanations for other, less physical but also bad [*kovi*] or inappropriate social behaviours, and their ramifications. When two couples in a village were caught in adulterous relationships, gossip spread across the island and through nearby Pangai: "too much *hulahula* [dancing]", people said, referring to the Mormon couples' participation in public dances, a clear infraction of Methodist constructions of traditional Tongan morality.

In the above cases, speculating an etiology of excess avoids the potential for actually incurring an illness (through bad feelings or inappropriate social actions) that would require forgiveness, as described by Parsons (1984). At the same time, it promotes the social practice standards identified as part of *anga fakatonga*. For instance, no one, to the best of my knowledge, ever got ill from 'too much going to church'.

In drawing this chapter to a close, allow me to review certain key points. By way of comparison, analogy or critical opposition, *mo'ui lelei* and *faito'o fakatonga* have been related oppositionally in the literature and medical rhetoric. Historically they have been associated as parts of a competitive, hence analogous, process wherein *faito'o* are intended for re-achieving *mo'ui lelei*, just like penicillin is for restoring 'health'. This emphasis in the literature on illness as a means of describing 'health' reflects an implicit acceptance of a paradigm in *Pālangi* thinking, wherein illness and 'health' are constructed as opposites. Yet *faito'o fakatonga* and biomedicine have commonalities: representation through a paradigm in which 'health' is the consequence of defeating or preventing illness; a focus on and cultivation of the concerns of mothers and children; and a status which is

more equivocal and ambiguous, than definitive or systematic.

Insofar as *faito'o fakatonga* includes treatments for inappropriate social practices and confirmation of the association between living well according to kinship-based principles of *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way], *faito'o fakatonga* is neither simply 'medicine' as predicated by a biomedical model, nor simply about biomedical 'health'. While the expansion of the trope of *faito'o fakatonga* models it as a method analogous to what medical doctors do, where *faito'o fakatonga* actually differs is in its practices. Cures perpetuate *anga fakatonga*, the culturally sanctioned social hierarchy and re-establishment of appropriate social relations within a *kāinga* [kindred] which includes God. Thus, while represented as an ethnomedicine focussed on illness and injury treatments, *faito'o fakatonga* resonates less with a biomedical method for re-achieving 'health' and more with the theory of *mo'ui lelei* as living well through appropriate social relations.

I have argued also that *mo'ui lelei* is a neologism, introduced as a part of the ongoing invention of the contemporary Tongan social and political state as a modern nation, but now taking on a semantic connotation which is more traditionally Tongan than *Pālangi*. Further, like the emergent trope of *mo'ui lelei* as 'health through living well according to appropriate social relations', both *faito'o fakatonga* and biomedical notions of 'health' must be thought of as cultural inventions. Instead of reinforcing descriptions of a dichotomous medical system, I have argued that there is slippage between the categories. Rather than a categorically heterogeneous dichotomy, or a potentially doomed example of ancient indigenous tradition, *faito'o fakatonga* is expanding, as a body of knowledge relating to episodes of illness, as an ideological construct, and as a conventional part of the cultural trope of *anga fakatonga*⁹⁰. These expansions indicate cultural invention in process. I

⁹⁰ Ironically, biomedicine is usually criticized for its hegemonic potential to incorporate other therapeutic techniques, hence its appellation as 'cosmopolitan medicine', but this is not necessarily the case in Tonga.

have offered the notion of the etiology of excess as an indicator of how thinking about illness follows cultural and social prescriptions for good social relations. Though changed from historic times, knowledge and use of *faito'o fakatonga* now exists as a marker of indigenous knowledge and practice within *anga fakatonga*, and thereby, provides a means for living well. Ironically then, while *faito'o fakatonga* is not about 'health' in the way that western medicine is about defeating illness, *faito'o* is important to living well –*mo'ui lelei*– a final ambiguity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COUNTERING THE BIOMEDICAL MESSAGE: HEALTH AS APPROPRIATE SOCIAL RELATIONS

In previous chapters I have argued that in the village of Maka Fele'unga, and on the Island of Kauvai in general, *mo'ui lelei* is thought of as health based in appropriate social relations, and that, as Parsons (1981,1983, 1984, 1985) and Bloomfield (1986) also argue, healthy social relations are modelled on kinship. Like kinship responsibilities and expectations which are based in the conventional and conventionalizing ideals for social practice described as *anga fakatonga*, biomedicine promotes an implicit, codified set of ideals for how people should behave, in order to be 'healthy'. But what exactly does the state-sanctioned message of 'health' entail in Tonga? How does this relate to the everyday conventions of village life? In this chapter, I focus on the particular messages and practices of the two conventions for being 'well': the state-sponsored teaching about 'health' and what was actually described to me as *mo'ui lelei* in the *anga fakatonga* of everyday life on Kauvai. In countering the biomedical prescriptions for being 'healthy', my discussion includes subjects important to everyday *anga fakatonga*: the desirability of children, significance of feasting to the social and sacred order, indigenous perceptions of food, and the relevance of gender. Because so much of the biomedical and 'health' material is concentrated on children, this chapter includes an extensive discussion of the healthy child: who is a 'child'? How does one determine that the child is healthy? How do local perceptions of the healthy child play out in *anga fakatonga*? This latter query

requires a reconsideration of the notion of ‘child’ as being limited by age, and draws on one of the most dramatic treatments for spirit sickness, the unearthing and reburial of ancestors; I argue that implicit within the notion of *mo’ui lelei* emergent on Kauvai is a critique of the bio-mechanical and pathological focus of biomedical prescriptions for ‘health’ which excludes the significance of social relationships and *’ofa* [love/ generosity/ empathy], *fa’i teliha* [freedom of choice] and *tau’ata’ina* [independence], *fatongia* [duty], key conventions for behaviour according to *anga fakatonga* [the Tongan way]. The motivation for health on Kauvai, I argue, is a dialogue of the social body, not of pathology.

The public and official materials which both constitute and demonstrate the official stance on ‘health’ care and promotion in Tonga are comparable to that found in Canada or any other ‘modern’ industrialized, ‘western’ setting. In the first section of this chapter, I draw on examples from public health nursing training and actual practice with respect to family planning. I then use examples drawn from the Ministry of Health’s radio broadcasts on health promotion, specifically programmes on nutrition. The final example is drawn from a manual on mother and child care (Nance 1977). The latter is published in the Tongan language, sold through the Wesleyan Church’s school bookstore (the main bookstore in the Kingdom), and features the royal family, specifically Queen Mata’aho, her daughter Princess Pilolevu, and grand-daughter, the Princess Lupepau’u in its promotion. I discuss each example, and the way in which they relate to everyday life on Kauvai in the following sections.

Public Health Nursing & Maternal-Child ‘Health’ Training

Periodic training sessions for public health nurses in Tonga are funded by the United

Nations Population Fund (UNPF), and supported jointly by the government of Tonga, the UNPF, and the WHO (Tenn 1991). In the pre-training and post-training assessment, in this particular case conducted by nursing consultant Mrs. Louise Tenn, participants preparing to become public health nurses are asked questions like the following (from Tenn 1991, Annex 5, page 26-27).

Which are the correct steps in nursing of individuals? (Nursing process)

- a) Diagnosis, management
- b) special tests, diagnosis, management
- c) history, physical assessment, diagnosis, management, teaching, evaluating
- d) management, assessment, planning and referring

Indicate whether statements related to menstruation are TRUE or FALSE:
The proliferation phase is dependent on the secretion of luteal hormones.

Menstruation occurs when the ovum is not fertilized but is also affected by environmental factors.

If fertilization does not occur, the corpus luteum degenerates and about 14 days later menstruation begins.

Mafi's last menstrual period was April 11. What would be her expected date of delivery?

- A) December 26
- B) January 4
- C) February 7
- D) January 18

These questions, characterized under the sub-heading of "Maternal Health" (Tenn 1991: 27) are comparable in content, style and subject focus to those found in any contemporary nursing, midwifery or obstetrical exam in North America⁹¹.

There is nothing medically, or physiologically wrong with the information presented there. However, implicit within the information these questions represent is an emphasis on the physiological workings of a body which is presumed to be identical to every other (female) body. The female body's processes (in this case, of fertility) are regulated by mechanisms totally separate

⁹¹ The answers are: (C), False, True, True, (D).

from the actions of other persons, living or not. This is a perspective which ignores the fact that Tongan women feel keenly that others, including nebulous ancestral ghost or spirit entities [*tevolo*] and God, have agency and can effect their child-bearing capacities, labour or delivery.

The second emphasis of the *Pālangi* model of maternal 'health' is on controlling the reproduction of those individual bodies. In the context of the public health nurses' maternal and child 'health' training, family planning and infant nutrition are key components, comprising 50% of the curriculum (Tenn 1991, Annex 9, page 75). The project objectives emphasize contraception and birth-rate reduction. These are the Tongan state's goals for improving the 'health' status of mothers and children (Tenn 1991, Annex 7 page 71):

“...[by] strengthening MCH/FP and health education to the point that the crude birth rate will have been reduced from 28.1 in 1985 to 25 per thousand population by the end of 1991; ...[and]... by the end of 1991, to have made available the services of trained PHN/midwives and staff nurses providing non-surgical contraceptive services at the 4 hospitals....”.

Consequently it is no surprise that the Training Manual for Public Health Nurses in Tonga suggests that the initial post-partum visit, where the nurse is supposed to be ensuring the baby is being properly breast-fed, the umbilical stump is not infected and the mother is coping well with breast-feeding, is also an excellent the time to “explore with the woman her decision regarding spacing of children and appropriate [contraceptive] method suited to her particular situation” (Tenn 1991, Annex 11, page 107).

Kauvai's nurse followed this strategy quite closely. Tupou told me that she counselled women to discuss the matter with their husbands at the first post-partum visit. I was present on some of her visits when she described the available family-planning [*fakakaukau'i 'o e fāmili*] options: condoms or quarterly injections of depo-provera (a long-term hormonal contraceptive). Oral

contraceptives were not available, nor considered safe to give to village women: in the opinion of the local chief medical officer and the Ministry of Health, too many women would forget when to take their pills; children might find them and eat them, or play with them; furthermore, climate and weather conditions made pills difficult to keep 'fresh'. The nurse preferred the depo-provera because it was the least susceptible to failure. However, she told me, and women I knew confirmed, that in practice, condoms were the option of choice for family planning.

The reasons women gave me for selecting condoms had little to do with contraception. What their reasons do demonstrate is the everyday potential for resistance while appearing to be obedient that is so very possible in *anga fakatonga*. In fact appearance of compliance or obedience is essential. According to *anga fakatonga*, it is very important to be seen to be behaving appropriately. In this, condom usage resonates with other forms of dissimulation and etiquette-based dishonesties described in the section on methodological caveats. Allow me to explain what I mean.

As a health professional, the nurse holds a position of authority and is therefore, in certain situations, more 'chiefly' than her clients. According to principles of good *anga fakatonga*, this means that what she says and suggests should be obeyed (or at least be seen to be obeyed). I have already described the situation when Talahiva lied to the nurse and to me, rather than embarrass the nurse, or be caught ignoring the formal, government-sanctioned lessons. Condoms offer women the same kind of leeway: Official government propaganda says that children should be well-spaced, that this enables families to provide for their children's 'health' and other needs, including school fees and other financial obligations. Spacing of children is described as beneficial for women's 'health', for parents' independence, and for the well-being of other children in the (nuclear) family (Ministry of Health, n.d., Radio Programme Transcript: Fakakaukau'i 'oe Fāmili). Yet Christian teachings say

that children are gifts from God (see Cowling 1990b and Morton 1996 for similar descriptions), and many women and men described them so to me. Furthermore, villages like Maka Fele'unga suffer from a shortage of labour (Evans 1996) and children do contribute to the household labour pool.

When I asked parents what number of children was ideal, the minimum number suggested was five, with many parents (men and women) suggesting a family size of up to ten children. Seven children was a common compromise figure. Common also was the notion that every household needed a range of children's ages - that older children were useful, and younger ones brought joy. Elderly people lamented the lack of a young child in their house, and other people felt great pity for households without young children (i.e.: two years to thirteen years of age). For this reason, it was normal for grandparents to raise one or two of their grandchildren. Such a child is referred to as a *pusiaki*, a fostered child. The happiness that children bring should not be under-estimated in the motivations of adults. Vasiti and Vili 'Aholelei, remember, were given two children to *pusiaki* [foster] and Pauline's household fostered a grandchild, despite the fact that four of Pauline's children lived with, or nearby to, her and contributed to a generalized pool of labour. According to *anga fakatonga*, children are desired, loved, and considered to be sources of happiness. Women who have children are considered blessed, not 'out of control'.

Freedom and independence [*tau'atāina*] are important personal goals in Tonga. Even though obedience is required between persons of lower and higher rank, the ability to "please oneself" [*fā'i telihā*] –even if one chooses to comply– is highly guarded. Women make a condom the contraceptive of choice because it gave them an option that injected contraceptives could not. Of the women who chose condoms for family planning, many did so because they wanted to portray themselves as obeying the nurse (at least during the check-up and interview) while retaining the

ability to please themselves and the freedom to control the realities of contraception. Choosing condoms meant they could do it all. When they next became pregnant, and if the nurse chastised or even questioned them, women told me they were free to say “my husband didn’t like the condom” or “we used the condom, but it broke”. Either statement represented the women as trying to comply with both husband and nurse. As Korn and Decktor-Korn (1983) point out, good intentions are more important than actual deeds. Regardless of the result, good *anga fakatonga* is followed. The nurse, by the way, recognized this strategy, and accepted it, both as an obfuscation, but also as a sign that the family was being respectful to her position. She consoled herself with the thought that at least she was getting them to talk about family planning, and that maybe after the next pregnancy, they would be more compliant.

Radio Based Health Promotion: Food as Nutrients

Like the individualized controls implicit in the focus of the maternal and child health practitioners, the radio programmes also demonstrate issues of control: Radio programs are used to promote a number of issues relating to the biomedical and state modernization agenda, from family planning and timely keeping of clinic appointments, to many lectures on food. There have been programmes on how to cook food for public gatherings (to prevent food poisoning), on diet, diabetes and weaning of infants.

In the nutrition as in the maternal and child health literature, illnesses are described as antonyms to ‘health’ [translated as *mo’ui lelei*]. Food, in particular is problematised and re-presented in a most un-Tongan way, and eating is vilified. The following passage comes from one such broadcast, reprinted below:

GOOD FOOD FOR GOOD HEALTH

...It is clear that the type of food you eat affects your health. Some of the health problems which are affected by the foods we eat and the lifestyle we adopt are obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, tooth decay. These are common problems in Tonga today. Perhaps the greatest nutrition problem in Tonga today is over weight [sic] and obesity.

Just as not enough good food can result in poor health too much of the wrong foods can lead to illness [sic]. If a person eats more food than their body needs for daily activity and exercise the extra is stored as fat making the body bigger and heavier.

There are many disadvantages to being overweight. Because of the excess fat you become tired quickly and feel uncomfortable during warm weather. You often suffer from backaches, foot trouble and are more at risk of developing diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases.

(Translation provided with original Tongan version, Ministry of Health, Radio Programme Transcripts).

In another nutrition oriented broadcast, the speaker talks about foods cooked at feasts, funerals and celebrations. Such foods are, s/he says, subject to various dangers: the loss of nutrition that occurs with overcooking, and food poisoning resulting from unhygienic preparation conditions and the germs [*siemu*] in undercooked, or slowly re-heated meats:

'Oku mahino mai leva koe fa'ahinga me'atokoni koe a 'oku tau mau. 'Oku fekau'aki lahi 'ia pea mo 'etau mo'ui lelei. Ko ha ni'inihi pe 'eni 'o e ngaahi mahaki 'oku fakatupunga 'e he me'akai ko ia 'oku tau manako 'ia 'ae mahaki 'oku fu'usino, suka, toto ma'olunga ka e 'uma'a 'a e mahaki 'ia 'ae mahaki 'ia koia 'a e nifo, pea moe mahaki'ia of mafu. Kuo nau hoko kinautolu koe ngaahi mahaki angamaheni 'i he ngaahi 'aho ni 'i Tonga ni. Ka, 'oku meimei koe lani ange pe 'a e fu'u sino.

Ka hoko lava 'e nga maheni 'aki 'e ha tokotaha 'ae ma'u me'atokoni koia 'o fu'u totua ma'u pe 'i he fiema'u totonu koia 'a e sino ke he'ene ngaahi ngaue faka'aho, 'oku hoko leva 'e heni ke tanaki 'a e ngako ia 'i ha sino 'o mamafa pea fu'u mamafa ange ai 'a e sino.

'Oku lahi leva 'a e ngaahi faingata'a 'oku fehangahangi moe mo'ui. Ko e fu'u lahi ko 'eni 'a e ngako 'i he sino, 'oku ne fakatupunga ai 'a 'ete hela'ia vave pa 'e 'ikai pe foki ha'ate toe ongo'i fiemalie kae tautefito ki he taimi 'oku mafana ai 'ae 'ea. 'Oku toe toe hoko foki 'a 'ete fu'u sino ke te mafu 'a 'ete ma'u ai 'ae langa tu'a, felanga'aki 'a hot [sic] va'en pea toe lahi anga ai foki 'a 'ete ma'u faingamalie ke te ma'u ai 'a e suka, toto ma'olunga pea pehe foki ki he mahaki mafu.

COOKING FEAST FOODS:

[It is] important to prepare the food so that it is clean and good for the people attending the feast.

Many times we have stressed to you to pay attention to the surrounding things, that clean food is as important as clean drinking water.

It is very important though to remember that it doesn't end with clean food, but also the energy we want for our bodies. For instance, when you prepare vegetables and greens, do be careful that they're clean but don't cut them too small and store them too long before using them.

It has been proven that the vitamins and various other elements that make up the energy in vegetables are quickly lost. If you can prepare your vegetables... [and] manage to keep them cold or on ice, you'll protect them for a while and not lose the energy from your food.

It is also important to cook your food completely when its prepared for a feast. It is exceedingly important because raw, undercooked food, especially meat or fish is very susceptible here to the growth of various little germs and destructive creatures that cause poisoning to the food and resulting in stomach ache, diarrhea, and other problems for your body. (in English this is called food poisoning).

[Oku] mahuinga ke teuteu'i 'a e me'atokoni ke ma'a pea mo lelei ma'ae kau faka'afe.

Kuo tu'o lahi pe foki hono fakamamafa'i atu mei he tafa'aki 'oku ne tokanga'i 'a e me'a 'o e atakai, 'a e mahu'inga ke ma'a 'a e me'atokoni` kae 'uma'a 'a e vai inu`.

'Oku fu'u mahu'inga foki kehe manatu'i 'oku 'ikai ngata pe 'i he ma'a 'a e ngaahi ivi koia 'oku fiema'u 'e horau sino-. Hange koia kapau 'oku ke teuteu'i ho'o vesitapolo mo ho'o salati pea ke tokanga ma'u pe ke 'oua 'e hifihifi 'eni 'o tuku ke fu'u fuoloa pea ke toki ngaue'aki.

Kuo 'osi fakamo'oni foki 'oku vave ange 'a e mole atu 'a e ngaahi ivi kehekehe 'i he vesitapolo e vaitamini, pea moe ngaahi elemeniti kehekehe 'e ni'ihii.... Kapau leva ko ha'o teuteu ha vesitapolo... he 'oku lava 'ehe momoko 'e e 'aisi 'o ta'ofi fakataimi 'a e mole atu 'e ngaahi ivi ni mei he me'akai.

'Oku toemahu'inga aip foki ke ngaahi ke moho lelei 'a e me'a tokoni kotoape 'oku teu'i ki he faka'afe. 'Oku fu'u mahu'inga foki 'eni he ka momoho 'ota ha me'atokoni, tautefito ke he kakano'i manu, pea mo ika, 'e toe vave 'aupito heni 'a e tupu 'ae fanga ki'i siemu pe manu maumau koia 'oku fakatupu kona ki he me'atokoni- 'a ē, 'oku fakatupu langa kete, fakalele pea moe ngaahi palopalema kehekehe ki totau sino-. ('Oku ui fakapālangi koe food poisoning)

The model here is of food consumption and obesity as mainly a physiological and mechanical relation - food is fuel which needs to be spent. If there is too much taken in, it is stored

as fat and the result is an unhealthy, ugly, heavy, body. The ramifications affect other aspects of one person's corporeal body - backaches, foot problems, difficulty with the blood (too 'high' or too 'sweet') and illnesses of the heart. These concerns are clearly the motivations for the weight loss contest described in the previous chapter.

Like the nursing literature described above, the radio shows generally represent the human body as a biological machine, constructed in this case by what is eaten. They indicate a relationship between food and illnesses, and illness is considered to be an individuated event.

These functional descriptions of food do not take into consideration the social importance of food for the representation of individual and familial status, as described in chapter six, nor the ritual importance of feasts, nor the emphasis on social performance and kinship or rank-based roles. Yet these are the very reasons feasts and large distributions of cooked and uncooked foods are held! Most large gatherings and food distributions occur because of a funeral (like Vasiti's), a wedding, a first birthday, the visit of a high ranking chief, during the annual Agricultural Fair (which resonates with the ancient *Inasi* described previously), or at the ritually significant times of Christmas and the New Year, during which an entire community re-affirms its social ties to each other and to God through feasting. In the following paragraphs, I give a cursory description of a typical New Year's feast, as but one example of how 'food' figures in Tongan social relations.

These feasts, called *kai me'akai* or *faka'afe*, were described to me as occasions of sacrifice and offering: "*feilaulau*". The object of a feast is to show God how well His beneficence is appreciated, and to ask Him for rewards for the upcoming year. As such, the feasts are a kind of gift, which, it is hoped, will obligate God to reciprocate, in the traditional manner of chiefs and commoners. That the feasts and the foodstuffs laid out in such abundance are intended as sacrifices is clear from the

language used to describe them --*feilaulau* [offering]-- but also by the prayers and ritual formats followed during the feasts, and in the attitude of the people laying out the feast tables.

On a feasting occasion, be it the weekly Sunday *'umu*, or any one of the annual feasts held during *'Uike Lotu* --Prayer Week--, foodstuffs are several things simultaneously: they are displays of the beneficence of God and the degree to which He has favoured a particular household or *kāinga*. This is demonstrated through the abilities of the hosts to provide an over-abundance of food. Furthermore, like the number of guests at a funeral, feasts like the community-wide ones held during the first week of the New Year, demonstrate the extent of a particular *kāinga*'s social relations: typically on Kauvai, such feasts serve sixty to over one hundred people and since no single nuclear family could accumulate so much food (there being no long-term food storage on Kauvai), extensive social connections are required to amass the amount of foodstuffs needed to feed the expected guests. The feasts graphically represent the bounty of food, but also, of good social relations, of connections between kin and compatriots.

Feasts are also occasions which emotively, discursively and structurally reinforce the existing social order. As such they conform to Mauss' analysis of sacrifice in his classic book The Gift (1990 [1925]). Visually and structurally, a feast table replicates the hierarchical order of society: food items which traditionally are the highest ranking, are placed near the 'top' of the table. The largest roast pigs, *'ufi* [a type of yam] and taro, along with other available delicacies, are placed here, where the high ranking people --*hou'eiki* [chiefs], religious leaders, honoured guests -- will sit. Other guests sit, according to a self-assessment of their relative ranks, with the lowest ranking persons at the bottom. The quality and abundance of the food decreases towards the bottom of the table too. A feast will likely have two seatings: guests eat first, and hosts eat second. As givers of the sacrifice, the

hosting family and their *kāinga* are lower in status. Consequently, they do not sit at this first seating, rather, they wait for the guests to finish, and then they, and other low ranking people, eat the leftovers.

Each feast begins with prayers from the various ministers. The New Year's feasts are organized through the various churches, and so that minister, or a high ranking guest, will offer the initial prayer. During this prayer, God receives a description of the magnificence of the food laid out, the illustrious guests who have come to eat, the continued subordination of all present to Him, and a reminder to bless the person whom the feast is honouring. At this point, a *mātāpule*, or representative of the host family, will make a request from the bottom of the table, that "everyone eat as much as possible, and take away with them whatever they please". While the high ranking personages are eating, a basket is sent to each of their homes or the boat(s) which they had arrived in. This is a gift from the hosts, a sign of gratitude to the guests for helping to glorify [*fakalangilangi*] the event and for acting as mediators between the feast-givers, and God (see Mahina 1992 for detailed discussion of the interrelation of ceremonial and social practice). The basket, which is an expression of gratitude for the guest's presence, contains minimally, a roasted suckling pig, some root crops, especially *'ufi*, other edible delicacies and an item of women's wealth [*koloa*].

After the high ranking guests have eaten, they are expected to give speeches. Oration and rhetoric are esteemed skills in Tongan cultural practice [*'ulunganga fakatonga*] and the speeches are meant to be displays of eloquence as well as knowledge. While a spirit of competition certainly exists, and the speeches are definitely entertaining for the guests, the demonstrations of oratorical skill should be thought of as part of the overall sacrifice: food for the mind, so to speak, in which the high ranking people add to the hosts' offering to God. Thus, the speeches act to glorify

[fakalangilangi] the occasion, and add the endorsement *[poupou]* of the elites to the entire offering. As soon as everyone who wishes to speak has finished, a final prayer is said, during which God is again reminded of the fidelity of the people present, especially the hosts, and He is pressed again to look favourably upon the person for whom the feast has been named.

After the prayer, it is time to leave, the first seating departs, and those who sponsored the feast come in to eat the leftovers. Importantly, the rituals of the invitation from the bottom of the table to eat heartily, the prayers and speeches are not repeated -- the offering has been completed, and God has been made aware of the sponsoring family, the person for whom the sacrifice is dedicated and their worth.

On Kauvai, the New Year's Feasts were usually dedicated to a young child. Susana's brother Ika and his wife Vaiola sponsored a feast for instance, in the name of their first child, eight year old Latu. Young Latu was a *pusiaki* [foster child] living with Vaiola's mother, at the far end of Kauvai. But she was still the focus of her parents' intercession with God. Feasts could be named for someone of any age: a young person about to make a life transition such as the Tongan School Leaver Certificate Exam, a voyage overseas, a marriage, or a person since deceased. Vili Maea, for instance, sponsored a feast every year in honour of his long-dead mother.

That the feast foods were sacrifices to God was confirmed to me, both when I asked directly "Are the feasts offerings to God?" [*'Oku feilaulau ki 'etau Otua, 'ae faka'afe?*], and in the actions of people like Sione Mama: Sione and I were helping lay out the food for one of the New Year's feasts of 1993. We were placing fried legs of chicken at intervals down the centre of the length of a table cloth which was laid on the floor of the Wesleyan Church's meeting hall. This feast 'table' was already fairly full, and we were doing our best to fit the chicken in between the platters of other

foods. We were near the bottom of the table, chicken not being an esteemed traditional food, and were laying out the broken, small or burnt pieces. We had both been up since dawn, cooking, attending church services, and then laying out the food. I for one, was very hungry. It seemed that Sione read my mind, for he looked around, and brought the chicken piece he held near his mouth. I watched, surprised, because I'd been contemplating doing the same thing, but Sione paused, then put the leg down between two bowls of *'ota ika* [raw fish]. He grinned at me and sighed "Bad luck, eh?" he said. Bad luck indeed - to eat of God's offering before it has been given. We waited until the second sitting, and then ate as much as we could of the blessed food.

A nutritionist focus on food ignores the significant ceremonial aspects of foodstuffs, in which foodstuffs and women's wealth [*koloa*] figure to tie together ranks of humans, in relation to God, and assuring the continued potency of society for the new year. Nutritional literature also disregards the degree to which abundance is culturally prescribed both for the producer as well as the consumer. Furthermore, the literature promotes a *Pālangi* based method of valuing food, as opposed to the culturally specific prestige of certain food items according to *anga fakatonga*: the nutritional literature describes food [*me'akai, me'atokoni*] by breaking it down into various categories: carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Diets are advocated, based on putting the specific constituents into individual bodies. For example, when teaching about "The Weaning Process" (Ministry of Health, Radio Programme), the speaker described a 'staple food', 'dark green leafy and orange vegetables', 'food from animals' and 'fruits'. For example (original translation) :

A very good first food to give a baby, along with breast milk, is a soft, thick, creamy porridge, made from the staple food of the community.The staple food contains starch, and it is usually eaten by most of the people in the community at most meals....The staple varies from country to country. It may be rice, wheat, maize, cassava, yam, potato, etc. Nearly all food from animals are nutritious but they are often expensive. They come in different forms:

- 1) Meat, including fish and organ meats such as liver.
 - 2) Milk from different animals including foods made from milk such as cheese or yoghurt. Although butter is from animals, it is not within this group. It is included as a fat.
 - 3) Eggs....
- If food from animals is not available to the family everyday, peas and beans are very good instead.

This kind of advice is confusing for villagers: They consider rice and wheat (available as flour) to be low status, famine food, something used after the lowest ranking form of root crop, *manioka* [cassava], was used up: how could it be good for babies when other food was available? People agree that potatoes taste awful (and don't keep well). Peas and beans were unavailable in shops and are too dissimilar from any other traditional foods for people to be comfortable with cooking or eating them. Lack of electricity for refrigeration means that milk products are rare on Kauvai ⁹². The animal fat every one does use, beef lard, is not even mentioned in the list. Furthermore, the categories described in the 'health' programme do not coincide with how 'food' is perceived and described in everyday life.

In fact, the nutritional lectures categorize food in completely un-Tongan ways. Food, called *me'akai* [thing to eat] in everyday language and *me'atokoni* [thing that helps] in polite terms, refers very specifically not to all edible products, but to the starchy root crops and varieties of breadfruit that are part of the traditional diet (the 'staple' in the radio programme's terms). It is opposed to a category of 'relish' or 'treat', called *kiki*. Things which are *kiki* are tasty and add interest to a meal, but eating *kiki* alone is not equivalent to eating a meal – *kiki* is not 'food'. The lists in Figure 4:

⁹² Dairy cattle were very expensive in Tonga, and non-existent on Kauvai. Dehydrated milk was prohibitively expensive for most villagers. Canned condensed, sweetened milk and formula were not understood to have significant differences. Furthermore, in 1992, a radio report described a study done in Samoa that attributed adult onset diabetes [*suka*] to use of cows' milk in childhood.

Tongan Food Categories indicate what was *me'akai* and what was *kiki* on Kauvai during my time there. Vegetables like tomatoes and cabbage, which have been introduced as potential commercial crops, figure in an intermediate category – more *kiki* than *me'akai*.

As well as the items listed in Figure 4, people on Kauvai might purchase items like 'cabin crackers', wheat flour, peanuts, pastas, rice and, in the height of the drought, bread, baked by an entrepreneur living in Pangai. Like the introduced vegetables, these edibles are not generally fitted into either indigenous category, but were clearly not *me'akai*. 'Food' [*me'akai*] is taro, 'u*fi*, *kape*, breadfruit and cassava. Everything else is pretty much *kiki*. Fruit drinks, made from adding water and sugar to grated fruits like mango, papaya and/or coconut (cream or grated) are referred to as *otai* and are not generally thought of as either food [*me'akai*] nor relish [*kiki*]. As the above lists show, villagers are not used to categorizing edibles for their constituent elements (vitamins, proteins, sugars or fats). I recorded the following in my field notes:

Feb. 16 '92: Food, it seems to me can be thought of in categories of tastes and textures: *melie* [sweet], *ngako* [fat/tasty] and *kona* [bitter/bad], or firm or mushy; or in categories of how it is obtained: grown or caught; or in categories of whether it is usual or unusual food. None of those categories include nutritional assessments. Food it seems, is eaten & selected, for flavour, and to avoid hunger. Drink is for thirst. Food is social, but not recreational, not even at a feast.

In hindsight, I could have added another category. In a ceremonial sense, edibles are categorized as appropriate or not, and ranked according to traditional status according to *anga fakatonga* and desirability. This is most evident at community feast tables, where the delicacies like lobster, the largest pigs, the sweetest drinking coconuts and the largest *kape*, 'u*fi* and taro are placed at the 'top' of the table. In formal kava circles, *anga fakatonga* says the most important edibles are 'u*fi*, pork and sugarcane. But as I recorded in my field notes, none of these forms of prestige ranking identify any particular edible according to notions of internal constituents such as are associated with

'nutritional' elements.

Much of the nutrition-focussed 'health' teaching is concentrated on children. However, as far as children's diets are concerned, Kauvai parents are interested that children eat something: what they eat is less important than that they have ready access to food, and as much food as they wanted. When I asked women to tell me "what was good for children to eat", they tended to list off the foods that they had available, beginning with the most common roots, and ending with desirable items that could be purchased in the local shop. This was true for adults as well.

Talahiva used an interesting expression when I was asking her to tell me things that were good for mothers to eat: The following is a list she gave me in September of 1992. Talahiva was telling me what she thought was "*aonga kai*". The more usual expression was "*sai ke kai*", meaning "fine to eat", and Talahiva's choice of words indicated she was trying to describing things that are 'useful' or 'appropriate' to eat, and of benefit to the body, in other words, what Canadian mothers mean when they say 'Eat your ____, they're good for you':

Bananas (two types), taro leaves, cassava, 'ufi (a yam), tinned fish, deep-fried pancakes, bread, tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, lettuce, melon, coconut juice, water (from a reservoir), milo (a malted milk powder), milk, soda pop.

Siaine, pata, lū, ika, manioke, 'ufi, kapaika, keke, mā, temara, kukumba, kāpisi, letisi, meleni, vai niu, vai sima, milo, hu'akau (lahi), sota.

Talahiva gave me what was, in some senses, a wish list at the time: we were talking near the end of the drought, and bananas, taro leaves and 'ufi had been non-existent for months. But she then listed the foods -- tinned fish, pancakes and bread -- that her family had been eating for the past weeks, as well as the tomatoes and carrots I had brought as a gift. Her list is therefore equally interesting for what is excluded: the usual staple of taro, of which there was none, pork, which is usually eaten at feasts, and fresh fish. Since there were no fishers in her household, she would have had to get fish from outside her own family network. In including the salad ingredients I had

brought as a gift, Talahiva was showing herself to be a courteous and politic person: Despite her characterization of the foods as being what was 'good for one', Talahiva was giving me, as I noted in my field notes at the time: "a list of things that are available for eating, rather than a list selective for things that are [nutritionally] 'good to eat' ".

Despite women's willingness to list off 'foods that were good to eat', I did not meet any mother who consciously planned their children's meals for nutritional value. Public messages through media like the radio broadcasts have impressed some mothers who, like Talahiva, know that certain foods can be described as being related to 'good health', but that did not affect the meal preparation, because 'food' and other edibles were selected by men, on the basis of what was available for eating from the *uta* [bush/gardens] or *tahi* [sea].

Rather than something which needs to be portioned out, watched lest it create an illness and gaged according to invisible characteristics, in everyday practice on Kauvai, food serves more as a means for assuaging hunger and demonstrating personal (masculine) capability and interpersonal (male or female) generosity. The term for selfishness is *kai po* - literally, 'eating at night (and thus hidden by the dark)'. Meals are consciously eaten in the open - near an open doorway, or in a most public part of one's home, the *peito* [cookhouse/kitchen]. The initial statement visitors will expect to hear when entering someone's house is "*na'a ke kai?*" - Have you eaten? Children are constantly being offered bits of food, and food often figures in the game of 'take and give back' played between adults and toddlers, and used to teach children to be generous. Plates of food go back and forth between neighbours on a daily basis, with an increased intensity on Sundays.

For men, food production is a way of fulfilling the traditional duties of fathers, brothers and sons, because according to *anga fakatonga*, food and shelter are male responsibilities. Through over-

production, men can publically demonstrate their (masculine) capabilities as farmers and/or fishers. But further, having enough food to give some away, whether as a sign of affection, in times of need, or by sponsoring a large community feast, also allows men to demonstrate their sense of *'ofa*.

As well as demonstrating generosity and competence, food [*me'akai*] also serves as a potent symbolic and poetic device in Tongan rhetoric and verbal arts. Mahina (1992:127) notes the use of the same categorizations of bitter and sweet which I had observed in my field notes (above) in social and poetic idioms, as expressed in the sayings *'Oku kona kiate au ho'o lea!* [Your words poison/embitter me] and *'oku melie kiate au ho'o lea!* [Your words are sweet to me].⁹³ In another example of food as metaphor for social relations, in everyday parlance on Kauvai, the corms which develop on the taro root, and which eventually become the means for further planting and propagation are referred to as *foha* [son]. Clearly, in Tongan epistemology, and on Kauvai, 'food' is not simply a constellation of nutrients, it is part of what people use, in practice and metaphor, to maintain appropriate social relations.

A Primer for Mothering

The final example of how *Pālangi* conventions for 'health' have appeared in Tonga comes from a book on pregnancy, childbirth and mothering (Nance, 1977). The small handbook is printed in Tongan, and promoted at a very low price (T\$2.00) through the Wesleyan Church's bookstores. It features a clear endorsement from the royal family: a photo of the Princess Pilolevu and her then

⁹³ Mahina suggests the use of these idioms in poetry and story serve to evoke the contradictory aspects of life in the Tongan social system. For Tongan society is rife with internally contradictory or competing expectations, as Gordon (1994:1) neatly captures in her description of the Tongan social fabric:

- 1] a dual descent system in which matrilineality is as equally significant and potentially generative of symbolic capital as is patrilineality, but structurally less powerful,
- 2] competition of unequally ranked cognatic kin in securing the loyalties and resources of an individual,
- 3] the problems for individuals of dividing those loves and loyalties among competing interests.

infant daughter Princess Lupepau'u appears on the cover. A letter of support from Queen Halaevalu Mata'aho appears on the frontispiece:

I want all women of Tonga to read this book because I believe it is good for them and helpful for their honourable duties toward the care of their children.

'Oku ou faka'amu ange ke lava 'o lau 'e he fefine Tonga kotoa pē 'a e tohi ko 'eni-, pea ka pae hē 'oku ou tui 'e 'aonga ke ai mo hono fatongia fakatauhi fānau-.

Nance's manual begins with an explicit, gynecologic, description of conception and development of a pregnancy. Line drawings such as those depicting the uterus, fallopian tubes, cervix, developing embryo and stages of birth, illustrate the entire text. Chapters cover the course of a pregnancy, including descriptions of morning sickness, miscarriages, diet, exercise, doctor visits, articles needed for an infant, the process of labour, complications and possible interventions including forceps delivery, episiotomy and caesarean section. Other chapters discuss contraception, post-partum care of the mother, breast feeding, use of formulas, weaning foods, normal physical and intellectual development of the baby, childhood illnesses and numerous other topics, including a list of (imported) medicines useful for treating various signs and symptoms, descriptions of various childhood diseases, and signs of 'the healthy baby' (Nance 1977:65):

Signs of the Healthy Baby

1. Grows well and gains weight.
2. Eats well when breastfeeding or when fed from a bottle.
3. Sleeps well between feeding times.
4. Doesn't cry very much.
5. The baby wets the diaper a lot.

Ngaahi Faka'ilonga 'o e Pēpē Mo'ui Lelei

1. Tupu ma'u pē e fua mamafa.
2. 'Oku kai lelei pē e pēpē he taimi fafanga 'i hono fakahuhu pe fafanga hina huhu.
3. 'Oku mohe lelei pē e pēpē he vaha'a taimi kai.
4. 'Ikai fu'u tangi lahi e pēpē.
5. Lahi e napikeni viku 'o e pēpē.

As may be ascertained from the signs listed above, Nance's book focuses on the first three

years of a child's life, and like the other forums in which *mo'ui lelei* is discussed, 'health' is presented as an antonym to illness, and as basically functional in nature. The information in the book is based on twenty-nine English language pediatric, maternity and general medicine texts; these were the sources which contributed to the material Nance translated into Tongan.

The text is very clearly an attempt to tell Tongans how their bodies work, and how they should interpret physical signs. The endorsement from the Queen, and the photograph of the princess royale and her daughter on the cover of the book serve to appeal both to commoners' ideals of obedience, and to perpetuate the ruling dynasty's association with 'health' issues.

What the text does not do, is situate the information in comparison (nor even opposition) to traditional [*anga fakatonga*] Tongan notions of illness, etiology or healing. Nor does the text address the semantics of *mo'ui lelei* for Tongans: traditional Tongan healing techniques are elided, an elision that, depending on your point of view, either discredits the traditional practices (by ignoring them) or does not discredit them (by ignoring but not forbidding them). This reading of the text is an example of how Tongans can 'remain Tongan by appearing to be Western', and also of how *anga fakatonga* permits fluid and flexible re-readings of actions, motivations and instructions.

Nance's book is in many ways a great resource for Tongans, especially Tongan women, for whom discussions of personal anatomy and physiology may be embarrassing and are best conducted in private. However, the scope of its influence on perceptions of children, and their 'health', is difficult to determine. Nance's book is the only reference of its kind printed in the Tongan language and available popularly. No-one I knew on Kauvai from 1991 to 1993 had a copy, or had even heard of the book, which was originally published in 1977. Yet many of the points the book emphasizes, such as hygiene and the variety of childhood illnesses, are present in women's discussions about

healthy children.

As the mothering primer, radio programmes and nurses' training show, the official 'health' messages in Tonga clearly are similar to that current in other nations of the world. It is a particular construction, in which 'health' is both functional, and an opposite of 'sick'; in this perspective, the physical body rather than social action is the site of illness(es), and therefore the physical must be subjected to government-sponsored controls. However, the focus remains on very young children, situating them as solely the responsibility of mothers; they are then generally ignored, until they are old enough to develop the lifestyle debilitations (eg: cardiovascular problems, cancer, diabetes) that bring them again into the purview of a medical services system (see Zimmet 1990).

In the following section, I show that Kauvai mothers do not take such a restricted perspective. Their signs for healthy children expand upon the information presented through the official medicalized messages, and condense the tropes of 'health'-as-physical with tropes of living well, according-to-*anga fakatonga*, over the course of a lifetime. The result is a newly expanded trope, the culturally meaningful invention (Wagner 1975, 1986) of *mo'ui lelei*-as-health.

The Healthy Child

From my first month on Kauvai, it was easy to see that children are socially idealized there. They are described as 'wealth' [*koloa*] and 'gifts from God' [*'ofa 'oe 'Eiki*]. Young children on Kauvai are well fed, and free from labour or personal restrictions; they are cuddled freely, and their skin is pinched to gauge plumpness. They are urged to eat and gifted spontaneously with candy, ice cream or other treats, by family and strangers. Girls and boys are bundled into beautiful clothes for church (three or more times a week), at which time they must be on their best behaviour. They are

otherwise allowed to run free for the first four years of life.

An infant may be teased with raised hands and warnings to be quiet [*longo!*], but children are not considered to be capable of logical thought [*tē ke ai poto*] until just before they are ready to enter school, some time around age five. They are therefore, basically unsuitable for discipline. As juveniles, they are *tu'a* [behind/lower in rank] relative to almost everyone else, and they are expected to demonstrate this through obedience to all elders.

Adults expect that each others' children will attend church frequently, be quiet, respectful, attend school, and learn both school and bible lessons by heart. Discipline, while potentially severe, was most frequently in the form of highly demonstrative public threats. Corporal punishment is an option, but one I saw very rarely, in contrast to what Kavapalu (1993) describes. In the few incidences of corporal punishment that I witnessed, ie: where an adult struck a child, the emphasis was on the public aspect of the performance: a very large wind up, and contact that was actually quite restrained. The focus of teaching is to produce a child who is *anga lelei* [well behaved, nice] and *loto lelei* [good internal motivations] (Kavapalu 1995, Morton 1997). While disciplining through corporal punishment and public ridicule was a possibility, the option I heard about and saw most often was the private, prescriptive, instructions [*fakahinohino, tu'utu'uni*] told to children, and used as reminders of how good children behaved. Some families even structured a weekly time when the parents would tell their children what they expected of them. This was particularly popular with Mormon families, but other families reported reminding children of their duty and proper forms of behaviour at bed time. This fit in with the traditional practice called *mohe 'ofi* --sleeping near-- in which mothers and children sleep together, and mothers tell their children stories, parables and/or genealogies as 'bed-time stories'. *Mohe 'ofi* are times when mothers are culturally prescribed to tell

their children about their place in the social order, and to teach them how to behave according to *anga fakatonga*; in short, how to be seen to be living well.

There are certain ideals about childhood, associated with specific stages of maturation. Notions about what is expected from one's child is determined in some respects by their maturational stage. Morton 1997 (see also Kavapalu 1991) has documented the early stages and parent's practices of childhood on Tongatapu, contributing to the general Polynesian literature on child rearing. As Morton describes for villages in other parts of the nation, on Kauvai too, children pass through socially marked stages - newborn, baptized infant, first year, puberty, and young adult (age 21).

Past childhood, and yet still part of the overall maturation process which concerns parents, are other milestones in maturity: marriage and parenthood. These milestones are followed by the attainment of the church based status of *malanga* [lay preacher] or *akonaki* [instructor]. Lay preachers are usually men, although there were two women on Kauvai who had passed the examinations to be accredited *malanga*, and who occasionally gave sermons. Usually, a husband and wife achieve the complementary levels of lay preacher and instructor [*akonaki*] together. Attaining a *mātāpule* or *motu'a tauhi fonua* title can mark another level of maturity for a man (women have only rarely held names or titles). This achievement situates a man within a genealogy of previous title holders that may extend back for several generations.

While a married woman or man, or anyone who has become a parent, is not considered a 'child' per se, they are still a child of someone, still responsible for fulfilling their filial, honourable duty [*fatongia*] to their parents; thus, by virtue of the ranking in the kinship system, every person, our or old, is still *tu'a*, and child-like to her/his elders, including ancestors. As women described

their ideal healthy child to me, their descriptions were not limited to the age definitions assumed in the maternal-child health teaching, or in the general 'health' promotion literature. Kauvai women's descriptions of the healthy child varied somewhat, depending on whether they were thinking about a toddler, a primary school child, a young adult, or grown children.

When asked each mother I interviewed, what special thing she did to ensure her children's health, I also asked what she did that maybe other people didn't do. I was attempting to ask a question that would allow me to tap into ideals of mothering, without generating the formal, official, conventionalized, *Pālangi*-oriented answer. There is a strong cultural ethic which says that 'all people do the same things', and so my framing of the query called that notion into question. Some women demurred, telling me they didn't do anything unusual or different from their neighbours. Perhaps those women saw through my ruse and answered conventionally: they re-emphasised food, clean beds and clean clothes. Those are the answers they associated with a *Pālangi* (i.e.: my) concerns about children and 'health'. However, I was also told "*lalānga*" [plait] and many, especially the women I had the most familiar relationships with, told me: "ensure they go to church", or "ensure they say their prayers". One mother's statement sticks out in my mind, because she stated quite clearly that a "healthy child is one that goes to church". This perspective was balanced, of course, by another's comment that a "healthy child is one who doesn't get sick", and again by another's statement that "children will grow to be healthy Tongans if they are treated well, if they don't see fighting and drinking, are taught to work hard and are raised to be respectful and to have '*ōfa*'. Notably, no one credited immunization or the well-baby check-ups performed periodically by the local maternal-child nurse.

While there is variability, in general the formal interviews which I had characterized as about

'health' [*mo'ui lelei*], resulted in descriptions which emphasized the factors publicized in 'health' promotion campaigns: hygiene and nutrition. But as women begin to think and talk generally about children of varying ages, the "healthy child" was described in terms of bodily wellness and social actions. Especially important was the child's fulfilment of their duty to parents, God, family and community [*fonua and kāinga*]. As Bloomfield (1986) argued in her research, health is related to *monitonu* – satisfaction from completion of kinship based duties. The following passages show how, despite differences in age, religious denomination and experience as mothers, women's discussions of healthy children overlap points emphasizing hygiene and nutrition with messages concerned with appropriate social practices and relations. Women's descriptions combine and overlap tropes drawn from notions of tradition, Christianity, family and 'health', and at the same time demonstrate the expansion of their understanding of *mo'ui lelei* to living well.

The first quotation is from a mother of nine children (one adopted). She is a member of the Chiefly Church [*Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki* : a 'homegrown' Methodist denomination], and was born in 1934:

Its my duty [*fatongia*] to make my children healthy, but God cares too. God energizes the food, yes the good life and all things come from heaven. But girls must be obedient, not go running off, for girls are precious. Its alright for boys to go wandering, but they should be cautious not to get wounded. Boys and girls need good food, and clean living; I wash their clothes and put their bedding out in the sun. The differences are in their bodies: Boys are more robust [*sino*], and they need to sleep in a different place [from their sisters], but girls are more beautiful; boys act like dogs, and eat anything, as they please. It is important to keep them from smoking and drunkenness - volleyball, tennis, farming, helping me and, if they have work, giving me money, that's living well [*mo'ui lelei*]. The main thing for [their] health [*mo'ui lelei*] is to prevent them from being dirty [physically and morally], or cold. I teach them not to swear, and not to go making a pest of themselves all over the place. People shouldn't show their children how to swear or gossip, or speak disrespectfully, rather, teach them to respect and love others, and that swearing and gossip are bad (N.T. 17/7/92.).

This next woman raised seven adopted [*pusiaki*] children. She was born in 1915 and attends the Wesleyan church. She offers her ideas on making and keeping children healthy, including the characteristics of a healthy child. In her description she refers to two men, one as helpmate, one as role model (Kenga is her deceased husband's grown son by a previous marriage, and Soni is her deceased husband). Her description mingles moral, physical and *kāinga* ideals with church based emphases on productive work, and the traditional roles of mothers, brothers and sisters:

I am responsible, but Kenga helps, even though he isn't really my child, nevertheless I looked after him like he was my true child. Its my duty [*fatongia*], the mother's, and my sisters', to raise healthy children. The difference between children is that girls should sleep away from the boys, and they [boys] should show respect [*faka'apa'apa*], shouldn't share bad language, or argue. I should be sure their food is clean, they should have enough that they're full, and have a warm bed. Its good for them to cook, to help look after the household [referring to money] and yard, do laundry, tidy up. A healthy child has a healthy body, they don't get sick, they're active and play freely. I watch their food, ensure they stay cool, out of the sun, guard them from sharp things; I teach them worthwhile work for the benefit of their place [*fōnua*] and family [*fāmili*], like Soni; not to just hang around without purpose. (S.M. 20/8/92).

The following example comes from a woman born in 1927 and raised in a Methodist denomination. In the 1950's, she converted to the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). She is the mother of nine children, one of whom is adopted, and four of whom died. She describes the healthy child:

What are the characteristics of a healthy child? "Behave nicely, active and busy, respectful, do the right things, obedient, learn their prayers and God, lots of energy, work often, strong of body, good appetite, eats freely". (F.A., while weaving, 2/7/92).

This same woman is critical of what she describes as some others' child rearing methods. Whether her statements are true, I do not know, but they do indicate her perceptions of the way to

harm the health of children:

My children are not often sick because their care is good. [They] eat their food, sleep well, at the right times, have clean clothes and bedding.... My neighbours hit their children often, they have abortions and swear at their children. It distorts [*kuluki*⁹⁴] their growth. (F.I. 2/7/92).

In the following quote, a mother connects Tongan medicines and the emphasis in *anga fakatonga* on avoiding bad social relations, with other nutritional and hygienic aspects of care. At the time of the interview, she was a 36 year old mother of 11, whose husband had been working overseas for years, yet she included him in the responsibility for children who are healthy:

Its my, the mother's, responsibility; and my spouse's. He's gone to New Zealand. I'll follow when the children are bigger... a child who is healthy has a healthy body, and is lively, plays, doesn't have to repeat the work he does, eats lots, eats at the proper time, bathes regularly, and drinks Tongan medicine [*vai tonga*]. A special thing I do, which is perhaps not usual, is to instruct them to know good from bad, and that way to stop their being tempted [to get into trouble]. A bad thing I see that some do is to teach [demonstrate] sharp language to their children. Bad things rise from that, that can destroy the character [*anga*] of the place [*fonua*], as people keep bad relations [*va kovi*] (M.T. 20/8/92).

The following example comes from Manu, a divorced mother of three teenaged sons, all of whom are currently attending school away from Kauvai. She attended the Chiefly Church, and lived with her elderly mother. Manu was well-known by my own daughter, because of the handfuls of sugar she gave out, treats she used to show her '*ofa* [love/ empathy/ generosity] for us. Manu clearly connected success at school with living well. She described how she knew when her niece, a *pusiaki* [adopted] to their household was *mo'ui lelei*:

You can tell when a child is healthy, because they do well in school, and they go to church [*lotu*] and they run and fetch water and help around the house. She doesn't speak badly, and isn't very naughty. She pays attention and she learns and she

⁹⁴ Literally 'to bend, enough to make a cracking noise'.

knows to pray to God. (M.N. 12/12/9).

Manu's perception that scholastic performance and health was linked is echoed by another woman, a grandmother who came to consult [*sivi* - a term associated with medical visits] with me one afternoon. She asked me what could be wrong with her grandson. He had been ranked first in his school classes for 4 years, but now, just when he needed the grades to be eligible for the secondary school rankings, he had slipped to third. His family feared he would not gain entrance to a good school, and suspected he was ill (If only I'd had a pill for *that* illness!).

These mother's words show that while the term *mo'ui lelei* is a signifier, what it signifies for Kauvai mothers, is not the same as what it signifies for medical professionals. Clearly, on Kauvai, *mo'ui lelei* is not a single construct. It most definitely is not a 'state of being' consistent to all individuals, regardless of stage of life. It is not centred in the physical body, although the body can be an indicator of health.

Nor do Kauvai mothers limit the idea of children's health to any particular age group, because for them, one's children are more than babies, toddlers or pre-school aged children: one's children are children to one forever, and the social prescriptions for practice derived from *anga fakatonga* and the ranking system place parents permanently in a position of being superior and responsible for their children⁹⁵.

Thus, as they grow older and more *poto* [capable], the signs [*faka'ilonga*] of a healthy child were good behaviour, being helpful and active in the family and village, eating the food they were given, worshipping at church and doing well at school. These are actions or behaviours that can be

⁹⁵ This is complex for mothers: traditional ranking places mother as lower than child, in one sense, as I have described, but higher in another, as an elder. Christian teaching echoes the primary stature of father, but also admonishes children to respect and love their mothers as elders.

expected of anyone, regardless of age.

Not getting sick figured in descriptions, but was not the key descriptor. I found it very interesting too, that despite the nurse's quarterly well-baby checks, and well-regimented inoculation routine, not one mother mentioned babies who had been inoculated as being healthier. Nor were the rounds of inoculations and nurse's visits described as actions which helped to make their children 'healthy', even though no-one, to my knowledge, refused to allow their children to be inoculated. When I asked women why they let their children be injected, they spoke of "pleasing Tupou". Why even go to the well-baby visits? It is good for "having a break from other things".

Between the *Pālangi* -style government-sponsored perspective on 'health' and that of Kauvai mothers, there are some similarities. Notable is the degree to which control becomes a moral issue. Control of the body and its physical nature, is expressed in government-sponsored materials which emphasize family planning, diet, and hygiene; to not comply with these controls is to subject oneself, or one's child, to the dangers of illness. Within the social performance of personal roles according to *anga fakatonga*, self-control is equally relevant in everyday aspects of living well. Duty, [*fatongia*] is especially strong as a motivating factor. There is a highly moral, almost sacred, significance to one's *fatongia* to one's parents, siblings, children, chief, and entire *kāinga*⁹⁶. Also predominant as a motivation for individual and inter-personal behaviours is *'ofa* [love/ empathy/ generosity]. *'Ofa* comes from mother, and then is returned by the children. Both *fatongia* and *'ofa* include implicit, patterned, specific, conventional ideals for behaviour.

But within the Kauvai mother's description of what makes a healthy child, or what indicates

⁹⁶ At one public event, a guest minister remarked that "the people of Kauvai still know the difference between *fatongia* and *kavenga*. He was referring the fact that *kavenga* refers to a burden, with the implications of a task which is onerous. *Fatongia* on the other hand is customary and demonstrates love, not disgruntled subordination.

that a child is healthy, variety also exists, despite their own assurances to me that “everyone is the same”. Some mothers emphasize the relationship to church, others the value of eating well, and many, that children behaved properly. What struck me as we talked is that the way women’s descriptions of *mo’ui lelei*, or their answers to my questions about *mo’ui lelei*, varied, according to where they and their children were situated, in terms of social maturation. Not surprisingly and most clearly, women’s answers reflected their individual experience: ages of the mother and her children affected her concerns for her children and the types of social relations she should be able to sustain. For example, preschoolers are “*te’eki ai poto*”, meaning that other than to play, eat and sleep, they are not yet capable of acting as social beings. A mother’s concerns at that point are focussed on the physical, but also the emotional and social. They are concerned with preventing injuries, such as falls and wounds from sharp objects. Shouts of *na’a ke tō!* [lest you fall!] and *lavea!* [sharp!] were so frequently heard that they were among the first words I learned in the village. But mothers (and fathers, siblings, everyone) were concerned that the infant and young child should not feel sad, nor should their noise (i.e.: crying) interrupt the harmony of an elder’s peace. Thus a crying child was frequently cuddled, or distracted with lilting, pleading or infectiously cheery voices; they may be told *oua* [don’t] and *longo!* [noisy/hush].

This is not to say that women are not concerned about fatal illnesses, or that children don’t die on Kauvai. There are many reminders of the possibility of child death, even in the benign environment of Kauvai: As women gave me their childbearing histories, a few told me about this child or that one, who had died in early childhood. One seven year old child from the south end of the island died while I lived on Kauvai, despite living two minutes walking distance from the home of the island’s nurse, and despite the fact that his family were friendly with mine, and that we often

handed out advise or first aid treatments. I was away from the island at the time, and I do not know what caused his death, but the symptoms described afterwards are consistent with dysentery and dehydration, very common causes of child mortality around the globe. The infant of another friend died within the first twenty four hours post-partum, while in the hospital in Vava'u, soon after I had returned to Canada. In this sad scenario, my friend's baby joined the short, but tragic list of other infants who had died in hospital.

The horror of such events, rare as they may be in actual numbers, was so strong in the public mind, that it induced the donation of an incubator from a Canadian archaeological team conducting research in the area. Certainly, Kauvai women did not take their baby deaths lightly, unlike the Brazilian women Scheper-Hughes (1994) describes as being so overwhelmed by the high numbers of baby deaths that they think of sickly children as angels-in-making, and accept babies' deaths as ordained by God. In contrast, the Kauvai women who talked to me of baby deaths blamed pneumonia, fever, unspecified 'sickness' [*puke pē*], and medical incompetence for causing the death of a young child.

Rather than putting children through trials of life (see Scheper-Hughes 1994), on Kauvai, newborns are secluded until their baptism, because there is a possibility of a child dying in the early months of life. The seclusion acts as a natural quarantine. Baptisms are performed sometime between one and three months. This is a celebratory event, in which mother, father and child are adorned in their best clothes and *ta'ovala* [waist wraps]. The event stands as a symbolic emergence from seclusion of the baby and mother, but it is not yet a full emergence into the social world: that occurs after the first birthday. At a first birthday, parents offer a large public feast (if they can), complete with distributions of foodstuffs and textiles: this event marks the point at which parents can assume

their child will live, and from which point a child is formally incorporated into her/his *kāinga* [kindred]. This is the point when an infant begins to be a member of the surrounding community, begins to live well. These first birthday celebrations are comparable to a funeral or a wedding in the size of the feast, numbers of guests and amount of resources gathered and redistributed: the flows of food and textile wealth that occur at the first birthday party incur obligations of reciprocity on behalf of the child, thus situating the child within the set of obligations that already bind their *kāinga*. Those dutiful ceremonials set a person on the *hala* [path] of their life in a social world. A significant part of the first birthday ceremonial involves women's *koloa*, as I discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters.

As they become closer to puberty, children are subject to other 'temptations'. Mother's concerns shift from the physical dangers and concentrate more heavily on the social health of their sons and daughters. As Ruddick suggested when referring to the 'demands' for preservative love, "as a child grows, so does the work of protection" and the task of mothering "enlarges", even as it "remains constant: to keep safe whatever is vulnerable and valuable in a child" (Ruddick 1986:80). With the older child, for instance, mothers (and fathers) are concerned that the glory and magnificence of a daughter's virginity and modesty be preserved, and that sons not make pests of themselves as they become peripheral to the feminine confines of the home.

Teenage boys are described as *talavou* [beautiful/youthful], but this is a stage when young men are expected to fend on their own. It is a period marked by small gangs of boys misbehaving in privately expected (but not publicly sanctioned) ways: typically, they scavenge food from their *fa'ē tangata* [mother's brother], get drunk, get into fights, and try to seduce girls. The fact that this period occurs while many teens are attending school away from their home villages adds to mother's

concerns in the abstract sense, but reduces other, potentially more immediate stresses: at least the boy may not cause problems with the neighbours and local community.

Any concerns a mother may have had for son's or daughter's hygiene and nutrition are supplanted at this point by concerns for moral, sexual and civil control, and avoidance of *kāinga* and neighbours' disapproval. Such problems can lead to bad feelings [*vā kovi* - the antonym of *vā lelei*], gossip and criticism of one's children, and, therefore, of oneself. The worst case scenario is for a daughter to become pregnant, and for this reason, when an eldest child graduates into secondary school, many mothers from Kauvai, and indeed all the other Ha'apai islands, moved to live in shantytowns [*nofoanga*] near their children's secondary school.

As one's children get older, they are expected to make greater contributions to the household - materially and emotionally. The pressure on young adults to provide labour, income and or prestige through accomplishments at university, can be severe (Cowling 1990a, 1990b). The child who does not show 'love' [*'ofā*] for their parents, or who is ineffectual, incompetent or ignorant of their duty [*fatongia*] to their parents are subject to gossip, as a form of covert social censure, but also any number of nebulous, or difficult to diagnose ailments. Failing to 'live well' can result in a number of vague or not-so-vague complaints: physical sickness, job loss, marriage failures, and bad dreams are among the symptoms for not living well. Not living up to the expectations of one's social group, and the way that parents act to hold children responsible for being healthy Tongans, even after their own deaths, is demonstrated in the following paragraphs. It is the story of Talanoa, a man originally from Kauvai but living overseas for years, and his eventual treatment for *tevolo*, a condition which, he told me, resulted from his deceased parents' disapproval of his failure to live well, to follow *anga fakatonga*.

Not Living Well: *Tevolo* and Post-mortem Kinship Responsibilities

Talanoa returned to Kauvai after living in New Zealand and then Australia for almost 15 years. He returned to re-bury his mother and father, because his sister had begun to have disturbing dreams, and he feared for his youngest daughter. He told me his story the day after he and a team of family and neighbours from Maka Fele'unga and two other of Kauvai villages excavated his parent's graves.

For the past four years, Talanoa had been battling stomach ulcers. However the ulcers were not responding to medical treatment. He also had a bad back, and that, coupled with the pain from the ulcers, led to the loss of his job. He was now living on a disability pension. In this state, Talanoa was concerned about the potential failure of his second marriage and was ashamed that he did not know the whereabouts of his first family: his wife and the children from the first marriage were somewhere in New Zealand, but he had lost contact with them. In his search for treatment for the back and stomach problems, Talanoa had been to many Tongans living in Australia, seeking *faito'o*. He had also been examined and treated by many doctors, but the pains always returned.

When he began to have severe headaches in addition to his other problems, he told me, the doctors could find "nothing wrong". Talanoa spoke to a *faipele* [Tongan card reader] who told him that his mother or father (both were deceased) was unhappy with him: he should return to Tonga. But Talanoa did not have the money to return to Tonga.

A year later, Talanoa's sister, who does live in Tonga (but not on Kauvai), began to have frightening dreams. The sister worked on one of the ferries that ran between the island regions. She dreamt that their mother was crying and scolding, and threatening her. His sister feared she would be drowned at sea. Upon hearing this, Talanoa scraped together the funds and returned to Kauvai to

exhume the bodies of his parents.

Deceased persons can grow lonely. They can be angry if neglected by their descendants. One sign of neglect -- a dereliction of filial duty [*fatongia*] -- is failure to maintain the grave site. When this happens, roots creep into the interred bones, and cause them pain; in other cases, synthetic materials used to wrap the deceased for burial fail to decompose. This constricts the natural unfolding of the body, and like the invasive roots, causes pain. In these situations, the deceased may send signals to their children -- they are especially likely to select a favoured child, usually an eldest or the youngest. Being dead, lonely, and in pain they are more irritable. Also, being dead, they have become more *'eiki* [chiefly] than when they were alive. Combined, this means they are free of social expectations and perhaps prone to unkind gestures. They are likely to punish those they think have forgotten their *fatongia* [duty] and neglected to maintain appropriate social relations [*va lelei*]. If the favoured child does not respond, another child, a grandchild (or even further down the generations) will be targeted until someone, eventually, heeds their call. The usual treatment for such a situation is to exhume the bones, clean off all the roots, massage them with Tongan oil, re-wrap them in a piece of barkcloth or woven koloa, and settle the bones back into the crypt or grave. Exhumation of deceased relatives is common, and requires no permit or official sanction⁹⁷. While not encouraged, it is a recognised aspect of *faito'o fakatonga*.

Talanoa believed that, in retrospect, he had been receiving warnings from his mother or father for years, but had been ignoring them. He knew, he told me, that he had not remembered his

⁹⁷ Embalming and other means of slowing the natural decay of the corpse are not practiced in most parts of Tonga. In fact, the failure of the body to decay is part of the explanation for the subsequent need for exhumation. Also, on Kauvai, crypts are used as burial tombs. This is fairly unusual in comparison to the rest of the country, and is connected to the high-ranking past of Kauvai. The use of crypts means more than one person may be buried in the same vault (although not at the same time).

fatongia [duty] to his *kāinga*, or his *fonua* [homeland]. He did not send gifts home when *kāinga* members died, he had stopped going to church, and he had not brought his children to Kauvai, where the spirits of the deceased grandparents could come to know them. Some of his children did not even speak Tongan! He had forgotten the importance of *’ofa*, for his elders, his family, his place. In his own eyes, Talanoa was emphatically not *mo’ui lelei*. His social relations were “full of holes” he told me (in English), and he had the *mala’ia* [bad luck] and *mahaki* [illnesses] to prove it. But it was when his sister became threatened, that Talanoa became frightened, both for her and for his young daughter. Then, as both a child and as a parent, he acted. His actions demonstrated a return to *anga fakatonga*, an attempt to reconcile kinship obligations, to be seen to be living well, so as to regain a sense of health.

The crew of young, *talavou* [youthful/beautiful] men dug at the sand covering the grave of Talanoa’s father. Pouvalu, a *motu’a tauhi fonua* [elder who guards the land] from Maka Fele’unga sat quietly nearby, lending a formal, if unspoken, sanction to the event. The elected regional representative and a brother of Talanoa’s deceased father had conferred as to the exact location of Talanoa’s mother’s grave, and now Vili Maea, in the role of *tofunga* [undertaker], directed the young men, encouraging them to hurry up, dig harder, then to clear the sand away from the edges of the crypt, and pry off the coral capstone. As the stone was removed, we all craned to look inside. It was hard to distinguish the bones of the various individuals buried inside from the thick knot of reddish brown roots of the nearby coconut palms. Talanoa’s already serious face looked even more concerned, and he spoke, both shock and relief in his voice: “Now I see how sick I really was”.

The *tofunga* laid out a length of barkcloth, and selected two of the young men to jump into the crypt. In this, as all situations, kinship is a significant aspect of social action. Vili Maea knew the

genealogies of the young men, and he knew who was buried in the crypt along with Talanoa's mother. He selected helpers who were related to the residents of the crypt through the deceased's matrilineal ancestors, or were *fahu* to the people buried in the crypt: decedents through father's sisters of those buried there. As part of his role as *tofunga*, Vili Maea had determined that those men's genealogical relationships meant they could safely handle the bones of the people buried there. He pointed out the bones of Talanoa's mother, moved the other individuals' bones to one end of the crypt and showed the young men how to rub off the roots and pull them from between cracks. He paid special attention to the foramen magnum and the various epyphysis⁹⁸, which provided hiding places for tiny roots. As I looked at the thick network of intertwined roots wrapped around, over and into the bones of Talanoa's mother, I thought of how sharply their dense, fibrous net contrasted with Talanoa's own frayed, loose and tenuous relationships.

Like Talanoa, many, many Tongans whose families originated on Kauvai now live overseas. Most moved to New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Of the latter, most are in California, with some in Utah and Hawai'i. Perpetuating *kāinga* relationships across oceans is not easy. It is hard enough to live up to one's local network of family-based duties [*fatongia*], as Decktor Korn (1974, 1977) notes, and migration overseas adds burdens both on the migrant, and on the kin left behind (Cowling 1990a). So Talanoa's detachment from his family, his 'place' [*fonua*], and the *kāinga* of his homeland is not unanticipated, even if it is painful for those left behind (living or not). Yet Tongans, in comparison to some other Pacific Islander migrants, have continued to perpetuate reciprocal ties between the kingdom and the overseas communities, ties based in strong affective

⁹⁸ The foramen magnum is the hole at the base of the skull which permits connection between brain tissue and spinal cord, skull and vertebrae. The epiphysial plate is a layer of bone at the end of long bones, which in a child, is the active growing site, but in an adult has become fused to the rest of the bone. Post-mortem however, such sites can be invaded by tiny roots.

ideals of *'ofa* (Vete 1995, Evans 1996, Brown 1998). Women and men that I interviewed in Auckland, cried as they told me of their love and empathy for, and their desire to be generous to [*'ofa*], the kin [*kāinga*] of their homeland [*fonua*] of Kauvai.

On Kauvai, mothers, like women throughout the kingdom, do what they can to foster feelings of *'ofa* in their children. They know that at least some of their children will migrate, such has been the pattern for at least two generations, according to the genealogies they related to me (see Cowling 1990a, for a discussion of migration from Tonga to New Zealand and Australia). But *'ofa* can keep their families together.

'Ofa is the underlying motive for all appropriate social relations (Kavaliku 1977) according to *anga fakatonga*. *Anga fakatonga* places great emphasis on the family as a “supportive, self-improvement group” (Cowling 1990b:193), and kin are identified, in Tonga as in other Polynesian societies, through affective actions. For Tongans, this is portrayed through on-going mutual assistance, on ‘helping’ [*fetokoni'aki*], on fulfilling *fatongia* [duty], all of which is said to be motivated by *'ofa*. The affective compulsion to show generosity to others, to participate in an ongoing flow of mutual assistance is termed *fe'ofa'ofani*, and it underlies much of the ideal for everyday living well.

Things done out of love, generosity and empathy –*'ofa*– help to create and perpetuate warm feelings of mutual interdependence, the same feelings that underlie notions of kinship and allow for the perpetuation of appropriate social relations. For example, when people who were not related to Vasiti gave textiles and food and animals for her funeral, they did it out of *'ofa*. When parents cater to their pre-rational [*te'eki ai poto*] children’s whims, or punish their older, more capable [*poto*] children, whether through scolding or corporal punishment, they do it out of love and duty (Kavapalu 1993, Morton 1996), and a confidence that appropriate social relations are important to

the child's ability to live well in the future. When deceased parents, like those of Talanoa, reach out from the grave they may be angry, but even the punishment is delivered out of *'ofa* (Gordon 1996). Talanoa's situation is a good example of the ways a mother, father, grandparent or older ancestor can be seen to be retaining an interest in the living well of their children, even after death.

Faito'o methods are passed down through family networks, but they are described as gifts from God. As such they should be shared freely, and so Talanoa, who has lived away from Kauvai for fifteen years, was able to come to Kauvai and ask people who were distant relatives or non-kin who, like Vili Maea, had known his parents, to help him. While Talanoa knew what needed to be done, he did not know how to do it himself. Men like Vili Maea, and the young boys who dug out the crypt helped because they could –because, as I have stated above, *'ofa* is the underlying basis for all appropriate social relations (Kavaliku 1977).

This notion of health as underwritten by *'ofa*, and as based in appropriate social relations modelled on kinship is quite different from that embedded in a biologically predicated 'health' system, and herein presents a critique of the biological, mechanical and pathological emphasis in notions of 'health' adopted within the medical system in Tonga. Though various in its origins and subject matter, the 'health' promotion material demonstrates clearly a biomedical model of disease causation and transmission, rather than a Tongan model of *'ofa*, kinship, *fetokoni'aki* [mutual helping] and *fai'i teliha* [freedom of choice]. Within the former model, people are constructed as essentially physical: people are portrayed as corporeal entities, demarcated and identified by biological, physiological, even mechanical bodies. These bodies are subject to specific forms of illness.

'Health' (translated as *mo'ui lelei*), is implicitly an antonym of illness in this model. Each

body needs to be controlled in particular ways, lest it become 'ill'. This version of 'health' is promoted through a top-down, government-sponsored constellation of messages and medicalized professionals. The focus is on illnesses, physical symptoms and treatments, and on disciplining bodies: through conventions of diet, procreation, illness categorization, diagnosis, prescription and legitimization of treatment, and in conventions for who and what is a 'healthy child'. It is a distanced set of instructions which tells people, via radio, print media, periodic nurse's visits or doctor's consultations, that government-sanctioned professionals are the authorities and should be obeyed.

On Kauvai, this construction of 'health' is being incorporated analogically, and condensed into, another set of conventional practices, and an ideology that says social relations are primary: The model for the interaction is the chiefly/commoner dyad, and perpetuates the conflation of tropes of chiefliness and the state, described in chapter five. In the village, biomedicalized 'health' activity is thus implicitly conjoined to the half of the dyad wherein acts of *'ofa* derive from the chiefs (and ultimately from God). Appearing obedient, respectful and cooperative is the way non-chiefly people fulfill their half of the burden of perpetuating life, of living well as a part of *anga fakatonga*. In short, government gifts of medical services are balanced against the reciprocals of public obedience, respect and compliance, to ensure the smooth flow of life. In the village, the motivation is *anga fakatonga*, the creation and maintenance of good social relations. Despite a medicalized infrastructure and educational curriculum, children are still described as healthy when they conform to cultural ideals for social behaviour: eat well, do well in school, show respect to elders, attend church. And the 'child' is always a child of someone, who may decide to remind that child of their social responsibilities, even from the other side of death.

From the point of view of people on Kauvai, specific diets, medical visits, medicinal regimes and family planning are not, therefore, actions which create *mo'ui lelei*. While they are focussed, from the *Pālangi* perspective, on controlling the actions of a physical body, on Kauvai, they are perceived as directions for social interactions which, when complied with, demonstrate a willingness to be obedient, respectful and cooperative. 'Health' behaviours such as visits to the hospital for medical advice, attendance at the nurse's well-baby clinic or parroting of radio broadcasts about breast-feeding or 'good food' are, certainly, intended to gain access to a particular treatment for a particular condition. But they are also scenes in which commoners can be seen to be demonstrating a willingness to appear compliant. For equal to notions of commoners' compliance and duty within the convention which is *anga fakatonga*, are the conventions prioritizing free choice [*fa'i telihā*] and independence [*tau'atāina*], duty [*fatongia*] and love [*ofa*].

In other words, the motivation for being healthy on Kauvai is the social body, not the physical one. Biomedical practitioners and health promotion advocates, with their government support and goals of controlling the physical bodies through diets, medications and fertility control are met with formal obedience, and informal nonchalance: condoms become the method of choice for family planning, because they truly do allow choice; people join the National Healthy Weight Loss Competition (ie: chapter six), then please themselves and drop out (Coyle 1997). Just like collecting and fabricating numbers of animals for a World Bank survey (as described in chapter 4) is a diplomatic and creative way out of a potentially difficult double-bind, so too, do people on Kauvai accept the directions offered as 'health' promotion, and the terminology of 'health' as *mo'ui lelei*, then manipulate that trope, expanding what it signifies, making it include what they know makes for healthy living: appropriate social relations.

Living well, maintaining appropriate social relations, making one's son or daughter into a healthy child –these are heavy duties on Kauvai. As I discuss in the next chapter, a Kauvai mother's sense of *mo'ui lelei* is tied to her ability to *fai fatongia* –fulfill her duty– and to her production of textiles. Within the conventions of *anga fakatonga*, a women's living well is directly associated to her children's *mo'ui lelei*; both are bound up with traditional textiles and the obligations of the maternal kindred.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MATERNAL DUTY AND THE SOCIAL INHERITANCE OF HEALTH

Motivation for *mo'ui lelei* on Kauvai is the social body and the conventions of *anga fakatonga*. I argue in this chapter that *mo'ui lelei* is socially transmitted. Children are seen to be inheritors of *mo'ui lelei* from parents who live well.

How to live well, as a mother, figures throughout this chapter. The work of mothering and of achieving *mo'ui lelei* are described by Kauvai women as depending upon personal industry, willingness to fulfill conventional domestic and kinship based duties, and ascribing to the ideal of *fakakoloa* [make like wealth/ enrichment], wherein the 'wealth of the family' is the mother. In the previous chapter, Kauvai women described the healthy child as being lively, obedient, knowing their place in the kindred and *anga fakatonga*, and, most importantly, following God and doing well in school. In this chapter, Kauvai mothers' words demonstrate the importance of *fatongia* [duty] 'ofa [love/ generosity/ empathy] devotion to God and the idea of *fakakoloa*, or being the wealth of the family. A woman's duty to be (and make) the 'wealth of the family' includes responsibilities for the economic, educational and spiritual needs of her family, especially her children. As I show in this and the following chapter, rolled up in the end results of the cultural pressures to live well, and the work of producing healthy children, are the multiple and sometimes competing uses for women's ceremonial textiles, the importance of gifting for perpetuating social relations and the gendered nature of some forms of labour in Tonga. Women's economic production patterns reveal important

aspects of their roles as mothers, and of the importance of textiles to living well on Kauvai⁹⁹ .

Women's textiles, wealth referred to as *koloa*¹⁰⁰, figure significantly in the ritual exchanges which create and perpetuate social relationships. I discuss certain ritual exchanges and their relationship to maternal identity and *mo'ui lelei* in the following chapter. Here, I show that a women's most intensive textile production is driven by her children's educational and spiritual needs, and the gendered nature of women's economic contributions to the family.

Identity and Mother's Work

Mothering is a form of work (Ruddick 1989) but also a social role, an identity (Whitbeck 1983). Polynesian people construct identity as essentially social, affective and performative. This is evident in kinship and fictive-kinship relations in other parts of the Pacific (see Lieber 1990, Sahlins 1985, Feinberg 1981, for some excellent examples) as well as in contemporary and historical Tonga. Performance and practice in everyday and ritual situations are the means for establishing and maintaining kinship, and for demonstrating and maintaining identities, senses of self which are structured by cultural role expectations, but which are quintessentially social. This is demonstrated in the way people are described as members of such-and-such, children of so-and-so, or as persons

⁹⁹ I wish to acknowledge M. Evans for giving me access to unpublished economic data he collected during 1991-1993. (See Evans 1996 for more detailed analyses of an atoll economy). The interpretation of the data is purely my own, but I owe much to his generosity and willingness to respond to my questions.

¹⁰⁰ *Koloa* is the generic term for the varieties of textile products (i.e.: bark cloth, plaited pandanus leaf products) which are made, administered by and associated with, women. The term can also be used to describe other valuable items (i.e: cars, china, furniture), and is one of the many euphemisms for children (see Kavapalu 1991, Morton 1996), but in everyday language on Kauvai, the default meaning for the term *koloa* is women's' wealth/plaited textiles. But there are numerous varieties of those textiles. Thus I use the gloss 'plaited koloa' to refer in general to the sleeping mats, waist wraps, draperies, and ancient and newer 'fine mats' (see Kaeppler 1978, 1990) that make up the range of valuables plaited from the multiple varieties of pandanus leaf fibres. I have coined the term 'plaited koloa' as a convenience to the reader only. It should not be assumed to refer to an indigenous term.

who do this-and-that. This is what Lieber (1990) means when he describes ‘consocial’ identity on the Polynesian outlier of Kapingamarangi¹⁰¹. Such ‘consocial’ ideals for establishing membership, filiation, or living up to idealized practices are expressed and conventionalized in Tongan social practice as *anga fakatonga*. For Tongan women, the structural role and obligations of “mother” –a maternal identity– require reconciliation with the roles and obligations of other aspects of their identity, for example as sisters and daughters within a kinship group, as wives and as feminine persons within a church parish. This is the classic structural tension discussed in chapter two, as was identified by Ortner (1981), James (1983), and Gordon (1996)

A maternal identity, and the consociality required of everyday *anga fakatonga*, means that mothers want do their best in terms of what is ‘right’ for their children, or at least seem to be attempting to do so. Everyday Tongan social ideology, places the responsibility for children’s well-being on their mothers, and blames mothers for ‘not sleeping close’ [*ta’e mohe ‘ofi*] if children turn out to have bad social behaviours or untreatable illnesses (Spillius 1958, Bloomfield 1986, Morton, 1996). Implicitly, the mother who lives well produces the child who is also living well: Children’s status of *mo’ui lelei* is socially inherited through good, healthy, parenting.

Mothers feel impelled to follow the conventions of *anga fakatonga* partly because they know that good, healthy mothers are evidenced by good, healthy children (Butt 1987, makes a similar argument for Dani women, but for different reasons). Good mothering on Kauvai means fulfilling the feminine social roles of mother, sister and wife, as well as being Christian and living according to

¹⁰¹ What may seem to be a contradiction in Tonga to the notion of consocial identity is the fact that contemporary Tongans do prioritize blood ties, in terms of accessing chiefly titles, personal rank (Biersack 1990, Bott with Tavi 1982) and access to land. Historically however, adoptive and other non-blood based forms of relation (consociality) were accepted as evidence of an individual’s rights to inheritance. The ranked titles themselves are still modelled on notions of siblingship, such that non-blood related individuals who hold titles which are considered related, are themselves considered to be *kāinga* or *matakali* [extended kin], simply on the basis of their (socially) acquired titles.

the conventions of *anga fakatonga*. In these ways, then, Kauvai mothers could be said to differ little from mothers in North America, in terms of the pressures to create socially appropriate, appealing, successful children (Ruddick 1989, Bart 1984, Chodorow 1978).

The conventions of *anga fakatonga* are partly derived from Christian teachings, partly from cultural traditions that pre-date contact. What is now enshrined in contemporary maternal and feminine conventions constructs wives as inferior in social status and subordinate to their husbands, and mothers as primarily responsible for their children.

Thus the contemporary situation would seem to contrast sharply with the equally conventional importance of independence [*tau'ata'ina*] and freedom of choice [*fa'i telihā*] and the higher status of sisters [*fahu*] in pre-contact Polynesian societies. In their roles as sisters, Polynesian (including Tongan) women held great influence, authority and power. The brother-sister relationship was described as strong and women invested a great deal in the children of their brothers and other siblings, sometimes, it is argued, in detriment to the mother-child relationship. In her analysis of gender and sexuality in Polynesia, Ortner (1981:391-2) concluded that in comparison to the sister-brother relationship:

The mother-child bond is thus much like the wife-husband bond from the wife's point of view. It receives little cultural support and is largely a matter of (variable) personal sentiment.... the parallels for women between motherhood and wifedom (as for men between fatherhood and husbandhood) are systematic, as might have been predicted by the fact that both are metaphoric "commoner" statuses. Just as wives have no great economic or "political" stake in their marriages, so mothers have little in their children (Emphasis added).

While 'cultural support' for various roles and thus kinship is changing with modernization, the sibling dyad remains a very significant aspect of a person's construction of self in Tongan society. Yet Christian and modernist constructions of family obligation also prevail. In contemporary village

life, women can experience a competitive dissonance between their perceived cultural obligations to their own *kāinga*, based in their roles as sisters and daughters, and their responsibilities to their marriage (Gailey 1980). Kauvai women's solution disputes Ortner's (1981) interpretation of the general situation. Contrary to Ortner's analysis, sister/wives on Kauvai strategically emphasise the structural position they have in common, that of mother.

There are many places a woman can and should place her loyalties, situations predicated upon her various kinship and affinal relationships as a sister, a wife, a mother, a daughter. Each choice will require an investment either of her plaited *koloa*, some other form of *koloa*, her cash or her time¹⁰². These multiple uses place competing pulls on a woman's *koloa*, as well as her individual loyalties. One way a mother, as an individual caught between competing loyalties, can deflect the conflict, is, contra Ortner (1981), to emphasize the needs and well-being of the individual both her natal *kāinga* and her affines hold in common: her child. This is in keeping with Evans' (1996) point that spouses cooperate as economic partners because of their children.

When mothers advocate that in order to make their children healthy they must live exemplary lives themselves, and make of themselves (as for example does 'Eva, below) 'the wealth of the family', they are not consciously strategising about how to make the introduced term *mo'ui lelei* meaningful. But they are concerned with the proper and public construction of an identity, with living lives that demonstrate the appropriate feminine and maternal qualities of 'ofa, 'anga lelei [nice behaviour/ good manners/ modesty], faith in God [*tui, falala*], industry as opposed to indolence [*fakapikopiko*], concern for good social relations [*va lelei*] and a mastery of traditionally feminine

¹⁰² Examples include the ceremonies that take place at life crises events, the annual feasts when high ranking guests must be gifted, leave-takings or welcomes to home for people travelling, events for which cash is not nearly enough. Finally, plaited *koloa* exists as a reserve source of cash, and equity for bank loans.

skills [*ngaue fakafefine*]. This is how women embody cultural ideals through their daily practices as mothers. In so doing they show themselves to be living well, and create the social space and material means for their children to also live well. On Kauvai, being able to do this means knowing how to *lalānga*: how make the plaited pandanus leaf textiles I gloss as plaited koloa.

Women's daily emphasis on the production of plaited koloa, their consistent longing for more of both kinds of *koloa*, and concern that they not be caught by some event (a funeral, birthday, wedding, honoured guest) without *koloa* to gift with and to wear, is part and parcel of the work that mothers do. Given the argument that living well creates healthy children, plaiting and having plaited koloa for gifting is as important an example of 'health activities' as is knowing the healing repertoire of the island's residents, breastfeeding an infant, watching lest a climber fall, or agreeing to have one's children immunized. Thus do women, through the process of motherwork, show themselves to be living well -- *mo'ui lelei* -- , create the social space and material means for their children to also live well, and in the process, embody certain cultural ideals¹⁰³. They think of themselves as fulfilling *fatongia* [duties] through their *fakakoloa* -enrichment- of their family.

Fakakoloa: The Wealth of the Family

'Eva Feimo'efi'afi, wife of the Wesleyan minister on Kauvai during my stay there, gave me a clear prescription for mothering in June of 1992¹⁰⁴. She had given the original version of the text I

¹⁰³ Plaited koloa exists as a source of 'wealth', and a focus of maternal work. But the value of plaited koloa stems from more than its fiscal potential, or even that the process of producing it demonstrates 'hard work' for the benefit of a mother's family. That plaited koloa has significance vis-a-vis gender, gifting as well as the burden of mothers' work to make their children healthy, must be bourn in mind, and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter (see also Appendix Three, in which I discuss many varieties of plaited koloa, including their symbolism).

¹⁰⁴ Ministers and their families are located with various congregations on a term basis. 'Eva and her husband had been living on Kauvai for two years when I arrived, and stayed there during the entirety of my own stay.

recorded, in a *malanga* [sermon/speech] the Sunday previous, at the close of the Wesleyan church's Family Prayer Week [*'Uike Fakafāмили*]. Family Prayer Week is a Wesleyan event, held annually, in June. As the highlight of the week in 1992, 'Eva's sermon was entitled "*Fatongia 'o e Fa'ē*": "The Duties of the Mother". She repeated her speech two days later at my request, and I was able to tape record it at that time. While the recorded version I reprint here is not identical to the version given on the Sunday, it too was a public performance. At the time of the recording, 'Eva was working with her *toulālanga* (cooperative plaiting group). Of the other three women in the group, only one was a member of the same denomination, and had heard 'Eva speak the Sunday previous. Nor was 'Eva in a completely neutral environment, despite her long association as plaiting partner and neighbour with the other women in the group. None of the other plaiters were close *fāмили* [family] to 'Eva and although two women (sisters) acknowledged a connection to her which made them *kāinga* [extended family/compatriots], it was a distant one, optimised when 'Eva first moved to Kauvai two years previous.

As well as being a bit less energetic and emotional in the repeat performance, 'Eva's second version differs in one other slight, but not insignificant, way from that of the previous Sunday. In the version I tape recorded, 'Eva's speech was slightly shorter in duration. In part, this is because on the Sunday, 'Eva made metaphoric connections between proper Christian, spiritual practice and domestic order through vocal and facial gestures which accompanied the recitation of certain Bible passages. In the second version, she only paraphrased the biblical references. The second text therefore reads with a stronger emphasis on domestic housework. In both versions however, her performative emphasis (i.e. voice, facial expression, dramatic pausing) was placed on the point that the mother was the enrichment of the family.

In my notes from the original performance on the Sunday, I recorded three words 'Eva had stressed: 1] *Faka'opo'opo*, meaning to fit things together, to make things organised, linked and neat; 2] *Tefito*, meaning the basis, base, centre or core of something, and 3] *Fakama'ama'a*, meaning to lighten a load. In my fieldnotes, I noted at the time that 'Eva was saying:

the responsibility of the mother was to organise the family and the home, to engineer the smooth running of the household through her physical and social abilities, with references to things like cleaning and food preparation, but also to teaching the children to behave, at home and in public. She went on to say also that the mother was the pivot or base of the family, that the mother was a helper to the father who was the 'boss'. The mother was also a teacher to the children, a caretaker, and the inspiration to do things like attend church'. This is the way I understand her to be using the term *fakama'ama'a*, in that the mother makes the burdens of the family, namely spiritual burdens, easier to bear.

The following paragraphs are the transcription of 'Eva's speech on mother's work.

The Duties of the Mother.
 'Eva Feimo'efi'afi.

Fatongia 'o e Fa'ē
 'Eva Feimo'efi'afi.

The honourable duties of the mother at home for the family are mainly four things: 1] they must teach the children. The home is the first school. 2] A very important duty, is to arrange things for the family. 3] It is a must to 'Christianize' the family. 4] The wealth-making' of the family is by the mother.

Ko e fatongia 'o e fa'ē 'i 'api ki he fāmili, 'iai e 'u me'a lalahi 'e fa [4]: 1] Kuopau ke ako'i kinautolu. 'Uluaki 'apiako ia ko 'api. 2] Kuopau ko fatongia lahi ia ke fakamā'opo'opo 'o e fāmili. 3] Kuopau ke fakalotu e fāmili 4] Ko e fakakoloa 'o e fāmili 'oku fai 'e he Fa'e.

The first duty is to tidy/organise/arrange things. If there is no mother at home, then the home can not be clean and neat. But when the mother is at home, the children are nice and clean, so is their bed, all positioned away; the kitchen and the equipment is too. If the mother was not there, then things would not be clean/tidy.

Ko e 'uluaki ko e fatongia ko e faka fakamā'opo'opo ko e pau, ka 'ikai ha fa'e'i 'api pea 'oku 'ikai maau 'a e 'api, ka ko e 'iai pe ha fefine 'e ma'a fotunga 'o e 'api 'i he 'iai 'a e Fa'e ma'a fanau, lava leva ke ma'opo'opo e tuku'anga 'o e mohe'anga, peito mo hono ngaahi naunau. Kapau na'e 'ikai ha fefine na'e 'ikai ke fakamaau 'e 'u me'a koia.

The first school is the home, and the first example the children follow is the mother. My own behaviour is seen in my children, who

Ko e 'uluaki 'apiako ko 'api. Ko kita 'e uluaki fakatata mai ki ai e fanau ko e fa'e, ko e 'ulunganga koia 'o'oku 'e 'ulunganga pehe ai pe 'eku fanau pea teu ako'i kinautolu ke nau

copy my behaviour. Thus I will teach them to be humble, as a servant of God the Father, as according to what works I do. I must teach my children various lessons, that's the good mother: It is the mother and her duty to teach the children in the home, teaching their speech, teach them their behaviour / culture; and the ways of life are taught to the children by what their mother does.

Regarding worship, it is a must to take my children to many/various church (prayer) activities. The reason is for them to know about God. If they don't know about God, all is futile. The truth from the gospel, Proverbs Chapter 31, is about the duty of the mother in the family: "Her light will not die in the dark" then, she that like a ferryboat, takes her children to worship. It testifies that the duty of the mother is so weighty that we are unable to express it.

The final duty of the mother is to enrich the family; The mother tries to plait, from which to get money to carry the various obligations (burdens). It is women who, themselves, will plan everything, to carry the various responsibilities. We are different, all of us, from foreign people, or from those Tongans who work for money- for us of Kauvai, we get money from weaving, to pay for the various duties of the mother. Therefore the wealth-making mentioned in Proverbs: 'She is a precious stone, more important than silver or gold'.

There are lots of responsibilities that the mother has in the family. We hope to be like mothers everywhere. Like the example of 'Ana [referring to 'Ana Seini, the only other Wesleyan woman present]: Wake up early in the morning, tidy and bathe the children and after that go to do other work, but don't wake and do other work without the home arranged.

'anga fakato-ki-lalo- (lotoma'ulalo) anga fakasevanite. Ngaue faka-tamai 'oe 'Eiki 'o fakatau pe ki he nau 'oku ou fai' pea kuopau pe keu ako'i 'eku fanau 'i he ngaahi 'apiako', he ko e fa'e lelei ia. Ko e fa'e ia mo hono fatongia 'o'oua ke ako'i e fanau 'i 'api, 'ako'i he lea, ako'i he 'ulunganga moe ngaahi mo'ui 'e pehe 'e he fa'e 'e fai pe 'e he fanau.

Koe fakalotu'i: Kuopau ke 'ave 'eku fanau ke ne ngaahi lotu ko e 'uhi ke nau 'ilo ke he 'Otua. Kapau he'ikai tenau 'ilo ki he 'Otua ko e laufanoa (maumautaimi) fakamo'oni mei he potu folofola 'i he tohi paloveape vahe 31 'oku ha ai 'ae fatongia 'oe fa'e 'i he famili: " 'Oku 'ikai mate 'ene maama 'i he pouli" pea " 'oku ne hange ha vaka fakatau ke 'ave 'ae fanau ke he lotu", ke fakamo'oni'i 'aki ko e fatongia ia 'o e fa'e 'oku mafatukituki pea'oku lahi 'ikai te tau fa'a malava la lau.

Ko e fatongia faka'osi ko e fakakoloa 'o e fāmili. 'Oku feinga leva 'a e fa'ē ke fai lalānga ke ma'u mei ai ha pa'anga ke fua'aki e ngaahi kavenga. Ko e kakai fefine ko kinautolu tenau fakakaukau'i e ngaahi me'a ke fua'aki e ngaahi fatongi. 'Oku mau kehekehe kinautolu mei he kau pālāngi pe ko e kau Tonga 'oku nau ngaue pa'anga kinautolu ia- ka ko'eni ia Kauvai'ni, 'oku ma'u pe pa'anga he lalānga 'o fai'aki e ngaahi fatongi 'o e fa'e, ko ia koe fakakoloa ia, 'i he tohi paloveape ko e Fa'e ko e makakula koloa 'a e mahu'inga 'o e fa'e 'oku mahulu hake ia 'i he siliva mo e koula.

Ko e ngaahi fatongia lahi 'o e fa'e 'oku ne fai 'i he famili. 'Oku mau faka'amu ke pehe 'ae ngaahi fa'ē kotoa pe. Hange koia na'e fakatata'aki kia 'Ana: 'a he pongipongi 'o tafitafi e fanau, kaukau'i ke ma'a pea 'osi ia pea tetoki 'alu 'o fai e ngaue, kae 'oua pe 'e 'e 'o 'uluaki fai e ngaue 'oku te'eki maau e 'api. 'Uluaki fai ngaue ki he fāmili, pea toki fai e

Do the family work first, then go and do her other duties. For instance, first I have to clean/ready my home, and then I must teach them [my children] to know and to be skilled to conduct their own prayers; And then do my duties, and then their food; those are the major duties mothers do for their family in the home.

That's it.

The testimony from the gospels psalms 27 says 'if the people and God are not together in the building of the family, then the effort will be wasted; they will be exhausted if God is not involved in the building of the family'.

fatongi ko e ki he ngaahi me'a kehe. Kae 'uluaki pe 'ete ngaahi hoto 'api, pea kuopau pe ke 'ako'i kinautolu ke nau'ilo mo nau poto hono fai e lotu, 'o fai 'enau ki'i lotu pea fai e fatongia ho'ata 'o 'ai 'enau ki'i me'akai, ko e ngaahi fatongia lahi ia 'oe ngaahi fa'ē 'oku ki he fāmili 'i api.

Ko ia pe.

Ko e fakamo'oni pe mei he folofola tohi saame 27 "kae 'ikai kau 'ae 'Otua he ngaue fāmili langa, ko e koto kula moe angosia kapau 'e ikai kau 'ae Otua he langa.

This formal, public prescription for mothering, clearly, has a strong emphasis on stereotypic *Pālāngi* and Christian missionary-era ideals of a female domestic sphere, encompassing household and children, obedience to God as father figure and subservience to a husband; it includes an acknowledgement of the benefits of order and cleanliness, read in a secular version as hygiene, and in a more sacred setting, as spiritual practice. But it also emphasizes the mother's role in creating the wealth¹⁰⁵ of the household, a mingling of traditional Tongan ideals and a Protestant work ethic.

While 'Eva's perspective is certainly influenced by her position as wife of the village's most influential minister (Wesleyan) her's is not an unusual ideal. The Wesleyan model of social practice has become the most closely associated with *anga fakatonga* (Gordon 1989, Cowling 1990b). In the following examples, I include the Christian denominations of the various speakers, so to show the similarities of stances, across denominations. The woman speaking in the first example is Mele, a mother of eight children. Her youngest was 8 months old at the time of the interview. Born in

¹⁰⁵ The term *fakakoloa* indexes a number of concepts in this context -- make-wealth, be-like-wealth, enrich, enrichment-- . What 'Eva is saying is that the mother enriches the family in spiritual and social as well as economic frames, and makes the family itself valuable.

1950, the wife of a *mātāpule* title holder, Mele was raised as a Catholic. Like most Tongan women who convert at marriage, she has attended the Wesleyan church since her marriage (almost ten years), but her participation within the church is not nearly as engaged and proactive as is 'Eva's. In this particular quote however, she clearly demonstrates ideas and ideals about the responsibilities of a mother which are similar to 'Eva's:

It is our two [her's and her husband's] responsibility to care for our children equally, without favouritism. God cares for us all, that we may stay living well/ healthy in the future. My hearts' desire is that they [her children] will be educated, so to live well/ have their health in the future.

Fatongia 'o maua, tauhi tatau, oua mamafa ki e taha. 'Otua, ko e 'Otua 'oku ne tauhi ki tautolu ke nau nofo mo'ui lelei he kaha'u. Loto ke ako'i ke ma'u hanau mo'ui lelei he kaha'u.

When I'm dead, that's the end of our mutual dependability. Thus I help them [now], like with this, plaiting. After that, they're free to choose whether they'll return my *'ofa*. But I am going to call to/ask them if I need something urgently.

Pea keu ke mate, 'osi mau falala'anga. Pea u tokoni kiai, hange ko e, lalānga. Tuku pe, ke nau fai teliha pe 'enau 'ofa mai. Pea te u toki kole pe kiai kapau fiema'u fakavavevave.

I ensure their health, by treating them with Tongan medicine, and I'm careful and attentive about feeding and food. A healthy child isn't irritable or sick, eats well, and they're active, lively and busy [working].

Ke u fakapapau'i 'enau mo'ui lelei, tauhi'aki pe vai tonga, pea tokanga'i pe ke fafanga, me'akai. Ko e tama 'oku mo'ui lelei 'oku 'ikai 'ite'ita pe puke, 'oku kai lelei, pea nau longo mo'ui, fa'a ngaue. (M.I. 8/7/92).

'Eva's and Mele's statements are prototypical examples of the implicit connections that women make between the ideals of mothering, making healthy children, Christianity, education, freedom of choice, *'ofa*, food, traditional Tongan medicines, and the work of plaiting. In the work of mothering, with all its moral overtones, women balance both material and kinship obligations with Christian and traditional Tongan spiritual concerns. Everything is cross-cut and overlapped by (con)social duties. There are also heavy emphases in mothers talk, as evidence in the texts presented in previous chapters, as well as in 'Eva's and Mele's descriptions, that mothers have many

responsibilities [*fatongia*]. A mother should be careful, attentive and protective [*tokanga'i*]. What mothers do, they say, is done out of love and generosity [*'ofa*], and out of industry, through hard work that shows everyone that a woman is not lazy [*fakapikopiko*], not lying around, doing nothing [*noa'ia*].

What is Wealth For? The Material Benefits

Some of the material and social obligations that women balance are most evident in the months between the beginning of October, to the end of February. Cowling (1990b:283) noted that poverty did not seem to be a factor in whether women worked on and or sold textiles. This is true in my data too. However, whether a woman is a mother, makes a difference. For a family with several children, the months between October and February represent a time of major cash expenditures, beginning with the *Misinale*, and ending with the start of the new school year.

The *Misinale* is an annual fund raising drive, held by all Methodist Churches, usually in October or November. The money raised through *Misinale* donations goes to all church business, except ministers' salaries -- those are paid through separate, quarterly donations. Families on Kauvai regularly gave between \$250 to \$1000 *pa'anga* at *Misinale*. The amount is determined in part by their own finances that year, how much they could beg or borrow from other relatives, a desire not to be outdone or embarrassed by the generosity of one's neighbour, and a sense that the gift both acknowledges God's bounty for the present year, and obligates it for the following year (see Mauss 1990[1925]).

After *Misinale* comes Christmas (December), an event which, while not as commercialized nor as strongly associated with individual gift-giving as in North America, does precipitate several

community-based feasts, sponsored by individuals or particular families. Finally, comes the spiritual and economic culmination of this busy and expensive time of year: the up to twice-daily feasts held through-out the first week of January, called Prayer Week [*'Uike Lotu*].

As described earlier, feasts are demonstrations of community, kinship [*kāinga* and *fāmili*] and individual capability. They are lavish, somewhat competitive events for which families pull on as many kin-based and other social connections as possible, in order to contribute all forms of prestige foods, both locally produced and purchased. Like the donations to the *Misinale*, the feasts please God and ensure future benefits¹⁰⁶. The feasts are hosted by individual families of specific church denominations, but the guests cross all denominations, as do the networks which support each feast. Several hundred people will be fed over the course of the first week of the New Year (Evans 1996, for further description of the *Misinale*, and the resources generated for the event). At the same time, visiting ministers and other dignitaries are given gifts of *koloa* as well as baskets of food (minimally a yearling pig, yams, and other edibles), to take away with them. The *koloa* given with such baskets is generally a length of barkcloth, obtained, usually, through an exchange of plaited textiles with women from Tongatapu¹⁰⁷.

Following upon all the church-associated drains on the household resources, are the costs of the new school year. Primary school is government funded, but secondary students pay fees. All

¹⁰⁶ It is no coincidence that the *Misinale*, in which parishioners donate the bulk of the annual offerings they will make to their church, and symbolically to God, is held in October. The bi-annual offering of first fruits (*polopolo*) to the Tu'i Tonga, and through him to the pre-Christian god(dess) Hikule'o, was held during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in October and July. The October ceremony was the largest (that being the time of the greatest harvest in the Tongan agricultural cycle) and was called the *Inasi*.

¹⁰⁷ The advantage of barkcloth is that a normal full piece, a length of forty *langanga* (forty to sixty feet), can be cut, somewhat like cutting a twenty dollar bill produces the equivalent of two ten dollar bills. Plaited textiles can be cut, but only those of the very highest value, the Samoan *'ie toga*, can withstand such violence. Large sleeping mats like *fala* are too valuable to give at a feast, and are considered destroyed if cut.

students, primary and secondary, pay their own materials and uniform fees. The costs vary according to the school, the number of siblings already attending that school, and whether a student is boarding at the school, with other family members, or with their mother in a *nofo'anga* [staying place, a kind of shanty town that exists for Kauvai people, in centres like Pangai]. School related costs range from approximately thirty pa'anga (per annum) for each primary school student, up to six hundred and eighty pa'anga, for a family with four students in secondary school.

The new term begins in February and, in addition to fees, students must have all of the books, pencils, rulers, maths instruments, papers, uniforms and any other materials that are required for the year, visible for inspection at the registration. If anything is missing, the student is not supposed to be admitted to class. Finding the cash for school fees for one, three or more secondary school students, plus the materials fees, as well as the costs of school uniforms, so soon after the expenditures of the previous four months, can be difficult. But very rarely is a child withheld from school. Such a possibility is not really considered an option: the money 'must' be found, and anyone who is perceived as having spare cash may be approached for loans¹⁰⁸

Because of the way work and familial roles are constructed, women's work is more closely associated with providing for child-related expenses than is men's. This is not to say that men do not contribute cash for the school related fees: the fathers that I came to know were very clearly concerned that their children receive good educations, and families viewed the responsibility as a joint one, as Mele stated above. But, women were definitely the default when it came to finding money for school and church related expenses.

¹⁰⁸ Letters to overseas kin, and after-dark spontaneous gifts of plaited koloa to resident anthropologists seemed to be at least two of the most-popular avenues for garnering cash during 1991-1993.

Gendered Labour

In the conventional frame of life, labour and the products of labour, are gendered. According to *anga fakatonga*, shelter and sustenance are provided through labour which is part of the male field of activities. This is very much tied to the fact that land is held and controlled by men¹⁰⁹, and that household economies on Kauvai are based on subsistence, non-monetary exchanges and small scale sales of garden products [*ngoue*], livestock and fish. Of the former, roots ('*ufi*, taro, *kape*, cassava), vanilla, fruits (bananas, pineapples, watermelon), as well as livestock and ocean fish, are associated with men's labour [*ngaue*]. Surpluses (planned or unplanned) can be sold, provided one can get them to market (see Figure 6: Income by Source and Figure 7: Income By Sex. Note: all values are reported in Tongan Pa'anga unless otherwise indicated).

Women's major contribution to the household economy, whether measured in terms of time, social relations or money, is their production of plaited koloa. Women sometimes collect shellfish and octopus from the reef, gather citrus fruits and make scented oil, and they may sell these products, but only rarely: the usual intended use of such products is in the household, or as gifts. Women may also decide to sell some prepared pandanus leaf [*taka'inga lou'akau*], a product which, as the base medium for plaited koloa is associated with women, even though the leaves themselves come from gardens which are considered to be men's spaces. Therefore, of the available sources of cash generation (itemized in the chart included as Figure 7: Income By Sex), the majority of options available on Kauvai fall under a masculine domain.

On Kauvai, cash is earned from copra (dried coconut) or the civil service. These two products provide some exceptions to the conventions of gendered labour: on Kauvai, two of the four

¹⁰⁹ Some women do 'own' land, but only as widows, in trust for a son, i.e: Pauline and Folingi.

school teachers were male, and two were female. One other salaried position, that of the nurse, was held by a woman. All other salaried positions, five of which were elected political positions, and one of which was the agricultural extension officer, were held by men (these eleven positions, plus the various religious authorities, represent the salaried income shown in Figure 7: Income by Sex).

Copra is also produced by women as well as men. However, when using an oven (the best method), copra drying is dirty work, and as such, not fitting within the conventions of suitable female labour. I did see women helping to carve the coconut flesh from the shells, and my partner reported women being paid for copra (M. Evans, per. com.).

Generally, it was more likely to be men than women drying and selling the copra. Women who did make copra did so either because they were trying to raise funds very quickly and had no more plaited koloa they were willing to part with, were unskilled at plating or, as in one case I know of, lacked access to pandanus.

Two other exceptions to the conventions of gendered labour were to be found in Maka Fele'unga: 'Eva, the Wesleyan minister's wife, whose speech on the duties of the mother I have recorded (above), marketed kava grown by a brother living off Kauvai. Also, an enterprising bachelor named Sione Mama began to grow paper mulberry [*hiapo*], for export to the market on Tongatapu. *Hiapo* is the bast used for barkcloth and is, conventionally, a women's product. Kauvai women do not make barkcloth and Sione Mama was taking advantage of the fact that mulberry was being cleared from garden lands on Tongatapu, in order to plant the cash crop of squash¹¹⁰, creating a

¹¹⁰ This was a particularly astute investment on Mama's part. Mulberry generally requires little labour investment, is easy to harvest and transport, and is much less at risk to spoil while waiting for transport to the Nuku'alofa market. Furthermore, since barkcloth was not made on Kauvai, Mama was unlikely to have neighbours begging some of his commercial crop for their own uses, something that men who farm pineapples, watermelon, yams etc. are always subject to. The irony of the situation is, that one of the explanations for why Kauvai women do not make barkcloth, is that the soils of Ha'apai are not rich enough for mulberry, and are only suitable for pandanus, something Mama is disproving.

shortage of bast for barkcloth.

Typically on Kauvai, production specifically for cash, is done for one of the following reasons:

- 1] A bumper crop exists (re: roots, livestock, fish);
- 2] It's the season (ie: for fish);
- 3] The price may be unusually good (e.g.: copra, watermelon);
- 4] Specific expense for which the family needs to generate funds (e.g.: feast, wedding, funeral, *Misinale*)

Most often, where immediate cash is needed, the funds are generated by men. But men's income sources are very much rooted in the natural environment. It is the nature of atoll-based economies that people are subject to the not entirely predictable seasonal shifts (e.g.: the rains, the runs of tuna and mackerel) and other whims of nature (e.g.: the hurricane season, periodic droughts). Because of these constraints, the opportunities for men to garner a lot of cash all at once are not predictable and hence, dependable. Certainly, during mackerel and tuna seasons, it is possible (assuming one has a net) to catch a lot of fish, and to be able to sell it to the local broker. Fish, however, do not run according to Gregorian calendars. But, for the costly months of October to February, dependability and predictability of a cash flow is exactly what is desired. Women's wealth provides both.

Multiple Uses of Plaited Koloa: Social Ties and Reserve Wealth

Koloa, (whether barkcloth or plaited koloa) is ideally produced and intended for a women's kin-based (including her own children's) responsibilities, events such as wedding, funerals, birthdays and other life passage and ceremonial exchanges. But, as women like 'Eva and Mele clearly

understand, plaited koloa can also provide strategically significant amounts of cash, or commodities, to a household.

When other activities fail to provide the needed funds; if a family have nothing else to sell and no one from whom they may request money; or if they have a reluctance to beg/borrow for whatever reason, mothers know they can depend upon their plaited koloa. Because it is a mandatory part of all ceremonies, and because, while all women 'should' know how to produce it, but not all women actually do, plaited koloa is always in demand. It can be traded for items such as cupboards, beds, dishes or other commodities, as well as cash and school expenses, and can even be used as collateral on a bank loan.

Some of these exchanges are pure barter: Aio'ema Atiola, the wife of the principle of the Wesleyan secondary school in Pangai showed me the *koloa* stacked in their spare bedroom: *ngatu* [barkcloth] and plaited textiles offered by families without cash, in lieu of school fees (and against official policy). She told me woman would say "I have no money to pay for school fees, but perhaps you would like a *fala* or a *ta'ovala*"? The principle and Aio'ema used the *koloa* at functions in which the school had to give gifts to high ranking dignitaries, and sold it to raise funds for the school.

Other times, women will take a *fala* [sleeping/sitting double-sided mat] or other piece of plaited koloa to the market and wait for a buyer. Use of the market, however, is less common than the tactic of going to visit someone, such as a relative, who may have some cash, and offering a piece of plaited koloa to them "as a gift". Usually, in such events, the recipient of the gift is overcome with the kindness of the offer, and the beauty and desirability of the offering. They feel the desire to reciprocate with an equivalent gift, and, often as not, that answering gift will be cash. The ideal result of such an exchange is as follows:

- 1] The recipient has more plaited koloa,
- 2] The gifter can pay their school fees (or other debts),
- 3] both have either established, re-established or strengthened a relationship which will be mutually beneficial in the future, and
- 4] both women (for it usually is women) have acted according to good *anga fakatonga*.

Gifting to a wealthier neighbour, and hoping for the appropriate return gift however, is not always possible. The drought (which lasted through the end of 1991 and most of 1992) resulted in seriously depleted agricultural production, and men had less garden produce available for sale. In Maka Fele'unga, for the year of 1992, women's plaiting brought far more cash into the village, as a whole, than did men's products (see back to Figure 6: Income by Source). Further, the data from Maka Fele'unga which is presented in Figures 8 and 9 (Koloa Income and School Children 1991 and 1992) shows that the number of women selling their koloa increased (from nineteen to twenty-three) as the drought continued. The data points to the importance of plaited koloa as reserve wealth—as treasures which can be depended upon in times of need. From 1991 to 1992, women clearly decided that if their family was to make an acceptable *Misinale* offering, and/or if they wanted their children to be able to register for school, they were going to have to sacrifice their *koloa* [wealth] and the past year's labour of *lalānga* [plaiting].

High quality pieces of plaited koloa are guarded as family heirlooms and hidden from public scrutiny, but even they can be translated into emergency funds in dire circumstances. During my time on Kauvai, a family suffering extreme public censure (and therefore had no one left to beg a favour from) offered their last remaining item of material value, a fine, fragile textile perhaps 200 years old called a *tu'oua tonga*, for sale. Their objective was to get the funds required so as to pay their children's' school fees and certain court debts.

Katoanga:

Women also send plaited koloa off the island to Tongatapu or overseas, in large planned exchanges called *katoanga* [literally, 'celebration', but common usage here refers to the exchanges]. These are occasions when families know in advance that they will acquire between 500 and 2,000 *pa'anga*, all at once¹¹¹. Not coincidentally, *katoanga* are planned for October and November, right at the start of *Misinale*. While the annual income from a man's economic activities may surpass the up to 2,000 *pa'anga* a woman can receive from participation in a *katoanga*, it is rare for these other sources of income (as represented in Figure 6: Income By Source) to generate a one-time lump sum equivalent to that generated through a *katoanga*, or to be as predictable.

The *katoanga* do more than provide a predictable income to the family – they establish or maintain gift-based ties with Tongans in other parts of the country, or overseas, people who are usually, but not necessarily kin, who may become ongoing exchange partners.

Sending away one's plaited koloa is always emotionally complex, even when pre-arranged, as in a *katoanga*. Women have to send away textiles that they see representing almost a year of work, as well as more aesthetic and esoteric principles of wealth, beauty, prestige, and the potential for participation in social networks and fulfilment of kinship based responsibilities. What they receive in return --cash and/or commercial commodities-- is needed, but things like salt, kerosene, school books or tuition fees have relatively little importance, in terms of prestige, potential and fulfilment of kin-based obligations. Nevertheless, such exchanges and outright sales have become an accepted and frequent practice for part of a mother's years, particularly as she has more children.

¹¹¹ The Tongan *pa'anga* is was, in 1991-93, pegged to the Australian dollar, and worth approx. 85 cents Canadian. Four standard size *fala* were valued at T\$1000.00. Some *katoanga* are arranged so that payment is all at once, but most with an interim payment six months earlier. Some women commit to exchange two items, others four or more. Hence there is some variability in the range of lump sum payments.

Plaited Koloa and Children

Having children in school increases a woman's likelihood of working intensively at textile production, and at exchanging her plaited koloa for cash. The data in Figures 8 and 9 also show that, of the 35 Maka Fele'unga households where women worked at plaiting, the number who sold or exchanged for cash (i.e.: *katoanga*) in comparison to those who did not, are clearly those who have children in school. Figures 8 and 9 also show that the mean income to the women who exchanged plaited koloa for cash, but did not have children in school, was slightly less than the mean incomes of the women (grouped according to numbers of children in school) who did have children in school. The data supports my observation that the more children a family have in school, the more likely a woman is to exchange her plaited koloa for cash¹¹². This also supports the finding by Evans (1996), who notes an efflorescence of feasting and gifting activities as families' children get further on in school.

There are two points not obvious from Figures 8 and 9: first, that those women who did not have school-aged children, but made plaited koloa without exchanging it for cash, were still mothers. This is a group which includes women whose children were not yet in primary school, as well as more senior women like Pauline, Loutoa, and Folingi, whose children had already finished school, but for whom the desire for plaited koloa had not lessened. And this is the second point: that a good number of women without children in school, still plaited, even if they did not do it for exchange or sale: In 1991, eight out of twelve households with no children in school did not report plaited koloa income or exchange. Of these, only three actually had no women plaiting: one woman

¹¹² It could be argued that a bivariate correlation should be evident, whereby the number of children in school can be shown to predict the amount of plaited koloa produced and exchanged. However the sample size is not random, and is too small, to obtain any meaningful information from such an analysis.

was in mourning, one was elderly, unmarried and uninterested, and one was mentally handicapped, leaving five active plaiters. In 1992, seven out of twelve had no children in school. The woman in mourning had resumed her plaiting, but the other two did not, making five women out of the twelve households with no children in school, active at koloa production.

At this point in the chapter, let me re-cap the main points. The duties of the mother are to socialize, educate, Christianize and 'enrich' their family, economically, socially and spiritually. They know that a public perception of good mothering will reflect on their children, and that their children will be seen to be healthy, as in living well. Through their own living well, mothers implicitly recognize that their children will acquire the benefits of lives lived well. Mothers fulfill their obligations to their children in partnership with God, but also other humans, especially husbands. In the conventions of *anga fakatonga*, men's work allows for the family to live and eat every day. Insofar as shelter and subsistence is considered a male activity, men's work can be said to subsidize what women do, which is 'wealth' production. But mothers are the default child-rearers, and women's wealth (plaited koloa) exists as an important kind of savings as well as a dependable and predictable source of income. Mothers were more likely to be the ones to find the cash for the expensive time of October to February, because they arranged the timing of the various *katoanga* payments to late January, early February (just before the new school term) and September-October (just before *Misinale*). Thus planned, the *katoanga* payments coincided with the school and *Misinale* deadlines. For those families with many children in school, the *katoanga* and sales of other plaited koloa were often key to meeting all the obligations of the October - February season. Likewise, during the drought, women's wealth ensured that families had food to eat, paid their school fees and made their church donations.

It is important to note that women's plaited koloa exists as a ready and dependable source of funds, whether or not a woman participates in a *katoanga*. It is also significant that women's wealth is usually deployed with children in mind. Even women who were not participants in a *katoanga* exchange planned their work year to coincide with the same deadlines in mind: *Misinale* and the new school term.

During the rest of the year, the importance of plaited koloa in life crisis events and its flexibility in terms of symbolic and fiscal capital –those qualities which make it the perfect source of emergency funds– are forms of value which are equally important in terms of kinship based *fatongia* [duties]. Fulfilling these obligations are gendered responsibilities which are inextricably tied to one's identity as a woman and mother. Plaiting koloa represents women as industrious, traditional, well behaved, and ready to fulfill kinship-based obligations. And so, more than just material benefits, making and exchanging of plaited koloa means mothers are living well. They become *fakakoloa* –the wealth of the family– as they fulfill their maternal obligations, and as they do the things described as important for children who are *mo'ui lelei*. As women plait and exchange their *koloa* for cash, they ensure their children are educated. As they garner funds for the annual church donation at *Misinale*, theirs and their children's spiritual well-being, what 'Eva called *fakalotu*, is achieved. As they show themselves to be industrious and hard working, their living well is demonstrated and their children's inheritance of health is (somewhat) assured.

“You Can Never Have Enough *Koloa*”

As children get older and finish secondary school, they either take jobs, go further in school, become guest workers overseas or begin their own families. Finally, the economic compulsion on

women to create plaited *koloa* for sale and for *katoanga* exchanges begins to decrease. However women at this stage of their lives do not cease plaiting. These are the women represented in Figures 8 and 9, who plait, but have no children in school. That they continue to prioritize production of plaited *koloa* is important: it shows that women are not producing simple commodities, and that the process of production, as well as having the product, is significant to women for some other reasons.

‘The mother enriches the family [with plaiting]’ said ‘Eva. “I help them now, with plaiting”, said Mele. I heard statements repeating this sentiment often, usually in non-interview situations, and it was easy to understand, in terms of women with school-aged children and the economic constraints of life in an out-island village. But grandmothers like Pauline, Loutoa and Folingi continued to work, daily, on plaiting, long after their children completed school. Even if the women were not participants in a *katoanga*, even though they complained of sore backs, eyes, necks, hands. “Why do you work so much?” I’d ask the older women, the grandmothers with no more children to put through school. Some simply smiled or ignored my (to them) silly question. Most told me “you can never have enough *koloa*”.

To tap into this idea that one can never have enough *koloa*, I played the game of “If you had a million dollars”, spinning great long “if you had this...” scenarios, trying to find out when women would stop making *koloa*: “If you had enough cash to put all your children through school... to send them to University in New Zealand... to build a big house... to buy your husband (or son) a boat and more fishing net... to have all the kerosene and sugar you want... and a cow... to give \$1000.00 to the church ...?” I heaped the riches and desires, searching for the point at which enough was enough, and treasures outweighed pain. Women assured me “I would still weave, even if I had all those things”.... “Maybe more” said one woman, “ because I’d be making it for myself”.

Through their plaiting, women can demonstrate 'ofa, expertise in traditional [*anga fakatonga*] knowledge and skills, prioritisation of traditional cultural practices [*'ulunganga fakatonga*], and a willingness to work hard rather than be lazy [*fakapikopiko*] or without care [*noa'ia*]. These are personal characteristics, conventions of *anga fakatonga* endorsed in orthodox rhetoric found at church, formal events (like feasts), as well as in casual chat [*pō talanoa*]. Through production and deployment of plaited koloa, women anticipate fulfilling the duties [*fatongia*] incurred as sisters, wives, and mothers, maintaining good relations [*va lelei*] with others and, perhaps, achieving a sense of self-satisfaction from completion of their *fatongia* [duty]. This sense of completion and satisfaction is termed *monitonu*. As I described earlier, this sense of completion from fulfilment of one's kinship-incurred duties, and its dependence upon a life well-lived, led Bloomfield (1986) to argue that *monitonu* rather than *mo'ui lelei* was a more appropriate gloss for the WHO's definition of 'health'. Bloomfield saw the term *monitonu* indexing a sense of 'healthy completion' and recognizing the totality of a life. What I have come to understand is that on Kauvai, at least, the term *mo'ui lelei* is being invented to encompass the moral and consocial practices of living well according to *anga fakatonga* that Bloomfield (1968) identifies with *monitonu*. Those practices depend upon mothers' actions.

Because of the dissonance between their roles as sisters, and as wives, it seems to women that the only reasonable tactic to ensure good social relations with kin, affines and neighbours is through flows of *koloa*, while encouraging children to be good Christians and achieve higher education (Bott with Tavi 1982, Marcus 1992). On Kauvai, that means a high level of production, because women want to have plaited koloa for gifting, both at life passages, and in *katoanga*. Hence, in living well, women emphasize their role as mother, the one individual the various *kāinga* competing for her

resources have in common.

A woman living on Kauvai who does not know how to plait, or is unable to do it well, loses the means with which to 'elevate' her children, and resolve the dissonance in her roles as wife, mother, sister and daughter. In not spending her days plaiting, she appears to be lazy [*fakapikopiko*] and slothful [*noa'ia*], and such social condemnations will reflect on her children. Without the skill to produce large amounts of beautiful plaited koloa, a mother cannot enrich [*fakakoloa*] her family because she lacks the option of commissioning or selling her plaited koloa to gain the necessary cash for church donations, feasts, school fees and other child-related essentials. Without stores of plaited koloa, a woman cannot exchange with other Tongan women for barkcloth, the preferred gift at birthdays and funerals ¹¹³. Her own nuclear family and wider *kāinga* is then seen to not be fulfilling its *fatongia*. Anyone in such a situation would feel they had failed their parents, their siblings, as well as their own children. Further, without stores of plaited koloa, a mother cannot give enough fine textiles to ensure that her daughter will be well respected and loved in her new home after marriage, nor can she give enough so that her son will be able to adequately 'answer' the gifts given by his bride's family during a wedding ceremony (described in the next chapter). One cannot attain a sense of *monitonu* [completion, 'health' in Bloomfield's (1986) argument] without carrying one's share of the kinship-derived social burden [*fua kavenga*]. Small wonder, indeed, that plaited koloa consumes women's thoughts, long after they have sent their children out into the adult world.

A life of textile production, gifting, providing for and raising children who themselves conform to ideals of *anga fakatonga*, is how one lives well as a mother on Kauvai, and therefore

¹¹³ The preferred gift for more distant kin is between six and sometimes as little as four *langanga* [a specific length, approximately eighteen inches] of barkcloth. Closer kin, especially from the deceased's nuclear and marital family will give plaited koloa.

makes one's children 'healthy'. In their daily practice, and in their talks with me, women of Kauvai, and women originally from Kauvai but now living elsewhere, connected the production of plaited koloa to their responsibilities as mothers, whether of young or mature children, and to both their own and their children's *mo'ui lelei*. I have described this connection of moral practices of the mother to perceptions of healthy children as a part of the way that Polynesians construct identity and inheritance of personal characteristics.

The overall point of this chapter is that the work that mother's do on a daily basis (plaiting textiles) is directed towards living well themselves, and thereby, to make their children healthy. Women are enjoined to be industrious, and to become the 'wealth' of the family, 'wealth' which is economic, but also pertains to moral, symbolic and spiritual aesthetics.

However, it is also true that the symbolism and material processes of the production and deployment of plaited koloa are pivotal to the construction of individual women's identities.

"You can never have enough *koloa*"

"I would still plait, even if I had all those things"

"I will never tire of having *koloa*"

"When I see my *fala* and *fihu*, all my *koloa*, I feel so wealthy, so content"

These sentiments were repeated to me, over and over. Clearly, *lalānga* was important to providing for children's material needs, and for ensuring a family's good social standing, in a gifting network, but there was something more included. It is this other, more symbolic and less economic aspect of plaited koloa, which explains why old women continue to plait, even, like Vasiti, to the day of their death. I explore this other aspect of *koloa*, and its importance to women's construction of identity and demonstration of living well, in greater detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER NINE

PUSHING CHILDREN UP: GIFTING, *KOLOA* AND THE MATERNAL *KĀINGA*

The notion of ‘wealth’ and ‘enrichment’ that ‘Eva termed *fakakoloa*, extends past the fiscal obligations described in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I focus on those other occasions which call for women’s wealth, the ceremonial spaces where plaited *koloa* figures significantly as gifts and symbols of identity within a wider *kāinga* [kindred].

Before and even after one’s children’s schooling is finished, the uses for women’s textiles remains significant. Elderly women continue to produce plaited *koloa*, because other uses of women’s wealth exist. I argue that through gifting events, a person’s maternal *kāinga* demonstrate their willingness to ‘push up’ one of their own. In chapter seven, I described the re-burial ceremony whereby deceased ancestors’ post-mortem illness messages about a son’s inappropriate social relations were treated, indicating that a child is always the responsibility of her/his *kāinga*. These kinship-based long-term responsibilities may be traced through gift exchanges as easily as through illness events. In this chapter, I examine gifting, and in particular detail, the gifting which occurs in the context of the wedding and the first birthday. Taken together as pieces of a whole, the wedding and birthday data provides a tool for a re-appraisal of the pressures on women as mothers and producers of ceremonial textiles, and the relationship of women’s wealth and maternal obligation, leading to a greater understanding of the significance of women’s wealth and the *kāinga* in relation to the invention of *mo’ui lelei*.

Gifting

Polynesians are famous for their generosity and the magnificence of their gifting. Indeed it was Polynesian gifting that led Mauss to the now classic theory of reciprocity and social structure described in The Gift (Mauss 1990 [1925]). The usual constituents of any gifting event in Tonga are *koloa* [women's wealth textiles], kava, pigs and *ngoue*. *ngoue* is the generalized term for the root crops grown by men. In gifting occasions, it has special reference to yams [*'ufi*] and taro [*talo*]. Gifting is described as being motivated by *'ofa* –love, generosity and empathy. Gifts at funerals, including the barkcloth and plaited *koloa* the body is wrapped in for burial, are signs of love and empathy meant to assuage the deceased (Cowling 1990) but also the living. Being able to gift is an important aspect of *anga fakatonga* and a key element of living well.

In my time in Tonga, I witnessed several situations in which gift [*me'a'ofa*] prestations were made. These included the induction of a noble's title, the visit of Her Majesty Queen Mata'aho to Kauvai (described in chapter five), several funerals (including Vasiti's), two first birthday feasts and one twenty-first birthday celebration, a formal, traditional wedding, two formal farewells, gifts between brothers and sisters at New Year's, gifts to visiting lay preachers at New Year's, gifts to honoured visitors, gifts as part of a donation effort to a school band entering an international competition, and finally, gifts given during a *katoanga*¹¹⁴. For commoners, and probably for the elites as well, the most lavish, spectacular (and resource-draining) events are funerals, weddings and birthdays. Vasiti's funeral, described in the preface, is a typical example.

On Kauvai, and throughout Tongan cultural practice, the flow of gifts, especially those of

¹¹⁴ Other occasions which precipitated the flow of *koloa* and which I was told about, but did not actually witness, included a tributary delegation to the king and queen during the annual Agricultural and Industrial Fair in Pangai in August of 1992, a birth, a baptism, and the start of a courtship.

koloa, is redolent with several sets of meanings, including:

- 1) Establishing personal rank within a widening circle of social relations;
- 2) Social confirmation and marking of gender;
- 3) Locating an individual within a social network which spans generations;
- 4) Marking ritual status (e.g.: mourning, respect, symbolic transformation);
- 5) Demonstrating the maternal *kāinga*'s love and investment in their child.
- 6) Fulfilment of culturally prescribed obligations [*fai fatongia*].

Formally and traditionally, the flow of gifts or prestations follows rank. Gifts [*me'a'ofa*], 'shares' [*'inasi*], offerings [*feilaulau*] and 'first fruits' [*polopolo*] go, in general, from lower to higher ranked persons. This holds true for nuclear family units, through the extended family [*kāinga*] and to even wider sets of social relations, such as between a village and their noble. Men and women give to their father's sister, children of a brother give to children of their father's sister; family of a bride give to family of the groom; commoners give to nobles; nobles give to higher ranked title holders, and to the royals. Everyone gives to God (e.g.: the *Misinale*).

Usually, brothers and sisters (and their children) give or receive simultaneously, as sibling sets, or members of a particular *kāinga*. Except at New Years, when brothers send their sisters a basket with a roast pig and some yams, and sisters send their brother a *fala* [sleeping mat] or a large piece of *ngatu* [barkcloth], I am not aware of any traditional or ceremonial occasion when brothers and sisters specifically gift to each other¹¹⁵. When they gift it is not from sister to brother per se, not men's wealth (pigs and yams) for women's wealth (*koloa*), but men's and women's wealth flowing

¹¹⁵ Rogers (1977:162) said that Niuaotupapu men gave food to their sisters at New Years, and that the sisters responded with cake or bread. He then notes (footnote 22) that "such gifts were once reciprocated with a piece of barkcloth and coconut oil", according to Tupou Posesi Fanualofanga. It seems that the brother sister exchanges I witnessed were more in keeping with Posesi Fanualofanga's sense of tradition.

together, from a (joint) position of lower rank to one of higher. Thus does gifting help to mark, establish, re-define or alter individuals' positions within both their personal *kāinga* [extended family] and the wider social hierarchy.

As well as demonstrating rank, gifting within a particular situation is gendered, and this is part of the significance of plaited *koloa* for Kauvai women. In situations when ceremonial gifts [*me'a ofa*] are given, and even though siblings may be gifting at the same event, the objects themselves are gendered. Men give pigs, kava and garden crops, especially yams [*'ufi*] and taro [*talo*]. Women give 'cloth' (plaited *koloa* and or barkcloth) and perhaps other objects: emollient made from masticated candlenuts [*tuitui*], skin oil made from scented coconut oil [*lolotonga*], flower necklaces and garlands [*kahoa, sisi*], and various types of ornamental girdles, which are worn around the waist and over a *ta'ovala* [*kiekie, salusalu, ta'ovala fakaha'apai*]. In older times, women also gifted a variety of plaited fans, but these are becoming more rare. In other parts of the kingdom, baskets made from pandanus or 'alu, an aerial root, figure as forms of women's wealth.

In another type of instance, a gift of *koloa*, can demonstrate gratitude. This is called a *me'a'ofa fakamālo*. One woman I know of, gave another woman a very fine, and old textile called a *tu'oua tonga* as a sign of her gratitude when her son, lost at sea in a storm, was rescued by the second woman's husband. Finally, as argued in the previous chapter, plaited *koloa* always exists as emergency capital.

In these ways, plaited *koloa* resembles 'cloth' as Weiner (1989, 1992) terms textile based valuables and heirlooms. Whether hoarded, displayed or sold, plaited *koloa* are good collateral, prestigious cultural capital, a form of 'wealth' that brought comfort to many women. In Auckland, even, where other sources of wealth were readily available, I was told "when I have many *fala* I feel

wealthy" , just as women on Kauvai had said to me.

As in any reciprocity system, what goes around is expected to eventually come back, and those who have given begin to receive. Such reciprocity may be immediate and balanced, as when a prestation of a section of barkcloth at a funeral is answered the next day with a similar section. Or it may be diffuse and generalized as with the more spiritual offerings. Examples include the contemporary feasts held annually in the first week of January [*Uike Lotu*], or the pre-Christian *Inasi* for the Tu'i Tonga. In both, the rewards are less immediate, but are expected within the course of an annual cycle.

There are cases however, where more spiritually-oriented offerings were intended to have fairly immediate effects: A Mormon secondary school student I knew fasted while studying for her final exam, in the hopes that God would reward her the next day with high marks. Members of the Chiefly Church of Tonga also fast every Friday morning, as an offering to God for the coming week. Two different families (of the Free Church and the Chiefly Church) invited us to small feasts held in honour of sons who were about to write final exams, from primary and secondary school.

These various examples show that the notion of gifting, to people and to God, is present in Tongan culture, regardless of denomination. What may vary, is the type or style of the offering, e.g.: abstinence vs. opulence, although, as I argued earlier, the symbolism of food figures centrally. In general however, men give gifts associated with the bounty of the land, while women give gifts which are aesthetically pleasing. Men's gifts are the bones of the event, and women's elevate it, "raise it to heaven" [*fakalangilangi*], with beauty and wealth.

At the level of the mundane and secular, gifting is a cycle which spans, and may even extend past, the course of an individual lifetime. For instance, it can take a woman a generation to get to

the stage at which her brothers have children who will give her a share [*inasi*] of their wealth. Until she reaches that stage, she may be hard-pressed to have the volume of *koloa* (plaited an/or barkcloth) that she feels she needs to give to her higher ranking relatives, and at ceremonies like funerals and birthdays.

The process of gifting makes women feel good, satisfied, and complete [*monitonu*]—aspects of health described by Bloomfield (1986). For a young woman, especially one with children not yet married, it can feel like her meagre stocks of *koloa* will never be secure, and that she will always be ‘poor’. Never-the-less, while some women are depleted of their plaited *koloa*, others benefit. Those flows of plaited *koloa*, along with barkcloth and men’s products (kava, pigs, roots), act to prevent the severing of *kāinga*, in the case of a funeral. They also tie existing families together, while establishing the relations for new *kāinga* as, for instance, in the case of a wedding. On Kauvai, the exchanging of these gifts, of which plaited *koloa* is a mandatory inclusion, have acted to bind together persons, families, and categories of people into ranked, but inter-dependent, social units, over and across the generations. Those ties are a form of wealth unto themselves, and evidence of a community working together to live well, and to perpetuate mutual and appropriate social relations—the basis of *mo’ui lelei*.

The following section looks in greater detail at one particular type of gifting event, a wedding, the flows of women’s wealth it generates, and the role of the maternal *kāinga* [kindred] that it elucidates.

A Wedding: Textile Gifts and Maternal Investment

In contemporary Tonga, marriage ceremonies range from ornate to simple. As in Canada, a

'traditional', formal wedding requires many resources, both economic and human. Partly because of the expense, it is not uncommon for people to elope, then wait and hope their families will accept the marriage and mark it with some gifts, namely baskets of food and *koloa*. This was the case, in fact, with my temporary research assistant, Vitina Vaitohi. However common (Rogers 1977: 164), elopement is not the ideal in Tonga. The best wedding, the kind that excites villagers and generates approving talk, takes several days to conduct. During this time, numerous exchanges of beautiful *koloa* –plaited and barkcloth– pigs, and other valuables, take place. The resources of a wide net of kin are drawn upon, and gifts [*me'a'ofa*], identified as for the wedding couple, but in fact destined for the higher ranking family members of the bride and groom flow from one set of families to another.

Space limitations prevent an exhaustive examination of all that occurs at a wedding (see also Collocott 1923, Rogers 1977:164, Morton 1996:45, and Gordon 1998:137 for brief references to weddings). I include a relatively cursory description here because it is so useful for illustrating the symbolic and ceremonial importance of women's wealth and the investment mothers and the maternal *kāinga* make in their children.

Lita and Siosuia were married in 1992. As a resident of Kauvai (the bride's home island) I was permitted to participate in the preparations and ceremonies. I photographed the event, as my gift to the bride, who gave me permission to use the photos here¹¹⁶. During the months of preparations for the event, Lita's sister Vaiola described it to me often as a "proper Tongan wedding" and indeed,

¹¹⁶ However, I use pseudonyms to describe the wedding couple. As a guest of the bride's family during the entire event, my data is limited to what I could learn as a participant among the women on the bride's side. Key information comes from the bride's sister, Vaiola, and the woman acting as the representative of the bride's *kāinga*, Heu'ifangalupe. I also sat as a guest at the final feast, and helped prepare the food the night before. As I was not privy to the deliberations from the groom's side, and little of what the men of the bride's *kāinga* were doing, other than what occurred in public, or in cooperation with the women, I have little to say about the total numbers of pigs, and amounts of other foods readied for the entirety of the wedding celebrations, nor the social connections activated by the groom's *kāinga* to get those resources. A wedding, clearly, is deserving of a much larger space for analysis than can be provided here.

in retrospect I found that the ceremonies followed those reported in 1923 by Collocott.

The cycle of events took almost a week to complete. It began with a kava ceremony performed in the bride's home village (on Kauvai), to which the groom's family brought the kava, and at which the bride served kava, and then was served some herself. Tongan women usually drink kava only on isolated and special occasions, such as a wedding. The next day, Lita and her natal villagers voyaged to Pangai, to prepare for the subsequent ceremonies and feasts. Two days after the kava ceremony, the bridal entourage, laden down with ceremonial bundles of *koloa*, the bride's furniture and housewares, baskets of food and roasted pigs (several trucks' worth), met the groom and his family representatives at the court house in Pangai. Bride and groom were dressed in formal church attire, all white, with ornate *kie tonga* [prestigious white pandanus garment] wrapped over their clothes. A civil ceremony of no more than fifteen minutes, which included a prayer, a declaration that the two parties were permitted to be married, a small speech from the judge and a signing of the register, ensured that the couple was married in the eyes of the state. The whole entourage then loaded back into the trucks and, the bride in one car with her 'mothers' [*fa'ē huki*], and the groom in another car with his 'mothers' [*fa'ē huki*], we moved on to the church¹¹⁷. A second, equally brief, ceremony followed, performed in front of a very sparse audience. Finally the couple was legally and spiritually married. Well, almost. After posing for photographs on the church steps, the entourage paraded, truck horns blaring, sisters and other womenfolk of the bride and groom cheering and cavorting (some quite raucously) from the trucks, to the home of the groom.

¹¹⁷ The 'mothers' were not the birth mothers of either, but were members of each's maternal kindred. One of the groom's 'mothers', in fact, was a male cousin, the son of his mother's mother's brother. In older times, the *fa'ē huki* was supposed to have the bride and groom sit on their lap, visibly representing the fact that the mother's side of one's family are there support one.

At the groom's home, the front room had been cleared, except for several large *fala* [pandanus floor mats] which were spread out [*faliki*] on the floor. We women crowded into the room, filling it. We noted with giggles and approval, that a new wall had recently been erected, to create a bedroom for the bridal couple. In their new bedroom, the *mohenga* was already laid out: The *mohenga* is a traditional sleeping bed, consisting of a *lotaha* [single layer floor mat], a *fala* [double-layer sleeping and or sitting mat], and a length of *ngatu* [barkcloth]. The *fala* was trimmed in multi-coloured yarn, and the barkcloth was a large section of 25 *langanga*¹¹⁸. The *mohenga* had been placed there by the groom's sisters, as a sign that they approved of their brother's marriage. It was the first in a set of exchanges of women's wealth that would take place that day.

We bustled back outside, and began unloading the trucks, almost storming the house with the furniture, the bundles of *koloa*, the dishes, and other household paraphernalia the bride was bringing to her new home. The most important part of the unloading was the laying out of another *mohenga*, this time from the bride's sisters, with a *fala* fringed with black and red. Red and black decorations are more '*eiki* [chiefly] than multi-coloured yarn, and the significance of this detail will become apparent shortly. Over top of the *mohenga*, we constructed the iron four-posted bed Lita had recently purchased. Meanwhile the baskets of feast foods --roasted hogs, goats, fish, coconuts, yams, taro-- were taken around to the back of the house. As soon as the bed was put together and the furniture in the main room seen and admired by the women of the groom's family, it was pushed against the walls or moved into the back of the house and we all sat down.

Shortly thereafter, the bride and groom entered the room, Siosuia looking embarrassed and amused by the pomp, Lita looking shy and pale. Both were dressed in formal and ritual clothing: the

¹¹⁸ One *langanga* is a measurement of length, approximately equal to the distance from fingertip to elbow. This particular barkcloth was about one-third of a full length of *ngatu*, or about 30 ft long.

groom wore a white shirt and white *tupenu* [wrap-skirt], the usual formal church-going clothing of a man. Over top of that, he wore a finely decorated *kie tonga* [a high ranking waist wrap]. The bride was dressed in a white gown, over top of which she was wearing the *kie tonga* she had worn during the civil and church ceremonies, plus one additional one. One of her *fa'ē huki* ['mother'] carried in a *fala* at the same time. This was folded into a dais, and the bride and groom were made to sit on it. Traditionally, the *fa'ē huki* themselves would have seated the bride and groom on their own laps, but Lita had requested that part of the ceremony be left out. The *fala* replaced the maternal *kāinga's* representatives.

Lita came in quietly, and sat in the idealized proper, feminine posture: knees to one side, and ankles very slightly exposed¹¹⁹, body upright, with her eyes modestly downcast. In her demeanor and in the magnificence of the *koloa* she wore, Lita was, simply, an iconic image of beauty, embodying femininity, good maternal nurturing, and traditional signs of wealth and prestige. She took our breath away with her beauty, and with the obvious signs of having been raised with love.

After some good natured teasing, including some sexual innuendos, one of the women called out to the bride to “take those old things off, and leave them for your new husband’s sisters”. This Lita did, standing up and allowing herself to be divested of the beautiful textiles. As the ‘cloth’ was being taken into the back of the house, she was wrapped in another *kie tonga*, a second gift from the groom’s women folk. Almost immediately, Lita was called outside. She soon re-entered the room, this time dressed in a large *fuatanga* [very prestigious type of *ngatu*] and with a *fihu fatufā* [a forty foot length of white pandanus ‘cloth’] wrapped on top of it all. The stiffness of the *fuatanga* and bulk

¹¹⁹ The shape of the ankle and heel is considered a sign of beauty, and the care a mother has put into a daughter’s nurturing. Rough or calloused heels and ankles, and sun-darkened skin are signs that a girl has not been protected, and hence probably not been well-cared for.

of the *fihu fatufā* made it difficult to sit, and, unable to rest her arms at her side, the bride sat with her hands delicately balanced on the shelf her *koloa* made above her breasts.

This was the third *me'a'ofa* [gift] from her kin to her new husband's family this day, and the excitement in the room increased. It was like being in the presence of crown jewels, so desirable and opulent were the textiles the bride was wearing. Presently, Lita was told again, "to remove her *koloa*", and that wealth was again, subtly exchanged for a beautiful *kie tonga* from the groom's side. But, as in each prior instance, the *koloa* of Lita's *kāinga* was of superior quality to that given from Siosiu's side.

The exchanges that took place that Wednesday, which was Day Three in the cycle of exchanges, are charted in Figure 10: Wedding Exchanges. They numbered three: From the groom's side, the first (the initial *mohenga*) was from his sisters, the second from his maternal kin (the *kie tonga*), and the third from his paternal kin (a second *kie tonga*). From the bride's side, the gifts were: a *mohenga* from her sisters, a *fala* and two *kie tonga*, and finally, a *fuatanga* and *fihu fatufā*. The *fuatanga* is a special sort of barkcloth, heavier, more ornate, and with a pattern designed to be exactly 10 sections square. Because of the pattern, the *fuatanga* cannot be cut as readily as normal barkcloth lengths. This is significant in this instance, because while the numbers of objects exchanged may seem to balance fairly closely (see Figure 10: Wedding Exchanges), in fact, the outlay by the bridal party is greater, since the expense and symbolic worth (i.e.: 'chieflieness') of the objects the bride brought to the wedding were greater than those gifted by the groom's family.

The entire process of exchange and prestation was monitored throughout by Lita's highest ranking relative of her maternal *kāinga*, Heu'ifangalupe from Maka Fele'unga. She choreographed the comings and goings of the bride, ensured the *koloa* was properly fastened around the bride's body

and told Lita when to remove her wrappings (see photo#3: Heu'ifangalupe, conferring with Lita, just prior to one of her re-entries).

Eventually, after the exchanges were complete, whilst we were chatting and teasing the bride and groom, Heu'ifangalupe spoke up again. She told the assembled women, that "it is time to leave the girl in her new home", that "the boats were waiting" and that "we women have done what we could to ensure that the people of the house would love and respect our girl". "We have fulfilled our *fatongia* [duty]". The atmosphere in the room changed, palpably. Suddenly, where laughter and giggling had been filling the room, tears welled up in eyes. The bride, and indeed, most of the guests, began to cry. I felt, suddenly, that fear gripped the bride's kin, and later, on the way home, women explained this to me: "what if her husband's sisters were unkind to her?" "What if her husband 'took her' as they slept together for the first time, that evening?" (A marriage should be consummated on Sunday). "What if the gifts of *koloa*, the wealth of textiles, furniture, housewares, the beauty of the bride, what if these things were not enough to make her new household love her, be generous with her, recognise that she had been taught to live well, and treat her with '*ofa*'?" These were the concerns which pre-occupied the women that evening, as we rested, in preparation for the subsequent days of the wedding. For the process was not yet complete.

On the following two mornings (Thursday and Friday), a large group of women visited the bride and groom, at just past dawn. The official purpose of the visit was to comfort the bride after her first night away from her natal *kāinga*, and to share morning tea with her new affines. The real purpose was to ensure that the wedding had not yet been consummated. When we arrived, the bed clothes on the iron bed had already been conspicuously folded down, displaying slightly wrinkled, yet snowy sheets. After a short tea, we dispersed for the day, but returned the following morning

again, just to make sure the young woman was being treated well in her new house. I noticed on that day (Friday) that the two *mohenga* which had been laid out under the iron bed had been removed -- whether put away, or given as gifts, I do not know. Saturday morning, we rested, and Saturday night we worked until dawn preparing the next day's major feast. On Sunday morning, a large entourage of women gathered again, this time to dress the couple for church.

Embodying the Wealth of the *Kāinga*

Lita and Siosiua were made to stand on pieces of barkcloth, and drenched in scented coconut oil. Over the fancy dress clothes they were already wearing, were arranged and wrapped several of the best and most prestigious forms of plaited koloa a Tongan can wear - multiple *kie tonga* were layered over with multiple very old, very fragile, very precious Samoan fine mats [*'ie toga*] and Tongan *tu'oua tonga*. These were fastened with sashes and belts adorned with beads and shells.

The process was, in a subtle way, competitive, with women from Siosiua's *kāinga* trying to ensure that he was too beautiful to behold, and women from Lita's *kāinga* doing the same. It was clear that the wedding couple were to represent more than their individual selves as they made the public walk to church: they were being formed into embodiments of their respective *kāinga*'s [kindreds] history, wealth, value, potency, knowledge of tradition and ability to generate resources. One woman presented Siosiua with a sash adorned with large white cowrie shells, a symbol of chiefly virtue, fertility and beauty, she declared, as she wrapped it around his waist. Several times, one elderly woman or another commanded the entire bundle of plaited koloa to be removed, so as to be re-arranged to better show off the oldest and most fragile of the *'ie toga* and *tu'oua tonga*. Once dressed to the satisfaction of the elder women who were loaning the use of these precious garments

(see photo#4) , the whole entourage set off for church (see photo#5). After attending church together, ritually adorned in the textiles which indexed history (see Gailey 1987), rank, respect, social connections, maternal love, and of course, *anga fakatonga* and living well, the young couple emerged as husband and wife.

One final set of exchanges was to take place, at the feast the groom's family was preparing for the community. In this third set of exchanges, the bride was again re-dressed in *koloa* which she later passed on to her new husband's family. That night, their marriage was consummated, and the next morning, the husband sent his new wife's mother a final gift of honour: a basket with a cooked pig, the sheet from the marriage bed. Finally, the wedding ceremony was completed.

It is difficult to define just how closely this "proper Tongan wedding" as Vaiola defined it, conforms to general practice in contemporary Tonga. There is in fact, no detailed description nor analysis of wedding practices since Collocott's (1923) article, written almost seventy years previous. I would be very surprised indeed, were all elements of the wedding to remain unchanged. Yet in so far as I experienced this particular wedding, minor details like use of trucks (decorated with barkcloth) for transport, photos on church steps and commercially produced furniture aside, Lita's and Siosua's wedding bore a remarkable resemblance to the event Collocott recorded. This is especially so with regard to the minimal fanfare given the state and church based ceremonies, the far more ornate and extensive exchanges of *koloa*, the combined *kāinga*-based resources required to put on a 'proper wedding', and the emphasis on the adornment of the bride and groom and their ritual embodiment (see Lock 1993 on embodiment as social ties) as the icon of familial wealth, and a *kāinga*'s health. It was also, a clear example of the concern a maternal *kāinga* feels for one of their own.

Who Gives? Politics and Pragmatics of Gifting in the Underpopulated Community

Pulling back from the specifics of the wedding, and focussing on large, ceremonial prestations in general, it is clear that any event requiring ceremonial gifting, not just the wedding, motivates a number of individuals and their valuables, for a number of different reasons. While the traditional perspective is that one gives according to one's own kinship relationships and responsibilities, Christian emphases on the husband-wife relationship, and the paucity of numbers of people in the outer villages like Maka Fele'unga, means that gifting based on individual sibling and *kāinga* connections can become conflated at the household level.

The overlapping of gifting responsibilities, such as between spouses which occurred at Vasiti's funeral (in the preface) are also to be found in other gift giving situations: a brother will give some of his pigs and yams as part of his familial *fatongia* [duty] at a child's birthday or wedding, while his wife can also be expected to give some of her cloth, despite the fact that she and her husband are not of the same *kāinga* and do not, therefore, have the same *fatongia*; likewise a sister will give some of her *koloa* and her husband may be expected to 'help her fulfill her duty' by giving some of his pigs and yams.

Even though the resources are deployed jointly, as if from a household, within the relationship of husband and wife, and even though wives are supposed to be subordinate to their husbands, each spouse retains ultimate responsibility for their honourable duty [*fatongia*] and final control of their product, be it *koloa*, animals or garden produce. As women and men explained very clearly to me, a bride brings her *koloa* to the marriage. If one or the other later decides to end the marriage, she takes her *koloa* away with her. Husbands, of course, take back access to their land in a divorce, and the resources labelled as 'hers', specifically, the pandanus growing on the land, can be

lost too¹²⁰. Pragmatically, wives and husbands give with their spouse out of *’ofa* and in partnership. The marital bond does not replace the obligations of the *kāinga*. Rather, spouses assume that their generosity will be repaid when, at a later date, they have their own familial obligations to uphold. It is simply that the pragmatics of every day life, and trying to follow traditional practice, to do things ‘properly’, with limited resources, calls for flexibility.

Other factors pull people, who would not conventionally be expected to give, into an event as givers. Small village populations mean labour and personal resources are often in short supply. Sometimes then, for an event to be done properly, all of an individual’s *kāinga* –father’s and not just mother’s side– may be begged to provide resources. In another scenario, cousins (siblings in Tongan kinship) who are formally higher in rank (i.e. from the father’s side of ego’s *kāinga*) may have a strong, personal sense of affection for someone who is trying to generate resources. In such a case, their *’ofa* and desire to give, leads to a willingness to ignore the formalities of traditions.

Further, as described earlier, high ranking people are culturally enjoined to show *’ofa* and be generous with those of lower rank. Such actions help to endear them to their supporters, and demonstrate their ‘Christian’ or ‘nice’ [*anga lelei*] characteristics. A common way to refrain from accepting a gift, without insulting the gifter, is to redirect the proffered gift back to another member of the offering family, such as a soon to be married daughter, or a newborn baby. In a slightly different scenario, a high ranked person, such as the *mehekitanga* [Father’s sister] may agree to “stay home” and not “bother coming” to a specific event. One young woman said that to her *mehekitanga* [father’s sister], prior to the large twenty-first birthday celebration her family was organizing for her.

¹²⁰ In one situation from Maka Fele’unga, a woman who was divorced, was living on her ex-husband’s town site, with her youngest children from that marriage. While she lived there, the pandanus growing on his garden land was referred to as hers. When her ex-husband returned to Maka Fele’unga to visit at Christmas, his new wife (who was from Tongatapu) harvested the bulk of the pandanus and took it back to Nuku’alofa with her. It was, after all, now her pandanus.

In suggesting that her *mehekitanga* not make the long ocean trip to the party, and in the *mehekitanga's* agreeing to do so, Vā'inga (and her mother) thereby retained control over the amount of *koloa* that was passed on to her father's sister. "If she had come, we'd have to give her a lot more *koloa*", Vā'inga's mother told me, as she showed me the two *kie tonga*, two large *fala* and fine sections of barkcloth her mother had prepared in advance as the *mehekitanga's* *'inasi* [share] of Vā'inga's birthday wealth.

In all gifting events, people are entities and actors in relation to others –all acts are therefore social ones, and all acts are ways of ensuring social ties and demonstrating living well.

The Maternal Kāinga Pushes UP

The flow of prestige items and the activation of social and familial relationships is instigated by an individual in a social space - an event such as a wedding, birthday or a funeral. Then, pigs, yams and *koloa* flow from a number of people, loosely of ego's *kāinga* and of inferior rank to, the event for ego. The redistribution that takes place sends the gifts on: to those of superior rank to ego, and as 'answers' to those who gave generously. But the redistributions are never equal - some people give and receive nothing in return, and usually, the individual who instigated the flow retains nothing, or very little of what was given.

What this gifting and ranking system feels like, from ego's point of view, is, as Fuiva Kavaliku told me, "father's people are always pushing you down, but mother's people are always pushing you up". Rogers (1977:158) recorded a similar way of describing how the relationship felt, from an insider's perspective, which he learned from Tupou Posesi Fanualofanga, at one time a researcher with the Tongan Traditions Committee: "You can stand on your mother's relations

[*kāinga* 'i fa'ē] but your father's relatives [*kāinga* 'i tamai] stand on you".

One of the ways that mother's people traditionally "push up" their sons and daughters is through the displays and gifts which occur at all life passage events. Thus from ego's perspective, male and female relatives on mother's side of one's *kāinga* give up all types of wealth, for ego, while male and female relatives on father's side accrue all kinds of wealth because of ego. Thus father's side "pushes you down", by taking your *koloa*. Lita's maternal *kāinga* went to a great deal of trouble, giving of time, labour, *koloa* and the use of precious family heirloom textiles, in order to elevate [*fakalangilangi*] the event, but also to push her UP.

The meaning of plaited *koloa* for Kauvai women and the maternal *kāinga* extends in another way, understood when the rituals of the wedding and those of a first birthday are examined together. This next example describe the typical ceremonial which marks a birthday, generally a first or 21st birthday.

Textile Gifts and the Maternal Iconography of *Koloa*: Celebrating a Birthday

I was a guest at three first birthday celebrations. Two of them resembled a wedding or a funeral for the numbers of guests, and for the extent to which flows of produce, animals, barkcloth and plaited *koloa* were activated.

A birthday feast lasts one day. The guests include high ranking religious leaders and representatives from all branches of the child's *kāinga* [kindred]. The number of guests at the celebrations I witnessed ranged from approximately 200 people at the first birthday, some 70 guests at the second, and only 12 at the third. The third birthday celebration was held near the end of 1992, when the severity of the drought had eaten up most families' cash, and killed all their crops,

making a large feast an impossibility, but there were still the ritually significant attendees of ministers, high ranking guests, and ritual representatives of the maternal and paternal *kāinga*. (See photo#6). The standard gift at a birthday was *koloa*: either barkcloth or plaited cloth, and the feast was provided from food drawn from a wide set of *kāinga* members. On all birthday occasions, the role of *koloa* figured significantly, both as gifts to the child, and as redistributed gifts from the child. The format of the birthday included a public feast, prayers, acknowledgement of the guests [in rank order] and the *koloa* given in the child's honour, blessings, and public speeches about the child and her/his family.

In all the celebrations, the year old baby was laid or seated upon a pile of *koloa*. In one instance, the pile reached three feet high. This represented gifts of plaited *koloa* and/or barkcloth made by the mother herself, or brought by the mother's *kāinga*. The best of that *koloa* was later divided between the child's father's sister [*mehikitanga*], the mother's *mehikitanga*, the father's *mehikitanga*, the ministers who said prayers, and some high of the ranking guests.

Important to the argument I am making here, is the role of *koloa* and the maternal *kainga*, which I suggest are clearly analogues. I identified the connection first in connection with my own daughter's small birthday party, and the actions of Susana, the woman who had been acting as an 'auntie', looking after Ceilidh when I was busy with fieldwork.

On the occasion of her second birthday, we were holding a very impromptu, Canadian style birthday party (cake, kids, balloons). Our friend Susana showed up unexpectedly, carrying a folded section of *ngatu* [barkcloth]. Our daughter was also made to sit on the *ngatu* while a lay preacher and neighbour said a blessing over her. At the time, the fact that Susana had been acting as a babysitter [*tauhi*] to Ceilidh during that year, and the significance of her perception of that

relationship, vis-a-vis her surprise visit to my daughter's Canadian style party, was lost on me. Even when, much later, Susana protested our taking Ceilidh away from Kauvai, at the end of the field stay (Young Leslie 1998), It wasn't until I reviewed the field notes and photos of the birthdays and the weddings together that I realized there is a connection between *koloa* and the maternal *kāinga*. In retrospect, and because of Susana's gift, it is clear to me now that despite its euphemistic labelling as "women's wealth", *koloa* is more than a gendered valuable, a product merely associated with women. *Koloa* is symbolically associated with mother and mother's *kāinga*. The pile of *koloa* upon which the baby is placed in the first birthday and the *fa'ē huki* who represent the maternal sides of the wedding couple's *kāinga*, are clearly analogous. The *fa'ē huki* bodily represent the maternal *kāinga* and their intention to support their offspring. The pile of *koloa* upon which babies rest are similar symbols, icons of the maternal side of the child's family, and their investment in that child. The fact that rank is derived from one's mother must be included in the confluence of meaning in the notion that mother's side pushes one up. 'Cloth' and maternal *kāinga* symbolically and materially elevate one. In the ceremonial context, *koloa* is a clear icon of the maternal *kāinga*.

Thus the meanings of *koloa*, and significance for women and their ability to live well, are multiple: In its production, *koloa* demonstrates good mothering. As transformations of raw, garden products, into beautiful media of cultural communication, both barkcloth and plaited *koloa* have migrated from the masculine spaces of the gardens [*'uta*] to the feminine spaces of the home [*'api*]. This gendered and maternal connotation persists when *koloa* is displayed and deployed in ceremonial events. When wrapped around bodies, *koloa* beautifies, protects the wearer from dangers, demonstrates respect for those of higher rank, binds mundane persons into ritual states and when piled high at a birthday, wedding or funeral, demonstrates the extent to which an individual's

maternal kin are willing to “push up” their child.

When gifted and exchanged, *koloa* achieves greater potential and influence, insofar as it serves to tie individuals and *fāmili* [families] together into social networks of kin and compatriots [*kāinga*] who are bound by gifts. Those gifts are used to show fulfilment of duty [*fatongia*], feelings of love/generosity/empathy [*ofa*], respect [*faka'apa'apa*] and obedience [*talangofua*], and thereby signify lives lived well. But *koloa* makes more than the ‘social body’, the set of appropriate kinship relations that underlie *mo'ui lelei* on Kauvai. Making *koloa* remakes the physical body too. In the following chapter, I describe the relevance of plaited *koloa*, as a form of work which re-makes bodies, even as it constructs social and cultural persons.

CHAPTER TEN

MAKING *KOLOA*: THE POLITICS OF EMBODIMENT

*Would that my doing
were as a doubled mat
Ulamoleka*

Making wealth and the end products of plaited *koloa* are identified by Kauvai mothers as key to fulfilling their obligations, living up to the ideals of *anga fakatonga* and therefore 'living well'.

It is important to have lots of *koloa* but having it, in and of itself, is not enough for a woman to be seen as living well. The actual process of production also figures significantly in the construction of a good, traditional, industrious mother, a woman who knows how to maintain appropriate social relations, is likely to pass the ability to live well on to her children. In this chapter, I look at women's textile production on Kauvai. As women work cooperatively in groups called *toulālanga*, the structure of the work helps create the proper maternal identity. But more than that, the work that goes in to making textile wealth represents an embodied form of knowledge which has political as well as cultural and economic significance. Recognized and valorised both on Kauvai, and by Tongans living abroad, making plaited *koloa* is specific cultural knowledge which belongs to women, defines femininity and marks traditional practice. Within the kingdom and while living away from Tonga, Tongans of all social ranks use the products of that knowledge to negotiate and maintain their cultural identity. As the physical, material medium for demonstrating identity and for living well as Tongans, regardless of where they are, *koloa*, and plaited *koloa* in particular, is

metonymic with knowledge which Kauvai parents implicitly, and unquestioningly connect to the ability to raise children who know 'the Tongan way' [*anga fakatonga*] and who are capable of fulfilling their social and kinship-based duties [*fatongia*]. Such children, in inheriting a parent's good social practice, and in (consocially) living well themselves, are clearly identifiable as healthy Tongans. They are the ones who will continue to invent *mo'ui lelei* in their daily practice, throughout the duration of their lives.

However, while enabling the proper identity and social ties identified as part of living well, and while perpetuating a set of skills and knowledge with important cultural and political significance, plaiting simultaneously re-makes women's bodies. A final dimension to the discussion of maternal obligation and the ramifications of women's wealth production to their 'health' is added through an examination of the work, skills and knowledge that goes in to making plaited koloa¹²¹.

It is important to detail the work/knowledge involved in women's wealth use and production of plaited koloa here, for several reasons. Both conventional (*anga fakatonga*) ideals and individual descriptions connect the work of making children healthy with 'mother's duties' [*fatongia 'oe fa'ē*], that in itself a good reason to pay attention to the production process. As I see it, the actual process of plaiting is both the boon of Kauvai women's identity and, ultimately, their bane. While plaited koloa is highly esteemed, and women who produce it are likewise valorized, through hours upon days, upon months upon years of plaiting, strong, tall and graceful women like Manu, Susana and Talahiva are re-made into bent and crippled women like Vasiti, Pauline, Loutoa or Folingi. Transforming raw pandanus into women's wealth is a process which, eventually, transforms women's

¹²¹ This chapter is best read with reference to Appendix Three, in which I detail the varieties of plaited koloa, and Appendix Four, in which I describe the varieties of pandanus leaves that women use to actually make their plaited koloa.

bodies. This is a final irony in a discussion of health practices as appropriate social relations.

Importantly also, on Kauvai, *lalānga* [plaiting] is the work which occupies women's time and passion most days of their adult lives. It obsesses them, as much, perhaps more than, do other maternal concerns such as family, church and appropriate social practice. This in itself is no small thing, yet despite the importance of plaiting to everyday women's lives, there is a complete lack of substantive description or analysis of pandanus processing and plaited koloa production, and its relevance for women, in the Tongan literature to date. While space considerations here preclude the substantive analysis the subject deserves, I discuss pandanus as a woman's crop, distinctive in the male gendered gardens, and touch briefly on its position in history as well as its processing from raw leaves, into highly esteemed culturally significant textiles (Greater details on pandanus varieties and processing are provided in Appendix Four).

Embodied Knowledge, Cultural & Political Identities

Keesing (1982) pointed to the political and economic importance of knowledge, and the significance of its control, to relations of domination, be they of states, hierarchical structures or gender relations. On Kauvai, knowledge requisite for the production and use of ceremonially essential textiles belongs to women. Plaited koloa production and usage figures significantly in the invention of the contemporary Tongan identity, and in the ability of any Tongan to fulfill the ideals of *anga fakatonga*.

For all Tongans, wearing and displaying *koloa* is a kind of metalanguage, a means of communicating without words, which is understood to be specifically Tongan. In terms of consocial personhood (Lieber 1990), or social practice (Bourdieu 1977, Ortner 1984), 'doing' is part of living

well, and what Tongans 'do' includes wearing plaited koloa. This has been described clearly with respect to funeral practice (Kaepler 1978b) and weddings (chapter nine). From a broader perspective –the global Tongan community– plaited koloa takes on even more significance as markers of identity (Small 1997 refers to overseas migrants desires for *koloa*). While many Pacific peoples use barkcloth and plaited koloa in ceremonial exchanges, only Tongans, within the country and in the many migrant communities overseas, wear plaited fibre textiles on a regular basis as a way of communicating identity, personal relations and social rank. The knowledge required for making, wearing and deploying plaited koloa is therefore politically as well as culturally significant.

Small (1987) and Herda (per. com) both argue that in the past, chiefly women controlled the value of plaited koloa by controlling its production. Weiner (1989, 1992) has argued the same for Samoa. These are decidedly 'noble views' (Decktor-Korn 1971), one which accepts contemporary '*eiki* [chiefly] people's assumption that in the past, chiefs freely and unilaterally controlled ceremonially and economically significant production, to the exclusion of influence or consideration of their lower ranked kin, the people called *tu'a* [commoner]. Today however, on Kauvai, the proper preparation, construction, use and deployment of plaited koloa is knowledge which resides in commoner women. Regardless that this may (or may not) be a relatively newly invented practice among the non-chiefly people, there are no noble women living on Kauvai now, no chiefly women telling the Kauvai women how to make or what to do with their textiles. In fact, it is the '*eiki* women who are coming to the commoners, asking for *koloa* which they themselves know not how to produce.

I understand the work involved in the production of plaited koloa to be information and skill embodied –a kind of gendered, cultural knowledge which is resident in the hands and bodies of

Kauvai women. In general, women were not proficient at *explaining* how to plait, or how to work the raw material, or what it was like to use the various types of pandanus. “How do you decide what width the element should be?” I’d ask. “See Heta, like this” was the usual reply, and my teacher would perform the manoeuvre for me. Long hours of sitting, watching, listening and later, learning to plait, gave me the opportunity to hear women as they worked on a number of different projects. My descriptions here, and of the qualities of the different pandanus varieties in Appendix Four, are based on what I learned from listening to women discuss their raw materials with each other, as well as with me. These are local and experiential, rather than technical or botanical descriptions, focussing on what each type of pandanus is like to harvest, process, and then use.

The female knowledge necessary for creating good quality, highly esteemed plaited koloa is originally taught and learned through example and practice, and memorized, embodied, in the fingers, hands and backs. It is the bodily basis of the knowledge required to do the work of plaiting which eventually transforms women’s bodies. Like the peasant cotton or linen spinners and weavers represented in European folk tales (eg: Grimm’s Fairy Tales), whose product was esteemed as a path to potential riches but whose hips, feet, lips, hands, eyes and backs were malformed in the process (Schneider 1989:177-179), plaiting on Kauvai is onerous, small-holder’s labour. Like Rumpelstiltskin’s gold spun from straw, plaited koloa is wealth created from raw materials, but its production also turns brides and young mothers into hunchbacked crones with crooked fingers¹²².

The process is one in which the physical body is re-shaped, but the social body too, is implicated in the production of plaited koloa on Kauvai, and key to this is the way in which making

¹²² Examples include the story of Rumpelstiltskin, who helped a peasant girl spin straw into gold and marry the king, also The Three Spinning Women, one with a deformed lip (from licking the thread), another with a splay foot (pumping the treadle) and the third with an enlarged thumb (twisting the thread). See Jane Schneider (1989) and most versions of Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Schneider’s (1989) analysis depends on Ruth Bottingheimer’s “Tale Spinners: Submerged Voices in Grimm’s Fairy Tales”. *New German Critique* 27:141-50, 1981.

plaited koloa is structured. I discuss the organization of plaited koloa production, and how the work is structured next.

Making Plaited Koloa: Working Together in a Women's Space

Early September morning, the sun just beginning to brush the tree-tops to the east of my house, the coolness of the air already slipping away. Sitting in my back doorway, savouring the westerly ocean breeze, mentally rehearsing the interview questions I hope to ask later in the day, I am interrupted by Manu, hailing me as she strides by. "*Mālō 'etau lava ki he pongipongi ni-*" floats at me from behind the roll of plaited koloa she is carrying across her shoulder. "*Io!, Manu 'e!*" I reply.

Half an hour later, and Manu's niece Mauvai skips by, singing on her way to school. I absent mindedly register that, as Manu's greeting reminds me, we have "made it to another morning" and, since Manu is carrying her *fala* to the work house, it must be Thursday, and I should see if I can get someone to watch my daughter while I interview women in the working houses.

When planning my research, I had originally anticipated using my toddler daughter as an entrée to the circle of women's activities. I'd expected that I could take her with me everywhere, and that there would be other children around who would play with her, occupy her time, entertain her while I interviewed the mothers, or simply chatted about topics I wanted to learn more about. This was the scenario as I understood it from the literature, for example:

My material was African and access to it was gained through staying with the women as they cook, divided food, talked about illness, babies and proper care of the body". (Douglas 1975:203, cited in Weinberg1989).

The applicability of this scenario was confirmed for me in personal conversations with other ethnographers of Pacific societies. It is also often assumed in the literature describing 'women's work'

as productive labour characterised by periodicity, work that can be fitted around other forms of domestic labour, including child care. I assumed therefore, that the process of women's work would be the same on Kauvai. However, I was surprised to see that typically, the houses where the women met to plait [*fale toulalānga*] were devoid of children. Husbands or older children brought pots of cooked food, and young children occasionally poked their heads in to relay a message or make a request, but generally, the abandoned houses which groups of women claimed as work sites were for mature women, women plaiting *koloa*, solely.

Young women only begin to learn to plait when they are secondary school students, although they likely have helped their mothers or aunts harvest, process or prepare the pandanus since childhood. They may begin to work on small projects (say a *ta'ovala* / waist wrap) as they reach adulthood, perhaps as a preparation for marriage. In general, however, women do not work consistently and formally at production of plaited *koloa* until after their youngest child is able to play independently with other children, usually around 3 years of age.

Not only did women delay participation in a plaiting group [*toulalānga*] until their youngest child was old enough to be watched over by others, the children themselves were encouraged not to play near the plaiting houses, and especially discouraged from being inside the house. The space of the plaiting house was one for adult women, into which others might visit, temporarily, but not stay. While children were part of the incentive for its production, they were clearly not welcome where plaited *koloa* was being produced. While plaiting technically can be done in small sections and can therefore be interrupted, the social construction of the *toulalānga*'s labour was clearly not work that permitted interruptions (and this included the daughter of the local anthropologist). In fact, the structure and popularity of the cooperative production groups, as I

describe below, stems in part, from women's desire not to let their work be interrupted.

Women on Kauvai generally plait their *koloa* in one, or any combination of, three ways: alone, with a group on an *ad hoc* basis, and, most commonly, as a member of a cooperating team, called a *toulalānga* (see photo#7 and #8). A *toulalānga* operates with a usual maximum of five women, generally no less than three, who work together on the same piece, each plaiting her section, which is connected to the section of the woman beside her as they progress. Each work day is dedicated to working on one particular woman's plaited *koloa*. For instance, in one *toulalānga*, Monday was Loutoa's day, Tuesday 'Uini's, Wednesday 'Eva's, and so forth. In her *toulalānga*, Manu's day is Thursday.

On her day, a woman's household is responsible for providing the members of the *toulalānga* with the main meal of the day. This is usually served at mid-morning, sometime between ten and eleven o'clock. Ideally, the meal is a good one, combining *me'akai* [taro and or 'ufi], and some *kiki* [usually fish or chicken]. These meals were generally prepared by the women's eldest child (son or daughter) or husband - whoever was free at home. Women in a *toulalānga* generally worked from shortly past sun-up, sometime between seven and eight in the morning, to about four in the afternoon, five days a week.

Women told me that the advantage of the *toulalānga* system was that it gave them company during what otherwise would be long, lonely hours of weaving. It also provided incentives against procrastination, or interruption of their work, what they referred to as laziness [*fakapikopiko*].

Small (1987) outlines the history of the development of rotating cooperative work parties

like the *toulalānga* from an earlier style of cooperative organization, called the *kautaha*¹²³. The *kautaha* were promoted by the late Queen Sālote as a culturally specific style of development, a 'traditional' form of modernized handicraft production. The *kautaha*, or 'alliance', where 'many join in one endeavour', were begun as wealth-generating schemes. In many ways they mimicked pre-Christian production systems controlled by chiefly women, in which female *kāinga* [kindred] members produced *koloa* which was the highest ranking ('*eiki*/chiefly) women's role and prerogative to re-distribute.

The *kautaha* placed a heavy emphasis on production of *koloa*, but this was not their only focus. In a *kautaha*, the cooperative group's activities were multi-faceted, offering a kind of group identity which, again rather like the pre-contact *kāinga*, transcended the material production of *koloa*, and extended to local level politics, and village improvement projects. As wealth-generating schemes, the *kautaha* tried to generate *koloa* which belonged to the group, with an individual woman contributing her personal labour to the group good. The philosophy was that each woman benefited as a member of the group and they commanded a joint identity which, as a collection of voices, enhanced the entire community.

The *kautaha* were successful for a time, and held a high profile in some communities, where they were given names and sponsored community feasts, work projects, the building of women's work houses, and organized major exchanges of barkcloth for plaited *koloa*, or for foreign commodities. Such exchanges are precursors to the pre-arranged exchanges called *katoanga* which are

¹²³ Please note that while barkcloth [*nganu*] production is described in this section, I wish to be clear that, no one on Kauvai made barkcloth. My understanding of its production is based on what women told me, rather than on first hand experience. While, as the preceding chapters clearly show, Tongan barkcloth is ceremonially significant, and, while it is distinctive from that of Samoa (where it is called *siapo*) and Fiji (where it is called *masi*), my purpose here is to emphasize plaited *koloa* production. This is because, on Kauvai, plaited *koloa* is considered of greater value than barkcloth. Furthermore, Tongan barkcloth is a subject well documented in the literature (e.g. Small 1987, Tielhet-Fisk 1991), while pandanus textiles are not.

now popular on Kauvai. Eventually, however, the *kautaha* devolved, and were replaced by more democratic and loosely organized *toulalānga* [plaiting together] and *toulanganga* [cooperative barkcloth production].

Small (1987) found that while the cooperative plaiting and barkcloth groups (*toulalānga* and *toulanganga*, respectively) developed from the *kautaha*, there were also significant differences. In part, differences were due to modernising influences which were changing Tongan social and kin relations. Especially significant in Small's analysis, was an increasing emphasis on the nuclear and three generational family as an interacting unit [*fāмили*], instead of the wider *kāinga*. Problems thus arose with the lines of authority among the *kautaha*'s members, including the tendency for high ranking women to either ignore the *kautaha*, or attempt to subvert the *kautaha* to their own personal, familial and *kāinga*-based ends. Also difficult was sustaining the momentum and motivation for group-oriented goals amongst the large collection of women. Being more flexible in organization, *toulanganga* (and *toulalānga*) women were free to drop in and out of the group, according to their individual and familial needs. The *toulanganga* style of barkcloth production thus allowed women to keep individual goals, and still 'help each other out' [*fe'ofa'ofani*].

In her analysis Small (1987) focussed on the *toulanganga*, the group which cooperates to produce barkcloth [*ngatu*]. She does not discuss Ha'apai women, nor *toulalānga*, to any extent. This is mostly because her research was conducted on Tongatapu, and there, most *kautaha* were focussed on barkcloth. They developed into *toulanganga*. Furthermore, it seems likely those *kautaha* and early *toulanganga* were more prevalent, and kept better records. Thus there is no analysis of the emergence of *toulalānga* in the Ha'apai region. There are differences between the *toulanganga* as described by Small, and the *toulalānga* as they are practised on Kauvai (in 1991-1993). In some

ways, the Kauvai *toulalānga* are more similar to the *kautaha* than to the current cooperative barkcloth production groups. The material specifics of the work help explain some of the differences between *toulalānga*, the contemporary *toulanganga*, and similarities to the earlier *kautaha*.

Ngatu [barkcloth] is made from beaten strips of the inner bark of the paper mulberry bush [*hiapo*]. The pounded and spread bast sections are eventually overlaid and re-beaten, then all the separate sheets are glued into larger and larger sections. Finally, the full, long white section, called *tapa*, is decorated with traditional designs from template patterns called *kupesi* and hand painted with brown, rust and black dyes.

The initial, individual strips of *hiapo* can easily be made into sections by individual women working at home. According to three of Maka Fele'unga's residents, who have made barkcloth in the past (while living elsewhere), the actual beating requires relatively little skill in comparison to plaiting. In fact, a hand cranked press for creating this first stage of the barkcloth is now increasing in popularity (Tielhet-Fisk 1991), reducing the skill level of the primary production process even further.

The final gluing and painting [*koka'anga*] requires the cooperative effort of several women for a brief, labour intensive basis. A large group will come together once or twice a year, to paste, colour and finally decorate the huge sheets (see photo# 9). This, as different woman from Tongatapu (all members of *toulanganga*) informed me, was the usual pattern of their and their partners' work habits. Each worked until they had enough *hiapo* ready for gluing, then asked their partners to set aside a day for the task. They did the same for the day of painting [*koka'anga*] the barkcloth. Organizationally, it seems, the challenge to a contemporary *toulanganga* is getting a very large group of women (say twenty or more) to commit to the timing of their *koka'anga* once or twice

a year. The labour required is relatively brief, intensive and usually highly public. Organizationally it is similar to other joint labour endeavours in a village, where a number of people are motivated to work together for a period of time. Such examples include building a village fence, cleaning out the village water reservoir, preparing a feast for the noble or attending the graduation ceremonies of the primary school: once a single date is set, individuals can work towards it, within their own constraints and the grand event occurs only once or twice in a year. Generally however, keeping the motivation strong for more than a week is difficult. People drift away from the project to return to their individual responsibilities.

Plaited koloa can also be made individually, in fact this is the traditional ideal. But it is not really the norm. Plaiting is repetitive, physically taxing work which can be very boring. Working in a group allows for peer pressure against procrastination and company makes the work pass more quickly. Because of the size of the actual pieces being produced each day, the cooperative groups are smaller than those generated by the painting of barkcloth. But unlike the barkcloth decoration [*koka'anga*], plaiting group members must be prepared to work together consistently, for months on end. The work of each woman must interlace with the work of each other woman, as they go. The women of the *toulalānga* must therefore begin and end at the same time, so that each woman begins and ends at the same point in the 'path' –called the *hala*– each day. A *toulalānga* arrangement therefore requires women who can work at the same speed, maintain the same level of quality and jointly agree upon their individual production goals. They must then stick to that schedule almost every day of every week, for a period of from six months to a year. This work pattern requires a somewhat different and not conventionalized set of organizational skills and long-range planning

practices¹²⁴.

The daily, pre-agreed upon work schedule is measured in specific lengths of plaiting to be accomplished per day, with the goal to produce a specific number of textiles by a set deadline. Five expert women can produce one standard (i.e.: 10x10 or 8x12 ft.) *fala* each (i.e.: five *fala*) in about two months. Women say it would take double that time, to produce the same piece alone.

The criteria for any individual women's participation in a *toulalānga* was variable. As stated above, women sought other weavers of equal skill and speed. Aside from this, women grouped according to geographical and familial lines. In other words, women who lived near each other, or were related to each other (often this category overlapped), tended to work together. But women who were very experienced formed partnerships with other highly skilled partners, regardless of where they lived in the village.

Participation in a *toulalānga* is also determined by the state of one's cycle of fecundity: Of the thirty five women of Maka Fele'unga who participated in a *toulalānga* between 1991 and 1993, the youngest child was three years, an age at which children are free to roam the village around their home, play with other children and be monitored by elder siblings. Women with young babies work on their *koloa* alone, if at all.

The reason five was the usual maximum of women who will work together at any one time, was that the number falls neatly into the days of the working week, and five women are all that can fit comfortably (with room for knees and elbows) on the standard width, room-sized, *fala*. There is another reason for the *toulalānga* to have a minimum of three women: an old, Christian influenced

¹²⁴ People of Ha'apai are envied by those living in Nuku'alofa, for what is perceived to be their 'freedom' [*noa'ia*] from the daily grind of wage labour (regardless of the local sanctions against such aimlessness and laziness). But for women who plait seriously, the work hours on Kauvai are long, and not dissimilar to wage-style labour.

gossiping law which forbids two women from being alone together.

The structuring of the *toulalānga*'s work over the year effects the work habits of each women's family members as well. It effectively contributes to ongoing cooperative relations not just between a particular set of women, but also their husbands and children. In some ways this resembles the cooperation noted between members of the original *kautaha* as described by Small (1987).

Unlike the *kautaha* in Small's (1987) analysis however, the *toulalānga* on Kauvai are not named, and do not attempt to exert their influence as a political entity. Nevertheless, insofar as the women of some *toulalānga* on Kauvai have consistently worked together for several years, the partnerships were sufficiently regularized that everyone in the village knew who worked in which *toulalānga*; those groups effectively were labelled, according to their constituent members. In everyday talk, these women were assumed to have (local political) interests in common as well as their plaited koloa production goals. Other groups were formed on an situational and convenience basis, for a few months or a year at a time, in response to a particular goal, such as an upcoming wedding.

In these ways, the *toulalānga* on Kauvai, bore some organizational, structural and identity-related similarities to the now defunct *kautaha* as described by Small (1987), while retaining the flexibility and emphasis on individual's goals and needs that she identifies with the *toulalānga*¹²⁵. Certainly, that flexibility to opt in and out of a cooperative group on an annual (or semi-annual) basis was important on Kauvai, especially for women in their child-bearing years.

¹²⁵ There were named women's development [*fakalalaka*] groups on Kauvai, and the memberships overlapped with *toulalānga* memberships, as well as women who were neighbours. However, the names were chosen only because the funding agencies asked for named groups. I received a list of the groups, including the women who were identified as belonging to each, from the Foundation for South Pacific Peoples before I went to Maka Fele'unga. Once there, I asked women from the various lists, which groups they belonged to. Most could not remember the name, although all could remember the 'head' woman of their particular group. The groups had served their usefulness (building water reservoirs and kitchens after the last hurricane), and were now 'on hold'.

The benefits of joint plaited koloa production are numerous. A group working together generates public respect: *toulalānga* women are seen to be industrious and skilled in knowledge which is traditional and valuable: they are understood to be creating 'wealth'. Participation in a cooperative group thus enabled a woman to maintain a public image that paid off both in terms of local social respect: someone who was living well. But it also helped at the bank, where *toulalānga* membership allowed people to qualify for small loans. As a member of a *toulalānga*, women could predict that more pieces would be completed in a year than were likely to be completed by a woman working alone, but also when their next piece of plaited koloa would be finished. They therefore could more likely predict what their minimum annual income would be (if they planned to exchange for cash), how ready they would be for an upcoming ceremony, or when they could pay off a bank loan. Furthermore, insofar as *toulalānga* women were perceived to be more expert at plaited koloa production, the organizers of *katoanga* exchanges sought them out first. Thus women in a *toulalānga* had the best chances to exchange their plaited koloa with overseas partners. Finally, while women were reluctant to label anyone as being a poor [*kovi*] plaiter, women avoided partners whose plaiting skills, knowledge, speed as well as work and social habits did not match their own. Being in a *toulalānga* implied being a skilled maker of plaited koloa. Insofar as *koloa* production and use is considered to represent traditional Tongan culture, *-anga fakatonga-* within and outside of the nation, plaited koloa skills perpetuate the social body as well as contribute to the representation of the traditional Polynesian polity.

Producing plaited koloa begins with the processing of pandanus leaves. Like the actual techniques of plaiting, pandanus processing is culturally constructed as women's knowledge. Many men will harvest the long, thorny leaves for their wives or sisters; many may have knowledge of what

the various pandanus varieties are like to work with, and what type of pandanus is appropriate for what type of textile. They may even know how to separate the leaf layers, dye the leaves or slice the fibres, but this is knowledge they do not 'own', nor will claim as theirs. Furthermore, this is adult women's knowledge and skill: Even though plaiting techniques are now included in some secondary school curricula, most women only become proficient at textile processing after they learn to plait – usually their first lessons begin with processed material received from their mother or another elder woman. Like plaiting, processing skills are embodied more than studied.

Pandanus is grown in the food gardens, which are considered to be men's spaces. But it itself, is usually identified as belonging to a woman. I will return to the relevance of gender in relation to plaited koloa after the following description of pandanus – the actual plant, its place in Tongan culture & how it is processed.

Pandanus: Gender & Women's Produce

Leaves from many varieties of the screwpine (pandanus) and other basts from certain barks can be used as base material for plaited koloa. Pandanus is by far the most common source. But pandanus has nasty, vicious, barbed leaves which must be processed before usable fibres can be created (see Appendix Four for descriptions of the varieties of pandanus).

Pandanus is processed with fingers, seawater, rainwater, fire, air, and sunlight. The only tools used are the long, machete-like knives [*hele pelu*] used to cut the leaves from the stalk and to remove the sharp barbs (see photos #10 and #11), and the rectangular blades [*kapa*], used to slice the long strips of processed pandanus into the desired widths, and to hone the strips during the weaving. These homemade blades are fashioned out of flattened pieces of tin - either from roofing or food

cans (see photo #12). A couple of generations ago, women say, a bivalve shell served to split and hone the fibre strips into wefts¹²⁶ for their *plaited koloa*.

With the proper processing, and knowledge of the varieties of pandanus leaf, pandanus yields fibres of varying but subtle shades and textures. These fibres are strong, flexible, durable yet biodegradable, and can be adapted to multiple purposes. This is very old technology. Pandanus sails powered the early Pacific navigators' vessels. Pandanus and other plaited material made baskets which stored their rations and cultivars; pandanus mats provided beds, sitting platforms, and divider screens; finely processed and wrought pandanus provided decorative 'aprons' and other garments of rank and symbolic communication; sheets of woven, decorated pandanus swathed brides, grooms, gods and god houses, funeral biers and grave sites. While certainly not the only raw material worked by Pacific peoples, as a genre of material culture, pandanus products formed a highly significant part of everyday and ceremonial trade and exchange, something evident in the materials collected by Cook and his crews on his three voyages (see Kaeppler 1978).

Elsewhere in the Pacific, varieties of pandanus provide food as well as the raw material for thatch and textiles, but the edible varieties are not present in Tonga (Whistler 1991:75). On Kauvai, aside from the occasional stringing of pandanus keys into delicately scented *kahoa* [neck-wreath/ lei], pandanus is strictly reserved for plaited koloa. Uncultivated pandanus reaches 5 m in height (Yunker 1959:48), and is frequently seen on the windward shore. The scraggly, twisted trunks and tufts of wild leaves were always wind-strained, even on calm days, clinging to the rocky shorelines with their aerial roots. While pandanus is indigenous to Polynesia, many of the pandanus varieties of Tonga are sterile. They are introduced crops, which survive only when cultivated and periodically transplanted.

¹²⁶ In plaiting, each fibre or element of material (in this case pandanus) is referred to as a weft, after Buck's example. This contrasts with the terminology of weaving, in which the longitudinal fibres are termed warp and the latitudinals, weft.

Even those varieties which are self-propagating need to be properly tended. Dead areas must be trimmed and kept free of encroachment by neighbouring plants, or the leaves will be difficult to harvest, to transplant, and of inferior quality for weaving. Leaves must be harvested carefully, to prevent rainwater from accumulating in the remaining stalk, an event which will cause the rotting of the trunk. Fijian women have the same concerns for their pandanus (Turner 1996).

Unlike their wilder cousins, or the *laubala* pandanus of Hawai'i, the cultivated varieties of pandanus on Kauvai exhibit no branches or spindly trunks, only geysers of luscious looking leaves. Pandanus leaves are long, slender, and tough. Many varieties are cruelly barbed along each outside edge and a lengthwise-running midrib. Imagine a huge pineapple top, with leaves 2 to 3 m. long and 7 cm. wide, and you will have an image of cultivated pandanus as it grows in men's gardens. It is the only cultivated crop in the gardens, usually thought of as men's spaces, which is referred to as belonging to a woman.

On Kauvai, women know and use a number of varieties of pandanus, many, but not all of which, imply a kind of ontological geography in their names: *tutu'ila*, *lotuma*, *tofua*. The most widely used varieties are the two required for the highest ranking types of plaited koloa: kie and *pāongo*.

The different varieties of pandanus require different techniques in processing and storage. Some are boiled, and the top surface is separated from the bottom. Some are dried in the sun and used whole. Some are soaked in a bath of sea water and coral ash, and others are cooked with specific dyes, baked or smoked. This specific, technical knowledge determines how a fibre will be used, and the end value of the produce. This knowledge is considered to be women's, as is the work (even when men and boys help, as I describe below). It is knowledge which is acquired and preserved through practice, and remembered, not in songs, stories, or images, but in the body.

As I describe the plaiting process (below) it is important to remember that the physical process, organizational structure and gendered nature of the work of making plaited koloa results in a clear example of what Bourdieu (1977) identified as bodily hexis, where “the political mythology”, in this case of gender, maternal obligation, feminine role and health as social relations, are “realized, turned into a permanent disposition” (Bourdieu 1977: 93-94). *Anga fakatonga*, and *mo’ui lelei* are embodied, as far as mothers are concerned, through the physical and social process of plaiting.

Once processed, whether the complex process required for the leaves called *kie*, or the simple one used for *pāōngo* (see Appendix Four), base material has been created from which to make any number of forms of plaited koloa. Often at this stage, processed pandanus is wound into large wheels [*taka’inga*] which are suitable for storage or sale, and readily available for use. Women told me their *taka’inga* would last years if kept dry, but they rarely were able to keep their stock on hand for more than a year.

After the leaves are processed, the actual plaiting can begin. The first step is the *fatu*. A *fatu* is a base or foundation, and in plaiting, refers to setting up the beginning edge of wefts. Women *fatu* the width of the piece they are working on, by slicing *fe’unu* from a leaf, while leaving the base end of the leaf uncut. At this stage it looks like a hand: a flat piece which divides into five (or more) equal sections. These base leaves are placed at right angles to each other, side by side in a row on the floor, for a distance of some eight or more feet. This row will become the width of the finished piece, and these beginning strands are carefully plaited together to create a kind of selvage. This stage is very difficult: the individual leaves are loose, held by nothing but the plaiter’s dexterity. It is essential to keep the plaiting even, regular and straight at this stage.

Once the *fatu* is completed, a band has been created which will serve as the main, framing

edge for the entire piece. Inexpert plaiting is obvious in a puckered or uneven edge, as well as curving or rippled lines of wefts; both flaws originate in the *fatu*. A woman will usually complete the *fatu* of a new piece at home in the evening, and work enough of the wefts herself that the piece will hold together while she carries it to the work house.

The final preparatory step in the production of plaited koloa is to make the individual elements for plaiting. This is called *fe'unu*. The strands, or 'elements' of processed pandanus are sliced from the uncut leaf. It is a very important procedure, requiring strong, skilled finger, hand and arm movements, and just the right sense of feel for the grain in the pandanus leaf (photo #13 shows 'Ana Seini preparing *fe'unu*). Typically, a woman hones the whole leaf once or twice, on both top and under surfaces, a maneuver somewhat like a barber stropping a straight razor. This softens the leaf slightly, making it more flexible. Pressing the sharpened corner of her *kapa* [blade] into the leaf, the plaiter slices off a sliver from the outside edge, usually beginning on the right edge. Next she makes a cut and severs the left edge. Sometimes these outside edges are discarded like rinds, as being irregular in shape or texture, but some women will use them. The subsequent cuts are gauged according to the original width of the leaf, as well as the weaver's desired width.

Consistency of widths is very important. To some degree, the width of the elements is prescribed: Each type of plaited koloa has a particular ideal or model for the kind of pandanus employed, the method used and, primary among these criteria, are the size, or *au* of the elements. Fine, slender elements of a particular item are referred to as '*auiki*', while wider ones are '*aulalabi*'. Of the plaited koloa that I have seen and was able to measure, *auiki* consistently refers to elements of 3-4 mm in width, and *aulalabi* are 7 mm in width. These are the two sizes typical of, respectively, *ta'ovala* [waist wraps] and *fala* [sleeping mats] The fabulous *tu'oua tonga* or *ngafingafi*, and the *kie*

hamoa ('ie toga in Samoa), used as high ranking ceremonial garments, have elements of 1 or 2 mm!¹²⁷ Wider elements, of 1.5 - 2 cm or slightly greater in width are usually used in a kind of work or underlay mat, a *papa*. In addition to the consistency and width of the weft, the process of slicing the individual elements, called *fe'unu*, is crucial to the overall process because even wide elements like those of a *papa* (a mat for sitting or work) are devalued if their edges are uneven, burred or jagged (see photo #14 of *papa* stacked for gifting).

When a woman has sliced enough wefts for herself and each woman who will work with her for the day, she and her partners in the *toulalānga* situate themselves at regular intervals on the newly begun piece, and work side-by-side, plaiting the fibres at a diagonal to their bodies, inching forward until the piece is the desired length.

Tacit, unspoken knowledge gained through years of practice and stored as 'skill' in fingers, wrists and arms is an important aspect of making both the plaiting elements [*fe'unu*] and plaiting the 'cloth'. Elements must be straight, smooth edged and of consistent widths, but the grain of a leaf is gently curved, and this curve can lead a blade astray, or cause a rough edge. Women's fingers find the curve of the leaf even as they are running it over their blade. They compensate for curves and avoid ragged edges with knowledge gathered through and directed with both gross-motor and fine fingertip senses. Their bodies know how to make the product, more explicitly than their tongues can describe, faster than their eyes can focus.

Likewise with the actual plaiting process. Even the simplest 'checkerboard' pattern of over-and-under depends upon embodied knowledge: like surgery, creating *koloa* depends upon being able to 'feel' the right point at which to join or separate the elements, and the fingers must be able to grip

¹²⁷ At this level of fineness, it is more usual to measure by the number of strands or weft to the inch (Kaepler 1995, personal communication).

the sometimes stiff, sometimes slippery single or double elements, and create the correct tension, in order to lay down a *hala* [road] which is straight and even.

The plaiting process is repetitive and can be hypnotic, but because each strip is slightly different (in width, thickness, length, flexibility), the process requires constant tacit concentration. The fingers pluck, gather, lift, hold, pull, flatten, over and over again. Each day, women fold the completed sections of their piece under the working section, so that they are sitting on the portions they have already finished. Thus, a woman's body weight helps to press that part of the completed *hala*, even as her back, thighs and ankles scream with the tension of leaning forward, cross-legged, for hours at a time.

Slowly, as the weeks pass by, a *fala*, *fihu* or some other plaited *koloa* is created. A month or two after a woman lays the foundation [*fātu*], the entire piece is finished, bound with closing knots and then decorated with coloured wool fringe. A *kie tonga* will be decorated with wool, feathers and/or beads. Like other items of value, newly finished *koloa* are beautiful: smooth, lustrous, newly laid unmarred pandanus wefts crisscross symmetrically at right angles; tight, strong, inviting, an object of pride, a tangible form of wealth [*koloa*] (see photo #15 of Talahiva, and #16, Pake'ina on two *kie tonga*, and #17, close up of *fala*) and, as argued in chapter nine, a sign of the investment and support of one's maternal *kāinga*.

Ideally, over the course of their lifetime, women on Kauvai expect to make plaited *koloa* of various types, and eventually to compile enough to be able to distribute as required at the various life passage events they or their children will go through, events like those described in earlier chapters. Eventually, they may get to a point in the cycle where they receive more than they give away. Once women get to the stage in their lives where they can begin to amass *koloa*, it is carefully stored and

hidden away. Often, thick piles of plaited *koloa* or barkcloth can be found under western style mattresses on four poster beds, where no one sleeps, but where the *koloa* is safe from the dirt, bugs, sunlight and mildew that can harm it, not to mention from prying, covetous eyes. However, there are always competing uses for plaited *koloa*, and a stockpile of plaited *koloa* is fair game for a 'lending' request. For this reason, among others, women do not relax their production. In those instances when *koloa* flows, whether in gifting, sale or as collateral, the plaited *koloa* always is thought of as a women's property, as is the knowledge required to produce it.

Simply put, plaiting and the *koloa* that results is metonymic with women. Over a career of plaiting, expert women are constructed socially, as maternal and feminine figures, but the lifetime of work also reconstructs them physically. In this slow, inevitable remaking, a woman's body becomes more suited for plaiting than any other activity associated with woman in Tonga: backs bent, fingers hooked, knees that are comfortable when bent for hours at a time, this is a re-making of the body which is particular to women. In the following section, I demonstrate the strongly gendered nature of plaiting work, and why it is women's bodies which bear the brunt of the burden of making 'wealth' as they live well and make health.

Only Women

1992 was blisteringly hot on Kauvai. The drought was in full force and most of the *me'akai* [food; root crops] had scorched in the ground. Women and men gathered every morning and evening around the public water reservoirs to receive their allotted ration of 2 'dustbins' of water [about 4 gallons] (that is, until the reservoirs ran dry). That water ration had to suffice for washing, drinking, and watering animals. The road to the south was busy with carts loaded with barrels,

heading for that part of the island where a freshwater aquifer lies beneath the coral substrata¹²⁸

The Kauvai economy is mostly subsistence based, with culturally prescribed surpluses, and optional and opportunistic marketing of surplus produce, fish and textiles (see Evans 1996 for greater detail).

Normally, men's and women's roles mesh well and family members' work is balanced. According to *anga fakatonga*, men are expected to do physical, outdoor, dirty labour, while women do labour which is refined, domestic and aesthetically, spiritually and ceremonially elevating. Food and shelter are therefore the responsibility of men, while cultural and biological reproduction are women's responsibilities. While types of labour are gendered, this does not mean that women can't go fishing, or don't help in the gardens. Nor does it mean that men don't do laundry or take on child care. Work roles are, in practice, open, and work is allocated in basically pragmatic, if usually gendered ways. As long as the gardens can produce, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers can meet their mutual responsibilities [*fatongia*], and the complementarity of the traditional system, even overlaid as it is by Christian emphases on husbands and wives, ensures fairly equal degrees of responsibility for men and women.

When the gardens failed however, families found that cash intended for school fees and boat fuel was being spent on food, an unusual circumstance for people like the residents of Kauvai, who

¹²⁸ An atoll such as Kauvai is an island formed from coral reefs which have formed around igneous rock, evidence of ancient volcanic activity. They are like floating gardens, held up from the sea by a lattice of centuries of coral. Ground water as such is non-existent on atolls, but fresh water may be tapped, either from seeps on the larger atolls, or as a thin layer of rain water, what geologists call the Ghyben-Herzberg lens, tends to filter down through the soil to collect and float on the underlying seawater in which the ancient corals grew.

The earlier Tongans dug wells, sometimes puncturing the floor of the atoll, creating small, highly prized pools, which frequently figured in narratives of chiefly people's adventures (ie Collocott 1928;11-12). Twice the archaeologist David Burley tried to excavate the well in the neighbouring village. The first time was during the drought, when the well was subject to much traffic. The second time was the following year, when conflicting interests between landholders prevented Burley from getting permission to investigate the site. Numerous attempts have been made to find a well in the village I lived in, but the water tapped is always saline.

think of themselves as food producers. Thus even though a cash market for fish existed, and families needed the cash, few men could afford to go to sea. Coupled with the lack of crops, this meant that families' main sources of cash (thus food and sundries) were remittances and *koloa*. The pressure was on women to provide for all the family's needs. Economically, they were pressed to produce plaited *koloa* which could be targeted for market, on top of those textiles already promised for gifting overseas in *katoanga*.

Men, time heavy on their hands, surreptitiously helped their wives with many of the stages of pandanus processing, as well as the household labour that, if not traditionally part of *anga fakatonga*, is more generally associated with women: laundry, childcare, the day to day cooking (i.e.: the description given by 'Eva above). The object was to free up the women's time so they could concentrate solely on their plaiting. One man even helped put the decorative *tuitui* [stitching] on the *kie tonga* his wife had finished. Even as women and men realised that the bulk of their income was coming from the sale of *koloa*, and that a good market for plaited *koloa* existed, any suggestion that men actually learn to plait, was considered uproariously funny, even lewd.

We were sitting in the weaving house, Loutoa, 'Eva, Lesila, 'Ana Seini, 'Uini and myself. As usual, they were bent over a *fala*, the unwoven ends of the *fe'unu* flying before them. They were discussing the famine [*honge*] and half-seriously berating the men *in absentia*, for being lazy [*fakapikopiko*]: "I'm fed up with eating flour". "Yes" came the murmured chorus, heads down. One women, 'Uini, dropped her blade for slicing and honing the pandanus [*kapa*] and stretched, then rolled awkwardly onto her back, groaning, "I'm crippled". "Too much plaiting" said Lesila, and I commented "You should get the men to help you weave". I was thinking of the impromptu kava parties that seemed more frequent of late, the men finding themselves unoccupied. The subdued

atmosphere was banished as a burst of laughter filled the house. The comments flew fast and furious, too quickly for me to catch the innuendos and retorts, the women's eyes snapping at this most delicious of jokes I'd made. Calming and chuckling to themselves, I caught one word easily, because of its frequency: "*fakalēiti!*" *Fakalēiti* is the Tongan term for men who behave as women (see Besnier 1994 for the clearest description of Tongan gender liminality to date, also James 1994).

Clearly, despite the similarities of *toulalānga* production to wage-style work that are apparent in the description above, or the economic incentive for families to produce more plaited koloa using male labour, cultural constructions of gender meant making plaited koloa is something only women do.

There is another aspect of embodiment and plaited koloa production which is relevant to a discussion of the gendered nature of the work of plaiting, and the ramifications of women's knowledge vis-a-vis the perpetuation of culture and invention of living well. The ideal Tongan posture is a still, motionless body. Indoors, this body should be sitting, outdoors, if moving, it should be moving majestically. Men and women are marked in terms of gender-linked styles of movements, but so is rank. High rank, or chiefly, is demonstrated in movements which, except in very specific times, should be minimalized¹²⁹. Women, who as sisters are always *'eiki* [chiefly], are in particular expected to be graceful, majestic and subtle in their hand, head, foot and leg movements. Men should also be graceful and yet vigorous, their gestures more open, more rapid. For both, small gestures, such as the turn of a palm, the lift of the eye brows or widening of an eye are highly eloquent (and in the latter case, insulting) signals. Movement and posture, as much as

¹²⁹ Much of these aesthetic criteria are emphasised in Tongan dance (see Kaepler 196?), but are also played out in everyday and ceremonial events. The times when vulgar, rapid and uncontrolled movements are sanctioned include the case of the dancer [*tulafale*] who clowns behind a women performing a *tou'olunga* [specific type of dance]. The clown accentuates the subtleness and grace of the *tau'olunga* with his or her own clumsiness.

physique, skin colour and hair are bodily signs of sophistication, breeding and nurturance. As women plait, their positioning and posture is reminiscent of that of the ideal Tongan beauty, the bride on display (see chapter nine, and Collocott 1923:221): seated upon *koloa*, eyes cast down, the plaiter is making wealth. As women lay down the *hala* [road] of the *fala*, *fihu* or *ta'ovala* they are working on, they embody incipient generativity, just as a new bride embodies the immanence of that other form of perpetuating wealth, children¹³⁰.

Together in a *toulalānga*, women bring to my mind another image of traditional Tonga, the *mā'ulu'ulu*: The *mā'ulu'ulu* is a seated dance, in which groups of hands moving in unison tell mythopoetic stories, like the first discovery of *kava*, itself a myth of generativity (Biersack 1991). But Kauvai's weavers are not simply telling stories, or representing idealised images. They are busily working, showing themselves to be anything but lazy, or careless; demonstrating publicly that they have the requisite skills, traditional knowledge that, in combination with respect for family and love for their children, are the requisites of the Tongan mother. Through lives of making plaited *koloa* they show that they are hard working Christians, good traditional Tongans, supportive members of their *kāinga* who are devoting hours, days, years, to create the things of both ceremonial and economic import: plaited *koloa*. *Koloa* production casts women as typically, ideally and traditionally, Tongan, Christian and maternal. Through their plaiting, Kauvai women live their lives well.

There is a Tongan proverb which says "mankind is like a mat being woven". The proverb uses the imagery of the crisscrossing and overlaying of wefts of pandanus fibre to reflect on the mingling of blood and gender, rank and status, family histories and individual deeds, which are

¹³⁰ One of the general euphemism for children is "*koloa*" –*wealth*–.

played out by sisters' and brothers' children. The result is Tongan society. Like a *fala*, which is strong because individual elements are combined and intertwined into a single unit the proverb implies, society is strongest when individuals' actions and destinies are entwined and overlaid upon others'. In a further reading of the allusion, the flow of mats through one's *kāinga*, from maternal to paternal relatives, from junior to senior, mimics the directional route a pandanus fibre makes as it is laid, creating the series of roads [*hala*] which make up a 'cloth'. Each *hala* is comparable to a generation of humans. There are other, more ribald readings of the proverb, too¹³¹. For example, the sets of wefts are identified as either "standing up" [*fokotu'u*] (the left hand elements) or "laid down" [*fakatōkoto*] (the right hand wefts), an allusion made more delicious, women reminded me, when you remember that one of the traditional uses of a mat is as a marriage bed. The same allusion of generativity and 'cloth' wealth can be extended to the birthing of a nation. A funeral lament by the poet Ulamoleka, recorded by Collocott (1928:81-82) uses the imagery of the *fala* juxtaposed to geography to paint an image of high ranking title holders and, even in death¹³², the physical creation of the kingdom:

Would that my doing were as a double mat
 Utufeolo that is doubled
 With the weaving of utukaunga.
 Unworthy is the mat of Tungua,
 But yet 'tis the portion of Falotuma.
 Bring then weaving of Matuku,
 Efu mat and mat of red feathers,
 Fatu mat is a mat not plentiful,
 The Tongan kie is in abundance.
 Weave fihu in Uiha and Lifuka.
 And take Vava'u, and gather them

¹³¹ The layering of meanings is a culturally esteemed factor in Tongan rhetoric, allusions, proverbs and poetry which are typically open to multiple readings such as the ones I am describing. The *fokotu'u* [standing up] wefts are sometimes described as male, while the *fakatokoto* [laying down] are described as female, a very un-subtle way of reading the allusion of a plaited textile with sex and the mingling of gendered activities which underlie society.

¹³² Biersack (1991) argues that internment is a key symbol in the kava ritual which motivates the re-creation of the Tongan polity.

with the cloth of the plover and twin birds.
A kie of Toku for his adorning,
or a mat of Late for clothing to Mua.
Finished is the wealth of our land.¹³³
Ulamoleka

Whether alluding to geography, social structure or sex, the proverb and the poem underscore the dependence of Tongan society on the capabilities of women¹³⁴.

Tongan women take the thorny, inedible screwpine leaf (Whistler 1991;70), and transform it into 'cloth' (Weiner 1989). That process, the work that women do to create plaited koloa from pandanus, is socially sanctioned and gendered work, as well as a form of embodied knowledge which, in itself, is significant to the construction of feminine and maternal identity on Kauvai. But it is also a process which results in a transformation of the body from one which stands tall, and straight, to one which bends low and crooked. The ideal Tongan feminine physique, tall, robust, cylindrical in its *ta'ovala* wrapping (and definitely not an hourglass!), is lost as plaiters grow old. Like the three spinning women (Schneider 1989), Tongan plaiters become deformed. Their hands, once flexible enough to tell stories in the *tau'olunga* or *mā'ulu'ulu* dances, become hooked and gnarled like the claws of sea birds. Their feet and ankles, potent symbols of beauty and maternal nurturance in Tongan culture¹³⁵, become ugly, the knees stiffly bent, the ankles and heels bumpy with bunions and

¹³³ My thanks to Phyllis Herda, who alerted me to this particular passage.

¹³⁴ Generativity may be a more applicable term than 'sex'. Women were not easily philosophical about *koloa* making, but their practices hint at semantic overlays: Sometimes, I would find a *toulalānga* singing hymns to help pass the time. At other times, they sang a children's hide and seek ditty, '*kumi toi*' [find hide], but with very adult lyrics: "*kumi toi, langa toi*". *Langa*, like many Polynesian language words, is polysemic. It can refer to progress, as in building a country, the pain of childbirth, but also a sudden spurt of energy, or the planting of a garden. In the context of a song about playing hide and seek, the sexual overtones are not difficult to grasp. To be sure I understood, though, the women advised me to "teach the song to Maika", referring pointedly to my spouse, and not my child.

¹³⁵ There is a popular story about a girl whose feet were so beautiful, the chief who saw her accidentally wounded himself in the face. The ankles, heels and foot movements are considered highly suggestive during women's *tau'olunga* dancing.

callouses. But the new shape of their body is one which is perfectly suited for plaiting: hooked fingers pluck the wefts more easily, bent backs do not prevent a woman from leaning over her work, knees used to being bent tolerate the long hours seated on the floor, callouses protect the ankles that are pressed into the floor as the plaiter leans forward. The body of the young woman transforms into the body of a plaiter. "Look at the hands of a plaiter" said Susana, perhaps seeing her own future.

For women of and from Kauvai, plaiting, the resultant *koloa*, female gender and motherhood are linked through metonym and metaphor that plays on and through women's bodies: Women make plaited *koloa*, *koloa* is women's wealth, making plaited *koloa* is women's work, Women also make children, and according to *anga fakatonga*, children are women's most precious wealth; making children is clearly women's work. Children become social beings, and are enabled to live well, through the good training and examples of their mothers and through exchanges of *koloa*. Those forms of plaited *koloa*, those textiles, are themselves valuable as the material medium essential for cultural communication and perpetuation and definition of the polity which is Tongan society. Politically, Tonga is reconstructed as a traditional Polynesian state where women make traditional cloth wealth for wearing and for gifting, each time a woman processes and plaits pandanus, then wears or gifts her *koloa*.

When a woman like Pauline is old and bent, cannot walk upright, or at all, her plaited *koloa* will demonstrate that she is indeed valuable, that she has lived well. As much as having children who have grown and become healthy Tongans, her plaited *koloa* production demonstrates the qualities of good mothering, and the support she brought to push her children up. Regardless of where they occur, exchanges of plaited *koloa* show that a single child is actually part of a much larger social whole, a maternal *kāinga*, a traditional Tonga perpetuated across time and space. As such, plaited

koloa, the Tongan polity, children's health, female generativity, and mothers' living well are mutually constitutive, and from this swirling tautology of conventional practices and competing structures, *mo'ui lelei* is invented.

CONCLUSION

RECONSIDERING MOTHERS

In drawing this text to a close I offer four concluding points. Mothers are active in the invention of Tongan culture. Mothers are significant to the production of a national image of traditional modernity. Mothering helps to mediate the structural tension between sisterly and wifely roles. Mothers in Tonga are good mothers, but their practice and priorities differ from a germinal feminist formulation (Ruddick 1989) for theorising mothering. For mothers on Kauvai, duty to family is a dominant trope, and traditionalism acts to protect, not ensnare the Tongan commoner woman.

Women, as mothers, are creatively, symbolically, inventing Tongan culture as a part of everyday life. They do this in the process of their maternal work, which means raising children to live well, and living socially appropriate lives themselves. I have shown that this series of tasks ultimately depend on the production and exchange of textiles, women's plaited koloa.

In drawing this conclusion, I am not suggesting that Tongan mothers are different in some way from other Tongans, or from other people. To do so would be contrary to the initial insight which lead Wagner (1975) to describe invention: that people are creatively, symbolically constructing culture, all the time. What I have pointed out is that even though the orthodox or received view of Tongan culture has confined the role that mothers play to biological (or cosmological) reproduction, and credited familial reproduction to sisters, this does not mean that the

mother's role is not experienced as socially instrumental, by mothers or by their children. By using 'health' as a lens through which to examine mothers' everyday practices, I found that as mothers, women go to great pains –literally– to ensure that they 'push up' their children. What connects health to mothering, tradition, and textiles? The short answer is that health is an aspect of personal identity and is understood to be created and maintained through social relationships. Kauvai ways of constructing identity mean that children are perceived to inherit their health from the good examples set by their parents. The way that women create and perpetuate good social relationships is through fulfilling kinship obligations and by publically representing themselves as traditional, industrious, moral, God-fearing and dutiful mothers as well as sisters, wives and daughters. On Kauvai, women construct and maintain this identity, and fulfill their traditional obligations through plaited koloa production and exchange. Health, as it is culturally invented on Kauvai, means that what maternal work requires that women live well, be *mo'ui lelei* in ways that are more social than biological. Insofar as medicine is often criticised for reducing individuals to biological units, it is in some ways ironic that in Tonga, 'health' and medical modernization programmes have brought mother's work into sharper focus, and provided an opportunity to consider the ways in which mothers are socially and culturally creative, agents who are more than their biologies.

In describing mothers' agency as invention, I have also suggested another way of thinking about something already recognized: the inherent dynamism of Tongan social practice. This has variably been described in the literature as 'frame shifting' (Gordon 1990), 're-tooling' (Decktor-Korn) 'adaptive flexibility' (Ritchie and Ritchie 1989), or 'compromise culture' (Marcus 1978). The creative capacity to expand cultural tropes extends to arenas more obviously political than maternal work: The frequent re-interpretation of the mythic charters described in chapter two and the invention of the monarchy described in chapter six clearly show that Tongans have complete comfort

with re-figuring cultural meanings. Herda's (1995) analysis of the re-interpretation of the seating at the *taumafa kava* to indicate that the Tu'i Kanokupolu title holders are actually of more divine ancestry than that of the Tu'i Tonga is clearly part of a multi-generational strategy for the control of the state, something I discussed in chapter six. However, health-oriented activities have not been recognized until now to be aspects of the state and the ruling chiefs' self-invention as equally modern and traditionally Polynesian. I add medical treatments and public health provisions like rainwater tanks, vaccination campaigns, The Healthy Weight Loss Competition and Queen Mata'aho's Red Cross tour as examples of the way in which the Tongan polity is creating a modernity which is culturally authentic and indigenous, and add the point that *faito'o fakatonga* is, like biomedicine, quite good at assimilating other practices.

All of the above indicates a fluidity and flexibility which for the individual-in-culture requires creativity at the level of personal symbolising and meaning-making. How else to understand what Gordon observed: that Mormon Tongans are able to describe brothers dancing with sisters at church-sponsored events as 'traditional' [*anga fakatonga*] behaviour, insofar as the brothers were there to watch over their sisters' safety, when such physical intimacies are unacceptable elsewhere (Gordon 1990)? Or, how to understand that Kauvai women re-figure the neologism of *mo'ui lelei* ['health'] to mean 'living well', 'good social relations' and 'fulfilment of kinship obligations'? In so doing, mothers are indigenising introduced symbols, such as the healthy child and the healthy body. This is what I mean when I say that Kauvai's mothers are inventing Tongan culture.

The second point I would make is that while the Tongan mother is largely unrecognized in the ethnographic literature to date, her role is of increasing importance in a society which is constructing an identity which is equally 'traditional' and 'modern'. 'Health' promotion and medical

services are one significant aspect of the national modernization process. Health statistics and infrastructure have been and are still a means for the nation to represent itself as a credible state vis-a-vis other nation states. 'Health' messages, health promotion campaigns and biomedical practices are sources of new and different ideas about bodies, food, women's responsibilities, children, and the risks associated with them. Many of these messages are targeted at mothers, placing women, as mothers, at a nexus between a particularly modern dualism: the state, as represented through medical and 'health' practices and the future populace, as represented by a children. It is mothers therefore who mediate the relation between modernizing state and child.

Education and intellectual advancement are another aspect of the Tongan modernization agenda. Here again, it is mothers who bear the responsibility of ensuring that children get their education. My data shows clearly the connection between having children of school age and production of plaited *koloa*. Women with children in school spend hours, weeks and months plaiting *koloa* for pre-arranged exchanges mostly so that they can pay school fees and buy school books. Even when the *koloa* is intended for a rite of passage however, such as happens about the time mothers become grandmothers, I have argued the object of the gifts and service are understood to ultimately benefit the child, by way of the mother, because such practices demonstrate a mother who is living well, and produce a child who knows traditional [*anga fakatonga*] practices for living well.

Women's plaited *koloa* production figures also in the public image of the 'traditional Polynesian kingdom'. Tonga vociferously promotes an image of a Polynesian nation, traditional and yet modern. The emphasis on traditionalism is particularly important in terms of the emerging Tongan tourism industry, and the marketing of a romantic destination. But traditional practices also ensure the flow of remittances which underwrite much of the local economy. Such remittances are

colloquially termed '*ʻōfa*, indicating their motivation in affection and kinship. Mothers extend and emphasise those emotions, by using their textiles to perpetuate ties across the oceans, and thereby retain contact with as many kin as possible. Women's wealth is a major icon of Tongan identity, overseas and in Tonga. It is from their positions as mothers that women are often motivated to make, and export the textiles which tie together the Tongan social and cultural formation (ie: in their mandatory use at every life passage event) and which signify a traditional Tongan identity at home and overseas. Tongan women's bodies therefore, become the site at which the traditions of the nation are resident. Most literature on gender in Tonga has focussed on elite rituals and mythic charters, but, as Gailey (1992) has pointed out, 'the Tongan way' is based in kinship and in contemporary society it is commoner women who are maintaining the ties and practices associated with *anga fakatonga*. Women have thus come to embody the traditional aspect of the modern/tradition dyad. Traditionalism is also pertinent at a time when a pro-democracy movement threatens to destabilize the current power structure. In emphasising a lifestyle which conforms to *anga fakatonga*, women are invoking the cosmic contract (as in Biersack 1991) between chiefs and commoners, wherein chiefs have love and generosity for the commoners, who in return give loyalty, obedience and duty. Thus, contra Gailey (1987, 1987a) women's wealth retains an important political dimension: as one of the key means by which *anga fakatonga* is perpetuated, in ritual and everyday practice, *koloa* ensnares the chiefs in a relationship wherein they must acknowledge their responsibility, as chiefs, to a national *kainga*.

Important as kinship is, ideas about the family are subject to stress in a modernizing society (Gailey 1992, Small 1997). For contemporary Tongan women, the role of mother allows them to mediate the structural tensions inherent in the kinship system, which pits the interests of sisters

against those of wives. By investing in their child, through emphasizing their maternal obligations, women play to the one person in whom both father's and mother's side have an interest. In being a 'good mother' women also portray themselves in ways which are validated by the emphasis in Christian teaching on the nuclear family unit, and delayed rewards. These same virtues are valorised by state agendas which emphasise family, education, and well-socialized, obedient children. Here again, plaited koloa is important. The tropes which organize women's everyday practice such as duty [*fatongia*], love/empathy/generosity [*ofa*], mutual assistance [*fei'ofa'ofani*], respect [*faka'apa'apa*] and industry as opposed to indolence [*noa'ia*] are all fulfilled through women's *koloa*. Being seen to be making *koloa* and having lots of wealth to give away at weddings, funerals and birthdays, helps mothers live up to their own expectations, to fulfill the kinship obligations [*fai fatongia*], and thus to live well, achieve satisfaction with their lives [*monitonu*] and to create children who are healthy [*mo'ui lelei*] Tongans. In addition, plaited koloa hold value as the icons of femininity and maternity, as my analysis of the *fa'ē huki* in chapter nine shows.

But what kind of mothers are these women of Kauvai? Ruddick defined maternal work as based in the demands that any child presents, just by virtue of being a child. Children, she said, need protective love, fostering growth (nurturance), and training for social acceptance. Kauvai mothers would agree, but there are differences, based in part in how they perceive a 'child': not as someone whose spirit should be allowed to develop 'naturally', but as a being who must be progressively constrained and controlled (Morton 1996).

'Eva listed the duties of the mother as being to teach the children, administer the family home, ensure their Christian faith and enrich the family. There is clearly some overlap here with Ruddick's formulation. But in many ways, Kauvai mothers are not the kind of mother that Ruddick

advocates. For example, Tongan mothers train for obedience, and explicitly not for 'conscience', a recipe that Ruddick suggests is less likely to produce a child who lives to her fullest potential. But this assumes a 'potential' which is individualistic and very North American in style. Tongan mothers are concerned to produce children who are comfortable within the warm gaze of continued community scrutiny. Independence and individuality are not conducive to harmony, as it is perceived on Kauvai.

Ruddick is also disapproving of corporal discipline, except, perhaps when used for protecting children from making mistakes (Ruddick 1989:167). This again is a very North American attitude. Kauvai mothers would insist on the right to use corporal punishment, in a controlled methodical manner (Kavapalu 1993, Morton 1996), even though in my observations, they actually carried out the threat very infrequently.

Ruddick describes the trustworthy mother, as one who "will not cave in to teacher, Father, or community" (1989:117). Yet Tongan mothers will indeed take the voice of authority figures to heart, and will teach their children to do so too. Again, this is an correlate of teaching for obedience. While obedience to duty is not as esteemed in North American social practice as it is in Tonga, it has certain structural advantages, which I outline below.

Maternal work on Kauvai is based in, and instills, compliance with social convention [*anga fakatonga*]. Mothers want do their best in terms of what is 'right' for their children, or at least, they want their community to see them attempting to do their best. Part of a mother's goal is to produce children who know the culture, who will have 'ofa for their family, who will do their duty and will live according to *anga fakatonga*. The child who does not know how to live according to *anga fakatonga*, is not living well, and will not properly reciprocate a mother's love, for example.

Socializing a child properly is more than making them acceptable, it is ensuring their identity as Tongans. Tongan social ideology places the responsibility for children's well-being on their mothers, and gossips will criticise mothers, for 'not sleeping close' [*ta'e mohe 'ofi*] if children turn out to have bad social behaviours or untreatable illnesses (Spillius 1958, Bloomfield 1986, Morton, 1996). Mothers therefore assume the right to be intrusive, authoritarian, yet loving; they do this through constant attention and observation –what Ruddick describes as scrutiny– not just as a means for monitoring children's environments for potential danger (Ruddick 1989:72), but for demonstrating maternal love. Where Ruddick (1989:119-121) contrasted "attentive love" with the potentially deleterious effects of scrutiny, domination and intrusiveness, on Kauvai, all are part of how mothers exercise "preservative love".

While Ruddick might view the Kauvai mother as an over-protective, domineering, controlling, intrusive person who trains for obedience, this is in fact not the way mothers and the mother's family in general is experienced on Kauvai. Fuiva Kavaliku told me, your maternal relatives will always love you, will always push you UP. But mothers have other obligations, and contrary to what Ruddick suggests, in Tonga, mother's work is based on more than the demands of the child. In Tonga, kinship obligations become maternal obligations.

Maternal obligation: doing one's duty

Kava'onau was her mother's only child, and her mother killed her, so to feed a visiting chief. What kind of model does this example of motherhood leave for contemporary women living on Kauvai? There is a Tongan proverb, *koe ngulugnulu 'oe kau 'umu*, which refers to the 'grumbling of the cooks'. The saying is a complement which points out that those whose kinship role it is to

provide the *'umu* –cooked food– may grumble about the work, but, they will do their duty –*fai fatongia*– and shoulder their burden –*fua kavenga*–. One can hear reference to *ngulungulu 'oe kau 'umu* at feasts, sometimes during the preparations for funerals, and implicitly, in complements given in public. At a public *fano* [meeting] near the end of 1992, a man gave a speech, praising the people of Kauvai. He was thanking them for their contributions to the King's delegation during the Annual Agricultural and Industrial Fair. As he did so, he pointed out that unlike some other parts of the kingdom, Kauvai people still recognized the difference between *fatongia* and *kavenga*. On Kauvai, he noticed, people understood that the *fatongia* brought honour to the gifters because they had fulfilled their duty, and indebted the receiver to them. Kauvai people had retained the 'traditional ways' and not succumbed to the modern ways of calling the gifts to the *hou'eiki* [elites/chiefs] of pigs and *koloa* unfair burdens [*kavenga*]. It is telling that the *kau 'umu* are always the maternal side of a family.

These are orthodox perspectives on traditional gifting and fulfilment of duties. They index a ranked relationship with an assumption of kinship, and are motivated by the same inclinations which motivate the feasts at the start of the new year, and the other, smaller offerings [*feilaulau*] to God, and gifting in general in Polynesian culture. Killing Kava'onau was a gesture of obedience and loyalty and made a grander statement than simply providing food to a hungry guest. It sent the message that duty would be served and the obligation fulfilled (Biersack 1991). Social practices, gestures, behaviours are like objects – they are things passed between persons. Like other things that flow, be they textiles, pigs or speeches, behaviours act to tie the social body together. Obedience to higher ranked persons, flows of *koloa*, displays of generosity and abundance are pleasing to those who are *'eiki* [high ranked] and as such, they obligate return forms of generosity. Such tactics keep the social body together, and each individual member *mo'ui lelei*, living well –healthy– in Tongan terms. A

child who has properly trained for obedience will fit into this system as a socially acceptable member, and remain healthy.

There are unpleasant practical effects of this kind of traditionalist, *fakatonga* conventions for living well and fulfilling the maternal obligation. In the case of Kauvai, the burden of making a child a healthy Tongan falls, perhaps disproportionately, on the mother. The work of plaiting re-shapes women's bodies, makes them into cripples. The gendered nature of work and bodily representation of self means women are more susceptible to diseases which derive from over nutrition and lack of physical activity: heart disease, diabetes, cardiovascular accidents, arthritis, osteoporosis. Clearly, the orthodoxies of *anga fakatonga* bind women (and men) into patterns of behaviour which are limiting, and on the surface, subordinating. But Kauvai women do not see rejection of tradition as the means for relieving the constraints of a social system in which they are structurally 'low'. Opportunities for resistance, such as might be derived from a different style of mothering, perhaps the "work of conscience" model advocated by Ruddick (1989), hold no attraction for Kauvai women.

From Kauvai mother's perspective, training children differently, would not be training them for social acceptability. It would result in children like those second generation immigrants living overseas, but sent 'home' to learn to be Tongan: miserable, uncomfortable with the intensity of the local scrutiny, resentful of the expectations, such people somatize their dis-ease in illnesses like *lolomai* (home-sickness) or, may be attacked by *'avanga* (Gordon 1990: 70-71), as was Talanoa, the man discussed in chapter seven. Kauvai mothers see a wider perspective: being traditional places the village dweller, as *tu'a* [commoner] in a dyadic relationship with those who are now called nobles, and who want to be thought of as *'eiki* [chiefly]. Playing the 'tradition' role as commoners means that elites must reciprocate, with *'ofu*. To let go of *anga fakatonga* and traditionalist ways is more

than rejecting a perceived past, it is rejecting the one structural aspect of social life which prevents the chiefly elites from exploiting the commoners. Being traditional –even accepting the mutability of *anga fakatonga* – perpetuates the cosmic contract between the sacred and secular world.

Plaiting, exchanging, following *anga fakatonga*, working hard, helping others, showing *’ofa* and doing their duty –these are all behaviours which establish a woman as a good mother, a good member of her *kāinga*, a person who is living well. When an old woman, hobbled by years spent creating plaited koloa tells me “God knows” that she has worked hard, I know that she is acting like the cooks at the feast, and referring to her life, lived as well as she knew how. She is bearing the ‘burden’ in a culturally appropriate way. She is telling me that she is feeling *monitonu*, satisfied with herself, with what she had done, and now free of her kin-generated burden. Her life is a gift, which will motivate a return of heavenly *’ofa*. In so doing, she confirms the power of traditionalist ideologies and perpetuates maternal labour as inspired by the mother of Kava’onau.

EPILOGUE

Imagine: Health as Pauline Knows It.

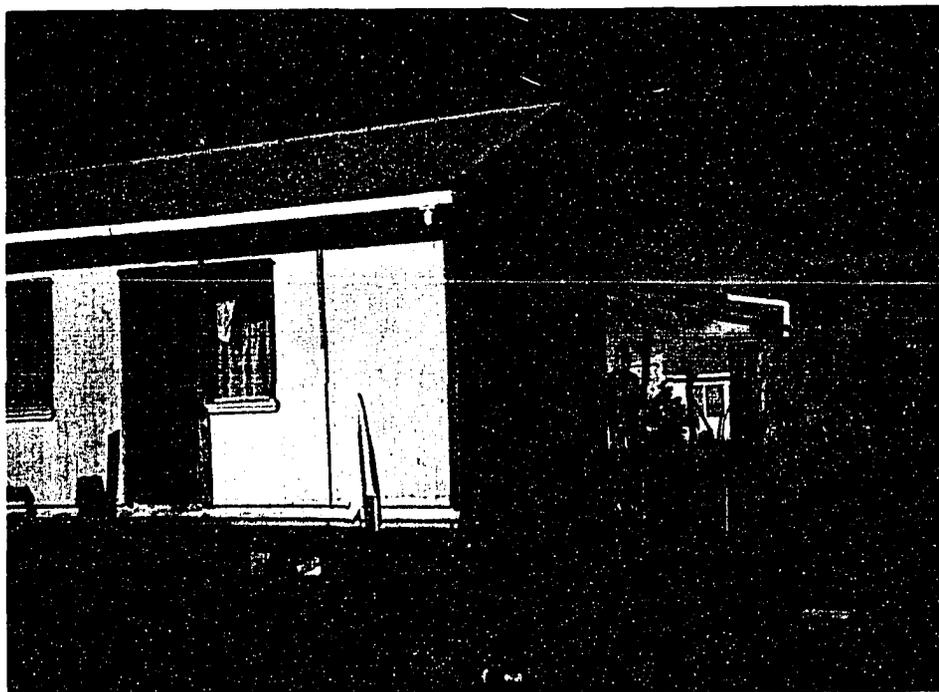
Imagine greetings called across the village: *'Alu ki fē?* [Where are you going?], *mālō 'etau lava ki he pongipongi ni'* [praise be, we have achieved this morning]. Picture the wordless tossing of a welcoming gift; neatly braided hair of girls in the front pew; bowed heads and flashing fingers of women plaiting. Picture the old wrinkled woman, moulding a newborn's head or hobbling to church; Picture the mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, silently counting stored treasures, calculating appropriate funeral offerings; Picture the heaps of women's wealth, textiles laboured over for months; Imagine the talk of women: *tutue 'a 'Ana Tangi* [Ana Tangi is wasted away], *kovi 'a Vili* [Vili is bad], *ko e fakakoloa 'o e fāmili 'oku fai 'e he Fa'ē* [the wealth of the family is made by the mother], *'ofa lahi 'ia Heu 'a Talahiva* [Talahiva loves her mother very much]; Imagine the allusion-filled oratory at feasts; the *fu!* [handclap] of men drinking kava, the solemn *'io!* [Yes!] during the sermon, the squeal of pigs readied for the *'umu* [earth oven], the smell of feast food stretching 20, 30 feet down the centre of the church hall; Imagine the stabbing ache of the lower back, the cramp of the weaver's fingers, for weeks, months at a time. And then picture the smooth luster of a plaited *fihu* [white pandanus sheet], the glossy oiled skin and thickly bundled beauty of a bride; Imagine the glow of pride, the sense of satisfaction, of completion when the thing is done properly, in a *cultured* way: "*Ko e 'ulungāanga fakatonga*" [that's traditional Tongan culture]. Imagine a people and a place, could be any place, really, where health lies in actions between others, not individuated states of

anatomical congruence. There are burdens –there are always burdens– and in this place, the burdens rest on the mothers. One burden these textile producing mothers do not have to shoulder, is the one of exclusion, disrespect, or isolation in old age.

Imagine *mo'ui lelei*, a life lived well, as Pauline knows it to be.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Hurricane Relief House, Maka Fele'unga Village



2. Unravelling World: The Funeral of Aiseia Latu



3. Heu'ifangalupe advising the Young Bride.



4. Senior Women with their most precious plaited koloa.



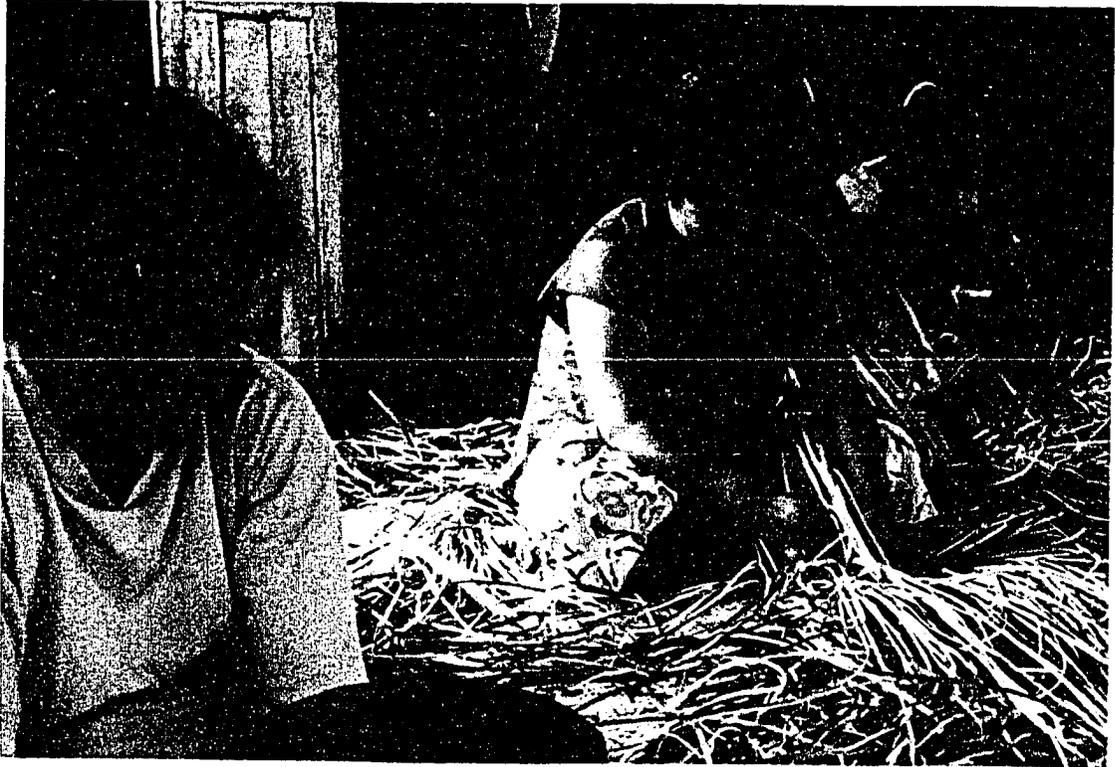
5. Bridal couple walking to Sunday Services, attended by their *fa'ē huki*



6. First Birthday Celebration: The minister blesses the child, and his *fa'ē huki* supports him, with plaited koloa gifts nearby.



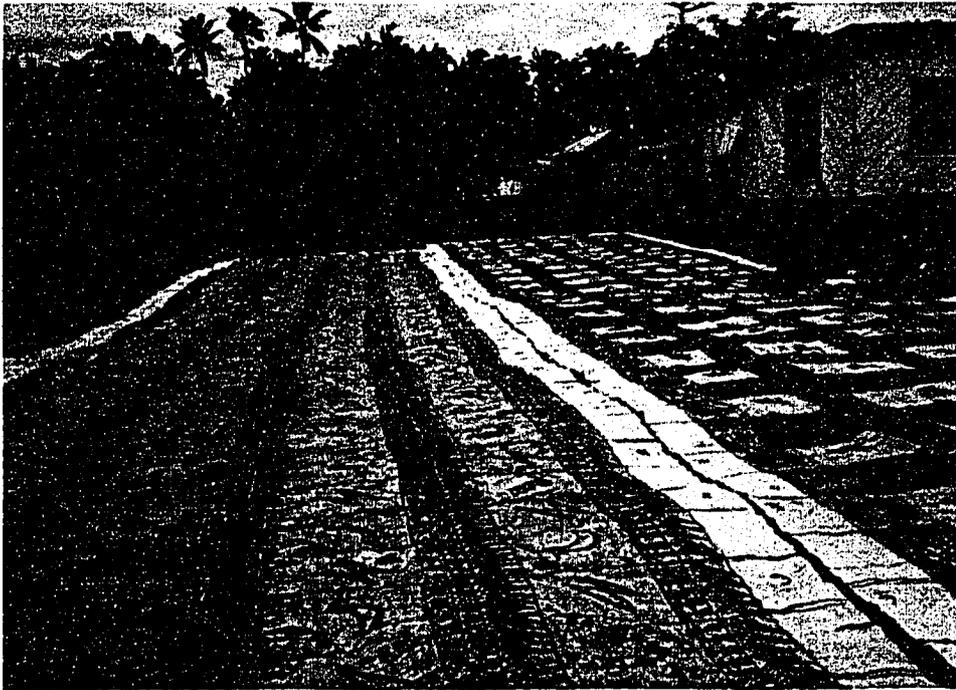
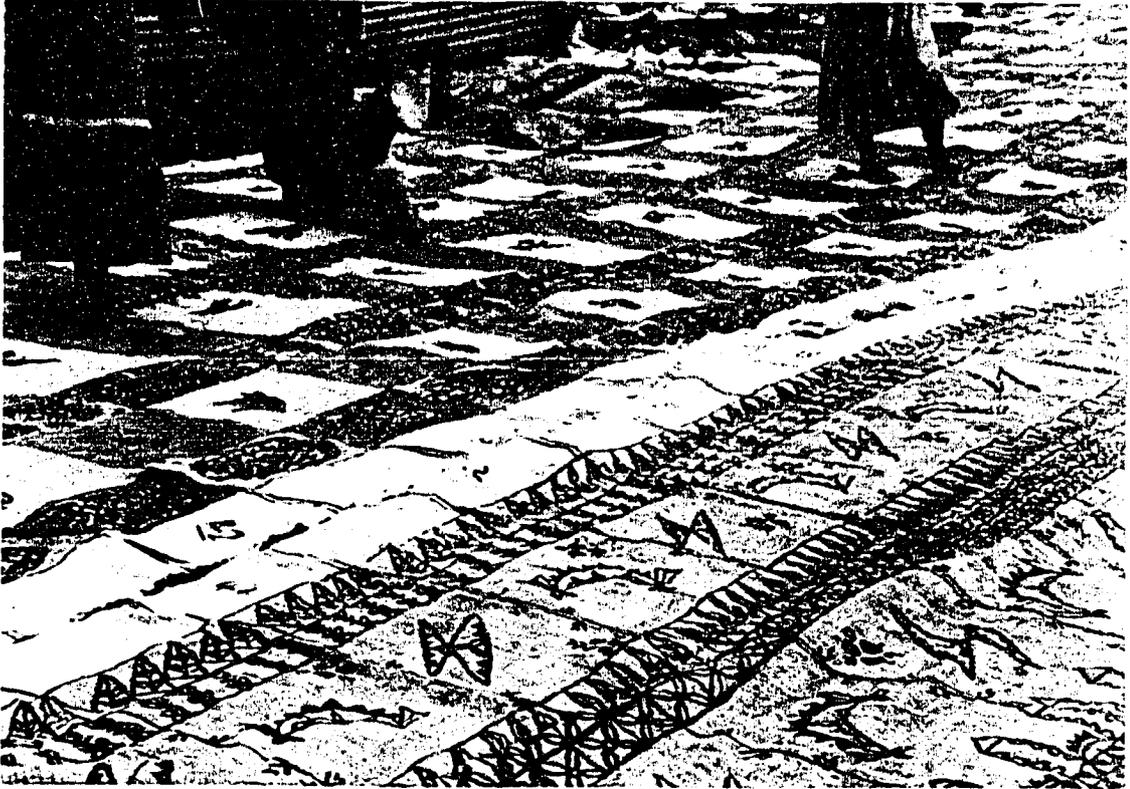
7. Toulalānga: 'Ana Seini, Loutoa, 'Uini, 'Eva



8. Working together on one *fala*.



9. *Ngatu* belonging to Pele, an young woman of Kauvai, spread in the sun.



10. Preparing raw pandanus: Lisia slicing the barbs off *kie* pandanus.



11. Mele and Malia sorting and de-barbing raw *kie* pandanus.



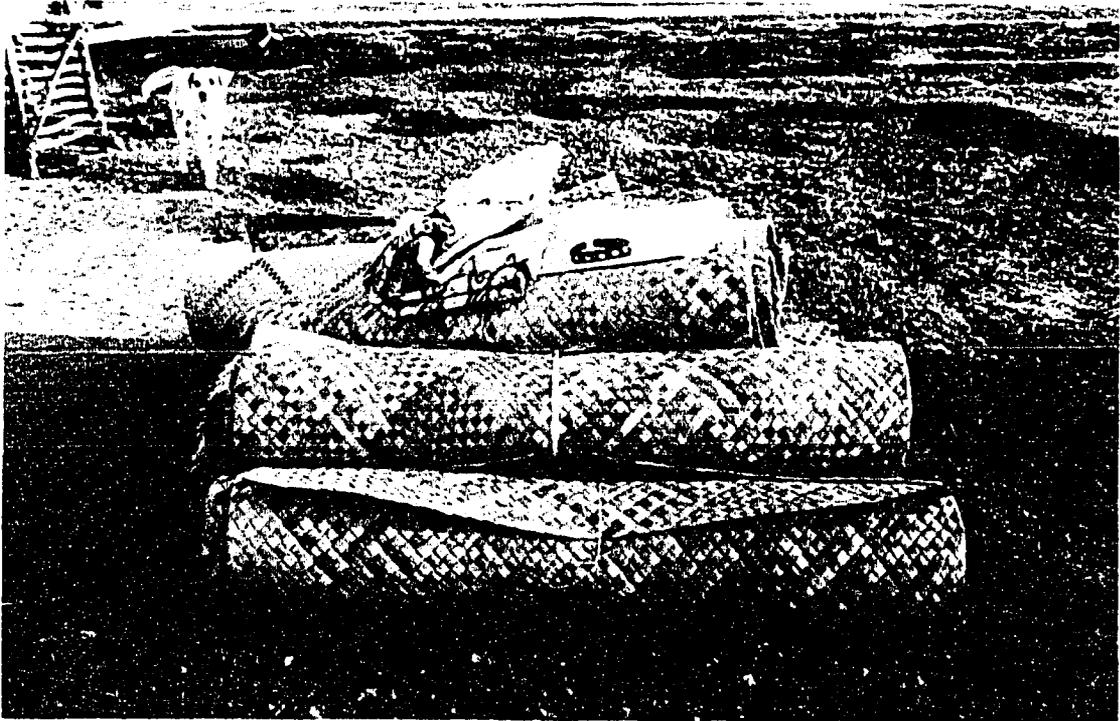
12. Loutoa laying a weft of pandanus, holding a *kapa* blade.



13. 'Ana Seini, preparing *fe'unu* [wefts] for plaiting.



14. *Papa*, the lowest ranked form of plaited koloa, stacked for gifting.



15. Talahiva sitting on a *fala tongi* she has made in preparation for her ailing father's funeral.



16. Pake'ina and granddaughters, sitting on two *kie tonga* made by Vasiti, just before her death. A *fala* lies in the foreground.



17. Close up of two *fala*. The plaid-style design is named "*sipi*" [sheep] after the tartan design on the boxes mutton flaps are shipped in.

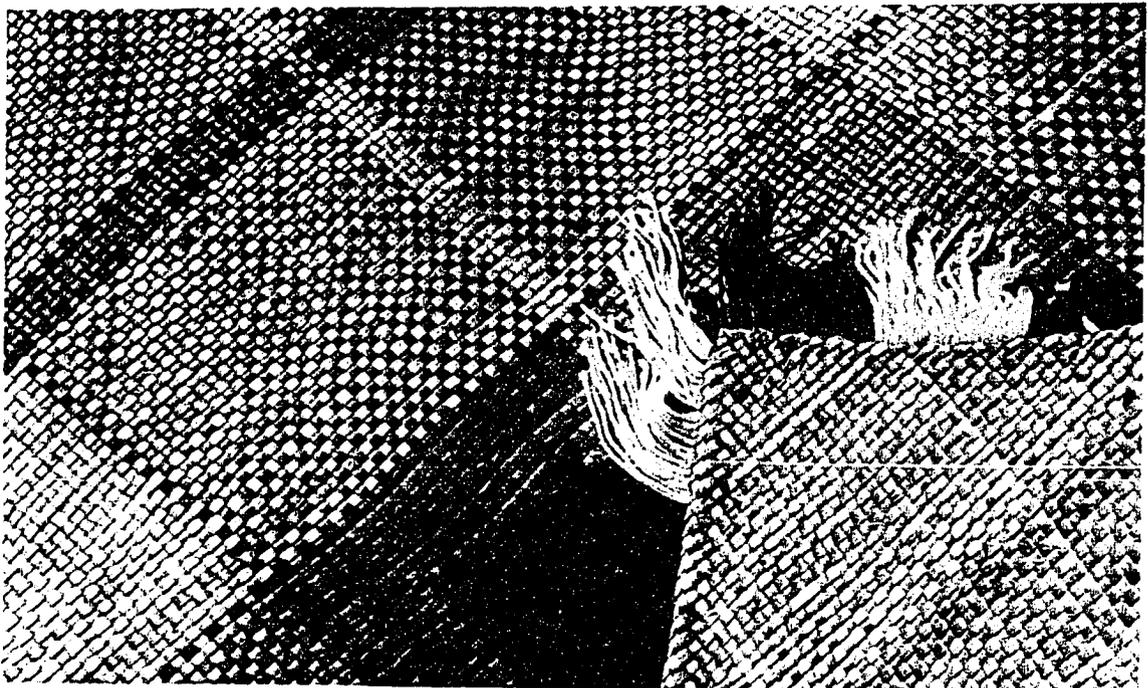


FIGURE 1:

PAULINE'S 'API

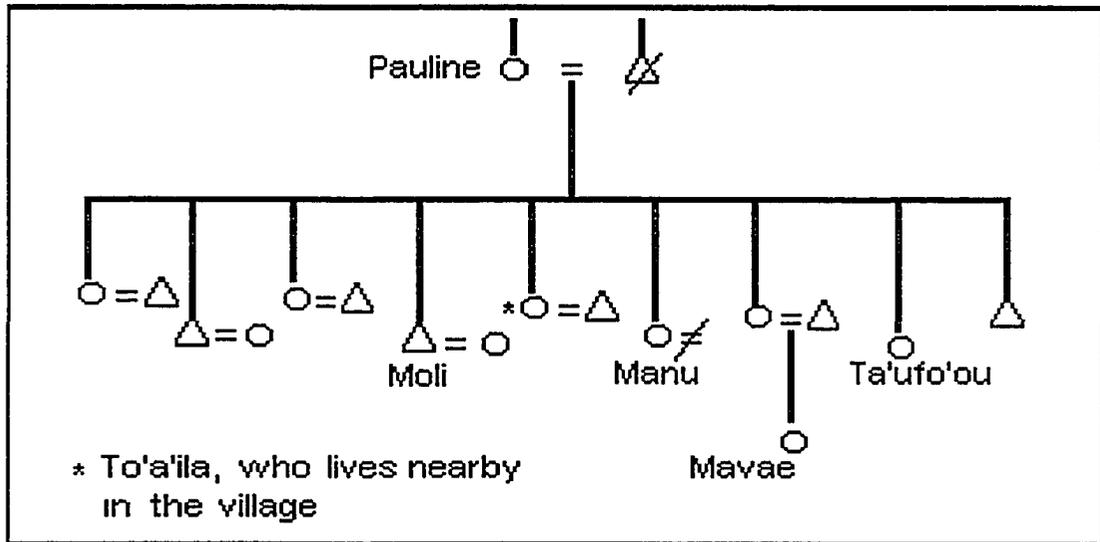


FIGURE 2:

FOLINGI'S 'API

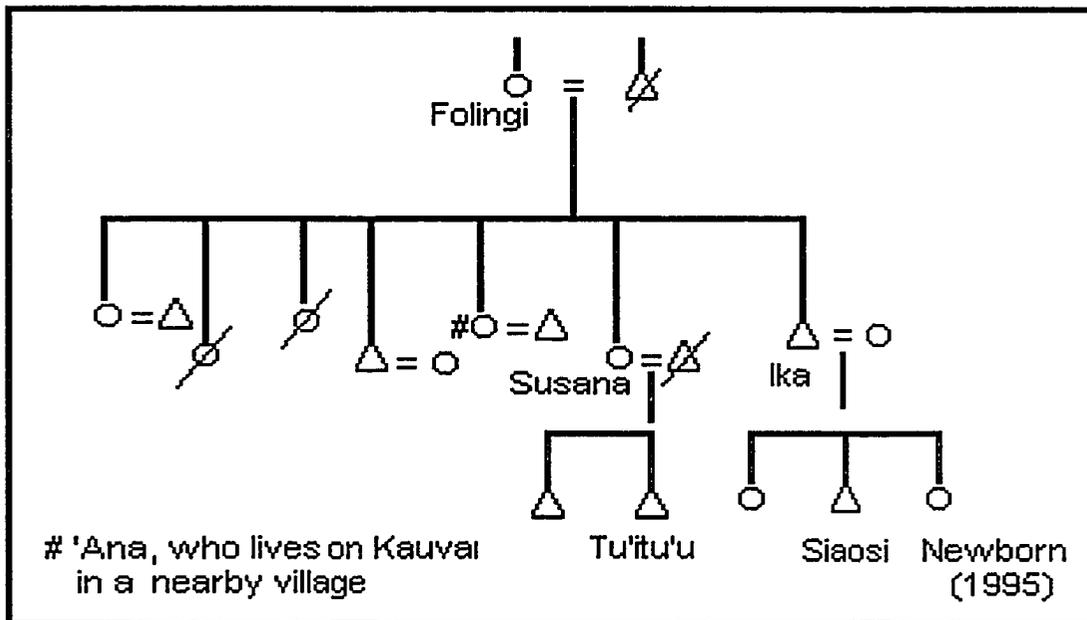


Figure 3 : Varieties of Health Professionals in Tonga (1990)

Health Professionals Active In the Kingdom

Registered Nurses *	213
Nurse Midwives	30
Student Nurses	87
Medical Officers #	44
Health Officers	17
Dental Officers	9
Dental Therapists	9
Technical Staff	111
* Two were overseas on study leave	
# Eight were overseas on study leave	

Figure 4: HEALTH PROFESSIONS ENROLLMENTS 1991 (OVERSEAS)

Medicine	9
Dentistry	5
Nursing	2
Laboratory Tech	1
Pharmacy	1
Medical Records	1
Physiotherapy	1
Health Education	2
Nutrition (1 Returned in 1992)	2
Public Health Nursing	10

Charts based on data released by Govt. of Tonga (1991:6-8)

FIGURE 5:

FAITO'O FAKATONGA BY SEX, AGE AND NUMBER OF PERSONAL RECIPES.

Data compiled from the typescript "Ko e Ngaahi Mahaki Faka-Tonga mo Hono Ngaahi Faito'o" Palace Records Office. Collected by the Tongan Traditions Committee circa 1967.

Male	Fem.	Age	No. of Recipes
1		71	6
	1	43	3
	1	65	3
	1	72	2
1		56	3
	1	72	3
	1	42	
	1	54	4
1		47	2
	1	42	2
1		56	15
	1	42	3
1		34	5
1		52	1
1		69	3
1		60	3
	1	60	3
1		39	1
	1	53	3
	1	42	1
	1	34	2
	1	34	6
1		34	1
	1	45	1

Male	Fem.	Age	No. of Recipes
	1	40	4
1		40	1
	1	44	1
	1	60	1
	1	40	4
1		66	2
1		37	4
	1	51	18
	1	30	2
	1	68	5
	1	34	4
	1	53	3
1		55	2
	1	48	4
1		35	1
	1	30	1
	1	46	1
	1	65	2
1		70	2
	1	68	2
1		65	1
16	28	45	141
Avg. Age,		50 yrs	
Avg. # of Faito'o			3 each

Note: of the 45 individuals interviewed from 12 villages, the sample is heavily skewed: 27 were from the village of Lapaha.

FIGURE 6: INCOME BY SOURCE. MAKA FELE'UNGA 1992

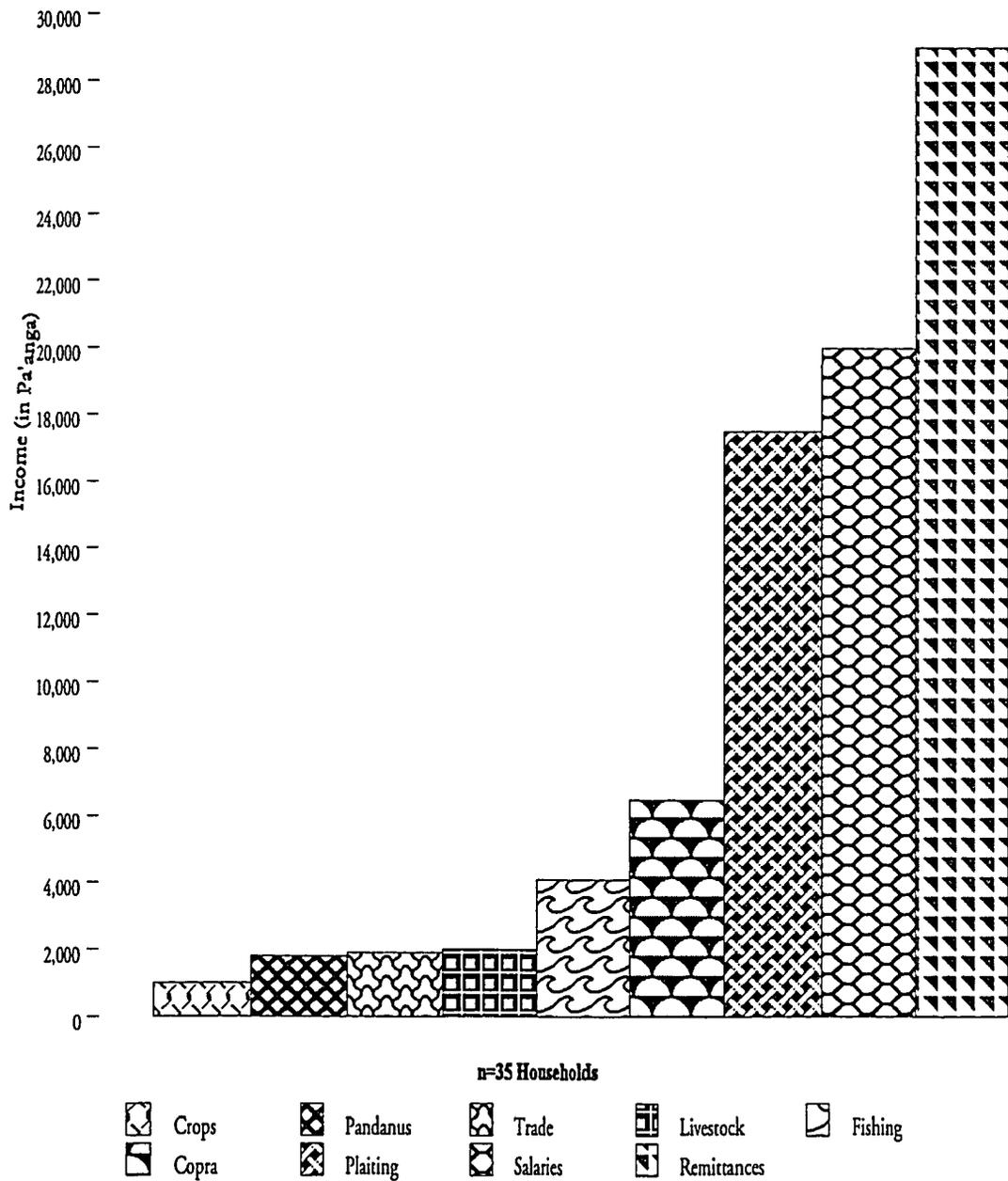


FIGURE 7: INCOME BY SEX. MAKA'FELEUNGA 1992

Cash earned from the sale of agricultural, fishery and artisanal production. Values in Pa'anga.

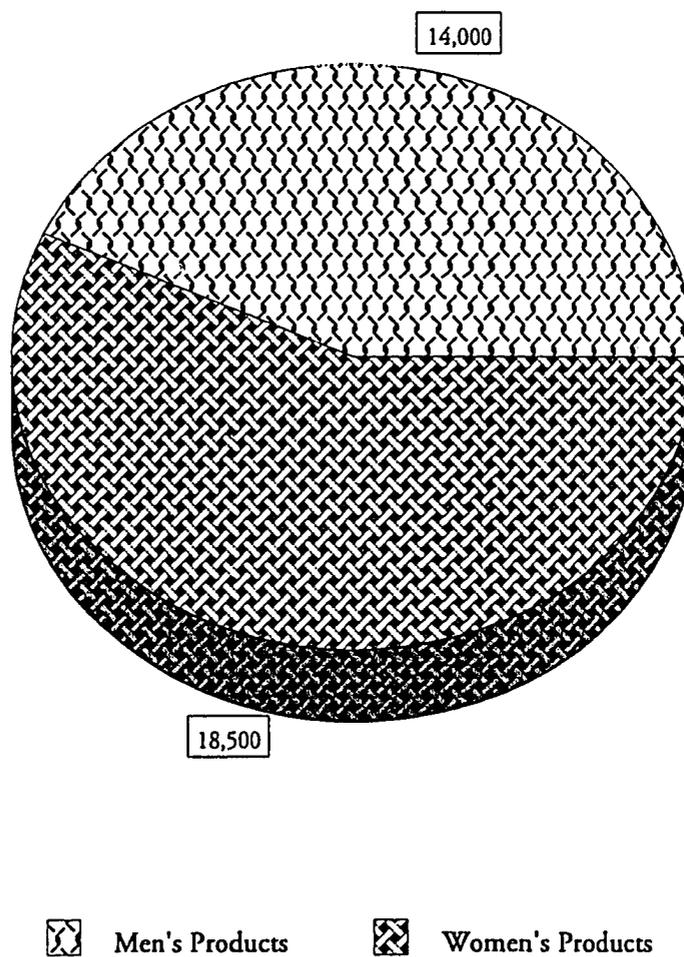


FIGURE 8
KOLOA INCOME & SCHOOL CHILDREN. MAKA FELE'UNGA 1991

Households (Grouped)	Fees owed	Mothers earning cash	Aggregated plaited koloa income	Mean plaited koloa income,
12	None	4	2900	725
5	One	1	1500	1500
6	Two	4	4040	1010
3	Three	3	2100	700
7	Four	5	4948	996
2	Five	2	2700	1350
35	64	19	18188	

FIGURE 9
KOLOA INCOME & SCHOOL CHILDREN. MAKA FELE'UNGA 1992

Households (Grouped)	Number of Children in School	Mothers Earning Cash	Aggregated Plaited Koloa Income	Mean Plaited Koloa Income,
12	None	5	3080	616
5	One	3	2100	700
6	Two	5	3924	784.8
3	Three	3	2914	971.33
7	Four	5	2534	506.8
2	Five	2	2375	1187.5
35	64	23	16927	

Figures -336-

Figure 10 : WEDDING EXCHANGES, DAYS 1, 3 AND 7

	Groom's Side To Bride's Side	Bride's Side to Groom's Side	Bride's items, from Maternal <i>Kāinga</i> (item made by <i>faē</i> marked *)	Bride's Paternal <i>kāinga</i> to Bridal Fam.	Bride's Family to Paternal <i>kāinga</i> (FaSi)	Bride's Family to Maternal <i>kāinga</i>
Day 1	<i>Kava, 2 Fala, 2 ngatu lauvalu, 2 Kie tonga</i>	<i>Feast food, 1 fala, 1 Kie tonga</i>	<i>Feast Food, 1 Kie tonga* 1 fala *</i>	<i>Feast Food</i>	<i>1 fala, 1 ngatu lauvalu,</i>	
balance: Groom = 1 kie tonga, 1 fala; Bride = -1 fala, -1 kie tonga; Bride's Mehekitanga = 1 fala, 1 ngatu.						
Day 3	<i>Mohenga (= fala, lotaha, ngatu)</i>	<i>Mohenga, Feast food.</i>	<i>1 mohenga 4 Fala* 1 lotaha</i>	<i>var. ngatu</i>	<i>1 Fala, 1 Kie tonga</i>	<i>var. ngatu</i>
# 2	<i>Kie tonga</i>	<i>2 Kie tonga, 1 Fala</i>	<i>10+ Ngatu (various sizes) 3 Kie Tonga* 1 Ngatu Fuatanga</i>			
# 3	<i>Kie tonga</i>	<i>Fuatanga, Fihu fatufā</i>	<i>Fihu fatufā * Feast food</i>			
balance: Groom= 1 Fuatanga, 1 Fihu Fatufā ; Bride= 2 fala, 2 kie tonga, 1 lotaha, var. ngatu; Pat.Kin= 1 Fala, 1 Kie tonga; Mat. Kin= var. barkcloth, var. sizes.						
Day 7		<i>Mohenga Kie tonga, var. Ta'ovala</i>	<i>loaned: 4 Tu'oua Haamoa (very old 'ie toga from Samoa).</i>		<i>1 kie tonga</i>	<i>1 fala 1 lotaha (ie: MoFaSi)</i>
# 2	<i>Feast (community)</i>	<i>1 ngatu 'uli, 1 kie tonga</i>	<i>Feast food</i>	<i>Feast Food</i>		
# 3	<i>Roast pig, yams (to bride's mother)</i>					
Balance	Groom's Side: <i>Kie T. x1 Fuatanga. x1 Ngatu X 2 Fala x2</i>	<i>Ta'ovala Lotaha X 1</i>	Bride's Family: <i>⊖ Koloa; wears an 'ie toga / tu'oua haamoa to church</i>	Bridal Paternal <i>Kāinga:</i>	<i>2 kie tonga 2 fala 1 ngatu</i>	Bridal Maternal <i>Kāinga:</i> <i>var. ngatu, fala X 1 lotaha x 1</i>

Figures -337-

GLOSSARY

Anga fakatonga	Tongan habits, cultural practices, “the Tongan way” of doing life. Close to the idea of custom or tradition, in that codified conventions are called anga fakatonga, but the concept includes everyday, conventional practices.
Anga lelei	Well behaved, nice disposition, polite, socially proper; when applied to a female, implies modesty and chastity.
Convention	Concept introduced by Roy Wagner (1986). Refers to the meanings, metaphors, concepts, signs, practices, tropes, symbolizations, traditions etc. that people use to communicate with each other across space and time; constitutes the usual notion of ‘culture’ as a system of shared meanings; everyday, naturalized, normalized practices and ideas. Codified, and created from the process of invention.
Fa'ē	Mother, mother's sister.
Fa'ē huki	Representatives of the maternal <i>kāinga</i> at a wedding. The <i>fa'ē huki</i> physically represent the maternal <i>kāinga's</i> structural and emotional support for the bride or groom, by seating the newlyweds in their laps.
Fa'ē tangata	Mother's brother. Literally, ‘maternal male’. Also called <i>tu'asina</i> .
Faka'apa'apa	Respect, especially between one of lower rank towards one of higher rank.
Fakatonga	Tongan
Fakapikopiko	Lazy, indolent, without industry or initiative. Another meaning is ‘to make crooked’ (as in a woman with a bent back, or a twisted stick).
Fatongia	This is an important concept for Tongans, socially and emotionally. It is usually translated literally as duty or responsibility, but there is a heavier semantic emphasis than usually associated with ‘duty’ in contemporary English usage. When Kauvai people say ‘ <i>fatongia</i> ’ they mean that which cannot nor should not be shirked, and the fulfilment of which is both expected and esteemed. It is often contrasted to <i>kavenga</i> (see below). In some ways, <i>fatongia</i> could be glossed as “honourable duty”.
Fei'ofa'ofani	Mutual assistance, helpful.
'Eua	Island in the southern portion of the Tongan Island group, near Nuku'alofa. 'Eua is a raised coral atoll, with some timber, and subsistence based on farming, and women's koloa production. It boasts a low population, an airstrip, small ferry port, medical clinic, lumber mill, an Agricultural college, and a new secondary school.

Figures -338-

Fakama'ama'a	To lighten a load.
Faka'opo'opo	Meaning to fit things together, to make things organised, linked, neat.
Fāmili	Family. Anglicized term which is used to refer to a nuclear family, or extended group of kin, but also sometimes synonymous with the larger <i>kāinga</i> . See Evans (1996) for an excellent discussion of the contemporary Tongan <i>fāmili</i> .
Fatu	Foundation, base. Process for starting to plait textiles from loose elements.
Ha'apai	Regional area in the geographic centre of Tonga. Economically peripheral, with a heavy dependence upon subsistence agriculture, fishing and textile production.
Hou'eiki	At the national level, the high ranking persons, title holders and their close families (plural); the traditional elites or chiefs. At the local level, used as a noun to designate the individual(s) who are the highest in rank. All ceremonies (church, feasts, life events) demand the presence of one who is chiefly. It is interesting to note that <i>hou</i> is an intransitive verb usually indexing agitation (see Churchward 1959).
Invention	Concept introduced by Roy Wagner (1975, 1986). Refers to a cognitive process of making meaning in a meaning-less situation, through a leap of metaphoric connection. Power for the metaphoric leap of understanding comes from the contrast between the conventional symbolization, and the 'new', un-comprehended symbolization. Process of invention creates a new symbolization or sign that comes to figure meaning for the previously meaning-less event. Synonymous with figure, figuration, this is how culture is made, and incrementally changed.
Ipu	Cup, most usually a coconut shell polished into a cup for drinking kava.
Ivi	Energy or life force, such as the energy from the soil that makes plants grow.
Kāinga	Bilateral extended family, traced cognatically from Ego, potentially unlimited in scope.
Kaifonua	Euphemism for non-chiefly people. Means land-eaters, or, I argue, those who eat of the [local] land.
Katoanga	Celebration. Used colloquially to refer to a pre-arranged exchange of koloa.
Kaungā'api	Term for neighbours. Literally transcribes as "together [with the] household".
Kavenga	Obligation, a burden which must be carried, as in the common phrase <i>fua kavenga</i> [shoulder the burden]. A <i>kavenga</i> can be complained about, in

contrast to a *fatongia*, which may not.

Koloa	Wealth, valuables, associated with female gendered goods, and a colloquial term for women's textile products.
Kovi	Bad, badly (done), as in "the braiding on the basket is not done well" [<i>ko hono fie pe 'oku kovi</i>], and evil, as in "the devil is evil" [<i>'oku kovi 'ae tevolo</i>].
Kuluki	To bend severely, so as to crack.
Lelei	Good, proper, well.
Loi	Wrong, incorrect, a lie.
Longo	Noise, noisy.
Longomo'ui	Active, lively. Literally, noisy/alive.
Lotu	Worship, prayer. Sometimes a euphemism for 'church' as in the answer to "where are you going?" on Sunday mornings, as everyone goes to church: ' <i>alu ki lotu</i> : "going to pray".
Matakali	Probably a Fijian word, used to indicate a class or grouping of people, as in extended kin (<i>kāinga</i>), or persons connected like kin, by virtue of having titles which were considered to be related.
Mātāpule	Position of authority as a speaker for a chief. Literally 'boss face', sometimes described as a 'petty chief'. Each <i>mātāpule</i> holds a title or name, and the eligibility for the position is inherited, as are other, more important titles. In Maka Fele'unga, most adult men held a <i>mātāpule</i> title.
Mehakitanga	Father's sister. Sometimes spelled <i>mehikitanga</i> . Refers also to <i>fa-fa-si</i> , and the father's sisters as far back through a genealogy as one can remember. See Rogers (1977) for a formative discussion of the role and significance of the father's sister and Taumoeolau (1991) for a significant correction that has often been overlooked. The etymology of the term <i>mehakitanga</i> is unclear: it is not a literal translation of 'father's sister'. Rogers (1977:163) states that <i>mehiki</i> is a vowel shifted term from <i>mahaki</i> (sick/ill/disease), plus <i>-tanga</i> , a suffix which denotes a noun. The <i>mehikitanga</i> then could be thought of as "Disease-one", or as Rogers put it, "source of disease".
MIRAB	Acronym for economies based on migration, remittances and foreign aid and characterized by bureaucracy (see Evans 1996 for a fuller discussion of the Tongan economy, and MIRAB economies in the Pacific).

Monitonu	Sense of self-satisfaction, that things are 'right' in the world, of peace from, for example, completion of <i>fatongia</i> .
Monuia	Lucky, blessed.
Motu'a tauhi fonua	Literally, "old men who guard the land". Inherited title, which must be held by a resident of the locale, and re-allocated if a title holder departs.
Mo'ui lelei	Term introduced to translate 'health' in biomedical practices. Literally 'alive well', good life, 'living well'.
Noa'ia	Aimless, careless, free, without result, feckless.
'Ofa	' <i>Ofa</i> has many cognates in other Polynesian languages: for instance <i>Aloha</i> , <i>Aropa</i> , <i>Talofa</i> . It is usually glossed as "love", but does not refer to the emotion associated in North American culture with lovers. ' <i>Ofa</i> implies a warm affection and the complex of associative behaviours which spring from "love", especially an emphasis on generosity. ' <i>Ofa</i> is often used as a synonym for a gift, and for the remittances sent to relatives from overseas. The ability to have ' <i>ofa</i> depends on an understanding and sympathy with the other's lot. Hence I gloss ' <i>ofa</i> as "love/generosity/empathy".
Pō talanoa	Chatting, literally evening talk. Not to be confused with the term for libellous gossip, <i>lau</i> .
Pusiaki	Fostered child, usually a grandchild, given to live with family members for an extended period. The fosterage may become permanent.
Sino	The term <i>sino</i> is complex - Literally it means 'body', and can mean 'fat' but without the negative connotations loaded on the term in North American English (cf. Bordo 1993 for a discussion of 'weight' in North American women). In Tonga, <i>sino</i> is a positive attribute, indicating attractive physical appearance, and implying among other things, the good social relations necessary to eat well. <i>Sino</i> can be glossed as 'healthy' in the sense of a physically healthy body as English speakers use the term, although it must be clear that the 'healthy body' in Tonga is quite different from that in North America. I gloss it as robust/ fit/ body.
Sino'i'eiki	Herda describes it as "of the body of Aristocratic rank" (1987:196). Marcus describes the term as designating those with membership in the dynastic line (1978). Literally, however, the medial 'i is actually a transitive suffix (Churchward 1985:240), making the term a verb, which I believe is better glossed as 'embodying chiefness'.
Ta'ovala	Plaited or crocheted waist/hip wrap. Made generally from pandanus or inner bark bast, in a variety of styles. Mandatory outer garment for both men and women at

all ceremonial functions, and for a period of mourning after the death of a *fāmili* or *kāinga* member. Denotes respect, personal rank in relation to a particular other (eg: the deceased), or ritualized status (eg: bride, minister, graduate).

Tefito	The basis, base, centre or core of something.
Toulālānga	Group who plaits pandanus textiles cooperatively. Members are always women.
Toulānganga	Group which produces barkcloth (<i>ngatu</i>) cooperatively. Members are always women.
Tu'a	Back, behind of something or someone. Polite euphemism for genitals, but most commonly understood as the label for non-chiefly people, commoners. Often glossed as 'low' in relation to the 'highness' of the chiefly people. This is a misapplication of English language oppositions to the Tongan context, where, as Shore (1982) describes for Samoa, oppositions are asymmetrical. The <i>kau tu'a</i> are the people who back up particular elites with labour, supplies, ceremonial and prestige items. A brother is considered to be <i>tu'a</i> to his sister, and is the person she can depend upon to ensure her well-being (see below: <i>tu'asina</i>).
Tu'asina	Same as <i>Fa'ē tangata</i> : mother's brother. <i>Tu'asina</i> is a term, like <i>mehakitanga</i> , for which there is no literal translation. It is interesting to note that <i>tu'asina</i> may be a conjoined term indexing 'one who is at 'back of – <i>tu'a</i> – a female/mother – <i>sina</i> –'. While <i>'sina'</i> has no direct meaning in Tongan, Churchward offers a note with relation to the term <i>sināmanu</i> which lends credence to my hypothesis: a <i>sināmanu</i> is an animal [<i>manu</i>] used for breeding. Churchward draws a comparison to the Fijian <i>tina</i> and Samoan <i>tinā</i> , both terms for "mother". Perhaps circumstantially, <i>Sina</i> is the Samoan name for a culture-heroine usually sought after by various lovers. She reappears –sometimes as a chiefly woman, sometimes as a demi-goddess– in many Samoan and Tongan tales. Her Tongan name is <i>Hina</i> .
Tongatapu	Largest of the Tonga islands, site of the capital, Nuku'alofa. 60% - 70% of the population (approximately 60,000) live on Tongatapu. Main air, shipping, export and immigration centre. Majority of secondary schools, and main government offices, banks, hotels, industry, commercial suppliers, medical and tourist services are based in Nuku'alofa.
'Ulunganga	Behaviour, with an implication of mannerly knowledge as well as actions. When linked with <i>fakatonga</i> [Tongan], can refer to "Tongan Culture", in the way that opera, ballet, art and knowing which fork to use at a formal dinner are associated with 'culture' in Canada.
Va lelei	Harmonious social relations, to get along well, nicely, pleasantly with one's neighbours, family, extended kin. Opposed to <i>va kovi</i> .

Va Kovi	Bad social relations. Not getting along well,
Vava'u.	A region in the north, consisting of several high islands with deep harbours. Popular with tourists for its scenery, and lush ecosystem. Regional centre is Neiafu, which boasts several secondary schools, an international airport, tourist services, some small industry. Fishing, farming and <i>koloa</i> production are the key forms of production.
WHO	World Health Organization.

Other, more technical terms are recorded in Appendix 2: Kinship Terminology, and in Appendix 3: Plaiting Koloa.

A Note on Glosses, Orthography and Pronunciation

Like all Polynesian languages, Tongan is based on a small number of phonemes. Words are built from phonemes and many words and phonemes have multiple, non-interrelated meanings. An example is *le'ō* which can mean “voice”, but can also mean “to guard”. Meanings are thus extremely context-sensitive. The glossary provides explanations and glosses for terms as they are used in this dissertation. While this is not a replacement for a dictionary, I have attempted to provide glosses which fully represent the semantic content of certain Tongan terms, rather than a simple replacement word. Thus in some cases, the gloss I provide is a compound, for example *'ofa* as “love/ generosity/ empathy”, meaning that it is equally all of those concepts, combined.

His Majesty King Taufa'ahau IV undertook a standardisation of Tongan orthography while still a young prince, as part of his mandate as Minister of Education during his mother's reign. His version differs slightly from the spellings introduced by missionaries, and there are thus differences in the ways that certain words are spelled, depending for instance on whether one is reading a Catholic bible or hymnal, one from the Chiefly or Free Churches (which preserves an older text), or the Wesleyan church (which follows the newer, official state version). With old texts but also into the present (because the language arts are still very orally based), there is some inconsistency in the spellings of words with double or long vowels: for instance *tōngo* could be written as *toongo*. Also, in the village there is variability on how to write compound words. Should *'anga fakatonga* be one

word, two, or hyphenated for example? I have tried to represent the words as I learned them on Kauvai, but relied on the spellings provided in Churchward's Dictionary (which adhere's to His Majesty's system), when necessary.

When speaking Tongan, each letter in a word is pronounced. Where two vowels occur, each is pronounced. Diphthongs do not occur. There are two difficulties: ng is written as two letters but represents one consonant, equivalent to the ng sound in "song". Had printing technology been different when His Majesty Tupou IV undertook the revisions of the orthography, ng might have been written as ŋ. The ng combination should not be pronounced with a hard 'g'. Hence the normal North American pronunciation of Tonga is not "tong - ga" but To- ŋa. It rhymes with "song - ah" (but with a long "o"). The second 'difficulty' is the glottal stop which is a silent consonant, written as ' . The glottal stop is a significant phoneme, that can substantially alter the meaning of a word. For example 'ono, which is a kind of fish, and ono, the number six, or 'anga the shark and anga, meaning habits, characteristic ways.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS #1- #6, Original Tongan Versions, with English in italics.

Village Survey #1

Tongan Version

Translation: 'Aioema Atiola

Interview Conducted By: HyL
(Start Date September 1991) Date:
Informant's activity during interview:

Questions index family and social relations, English translations in italics:

1) Fāmili: *Family*:

Ko hai ho hingoa kakato? *What is your whole name?*

Kataki 'o talamai e hingoa 'o e kakai ko eni (ka pau 'ok nau nofo i Kauvai'ni), mo ko e ha nai honau 'aho fa'elei [fanau mo mali pe]? *Please tell me the names of the people here (if they live here on Kauvai) and their birth dates.*

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| a) huspaniti | <i>Husband</i> | e) fa'e ho'o mali | <i>Spouse's mother</i> |
| b) ho'o fa'e | <i>Your mother</i> | f) tamai ho'o mali | <i>Spouse's mother</i> |
| c) ho'o tamai | <i>Your father</i> | g) pusiaki | <i>Fostered/Adopted children</i> |
| d) fanau | <i>Your children</i> | g) mokopuna | <i>Grandchildren</i> |

2) 'Api *Residence*:

Ko hai fua 'oku mohe i api ni? *Who sleeps here?*

'Oku 'i ai nai ha taha 'oku faa ha'u 'o mohe heni? *Is there someone who comes and sleeps here (sometimes)?*

6 specify relationship: kainga pe, *Family/ kin*; kaungame'a/ kaume'a? *Friends?*

7 'Oku tu'o fiha? *How often do they come?*

8 3) Vā Lelei *Social Relationships*

Ko hai fua 'oku nai ha taha 'oku fa'a ma'u me'atokoni heni, ka 'oku 'ikai nofo heni? *Is there anyone who comes and eats here, who does not live here?*

Ko e ha nai hono lahi? /'Oku tu'o fiha? *How often / frequently do they come?*

Ko hai 'oku ke fa'a tufa me'akai ki ai? *To whom do you give food?*

Ko hai nai kuo ke fo'aki ha me'akai ki ai he 'uike kuo 'osi? *To whom did you give food last week?*

'Oku mou siasi ha? *Which church are you?*

'Oku 'i ai ha taha 'oku siasi kehe? *Is there anyone living here who is of a different church?*

Ko ho siasi ma'u pe eni (Pe na'a ke 'uluaki 'i ha siasi kehe)? *Did you used to attend a different church from the one you are attending now?*

4] Me'a Kai, Ngaue *Food/Work*

'Oku ke ma'u ha'o me'akai mei fe? *Where do you get your food from?*

(mei ho 'uta pe? fangota? hakau pe? pe tahi loloto; pe mamaha?)

(From gardens, fishing, the reef, deep sea, far out?)

Ko hai 'oku fa'a tokoni 'atu kia koe ke fai ho'o ngaue? *Who helps you with your work?* (hange koe ngaahi mataka niu; 'uta / to ngaue; lalanga; feihaka). (For instance, copra, gardening, plaiting, cooking).

Interview #2

Tongan Version

Translation: 'Aioema Atiola/ Vitina Vaitohi

Questions index social relationships and networks with reference to children, specifically, who to ask for advice or ideas, if children are sick or acting abnormally.

Interview Conducted By: HYL / VV

(Start date January 1992).

Record Date:

Informant's activity during interview:

1] Ko hai 'oku ke kole tokoni pe 'akonaki (fakakaukau) mei ai, kapau 'oku puke pe faikehe ho'o tamaiki (fanau)? *From whom do you ask for help or advice, if your child is sick, or acting strangely?*

1b] Ko e ha nai ho'o mou felavei? *What is your relationship (to that person)?*

2] 'Oku ke kumi tokoni nai kapau 'oku puke ho'o fanau/ ha'o tamasi'i? [tukukehe au, mo Tupou/ 'ikai kau ai au mo Tupou]. *From whom do you seek help if your children are sick? [excluding me, and the nurse].*

2a] Ko e ha nai ho'o mou felavei? *What is your relationship to them?*

Questions re: use and knowledge of various faito'o:

3] 'Oku ke ngaue'aki 'a e faito'o fakatonga / vai tonga kapau 'oku ke puke? *Do you use Tongan treatments &*

medicines when you are sick?

3b] Pe 'oku ke 'ilo'i ha taha oku ne ngaue'aki 'a e faito'o fakatonga/ vai tonga? *Do you know others who use Tongan treatments & medicines when they are sick?*

Faito'o fakatonga as preventative medicine:

4] 'Oku ke fa'ainu vai Tonga ke malui / taofi koe mei ha mahaki? *Do you take Tongan medicines to protect & prevent illnesses?*

4b] 'Oku ke 'ilo nai ha taha tatau mo koe? *Do you know others who do the same as you?*

5] 'Oku ke ngaue'aki a e vai tonga ke ho'o fanau kapau te nau puke? *Do you use faito'o fakatonga if your kids are sick?*

6] 'Oku ke fakainu vai tonga ho'o kauleka koe, malu'i pe na'a puke? [vaipala] *Do you use Tongan medicines to protect your kids (from getting sick)?*

7] Ko e ha 'e faka'ilonga o e mahaki ko ia 'oku ke faito'o? *What sign (do you use) to decide that this is the right treatment?*

Interview #3

Interview Conducted By: HyL / VV

Tongan Version

(Start date January 1992).

Translation: 'Aioema Atiola/ Vitina Vaitohi / H. Young Leslie

Questions re: *medical treatment & experiences*

Date:

Informant's activity during interview:

1] 'Oku ke osi 'alu o sio ki he toketa pe neesi i ha'o puke ['io pe 'ikai?] *Have you ever been to the doctor or nurse when you were sick?*

1b] 'Anafe? Ko e ha nai 'uhinga na'e ke 'alu 'ai? *When? What was the reason you went?*

1c] Ko e ha ho'o lau ki he faito'o na'e fai 'ehe toketa? *How would you describe the treatment you received from the doctor?*

2] Na'a ke osi 'alu 'o ave nai, ha'o tamasi'i ki he toketa? *Have you ever taken your child to the doctor?*

2b] 'Anafe? Ke e ha nai 'uhinga ne ka 'alu ai? *When? What was the reason you went [took them]?*

2c] Ko e ha ha'o lau ki he faito'o na'e fai? *Would you describe the treatment received from the doctor?*

Appendices -347-

3] Te ke toe 'alu na'i ki he fale mahaki, 'oku ke toe puke? *Would you go again to the hospital if you are sick?*

3b] kapau 'io: ko e ha na'i ha no 'uhinga ho'o 'alu? *If yes, what is your reason?*

3c] Kapau 'ikai: koe ha na'i ha no 'uhinga? *If no, what is your reason?*

4] 'Oku ke tui na'i e malava ki ngaue fakataha faito'o fakatonga mo e faito'o fakapalangi? *Do you think Tongan treatments and Palangi treatments can work together?*

4b] Kapau 'io: ha'a nai ha'o fakatata? *If yes: can you give an example?*

4c] Kapau 'ikai: ko e ha 'uhinga? *If no: what is your reason?*

Interview #4

Interview Conducted By: HyL / VV

Tongan Version

(Start date January 1992).

Translation: 'Aioema Atiola/ Vitina. Vaitohi/ H. Young Leslie

Date:

Activity during interview:

Questions about protection of children/ responsibilities/ ideas about health/gender differences:

1] Ko hai 'oku ne tokanga'i mo tauhi a e taimiki/ fanau/ kauleka? *Who looks after a child?*

(Fakahokohoko ange fakatata ki he lahi o e tauhi:) *List who does what work.*

1b] 'Oku ai nai ha faikehekehe kapau ko e tamasi'i pe ta'ahine? *Is the care of girls and boys different?*

2] Ko e fatongia nai 'o hai hono tokanga'i mo fakapapau'i ke tupu hake 'a e ki'i tamasi'i koe ki'i "tamasi'i Tonga mo'ui lelei" 'i he kaha'u? *Whose duty is it to ensure that a child is raised and becomes a healthy Tongan child in the future?*

2b] 'Oku 'i ai nai ha faikehekehe 'i he ta'ahine mo e tamasi'i? *Is it different if the child is a girl or a boy?*

3] Ko e ha ha'o fakakaukau fekau'aki mo e ngaahi mea 'oku ne ngaahi 'a e fanau ke mo'ui lelei? *In your opinion, what things make a child healthy?*

3b] 'Oku 'i ai nai ha faikehekehe 'i he ngaahi fiema'u ki he tamaiki fefine mo tangata? *Does this differ for female or male children?*

4] Ko e ha ha ngaahi me'a 'oku ke pehe 'oku lelei ke fai 'e he tamaiki (fanau)? *What things are good for children to do?*

Hange koe va'inga; tokoni ke he matua; fai ha ngaahi ngaue (pu'i) 'i 'api; 'alu ke he lotu; to'o tama; lau tohi; va'inga moe tokoua pe?

Potential prompts: such as playing, help the elders, housework, go to church, carry babies, read, play only

Appendices -348-

with siblings?

5] Fakamatala'i mai ange 'a e tamasi 'i mo'ui lelei. *Describe the healthy child to me.*

Fakamatala'i 'i he lea fakatonga 'a e tamasi'i mo'ui lelei.

Alternate phrasing: Tell me in your own words, what is a healthy child like?

6] Ko e ha ho'o me'a 'oku fai ke fakapapau'i 'oku mo'ui lelei 'a e tamaiki (fanau?) *What things do you do to ensure your child is healthy?*

7] 'Oku 'i ai nai ha me'a mavahe 'oku ke fai ki ho'o fanau 'oku 'ikai fai ia 'e he kakai kehe?

Is there something that you do (for your child's health) that others don't?

8] 'Oku 'i ai nai ha me'a 'oku fai 'e he kakai kehe 'oku ke pehe/tui 'oku 'ikai lelei/sai ke he fanau? *Are there things that others do that you think is bad, or not good for children?*

9] Ko e ha nai ha ngaahi me'a 'oku ke fai ke malui'i ho'o fanau mei he me'a ta'e sai, hange mahaki pe fakatu'utamaki, pea me'a kovi 'oe famili? *Is there anything that you do to protect your child from danger, illness, accident, or other bad things?*

Ko e ha ha ngaahi me'a teke fai ki ho'o fanau, ke malu'i kinautolu mei he mahamahaki, pea he fakatu'utamaki? Pea kakai ta'e lata mo'ia?

Alternate wording: Are there things you will do to your children to protect them from disasters or dangers or if you are not content with how they are?

Interview #5

translation: H. Young Leslie

Start Date: July 1992.

Tongan Version. *English version follows below.*

Savea Kau Sai e Mo'ui Lelei 'ae Fonua

(Village Health Worker Survey, Ha'apai)

'Oku fiema'u lahi homou tokoni ke he fakatotolo 'oku lolotonga fakahoko 'i Ha'apai'ni. 'I he fakatotolo'ni 'oku fakatautautefito'ia ke he mo'ui 'a e ngaahi 'otu motu mama'o he lolotonga'ni.

Ko e kau ngaue ke he mo'ui lelei 'a e fonua 'oku fu'u mahu'inga 'aupito. 'Oku mau faka'amu te mo ma'u 'a e ngaahi fehu'i'ni kimu'a pea toki a'u atu 'a e kau ngaue ki homou ngaahi tukui kolo, 'i Siulai, ko e toko taha fekumi ko Mrs. Heta Leslie mo hono hoa ko e Neesi Nanse, 'e fu'u tokoni lahi kiate kimoutolu kapau te mou faingamalie ki ha ngaahi faka'eke'eke pea moe toko taha'ni pea ke toki ha'u ki he toko taha'ni.

Kapau he'ikai te ke faingamalie 'i he taimi e a'u atu ai e Neesi 'a'ahi, pea ke 'ave 'a e foomu ke he Ofisa Kolo, pea talange kiate ia ke fakafoki kia Mrs. Leslie 'i he taimi te ne a'u atu ai ki homou kolo. Pe kapau

'e toloi 'a e 'alu atu 'a e kau 'a'ahi, pea ke hanga mu'a 'o meili'i falalelei 'a e foomu ki he tu'asila 'oku 'asi 'i he lalo 'i he vave taha teke 'alu 'ava, ki mu'a he 'aho 15 'o Akosi.

Malo 'Aupito ho'o tokoni mai,

Mrs. Heta Leslie

Pangai, Ha'apai.

Ngaahi Fehu'i:

- 1] Fakafuofua'i, ko e kakai lalahi 'e toko fiha 'i homou kolo?
- 2] Fakafuofua'i, ko e ha e toko lahi 'oe Fanau ako lautohi?
- 3] Oku Fefe ho'o fale'i ki he ngaahi me'a fakafaito'o (hange ko e fa'a ha'u ha kakai 'o fie'ilo ki he ngaahi me'a fakafaito'o).

'Aho katoa ...

Tu'o ua pe tu'o tolu he mahina

Tu'o ua he uike

Hala ...

- 4] Ko e ha hono tu'o lahi ho'o ngaue'aki 'a e ngaahi me'a'ni: (Kataki, fakahokohoko mei he 'uluaki ki he fakamuimui, pehe: 'Uluaki = 1 Tu'o ua = 2 Faka'osi =3).

Ko e panadolo.....

Palopalema 'oe fatafala pe manava.....

Fa'ahinga fo'i 'akau

Langa kete.....

Fale'i pe hino'i fekau'aki mo e palopalema
kakai fefine.....

Palopalema ki he ngakau (makehekehe).....

Fofonu.....

Fale'i pe hino'i fekau'aki mo e palopalema
kakai tangata.....

ihu pe'e.....

Tali.....

Fale'i pe hino'i fekau'aki mo e palopalema
kakai fanau.....

Fale'i pe hino'i ke 'alu ki he Falemahaki.....

Langa 'ulu.....

Ko e fa'ahinga fakatu'utamaki (hange lavea,
'u'u 'i he ika, to mei he 'akau).....

Pe me'a kehe (tohi eni:)

- 5] 'Oku ke fa'a faito'o ha taha hili ne 'osi faito'o fakatonga?

Kimui'ni mai; Kimu'a atu; 'Oku fakahoko he taimi tatau pe

- 6] 'Oku ke malava pe 'o fakahoko 'ae faito'o fakatonga 'iate koe pe?

- 7] Ko e ma'uli koe?.....

- 8] Ko e toko fiha kau ma'uli 'i homou kolo?

9] Ko e kakai ko ia 'oku nau poto he faito'ofakatonga ko e ha e fa'ahinga faito'o'oku nau fai?

Puke Fanga ki'i pepe.....

Palopalema kakai tangata

Puke 'a e kauleka.....

Palopalema kakai motu'a....

Palopalema 'oku fa'a hoko ke he kakai lalahi (hange kahi, hangatamaki).....

Fasi hui

Palopalema kakai fefine (hange Lami pe Palametaki lua)...

Tevolo

Fotofota....

10] 'I ho'o fakakaukau, ko e ha 'ae palopalema lahi taha 'oku fehangahangi moe mo'ui 'a e kakai? (Kataki 'o hiki mai:)

11] 'Oku 'iai ha'o 'ilo 'o fekau'aki mo ha me'a 'e lava ke veteki-'aki 'a e ngaahi palopalema'ni?

12] Ko e ha ha toe palopalema'oku fehangahangi moe kakai homou kolo? fakatata: fakasiasi, 'anga 'oe 'aho, me'akai, faka'ekomonika, faka'ako pe fakasosiale (hange ko e: feingata'a e kumi ha hoa pe mali, kakai fakapikopiko, ngaue'aki e kavamalohi, 'ikai ha kakai fe'unga ke ngaue ki 'uta, 'ikai ha kakai tokolahi fe'unga ke fua e ngaahi kavenga pe fatongia).

13] 'Oku tonu ke tau 'ilo'i 'oku tokanga lahi mai e Pule'anga ki he palopalema hotau ngaahi kolo?.....

14] 'Oku ke pehe ko e ha 'ae fakakaukau 'ae kau ngaue 'ae Pule'anga 'oku fefe 'ae mo'ui 'i he ngaahi 'otu motu?

15] Ko e ha e fa'ahinga fakalalakala 'oku ke pehe 'oku sai taha ki homou kolo?

Interview #5 English Version. *Tongan version is above*

translation: H. Young Leslie

Start Date: July 1992.

Village Health Worker Survey, Ha'apai

Dear

Your help is requested for a research project currently underway in Ha'apai. The project is focussing on contemporary Tongan's health practices in the remote communities. As a Village Health Worker your input is very valuable. Hopefully you will have received this questionnaire in time to complete it before the Ministry of Health's Quarterly Vaccination tour of the Outer Islands, in July. The researcher, Mrs. Heta

Appendices -351-

Leslie, will be accompanying the visiting nurse, and it would be helpful if you could be available then for an interview with her.

If you cannot be available, please give this form to the Ofisa Kolo, and instruct him to pass it along to Mrs. Leslie when she comes to your village. Or, if the quarterly visit is cancelled, mail the completed form as possible to her at the address below, before August 15th:

Mrs. Heta Leslie
c/o Post Office, Pangai, Ha'apai.

Questions:

1] Approximately how many adults live in your village?

2] Approximately how many primary school children?

3] How frequently are you approached for medical information or assistance?

Every day More than once a week

Two or three times a month

4] What are the most common requests you receive? (indicate any that are applicable)

For panadolo [acetaminophen/aspirin]

Any kind of pill

Advice about women's health problems

To deal with accidental injuries

Advice about men's health problems

Chest or breathing problems

Advice about children's health problems

Stomach pains

Bowel problems

Runny nose

Coughs

5] How often do you treat people who have already used *faito'o fakatonga*?

Recently

Long time ago

All the time

6] Do you use *faito'o fakatonga* yourself?

7] Are you a midwife/ traditional birth attendant?

8] How many midwives traditional birth attendants in your village?

9] Of the people there who are skilled with *faito'o fakatonga*, what kinds of treatments do they offer?

Babies illnesses

Children's illnesses

Women's Problems

Men's problems

Normal, non-serious problems [haemorrhoids, boils]

Spirit [*tevolo*]

Problems of the elderly

Wounds/ fractures

Massage

Appendices -352-

10] In your opinion, what is the most serious problem affecting the lives of the people in your village? Please write your answer here:

11] Do you have an idea for how to alleviate this problem?

12] What other kinds of problems affect your village?

Examples: Boredom Food The Economy
Schooling or Social Needs (Such as Finding an Appropriate Spouse) Make People Leave the Island
Beer Drinking Not Enough People to Work in the Gardens
Not Enough People to Shoulder the Burden of Social Life [*Fua Kavenga*]

13] Should we tell the government to take more care of outer island villagers and their problems?

14] Do you think the government workers understand what life is like on the small islands?

15] What kinds of development do you think are appropriate and good for your village?

Write your answer here:

Interview # 6 Tongan Version

Village Officer's Survey. English version printed below.

Translation: Vitina Vaitohi, H. Young Leslie

Start Date: June 1992

Kia, Ofisa Kolo,, Ha'apai.

Ko ha ki'i konga fakatotolo 'eni 'oku lolotonga fakahoko 'i Ha'apai'ni, 'oku fiema'u lahi ho'o tokoni ki hono tali 'a e ngaahi fehu'i'ni fekau'aki mo homou kolo.

Ko feikumi'ni 'oku fakapa'anga ia 'e he International Development and Research Centre 'i Kanata, pea koe ngaue'ni 'i he tu'utu'uni 'a e Pule'anga Tonga. Ko ho'o tokoni 'e hoko koe foaki mahu'inga ki he feikumi'ni 'o fakatautaufito 'i he ngaahi palopalema faka'ekonomika, mo'ui lelei moe faka-sosiale pea moe ngaahi ngaue fakalalakala ki he ngaahi 'otu motu 'o Ha'apai'ni.

Ko e me'a'ofa a ho'o taimi, kataki tali ē Pa'anga 'e nima ko 'eni. Mālō.

Kataki toe fakafoki mai kiate au 'a e foomu'ni 'i ha sila 'i ha uike 'e tahe pea teu toki ma'u ia.

Mālō 'Aupito,

Mrs. Heta Leslie R.N. M.A. (Pangai, Ha'apai)

NGAAHI FEHU'I

- 1] Ko e ngaahi fale 'e fiha 'i homou kolo he lolotonga'ni?
- 2] Ko e fale afā 'e fiha 'i homou kolo?
- 3] Ko e ngaahi fale Tonga fo'ou (falefakafuna) 'e fiha ('a ia na'e tanaki pa'anga ki ai 'e ngaahi Siasi he 'osi 'a e Afa 'Aisake)?
- 4] Ko e fale Tonga totonu 'e fiha?
- 5] Ko e ngaahi fale 'e fiha 'oku 'ikai nofo'i?
- 6] Ko e ngaahi 'api kolo 'e fiha?
- 7] Ko e ngaahi 'api kolo 'e fiha 'oku tu'u ai 'a e ngaahi falé pe nofo'i?
- 8] Ko e 'e ngaahi famili 'e fiha 'i homou kolo lolotonga'ni?
- 9] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha mei homou kolo 'oku tauhi ako 'i Pangai?
- 10] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha mei homou kolo 'oku tauhi ako 'i Tongatapu?
- 11] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha 'oku nau nofo mavahevahe (koe Fa'e oku tauhi akó kae nofo 'e Tangata'eiki 'i motu 'o 'alu ki 'uta)?
- 12] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha 'oku ako nofoma'u 'enau fanau, kae nofo pē ongomātu'a 'i motu?
- 13] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha 'oku nofoako 'enau fanau 'i honau kaingá kae nofo pē ongomātu'a 'i motu?
- 14] Ko e toko fiha ē kakai fefine 'i ho'o kolo kuo nau 'osi mali?
- 15] Ko e toko fiha ē kakai fefine matu'otu'a 'i ho'o koló 'oku te'eki mali?
- 16] Ko e toko fiha kakai tangata 'osi mali 'i homou kolo?
- 17] Ko e toko fiha kakai tangata matu'atu'a te'eki mali 'i homou kolo?
- 18] Ko e toko fiha 'a e fanau ta'u ako lautohi Pule'anga 'i ho koló?
- 19] Toko fiha tama'iki talavou pe tama'iki lalahi 'i homou kolo (hange lahi ange he ta'u 13 kae si'i hifo he ta'u 20)?
- 20] Oku 'i ai ha Lautohi Pule'anga 'i homou kolo? Io pe 'Ikai
- 21] Ko e toko fiha kau Faiako 'i he Lautohi Pule'anga 'oku ako ai ho'omou fanau?
- 22] 'Oku 'i ai ha Neesi Ngaue 'oku lolotonga ngaue 'i honou kolo? Io pe 'Ikai.....
Kapau 'oku 'ikai, oku ange fēfē 'ene 'a'ahi mai? (Fili 'a e tali 'ofi taha:) Hala
Tu'o taha he mahina pe lahi hake Tu'o taha he mahina 'e tolu
- 23] 'Oku 'i ai ha Neesi Ngaue lakanga fakafa'e 'i homou kolo? Io pe 'Ikai
- 24] Ko e ma'uli 'e toko fiha 'i homou kolo?
- 25] 'Oku 'i ai ha Toketa 'oku lolotonga ngaue 'i homou kolo? 'Io pe 'Ikai

- Kapau 'ikai, Ko fe'ia e Toketa ofi taha?
- 26] 'Oku 'i ai ha kau Faito'o Fakatonga 'iloa (fefine pe tangata) 'i homou kolo? Toko Fiha?
- 27] Fakafuofua'i, ko e hā ē tu'o lahi 'a e fa'a 'alu ē kakai homou koló ki Pangai? (Fili ē tali ofi taha:)
- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Tu'o taha he uike | Tu'o Taha he Mahina |
| Si'isi'i hifo he tu'o fā he ta'u | Tu'o Taha he ta'u |
- 28] Fakafuofua'i, 'oku tu'o fiha 'a e 'alu ha vaka mei homou koló ki Pangai?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 'Aho kotoa | Tu'o taha he 'uike |
| Tu'o ua he uike | Tu'o ua he mahina |
| Si'isi'i he tu'o tolu he ta'u | Hala |
- 29] Ko e hā ho'o fakakaukau ki he 'uhinga lelei 'a e kakai mei he'enau 'alu ki Pangai? (Kataki, fakahokohoko mei he 'uluaki ki he fakamuimui, pehe: 'Uluaki = Tu'o ua = Faka'osi =).
- | | |
|---|--|
| Ki he Pangikē | Tali Vaka (hange 'Olovaha) |
| Fakatau Me'akai (hange mahoa'a) | 'Eva kaume'a pe famili, |
| Fakatau Lolo (hange penisini pe kalasini) | 'A'ahi ki Falemahaki |
| Fetongi ki ha fetu'u faka'ofa'ofa ange | Ke ngaue |
| 'Alu ki he fakamaau | Feinga ke mama'o mei he kolo |
| Fakatau'atu kiki (hange ko e ika) | Fakatau'atu ha me'a (hange ko e lalanga) |
| Fakatau'atu me'akai | |
- 30] 'Oku 'i ai ha fonua kaunga'api pe kolo 'oku fa'a 'alu ki ai ē kakai homou kolo? (kataki, tohi ē hingoa:)
-
- 31] Ko e hā ho'o fakafaukau ki he ma'u'anga Pa'anga lelei taha ki he ngaahi famili 'i homou kolo? (Fakahokohoko mei he 'uluaki ki he fakamuimui):
- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Pa'anga (tokoni) mei Muli | Pa'anga (tokoni) mei Tongatapu |
| Lalanga 'a e kau Fefine | Fakamataka, |
| Vanila | Taumāta'u Fakatele |
| Taumata'u Kupenga | Kava |
| Me'a kehe hange ko e:..... | |
- 32] Ko e hā ho'o fakakaukau ki he ngaahi fakamole faka'aho mahu'inga taha 'o e ngaahi famili 'i homou kolo? (kataki, fakahokohoko mei he 'uluaki ki he'ene 'osi:)
- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Mahoa'a | Lolo (Penisini pe Kalasini) |
| Kapaiki pe kapapulu | Tapaka Suka |
| Lolo ngaohi kai (pe ngako) | Koa (fō, fufulu peleti, pe faka-ē-sino) |
| Fakaai fiema'u 'a e fanauako | Toe me'a kehe hange ko e:..... |

- 33] Ko e fē Siasi 'i he ngaahi Siasi'ni 'oku mou kau ki ai 'i homou kolo? (kataki toe vakai takitaha kinautolo):
- | | | |
|------------------------|--|----------------|
| 'Uesiliana | Tonga Hou'eki | Katolika |
| Paha'i | Siasi Ingilani | Siasi 'Ahofitu |
| Siasi Tonga Tau'atāina | Siasi 'o Sisu Kalaisi 'oe Kau Ma'oni'oni 'i he Ngaahi 'aho | |
| Kimui'ni | Siasi kehe, hange ko e | |
- 34] Ko e vaka 'e fiha 'i homou kolo 'oku 'i ai hano misini?
- 35] Ko e popao 'e fiha i homou kolo?
- 36] Kapau temau kupenga fakataha mo e kolo, ko e mita 'e fiha hono loloa?
- 37] Ko e ngaahi famili 'e fiha 'oku nau ngaue'aki ha misini 'uhila?
- 38] Ko e famili 'efiha 'oku nau ngaue'aki ha misini 'aisi?
- 39] Ko e hā ē lahi 'o ē kau fefine ne nau 'osi kau 'i ha katoanga Pa'anga?
- 40] Ko e hā ē lahi 'o ē kau fefine ne nau 'osi kau 'i ha katoanga Ngatu?
- 41] Kataki kae faka'ilonga'i fakahokohoko 'a e ngaahi me'akai'ni ki he'ene mahu'inga ki homou ki'i kolo?
- | | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|--------------------------|
| Manioke | Ufi | Talo | Kape |
| Hopa | Pata | Siaine | Kumala |
| Lou'akau | Vanila | Mataka | Mo ha me'a makehe: |
- 42] Kataki, 'i he fehu'i faka'osi. Ko e hā ho'o fakakaukau: ko e hā ē fa'ahinga fakalalakaka 'oku ke pēhē 'oku sai taha ki homou kolo? Tohi'i 'i heni:

Interview # 6 English Version

Village Officer's Survey. Tongan version printed above.

Translation: Vitina Vaitohi, H. Young Leslie

Start Date: June 1992

To Town Officer,, Ha'apai.

As part of a research project currently being conducted in Ha'apai, your help is requested in answering some questions about your village.

The research project is funded in part by the International Research and Development Centre in Canada, and is operating under the direction of the Government of Tonga. Your help will make an important contribution to the project which is focussing on problems of economic, health and social-services

Appendices -356-

development on the outer islands of Ha'apai.

As a recompense for your time, please accept the five pa'anga enclosed, and my thanks. Please return the form to me, in the envelope provided, within one week of receiving it.

Thank you very much,

Heather E. Young Leslie. C/O Post Office, Pangai, Ha'apai, Tonga.

The Questions:

- 1] How many houses are there in your village at present?
- 2] How many houses are of the "Fale 'Afa" [hurricane] type?
- 3] How many are of the New Faletonga [ie: donated by the Council of Churches after Hurricane Issac] type?
- 4] How many are true faletongas?
- 5] How many houses are currently vacant?
- 6] How many 'api sites are there in your village?
- 7] How many 'api sites have a house on them?
- 8] How many families are currently present in your village?
- 9] How many families from your village are currently in Pangai with school children?
- 10] How many families from your village are currently in Tongatapu with school children?
- 11] How many families are separated, so that the mother stays away with the school children, and the father stays in the village and works the 'uta?
- 12] How many families have children boarding at the school, and both parents staying in the village?
- 13] How many families' children are boarding with a family member, while the parents stay in the village?
- 14] How many married women are there in your village?
- 15] How many adult unmarried (never married) women in your village?
- 16] How many married men are living in your village?
- 17] How many adult unmarried (never married) men are there in your village?
- 18] How many primary school age children are there in your village?
- 19] How many young adults or older children are there in your village?
(ie; less than age 20, older than age 13).
- 20] Is there a primary school in your village?
- 21] How many teachers work at the primary school the children from your village attend?
- 22] Is there a Public Health Nurse currently working in your village?

33] What do you think is the main every-day expense of families in your village?

(rank them from first to last)	Flour	Fuel (gasoline or kerosene)
Tinned fish or beef	Tobacco	Sugar
Cooking oil	Soap (laundry, dishes or personal)	
Children's school supplies	other:	

32] Which of the following churches have congregations in your village: (please check each one)

Wesleyan	Chiefly Church of Tonga [Hou'eiki]
Catholic	Independent Church of Tonga [Tau'ataina]
Baha'i	Church of England
Church of Jesus Christ & the Latter Day Saints	
Seventh Day Adventists	Other (please name any):.....

33] How many boats with outboard engines are there in the village?

34] How many dug-out canoes [pōpao] in your village?

35] If you put all the fishing nets in the village together, how many metres long would it be?

36] How many families have working generators?

37] How many families have working refrigerators?

38] How many women in the village are involved in Exchanges [katoanga] for cash?

39] How many women are involved in Exchanges [Katoanga] for barkcloth?

40] Please rank the following crops in order of their importance in your village:

Manioke'Ufi	Talo	Kape	Pata	Hopa	Siaine	Kumala	Lou'akau
Vanilla	Tomatoes	Capsicum	Copra	other:.....			

Thank you again, and best wishes

Heather Young Leslie

APPENDIX TWO: KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY.

See also Kaepler (1971) for discussion of kinship terminology and ranking.

- 1] Father and father's brothers are all designated as *tamai* [father]. Father's brothers are as father to ego, even though children and parents alike clearly recognize a difference between father and father's brothers.
- 2] Mother and mother's sisters are all called *fa'ē* [mother]. As with point number one, mother's sisters are recognised as mother, but are not confused with mother. Some families are beginning to use the term *mami* [mommy], but this is quite uncommon on Kauvai.
- 3] Father's sister is the *mehekitanga*, and exists as the highest ranked person in ego's family.
- 4] Mother's brother is the *fa'ē tangata* [male mother]. The *fa'ē tangata* is the lowest ranking person to ego, who can deny no request.
- 5] Infants are called *bebe* [baby¹³⁶]; Children are called *fanau*; older 'kids' (plural) are called *tama'iki* and *kau leka*.
- 6] Female children are politely called *ta'ahine* by others, *ofefine* by their father and father's brothers and *tama* or *tama fefine* [woman child] by their mother and mother's sisters. A teenage and young unmarried woman is a *finemui* and may be called *ta'ahine*, a term associated with chiefly daughters. Elderly unmarried women were acknowledge to be *fine mui*, technically speaking, but were often categorized with the *fine motu'a* - mature women.
- 7] Male children are called *tamasi 'i* by others, *foha* by their fathers and father's brothers and *tama* or *tama tangata* [man child] by their mother and mother's sisters. When they get into their teens and early twenties, an unmarried male is termed *talavou* [beautiful].
- 8] Grandchild is a *mokopuna*, regardless of gender.
- 9] Grandparent is a *kui*, regardless of gender.
- 10] Adopted (permanent or temporary) child is a *pusiaki*. Most *pusiaki* are also *mokopuna* [grandchildren] but are not uncommonly children from some other kin. Adoption of non-kin is very rare (Morton 1976:67).
- 11] The *fa'ē tangata* [mother's brother] refers to his sister's children as *ilamutu*.
- 12] The *mehekitanga* [father's sister] refers to her brother's children as her *fakafotu*.
- 13] Same sex sibling is *tokoua*.
- 14] Sister's call their brothers *tuonga'ane*.

¹³⁶ Tongans would, I suspect, say that *bebe* is a borrowed term, but Firth (1963: 128) reports that in Tikopia, a child at the stage to be carried on the back was called *pepe*, perhaps indicating a Polynesian cognate term?

- 15] Brothers call their sisters *tuofefine*.
- 16] Elder siblings (same sex) are *ta'okete*.
- 17] Junior siblings (same sex) are *tehina*.
- 18] Spouse is called *houa* [partner] in polite terms, or *'uaiʻi* [wife] and *husipaniti* [husband].
- 19] Wife's brothers and husband's sister are *matāpule*. There are no specific terms for affinal relatives other than the *matāpule*.
- 20] Descendants of same sex siblings refer to their ancestors as *tautehina kui*, a term meaning something like "grandparent; together juniors".

While the terms listed above were all understood by people on Kauvai, the terms *fakafotu*, *foha*, and *ta'okete* were fairly uncommon in practice, and sometimes invoked some discussion as to what the "proper" application of the term was, when I raised the subject.

APPENDIX THREE: PLAITING KOLOA

The process by which all types of plaited koloa are made is called *lalānga*. Technically, plaiting is a process whereby fibre elements are worked at right angles to each other, but in a diagonal to the artisan. In plaiting, what is warp in one area may be the weft in another (Arbeit 1990:5). No loom or other tools are needed, but the elements themselves must have enough structure to hold the position in which they are placed, because no loom is used. Plaiting allows for the use of fibre types that could not otherwise be worked into 'cloth'. This is what differentiates the technique of plaiting from weaving¹³⁷. Weaving is a form of interlacing where the warps and wefts are constant, and worked at right angles to the artisan. It usually involves the use of some form of loom, and accommodates very fine elements, or strands, of fibre.

Linguistically, Tongans do not differentiate between plaiting and weaving: both plaited koloa and machine woven fabric are described as the products of *lalānga*. This is not to say they have only one term for textile-associated techniques. Other techniques known on Kauvai included braiding [*fi*], and multiple-element braiding/twining [*kako*]. These techniques are well known and used both in basketry, hair adornment, and for making *kiekie* (a belt-like girdle, usually with dangling sections). Recent development efforts have introduced knitting and crocheting, although these activities were not much in evidence during my time on Kauvai¹³⁸. In the past, men made rope [*kafa*] from coconut sennet. In historic times, sennet rope was used to tie house posts and beams, but now the rope is not used, except perhaps as the belt which holds a *ta'ovala* in place. Today, sennet rope is usually only made by boys in the upper grades of primary school, or in secondary school, as a part of their formal studies of Tongan culture. Both men and women make temporary baskets from coconut palm fronds, and more semi-permanent coconut frond flats [*takapau*] that can be used for walls, shutters, feast trays or under *fala*. In keeping with the argument that *lalānga* is a gendered form of labour, men's rope work is not referred to as *lalānga*, and boys seen twisting coconut sennet are not praised with the greeting "*Mālō lalānga*" [praise be for plaiting], as women may be.

Unlike other esteemed forms of 'Tongan culture' taught in the school curricula, *lalānga* is not highly embellished in symbol, prose or poetry. This makes Tongan women's knowledge different from examples of women's traditional knowledge in other cultures, where techniques are preserved in mnemonic chants, stories, or symbolic allusions (see Keller 1988, March 1983, Messick 1987, Tedlock 1985), and different too from other forms of 'women's knowledge' in Tonga, such as child rearing, which is well codified in language and recognised social stages (see Spillius 1958, Kavapalu 1991, Morton 1996).

Whether this represents a loss of an old repertoire of knowledge is unclear. It is surprising that a technology so significant to the material and symbolic continuity of a society and a culture should have no recorded stories, myths, or rituals. This lacuna in the recorded repertoire may reflect a combination of occurrences in the recent history of Tongan society. The earliest visitors (Martin 1817, Orange 1840) and ethnographers (Collacott 1928, Gifford 1929) were all male, and were *perhaps* unlikely to have access to or interest in women's stories, including plaiting knowledge (except McKern n.d., who never finished his work on the material culture. His extensive notes are unfortunately, too confused to be reliable descriptors of early plaiting practices and knowledge).

Women were not formally involved in the sphere of (public) oratory, composition, choreography and poetry that was most easily recorded as 'Tongan culture'. It may be that aspects of Tongan women's

¹³⁷ In the literature, plaiting and weaving are often used as synonyms (e.g.: Keller 1988), but this leads to a misrepresentation of the technical skills and material mediums used.

¹³⁸ Some women who had been part of a recently disbanded women's development committee showed me their knitting needles and crochet hooks, but explained that they didn't use them because the wool was expensive, and there was no real use for the things they knitted or crocheted.

knowledge have been lost due to a biased perspective, or it may simply be that linguistic elaboration of plaiting was long expired, perhaps for the reason that ritualistic practices tend to cluster around those things deemed undependable, tenuous, risky, or secret.

Control of *koloa* production is supposed to have passed from chiefly women to individuals of all ranks (Small, 1987, Kaepler 1997, per. com, Herda 1997), a process possibly begun during the early stages of Christian missionization, and certainly exacerbated during the reign of the late Queen Sālote. Her Majesty encouraged the secondary schools to teach girls handicrafts, including plaiting. It may be that stories, adages, mnemonics, and symbolizations were elided in the years between the democratization that accompanied Christianity and Queen Sālote's particular version of development.

Whatever the reason(s), women on Kauvai were unable to tell me any old stories, proverbs, or songs which focussed on, or included references to, *koloa* production (although they did sometimes sing while weaving, as I describe below). Nor did they use special mnemonics when working on particular patterns. Stories about the origin of particular 'Tongan' designs such as *manuloua* and *tokelaufeletoa*, are taught, as is much of Tongan 'tradition', as a part of the school curriculum¹³⁹. These patterns are more commonly visible on *ngatu*, but it is interesting to note that the characteristic lines, colour changes and angles typical of Tongan art forms such as the *ngatu* designs replicate those created by the angles of the criss-crossing of pandanus elements in plaited textiles. Interestingly, they also replicate the planting patterns of traditional gardens, wherein plants are placed at intervals which create rows which intersect diagonally (like multiple X's), rather than at 90° (or +) angles.

Kauvai women's inability to give me examples of any 'old' songs or stories about *lalānga* may be as much a comment on what is promoted as official Tongan 'tradition', as anything else. Nevertheless, plaited *koloa* are highly regarded in Tonga, regardless of other forms of cultural validation. Indeed, insofar as plaited *koloa* carry a metalanguage of their own, one might say that the *koloa* speaks for itself.

Categories of Plaited Koloa

In this section, I give a brief overview of the three main categories of plaited *koloa*, and the ways in which they are used: *Fala*, *Fihu* and *Ta'ovala*. These are categories and descriptions grounded in women's discussions and descriptions of their work as weavers [*kau lalānga*], and from my experience with and observations of the uses of each of the various types.

Within each category, there are variations, based mostly on the variety of fibre used, and the type of decoration on the textile. I avoid giving English glosses for the types of plaited *koloa*, because each type entails a variety of uses which are themselves circumstantial. For instance, a *lotaha* can be a floor mat, but when your father dies, it can become your *ta'ovala*; a *fihu fatufā* can be used to wrap a bride, as a rest for the king's feet, as a decoration for a church, or as a burial mantle.

Fala

Fala (see photo) are the group of large, double sided mats, sometimes described as 'sleeping mats'. They comprise an important part of the marriage gifts a bride brings on her wedding, and are the basis for the traditional *mohenga* [bed]. Today, women like to have a *fala* available to extend [*faliki*] for guests to sit upon, both indoors and out: it is an essential household furnishing. The *fala* creates a space which is socially appropriate, and unlike a carpet, is rolled up and placed away when guests depart. On Kauvai, women without

¹³⁹ There is one hypothesis about the origin of the *ta'ovala* [waist wrap], which is, briefly, that a man, naked in a boat, was suddenly approached by a chief. Needing something to cover his nakedness, he snatched some of the sail, and wrapped it around his waist.

a clean, new, *matamatalelei* [smooth faced / beautiful] *fala* felt embarrassed by their poverty. *Fala* are made to any size, but the standard is 10 x 12 feet, with multicoloured yarn or dyed and shredded hibiscus bast as fringes at each end. A mat which looks like a *fala*, but is only single layered, is called a *lotaha*.

Usually, *fala* are labelled according to the variety of pandanus used, the pattern in the plait, and/or the size. The types known on Kauvai are as follows:

- Fala tekumi* Made of any type of leaf, and specifically ten feet square: *tekumi* is one way of saying the number ten. *Fala tekumi* are usually decorated with multi-coloured wool fringe.
- Fala tofua* Made from the *tofua* variety of pandanus, and are fairly utilitarian in usage.
- Fala fihu* Large white sheets, used on walls, floors, and to wrap brides and the deceased. They are made from the *kie* variety of pandanus.
- Fala tongi* A type of floor or sleeping mat which has a two tone zigzag [*tongi*] pattern plaited into the upper layer.
- Fala tui* Made specifically by women from the Niuaus who sew [*tui*] the two sides together, rather than plait double wefts of fibres.

Fihu

Fihu is a term used to refer collectively to textiles (see photo) made only from the *kie* variety of pandanus (*Kie* is described below). *Kie* is used to make the *Kie tonga*, the highest ranking variety of *ta'ovala* (discussed below), and a number of large sheet-like textiles, which may be single or double thickness, made with wide or slender wefts of fibre and are usually made very long: for instance the *fihu fatufā*, which is about forty feet in length and ten feet wide.

Fihu are beautiful - they are a golden white and reflect the light, a luminous colour that is likened in other parts of Polynesia to pearl shell (per. com. J. Huntsman 1996). They are coveted for funerals and weddings, and are appropriate for wrapping the deceased for burial. But circumstances often preclude this today. *Fihu* are too valuable to be buried with the deceased without some hard decision making, especially when the family has very little *koloa* to redistribute as part of the funeral disbursement. Often the *fihu* will be given to the person who sits as *fahu* [highest in rank] to the deceased during the pre-burial visitation period (which lasts one or two days).

At her wedding, a bride may be wrapped in *fihu* two or three times (see chapter nine) each time being told by the womenfolk (kin) who bring her to her husband's house to "take off that thing and leave it for your husband's sisters". A bride's family hope that when they receive beautiful *fihu* from their husband's new wife, his sisters will not be jealous, and will treat the new bride with kindness as she moves into their house, and takes the affection of their brother. *Fihu* are also used to decorate churches, and any place where the royal family will visit. They are the most costly form of *plaited koloa*.

Ta'ovala

Ta'ovala (see photo) are in some ways the most interesting and useful type of plaited *koloa* to know. They are certainly the most variable in terms of artistic creativity. Generally, a *ta'ovala* is anything worn about the waist and hips. They can be made from any kind of pandanus, hibiscus or other barks, but I have seen even plastic fibre (see Cowling 1990:x), and burlap sacking used (However, the person wearing a burlap sack sewn into a *ta'ovala* is likely to be a source of public amusement or pity, for having no access to true *koloa*.). *Ta'ovala* are very old in terms of Tongan traditional practice, and yet the subject of ongoing and overt codification as part of Tongan tradition, through the efforts of the late Queen Sālote, and now the Wesleyan Church. The emphasis on the proper, plaited *ta'ovala* in the Wesleyan Church, and the connection of Wesleyans with Tongan traditionalism was made even more evident during my time there, when married

women were admonished, in a denominational circular, to give up wearing the *kiekie*, a garment deemed appropriate for young people, not sober, mature, women. Wearing a *ta'ovala*, what ever it is made from, makes Tongan women feel beautiful, special and/or protected, and properly attired.

Kiekie

These 'belts' or 'girdles' are popular, mostly because they fill the need for a waist wrap which demonstrates respect [*faka'apa'apa*] for others, but is relatively simple, cheap and quick to produce, and less constricting to wear. *Kiekie* and the *ta'ovala* crocheted from *fau* are easy solutions to the problem of public etiquette in contrast with the time, skills and requisite materials needed for good, proper, *ta'ovala*. They are worn by secondary school students, government employees, a gesture initiated by the late Queen Sālote, in which they denote both respect [*faka'apa'apa*] for others, and their specially charged status. But *kiekie* are purely decorative, do not have the gravity or power of *ta'ovala*.

Kie Tonga and Other Prestigious Varieties of Pandanus 'Garments'

Kie tonga A highly esteemed textile which may be used as a garment. It is made out of *kie* and decorated with coloured threads, feathers, even sequins. It used to be called *kie tōnga* (with a long 'o'), a cognate with Samoan and Maori terms for 'valuable' or 'treasure' – *tōga* and *taonga*, respectively. But the pronunciation has changed, probably due to orthographic conventions, in which the macron was dropped. Now the *kie tonga* indexes nationalism as well as wealth. It nevertheless is still associated with the ceremonial and linguistic equivalent, the Samoan "fine mats" [*'ie toga*].

Tu'oua tonga

A type of waist/body wrap made *fala*-style (double-sided), but from very slender (1 mm wide or less) fibres, and usually more sedately decorated than the *kie tonga*. *Kie tonga* are mandatory as both gifts and apparel at weddings, but the *tu'oua* is technically more difficult and time consuming to make. The *tu'oua tonga* is possibly a modern analogue of the historic and high ranking *ngafingafi*, known mostly through the ancient named *kie hingoa* 'fine mats' (Kaeppler 1990:64) which are coveted by chiefly families. Some of the *ngafingafi* are reputed to be hundreds of years old.

Fala vala A *fala*-style waist wrap made of very slender (2-3 mm wide) wefts of *tofua* pandanus with a very plain flat-finished edge and bleached white in coral ash. Another high ranking *ta'ovala* known on Kauvai were the *ma'opo*, but I saw none made or worn during my time there.

Ta'ovala

lokeha Made from the *tofua* variety of pandanus, then bleached white in successive baths of coral ash and sea water. On Kauvai, women excelled in making the *lokeha*.

Ta'ovala

kiefau Made with *kie* as the underside and *fau* [hibiscus bast] as the upper layer. They were becoming popular among the more experienced weavers, who sought a challenge to their skills, and were spurred on by one women's development groups' desire to produce something beautiful, valuable and prestigious. In Maka Fele'unga, the *ta'ovala kiefau* figured as the requisite ritual dress for a ceremony performed to call fish to the island.

Ta'ovala putu

fakanonu Made from a *ta'ovala* plaited out of *kie*, then dyed a rusty brown colour with fluid made

from the pounded roots of the *Morinda Citrifolia [nonu]* tree. The result is a very elegant funeral garment.

Ta'ovala
faka'ahu

Decorated with smoke [*faka'ahu*]. They are popular as funeral wear, especially since stencils of paper could be used to leave reverse-transfer patterns during the smoking process. In the mid 90's women had begun to experiment with commercial dyes, and a few purple, mauve and chartreuse *ta'ovala* are to be seen in Ha'apai. These styles were generally disparaged by the women on Kauvai, who prefer what they think of as the traditional styles of the *lokeba*, and the *fakanonu*.

Symbolism

The symbolism of wearing *ta'ovala* is complex. How a *ta'ovala* is worn depends on the circumstances, and one's social status in that situation. Generally, *ta'ovala* are worn to mark the person as being in a ritual state. While the *kiekie* is a more casual belt like-girdle (see Teilhet-Fisk 1992 for an examination of the *kiekie* from an art historian's perspective), it can serve a similar function, in *some* circumstances. In most cases, this state is one of being low in rank, and the act of wrapping in a *ta'ovala* embodies one as offering *faka'apa'apa* [respect]. At a funeral for instance, the size and type of *ta'ovala* indicates one's rank in relation to the deceased (see Kaeppler 1978); *matāpule* (ceremonial attendants) tie their's in a distinctive way, which gives them a space to carry *kava*, and demonstrates their relationship to the noble or chief they serve. Wesleyans wear *ta'ovala* (or *kiekie*) to church to demonstrate respect for God and his representative, the minister. All ministers wear them whenever they are out in public (some, even when working in their gardens) to demonstrate their perpetual service to God. In the Free Church of Tonga, and the Chiefly Church, unmarried and young women wear *kiekie* or *ta'ovala* to church, while those who have married, and matured to the status of *akonaki* [instructor] wear the hat adopted from the early missionary wives. At church their ministers and lay preachers wear suit coats and trousers or the men's long wrap skirt. On special occasions such as the *Misinale*, however, all wear their *ta'ovala* with their suits. Any one approaching a noble or a royal family member must be wearing a *ta'ovala*, a formal statement of 'respect', but one also denoting the ritually charged state the person is in.

Brides and grooms wear layers of beautiful, ornate, and/or ancient *ta'ovala* to indicate the ritually charged state they are passing through, as they move from un-married to married (see chapter nine); a corpse is supposed to be draped, then wrapped in a *ta'ovala 'efu'efu*, as the person moves from living to spirit worlds, and to the status of higher rank. Wesleyan women wear white and their most beautiful *ta'ovala* to the annual role call in May, when all women re-new their membership as Wesleyans. Our *ofisa kolo* [town officer] wore a *ta'ovala* the day he harvested, and brought to the village ministers (and my family), the first of his crop of corn, planted during the drought on Kauvai. *Polopolo* is the term associated historically with harvesting of first fruits and the mandatory rights of the old chiefs to such fruits. Perhaps, inmaking a gift to those people who as guests and relative outsiders, formally ranked highly in the village, our *ofisa kolo* was taking no chances?

For further information on pandanus, and production of fibres, see Appendix 4.

APPENDIX FOUR: PROCESSING PANDANUS

Different varieties of pandanus require different techniques in processing and storage. The technical knowledge is considered to be women's, as is the work, even when men and boys help. In general, women were not proficient at explaining how to plait, or how to work the raw material, or what it was like to use the various types of pandanus. Long hours of sitting, watching, listening and later, learning to plait, gave me the opportunity to hear women as they worked on a number of different projects. In the next few paragraphs I describe the varieties of pandanus worked by the women of Kauvai as they themselves discussed them with each other and me. These are local and experiential rather than botanical, descriptions.

Tutu'ila This variety is nice to harvest and process because it has few barbs. But its leaves tend to be shorter, and it wears easily. Its dull taupe colour is considered less than beautiful. *Tutu'ila* is a 'low ranking' form of pandanus, and plaited koloa made from it can be important in functional or casual circumstances, but it is not appropriate in formal or ceremonial situations. For these reasons *tutu'ila* is more trouble to work, than it is worth. It is used as the underside, or as decorative accent in certain types of *fala*. Sometimes women will make a *papa*, a work mat, out of *tutu'ila*, or a *lōtaha*, a large, one layered mat. Young women learning to plait were offered *tutu'ila*, because its wastage was not as serious a loss as the waste of other varieties.

Tofua This variety is used frequently because of its suitability for a number of types of plaited koloa. After being wound into large wheels [*taka'inga*] and boiled, the leaves dry to a blond-coloured fibre, popular in *ta'ovala* garments as well as *fala*. *Tofua* leaves are long and finely grained - making them ideal for projects requiring very slender fibres. The blond colour is sometimes used in patterning of *fala* made of the darker *pāongo* (such as the *fala tongi*), or to make the *fala pāongo 'aofi tofua*, which has one layer of *pāongo* and the other of *tofua*. Because it is light coloured, it takes dyes well. A popular formal garment, the *ta'ovala lokeha*, is a waist mat woven from slender elements of *tofua*, then bleached in successive baths of seawater and coral ash, to a variety of yellows, blonds and eventually, white.

Pāongo This variety is esteemed as the ideal pandanus for *fala*. "*Aonga 'ae Tu'i*", "worthwhile to the king" women say, stroking the surface of a *fala* made of *pāongo*. Its firm, leather-like surface mingles shades from chocolate to khaki. Unlike most other pandanus, *pāongo* requires relatively simple processing, although as a novice, I found it hurt my fingers and gave me cramps in my thumbs: after shaving the barbs, split the leaf lengthwise, then wind the stiff leaf around the fingers. Tuck both ends inside the coil and gently release: when done properly, the manoeuvre produces a double helix of leaf likened to a piglet's curlicued excrement "*te'ete'epuaka*". The *pāongo* is then left to dry in a cool corner of the house. Later, it can be wound into a wheel, or split into elements (*fē 'unu*) for weaving. *Pāongo* is the most durable of pandanus, and in some ways the most difficult to work because it gets stiff and brittle in the seemingly ubiquitous sunlight. "Rainy weather is the time to weave *fala pāongo*" I was told.

Kie/Fihu *Kie* is reputed to be from Samoa. It is very plentiful on Kauvai, which has an origin myth linking it to trade, and perhaps intermarriage with Samoa. While *pāongo* is the standard by which *fala* are gauged, *kie* is the queen, the silk of pandanus. The highest ranking forms of woven *koloa* are made from *loukie*, leaves from the *kie*. When processed properly, *kie* is soft, flexible, and strong. When woven, the golden whites of the *kie* seem to glimmer, catching and rippling the light, contrasting with the more usual earthy browns, coppers and blacks of other *koloa*. Items made from *kie* (except for the variety of *ta'ovala*) are called *fibu*.

Queenly, it may be, but *kie* is also the cruellest of pandanus. Three rows of little scimitars march down the edges of the quasi-triangular *kie* leaf. They must be shaved off, with due care to preserve the integrity of the top layer of the leaf. After *kie* is de-clawed, it is boiled. Then the top and bottom halves of the leaf are separated, another process highly dependent upon unarticulated, perhaps localized techniques, tacit knowledge girls and women have gained over years of observing, then helping their mothers, aunts, grandmothers or elder sisters. Separating the layers is a slimy, slippery procedure. The *kie* is wet and hot from being boiled, and limp. As the halves of the leaf are separated, its inner, jelly like flesh coats palms, fingers and foot soles, making control of the leaf problematic. Unsteady hands or jerky movements cause the friable top layer to tear like wet paper, or stick to the bottom layer. This top layer is rinsed in rain water and french-braided with a rope of hibiscus bast [*fau*], then hung up to preclude tearing. Each rope of dangling *kie* is then laid in the shallows of the sea, weighted down with rocks and left to soak for up to nine days (Whistler says a week 1991;71). Women check their *kie* daily, wary of serious tangles, loosening of the stone weights, or the unlikely event of theft.

Seawater bleaches the *kie*. When it has lost its green, women take the wet strips, rinse them in rainwater and hang them, like laundry in the sun, propping the clothes lines up high with long poles. Occasionally, the initial bath is insufficient, and the *kie* must be replaced in the sea, rinsed and hung in the sun. As the now golden-white *kie* dries, it coils into cascades of ringlets, one side of the leaf smooth and shiny, the other whiter, and delicately ribbed. The differences in the textures are significant, as they are used to create different types of *koloa*: the '*efu'efu*, appropriate for draping a corpse, is made with alternating face and underside of the element, minutely changing the way light moves across the completed surface of the completed textile.

Fau This is fibre made from the inner bark of the *Hibiscus Tiliaceus*, a small bush. *Fau* is processed in a similar manner to *kie*: lengths of *fau* saplings are soaked in seawater, for a period of up to two weeks. The outer bark begins to decay [*pala*], and is stripped off with a knife. Then the inner layers are peeled away. The resulting strips of tissue-paper like fibre is very difficult to weave, beautiful to behold, and highly prized, for instance when worn as a *ta'ovala*. Kaepler comments glowingly on the "most remarkable" *fau* 'overskirts' (*ta'ovala*, probably) collected from 18th century Tonga by Cook (1978;215). Today, *ta'ovala fau* are not commonly worn. I was lucky that during my stay on Kauvai, a women's committee decided to make themselves some *ta'ovala fau*, and that I was privy to the process. Whistler (1991;29) says that *ta'ovala* made from *fau* called *ngie* were worn during sea voyages, but I am unable to confirm the name. However, in one of the *fakamatata* [histories / explanations (see Evans and Young Leslie 1995) associated with the village, and the enduring ceremony associated with the event described in the *fakamatata*, involves the protagonist going to sea to call to certain fish, while wearing an ancient *ta'ovala fau*.

Once pandanus (or *fau*) is processed, whether by the complex process required for *kie*, or the simple one used for *paongo*, base material has been created from which to make any number of forms of *koloa*. Often at this stage, processed pandanus is wound into large wheels of either the entire width of the leaf, or as is more likely, the half-width. The wheels [*taka'inga*] are suitable for storage or sale, and readily available for use. Women told me their *taka'inga* would last for years, if kept dry.

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