FIGURE 1

Map of the Tongan Archipelago

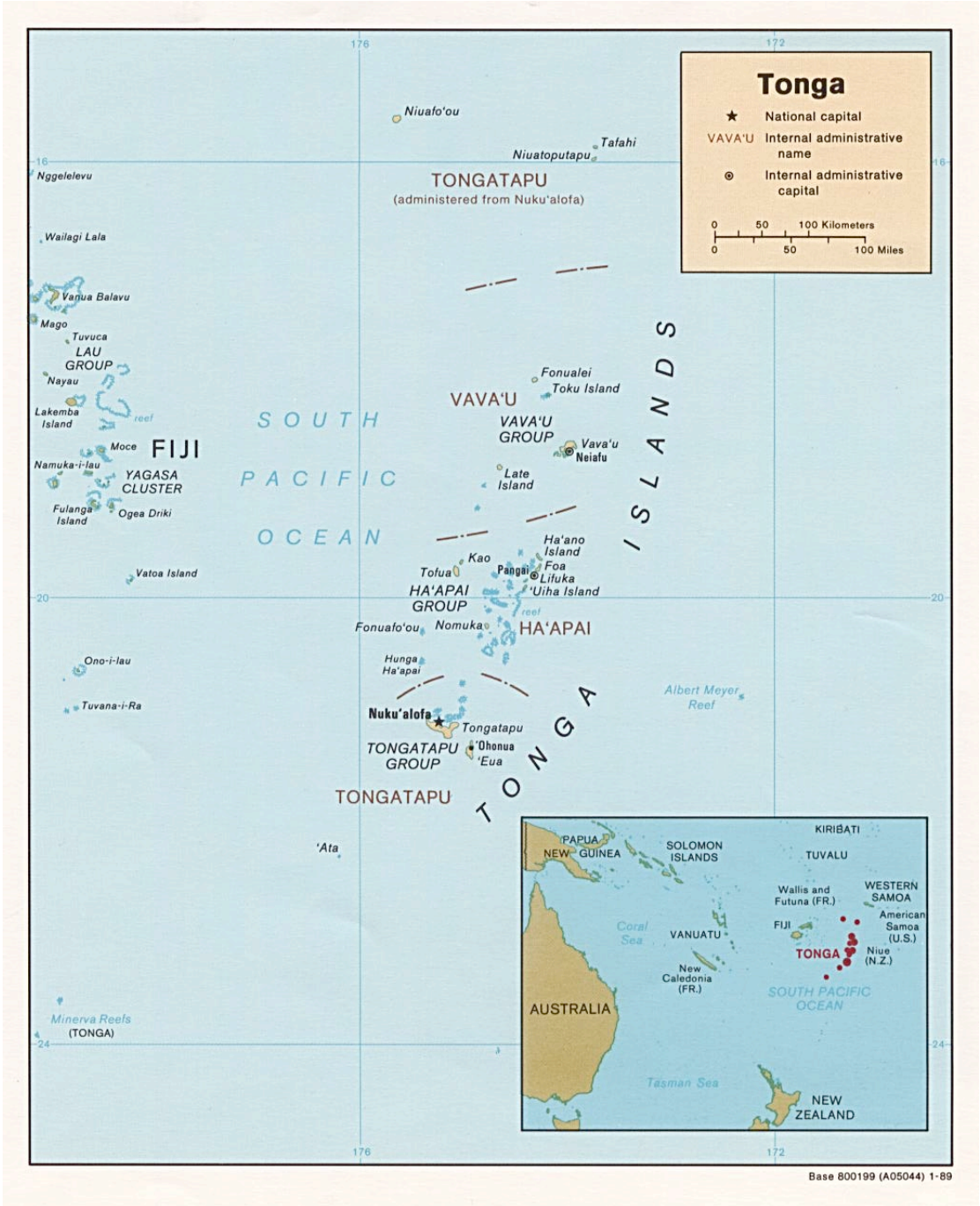
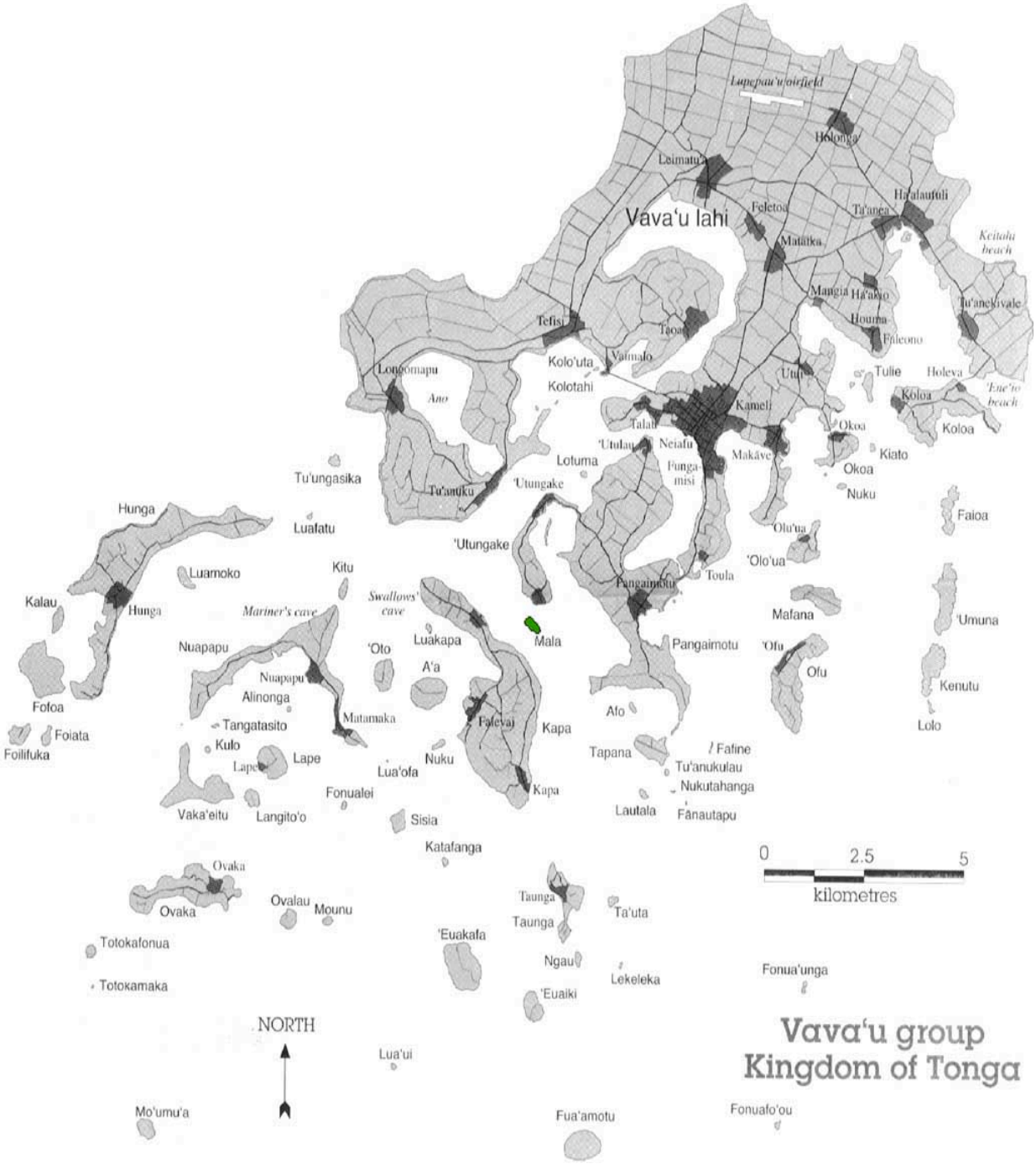


FIGURE 2.

Map of Vava'u



CHAPTER 1

Vava'u
An introduction

Vavā-space between the earth and the sky
'ū-bundle of things bound or tied together
tō ki he vavā--lit. to fall into the sky: (a) to fly very high-of bird, a kite, or a plane; (b) to be 'over the odds', or to do something 'over the odds' (something exceeding all bounds of decency or propriety).
Churchward (1959: 535,489)

Almost the whole of Vava'u can be seen from the top of Mount Talau a long time before the sun finally appears on the horizon. In that grey light before dawn, Vava'u slowly comes awake to the sounds of cocks crowing, church bells ringing and church drums banging. Three days a week dawn is welcomed by the shrill, flat and forced voices of the congregations of the Church of Tonga, who, despite their number, manage to wake many within their areas. That sound travels better in the dewy air of this time of the morning explains how occasionally they can be heard crystal clear in 'Utulei, one kilometre distant across the harbour. Wisps of smoke rise slowly into the air, as pigs, dogs and chickens come running for breakfast, signalled by the sharp cracks of bushknives opening old coconuts.

From this vantage point it is not difficult to see why the islands of Vava'u are well known to other Tongans. Of all the islands in the Tongan archipelago, Vava'u is the most scenic, its hilly geography giving spectacular vistas to the heavily vegetated fifty islands of the group. It is difficult, however, to get a sense of Vava'u's remoteness; the eyes' journey to the horizon is interrupted by the many islands to the south and the gently upwardly sloping landmass to the north. Only in the very distance can one make out the crashing swells breaking on the surrounding offshore reefs. Some eight hundred kilometres to the west lies Vitu Levu, the main island of Fiji and six hundred kilometres north by north east, Samoa's Savai'i (see Fig. 1). On Vava'u's enclosed harbour sits its largest town, Neiafu. From here, ferries wind their way

around Vava'u's maze of intertwined raised limestone islands to the open ocean for the one hundred and fifty kilometre journey to Ha'apai's spread out low atolls and then another one hundred and seventy kilometres to Tongatapu's large flat bulk. On occasion ferries will follow the south-west coast, passing Longomapu perched high on the headland. As they head north to the remote outliers of Niuatoputapu and Niuafo'ou, one day distant, passengers gape at the dramatic, treacherous cliffs of the northern coast. Inaccessible, except by boat, and by a few paths at their eastern extremity, they are like the outer edge of half an amphitheatre, forcing attention to the main arena of Neiafu. Descending from this outer edge, most villages sit at the point where land is closer to the more sheltered inner waters.

The intimacy of the landscape hints at one of Vava'u's nicknames. *Fatafatamāfana* (warmhearted) is a reference to the emotional volatility of people here, of their capacity for *māfana*, an emotion of communitarian enthusiasm and of spontaneous moments of generosity that border on eccentricity in the eyes of people from Tongatapu. Vava'u's memories of independence from their cousins on the main island, Tongatapu, and not a little guarded animosity to those who tend to look down on those from other islands, has something to do with their sense of difference. For people in Vava'u, Tonga refers primarily to the island of Tongatapu and not the whole island group that has taken its name. Puns on *Vava'u lahi* (Great Vava'u), another of Vava'u's nicknames, make the connection with *Bilitania Lahi* (Great Britain), and evoke Vava'uans' tendency to exaggerate, their wish to be the best and show it and their pride in their island group. At the King's eightieth birthday celebration, on the fourth of July 1998, *Vava'u lahi* certainly delivered. The local journalist reported that one thousand people from Vava'u travelled by ferry to the capital Nuku'alofa to perform a *lakalaka* (standing dance) that had as it's *coup d'ésprit* the surprise presentation of five hundred six pound tins of corn beef. Their generosity was a feat of understated one-upmanship.[1] Generosity after all, can be heartfelt but it is also a means by which social capital is

[1] See video (*Haka he langi kuo Tau.* (2001) Produced for the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga by the Institute for Polynesian Studies, Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, and the Polynesian Cultural Center) which tells in part the story of this *lakalaka* and Kaeppler (1999:54) for the words and translation.

gained. Vava'u wants to be the best, it does not want to be outdone. This is manifest in the expression: *Vava'u ta'e fie tō,* where *tō*, expresses an element of not wanting to fall in the estimation of others. Vava'uans' fear of loss of face is embodied in the expression: *Na'a tō 'a Vava'u lahi* (Lest Great Vava'u fail).

Vava'u, as a good friend implicitly contrasted with Tongatapu and overseas, is a place where you can still *nofo nonga* (live contentedly). A place where when one's *kavenga* (responsibility) has been carried out one can enjoy *mohe* (sleeping), *lotu* (praying), *talanoa fiefia* (happy conversation), *melino* (being at peace), *kai* (eating) and *'eva* (going to see people). People in Vava'u never tire of emphasising that here you are free of the monetary pressures in other countries, you can live and eat for free, content and confident in your membership of your *kāinga* (extended family). An easily accessible and sheltered ocean makes fishing relatively free of danger all year around and the fertile land and few pests make growing crops problem free. This, coupled with the inclusiveness and generosity so characteristic of people in Vava'u, and the strong ideology of mutual help and assistance (*fetokoni'aki*) within the extended family means very few people despite their economic or social standing want for food or shelter. Perhaps more importantly, people do not want for social interaction. And herein lies another supposed characteristic of people in Vava'u that occasionally perplexes people from Tongatapu. They are often accused pejoratively of being *kaimumu'a* (self-possessed, quite free from stage fright) in contrast with the more reserved character of the people in Tongatapu. This reflects a forwardness and presumptuousness of interaction in the Vava'u manner, that is a reflection of the involvement that people have and want in each other's lives. *Fakahua* (to joke or banter) is much valued and is evident in the teasing and joviality of interaction among most people. It is no coincidence that the most famous Tongan comedian, nicknamed Tinitini, hails from Paingamotu, Vava'u.

From the top of Mt Talau one immediately notices that the largest buildings are churches and schools. Often together, they stand out from the areas of houses in which they are nestled. With few exceptions, they are the best-kept and best-positioned buildings. Both Tailulu and Chanel school students can gaze absently from high vantagepoints to a view of Vava'u, while benefiting from the breezes that are all the more cooling at that height. From the top of Mount Talau one can see school

children in their many coloured uniforms walking from their houses to schools. As all the secondary schools are located in Neiafu, every morning cars and trucks converge on Neiafu with their cargo of schoolchildren.

By contrast with people in Tongatapu, Vava'u has little contact with the largely absentee landlord nobles upon whose estates most of the villages of Vava'u sit. The current Governor of Vava'u, Baron Tuita, whose estate encompasses the village of 'Utungake, is an exception. He occupies the highest governmental position in Vava'u. The Governor's office administers and issues directives to the six district officers and thirty-nine *'ofisa kolo* (town officers) who are elected from within every village in Vava'u and represent the government at the local level.

Some villages are located in the estates of the *Tu'i* (King), *kau hou'eiki nopele* (nobles) or *kau matāpule ma'u tofi'a* (talking chiefs with land). The people of these villages are then referred to as the *kāinga* (people) of the noble concerned.[2] They pay tax to him and are duty bound to help in the fulfilment of his responsibilities. Nobles' popularity varies, depending on the way they relate to their *kāinga* and the demands they make. There is an advantage in living on government land, in that taxes are set and fixed and that demands made on you tend to be lower. Many government villages still recognise their local chiefs although they were not given noble titles by King Tupou I in the late 19th century. Fotu and Afu, *matāpule ma'u tofi'a*, both reside in their estates of Leimatu'a and Ha'alaufuli respectively.

Most men, especially those living in the villages, work on the plantations that comprise much of the land on Vava'u. Many men prefer to work in small groups, known as *toungaue*, which work each other's land together (Grijp 1993). While men work in the bush, women in most of the villages gather in each other's houses or the weaving shed to weave and chat. Children, below school age, will

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[2] Villages on the estates of the King: Holonga, Paingamotu, Nuapapu and Matamaka. Villages on the estates of Nobles: Ulukalala (Tu'anuku), Luani (Tefisi part of Tefisi falls on Fakafanua's land), Veikune (Longomapu), Crown Prince Tupouto'a (Taoa) , Vaha'i (Ta'anea) Tu'ia fitu (Makave). Vehekite ('Otea), Fakatulolo (Falevai), Fulivai (Hunga), Tu'ilakepa (Ofu & Okoa). Villages on the estates of talking chiefs: Fotu (Leimatu'a), Afu (Ha'alaufuli), Akau'ola (Taunga). Villages on Government land administrated by the Governor: Neiafu, Mataika, Feletoa, Tu'anekivale, Vaimalo, Koloa, Holeva, Houma, Ha'akio, Mangia, Lape, Ovaka.

accompany their mothers and sit in their laps or play around with other children while their mothers work. *Koloa* (valuables), such as *fala* (mats) and *ngatu* (tapa cloth), are vital in fulfilling familial responsibilities at funerals, weddings and other social events but can also be sold within Vava'u and at special *katoanga* (festival) which involve Tongan women from overseas. [3]

Some work is available for those women who have secretarial or business qualifications. It is a testament to the lack of wage earning opportunities in Vava'u and Ha'apai that girls from these islands groups regularly come top of their class in the Nursing School in Nuku'alofa. It is mostly women who sell in the market. Other than selling foodstuffs, families make *lolo Tonga* (Tongan oil), *vai Tonga* (Tonga medicine) and handicrafts to sell in the market. For a relatively small number of people, there is work in the many ministries (Fisheries, Customs, Quarantine, Works), police station, fire station, governor's office, treasury, telecom office, banks, hospital and shops in Neiafu.

As the heat of the day starts to wane, the roads come alive again when school finishes and most of the shops close. The streets are once again full of school children, walking or packed on trucks and pickups returning to their villages. The arrival of the inter-island ferries, the Tautahi and the Olovaha on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, breaks up the week and is an irresistible draw to many people whether or not they are picking people up or seeing them off. These ferries bring goods for the stores, mail for the post office and visiting relatives. People come just to witness the social drama of relatives being separated or reunited. Boys take great pleasure in launching themselves acrobatically off the wharf and into the sea between the ferry and the other moored boats.

Each area of Neiafu, and every village in Vava'u, has a distinct character and reputation despite the multiple kin ties that link people to other villages in and outside Vava'u. There is no better example than a small area of land next to St Joseph's Catholic Church. Despite almost two hundred years since its settlement by a group of Ouveans at the beginning of the 19th Century, Falaleu, named after a village in Ouvea,

[3] See James (1997) for a comprehensive account of the role of *koloa* (Tongan valuables such as mats and bark cloth) in the processes of modern migration and remittance.

still maintains its distinctiveness. That difference of mentality and allegiance that led to them having to flee Ouvea two hundred years ago is still manifest in their descendants, who now live all over the island but predominately in Falaleu and Fungamisi. Though they were given land by King George I (Tupou 'Uluaki), as Catholics their allegiances were with the *Ha'a* of the Tu'i Tonga, the lineage that was dispossessed of power when King George I brought the *Ha'a Kanokapolu* into total influence over the archipelago. The Catholics in their heartlands of Mu'a, Lapaha and Ma'ufanga (Nuku'alofa) to this day are more critical and less respectful of the current nobility. Falaleu is no different. It too has a reputation for dissidence, which is perhaps most manifest in the fearsome reputation of their young men on and off the rugby field. The Falaleu team, dressed in all black, is rarely beaten.

The playing of rugby, football or volleyball in the evening, in which most young men participate, is one of the few activities that concretises a strong sense of village membership. Falaleu and to a lesser extent Fungamisi are rare in that common origin, *kāinga* and church all coincide. Other areas in Neiafu do not have this strong sense of difference. Their definitions were more arbitrary, their populations are much larger and are also comprised of a variety of different *kāinga* and churches. The total population of Neiafu is 4100, distributed in thirteen districts.[4]

Almost anticipating nightfall, insects in the bush start their cacophony and fruit bats start spreading their wings as the sun is still setting. The night air is more humid and richer in perfume. On rare nights, when the wind has died and the full moon hangs high in the sky, boats can be seen perfectly reflected in the harbour's waters. On nights like these, once you have eaten, the pigs have been fed and the rubbish burnt, people sit outside, chat and joke. Women sit together near the house. Boys sit or lie in groups on the warm tarmac, chatting and teasing each other. In Neiafu, people no longer gaze on the many fishing boats which would linger in the harbour until dawn, their lamps attracting fish to carefully crafted lures. Now, the many yachts of the

[4] Fangatonu (457), Talau (381), Fa'okula (370), Sailome (145), Saineai (206), Masilamea (471), Kameli (812), 'Otumapa (193), Falaleu (154), Neiafu Tahi (340), Houmalei (101), Fungamisi (470), 'Utulangivaka (222). Statistics for Jan-Dec 1998 (Public Health Department, Prince Wellington Ngu Hospital, Neiafu)

charter companies Sunsail and 'The Moorings' are spread out over the harbour nearest the Catholic Church. Some men will go spearfishing on the many reefs, returning early in the morning with fish to feed their household or to sell in the market. The huts of the four taxi companies erupt periodically with the laughter of drivers who play cards and drink *kava*[5] while waiting for fares.

Choir practice, especially close to the regular singing competitions, takes place in informal groups within churches or houses. The air is thick with the polyphonic harmonies which impress so many visitors to Tonga. The many small *falekoloa* (shop) that are dotted around Vava'u provide a place for a chat in the evening. Children are sent to pick up food on credit for dinner. Other families will watch videos. Video machines appeared in the 80's, soon after the three cinemas closed down.

Many men will head to their local *kalapu* (*kava* club). Discussions on the events of the day, joking, singing and occasionally a card game or watching a video takes place around a bowl of *kava*. Drinking *kava* promotes a relaxed sociality in which, men acknowledge, frustration and anger dissipates. The overall atmosphere is one of cheerfulness, lack of pretension and enjoyment of each other's company. The most popular clubs have *tou'a* (young women servers) leading to a more ribald and risqué interaction. Leimatu'a's famous Friday *kalapu* is also a major fundraising event in which one's weekly wages may disappear in the enthusiasm of generosity.

Neiafu gets busier as the week progresses. There are more people buying and selling in the market. On Friday, one of the regular Royal Tongan Airlines flights from Nuku'alofa brings the Vava'u ration of the Chronicle and Taime Tonga newspapers to be devoured by readers eager to read news from Tongatapu and overseas that they have not heard on the radio. On Friday night the market stays open till late, and the centre of town is full of lorries and cars from all the villages, bringing produce to sell and at the same time people to *'eva*. *'Eva* is socialising for its own sake in the process of travelling by car or

[5] To make *kava*, the dried, crushed and powdered roots of the shrub Piper methysticum, are added to water and then strained through a thin gauze. *Kava* refers to both the plant and the beverage made from its dried, crushed and powdered root (Churchward 1959).

walking. It is a kind of 'social wandering', sometimes with the aim of seeing particular people but often with no other purpose than to see and maybe meet someone. It is, undoubtedly, one of the most popular activities in Vava'u. Fathers might take some members of their household for an *'eva* to the beach or to the house of some relatives, but they might just as easily just drive around without any geographic aim. During this activity peoples' response to the common greeting *'Alu ki fē'* (Where are you going?), is a cursory *'Eva pē'* (just wandering).

The attraction of *'eva* for the youth is of a different quality to that of older, married people. For them this is a chance to find a *moa* (boyfriend or girlfriend). So popular is this relative freedom from some of the strictures of living in a household that girls, who have tasted its pleasures, claim to postpone marriage to get a few more years of it before the responsibilities of marriage take over. The freedom to *'eva*, often without chaperones, is one of the biggest changes to some girls' lives in Vava'u over the last decades. Traditional courting that involves drinking *kava* in the house of the girl, still takes place but not to the same extent as before. The Friday night discos, despite warnings from church and school, are an irresistible draw, enough to make children lie to their parents, regardless of how good their relationship is with them. Youth in Neiafu have more exposure to these new pleasures, but awareness permeates the whole of the island group. It is not only the youth, however, that frequent discos. They are also a distraction for married men and women. The darkness, noise and mass of people in discos contrast with those other spaces in Neiafu where it is difficult not to be observed. Mormon dances, by contrast, take place in basketball courts, under full floodlighting with household members and church members present.

In town, boys sit and stand in dark doorways, quietly watching and occasionally whispering comments to get the attention of the girls who wander centre stage through the market and through town. Teenagers sneak off and hang out outside the main discos, hoping to get the three *pa'anga* (Tongan pound) entrance fee from an obliging relative. Inside, whole weekly salaries may be spent on beer for everyone who knows you. No sooner is a beer bought than a *namu* (lit. fly-someone who hangs around at the bar asking for drinks) takes it off you. Fights occasionally break out between boys from different villages

and are soon ejected into the street. The many contradictory accounts form the staple of conspiratorial conversations the next day.

The quadrant in Sailome which includes the fire station, police station, the *kava* club Mohetaha (lit. sleep together) and Sia Leka's (a 24 hr restaurant), stays awake later than the rest of Vava'u. Under shelter, the night shift at the police station sit and chat while drinking *kava*. It is difficult not to linger in this area; the songs from Mohetaha fill the air and mix with the smell of curried mutton. One can sit and chat and watch the late night *kava* drinkers returning home to a deep long slumber.

Saturday: The Villages

Saturday brings almost the whole of Vava'u into Neiafu. People arrive early from the villages and soon the market is overflowing with baskets of *manioke* (cassava), *kumala* (sweet potato), *'ufi* (yam) and *niu motu'a* (ripe coconuts) a source of understated pride to the families whose men grew them. There will be many comments as to the size, quality and provenance of the crops concerned. Huge mounds of *lū* (taro leaves) are sold quickly to make the essential component of any Sunday meal; one of many varieties of *lū* dishes in which meat or shellfish is cooked wrapped in *lū* and soaked in coconut milk.[6] In season, piles of melons and pineapples almost surround the market. As men unload lorries of produce, the women, as representatives of their households, cajole and encourage people to buy their produce. The women, who sell most days of the week, have their own tables in the main part of the market, while the rest of the women who sell only on Friday and Saturday sit on a covered area of concrete outside. The women in the market are party to all the latest news in Vava'u. By Friday night village news has become island news.

The positive value and enjoyment of socialising that characterises the interaction in the market is not limited to people from your village or your extended family. Although women will tend to sit in groups

[6] For example *lū sipi* (mutton), *lū moa* (chicken), *lū fingota* (shellfish) and *lū pulu* (corned beef or beef).

with other villagers and feel less inhibited in their presence, they will also joke and banter with other women and passers-by. Women send their children to get change from a nearby woman, and lend each other knives to open coconuts. People leave their produce and other women will take the money on their behalf.

The excitement of the market extends to interaction in the main street of Neiafu. Every available sitting space is occupied by groups of boys and girls watching, chatting and flirting ever so surreptitiously. The flea market's narrow pathways between stalls are full of youth looking at the clothes, toiletries and assorted bric-a-brac. In passing conversations gossip is shared of the previous night, and jokes and banter revolve around *tulimoa*, which literally means chasing chicken but refers to the process of looking for a boyfriend or girlfriend. Saturday is the ideal day for an illicit date with your *moa* (boyfriend or girlfriend) without raising suspicion. Market day is one of the few occasions when boys and girls can meet casually. The excitement is palpable, so much so that some mothers even forbid their daughters to go into town, fearing they will lose their heads over some young paramour.

The importance of *feohi* (interaction/fellowship) is manifest in the constant mutual acknowledgement of people who know each other, through common greetings such as *'alu ki fe*' (where are you going), or shouting their name followed by an expletive, *'Finau 'e '*. Someone who does not engage may be labelled *fakamaahuahu* (to ignore in a pompous or self-important manner).

Approximately three quarters the population of Vava'u live in the thirty-six villages other than Neiafu on 'Uta Vava'u and surrounding islands.[7] Only about one thousand three hundred people live on islands which are inaccessible by motor vehicle. The largest villages are those that have the greatest access to cultivable land. They are in order of population: Leimatu'a, Pangaimotu, Longomapu, Ta'anea, Mataika, Tefisi and Taoa.[8] The more land a village has the more able they are to

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[7] Falaleu and Fungamisi, though they curiously both have *'Ofisa Kolo* (town officers) in contrast to the one that is the official representative for the whole of Neiafu, are regarded as being areas of Neiafu.

[8] Population statistics for 1999 carried out by the Department of Public Health, Ngu Hospital, Neiafu. Leimatu'a(1453), Pangaimotu(808), Longomapu(722), Ta'anea(658), Mataika(596),

fulfil their responsibilities and maintain the image they want to create through acts of generosity, especially in the yearly *misinale*. Although the competitive aspect of the annual church collection is not its explicit purpose, there is always a sense of interfamilial and intervillage rivalry as to who can donate the most.

Intervillage rivalry, most visible in rugby matches on Saturdays, is also manifest in both friendly and pejorative ways of teasing. During the rugby season, the more important matches take place in the afternoon, once the market has closed. People come to the rugby pitches at Sainehā or Chanel for the spectacle. Heavy falls and collisions elicit just as much laughter from the crowd as cheering when a try is scored. Men, sitting in large groups, are muted in support for their team. It is some of the women who create the biggest spectacle by throwing themselves onto the ground, in expression of exuberant emotion known as *māfana*. Most unmarried men play rugby for either their first or second team. Matches are rough; many boys come off with gashes in the head or sprained muscles.

People in Vava'u are no different from other people in Tonga in that they play and draw on stereotypical characteristics of people from different places. While Vava'u may be the butt of friendly banter in Tongatapu, there is plenty of seeming internal differentiation to orient people and serve for humour. The proverb *Lōlinga 'A Motu (Lolenga 'A Motu)* meaning literally 'Habit of a small island', captures a degree of condescension that people living in Nuku'alofa and Neiafu may have toward smaller places (Tu'inukuafe 1992:26). The distinction between *kolo* (town) and *'uta* (bush) reinforces people in Neiafu's sense of pre-eminence within Vava'u as a whole. People from Holonga, in particular, due to the difficulty in coming into town and their apparent insularity are joked about as being wild or in Tongan *kakai kai vao* (literally 'people who eat the bush'). Makave and Toula, the villages closest to Neiafu, share somewhat in its relative prosperity and the kudos of living in town, rather than *i 'uta* (in the bush).

Tefisi(572), Taoa(535), Holonga(465), Ha'alaufuli(443), Tu'anekivale(397), Makave(390), Feletoa(390), ʻUtungake(361), Toula(331), Tu'anuku(329), Utui(299), Okoa(298), Utulei(232), Utulangivaka(222), Talihau(216), Koloa(196), Ha'akio(187), Ofu(175), Houma(173), Holeva(134), Oloua(125), Vaimalo(99), Mangia(83), Malanata(45), Ha'alefo(25), Faama(22).

This association of status with place is manifest in teasing and joking and also the desirability of people in marriage for people from these places. Many parents from Neiafu will not be happy if their daughter intends to marry a man from one of the outer villages or the islands. Yet, girls from the islands and more distant villages are desirable as wives because of the perception that they are more *talangofua* (submissive, habitually obedient), *anga lelei* (of good character) and not *fokisi* (lit. like a fox but meaning promiscuous). *Mali hola* (elopements) are very common in Vava'u, partly because of the difficulty of pleasing your parents with your choice of marriage partner. The household of the man from one of the outer islands or remoter villages who marries a girl from Neiafu of high status will of course be very happy. They will benefit in both status and economic terms. Pragmatism and romance enters to various degrees in all marriages.

The response of people in such places is not to deny their relative poverty and lack of opportunity but to celebrate their traditionality, their stronger sense of community, the greater involvement they have in each other's lives and the success of their relatives. People in the small islands have a fortitude and calmness born of making the best of small island resources. Less exposed to the forces of change and the monetary economy they have pride in their traditionality, community spirit and church. The smaller islands also benefit from the academic and professional success of their children. Hunga celebrates the current Minister of Health, Dr. Williami Tangi; their pride in him reflects their pride in their island. Dr. Epeli Hau'ofa, the well-known Tongan author, is widely regarded to be originally from Hunga. The Dux of Mailefihi in 1999 was a boy from 'Oloua. Falevai, on Kapa, is the original home of the Bifeletis, an extended family which include two doctors and the current Police Magistrate, Peau Bifeleti in Neiafu. The current Governor's secretary is also from Falevai.

Villages are also notable for more positive reasons. Pangaimotu for example, is well known for its *faiva* (performance). This is put to good use for tourists and visitors at the many barbecues they organise. No village, in Vava'u nor in Tongatapu for that matter, matches the renown of Leimatu'a. Its inhabitants are regarded with wonder, bafflement and on occasion fear. Many people from Leimatu'a claim it is a *fonua fiefia* (happy place) because of a strong emphasis on *tau'ataina*

(freedom).[9] People here are more self confident in interaction than anywhere else in the island group.

People attachments to others in their village and outside are evoked and denied to varying degrees in different contexts. For most people their household and extended family are their prime concern. And it is their concern over how their household is regarded that motivates them to both acquiesce to and celebrate the demands made on them by church and village. Women typically join the household of their husband, before setting up a household of their own. It is true that wives pick up the local way of doing things but, as sisters to their brothers, they still have strong influence over, and affection for, relatives in the villages where they were brought up.

Disputes between households and individuals occur in all villages, though some villages have the reputation for more than others. However, familiarity and the fact that people live in such close proximity sharing in events and village activities is a force for reconciliation, at least on the surface. When someone dies in the village everyone will dress in *teunga uliuli* (mourning dress) and participate in the funeral. Men drink *kava* together frequently.

After the rugby games Neiafu is almost deserted. Some families go to their plantations to do some work and relax. Others will go swimming, *fangota* (shellfish gathering) or fishing near their villages. During Christmas holidays, many churches will organise *Kaitunu* (picnics) on the various beaches on the main island. Men drink *kava* together, women talk together and children play in the water minded by their elder siblings or cousins. Discos are open on Saturday, but in general lack the excitement of Friday. At midnight everything must close, for Sunday is God's day.

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[9] According to an academic Tongan friend who had studied overseas Leimatu'a is a place where the individualised self is denied. Yet in the denial of this kind of self, people from Leimatu'a claimed there was great freedom. I suspect that what is precisely meant by this freedom is less a freedom from responsibilities but a freedom to engage and influence others born of the confidence in ones *tauhi vaha'a* (evoking and attenuating relatedness).

Sunday: Church

There is a stillness about Sunday which you sense immediately when you awake, the stillness before the storm. Fires have already been lit and food put in the *'umu* by the men of the household, when the stillness is suddenly disturbed by church bells and drums calling people to service. Sunday is celebrated all over the kingdom and in Tongan communities overseas. It is against the law to play music, play sport, swim and do washing. Decorum and good behaviour are expected. The bakery is the only business that is allowed to open, but only in the afternoon. Sunday brings the household together in common activity and the pleasure of eating together and re-inforces the centrality of the Church in life in Vava'u.

Any comprehensive summary of the churches would require a thesis in itself.[10] Only a basic introduction is possible here. The Wesleyan Church is the oldest, biggest and most traditional of the churches in Vava'u. The large number of Wesleyan churches in Neiafu and in the villages mean that most Wesleyans belong to relatively small intimate congregations, with churches near their homes. There are only two Catholic churches in Neiafu and most people go to St Joseph's, not only from Neiafu but also from Toula and Pangaimotu. There are three branches of the Methodist Church of Tonga in Vava'u with substantial congregations in Vava'u: *Siasi Tonga Tau'ataina* (Free Church of Tonga), *Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki* (Church of Tonga), *Siasi Tonga Conistutone* (The Constitutional Church). A breakaway group from the Wesleyan church variously named the *Siasi Tokaikolo* or *Siasi Maama Fo'ou* have a base a short distance from Neiafu in Malanata. The Mormon church has an ever-increasing presence in Vava'u and most villages have the standard design Mormon church. There are also small congregations of the Anglican and Seventh Day Adventists. There are two Assemblies of God that have a broadly Pentecostal doctrine. The Bahai church is the only non-Christian denomination in Vava'u, preaching an ethic of World Peace, with a structure in which authority is shared.

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[10] See Decktor-Korn (1978) for a study on Denominational Diversity and Latukefu (1974) for a seminal work on the early history of the Wesleyan Church in Tonga

That there is little obvious interdenominational conflict is a reflection of extensive kin ties (most people have relatives in other churches), the value of *fakama'uma'u* (to restrain, repress), the awareness of people's need to join other churches for marriage or for opportunity (access to education), and awareness of the many pleasures of church membership. Non- membership of a church is an option for very few in Vava'u. It would deny you the pleasure of interaction with fellow congregants, the experience of communal religious enthusiasm, the enjoyment of singing, a sense of identity as a Christian with the wider Christian community and opportunities to travel and meet people and gain status in your rise through the various grades of church membership. Many people love their church and their contributions are freely and emotionally given.

For many people the distinguishing feature of the Wesleyan Church and the three Churches of Tonga, is their frequent *kaifakaafe* (feasting). This is a celebration of community through eating together. On most Sundays, there will be a feast in the house of one of the members of the congregation. It may be to celebrate a birthday, wedding or another special occasion. It is a matter of great pride for the household to put on such a feast, or provide a *pola* (a table of food) for it. Often the household will not eat properly during the week, so that they can provide an impressive *pola*. They will go without food before and after the event, for the sake of providing the best food in large quantities.

The cornucopia of food in a *pola* contrasts markedly with that eaten by the household during the week. The wooden, often split-level structures are piled high with *puaka tunu* (roast pig), *moa fakapaku* (fried chicken), *ika fakapaku* (fried fish), *'ufi*, *kumala*, and *kape*. Bowls of potato salad garnished with tinned vegetables, plates of a variety of different *lū* dishes, *fingota* (shellfish), lobster and large bottles of fizzy drinks fill out the spaces. Packets of crisps and snacks and apples dangle invitingly from the framework or branches attached to look like trees.

People eat in silence and listen to the many speeches given by prominent members of the clergy, honouring the household which laid on the feast. When the guests leave, the more important ones laden with food in coconut frond baskets to take home, household members can finally relax in the knowledge they have completed their *fatongia*

(duty). Their guarded, respectful behaviour is let down as they relax, eat and joke with their kin. The large amount of food left over is then distributed among *kāinga* members who contributed.

For members of other churches and for those who have not been invited to a feast lunch will usually be food cooked in the earth oven. Sleeping and the bliss of having nothing to do often fills the rest of the afternoon.

As the bakeries in Neiafu open in the late afternoon, the streets fill with groups of young people dressed in their Sunday best wandering around town. A steady stream of cars comes to Neiafu to pick up bread for the villages. Groups of young people sit and eat bread and large chunks of butter and sweet buns and watch the goings on. From the top of Mt. Talau a long line of boats can be seen silhouetted in the setting sun as they return from the islands full of families ready for the school week ahead.