

JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 126 No.4 DECEMBER 2017

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

WHAT'S IN A NAME?:
RECONSTRUCTING NOMENCLATURE OF PRESTIGE
AND PERSUASION IN LATE 18TH-CENTURY TONGAN
MATERIAL CULTURE

PHYLLIS HERDA
University of Auckland

BILLIE LYTHBERG
University of Auckland

ANDY MILLS
University of Glasgow

MELENAITE TAUMOEFOLOU
University of Auckland

The reidentification of unique 18th-century objects of prestige in museum collections has restored material substance to things believed lost to Tonga for more than 200 years. These rediscoveries and their recent cross-disciplinary syntheses (Herda and Lythberg 2014; Lythberg 2013, 2014; Mills 2009) now point to a need to reassess the ephemerality of terminological classifications for these items. This paper is a study in the productivity of working across the disciplinary boundaries of material culture studies, historical linguistics and museology to clarify and restore the significance of historic names for prestigious Tongan objects within the wider context of Western Polynesia.

The last five years have returned significant details of provenance to a single radial-feathered headdress in Madrid; two elegant curved neck rests, one each in Leiden and Cambridge, Massachusetts; and percussive “stamping tubes”, one in Dublin and another in Bergen.¹ All are associated with the paramount chieftainship of Tonga in the late 18th century. In Madrid, the headdress had lost all association with Tonga and was thought to be a skirt. In Leiden and Cambridge, the neck rests, with their fine distal curvature, were presumed, respectively, to be a club and a backscratcher or massager. And in Dublin and Bergen, the hollowed-out bamboo instruments had been determined to be quivers for arrows.

In each case the reidentification of these items hinged on painstaking archival research and the familiarity with collections that permits fine-grained analyses to be made from objects themselves, and connections to be made through time. Though extirpated from Tonga before or during the years of political unrest and civil war in the very late 18th and early 19th centuries,

which irrevocably changed the political landscape of the archipelago, these objects nevertheless left traces in genealogies, oral histories, written records, illustrations and contemporaneous and subsequent works of Tongan art. Some of these are in the form of *heliaki*, the Tongan device employed to say one thing but allude to another in oratory and material and performance arts (Herda 1995:39-42).

The research on these artefacts, subsequent to each initial suggestion that “this might be...”, was facilitated by the connectivity of the internet, which enabled the easy sharing of images and ideas between large groups of geographically dispersed individuals. As discussions continued regarding the details of these objects and their histories amongst colleagues, at conferences, on scholarly projects and via social media, we were and still continue to be presented with a new challenge: how best to talk about these objects in and on Tongan terms. How can we have generative conversations if we do not have the right words. *What's in a name?*

Towards reconciling sometimes conflicting archival sources and the intentional ambiguity of Tongan nomenclature, this paper brings together the research findings and perspectives of two Pacific art historians, an anthropologist/historian and a Tongan linguist, alongside traditional histories, multilingual archives and Tongan objects from the late 18th century to the present. It takes as its primary focus the terminology used to refer to the feathered headdress reidentified in Madrid's Museo de América in 2011. This was described in a previous issue of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (Herda and Lythberg 2014: 277-300) and the Museo's own journal (Lythberg 2014: 142-51) as a *palā tavake*, a term this paper aims to discuss and put into historical and linguistic context.

Our discussion of the term *palā tavake* necessarily draws on linguistic cognates that help us to understand Tongan nomenclature in the context of relationships within Western Polynesia, and the significance of the cognates. It considers the etymology of similar terms in 'Uvean, Futunan and Niuean as well as Proto-Polynesian and begins to address the probable provenance of alternative terms. The Tongan systems of nomenclature surrounding material culture are of two types, one identifying objects by descriptive names and another affording personal names to the objects. The former—descriptive terminologies—are discussed with particular reference to both the percussive “stamping tubes” now being revived by Tongans and ‘*akau tau* ‘clubs’; the latter are exemplified by the most highly ranked of Tongan objects, *kie hingoa* ‘named mats’. The taxonomy of descriptive terms used for ‘*akau tau*, which includes individual titles for particular examples contemporaneous with the radial headdress, is also drawn upon to consider whether *palā tavake* is simply a descriptive term, or a form of *heliaki* or whether it was an appellation given to a singular example. It is ironic that in this analysis of clubs and *palā tavake*

we are comparing the rarest with the most common of Tongan “artificial curiosities” collected by Europeans during the 18th century: the singularity that is the Tongan radial feathered headdress in Madrid with the more than one hundred late 18th-century Tongan *‘akau tau* in collections worldwide.

ARTIFICIAL CURIOSITIES—ARTIFICIAL TERMINOLOGIES

Europeans have long held a fascination for collecting and displaying objects. By the 18th century these collections—or “cabinets”, as they were known—were arranged with the items presented to whet the curiosity of viewers. Following the late 18th-century’s voyages of scientific exploration, collections expanded to include artefacts from Polynesia and the wider Pacific region, classified initially as either “natural history” or “artificial curiosities”. The former comprised specimens of plants, animals, minerals, fossils, shells and other objects of nature, while the latter focused on exotic (i.e., usually non-European) human-made arts and artefacts. What often did not adhere to these articles, however, were their indigenous nomenclature and vernacular taxonomic classifications. Even when such information originally accompanied the objects, be it in journal accounts, as labels or inscribed upon objects themselves, it might be lost, overlooked or overlaid as the articles became subsumed in European notions of classification and categorisation (Lythberg 2016: 208; Lythberg *et al.* 2016).

Often both natural history specimens and artificial curiosities were organised into “types” approximating things already known to Europeans (animals, minerals, plants, etc.), which then joined other members of families and species recently clarified and arranged by Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus, while Pacific “artificial curiosities” took on “artificial terminologies” either equating them to European things or at least describing them in decidedly European terms. The expansive category of Polynesian objects still referred to as “clubs” demonstrates the former propensity of listing an array of variously ceremonial, quotidian, plain and elaborately incised items by a term familiar to Europeans from their own histories, whereas “stamping tubes” offers an example of the latter through the creation of a composite term delineating how the ends of these modified lengths of bamboo were stamped on the ground to produce a percussive sound. The inadequacy of such descriptors can impact our engagement with the very objects they attempt to describe, reducing their efficacy to that which can be denoted in terms current at the time of their acquisition, thereby exerting authority over their past, present and future effects. Moreover, the cachet associated with a connection to an “enlightened explorer”, such as James Cook, further harnessed Pacific artefacts to European narratives and systems of value—a practice much akin to the naming of Pacific places as well as plant and other species after explorers or their crews or patrons.

Many of these early assemblages of “natural history” and “artificial curiosities” would form the basis of European museums, with their early taxonomic categorisations often surviving to the present within museum cataloguing systems and databases. Often these acquisition data are all that remains to connect objects to histories—whoever’s histories these may be. Success in finding even well-provenanced 18th-century objects within collections can depend on an understanding of the classificatory categories of the time in which they may have been placed. Despite attempts to control and standardise terminologies over the years there has as yet been no agreed-upon system in the ordering of artefacts, such as the Dewey library cataloguing or the Linnaean system of biological classification (International Council of Museums 1995); however, by pursuing the vernacular name for objects, as well as the indigenous system of classification and nomenclature, a greater understanding of their cultural meaning and societal value can be gained. Indeed, some museums actively collecting from Pacific communities are now prioritising local names for new acquisitions (for Tongan examples see Lythberg 2013).

Sometimes the artefacts themselves suggest their names, and the “stamping tubes” provide an excellent example. Here, the explorers’ records include fine illustrations and descriptions of their musical usage, but no indigenous names were recorded by any European expedition whose members saw them. Following the reidentification of a single short (and therefore high-pitched) example in Dublin and a single long (and thus low-pitched) example in Bergen, a group of Tongan musicians has begun a journey of “re-membering” and revitalisation. In the process of learning to make these instruments anew, and sounding the different tones made by bamboo cut to different lengths, several names have been “re-called” from the past (‘Okusitino Māhina and Semisi Potauaine pers. comm. 2015). The names seem modelled on descriptive terminology, whereby *tuki* ‘to pound’ is modified by a descriptive suffix. If we take seriously the claim that these names were “re-called”—and the sense of actively “calling again” is invoked intentionally here—this points to the reawakening of memory and nomenclature by material presence, something Ty Tengan (2008) has designated “re-membering”. This term has considerable potency as it involves a cultural reclamation and encompassment of the past.

THE PROBLEM OF NAMING THE TONGAN RADIAL HEADRESSES

Determining and reclaiming the historic names for prestigious Tongan objects is not always straightforward or simple. While it is generally agreed that the radial feather headdresses of the traditional chiefly elite of Tonga were known, in some sense, as *palā tavake*, *palātavake* or *palaa tavake*, the specifics of the nomenclature are not entirely clear. We favour *palā tavake* in this paper in keeping with the orthography used by Queen Sālote (Spillius

1958-59). John Webber's portrait of the Tu'i Tonga Pau wearing one² (Fig. 1, engraved by Hall after Webber) and William Wade Ellis's sketch (Fig. 2) as well as the headdress discovered in 2011 in the Museo de América (Fig. 3; see also Herda and Lythberg 2014) provide the best surviving imageries of what these magnificent feathered adornments must have been like. The headdresses were also carved as incised iconography on 'akau tau (Fig. 4),

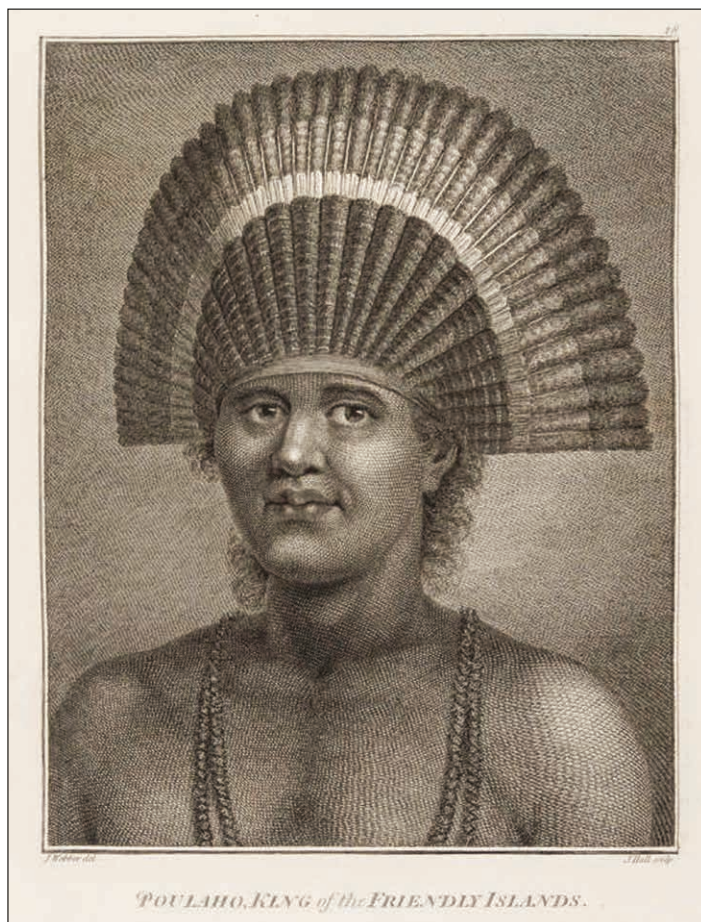


Figure 1. John Webber and John Hall "Poulaho, King of the Friendly Islands", 1784, engraving on paper, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, New Zealand, purchased 2007.

many of which are extant in public and private collections worldwide (Mills 2009; Posesi Fanua n.d.; Weener 2007), and in the late 20th century a simple depiction of a radial headdress had become a popular motif in *ngatu* ‘barkcloth’ design, delineated further by the painted text “*koe bala tavake*”³ (‘this is the *bala tavake*’) (Kaepler 1999a: 36; see Fig. 5). But where did the name *palā tavake* originate?

Significantly only one of the three late 18th-century European exploring expeditions that saw and collected the headdresses in Tonga recorded what they were called in the local language. James Cook’s ships visited Tonga on two voyages: in 1773–74 and then again in 1777. The Cook Expedition

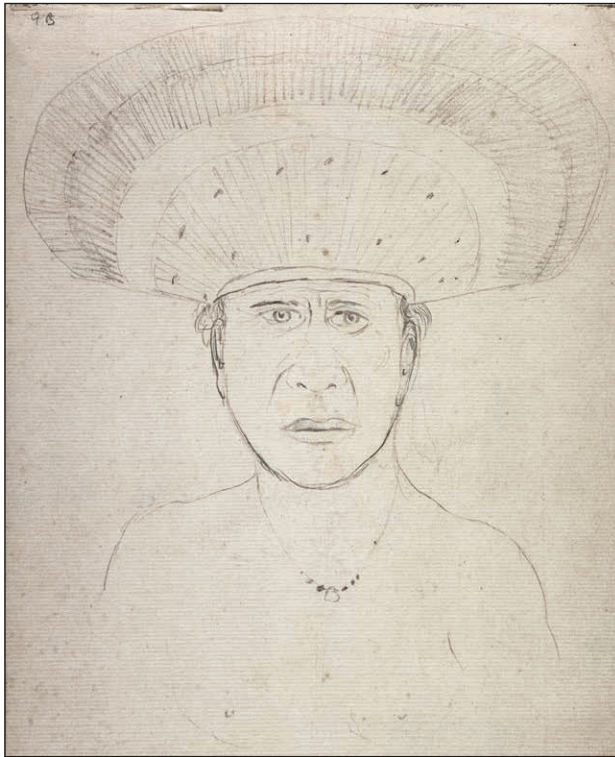


Figure 2. William Wade Ellis, “Feenau”, May 1777, pencil on laid paper, Alexander Turnbull Library, A-264-009-2, Wellington, New Zealand.



Figure 3. Radial feather headdress (*palā tavake*), Museo de América, Madrid, Spain. Photo by Maia Nuku.



Figure 4. 'Akau tau' club' with incised human figure wearing a radial feather headdress (*palā tavake*), Field Museum, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Photo by Billie Lythberg.



Figure 5. *Ngatu* with radial feather headdress design (*palā tavake*). Photo from Lythberg collection.

collected three radial headdresses during its 1777 visit to Tonga. Two were pulled apart and the feathers traded by the British elsewhere in Polynesia (the Marquesas and Society Islands) where red feathers were, as in Tonga, highly prized. Whether the third survived, and where it may be, is unknown. Bruni d'Entrecasteaux and his men visited Tongatapu in 1793. Labillardière (1800: 375), the biologist on board the expedition, published his journals and reported that Bruni d'Entrecasteaux was “brought as a present a diadem, made with the beautiful red feathers of the tropicbird, with some other very small feathers of a brilliant red colour.” Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's (1808 [I]: 560) vocabulary includes *bala* (*pala*)⁴ and defines it as “couronne de plumes rouges” (“crown of red feathers”).⁵ It is not known what happened to this headdress. One month later the Spanish expedition under the command of Alejandro Malaspina visited the northern Tongan archipelago of Vava'u. Crew member Arcadio Pineda (MS 181 21/5/1793; MS 94 n 11. 22a) noted that the “monarch”, whose name they recorded as Vuna, “was distinguished [from the populace] by a hat or diadem of red feathers, like that which Cook described when he spoke of Paulajo [Tu'i Tonga Pau]”. This presumably is the *palā tavake* located in the Museo de América. Aside from Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's single mention in his word list, no members of these expeditions, in their descriptions of the headdresses or in the vocabularies they created, noted during their visits what these headdresses were called by

Tongans. The terms most often offered—cap, bonnet, diadem, hat—connote little more than the fashionable European headwear of the day that may mislead with implied structural details.

The first time the term “*palā tavake*” appears in the written records is fairly late. Queen Sālote used it when speaking to anthropologist Elizabeth Bott, who met with the Queen for “Discussions” in 1958–1959 (Spillius 1958–59). She was speaking about the feathered headdress worn by Tu‘i Tonga Pau inspired by the image by Webber and Hall, which was seen by Cook and his men and may even have been acquired by the Europeans and removed from the archipelago. It is unclear in the passage whether the Queen used *palā tavake* as a generic name for that type of traditional radial headdress worn by Tongan elite or whether it was the name assigned to the particular headdress worn by Pau. Adrienne Kaeppler provides the next usage of the term. She (Kaeppler 1971: 214) stated that “well-informed Tongans” knew the term in the 1960s and early 1970s and that it was applied to feathered headdresses; others mistakenly believed them to be feather combs, more properly known as *helu kula*, which were worn exclusively by individuals of the Tu‘i Tonga line. In June 1974 staff at the Auckland War Memorial Museum recorded the term in discussions with Tupou Pōsesi Fānuā about a club embellished with carvings of human figures wearing a “sacred headdress” (see Fig. 4; Pōsesi Fānuā n.d.). Tupou Pōsesi Fānuā was an acknowledged expert in Tongan traditions, customs and history, and was also a member of the Tongan Traditions Committee.

Taumoeofolau and colleagues (2004: 249) translated a composition written by the Queen in 1966 which included a reference to the *palā tavake* alluding to the way in which two sister schools (Pilolevu College in Ha‘apai and Siuilikutapu in Vava‘u) play supporting roles in strengthening Queen Sālote College in Tongatapu. The reference alludes to Hikule‘o and Faimālie, two Tongan goddesses, who work together, thus laying the foundation for the Tu‘i Tonga title, the *palā tavake* metaphorically referring to the Tu‘i Tonga. This layering of meanings through *heliaki* may also allude to the ancestry of Queen Sālote:

Ke fatakī nima he ‘aho koē	It was because they held hands in those days
Tu‘u ai e palātavake.	That the <i>palātavake</i> stands today.

Queen Sālote, at significant events, wore a feathered comb which she called *Palā Tavake*, though materially it more closely resembles a hair adornment known as a *tekiteki*. The comb featured two tail feathers of the *tavake* or tropicbird (*Phaethon lepturus* or *Phaethon rubricauda*). The comb did not in other respects resemble the radial feather headdresses, which seem to have been exclusively worn by men. The combs have teeth that are threaded through the hair so that the *helu* stands up. The radial feather headdresses are,

instead, fitted on the head more like a hat. Sālote is wearing the comb named *Palā Tavake* in the portrait of the Queen that graces the cover of Elizabeth Wood-Ellem's biography (Wood-Ellem 1999). The photograph was taken in London when Queen Sālote attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, where she wore it in the open carriage procession through London. In wearing a hair ornament called a *palā tavake* Sālote was subtly emphasising her genealogical connection to both significant chiefly lines in Tonga: that of the Tu'i Tonga and that of the Tu'i Kanokupolu. Although the Queen and her descendants obtained their political position and power through the Tu'i Kanokupolu title, she also had blood rank through Tonga's ancient and divine chieftainship. Sālote's mother, Lavinia, was a great-granddaughter of Laufilitonga, the last Tu'i Tonga.

We do not wish to suggest by referencing these three 20th-century instances that the term *palā tavake* is a recent addition to the Tongan language—far from it. We believe that *palā tavake* is an ancient Tongan word that was most probably part of the language reserved for high chiefs ('*eiki*), hence its being recalled within royal or chiefly circles in modern Tonga. The Tu'i Tonga and others who were considered *sino'i 'eiki* 'the body of an aristocrat', and all things associated with them, were exclusively addressed with a special language of respect known as *lea fakatu'i* (Churchward 1953: 303-5; Taumoeofalau 2012: 327; see also Vason 1810: 96; Martin 1817: 78-79). As such, *palā tavake* would have referred only to a headdress worn by the Tu'i Tonga and the male *fale 'alo*—those lineages and individuals who descended from a Tu'i Tonga or Tu'i Tonga Fefine.

Palā itself is not recognised as a modern Tongan word. Though it seems to signify tail feathers and is used in Tonga only in conjunction with *tavake*, when Tongans speak of the tail feathers of a *tavake* bird they use the term *lave 'itavake*. Linguistic evidence suggests that *palaa* appears to be a Proto-Polynesian word referring to feathers (P. Geraghty pers. comm. 2017), and its use with *tavake* to mean a feathered headdress may have been borrowed from 'Uvea and adopted into the Tongan language at a time, long ago, when 'Uvea was part of a regional dominion that sent tribute to the Tongan archipelago. It is difficult to ascertain the exact relationship between 'Uvea and Tonga, but Tongan tradition records that the 11th Tu'i Tonga, Tu'itātui, called upon labour and resources from islands outside the Tongan archipelago to build many of its significant stone monuments, including the early stone-faced *langi* 'tombs' of the Tu'i Tonga and *fale 'alo*. Although archaeologists are convinced that the quarrying for the monuments was accomplished on Tongatapu or its immediate surrounding islets (Clark *et al.* 2008; Clark *et al.* 2014), Tongan tradition maintains that its stones came from 'Uvea as part of its tribute to Tonga (Collocott 1924: 173; Dillon 1829: 295; Gifford 1929:

14, 349; Thomas 1879: 157; Ve‘ehala and Fanua 1977: 33). It may be that the men who quarried the stone came from ‘Uvea and their labour was part of ‘Uvean duty to the Tu‘i Tonga. It is conceivable that feather headdresses, also known as *palā* in ‘Uvea and *palā tavake* in neighbouring Futuna, were also part of this tribute. Conceivably, like the stonemasons’ work, they may have been made in Tonga by ‘Uvean craftsmen.

Just as it is not clear where the radial feather headdresses originated, it is not entirely certain who was allowed to wear the *palā tavake*. It seems likely that it was probably the prerogative of the sacred ruler of Tonga, the Tu‘i Tonga, and the *fale‘alo*—that is, those directly related to him or his sister (the Tu‘i Tonga Fefine) or whose lineage or titles derive from them (Kauhala‘uta)—but these suggestions are not made with absolute certainty (see, for example, Churchill 1917; Herda and Lythberg 2014; Kaeppler 1971: 214, 1999a: 173; Mills 2009; Posesi Fanua n.d.). In modern Tonga *Palātavake* was used as a personal name of an individual who was a direct descendant of Laufilitonga, the last Tu‘i Tonga. As previously mentioned, in Tonga tropicbird feathers were more generally associated with the Tu‘i Tonga’s title, symbolising the illustrious and divine origin of the title and titleholders. The first Tu‘i Tonga is said to be the son of the god Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a. ‘Eitumatupu‘a is said to have descended from the heavens to Tonga and impregnated a local woman, ‘Ilaheva, also called Va‘epopua. Their son was ‘Aho‘eitu. When ‘Aho‘eitu came of age, he journeyed to the heavens to find his father and was given the title Tu‘i Tonga and the authority to rule the islands of Tonga. This descent from divine ancestors promulgated honour and authority to the titleholder and his close relatives. It is, by far, the oldest and highest-ranking of Tonga’s three great historical titles: Tu‘i Tonga, Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua and Tu‘i Kanokupolu.

The red-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) itself was often employed as a metaphor in Tongan oratory for the Tu‘i Tonga (Kaeppler 1999b: 175; Mills 2008: 340). As it was a grievous affront and grave offense for an individual of lower rank to directly refer to an illustrious person such as the Tu‘i Tonga by their name, various means were employed to refer to him indirectly. Kaeppler (1999b: 182, 210), for example, argues convincingly that the title was associated with a very fine mat known as Lilomomu‘a—the personal name of one *kie hingoa*—which was used metaphorically to refer to the sacred kingship. Similarly the names applied to the stone *langi* where the Tu‘i Tonga and *fale‘alo* were interred are another example of not directly naming the titleholder. *Langi* is both the word for the tombs of the *fale‘alo* and for the sky or heavens—a reference to the divine origin of the Tu‘i Tonga title. The Tongan practice of *heliaki*, the skill in Tongan oratory of metaphor, poetic or historical allusion and plays on names or words, also applied to—

or, indeed, possibly originated in—the prohibition of normal nouns for the person, bodily excretions or excesses as well as personal possessions of highly sacred ‘*eiki* individuals such as the Tu‘i Tonga. Instead these individuals were referred to using a vocabulary of mountains, celestial bodies, sacred animals, birds, flowers and other natural phenomena associated with greatly exalted places or things. Through this honorific vocabulary, *heliaki* can be understood as motivated by the same principles of avoiding direct contact between the chiefly (*tapu*) on one hand and the common (*ngofua*) on the other—a verbal equivalent of the proscription and prescription against touching and looking found throughout cross-rank interactions in Tonga (Mills 2008). The implementation of *heliaki*, therefore, indicates a particular godly exaltation reserved for known individuals of acknowledged ‘*eiki* rank.

Tavake appears to be one of these understood, indirect references to the Tu‘i Tonga. Likewise, *palā* appears to be both a material description and a *heliaki*. The use of the same noun (*palā*) for the wing of a bird and the fin of a fish implies a wider and simpler concept of any structure consisting of a membrane supported on a radial armature of bones, quills or spines. In this sense, the *technological* ancestry of *palā tavake* headdresses can ultimately be associated with the method of manufacturing Tongan combs (*helu*) from coconut leaflet midribs woven with fine coconut husk fibres, which caused them to fan delicately. The larger radial feather headdresses further elaborate this schema. The underlying symbolic significance of the Tu‘i Tonga’s regalia as a wing or fin is worthy of consideration, as it implies an association of locomotion, grace and agency. Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a, the divine apical ancestor and a bodily inhabitant of each Tu‘i Tonga, was narrated in Tongan myth as a feathered being who flew between the sky otherworld and the earth—rendering a radial featherwork headdress metonymically indexical of the Tu‘i Tonga’s cosmological bridging of, and movement between, the heavens and earth.

However, it was not just the Tu‘i Tonga who was seen wearing a *palā tavake* by Europeans in the late 18th century. As previously mentioned, Arcadio Pineda, of the Malaspina Expedition, met a chief they knew as Vuna, who was identified as the ruler of Vava‘u, and his younger brother wearing radial feather headdresses in 1793. Vuna was not the Tu‘i Tonga. He had, however, allegedly killed Tu‘i Tonga Pau in battle (Novo y Colson 1885: 382). Was this enough to grant him the right to wear the headdress, or does his wearing of it signify that it was worn by others beyond the Tu‘i Tonga and the *fale ‘alo*?

An intriguing clue that it might not just be the chiefs of the Kauhala‘uta (the Tu‘i Tonga and his people) who may have worn the radial feather headdresses of Tonga, but rather prominent, high-ranking, male chiefs in general, comes from a sketch alleged to have been made by William Wade Ellis, surgeon’s

mate on HMS *Discovery* during Cook's third expedition, which visited Tonga in 1777. It portrays a man wearing a radial headdress (see Fig. 2; Joppien and Smith 1987: 314). Someone pencilled the name "Feenow" (Fīnau) on the sketch, but the name has been crossed out. It is neither known who assigned the name to the portrait nor who crossed it out, but we can assume that the person who wrote it thought this designation was correct.

Fīnau was not the Tu'i Tonga, nor was he of this lineage. Exemplifying a tenet of Tongan naming conventions whereby an individual was known by several names during their lifetime as they acquired new experiences and accolades, the man Cook knew as Fīnau was most probably also known as Tu'ihalafatai, a man of considerable rank in Tonga's triumvirate system (Bott with Tavi 1982: 19-20; see also Beaglehole 1967 [III]: 177; Thomas 1879: 153). When Cook and his men visited Tonga in 1777, Pau was Tu'i Tonga, Maecaliuaki appeared to be Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and Tupoulahi was Tu'i Kanokupolu although, because he was elderly and infirm, his son, Tu'ihalafatai ('Fīnau'), exercised the practicalities of actual rule (Afuha'amango n.d.: 5; Beaglehole 1967 [III]: 892-93; Erskine 1853: 128; Thomas 1879: 153). As his father was still alive, and titles were held for life, Cook and his men would have met Tu'ihalafatai before he became Tu'i Kanokupolu. Cook's journal describes "Feenough" setting out for Vava'u to acquire "red feathered caps" for Cook and his crew to carry to Tahiti "where they are in high esteem" (Beaglehole 1967 [III]: 112). Fīnau fails to deliver on his promise, and Cook later confirms that Pau is the donor of at least one of the headdresses he eventually receives (Beaglehole 1967 [III]: 117).

If the Ellis portrait is of "Fīnau" (Tu'ihalafatai), his wearing a radial headdress provides a precedent for the observations made by the Malaspina Expedition, and affords his claim to be able to procure these for Cook some integrity. However, it may also be a sketch of Tu'i Tonga Pau, wrongly assigned to Fīnau. Janet Davidson argues that the folio number on the sketch matches Ellis's published account confirming the identification of Pau (Davidson 1977: 21-22; see also Murray-Oliver 1977: 30). At the very least, Cook's and other voyage accounts allow us to argue with some certainty that there were several headdresses in circulation during the visits of Cook, Malaspina and Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. This is significant because some individuals, often following on from information given by the current holder of the Helu title, suggest that "*palā tavake*" is the proper name for the specific headdress worn by Pau, rather than the name for the type of radial feather headdress (Māhina 2015; see also Kaepler 1999a: 47). The Helu title is said to have been established as a result of the first holder, Helu of Foa Island, creating a headdress for Tu'i Tonga Pau. It was said that Pau's *palā tavake* was made at a time when the knowledge of how to create them

was in danger of being forgotten. Pau, reportedly, offered a *matapule* (chiefly attendant) title to anyone able to make one (Kaeppler 1971: 214). The title he established was “Helu”, which means ‘comb’ in Tongan.

In addition to the establishment of their *matapule* title, Helu was also granted land at Houmatala. The inscription on the headstone of Havea Hikule‘o Helu, who died in 1884, states: “Ko Helu eni ‘aia Na‘e/To ai a Houmatala/Koe Me‘a He‘ene Ba” (“This is Helu to whom Houmatala was given because of his comb [headdress]”) (Withers n.d.). While, clearly, this Helu was not the man who made the actual *palā tavake* for Tu‘i Tonga Pau (he died 100 years after Pau), his epitaph demonstrates another aspect of naming and titles in Tonga. When an individual receives a title, he becomes the title encompassing all of the preceding holders of it. So, in effect, Hikule‘o Helu, the Helu who died in 1884, is the Helu who created a fine and exalted adornment for Tu‘i Tonga Pau.

It is interesting that the title chosen was Helu not Palā. The *helu* ‘comb’ is distinct and quite different to the radial feather headdress (implied by *palā*). Tongan combs are items of adornment made to stand in the hair at the crown of the head. Kaeppler (1978: 211) notes that in the late 18th century they were “invariably made of the midribs of coconut leaflets which are intertwined with sennit in various shades of natural, brown, and black to form decorative patterns. They are either squared off at the top or form an extended triangle”. There is considerable, albeit subtle, variety in their details, such as the number of tines and the patterns and styles of binding, indicating the personal inventiveness of their makers. As time progressed *helu* became taller and more ornate. Chiefs’ combs, imported from or influenced by those being made in Sāmoa, were hardwood or turtle shell, intricately cut through with silhouette detailing, and up to 50 cm tall. By the early 19th century, coconut leaflet combs reached the same heights as their hardwood counterparts, and some incorporated glass beads in their binding.

There were yet other types of late 18th-century feathered headdresses in Tonga that have not survived, and a perplexing term which has. A lozenge-shaped and feathered accoutrement was first seen in Tonga in 1773–1774 during Cook’s second voyage. Similar examples survive from Fiji, where they were worn around the forehead and called *wakula*, but it is not clear if their presence in Tonga was through trade with Fijians, nor do we know what they may have been called in Tonga (Hooper 2016: 146–47). Gifford, in the early 20th century, recorded that a radial headdress of feathers worn by many ranks of Tongan chiefs at ceremonial occasions was called a “*fae*” or “*faefae*” (Gifford 1929: 127). This is not a term that is recognised by Tongans today. Used since then by various scholars—including Beaglehole (1967) in the footnotes to his edited version of Cook’s journals—it is unclear whether *fae* or *faefae* referred to what we are calling *palā tavake* or headdresses similar to

palā tavake, but worn by chiefs other than a Tu‘i Tonga or his near relations. Is it the ordinary (i.e., not royal or chiefly) term for a radial headdress, another variation of headdress altogether, or the result of a misunderstanding by Gifford? Tongans sometimes speak of combing their hair as “*pae*”. As a noun *pae* or *paepae* could refer to hair on the head that has been combed.⁶ Perhaps Gifford was told or misunderstood this to mean a feathered headdress.

WESTERN POLYNESIAN COGNATES

While *fae* or *faefae* does not appear in other Western Polynesian languages in relation to headdresses, supporting our conjecture that it may have been misheard or misunderstood, there are a number of cognates for *palā* meaning a headdress or crown made of feathers. As previously mentioned the word *pala* is categorised as Proto-Polynesian (Geraghty pers. comm. 2017). Burrows (1936: 197, 1937: 136) chronicles that, like its inclusion in Bruni d’Entrecasteaux’s word list, “*pala*” was an old term that referred to feathered “crowns” in Futuna and “helmets” which incorporated feathers in their construction in ‘Uvea. Citing a French priest, Father Grézel, who published a Futunan–French dictionary in 1878, writes:

There are in Futuna certain birds inhabiting the mountain gorges in the interior of the land, which birds have on their tails long feathers among others, which the natives use for making crowns (*pala*) which they fit on their heads in public festivals, games, war dances, etc. These birds are the *tavake* with white feathers, the *nanai* with red feathers, the *lafulafu* with gray or ashy feathers. Ten feathers of these birds are called *nuulanga e fasi*, ‘arrow’. Ten rows of these feathers assembled complete the crown (*ku tuu le pala*). When they symmetrically arrange 40 of these feathers in a line, to reach from one ear to the other when the crown is put on, then they call them *fakalaunui*. (Burrows 1936: 197)

Although not identical to the Tongan feather headdresses there is a remarkable similarity in depiction, with the Futuna description clearly designating a radial headdress made with feather bundles. The surviving Tongan *palā tavake* in the Museo de América has a fan of 33 bundles of feathers wrapped with *ngatu* around reeds or sticks and attached to a broad band, which would radiate from ear to ear when tied and placed on the head.

The *pala* were no longer made or worn in Futuna when Burrows was there in the 1930s. He (Burrows 1936: 197) reported that “the only feather crowns I saw in Futuna were worn by boys who swung censers at a [Catholic] church procession. They were of white chicken feather sewed to headbands of European material.” ‘Uvea also had an abandoned tradition of *pala* which an early Catholic missionary there defined as a “plume of tropicbird or cock; [a] warrior’s helmet adorned with these plumes” (Burrows 1937: 136). Burrows

added that “they are no longer seen and I have no description, but doubtless they resembled Futunan feather headdresses of the same name.”

S. Percy Smith, in an early 20th-century study on Niuean culture, recorded the use of feathered head adornments, which he recorded were known as “*palā-hega*” (*palāhega* in modern Niuean). Rather than being a radial headdress worn from ear to ear:

The *palā-hega* was a sort of plume worn at the back of the head, and kept in position by a band of *hiapo* [tapa] around the head. They are made with a core of dried banana bark, round which is wound strips of *hiapo* having scarlet feathers of the Hega parrot [Blue Crowned Lorikeet *Vini australis*] fastened on to them, and at top and bottom the yellow feathers of the Kulukulu dove [Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*] are lashed on with hair braid. From the top springs a plume of red and white Tuaki and Tuaki-kula [both tropicbirds] feathers, making altogether a rather handsome ornament. (Smith 1903: 64)

Palāhega were still being made at the time of Smith’s study, and one of his plates (Smith 1903: Plate 7) shows two examples. Edwin Loeb (1926:93) conducted fieldwork in Niue in 1923; by then *palāhega* were no longer being crafted. However, a modern Niuean dictionary (Sperlich 1997: 313) offers definitions of *palā* as an “ancient head-dress of feathers” and the “long tail feathers of a bird”. Smith (1903: 5) also noted, “From the fact of there being a place in Niuē called Hiku-tavake (the *tavake*’s tail) it would seem that the tropic bird, although now called *tuaki*, was once known as *tavake*, as in other islands.” So it may be that Niue also previously had a headdress made with *tavake* feathers perhaps known as a *palā tavake*.

Materially and stylistically, then, there are several cognates with the Tongan radial feathered headdress from other Western Polynesian islands. Regionally the connotation of the word *palā* (linked through the Proto-Polynesian *palaa* ‘feathers’) denotes a headdress made with feathers, usually tail feathers; most appear to be in a radial style, but not all. This suggests that *palā* followed by the type of bird whose feathers are used in its manufacture may be a descriptive name. Feathers of the *tavake* often feature on the headdresses. So, a *palā tavake* or *palātavake* designates a feather headdress, which includes tail feathers from the *tavake* or tropicbird. It may be that the term was adopted into Tongan to mean the name for feathered radial headdresses worn by the Tu‘i Tonga whether or not it contained *tavake* feathers. Futunans, ‘Uveans and Niueans appear to have stopped making feathered headdresses in the late 19th or early 20th century, while in Tonga manufacture ceased approximately 100 years earlier. It seems clear that *palā* is a very old and possibly generic descriptive term in Western Polynesia for headdresses made with feathers. Examining the ways that other prestige items were named may help place the foregoing terms in a broader context.

THE ART OF NAMING IN TONGA

Tongan naming practices surrounding objects are generally descriptive or functional in terms of the objects and what they do; however, it is also the case that taxonomic designations of individuality can index the particular individual or discrete supernatural qualities associated with a particular object. So, for example, the Tongan taxonomy for *'akau tau*—often unsatisfactorily glossed as ‘war clubs’ in English—provides another useful model for the naming of 18th-century Tongan material culture items of prestige. The generic historical Tongan term follows a general pattern for specifying categories of typology: a primary noun, *'akau* ‘stick’ or ‘stave’, with a secondary noun deployed as an adjective, *tau* ‘war’ or ‘fighting’. In this case that secondary adjectival noun is functional, while others are formal or material, as with *palā tavake*. Notably, the historically recorded terms for *'akau tau* types do not follow this pattern; rather, several type terms that can be etymologically interpreted were loanwords into Tongan from languages such as Fijian or Sāmoan. Their construction is explicitly descriptive of form or materials. Notable *'akau tau* types demonstrating this include the most common type, *apa 'apai*, a designation which has been superficially Tonganised to convey a sense of respect. The term seems to have been derived from the cognate Sāmoan club form *lapalapa*. In Sāmoan this name refers to the weapon’s serrated edges, which are absent in the Tongan *apa 'apai*. Type terms similarly derived from Fijian include *kolo* ‘throwing clubs’, a term signifying a bird-hunting throwing stick prevalent in eastern Fijian dialects but not relevant in Tonga itself, and Tongan *povai* pole clubs, which were acquired as a style from Fiji where they were known as *bowai*. Other *'akau tau* type terms can be understood as formally or functionally descriptive in Tongan. One good example of this is the *pakipaki* club, whose name means ‘plucker’ or ‘smasher’ in English. Another is the bossed, dome-headed *pukepuke* club, named after yam cultivation mounds, in this case a translated loanword from the original Fijian, *bulibuli*, of the same meaning (Mills 2009: 20-33).

Tongan *'akau tau* ‘clubs’ would often be individually named (see Mills 2009). William Mariner recorded in the early 19th century that it was the practice to name *'akau* after they had “done much execution” (Martin 1817: 359). In other words, the demonstration of the *mana* of the *'akau tau* (that it had shown itself to be effective at the killing task for which it was created) led on to the attribution of a kind of personhood to the club. Some individual clubs possessed names that alluded to their formal characteristics, for example, Tu’i Tapavalu ‘The Eight-Sided Lord’.

These objects of prestige and power were often inextricably linked with those individuals who wielded them with success. For example, the *'akau tau* Mohekonokono ‘The Bitter Sleep’ had intimate ties to the Vaha’i title and was said to be “so full of mana that it could not lie still and was always

moving (*futefute*) as it reposed in the house. ... Vahai's club gave warning of war planned against Vahai, by moving. The movement was caused by the 'mana of the god'" (Gifford 1929: 327). In one instance the naming of an '*akau tau*' was turned into a title for the warrior associated with it. The famous or infamous Fīnau 'Ulukālala-'i-Ma'ofanga was a renowned warrior of not the highest chiefly birth rank. As a young man he travelled to Fiji and fought alongside the Tui Nayau, earning himself an envious reputation both in Fiji and Tonga. The ferocity of his fighting and the success he had saw the club acquire the Fijian nickname "Ulunqalala" 'Empty Head' for its renowned ability to smash skulls. When Fīnau returned to Tonga the nickname was translated as 'Ulukālala and became a hereditary chiefly title (Hocart n.d: 242; Spillius [Bott] 1958–59; and also Fergus Clunie pers. comm. 1985; Deryck Scarr pers. comm. 1986).

This practice of naming individual objects, especially those associated with high-ranking chiefs, is not without precedence. Association with rank and divinity through the highly stratified chieftainship, as well as efficacy at the tasks for which they were manufactured, were understood to accumulate a repository of metaphysically founded significance—*mana*. This in turn could cause those objects to develop an inhabiting and attendant spirit (*fa'ahikehe*) in the understanding of its owners and their contemporaries (Mills 2008). The incremental named individuation of such exalted objects grew as an index of their supernatural empowerment, bringing with it a range of superhuman powers. We can thus recognise a generalised trend in the taxonomic designations of distinguished material culture items wherein at the typological level this was primarily formal, material and functional, while taxonomic designations of individuality indexed the personhood and exalted qualities of a discrete supernatural agent.

Kie hingoa, described as "the most important and powerful objects in Tonga", also embody many Tongan notions of chieflyness around naming (Kaeppler 1999b:168). As with '*akau tau*', the name bestowed upon a mat recalls the history of that particular mat. *Kie hingoa* and other fine mats are worn at specific occasions by individuals who, by their birth and genealogy, have the privilege and right to wear them. Choosing which mat to appear in at a particular ceremony, ritual or event becomes an exercise of subtlety and skill as the conjuncture of person, *kie* and event orchestrates historical, political and kinship associations, which may enhance, if properly contextualised, the *mana* of the individual as well as the *kie* (see Kaeppler 1999b; also Herda 1999).

It is not, perhaps, surprising that much of the language, as well as the action, surrounding *kie hingoa* are strikingly similar to those used when discussing Tongan *hohoko* 'genealogies'. Indeed, *kie hingoa* can be said to have *hohoko*. While the identity of the maker will not be recalled, the names

of the renowned individuals who possessed the mat, as well as the occasions when it appeared or was presented, are remembered and commemorated. For example, the late Queen Sālote, speaking of the *kie hingoa* named Lālanga ‘o ‘Utukaunga, explained:

Each line of kings had its own ceremonial mats which were carefully preserved from generation to generation. In fact, our history is written, not in books, but in our mats... the *ta’ovala* I wore when I met Queen Elizabeth on Her Majesty’s arrival in Tonga was 600 years old. Worshipped in the 13th century as a symbol of the ancient gods, the mat belonged to the chiefly family of Malupo on the island of ‘Uiha. (Bain 1967: 77; see also Kaepler 1999b: 208-9)

Naming could also include designations that were not necessarily positive in their meaning. In fact, the name “Paulaho” is a good example. *Laho* roughly translates into English as a swear word meaning ‘scrotum or genitalia’ and is offensive to many Tongans today. Yet, it was the name of the Tu‘i Tonga that was given to Cook and his men who met the man, and was repeated by Tongans for several decades as subsequent visiting Europeans asked what had happened to him (Beaglehole 1967; Labillardière 1800:375; Novo y Colson 1885: 382). While it is conceivable that the name was not offensive in pre-Christian Tonga, or that it was not Pau himself who uttered this version of his name but his rivals who chose to denigrate the Tu‘i Tonga to the foreigners, it seems more likely that this was how he was known and that its suffix was not a polite word. Pau’s half-sister, born to Pau’s father Tu‘ipulotu, the 35th Tu‘i Tonga, and his first wife Tu‘ilokamana, similarly was known as “Ta‘emoemimi”, which means ‘faeces and urine’. This practice appears to be of a higher-ranked individual bestowing a derogatory name to emphasise their position *vis-à-vis* the receiver. They do it because they can, their more exalted rank ensuring that the name will be applied and used. In the case of Paulaho and Ta‘emoemimi it was most likely their *mehekitanga* ‘father’s sister’ Tu‘i Tonga Fefine Sinaitkala-‘i-Fanakavakilangi who bestowed their names.⁷

SO, WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The Tu‘i Tonga was the embodiment of the gods in the archipelago of Tonga. As the descendant of Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a, he provided the essential link for transferring the bounty of the gods to the whole of Tongan society. As a divine mediator, the Tu‘i Tonga also provided the channel for the Tongan people to approach the gods to present *polopolo*, their offerings, for when they presented to him, they presented to the gods. Indeed, many lists of the gods made by Christian missionaries included many Tu‘i Tonga among them (Lyth n.d.: 45-46; Thomas 1879: 248). This divine lineal descent was also reflected in the special *tapu* state ‘sacred’ (but also ‘prohibited’) that surrounded the *fale‘alo* and the regalia in which they were invested. These included the

palā tavake—the radial feathered headdresses—worn by the Tu‘i Tonga and perhaps other high-ranking male chiefs. Feathers are considered valuable objects in Polynesian cultures—red feathers especially so. The elites of other Polynesian islands and archipelagoes were often dressed or ornamented with sacred items, be they cloaks, god images or headdresses, made or decorated with feathers (see Caldeira *et al.* 2015; Hooper 2006; Kaeppler 2010; Neich and Pereira 2004; Rose 1978).

Tongans stopped manufacturing *palā tavake* sometime during the late 18th or early 19th century. The headdresses that were part of the regalia of the Tu‘i Tonga—the traditional sacred ruler of Tonga—became redundant by the early 19th century with the rise of Tāufa‘āhau and the Tu‘i Kanokupolu title of the Tupou Dynasty. Tāufa‘āhau consolidated the influence of the Tupou Dynasty during the late 1820s and 1830s and established the Tongan monarchy in 1845, and with the decline and eventual elimination of the Tu‘i Tonga title in 1865. The headdresses were eradicated from Tonga along with other material manifestations of the sacred chiefly line and references to them. Conversations with non-chiefly people in Nuku‘alofa in the late 20th century saw them deny the presence of these headdresses in their history. They did not recognise the term at all, nor did they identify images of the headdresses as Tongan, believing instead that Cook and his men were confused. This history was not theirs to know or remember—it belonged to the elite in Tongan history. That it was “re-membered” by Queen Sālote in her wearing the comb with a pair of *tavake* tail feathers at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and subsequently reinserted into Tongan oratory, pivoted on her genealogy (*hohoko*), which included holders of both the Tu‘i Tonga and Tu‘i Kanokupolu titles. Queen Sālote handed down her knowledge of *hohoko* to her descendants, including, of course, Tupou VI, the present king of Tonga (for the royal genealogy of Tupou VI see Nanasipau‘u, Queen of Tonga *et al.* 2015: 8).

* * *

The character of *palā tavake* as a descriptive term that is both formal and cross-cultural in its principal noun and material in its adjectival modification to specificity is quite straightforward. The category of fine mats called *kie hingoa* or the *pakipaki* clubs provide other good examples of Tongan naming practices surrounding objects (Herda 1999; Kaeppler 1999b; Mills 2009). These labels are descriptive or functional in terms of the objects and what they do. However, it is also the case that taxonomic designations of individuality indexed the personhood and exalted qualities of discrete supernatural agency associated with the experiences or history of a particular object. Therefore

the *kie hingoa* named Lilomomu‘a (Kaepler 1999b: 188) or the ‘*akau tau* known as Mohekonokono (Mills 2009: 15-16) were distinguished from others by designations celebrating their illustrious experiences and associations with exalted individuals in Tongan history. It is entirely possible that the *palā tavake* now in the Museo de América in Madrid also possessed its own name and motivating supernatural personhood (*fa‘ahikehe*) as it served as a chiefly adornment to a person of illustrious rank.

In the absence of a personal name, what can we infer from the taxonomy of the term *palā tavake* to help us understand the material make-up and cosmological efficacy of the radial feather headdress of the Tu‘i Tonga? It is possible that *palā tavake* is an obsolete Tongan term or, perhaps more likely, is a loan from ‘Uvean, along, with, perhaps, the headdress form itself. In Tongan oratory, a word that is unknown or foreign in origin is considered to be more poetic and may have more *mana* than words that are well known. *Palā tavake* for this reason may be more oratorical and evocative of an ‘*eiki* status more readily than the ordinary Tongan equivalent. Though the term *palā* is Proto-Polynesian (*palaā*) and is shared with other Western Polynesian languages, its specificity within Tonga depended entirely upon the inclusion of *tavake* to mean a regal feather headdress with their clear exclusive material identity-correlate of the Tu‘i Tonga himself. *Palā* also suggests *heliaki* circumlocution—the allusion to a bird’s wing or the fin of a fish—suggesting an association with locomotion, grace and agency that renders radial featherwork metonymically indexical of the Tu‘i Tonga’s cosmological bridging of, and movement between, the heavens and earth.

A more sympathetic understanding of the term and systems of classification and nomenclature surrounding *palā tavake* not only brings us closer to appreciating the contextual grace and beauty of these chiefly headdresses but also substantiates, through time, our understanding of the power and substance of rank and divine chieftainship in Tonga. By closely “reading” prestige objects from Tonga’s past through a multidisciplinary lens, we gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Tongan material culture and the historical and social environment that created them. This, in turn, invites further, generative conversations about Tonga’s histories and its legacies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge our appreciation of the Marsden Fund of the Royal Society of New Zealand for a grant which enabled the collaborative research resulting in this paper. We would also like to thank Paul Geraghty for an insightful conversation over email, Chris Philipp of the Field Museum in Chicago for access to the Fuller Collection, and the two anonymous readers who provided sensible suggestions to improve the paper.

NOTES

1. The holding institutions for these objects are Museo de América, Madrid, Spain; National Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, The Netherlands; Harvard Peabody, Cambridge, MA, USA; National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland; and University Museum, Bergen, Norway.
2. Webber listed an oil portrait in his catalogue entitled “Powlehoe [sic] King of the Friendly Islands Wearing a Cap of Ceremony” (Joppien and Smith 1987: 43). Unfortunately the whereabouts of this portrait is unknown.
3. Tongan orthography was standardised in 1943 by a decree of the Privy Council of Tonga. The voiceless stop sometimes written as “b” and sometimes as “p” became standardised to “p”; however, many Tongans, especially from the older generation, still choose “b” in their spelling of words.
4. As previously mentioned, the Tongan voiceless stop is rendered either as a “b” or “p”.
5. We would like to thank Paul Geraghty for bringing this to our attention.
6. This is especially the case when combing the hair in a hurry—“*pae fakavave hake pē hoku 'ulu kau lele*” (“I hastily combed [*pae*] my hair and ran [*pae*] the comb through the hair [i.e., in a quick sweeping motion]”). Translations by Melenaite Taumoefolau, August 2017.
7. More recently Queen Sālote called a young girl, also named Sālote, “Mahaeua ‘i Pangai”. It translates as ‘torn in two at Pangai’ and is a reference to a woman’s hymen being torn during sexual intercourse. She also gave the nickname Lūseni to another child named Sālote. It is the name of a plant that is often fed to pigs and horses. See also Moyle (1975) for the inclusion of overt sexual terms and phrases in Sāmoan oral tradition.

REFERENCES

- Afuha’amango, n.d. Koe Ngaahi Kongokonga Hohoko Na’e Tu’u ‘i he Tohi Noa ‘a Afuha’amango Lahi. MS. Nuku’alofa: Palace Records Office.
- Bain, Kenneth, 1967. *The Friendly Islanders: A Story of Queen Salote and Her People*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Beaglehole, J.C., 1967. *The Journals of Captain Cook on His Voyages of Discovery. Volume III: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery, 1776–1780*. London: Hakluyt Society.
- Bott, Elizabeth with Tavi, 1982. *Tongan Society at the Time of Captain Cook’s Visits: Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Sālote Tupou*. Wellington: The Polynesian Society.
- Bruni d’Entrecasteaux, Joseph Antoine, 1808. *Voyage de D’Entrecasteaux Envoyé à la Recherche de La Pérouse ...*, Paris: Imprimerie Impériale.
- Burrows, Edwin G., 1936. *Ethnology of Futuna*. Bulletin 138. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- , 1937. *Ethnology of Uvea (Wallis Island)*. Bulletin 145. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- Caldeira, Leah, Christina Hellmich, Adrienne L. Kaeppler, Betty Lou Kam and Roger Rose, 2015. *Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Nā Hulu Ali ‘i*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.

- Churchill, William, 1917. *Club Types of Nuclear Polynesia*. Washington D.C.: The Carnegie Institution.
- Churchward, C. Maxwell, 1953. *Tongan Grammar*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, Geoffrey, David Burley and Tim Murray, 2008. Monumentality and the development of the Tongan Maritime Chieftdom. *Antiquity* 82 (318): 994-1008.
- Clark, Geoffrey R., Christine Reepmeyer, Nivaleti Melekiola, Jon Woodhead, William R. Dickinson and Helene Martinsson-Wallin, 2014. Stone tools from the ancient Tongan state reveal prehistoric interaction centers in the central Pacific. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111 (29): 10491-496.
- Collocott, E.E.V., 1924. An Experiment in Tongan history. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 33 (3): 166-84.
- Davidson, Janet, 1977. The Ellis Drawings: An ethnological viewpoint. *The Turnbull Library Record* 10 (2): 20-22.
- Dillon, Peter, 1829. *Narrative and Successful Result of a Voyage in the South Seas*. London: Hurst, Chance and Co.
- Erskine, John E., 1853. *Journal of a Cruise Among the Islands of the Western Pacific*. London: Dawsons.
- Gifford, Edward Winslow, 1929. *Tongan Society*. Bulletin 61. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- Herda, Phyllis, 1995. Hierarchy and the prerogatives of history-making in Tonga. In J. Huntsman (ed.), *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*. Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, pp. 37-55.
- 1999. The changing texture of textiles in Tonga. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 108 (2): 149-67.
- Herda, Phyllis and Billie Lythberg, 2014. Featherwork and divine chieftainship in Tonga. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 123 (3): 277-300.
- Hocart, A.M., n.d. The Windward Islands of Fiji. TS MS 9 HOC. Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library.
- Hooper, Steven, 2006. *Art and Divinity in Polynesia, 1760-1860*. Wellington: Te Papa Press.
- 2016. *Fiji: Art and Life in the Pacific*. Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts.
- International Council of Museums, 1995. *International Guidelines for Museum Object Information*. International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums. http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Guidelines/CIDOCguidelines1995.pdf. Accessed 20 August 2017.
- Joppien, Rüdiger and Bernard Smith, 1987. *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages, Volume Three: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Kaeppeler, Adrienne L., 1971. Eighteenth century Tonga: New interpretations of Tongan society and material culture at the time of Captain Cook. *Man* 6 (2): 204-20.
- 1978. "Artificial Curiosities": *Being an Exposition of Native Manufactures Collected on the Three Pacific Voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N.* Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press.
- 1999a. *Tongan Art and Society on the Eve of the Millennium: From the Stone Age to the Space Age in 200 Years*. Tofoa, Kingdom of Tonga: Tongan National Museum.

- 1999b. *Kie Hingoa*: Mats of power, rank, prestige and history. *Journal of Polynesian Society* 108 (2): 168-232.
- 2010. *Hawaiian Featherwork: Catalogue Raisonné of Pre-1900 Feathered God Images, Cloaks, Capes, Helmets*. Berlin: Nationalgalerie—Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- Labillardière, Jacques J. H., 1800. *The Account of the Voyage in Search of La Pèrouse, Undertaken by the Order of the Constituent Assembly of France, and performed in the Years 1791, 1792, and 1793, in the 'Recherche' and 'Esperance', Ships of War, Under the Command of Rear-Admiral Bruni d'Entrecasteaux*. London: John Stockdale.
- Loeb, Edwin M., 1926. *History and Traditions of Niue*. Bulletin 32. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- Lyth, Reverend R. B., n.d. Tongan and Feejeean Reminiscences. MS, 2 vols. Sydney: Mitchell Library B549.
- Lythberg, Billie, 2013. Polyvocal Tongan barkcloths: Contemporary *ngatu* and nomenclature at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. *Tuhinga: Records of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* 24: 85-104.
- 2014. Tocados Emplumados en el Museo de América (Madrid) y el Weltmuseum (Antiguo Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna). *Anales del Museo de América* XXII: 142-51.
- 2016. "Fine Fancy and Delicate Taste"—The Queen of Ra'iatea's royal robe. In Nicholas Thomas, Julie Adamas, Billie Lythberg, Maia Nuku and Amira Salmond (eds), *Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories*. Dunedin: Otago University Press: 207-9.
- Lythberg, Billie, Maia Nuku and Amiria Salmond, 2016. An admirable typology. In S. Schaffer and A. Craciun (eds), *The Material Cultures of Enlightenment Arts and Sciences*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 267-69.
- Māhina, 'Okustino, (5 September) 2015. Faiva (Performance), Tufunga (Material) and Nimame'a (Fine) Arts: Refined Ancient Tongan Cultural Heritage in European and British Museums. Public presentation at 2015 Tongan Language Week in Aotearoa NZ. Langimālie Garden Hall, Onehunga, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Martin, John, 1817. *An Account of the Natives of the Tongan Islands, in the Pacific Ocean, Compiled and Arranged from the Extensive Communications of Mr. William Mariner*. London: J. Murray.
- Mills, Andy, 2008. *Tufunga Tongi 'Akau*: Tongan Club-Carvers and Their Arts. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich.
- 2009. 'Akau Tau: Contextualising Tongan war clubs. *Journal of Polynesian Society* 118 (1): 7-45.
- Moyle, Richard M., 1975. Sexuality in Samoan art forms. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 4 (3): 227-47.
- Murray-Oliver, A.A., 1977. The Ellis Drawings: An inventory. *The Turnbull Library Record* 10 (2): 28-37.
- Nanasipau'u, Queen of Tonga, Adrienne L. Kaepler and Mary L. Fonua, 2015. *Tonga's Royal Family: Photographs from Royal Collections*. Nuku'alofa, Tonga: Vava'u Press.

- Neich, Roger and Fuli Pereira, 2004. *Pacific Jewellery and Adornment*. Auckland: David Bateman.
- Novo y Colson, Pedro, 1885. *Alrededor del Mundo por las Corbetas 'Atrevida' y 'Descubierta' al Mando de los Capitanes de Navio D. Alejandro Malaspina y Don Jose Bustamante y Guerra Desde 1789 a 1794*. Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda e Hijos de Abienzo.
- Pineada, Arcadio, n.d. Borrador del Diario de d. Arcadio Pineada en los Corbeta Atrevida. MS 94; MS 181. Museo Naval, Madrid.
- Posesi Fanua, Tupou, http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am_humanhistory-object-55606. Accessed 20 August 2017.
- Rose, Roger G., 1978. *Symbols of Sovereignty: Feather Girdles of Tahiti and Hawai'i*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- Smith, S. Percy, 1903. *Niuē-Fekai (or Savage) Island, and Its People*. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs.
- Sperlich, Wolfgang B., 1997. *Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niue Language Dictionary*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press in Association with the Government of Niue.
- Spillius [Bott], Elizabeth, 1958-59. Discussions of Tongan Custom with Her Majesty Queen Sālote Tupou, The Honourable Ve'ehala. 2 vols. MS. Nuku'alofa, Tonga: Palace Records Office.
- Taumoefolau, Melenaite, 2012. Tongan ways of talking. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 121 (4): 327-72.
- Taumoefolau, Melenaite, Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, HRH, Princess Nanasipau'u Tuku'aho and Adrienne L. Kaeppler, 2004. *Songs and Poems of Queen Sālote*. Nuku'alofa, Tonga: Vava'u Press.
- Tengan, Ty, 2008. Re-membering Panalā'au: Masculinities, nation and empire in Hawai'i and the Pacific. *The Contemporary Pacific* 20 (1): 27-53.
- Thomas, John, 1879. History of Tonga, MS. Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London: University of London.
- Vason, George, 1810. *An Authentic Narrative of Four Years' Residence at Tongataboo, One of the Friendly Islands, in the South Seas*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme.
- Ve'ehala and Tupou Posesi Fanua as told to Noel Rutherford, 1977. Oral tradition and prehistory. In Noel Rutherford (ed.), *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, pp. 27-39.
- Weener, Frans-Karel, 2007. Shorter Communication. Tongan club iconography: An attempt to unravel visual metaphors through myth. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 116 (4): 451-62.
- Withers, Kit, n.d. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kitwithers/helu/helu.html>. Accessed 4 March 2014.
- Wood-Ellem, Elizabeth, 1999. *Queen Salote of Tonga: the Story of an Era, 1900–1965*. Auckland: University of Auckland Press.

ABSTRACT

This paper is a study in the productivity of working across the disciplinary boundaries of material culture studies, historical linguistics and museology to restore the significance of historic names and terminological classifications for prestigious Tongan objects within the wider context of Western Polynesia. The authors trace the nomenclature of radial feather headdresses (*palā tavake*) both within Tonga as well as through linguistic cognates from elsewhere in Western Polynesia. Aspects of Tongan naming practices of other prestige items are considered, such as 'akau tau 'clubs' and *kie hingoa* 'named mats', as is the Tongan practice of the poetical device of *heliaki*. We argue for a deeper understanding of objects of Tongan material culture and the historical and social environment that created them by closely "reading" prestige objects from Tonga's past.

Keywords: Tongan naming practices, historical linguistics, Polynesian prestige objects, *heliaki*, Tongan material culture, feather headdresses, clubs, named mats

CITATION AND AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Herda,¹ Phyllis, Billie Lythberg,² Andy Mills³ and Melenaite Taumoeolau,⁴ 2017. What's in a name?: Reconstructing nomenclature of prestige and persuasion in late 18th-century Tongan material culture. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 126 (4): 443-468. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15286/jps.126.4.443-468>

¹ Corresponding author: Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland. Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand. Email: p.herda@auckland.ac.nz

² Mira Szászy Research Centre, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand. E-mail: b.lythberg@auckland.ac.nz

³ Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History, School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G11 6AQ, United Kingdom. E-mail: Andrew.Mills@glasgow.ac.uk

⁴ Centre for Pacific Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand. E-mail: m.taumoeolau@auckland.ac.nz