

## **Wry Comment From the Outback: Songs of Protest From the Niua Islands, Tonga**

**Wendy Pond**

I ask leave from the poets and orators of Tonga, whose inherited metaphors I am about to describe in the plain language of English. My work is the product of many years of joint endeavor with Tupou Posesi Fanua.<sup>1</sup>

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of a group of scattered islands in western Polynesia. In the far north of this group are three isolated islands, Niuafu'ou, Niuatoputapu, and Tafahi, known collectively as the Niua Islands. In the late 1960s, while conducting ethnographic research there, I began to understand how the colonized people of these islands made use of songs to speak ruefully about the hardships of their lives and to assert their independence of thought in the face of political and economic rule from the south. In formal Tongan discourse it is unseemly to speak directly of one's subject or intention, and so poets embellish their poems in order to distract the audience's attention in such a way that their meaning is discerned only by those for whom it is intended. This paper examines three songs, one from each of the Niua Islands, in which poets practice this art. In these elaborate songs there are two levels of meaning, one intended for outsiders and one for the poet's own people. Complex irony, skillful metaphors, and witty play upon convention allow the poets to present their messages with appropriate indirection. To appreciate the content and roles of these songs, one must understand something of the historical background.

### **The Colonization From the South**

When Captain James Cook visited Tonga in the 1770s (Beaglehole 1967, 1969), it was a great maritime metropolis ruled by the god-kings, the

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<sup>1</sup> Tupou Posesi Fanua has lived through the reigns of King George Tupou II and Queen Sālote Tupou III and on into the reign of King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV. She is an authority on Tongan tradition and in 1959 was asked by Sālote to work for the Tonga Traditions Committee at the Palace Records Office.

Tu‘i Tonga, from their seat of power on the island of Tongatapu. The Tu‘i Tonga had established governors on nearby ‘Eua and to the north on Ha‘apai, Vava‘u, Niuafu‘ou, Niuatoputapu, and ‘Uvea, and their political influence extended as far as the more distant islands of Lau, Futuna, and Samoa (Bott 1982:95, Gifford 1924:32-35). On the three Niua islands of Niuatoputapu, Niuafu‘ou, and Tafahi, the political situation at this time and subsequently was briefly as follows. On Niuatoputapu the powerful lineage of the Mā‘atu chiefs had been established as governors in the seventeenth century (Bott 1982:106) and ruled there until 1934, when the Tongan monarch allowed the title to remain vacant.<sup>2</sup> The Niuatoputapu poets brooded over their loss of chiefly leadership in dance-poems, *ta‘anga lakalaka*, composed for visiting royalty. In 1959 Filianga complained that

Si‘ete ongo‘i tu‘unga fale	We feel we are an empty house site.
Hungaluopea he ‘one‘one.	The beach line is strewn with debris.

(Filianga 1979)

On Niuafu‘ou, the Fotofili lineage was established as governors in the seventeenth century (Bott 1982:96,112-13), and Fotofili is still today the highest aristocratic title on the island. The history of the founding of this title was recalled for the Niuafu‘ou people by Queen Sālote in a dance poem, *ta‘anga lakalaka*, which she composed for her visit in 1927:

Tō e folofola mei mu‘a:	The royal command given from the past ahead:
Fakahā ki Fonuamotu tokua	“Advise Fonuamotu,” so it is said,
Ke ‘ave ha taha ‘o nofo fonua	“Send out a resident
‘O tauhi ‘a e motu ko Niua.	To govern Niua.” <sup>3</sup>

(Tupou III 1927)

The people of Tafahi, on the other hand, do not have a tradition of aristocratic chiefs, so this is not a subject for poetry. Instead the poets warn of the hardships of their terrain and the rigors of their unsheltered coastline:

Ka ai ha sola ‘oua e ha‘u	No outsider should try to come,
He ko e ava ni ‘oku toutau	For the waves in the pass are rough
Ka hao‘uli fisi‘i peau,	And the boat is steered through the surf,
I sakē io!	<i>I sakē io!</i>

(Tavake 1983)

<sup>2</sup> In 1979 Tupou IV appointed his second son, Alaivahamama‘o, to the title of Mā‘atu, thereby according a Tu‘i Kanokupolu chief the status of this Tu‘i Tonga title.

<sup>3</sup> In Tongan thought, the past lies ahead rather than behind. But as well as meaning “past” and “ahead,” the word *mu‘a/Mu‘a* is the name of the seat of the Tu‘i Tonga in Tongatapu, the source of the highest aristocratic authority.

Eventually in Tonga there was a move to constitutional government. After Cook's departure the power of the Tu'i Tonga had been challenged by another powerful lineage, the Ha'a Ngata (Bott 1982:113), and after some thirty years of warfare King George Tupou I assumed power. Subsequently, in 1862, he passed a code emancipating the Tongan people from the power of their chiefs, and then in 1875 he adopted a constitution. Today, while the old Tu'i Tonga governors of Niuatoputapu and Niuafu'ou remain as the highest aristocratic titles of these islands, government is carried out through government representatives, district and village officers, magistrates, police, agricultural officers, and other civil appointments.

The aristocratic and entrepreneurial families of Tongatapu have regarded the Niua people as country bumpkins and their social behavior as perverse: in public places they wore gaudily embroidered waist-mats which Tongatapu people would have reserved for weddings and celebrations. Their musical speech was believed to be old-fashioned Tongan, and Niua people walking along the road would be greeted jeeringly with lines from their stick dance, the *Vaka eke* (*Sōkē*)—but at national festivals this dance brings shouts of enthusiasm, and it has spread through schools as far afield as Auckland, New Zealand. Through their poets and dance choreographers, the people of the Niuas reclaim their reputation. With this background we can now consider the songs of protest from these three islands.

### **Niuatoputapu**

An eroded volcanic island, Niuatoputapu is a land of ancient monuments and chiefly story. The island's nickname in oratory, Niu-teke-vaka, Niu-which-repels-boats, originates from an era in which the governing Mā'atu chiefs were strong enough to cease sending tribute to the Tu'i Tonga and assert political autonomy.

In 1969 King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV paid a visit to open Niuatoputapu's first Agricultural Show. Preparations and dance rehearsals began three months beforehand. Royal visits entail traditional presentations of kava, pigs, yams, taro, and fine mats. Large pigs and large kava plants are hauled onto the presentation ground on a sledge pulled by villagers chanting a *tau'a'alo*—literally a rowing song, but here used as a hauling song. In the last week of rehearsals, an old chief, Loketi Lapuka, came to the hall late one night and taught the Hihifo people a *tau'a'alo* that had the appearance of a traditional hauling chant. But when we translated it after Lapuka's death, Tupou Pōsesi recognized that there are two levels of meaning in this complex and sardonic poem.

*Tau‘a‘alo*

Fie tau ē pea fokotu‘u  
 ‘Alu ‘o tau ‘i Futuna tu‘u  
 Kae tuku ‘a Niua ni ke toka  
 Fai ai pē tau ‘a e moa  
 Muihelu ē ‘alu ‘o vakai vaka  
 Kae pailate Maka-foa-vaka  
 Funga Mafa ē ke ke fanafana  
 Vaihola ē tu‘u ‘o kalanga  
 Tala ki Tonga ke tapu e vaha  
 He ko au ē Tupa-teke-vaka  
 He kuo u ta‘uta ta‘e ta‘ovala  
 ‘Ei ē ē! ‘Ei ē ē!

*Hauling Chant*

Want to fight? Then stand up,  
 Go and fight in Futuna. Stand up,  
 And leave Niua in peace.  
 Fight on like roosters,  
 Watch for a boat from the summit lookout  
 Piloted [past] Boat-breaker Rock.  
 From the summit of Mafa—whisper,  
 Vaihola, stand up and shout,  
 Tell Tonga the seas are barred,  
 For it is I, Tupa-who-repels-boats—  
 But here I sit without a waist-mat!  
 Heave ho! Heave ho!

(Lapuka 1982)

Lapuka’s chant was performed as the sledge of produce was hauled onto the open ground after the orator’s speech of presentation to the assembly of chiefs. In this context of metaphor and deference, the chant appeared to recall and celebrate the heroic eighteenth-century history of Niuatoputapu. At that time, the island’s governing Mā‘atu chiefs had become so powerful that they were able to maintain independence from Tongan rule; right up until the late 1830s, these chiefs had fought against the peoples of Futuna and ‘Uvea. So in his chant Lapuka speaks of fighting in Futuna and of people watching for enemy canoes from the lookouts at Mafa and Vaihola on the central ridge. He then speaks of a famous incident during this period of independence when the Niua chief Tupa prevented the Tu‘i Tonga party from landing. Lapuka identifies himself (and therefore his people) with Tupa, celebrating his island’s history in a manner which is in accordance with poetic convention.

Finally, the poet speaks of himself (and his people) as being without a waist-mat because this garment is worn to honor the presence of chiefs. He is thus complaining that he finds himself in a land without leadership, living helplessly in the illusion of past power. This complaint is without ambiguity and comes as a strong conclusion to the song. It is again quite in accord with convention: Lapuka is appealing to the king to appoint a successor to the Mā‘atu title. But there is another level of meaning. Lapuka is also complaining about the generation of younger, educated people who are leaving the island and abandoning their responsibilities of leadership. On this level, in the first lines he is upbraiding the young men who succeed in education, become teachers, ministers, and civil servants, and abandon their homeland to seek work and status in Tongatapu. In this context, the third line can be understood as meaning “Leaving Niua the

loser.”<sup>4</sup> In the fourth line, the word *moa* can refer either to roosters or to hens. Most obviously, this passage exhorts the warriors to fight like roosters, but it can also be taken as an ironic and disparaging reference to citizens who are squabbling like hens. On this second level the poet is making a social comment: without leaders of status and competence, the family heads will not work together. He sees hope in the king’s visit to the Agricultural Show, and he urges people to pass the message on by word of mouth, calling from signal stations along the ridge at Mafa and Vaihola. In the sixth line the place name *Maka-foa-vaka* means literally Boat-breaker Rock; however, since metaphorical use is often made of place names, this line can be interpreted as referring to a people who, lacking leadership, have been piloted onto the rocks.

The place names Mafa and Vaihola represent also the people of the island; this is why the poet addresses them directly. The name Vaihola, literally “Fleeing Waters,” is not a real place name but a metaphor for a spring called *Utufeikitu’a*. At this spring, water is always drawn (*utu*) with one’s back turned (*ki tu’a*), since the water would otherwise vanish (*hola*). The place names identify the *tau’a’alo* with Niuatoputapu and serve as metaphors of the poet’s social criticism.

### Niufo’ou

The second song is from the island of Niufo’ou, an active volcano with crater lakes and no harbors. After an eruption in 1946, the inhabitants were evacuated by government decree; many of them established new villages on the island of ‘Eua. But after 1959 some 600 people returned to Niufo’ou. They were prepared to face the prospect of an eruption for the sake of living in their ancestral land and for their love of an independent way of life. This sentiment was expressed by one of the people returning, the chief stevedore, Siaso Telefoni Ongoloka: “My four main ancestors are resting here in Niufo’ou and they are not transferable. . . . This is my island and here I intend to stay” (Rogers 1986:127).

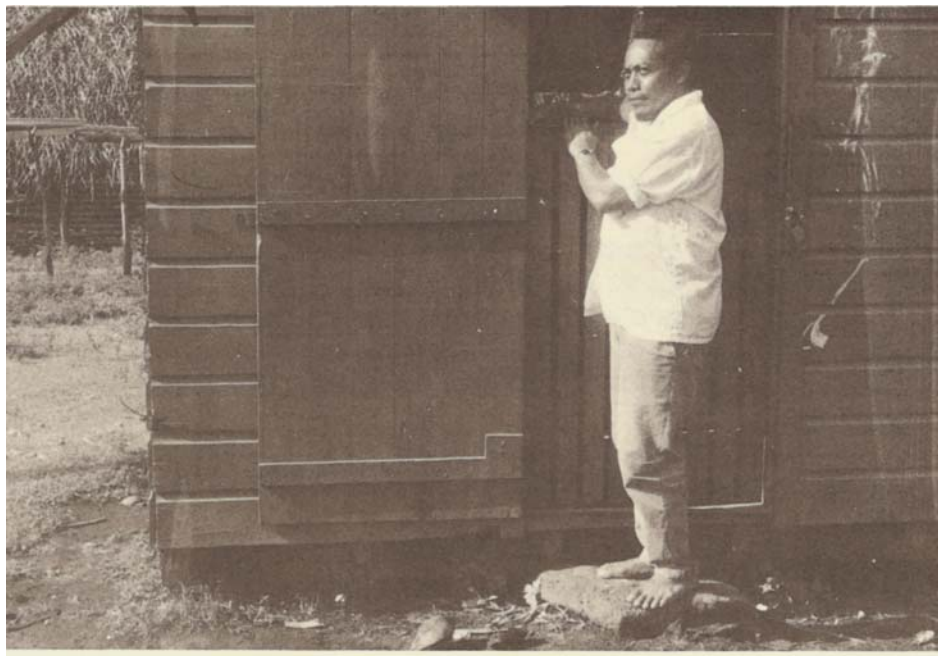
In 1967 on Niufo’ou, groups of young men singing unaccompanied topical songs, *hiva kakala*, would perform at kava parties in the evenings, the singing arising spontaneously at intervals in the kava drinking. Garth Rogers recorded a collection of songs of this kind which had been composed by the wireless operator, Kitone Mamata of Ha’apai (Rogers 1986:105-22). These songs are a witty and wry comment on the hardships

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<sup>4</sup> This is possible because the word *toka* has several meanings, including “fall in combat,” “be at peace (of land),” and “be motionless.”

the people were experiencing in this outpost in the 1960s, left out of development aid projects and disregarded by the government and by their own aristocratic chiefs in Tongatapu. In one of these songs, “Loading and Unloading Procedures,” Mamata describes how the sacks of copra were loaded from the end of a lava outflow at Futu with no protection from the surge of the sea: they were carried down to the beach and out along the rocks by a team of men supervised by the chief stevedore, then taken out on a lighter to the copra ship.

In the 1960s copra was the island’s main source of money. The copra cutters had to pay a portion of their returns to the chiefs who were their landlords, but some of these chiefs had not returned after the eruption and thus did not, as was traditional, repay tribute with leadership. The government, likewise, had not reciprocated the payment of taxes by providing aid for development. This situation is cryptically referred to (“present adjustments”) in the last stanza of Mamata’s song. His use of the lighthearted *hiva kakala*, a lyric song genre, serves to deflect the audience’s attention from his political analysis.



Kitione Mamata outside his wireless hut in Sapa'ata Village, Niufo'ou, in 1967.

*Photo by Garth Rogers*

In speaking in the first person, Mamata follows a poetic convention by which the composer speaks on behalf of the people to their chiefs. Although Mamata was an outsider as well as a civil servant who could have placed himself in an elevated social status, he spoke as a social commentator for his friends, allying himself with the copra cutters. Conventionally, in oratory as in the grand dance performances of *ta'anga lakalaka* (a genre performed by the people before their chiefs), a speaker begins his discourse by paying deference to the titleholders and asking that their minds not be disturbed by his unseemly words. The composers of *hiva kakala*, speaking to their peers (and often to lovers), do not need to observe this convention, and in this song Mamata's perfunctory use of the convention is a witticism. His song is embellished with English loan-words, a style favored among contemporary song writers: for example, *Natula*, Nature; *palanisi*, balance; and *houa*, hour.

*Founga Fakahifo mo e Fakaheka*

Tapu mo ha'a kāvei fonua  
 Hūfanga he Aofaki 'o Natula  
 Kau fai ha ki'i talanoa hua  
 Tuku ange 'o ka fakafiematamu'a.  
 Ne u fehu'i ki he sitivatoa  
 Founga fakahifo pea mo e fakaheka,  
 "Ka loka pea hou leva 'a e taulanga  
 'E fēfē 'alā si'etau mataka?"

## TAU

"Ko e me'a pē 'e taha 'e lava  
 Feinga ke toloi'i taimi 'o e vaka."

Takatu'u mai, fai ki he vave taha  
 Kia ho'o niu, lele 'o tu'u 'i he 'utu  
 fakaheka  
 Teu ki he laku ki vaka, tali mo ha  
 peau 'e laka  
 Tu'u fakave'etaha, pea palanisi  
 mo ho'o laka.

'O ka ke ka vaivai he fie tangata

Ko hono mo'oni ko e ta'e fie tuitala

'A e sola tuku mu'a fie taki mamata

He 'e toe houa pea te ke toe tehanga. You'll be dead-beat within the

*Loading and Unloading Procedures*

Deference to all concerned!  
 I take refuge in the Almighty.  
 If I've got a nerve telling  
 This jocular story, ignore it.  
 I questioned the stevedore  
 Reloading and unloading procedures.  
 "Friend, if the anchorage is rough,  
 What's to be done about the copra?"

## CHORUS

"There's only one thing to be done,  
 Try to postpone the vessel's  
 departure."

Look smart, act on the double,  
 Shoulder your sack, trot to the  
 loading rock,  
 Get ready to sling aboard, wait for  
 the double-banger,  
 Take a one-footed stance, stay  
 on balance as you step.

If you don't feel quite up to being a  
 man,

Streuth, don't believe what you're  
 told

By an upstart foreigner acting as  
 guide.

hour.



## TAU

Si'oto tufakanga pē ke u tō kakava  
Kae 'ahai nai ia 'a si'ono ha'aha'a?

Nga'ahoa e mo'ui ni he 'Otu Anga'ofa

Ne taha'i senituli si'oto fakakoloa  
Fe'amokaki he lelei, he ngāo'i  
si'ota kuonga  
Hopoaate, tukufakaholo ki he  
lauikuonga.

## CHORUS

It's my innate talent to sweat,  
But for whose benefit is it?

I lead a two-sided life in the  
Friendly Isles.

For centuries I was well-endowed—  
Now, a shortfall on wealth under  
present adjustments.  
We're hereditary slaves for the  
foreseeable future.

(Mamata 1986:106-7)



“Aleifua, Port of Departure”

Tafahi people hauling a boat across the reef in 1971.

*Photo by Thomas Riddle*

Social and poetic conventions require that poets should praise the aristocracy; criticism is normally conveyed in a context of humble deference and hidden in metaphor. Mamata's song is unusually direct, although in the last stanza his criticism is carefully worded so that it refers to the government more than to the chiefs. Nevertheless, in the political circumstances of the 1960s, songs such as this were especially courageous and outspoken. At the time, the staff of the radio station run by the Tongan government would travel through the kingdom recording people's songs for broadcasting, but Mamata's songs were not chosen to be broadcast. At the present time, in the 1980s, a change is coming: commoners publish independent newspapers, challenge aristocratic chiefs



to be fair-minded, and write satirical works of fiction.<sup>5</sup> Mamata's songs sympathetically reflect the independent character of the Niufo'ou people, and in this way they express the spirit of the emancipation granted in the last century by King George Tupou I.

### Tafahi

The third song comes from Tafahi, seven miles distant from Niua-toputapu. Because it is a relatively high island, it seems to sit on Niua-toputapu's doorstep, but the crossing, accomplished in a small boat with an outboard engine, can be hazardous in the unpredictable gusts which sweep down the mountainsides. On clear days, Tafahi people working in their gardens can see the summit of Savai'i in western Sāmoa. Niufo'ou is closer, but not visible because of its low profile. Tafahi is a Tongan government estate. The people live on the mountain slopes in a single village consisting of about a hundred households. They do not have an aristocratic chief in the Tongan tradition. The head man, Vaka, holds an inherited family title which gives him the right of leadership, but it is his own personal qualities of leadership and hard work that earn him respect from the people of Tafahi. The island's poetry and place names reflect an ironic sense of humor unrestrained by aristocratic dignity.

At a kava party in Tafahi village one evening in 1970 I recorded the group Tavake Oma 'o Piu 'o Tafahi (Tropic Bird from the Summit of Tafahi) singing a plaintive and romantic song, *hiva kakala*, which had been composed by Huhane VĪVĪ, possibly in the 1930s. To an outsider, a stranger from Tongatapu or anyone not familiar with Tafahi place names, the song appears to be the composition of a passionate but jilted lover. To one who knows the contours of the land, it is an ironic play on the place names of Tafahi expressing the poet's fondness for an arduous and difficult landscape. VĪVĪ was a titled man from Niua-toputapu; his family was associated with Father Jouny, the first Catholic priest in the region, and it is likely that VĪVĪ visited Tafahi to introduce the Catholic faith there. Despite the fact that he was a chief, he identified himself with the Tafahi people in their lives of hardship. His song was sung as a farewell before his return to Niua-toputapu. In the transcription and translation below, each stanza is followed by a commentary.

*Piu 'o Tafahi*

*Summit of Tafahi*

Tapu mo e Piu 'o Tafahi

Summit of Tafahi, I beg your leave

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<sup>5</sup> Pesi Fonua has founded an independent news magazine, *Matangi Tonga*. Akalisi Pōhiva has taken the Tongan government to court. Dr. Epeli Hau'ofa has written *Tales of the Tikongs* (1983) and *Kisses in the Nederend* (1987).

Kau fai si'a fakafeta'i  
 Ki si'i Fine-tou-palangi  
 Niu-momoko ko e vale'anga  
 hoku loto.

To express my thanks  
 To the dear Dough-white Lass.  
 Frigid-coconut has utterly  
 enchanted me.

Like Mamata, whose *hiva kakala* is discussed above, VĪVĪ makes witty use of customary expressions of deference to the chiefs. In this case he does so by ironically yet affectionately paying his respects to his mountain peak. Dough-white Lass is a bald area on the face of the mountain and Frigid-coconut is the crater at the summit; coconut trees grow there, but do not bear nuts because of the high altitude. Listeners from outside the island, not knowing these are place names, would assume they are women.

Lupe tau fonua lupe he folau  
 'Aleifua tau'anga folau  
 Mou nofo ā ka u foki au  
 Ka u foki au ki Malolo-'ae-hau.

Dove alighting, dove migrating.  
 Port 'Aleifua,  
 Farewell! I must return,  
 I must return to the Victor's-  
 demise.

Pigeon-snaring was a favorite sport of chiefs, and in Tongan poetry the pigeon is a metaphor for the woman one seeks to ensnare. On Tafahi the native pigeons fly over the canopy of the forest at midmorning, moving to their feeding grounds, then return in the middle of the afternoon; they also migrate between Tafahi and Sāmoa. 'Aleifua is a boulder marking the difficult landing-place for boats. The island is rimmed with a shelf of reef on which the waves break and through which there is no passage to the shore; at high tide, boats are launched through the surf, and at low tide they are hauled on rollers across the shelf and into the surge of the open sea. Victor's-demise is a place name in Vaipoa village on the island of Niuatoputapu. This was the composer's home village, to which he was returning. An outsider might assume that this place name refers obliquely to a man's disappointment in love. In this case, however, the literal interpretation is the correct one.

Hala-'a-fefine, Hala-'a-tangata  
 Si'i Tauloto mo e Fakafafa  
 Ka te ka folau te u vale ho anga  
 Ko e lusa'anga hoku 'anga'anga.

Women's-way, Men's-way,  
 Beloved Shoulder-burden and  
 Back-burden,  
 If I leave I'll go mad about you.  
 You are the ruination of my being.

With these place names VĪVĪ is describing the rigors of the Tafahi terrain (though again, in this genre such names evoke courtship). Women's-way and Men's-way are two paths over a volcanic extrusion which interrupts passage along the eastern shoreline. Beloved Shoulder-burden and Back-burden are two volcanic necks which rise out of the sand at this point; they are the burden the mythical Māui carried on a shoulder-stick and deposited there, and the burden he carried in his arms. VĪVĪ used these place names to

evoke the Tafahi lifestyle on mountain slopes too steep for horses, where all burdens have to be borne by humans: the Tafahi landscape has been the ruination of his body.



“It’s my innate talent to sweat.”  
Niuafu’ou people loading copra.

*Photo by Wendy Pond*

## TAU

Te u hanu launoa kia fo’i falahola

Te u lata ‘i ho hala kakala

Si’i Hā’anga-la’e ko e vale’anga

‘A e folau ‘a e kau tangata

Kapakau-tatangi mo e

Vai-hanga-ki-langi

Ko e hu’i’anga ‘o e vai kahi

Ha’u ā ‘o inu ai ka ke ‘ilo hono sai

Kuo pau pē te ke mo’ui ai.

## CHORUS

I’ll make my complaints to the  
pandanus tree.

I’m at home in your sweet-scented  
paths.

Beloved Spot-where-foreheads-  
appear,

Men newly arrived lose their senses  
here.

Bush-bird’s-wing and the Pool-  
which-gazes-at-Heaven

Dilutant for purgative medicine—

Do come and drink so you  
experience the benefit,

You are sure to be cured by it.

(Vīvī 1983)

The poet speaks of the species of pandanus tree which occurs in a standard image employed in praise of a person; I do not know who is referred to here. In the line which follows, the sweet-scented paths are those of Tafahi; once again, this phrase could be taken to refer to lovers’ meetings. From the landing-place at ‘Aleifua, the path follows the coast and then climbs

steeply up to the village on the north face. So steep is this ascent that the first sight villagers have of travelers arriving is their foreheads appearing over the edge of the cliff; the top of the path is therefore given this name. Again, listeners unfamiliar with the terrain might understand this line as referring to a lovers' trysting place.

At the foot of the mountain the path passes a very small waterhole called Pool-which-gazes-at-Heaven, where rainwater collects and stagnates. In times of drought, before the island had concrete water tanks, fresh water was collected from such pools, but *Vīvī* is being ironic, for an insider would know that this pool is too small for practical use. The significance of the reference to purgative medicine is uncertain. It could be taken to indicate rejection by a woman, but almost certainly he is speaking in some way of the difficult terrain.

It is customary for a composer to mention the place names which are special sources of inspiration and beauty. In aristocratic dance poetry, *ta'anga lakalaka*, place names are metaphors of chiefly status and genealogical connection. Here, instead, the poet describes the everyday hazards of the Tafahi landscape: the coconuts which do not bear nuts at Frigid-coconut (Niu-momoko), the barren mountainside at Dough-white Lass (Fine-tou-palangi), and the steep ascent to the village (Hā'anga-la'e). He speaks also of the arduousness of the lifestyle and the necessity for men and women to carry heavy loads up and down the mountainside and to launch their boats across the coral shelf. To the outsider, his song expresses unrequited love. To Tafahi people, it is a rueful and apt comment on their landscape, not a claim to greatness and reputation as is made in aristocratic poems but a leg-pull at the expense of outsiders. This witty and entertaining song is composed in a tongue-in-cheek spirit. In Tongan it would be described as *faka'oli*, *fakalaunoa*, or *fakalaupisi*. In the last lines, the composer expresses his conviction that the Tafahi lifestyle will bring wellbeing to all who try it. To both audiences the song conveys a people's love of life in their own land:

Te u lata 'i ho hala kakala.

I'm at home in your sweet-scented paths.

### Concluding Remarks

In Tonga, any song can convey multiple levels of meaning. All of the three songs discussed here are complaints on behalf of the common people. In all of them there is a public message intended for outsiders and a private message intended for the poet's own people. The first song, by Lapuka of Niuatoputapu, belongs to the old genre known as *tau'a'alo* (literally a paddling song, but here a hauling chant). It was composed for

performance before the king and his chiefs on a high ceremonial occasion; the public message is for the king and his party, the hidden message for the people of Niuatoputapu. It is quite acceptable for a poet to convey an oblique, metaphorical, and deferentially phrased complaint to his superiors, and Lapuka is being orthodox in so doing. His hidden message reproving his own people was also socially acceptable. Like all three of these poets, he brings his song to a strong conclusion.

Both of the other songs are *hiva kakala*, light-hearted topical songs sung for entertainment and usually concerned with love, but here conveying different messages. Mamata's *hiva kakala* describes in unusually direct language the trials of the men loading copra on Niuafu'ou, then ends by complaining (rather more discreetly, however) about government neglect and chiefs who were absentee landlords. While this particular *hiva kakala* makes no mention of love, its genre remains important. The song is sung at speed, with gaiety and evident enjoyment, and its jocularly serves to soften the impact of the poet's words, rendering his protest somewhat less dangerous. Vīvī's *hiva kakala*, on the other hand, appears to be a love song but is in fact, for knowledgeable listeners, an affectionate evocation of the landscape of Tafahi and the difficulties of living there. In that it is ostensibly a love song, it is a witty leg-pull.

These people are poor and have no political power. Songs give them a voice, a way of commenting upon their lives and their masters with robust humor and finely judged subtlety. Messages, often of protest, are conveyed to outsiders, yet much of the meaning is reserved for the people to whom the poets are closest. Thus, textual analysis alone does not reveal the full import of these songs; that can only be revealed by the social contexts of the poem's composition and empathy with the poet's perspective.

*Stout Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington*

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### Appendix: Main Sources of Tongan Poetry

*Ko e Makasini (a Kolisi)*, a magazine edited by Rev. Moulton of Tupou College from 1874 to 1899. Some issues are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

*Faikava, A Tongan Literary Journal*, nos. 1-10, 1978-83. Edited by Futa Helu and Epeli Hau'ofa. Available from *Faikava*, c/o University of the South Pacific, Institute of Rural Development, P.O. Private Bag, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

Collocott, E. E. V. *Tales and Poems of Tonga*. Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, Bulletin 46, 1928.

Gifford, E. V. *Tongan Myths and Tales*. Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, Bulletin 8, 1924.

The Palace Records Office in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, has song texts among unfiled papers. Song texts, with translations, occur throughout the works of Adrienne Kaeppler. The Tongan hymns composed by the Rev. Moulton are greatly loved and are found in the Methodist hymn book, *Ko e Tohi Himi 'ae Siasi Uesiliana*. A review of dance categories and historical sources is provided in Richard Moyle, *Tongan Music* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987). The only university teaching critical appreciation of Tongan poetry is 'Atenisi Institute (Prof. 'I Futa Helu) in Nuku'alofa, Tonga.