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The Tu'i Kanokupolu Matai Establishment
and

Why would Tu'i Tonga Fuanunuiava have vied to become one?
(A genealogical analysis of post 1550 AD new political hegemony in Tonga)

By

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Philosophy
At Massey University – Albany Campus

November 2007

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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

Siaosi L. 'Ilaiu
November 2007

Glossary

Sāmoan Terms:

ali'i – Sāmoan high chief.

ali'i - pa'ia – Sāmoan sacred chief.

ao – paramount chiefly title.

aualuma – council of virgins.

aumaga – council of young untitled men.

feagaiga – a sacred covenant between brother and sister.

fale'upolu - Council of advisors for the Ali'ipa'ia.

Gatoa'itele – paramount title of Afega.

pule – orator groups who control the conferment of high titles of Savai'i.

matai – a family title bestowed on chiefs and orators at different social levels starting from the rank of tulafale at the bottom to tulafale-ali'i in ascending order to ali'i and then ali'i pa'ia at the very top.

sa'o – chosen leader for young women and young men's village organisation.

sa'o aualuma – taupou's office in women's village organisation.

sa'o aumaga – mana'ia's office in men's village organisation.

sa'o tama'ita'i – title for the highest ancestress title of a district.

tulafale ali'i – orator chiefs who hold more than one title/ with dual prerogatives as chief and talking chief whenever it is required.

tulafale – talking chief.

Tamasōali'i – paramount title of Safata.

tafa'i – a pair of protectors (titled high chief) for each of the four paramount papa titles.

tafa'i-fa – a status given to any individual who holds all the four paramount papa titles to which he/she is recognised as tupu (titular ruler/ king of Sāmoa)

Tu'i A'ana – paramount title of A'ana.

Tu'i Atua – paramount title of Atua.

Tu'i Fiti – Paramount title of Bau.

Tu'i Manu'a – royal title of the king of Manu'a.

Tu'i Samau – orator group in Afega who have the right to confer the royal title of Gatoa'itele.

Tu'i Sāmoa – a title from Poutasi village which originated from Fiji.

Tumua – two orator groups who have the right to confer the titles of Tu'i A'ana and Tu'i Atua. One in Leulumoega in A'ana and the other one in Lufilufi in Atua. The two tumua control who they confer the titles on.

Tupu – titular ruler or king.

Tongan Terms:

- ‘eiki* – a Tongan chief.
‘eiki lahi – a Tongan high chief.
‘eiki toputapu – a Tongan sacred chief.
falefā - House of four. The four ceremonial attendants of the Tu’itonga.
feangai – a sacred covenant between brother and sister.
faleha’akili - Group of titleholders in the court of the Tu’ikanokupolu
falekanokupolu – Tongan equivalent of Sāmoan faleupolu.
falefisi – descendants of unions between tu’itonga-fefine and Fijian high titled chiefs.
fatongia - A hereditary profession assigned to every ha’a.
ha’a - The largest social group in Tonga.
hau - A designation ascribed to a ruler of the second order.
pule – orator groups who control the conferment of high titles of Savai’i.
hingoa - A traditional title.
hingoafakanofa - A hereditary chiefly title.
hou’eiki - chiefly class.
kāinga - blood connection/relation.
kauhalalalo – lower side of the road, Tu’ikanokupolu tradition.
kauhala’uta – upper side of the road, Tu’itonga Tradition.
mana - Supernatural power/attribute.
ma’itaki – Principal wife of the Tu’itonga, (Sāmoan Taupou).
matapule – Tongan ceremonial attendant.
mohefo – The principal wife of the Tu’itonga, (Tu’i Kanokupolu’s daughter).
tu’i - King, ruler or emperor.
Tu’i Tonga fefine – female Tu’itonga
Tu’i Ha’atakalaua – Secular Ruler, name for the second dynasty in Tonga.
Tu’i Ha’apai – King of Ha’apai group.
Tu’i Vava’u – King of Vava’u group.
Tu’i ‘Eua – King of ‘Eua.
Tu’i Niua – King of Niua.
Tu’i hihifo- paramount title of hihifo district in Tonga.
Tu’i ha’amo’unga - another version of Tu’i hihifo title.
Tu’i Kanokupolu – recognised title of the rulers of Tonga’s third dynasty.
Tu’i Tonga – royal title of sacred king of Tonga.
tamahā – daughter of the Tu’i Tonga fefine, Sacred being.
tamatauhala – the most sacred/extraordinary being.
tapu – Taboo, sacred, complete out of bound.
tu’a – Commoners, untouchable class.

KEYS:

- TA* – Tu’i A’ana.
Tt – Tu’i Atua.
TT – Tu’i Tonga.
TH – Tu’i Ha’atakalaua.
TK – Tu’i Kanokupolu.
TMA- Tu’i Manu’a.

- TM*-Tamahā.
TTF-Tu’i Tonga Fefine.
THT-Tu’i Ha’ateiho.

Preface

This thesis is part of an ongoing project which aims at rethinking Tongan history in such a way that some sense of historicity could eventually be restored to both ‘oral tradition’ and the works written by Tongans and non-Tongan observers, thinkers and scholars alike.

The earliest commentaries on Tonga were recorded in journals written by navigators, missionaries, European travellers, beach combers and war captives who directly met indigenous leaders and were involved in local affairs. These records begin with the journals of the Dutch explorers Schouten and Le Maire who located the northern islands in 1616. Scholarly works on Tongan history surfaced in the late 19th century when Dr Moulton established the Wesleyan college in 1866.

The present history of Tonga is cumulative only of sources provided by oral tradition and works generally written by non-Tongan commentators. The validity of such sources has been questioned in a number of studies for more than a decade and a half now. Even though criticism of folklore and other oral traditions is well founded and appears logical in a number of ways, it appears somehow that revisions made (as I will show later on) are as ahistorical as the ones they tirelessly endeavour to correct. This thesis argues that although information regarding pre-contact times has provided uncertain conclusions, the works of revisionist historians are even more doubtful and some rethinking needs to be done.

The topic and area of study I am pursuing here is not new but I have chosen to tackle it on the basis of my strong conviction that the present literature on Tongan history has had a wrong approach from the beginning. A fresh look at Tongan History must start from a serious examination of methods used and theoretical agendas involved in the historian or researcher’s mind. One of the common errors appears to be ‘anachronism’ (where history is written out of time); its presence frustrates productive efforts to underpin facts in a more scientific way.

There are organisations and institutions that I am indebted to for harnessing, refining and processing the course of my early academic life. I must begin by thanking my teachers at Tonga College and 'Atenisi University who were instrumental in the initial stages of my progress as a student and especially my lifetime teacher Professor Futa Helu for instilling lasting thoughts and knowledge that have formed the basis of my entire academic career. I wish also to acknowledge my former mentor at Auckland University the late Dr Garth Rogers.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of a number of individuals who were generous enough to give me their time during the production of this work: Hon. Fusitu'a and Lady Fusitu'a, Hon. Fiamē Mata'afa, Hon. Lupepau'u Fusitu'a, Kioa (Tomu) of Ha'utu, Makamapu-'o-Ha'a Havea Lahi, Faleafa-'o-'Atalanga, Kieteau Topui, Soane Tone, Tevita Folau Mahu'inga, Tevita Ovalau Fifita, Tuala Tominiko, Sa'ena, Fonoti, Tevita Valahulu Kanongata'a, 'Aisake Tu'iono, Saia Moe hau, William Edwards, Semisi Panuve, Ngatu Lui, Sione Tupou Tu'ifua, 'Ahau, Laugatasi 'Ahio, Joe Tu'ilatai Mataele and last but not least my special thanks to the 'Kaunanga 'o Petani' for all spiritual advice and guidance.

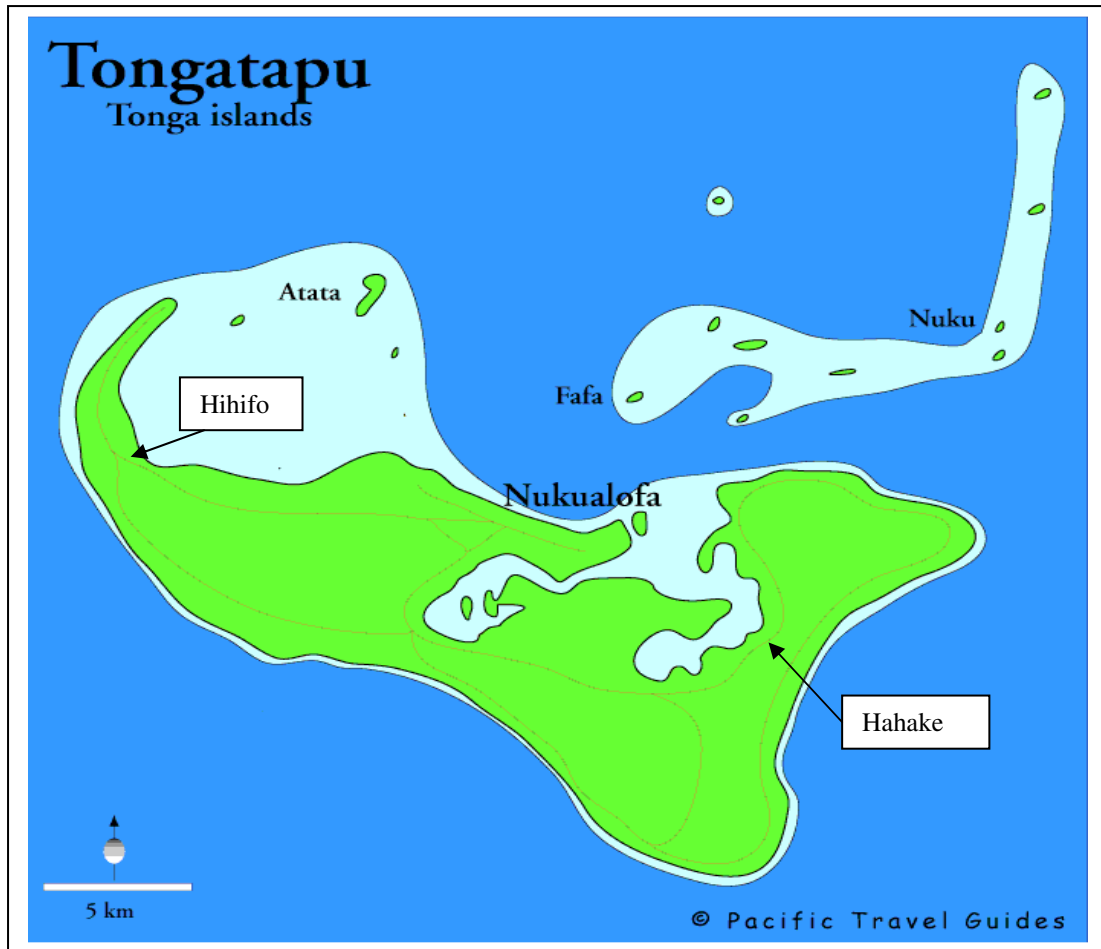
In the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Massey University (Albany Campus) I would first like to thank my supervisor Dr Graeme Macrae for enduring the hardship of keeping me on track over the years, during which his encouragement and constructive advice facilitated the completion of this work. I also acknowledge my debt especially to Dr Eleanor Rimoldi and Professor Paul Spoonley for their patience and strong belief in my ability. I would also like to acknowledge the support, friendship and positive contribution given to me by my colleagues: Nalesoni T. Tupou, (The Late) Finau Kolo, Vakaola Helu, Failo Taufā, Rev. 'Aminiasi Vuki, Taniela Vao, Inoke Hu'akau, Heamasi Halasili, Siaso Kei, Lemeki Helu, Penisimani Finau, 'Opeti 'Ofamo'oni, Taniela Mo'ale, Paula Vi junior, Ungia 'Ofa, Sione Hafoka, Manisela Sitake and all my peers who have helped me but are not named here.

Special thanks are due to Tu'uta Pome'e who drew the genealogical figures and Manase Lua who helped with proof reading, for their support and friendship throughout the thesis.

I wish to thank my aunties Finaulilo and Mele'ana, my sister Lupeha'amo'a, cousins Va'inga and Falefehi for their unending patience, and support. Finally, I wish to thank especially my wife Lucy Anna for her interminable belief in me, for without her prayers, incessant guidance and encouragement this work would not have materialised in this present form, and last but not least, I wish to acknowledge our children's contribution in struggling together with us during this project.

WESTERN SAMOA - ISLAND OF UPOLU





Abstract

This work examines some issues relating to specific social, political and ideological developments that have shaped the pre-contact history of Tonga especially the puzzling ideas that revolve around the co-existence of the three kingly lines that survived into the era of written record. There are competing versions of how each dynasty came about and what kinds of contribution they accomplished. I endeavour to go further than what current research has brought to light so far. In fact, current research on Tongan history is stagnant due to some great lack in research methodology whereby easy problems cannot be logically deciphered. I believe this is because present disciplinary guidelines limit the scope for attaining a deep understanding of things not to mention the failure of comparative method (comparing chronologies in neighbouring islands) to underpin the historical realities on offer. One of my main concerns in this study rests on how well the contact period reflects the reality of what we may refer to as Tongan *tradition* or what is really traditional about Tongan ways of life prior to the seventeenth century.

This thesis is designed to use Tongan genealogy as a guide in attempting to make sense of what the European records can offer to our understanding of post-contact Tonga. Historical documentation in this context refers simply to post-contact recording of events, whereas traditional history, ordered by genealogy, gives us access to a more distant past. This work argues further that genealogy unravels an ever-presence of conflicting tendencies that existed even in times where Tongan society was perceived to enjoy long-term peace.

This thesis is aimed at a complete rethinking of political transformations in ancient Tongan polity and how such transformations introduced new patterns of social, political and ideological realities that current scholars have not yet recognised. I also show how genealogy is useful in determining the course of Tongan political history, especially the major changes that took place a few centuries before contact with Europe came about in the early 17th century AD.

In Chapter one, I introduce an alternative theory about the political history of Tonga since the inception of the TK dynasty¹. I also delineate how genealogy reflects major changes in all aspects of life in both pre-

¹ I use TK as abbreviation for Tu'i Kanokupolu.

contact and post-contact Tonga. In the light of this better understanding of Tongan political history I employ Antonio Gramsci's dialectic to harness and clarify matters relating to social processes in the past that have remained unexplained up to now. I discuss here the hegemony of the Tu'i Tonga dynasty i.e. how it was achieved and maintained for over a thousand years from 450 AD until around 1500 AD when there was an unsuccessful counter-hegemony by the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* line. In 1550 shortly after the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua *failure* every commentator of Tongan society has overlooked another counter hegemony by the third dynasty. The Tu'i Kanokupolu hegemony will be critically discussed with reference to a further counter-hegemony by the Tu'i Tonga by which strategy the old dynasty managed to survive a bit longer.

Chapter 2 then, offers a critique of old notions about Tongan society in works written mostly by the so-called Polynesianist revisionists who have constantly revisited Tongan history for the past two decades. I also show why Tongan traditionalists and scholars alike could not understand what had been happening in Tonga's past.

This work focuses on the creation of the third dynasty in Tonga around 1550 AD. There are a number of issues relating to this event that have not been discussed by any commentator of Tongan society so far. These include the indirect but significant importation of a quasi-Sāmoan matai system that eventually formed the basis of Tongan polity encountered by European explorers starting from Souten and Le Maire in 1616 during the reign of the third Tu'i Kanokupolu (Mataeletu'apiko), when the matai system was locally practised in the narrow confines of Hihifo². It had gained momentum at the time of Captain Cook's last visit in 1777. The system grew stronger and spread to all corners of the Tongan archipelago within the duration of only two centuries.

It is the growth of this system that this study determines to underpin, as it will provide a more lucid explanation for a number of important puzzles that still confuse contemporary historians. First, the reason why and how the Tu'i Kanokupolu came into existence, the odd nature of Tu'i Kanokupolu political practices, and the secrets behind the mass production of titles as family and extended family gifts plus how these gifts determined the outcome of social, political, and religious activities that all three dynasties engaged in, in their tensely unavoidable coexistence especially in the eighteenth century.

²Hihifo is a narrow point at the western end of the main island of Tongatapu where the seat of the Tu'i Kanokupolu dynasty was established in space 1550 AD.

Chapter 3 - offers a general discussion of Ama's possible schemes and plots. I argue in this part that Ama was determined to recapture and rule Safata. In Sāmoa I identify a connection between a political struggle (civil war) that took place in Upolu around 1500 – 1520 AD with the creation of the Tu'i Kanokupolu in Tonga about 1550 AD. This war is discussed here for two reasons. First, it was an attempt by Sāmoan high chiefs to create a centralised in Upolu state to be headed by a Sāmoan monarch for the first time in their history. Second, the end result of this war affected Tonga more than Sāmoa since the vanquished Ama fled from his district Safata to Tonga. This chapter concentrates on discussing the major players in the said war.

Chapter 4 – This part discusses Sāmoan politics at the time of Ama's exile. I also unfold here the structure of Sāmoan polity by discussing the matai system and how it generates political, social and religious responsibilities among Sāmoan lives in general. This chapter discusses significant principles of Sāmoan social and political organisation such as matai (title system), tafa'i (royal protector), faleupolu (political advisors), 'aiga (extended family), sa (family – royal lines), ali'i-pa'ia (sacred chief/district monarch), ali'i (high chief), tulafale-ali'i (minor chief), and tulafale (chief's attendant). These organisations will be compared with the Tu'i Kanokupolu political system so that the resemblance is not confused with the Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Ha'atakalaua systems.

Chapter 5 - discusses with critical analyses the real characters of the Tu'i Kanokupolu political establishment. Such discussion includes TK status, the conception of 'ulutolu (chief's protector), hingoa – fakanofu (title system), falekanokupolu (political advisors), kāinga (extended family), ha'a (titled chiefs related to an original royal line), 'eiki lahi (paramount chief), eiki (high chief), 'eiki si'i (minor chief), matapule (chief's attendant). I argue in this part, that the TK political organisation is essentially structured in Sāmoan fashion both in theory and in practice and I will show the basic difference between this system and the quintessential Tu'i Tonga organisational principles described in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 – This chapter depicts the basic structure of the Tu'i Tonga political organisation and how it countered the powerful hegemony of the TK expansion in the 17th and 18th centuries when there was an internal struggle for political supremacy among the three ruling dynasties. I discuss here counter hegemony by the Tu'i Tonga, which resulted in the creation of several new statuses such as the *Tu'i Tonga fefine* (female Tu'i Tonga), *tamahā* (sacred being – female), *falefisi* (sacred house of Fiji). This chapter also highlights the collision between the old political system and the new and also shows how the new system

paved its way to an undisputed status in the mid 19th century after the last conflict of 1852. I discuss the new Tu'i Kanokupolu ha'a system and the kind of impact it propagated in the dominions of Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Ha'atakalaua.

Chapter 7 – My main concern in this chapter rests on a case where a highborn female Tupou mohefo successfully usurped the Tu'i Kanokupolu title and became the first female titleholder in this dynasty. She was very ambitious and pried into politics on a number of occasions when she made attempts to revolutionise the norm of Tongan tradition such as her well known move to dethrone her husband Tu'i Tonga Pau in favour of their son Fuanunuiava and also her desperate instigation to abolish the office of the TK in the 1770s.

Chapter 8 – Discusses how TT Fuanunuiava aspired to obtain political authority and his strange ambition to be named Tu'i Kanokupolu after the death of TK Mumui in 1798. Why should a Tu'i Tonga vie to be named TK will be discussed here in great detail.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion – general summing up of debates and arguments.