

# Rootz Vaka Transits

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*Traversing Seas of Urban Diasporic Indigeneity by Collapsing Time and Space with the Songs and Stories of the Kava Canoe.*

**Arcia Tecun**

**(Daniel Hernandez)**

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## Abstract

*Fai Kava represents the most common and diverse types of Kava drinking gatherings among Tongans in the Kingdom of Tonga and its diaspora, which is the focus of this multi-sited ethnographic research. Rooted between Te Ika a Māui, Aotearoa and Soo-gahni, Utah on Turtle Island, with some additional points of reference from travels to Australia and the Kingdom of Tonga, this thesis explores: What is Fai Kava today? What does Kava in diaspora tell us about urban Indigenous identities? And, what is the contemporary relationship between music and Kava? Faikava are practical and creative ways for urban diasporic populations to make, and keep connections to their Indigenous identities by transporting ethno-scapes of ocean, land, and ancestors. Kava is a metonym for fonua (land, placenta, ancestors, tradition), which heals temporal and spatial displacement (diaspora) by collapsing space and time. Kava gatherings are thus sites of Indigenous cultural reinforcement that facilitate keeping close relationships to a homeland while relating to new places in Indigenous time. Indigeneity is revealed through performances of identity, song, story, socio-political mediation, the embodiment of ancestors, and the production and transmission of community-based traditional knowledge. Faikava is a space of mediating mana (potency) and tapu (sacredness) to yield noa (equilibrium) revealing truths. The conflicts, adaptations, and continued negotiations between Indigenous and modern western metaphysics is revealed in the intersection of kava and religion, which reveals resistance, syncretism, and local agency. Faikava cultivates and transmits cultural values, language, and Indigeneity where ancestral identities are formed and re-formed anew in diverse ways, contesting modern colonial temporalities that imagine Indigenous pasts and people as static. New music is performed in older styles, and old songs are remade within new styles, with lyrics telling the stories of past futures. This reflects complexity and a broad spectrum of tradition and Indigeneity, within a growing global phenomenon of urban and diasporic Indigenous peoples. Gender relations between spouses, siblings, as well as explorations of masculinities and women in kava reveals conflicts, negotiations, and adaptations that contest constructs within paradigms of western modernity. The metaphorical canoe of transported Kava carries deep ancestral memories anchored in story and songs in transit, which arrive as an intricately diverse spectrum of contemporary Indigenous identities. This thesis imagines a Rootz Vaka (Kava Canoe) reconceptualization of Indigeneity as a metaphorical memory of an ancestral humanity, guided by song, story, Tāvāism, decolonial thought, Indigenous theorizing and remembering. This thesis on kava invokes the past into the present in order to shift into an Indigenous paradigm with a rootz way of thinking, doing, and being.*

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Contextualizing Kava

There's lots of places we can't go no more. Plenty of things they won't let us do... So we gonna break down all the walls. I'll show you the way to the house of roots... Come on Mr. Music, been waitin all day for you to set me free.

– Natural Roots



Figure 1. Rootz Vaka - Kava Canoe Drawing by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

People of the Moana (*Ocean*) are regularly gathering to drink kava in the evenings, on weekends, and at life events. This is happening throughout the Kingdom of Tonga, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, the U.S., and likely anywhere one finds Tongans, Fijians, or other kava drinking Oceanians. Kava is an ancient and contemporary drink that is used in many

ways, but the most common gatherings are when people come together to hiva (*sing*), fakaoli (*be comedic*), and talanoa (*talk story*). In the case of Tonga, social hierarchy and political organization is visibly reflected in kava rituals, which is identifiable in the performance of presenting, preparing, and drinking kava (Biersack, 1991; Pratt, 1922). Tongan kava gatherings exist in various forms dependent on the type of event, purpose for gathering, rank of attendees, and frequency with which a group gathers. Kava is consumed in each of these settings predominantly, but not exclusively by men. Music and song is integral to and often tells the stories of these gatherings, which is a central theme of this study.

Kava is a drink with anti-depressant and soporific qualities, although the effects depend on how much is infused with the water before drinking, and the type of kava used (Aporosa, 2014a; Kaeppler, 2010; Lebot, Merlin, & Lindstrom, 1997). J Stringz, a California (U.S.) based Tongan musician composed a song called *Clap Clap* about kava, In this song he sings, “if you ain’t feelin’ good than drink some more ... it’s all natural, drink it up, or drink it slow, until you get that kava fade.” The Utah (U.S.) based reggae group, Natural Roots, led by Dutch/Sāmoan singer and song writer JanWillem van der Beek, is comprised of Tongan, Sāmoan, and Pālangi (*White/European/Foreign*) band members. Natural Roots sing a song about kava where they explain the effects of drinking kava as, “feelin’ irie from my head to my toes, but my mind is so clear.”

Brayboy (2006) explains that our stories as Indigenous people are our theories, and for this reason story will be treated as theory throughout this thesis. This thesis reveals how story and song in kava settings construct and maintain Tongan and Moana (*Ocean/ia/ic*) knowledge and identities while also reinventing them. The kava circle is a site of knowledge production and transmission where Indigeneity is nurtured. These spaces facilitate a roots way of thinking that brings the past into the present where ancestral ways of knowing, doing, and being are cultivated and reimagined. These are spaces where various layers of power,

paradox, and contradiction within communities and their respective societies are revealed and can be mediated. I use the poetry and story in songs as a locus for understanding urban Indigenous identities and kava phenomena today.

Kava visibility, use, and interest has grown significantly since 2015 when I began this doctoral research. The prices of kava have also tripled since that time, with many kava colleagues pointing to a combination of possible reasons. Many comments from the contributors to this research point to major factors coming from droughts, major storms in the Pacific Ocean, the long growing process of kava (2-3 years +), an increased demand by non-Oceanian's, and a growing interest by multinational pharmaceutical companies and naturopathy. The Facebook page *Kavafied* boldly predicts that “by 2020 there will be an American kava bar in every major U.S. city!” (26 February 2018). The increased visibility of kava by western companies, and what some in my research have referred to as “hipster café's,” are identified as kava gentrifying forces. Increased competition in neoliberal capitalism is threatening to enclose kava from communities in the Moana and the diaspora abroad. A decrease of kava quality along with increased prices is directly linked to the intensified commodification and privatisation of kava in globalised markets, which changes the relationship and use of kava by attempting to detach Kava from mana/tapu (*authority/sacredness*) (Alexander, 2004; Gregory, 2006; Tomlinson & Tengan, 2016). Kava culture changes and will continue to, it certainly has in the past, but the western contributions in influencing change in faikava has largely escaped criticism. When communities who have stewarded kava since its inception begin to lose access due to these external forces it undermines Moana people's self-determination and autonomy. The popular representation of kava in mainstream media outlets in Aotearoa and the U.S. have highlighted kava as a “new” commodity while ignoring Moana people that have inherited kava from their ancestors. This narrative largely excludes Moana voices, which is a process that attempts to erase Indigenous

presence, knowledge, and practice. Participants of this research are located in this context of increased mainstream visibility of kava while being made invisible in diaspora settings. This paramount icon (kava) is tied to ancestrally linked identities, which urban diaspora Tongans negotiate in societies they now reside in.

Tongan and Moana Indigenous worldviews provide diaspora groups with a unique perspective having identities based in navigation, rooted in the ancestral tradition of wayfinding. The paradigm of modernity perpetuates a dichotomy of western vs. Indigenous, which I explain further in chapter two, and that I disrupt by putting Moana thought in conversation with Turtle Island (*North America*) and Mayan thought. I argue that in the contemporary kava gatherings described in this thesis, one experiences moments of a collapse of linear time, making these spaces (events) sites of creativity, healing, and generative power. The experience is of a neutrality of time in space, of which song plays an important role in remembering and re-creating futures based in the past. The title of this thesis is Rootz Vaka for this reason, vaka is the canoe, the vessel. Rootz is the knowledge, with 'z' instead of 's' representing the urban contexts of kava use. Rootz is a way of thinking that is Indigenous, bringing ancestral pasts into the present continuously through story and song. Rootz also refers to the kava roots one drinks. Pacific archaeology has referred to ancestor wayfinders of the region as having transported their landscapes in discovering and populating new places in a sea of islands anciently (Hau'ofa, 1993; Kirch, 2002; 2017). Drawing from this legacy of physical transportation I see kava in diaspora as transportable ethno-scapes where social relations, Indigenous culture, and traditions travel to new places.



Figure 2. RootZ Drawing of Kava plant, roots, and Tō (sugarcane).  
Drawn by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

## 1.2. Global and Contextual Relevance

The displacement of communities and Indigenous identities throughout the globe yields drastic consequences that negatively impacts well-being. The rhetoric around diasporic people of colour and assumptions of criminality often does not consider structural influences. Davis (2014) argues that culture provides social restraints through morals and values that when disrupted by western modernity yields feelings of alienation to one's identity and place. This causes a harmful detachment of Indigenous belonging in western projects of ethnocide through assimilation to Eurocentric normativity. Hansen (2004) argued that the loss and transformation of Tongan culture in Utah has significantly contributed to the creation of gangs and an increase of crime in the community. This social crisis and existential reality has been responded to by Indigenous peoples with a rhetoric in postcolonial literatures and media, which insist that having a grounded sense of cultural (Indigenous) identity helps prevent

and/or remedy harmful behaviour, provides healing, and is tied to vital knowledge (Davis, 2014; Fehoko, 2014; Keown, 2007). Fehoko (2014) argued that for Tongan male youth in Aotearoa, kava provides an alternative to urban struggles of gangs, depression, and even suicide. Fehoko explains that kava in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) provides a safe alternative to unpack social frustrations because it is rooted in identity, community, and ancestral traditions.

Indigenous intellectual contributions are more equitably positioned on a global scale within this academic project, by grounding Tongan epistemologies and songs as both topic of inquiry and theory. This demonstrates and respects the significance of this topic and the contributions and influences that Moana ethnographies offer to understanding global issues such as diaspora, gender, religion, identity, and Indigeneity (Teaiwa, 2006; Huffer and Qalo, 2004; Gershon, 2007). Kava songs, story, and humour, across generations, genders, and national borders reveal epistemologies that value both harmony and critical pedagogies when rooted in kin-like social relationships. This lesson from kava gatherings offers learning possibilities such as hip hop pedagogy has for urban populations in the U.S. and Aotearoa (Akom, 2009; Stokes, 2004; Feld, 1984). The gathering of knowledge and questions asked in this research will potentially serve as a resource derived from spaces of learning beyond the narrow boundaries of power currently maintained by dominant western institutions, countering the hegemonic and homogenizing forces of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization.

An important theme that is echoed among Indigenous peoples is the importance of autonomy, and self-determination by individuals and communities. Kava itself is not “THE” solution or panacea to the social concerns and issues of Tongan communities or others in the world. Framing kava as such can have the effect of evading structural and systemic criticism which makes kava unnecessarily vulnerable with such a high expectation. Instead I am arguing that kava doesn’t cause or solve these issues, but rather, as a possessor of mana

(*potency*) it reveals truths and community issues, giving rise to the potential to resolve them. Although kava groups are alleviating many of these issues, the root causes are tied to many other larger systems such as racism and colonial violence in school discipline, prisons, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy, and until those are resolved these social challenges and issues will continue to exist (Calderon, 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Escobar, 1988; Kendi, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Quijano, 2000; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Kava circles allow for the confrontation of difficult and contradictory truths such as negotiating dominant societal representations, Indigenous identity, and experience, which is manifested in various songs and music. Kava circles open up the possibility of healing in nurturing one's identity and belonging to people, land, and heritage through song and story. This research is not only relevant to the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology. It is relevant to oral history, area and diaspora studies, ethnic studies, sociology, political science, philosophy, education, performing arts, and the growing visibility and presence of Indigenous studies, methods, and theories within academia throughout the globe.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

This research on kava contributes to local and global conversations around culture, identity, Indigeneity, wellbeing, education, and theory; while adding important and necessary Moana community knowledge to the public discussion happening now around the increased popularity of kava in the “west” and increasingly in the “east”. The guiding research questions for this thesis were:

- \*What are Fai Kava phenomena today?
- \*What does the practice of kava in diaspora tell us about urban Indigenous identities?
- \*What is the current importance of song in kava circles?

These questions respond to insufficient attention given to common kava gatherings in the academic literature, as well as the lack of mindful observation to the complexity of

contemporary kava practice in popular history. Additionally, the importance and role of songs in Tongan kava practices is virtually non-existent in academic literature yet a highly significant component of contemporary kava phenomena. The knowledge in faikava surrounding gender, Indigenous metaphysics, pan-Moana identities, and diaspora has also been overlooked in various fields of academic literature, which this thesis seeks to address.

Exploring the songs and stories of kava in order to understand common gatherings illuminates deeper layers of complex social practices in common kava gatherings where social tensions are negotiated, community conflicts are exposed and potentially resolved, and knowledge is transmitted. Informed by the research questions, I do not argue that kava groups are a tool to merely cope with struggle or a means to create docile assimilated islanders within western modernity (neoliberal capitalist forms of labour, social alienation, modern anxiety, and the violence of racist settler colonial nation-states). I argue instead, that understanding contemporary kava phenomena by exploring the conflicts, controversies, benefits, and blessings that surround regular kava use today offer meaningful insights towards decolonial Indigenous futures. Moving beyond the oppressive paradigm of western modernity, Tongans, Moana peoples, and arguably all people benefit from kava lessons. Kava phenomena is rooted in slowing down and suspending time, talking story, healing, recovering, remembering and imagining, through song and connections to land. Kava as mana wields potency, power, and honour, but its impact is governed by the purpose, system, and intention of those who wield it.

#### **1.4. Research Setting and Process**

This thesis is a collection of kava stories gathered through ethnographic research and talanoa (*relationally mindful critical oratory*), which I explain in more detail in chapter three (Tecun, Hafoka, ‘Ulu‘ave, & ‘Ulu‘ave-Hafoka, 2018). I see the variety of different experiences and perspectives for Moana people’s in their diaspora experience as a metaphorical song that’s sung across ocean and land. This song/story has different notes and

parts (expanding Tongan identities) that come together as one. This song transcends colonial mapping, borders, and nation-states. This song of identity, expresses what it means to be Tongan, to be part of a shared Moana, a connection based on conceptions of Indigeneity, original connections to identities tied to place. Each kava story contributes a part to uniquely different yet deeply connected Indigenous identities. Some of the voices stretch further into the depth of kava origins (e.g., chants), others are newly invented or adapted (e.g., reggae/Hip Hop), but they all add complexity to the song that is sung about Tongan identity, epistemology, and ontology in urban diasporic contexts.

This research focuses on urban/suburban areas primarily in Aotearoa's North Island and Utah. I grew up in Utah (yes I'm Mormon) and I have now lived in Aotearoa for nearly four years now. I draw from my kava experiences growing up, as well as two trips to Utah during my nearly four years thus far living on Te Ika-a-Māui (North Island, Aotearoa). I also draw from research visits to the Kingdom of Tonga, including two trips during my doctoral studies (about one month in total), and also a previous research trip (six weeks total) prior to beginning my PhD studies. I also attended a kava conference in Kamberra (Canberra, Australia) for one week in 2015 where I engaged with some of the kava community there. Most of the groups in this research were in diasporic contexts, and most of the contributions in this research come from cisgender men, mostly between the ages of twenty and forty-five. This thesis draws heavily from kava circles that are increasingly multi-ethnic compared to the more homogenous Tongan groups in the Kingdom or kava clubs in diaspora frequented by older generations or facilitated by Tongan churches. I explain in more detail the methods and the logistics of research and data collection in chapter three.

## **1.5. Linguistic Ethics and Terms**

This research is linked to phenomena I not only participate in, but live and experience. I began participating in regular kava gatherings over 15 years ago and have relational

responsibilities I continue to uphold. Drawing from decolonial research ethics and methods, the question of why I am doing this research and for whom are centred in my approach (Smith, 2012). Decolonial thought makes colonising language visible in order to face, challenge, and change it. For example, the journal, ‘Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society’ (n.d.) explains in its author guidelines that the term “Indigenous” is politicised globally, and the “I” is capitalised because “by spelling ‘indigenous’ with a lower case ‘i’ we un/knowingly reproduce dominant writing traditions that seek to minimize and subjugate Indigenous knowledges and people”. Additionally this journal states that decolonial thought values all languages and refrains from italicizing non-English words “as it only serves to set them apart as exotic, deviant or as part of a particular colonizing anthropological project”. This is why I have not replaced Indigenous words that embody complex concepts that have no English equivalents. This is also the reason I have not italicised Tongan, Māori, Moana, and other Indigenous words, because they are not foreign when they are the focus in this research, they are neither “other” or marginalised, they are the centre starting point. I also at times *italicise* gendered pronouns in order to emphasize and refer to the hegemony of meta-structures that are gendered. This is a metaphorical strategy used at times throughout this thesis.

I also use the term Moana, which Māhina (2010) has argued to be a more appropriate term for ocean/Oceania/Oceanic for Tongans, which is also the Indigenous word for other related peoples and places in the Moana. Popular Moana musicians such as Nesian Mystik have already collapsed the colonial naming that divides the Pacific Ocean into poly/mela/micro groups in their pan-Identity name of an inclusive ‘Nesian’. I draw from this position that is strategically pan-Pacific (Pasifika/Oceania/Moana), which is a position that draws from Hau‘ofa’s (1993) critique of western views that the Pacific is a group of tiny islands in the middle of the sea. Hau‘ofa explains an Indigenous perspective is that the Moana

is instead a massive sea of islands connected by water, culture, and history. This view and position transcends the externally imposed parameters that have been used to fragment the region culturally and geopolitically (e.g., poly/mela/micro-nesia).

Throughout this thesis I capitalize Kava at times, as well as use Fai Kava and faikava interchangeably. This is for convenience and at times to contextually emphasize its prominence. This is a reminder that although kava is common, Kava is also simultaneously highly respected. I translate words into English through: (*italics*) because translations are integrated, and there is no glossary. This is an attempt to avoid fragmenting this story and to maintain it holistically within the text in a non-linear fashion. I also shift the writing expression between academic and casual voice, in order to minimize distance and hierarchy between myself and interlocutors. This is strategic in order not to take for granted an assumed objectivity, which can be the effect caused when academic speech is contrasted with quotes that are taken from conversational speech, rather than formal speeches or writing. This reminds readers of a broad audience of my personhood, like my friends and mentors I quote and write about, so that our subjectivities might be more transparent and better understood (Farella, 1993). I will explain this in more detail in chapter three with my positionality and reflexivity.

## **1.6. Thesis Chapters: Topics and Content**

This thesis is divided into eleven chapters. The organization of the chapters are based on my journey of inquiry and follow the order of levels I have climbed and built upon. They represent climbing to a peak and what is revealed at different platforms before reaching the highest point at the end of the story. The chapters thus go in order of how my foundation of inquiry began and the directions it led to. Chapter 2: Kava and Indigenous Theory, is comprised of a literature review of kava and the theoretical framework for this critical ethnographic thesis, based in Indigenous concepts and decolonial thought. Common and

regular kava gatherings is contextualized as the focus of this research. Faikava is defined as a complex range of purposes and formalities that refer to common kava use. The Tongan kava origin stories are also introduced. The paradigm of modernity and the imagination of a binary antonym Indigene is critically examined as it influences identity and understanding of kava phenomena. Indigenous is defined as ‘native’ existence that remains and continues to evolve beyond western colonial encounters. Western modernity is defined as hegemonic projects that are represented by the dominant discourses of Eurocentrism, capitalism, colonialism, coloniality, patriarchy, racism, civilization, Christianity, and heteronormativity. Indigenous thought is recovered and remembered in ceremony and tradition to frame and root kava in its original contexts in order to navigate various new contexts today. Tongan and Moana concepts of mana (*potency*), tapu (*sacredness*), and noa (*balance*) are treated as theory (rather than objects of study), and are defined and discussed. The Tongan tā vā (time-space) theory is also discussed as a central idea of temporal and spatial mindfulness. Tā is metaphorical time represented by beats, taps, or rhythm, and vā is space represented by spatial relationships and the points in between (Māhina, 2010; Ka‘ili, 2017a). The theoretical discussions of time and space from Tongan, Mayan, and other knowledges are brought into conversation with each other to critically expand these ideas in order to interpret the kava phenomenon central in this thesis. Indigenous concepts of time inform a cyclical spiral concept that is a non-linear relationship, requiring a constant mediation of potential conflict in place. Tongan and Indigenous thought are intentionally temporally and spatially relational as rootz ways of thinking, founded in ancestral knowledge, memory, and reinvention.

Chapter 3: Ethics, Methods, Position, and Data. This chapter contains reflexive positioning of myself as researcher, as well as my backgrounds that inform my thought, engagement, and relationship to this project. The logistical information of ethnographic data is shared as the boundaries that inform this thesis, composed of eighty eight kava sessions

attended in the last three years and one hundred and forty participant contributions through talanoa. Participant ratios will be displayed, which include mostly men, some women, and few fakafefine (discussed in chapter eight). Participants were mostly comprised of Tongan descent, with a significant amount being multi-ethnic as well. The Tongan epistemological concept of talking story through relationally mindful critical oratory known as talanoa is discussed as a method that mediates mana, tapu, and noa to uphold relationships first and then critical discussion. This research was approved by my kava mentors, participants, the university ethics committee, and the prime minister's office in the Kingdom of Tonga who approves foreign research permissions. Ethical approaches were grounded in the concept of tauhi vā. Tauhi vā is a Tongan cultural value of nurturing social space and kin relations. This ethnographic project's ethical considerations extend beyond the legal parameters of the university, being based in Indigenous approaches to relationships. Both talanoa and tauhi vā are central components of kava phenomenon, where imbibing kava neutralizes different energies from people allowing for an open dialogue. Tauhi vā founds the basis of openness by nurturing and tidying up relational space between people and place to create balance in kava settings.

Chapter 4: Chanting Kava History and Singing Tongan Tradition. In chapter four ideas of tradition and Tongan-ness are explored through the history of kava. The ancient Tongan kava chant reveals layers of history and kava practice, which is continued up through contemporary musical styles. The ancient and contemporary kava musics express ethnographic reflections of kava events in both the past and the present. Kava ceremonies facilitate a mediation between socio-political power relations, which is ancestral knowledge established anciently and remembered in the kava chant. Lo'au is considered by many scholars and elders to have been an architect of Tongan society and instrumental in the establishment of the kava ceremony that survives today. This ritual construction took place

during a time of great upheaval in order to establish and continue to re-establish societal balance. Kalapu (kava clubs) such as the Fōfō‘anga represent a legacy of open dialogue, political criticism, and community strength that have expanded Tongan kava culture. Common faikava gatherings adapt in form but maintain the function of calibrating relationships and creating spaces of truth telling for Tongans. Several reggae songs composed by diasporic Tongans document Indigenous identities that connect to the past, uphold ideas of tradition, and reflect contemporary kava.

Chapter 5: Religion, Spirituality, and Kava Metaphysics. In this chapter Indigenous critiques of Christianity are used to negotiate the conflicts and collaborations that construct contemporary kava practices. Christian Sabbath/Sunday has been adopted into Tongan Christianity and is treated as tapu, drawing from Indigenous concepts applied to new beliefs. Kava circles respond to Sabbath constructs by setting this day apart with songs and discussion that focus on religious themes. Tongan Christian history is one of a violent crusade to centralize power in a context of colonial national formations that emerged throughout Oceania. Tongans rejected Christianity but were compelled over time through chiefly conversions and missionary strategy. Kava remains a central component of Tongan spirituality and pre-Christian religious practices that still echoes through today. Kava spirituality is based on an intimate relationship with the land, a source of Tongan identity. The faikava experience is a mediation of Tongan metaphysics where tempo-spatial mediation of mana and tapu take place to create noa. Tapu must be rendered noa in order for people to act or speak openly in a manner outside of ceremonial protocol, transcending social conventions and restrictions allowing for openness and truth to be performed and spoken. Tongan spirituality resonates with the sounds of the spirits, which is identified as a minor key sound by Māhina (2016a). The sound of spirits invigorates ancestral memory and animates living

spirits. Indigenous metaphysics are brought forward from the past as a rootz way of thinking, which continually brings the original into the present and adapts it to contemporary realities.

Chapter 6: Underkava Mormons – Hymns, Reggae, and Hip Hop. Using the example of Mormonism, this chapter reveals how the ideas of modern/Indigenous binary tensions exist between kava practice (Indigenous) and religious (western modernity) paradigms. Mormon controversies around kava are premised on confusion between local lay clergy, church owned institutions, and no official church stance. Mormon focus on nuclear families, capitalist productivity, and monogamous fidelity conflicts with some kava practices of broader family definitions and the disruption of capitalist logics. Mormon Kava groups privilege Tongan composed hymns and use them as a way to connect to their Indigenous identities, ancestors, and as a source of healing. Church responsibilities and nuclear family focus becomes central in Mormon kava practices. Mormon kava is also generally more pan-Moana in composition. Mormon theological narratives of Pacific Islander origins is reinforced through exotic constructions by ideologies of western modernity of Indigenous identity. Mormon owned tourist infrastructure in Hawai‘i perpetuates these constructions. Tongan/Moana Mormons who are alienated in diasporic societies adopt new expressions (e.g., reggae and Hip Hop) in ancestral vessels (e.g., faikava) in order to tell their complex stories, which are absent in mainstream Mormon channels.

Chapter 7: Transporting Place in Diaspora Temporalities. In this chapter, diaspora is argued to be an existential phenomenon and experience beyond spatial or geographic distance, including temporal dislocation and displacement. The primary research sites of Utah and Aotearoa are contextualized as respective hubs of Tongan and Moana communities where kava practice is thriving and adapting. Diaspora detaches and alienates groups of people through western metaphysics of linear time and Indigenous erasure. Some identities that emerge out of diaspora experience include romanticized Indigeneity, strategic romanticism to

escape present oppression, and assimilation to the belief that Indigeneity is not relevant or necessary. Faikava collapses time in space, which heals feelings of disconnect and catalyses identity formation and a sense of belonging. Kava circles in diaspora serve as sites of recovery from the structural and material struggles faced by communities in systems of linearity. In the process of connecting to land and ancestors, diaspora communities find healing and connection through Indigenous identity formation. Diasporic healing replaces feelings of displacement with critical historical memory and reimagining's of place, relationships, and the body as land. Land and Indigeneity is the medicine administered in faikava to treat temporal dislocation in paradigms of western modernity.

Chapter 8: Kava Genders. Gender and kava is specifically discussed in chapter eight revealing tensions, alternatives, and future possibilities. Some of the tensions and controversies around kava practice today is the strain it can put on nuclear family units when a husband is out drinking kava frequently, which is demonstrated in a reggae song about kava from a wife's perspective. Spousal tensions has led to a response by many men to prioritize nuclear home life before going to kava sessions. A growing number of women are engaging with faikava today, revitalizing Indigenous practices. Indigenous gendered relations between brothers and sisters remain a potential issue in kava that is negotiated in the growth of co-ed kava groups. Western masculinities are challenged in kava settings that open up the space through the mana of kava where men can support one another, talk openly, and express love. Kava also reveals the erotic desire that has been suppressed in modern paradigms through the memory of traditional courtship with the presence of tou'a fefine who serve kava on some occasions. Queer identities are also surfaced in kava settings as they embody a collapse of gendered restrictions in Tongan tapu; such as brother-sister prohibitions of open interaction. A resurgence is taking place today with increasingly common co-ed, multi-gendered, and all women's kava groups as kava brings rootz into the future.

Chapter 9: Ancestral Identities. This chapter begins exploring Tongan ideas about identity that ground Tongan-ness in ancestral stories, resilience, time and space mindfulness, and kava. This chapter explores the context and content of the poem turned song, Hala Kuo Papa, which was written by Queen Sālote. This song demonstrates one model of Tongan identity through facing challenges and rooting oneself in their genealogical identity and ancestral mana. The other model of identity that is explored is that of oppressed Tongans who construct and create new and expanding identities. The Seleka kava and art club is discussed as a collective that has embraced and created a space that is open for the youth ‘misfits’ and ‘outcasts’ of Tongan society. This chapter concludes with a discussion on identity based in creativity and Godliness. Through collapsing time, the Gods of yesterday are present today, and the people of today can be conceptualized as the potential Gods of tomorrow. The potential to be like the ancestors is in recreating something anew that can be sustained and perpetuated, a manifestation of the generative quality of mana.

Chapter 10: Metaphors of Kava. This chapter explores the relationship between metonym, metaphor, and the various references to kava practices which are prominent in songs about kava quoted throughout this thesis. This thesis is formulated as a roots way of thinking that continually brings the past forward as a basis for Indigeneity. The metonym of kava as transportable land, allows for continued construction of Indigenous identity that is founded on ancestral sources. Indigeneity evolves as it is recreated and adapted to contemporary relevance and contexts. Kava metaphors are argued to be grammars of animacy that reflect a living world. Kava effects are explained to be metaphorical cycles of life and death, which gives access to spiritual planes of consciousness where knowledge is learned from and co-produced with ancestors. The kava bowl is a metaphor for ancestral navigational and astronomical knowledge, which also represents woman, earth, the Ha‘amonga ‘a Maui (stone trilithon) in Tonga, and the Tongan cosmological worldview. Chewing is a traditional

preparation of kava, which recreates the founding ancestor story of Tongan identity, the first Tu'i Tonga Aho'eitu who was consumed and then resurrected. In consuming kava one consumes the sacrament of ancestor(s) and is connected and animated by them and brings them to life. Indigeneity is argued to be a metaphor for ancestrally rooted experiences of being human, based in the necessary functions of life and ecological relationships.

Chapter 11: Conclusion. This final chapter summarizes the arguments made in this thesis. Faikava is a contemporary Tongan and Moana phenomenon, which mediates various living, ancestral, and environmental relationships. Kava practices are rooted in ancestral traditions as they are reimagined and recreated to adapt to current realities, needs, and challenges. Indigeneity emerges in response to western modernity and metaphysics. Indigenous identity is a rootz way of thinking, being, and doing that continually brings roots into the present. Songs and music are closely related with kava practices and many compositions are rich ethnographic sources of ancient and contemporary kava traditions. Singing transmits story, the significance of identity, and cultivates feelings of māfana (*warmth*) within kava circles. Hip Hop and reggae are additional sounds to the string bands and A Capella performances in kava circles that add new expressions to complex identities and contemporary realities. Urban Indigenous identities are created and perpetuated in confronting displacement and disconnection from diaspora experience where kava serves as transportable land and knowledge. Controversies and contradictions within communities are mediated in these kava events by suspending time, and upholding relationships through softening conflict with humour, song, and kava.

## Chapter 2. Kava and Indigenous Theory

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter is a review of Tongan kava literature that contextualizes my research focus on “common” or “regular” kava gatherings (distinguishing them from elite practices). I introduce kava origins in Tonga from a young woman who represents sacrifice and socio-political mediations. This expands the potential understanding of contemporary kava practices as sites that function as open spaces where criticism and controversy can be negotiated towards upholding balanced relations. Kava origin stories root interpretation of kava practices today as Indigenous theory. Ideas and paradigms of modernity and Indigeneity frame the contested spaces and various identities that are formed in kava settings today. These concepts are defined as identities, ideologies, and paradigms that are antagonistic, where modernity is a visible dominant system and Indigeneity an ancestral place-based challenge to western hegemony. Decolonial theory helps dismantle paradigms of western modernity and the antonym it creates of Indigeneity, offering new understandings of identity and kava, while upholding Indigenous autonomy and self-determination. Tongan/Moana theoretical concepts of mana, tapu, and noa are defined and discussed as alternative frameworks better suited to exploring kava practices and history. Mana, tapu, and noa are mediations of energy and ancestry that must be continually recalibrated and neutralized in order to maintain good relations with the social and natural realms. A review of the Tongan *tā vā* (*time-space*) theory of reality is put into multi-Indigenous dialogue to expand native theory. This is done in order to utilize these theories to interpret diasporic kava phenomena with Indigenous knowledge and to expand Indigenous thought.

### 2.2. Kava Literature and Origin Stories

Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is a member of the pepper plant family (a mild sedative

with anaesthetic properties) and is used in a variety of ways for medicinal and social purposes throughout the Moana (Fitisemanu, 2007; Lebot et al., 1992). The root of the Kava plant today is most commonly dried and ground before being mixed with water and then drunk. However, depending on the type of occasion or level of formality in Tongan society, the process, preparation, and presentation of kava may have more or less protocols and steps performed (Biersack, 1991; Hernandez and Bell, 2013; Newell, 1947; Pratt, 1922). Whether fresh or dried, how it is strained, presented, and drunk also varies across the Moana, as well as who participates, but the protocols generally hinge on the particular purpose for gathering. Taumafa kava, the regal ceremony in Tonga, in which the Monarch is present or receiving their coronation, fresh kava roots are used, broken off of the full plant, and pounded as part of the ceremony. What is often considered formal kava has many facets of its own but might generally be understood as a ceremonial imbibe tied to the bestowing of titles, royal events, or practices associated with major life events that exist in all social ranks (e.g., funerals and weddings). There are many strict protocols for kava ceremonies in Tonga associated with higher status events such as receiving a title, which have their own respective names. Taumafa Kava (*Paramount Chief/Monarch's kava ceremony*), Ilo Kava (*Chiefly kava ceremony*), and Fai Kava (*Common/People's kava session/ceremony*) generally comprise the levels of kava ceremony and ritual in Tonga (Feldman, 1980; Newell, 1947; Pratt, 1922). Chapter four will delve into some more detail on Tongan kava rituals, their evolution, and their connections across social rank.

My research is focused on Tongan Fai Kava, or faikava, which are kava drinking sessions, which are more frequent and common gatherings. Faikava take place regularly in people's homes, or in adjacent areas such as garage's or other meeting places. Faikava have been considered by some as 'informal' in the kava literature (Feldman, 1980; Newell, 1947). Faikava literally means "to do kava, kava making/drinking", or "to have a kava drinking

session/gathering” (Helu, 1993; Hernandez and Bell, 2013). It’s usually spelt faikava, but I spell it Fai Kava at times, so I can capitalize Kava to show its’ importance and significance. This is how I contextually respect kava in writing, it is a personal preference. Kava transcends the colonial lens that separates Micro, Mela, and Poly – nesia. Kava use extends from Papua to Pohnpei, to Hawai‘i, and many places in between (Lebot et al., 1997). Generally known as Kava, it has many names across the Moana including Sakau (Pohnpei), Yaqona (Viti, Indigenous word for Fiji), ‘Ava/‘Awa (Sāmoa/Hawai‘i), and Kava (Tonga). Kava use is generally dominated by the participation of cisgender men amongst Tongans. That being said, women throughout the Moana have also participated in kava drinking historically, including in Tonga. There are early accounts of Goddesses and Chiefly women who drank kava (Dale, 2008; Gifford, 1924; Ka‘ili, 2017c). There are also several eighteenth-nineteenth century accounts by Missionaries, Captain Cook, and William Mariner who observed women of various rank drink kava, such as priestesses; kava was also drunk in connection with feminine/female deities (Dale, 2008; Ferdon, 1987; Gifford, 1924; Ka‘ili 2017c; Lātūkefu, 1966). However, since the integration of Christianity in much of Tongan identity and practice, kava amongst Tongans is now generally considered a men’s domain, although that boundary is increasingly being challenged and is changing. Chapter eight of this thesis will explore kava and gender in more depth.

Kava use amongst Tongans and Moana people is hugely diverse and dependent on purpose as well as region, island, village, family, chiefly line, religion, and group, with each upholding their own respective protocols and purposes for drinking kava. Kava can be used to formalize an event or enter into a binding covenant (e.g., coronation, wedding). Fuakava is the word for covenant in Tongan, meaning first kava or the fruits of kava. Kava binds title or chief to their duties and responsibilities, or the covenant between couples to each other in a wedding ceremony, or between aggrieved parties that are reconciling and asking for

forgiveness (Aporosa, 2014a; Collocott, 1927; Churchward, 2015; Dale, 2008). My focus is on the range of elements in Tongan identity founded in faikava among the groups I have engaged with for this research, exploring the function of binding people and fonua (*land, placenta, custom, tradition*) together in the Kingdom of Tonga as well as through transportable fonua (e.g., kava) in diaspora (Tecun, 2017). Kava settings also facilitate a variety of Tongan art forms that are practiced and performed such as comedy, speechmaking, music, and storytelling, which maintain many poetic forms vital in connecting with the fonua (Feldman, 1980; Māhina, 1993; Māhina, 2008a; Māhina, 2008b). Kava circles are spaces of transmitting knowledge, which reveal truth, and practices today are derived from hundreds of years of tradition and adaptations throughout time (Fehoko, 2014; 2015; Huffman, 2015a; 2015b; Rodman, 1991).

Kava is infused with mana, which is authority, honour, spiritual power and effective force (which will be explained further later in this chapter) (Aporosa, 2014a; Turner, 1986; Moorfield, n.d.). Any positive or negative behaviors that are linked to kava by Moana communities exist because kava can reveal who people really are, and reflect the realities of their temporal and spatial experiences. This means they reveal their “entirety”, including what many generally don’t normally show in public formalities or in their usual gendered and generational boundaries within Tongan culture. Kava as mana is potent and has some soporific effects, but it does not cause one thing or another, it is neither good nor evil. In Viti (Fiji), kava can be used to bless or to curse, depending on the purpose or intent of who wields it. Ancient life in Tonga possibly also included a spectrum of use that could be metaphysically beneficial or harmful (Collocott, 1921a, 1921b; Filihia, 2008; Gunson, 2010; van der Grijp, 2002). If a faikava leads to what some refer to as elevated higher planes of dialogue, feeling, and thinking, this is because kava reveals the knowledge and wisdom of the group and their ancestors present (Tecun, 2017; Tecun et al., 2018). Another example that is more

controversial is when kava leads to different planes of speaking and talking that include obscene or vulgar language (e.g., swearing, dirty jokes). According to interviews and observations this reveals those people's temporal positions and environmental circumstances, such as expressing their escape from oppressive neoliberal capitalist labour. Kava is used in these circumstances to survive the struggles of urban life and diaspora angst for working-class Tongans in settler colonial nations (Aporosa, 2014a). These various responses to the drink at times happen simultaneously in the same event or at different times for the same person. The composition of the event and the time and space it takes place also influences the purpose and result of the faikava (Ka'ili, 2008; 2017a; 2017b).

Kava is seen by some as a cleansing of one's inner self by bringing 'truths' out from within that are not able to be expressed in other settings. An example is once one purges their stresses, thoughts can shift and one can transcend the current reality and imagine the past or the future. That which is within you that is out of balance is temporally calibrated, making one momentarily whole with the physical and social healing properties of kava. If one is already in more balance generally, their kava experience has the potential to transcend realms of the living to an ancestral plane, where knowledge or truth is found in a state between consciousnesses (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bott, 2003; Coogler, 2018; Gregory, 1988; 2006; Mignolo, 2012; Rodman, 1991; Turner, 1969; 1987; Turner, 2012; Vaka, 2016; van der Beek, 2017). This is why one claps to indicate that it is time for the next drink of kava or to identify yourself as the next recipient. Clapping marks one is ready to take their cup, and it is a way to wake up or acknowledge the spirits present and one's connection to them (ancestors, deceased chiefs) (Aporosa, 2014a; Lebot et al., 1997). One can also drink kava in proxy, such as on behalf of the deceased or the living. I have witnessed drinking on behalf of the deceased at funeral settings, and also drinking on behalf of someone who was living, but not physically present (Aporosa, 2016b).

Framing faikava as ‘informal’ or less formal is only in as much as it contrasts with more strict formalities when kava has a more specific and rare ritual purpose. Kava sessions are reflections of Tongan society, microcosms of communities, yet much of the academic attention has been on the elite ceremonial versions. The focus on ‘informal’ practices in this project considers explanation of all faikava being formal occasions in their own right, because of their function as socio-political theatre, and as events that bind relationships (Helu, 1993; 1999; Ka‘ili, 2008; 2017a; Newell, 1947; Tecun, 2017). Perminow (1995) argues there is never really informal Kava sessions that are not “governed by rules of procedure and behaviour” (p.119). Perminow states that there is only one type of Kava ceremony in Tonga and the formality level can be “dressed up or down to elaborate, and thus play a part in, the on-going constitution of a diversity of social relationships” (p.119). Futa Helu commented in the documentary film *Kava Kuo Heka!*, “Kava ceremony is the centrepiece of our ceremony and our rituals” (In Shumway and Smith, 1999). Kava “always involves symbolic expressions that play a part in the *constitution or reconstitution of important social relationships*” (Perminow, 1995, p.120). All types of Kava ceremonies are connected and bleed into each other in purpose, format, and function, although they may be for a variety of events, and reflect different socio-political power relations. For the purpose of this thesis I refer to faikava as a regular event, being between the realms of common vs less common rituals rather than formal/informal.

Common kava gatherings are the general types of spaces I have been in while observing song, story, and performance for this thesis (Helu, 1993; Newell, 1947). It is important to emphasize that Tongan experiences and identities include and interact with other Kakai Moana (*Oceanic peoples*). Tongan kava practice is influenced by both connections with neighbouring people of the Moana in the deep past, as well as present day Moana people getting to know each other again in diaspora (Lopesi, 2018a; 2018b). There are overlaps with

Sāmoans, iTaukei (*Indigenous Fijians*), and other Moana people in Tongan experiences and vice versa (Cattermole, 2009). Additionally, this thesis centres predominantly on diaspora, arrivant, immigrant, or transnational peoples who find themselves in physical and temporal distance from the origins of their individual, collective, and place-based identity, or rather their Indigeneity (Byrd, 2011; Reyes, 2014). Ka‘ili (2017c) suggests trans-Indigenous or trans-Indigeneity may appropriately reflect these groups of people who are Indigenous in their ancestral ethnicity, yet no longer reside in the origins of their place-based identity. Any investigation of kava practices today must seriously attempt to include both a spatial and temporally mindful vision rather than a partial view of kava phenomena (Māhina, 2011b).



**Figure 3. Bags of dried kava powder in Nuku‘alofa, Tonga. Picture taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

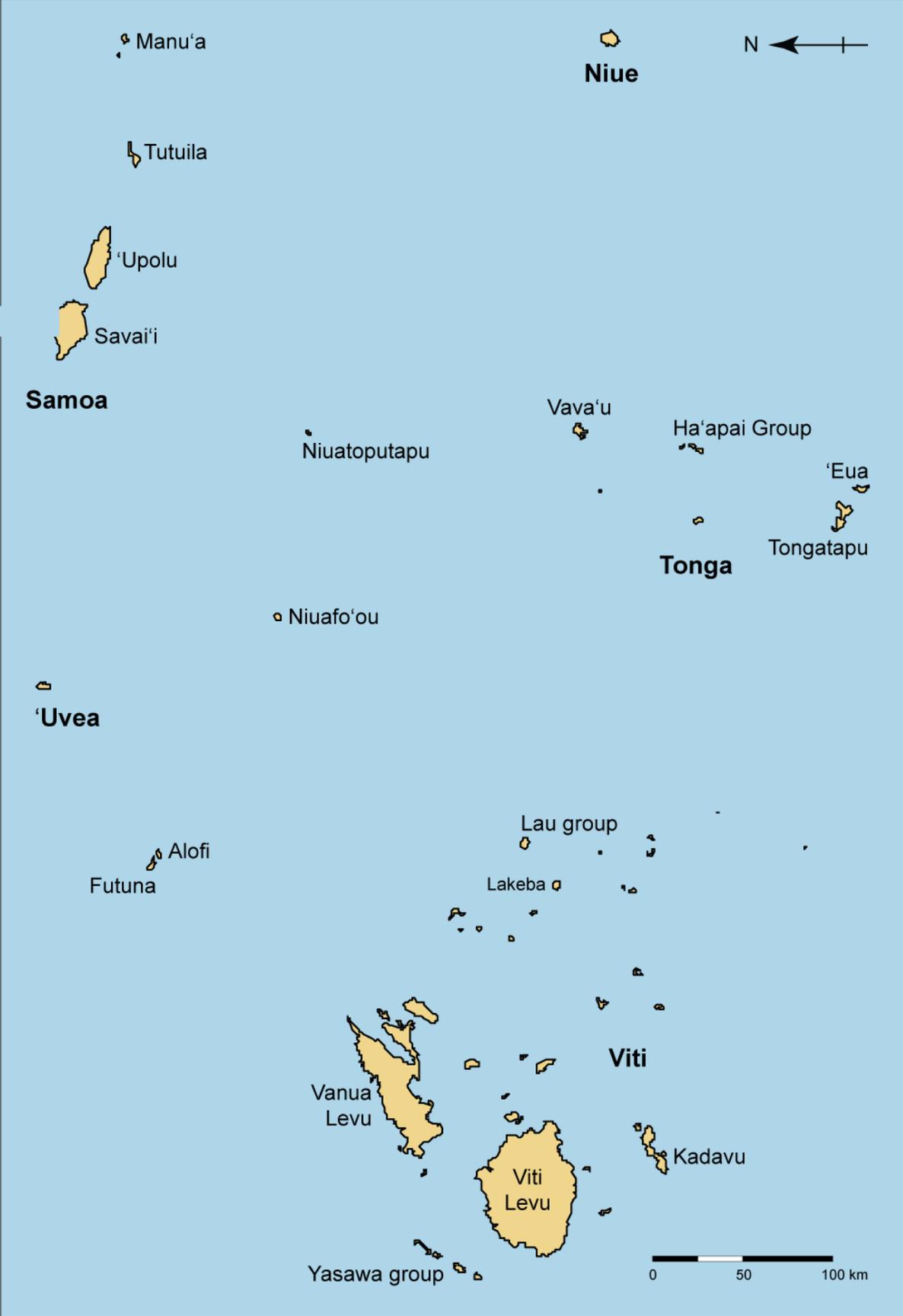


Figure 4. Map of Tonga, Viti, and Sāmoa. This map faces east intentionally. Commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and created by Seline McNamee.



Figure 5. Kalapu Ramz in Kava Lake City, Utah. Picture taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).



Figure 6. Kava plant in 'Eua. Picture taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

### 2.3. Kava Origins

Tongan kava stories are rich with supernatural elements and connections. The first Tu'i Tonga (*paramount/sacred chief*) Aho'eitu climbed a toa (*ironwood*) tree in order to reach langi (*sky/heaven*) (Campbell, 2001; Gifford, 1924; Gunson, 1990; Herda, 1988; Ka'ili, 2017c; Lafitani, 1992; Māhina, 1992; Tauamiti & Mafile'o, 2015). Aho'eitu met his father Tangaloa in langi and drank kava with him, after which he would be consumed by his jealous half-brothers and would later be resurrected in a kava bowl. The origin story of kava and tō (*sugarcane*) tell that they grew miraculously from a young woman's tomb, which I will tell later in this section. Lo'au is a prominent figure in most versions of the kava origin story as the chief who instructs the ritual use of the plant, and also as an author of the story. Lo'au was a foreigner who became linked with the Tu'i Tonga lineage and an important figure in history as a social architect in Tongan society. The name Lo'au would continue to reappear after this first Lo'au whenever the society was reorganized significantly (Bott, 1982; Ka'ili, 2017c). Lo'au's daughter Nua was married to the 10th Tu'i Tonga Momo, linking him with this lineage. Lo'au is argued by Ka'ili (2008; 2017a) to have been a master botanist, possibly from Hawai'i or Tahiti, since the stories about him in Tonga and Sāmoa say he was from the east. Ka'ili argues that the first Lo'au who arrived in Tonga during this era could be Lā'au in Hawai'i. I will go into more detail in chapter four drawing from the songs composed about kava to explore this history further.

There are several versions of the origin story of kava, and I will focus on some common elements (Biersack, 1991). A high chief, whose precise identification varies in each narrative, but who is generally agreed to have been the 10<sup>th</sup> Tu'i Tonga Momo, arrived at an island called 'Eueiki. Ka'ili (2008) argues 'Eueiki is the Tongan version of Hawaiki/Hawai'i. A man living on this island called Fevanga, seeing this arrival anxiously prepared an umu (*earth oven*), while Fefafa his wife went to harvest kape (*giant taro*) to feed the honoured

guests arrival (Māhina, 2011b; Shumway & Smith, 1999). They found him resting under the shade of the plant hoped to be harvested. They were unable to approach him because of the tapu of his status and rank, so they made a difficult decision to put their daughter in the umu as a sacrifice to offer him instead. When the high chief heard of such devotion he refused the gift and instructed them to leave it as her grave. Another version says he departed upon hearing of the act before the umu could be uncovered, and it eventually became their daughter's grave. Fevanga and Fefafa's daughter was named Kava'onau. Two plants eventually grew from her tomb, one being named after her, Kava, and the other was Tō (sugarcane). Some versions include the observation of a mouse/rat who nibbles on the base of the kava plant and begins to stumble, and when chewing on the sugarcane walks straight once more. The Taumafa Kava ceremony is believed by many to have been constructed at this time by Lo'au. One story includes that when Lo'au heard of these miraculous new plants growing from the grave mound where Kava'onau was buried, he instructed her parents to take it to the Tu'i Tonga as an offering, one sweet, one bitter, a balanced gift, which is still a highly respected gift in Tongan society and custom (Biersack, 1991; Māhina, 2011b; Wolfgramm and Shumway, 2001).

The kava origin story implies a deep importance for sacrifice, balance, and fatongia (*sacred responsibilities of reciprocity*), both in the sacrificial offering given by the people, and in the chiefly refusal to accept such a costly gift (Biersack, 1991). Kava is the national drink of Tonga and remains a powerful icon of identity (Aporosa, 2014b; Shumway & Smith, 1999). Kava gatherings and ceremony are a major site of Tongan epistemological and ontological development, as well as identity reinforcement. Kava rituals are performances of socio-political mediation, which Helu (1999) referred to as "social theatre" (p. 232). Biersack (1991) explains them as contractual agreements between rulers and people. Common kava sessions are also agreements and theatre between gendered relationships, families, and

communities. Kava rituals in their various forms, function to create or reflect a sense of order, by mediating social, environmental, and political relationships. Māhina (2008b; 2011a) argues that this process facilitates the mediation of conflict to resolution or a move from restlessness to restfulness. This mediation is enacted through performance arts that strive to create harmony in a kava session such as speeches, songs, and stories.

#### **2.4. Locating the western/modern and identifying Indigeneity**

The terms and concepts of modernity and Indigeneity will be defined in this section. These concepts require thoughtful attention because this thesis centres on Indigenous paradigms, however Indigeneity itself comes into existence through the inception of modernity. The paradigm of modernity is one of constant conflict with the antonym it creates of Indigeneity. This paradigm has created an invisible whiteness and hegemonic racialized hetero-patriarchy as its cultural norm. When I refer to western modernity it includes the concepts, ideologies, and systems that have in relatively recent history imagined and constructed “the west”. This includes that which is called western, western paradigms, western metaphysics, modern western notions of civilization, eurocentrism, and more. In other words, a symbol for the hegemonic culture, dominant representation, and systems of power derived from the “west” that have metastasized over the recent centuries as a temporally imagined essentialist construct. Modernity is fuelled by teleological linear thinking and temporality, which supported the rise of capitalism, national state-craft, and current notions of hierarchical superiority. This paradigm simultaneously creates then demonizes and romanticizes a frozen and orientalist past for the coloured exotic Indigene (Byrd, 2011; Calderón, 2016; Fanon, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mills, 2007; Rifkin, 2017; Said, 2016; Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Modernity assumes ownership of “advanced” technology and divides “past” peoples on measures of authenticity premised on the absence of contemporary tools. Western

paradigms assume an exclusively “western” authorship and use of so-called “modern” technology, which are made possible through legacies of exploitation of people and land or in collaboration with them. However western technology is not objects and tools themselves but rather a different set of relationships to them. Modern technology cannot assume it is advanced without considering the environmental and social cost of non-convivial and unsustainable tools (Illich, 2001). Modernity is not the adoption or use of externally introduced or co-produced tools either, rather it consists of the dominant logics of manufacture, distribution, and use of technology (tools) in our modern paradigm. Is the technology appropriate to people and place? What is the ecological cost and price to humanity in its mode of production, manufacture, and invention? Modernity’s political economy seeks to commodify everything, intruding on Indigenous life, causing anxieties of a double-bind desire for Indigeneity to protect knowledge and intangibles yet having to do so through western notions of property (Busse, 2009). Indigeneity must constantly transform commodity and property into a gift, tribute, or trade by shifting the cosmology of the original intention and relationship of its production and distribution (Mignolo, 2009). Yet even restoring pre-commodified relationships cannot erase the ecological and cultural price of its commodification in the first place (McCormack, 2013).

Modern life makes Indigenous people and land into sites of commodification, extraction, and mining. People and land become what Dotson (2017) identifies as epistemic backgrounding, being “relegated as a means for framing some other domain without ever becoming the ‘point’ of inquiry” (p. 424). Critically identifying the elements of this paradigm is necessary to see and understand its influences on ideas and experiences of Indigenous identity and in understanding kava phenomena in the Kingdom and abroad (Calderón, 2016; Tecun, 2017). For example, notions of authenticity in kava practices measured by materials or tools used are often judged on their temporal location. If it is perceived as “modern” than it is

often subject to scrutiny of being “non-traditional”. The paradigm of modernity maintains sets of invented dichotomized binaries, such as between the modern and primitive, that which is imagined to belong to modernity or Indigeneity. Modern paradigms evade complicated and connected realities that impact one another that include how these paradigms and identities are entangled with each other. In the following paragraphs I will focus further on Indigeneity and modernity, and how they are defined by academic literature, Indigenous thinkers and artists, and those who contributed their knowledge and experience to this research. These paradigms inform understanding Indigeneity, Tongan time-space theory, kava, and identity in this thesis.

Indigenous came from the Latin ‘indigena’ in order to distinguish the “cultural,” the “ethnic,” from the dominant norms of “western man” within the paradigm of modernity (Hamill, 2012; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Smith (2012) has identified it as a problematic term because “it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different” (p. 6). Smith explains that other collective or pan-identity terms used under the umbrella of Indigenous includes, First Peoples, Native Peoples, First Nations, People of the Land, Aborigines, or Fourth World Peoples. In Iximulew (*Guatemala*) and throughout Abiyya Yala (*South America*), Pueblos Originarios is also used, meaning Original Peoples. Among Moana peoples the terms; People of the Sea, Ocean Peoples, Pasifika, and Oceanians is also used, and are terms of convenience subject to the same negotiations of collective similarity and distinct diversity (Gordon-Smith, 2015; Samu, 2016). Indigeneity encompasses all of these different regions and identifies a particular relationship and worldview tied to place and ancestors.

The word Indigenous first appeared in English in a 1598 document and is framed by conquest (Hamill, 2012). However, although it was created and introduced by outsiders of the “New World” to refer to people who were already there, Indigenous people eventually began

to own the term. Cajete (1994) explains that the terms Tribal and Indigenous apply to the large amount of “traditional” and “tribally oriented” communities with identities tied to specific places, regions, and whose cultures espouse “an inherent environmental orientation and sense of sacred ecology” (p.14). Indigenous is a local and global identity, drawing from both place-based uniqueness, and common global struggles (Merlan, 2009). Indigenous identities are linked to different colonial legacies, mostly derived from the same geographical region of the European ‘west’; or catalysed by and modelled after the manner of modern empire. Indigeneity has been defined in the tension between ‘the west and the rest’, where whiteness, colonizer, and patriarchy is defined as the “self” and has presumed to define all “others” (Hall, 1992; Minh-ha, 2006; Wise, 2011). Eve Tuck (Twitter, 6 January 2018) explains the complications and yet the embrace of such a term, stating: “I don’t love the word ‘Indigenous’ more than all other words. I care about it insofar as it conveys a spatial, political, ongoing and historical relationship to the state. I care about how it connects up with other peoples.” Gunson (1993) suggests that “Polynesian traditional history refers to a vast body of vernacular literature either surviving from pre-Christian times or re-presented by indigenous storytellers in post-Christian times” (p. 140). The use of Indigenous here refers to literacy that extends beyond European writing, including oral storytelling, and yet is dichotomized with Christianity as the mid-point that divides time. Filihia (2008) adds that “the use of the term ‘indigenous’ is preferable to the terms ‘pre-Christian’ or ‘pre-contact’ because many ... practices... have continued to the present day” (p. 383). Gunson (1993) explains that during the era of initial European intrusions in the Moana, many converts to Christianity who had stewarded specialised or sacred Indigenous knowledges deliberately suppressed them. Gunson suggests that this was because Indigenous songs and stories, “celebrated ways of life and relationships which they not only felt would be offensive to European Christians but which they wished to forget themselves” (p. 141).

Although Indigeneity is a continually adaptive identity and complicates divisions of time as pre and post, it can be identified as being linked to a deliberate, intentional, and living connection to the ancient past, ancestral place, and is often presented as an oppositional “other” to the “modern”. Fanon (1963) explains the imagination of this dichotomy and its antagonistic tension, stating that “it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system” (p. 36). Fanon (2008) also explains the temporal significance of this tension, reminding us that “The architecture of this work is rooted in the temporal. Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time” (p. 5). Modernity not only creates the native, the Indigenous, it freezes Indigeneity and colour in time, creating a paradigm where the future for the brown/black Indigenous body is “white”. Asserting one’s own Indigeneity is thus a political act counter to the linear temporality of modern western society. One example of this is demonstrated by the Pan-Moana diaspora reggae group Kava Kreation, who recorded an upbeat song about kava in 2012, which intentionally brings the past into the present. Their kava song’s lyrics say, “the roots of the kava is traditional, its passed on down, yeah, from the old school times”.

The order of the world within this coloniality of power is made after the image of “western” imaginations, which have categorised, divided, named, and drawn the world in a racialized colour-coded hierarchy with a white gaze, a god lens, which looks down upon everything, creating the world in *his* own image (Morrison, 2007; Willinsky, 1998; Rabasa, 2003; Quijano, 2000). Rabasa (2003) explains that in mapping and categorising the world through imperial expansion, eurocentrism remains central in the conception of the “west” and “in the bodies and minds of the rest of the world” (p. 358). Belonging to the inside or outside of this colonial atlas reflects the constructed binary dichotomous oppositions between moderns and ancients, primitive and civilised, hard science and soft science, black and white,

the “west” and the rest. The Gregorian calendar year of 1492 is argued to be the temporal centre point to understand how the world has been ordered as such through modern imperialism, transiting into a modern colonial paradigm of war (Byrd, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Memmi, 2013). “Western” is thus defined within the epistemology of modernity, which is projected out of the tempo-spatial Columbian intersection. According to Maldonado-Torres (2008), war is the central feature of modern life, the constant ethic that founded colonialism, racism, and gendered oppositions. Adding the colonial relationship to political economy in the paradigm and logics of modernity Loomba (2005) explains that colonialism served as the “midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism” (p. 10). From these foundations, a colonial system of power emerged and remains in diverse and continual shapeshifted forms. European disruption differs from other ‘pre-contact’ power relations in both intentionality, hegemony, and the sheer scale in which so many changes have occurred relatively quickly, considering the depth of our existence as a species.

Coloniality is premised upon its normalisation of universal vs. local. For example, “Western commentators...are more compelled to rigidly compartmentalize indigenous and exogenous, precolonial and colonial, because they retain an exoticized and dehistoricized view of [Indigenous] Pacific cultures” (Jolley, 1992, p. 53). Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines coloniality as the remaining pattern of power derived from colonialism, yet in existence beyond colonial administration. Maldonado-Torres explains that coloniality is upheld in books and in the standards for academic performance. Coloniality is “in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and [more] ... as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday” (p. 243). Colonialism, imperialism, and the pervasive coloniality of western modernity differs from past empires the world over.

Modernity is marked by the shift that “rationalizes” a sense of “discovery” of supposed “new” world’s known as Turtle Island, Abiya Yala, and Moana (“America’s” and

Oceania) (Byrd, 2011; Dotson, 2016; Loomba, 2005; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Smith, 2012).

The shift of modernity brought with it new ideologies and centralized power on a speed, scale, and magnitude unprecedented in human history albeit locally specific. For example:

By the 1930s colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it is impossible for European colonialism to have been a monolithic operation... The legacies of colonialism are thus varied and multiple even as they obviously share some important features (Loomba, 2005, pp. 19-20).

Adding further complexity and distinctiveness with the “new” world’s impact on modern western colonialism, Byrd (2011) argues that the colonial project in these “new” world’s constructed and created “Indianess.”

Indianness as a concept branched out from the inventions of the native and Indigenous. I understand “Indianess” to be a process and condition that makes “Indians” an invisible polar opposite of “whiteness” (class and colour-coded western normativity) (Mills, 2007; Wise, 2011). Indianness (Indigeneity) is an invisible presence assumed to be absent, and whiteness is an invisible socialized norm assumed to be standard. Both Indianness and whiteness are mystified and visibly non-existent in societal dialectics within this paradigm. The conditions for the existence of “Indianess, blackness, and whiteness” is a colonial-blind discourse. This is similar to what Mills (2007) refers to as an epistemology of ignorance that perpetuates a historical amnesia to past and present racism. Indigeneity is thus rendered invisible, while a hypervisibility of colour emerges and is thus dehumanised by the self-presumed “master”, made into a racialized thing, a commodity, sub or non-human, and invalid in the prevailing western hegemony (Fanon, 1963; 2008; Kendi, 2016). Modernity thus continues to exist through a colonial-blind, which is a covert state of ignorance that perpetuates a settler futurity or future coloniality by erasing Indigenous presence and autonomy (Calderón, 2016). Colonial-blindness maintains the dimensions of colonial projects as invisible and normalized. Moana peoples thus confront struggles for Indigenous visibility

globally and within themselves, and they are in many circumstances racialized or measured on a spectrum of their proximity to ‘blackness’, ‘indianess’, and ‘whiteness’. Moana peoples were called “Indians” by Captain Cook, yet in some cases considered to be more ‘civilised’ than continental ‘Indians’, which is how the modern “west” conceived these “rest” who were found in the “new” world’s and oceans (Byrd, 2012; Ferdon, 1987). Similar to what Critical Race Studies has done to identify racialized discourse and presence in societal institutions and systems, coloniality must also be identified and made visible in society and scholarship in order to imagine something else (Calderón, 2016).

American Indian activist and poet John Trudell speaks of modernity as the idea around the concept of civilization (Rae & Katz, 2005). Trudell critiques this system and ideology, saying in a recorded interview:

It has been literally the most blood thirsty, brutalizing, system ever imposed on this planet. That is not civilization, that’s the great lie, that it represents civilization, that’s the great lie, or if it does represent civilization, and it’s truly what civilization is, then the great lie is that civilization is good for us. I think that we really need to put serious thought into understanding that we are dealing with a disease. It’s like there is this predator energy on this planet, and this predator energy feeds upon the essence of the human being, the spirit. This predator energy will take fossil fuel, and other resources out of the earth, and turn it into fuel, to run a machine system, but in order for there to be a need for that system, and in order for that system to work, they have to mine our minds, to get at the essence of our spirit. . . for this predatory system, this disease to work, we must not be able to use our minds in a clear coherent manner, because if we use our minds in a clear and coherent manner, we will not accept the unacceptable.

He adds that in order to understand European modernity and colonisation around the globe, European settlers, missionaries, and the like should study their tribal ancestry and reflect on who they are and interrogate how they got “civilised” or became “modern”. Trudell explains that in order to remain physically alive Indigenous people have had to shift their perceptual reality in order to survive.

Killsback (2013) refers to the driving force of this paradigm as an organism based on an invented ideology that “dehumanizes entire groups of people and damns whole societies while excusing itself from any past, current, or future acts of inhumanity” (p. 107). This

system produces a “societal bipolar disorder: half-colonizer and half-colonized” (p. 107).

Vandana Shiva refers to the current reiterations and maintenance of modernizing, civilizing, and development projects, as a production of in-between people who get caught up in the cracks of an in-between world (Black, Marlens, Hurst, & Grossen, 2010). Calderón (2009) defines western metaphysics as anthropocentric, individualistic, and linear. LaDuke (2015) explains that this system and society assumes that “man’s” laws are highest and is superior knowledge over “others”. LaDuke explains in a podcast that the linear thinking of western modernity is:

The idea that you can always make a new frontier and find someplace greener...there’s gonna be greener grass someplace ... and that we can trash it and move on...the perfect examples of linear thinking are two things: you have a linear production system where the largest products that we produce are waste; 50 Trillion pounds of waste... And the largest growth industries ... are what – waste management and the social element of that, prisons. There you go. That’s a linear production system, which is totally unsustainable.

Killsback (2013) explains that this organism “defies all of the characteristics of other human societies, even previous European ones”, which is an anomaly “that survives under conditions that are dire and lead to dysfunction for itself and nearly all its members” (p. 107).

Killsback (2013) argues that the western paradigm is one of spiritual immaturity, selfishness, self-aggrandizement, greed, violence, sexual frustration, insecurity, domination, one which fears death, and in denial.

Western cultures...hold a dysfunctional relationship with their history, especially when their histories are unfavourable...Indigenous peoples and their histories are often unfairly forced into this Western perception of history, which can lead scholars to adapt their work to defend their peoples’ honor against the threats of shameful histories. Indigenous peoples embrace their histories and need only to defend their survival (p. 91).

The paradigms of western modernity are destructive aspirations of unattainable monolithic projects, which can only exist with the eradication of “others” be it through genocide, ethnocide, or assimilation. The illusion of western modernity is that clean divisions maintain pure and separate realities, pervading a complex existence (Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

Although Indigeneity is relegated to the periphery, mined for knowledge, exploited for land, and made invisible to be appropriated by western systems, Indigeneity remains, is present, and in the centre simultaneously. Due to all of these reasons and more, Calderón (2009) argues for a rejection of western metaphysics and a “move toward epistemological and ontological diversification, and the shattering of colonial blind ideologies and practices” (p. 73).

#### 2.4.1 Indigeneity Response

The inception of Indigeneity took place as Indigenous identity was formed out of an essentialised “other-ness” to an evolving hegemonic norm of modernity. This condition attempts to erase what most groups refer to themselves as, in their own languages, ‘person/the people of this land/sea’. Only “the self” is human in western modernity, and only humans are sentient. This ontological collision is another tension between modernity and Indigeneity that exist simultaneously in contested space and time (Gilardin, 2001; Montejo, 2010). One example where this tension was identifiable in the context of kava is during the official opening of the Lo‘au University 2015 Kava conference, held in Kamberra, Australia. HRH Princess Angelika Lātūfuipeka Tuku‘aho introduced kava as part of “Tonga’s Indigenous culture”, distinguishing it from the modern elements of contemporary Tongan-ness.

Figueroa-Helland and Raghu (2017) define Indigeneity by its rift with civilization, which is to say its rift with the modern, western, and capitalist. They argue that efforts to revitalize and recirculate ancestral traditions by Indigenous peoples is “part of their longstanding struggles for emancipation from the hegemonic world-system” (p. 190). This has given rise to an alternative Indigenous paradigm known as Indigeneity. Indigeneity is a variety of worldviews, epistemologies, and ontologies that practice communal lifeways and advance a non-anthropocentric and decolonial alternative to the anthropocene’s current circumstances; an ecological and socio-political crisis of civilization (Figueroa-Helland &

Raghu, 2017; Māhina, 1993; Montejo, 2010). Cajete (1994) adds that “the crisis of modern man’s identity [is] his cosmological disconnection from the natural world...a deep sense of incompleteness” (p.26). Fanon (2008) explains:

every colonized people ...every people whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation...the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle (p. 9).

Modernity is a material condition and conceptual state of mind or consciousness, a paradigm where spirits get eaten (Kindheart, 2011). This crisis is identified when you are spiritually disconnected from the past and have willingly rebuked and thus forgotten the teachings of your ancestors, the traditional knowledge and customs once handed down through generations (Gilardin, 2001; Kanem & Norris, 2018). John Trudell said this is when you have no relationship to being, just reaction to living (Kindheart, 2011). This is not to suggest that the lack of awareness or knowledge of adapted or transformed traditions over time in order to survive is no longer Indigenous. Instead, Indigeneity not only maintains but pursues connection to the forgotten, to find and identify that knowledge in order to revitalise, nurture, and recreate ancient wisdom, which is the essence of my interest in Indigeneity. One might say that this type of inquiry is one of chasing shadows, following breadcrumbs, and tracking echoes from the past. This is a rootz way of thinking, where the past is constantly present. This is modelled by kava practices, where one must dig up the roots out of their depths to bring them into the present so they can be imbibed.

The term ‘Indigenous’, unifies people with shared roots of experience, land loss, cultural knowledge and language loss, large scale material poverty, and struggles to exist with self-determined collective identities. Although this shared collective experience is significant it can threaten distinction as well, by homogenizing unique peoples’ lifeways and histories. It is important to remember that “local definitions become validated not within international

forums or courts of law but the closed circuit of cultural identity in indigenous communities" (Hamill, 2012, p.7). Indigeneity is the emergence of Indigenous-ness, an agency of visibility, the rupture of erasure. Indigeneity is demonstrated by "tracing family lineage [which] pulls ancestral connections into the present, where individuals are living embodiments of the past" (p. 7). The dominant western cultural hegemony within the paradigm of modernity creates conditions that position Indigenous people to be essentialist in order to be able to collaborate with "others" from a marginalised position. Many feel a need to essentialise marginalised identities in order to create a sense of identity and belonging out of the fragments that survive colonial violence. However, the position of being Indigenous and using Indigeneity in essentialist ways differs in use from how the history of the west has constructed essentialist "others". Indigenous essentialism is a different relationship, which uses agency to build collective connections and collaboration that support autonomy and self-determination (Smith, 2012). Moana people's adoption of reggae music is a reflection of this Indigenous essentialist comradery. As a pan-Indigenous music, reggae is easily adapted into kava settings. Roots music (reggae) takes on a metaphorical double meaning in faikava, referring to the Indigenous identities and histories prevalent in reggae politics and also to the drink made out of roots itself (Alvarez, 2008; Cooper, 2012; Clough, 2012; Fonua, 2015; van der Beek, 2017).

#### **2.4.2 The case of Tonga**

The Kingdom of Tonga is unique in its history of evading settler colonial occupation, yet still faces the consequences that have come from imperial projects and colonial outposts in the region historically, which remain today, such as modern national formation (Anderson, 2006; Campbell, 1982; 1989; 2001; Gunson, 1979; Hau'ofa, 1993; Lātūkefu, 1974). With just over 200,000 Tongans worldwide, half of them living in the kingdom experience modern subjectivity through coloniality and the other half who live in diaspora experience racialized

settler colonial realities (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, United States) (Lee, 2003; Small, 2011). Tongans have increasingly entered into these societies over the last half century where they are subjected to settler rules being transformed into ‘migrants’; where local Indigenous presence and polity in mainstream experiences is largely invisible in those new residences, and racialized hierarchies dehumanize hypervisible black and brown bodies (Calderón, 2016; DuBois, 1982; Fanon, 1963; 2008; Kendi, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Quijano, 2000). This experience builds upon and confuses the layers of subjectivities based in the coloniality of being experienced in Tonga, which is premised not on occupation, but rather through church, state, school, and an intensifying capitalist economy (Campbell, 2001; Hau‘ofa, 1993; Helu, 1999; Janman, 2012; Lātūkefu, 1974; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Thaman, 2014). Tongans thus experience complex subjectivities that traverse multiple layers of diverse colonial subjectivities beyond a single national polity, resulting in spatial and temporal conflicts and convergence. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Tongans, and is relevant to other diaspora groups, ‘migrants’, and issues of Indigeneity across the globe, especially with an increased density of Indigenes moving into the hubs of “civilisation”, the ‘metropolises’ and urban centres of modern cities (Delugan, 2010; Loomba, 2005).

Popular music artist George Veikoso, who goes by the stage and recording name Fiji, is a popular musician amongst many Moana diaspora populations. He sings a song called Indigenous life, which is also the name of his 2008 album. Fiji refers to Tonga in this bold Moana reggae song, mentioning descent from a warrior line, declaring a prominent chief in Tongan history, Fīnau ‘Ulukālala, who was a principal warrior/chief in the centralizing of power to what would become the modern nation-state Kingdom of Tonga today. This song’s lyrics include:

I come from a part of the world where the royal lineages are considered a dying breed, where missionaries flood them with gospel, mislead the people and take all the land with greed, sell them to a different kind of god, where their souls can be bought, and forget about their history. . . I’m living the Indigenous life, that’s the life I live.

He refers to the division between Indigeneity and modernity in the Moana, that of Christianity's introduction and adoption. Pre-Christian has become a distinguishing point between Indigeneity and modernity in Tonga, although Christianity has now become part of Tonga's national and dominant identity. There are certainly many syncretic elements in Tongan Christianity today, which I discuss further in chapter five and six. However, I believe that Fiji is referring to the tension that exists in the temporality of modernity which privileges the latter part of this historical time division. This tension is derived from an imposed beginning of history with the arrival of Europeans, Christianity, and western modernity, which makes Indigenous pasts and futures irrelevant in this occupying paradigm. 'Atenisi Institute founder and professor, I. Futa Helu provocatively asked his fellow Tongans where the gods of Egypt are today (Janman, 2012)? He drew from the past to challenge the temporality of Christianity (modernity) in Tonga and whether it is capable of achieving a Tongan future. The stakes of Indigeneity are rooted in resilience to what survives and has evolved up through today, carrying a depth of time beyond western presence in Tonga. Indigeneity is the potential for establishing an identity and tradition that can span far into the future as deep as its past.

## **2.5. Indigenous theory**

In acknowledging that one exists within a modern colonial paradigm, where a diverse multitude of subjectivities converge globally albeit not always easily visible, one can begin an undoing of power, which is to continually identify and confront it until it is no more, and then to remember. Considering for example how non-racism is complicit and does not transform or change the status quo, anti-racist action can potentially transcend the order of racial privilege and oppression in the geopolitics of knowledge (Kendi, 2016; Mignolo, 2002). Therefore, if the colonial blindness of modernity cloaks colonialism, the presence of Indigeneity reveals it,

a necessary step in order to undo and decolonize systems of oppression tied to knowledge production, land/sea/intellectual/spiritual occupation, and oppressive material inequalities (Calderón 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Smith, 2012). The limits to modern colonial knowledge are found in the lived experience of “others,” and their colonial difference (Fanon, 2008; Mignolo, 2012). Because the colonizer will not hear the colonized unless they speak in the language *he* understands, it is necessary to challenge *his* mana (*essence/authority*) with one’s own, “kanohi ki te kanohi, face to face”, and mind to mind (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Fanon, 1963; 2008; Iti, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

Theorizing for a more equitable world and towards dismantling colonially established cultural hegemony must include “Indigenous” theory. I hopefully imagine critically that it will become so much the case that the term Indigenous is no longer necessary to use in order to differentiate it from the canon and norm based in western modernity and eurocentrism, which perpetuates a dichotomy of knowledge in the very nature of its founding structure. Philosophy of “others” will be recognised in their own way, such as Anga Faka-Tonga, N’ojibal ÄjK’iche’-Winaq, Mātauranga Māori, as they become more locally and globally visible and known. These epistemologies already have a place, not only where they originated, but in the people who have used their stories and inherited knowledge as theoretical frameworks to make sense of their changing experiences and realities. Such as the Indigenes who are made foreigners in their own inherited ancestral lands and in their displacement and arrival into new lands and places. This is how I imagine our own approaches (Smith, 2015). Indigenous theory is political by nature, not any more so than any other theory, but what differs is an explicit acknowledgement of the decolonial politics that seek to transform material conditions, relationships to land, water, and place, and ultimately shift the cosmology of governance (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Mignolo, 2009). “Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only

when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end” (hooks, 199, p. 2). Unchecked power relations, complicity, and lack of reflexivity of the temporality of ethnographic projects, while ignoring “other” voices in multiple forms of textuality and literacy is an anthropology which is a tool of western cultural hegemony, which I explicitly subvert in this thesis (Fischer & Brown, 1996). Teaiwa (2006) wrote just a decade ago that “more often than not... the Pacific is not brought to the table as an equal partner in any conversation about the nature of humanity or society” (p. 73). Drawing from the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality project, we are reminded that despite colonialism or anthropological reconfiguration, “existence of modes of being and thinking that are otherwise to the pretensions of modernity” continue onward, and work towards “*an* epistemic justice ... reckoning with the racialized inequalities of knowledge production” (Shilliam, 2015, p. 376). The significance of Kava events and sites cannot be understated for they are a knowledge commons, and in diaspora they continue to exist subversively within and continually outside the dominant systems of knowledge production as symposiums of performance, story, song, and learning.

Theory orders and organizes the world after itself, so one must not only ask why and for whom they do their work, but from whom and for what ends is their theory based in (Chilisa, 2011; Kovach, 2010; Lambert, 2015; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008)? Although western theology, science, and philosophy are at times at odds with each other; they can team up together to maintain a status quo of the assumed universality and linear teleology of western thought (Deloria Jr., 2012; Mignolo, 2002; Pihama, 2012; Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). From my Mayan standpoint, time is cyclical, and spirals of time are relative to our positions and relations. We accept our ancestor’s experiences and knowledge as inherited wisdom that has been passed down through story and ceremony. We are not sceptical of inherited wisdom, which is a point of departure from the dominant thought

of rational and enlightenment logics in western magic, which is at times exclusively claimed as science (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Barth, 2002; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Menchú, 2010; Mignolo, 2002; 2009; Montejo, 2010; Smith, 2012).

All knowledge...engages “nature” in that it is used to interpret and act on the world, and we need to be precise and discriminating in our description of how different representations of knowledge and different sociologies are linked to different practices of application to nature (Barth, 2002, p.10).

Before Einstein, Mayans, Tongans, and others already lived the knowledge of relativity of time in our relationality to one another and the cosmos, based on our experiences in and as nature. We understand that we observe, ride, and construct time and we relate to shifting and multiple temporalities. We have learned to expand and collapse time and space in our ceremonies, although we do it differently and organize and conceptualize time in our own respective ways. The basis of the Tā Vā (Tongan time-space) theory (tāvāism), where tā represents time, and vā represents space, is that “all things in nature, mind, and society stand in constant relation of exchange giving rise to conflict or order” (Ka’ili, 2017b, p.62; Māhina, 1993; 1993; 1999b; 2008b; 2010).

The ‘Tā Vā Theory of Reality’ has been a challenging thing to grasp in my observation among those outside of, and even for many within the community it is derived from (Ka’ili, 2017b). I believe this is because of the coloniality of being, which is demonstrated in tensions between contested concepts of time in modern Tongan life (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Modern concepts of time are derived from Christianity’s arrival in Tonga and thus western systems of thought and society. Tongan scholar Konai Helu Thaman (2014) comments that in recent Moana history, “foreign – mainly European – cultures, have infiltrated and greatly influenced their lives, including the way they think, learn and communicate with one another.” (p. 301-302). “Sometimes what we know is deliberately pushed offstage, hushed up and transmitted only in whispers,” yet the remnants of ancestral knowledge leave strong resonances in the living present (Shore, 2014, p. 129; Trask, 1999). In

developing Indigenous theory one follows the rhythms and vibrations of past echoes.

Dialectical materialism is often equated with *tā vā*, which in my observation is because both are concerned with cycles of conflict, paradox, and contradiction (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Māhina, 2010). The major distinction, I believe can be better understood with assistance from John Mohawk (1999) who speaks of western thought from the view of its utopian legacy, a history of linearity and teleology, where both capitalism and communism have sought utopian futures through mass-scale violent means. Despite the useful deconstruction and criticism of capitalism by Marx, it is contained in the same paradigm of western modernity. Indigenous futures can be imagined only in decolonizing the dialectic, seeking an alternative that does not have a linear progressing end point, collapsing modern time, where instead we face the deep past (Byrd, 2011; Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Ka‘ili, 2017a; 2017b; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2011). The distinction of these similar yet different dialectical methods lies in the ‘diversality’ and ‘colonial difference’ between them, revealed in the temporalities of each system of thought and the Indigenous acceptance of conflict that does not have logics for a forced utopia (Māhina, 2010; Mignolo, 2002; 2012; Memmi, 2013).

Indigenous thought slows down the capitalist efficiency of colonially enforced linear time within western modernity. Indigenous time disrupts the unilineal notions of progress and evolution, rupturing the “noble” as the potential end point of the “savage”, as well as the overt and covert dichotomies of dominant/subordinate, superior/inferior, and more (Brace, 2005; Fanon, 2008; Lorde, 1993; Mohawk, 2010). This is why Indigenous people often joke about “being late”. In order to challenge the *mana (authority)* of the self-proclaimed god of the west (modernity/coloniality), and *his* structuring of the world, we must make explicit how this linearity continues to encompass us. This is in order to delink from the trajectory that relegates Indigenous pasts as frozen and de-historicised. Challenging notions that Indigenous futures are the colonizer’s present, exposes the ‘master colonizer’ who fears a dystopian

future that is already an Indigenous present (Anderson, 2006; Fanon, 1963; 2008; Iti, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; 2008; Mignolo, 2007; 2009; Rifkin, 2017; Whyte, 2016; 2018). Once Indigenous thought is more broadly understood, decoloniality begins to materialise.

At this intersection of *tā* (*beats/taps*) in *vā*, (*points between*), critical engagement can expand the possibilities of this theory toward Indigenous futures by no longer comparing it and distinguishing it from the west, and instead put it into relation and dialogue with relatives across a shared sea to see what holds up in those points of overlap (Hau‘ofa, 1993; Ka‘ili, 2017a; Mignolo, 2012). There is an Indigenous commonality in the departure from the individualism of the Cartesian dichotomy. Instead of “I think, therefore I am”, the larger Indigenous ‘we’ is centred as Brian Yazzie Burkhart is quoted saying, “We are, therefore I am” (In Brayboy & McCarty, 2010). A lens of complimentary or accepted dualities rather than a binary opposition or dichotomy that is antagonistic in the ‘self’s’ need to consume the ‘other’. Lorde (1993) in departure from western Cartesian thought, gave the alternative that “the black mothers in each of us - the poet - whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free” (p. 38). Thaman (2003) explains that the ocean, sky, land, and birds have their own thinking. Thaman responded to the Cartesian split by saying, “You say you think therefore you are but thinking belongs in the depths of the earth. We simply borrow what we need to know” (p. 14).

Indigenous theory lies in ceremonies, languages, experiences, memories, metaphors, proverbs, and traditions. Deloria Jr. (2004) promised that:

If [we] give [our] own heritage the respect it deserves, an amazing number of issues can be brought forth that Western philosophy does not presently touch on. Foremost will be the view that all knowledge must begin with experience (p. 11).

My research topic is the kava circle, where theory is remembered, reconfigured, and developed. Siosuia Lafitani (2015) explained it to me in the saying, “ko e kava, ko e api ako,” meaning that the kava circle is a home of learning. As Wīnak/Winaq (K’iche’-Maya for

person/people), like my Moana relatives, I also see the land as encompassed within a sea of islands, and the earth as an island in the cosmos, and we have yet to talk this story, and it's about time we did.

### 2.5.1 Tongan and Moana Thought: Tā Vā (Tāvāism) and Our Sea of Islands

Hau'ofa (1993) explained that the changing dynamics of a “New Oceania” maintains the resiliency and freedom of Indigeneity rooted in the ancient while in constant contemporary movement. Hau'ofa explains that one way in which this is done is in maintaining Tongan ways of life that adapt fluidly to new environments. Whatever the reasons for movement are, even if they are not completely voluntary or desired, resiliency and creativity in adapting to new environments remains constant for Moana people as it does for other diasporic groups. Hau'ofa shares an Indigenous perspective of his own home as a sea of islands instead of islands in the sea. He views the vastness of the Moana (*The Great Pacific Ocean/Oceania*) as a connecting waterway, instead of the lens that they are ‘small’ islands in isolation that are only separated by ocean. The sea of islands Hau'ofa speaks of expands as people of the sea move and broaden the reach of the ocean.

Drawing from my urban diasporic Mayan perspective of time and building on this idea with Tongan tāvāism, the explicit act of arranging time, being mindful of time, or in other words “getting in the zone” yields the production of ‘good vibes’ and ‘positive vibrations’ expressed through story, song, or performance. I see tāvāism as the process by which various energies (social, environmental, cosmic) and their respective restrictions are mediated and temporally and spatially brought into common rhythm. A process where the act of temporal mindfulness and spatial arrangement produces an alignment, balance, equilibrium, which potentially reveals harmony or makes disharmony visible, whatever the truth between energies and relationships is. When equilibrium results in the mediation of tā vā (spatial rhythm), resolve is found allowing truth and knowledge to be released and revealed. This is

reflected in music when voices align as one, or instruments accompany harmoniously at a kava event. An alignment of thought, a common vibe, in the same zone together, performed in dialogue and projected in unified singing. Tongan identifiers of this result is indicated when it is *melie* (*sweet*) and when one proclaims *mālie!* (*bravo*). Other indicators are observed in gentler hours of the late evening or early morning at a faikava where the echoes of participants are heard saying “*mālō*” (giving thanks), responses to the generating of feelings of *māfana* (*warmth/ excitement*) (Māhina, 2007; 2010; 2011a; 2011b).

Māhina (1992) explained that *tala-e-fonua* means to speak in the manner of/or the poetics of the land, which is a socio-environmental mindfulness of time and space in faikava. For example, the large majority of common and regular kava circle gatherings I have been a part of take place in the evening. Sione Vaka (2016) taught me that having a kava session at night draws from the energy of night. This is when it is calm, and environments become quieter. Night is a time of renewal with a slower pace than daytime, which is conducive to mindful observance of the pace and rhythm of people and place in order to reach a state of *noa* (*equilibrium*). *Tauhi vā*, a central Tongan cultural value is linguistically composed by *tā* and *vā*, meaning to nurture relationships and mediate the social space between people(s), to maintain harmonious and beautiful socio-spatial relationships (Ka’ili, 2005; 2008; 2017a; Māhina, 2008b; 2010). This requires an ever-present mediation of conflict in oneself, and between communities, to keep we and I, in balance, where infractions yield *vākovi* (*disharmonious spatiality*), rather than *vālelei* (*harmonious spatiality*) (Ka’ili, 2008; 2017a). The poetics and relationships of and with the *fonua* (*land, people, and place*) materializes in speech, story dialogue, and ultimately song. This is one of the main reasons *tāvāism* helps understand Tongan performance arts and expression in faikava.

### 2.5.2 Tongan and Moana Thought: Defining Mana, Tapu, and Noa

I will use the concepts of mana, tapu, and noa throughout this thesis and specifically in chapter five in order to detail the mediation between mana and tapu to create noa in the faikava. Blust (2007) defined mana as thunder, but explains it is also translatable as potent, effective, or of having supernatural origin and power. Tomlinson (2006) explained that mana is both a noun and/or a verb. Understandings of mana includes, along with the common interpretations of power and authority, a pragmatism, manifest-ability, finishing quality, sense of true-ness, effectiveness, and/or being generative (Shore, 1989; Tomlinson, 2006; Tomlinson & Tengan, 2016). Katerina Teaiwa (2016) adds that mana is not possessed as much as it is done. Mead (2003) explains that mana has a spectrum of meanings tied to place, and that people inherit and generate mana from their ancestors. Mana can increase through effective and generative works or contributions to community. Mana can decrease through dishonour or lack of effectiveness/fecundity. One of the ways in which relationships are mediated is by drawing upon the mana in genealogy, which Tongans call hohoko. Hohoko are genealogical introductions between people in order to find a common connection and link, which generate mana in order to create noa (*balance*) between people (Ka'ili, 2008; Ka'ili, 2017a; Shore, 1989). Socio-spatial intersections happen in the rhythm that connects betweenness of people, nature, and things. If the mana is correct and enough, noa results in the vā that connects them all, meaning one is being effective in doing mana (Māhina, 2010). Mana is the application of knowledge, influence, authority, power, derived from the metaphysical depths of the supernatural, shown in acts, reflected in status and ancestry, and is in some respects honour (Tomlinson & Tengan, 2016). Ceremony, ritual, and protocol, such as within kava circles exists in order to materialize mana practically and metaphysically. Mana is generative potency, honour, prestige, authority, and a supernaturally derived power. Mana is also so

much more and includes various nuances within contextually specific places and peoples (Shore, 1989).

Tapu is the root of the western loan word taboo. It can mean sacred, restricted, protected, dangerous, sanctified, and set apart. Tapu is everywhere, “it is present in people, in places, in buildings, in things, words, and in all tikanga” (Mead, 2003, p.30). The meaning of Māori tikanga (*correctness*) includes protocol, and a sense of true-ness, righteousness, and the practice of good values. Mead (2003) explains that tikanga is necessary in order to have good relations with the land and its people, similar to the role of Tongan tauhi vā, in nurturing relationships to achieve or maintain balance between them. One of the points Mead (2003) makes about tapu is that people, individuals, embody it. Iti (2015) proclaimed that each person has mana, and thus everyone is also tapu because they have and do mana. Tapu, like mana, is relational, and there are specificities to culture, village, and region, but in each case, tapu is “inseparable from mana” (Mead, 2003, p. 30). Tapu is divine, the set apart and honourable, it is chiefly, such as the noble acts or stewardship of knowledge that exhibits mana, and like knowledge it can be dangerous and/or respectable (Shore, 1989). That which is tapu is so, because it possesses and does mana, they are different parts of a whole. When watching the Māori film *Utu* (Murphy, 1983), it dawned on me that the correct mana (e.g., appropriate relationships) or the amount (e.g., ancestral status, experience, knowledge) has to find a balance with the tapu of the person(s)/place/thing one is in engagement with. This was demonstrated in the final scene of the film where only a close relative could enact a punishment on their relative due to their deeds and crimes done to others. This was in order to neutralize the tapu between conflicting and contentious relationships without the consequences of leading to a chain reaction of more acts of retaliation and revenge. The relationality of mana to tapu is central in order for mediation and negotiation to be effective (yielding a state of noa, neutrality or equilibrium). Tapu protects one from mana through

knowledge in protocols, which inform proper use or behaviour. Whether it is Anga Faka-Tonga (Way of Tonga), Fa'a Sāmoa (Sāmoan way), or Vakaturanga (Fijian way of the chiefs), the principle is that the intersections and arrangements of time and space imbedded within protocols and cultural knowledge aid and support the process of striving for balance, continually restoring equilibrium, having accepted a reality of potential conflict or harmony in engagement between peoples, places, and energies.

Noa is often paired with tapu, especially with high levels of tapu that are dangerous, and “noa refers to restoring a balance,” meaning that once it is noa it is safe (Mead, 2003, p. 31). “The state of noa indicates that a balance has been reached ... [and] relationships are restored” (p. 32). Noa is neutralising, neutrality, equilibrium, balance, and zero. Noa, as a state of balance, a condition of equilibrium is in constant calibration between relationships. A process by which mana and tapu are mediated to create a state of noa demonstrates a cyclical/spiral process rather than a linearity with a dialectical end point (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Mohawk, 1999; Tecun et. Al, 2018). For example, when one is noa it does not mean that tapu is removed, although that is at times how it is explained in the limits of the English language. Mana and tapu are not gone or irrelevant, instead they are increased in doing mana, but those who have effectively mediated/neutralized tapu with mana are contextually and relationally noa to each other, to place, to event, or to circumstance. However, because it is relational, you might be noa to those who have co-acted with you, but tapu, to those outside. In Tonga, the King cannot be crowned by a fellow Tongan because his head is tapu to them, but it is not to non-Tongans, who are those that can crown him, walk in front of him in the kava coronation ceremony, or receive his gifts. This at times has included iTaukei, Europeans, and other non-Tongans. Noa is contextual to relationship, time, and place, which has changed and/or been opened up in that moment or event. Noa requires continual recalibration since the

actors increase mana in neutralizing tapu, requiring more mana to neutralize that, and so goes the cycle, a non-linear paradigm with no end point.

Noa as a theoretical concept overlaps with other concepts and knowledges to such phenomena. Byrd (2011) wrote that as a mathematical concept theorized by the Maya, zero is a moment between annihilation and creation, a generative force. Zero is not nothingness, but relates to something-ness, it can be represented as a: “creation-in-destruction” such as for Amerindians to whom, “‘zero’ [is] neither void nor emptiness ...it gestured to creation, the circular movement between life and death, the repetitive progression of history that connects and interweaves past futures and future presents” (p. 103). My personal experience as Wīnak (Mayan) is that zero is the point of transition or moment of transformation, the fulcrum of movement, the capture of or mid-point between energies. The conch shell when whole, is the Mayan hieroglyph that represents the concept of zero, not an absence or emptiness, but rather a balance that holds the tensions of time and space, represented in the spirals within the shell and experienced in the transitions between temporalities. Mayan waix/taj (zero in K'iche' and Kaqchikel) is in many regards Tongan and Moana noa, a state or position of equilibrium. A liminality and borderlands concept of sorts (Anzaldúa, 1987; Turner, 1969; 1987). Kava circles generate mana to create noa, and arrange time in space in order to reach a state of noa between social relations and within oneself, where creative processes and thoughts are repaired and enhanced.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

By collapsing settler time with Indigenous epistemologies as “the sword against anthropological arrogance and the shield against philosophical universalisms”, we might come to better understand one another and how to more appropriately relate with a more clear and collaborative articulation of collective wisdom (Meyer, 2001, p. 125). Faikava is a common and regular gathering that simultaneously facilitates various functions and purpose

and is yet connected to other less common kava ceremonies. The kava origin stories, tāvāism, mana, tapu, noa, and decolonial theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding contemporary kava phenomena and further develop Indigenous theory. Faikava mediates mana and tapu through mindful tā vā arrangements, where time and space are collapsed bringing the past into the present and creating a noa space. The theoretical framing of this thesis seeks to live into the possibilities that have been, are, and can still be in not re-imagining with ‘new’ theory, but seeing it for having always been there as new understandings of old knowledge. Identifying what kava is today from an Indigenous position combats colonial blind epistemologies through mana-full Tongan knowledge that stakes claim in a shared world, and expands the conversation beyond the limits of modernity.

## Chapter 3. Methods, Ethics, Position, and Data

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I summarize the methodological approach for data collection in this thesis. This research is a critical ethnography, utilising decolonial methods that is mindful of ceremony and participant agency (Māhina, 1999a; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). This thesis includes social media correspondence, songs and lyrics, transcript review and editing by participants from filmed events, and ongoing relationships after officially gathering data. I begin this chapter with a reflexive positioning of myself as researcher, my responsibilities to knowledge entrusted to me, and then discuss methodology and ethnomusicology. Talanoa is a research method that is defined as relationally mindful critical oratory used in this thesis (Tecun et al., 2018). Tauhi vā (*nurturing socio-spatial relationships*) is also discussed as it upholds the ethical basis in this research project. This chapter concludes with a report of the places and people included in the spectrum of data collected for this thesis. Voices are often the principle instruments in kava circles, side by side with string instruments that often accompany them (Kaepler, 1971; 1972; Moyle, 1987). In like manner this thesis weaves together different voices that collectively accompany one another to answer the questions of what kava is today, the formation of urban Indigenous identities in diaspora, and the role of songs in faikava.

### 3.2. Critical Anthropological Positioning

Kanaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian) anthropologist Ty Tengan (2005) explains that to be an Indigenous anthropologist one must take risks in challenging the reigning hegemony in the discipline. The epistemic authority prevalent in anthropology raises the question of whether decolonial or Indigenous anthropology is even possible? A question I anticipate will be answered in time within an already shifting paradigm. In positioning our identities, we

simultaneously challenge the self-proclaimed ‘master’s’ hiding behind “objective” distance to reveal themselves, bringing truth and transparency to the surface by disrupting colonial-blind discourse (Calderón, 2016; Tengan, 2005; Tengan, Ka‘ili, & Fonoti, 2010; White & Tengan, 2001). Argentine philosopher Walter D. Mignolo (2009) says of Linda Tuhiwai Smith that in her project of decolonizing research methodology, she is no longer doing western anthropology. Mignolo argues that “if you engage in the de-colonial option and put anthropology ‘at your service’ like Smith does, then you engage in shifting the geography of reason” (p.14). Afro-Caribbean Chinese anthropologist Ping-Ann Addo (2010) suggests that “ethnographers of color must be willing to critically explore the political economy of their own racialization by their informants and vice versa (p. 259).” Addo argues that in doing so the politics of identity can shift “multiple identity constructions to eschew the role of dominant historical categories of race and their incumbent global hierarchies” (p. 259).

### 3.2.1 Being Identified in Research

Lo‘au university founder Siosuia Lafitani expressed that he saw me connected to the Ha‘a Lo‘au (Lo‘au clan) as a Mayan, claiming me as part of that lineage, which he asserts is distantly connected to Mayans and South Amerindians anciently. Tēvita Fale, who is known for writing about Tongan history online also saw me connected to Tonga but through genealogy as a Mayan. Fale’s position is a controversial one believing that Tongans have origins in Mesoamerica rather than South East Asia. Many of my connections to initiate this research came from my membership, upbringing, and relationships in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons/LDS). Mormons have a historical tradition of linking Pacific Islanders to ancient America and Israel. For many Tongan Mormons I was connected to them through this narrative. Many Tongans in the Kingdom also referred to me as “Intia Kula,” which means “Red Indian”, to distinguish me from South Asian Indians. Some Tongans in New Zealand were familiar with Guatemala because of a line in a local soap

opera *Shortland Street*, “you’re not in Guatemala now Dr. Ropata!” While I attended a Tongan language class at university my fellow classmates were excited I was Mayan when I introduced myself, however it was a case of mistaken identity as they were referring to the fictional Chicano biker gang called “The Mayans” in the television series *The Sons of Anarchy*. In Tonga and Aotearoa, I am often recognised as Mayan because of the genealogical values Indigenous people there hold. Only in the U.S. I have been homogenized by a few Tongans and Pacific Islanders who assumed me to be a generalised imagination of Hispanic/Mexican with the term “Miko”, which some Tongan friends have said is a Tongan version of Mexico referring to Spanish speaking people. I have a Tongan friend based in California that said she feels like “Miko” is used as a derogatory term by younger generations who have contradictorily adopted anti-Mexican/immigrant sentiments prevalent in the U.S. Another Sāmoan friend mentioned to me that rather than meaning Mexican he understood it to be derived from the word “amigo,” meaning friend in Spanish. My impression is that each of these meanings are true but represent different layers of time and different generations and relationships of Tongans residing in the U.S. and their experiences with and perceptions of Spanish speaking peoples on the continent.

### 3.2.2 Positioning as a Researcher

I tried kava a few times in secondary school, but I did not begin regular participation in kava sessions until Mario Cadenas brought me into his circles right after I graduated from high school. We are technically cousins, as we learn to say in the U.S., but in Tongan contexts *tokoua* (*same-sex sibling*) fits better, since linguistically the word for sibling applies to cousins, brothers, or close relations. We grew up together and in the same home at different times. He is four years older than me, and he joined the military right out of high school, enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps. Mario’s unit had some Tongans in it who he would join in their faikava during and after their military service. Mario, Robert Reeves and his brothers

Havili and Sione who are part of the Ogden Kava Boys Kalapu introduced me to the practice and to my initial kava networks and communities. This has now led to over 15 years of being a contributing member of the kava communities where I have resided.

I believe I am the first person of Mayan (K'iche'/ Tz'utujil/ Mam/ Kaqchikel) descent to engage in anthropological research with the Moana in this way and have a unique position to do so as an Indigenous person, born in diaspora from ancestral lands of origin, raised in an urban setting on Turtle Island/Abiya Yala ("Americas"), now living in Aotearoa. I have been influenced greatly by my parent's renditions of the Mayan creation story the Pop Wuj/Popol Vuh, as well as the stories from their lives and our ancestral past. My partner, extended family, children, and religious upbringing also significantly form the basis of my worldview. Rigoberta Menchu, John Trudell, Tupac, and Bob Marley's works have also been quite influential throughout my life and early critical consciousness. I am as of recent also quite drawn to decolonial and Indigenous literature as well as critical theory, which I have been introduced to by a select few while studying in universities, which also influences my thinking. This provides me with unique yet similar experiential insights to my research on Kava, songs, globally connected communities, Indigeneity, and identity. This research is linked to phenomenon I not only participate in, but live and experience.

I played American Football, have dark brown skin, went to West High School, and I am also Mormon, of which I often joke, I haven't been kicked out of yet. I am still a practicing Mormon, although my fellow church members may construct me differently as I have long hair and often wear facial hair and am not always visible in church because of my ninja stealth. Even having good standing with the church institution, not being culturally orthodox alienates me from my religious community in many regards. Doing ethnographic work as a Mormon has challenged me significantly. Unlike the atheist anthropologist being tempted to believe while engaging in religious ethnography, as someone who already lived a

religious belief of study, I was tempted not to (Ewing, 1994). Ultimately this type of research has shifted several elements of my lens and cosmology leading me to believe differently than before. My Mayan spirituality and traditions however held up as being more resilient in its flexibility than my Mormonism. This was especially the case when working with Methodists, Bahá'í, and Indigenous Tongan spirituality and ethnographically attempting to restrain my worldview enough to begin experiencing theirs as much as was possible. I saw more overlaps and room to enter in and out of different paradigms that could co-exist even when I was grounded in Mayan cosmovisión. I experienced internal tensions at times while traversing paradigms when my western religious influence surfaced, which subscribes to the exclusive universality of western modernity. From my religious networks however, I gained my initial access through relationships to Tongans, where many more relationships have flourished. Being brown has also in many cases led to the assumption by many that I am Pacific Islander if not Tongan, creating interesting dynamics of negotiation during my research. I find much in common with my Moana relatives. I feel it is necessary to have much more meaningful dialogues between “third-world” or “global-South” Indigenous groups in research and generally. I believe this may prove more productive than perpetuating the western binary that constantly repositions one Indigenous group in comparison to the one dominant expression of western modernity, overlooking other “others” (Farella, 1993; Hamill, 2012; Shilliam, 2016). Lopesi (2018b) speaking of the great Moana, sums up my sentiments in an online article she wrote, stating: “while we may talk back to the empire, we can’t talk to each other...how do we get to know each other again?” (2018b).

I navigate a liminal research position not being Tongan on one hand, yet part of the kava communities I have done research with, as well as being from a marginalized position within the academy as an Indigenous person. Growing up I felt aligned with Tongans in our position as urban minorities with Indigenous backgrounds as brown diaspora peoples. This

research stems from already established relationships and participation in the kava community, which enhanced my ability to do this research. I utilised my own Indigenous codes of conduct as well as Tongan protocols of respect, incorporating global Indigenous scholarship on research practices for permissions and responsibilities to knowledge I am grateful for. I also used the ‘western’ academic ethical conduct as required by my university. This is not an exhaustive look at kava yet still an intimate and critical engagement with kava in the specific contexts I draw from, in the pursuit of both the locally meaningful and globally relevant. This research and my position in it provides an example of Indigenous research with a different Indigenous culture outside of one’s own.

### **3.3. Methodology**

Kalavite (2014) argues that Tongan research methods and frameworks used in her research such as talanoa “produced results that could not have been produced by a non-Tongan” (p. 166). Kalavite makes parallels however to qualitative, phenomenological, ethnographic, and auto-ethnographic methods that she argues are approximate equivalents to Tongan research methods. How then is Tongan defined? Does this require an ancestral identity? Epistemic and Ontological position? Which Tongan community decides? Can a non-Tongan learn and use these methods like Tongans learn and use ‘western’ methods? I believe Kalavite’s claims reflect an Indigenous political assertion of self-determination in knowledge production tied to identity, which challenges the power relations between modernity and Indigeneity. For example, whether I produce acceptable results for both the various different Tongan communities I have worked with and the academy, it will not be determined by me, yet each group has different stakes, visibility, and power to determine this. My awareness and deliberate action to maintain connections and accessibility to the research with communities is my role as a critical ethnographer. I agree however that I cannot produce the same results as a Tongan. Instead, I write as an urban diasporic Mayan who was raised in close proximity with

diasporic Tongan communities, with some extended family kinship ties, and having been influenced for over a decade by kava practices (one of many realms in Tongan life). My understanding of Tongan research methods is they incorporate Tongan ethics and epistemology, with meaningful consideration of contextual differences across global Tongan communities. This is done in order to better ensure the relationally specific ethical considerations that should take place in any ethnographic work. Kalavite (2014) advocates that these methods should support Melanie Anae's call that, "if research is to make meaningful contributions to Pacific societies, then its primary purpose is to reclaim Pacific knowledge and values for Pacific peoples" (p. 159).

I draw upon the fifteen years of experience I have been grateful to be a part of, in the Tongan/Moana kava communities where I have lived. I draw from memories, experiences, and reflections that are insightful to my research questions, as an additional voice among friends, mentors, and experts who have shared knowledge with me. I position myself as "insider-ish and outsider-ish" because of my participation and long-time relationship with much of the community through kava, sports, and church in my research sample. Yet, not part of other aspects of Tongan experience such as home life and obligatory and relationally specific kinship responsibilities in life events. I also have limited access to better understanding some knowledge at times due to my limitations in the Tongan language (non-fluent, continually studying). I have also been in neutral positions however within Tongan hierarchy as a non-Tongan, which has also given me other types of access to different knowledge. For example, there are some tapu that are reserved for Tongans only, such as the example's given in chapter two of who can crown the King of Tonga or receive his gifts (non-Tongans). Because of my outsider-ish status at times, particularly when in the Kingdom of Tonga when I was noa of specific tapu that have contextually specific restrictions for Tongans, I had easier access in these moments to chiefly entities.

Mediating anonymity and visibility of participants in this thesis was established through making data collection explicitly visible in a practical sense. Having an obtrusive material element in data collection such as a tripod, camera, and microphone encouraged a constant visibility of documentation and recording. This assisted in explaining the research process to those less familiar with the permanent nature of research documentation. However, as a filmmaker I would also negotiate not wanting the camera to be too disruptive of the general organic flow in kava spaces. It was often a case of timing as to which event and when and how long to film. The camera presence was useful in determining who really wanted to be identified and who didn't, and what things were desired to be shared anonymously. Identifying consenting participants combats legacies of erasure of knowledge holders who are forgotten in anthropological authorships. However, when someone asked to stop recording, or that they preferred not to be filmed although they wanted to participate opened up discussions of anonymity. I also would pick up on the nuances of indirect speech from friends, mentors, or their referrals in this project who would subtly avoid being identified and might have otherwise felt obligated to be filmed or be made known. Additionally, many participants who I already knew well were able to distinguish an event that was for research from the many other events we share outside of my doctoral studies. Due to the relationships already established, having a camera also helped to distinguish how previous relationships were momentarily changed. As a researcher recording and documenting in order to tell a story in responding to research questions, I was now linked to other institutions and structures (e.g., university) absent from previous connections in our relationships. Film became a method to maintain connection to geographically distant communities via online sharing, which allowed for continual feedback on interpretations and editing of film and the use of pictures. Recording kava events and talanoa allowed for reflection on previous happenings and insights, such as reinforcing what was previously shared and recorded, or on some occasions sparking a change

in thought and edits being made in the written transcriptions. Talanoa was filmed and then there was talanoa about the filming and written transcripts from filming. The insights from reviewing transcripts and film with communities centred on how the written voice differed from the audio-visual voice, or event memory, yet were connected, providing rich opportunities of insight and reflection about ideas and practices that are second nature in faikava communities. Utilising film in my methodology was useful to identify both old relationships and new ones in mediating ethical concerns, as well as giving time and space for reflection with the permanent capture of ethnographic stories.

### **3.4. Ethnomusicology**

My introduction and experience with Kava for over a decade is inseparable from the presence of music, ranging from local kava bands, participants singing, or electronically played songs. Songs can be understood as not only entertainment, but also a means of memory, identity, community, philosophy, literacy, recordkeeping, possession of or demonstrator of mana, and part of the Tongan and Moana epistemology (Cattermole, 2009; Fitisemanu, 2007; Hernandez & Bell, 2013; Reyes, 2014; Shuker, 2008; Turino, 1988). Cattermole (2009) explains that iTaukei kava songs called “sigidrigi” (from the English sing-drink) are “one of the means by which iTaukei represent, and thereby construct, their sense of who they are and where they belong” (p. 157). Cattermole (2009) also demonstrated connections between contemporary popular songs and Indigenous forms of performance and story, such as the continuing role that simile and metaphor play in them. Māhina (1992; 1993; 2004) argues that Indigenous language, in his case Tongan, is inherently poetic, as it is derived from relationships to nature, reflecting a place of origin. Paying attention to poetry in everyday Tongan life is of deep importance to understand expressions in speechmaking, song making, storytelling, and comedy as they are transported through time and space.

Ethnomusicology opens up the possibilities of approaching a significant aspect of

human experience to understand cultural phenomena. Ethnomusicology also allows for Indigenous literacies that are marginalized in dominant research settings to become central, such as the various histories, ideas, and values embedded in stories, oratory, songs, dance, and various art forms (Māhina, 1993). I propose that decolonial ethics coupled with ethnomusicological and ethnographic study is a good fit for Tongan and other Indigenous research. Understanding culture through the lens of music and song while grounding theory in relationships and experience is empowering and relevant. For this reason I hold popular songs and common knowledges in direct engagement with academic knowledge that is less accessible in archives, subscription access journals, or the privileging of the western canon (Barth, 2002; Rabasa, 2003).

Hamill (2012) provides an example of this type of approach by privileging Indigenous ontology to understand the phenomenon of spiritual power in songs, “intentionally distancing this story from Western ways of knowing,” because in western paradigms, Indigenous realities of spirit, sacredness, and power “have been relegated to the confines of ‘belief’ and ‘superstition’” (p. 8). If we do not centre the epistemological position in us or in how we write, we potentially miss out on better understanding phenomena altogether let alone their potential expansion of philosophical thought:

Just as traditional ethnomusicological fieldwork often takes place in a shared space where people gather to interact ... fieldwork can happen anywhere, from an external geographic locale to the interior realm of the mind and spirit. It therefore seems logical to consider the spiritual continuum as valid a location as any for further fieldwork and research (p. 142).

Hamill sought to understand song power in ceremony in its ability to transcend and transform the mundane world. “Sound structures in ceremony are beholden to spiritual phenomena. Without such phenomena, sound becomes meaningless, a meandering and isolated element severed from its source” (Hamill, 2012, p. 141). It is this power in ‘Amerindian’ contexts that I see overlaps with mana in Moana contexts. Sisi‘uno Helu (2016) of the ‘Atenisi institute in

Tonga taught me that when māfana (*warmth/exhilaration*) is felt by performers, listeners, and viewers, and it is continually sustained throughout an event or ceremony, you reach the sky/heavens. In Tongan this phenomenon is called “Tau e Langi.”

Ethnomusicology as a method for Indigenous research is also fitting when it assists the expression of political identity through music and song, because it respects and authenticates the validity of these identities (Frith, 2000). Performance of identity and associated songs in common and ritual contexts are aesthetically ethical arguments where:

Music articulates a way of being-in-society both representationally (in its subject matter) and materially (in its lived-out relationships between musicians and between musicians and audience). This is a process of idealization both in formal terms (the way in which music provides a narrative, an experience of wholeness and completion) and as a matter of staging, in events in which solidarity is made physical (p. 317).

Considering the power of song and performance, poetic speech in song will be positioned not as isolated prose, but as political theory itself, responding to Teaiwa’s (2010) call to restore the audio-visual roots of Pacific literacy (Māhina, 1993; 2004; Rifkin, 2012). In this way ethnographic ethnomusicology is used critically to expand social and cultural anthropological possibilities, thus transforming it into Indigenous research, making it suit native purposes and inquiry (Anae, 2010; Davies, 2002; Collins & Gallinat, 2013; Mignolo, 2009; Pink, 2006; Ranco, 2006; Smith, 2012; Tengan, 2005).

### **3.5. Talanoa**

This section will define talanoa and its use in this research as knowledge produced through talking story, critical dialogue, and vulnerability, which reflects that there is trust in a relationship yielding openness to share (Fa’avae, Jones, & Manu’atu, 2016; Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Halapua & Pago, 2013; Ka’ili, 2015; Violeti, 2006; Tecun et al, 2018). Talanoa gives language and theory to describe phenomena that is commonplace across the Moana and in many ethnographic processes. Talanoa has been defined as unconcealed storytelling, social curious dialogue, and as talking critically yet harmoniously (Halapua &

Pago, 2013; Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2006; Māhina, 2007; Tecun et al, 2018). Talanoa is also often generalized as a pan-Pacific/Pasifika open or informal dialogue (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014; Māhina, 2007). Talanoa is similar to other forms of story and dialogue but is in this case an explicitly Tongan and Moana term and concept which asserts the importance of identity, protocol, relationality, and autonomous forms of knowledge production. Talanoa is a process of engaging in story like dialogue with close relations once protocols that uphold good relations in Tongan and Moana value systems are enacted. Talanoa embodies fonua in Tongan, or vanua in Fijian, which is to say the land, people, placenta (origins), and custom, including love, empathy, and respect (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). The breakdown of tala (*story, talk*) and noa, is produced by mediating mana and tapu (Māhina, 2007; Shore, 1989; Tecun, 2017; Tecun et al, 2018). Talanoa materializes in rendering that which is tapu, noa, where a balance between mana and tapu takes place. In the case of people entering dialogue, it is a mediation of different potencies and energies that without calibration limit openness and understanding. Manulani Meyer (2001) explains that “knowledge is the by-product of dialogue ... of something exchanged ... a gift that occurs when one is in balance with another” (p. 134). This can be done by generating mana through finding genealogical connection, gifting, presenting and drinking kava, or eating together, among other protocols. For this reason Tecun et al. (2018) explain it as a result of reaching noa and as a process to reach a state of noa, defining talanoa as relationally mindful critical oratory.

Access to knowledge through talanoa is founded on relationships and stories that are shared or co-constructed, which can be weaved together by researchers, individuals, and/or groups as research results (Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2006; Māhina, 2007; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tecun et al, 2018). Talanoa is premised on the necessity of closeness rather than distance, which can result when researching or writing “objectively.” For example, dominant western research practices can create distance in personal relationships with

permission forms and legal waivers and change relationships with friends and elders by transforming them into “informants”. Practically speaking, I reference talanoa as a replacement to listing personal communications from ethnographic data and include it in this thesis within the references. I also directly quote individual contributions from the talanoa I have had, or I reference a group or person who I engaged talanoa with from where ideas emerged collectively. I do so in this manner to clearly indicate how talanoa was used in the context of being interpreted as a research method, while already an Indigenous epistemology that precedes and transcends the current boundaries of academia. Talanoa is paramount in faikava settings as is music. When people sing together in a kava group there is often spontaneous adaptations and arrangements that take place, based on the feelings generated in the moment of performance. Successful combination of spontaneous additions to a song, expressed in call and response performance are a reflection of the mediated relationships in the group. This is the balance made and reflected by group harmony. Tongan call and response is a singing version of talanoa, where voices are mediated and intertwine to make complimentary sounds into one song, like many stories converging to align together in talanoa.

### **3.6. Ethics**

My impression from institutional ethical approval is that their concern is primarily regarding the parameters of time within my years of study as a doctoral student, and legal liability for the university. I however have a timeline of ethical consideration that began much earlier, and never ends, which is centred on maintaining good relations continually. One of the expectations given to me by the institution is that the multiple pages I submitted outlining and explaining the project would be read and signed by participants or leaders of groups I would participate in. I instead advocated for oral consent and had to justify it as ethically legitimate. Ultimately, it was approved with the expectation that I would convey all of the

information in the written documents orally and keep my own written record of it. The practical application of oral consent resulted in myself becoming an intermediary between different relationships. On one hand, the academic institution, which has a policy of self interest in liability and thus a protocol of distance and legal protection. On the other hand the communities I am from and worked in, where Indigenous protocols of social and ancestral responsibility, closeness, and expectations of an ongoing relationality took precedence. The primary conflict for me is that enforcing the ethics of the university, based in colonial logics that impose assimilationist processes of liberal ‘inclusion’ by privileging written documentation, linear prescriptive checklists of liability, and devaluing relational ethics and community-based protocols of consent to share, participate, and steward sacred or protected knowledges. However, I did receive approval from the universities’ ethics committee. Additionally, I obtained permission from the Kingdom of Tonga’s prime minister’s office to do part of this research in Tonga, alongside relationship based protocols of permission with communities, friends, mentors, and elders that I was already connected with or came into relation with during this research.

While much of the literature on Indigenous research and methods argues it is more ethical than western methods, it has inadequately mentioned that they tackle different ethical dilemmas. For example, how should one treat accessed knowledge by successful application of Indigenous research methods? Talanoa is about getting to the loto, the center, the heart (Vaka, 2014), which includes the centre of oneself, or a community, the most personal, intimate, or even tapu knowledge one stewards. My experience with tapu is that it is not always restricted, rather it is restricted while in its sacred form, and once we have accessed it through a state of noa, appropriately, how and what can we write of it? How can the reader access it in the way I have during this research? How are they relating to this text now? Some of this knowledge can potentially be made available, but it requires the same or similar

processes and protocols that ensure its protection and respect, which in one essence is understanding it as well as when and how to utilise it (Tu‘itahi, 2016a). Consequently, relationships reveal, and protect knowledge simultaneously. The challenge for Indigenous research is in interpreting and relating our research stories appropriately and with strategies of protection, so that a prepared person or reader can pick up on the nuances and find or understand the further depth that is locally meaningful, while other readers can appreciate the global relevance and broader symbolism. Holding researchers accountable to these considerations, knowing there is not one answer, but that this discussion is important, is another way we centre Indigenous paradigms despite modern colonial contexts (Smith, 2012). I have refrained from using the term intellectual property because it is arbitrary in explaining the rules of producing and sharing particular knowledges from non-western perspectives. However, because I write and will publish within a “western” academy that stands on Indigenous soil, the written record can become surveillance of Indigenous communities unintentionally, and in turn, property (West-McGruer, 2016). Thus, strategic methods and continual community engagement is a necessary ethical practice to honour Indigenous agency and uphold mana.

However, these considerations should be balanced and challenged with what Professor I. Futa Helu argued in the pursuit of knowledge, that there be no tapu subjects (Janman, 2012). Another example from the Moana is from the anthology, *Whispers and Vanities: Samoan Indigenous Knowledge and Religion*. The introduction of this book boldly states that “This book breaks tapu. It adopts as its driving principle the view that while all knowledge is sacred and to be respected, it is also to be shared and debated. It is, after all, *our* knowledge” (Suaalii-Sauni, Wendt, Mo‘a, Fuamatu, Va‘ai, Whaitiri, & Filipino, 2014, pp. 49-50). Keeping in mind the importance of who shares what, why, and how, it is between points of knowledge protection and sharing, debate and respect, which is where I find myself between while

writing this thesis. I argue that this intersection is where new language for knowledge emerges, located in the borderlands of consciousness where binaries and dichotomies are ruptured (Anzaldúa, 1987). Māhina (2008b; 2010) and Ka‘ili (2005; 2008; 2017a; 2017b) explain this position as the tā vā points of intersection, where conflict can become order, and disharmony can become beauty. I have obtained the knowledge through gifting, exchange, and relationships mediated in protocol and grounded in Indigenous theory and values. Therefore, I write from a point of noa in Tongan cosmology and from a point of waix/taj (*zero/equilibrium*) in Mayan (K’iche’/ Kaqchikel) cosmovisión, both cosmologies identifying a calibrated point of neutrality, where knowledge can be shared openly in a transition point of creative energy. Kū Kahakalau (2014) introduced and explained to me a ‘Ōlelo No‘eau (*Hawaiian proverb*), which goes: “He lawai‘a no ke kai papa‘u, he pōkole ke aho; he lawai‘a no ke kai hohonu, he loa ke aho.” The English translation is: A fisherman of the shallow sea uses only a short line; a fisherman of the deep sea has a long line. When ethics, methods, and theory are complimentary, and mindful of various parties, processes, and systems that must be navigated, research can become a long line to catch big fish and greater knowledge.

### 3.6.1 Tauhi Vā and Gifting

Tongan music and Kava songs reflect participant’s views, their respective society, and their actions within it, revealing different relationships within the Tongan cultural value of tauhi vā (Thaman, 2008; Ka‘ili, 2005; ‘Ulu‘ave, 2012; Lipchitz, 1999; Simonett, 2008). The relationship between musicians, song writers, singers, songs, Kava, and Moana people through sharing knowledge and memory are also reflected in this Tongan value. While originally being based on kinship, tauhi vā and its application expands as kin does. Tauhi vā is a mediation of points between social and environmental cognitive spatial awareness. Anae (2010; 2016) in efforts to bring the academy into balance with the Moana centres teu le vā in native anthropology, the spiritual essence of keeping social space tidy. Teu le vā adds that vā

is not a vacancy, an emptiness, but rather the relationships that hold everything together. To work in *vā* is to nurture the space between each other, the environment, and the collective relationships embodied through time and space. Particular songs generate their mana through *vā*, which extends what can be tracked in material success or mainstream popularity. This mana is derived from authorship, genealogy, meaning, temporal and spatial positioning, and their overall impact in yielding *māfana*. In diaspora contexts *tauhi vā* nurtures the space between geographical space and historical time, which I elaborate on in chapter seven. This requires a nurturing of physical and temporal space with ancestors to uphold one's identity.

Gift-giving is one such act that reflects one's mana and applies *tauhi vā* simultaneously. The Tongan *me'a 'ofa* or Māori *koha* (*gifts*) that are appropriate may of themselves possess mana or reflect the givers' mana in gifting them, contributing to calibrating or creating balanced social space (Ka'ili, 2008; Vaka, 2014). The *iTaukei isevusevu* (*yaqona/kava presentation and gifting*) is one example. Aporosa (2014a) has explained that if a researcher gives *isevusevu* expressing their intent and their research project, requesting a signed form or hand out consent waiver afterwards would diminish or insult what that gift holds and represents in its Indigenous context. Aporosa (2014a) further explains that a gift of *yaqona* (*kava*) is mana and carries significant value in its ability to establish *noa* as a gift and in its consumption. It is important to know your relations and develop good social skills to make sound decisions. My recognition of *vā* increased and improved throughout the research process. My Mayan cultural values derived from a cosmic relational lens has been an important foundation in becoming more aware of *vā*, and learning from mistakes, such as what and how to gift with new relations and to contextualise gifts. I gave gifts of *kava* to all groups I went to *faikava* with. For individuals or small groups that I met with outside of *kava* settings to film them, I often gave them chocolates. Being based in Aotearoa, chocolates from here were highly valued in Moana communities in Utah, I also had chocolate from Iximulew

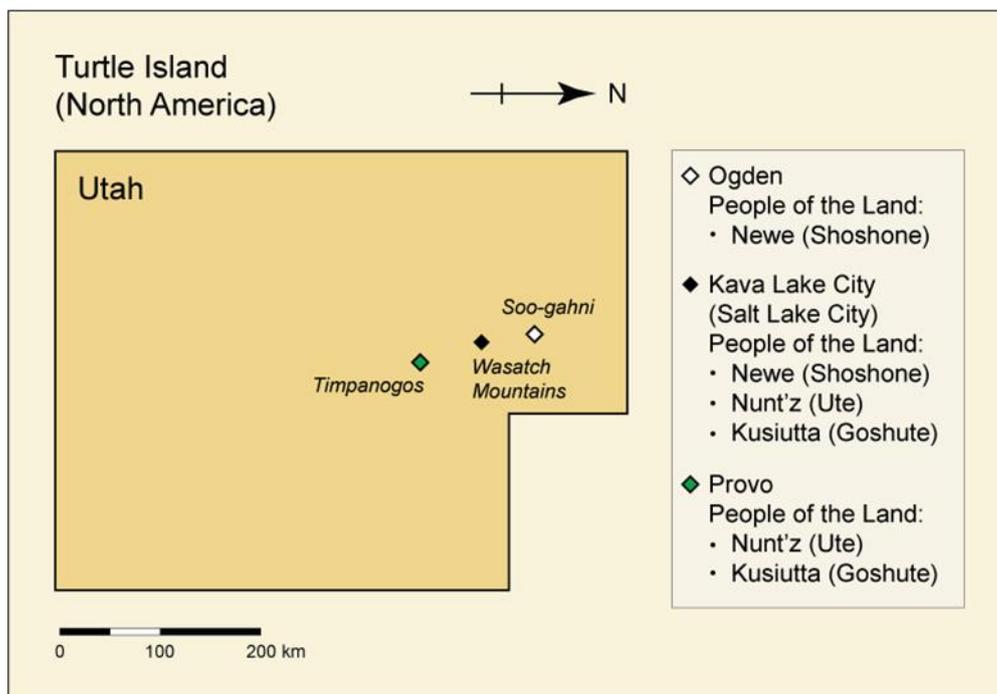
(Guatemala) that I gave out in Aotearoa. Kakaw(a) (*chocolate*) is a sacred food, it is Mayan mana, and gifting it was akin to kava for me, although I realised late in the research that it was important to contextualize the meaning of it when gifting it. For particularly significant contributions to the research I provided other gifts such as Mayan material goods made from back strap loom weaving. These gifts were easily understood as they related to Tongan women's craft of koloa (e.g., fine mats, barkcloth). Buying a meal for someone at a restaurant, or in some cases cooking food for them together with my partner, was also a common gift. In some of the kava groups that were larger, finding the rhythm to present gifts was difficult at first as I generally thought to give something at the beginning and at the end to show gratitude. The level of formality and gift giving was also higher in new or more recent relationships, as previous ones continue on a thread of ongoing gifting throughout time. A final note on gifting is that because of communal networks globally, on a few occasions gifting was done through proxy when requested, such as asking for a gift to go to a relative, friend, or community member rather than the person directly sharing knowledge with me.

### **3.7. Places and People: Kava Research Sites**

Throughout this research I have centred my work in Aotearoa where I was primarily based. I participated in kava circles in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and Kirikiriroa (Hamilton). My additional site is where I was previously based, on Turtle Island (Utah, U.S.). There my kava participation spanned from Ogden, to Salt Lake City, to Provo. While I attended a conference in Australia in late 2015, during my first year of doctoral studies, I stayed with peers and participated in the local kava community in Kamberra. I made two trips to Tonga during my years of research so far and draw from a previous trip in 2012 as well. In the kingdom, I have been primarily based in the island of Tongatapu, but I have visited 'Eua, and have also spent some time in Ha'apai, and the Vava'u island groups. However, the

majority of kava experiences from Tonga used in this thesis come from the urban centre of the country's capital, Nuku'alofa.

I attended four kava sessions in Kamberra, Australia, and sixteen throughout the Kingdom of Tonga during my doctoral research. During my trips to Utah while gathering data for this project at the end of 2015 and in late 2017, I attended twenty-six kava sessions. In Aotearoa, I attended forty-two kava sessions that I wrote reflections on or filmed at, after which I stopped counting and documenting specifically for this research. In total there are eighty-eight kava sessions I attended including each research site. I also received contributions through talanoa from one hundred and forty people, seventeen in Australia, forty-three in Utah, forty-eight in Aotearoa, twenty-one in Tonga, and eleven from anonymous locations. Depending on availability and other family commitments I spent a few hours to several at each event, and for about 15 of all the sessions I stayed until the end, which ranged from finishing at midnight to 6 a.m. in the morning.



**Figure 7. Map of Utah research sites, facing west towards the Moana.  
This map was commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and created by Seline McNamee.**



Figure 8. Map of Aotearoa research sites, facing the direction that Māui did when fishing it out. This map was commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and created by Seline McNamee.

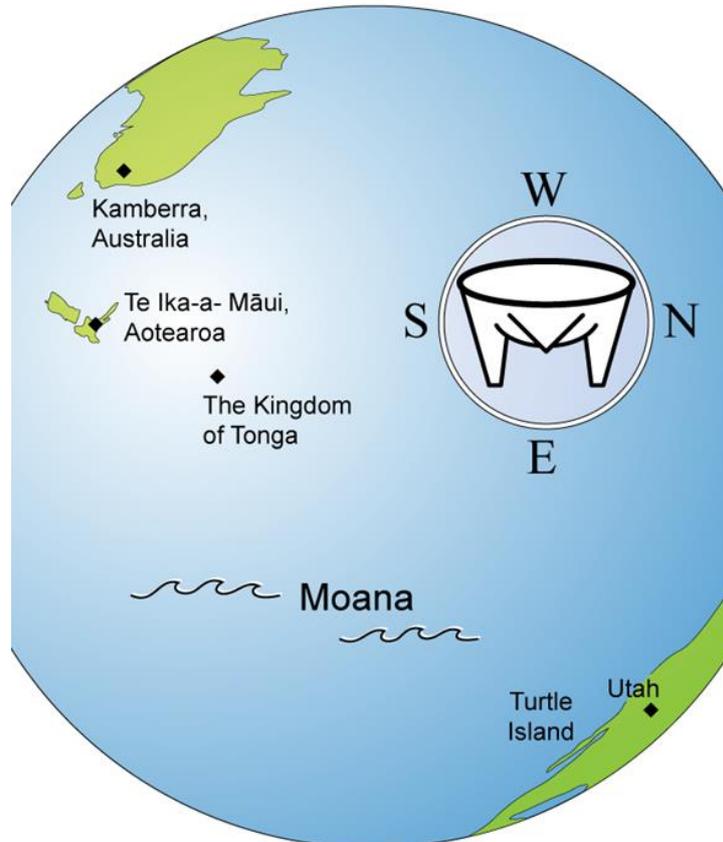
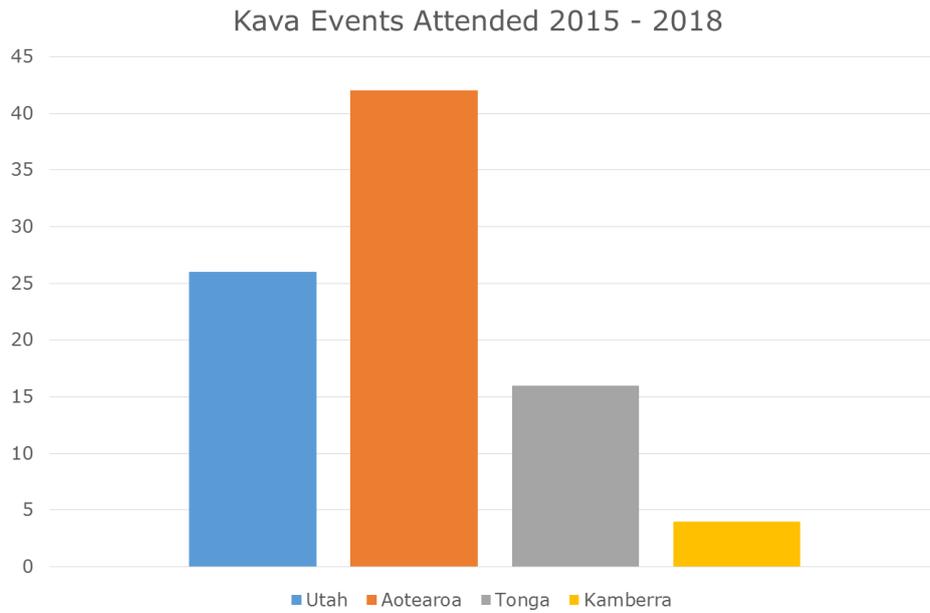
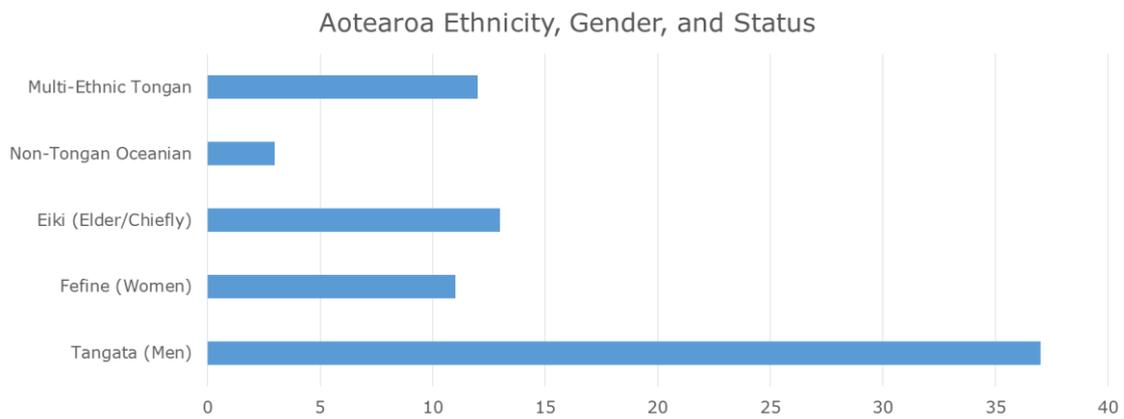


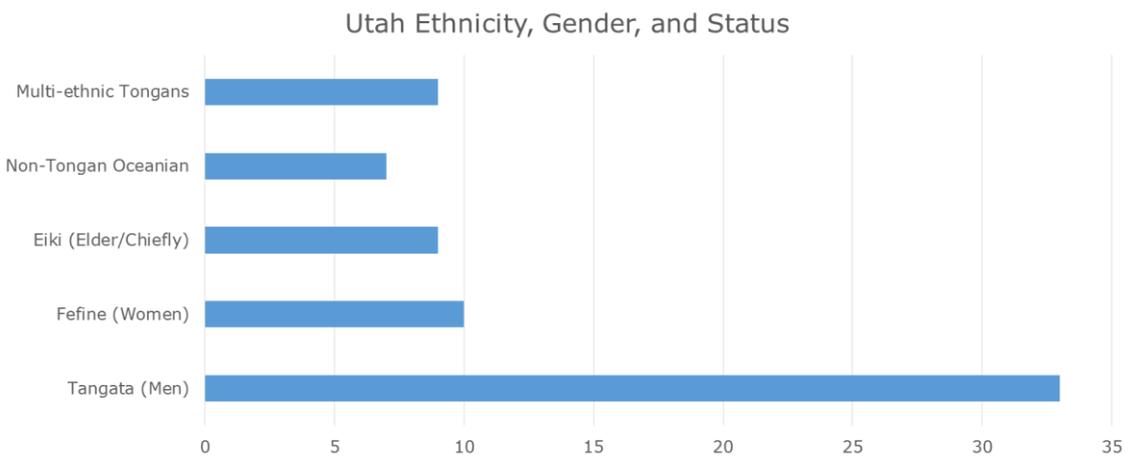
Figure 9. Map of all research sites, facing how I began my relationship with the Moana. This map was commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and created by Seline McNamee.



**Figure 10. Graph - Faikava events attended (88 total). Graph by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**



**Figure 11. Graph - Aotearoa participant demographics out of 48. Ethnicity, gender, and elder status overlap in participants but are separated here to distinguish them. Graph by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**



**Figure 12. Graph - Utah participant demographics out of 43. Ethnicity, gender, and elder status overlap in participants but are separated here to distinguish them. Graph by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

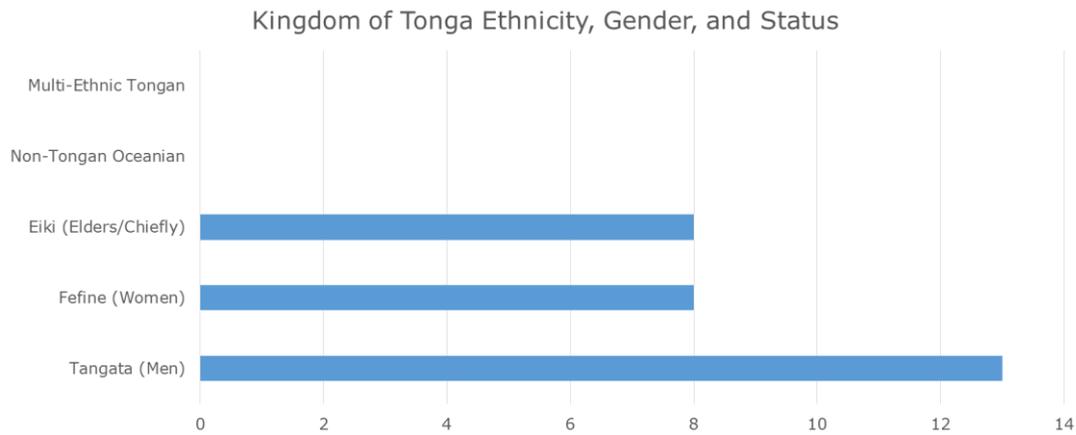


Figure 13. Graph - Tonga participant demographics out of 21. Ethnicity, gender, and elder status overlap in participants but are separated here to distinguish them. Graph by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

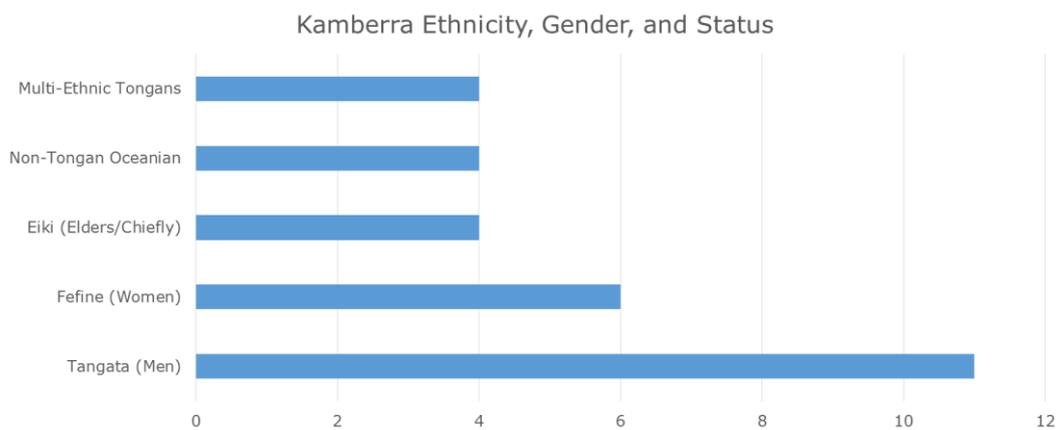


Figure 14. Graph - Australia participant demographics out of 17. Ethnicity, gender, and elder status overlap in participants but are separated here to distinguish them. Graph by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

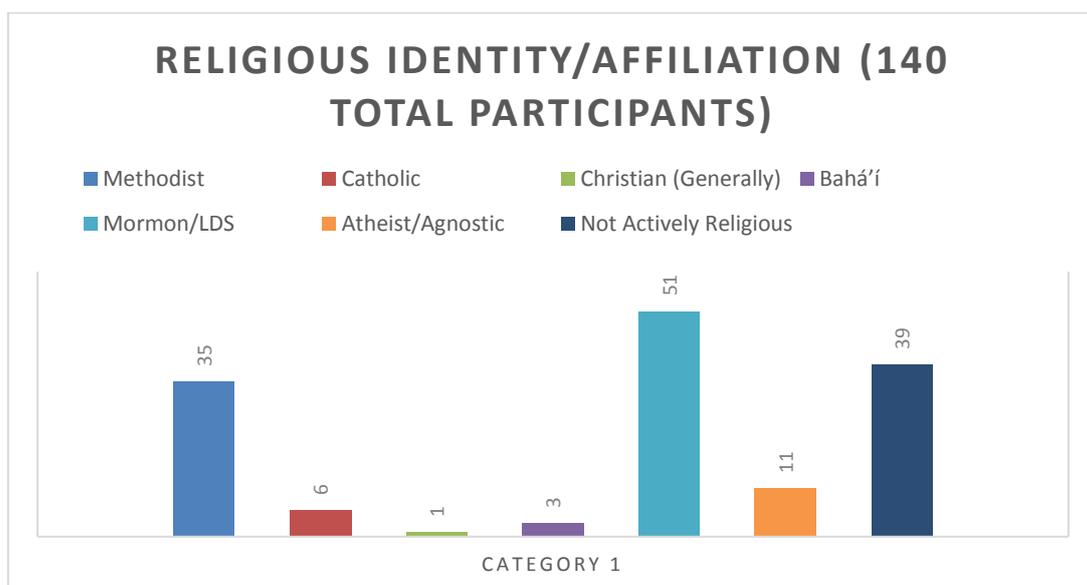


Figure 15. Graph - Religious demographics out of the total amount of participants. Graph authored by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

### 3.8. Conclusion

This chapter began with my positionality as an urban diasporic Mayan raised Mormon and a long-time participant in kava gatherings, now academic researcher. I explained the methodology of ethnomusicology, which integrates Tongan epistemologies through Indigenous oratory such as poetry and song lyrics side by side with academic literature. This chapter discussed that music in kava settings generates feelings of māfana in performance and the openness that results from states of noa that balance out relationships in shared experiences at kava events. I defined and explained the use of talanoa as critical oratory that opens dialogue through relationality. I also discussed Tongan relational values of tauhi vā as the ethical framework for this research of kava groups in Utah and Aotearoa with some additional contributions from sites in Tonga and Australia. This thesis weaves together different voices across space that collectively accompany one another to answer the research questions of the role of kava today to create noa spaces, the formation of urban Indigenous identities in diaspora through kava, and the role of songs in telling these stories. This research is tapu in that its contents were obtained and is written from a position of noa, which is a reminder to thoughtfully engage with the contents of this thesis and be mindful of the relational and contextual specificities from which these stories and ideas are derived from. The remainder of the chapters in this thesis are thematically organized around history, Christianity, Mormon nuances, diaspora, gender, identity, and the knowledge represented in metaphor.

## Chapter 4. Chanting Kava History and Singing Tongan Tradition

### 4.1. Introduction

In Tonga, kava was the drink of the gods. In one of the stories, the principal deities of Tonga, namely Hikule‘o, Tangaloa, and Maui, drank kava in Pulotu (realm of the spirits/ancestors) under a mythical talking tree known as ‘Akaulea. ‘Akaulea, the talking tree, was the master of ceremony in the kava circle who called out the name of the person to drink the kava.

–Tēvita Ō. Ka’ili (Facebook, 2 Feb 2018).

It was mid-winter in Utah, it was cold, and snow was on the ground. I was on my way to faikava with ‘Inoke Hafoka, a Tongan doctoral student, Phillip Muavesi, a Hip Hop artist who is iTaukei and Sāmoan, and Samoana Matagi, a filmmaker who is of Sāmoan and European descent. Samoana also goes by the alias “The No-Handed Bandit” a playful spin to the tragic accident that left him without hands. Samoana suffered an on-the-job electrical burn injury that resulted in the amputation of both of his forearms and hands. Although I have drunk kava with them in other settings on the floor, this evening we were sitting on chairs and around a small table. Phillip was serving the kava out of a small yellow plastic basin and we shared a bilo/ipu (Fijian/Tongan-Sāmoan word for halved coconut shell kava cup). Samoana has prosthetic forearms with hooks that can open and close to grip objects, which he wears to assist his mobility. These prosthetics have Sāmoan tattoo patterns printed on the forearm portions of them. We passed around the ipu/bilo, each drinking our cup of kava after clapping. Samoana was using a ceramic mug to drink the kava served to him, the handle on the mug was easier to grab a hold of so he could drink. As we laughed over funny stories, enjoyed the rhythms of reggae music playing in the background, and caught up from the last time we were together, our talanoa began to unpack the way each of us actively relates to and thinks about kava. At this point we were several hours in and feeling relaxed from countless cups of kava. After drinking a round, Samoana spoke up, he gently placed the mug back on the table and said:

I think that one thing that makes a difference is that you know what it's supposed to be or what it was. So, while I'm drinking out of this cup, I know that it used to be a coconut shell, and I know that used to be a kumete [pointing to the plastic basin of Kava], and it's just like in Hip Hop ... if you look at the best artists in Hip Hop right now, those are the guys that did their homework, they know what they're talking about or what the old guys talked about, and they're re-teaching stuff. This is like the perfect environment to teach this kind of stuff to the young ones (Matagi, 2015).

Samoana continued to express the importance of knowing origins in order to navigate life, and he also brought up the idea that learning songs was important and that understanding them is a process. For example, he said: “a whole bunch of people who listen to Bob Marley don't know what he's saying, but they like it ... I didn't know what he was talking about, but later on I was like, I need to find out ... I found out what Bob Marley was saying.”



**Figure 16. Samoana Matagi preparing to receive his cup of kava.  
Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

Many kava circles critically engage with and unpack histories, social realities, and meanings. As Samoana mentioned, this is not the case all the time for everyone. For kava sessions when these types of questions take place, a broad range of topics are reflected on, including history, society, politics, sports, family, and more. In cases where the lyrics of songs are understood and connected to their original context through collective knowledge that exists within a group, new contexts are mediated and new interpretations are created. This is a genealogical process of tracing origins, making ancestral connections, and bringing the past

into the present, reinventing it in the process; a roots way of thinking. This is not only about understanding meaning, but also about new meaning making for the songs sung or played in kava circles, whether they are of Moana origin or not.

In this chapter I will discuss some of the tensions with the concept of tradition as well as its usefulness in conveying Indigenous identities. As Samoana has conveyed earlier, Indigeneity is a living presence that is rooted in ancestral connections to place(s), a contemporary expression of ancestral traditions. Drinking kava is a traditional practice as a custom that has been passed down continuously over many generations, and it is simultaneously a contemporary popular practice in the island Kingdom of Tonga and among Tongan diaspora. Kava tradition intersects with contemporary space as it is carried by new vessels, such as the plastic basin mentioned earlier. Kava songs are likewise transformed into new sounds, such as reggae and Hip Hop. The ancient Tongan Kava chant holds various layers of history within it, revealing significant Tongan values represented in kava practices such as sacrifice, duty, and conflict resolution. The kava chant refers to the formation of taumafa kava, which is a regal ceremony that will be discussed in this chapter. The kava chant's expansion into contemporary settings will then be explored through the inception of kalapu (kava clubs), the Fōfō'anga kalapu, and string bands. This chapter concludes with contemporary songs that are ethnographic reflections of contemporary kava practices.

## **4.2. Concerning Tradition**

Modern paradigms have often framed Indigenous people in a temporality that relegates them to being “the last of, the dying out, and the disappearing.” Indigenous people are constructed as temporary in the linear progressive imaginary of western modernity. The endangered Indigene is a complicated problematic. When is the starting point for an Indigenous identity? When is the end of an Indigenous tradition? These questions are complicated yet they are continually asked of communities. These questions are political

because they refer to belonging to land and ocean, and to cosmological claims of which systems should govern in place(s). Indigenous identities as mentioned in chapter two are explicitly political in this sense, as they assert a contested temporality to modern time in contested space. Whether it be settler-colonial nations or seemingly self-determined independent nations that are subject to the coloniality of being, which I discussed in chapter two. Tongans experience the different subjectivities of these temporal and spatial politics at home and abroad, embodying multiple temporal and spatial subjectivities.

Who belongs where and when? How are they allowed to belong there and then? “Western” time is established and maintained materially and ideologically through imperial force, colonial occupation, colonality, and globalized political economy. These oppressive systems have sought to or continue to attempt to erase and reconfigure “others” in the “white man’s image/world” (Black et al., 2010; Lesiak, 1992; Shakur, 1996). Western modernity struggles for Indigenous erasure and recognition by demanding adherence to the arrangement of divided up zones of time into hours that relate to one another in their proximity to “the centre”, which is imagined as the British Empire (e.g., Greenwich Median Time). Modern western paradigms imagine a temporality of work days, work weeks, pre-history/pre-Christian, and “history/Civilized” (Rifkin, 2017). Further, western modernity is organized through the division of nation-states which have drawn lines in the recently conceived territories known as nations in the last few centuries (Anderson, 2006; Loomba, 2005). These damage-centred narratives of linear temporalities of a limited existence for Indigeneity is materialized through continual disruption to them, through the presence and existence of Indigenous people and traditions (Calderón, 2016; Tuck, 2009). Indigenous identities through their mobility, legacies, and living traditions are acts of temporal sovereignty, which are alternatives to modern notions of time and space as they contest them with their presence and performance (Hau’ofa, 1993; Horrocks 2005; Ka’ili, 2017a; 2017b; Maldonado-Torres, 2008;

Rifkin, 2017; Wendt, 1982). Faikava is one such practice as a contemporary presence of an Indigenous tradition. Faikava performs a contested temporality by slowing down and suspending time through calibrating multiple relationships. The Tongan tradition of faikava disrupts the pace and divisions of modern time and space.

Sione Vaka (2016) has suggested we should consider the changing face of kava in relation to divided and contested concepts of time and tradition. There are tensions at the intersection of distinguishing what traditional means and when it begins. This is exemplified in questions that arise as to what is ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’, which is prevalent in diaspora settings and communities. In the case of Tongans and other people of the Moana, the backdrop of distinguishing traditional is set by western imperialism in Oceania and what Trask (1999) refers to as cultural prostitution in the tourist industry. The increased adoption and visibility of kava through its global commodification by non-Moana peoples today should also be considered within this context. These backdrops to questions of ‘traditionalism’ and ‘authenticity’ are influenced by these ideas, which positions kava in a double-bind where to be contemporary is to ‘be white’ and ‘inauthentic’, and to be exotic is to be ‘authentic’ and ‘frozen in the past’, both options being framed by western modernity. Some members of Moana communities criticise kava practices at times on the basis of differing interpretations of what constitutes as traditional. At times the measure of “traditional” relegates kava exclusively to rare and elite ceremonies and does not include faikava practices. Renowned scholar and musician Sione Vaka (2016) commented during a talanoa that:

What is difficult now is some people ignore the original interpretation and pick up somewhere in the middle and say this is what we Tongan’s used to have. Then it becomes a main belief, and that totally disregards the original story ... we can’t stop the changes, but we need to record the right things, and where the development is, and always go back to the original stories. We should not put up something in the middle and say this is the original idea. I think that will misguide our future generations.

When “traditional” is constructed as being exclusive to rare and elite ceremonies it overlooks the long-standing tradition of the regular use of kava, which I introduced in chapter two and

discuss further later in this chapter. This is a selective and narrow definition of tradition that limits the breadth of Tongan kava traditions. This idea also reflects the western hegemonic ideologies that Indigenous identity is not “modern” and can’t remake or make new traditions, raising the question of who gets to decide what traditional is and how.

Gathering from ethnographic experiences in this project, doing traditional kava is a performance of Indigeneity, which simply maintains a living link to ancestors. Identifying the traditional is possible through the cultural value of tauhi vā, the moments when ancestral relationships are nurtured, keeping the past alive by bringing it into the present and valuing ancestral wisdom as relevant today. Indigenous tradition in this sense is the continual formation of identities through evolving customs which collapse western time and the illusion of modernity. This is demonstrated by ‘Okusitino Māhina’s (2010) explanation of Moana temporality in which “people walk forward into the past [kuongamu‘a], and walk backward into the future [kuongamui],” where time is mediated in a conflicting or paradoxical present (p. 170). We collapse time by doing the past now, and being mindful that what we do now, is the past of tomorrow. Therefore, today’s popular will become tomorrow’s traditional. For example, elders today are often respected for their rank in relation to younger persons, demonstrated when younger people fulfil responsibilities of service to elders, such as preparing or serving kava and running errands for elders in a kava circle. These young people will eventually grow into elder status or position and one day be served as well as they earn respect through service, experience, and knowledge. Indigenous conceptualizations of time include ongoing expanding definitions of tradition that are premised on living connections with ancestors even in adapted forms and expressions.

The presence of kava itself at an event marks it as something traditional because it is an ancestrally inherited practice that invokes the past into the present. Fehoko (2014) explains that a common sentiment or expression to explain faikava is “pukepuke fonua,” meaning to

hold on tightly to the land and its heritage. A Tongan elder and community leader from Vava'u, Tonga, who is currently based in Utah shared that he prefers to faikava inside his home, often in his living room, and in a manner that his family is comfortable to join in or be around. This elder expressed his sentiments about the traditional appeal of kava, explaining:

I think what attracted me to kava was more the traditionalism. The kumete [kava bowl] and the cups, the fala [mat(s)], and all of the stories that go around it more than anything. For me, it connected me to my past, and it connected me to my forbearers and all of the ancestors that were there. I understand that kava is a validation of things, it validates occasions, for example when you come to a funeral and the family brings all their goods to a funeral, they come together as a family, but at the forefront of all of that, with the 'Ulumotu'a (the chief for that family or the island) ... is the kava branch, or in this case you know, just the kava bag. This is to validate the fact that this clan has come to pay respect and homage to the person... this signifies coming in peace, coming in support of the families that are there and so forth. In a wedding it comes at the forefront also ... you bring your fala, you bring your mats and all of your goods. But, at the forefront of that is the kava. It's a validation of occasions, events, and things that are important in the Tongan culture.

Faikava is a traditional component of Tongan culture and identity. This elder is seen as a significant knowledge holder not only because of different positions he has held in the community (titles), but because of his continual contextualization of traditions such as kava, mediating its place in time. Bringing kava into the future by linking it with the past, contextualizing and walking through the current forms and expressions (e.g., kava bag) that represent past forms (e.g., kava branch). This elder demonstrates the important role of Kava to connect to the past in order to validate the present, such as at life events.

### **4.3. Kava Chant and Tongan History**

This section will delve into the meanings of the stories referred to in the ancient Kava chant, which demonstrates the ideas surrounding tradition discussed above. This chant is an Indigenous ethnographic expression of kava history and practice for future generations to trace back to. I begin by looking at the values of sacrifice and peace; followed by a lyrical analysis of the kava chant, which reveals heavy kava drinking consequences, the material

culture of kava, and the nuances in practice and protocol specific to lineage. The following is the kava chant as it was written down and interpreted by ‘Okusitino Māhina (2016a; 2016b):

Laulau ‘oe Kava (moe Tō)

Kava koe kilia mei Fa‘imata  
Ko e tama ‘a Fevanga mo Fefafa  
Fahifahi pea mama  
Ha tāno‘a mono‘anga  
Ha pulu hono tata  
Ha pelu ke tau‘anga  
Ha tou‘a ke ngaohikava  
Ha mu‘a ke ‘apa‘apa  
Ha ‘eiki ke olovaha  
Fai‘anga ‘oe fakataumafa

Kava (and Sugarcane) Chant

Kava, the leper from Fa‘imata  
The child of Fevanga and Fefafa  
Chopped and chewed  
A bowl as a container  
With coconut fibre as a strainer  
A fold of banana leaves as a cup  
Someone to make the kava  
A relative as a master of ceremony  
And a chief to preside over  
Where the royal kava is done.

#### 4.3.1 Sacrifice and Peace

This chant makes reference to the kava origin story, which is believed by many to have taken place during the tenth Tu‘i Tonga (TT) era (approx. 500-800 years before present). However, before continuing, it is important to remember that the first possible mention of kava in Tongan history was when the first TT, Aho‘eitu went to langi (*sky/heaven*) to drink kava with his father (Ka‘ili, 2017c; Māhina, 2017). The kava origin story was thus composed after it already had a place in Tongan culture but would be transformed into a new ritual. The Tongan kava origin story took place with the guidance of the foreign chiefly advisor Lo‘au. The origin story of kava mentioned in the first two lines of the chant was shared in chapter two of this thesis (Māhina, 2017). Kava‘onau the leper is mentioned here, and her parents who had offered her up as a sacrifice. They had no other offering to give to the sacred TT chief who arrived on their shores. Kava was named after her (the human sacrifice) when it grew out of where she was cooked, the umu (*earth oven*) turned gravesite, and along with kava, tō (*sugarcane*) grew also. Suren (2015) believes that the young maiden Kava‘onau, being youthful, the only child of her parents, and a woman, made her a highly valuable sacrificial offering, elevating the significance of what was being given up and offered.

Hu‘akau (2015) argues that Kava use and practice today has been oversimplified and

detached from the origin story, which has led to the consequence of its relevance being questioned by many Tongans. Hu‘akau emphasizes the significance of Kava practices is held in that it is a major cultural identifier of their own ancestral making. Hu‘akau shares:

I believe we have to go back, because ... our culture was created around the ceremony of kava. . . The kava story was created to instil into the psyche of the Tongans, the core value, that they have to build their society with, and that value is that your obligation to your society is more important than your life. If there comes a time, whether you serve your people, or your society... and you are to choose, between your life and your obligation to your society, your fonua, your people, then you always choose your obligation, don't worry about your life.

A Tongan saying, which is also the name of Tonga's National Rugby League team is 'Mate Ma'a Tonga', which literally means 'Die for Tonga'. This saying reflects the significance of sacrifice and obligation that Hu‘akau refers to as a core value in the kava origin story. An example from ancient Tonga is the underwater game some have likened unto rugby called kasivaki, where divers would run across the ocean floor, being held down by holding a large heavy stone (Dale, 2008; Liuaki, 2008; Moala, 1994; Taumoefolau, 2011; Tu‘itahi, 2016a). It was not uncommon for players of this sport to die, primarily by drowning. Ka‘ili (2017c) explained to me that the cultural ideal of 'Mate Ma'a Tonga' is linked to the Tongan concept of sacrifice and loyalty, which is mateaki in the Tongan language, literally meaning 'to die for,' which might also be interpreted as 'to give your all' or 'to live for'.

Siosiu Lafitani (2015), is the primary founder of the Lo‘au University in Tonga. He shared with me that Lo‘au as a chief advisor to the tenth paramount chief of Tonga, Momo, instituted the kava ceremony as we know it today as part of a new philosophy centred on making peace and developing knowledge. Ka‘ili (2017c) adds that when "Lo‘au came, there were major conflicts that were happening in Tonga, because people couldn't find... balance." The new kava ritual instituted at that time and its associated protocols emphasized an ethos of peace in re-constructing the society at that time. Lafitani (2015) explained:

In ancient times, [Kava] is where stories and myths were kept ... Lo‘au called the kava circle the school for Tongan people... 'ko e kava ko e api ako'. That's where you learn,

where you can learn how to respect. You learn the principles of respect, of humility, of keeping beautiful socio-spatial relationships, of dedication.

This new institution of kava practice included the value of dedication, obligation, conflict resolution, responsibility, and knowledge production relevant to Tongan society and culture (Lafitani, 1992; Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016).

Lo‘au is recognized as a *tufunga fonua*, a grand master of the land, custom, and people, meaning an architect of society and place, a creator of culture and prosperity. Ka‘ili (2017c) has explained that this title meant that Lo‘au “used kava to create harmonious social relations, which allowed people to ... be able to talk about/resolve conflict.” Ka‘ili goes on to explain that Lo‘au created ‘*fatongia*’, which refers to different types of mutual obligations:

Lo‘au was an architect who was able to divide the *fatongia* between the different clans in a way that would create harmony within Tongan society, so that you have an obligation to someone, who will also have a *fatongia* to you, that there would be a sort of reciprocity that would happen.

This idea is imbedded in the kava origin story and chant, where the grave of Kava‘onau was a result of chiefly refusal to accept such a costly and burdensome sacrificial offering, demonstrating the value of not taking advantage of the people. The other part of the chiefly duty and responsibility was to make the land bounteous, having chiefly *mana* meant you could propagate fertility and thus generate life in fulfilling ones chiefly *fatongia* (Tomlinson & Tengan, 2016; Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016; Shore, 1989). Ka‘ili (2017c) explained to me that when *fatongia* are not met you reach an imbalanced state of *tauhi vā*, where spatial relationality has not been nurtured and mediated, and what results is *vā kovi* (*spatial disharmony*) rather than *vā lelei* (*good spatiality, spatial harmony*). The *fatongia* for Tongan’s is demonstrated in Fefafa and Fevanga’s willingness to give the most precious thing they could as an offering to the chief. Ka‘ili shared with me that there is a Tongan proverb that exemplifies this value, “Si‘i pē kae hā, even though you don’t have much, you show up, and you give as much as you can to help.” The key in the value of sacrifice for the sake of

peaceful relations is that one must nurture the space between all relations, when it is not reciprocal and out of balance, conflict prevails. The last person who was referred to as a *tufunga fonua* is the late HM Queen Sālote Tupou III, a renowned *punake (composer, poet, and choreographer)* and revered monarch who I will discuss in more detail in chapter nine on identity.

A contemporary example of kava practices used for peaceful resolutions that fulfil the need for a sacrifice is in the bestowing of titles linking people to their sacred duty to fulfil their responsibilities associated with their titles. Kava is also still used in some circumstances to resolve conflicts and ask for forgiveness, and in some adaptations of this expression, to ‘squash beef’, either through engaging in a *talanoa* of reconciliation and then drinking kava together or drinking kava together until conflict is reconciled peacefully. The value of sacrifice and responsibility/obligation is deeply embedded in kava ritual and history. The remainder of this section will look at the specific cultural and historical nuances also imbedded in the kava chant lyrics.

#### 4.3.2 **Kava Chant Lyrics and Analysis**

##### Kava, the leper from Fa‘imata. The Child of Fevanga and Fefafa.

The first line of the kava chant identifies the young women Kava‘onau who would be sacrificed to the visiting chief and would eventually be the source of kava and *tō*, and in doing so mentions that she also has leprosy. Tongan linguist Melenaite Taumoefolau (2016) shared with me the possibility of her leprosy being an indication of the potential side effect of drinking too much kava for some people. This is known as ‘kava dermopathy’, dry scaly skin, known as *kanikani* in Fijian (Aporosa, 2016a; Norton & Ruze, 1994). Ikanamoe Ma‘u (2016) explained to me that she knows it as ‘*uno‘unoa* in Tongan, or as fish scales. The effects and severity vary, and although they may cause mild discomfort for some, it is generally not physically harmful. This potential side effect that results for some after frequent and heavy

kava consumption has been known for a long time as the origin story of kava indicates, reiterated in the kava chant (Aporosa, 2016a; 2016b; Norton & Ruze, 1994). This condition is easily resolved by ceasing to drink kava for a time. Those who I have observed take on the “leprous” appearance of Kava‘onau, have all been heavy kava drinkers who spend most days of the week drinking for several hours. Early Europeans in Tonga observed and recorded that kava was an everyday practice, which would yield kava dermopathy among the older and frequent consumers of kava (Dale, 2008; Ferdon, 1987; Suren, 2015). Forster wrote in 1773:

They swallow this nauseous stuff as fast as possible; and some old toppers value themselves on being able to empty a great number of bowls... The old men who make a practice of it are lean [and] covered with a scaly skin (In Suren, 2015, p. 218)

I have observed a range of responses to people who get ‘uno‘unoa ranging from being mocked, being called ‘ashy’ or referred to as having ‘dinosaur skin’, or even jokingly offered skin lotion. There is also those who are praised and praise themselves for their commitment to kava drinking, which is demonstrated in the only potential visible marker for kava consumption shown in dry scaly skin, indicating a heavy and regular drinker.

### Chopped and Chewed

The third line of the kava chant refers to previous practices in the preparation of kava by young people who had the best teeth and would chew the kava roots before they were mixed with water (Dale, 2008; Collocott, 1927; Newell, 1947). Today, in the taumafa kava, kava roots are pounded with rocks as part of the ceremony, which is an adaptation from chewing the root, being influenced by European missionaries who saw it as an unclean practice. Additionally, Ferdon (1987) argues that early Tongan practices may have consisted of only chewing kava roots without making an infusion with water, stating that “the masticating of various parts of pepper plants may have been the earliest and most widespread use of the plant” (p. 55). Ferdon adds that he believes onlookers outside of the kava ring/oval in the elite ritual ceremonies were eager to participate as kava chewers given the opportunity.

Ferdon argues this is because, “They were already familiar with the pleasurable sensation to be obtained from the simple act of chewing the root alone” (p. 56). There is some additional metaphor and symbolism surrounding chewing the kava that will be discussed in more detail in chapter ten.

A bowl as a container. With coconut fibre as a strainer.  
A fold of banana leaves as a cup. Someone to make the kava.

This portion of the kava chant makes references to the materials used in the past to have kava, of which some elements remain today in the taumafa kava. The reference to the kava bowl in the chant is not the more common term kumete, but rather tāno‘a. Although kumete seems to have been a term also used in the past, the elite ceremonial word for the bowl in taumafa kava is tāno‘a. The iTaukei and Sāmoan version for kava bowl, tanoa, was also an interchangeable term (Collocott, 1927; Dale, 2008; Newell, 1947; Suren, 2015). I have generally only heard tāno‘a used in reference to a kava ceremony when the Tongan Monarch is present. I have also heard kumete used to refer to kava bowls of the highest chiefs as well, both terms being used interchangeably among Tongans (Fale, 2015; Shumway & Smith, 1999; Suren, 2015; Taumoefolau, 2016).

The other material components mentioned in the chant is the fau, a hibiscus fibre used to strain the kava, which is still in use today at Taumafa Kava and Ilo Kava. Many older men commented to me that hibiscus fibres were still the main strainer used in common Fai Kava throughout the mid-twentieth century in Tonga. The common materials being used now include cheese cloth, milk strainers, and paint strainers, or in diaspora at times even nylons or pantyhose are used to strain kava. The banana leaf cup mentioned in the chant however seems to be obsolete now in any setting. Banana leaf cups were the primary cup used in Tongan kava gatherings, and when coconut cups were introduced there are some distinctions made historically where the banana leaf was reserved for more formal occasions (Collocott, 1927; Dale, 2008; Ferdon, 1987; Newell, 1947; Suren, 2015). Some people have mentioned to me

that the coconut ipu was a Sāmoan introduction and influence in Tonga. Coconut ipu are used today in Taumafa Kava and Ilo Kava, and in many Fai Kava as well. Diaspora faikava settings are not always conducive to the maintenance of coconut kava shells for cups however, such as in Utah where the high altitude dry arid climate often leads to the cracking of ipu. Various different vessels are used in diaspora faikava settings including Styrofoam or plastic cups, metal or glass cups or bowls. Salsa bowls are also growing in popularity which have a bowl shape to them like the ipu/bilo, but they also have legs on them and they are made of hard reusable plastic.



Figure 17. Kava materials used today. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

Someone to make the kava. A relative as a master of ceremony  
And a chief to preside over. Where the royal kava is done.

The chant's mention of 'someone to make the kava' is a reference for the tou'a, which means the person who prepares the kava. Māhina (2017) refers to this position as the anchor or base of the hull of the kava ceremony seating and arrangement, which represents a vaka (*canoe*). Ka'ili (2017c) see's the tou'a as the bailer of the sea vessel. The tou'a also has gendered aspects in faikava, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight. There is

no definitive gender for the tou‘a position and throughout history both men and women have served in this capacity (Dale, 2008). The master of ceremony mentioned in the chant could refer to the matapule (*talking/attendant chiefs, chiefly intermediaries*) who conduct the kava ceremony (Dale, 2008). The matapule who conduct the ceremony call out instructions to the kava preparers, and guide the entire ceremony (Collocott, 1927; Ferdon, 1987; Newell, 1947; Māhina, 1993; 2011b; 2016a). Matapule later call out the names of recipients in order of rank within chiefly kava ceremonies, to which the recipient will clap once or twice to indicate who they are to those who serve out the ipu of kava. Depending on the size of a kava event it was not uncommon in the past to throw cups back after drinking by spinning them across the ground towards the kava bowl, which is a practice still happening in many faikava.

Taumafa Kava is a designation reserved exclusively for the royal kava ceremonies when the monarch or a paramount chief (Tu‘i) is present. Although it is common to refer to any kava ceremony today with the monarch present as taumafa kava, it initially refers to the original bestowing of a Tu‘i title called fakanofu (*receiving title/name*). The first taumafa kava that titles a high chief is referred to by some as the ‘real’ taumafa kava. All kava events after the fakanofu when the monarch is present are still called taumafa kava out of respect for the title now officially held. Today, a Christian coronation for a new ruler is also held, but the taumafa kava must also take place in order to complete the process of making a new successive monarch. The coronation is for the instalment as head of state, and the taumafa kava is the fakanofu as Tu‘i Kanokupolu, a duality of titles embodied in ruler who is both Tu‘i and King. A taumafa kava is thus an exclusive once in a lifetime ritual and simultaneously any ceremony when the Tu‘i/King is present. However, whenever the protocols for a taumafa kava are upheld, I have observed that even if the monarch is not present, some people controversially will still refer to these events as a taumafa kava when a kava ceremony is conducted after the same manner and protocol of the regal ceremony. The

term taumafa kava referred to in the kava chant extends through today, in order to identify a level of formality in kava preparation and serving or an attending Tu‘i or titling of a Tu‘i. The kava chant has since been incorporated in contemporary string band renditions that tell the kava origin story, with versions of the chant often sung in A Capella as the chorus.



Figure 18. Ilo Kava in Kirikiriroa. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

#### 4.3.3 Tongan Tu‘i Lineages and Kava Ceremony

The spectrum of Tongan kava practices are connected yet they also identify unique variations within lineages and between chiefly powers. When I inquired about the taumafa kava used today, I was told the current protocols are specific to the Tu‘i Kanokupolu (TK). The TK is the third paramount chiefly lineage titled after the first Tu‘i Tonga in Tongan history. Tu‘i Kanokupolu is the younger sibling in chiefly title rank and a more recently established line compared to the elder sibling chiefly title of Tu‘i Tonga, which is the oldest (elder rank being associated with more mana). I was told that because the current monarch is

primarily from the Kanokupolu line the specific taumafa kava protocols for this lineage are used. I also came to understand that the knowledge and practice of the other respective taumafa kava for the Tu'i Tonga and the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua (TH) (second oldest lineage) are still held in the clans they belong to and closely associated villages. However, the specific titles of TT and TH are not currently held by anyone in Tonga (Bott, 1982). TK has absorbed the other lineages in the centralising of political power in the national formation of the Kingdom of Tonga.

The chiefly lineage in power (church and state) not only governs the protocol used in enacting and performing today's regal kava ceremony but is also a major influence in regular faikava practice. Respect for the mana of the lineage and power held by the head of state is reflected in the regular kava practices that in large part mirror the governing chiefly lineage. When the manner of faikava departs from this it is usually in protest, divergence, or due to closer affiliation to other lineages and residual historical tensions. For example, before Tonga's modern national formation there was a loosely held governance across the Tongan sea of islands, with relative autonomy and local chiefly governance (Bott, 1982; Campbell, 1982; 2001; Dale, 2008; Gunson, 1979; Helu, 1999; Herda, 1987; Lātūkefu, 1974; van der Grijp, 2004). When power from the three lineages was centralised into the modern state under a singular high chief, some tension remained from the historical resistance to this transformation of governance. However, similar to the previous prevailing value of respect for the authority of high chiefs, there is still a general respect for the current governing authority. In this manner, the singular taumafa kava ceremony that represents the collective nation-state monarchy carries authoritative influence through chiefly respect in faikava practice. This is mainly subconscious through socialization and not generally a mindfully aware assertion with some exceptions.

The Taumafa Kava although constructed in Tonga was influenced by neighbouring traditions. Some have shared that the TT protocols are more closely associated with Fiji whereas the TK protocols are more closely linked with Sāmoa due to the history of those lineages with those places. If we revert back to the kava origin story, Kava‘onau’s sacrifice took place on the island of ‘Eueiki. Ka‘ili (2008; 2017a; 2017c) argues ‘Eueiki is the Tongan equivalent to Havaiki/Hawaiki or Hawai‘i. Ka‘ili explains that Lo‘au was likely a Hawaiian or Tahitian, identified as a foreigner from the east who became a tufunga fonua in Tonga, and an author of the kava origin story in Tonga. Considering this possibility, there may be other elements from Hawai‘i and elsewhere across the Moana that have had influence on the various Tongan kava practices as well. I believe these complex and potential nuances is why Māhina (2011b) has argued we must have a total view rather than a partial view of kava. I have taken the ‘total view’ to mean a broad inclusion of both time and space. A total view that draws from the layers of time in innovation and adaptation in history, as well as the people who influence this through exchange and interactions across a pan-Moana spectrum.

Taumafa kava is in many ways a ‘traditional’ standard for Tongans as it branches out into various unique nuances according to village, clan, and family particularities. The purpose however remains rooted in the values of sacrifice and mediating the mana and tapu between peoples and fonua. This mediation is done in order to reach a state of noa to fulfil whatever the purpose or function of kava is in a particular moment in time and in space. Kava solidifies, elevates, and gives honour and prestige to a particular event as well as neutralizes barriers, allowing for people to open up and be vulnerable, thus leading to closer relationships, and intensifying the fatongia between people and their fuakava (*oaths, covenants, binding commitments*). Ka‘ili (2017c) reminds us that:

We do know that there was a ceremonial kava, and then there was other kinds of faikava that people would do when they would just come together and drink after a hard day of work...all of these levels of kava were there from the very beginning...in the story of Aho‘eitu visiting Tangaloa, their kava ceremony seemed to be less formal,

it was just father and son, they went to his home and they had kava because he met his son for the first time. That's not a royal kava ceremony, that's one they had in their home, all these different kinds of kava gathering, we seem to still have today.

Keeping this in mind in my focus on common faikava settings, mostly among the Tongan and Moana diaspora, there is much more to be explored and theorized in regards to kava rituals beyond the scope of this thesis. For example, due to my linguistic limitations I do not write extensively on faikava at putu (*funerals*) or hoa/mali (*weddings/partnerships*), along with other areas not fully addressed in this thesis. I leave these topics and realms for scholars with broader and closer kinship ties that gives them appropriate access to such realms, or possibly to a better equipped self in the future in collaboration with such scholars or members of the community. This is a brief and basic overview of some elements in kava ritual processes as my focus is on the ideas that connect the diverse range of kava practices and settings.



#### **4.4. Kava Historical Present**

Kava is diverse and has multiple functions and purposes in the regular gatherings known as Fai Kava. Helu (1993) explains that external economic and political influence through globalization on Tongan culture is also reflected through faikava practices today, which we should take into consideration alongside the chiefly lineages and political power influences mentioned earlier in this chapter. Helu explains that ‘tau fakalokua’ is a small session with only a few participants. Tau fakalokua takes place in a home after the day’s work at sea or in plantations, emerging out of the traditional economy of gifting and tribute through subsistence agriculture, which was also an opportunity to relax and engage in talanoa. ‘Faikava eva’ is defined as the traditional method of dating in Tongan society where a young man with permission from the parents would court a girl along with friends supporting him in singing love songs together to her, having the kava gathering at her home. This courtship practice was dying out according to Helu, due to the adoption of night clubs and dances. ‘Kalapu kava Tonga’ is the most recent adaptation to the practice and is generally an open club where anyone can attend, although there may be a core set of regulars rooted in a locale who attend, and in my experience women rarely if ever attend, unless they are tou‘a for a particular event. This form of kava is prominent in villages, towns, or suburbs, and Helu argued is a reflection of the monetization of kava sessions, with kalapu’s often being utilized as fundraisers. ‘Kava fakasiasi’ is a gathering of church members or officials and has been taking place since the Christianisation of Tonga with some missionaries utilizing it as a form of conversion. Today this is still practiced by some denominations on Sunday mornings or evenings, before or after a service, often including performances of hymns and religious songs. The various kava sessions explained by Helu encompass the complex possibility of meaning when someone says they are going to Fai Kava, as it could be referring to any of the above and more. Helu explained that externally influenced societal and economic changes in

Tonga have nearly obliterated faikava eva and tau fakalokua when he wrote his article on identity and change since European contact. I have argued however that ‘faikava eva’ and ‘tau fakalokua’ remain, but have adapted into a consolidated form where they exist simultaneously in various kalapu or other kava settings (Tecun, 2017).

One of the consistent comments I have heard regarding faikava is the role it plays in learning, particularly community relevant knowledge. Although the common gatherings may be more flexible in their protocols and practice, this reality allows for mistakes and questions to be worked out. Many friends have expressed to me how regular participation in faikava has been how they learned where, how, and when to participate in life events such as funerals. There are many things learned, but songs in particular not only serve as an enjoyable experience to perform and listen, but are practiced and memorized in faikava and then utilised at life event ceremonies. Another thing that I have observed is the learning and refinement of formal speechmaking that is also utilised in various other settings. There is also the banter and comedic whim and wit that is refined and developed as well in these gatherings, but overall a range of social skills are developed in faikava or the revelation that one lacks them.

#### **4.4.1 Fōfō‘anga Kalapu**

The Fōfō‘anga kalapu is important to mention on its own due to its significant historical influence in what has become and is continuing to expand as faikava and kalapu kava phenomena. Kava clubs are growing and spreading, not only among Tongans but increasingly with Sāmoans and other Moana folks in diaspora, and even among those who have learned kava culture through relationships with people of the Moana (Aporosa, 2014b; 2015). In this section I will go over some of the Fōfō‘anga history, foundation, philosophy and role as a prominent musical kava club. This section concludes with a discussion on string bands and Tongan songs.

I do not give a complete history here, but instead point out key moments and elements related to the foundation of Fōfō‘anga. Many people in this research have shared with me the importance of the Queen Sālote Tupou III’s era. She ruled over the Kingdom of Tonga between the years 1918-1965. As a tufunga fonua, who was also known as a Lo‘au, Queen Sālote reinvigorated and reset Tongan society in a new era colliding with western modernity. Tonga as a newly formed nation-state monarchy became influenced by new ideas and forces unprecedented in the history of their region prior to European imperialism. This meant that Tonga collided with, adopted, and fused Indigenous paradigms with western political, economic, and religious structures while centralising power in the modern state. Queen Sālote rose to power less than fifty years after the Tongan constitution was ratified, and she dedicated a focused attention to a burgeoning national Tongan identity. She had an eye on preservation and development of the various Tongan arts, including faiva (*performance arts*), nimamea‘a (*fine arts*), and tufunga (*material arts*) (Bott, 1982; Ka‘ili, 2017a; Wood-Ellem & Taumoevalou, 2004; Taouma, 2007; Wood-Ellem, 2001). It is during her era that kalapu kava emerged, continuing the ancient tradition of regular kava drinking outside of the less frequent ritual contexts, but in new forms that responded to the changing context of Tongan life (Helu, 1993). The early kalapu in Tonga, which were quite formal are believed by some to have been established during the mid to late 1950s with the support of Queen Sālote, setting a foundation for the rise of the Fōfō‘anga kalapu that would initially be established in the 1960s.

Sisi‘uno Helu (2016) shared with me that due to the formalities of the earliest kalapu that although one had access to learn chiefly knowledge through listening, one did not have many opportunities to speak or share their knowledge. The talanoa was primarily between those with chiefly titles in the early kalapu. She shared that her father and some other people began to drink kava at another location because they wanted to do it differently. In the 1960s,

Helu (2016) stated that “they started the Fōfō‘anga from there...I think that the initial intention was everyone is equal, they just sit around and be you know, themselves.” The innovation of kalapu kava appears to have intensified and broadened the performance and practice that exists in states of noa in the midst of changing paradigms. The concept of noa remains but the performance to calibrate such a liminal state expanded. New Zealand historian Scott Hamilton (2017) wrote in an online article that:

Traditionally a kava session was a highly ritualised affair, with drinkers seated around the bowl in order of their social status, and long and formal speeches offered to chiefs and royals. At about the time he was setting up ‘Atenisi, Helu and some friends founded a series of kava clubs where drinkers could sit where they liked, and talk to whomever they liked about whatever they liked... Futa Helu hoped that fofo‘anga would help to change Tonga, by providing a space where the kingdom’s problems could be discussed. It is possible, though, that the democratic kava clubs have helped to stabilise Tonga, by letting men shed, night after night, their ordinary identities, and the burdens that come with those identities. Tonga is an intricately hierarchical society. Royals and nobles and priests demand and usually receive respect. A commoner who fails to tithe at church or bring a gift to a noble’s wedding risks denunciation and disgrace. Young Tongan men usually live with their parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles, who direct and monitor their activities. The fofo‘anga has become a liminal place, where Tongans can say and do things forbidden outside its doors. Inside the fofo‘anga the lowliest commoner can mock his country’s nobility, or joke about his church. In a small, conformist society, the kava club is a sort of safety valve.

The safety valve that Hamilton explains as a function of modern kava club phenomena may be a revitalization or a transformation of previous practices, which functioned as restorations of balance through noa.

Fōfō‘anga is the Tongan word for pumice, the porous and light volcanic rock that floats to and fro across the surface of the sea. Unlike other kalapu that exist today based on village or religion, the Fōfō‘anga is much more diverse in its participants. Like the pumice stone, Tongan “wanderers” from any direction, village, or denomination can attend this kalapu. Malakai Koloamatangi (2016), a Tongan scholar, community leader, and musician based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) explained to me that the values of this kalapu is premised on freedom from authority and other social conventions, including political and

religious positions and even within *kāinga* (*extended family/clan*). Koloamatangi (2016) explained to me that many Tongan kava clubs throughout the world are often named after a person or a place of origin, such as to reinforce a village based identity. The Fōfō‘anga however is a regional and international idea, a Tongan nationalism based on ideas of equality and collective authority. There is no required seating arrangement, and kava is not served in a particular order according to rank. This protocol is attributed as an invention of the Fōfō‘anga kalapu that has become a common practice in various kalapu and faikava practices generally. Malakai Koloamatangi (2018) explained to me that the Fōfō‘anga kalapu after its inception began to dissipate. It was a radical idea in its initiation, but was reinvigorated by his father Saimone Koloamatangi and Siosuia Holiday Fonua (who held the title Tau‘etavalu) during the 1970s. They were instrumental in the rapid growth of the Fōfō‘anga kalapu in Tonga and its expansion among Tongans living overseas. In these founding moments and expansion this kalapu began forming string bands and kalapu houses. Saimone Koloamatangi upon migrating to Aotearoa would establish the first Fōfō‘anga there, in Tāmaki Makaurau. Some people in the Auckland community have shared with me that this kalapu became an important hub of community organizing during the dawn raids that racially profiled and targeted Pacific Islanders as “overstayers”, assumed to be undocumented residents in New Zealand. Additionally, the Fōfō‘anga ‘o Aotearoa brought with them the tradition of fundraising for school fees, school loans, and even providing scholarships, available to family members of the kalapu and community.

When I have attended the Fōfō‘anga ‘o Aotearoa, which has been going for over forty years now, I met Maua Lavulo (2016) and Finau Halaleva (2016). They shared the kalapu mottos with me:

“Lau pe ua ko e taha” (two are regarded as one/ two become one)

“Ko ho‘o me‘a ko ‘etau me‘a” (what is yours belongs to all of us/material equality)

Finau Halaleva (2016) who is a Faifekau (*church minister*) explained these mottos to me as the evening went on and we had discussed these concepts and other topics while we drank kava together. He said that when we began the evening we were two different people who did not know each other, but by the end of the kava session we became one. Latu (2014) reported that in this kalapu they “don’t sell kava it is free to everyone, even visitors” and that there is no hierarchy in their organization, meaning they have no executive body that is selected to run the club, they just have a secretary. This collective authority and autonomous organizational model is why they believe that it is still operating since it was first established, as these principles of governance have proven sustainable for them.

The Fōfō‘anga kalapu’s that I have attended have always had live string bands playing. The string band tradition is one that is still being passed on to younger generations although it is also expanding to include acoustic solos, revitalising A Capella, and integrating electronic mediums. Early accompaniment to singing in Tonga was from bamboo stamping tubes, drums, and nose flutes, giving a unique and particular a range of notation, which has expanded with the adoption of string instruments (Dale, 2008; McLean, 1999; 2007; 2008; Moyle, 1976; 1987). It is possible if not likely that string bands arrived in Tonga by way of Hawai‘i and Aotearoa. The Kingdom of Tonga and the Kingdom of Hawai‘i had communication and influence between each other during constitutional constructions of their nation-state monarchy’s in order to stay afloat on the waves of modernity, not to mention Hawaiian string bands were traveling around the Asia-Pacific region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as well (Ka‘ili, 2017a; 2017c; Kaeppler, 1994; Lātūkefu, 1974; Low, 2016; Macpherson, 2001; Troutman, 2016). A common element in Tongan string bands in kalapu is having a slack key guitar, where you loosen the key(s) of the strings, which is derived from the sounds of the steel guitar that was invented in Hawai‘i, known as the kīkā kila (Low, 2016; Troutman, 2016).

The Hawaiian steel guitar changed the sound of modern music and is often a forgotten contribution to what has become contemporary American and global popular music. The use, adoption, and exchange of these sounds in Tongan kalapu historically has come full circle in youth inheriting Tongan music and string band sounds, while simultaneously connecting with other contemporary popular music genres today that share common roots (e.g., soul, r&b, hip hop). Bill Wolfgramm a famous Tongan steel guitar player was part of the Fōfō‘anga ‘o Aotearoa and played and recorded with them throughout the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kaniva Staff, 2018). Jazz and blues are the roots of modern American popular music, which has become global, and included Indigenous elements from Africa, Turtle Island, and the Moana, although it has often been exclusively racialized as black music (Hamill & Diamond, 2011; Hamill, 2016; Low, 2016; Petillo, 2017; Troutman, 2009; 2013; 2016). This circumstance of visible appearance or performance of blackness that is oppressed in modernity, reflects assumptions of racial visibility and performance, while Indigeneity is simultaneously made invisible in this paradigm, which was explained in more detail in chapter two. Tongan kalapu string bands arguably preserve thousands of songs that have been reinvented or newly composed (Lavulo, 2016; Lafitani, 2015). Helu (2016) comments that:

If you listen to some of their songs, it’s like the legacy of equality remains... I think that’s what [they] wanted with the people that started [Fōfō‘anga]. They wanted to start something where they’re all treated equally...well that’s my own interpretation ...they just wanted to hang out where everyone was treated equally.

The connections to global popular music runs deep in Tongan kalapu with their slack key style, as does the politics these Indigenous music’s represent that have been racialized throughout time and in different ways in place(s). There is more research to be done in identifying the direct links to string bands in Tonga, which I also leave to future scholars and scholarship, this is just an entry.

## 4.5. Songs about Kava

There are many types of songs that take place in kava settings, and there are also a growing number of songs that have been written about kava as well. Among more homogenously Tongan groups the most common type of songs sung are hiva kakala, which can be translated as songs of sweet fragrance, or flower songs (Taumoefolau, 2016). Hiva kakala are sometimes interpreted as love songs, but the songs may not always be about romance, sometimes they are political or even tragic, but the manner in which they are sung in string band groups are what makes them sweet sounding. They are often sung with some harmonious falsetto voices abounding. This final section in this chapter will focus on the role music plays in kava today through some contemporary songs about faikava, which have been written in diaspora, in the English language, and from pan-Moana kava group settings. These songs about kava maintain the tradition of an ethnographic documentation of kava practices like the ancient kava chant. These kava songs are also some of the literacies, or rather oralities in Tongan culture and history (Ka'ili, 2015).

California based Tongan musician J Stringz (2013) wrote a song about Kava called “Clap Clap” referring to the two deep claps given to indicate you are ready to drink a round of kava. This song has a prominent acoustic guitar sound and Island string band feel with a reggae rhythm and beat. The song includes the following lyrics:

Grab a couple of bags, and hit up the boys, grab a guitar to make a soothing noise, lets feel relaxed drinking the kava roots, let me show you how us Polys do. Mix it in the water, the water turn brown, keep on squeezing' til the kava's dried out, relax session, laid back party, no requirements, this session is for everybody... pour it in a bowl, but we call it a kumete, relax to the music, and listen to the jams, and when you're ready to drink then say it with your hands . . . Clap clap for a cup, pass pass and drink it up, drink until the morning day... The first bowls done so we make some more, telling story and sitting on the floor, the nights so young but it goes by fast, cuz this kava's got your mind and body so relaxed, like 'ooooohh what a feelin' yes ... Straight from the island where it's from, one love to the pacific ... Polynesian roots is number one... All my kavaholics sing a long, feel the vibration, here's a little taste of how we do it from where I'm from.

This song gives a thorough ethnographic reflection of faikava experience, from the music, to the process of preparing kava, and more. I have heard this song just about everywhere I have been, but especially with younger people. One man commented to me jokingly that the lyrics should say ‘drink all night and sleep all day’ to also document a common consequence of staying up all night drinking kava.



**Figure 20. Multi-ethnic Pan-Moana Faikava in Kirikiriroa.**  
From left to right: Sanaila (iTaukei), Sean (Cook Island Māori), Leni (Tongan, Edmond (Tongan), Myself (Wīnak). This photograph was taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

Kava Kreation is an Arizona based Hawaiian reggae fusion group who identifies their origins to California, Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, American Samoa, Arizona, and Saipan (Pipeline2Paradise, 2011). They organised themselves as a band out of their kava circle, and not only named themselves accordingly, but have also composed a “Kava Song”, which includes the following lyrics (Kava Kreation, 2012):

I know a place where we can go... And play reggae music, and drink kava from the bowl ... We’re Polynesian people and we know, the roots of the kava is traditional, its passed on down, yeah, from the old school times, for you and me to enjoy and have a real good time. ... mix the kava real good... Listen, All my Polynesian people, we

stand and unite, we drink all night, until the morning light, pass your cup, and let it flow, 'cause kava creation gonna' sooth your soul.

They document in this song what kava means to them, and the role it plays in unifying people reflecting their pan-Moana identity. They also link kava with reggae music, something I hear everywhere I have been around Moana people, but especially in diaspora kava settings.

Natural Roots is a Utah based roots reggae group composed of band members with Tongan, Sāmoan, European, and Dutch ancestries. Lead singer JanWillem van der Beek wrote a song about Kava in 2005 for Natural Roots to sing. This is a popular kava song I have heard in many places during the research for this thesis. I believe this to be the first original popular composition about kava in English. The lyrics to this song go as follows (van der Beek, 2017):

Verse 1: We've been living in this land so long, but we're singing the same old songs  
Singin, mixing the finest roots so we can drink until dawn

Chorus: Bring me a bowl (mai se ipu)  
I'll mix it up (se'i palu nei 'ava)  
Bring me a cup (mai se ipu)  
I'll drink it up (se'i ou inu)  
I'm feelin Irie from my head to my toes  
But my mind is so clear

Verse 2: So I called my brothers on the phone  
To see if anyone was home  
They said "bring us the ava roots so we can talk until dawn"  
Up until sunrise

Verse 3: Some say there must be something wrong  
Cause it looks like dirt and smells so strong  
When it hits you, you feel no pain  
Just like a new song

*Translation to Sāmoan response in the chorus:*

(bring me a cup)  
(so I can mix this kava)  
(bring me a cup)  
(so I can drink)

This song not only describes the kava experience today, but also brings in the tensions with the modern western dichotomies between ideas of being civilised or Indigenous. The final

verse they sing about explains how some people see kava as ‘wrong’, a common notion in modern thought about so-called “primitive” culture. They also tie together the role of song as a healer that removes pain. When I have communicated with van der Beek (2017) he has expressed that song has mana, a power, referred to here in this song. Kava and song can both be mana, generating an increased potency that can yield a state of balance, noa. This can also generate the feelings that can come from harmonious performances in that state, the feelings of māfana, the warming up of the room or of oneself.

Makisi Fonua, who goes by KIS. B, is a Utah based Tongan Hip Hop artist who wrote a song about his kalapu, called H.O.G. Farm (Fonua, 2015). The song begins with a Tongan language song being performed A Capella and then an electric deejaying remix starts the hip hop beat before KIS. B begins his passionate flow. The lyrics include “Hog farm baby, clap clap clap it up.” KIS. B goes on to explain that they drink until “1 am in the morning, double scoop cups” and then continue to drink more. The name of their kalapu is an acronym for House of Gravy (H.O.G. Farm), a metaphor for the appearance of kava, which doubles with the prominence of pigs as chiefly gifts and food. He raps “part man, part hog and truly half amazing”, and then lists some of the musicians they listen to at their kava sessions “Lucky Dube, Alpha, Bob Marley, Tuff Gong.” Although KIS. B is using another new genre to talk about kava, he also makes the links to reggae music. When we had talanoa during this research he mentioned that reggae music is perfect for kava because:

I feel like reggae music is really in touch with their culture and with love, peace, and harmony, they promote that and preach that all across reggae music ... I think when it comes, as far as not only kava, but Polynesians ... we grow up in that type of atmosphere, where it's like, big hearted people, humble people, people who are in touch with their roots, and when you listen to reggae music, Jamaicans are huge on that too, they're in touch with roots, in touch with their culture, they promote love and peace, and at the same time they're revolutionary people they always stand up for what is right you know, for the cause, everything's for the cause ... It just fits man, I mean that's how I look at it ... it's the same atmosphere, nobody's here to fight, nobody's here to like hate and you know gossip on each other, even though there's a little gossip, but you know, other than that it's all like peace and harmony man, everybody's on a different level in the kava circle, just like in reggae music.

This chapter began with the complexity of ‘traditional’ as a concept for Indigenous identities, and the notions of historical divide that defines what tradition is in a modern paradigm. An exploration of the importance of having a broader range of time rather than historical divisions led to an analysis of the ancient kava chant. This kava chant reveals a deep historical context and layers of different eras and ideas as well as chiefly lineage peculiarities that influence faikava. Kava today has adapted previous practices into the new ones. Kava clubs have expanded globally to the various sites I draw from and elsewhere also. They have been influenced by political ideas of social and material equality of which the songs about kava reflect. Kava songs both old and new document and express layers of kava history. In this process they become the traditional songs of tomorrow.



**Figure 21. Troy's Kava lounge in Tamahere, Aotearoa with reggae colours and pan-Moana taonga (treasures). Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

## **Chapter 5. Religion, Spirituality, and Kava Metaphysics**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The creation story in Tonga: In the beginning, it was just the ocean and Pulotu [spirit world], and from there emerged limu and kele, the seaweed and the sea sediment ... They gave birth to the first rock, ... Touia‘afutuna, and from Touia‘afutuna came everyone... it all comes from this land.

–Tēvita Ka‘ili (2017c)

The realm of spirituality as it pertains to the songs and stories that emerge from faikava will be explored throughout this chapter. This is excluding specifically Mormon contexts which will be discussed in chapter six. This chapter begins with some Indigenous critiques of Christianity and the continued negotiations between Indigenous and foreign introduced beliefs and worldviews. This includes syncretic processes, global hegemonic forces, and local agency. Indigenous singing traditions relate to land and ocean, revealing remnants of deep ecological relationships from ancestral place-based identities. The ancient adherence to tapu (explained in chapter two) continues today in adapted forms and practices such as Sunday worship, where Sabbath practises are observed as tapu. The Fai Kava/faikava phenomenon will be explained based on the data collected in this research, demonstrating the underlying meanings that are connected to pre-Christian Indigenous worldviews. Finally, to conclude this chapter, the sounds and realm of spirits as they pertain to Tongan music and the Kava experience will be discussed, showing the significance of the minor key sounds, reinforcing the role of Kava in metaphysical experiences and spiritual practice.

### **5.2. Indigenous Christianity**

The history of Christianity globally is tense, especially for Indigenous peoples who have encountered it through contexts of colonialism, modern evangelism, and globalizing political economy. One of the results is that many traditions and knowledges that existed locally have been hidden or suppressed, some of which were adapted and reinvented in

vehicles of Indigenous spirituality if not eradicated. For example, some of the impacts from Christian missionaries in Tonga was canoes being burned, prohibitions of dances and games, and attempts to ban the gifting koloa at funerals (*family wealth made by women such as fine mats*) (Lātūkefu, 1966; ‘Ahio, 2007). Kava was initially among the practices sought to be eradicated by missionaries, but it was eventually tolerated by some of them when alcohol was introduced and comparisons could be made with their different effects. Tongan culture experienced changes in notions of modesty and types of clothing, focus on nuclear rather than extended family, and moves towards a cash-based capitalist economy, pressuring local subsistence practices and gifting/tribute economies. Missionary influences in some cases replaced parts of the Indigenous belief system that protected the local ecology and instituted deficit views of one’s traditions and ancestors by negatively associating them as “primitive”, “pagan”, or “heathen” (Collocott, 1921a; 1921b; Black et al., 2010; Johnson-Hill, 2008; Shumway, 1981). Lātūkefu (1966; 1974) explains that Tongans did not willfully give up their ways or traditions, and they resisted early missionary efforts. Despite a general departure from resisting Christianity and the cosmological shift that resulted from this collision; the legacy of holding onto Indigenous traditions in the face of an assimilating western Christianity is very much present today (Lātūkefu, 1974; Collocott, 1921a; 1921b). Religion is a site of refuge and comfort as much as it is one of conflict and oppression, where western modernity and Indigeneity are continuously negotiated. These tensions are where Tongan identities and knowledge emerge in kava circles and old tensions find new homes of expression through creative adaptation, adoption, agency, and resiliency.

Tui Tamasese of Sāmoa asked in the publication *Whispers and Vanities: Samoan Indigenous Knowledge and Religion*, “Is the indigenous religion of Samoa, which the Christian missionaries were supposed to have stamped out, really dead; or is it alive under the

guise of Christianity?” (Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2014, p. 38). Responding to this inquiry, Shore (2014) adds:

The traditional landscape of pre-Christian institutions like the pantheon of gods and demons, forms of worship or pre-Christian Samoan cosmology can be altered in a couple of generations and yet still leave behind strong echoes of the buried concepts that originally supported them (p. 132).

Siosiuia Lafitani (2015) commented to me once that, “We must awaken the DNA in the Tongan people”, alluding to raising awareness of such echoes of ancestral knowledge systems. Considering these echoes of the past in the religious syncretism of Tongan society, which in some cases has integrated or adopted kava within their traditions. Kava is not foreign to church (in those that allow or sponsor it) because it was and, in many cases, still is “church”.

One of the components of Tongan identity for many throughout my research is the notion that Tonga was never colonized by a foreign power, being the last standing independent monarchy in the Pacific. In terms of colonialism, Tonga does not have a history of European settler occupation, however economically and politically it was a British protectorate for nearly a century, beginning just a few decades after becoming a constitutional monarchy (Lātūkefu, 1974; Small, 2011). Coloniality is a more appropriate concept to address colonialism in Tonga, which I explained in chapter two. In the case of Tonga, an imposed foreign political power or influence is enacted out by Indigenous people rather than settler occupants, where Christianity is a vehicle of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). When referring to Indigenous culture in Tonga it is often identified with a division of time premised by the boundaries of pre-Christian life. ‘Culture’ in this sense is an association with ancestral originated customs in Tonga prior to European contact. Although Tongan Christianity is negotiated with Indigenous agency, it is a governing force of coloniality in the origins of the nation-state Kingdom of Tonga. The imagined binary construct is between local spirituality/cosmology/cosmogony and foreign introduced beliefs, Christianity being the

universal religious standard to which all “others” react or respond to in paradigms of western modernity. Responding to western imperial forces in Oceania and western imaginations of geographical borders and cultural divisions, Tonga engaged in a violent Christian crusade to centralize power and avoid settler occupation by foreigners. From this new reality rose an imagined kingdom nation constructed in the manner of, and in response to modern nation-statecraft (Anderson, 2006; Rabasa, 2003). Lātūkefu (1974) explains that although the role and influence of missionaries was significant, it was not supreme or ultimate, and it is the contested interactions between modernity and Indigeneity that founded both church and state in Tonga, which are overtly inseparable in the Kingdom.

The late Lakota scholar and theologian Vine Deloria Jr. (2003) critiqued western religion for its universalism, anthropocentrism and linearity. These ideas in turn inform philosophy and science within modern western paradigms. The problem he points out is that western thought has not been able to resolve “whether or not religious experience can be distilled from its original cultural context ... [and become a] principle that is applicable to all peoples in different places and at different times” (p. 65). What results is a western versus Indigenous binary and essentialist identity. These continue to exist because the consequence is to always centre, respond to, or speak back to the imagined “west”. White people, post-Christian or post-European contact becomes the symbolic face of what is perceived as western and non-Indigenous. Because these social and historical tensions have not been reconciled they continue to manifest themselves in identity and experience. Deloria Jr. argues that universalism in modern western paradigms is an illusion and thus fundamentally limited and flawed. He states that because thought and belief is subject to cultural qualification “it is not suitable for transmission to other societies without doing severe damage to both the message of revelation and the society which receives it” (p. 65). A reality that I argue is similar for Tongans as much as it is for Indigenes of Turtle Island/Abiyya Yala.

The paradox of Indigenous Christianity or Christian Indigeneity is one premised on power relations and cultural hegemony. Frantz Fanon (1963) said:

I speak of the Christian religion, and no one need be astonished. The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few are chosen (p. 42).

Maldonado-Torres (2008) argues that colonialism is a missionizing project where 'the white man' (symbol for western modernity) projects 'god', seeking recognition from the slave ("others") as their master, or as "THE master's" representative. Sāmoan theologian Upolu Vaai and Ojibwe environmentalist Winona LaDuke have both explained that colonization is derived from colon, meaning to digest, which has been the digestion of "others" within modern western paradigms (Vaai, 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017; Sacred Land Film Project, 2015). Christianity in the Moana and elsewhere has been a project of creating oneness, in the image of the west, an assimilationist project of violent and coerced unification (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Vaai, 2016a; 2016b). This is drawn from the premise in Christianity that diversity is a punishment, demonstrated in the biblical story of the tower of babel where God confounded the languages of the people as a punishment so they could not understand each other (Vaai, 2016b). LaDuke (Sacred Film Project, 2015) has argued that Indigenous people of the land have been dichotomized in the same manner, being the symbols for nature or the "wild" being measured by concepts of modern western "civilized man". The modern western biblical narrative expresses this transformational shift in thought and relationship to land. Adam and Eve, the first two people in the biblical genesis start in a 'garden' of peaceful co-existence, but are eventually cast out of it, and the world becomes 'wild'. 'Wilderness' becomes separate from human existence and is a trial for humanity in this paradigm.

Māori scholar Hirini Kaa (2017) argued in an interview that Christianity and Christian theology are distinct, stating:

It's tricky saying this, but Christian love, in some respects, enabled us to fulfill our beautiful culture ... these beautiful ideas of whānau, of family, of our relationship, of interconnection ... that's almost like the ingredient we were missing, and this is not missionary ideas of love, this is the central gospel tenant, which you know, the disciples struggled with...so even the people around Jesus weren't getting it, so it's not like everyone knew the secret, and we all received it, it was a particular revelation, an intellectual revelation that enabled us to fulfill the full potential of our culture.

My impression is that Tongan scholar and theologian Sione Lātūkefu (1966) would have been in support of this view as well. He argued there was a flaw in early missionary's inability to differentiate between Christian principles and British middle class moral standards in their judgments of Tongan customs. He argued that despite these negative aspects the “doctrine offered the commoners what had been denied them by the old religion – souls and hope for eternal life – which were, in fact, very attractive to many” (p. 263).

Modern western paradigms create a dichotomy with Indigeneity that it must consume as “other”, because it is a worldview and existence that claims universal knowledge. Christian Indigeneity takes over the Indigene for the purpose of Christianity's role in modernity whereas Indigenous Christianity is the approach that attempts to reconcile and negotiate these tensions. Indigenous Christianity is intrigued by the possibilities in these collisions and reconfigures Christianity for Indigeneity's sake. However, even in Indigenizing Christianity one operates in relation to the western standard, norm, ‘master’ in an attempt to find complimentary possibilities at best and a vicious dichotomy at worst. All the while there is a polychromatic possibility that exists outside of this binary if ‘Indigenous’ peoples focus on our relationships with each other, rather than to a standard of modernity that is continually re-centred while it divides and erases “others”.



Figure 22. Kava Christianity. Mary Magdalene Cathedral (Catholic) in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)

### 5.3. Kava and Land

Tongan anthropologist Tēvita Ka'ili (2017c) explains that one of the major conflicts that happened with Christianity's arrival is the relationship to the land and environment. The Christianity that arrived in Tonga was anthropocentric whereas the Tongan values of tauhi vā and tauhi fonua (*nurturing relationships, nurturing the land*) is not only about one's relationship to each other, but to the land, plants, animals, and marine life. Ka'ili (2017c) explained in a talanoa the complex interweaving that has resulted from this interaction:

Kava was used in spiritual dimensions in the ancient days, ...Tongans express Indigenous spirituality through kava, and because Tongans have such respect, almost worship - for the fonua, the kava continues to be that manifestation of the Tongan tie to the fonua as not only a physical thing, but also a spiritual thing ...which is something that Christianity does not really have. I think maybe old Christianity or some version of Christianity had this kind of respect for creation and for the land, but the version that made it to Tonga and Sāmoa doesn't really have that, so the kava and the ta'ovala [waist mat regalia] seem to fill it in that way. You know, fonua is not only the land, but fonua is the placenta, which is nourishing for a child... the child comes from their mothers fonua [placenta], into this fonua [land and people], and then when they pass they go back, down to the lalofonua [underworld].

The relationship to place has dramatically changed among Tongans, religiously, politically, and economically with the onslaught of modern western life. Modern “development” in Tonga was observed and critiqued by Hau'ofa for its negative environmental impacts, which continue to intensify through today (Marcus, 1979). Deloria Jr. (2012) explains that the key difference between western and non-western metaphysics is grounded in relationships to nature. He argues that western modernity seeks to dominate and subordinate nature and its subsidiaries (Indigenes). Western dichotomies have catalyzed global social conflict because modern western metaphysics are not grounded in natural phenomena (Deloria Jr., 2012). Ancestral ecological relationships linger however in many Tongan kava circles today even in diaspora and in adapted forms, holding onto values of binding oneself to each other through land, transporting land, and ingesting fonua (Aporosa, 2014a; 2014b; Tecun, 2017).

In many kava settings I have participated in, environmental consciousness is practiced and expressed. For example, as I utilize the kava bowl as a metaphor for a vaka/waka (*canoe*); I recall a few experiences on a kalia (*double hulled canoe*) in Aotearoa, and the lessons Hoturoa Kerr (2016), Ema Siope (2016), and Numa McKenzie (2017) taught me. They have explained to me that how one lives on the waka/vaka is a lesson on how one should live on the land. Everyone must look out for one another and harmonious relationships are crucial not only for survival, but to successfully arrive at one's destination. One has to be mindful on the waka of what kind of waste is produced and how to appropriately manage it as well. Māori

educator Nephi Prime (2015) who I met in Utah, would often comment to me that there are no passengers on the waka/vaka, there are only crew, and everyone has a role to fulfill in the collective. When one attends a faikava, everything around the bowl is shared, from ipu/bilo (*coconut shell kava cups*) to whatever tō (*sugarcane/‘food’*) is brought to chase the bitter taste of kava. I have seen shoes and other material items gifted in faikava as well, including “losing” one’s jandals (flip flops/sandals), which is not uncommon at a regular kava gathering. This happens because someone has taken off with them, because there is no thought of individual property ownership of jandals, and in turn the person who has “lost” theirs, finds another pair that fits them. As if being on a single kalia, around the kava bowl, there is little wasted, and much is reused, creating close bonds between people. It is through these relationships that collective singing can thrive, as singing together harmoniously, and having the ability to effectively integrate spontaneous additions or arrangements to songs, reflects the relationships and knowledge one has of each other. Singing harmoniously reflects relationships of closeness like one develops while voyaging on kalia and vaka.

### 5.3.1 Spontaneity through Relationships

Maua Lavulo of the Fōfō‘anga Aotearoa Kava club introduced me to the term fakahēhē, which Churchward (2015) defines as spontaneous. Lavulo (2016) however broadens that definition in referring it to emotions, he would tell me that they are playing emotion, as he put his hand over his heart. In various circles that I have attended where live music is played, what becomes clear over multiple visits and comparison between groups is that each club has their preferred and favourite songs as well as unique arrangements to them. One of the unique aspects of the performances in kava is playing the feeling, the emotion to create mālie, the bravo response to māfana, warmth (Lavulo, 2016). This is not something that can be transcribed or written down effectively or clearly, it must be felt, sensed. A musician’s spontaneity has to then be followed or responded to by the accompanying musicians in a

string band, and/or by singers in a group. It is here that I can only refer to this phenomena in English as social Tongan telepathy, a visible connectivity between people in place, where unspoken cues and actions are followed, through feeling and sensing the vibe of the moment and responding to it. In some cases, singers or players harmonize to new sounds, in other cases they echo, sing, or play them back, all of which is only possible through the relationships established prior to and through singing together. It was commented in several circles that some performers have certain stylistic and emotional tendencies and song preference, which being familiar with enables various musical responses. It is these positive feelings of māfana that can come from singing and comradery to people and land, which some early missionaries and churches today attempt to utilize in their conversion strategies (Frith, 1996; Shumway, 1981; Lātūkefu, 1966; Tu‘itahi, 2016b).

#### **5.4. Sāpate – Sabbath/Sunday**

One Sunday while on some of the islands in the Kingdom of Tonga, the sun had not yet risen, but the smell of wood burning woke me up. I went to assist in the preparation of the umu (*underground oven*). Taro leaves were being wrapped around fresh cut meat and coconut cream, coconut milk was being pressed by hand through coconut husk fibres, and root crops were being cleaned and prepared. As the sun began to give off morning light, the food was being stacked on top of hot rocks as the wood had finished burning out large flames. A metal barrel cut in half was put overtop the food placed over the hot rocks that were in a small pit in the ground, which we then covered with some old blankets and potato sacks that had been dampened with water. The Wesleyan Methodist minister who I was staying with tells me it will be ready to eat when we get back from church. The outdoor cooking was done by all the men of the house along with some neighbours, while the women were preparing other types of food in a different area under a roofed shelter attached to the house. After getting dressed we began our slow-paced walk down the path towards the church building. It is Sāpate,

Tongan for Sunday/Sabbath and all is still. The villages and outer islands are especially calm, but even in the nation's capital and highest populated island of Tongatapu, the noises of cars are minimal if any, and the sound of business bustle is absent. Instead, the sounds of food preparation, church bells, nature (wind, ocean, birds), and singing congregations abound.

Although I shared the same religious affiliation with many of my Tongan mates growing up, we practised it differently at times. It was not uncommon in my memory for Tongan friends to pray for their food in public places such as restaurants, while that was not something I generally practised when they were not around. A practice I have since come to find myself doing at times. If I was out late on a Saturday night with Tongan friends growing up or during this research, as soon as it was midnight things change. For example, in every kava circle I have been in there is some recognition or change in repertoire from Saturday to Sunday, midnight to midnight. Church music or hymns are often played exclusively during that time, and conversations may have an increased focus on theology, doctrine, or spirituality. This of course exists to varying degrees dependent on generation, affiliations, level of practise or conversion to a particular belief, and the demographic composition of the group. I found that the intensity to which the midnight to midnight protocol takes place were more pronounced in the presence of elders or especially clergy.

We glimpse into the past that is present before us in adapted expressions of Indigenous spirituality housed in Christian vessels (Hau'ofa, 1993; Ka'ili, 2017a; Māhina, 2010). The adaptation is based on the ancient ceremony of 'Inasi, which was to give thanks for the first fruits of the harvest. The 'Inasi was previously held over one week long and happened annually. Aspects of the 'Inasi ceremony have been transmitted into the weekly observance of Christian Sabbath, where elements of this ceremony maintain similar functions in a new form (Dale, 2008; Māhina, 2008b). Collocott (1921a) refers to Sunday/Sabbath as the tapu day, following the Indigenous concept of tapu, being the sacred restrictions related to that which is

set apart or potentially dangerous. Christian devotion and conversion is more deeply accomplished in the framework of previous belief and culture. Old beliefs and knowledge remain as they are built upon, but the consequence is that culture changes from these influences over time as it adapts in new spaces. The consequence of change is expected, but the issue of power is important to identify, who is adapting to who, where, and why?

Dale (2008) explains that 'Inasi means a share or portion of the fruits of the earth, anything that will be or has already been distributed out amongst the people in celebration of the land's bounty. William Mariner wrote that "Not only no work may be done at the time of the 'Inasi, but nobody may appear abroad, unless for the purposes of the ceremony" to which Dale explains is adapted to Sunday ceremonies (2008, p. 352). These protocols of the 'Inasi ceremony survive the transformation into Sabbath custom as they merged with the code of no-work on Sundays adopted from the missionaries. This behavioural code was integrated into an already existing system of disciplined restraint of activity for times that are tapu, set apart and sanctified. The 'Inasi also included the drinking of kava for blessings and to enact protection from the Gods. Additionally, the role of singing during this time also noted by Mariner reinforced the behaviours required in observance of the 'Inasi. It was recorded that:

The voices of men and women are heard singing, "Nofo 'oua te ke ngaue, 'oua ngaue." ("Rest thou, doing no work; thou shalt not work.") This increases till midnight, men generally singing the first part of the sentence, and the women the last, to produce a more pleasing effect. It then subsides for three or four hours, and again increases as the sun rises. Nobody, however is seen stirring out in the public roads till about eight o'clock (p. 352).

Tapu is a living concept in its meaning of sacredness or restrictedness, although it has some newer forms of expression (Christian Sabbath) and a shifted focus (Lātūkefu, 1974; Collocott, 1921a; 1921b). The discipline to live by tapu is derived from the depths of Indigeneity, an existing spirituality that is now housed in the worldview and theologies of today. Food is still prepared for feasts and shared out with neighbours, friends, and extended family similar to earlier centuries and ceremonies that precede Christian expressions. Songs are sung boldly

with the same fervour as their original purpose to perform them, as expressions of worship, prayer, and thanksgiving. In many cases Tongan composed hymns called *hiva usu* (unaccompanied singing, one person begins and the rest join in) as well as call and response hymnody prevail (Black et al., 2010; Moyle, 1987; Shumway, 1981).

Jolly (1992) has asked why church hymns have not been considered part of Pacific traditional music stating that “Hymns and church rituals have been significantly remade by Pacific peoples, so that Christianity may appear today as more quintessentially a Pacific than a Western faith” (p. 53). Hymn styles differentiate across denominations in Tonga and can also reflect historical political allegiances and genealogies (Moyle, 1987). Hymns are quite popular in kava circles as well. Sisi‘uno Helu (2016) explained that:

I think our pre-Christian contact music was maybe monotonous ... two parts only... three parts were introduced later. The fakatangi [mourning song], the playing of the fangufangu [nose flute]. I think it was based on a 5 note scale like almost pentatonic... A very minor sound... the intervals and the singing, it's like calling, its yearning. Maybe worshipping at the same time... I think if we find recordings from before, it was very minor, now it's very major, the tonality has gone major... I think that when the missionaries came they changed everything, they didn't like the sound of the actual singing in minor intervals, of the calling, and of the yearning, maybe they thought it was sexual.

The Indigenous minor sounds of Tongan music will be discussed further later in this chapter and hymns will be delved into further in chapter six.

## **5.5. Fai Kava Phenomenon**

This section responds directly to the research question of what faikava is today and builds on the ideas introduced in chapter two that kava reveals truth. Anthropologist Kirk Huffman commented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Kava Conference of 2015 in Canberra, Australia that in the case of some areas in northern Vanuatu, some varieties of kava reveal truth. These varieties of kava bring truth to the surface, and although his comments are contextual to region and even plant type, this consequence is worth considering in Tongan kava culture generally.

Considering kava as revelatory of truth suggests that kava is not the cause of any particular

behaviour or social issue associated with it, rather it has the power to reveal them, bringing them to the surface, making them known. In Fiji kava can curse or bless dependent on who wields it and for what purpose as to what it will do (Aporosa, 2014b). This reflects a neutrality of mana, in that potency, authority, generative power is subject to a person or groups purpose.

Drawing from the theoretical concepts of mana, tapu, and noa explained in chapter two, the faikava and its spiritual dimension can be better understood. In brief review, Shore (1989) explains that mana is spiritual generative power, knowledge manifested tangibly and metaphysically. He also explains that tapu is sacred, and does not just have prohibitions and restrictions, but requirements. The concept of noa might be best summarized as a state of equilibrium, balance, or being neutralized. Something is tapu if it has mana, and it must be rendered noa in order to engage with it outside of tapu restrictions that are in place to prevent consequences of potential danger. The relationship between mana, tapu, and noa are what is mediated in any kava setting although the process varies, dependent on who is present and the purpose for gathering.

Kava is considered to be a possessor of mana itself from Indigenous Tongan and Fijian perspectives (Aporosa & Tomlinson, 2014; Aporosa, 2017; Turner, 1986). Aporosa has shown me this from his perspective as iTaukei in his respect for Kava and the Tāno‘a/Tanoa/Kumete (*Kava Bowl*) in the manner in which he mindfully serves, passes, partakes, or presents Kava. Dave Puleiku (2015) of the Ogden Kava Boys in Utah says that one of the main reasons he participates in Kava gatherings is because he does it in memory of loved ones who have passed on, sharing that “it comes with a lot of respect.” Because Kava is mana, it has power, and with that potency it physically neutralizes people who ingest it. This mana is the source of the anti-anxiety and muscle relaxing effect or the slight numbing of one’s tongue and mouth initially, after which faikava facilitates a social calibration or

neutrality between people (Ka‘ili, 2017a; Māhina, 2017; Lebot et al., 1992). We become relaxed in body but remain clear in mind as the reggae kava song by Natural Roots says “I’m feeling Irie from my head to my toes, but my mind is so clear” (van der Beek, 2017). This is one of the reasons Kava is known by some as the elixir of the Gods because it does not cognitively impair you or alter your perceptions, instead it removes anxiety and physically relaxes so one can refine their thoughts. Aporosa (2017) explained to me that Kava as a plant does not self-propagate on its own. This is one of the reasons why it is mana, it was propagated, reproduced, generated by being planted by the Gods.

In some cases, Kava sessions are an opportunity to act in a way that is different or hidden from the faces used to express different aspects of oneself in public. It may also be where one shows a complete or holistic self, ‘keepin it 100’ or ‘keepin it real.’ Whereas at other times one only shows portions of themselves to show respect, or because one is shy, or for other reasons in public realm performances and interactions. Examples of this are the regular comments I have heard from young Tongans explaining that at the kava session they are able to talk openly in a way they feel they cannot outside of the kava space. In Fai Kava, expressions of oneself are done through humour, song, and speech. It is a space where controversial topics such as religion and politics, can be engaged with, even intensely and still maintain a harmonious environment, regardless of social rank or position. The tapu that we have as individuals requires we conduct ourselves with respect and mediate our interactions with each other, nature, publicly and according to the spaces we are in (Mead, 2003). Fai Kava neutralizes tapu behaviors and performances that are released/cleansed with the inception of noa, which facilitates a recovery from emotional and physical burdens (Māhina, 2010; 2011b). Many individuals shared that they experience healing and renewal at Kava, especially when it comes to hearing or singing particular songs that have significant meaning to them.

Ka‘ili (2017a) explained from his research with Tongans in Maui, that like their ancestor Maui who slowed down time by capturing and slowing down the sun, faikava also slows down time. He explains, “The ending time for a faikava gathering is not determined by clock time but by *melie* (sweetness, pleasantness, beauty). Tongans end a faikava by saying ‘tuku ā he kuo tau melie’ (let us end for we have reached melie)” (p. 19). The act of faikava centres on autonomous Indigenous temporalities based in place and socio-spatial relationships (Ka‘ili, 2017a; Rifkin, 2017). Relational knowledge is of utmost importance in faikava as time is determined by relationships. Siosiua Lafitani (2015) commented to me that you can tell who goes to faikava and who doesn’t in the way they behave and speak. Uilisoni Angilau (2015) from Utah adds that faikava is where good social and communal skills are learned and refined.

Fai Kava is a process of ingesting mana, the land, in order to calibrate yourself with the mana/tapu within you, those around you, and the space one is in. Kava is a space of learning how to relate through open conversations and behaviours, which are possible because tapu has been made noa through consumption and enactment of mana. The mana kava possesses creates noa, balancing the tapu between people in socio-spatial settings. This means there is an equilibrium between different social, religious, and political power relations centered in land. Once a balance is reached, harmony between different energies, personalities, and ranks are reflected in the shared laughter, critical yet harmonious dialogues, and in the songs that are sung collectively (Māhina, 2007; 2008b; 2011b). In this state of equilibrium, one does not remove tapu, rather it is neutralized between you and the participants of the particular ceremony or gathering. Balancing energies between people through land materializes talanoa and the revealing of ‘truths’ (e.g., who you are, knowledge within the group).

While one is traversing through borderland experiences between consciousness (awake and asleep) in the depths of the night, one works through various levels of liminality to reach noa, moving between themselves through self-reflection and with those in the circle through engagement with them (Anzaldúa, 1987; Tecun et al, 2018; Turner, 1969; 1987). When one becomes noa with themselves and with those around them, they are at the same time also becoming tapu to those outside of the event who are not ingesting mana. In the more rare and formal kava ceremonies one should not breach the tapu of the ‘alofi (*kava oval/circle*) because although one can see or look in, onlookers are still not in the metaphysical realm those who are participating in it are (Herda et al., 1996; Māhina, 1992; 1993; 2017). The breach of tapu manifests itself differently in these more common kava gatherings. The more mana you consume, the closer to the spirit realm of pulotu you get, and those outside of the kava circle remain securely in the mortal realm. Taufu (2014) recorded in her research that many women reported that their partners or other male relatives would eat after drinking kava, which is a common occurrence. Although one is noa in the kava space, one is also simultaneously tapu to other spaces and must calibrate these spatial relations in each realm. Food is an accompaniment of kava, symbolically represented by tō (*sugarcane*), which grew together with kava in their first miraculous appearance long ago in the Tongan kava origin story, as well as in fono (*meetings/ceremony*) that offer kava and food (Dale, 2008; Māhina, 1999a; 2011b). Troy Wihongi (2016) explains that this is why it is important to eat after having kava, to calibrate yourself out of the spiritual realms as you return to being primarily in the physical realm. I will discuss this further in more detail in chapter ten.

## **5.6. Sounds of Spirits and Spiritual Realms**

On one evening while in the Ha‘apai region of the Kingdom of Tonga, I was walking with a friend on our way to the place I was staying. The moon was especially bright this particular evening, and as we turned the corner in front of a house, an old woman burst out

with a loud scream! She then began to laugh. As we looked over to her she said we had frightened her. She explained that she believed we were *tevolo* (*ghosts/spirits*) walking towards her but when we walked passed her she saw we were mortal. This is why she initially screamed and then laughed at herself. She shared that we were confused as *tevolo* because the realm of spirits is represented with nighttime and we were the only people out on that occasion. *Tevolo* has come to represent spirits and/or ghosts, but is derived from the English word for devil and dependent on user can have a negative connotation to it in my experience or simply mean spirit(s). Some friends have explained to me that it does not ghosts, but rather spirits, but there are many who associate it with evil spirits, pagan beliefs, or the devil because of Christianity. The original Tongan concept and word was *fa‘ahihehe*, which is spirit(s) as there was no singular devil concept in pre-Christian Tonga (Collocott, 1921a; 1921b; Ka‘ili, 2017c). *Fa‘ahihehe* can refer to ancestors or those who have passed on and is not necessarily negative, but in its transformation to *tevolo* has associated this Indigenous Tongan ontology as part of the “pagan/heathen” past for many who are consumed by modern western ideologies and its Christian reconfigurations of this knowledge.

The term *fakafa‘ahihehe* means that something pertains to the realm of spirits, and the sounds that produce this are found in the Tongan instrumentation that produce minor sounding tunes. Tēvita Ka‘ili (2017c) explains that Most of the Tongan instruments such as the *fangufangu* (*nose flute*) produce a minor key sound, which is associated with *fa‘ahihehe*, *mate* (*dead/death*), *tupu‘anga* (*ancestor(s)*), and *Pulotu*, the homeland, afterworld, spiritual realm of chiefs. Ka‘ili (2017d) adds that:

The bamboo instruments are known as “*ongo fakafa‘ahihehe*” (sounds of the spirits). This sound is associated with *Pulotu*, a Tongan ancestral homeland that lies west of Tonga. I have come to conclude that *Pulotu* is the Tongan name for Fiji and other parts of “Melanesia”.

Considering the distribution of bamboo instruments such as tubular flutes and panpipes as they moved from the Solomon islands eastward, there is both physical and metaphysical

meaning to originating from Pulotu, believed to be islands west of Tonga, a place of origin as well as a spirit realm travelled to after death in the direction where the sun sets (Campbell, 2001; Ka‘ili, 2017c; McLean, 2008; Moyle, 1976).

‘Ökusitino Māhina (2017) calls “ongo fakafa’ahikehe” the minor tune sound and has worked to revive this sound among Tongans through the instruments that originally produced them. To have a glimpse into the sounds sung by Tongans before Christian hymnody was introduced, one must move out of the major scale tunes and be guided by the sounds of the fangufangu and the like. Moyle (1987) reported that although there were various responses to Tongan music by Europeans, the Wesleyan missionary William Woon expresses a common view that he wrote in his Journal of 1830:

Anxious that I should do something to improve the singing among the natives ... something should be done soon to make the tunes they sing more like the originals. Several of our excellent tunes are spoiled by the natives from singing them in a minor key; others are so completely metamorphosed that we scarcely know sometimes what tunes they sing.

At least in the case of some British Wesleyan’s who have arguably had the largest impact on Tongan religion and culture overall, the minor sound was not favourable (Moyle, 1987; Lātūkefu, 1974). Māhina (2017) refers to minor sounds as being true to Indigenous Tongan style, including remakes of songs and adaptations (e.g., reggae) that maintain a minor sound. Minor sounds on the major melodic scale cultivate feelings of Indigeneity because they are close to the original sounds of the ancestors.

Ata Siulua (2016) told me not to whistle at night when you are in Tonga because it sounds like the traditional instruments and the sound could be confused with being spirits or may wake them up. Although I have yet to hear too many instances where the bamboo instruments of Tonga are used at a Kava session, some groups still prefer to sing A Capella and favour songs that are in a minor key. Many church hymns often associated as funeral songs are quite popular even outside of Sunday gatherings for this reason. Whether live or

electronically played; polytonal musical styles, localised tunings of slack key guitar, falsetto voices, minor key sounds, and vibrato sung across notes, parallels and reinvents traditional singing in various kava settings. In Utah some of the groups who include country music in their mix of sounds find a connection in style to the twang of the country singers voice as well as the themes of lament found in that genre. The sound of spirits adapts and evolves, and although it varies across groups, there is a certain sound and style selected that appear to reflect a continuing popularity in falsetto, polytonal, and minor key sounds. As kava sessions go deeper into the evening, there is less talking and more meditating. Ancestral voices are then heard through songs about them, composed by them, or that connect one to them in the late hours of a Fai Kava.

## **5.7. Conclusion**

The historical negotiations with modernity and Christian conversion is found in the echoes of Indigenous spirituality manifested in the exchange, subversion, and adoptions in Tongan Christianity that rings through in today's practices around Fai Kava and the songs of spirits. Lyrical, cultural, and musical style analysis demonstrates the relationship of Tongan spiritual and cultural identities that are adapted and reinvented today. Christianity and Indigenous spirituality, fonua/land, along with tapu in Sunday/Sabbath worship are sites where tensions and overlaps reveal Tongan identity negotiated in these continually reoccurring intersections.

## **Chapter 6. Underkava Mormons - Hymns, Reggae, and Hip Hop**

### **6.1. Introduction**

For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.

- Doctrine & Covenants, Section 25, Verse 12

Jah music is the way to hear his voice, so when trials and tribulations come your way, hold onto your roots ... it's not easy, the road to trod to find your destiny, open your mind and see, Jah say, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.

-Natural Roots (If it ain't Natural)

Kava is stigmatized in the Mormon Moana community. Due to this reality, I maintain some ambiguity and anonymity for leaders, members, and congregations that I draw knowledge from throughout this chapter. This is an attempt to prevent those who I refer to as being 'underkava' from dealing with potential Mormon community repercussions. There are a few church and community leaders who were open and confident to be identified however, but most preferred discretion. This chapter explores complex Tongan, Moana, and Mormon identities as they intersect in kava spaces, beginning with a brief background of Mormons and Tongans. Mormon hymns sung at kava sessions heal and can also be songs of protest when selecting Tongan compositions over European ones. The ideas that contribute and perpetuate kava stigma among Mormons are tied to dominant western views and economic values. Church owned tourist sites along with theology influences constructs of Pacific identities that are negotiated in kava spaces. Many Mormon kava drinkers are adapting both kava practice and Mormon belief, asserting agency in this intersection. Hip Hop and reggae expand the possibility of expressing robust and complex identities that go beyond the scope of Mormon hymnody and speak to diaspora realities of working-class struggles.

### **6.2. Tongan Mormons and Kava**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS/Mormon) claims a membership

of 64,824 members in Tonga, stating it is the highest percentage of members per capita anywhere in the world (Mormon Newsroom Facts and Statistics, n.d.). There are also many Tongan (language based) congregations outside of Tonga (e.g., American Samoa, U.S.A., Australia, and New Zealand) (Lds.org, maps, n.d.). Tongans in diaspora who are dispersed throughout mainstream congregations in overseas nations are hard to quantifiably identify because they are not documented as Tongan Mormons unless they attend a designated Tongan language congregation. The CIA World Fact Book (n.d.) reports that Tonga is comprised of 64.1% Protestants (including the Free Wesleyan Church that comprises 35% of the total population), 18.6% Mormons, and 14.2% Roman Catholics out of a total population estimate of 106,479. The discrepancy between the CIA numbers and Mormon claims is that the LDS church counts anyone on their official record, whereas the CIA report is survey based according to their website, which means it is determined by self-identification responses. Although Mormons claim 60.8% of the total population of Tonga, only 18.6% appear to self-identify as Mormons. The visible presence of the church's vast material infrastructure in the form of chapels and schools throughout Tonga, reasonably gives an impression of a large Mormon presence. Despite the ambiguous gap of membership claims between self-identification and church record, Mormon presence is significant among Tongans.

Kava is absent in the LDS standard works (canonical texts). "A spokesman for the church's public affairs department, which fields all news-media inquiries, says there is no official policy on the drink" (Griffin, 2007, p. 3). The word of wisdom, or Mormon's health code does not include kava, but currently prohibits the consumption of alcohol, coffee, tea, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Because kava is not prohibited it serves as an alternative for some Mormons who are quitting or abstaining from the prohibited foods and substances. The official church perspective leaves the choice to individuals to decide based on the principle of avoiding that which is harmful (Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, 2002). Regardless

of this official stance however, kava is controversial for many Mormons and regulated on various local and social levels by volunteer lay-clergy and fellow members of the church. The discourse that rebukes kava is influenced by non-canonical speeches, opinions, publications, and policies by some church owned institutions.

In some Tongan language speaking congregations there are attempts to assert a ban on kava, enforced through revoking of temple recommends (access to highest level of Mormon orthodox ceremonies, separate from regular church attendance). This rebuke arises primarily for Mormon participation in the regular social kava rituals of faikava (vs. life event kava ceremonies or chiefly/regal kava), which is seen as time spent away from nuclear families. This enforcement assumes the modern western definition of family reflected in the normalized white middle-class “American” standards prevalent in dominant Mormon culture. Most Tongan families are comprised of large complex communal extended family networks linked to island, village, and clans, which remain largely intact even in diaspora. Kava sessions I have attended most often always had several participants who were related to each other through these larger kinship groups. Mormons like other Christian sects provide a social infrastructure for Tongans to congregate in modern paradigms. Many Tongans and Moana people utilise these spaces beyond their worship services as a central part of everyday life. For Tongan families that have diverse religious affiliations however, or worship in different congregations, it is a struggle to see each other regularly, straining their kinship formations. Although regular faikava attendance is controversial for many Mormons, there remains a spectrum of engagement with kava among them. Ka‘ili (2008; 2017a) observed that Mormon Tongan men who were not present at any kava gatherings during a funeral were at times criticized for not attending. The most frequent exception that evades general scrutiny for Tongan Mormons is faikava during life events such as funerals. Many fellow Mormons shared with me that by regularly going to a kava gathering they are able to see relatives from

their kāinga (extended family network) who attend different congregations, or who belong to different denominations altogether. Tongan Mormons who regularly participate in faikava are able to nurture their Indigenous kinship relations. This creates other tensions however that can be antagonistic to the western definition of nuclear family derived from Victorian and puritan values prevalent in Mormon paradigms.

There are two prominent Mormons who have come up as significant influences on kava stigma among Tongans. The first is Faivaola (Eric Shumway), a European-American who has had several different positions within the church, and also carries an honorary Tongan chiefly title. One of his public comments comes from a YouTube video called, ‘Ki he kau Kava Tonga-Elder Shumway’. This video appears to discourage kava as it is practiced within some kalapu settings, specifically targeting the practice of having a tou‘a *fefine* (*female kava preparer/server*). The video gives examples of what some men will say in their flirtations and asks men to reverse the situation and consider if they would be ok with their wives at a kava session flirting as they do, but to a young man (Shumway 2012). The other example of a public community figure that has influenced Mormon kava controversies is Vai Sikahema. He has held lay-clergy religious leadership positions and is a NBC10 News Anchor (Sikahema, 2014). He is well known in my experience as the first Tongan to play in the NFL (National Football League, U.S.A.). In a column in the Deseret News, he wrote:

Our Polynesian ancestors all used *kava* for their most important ceremonies. Village leaders and chiefs counseled together over a bowl, or *kumete*, of kava. Kava was an integral part of the wedding ceremony. In fact, the Tongan word for “covenant” is *fua kava*, which is literally translated as “the first fruit of the kava.” Yet today, kava is consumed socially to the point of inebriation in parties that lead to marital discord, loss of academic opportunities, chronic unemployment, and infidelity. All night kava parties, or *fai kava*, now replace the sanctity and righteous purposes for which our ancestors used the kava root anciently (2014).

The assumption that kava has traditionally only been consumed in elite, ceremonial, or religious contexts is contrary to the diverse practice, ritual, and utility of kava across all social realms in Tongan society. These practices regularly and commonly occurred prior to

European contact, during contact, and still today (Helu, 1993; Ferdon, 1987; Tecun, 2017). However, it is understandable that this idea exists as it is a common sentiment I have heard from multiple people. The idea that only elite ceremonial practices are traditional is derived from what Māhina (2011b) has argued to be a partial rather than a total view of kava. I have argued in chapter four that Indigenous perspectives rupture the modern western ideas of ‘authenticity’ and ‘tradition,’ which have dehistoricized living Indigenous traditions that are continually negotiated and reinvented. Sikahema (2011) further illustrates his position on kava writing in his column, “Today, the once-sacred kava ceremony has evolved into kava parties ... Church leaders once tiptoed around kava, careful not to offend cultural mores, but today, they’ve simply counseled us, ‘STOP’”. He is likely referring to unofficial statements here that have been made by some church members and leaders during events, which have not been published by the church, as I could not find any such mention on the official church website. Some church members in my experience however do not distinguish official from unofficial let alone measure statements against the canonical texts of the church. This has added to the confusion and ambiguity on the Mormon stance on kava, which has resulted in divided opinions and perspectives in Mormon Moana communities.



**Figure 23. English only sign.**

**Mormon high school in Tongatapu, Tonga. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)**

### 6.3. Hymns in a Mormon Kalapu

There are only 12 hymns in the Tongan LDS hymn book that are both written and composed by Tongans (out of 204) (Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 1994). The large majority of Mormon hymns are standardized globally, selected from Euro-American compositions or preference and then translated into “other” languages. The significance this has for Tongan Mormons is that church music is primarily western derived, compared to non-Mormon Tongan churches that often have a much larger range of Tongan composed hymns to choose from. Considering that aspects of Tongan musical styles have survived in hymns, despite early missionary efforts to eradicate them (see chapter five), songs of worship can also be songs of protest. There is an act of resistance taking place when people select their favourites out of Tongan composed hymns rather than European introduced hymns translated into Tongan.

Folofola mai ‘a Sīsū (*Thus Sayeth the Lord*), also known as hymn number 27 in the Mormon hymn book is a favourite for many groups. Bones Joseph (2016) is Ngatu Kahungunu (Māori) and regularly attends the Dox Brothers Kalapu, which is comprised of multi-ethnic Pan-Moana Mormons. Bones shared that when one of his Tongan friends from the community passed away, he was able to participate in singing him to the next life at his funeral. Bones commented:

I love singing the songs...I was able to sing it for one of our friends that passed away in his native tongue ... they sung that song to our friend when he was lying in our friend’s house, and I was able to join in, and that was I think a little token of my respect for him, and I was glad I was able to do that.

A common custom at Tongan funerals is the ‘apō (*wake*) where kava is drunk, food is shared, and singing takes place all through the night and sometimes throughout the week before the burial (Ka‘ili, 2008; 2017a).

A Tongan Mormon is the leader of the Dox Brothers Kalapu and is commonly known as ‘Boso’ (*Fijian word for Boss*). Boso (2016) adds what this hymn means to him:

Whether they’re Tongan or not-Tongan, we introduce the language to them, and for myself, [it] helps lea fakatonga [to speak Tongan]... Other than for the language it is for the spirit that you feel when we sing. It’s healing, it brings us close when we sing, like the song we were just singing about blessings. It’s not so much the drinking of kava, but the healing that it gives... being able to sit, and talk... a lot of times we joke around, but I know for us ... it’s a lot of talk to heal and resolve things that we might be struggling with... It’s just another way we can receive some healing from the saviour, from our Heavenly Father, well that’s what I believe, when we meet, and we sit on a low level on the floor, in a circle, and have love and respect for each other.

This kalapu as well as others, have merged Tongan and pan-Moana ideas with Mormon ones. For example, the Dox Brothers are more formal than other kalapu I have attended with most who attend regularly wearing a tupenu/sulu (*Tongan/Fijian formal wear, skirt*) and a bula/aloha shirt (*Moana patterned polo*). Every faikava I have attended with Boso he also wears a ta’ovala (*Tongan waist mat*). He explained to me that he does this in order to show respect for the kava and those who attend. The level of orthodoxy for this group varies, and non-Mormon visitors follow the general behaviours of the group of no swearing, alcohol, or smoking. I have observed some return to church through this or other groups like it, and there are also several who have even been baptised as a result of being introduced to the faith through these types of Mormon kava groups.

#### **6.4. Mormon Work Ethic and the Spirit of Neoliberalism**

Mormon kava stigmas are centred on the regular Tu’a (*common*) activities of faikava, isolating lower Tongan ranks as well as practices of migrants in diaspora who live through working class struggles in new places of residence (Ahlburg, 2000; Ravulo, 2015; Reyes, 2013; Stats.govt.nz, n.d.). Mormon values I have been taught include ‘being anxiously engaged in a good cause’ and being ‘early to bed and early to rise’ with a beehive like industriousness, which are seen by some to contradict with kava activities. When these values are combined with modern Mormonism’s rigid hierarchy and bureaucracy, theology is

interpreted as the neoliberal values of individual productivity, privatisation, and sales-like evangelism. In this paradigm mainstream Mormons can keep to a neoliberal pace and find success and efficiency in globalizing political economies. This offers Tongans practical access to meritocratic pursuits through church schools and social infrastructure that supports the white middle-class culture that thrives in western paradigms (Morris, 2015). The regular use of kava slows time down however and disrupts the global economic pace the church operates within. Kava participation disrupts the Mormon work ethic and spirit of neoliberalism in the church. This contributes to the Mormon stigma on faikava based in its counter-productivity to the capitalist machine with accusations of being an ‘irrelevant’ Indigenous tradition.

These stigmas have been expressed to me in a common saying that seeks to distinguish the ‘cultural’ from the ‘godly’, which goes: ‘we don’t do things the Tongan way, or the pālangi way, we do them the gospel way’. Māori Mormon scholar Gina Colvin (2017a; 2017b) has critiqued the notion of ‘gospel culture’ or the ‘gospel way’ in Mormon paradigms, arguing it means white capitalist Utah patriarchy, disguised under this term. She argues that ‘gospel culture’ is a western capture of Mormonism that perpetuates Eurocentric norms that are framed as universally objective and neutral in comparison to ‘other’ non-western cultures. Many in my experience relegate Indigeneity and kava as a non-religious/spiritual tradition, calling it ‘culture’ instead. This sentiment is expressed by Chris Ahokava (2013) who sings a song about kava found on YouTube with lyrics, “It’s not religion, it’s my own decision”.

I observed that many kava regulars who use kava heavily (multiple times a week for several hours each session) were responding to economic pressures experienced in diaspora. Many friends commented to me their need to escape or unwind from the everyday and weekly grind of labour and life in the more intensely capitalist settler colonial nations they now reside in (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, and U.S.). Many of the Kava participants who were

identified as heavy drinkers or as problematically frequent drinkers by third parties, most often worked well over the full-time (40-hour) work week, doing heavy physical labour, or emotionally demanding jobs. Many Tongans in diaspora often hold several jobs and experience a conflict with the value placed on employment over kin relationships (Lee, 2003; Small, 2011; Ka‘ili, 2017a). A Tongan elder in Utah suggested that many who leave their nuclear families to go faikava after working many hours, see their contribution to the family as the monetary income they bring into their household. He suggested that their heavy kava attendance allows them time for themselves to recover from heavy workloads. They do this in order to survive the modern cost of materially supporting their families.

Tongan Mormon hip hop artist KIS. B’s music reflects the working-class experience of many Tongans I grew up with, and from surrounding neighbourhoods on the west side of Salt Lake City. He expresses urban struggle in his song *Street Made* (Fonua, 2015), rapping: “we ain’t playin’, the neighbourhood I’m from is a beast ... its mean in these streets”. KIS. B (Fonua, 2015) also rapped about drawing strength from his beliefs to overcome these challenges in his song *We Gon’ Be Fine* that I will detail later in this chapter. Tongan reggae singer Kelesi Buck (2016), known as Miss. K, performs a song called called *Rock ‘Dis Way*, which speaks about the material struggles of Tongan diaspora life. Miss K. (Buck, 2016) sings: “We living the ghetto life, got little money, struggle and strife”. Frith (1981) explained that there is a power in popular music, which is a “source of vigour and exhilaration and of good feelings that are as necessary for the next morning’s political struggle as for the next day’s work...fun is as much a quality of the music’s use as its form” (pp. 254-255). Faikava and the musical performances associated are escapes from material and social struggles, and simultaneously forms of resistance. Music in kava circles contribute to the renewal of the mind, body, and spirit in order to continue surviving in the neoliberal capitalist machine.

Mormonism offers practical access and support to modern western schooling and

middle-class culture, but it also represents by those same icons the tensions between the ideologies of modernity and politics of Indigeneity (Aporosa, 2014a; Byrd, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Morris, 2015). Kava consumption by Mormons is a demonstration of agency in asserting the importance of Tongan spirituality and tradition, despite the conflicts that exist with modern life, economy, and religion.

#### 6.4.1 The Polynesian Cultural Center

Mormons have unique nuances to western constructs of the Pacific, which is prominently displayed in the church owned tourist attraction in Hawai‘i, called the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC). There are different island cultures represented at the PCC and visitors can spend the day observing replications of ‘traditional’ village life. There are dance performances throughout and activities one can engage with, but the biggest attraction is the evening luau (*feast and dance performances*). The luau has become a common identifier of Pacific identity in Mormon imaginations and a measure of authenticity. A relationship linked to tourism, entertainment, and consumption of the Pacific as a cultural commodity (Aikau, 2012).

Seventeen of the twenty-four people I talked to in kava circles from Utah indicated that Utah’s luau culture influenced their identities. Additionally, the PCC was identified as a force in forming Polynesian-centric Pacific identity, which excludes “Melanesia” and “Micronesia”. Luau fundraisers at secondary schools often associated with football were common when I was growing up in Utah. Some folks also mentioned that doing family fundraising of selling plate lunches was a sort of extension of the luau. When I participated with the Pacific Islander group in a multicultural assembly in high school, we performed a dance from each of the islands represented at the PCC. We even used some of the same music from the PCC because it was generally familiar. Many white Utah residents throw fake ‘luau’s’ as a thematic party in the ‘American’ repertoire of exotic fascination. Many party

stores carry plastic and paper replicas of what is imagined to be part of a luau, which often includes prints of tropical birds from South America, and African masks, reconfigured as “Polynesian” to the modern western gaze.

There are mixed feelings in regards to the PCC within communities. Mostly however, for the Mormon Oceanians I have talked with who worked there as performers and hosts to tourists, they have mostly positive memories. These memories are mostly associated with the relationships cultivated while working there and experiences they had with friends. Many people found their spouses while working at the PCC and studying at BYU-Hawaii or descend from parents who found each other while working and going to school there. However, there are a couple who made comments that indicated they felt exploited and felt like they were ‘frozen in time’ regarding their identities as Moana peoples. A friend who was reflecting on their experience dancing there, shared it felt like being “in a human zoo”. Another person expressed they received little pay, yet this was supposedly fair compensation for the opportunity to get a western education. Another friend addressed tourist comments that reflected they had no idea that they do not all live like they perform at this location, let alone had any clue to the challenges Moana people face today (e.g., racism, rising sea levels, etc.). These comments have come from practicing Mormons as well, demonstrating a continued resistance to imposed identities, even from within the paradigm of their faith.

Church perspectives on the PCC focus on western education as “THE” education, which can be gained through commodified cultural performances, which transforms traditions into entertainment as the means to earn a cash income. The current president and prophet of the church Russel M. Nelson commented in 2013 about the PCC’s purpose. At that time, he was a senior leader of the Mormon Church with the title of apostle. He stated that the PCC was always about education, saying, “that’s their reason for being there. It’s not to sing and dance; it’s to learn” (Mormon Newsroom, 2013). Hawaiian scholar Haunani Kay Trask

shared her criticism that the PCC is an example of how tourism creates a prostitution of culture in a documentary project by Angelo Baca on YouTube (Takinitbakk, 2008; Trask, 1999). She argues that Pacific culture as entertainment becomes a shadow of its real self. The demographics of performers are mostly if not all ancestrally tied to the Moana, and the aesthetics at the PCC suits the appetites of outsiders for 'authentic exotica'. Rifkin (2017) explains that native peoples are relegated to the past through this type of process and if they are represented in the present they are defined by non-native logics. Aikau (2012) specifically critiques the PCC as perpetuating a 'happy native' stereotype.

Static and exotic imaginations by settler logics frame Pacific music as something exclusively of the past as well. This reflects the binary logics of western modernity and its subsequent dichotomies of civilised and primitive. In one kava circle in Aotearoa the topic came up of why there are Mormon Tongan speaking congregations, but no Māori ones? A conclusion that was reached was that although the church champions its diverse range of languages used, its purpose is to learn the gospel in your own language initially, and then begin a path to English. The Mormon Tongan hymn book reflects this attitude as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, which even though it is entirely in the Tongan language, the large majority of the hymns are of European composition that have been translated. Less than ten percent of the Mormon Tongan hymnal are written or composed by Tongans, and none are currently written by any non-European in the English 'standard' hymnbook. This is in contrast to Hip Hop and Reggae songs written by Moana Mormons, which becomes an important tool to tell their stories. Drawing from musical traditions by folks with similar colonial experiences and racial oppression, Moana Mormon stories told in these styles empower more holistic identities. This makes visible the absence of their stories, with the autonomy to tell them by themselves, beyond what is currently found in Mormon music.

## 6.5. Indigenous People and the Church

Mormonism is problematically often called an “indigenous” American church by scholars and observers (Bushman, 2007). This is done without distinguishing it as a church founded by and established through settler colonial occupation of Indigenous lands in what is currently known as the United States of America. This is due to Mormonism’s emergence within the national formation of the U.S., despite it being founded by people who were not Indigenous to the land. Although in many cases marginalised European peoples were fleeing previous homelands, they did so through the transition and routes between one empire to another into a burgeoning society that would privilege them over Indigenous inhabitants and enslaved Africans (Byrd, 2011). As I have explained in chapter two, this is a colonial-blind narrative that perpetuates settler futurity and governance (western modernity), which excludes Indigeneity (Calderón, 2016). This section will explore some of the unique nuances that emerge from Mormon constructs of Indigenous people and Tongan Mormon responses in kava circles.

Mormons claim that one of their canonical texts, the *Book of Mormon* (BoM) is derived from ancient American material and historical sources (Bushman, 2007; Book of Mormon, 2006; Morris, 2015). Additionally, there is a long-standing tradition among Mormons that associates Polynesian people with a BoM lineage through Hagoth, a person who appears briefly in the BoM (Aikau, 2012). Although it is not part of the dominant mainstream narrative within Mormonism, some Tongan and Moana kava participants have shared with me a belief that kava correlates with the BoM. For example, the BoM text claims that Jesus Christ visited the Americas after being resurrected, and that Christ also went to visit other people, which many believe includes the Moana and elsewhere. This opens the possibility of Christ introducing kava to ancestors anciently. Some Tongans, Sāmoans, iTaukei, and Māori who I have spoken with see their Indigenous culture as the original

Mormon culture, as Christ's true gospel culture. They interpret Mormonism to be an Indigenous church, claiming that Christianity was present in ancient America and Eastern Oceania, pre-dating western introductions to Jesus. This shifts the position of the dominant Mormon culture entrenched in Eurocentrism as being out of line because it is seen as Gentile in this lens, positioning Indigenous interpretations as more authentically Christian.

Tongan scholar I. Futa Helu suggested that kava likely replaced ancient practices of human sacrifice (Shumway and Smith, 1999). Some have equated this replacement sacrifice to be a parallel event in the Moana to the abolishment of animal sacrifice and the adoption of sacrament in the New Testament of the Bible. Kava being a pacifier, physically speaking, is also often equated as a bringer of peacefulness, a fruit of the prince of peace, Jesus Christ. The Mormon theological lens expands through Indigeneity, by interpreting kava to be a ceremony established by Christ that pre-dates Mormon foundations, and Christianity itself. A Tongan elder explained that the partaking of the Mormon sacrament (Eucharist/communion equivalent) was easily understood for him because of his experience with kava, which had already equipped him as a covenant making protocol and binding ritual. When he engaged with the weekly sacramental and occasional temple rituals after his Mormon baptism, he said he felt as if he was returning to something he already was a part of. Mormonism was the restoration or return to an ancient Indigenous Tongan culture to which he already had a working knowledge of in his living cultural tradition. This train of thought may be acceptable among some of the Mormon kava drinkers, but I find to be much less prominent with Mormons who don't participate in kava circles. Some of those Mormons depart from these interpretations and see kava as a 'fallen' or 'bastardized' version of Mormon sacrament that has gone astray from its original, with Mormon sacrament being the correct version that kava ceremony strayed from over time. Drawing from Mormon theology, Christ's church was established while he was on the earth and then went into apostasy after he died (lost, taken

from the earth). For Mormons this required a restoration of divine authority to govern Christ's church, a renewal of the ancient or 'primitive' church of Christ. Mormons believe they belong to the modern restoration of this ancient church of Christ. Thus, Mormons house divine authority (priesthood) and the truest and most correct original practices restored to and through European settlers in the United States. There are also others who do not see kava related to anything within the Mormon paradigm at all. Lisiate Wolfgramm (2015) comments regarding these variety of Tongan Mormons, saying:

Many of them have a closer affinity to their religion than they do to their own cultural heritage, and for some people they don't see a difference between the two things, and the two things blend into one thing, so that creates another interesting phenomenon.

These paradoxes in my experience make for lively and passionate discussions that continue being negotiated in Mormon kava circles.

Because of the controversies surrounding kava, I have observed people quit drinking kava altogether, still attend gatherings but for less time, or take a kava fast by abstaining for a while. There are a few groups however that have adapted kava use to fit their Mormon responsibilities, such as using it for reactivation of less-active members, retention of new members, and ministering to fellow members of the church. I have also met three people during my PhD studies, and heard of others who have been baptized through Mormon kava circles. I have seen and heard of even more who have been mentored out of struggles in their life through kava, and some who have been given LDS priesthood blessings by members in their kava group, and some who become the focus of service projects from their kava community. Although kava is still predominantly comprised of men, some Mormons now drink together with or in the presence of wives and/or older children to combat the critique of time spent away from nuclear families. Faikava becomes increasingly important for Tongan Mormons to fulfil cultural duties at life events because these lessons are generally absent in Mormon churches, whereas they are often taught within most Tongan church settings (e.g.,

Tongan Methodists). Most Tongan Mormons have a diversity of religious affiliations in their kāinga (village/kin group), which requires a continual working knowledge of Tongan protocols one can learn at faikava.

Troy Wihongi (2016) is Tongan and Māori, and well versed in both cultures as well as Fijian due to his engagement with the community and regular travels there as a kava importer. He is open with his kava participation and an active and visible participant in his faith as a Mormon. He explains:

With my kava drinking and usage I try to parallel it with gospel principles . . . what we do with kava helps us to be more mindful of others feelings, less judgmental, more patient, more accepting, all of the many Christlike attributes that are important to us in our lives. . . we promote those things when we are drinking kava. In my house here, those things are really important, and there's other things that we don't allow in the house, swearing, that's one, a big reason is because I'm a member of the church, so even though we're drinking kava in the house doesn't mean people can carry on anyway they want, they have to have respect for the house. The funny thing about that is if I'm sitting here and there's people sitting there and they're swearing, I won't even have to say anything before someone turns to them and says that in this house we don't swear you know. . . Kava culture has similarities with gospel. . . for me absolutely, for others absolutely not, but for me that's the way I wanted to build it, and what I personally found in building it that way, you have longer lasting relationships, and more meaningful mixes, you know, I've sat down here many times and given counsel to my sons, it's something that's worked for our family . . . I'm thinking that one of your questions might be, what do you feel as a member of the church drinking kava? So with that, absolutely fine, so long as I'm taking care of all of my responsibilities as a father, as a husband, taking care of all those things, then I'm able to have an outlet and relax my mind, and balance everything back out.

He adds that theological discussions in faikava also broaden the interpretations and diversity of belief or non-belief that exist between those who share their perspectives in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic faikava context. He explains that kava opens up acceptance and understanding when there are opportunities to engage with people outside your congregations and churches, because in order for there to be harmony nobody can be universally correct or try to force their particular beliefs on each other.

## 6.6. Complicated Moana Mormon Identities

Akom (2009) explains that educational praxis is found within Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP), which offers a medium to tell stories centred in experiences of people of colour combating racism and other forms of oppression. One of the core concepts of CHHP is elevating the experiential knowledge of students of colour. Hip Hop being a robust culture that includes kinaesthetic learning through dance, musicological skill in deejay/dj electronic music composition, visual graffiti art, and spoken word poetry in MCing/Rapping. Hip Hop originated out of New York by urban youth making something out of what they had, creatively combining these elements to make Hip Hop culture (Akom, 2009; Forman, 2000; Zemke-White 2000). Akom (2009) considers that:

given the long history of socio-political conscious hip hop as a tool for illuminating problems of poverty.... racial discrimination, as well as love...institution's under-utilization of hip hop's liberatory potential in the classroom is surprising (p. 54).

If we consider Moana Mormons in diaspora I believe it would be appropriate to add church to this observation of school. The material realities, histories, and struggles of diasporic Pacific Islanders is not significantly reflected in dominant Mormon discourse, media, or hymns. Hip Hop since its origins in the 1970s Bronx has moved across the U.S. and the globe with an emphasis on locality and relationships to place (Forman, 2000).

In the case of Indigenous diasporic peoples, Hip Hop provides a way to connect locally and globally (Zemke-White, 2004). Hip Hop is also a way to organize collectively rather than be subjected to the “fragmentive effects of Capitalism” (Forman, 2000, p. 71). Hip Hop is a powerful tool like kava, it is about telling truth, which is why it is also controversial, the good, bad, hard, and ugly truth is shared indiscriminately. Hip Hop is derived in response to struggles in paradigms of western modernity, so there is a sense of comradery one can find in this culture on the basis of race, class, or Indigeneity. Speaking to the experiences of

struggle in a working-class neighbourhood and overcoming this through community and God, Tongan Mormon Hip Hop artist KIS. B (Fonua, 2015) raps in his song *We Gon' Be Fine*:

Let me tell you what it is before y'all start assumin', we been good since day one, and we been moving. I ain't never needed nothin' in my life, but my family, and my block, and they all rep it right. Real people with real problems, but we always overcame it, cause we believe in the Man who a lot think is over-rated, but because of him the love inside my hood has been created, and with that we'll never lose, cause we already done made it . . . we got problems everyday but we get through'em as a hood . . . don't worry about us cause we gon' be fine

Mormon hymnody does not encompass contemporary urban diasporic experiences whereas Hip Hop is adopted as a way to speak to those experiences, realities, and stories. Additionally, reggae iconography is featured in KIS. B's music video such as the colours red, yellow, and green as well as mention of older sisters, the highest-ranking siblings in Tongan families. KIS. B is part of the H.O.G. Farm Kava Kalapu in Rose Park, a west side Salt Lake City neighbourhood where he explained he was first truly immersed into music and his artistic path. Growing up in the church he was also exposed to music, but it was in the urban kava circle he is part of where the possibilities of expression broadened to tell a localized story that is more complex. Here Hip Hop localizes global experience and the layers of ethnic, regional, and religious identity that is invisible in dominant Mormon repertoire and media.

Late December 2015 I went out to West Valley City, Utah to visit with Philip Muavesi, Samoana Matagi, and 'Inoke Hafoka who I introduced in chapter four. All of us had met a few years ago while working in our communities and have since continued to connect and talanoa. The composition of our group that evening represented a product of both diaspora and Mormon globalism that had brought us all together. Each of us had served a two-year full-time mission for the church in different countries and were at places in our lives where we were having more critical conversations about church, power, and identity. Questioning in Mormonism has cultural bounds and limits, which we went beyond this evening. In our discussion, I asked about music and media since the four of us engage in these arts to varying degrees. Hip Hop and reggae featured prominently in our talanoa. We played

reggae music throughout the evening as well. Phil Muavesi (2015) at a few hours into the kava session told a story about his identity and how Hip Hop had catalysed critical thinking and reflection for him as a Moana Mormon:

Going back to your question of when did these things become important for us to think about . . . hip hop was a big catalyst for me to ask where I'm from and that was because the early MC's were talking about African American culture, Africa culture, they were saying we're not a, b, c, stereotypes, we come from kings and queens from Africa, we come from here, and that was song after song to a cool beat, and you just like listening, and I started 7<sup>th</sup>- 8th grade [approx.. 13 years old] thinking, since they're talkin about Africa, where am I from?

. . . my context to culture 7th, 8th grade, was luau, you know what I mean? That was the one thing it seemed like culture was accepted through luau for Pacific Island Mormons. . . that's what the pālangi's accepted of us, so that was my view of my culture, that was the extent at that time, but as I kept hearing these African American cats talking about Africa then I had to then challenge myself at that age, well what about us? As they talked about these stereotypes, 'hey we ain't these stereotypes', that movies try to portray us as, or government tries to say we are, we're this, and this is going beyond the stereotype. So, then I thought, well luau . . . what's beyond that? What's beyond all the money making PCC stuff? What's the culture beyond all that? So it started to send me down this thing of what's real? What was driven by money or stereotypes, or constructed by religion? . . . Going from music from a culture totally different from my heritage, started to send me down this path, that and Bob Marley.

While we still currently remain in the church we navigate our beliefs and questions through talanoa faikava, which reveal a more complicated picture to Mormonism and complex Indigenous identity.

## 6.7. Conclusion

Moana 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka (2017) is a spoken word artist, creative writer, and community advocate and scholar. Her writing on Tongan Mormons best reflects the essence of what is argued and shared in this chapter so I conclude with her poetry:

Before mainstream Mormonism started noticing young white millennials were no longer in the pews, we were already playing in the streets. We were brought here but not wanted here. Our numbers reflected in the semi-annual reporting, our quarters and dimes counted towards the building of Zion, our names recorded in the book of Heaven, but our presence void. Sione had already been absent from the sacrament lines for kava sessions; Mele had already skipped Young Women's for friends of other

faiths....To be young, Mormon, and Tongan means our faith has been separate and complicated....For decades now, we have been praying West of the Temple in the shadows; relying on the one true God to liberate us from our poverty...Hip hop and reggae moves me to reverence, To appreciate the divine. Jesus is found in all places; In kava circles, In my aunt's' loud laughter, In Amanaki's prison cell, In my daughter's small, chubby hands, Jesus is her. To be young, Mormon, and Tongan means to live on the margins of Mormondom; Maybe it is because we still believe in the gods of our foremothers; or maybe it's because we have forsaken them. (pp. 5-6)

Moana Mormon kava spaces revealed hymns that have the power to heal and subversively protest at the same time. Stigmas are confronted and mindfully considered by kava communities who have responded to some by shifting kava practices to include religious responsibilities. Diasporic Tongan and Moana Mormon's unpack complex identities through faikava and the adoption of Hip Hop and reggae to discover and perform intricate identities.

## Chapter 7. Transported Place in Diaspora Temporalities

### 7.1. Introduction

Now we're stuck here singing soul music from diaspora. Your hosts can't relate to your sense of dislocation. The type of pain that cannot be contained in a dissertation... Considered as a compliment if our beauty is fetishized. Your history is power, that's the reason some are petrified ... a man with amnesia trying to find his past... Don't you wonder what became of the children of diaspora? Those that innovated in their ways and their vernacular.

- Lowkey ft. Mai Khalil (Children of Diaspora)



Figure 24. Sāmoan 'Ava Bowl by Tali Alisa Hafoka.

Painted by Tali Alisa Hafoka. This painting depicts common vessels for transporting land/kava in time and space. (Photograph was taken and the painting commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

This chapter begins with addressing the question of Indigeneity outside of one's ancestral homelands, which is necessary to contextualize the importance of kava for Tongans in diaspora. Each of the locations for this research is described and diaspora is defined as expressed in music lyrics and experiences told in faikava. I argue that diaspora is an existential phenomenon beyond spatial distance, which includes temporal displacement. This means that diaspora phenomena take place in homelands as well as overseas because it includes a scattering from a home-time of ancestral autonomy and living pasts. This chapter explores how western modernity produces diaspora and maintains it through coloniality. Further, the dichotomy of both romanticized and demonized Indigeneity is better understood

though diasporic time. The process of shifting to an Indigenous temporality and cosmology potentiates a reconceptualization of place, land, and the body. This chapter concludes with stories of healing fragmented Indigenes by collapsing time in kava space, with the medicine of land.

## **7.2. Is Indigeneity possible in a new place?**

Diasporic Indigenes raise important questions about identity as they hold onto Indigeneity in places that they are not Indigenous to. The relationship is complicated because diaspora moves through channels established by colonial invasions and occupation. Yet, Indigeneity is rooted in the pace or rhythm of place and must align with new space and time, regardless of how one came to arrive there. Indigenous peoples can be settlers too however, when they knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate and uphold coloniality (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Calderón, 2009; 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). I would argue though, that Indigeneity is no longer operating when this occurs, but rather a cosmology entrenched with the logics of the systems of power in western modernity (Mignolo, 2009; 2012). This is however not to say that Indigenous peoples have the societal or economic power in colonial systems to be able to choose how they operate in settler systems of governance. My mother taught me while growing up in Utah that the Indigenous peoples there, although they are relatives to us Mayans, nonetheless have authority in that place through their cultural knowledge. Their language and culture is “OF” the place and therefore elder to our language and culture in that particular space. She taught me that elder knowledge (place based ancestral wisdom) is better suited as the foundation for the cosmology of governance in any place, from which other cosmologies can then come into relation.

The dichotomy between western and Indigenous as I define in chapter two is not singularly about knowledge but is a problem of knowers and knowing (Mignolo, 2007; 2009). I express the conflict of the imagined dichotomy of split consciousnesses between western

and Indigenous collisions through metaphorical and gendered *italic* expressions, which symbolically represent the hegemony of coloniality in the following passage and throughout this thesis: western *man* assumes the power, history, and hegemony of universal knowledge and ‘standards,’ mythologized in *his* own ideology, reinforced in *his* categorised and divided world (Willinsky, 1998). All western knowledge is based on Indigenous knowledge, yet this is ignored in the imaginary binary between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Minh-Ha, 1989; 2005; 2006). Western modernity created itself as it transformed its relationship to the past, rebuking the spiritual perceptual reality of the ancestors, which *he* killed to proclaim *himself* god (Trudell in Rae & Katz, 2005; Gilardin, 2001). A process of erasure, using *his* witchcraft to make them disappear in the invention of progressive ‘advancement’ out of ‘primitiveness’. Modern *man* sought/seek(s) to destroy the reminder of *himself* and the ancestors *he* turned his back on. When *he* faces those who refuse(d) to do so (the Indigenous), *his* godlike ‘master’ status is put into question, and *his* insecurity and fear leads *him* to violence. Even *his* attempts to be like *her* is a process of violent consumption, a new-age performance that digests *her* in order to avoid *his* own reflection. The harm modern *man* causes is derived from the harm *he* did to *himself* first, which *he* continues to evade. Western modernity departed from ecological, communal, and relational cosmologies, by isolating, centralising, and assuming individualistic power. The past that is present is unavoidable as it is continually made visible through Indigeneity, such as in the expression of music. This point is articulated by the character Bushmaster in the T.V. series Luke Cage. Set to the backdrop of Christone “Kingfish” Ingram powerfully playing and singing the blues, Bushmaster reminds us in his Jamaican patua voice that we must face *ourselves*, saying: “You hear that? (What?) The talkin’ blues. Those are the ancestors you hear, they remember. You can’t erase the past. You can’t burn it away. That’s the spell on you. That’s magic. Science in its purest form” (Coker, 2018).

The process of maintaining western power is based in *self*-interest that perpetuates this system and cosmology to suit *his* interests in the paradigms of western modernity (Calderón, 2016; Mills, 2007). This causes a racialized hierarchy and temporal displacement, resulting in a dehistoricizing of Indigenous Natives, which simultaneously makes false ‘master’s’ and ‘gods’ of modern *man* (Brace, 2005; Fanon, 1963; 2008; Kendi, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2008). The politics of Indigeneity is thus in making visible the hidden histories and knowledge erased by modernity (Low, 2016; Smith, 2012). As Tongans move closer to the symbolic “centre” of modernity (e.g., settler colonial nation metropolises), the more visible the Indigenous politics of kava becomes. Kava represents autonomous and relevant Indigenous knowledge production that reveals truths and brings it to the surface. Controversy arises as these are truths modernity hopes to keep concealed, such as alternatives to western capitalism, religion, and coloniality. Indigenous knowledge and identity is an ever expanding and dynamic system that respects ancestors and elders. This means having starting points in the depths of time where inherited ancestral wisdom comes from. This depth far outweighs our knowledge based on our lived experience alone, let alone the starting points of modern western paradigms that begin with the appearance, arrival, or creation of the ‘noble,’ ‘civilised,’ ‘racially superior,’ ‘straight,’ ‘Christian,’ ‘white *man*’ (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Mills, 2007; Rifkin, 2012; 2017).

Tracey McIntosh (2001) explained that there were tensions between Pasifika communities and Māori because Pasifika people did not arrive to *hongi* (*greet/exchange breath/touching noses*) with Māori. Tongans arrived in the U.S. or New Zealand (NZ), meaning they did not arrive to Turtle Island or Aotearoa initially. They arrived via colonial channels of complicated relationships with church, settler nation-state, and globalizing political economy where they would compete for scraps with relatives and similar communities. McIntosh shares in an interview that out of this context tensions emerged in NZ

because they did recognise each other, “Knowing that we’re related but being, in many cases, uninterested in that relationship” (Husband, 2016). Relationships between Moana relatives eventually improved in Aotearoa, strengthened by reconnections, and intermarriages. A lesson for Indigenous diaspora peoples everywhere that as we respect the elder authority of our local Indigenous relations where we reside, and their conditions improve, so will ours, through each other, subverting the current state. Turning to my own experiences and inherited knowledge, my mother made me ask myself, how would I like different people to relate to the places we have been displaced from? While living in Aotearoa I have become familiar with Mātauranga Māori (Māori wisdom/knowledge), following the lessons of my mother to respect place-based knowledge and people. In Aotearoa I have learned about manaakitanga, to be a good host, to do and share your mana with your guests. I have also learned about being manuhiri, a good visitor, a harmonious new resident who is mindful of their hosts (Mutu, 2010). This has given me more words to express what my mother had taught me growing up. Have we come into relation with local Indigenous peoples where we now reside? In exploring what it means to be Indigenous yet in diaspora, I also ask, do we respect the Indigenous elder knowledge, culture, and language of place? This is how I identify Indigeneity in new shared spaces.

### **7.3. Contextualizing Place**

In order to understand Indigenous identities across nation-states between connected groups that share an ancestral homeland, like Tongans, identity must be contextualized to different diaspora settings (Teaiwa, 2006; Flanagan, 1998; Guilbalt, 1993; 1996; Lee, 2009). From a sea of islands into urban diasporic seas, new communities are created, rooted in a sense of being Tongan. Moana peoples offer an important view for Indigenous peoples elsewhere with an identity rooted in mobility, navigation, and voyaging that sends out many branches (Kirch, 2017; Macpherson, 2001). The vessels that carry kava today whether they be

traditional kava bowls (kumete/tāno‘a/tanoa) or plastic basins/buckets, like the canoes of old that were used to originally settle the islands, these vessels carry Tongan ways of being and knowing wherever they go. My research sites are distinct places with differing and unique histories that are 21<sup>st</sup> century vessels for Fai Kava culture. The Kingdom of Tonga has seen its inhabitants migrate to other countries with the support of kinship ties and networks.

Emigrating for reasons that include seeking increased access to western education, religious activities, economic and employment opportunities (Hafoka & ‘Ulu‘ave & Hafoka, 2014; Pyke & Francis, 2012). Having my own diaspora/transnational story, born in the U.S. with parents from Iximulew (Guatemala), I found myself growing up in close proximity with Moana peoples. My home state of Utah is now home to 1 in 4 of the Tongans living in the U.S. This shared experience of diaspora is how I was introduced to kava. I now have intermarriage ties through some of my extended family with Tongans and Moana people as well. I also have overlapping lived experiences through church, sport, and residence in diaspora.

The Tongan population in Aotearoa now constitutes the third largest Pacific ethnic group in New Zealand as of 2013, where over one quarter of all Tongans globally reside (New Zealand Census, 2013; Te Ara, n.d.). Australia had 18,420 people who were born in Tonga or identified as Tongan in the 2006 census, but this figure is considered to be an underestimation of the actual size (Pyke & Francis, 2012). Since the 1950’s Tongans have increasingly moved between Tonga, Australia (AUS), NZ, and the U.S. with 40% going to NZ, 40% to the U.S., and 20% to Australia at that time (Pyke & Francis, 2012). Additionally, Tongans and Moana people are also finding global visibility (particularly men) and migration opportunities through global sport and other media (Diaz, 2002; 2011; Uperesa, 2014; Uperesa & Mountjoy, 2014; Vainuku & Cohn, 2015). Morton (1998) argues that diasporic Tongans create their own identities through these new experiences. Despite being in different

places, diverse expressions materialize out of a connected sense of Tongan-ness.

The “new” nations (NZ, U.S., Australia) Tongans find themselves in have similar political and colonial histories of anti-blackness, dehumanizing visible “otherness” of the nation’s norm (whiteness), and a displacement of Indigenous peoples from governance and ancestral lands. AUS and the U.S. are similar in that they both have a smaller percentage of Indigenous population and overall larger population sizes as nations (Peled, 2017; Census.gov, 2014). NZ although similarly a settler colonial nation, is more akin to Canada, in having a higher Indigenous population percentage and smaller overall national populations (New Zealand Census, 2017; Canada Census, 2011). As Tongans arrive and are transformed into migrants into these nations they are subject to settler rules and governance rather than to Indigenous authority, complicating their subjectivities and Indigenous identities (Calderón, 2016). Similar to other brown/black Indigenes who are racialized and made ‘minorities’ in these settler-colonial nations, Tongans are transformed and experience the consequences of mainstream ‘racial’ visibility, while their Indigeneity is simultaneously subject to erasure (Byrd, 2011; Hamilton, 2016; Kempf, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Smith, 2012).

#### **7.4. Diaspora as Temporal Displacement**

I felt as though someone knocked me unconscious when I came into the world. It’s been a lifetime trying to come to. I used to get this idea that I was in the wrong time and the wrong place . . . I used to see this camp on the plains, amongst the trees, by a river, it was a tribal camp, and I felt I was part of it. It’s like these thoughts [dreams] were memories, every part was familiar, and I was a part of the whole thing.

-John Trudell (Trudell Documentary)

I remember having similar experiences, imagining the past and future in the places I have stood, walked throughout, climbed, or swam in. I remember dreaming, while awake and while asleep, seeing different ‘ethnoscapes’ in place, of times past and future. I have referred to myself jokingly as an urban hunter-gatherer, being an Indigenous person traversing the concrete jungles’ ideological realms of western modernity. I guess I still do see myself this

way but have turned toward the path of chasing the shadows, dreams, and imaginations I see glimmering behind the fog of modernity in place. Hunting down ancestral reverberations, I now see myself as one who hunts echoes and gathers stories. In expanding the concept of diaspora to include time, it can be understood as an existential phenomenon of temporal and spatial displacement (Tecun, 2017; Hernandez, 2017). This dislocation in time yields feelings of being ‘lost’, of which kava gatherings offers remedies in the identity formation it facilitates and enforces. Tapsell (2002) explains that place roots Indigenous people in their identities, giving examples of how urban Māori have developed pan-Māori marae to sustain their identities in new circumstances and spaces. Kava for Tongans operates similarly especially in diaspora as it becomes more pan-Moana and multi-ethnic.

Spickard, Rondilla, and Hippolite Wright (2002) argued that the different frameworks to understand diaspora although useful cannot by themselves describe Pacific diaspora. Assimilation is one of the models that emphasizes the role that acculturation to the dominant culture plays in new nations of residence. Diaspora and transnationalism is another which is negotiated as to its appropriateness to explain the experience and reality of Moana peoples ‘abroad’ (Flanagan, 1998; Gershon, 2007; Guilbalt, 1996; Lee, 2003; Morton, 1998; Small, 2011). I like how transnationalism implies a constant movement and plurality of nationalism, but I don’t think it captures the existential phenomenon of being displaced, scattered, separate, or distant in time and space in order to push beyond modern nationalisms. I prefer diaspora for this reason but see usefulness in both terms. The other model used to understand diaspora is a pan-ethnic emergence in diaspora settings where collective identity focuses on larger meta-narratives of identity across regions, oceans, continents (Spickard et al., 2002). Spickard et al. argue that each of these models gives insights to the diverse range of experiences and circumstances in Pacific diaspora. It is also important to consider the push and pull of modern movement, and the catalysts for this mobility and scattering. Migration

alludes to a conscious or planned movement, whereas displacement alludes to a forced or externally catalysed movement.

#### 7.4.1 Why Migrate to Diaspora?

Hafoka et al. (2014) explain that Tongans ‘migrate’ or arrive “primarily for educational and employment opportunities”, yet they experience a double-bind in diaspora as they struggle to find balance between competing dual identities and barriers to accessing opportunities (p. 127). Kehau Folau (2015), a Tongan/Lapis friend and intellectual shared that her family emphasized formal western schooling in her upbringing because that is what brought them to their new homes. Kehau explains she experienced an intentional privileging of the English language and Anglo-American systems, in order to survive and try to succeed in them. The narratives of seeking out educational and employment opportunities in “promised lands” becomes complicated when facing diasporic realities such as poverty, inadequate access to healthcare, education, employment, and the psychological stress from acculturation and assimilation (Hafoka et al., 2014). This reality is a common experience, although with unique nuances to place, in the diaspora locations I attended faikava (U.S., NZ, and AUS).

I explained in chapter two that although violence is not exclusive to modernity, modern life has developed new forms of mass produced violence, and dehumanization, which is unprecedented in our history as a species. Colonial violence and imperialism has thus intensified and perpetuated domestic and sexual violence, suicide, and drug abuse in the island Kingdom and among Tongans in AUS, NZ, and the U.S., as it has for other racialized black and brown communities (Hafoka et al, 2014; Moala, 2016; Morton, 1996; Lee, 2003; 2017; Tapu Podcast, n.d.; Tiatia-Seath, Lay-Yee, & Von Randow, 2017; Radio New Zealand Pacific, 2017; Radio & T.V. Tonga, 2016; 2017; Small, 2011). Tempo-spatial displacement and diaspora struggles are thus experienced at ‘home’ as well as abroad.

Additionally, Tongans face the impending consequences and vulnerability to rising sea levels mostly out of their control and largely intensified by the actions of modern nation-states elsewhere (Havea, 2014). Tongans now face the imminent possibility of becoming displaced due to climate catastrophe. Some Tongans may soon find themselves in similar tragedies as some of their Moana relatives who are already climate refugees (Bayer & Salzman, 2008; Goodall, 2010; Havea, 2014; T. Teaiwa, 2016; Treanor & Watson, 2015). For Tongans today, living in the kingdom or in diaspora, the violence of coloniality becomes more and more apparent. The depression and struggles I have mentioned are planted into a modern psyche of isolation on small islands, which has replaced an Indigenous connectivity to an open expansive sea of islands (Hau'ofa 1993). Land locked mentalities are akin to the Indigenous removal from land in settler colonial nations. When you can't swim or voyage in a sea of islands than you are confined and isolated to a 'small and remote' island of mind and body.

#### 7.4.2 Dehistoricized in Diaspora

Diaspora has often been focused on ethnic groups of people scattered from a homeland, yet the existential realities of diaspora I am identifying include people in their homeland. When we broaden the concept of diaspora to include temporal displacement we can see how this existential phenomenon is present even when you are in your physical ancestral geographic home. For example, in the independent monarchy of Tonga the majority of people have access to land and sea and utilise agriculture and fishing for subsistence (Bell & Hernandez, 2017). However, this autonomous livelihood is devalued by the logics of modernity. I heard these sentiments expressed in Tonga through several comments that included, "before Tonga was civilized" or "Tongans were savages, before we had Christianity". These statements troubled me because it was familiar, I had heard these things expressed in my own extended family and societal upbringing. Diaspora puts Indigeneity out

of place, by imposing modern temporalities. It is an experience of being made a foreigner in your own lands, in your own body and mind. Although I am focusing on groups who are spatially distant from a homeland, diaspora as a concept and experience includes distance from a home-time. This is an intensifying issue in modern nation-states, with the growing phenomena of urban Indigenes (Decker, 2011; Smith, 2012; Tapsell, 2002; Williams, 2013). I myself come from four generations of urban Indigenous experience, my paternal great grandfather left his highland Maya community to seek economic opportunities and safety in the capital city, and I was eventually raised in the urban centres of the Mountain West further up the back of Turtle Island.

As I argued in chapter two of this thesis, the paradigm of modernity creates a ‘white’ future for brown and black racialized bodies, if there is to be one (Fanon, 2008; Rifkin, 2017; Whyte, 2016). Our Indigeneity is made invisible so that ‘we’ can be entered into the racialized teleological system of linear time and ‘progress’, towards becoming ‘civilised’, a process of ‘straightening’ out the native (Rifkin, 2012). The invisible Indigenous person is thus made visible in a racialized and dehistoricized body that is always behind in modern time.

‘Inoke Hafoka (2015) explained this temporal displacement during a faikava, sharing some of his observations from lived experience:

....what gave our parents that idea of leaving their home to go to another place? They don’t understand the language, they’re going to be coming in as immigrants to work the jobs that nobody else wants to work. Hoping that they’re sacrificing for their descendants [so] they’ll be able to enjoy the mainstream [modern] life ... they’re trying to figure out why is my kid not receiving the same advantages or the same lifestyle that was promised to live...while living in this land? It’s funny ‘cause we go through this stage of working 9-5 all the way to retirement, and then we retire, what is the ideal lifestyle for someone that’s retired? Oh, let me go to the beach, relax, no cell phone, no outside communication, and I was like, isn’t that what we were living before? My question now is, what is considered a better life? Weren’t you already living a better life in Tonga? You had sustainable living, by living off the land, you got a nice beach, you got the ocean right there, not having to have a boss, you’re your own boss.

Hafoka's explanation of diasporic time was echoed in a popular song called *Lost in Paradise*.

This song is written by Common Kings (2016), a pan-Moana popular reggae group based out of California. They sing in a pop Pacific upbeat reggae song:

...I need a break from the days that are tripping at my soul... Take me to paradise ...  
Palm tree sway your Alabama stress away... Find me in paradise ... Left my phone  
plugged in at home... I'll be staying poolside. Sipping on that good life. Slurping on  
the good vibes. In the summer time. If you need me I'll be gone. Lost in paradise.

'Inoke Hafoka pointed out the contradictions for Moana peoples to imagine a future in modernity, because it is one they already had. Common Kings talk about paradise as being a place away from stress in modern life. The good life is poolside, sipping good life and feeling good vibes, in the summer time. Life in the Moana tropics is seaside, where it's always summer time, and that's where they want to get lost. Considering Hafoka's observations, the irony here is that maybe Common Kings are reflecting being lost from an already present existence or past existence, as they speak in the confines of modernity and diaspora? I do not know if Common Kings intentionally would interpret their song in this way, however I suggest that the diaspora subconscious which 'Inoke Hafoka described has come through in their song.

Diaspora is about displacement, resulting in a state of mind that is scattered and dislocated both physically and psychologically. The creation of rural and urban, where you find yourself in a blurry in-between, wondering if you are "in the middle of nowhere" when you are in actuality "somewhere". Diaspora is an ontological confusion lost in the mist of colliding temporalities in contested spaces. Diaspora can be a state of mind in homeland as much as a spatial geographic displacement because it is about distance from a home-time. Temporal displacement is observed when you are still in place, but no longer there in the same way because the paradigm has shifted, being occupied by western modernity. I see it like riding a wave of time in shared space, where one is sucked in an undertow and slammed into the sand, caught up in a cycle of colliding forces, energies, and materiality's. All the

while these multiple realities (e.g., modernity, Indigeneity) are happening at the same time in the same ocean/beach.

### 7.4.3 Diaspora Consequences: Binary Responses of Modern Dichotomies

Diaspora subjectivities are split and fragmented into binaries and dichotomies, which sparks either acceptance or rejection to western modernity. This is expressed by demonizing and forgetting one's ancestral past by rejecting Indigenous relevancy. This is also done by ignoring the shadows of our ancestral essence, resulting in feeling 'stuck' as 'in-between people' that cannot see beyond the borderlands of colliding identities (Anzaldúa, 1987; Black et al., 2010; Takinitbakk, 2008). The other side of this binary response is also expressed in unquestioningly romanticizing one's past. This is shown by using romanticized narratives as resistance, arguing Indigeneity is just as 'civilized'. This is an attempt to prove Indigenous systems are just as rigorous and meaningful as western ones, measuring and comparing Indigeneity to the 'masters' standards. These responses to diaspora continually centre on the modern imperial *man* in either accepting or rejecting *him* as 'master', which only serves the master in *his* dialectic with the slave, because *he* remains in the centre and in power (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). This makes it challenging to imagine outside of this cage of thought, whether one is on the land they emerged from or not. In this section I explore the binary response of both devaluing and romanticizing Indigeneity. I argue there are two differing methods of romanticizing as well, one is a strategic and intentional use and the other a mirrored reaction to the modern dehumanization of Indigeneity. Through this exploration the potential rupture of this paradigm emerges.

There are many of my Tongan friends who I believe would say they have adopted the South African reggae artist Lucky Dube into Tongan-ness. In every place I have mixed kava with Tongans, whether throughout the Kingdom, or in the gatherings in diaspora, Lucky Dube's music is present. I have observed this not only with my peers and younger generation,

but also with the older generations as well. On one evening while drinking kava in Utah, Lucky Dube's song *The Other Side* began to play, which expresses a dichotomy of modern diaspora:

His name is Themba. He lives in Soweto. Every morning he goes to the airport to watch the planes come and go. He has changed his African name to a western one, 'cause he doesn't know how it hurts to have a name you can't be proud of. He hopes that one day, one of these birds of the sky can take him away, to a very very far land. Running away from the very roots, that so many black people in the world, are wanting to come back to. A place they call home. They wish they were home. They wish they were in Africa... The grass is greener on the other side, 'til you get there and see it for yourself (Lucky Dube, track 2, 2003).

Here Lucky Dube is talking about the temporal displacement of an Indigenous person in their ancestral homeland. Themba rejects his Indigenous identity wanting a western one, a 'civilised' and modern one, juxtaposed with those in diaspora who long for the knowledge of homeland roots. Ata Siulua (2016) explained that as a diasporic Tongan growing up in Utah he has observed the normalized practise of anglicizing Tongan names or adopting western nicknames such as is mentioned in Lucky Dube's song. Lisiate Wolfgramm (2015), an educator and public intellectual in Utah's Tongan community pointed out to me, "a Tongan American, [or] an American Tongan, even that's a different thing, just by rearranging those two words." Wolfgramm (2015) adds that many people unfortunately learn within their own communities to have "a negative perception of their cultural identity... I think that's always gonna' be a challenge for communities in the diaspora."

One of the Tongan brothers from the hood I grew up in having been incarcerated for a time, shared during a kava session how mental escapes help survive the isolation of the pen (prison). Lucky Dube (track 2, 2003) also sings about this in *The Other Side*:

His name is Jackson. He lives in Jamaica. Every morning he comes down to the docks to watch the ships come and go. He's been here too long. Mental slavery has not touched him one bit. He still knows his history, he knows where he comes from. That is why he believes the ocean can give him some answers. About the very very far home, that he's never been to. All his life he says, I wish I was home...

Incarceration is both a material reality and a mentality, the Tongan brother who had been incarcerated shared that nostalgic feelings come from imagining a romanticized past of freedom. During a faikava he explained how he would escape to a time in ancient Tonga where he was not subject to the dehumanizing control of his life and body while he was locked up. He imagined fighting battles, living free, and sailing across the imagined borders of today without fear of deportation. In doing so he rejected the present dystopian reality of prison life and the material struggles that led him there. He would use this romanticized memory to free himself from the cell walls that confined him, drawing from an autonomous memory of the past, escaping the body with the mind. He was strategically using a romanticized imaginary of Indigeneity to counter the deficit views of ‘master’ narratives. In discussing this particular strategy with ‘Inoke Hafoka (2015) we ended up feeling like it’s another double-bind because we are left to romanticize, and essentialise. There is no other choice in the dichotomy of western modernity if you wish to have an empowered vision of yourself. The alternative is to accept tenants of modernity, to distance oneself from Indigeneity and reject it as ‘primitive, backwards, irrelevant, and heathen’. This Indigenous romanticism however is still a mindfully strategic one like Indigenous essentialism, which differs from western romanticizations or essentialisms of Indigeneity (Smith, 2012). This is not the same thing, when Indigenous peoples do it in this manner it is a tool for survival and is derived from *The Other Side* of modernity. When done in this manner it is using imaginative capacity to repel oppressive power relations, a response to the current cultural hegemony and dominant systems of power, imagining beyond these struggles.

There is another romanticized narrative that exists as well, which reinforces a frozen past measure of authenticity in a boxed imagination that does not recognize dynamic and evolving cultural realities. This reaction mirrors the deficit view that oppresses Indigeneity. This is a fixed romanticism that views an unquestioned Indigeneity as an infallible solution

(Kaa, 2017). One of the problems with romanticized identities that are fixed in time is they cannot be engaged as being alive and complex. When this is the case, your ancestors are subject to a temporal totality where the stakes are much higher. This contributes to the development and expression of an isolated and rigid ethnocentrism. One example during my research was the refusal from men and even some women, to ever see any conflict with family/community defined problematic behaviours associated to Tongan men, culture, or kava. For example: when hyper-masculine violence was excused as a warrior tradition, or the exclusion of women in faikava seen as their individual choice rather than an uncomfortable environment created by men in some kava circles. This perspective is caught up in the dichotomy and binary of being human or not, primitive or civilised, leading one to have to romanticize and establish an ethnocentric position. In this paradigm ancestors have disappeared or are invisible, which must be arbitrarily defended in order to assure one is also human like the 'white *man*', equal to *his* standard (Juárez & Pierce, 2017). Hamill (2012) argues that "at no time since the beginning of the colonial conquest ... has the struggle over identity seemed greater than with today's younger generation" (pp. 138-139). He concludes that "less informed and more rigid, young Native people overall have adopted a narrower view than their forebears" (p. 138). Hamill hopes that making hidden Indigenous histories known may serve younger generations to develop a less rigid approach, broadening alternative possibilities to casual concepts of Indigeneity.

The results of modernity have yielded mass produced violence, especially for people in a spatial and temporal state of diaspora (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). Kavapalu (1991) explained that before modernization, although Tongans did have physical punishment applied widely to adults, "it cannot be assumed that it was a feature of child socialisation" (p. 208). She also points to the missionary arm of modernity that brought corporal punishment and the idea that it was necessary and proper for children, urging "parents to be vigilant in correcting

the wilful and unruly nature of children” (p. 209). Early missionaries in Tonga would advise parents to “beat them again until they ceased crying” (p. 210). Some of the talanoa I have had during this research included some people sharing memories with me that their older generations would speak about a time before children were punished physically. Violence in diasporic families reflects the modern colonial violence that created temporal and spatial displacement and dislocation. Punishment is a mechanism of control, which is enforced by the institutions that do modernity’s bidding (e.g., church, state, school) in order to ‘straighten’ out Indigeneity (Foucault, 1995; Kavapalu, 1991; Lee, 2017; Rifkin, 2012).

During some faikava a provocative song circulating online became a topic of discussion, which explores the themes of diaspora discussed so far. Moana hip hop artist Leyo Lazer summarizes many of the points on diaspora discussed so far through an intergenerational monologue in his song *Love Me* (2016), where he performs an intense broken English frustrated father with an overseas born equally frustrated son:

Father: We fly across the sea to a better destination, give your brothers and sisters a better education. But you come over here and you do something else, why? ... why you fight, why you not listen to the teachers? Why you not come to church to help sing his praise, only bring disgrace, make me shame to show my face, that’s why I hit you, it’s the only way you listen. . . I told you, only make a friends with the white kids, the kids from the islands is only make the violence...

Chorus: ...love me love me, say you, love me love me . . . let me fly away with you.

Son: I know what you went through, and I know where you came from, ‘cause all my life you’ve been singing that same song. I don’t want to sit in the can or run with a gang... But you just don’t understand ... I was looking for fam, they looked at me as a man, you and mom don’t agree, but that is what I am, but you take that away callin’ me all types of names, leave me scars on my legs, and up and down my face, then when I’m at school how can I not feel out of place ... not everyone is built for a life of submission, not everyone can persevere through this sort of adversity then make it to a uni, or some form of tertiary, that requires desire and a healthy self-esteem, picking apart my character isn’t helping me. And church, man, that’s the last place I wanna be, with a bunch of hypocrites in glass houses judging me...

Through critique and dismantling of diaspora conditions and states of mind, the potential emerges to shift beyond Indigenous apologetics.

Faikava songs that are played and discussed maintain and disperse knowledge, which allows for these negotiations to happen through critical dialogue in settings that mediate difficulties through humour and close relationships. This opens up new possibilities towards a more grounded sense of complicated histories and empowered Indigeneity. Esera (2014) raps in his composition *'Blood Past, Mind Present'*, "I forgot, we forgot, so we must remember that it's our turn to navigate, determine our own fate before it's too late." Albert Wendt reminds us in the documentary film *The New Oceania*, "No culture is perfect or even sacred today. Individual dissent is essential to the healthy survival, development, and sanity of any nation - without it our cultures will drown in self-love" (Horrocks, 2005). By suspending time in faikava and recalling ancestral memory through song and story, Indigeneity becomes more deeply rooted and can be critically reimagined.

### **7.5. The Return of Maui: Slowing Down the Sun (Time)**

The great ancestor demi-god of many people across the Moana previously captured/slowed the sun, a lesson which guides Indigenous rituals of slowing down time (Ka'ili, 2017a). Hafoka (2015) explains that people today are wrestling with the modern sun in their 9-5 workday schedules and the many obligations that consume them outside of work/school hours. This means that by the time you get to sleep "there's not a time that you get to think." Hafoka and I conversed about our experiences pursuing tertiary degrees that the further along we go, the more time we have to dedicate to think about ideas, histories, and knowledge. In essence the loans that cripple me to pursue a doctoral degree has been about borrowing time. Setting apart time to focus and respond to the questions about urban Indigeneity in diaspora central to this thesis. Hafoka (2015) explains:

you almost have to get to a level in school to think of these things [because you have time to], but other places are in jail or prison, you got so much time to read books and think... [There are] some mad critical thinkers that are in prison but once they come out...they've been socialised that they're a bad person [feeling they] can't possibly know how to help society.

School and prison affords time to think, but under the ‘masters’ watchful eye. Although they are similar structures yet vastly different in levels of control, one potentially gives you societal privilege to be recognized for having dedicated time to think, research, organize, and present your thoughts, while the other does not. The lessons of Maui include that his source of mana and knowledge came from women, and that he utilised it to be a liberator who contested oppressive hierarchies of his day (Ka‘ili, 2016a; 2016b). He did this in order to make knowledge and power, such as that of fire, available for the people. In order to be like Maui we must look to the time and space constructions outside of the dominant systems of modern school, society, and prison as they currently stand. We liberate people and time, by extending or slowing it down. This is done by privileging and centering relationships and Indigenous traditions, which shift us into an Indigenous cosmology and temporality, a temporal sovereignty (Ka‘ili, 2017a; Mignolo, 2009; Rifkin, 2017). This is possible through a restoration of Indigenous time in kava space, thus Hafoka (2015) concludes, “It’s interesting because I feel like some of the times that people do get to think is if you’re in a space like this [faikava].”

## **7.6. Transporting Land and Sea: Shifting Temporalities on the Kava Canoe**

Recognized the raising of my consciousness when I migrated to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. Opened up my mind to the idea of strength and unity from my Sāmoan family. Imagine if we ever come together, and we trace our roots all the way back to the Māori.

– Fiji (Indigenous Life)

Kava events collapse time in space even if just momentarily by extending time and nurturing ancestral relationships (Ka‘ili, 2017a; Tecun, 2017). This allows for a reconnection of different realities, relationships, and possible futures and past understandings. Ancestors become alive again and can be critically engaged with as romanticized fear of a modern temporal totality dissolves. An Indigenous temporality yields an Indigenous reality, one that

see's all time in front of you in the ancestral plane of existence, where we all have a connection, but must find and identify it (Coogler, 2018). Ka'ili (2017a) shifts the cosmology of Indigeneity out of modernity by revealing Moana identities are mobile throughout time and space, marking time, *tā*, in *vā* (point in space) to link up ancestral connections and make harmonious relationships in place (Mignolo, 2009; Mills, 2016). This is a way to *hohoko* (make a genealogical connection) in order to connect by retracing one's voyage(s) that positions you in the present. This is also a way to generate ancestral power and become *mana*-full in the present (Tomlinson & Tengan, 2016; K. Teaiwa, 2016). Mills (2016) explained that *mana* was an embodied metaphysical efficacy in pre-Christian Tonga, which I add 'IS' still a metaphysical efficacy, derived from the ancestors and still called upon today when time is remade.

The time collapse experienced in kava circles allows us to see the *vā*, the space that connects us, that holds our relationships. A process of animating moments through relating or making relations by connecting space through *faiva* (*performance/make relation*). This is happening on at least a subconscious level through global Indigenous music connections such as Hip Hop and reggae that draw upon Indigenous Africa, connecting oratory traditions. I believe this is what Stuart Hall means when he says, "the aesthetics of modern popular music is the aesthetics of the hybrid, the aesthetic of the crossover, the aesthetics of the diaspora, the aesthetics of creolization" (In Frith, 2017, p. 159). I see this phenomenon as an inter-Indigenous *hongī*. *Hongī* is commonly known as a Māori greeting of touching noses and exchanging breaths, although it was also common in Tonga and throughout the Moana. In this case it is an exchange of breath between Indigeneities, where different roots are exchanged in a metaphorical global *hongī*, yielding a "...blurring of musical borders and histories" transforming music from "a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself" (Frith, 2017, p. 160). These links when made appropriately and effectively unite and hold us. Time is rendered *noa*

(*neutralized*), calibrated to suspend time so we can vibe together, by drinking kava and hear the positive vibrations of song and story around the kava bowl. The question of connecting in this state becomes one of how far back do we go? Regional? Continental? Oceanic? Pangeaic (Pangea)? Cosmic (star dust deep)? In K'iche' (Mayan) we have a greeting, tzk'at, which expresses this type of connection, similar to the Tongan concept of tauhi vā, it roughly means I am you and you are me, it is an acknowledgment of connection not only between people, but with plants, birds, and all our relations.



Figure 25. Pan-Moana Kumete/Tāno'a/Tanoa.

Tapu Takiari's Kava bowl, currently residing in Australia. This bowl was sculpted by Troy Wihongi with patterns from Tonga, Aotearoa, and Fiji. Photograph was taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

### 7.7. Kava Heals Temporal Displacement with the Medicine of Land

One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain.

- Bob Marley

When it hits you, you feel no pain. Just like a new song.

- Natural Roots (Kava Song)

Cattermole (2009) explained that in Fiji, “The people are the *lewe ni vanua* (the flesh / members of the land); the human manifestation of the physical environment. The land belongs to the people, and the people belong to the land” (p. 157). The combination of community, singing, the physically relaxing effects of kava, and the deep spiritual tie to the land facilitates a land-based healing of temporal and spatial dislocation through faikava. Time and space is

dissolved, and the state of consciousness of diaspora disappears even if only for the moments during this social ritual and ceremony, allowing for new homes, lands, and embodiments to ground you. Discovering that the land is you and you are the land, the potential to become whole emerges. Kava is medicine in this sense as land, but that does not mean it is a universal panacea for perceived solutions to “deviant colonized peoples” who inhabit multiple colonial subjectivities. Instead, faikava is a way to reconnect them to land, history, mother earth, and Indigenous morals of respect despite modern colonial barriers. Faikava groups and sessions are an urban Indigenous Moana response to Tupac Shakur’s (2002) theoretical conceptualization of Thugz Mansion (Guzman & Unzueta II, 2012). Shakur imagines it as:

A spot where we can kick it. A spot where we belong, that’s just for us...A place to spend my quiet nights, time to unwind. So much pressure in this life of mine...Ain’t no place I’d rather be. Children, dead homies, and family (disc 2, track 2).

Isidoro Guzman (2018) shared with me online that “Thugz Mansion is a political and spiritual project. Pac talking about finding—or building—spaces of autonomy & self-determination”. The president of the Ogden Kava Boys kalapu, Havili Reeves (2015), explains that “here we just want you to relax and have a good time and be yourself.” When Indigenous peoples and communities are able to practice autonomy, internal solutions to diaspora struggles are realized.

The band Natural Roots has a song that refers to their place of peace, where they mix their kava at the House of Roots. Here, ‘roots’ is both kava and reggae music, drawing from the Rastafarian influence on reggae which “enables individuals to situate themselves within a lineage, both recent, and ancient” (Daynes, 2016, p. 125). They make a place where they belong in time and space. In their song House of Roots, named after their kalapu, they explain that there’s many places they cannot go in ‘Babylon’ and there are “plenty a things they won’t let us do” (van der Beek, 2017). Babylon represents many oppressive systems and entities in Rasta inspired reggae music (King & Bays, 2002). The temporality and spatial displacements

in the paradigms of western modernity is a metonym for the Babylon metaphor. Natural Roots sings about refuge at the House of Roots through the mana of kava and music, singing, “come on mr. music been waitin’ all day (for you to set me free)...I and I go break down all the walls”.

Kava remedies modern temporalities by moving in and out and traversing beyond them. A Tongan mentor of mine shared: “I’ve always felt that kava is a transporter of sorts.” This idea expands from transporting land to transporting oneself through and within land. Silvia Solis (2017) calls us to invoke upon place, mothers, and land in order to “return to the places we call home” (p. 197). Teresia Teaiwa proclaimed that “we sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood” (In Hau‘ofa, 2008, p. 41). We are embodiments of land and sea, a realization possible when we neutralize time in us, and hold space, positioned in-between the ancestors and the descendants. Sione Vaka (2016) gives an example during a talanoa. Once they have reached a point deep into the night when the kava is in full effect, and all the stories have been told, the jokes have been laughed, and things begin to slow and quiet down, Vaka explains:

some of my cousins will stay late and when we know that kava has stabilised us together, we sort of look at each other and say ‘it’s time to go home’, which means...we’re just gonna go back to the music of our forefathers, our grandfathers... the lyrics, the tunes, everything just hits some point in your heart...takes you like there’s a heaven here on earth, when you hear that kind of music.

Going home takes on many meanings as a rootz way of thinking. This is an experience of transporting oneself metaphysically by singing songs and telling stories of the ancestors while drinking the land as they did, bringing the past into the present.

## 7.8. Conclusion

This chapter explored various diaspora contexts where many Tongans privilege the English language and Anglo-American or Pākeha (*NZ European*) systems in order to survive. I focused on groups spatially distant from a homeland, yet I demonstrated how diaspora is a

temporal displacement that also affects people at 'home', being distant from a home-time. Indigeneity is not fixed but fluid and evolving. Diaspora is an ontological conundrum blurred in the fog of temporal collisions in contested space that yields binary responses that either devalue or romanticize Indigeneity. Kava remedies diaspora struggles in modern time by collapsing time through transported land and rootz ways of thinking. Kava sessions in diaspora heal Indigeneity within modern western paradigms through the medicine of land, stories, community, roots music and roots drink.

## Chapter 8. Kava Genders

### 8.1. Fakatapu

Fakatapu atu kiate kimoutolu hono kotoa  
Tapu mo hou'eiki fefine mo ha'a fakafefine  
Tapu mo hou'eiki tangata mo ha'a fakatangata  
Tulou, Tulou, Tulou

Sacred are you all, all of you.  
Sanctified is the chiefliness of woman and the clans of all those in the manner of women.  
Sanctified is the chiefliness of man and the clans of all those in the manner of men.  
Excuse me, Excuse me, and Excuse me.

### 8.2. Introduction

This chapter examines contemporary kava traditions that reveal Tongan marital relations, brother-sister tapu, femininities, and masculinities. Tongan genders are reinforced and negotiated in contemporary faikava. This chapter begins with marital tensions around nuclear family stress when men faikava frequently, exploring music lyrics and community responses to this issue. Brother-sister tapu is also explored as a dynamic that continually surfaces in faikava settings. The tou'a fefine (*female kava server/preparer*) is a significant position in Tongan faikava although not always present in gatherings, which is a complex position of both degrading and elevated status. Feminist ideas have responded to kava practices and a growing number of women's groups have re-emerged after being suppressed after the introduction of Christianity. Kava sites are also important events for men to negotiate masculinities between community and societal pressures. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the erotic power associated with kava and the negotiations of co-ed kava groups and queer identities that are often noa to brother-sister tapu in faikava.

### 8.3. Marital and Familial Gender Relations

One of the biggest points of tension for kava use in diaspora is frequent attendance by some men who are in cohabitating partnerships, which strains nuclear family structures in paradigms of western modernity. Kalani (2014) who identifies as a biracial Tongan from Texas (U.S.) explains in a blog that frequent and prolonged kava participation by her former husband was a prominent issue in their marital tensions. Kalani wrote in her blog post:

It was bad when my husband would go faikava ...I worried constantly about him...But, it was almost worse when they would have their faikava at our home. On these occasions, all the men sat outside either in our garage or our yard, and I sat in my house alone (well...as the lone adult with 3 infants and a 7 year old...). Because Tongan culture is very strict about when and where men and women can be in mixed company...when they would faikava at our house, I felt like a prisoner in my own home...I felt forgotten.

Many women have expressed similar feelings to me, that kava practices in a diaspora context adds stress and burdens on women and children, although there are a variety of different perspectives from women. Visible marital tensions usually arise from nuclear family settings that situate motherhood as a 24/7 job exclusively for 'mom', with little to no help in co-parenting contributions from husbands or other family members. Women who I observed that had close kinship ties with their *kāinga* (*village/extended family*) that lived nearby, had less stress when it came to child rearing during spousal absences from faikava attendance. Some men expressed that the amount of hours they work is their family contribution and kava relieves their work stress so they can continue to support a large family. It is a complex issue with many factors including capitalist labour systems and western religious definitions of family.

Taufa (2014) explained from her research that Tongan women's perspectives on kava in Auckland, New Zealand, identified male partners or relatives who were heavy drinkers (frequent and all night) as problematic, and not kava itself. During my research I have talked with spouses of kava drinkers who said they preferred that their husband drank kava on the

weekend instead of alcohol because they come home calm. Some women said that they were ok with regular attendance if it was reasonable, which generally meant no more than once a week unless there was a life event (e.g., funeral). Some mothers would get concerned at the frequency of their sons (late teens – twenties) participation in faikava if it became a daily occurrence, although they preferred faikava to other activities (e.g., bars, clubs). When some kalapu utilise kava gatherings for regular fundraisers, some women have also expressed their concern for constant monetary donations made by their spouses. This becomes especially controversial if the fundraising is used to pay for the services of a tou‘a fefine, which I will discuss further later in this chapter. Although it is still not generally considered a common practice, there are a growing number of spouses who also drink kava with their husbands or are around when they do. I found this was especially the case among Mormons.

### 8.3.1 My Mali is still at the Fai Kava

The song *Rock Dis Way* was inspired by a true story of a Tongan man and his wife who struggled with his constant absence from home, due to his frequent attendance in kava sessions. The most popular version of this song was re-made by the original writer’s (Senituli Lino) sister, Kelesi Buck (2016) who changed the lyrics from a third-person to a first-person perspective. This song has a lively reggae beat to it and has both English and Tongan lyrics. When I spoke with Kelesi online she informed me that she became both famous and infamous in the community because of this song. Kelesi Buck (2016) performed and recorded this song under the title Miss. K. The lyrics include:

(Original Version)	(English Translation)
<p>We living the ghetto life, got little money, struggle and strife, hit rock bottom many times, get right back up, by writing these rhymes. Can’t no haters ever change me, yeah, y’all live your lives and let mine be. Through the years of all the changes, one thing remains, the music nations sayin:</p>	

<p>Rock dis way, music, feels so good, just sway, rock this way, move your body, skank my way.</p> <p>Meimei he po ke po e oku tali he'eku lotofale. Hanga pe ki tu'a he matapa sio'ata. Alu pe lo'i mata eku si'i loto mamahi moe eku fika pe kaa kotoa. He'ene paasi he'ene paasi. Moe eku faka'amu pe koe kaa hoko ko hoku mali ko hoku mali. Mou me'a mai ke si'i hiva. My mali, still at the faikava.</p> <p>Tangutu hifo he sea o alu ai pe. Eku manatu kihe moui na'aku i ai. Palome'esi to'ofiha hoku mali ki au.</p> <p>Palome'esi mai e ia, he's never going to do anything to hurt me. Palome'esi mai e ia. My mali, still at the faikava. I need you to come right home. My mali, still at the faikava. Palome'esi mai e ia.</p> <p>*Mali is a gender-neutral Tongan word for spouse, derived from marry/marriage in English.</p>	<p>Night after night (every night), I stand in my house and face outside looking out the window, the tears fall uncontrollably from the pain. I watch and hope that each car that passes by is my husband, you all come and give heed to this song.</p> <p>I'm sitting here in this chair with memories that go back to the way of life my husband promised countless times.</p> <p>You promised me. You promised me, he's never going to do anything to hurt me. You promised me. My husband, still at the faikava. I need you to come right home. My husband, still at the faikava. You promised me.</p> <p>*Translation is a combination of versions by Veanna Pau'u (2016) and Moana 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka (2016)</p>
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This song provides social commentary on the marital and familial issues in contemporary Tongan communities, revealing tensions that arise within heteropatriarchal monogamy, material struggles, and isolation in nuclear families.

### 8.3.2 Responses to Spousal Tensions

Many men have responded to these conflicts and are mediating the tensions, especially among younger generations and multi-ethnic/pan-Moana kava groups in my observation. This is because the tensions are more visible with greater ranges of diversity to negotiate through intermarriages. At a faikava with a few of the members of Kalapu Ramz in Utah, Uilisoni Angilau (2015) shared:

You take care of your stuff at home than you can come to the kalapu all you want ... Your wife isn't blowin' up your phone for you to bring your butt home... and all

that other kind of stuff. If you live and die for the kalapu, like kava is gonna' take care and provide for your family, then you've got another thing coming.

Toa Motuliki (2015), who was also present, replied:

My wife, she knows what I like to do on my free time. As long as our bills are paid, I take her on her little dates that she wants to go on ... give her, her personal time... I'll go on my little binges, I'll mix my ass off for a whole weekend, but one thing I do is I'm up, waking my kids up for school ... all that extra stuff that I should do, but I know I do kind of wild out at times. My wife she'll give me that reality check every now and again, but it's like anything else. You like playin' ball? Take care of your stuff at home. Everything else should pretty much fall in line, if not, that's where it starts unravelling.

The kava communities are very much aware of this issue and are mindfully responding to the tensions in the vā, despite the challenges from systemic influences and causes, such as the need to recover and escape from fast paced life of being overworked and underpaid.

Every group I have participated with at least in words, and some in more direct encouragement, check each other to make sure their homes are in order. I often hear and observe comments that groups would rather see each other regularly than have someone disappear for a while because they have to repair imbalances in home life. This is a sentiment all across the board, in homogenous Tongan groups, and in multi-ethnic pan-Moana kava groups. Robert Reeves (2015) of the Ogden Kava Boys Kalapu in Utah shared:

I love when other people get to experience [kava] and they can see, the good things, 'cause there is a lot of bad things out there about kava, but you know, a lot of us we hold jobs, we're responsible, we're family men, it can be done, it's just, you gotta' make the effort.

The challenges of modernity are still currently perpetuating the struggles that influence heavy or problematic kava participation, and until they are dismantled and remade into vālelei (*harmonious space/relationships*), vākovi (*disharmonious space/relationships*) will continue to be revealed by kava (Ka'ili, 2017a).

## 8.4. Brother-Sister Sibling Tapu

The brothers on the left, yeah, sisters on the right, the tou‘a in the middle, jam and mix all night.

- Kava Kreation (Kava song, 2012)

Growing up in Utah I would notice that every Tongan family I knew or came into contact with had different interpretations or applications of Anga Faka-Tonga (The Tongan Way). One of these was on whether or not the brother-sister tapu was enforced or not, or how it was regulated. In some cases, a house would be divided up and brothers would be on one side while sisters would reside on the other. In other cases, everyone would be dispersed throughout the house if it was more practical to do so for the family, but brothers were not allowed into sister’s rooms, and vice versa. When I got into high school and became aware of faikava, I noticed in some circumstances there would be a boy’s shed in the garden/backyard where males in the family would sleep and/or drink kava. This was much more commonly and visibly prominent when I first visited the Kingdom of Tonga years later and saw several boy’s houses that were separate from the main house. The brother-sister tapu in my experience has most often been referred to as an expression of faka‘apa‘apa (respect). Fāhina Pasi (2015) shared some of her experience with this as she was growing up in the Bay Area, California (U.S.):

A brother and sister are very respectful in the things that they say, there’s no cussing, there’s not anything shady said... I remember growing up, my parents, especially my dad, he would never allow us to watch T.V. together... just things that were going on T.V., whether it’s kissing or things of that type, he didn’t want us to be in the same room with our brothers, because it was kind of disrespectful to see things like that [in front of each other].

The brother-sister tapu and faka‘apa‘apa is a prominent factor for gendered kava spaces. Kavapalu (1991) suggests that some of the stricter observances of the brother-sister tapu include that they cannot dance together, attend the same events (e.g., wedding, funeral) simultaneously, and that a brother “could not drink kava his sister served” (p. 153). Siblings, cousins, close relatives, or even close friends of the family who are treated as kin can be

subject to this tapu. This tapu is “characterised by *faka’ehi’ehi* (avoidance) and restraint” (Kavapalu, 1991, p. 151).

Tongan brother-sister tapu emerges from a history of avoiding incestuous relationships, although they existed in the ancient cosmology (August, 2005; Dale, 2008; Helu, 1995; Kavapalu, 1991; Marcus, 1979; Morton, 1996; Shore, 1989). Marcus (1979) suggests that this tapu originated primarily as an incest prohibition. Kavapalu (1991) explains that in one of the versions of the eleventh Tu‘i Tonga, Tatui’s history with his sister, “it is implied that he raped her” (p. 152). Tatui’s father is the Tu‘i Tonga Momo who I discussed in chapter four. In one faikava talanoa it was commented that there is a lack of knowledge among some Tongans today with the sibling tapu being associated with incest. This talanoa led to speculating that Tu‘i Tatui’s assault on his sister is possibly a poetic indication of an era of conflict, instability, and human sacrifice. Thus, this event (a brother’s assault on a sister) could have possibly influenced the establishment of the brother-sister tapu, or at least reinforced it. There are also other factors such as gendered sibling rank (sisters being highest rank among siblings, particularly the oldest sister known as fahu), possibly influenced through intermarriage with Fijian’s and their sibling rank customs (Douaire-Marsaudon, 1996; Herda, 1987; 1996; Herda et al., 1996; Rogers, 1977). This seemed plausible considering that in Tongan cosmology there were initially accepted ‘brother-sister’ sexual unions that founded creation (Collocott, 1921a; 1921b; Gifford 1924; Herda, 1996; Kavapalu, 1991; Māhina, 1992). Herda (1988) explains:

While sibling incest was inevitable and unavoidable for the deities because there were no other beings, there is no such necessity for human beings. Thinly veiled behind the notion that the world and society was created by divine sibling incest is the fear that human sibling incest could destroy it (p. 29).

Another aspect for the brother-sister tapu is a respect, even reverence for *mana fefine* (*transcendent power of women*). Marcus (1979) suggests that this tapu is a “respect for sacred or mystical power, embodied by persons of chiefly status. Brothers still refer to their sisters as

‘eiki (*chiefly*) in relation to themselves” (p. 89). The mana that sisters possess is derived from a divine spiritual order, where brothers are outranked as men, being from Ma‘ama (*earth*), while sisters and women are from Pulotu (*spirit world*) (Filihia, 2001; Herda, 1987; Mills, 2016). Women are the producers of highly valued treasures in Tonga, “koloa, literally wealth or valuables” (Filihia, 2001, p. 383). Tongan women are keepers of genealogies, and protectors and transmitters of knowledge, which adds to their gendered mana (Fale, 2015, Filihia, 2001; Herda, 1996; Kavapalu, 1991; Wood-Ellem, 2001).

Tongan creative Rizván Tu‘itahi (2016) shared during a faikava however that, “Tonga says we put women way up there, but it doesn’t feel like it sometimes, you know what I mean?” The brother-sister tapu as well as mana fefine remains intact but has diminished from its previous prominence. Kavapalu (1991) argues that the weakening of women’s prominence “can be traced back to the early period of contact between Tongans and Europeans” (p. 155). This resulted in politically privileging men and introducing exclusively male property and ownership rights in Tonga’s national formation (Gailey, 1980). Indigenous attitudes regarding the metaphysical realms and mystic force attributed to women began to shift during this point in time as well (Kavapalu, 1991; Herda, 1987).

### **8.5. Tou‘a Fefine**

Tou‘a fefine are a paramount feature in the Tongan faikava imaginary. Many people have commented to me that the only woman who can be found present in a kava circle is one who is there as a tou‘a. This is such a common narrative that when someone says tou‘a, although it refers to the preparer/server behind the kava bowl (often performed by men), it is assumed to refer to tou‘a fefine (Ka‘ili, 2017c; Māhina, 2016a; 2017). The presence of tou‘a fefine in kava sessions, which was not very common in the groups in this research, is nonetheless a well-known part of Tongan kava culture. A prominent stigma and/or elevation of an event occurs simultaneously by men and women with the presence of tou‘a fefine. Many

multi-ethnic, Mormon, and/or millennial generation kava groups I have encountered avoid this controversy altogether by never having a tou‘a fefine in attendance.

My ethnographic data centred on regular and common faikava for this thesis found that the presence of tou‘a fefine in kava circles was eighteen percent of the time, out of eighty-eight kava events I attended over the last three years between Australia, Aotearoa, Utah, and the Kingdom of Tonga. There were significantly less in my kava participation in Utah than in the other three locations. Sometimes tou‘a arrive later in the evening as well, so if I left an event before midnight it is possible one would arrive later, although this is rare in my experience. There are some kalapu that are known for regularly having a tou‘a as well, and are accustomed to having one present in their official weekly kalapu faikava. When churches sponsor kava for significant events there is also usually a tou‘a present, although church is generally considered to be a different situation than kalapu settings.

Griffin (2007) reported that some women in Utah have expressed great discomfort with the way some men are known for teasing and making sexual commentary to tou‘a fefine. Some women have commented that the role of tou‘a has gone from a traditional courtship setting in a young women’s home to a “degrading term for any female, young or old, desperate enough to make a few hundred dollars a night serving kava” (p. 3). Taufa (2014) explained that some of these feelings extend to Tongan women in Auckland (NZ) as well, with women expressing concerns when spouses or partners attend a faikava when a tou‘a fefine is present. Taufa argued that tou‘a fefine is more appropriate in more formal faikava gatherings such as church sponsored events. Having a tou‘a can elevate an event and make it more formal, official, or eventful depending on the group and occasion. I have heard some older men share that they do not like to attend if there is not a tou‘a, and they will ask young men to go invite one. Sometimes this is due to a sense of tradition, while many times it is also because the event can transform into a much more lively one for the men when they can flirt

or banter with a tou‘a. Many women commented to me that if their church (e.g., Methodist, Church of Tonga) have a tou‘a then it is fine. This is because they are considered to follow protocol of respecting the position of tou‘a, and flirtations are assumed to be regulated and relegated to young single men.

Tou‘a fefine become stigmatized in kalapu settings, particularly in diaspora, where they can be considered by some to be worth ‘getting at’ (flirting with) for the night, but not someone to take home to mom. I have found that there are often exceptions to that sentiment however. Ma‘u (2016) shared with me that she has witnessed a time when there was a tou‘a fefine that had money folded up into a dense triangle shape flicked at her as if she was just a ‘thing’, an object. She explained that she prefers to drink at home if she is not with relatives because of the disrespect that can exist towards women and especially tou‘a. She shared it is safer and better for women to have kava together with other women, than to go out to a kalapu to drink kava, let alone be a tou‘a for one. Helu (2016) shared with me that when she hears a young woman is going to be a tou‘a she will often go with them for as long as she can so they are not by themselves and are not harassed after the kava when it is time to go home. She also shared that she is there to speak back to any inappropriate comments that may be said to a tou‘a. Tou‘a are also criticized by other Tongan women who I have heard refer to tou‘a as prostitutes because they receive money to engage in sexual talk, which is done in large part through innuendo and metaphor. There are various infamous stories that circulate about the rare occasion a tou‘a affair with a married man will happen. There are a couple stories I have heard growing up also that non-Tongans were being asked to serve the kava in overseas settings and treated as strippers or were actual paid strippers. The rumour mill gets quite extravagant and ambiguous when it comes to tou‘a’s. There is also a common thought I have observed of tou‘a being similar to Japanese geisha’s, or as some Tongans unintentionally or playfully say, ‘keisha’s’.

Tou‘a positions are also complicated by money, which some have expressed is fuelled by the lack of opportunities to earn the kind of money they do as tou‘a elsewhere, especially overseas. Some say they enjoy doing it while others say they only do it for the money, with many reporting several hundreds of dollars for a night (anywhere between 4-10 hours approx.), and there are even some stories of thousand(s) being earned on big occasions in the U.S. Another element is Tongan women who are traveling or do not have residential documentation in an overseas country, which are positioned with less if any choices for income other than being a tou‘a. Many young men have expressed that being a tou‘a overseas nowadays is usually only performed by “f.o.b.’s” (*fresh of the boat/recent arrivals*) because NZ, AUS, or U.S. born Tongan women are much less likely to be a tou‘a. Some speculate it is because of mainstream feminist ideas of equality in “western” nations that influences overseas born Tongan women to refuse being a tou‘a. There was one tou‘a who shared with me that she would occasionally do it for the knowledge she would gain. I inquired with her further, initially thinking it must be the history and politics prevalent in many songs and stories at faikava, but I was incorrect. She was referring to knowledge of individuals in the villages she would go tou‘a for. She had a very detailed set of knowledge of the pool of future spousal or partner candidates, not only for her, but for her sisters and female peer relatives. She explained to me that because kava is an open space that reveals who you really are and the sides you do not show in public or to a girlfriend’s parents, she had come to know who the respectful boys were and who were not.

The two major factors that are continually pointed out as the points of tension regarding tou‘a controversies is capitalist commodification and the composition of attendees and location of a faikava. Money has been shared by many to lead some men to thinking they have a right to say to you what they want because they are paying you or ‘tipping’ you if you put up with it. When the relationship with tou‘a fefine is commoditised she is made into a

consumable service that is objectified. Fale (2015) comments that these problems emerged when women were no longer tou‘a in their home setting in what is considered by many to be traditional courtship practices, and instead enter into kalapu settings. Many echoed these feelings that when women are no longer in a realm of the original protocols they enter into a realm of men who make up new rules. These ‘new rules’ arise out of western modernity’s heteropatriarchy and its accompanying misogyny, sexism, and toxic masculinity, which has nonetheless become part of the cultures subject to the paradigms of modernity and coloniality. The presence of a tou‘a fefine thus carries multiple possible meanings dependent on the various expectations men in a kava event have, which includes someone to flirt with for the evening, or someone to pursue in courtship, to someone to add aesthetic appeal to an event, formalising an occasion, or for some observers a degrading position for women. Tou‘a fefine in contemporary kava events can have both honourable statuses and scandalous reputations at the same time.

### **8.6. Kava Feminism and Women’s Groups**

Many younger and older women are responding to the gendered structures in kava culture, by taking on a greater role beyond only serving it (Griffin, 2007). In this section some of the literature on women and kava will be introduced, framing contemporary women’s kava groups as a resurgence of Indigenous practices. Lebot et al. (1997) argued that kava has generally been a male domain across the Moana historically. In some cases, traditional knowledge avoided kava “use [that] endangers the fertility of women” (p. 135). The use of certain kava varieties and specific parts of the plant as an abortifacient by some West Papuans is one example. Another one is the “kava-based medicinal treatments in Polynesia” included specific use for its abortive potential, including being used during childbirth as an anaesthetic (Fitisemanu, 2007; Lebot et al, 1997, p. 113). This helps explain some tapu being placed with women and kava in certain contexts, and the symbolic role in other contexts of restricting

tou‘a fefine to being virgin females. This does not mean that women have been completely restricted or did not participate regularly in kava prior to European contact, but it does reveal practical and symbolic Indigenous knowledge regarding kava. In the case of Tonga, Captain Cook “made several references to men and women drinking the beverage together, and James Wilson mentioned a group of women enjoying their kava while aboard his ship” (Ferdon, 1987, p.66). The kava space being absent of women reflects the changes to their societal position within paradigms of western modernity.

Moeata Keil (2017) posted on a New Zealand sociological association blog that Pacific feminists confront challenges within their communities. She shares that many Moana women do not identify as being ‘feminist’, adding that her feminism is seen as something tainted with:

negative connotations of being an adopted and/or colonised position or way of thinking about the world and my position within it. A position that has somehow been interpreted as speaking against tradition, as speaking against religion by questioning or challenging the patriarchy that is so clearly pervasive... I think somehow feminism has been misunderstood as something-to-do-with-the-West, as a western way of thinking that contradicts Pacific cultures and customs. Feminism has a place in...the Pacific (just like it does everywhere in the world).

Moana ‘Ulu‘ave-Hafoka (2015) adds that even shifting the thinking about feminist critique is important. For example, she shared in a talanoa that there was a time she only saw deficits, such as looking to see where women were absent and where they needed to be made equal based on a western standard. She explained that she has come to the realization of the importance of different gendered spaces and their complimentary roles, when they are in balance. The real issue she points out is the power imbalance such as the erasure and ignoring of what women are already doing or wanting to do, and not being recognized, valued, or allowed to. ‘Ulu‘ave-Hafoka shared the example of exchanges of koloa in diaspora where women talk openly in spaces of noa similar to faikava. She points out that although faikava is controversial it is still a prominent aspect of Tongan communities and culture, while women’s

exchanges are less frequent and more and more rare. ‘Ulu‘ave-Hafoka extends the critique to activating Indigeneity rather than only focusing on visible absences, which is only a symptom of the root causes of oppression. The larger issue of heteropatriarchy is revealed and kava is no longer the exclusive point of disharmony, but rather the face of it for some women.

When we shift the conversation to church, many women have shared with me the same amount of critiques of patriarchy and men’s absence due to church service. This is often seen as excusable or obligatory though, because it deals with salvation and the new singular male God, while kava is seen less spiritually relevant, being linked to old Goddesses and Gods replaced by Christianity. ‘Inoke Hafoka (2015) shared that drinking kava is drinking land and thus carries with it a strong female energy. Many men have equated kava as feminine, whether they point to old Goddesses it was associated with before Christianity or to the young woman Kava‘onau who kava is named after. It is interesting then to consider how kava is often blamed for social and community ills by those who point to the controversial behaviours kava reveals. This parallels the logics of patriarchy and sexism that blames victims and women for societal problems that oppresses them. Kava is feminine mana in many of the stories across the Moana that say it was generated by a young woman. Kava‘onau after being sacrificed produced kava and tō as the fruits of her grave in Tonga, yet even in death as a woman she is blamed.

Fehoko (2014; 2015) argued that faikava are ‘cultural classrooms’ that are important spaces for young Tongan males to build a sense of identity, culture, and community. Fehoko adds that he learned that the young men he did research with avoided gangs, binge drinking alcohol, and other criminal activity when kava communities were an alternative for them.

During a talanoa with Fehoko (2016) he added:

My personal view is that if our females are missing out in maintaining a sense of Tongan identity [being absent in faikava]...why are we stopping them? Why are we stopping our young females in wanting to have a taste of what our young males have access to... stats and research does say, and also through personal experience... our

young Tongan females are now participating more in binge drinking, teenage pregnancy, and suicide... there has been a push by Tongan community leaders to bring young males into these kava circles and now we see a decline [of] young males being affiliated to youth gangs, and I see the impact of the faikava on these decisions... I like the idea of female kava clubs.

A quiet revival has been taking place of women drinking kava regularly in common settings on their own or in co-ed circles, for over forty years in Tonga and at least twenty years in Utah and Aotearoa (Helu, 2016; Kinikini, 2015; Ma'u, 2016). However these groups are not generally visible and rarely talked about being seen by many as improper or otherwise stigmatized as not appropriately acting as women should.

Ikanamoe Ma'u (2016) openly and confidently shares her affinity with kava and has introduced many Tongan women to faikava. She stressed to me the importance of having a secure, comfortable, and safe place to host such faikava with a clean and private toilet for the women. Establishing a space of noa for women means they can dress and sit comfortably having neutralized gendered expectations in dress and even sitting posture. Ma'u shares:

We can drink kava and still hold true to our values, having the kalapu at home, having your own kava at home and men can come in and join, but not for you to go, not for us females to go and look for a place to have kava. I prefer sit at your own house, you can sit in your own living room, have friends [male or female] ... come to your house and have a normal kava, casual one, not a formal one...even though oldies and other people they look at you drinking kava and they say, ah look at her, 'she's more than a biatch' <laughter>, don't worry about my language...I'd rather have a kava than drinking alcohol, because this is our customs, this is our traditions, this is our value. And if men drink it why can't we drink it?

Ma'u also commented playfully that she likes to have a young man be tou'a when she can. As we continue to discuss this over a bowl of kava, she explained that she wants them to know how it feels for tou'a fefine so she asks them if they have clean hands, which is an innuendo to the question of where have your hands been? The implication here is to inquire if he is married or has a partner. She then follows up to this hypothetical tou'a tangata (*male tou'a*) clarifying, "are you a virgin?!" as we burst into laughter. I heard of stories of young Tongan men who were university students that would quietly go be a tou'a tangata. Kinikini (2015)

shared with me of a story of university students who were discovered to have gone out to do this and were coming home with a few hundred dollars just like women would.

Women drinking kava today are resurrecting the Goddess Faifaimālie (also Faimālie), extending into a deeper history of women’s kava participation than early European documentation (Gifford, 1924; Ka‘ili, 2017c). Ka‘ili (2017c) explained that women reclaiming kava is like the story of old where earthly Gods traveled to Puluotu (*spirit world/homeland*), where Faifaimālie outdrank everyone in the kava circle. He adds that “Mythology is deep history. It tells us that women always participated in kava consumption.” Ma‘u (2016) shared that she remembers learning about this story from the late Paenga Mila during school breaks in her childhood in Tonga. Along with her set apart ipu that is well over the average size, Ma‘u sets the challenge to see who the true descendants of Faifaimālie are today.



**Figure 26. Ikanamoe drinking kava. Ikanamoe Ma‘u (left) and myself (right). Photograph was shared with author by Ikanamoe.**

## 8.7. Kava Masculinities

Kava masculinities in diaspora are mediated in faikava, where men negotiate Pacific masculinities that are heavily influenced by global fetishizing of themselves in Rugby, American Football, military, urban gangster life, and “exotic Luau” tourism (Aikau, 2012; Diaz, 2002; 2011; Hawkes, 2018; McDonald & Rodriguez 2014; Tengan & Markham, 2009; Uperesa, 2014; Uperesa & Mountjoy, 2014). This is framed out of the contradictory western imaginations of violent brown/black masculinities of ‘tattooed savages’ that are simultaneously emasculated and romanticized (Byrd, 2011; Hawkes, 2018; Hokowhitu, 2004; hooks, 2004; Innes & Anderson, 2015; Tengan, 2002). The material realities and poverty experienced by many migrant Pacific diaspora groups is often overlooked in the reinforcement of these masculinity binaries (Ahlburg, 2000; Reyes, 2013). Diaspora masculinities are reflected in a line from the T.V. series, *Luke Cage*, which goes as follows:

A Black man only has two choices in this world. You can either lean into the fear and be the nigga people already think you are, or you can play the big docile housecat with a smile (Coker, 2018).

A friend once echoed a similar experience as a Tongan man. He shared that his survival strategy in ‘white Utah’ was to be the side of the binary that is a big funny teddy bear Islander who is unthreatening. The dilemma he said was that this identity was also associated with being simple minded and unintelligent.

Hip Hop artist Leyo Lazer (2016) raps about Pacific masculinity in his song *Love Me*, saying: “instead of seeking help for your anger we’ll see it out, ‘cause god forbid feelings are something you speak about.” Rizván Tu‘itahi (2016), a Tongan creative based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) shared that “It’s liberating you know, to like share, it’s therapeutic. Especially men, men don’t talk, we just put on the league and say ‘yo’...it’s like kava is men’s therapy session.” Many men have shared that in a kava session with trusted community you can open up and share hurt, pain, struggle, worry, sorrow, hope, dreams, support,

emotions, and more. Kava reveals these truths by establishing noa, and the songs, stories, and relationships can help heal pain and harm, or continually mediate them in the pursuit of balance. Tongan scholar and educator David Fa'avae (2016) shared that:

growing up seeing my father and my uncles, they were quite staunch, they weren't the emotional type ... in the faikava that's where you are sort of a bit more relaxed, and you started to see the spirit come out, where they express love and songs, and ...they're [no longer] as staunch as they are, through the songs that they sing. ... They don't freely talk about ex-girlfriends...you know all the personal stuff. In the faikava they do... this is why it's rich, but it's not always the case ... for my fathers and uncles it was a site where I saw them being more, not real, but, I guess so, their real self.

The mediation of tapu topics and subjects through the mana of kava songs and ancestral relationships facilitates their calibration through time and space, giving rise to a temporal state of noa. When utilised in this way faikava facilitates forgiveness, reconciliation, and a healthier well-being. This openness strengthens bonds and relationships and also creates teaching moments between the generations. Some of the fathers shared with me that they could speak with their boys about sex education or other subjects that are usually tapu outside of the kava setting. Fehoko (2016) has continually emphasized to me that in the faikava, social, religious, and political power relations are neutralized and you can speak directly to a minister, a chief, a professor, or a father more openly, and in turn they can also speak more openly and personally to you.

### **8.8. The Erotics of Kava**

Music is my love, and kava is my baby...every time I drink a cup all I wanna do is the tell the tou'a to fill it up, so fill it up, long haired, beautiful pretty girl, cup your hands, clap two times, and watch her stir.

-J Stringz (Clap Clap)

Many Tongans have disavowed any open expression of sexual desire in Christian paradigms. Tongans are thus confronted with the contradictions that western modernity first introduced this prudishness, and now the liberal sensibilities of western modernity offers and encourages sexual freedoms (e.g., bars, night clubs, and pornography). Lātūkefu (1966)

explains that the early Christian missionaries prohibited Tongan's from dancing because they considered it immoral. Dancing was often an all-night activity, which meant that "sexual appetite was thereby whetted, and its satisfaction commonly and unblushingly sought in an indiscriminating fashion outside the holy sanction of Christian matrimony" (p. 252). The missionaries saw dancing as filthy, idolatrous, a cause of sin, and as the cause for "congregations snoring their heads off during divine services after late performances the previous night", which fuelled their desire to stop it (p. 252). Missionaries were uncompromising on their stance on sex regarding it to be sacred, and that intercourse should only be allowed after church and state had sanctioned a hetero-monogamous marriage. Tongans were told that they would be thrust down to hell and endure eternal torture for committing sexual sins that were the devil's way of destroying 'normal' relationships. Missionaries preached and many still do that premarital sexual abstinence and fidelity after marriage are to be strictly adhered to. Lātūkefu explains that "Both these views clashed bitterly with the traditional Polynesian attitude to sex" (p. 255).

Kava circles as spaces of noa, equilibrium, allow for openness that includes talking about sex in innuendo or metaphorical form, which is generally not done publicly. If there is a female tou'a present she may be the recipient of these comments as I have explained earlier. Many men explained to me that when a tou'a serves kava it is "ifo inu", meaning delicious to drink, despite the bitter taste of kava. The excitement over having a tou'a fefine puzzled me in the past. I once even asked on my first trip to Tonga how the gender ratio being against you as a man in those settings was enticing, only to be met with laughter. One young man replied, it's about the chase, the potential. It became clearer to me when I learned about the moa uli (*black fowl/chicken*), who is like a wingman of sorts. The job of the moa uli as I have come to understand it is to help you look good if you are the one going to court a tou'a. He is supposed to do this by emphasizing your singing ability, or telling favourable stories of you,

or using comedy to put down your other mates so you shine in their midst. However, I have also come to learn that moa uli are infamous for winning the attention of the tou‘a. In courtship settings moa uli may end up with the tou‘a as a girlfriend or wife instead of the friend they were supposed to assist gain her attention. This is of course complicated in kalapu settings that are not exclusively for courtship and have a range of ages and marital status attendees. Kalapu settings can awaken a nostalgic cultural memory of the flirtatious chase in faikava eva (*kava courtship*), intensifying sexual tensions around tou‘a fefine (Helu, 1993; Tecun, 2017).

There were a couple of occasions I was told to go sit next to the tou‘a or asked if I had something I would like to say to her. I took advantage of those opportunities to inquire about my research and the tou‘a I have spoken with I felt were quite open. One tou‘a told me that the men think they are very clever and smooth when they make vague innuendos to sexuality, but that she can read right through them. Another tou‘a shared with me that she will play along like she does not understand sexual innuendos because the men enjoy it and she receives more monetary tips. An older man at a kalapu I was visiting told me that he prefers a tou‘a fefine because it is practical for cleanliness. If there is no tou‘a fefine and it’s a man who is also drinking, he will eventually need to go urinate, which is dirty to come back and serve the kava (especially if there is nowhere to wash your hands). However, if there is a tou‘a fefine you do not have to worry about that because she generally does not drink. He proceeded to explain, “if the tou‘a did touch herself before serving, we would be ok with that”, revealing both practical functions and erotic desire for contemporary tou‘a.

The faikava with tou‘a reveal a combination of an Indigenous celebration of sexuality, suppressed erotic desire, and modern curiosities. Suaalii (2000) explains as she deconstructs the ‘exotic female beauty of the Pacific islands’ that these constructions are “fed and defined by white consumption and by eurocentric male desires” (p. 93). This history of objectifying

and sexualizing Indigenous women and their bodies as exotic, vacant, and available like the lands colonial gazes lusted after, influences modern sexual curiosities (Byrd, 2011; Suaalii 1997; 2000). Certainly, Tonga is not isolated or exempt from this influence historically or today. This is demonstrative in changing aesthetics of beauty, sexuality, and notions of modesty. Sexual desire is evident in faikava with tou‘a fefine present as well as the changed relationships to erotic power and women’s positions within paradigms of western modernity.

Audre Lorde (1993) explained:

The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with its opposite, the pornographic. But pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling (p. 54).

Sensation without feeling is expressed by many orators who have shared with me that the most disappointing thing in kava culture today is the direct and sexually explicit speech that has replaced the performance of intricately layered heliaki. Another elder shared with me that the western aesthetic of beauty is also replacing the Tongan one. He gave as an example the growing desire to have skinny, light skinned, light hair girls who ‘look’ pretty. He continued to explain regarding courtship kava that ‘whether the tou‘a could win a modern beauty pageant or not it would not have mattered’, because the chase would be the same. The mana fefine (*potency of woman*) that is sought is derived from the path the foi va‘e (*sweet voluptuous legs*) leads to.

### **8.9. Tapu is Noa in Co-Ed and Queer Kava**

Kava creates balance with the sacred and restricted in neutralizing tapu, making it noa. This is contextual and relationally specific however and depends on the starting point and purpose of the group. For some groups and individuals, particularly older generations or those in more homogenously Tongan groups, any woman at a faikava is fair game to flirt with,

despite marital status. This is a conflict that limits many women from participating in Tongan co-ed faikava, although there are some groups who are challenging this notion. For example, in a talanoa with a Tongan woman who had studied for a time in Fiji, she shared with me that she really enjoyed kava while she was there. I asked her if she would continue to drink kava now that she was back in Tonga or when she moves overseas. She replied that she would like to, but she will never drink with Tongan men because of 'how they are' and that in Fiji it was different because co-ed kava is part of their culture. The few groups I have met who have women participate with them (spouses, friends, relatives) have expressed that multi-ethnic groups are easier to manage because no single protocol is absolute, and you go by the protocol of the host. There have been circumstances where I have seen hosts explain to newcomers that in their circle women are there to faikava not to be tou'a or flirted with, emphasizing that any courting should happen elsewhere, so that everyone is comfortable.

The youth groups and student groups I have participated with are the most flexible when it comes to gendered tapu. During a faikava with university students, before music was played on speakers a young woman who was going to deejay asked, "are we faka'apa'apa?" Meaning to say, are we going to follow the brother-sister tapu? The reply was anything goes and she proceeded to play music that included swearing in it. Everyone was drinking together; young men and women were not sitting on opposite sides of each other but intermixed in the group in no particular order. There was one young man I recognized from a kalapu and I asked him how he approaches this different setting, and he replied that you go with the flow of the group. When I have discussed this phenomenon with Leni Lolohea (2016) who studies at the University of Waikato he shared with me:

I would say that's more my generation, you know 21st century, there's a kumete of kava, anyone who wants to join, join, I'm not gonna stop you because you have different body parts than me ... everything evolves, and we're in a time and place now that women's roles in society is being more recognised.

As I continued to talk with Lolohea and observe him at different faikava I noticed an intentional and mindful approach to faikava space. Whenever Lolohea enters a new group he is quiet, he pays attention, he is feeling the energy, the pace of the group, and waits so he can observe and then follow the codes of conduct pertaining to that group. Sometimes it may not happen in the first night but upon regular participation with a group through spatial and temporal mindfulness. Co-ed kava is growing everywhere I have been throughout the research for this thesis, extending back into the nineteen seventies in Tonga, with the 'Atenisi Institute who instituted co-ed kava as a weekly tutorial between students and professors (Helu, 2016).

There are also those who are not part of the dominant two genders who are increasingly present in kava circles. Tongans have four Indigenous genders, tangata (*man*), fefine (*woman*), fakatangata (*women like men, in the manner of men*), and fakafefine/fakafefine (*men like women, in the manner of women*). Anciently, divergence from tangata and fefine appears to be primarily linked with gendered work, and secondarily to dress and mannerisms (Elliston, 2014; Farran, 2010; James, 1994; Schoeffel, 2014). Fakafefine were not necessarily expected to or known to engage in sexual relations with those who share a birth identified sex. They were also associated with healing or pre-Christian priesthoods. These identities are complicated further as they interact with the contemporary categories of LGBTQIA+, resulting in fakafefine or now more commonly heard fakaleiti (*like a lady*) being referenced for a wide range of behaviours, identities, and orientations including being femme, homosexual, transvestite, and/or transgender (Alexeyeff & Besnier, 2014; Besnier, 2002; Good, 2014). In any account, as transcendent genders they embody mana that makes them noa to common gendered tapu.

There was one faikava I participated in that was comprised of only young Tongans, most of whom were university students. This was a co-ed group that had a tou'a fefine that served the kava and participated in conversation like everyone else in the circle. I noticed one

of the tou‘a’s relatives was in the room but not in the kava circle. I inquired and she explained that even though it was a co-ed faikava, because he was a close male relative and she was currently in the tou‘a position, their faka‘apa‘apa enforcement requires him not to enter the circle even though he was at the event. As the evening progressed I observed another young man in the circle was also related to the tou‘a, which I inquired upon to clarify their protocol. The tou‘a explained that he was noa of the faka‘apa‘apa because he was, she paused, and put out her hand out and flexed her wrist with her palm facing down as to indicate he was gay or effeminate. She later explained further, referring to him as fakaleiti (common contemporary term for fakafefine/fakafafine), that he is not subject to brother-sister tapu. I later inquired with this person to see how they identified themselves, and he explained that he is gay, that fakaleiti is usually for transwomen, but he is often labelled as such. He explained that he is also noa of other brother-sister tapu because of his sexuality and gender, such as being allowed in sisters rooms to help them dress for dance performances. Non-binary and non-heteronormative identities embody the borderlands of gender, which makes them noa to Tongan gendered tapu (Anzaldúa, 1987). Although fakafefine and fakatangata are in many ways embraced in certain realms of Tongan society and some youth kava settings, they still face discrimination and violence in their communities (Barber, 2018; Besnier & Alexeyeff, 2014; Farran, 2004; 2010; Farran & Su‘a, 2005; Miles, 2000).

Bringing the past in front of us, Tongan anthropologist Tēvita Ka‘ili (2017c) explains the place of gender ambiguity and fluidity in ancient Tongan deities and ancestors:

Hikule‘o is in Tongan tradition both male and female, sometimes he’s male, sometimes she’s female. My sense is that Hikule‘o was probably female, but masculinised ... so maybe a fakatangata in a sense. But then we have other mythological beings like felehuhuni, felehuhuni is male and female depending on where she shows up in the stories and felehuhuni is more like a fakafefine to me. I think when Christianity came is when a lot of our more rigid ideas about gender came... We were worshipping these deities who were both male and female before Christianity came... So for me, that’s part of the fluidity of Tongan gender back in the days.

Kava is seen as a disruption to marriages and nuclear families and community responses are yielding adaptations such as the inclusion of spouses and mindful participation in faikava. Brother-sister tapu appears in kava settings, particularly around close relationships with tou‘a. Tou‘a fefine are prominent in the imaginary of Tongan faikava but are not as common as they appear to be. Women’s kava groups are growing in numbers revitalising Indigenous traditions of female participation. Tongan masculinities are negotiated in faikava and often subvert dominant hypermasculine narratives imposed by western modernity. Faikava also reveals suppressed exotic desires and sexuality from Christian sensibilities. Youth co-ed kava groups are also revealing a growing acceptance among youth of queer and gender transcendent identities.

## **Chapter 9. Ancestral Identities**

### **9.1. Introduction**

Let's not kid ourselves that Identity gives you virtue, it doesn't, it also gives you a lot of baggage you wouldn't necessarily want ... but it all adds up to something that's distinct.

- Ian Bell (In Foster, 2014)

This chapter explores Tongan identity and Indigeneity in kava settings. Tongan scholars are used to explore a spectrum of Tongan-ness, based on ancestry, tempo-spatiality, resilience, and kava. I then discuss two examples of Tongan identity formation in terms of how they generate mana. The first looks at Tongan chiefly privilege and knowledge in the example of HRM Queen Sālote Tupou III and a popular song she composed, called “Hala Kuo Papa”. Historically contextualizing this composition reveals its layered meanings and demonstrates an archetypal Tongan musical style and identity. The second example highlights intersectional Tongan perspectives that acknowledge multiple marginalization's in the construction of identity, which broaden the expression of complex contemporary experiences. This chapter concludes with a discussion on names, naming, titles, and the mana associated with identity in the potential to become like the Gods. These ideas are key concepts in understanding a broad spectrum of Tongan-ness.

### **9.2. Tongan Ideas about Identity**

This section will discuss different ideas about Tongan identity, drawing from published literature and talanoa. ‘Inoke Hu‘akau (2015; 2018) conceptualizes ancestral identity in what he calls a cosmological theory of identity based in Tongan stories of Gods, creation, and kava. Melenaite Taumoefolau (2013; 2016) explains that Tongan identity encompasses the components of respect, solidarity, and resilience. Ka‘ili (2017a; 2017c)

conceptualizes a temporally and spatially expansive Tongan identity based in Indigeneity. Fehoko (2016) reconceptualises the material structure of the legs that hold up the Tongan kava bowl as the principle values of Tongan identity championed by Queen Sālote Tupou III. The collective thoughts from these Tongan scholars comprise a broad, complex, flexible, and rooted spectrum of possibilities for Indigenous Tongan identities.

### 9.2.1 ‘Inoke Hu‘akau

Hu‘akau (2015) begins by problematizing Tongan identity with the simple yet provocative question of, “who are we?” He comments further:

We have changed our story of the Gods. We have replaced it by another story from somewhere else, and we changed the story of creation also, [replacing] it with another creation story from somewhere else... When it comes to the story of culture, we are trying our hardest to mess it up now. That’s the only thing that is left. So, what I am saying is that we cannot answer the question, what do you mean by saying you are Tongan. . . we cannot.

‘Inoke Hu‘akau is a founding member of the Lo‘au University in Tonga. He critiques the dominant ideas of Tongan-ness today, which asserts that Tongans are essentially a Christian people. He believes this is contradictory in practice, and more of a “myth,” stating, “Anything that Jesus hates, is what we are doing now... simply because we have no idea who we are.”

Hu‘akau argues that “unless the new god is identified with your God, and the new creation is linked to your creation, you cannot answer the question of identity.” This is the challenge for Indigenous Tongan identity within a paradigm of modernity.

Hu‘akau (2015) advocates that if Tongans do not tackle the challenges of Tongan identity then they will have become “empty vessels [that] cannot deal with the inner most [part] of life”. He argues for a cosmological theory of identity that is based in ancient stories.

In his own words:

The cosmological theory of identity is based on these stories ... The story of the Gods ... We were created by a God, that is Tangaloa... and then our story of creation, where our first Tu‘i Tonga was created by Tangaloa. And then we have the culture,

what you find is always with a God creation, there will be a culture, a civilization, that arises out of it ... And I believe that everything created by a God, no matter where, you see a culture that arises out of it... What does it mean for me to be a Tongan? ... The answer is that because I am the descendent of Aho'eitu, the first human being that [was] created by God Tangaloa ... the whole process of creating a culture is to perpetuate the life that has been created by the Gods... To keep you in existence.

Hu'akau (2018) argues that in the stories of culture, kava is a central feature in social and political life for Tongans as a blueprint for society and culture. Kava defines Tongan people and gives their culture structure. However, he also argues that a clear definition of the role of kava is lacking today. He commented that modern literal interpretations of the kava origin story overlooks Lo'au's political purpose and intention as author (see chapter two and four for background on Lo'au and the kava origin story). He proposes that Lo'au constructed the story to symbolize a "sense of obligation and duty required to serve as the mode of operation for the society" (2018, p. 1). Social values taught in the kava story include sacrifice and duty, which he argues advocated for and cultivated a Tongan identity of deep loyalty, unwavering dedication, and strict responsibility to their society.

### 9.2.2 Melenaita Taumoefolau

Taumoefolau (2013) argues that Pacific worldviews contain unique expressions to the values of respect and solidarity. Taumoefolau explains that Tongan respect, faka'apa'apa, or Sāmoan fa'aaloalo, is derived from tapu and mana. Mana and tapu is derived from the Gods, the ancestors, which is a respect that is based in an Indigenous spirituality that values the 'nonmaterial' and 'nonphysical' worlds. Tongan identity as it pertains to respect reflects the mana and tapu of rank between older vs younger persons, chiefly vs non-chiefly persons, and sister's vs brothers. Solidarity is the communal component of Tongan and Pacific identities. Taumoefolau explains that this component of the Indigenous Tongan worldview is identified by one's "usefulness to the community, the family, the land" (p. 123). Taumoefolau approaches these points of identity at the intersection of island-born migrants and their New

Zealand born/raised children. She explains that one of the challenges for those in-between is that it often yields “a kind of alienation that can result in feelings of rejection and loneliness ... and can cause youth to turn to the abuse of alcohol and other substances in their search for consolation” (p. 116). Taumoefolau explains this is as a plague of “feelings of insecurity and marginality, losing [a] sense of belonging,” not being accepted by one’s ‘traditional’ community or ‘mainstream western’ society.

Taumoefolau (2013) also explains that Tongans have a defining characteristic of resilience. Resilience she explains is complicated because it can both contribute to accepting harsh abuse as acceptable, and simultaneously cultivate the ability to overcome life’s hardships. She explains that Tongan resilience is developed in the “customary ways of making fun that non-Tongans may not find funny because they tend to be rather rough” (p. 126). She gave an example of overtly pointing out someone’s disability in a cheeky manner, which I have observed along with making visible one’s mistakes, awkwardness, or misfortunes. Taumoefolau explains that this Tongan socialization is called *fakapāngopango*, which is to tease by making someone look bad comically, or to *hua*, a comedic exchange of putting each other down. Taumoefolau argues that these exchanges although seemingly in bad taste are considered to be ways of learning to laugh at oneself. I have observed that this type of humour can strategically confront or regulate those who are not considered to be good humoured or good natured. Comedy in kava settings is creative, quick witted, versatile, diverse, and even transmitted inter-generationally, all of which is often used to emphasize the importance of the collective and to soften criticism with laughter.

### 9.2.3 **Tēvita Ka‘ili**

Ka‘ili (2017b) explains that central components of Tāvāism (Tongan time-space theory of reality) address processes of constructing reality by temporally aligning space, *tā* (*strike/beat/tempo*) in *vā* (*point in-between/space*). This is especially the case as time and

space are mindfully arranged through performance arts to create beauty through balance, symmetry, and harmony, which is something I commonly witness in faikava. A central component of Tongan identity is found in the “temporal marking and spatial locating of past, present, and future in Moana cultures” (p. 64). The word *mu‘a* for example, is both a temporal and spatial word, meaning the past, and in front. Tongan temporality marks three points of tempo-spatiality: past/front, present/centre, and future/back. Tongan family and sibling rank of elder/younger, female /male, is a microcosm of the meta-structure of Tongan culture, society, and identity. The word *tu‘a*, which is generally interpreted to mean common(er), comprising the majority of Tongans, also refers to space and time. *Tu‘a* means outside of the inner circle of chiefs, so an external spatial proximity to the *loto* (*heart/present/centre*). *Tu‘a* also refers to the time after or in the future in regards to sibling births, thus *Ka‘ili* explains that to be a ‘commoner’ means to be born after the higher ranking first born/chiefs or to descend from younger sibling clans, titles, or families. Tongan identity is thus a large family divided in rank as to who arrived first in time and in space, which extends back to the waves of Tonga’s first inhabitants through to later arrivals.

*Ka‘ili* (2017a) also extends Tongan identity into a pan-Moana past-future possibility. He does this by drawing from the creation stories that precede the first *Tu‘i Tonga Aho‘eitu* to the time of the *Tangaloa* and *Maui* clans, and further back still, all the way to the first elements of sea, sediment, and the great rock that gave birth to the first peoples. He delves into a past that goes beyond Tonga’s inception, back to a time of the *kaivai* (*kai*: to eat/ingest, *vai*: water; meaning sea person/ocean peoples). *Ka‘ili* explains further that *kainanga* like *kai* or *kakai* refers to people. *Fonua* has been explained throughout this thesis as a complex concept of land, placenta, tradition, and people. Thus *kainanga ‘o e fonua*, *kakai i‘fonua*, *kaifonua*, are also complimentary gender neutral terms to ‘*kaivai*’ that means people of the land (the connection to the meaning of person as it relates to the word for eating, *kai*, will be

discussed further in chapter ten). Ka‘ili pulls from the depths of Moana a broader temporal and spatial reality and existence into Tongan identity. From this lens Tongan identities can extend beyond isolated and frozen imaginations of diasporic modernity to an ever-expanding mobile one. For example, Ka‘ili makes ancestral Tongan connections to his home residence of Hawai‘i, finding belonging there while also upholding the mana of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi (*Native Hawaiians*). This process of constructing a temporal and spatial reality that privileges connection rather than difference/separation is done by linking with and sustaining the authority of local Indigenous relatives, rather than ignore them, their mana, or their struggles. This is an Indigenous alternative to modern settler/migrant realities.



Figure 27. Ta'ovala rolled up.

Ta 'ovala rolled up with kafa (coconut sennit cord). When it is worn by wrapping around one's waist it is a way to bind the fonua to oneself. (Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)).

#### 9.2.4 Edmond Fehoko

Cultures can be defined by their staples, foods, central plants, and animals, which give form to their cultural context due to their function in the diet or as medicine (Garibaldi & Turner, 2004). In the case of the Moana, kava is central to social, political, and spiritual life and is an icon and symbol of cultural identity (Aporosa, 2014b). These foods/plants/animals,

such as kava, feature prominently in language, ritual, ceremony, and stories. “Without these ‘cultural keystone species’, the societies they support would be completely different (Garibaldi & Turner, 2004, p. 1). Fehoko (2018), positions kava as a central feature of Tongan identity, conceptualizing the material construction of the kava bowl’s legs as the golden values of Tongan identity. The late Queen Sālote Tupou III used these paramount values and characteristics to organize Tongan identity and society during her reign. The four golden values are faka‘apa‘apa (*respect*), loto-tō or anga fakatokilalo (*humility*), mamahi‘i- me‘a (*willing heart/loyalty*), and tauhi vaha‘a/vā (*caring/nurturing relationships*). Fehoko (2018) explains:

The kava bowl is a cultural symbol that is recognised in the Pacific. For Tongans, the kumete kava represents the placeholder of the fonua or the kava beverage. The traditional Tongan kumete kava consist of four legs [where] each leg represents a golden pillar that was emphasised by Queen Sālote Tupou III. . . The kava that is poured into the kumete kava metaphorically illustrates the Tongan language, culture, customs, beliefs, values, traditions, history and practices. When a leg is missing, the kumete eventually becomes unstable, which, in turn, our Tongan identity is then placed in an unbalanced situation.

The legs of the kava bowl come to represent the immaterial values that hold up the material origins of identity, the land itself, which in turn is the origin for the values of the fonua that uphold it, a constant cyclical relationality that comprises Tongan identity. Drawing from these four experts I now turn to a song which also defines and expounds on these ideas of Tongan-ness.



Figure 28. Kava ready to be served. Photograph was taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

### 9.3. Queen Sālote Tupou III and Hala Kuo Papa

Hala Kuo Papa is a song that is a poetic ancestral call to walk the well-trodden path of forebears. Queen Sālote was the first women monarch in the modern nation-state of Tonga and received gendered opposition by rival male chiefs to which this song confronts by reciting genealogical connections and asserting her rightful place, chieflyhood, and mana. Out of all of the songs I have heard in various sites, whether it was sung or played electronically, Hala Kuo Papa is a consistent favourite. Even Tongans I encountered that could not identify the song by name, composer, or meaning, still recognized it by sound and by the feeling of māfana (*warmth/elation*) that it generates. This song is a powerful anthem of Tongan cultural identity today. Composed in 1942, the text was written by Queen Sālote Tupou III, and the music by Vili Pusiaki and the Lomipeau singing group from Lapaha (Tu‘i Tonga associated village) (Velt, 2007). Interpreted into English, Hala Kuo Papa means the “path that has been trodden” or the “well-trodden path” (Taumoefolau, 2016; Helu, 2016). Hala, means a path, road, or way, but it also means to rip or tear (as in making a way/path), and is additionally the high

chiefly word for monarchical death (Churchward, 2015). Kuo, means the transition from not-being to being, something that now is. Papa means flat, smooth, and firm (e.g., mat, plank, sandstone bed or layer) (Churchward, 2015). Melenaite Taumoefolau (2016) explained it to me through her memory of seeing grassy areas where paths were marked out from the many layers of feet that had walked over it, making the path visible. Hala being both the process of making a way, and the identification of known pathways. It is this ancestral metaphor that the song draws from, referring to the paths set by the ancestors of Tonga and the Moana.

The Following Chart lists the lyrics in Tongan and two translations that have been published. The translation in the middle column is literal and the right column is interpretive.

<b><u>Hala Kuo Papa</u></b>	<b><u>Path that has been trodden</u></b>	<b><u>The well-trodden paths</u></b>
Ne u nofo pe 'I he Hauhau-o-tangata	I stayed at the hauhau-o-tangata	There I had dwelt in the company of men
'O fanongo he tue mo e fakalavetala	And listened to the merriment and alluring singing	And heard of courting and voices joyful of prideful birds
'A e manu launoa 'oku toil he kakala	Of the seductive birds pecking at the flowers	There aplucking the kakala
To'ona hono mausa pea teki e sola 'o kata	Their wafting scent startles the stranger into laughing	Bemused by its fragrance the adazed novice laughs
Pe'i nonga ho'o fiili k ate u fakamatala	But cease wondering and let me explain	So be patient with the wondering and I shall explain
Ko homau ve'eve'e tui ki he po tatala	It is our ve'eve'e strung for our social gathering	Because it is our ve'eve'e stringed for a night of parley
'O haha 'i Fuipa pea mo e 'otu fanga	Threshed at Fuipa and the row of beaches	It was threshed at fuipa and the row of coves
Si'i tu'u 'a tongaleva pea mo e faka-Asava	Dear Tongaleva standing there and the faka-Asava	There dearly stands tongaleva with the faka-osava
Ka to 'a e malu pea huni 'i he moana	When the calm falls and the ocean surface glistens	As calm descends and the deep like oil is lulled

Ko e ha ha‘o lau, touliki si‘i Manavanga	What say you, when manavanga trickles gently	What says you there smoothly flows dear manavanga
Tala atu ‘oku taka mo e fakangalongata‘a	I tell you it is well nigh impossible to forget	With wonders so moving and hard to forget
Tamaiki pe‘i hu‘i ‘a e kakala ‘o luva	So, children, throw off your garlands and yield them	Oh noble youths, please surrender your kakala
Kei tu‘u ‘a e angitoa pea mo e Painimu‘a	For the angitoa and painimu‘a still stand	For there still stands the angitoa and the painimu‘a
Tuku a ke ngatuvai ‘i he Uafu-ko-vuna	Let their mellow fragrance be upon Vuna Wharf	Let thekakala be bewilted at the uafu-ko-vuna
Ke ‘ilo ‘i ‘e Tonga ni ko si‘omau tu‘unga	So Tonga will know that is where we stand	So it be known to tonga it is our station
Ko e hala kuo papa talu e kilukilua	This path was trodden since times long past	It is a well-trodden path from ancient times
Hake ‘i Vaha‘akolo ‘I he ahi mo e vunga	Rising at Vaha‘akolo at the ahi and vunga	Landed at vaha‘akolo at the ahimoevunga
Ka tau tue tue oku kei fusi ‘a e fuka	Let us cheer and cheer for the flag is still raised	But let us be joyous that the flag is still aloft
‘Oku kappa-‘i-vai ‘olive ‘o e hifofua	The Olive branch of the Hifofua still prevails	It is flying over the water, olive of the hifofua
Pea ‘ilo ‘e he poto pea mo e kaimu‘a	And the wise and vocal ones know	And it is known to the wise and the adept
Kuila e Lomipeau kuo taha ai ‘a e ua	The flag of the Lomipeau that has united the two	Pennant of the lomipeau there is unioned the two
(HRH Tuku‘aho, Taumoefolau, Kaeppler, & Wood-Ellem. In Wood- Ellem & Taumoefolau, 2004, p. 166)	(HRH Tuku‘aho, Taumoefolau, Kaeppler, & Wood-Ellem. In In Wood- Ellem & Taumoefolau 2004, p. 166)	(Velt, 2007, p. 85)

### 9.3.1 Contextualizing Hala Kuo Papa

Hala Kuo Papa is an anthem of history and collective identity and destiny. It is also a testament of the importance and significance of one’s identity and knowing who you are.

Tongan scholar Sione Vaka (2016) shared that for him there is a personal and close

connection in kava events when this song is performed, because his ancestor Vili Pusiaki put the poem to music. Others have shared with me that this song spurs memories or imaginations of Tonga. The performance of the song Hala Kuo Papa reflects a Tongan style of singing that climbs towards a peak to end the performance (passionate crescendo). Helu explains this further:

The characteristic of our melody is developed to reach a peak. When we reach there, we stop there ... For example Hala Kuo Papa, we start slowly and [by] the third verse it starts getting faster and faster, and then the last verse is when everything, the bomb goes off and then it just stops there. The western music you have a theme, you develop it, and then you bring it down ... the theme at the beginning will be the same as the theme at the end... We don't develop a melody, it's more like we develop a feeling, and it's a feeling that's being pushed through the sound and the rhythm, and everyone starts to join in. It's like getting high, and everyone just jumps up and down at the very end.

Sisi'uno Helu (2016) explains that Tongan faiva (performance arts) is a combination of poetry, music, and choreography, and Queen Sālote composed her poetry accordingly, as something that could be music and be danced to. In Taouma's (2007) documentary on women of power in the Pacific it's explained that Queen Sālote as the only child of her father faced many challenges to become the reigning monarch. She is now known as a model Tongan, and as a tufunga fonua, who like Lo'au of old reset the Tongan fatongia (*mutual social obligations*) (Ka'ili, 2017c). Teresia Teaiwa (in Taouma, 2007) explained that, "She did not have an easy time ... Tongan nobles were constantly conspiring against her, males, as a young female". The significance of Hala Kuo Papa emerges out of this context, demonstrating the mana that can be generated in asserting your place, your identity, your belonging, knowing how deep your roots extend.

### 9.3.2 Understanding Hala Kuo Papa

I will work between the two translations above to discuss some of the meaning to the words used and the layers of history and significance packed into the heliaki (*metaphor*) of this song. An important aspect of composition is that although layers and multiple meanings

emerge and can co-exist, the true or original meaning lies in the embodied experience and context of the heart and mind of the composer. The following commentary is therefore not exhaustive or all-encompassing but an introductory engagement to some meanings and possible interpretations as I have come to understand them. I argue that lyrically this song signifies the importance of identity as it is tied to history, ancestry, and politics, by making explicit links to mana and simultaneously generating mana. The following lyrical analysis draws from and is informed by knowledge learned in multiple talanoa faikava, poetic study, and Tongan historical literature (Bott, 1982; Fehoko, 2016; Gifford, 1924; Helu, 2016; Ka‘ili, 2017a; Kaeppler, 1992; 2010; Mills, 2016; Māhina, 1992; 1993; 2004; 2011a; 2016a; Shore, 1989; Taumoefolau, 2016; Tu‘itahi, 2016b; ‘Ulu‘ave, 2007; 2012; 2015; Velt, 2007; Wolfgramm, 2015; Wood-Ellem & Taumoefolau, 2004).

### 9.3.3 Hala Kuo Papa Lyrical Analysis

I stayed at the hauhau-o-tangata. And listened to the merriment and alluring singing. Of the seductive birds pecking at the flowers:

Hauhau-o-tangata is a place name or title of a place, which is part of the regal estate. Immediately this establishes the author’s identity as pertaining to high chiefly status. The subsequent reference to birds and flowers are unspecific and not explicitly named as they are already linked to a chiefly place, otherwise the specific bird or flower could be a reference to a particular event, place, or status in and of itself. Merriment in song here could possibly refer to the joy and pleasure from the honour of being in the vicinity and presence of such a chiefly place or person, being the author of the text.

Their wafting scent startles the stranger into laughing. But cease wondering and let me explain. It is our ve‘eve‘e strung for our social gathering. Threshed at Fuipa and the row of beaches:

The stranger could refer to the bewilderment of someone who does not have the chiefly knowledge of what the scent holds or tells. The unknown knowledge will be

explained. The chiefliness emanated is so grand that nervous laughter is the only response that all those present can muster, having come into sight, scent, and close proximity of tapu. The ve'eve'e is a particular type of garland which, the seductive birds plucking flowers mentioned in the earlier line are thus likely references to the people who were collecting flowers and constructing this garland. The ve'eve'e garland in particular is one that is worn on or around one's feet (Taumoefolau, 2016). To be adorned at the foot/feet is to indicate again a superior and high-ranking status. The moemoe is an Indigenous Tongan custom which consisted of touching one's forehead to the feet of the chief, and then touching the sole of his foot/feet with the palm and back of your hands (Dale, 2008). This act could also be done to restore balance and render someone/something noa that was in a tapu state, which was possible through the mana of the chief this act was done to (Dale, 2008; Mills, 2016; Shore, 1989). In this case the garland metaphorically does moemoe, taking place at Fuipa, which is a seaside location in Mu'a, an ancient capital site.

Dear Tongaleva standing there with the faka-Asava:

Tongaleva is the land associated with the Queen's home in kauvai, however here it is associated with faka-Asava (Wood-Ellem & Taumoefolau, 2004). Faka-Asava is Tongan for the Yasawa island group of Fiji (Taumoefolau, 2016). Thus, Tongaleva here may be Tongarewa in Fijian. I cannot conclusively link contemporary Tongarewa sites and can only speculate at this point so I will just mention that generally this could be a reference to Fiji-Tonga relations and history. There is a historical association with Fiji under the Tu'i Tonga (TT) lineage that includes the falefisi (*House of Fiji*), which is a kauhalauta (*plantation road*) title that is a TT clan. This is possibly a reference to those chiefs of Fiji and to TT ancestry, expanding the reach and mana of her chiefliness. There are some commentators in kava circles I have been in that have expressed that the TT kava ceremony was closely related to

Fijian protocols, just as warfare skills, intermarriages, and canoe technology/materials from Fiji influenced Tonga as well (Dale, 2008).

When the calm falls and the ocean surface glistens. What say you, when manavanga trickles gently. I tell you it is well-nigh impossible to forget:

Manavanga is a reference to the eastern district of Tonga associated with Tonga's historical founding and identity tied to Aho'eitu who became the first Tu'i Tonga. The calm befalls where the ocean glistens may be where sea water falls from a higher place in conjunction to this place/bay near the sea (Taumoefolau, 2016). This again is another reference to chiefly because it is water that falls from a high place, the height being chiefly. Aho'eitu also similarly returned down to earth to rule, coming from a high place (having visited his father Tangaloa in langi/heaven).

So, children, throw off your garlands and yield them. For the angitoa and painimu'a still stand. Let their mellow fragrance be upon Vuna Wharf. So Tonga will know that is where we stand:

Throw off your garlands and yield them is a line that calls one to submission and acknowledgment of the reigning platform and chief in power. This is the chiefly system that has been established throughout history, which has been laid before the listener of this poem/song. Angitoa, is the name of a pine tree at the royal palace, there is also a toa (iron wood) tree named this there (Taumoefolau, 2016). It thus refers to the palace of the current reigning monarchy that draws from the chiefly lines that precede it, assuming inherited authority from the past. Painimu'a is a name connected to the palace as well. Let the fragrance be upon Vuna Wharf, which is the ancestral wharf that exists underneath what is now known as the Nuku'alofa wharf. Fragrance here possibly refers to the memory of this past place that is present underneath the current form. A reference and call to solidify this memory as something permanent. So that Tonga will know that is where they stand, on the same places the ancestors did, in the same places they began, which they now inherit.

This path was trodden since times long past. Rising at Vaha‘akolo at the ahi and vunga. Let us cheer and cheer for the flag is still raised:

At this point in the song, it is reaffirmed that Tonga’s place and direction follows the ancient path that has already been trodden since times that are long past. An affirmation of the Queen’s place and position as heir to this legacy and architect of their society. Vaha‘akolo is another reference to the palace and ahi is the fragrant sandalwood plant used in anointing chiefly people or at royal events (Taumoefolau, 2016). Vunga is an extinct tree that once stood at the hill next to the palace being referred to. This draws from an ancestral memory of what was once in that chiefly place. A way of seeing what is still metaphysically present that was once physically visible, just like the past before us, and the spirit realm around us. The next line thus calls for all to cheer that the flag is still raised, that it still stands. The use of a flag brings into position the present day nation-state monarchy and Tonga’s more recent nationalist identity, merging the past and present identities of Tonga.

The olive branch of the Hifofua still prevails. And the wise and vocal ones know.

The olive branch is a Christian symbol of peace and hope derived from biblical stories and narratives that refer to olive trees, branches, and more. This indicates the Christian identity of Tonga since the Queen’s grandfather King George Tupou I centralised power, adopted Christianity, and dedicated the modern nation to God. The Hifofua is the name of an ancestral kalia (*double-hulled sailing canoe*). This kalia is linked to the western district of Tongatapu island, which is associated with the reigning lineage in Tonga, the Tu‘i Kanokupolu (TK) (Taumoefolau, 2016). The royal kava ceremonies today are after the TK protocols, which differ from the TT, mainly in the spatial arrangement. In the TT protocols the olovaha (*presiding chief*) sits in the east, and in the TK protocols the olovaha instead sits on the west side (Bott, 1982; Collocott, 1927; Fale, 2015; Newell, 1947). Ngata is the founder of the Ha‘a Ngata (Ngata clan), which houses the TK lineage, and who was also the son of a Sāmoan mother, who according to Queen Sālote brought the title system in Tonga to

prominence and greater recognition (Bott, 1982). The first Ngata was stationed on the west part of Tongatapu island known as Hihifo. Additionally, because Ngata's mother was Sāmoan, he brought with him a lot of Sāmoan chiefly relations to this place. Taumoefolau (2016) explained to me that this is the meaning of the name Hifo-Fua, which refers to unloading upon arrival for the first time, where this kalia not only unloaded goods in this place but chiefly Sāmoan relations. At this point chiefly ties to Fiji, Sāmoa, and Tonga have been made drawing on their collective and historical mana.

The flag of the Lomipeau that has united the two:

The highest and oldest chiefly line of Tonga, the TT, came to a controversial end of reigning power. Tensions between chiefs and their kāinga/villages/islands intensified during the centralising of power in Tonga's national monarchy (Bott, 1982; Lātūkefu, 1974; Taumoefolau, 2016; Tu'itahi, 2016b). Many rival clans and chiefs joined non-Wesleyan churches during the wave of western Christianity simply out of rebellion to the Wesleyan association with King George Tupou I. The rank of titles is also significant here, and older ones like older siblings or people have higher rank historically. The oldest and most sacred title and lineage of the Tu'i Tonga is connected in this final line to the youngest brother in the paramount Tu'i lineage titles, the Tu'i Kanokupolu. This is at the highest point of the poetry, song, and performance. Queen Sālote belonged to her grandfather's chiefly line and held the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu, and she married into the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua title and clan (Second oldest Tu'i title), unifying two of the three highest chiefly titles in Tonga. Her life and legacy raises a flag that unites rival kalia (e.g., canoes/peoples/chiefs). The Lomipeau is the kalia of Hahake (eastern district of Tongatapu island), which is a TT canoe associated with the TT side of the island. Queen Sālote's son would marry the great great granddaughter of the last living holder of the TT title, thus through her, all three major paramount high chiefs of Tonga become one. This final song line is possibly saying that the younger chiefly title having

assumed authority through centralising power in the construction of the national monarchy, has now officially sealed it through intermarriage unity with the other titles. Queen Sālote asserted her inherited mana of lineage as much as her living mana. She demonstrated this in her diplomatic strategies of intermarriages to mediate unrest between clans. Many Tongans today assert a nationalism that collectively draws upon all of Tonga's chiefly mana.

#### 9.3.4 Hala Kuo Papa Commentary

‘Uhinga means genealogical connections with chiefly lines and is a way to assert mana. This is in part what this song does in drawing from the past, creating a narrative that unifies it through the collective and historical mana of Tonga. However, this is not done in direct speech, keeping in rhythm with Tongan cultural values and etiquette, heliaki is used, where symbols, allegory, metaphors, and indirect speech soften the delivery of a powerful and political identity. Taumoefolau (2016) explained to me that hau is the strength derived from being monarch, konohau is the material (possession) one has as the monarch, collectively part of the spiritual and effective potency of mana. Queen Sālote becomes more immovable in knowing who she is and being able to recite her historical and genealogical connections that define her and position her in time and space. She draws upon the layers of mana, the layered steps that make the path firm for Tongans today, creating the pathways anew within new forms where it was previously trodden out by ancestors. A common interpretation I have heard is that this song is an assertion that Tonga's path is the monarchy, the modern Christian constitutional nation-state, which is believed to be derived from the past political and cultural systems in Tonga.

### 9.4. Identity out of Oppression

Another side on the spectrum of Tongan-ness is derived from oppressed social positions, which having little to any stakes in the society rely upon mana derived from

creative divergence. Identities based in genealogy are complicated when one has been stripped of knowing or using your roots through diasporic spatial-temporal displacement. A different route to identity emerges from working through oppressed and marginalized perspectives. In this section I will look at those who navigate pan-Moana and multi-ethnic kava circles that question exclusive Tongan identities. I will also look at those who feel out of place in their Tongan society and dominant identity who recreate the kava as a refuge to better reflect who they are.

Many diasporic kava groups having faced the intensified divisions of race, class, gender, and religion in paradigms of western modernity seek to collapse them in broadening the faikava circle through relationships and place-based community. Utah based Mormon and Tongan Hip Hop artist KIS. B (Fonua, 2015) explains:

We grow up, and everyone's with their own. I grew up LDS [Mormon], so I've always hung out with LDS people ... and I've noticed we never got to hang out with a lot of the Catholic boys or the Methodist boys or the Baptist boys, but once you're in that [kava] circle, that barrier is gone...kava just kind of takes away all of those type of labels that can separate people, I think that's another great thing about roots, mixing... This is a place of love and peace...and I learned that at an early age, back in high school growing up around the boys...here in Rose Park (Utah)...you got Uliuli's [Black/African-American], you got Miko's [Mexican/ Latinx], we got Palangi's [European/White], we got Sāmoan and Tongan, we got Hawaiians, whatever it may be, even Asians you know what I mean, we all come from the same place ... as far as drinking [alcohol] and smoking and stuff you know, we partied with a lot of people, but people could be really clickish, so people are always like, this is Tongan, you know, this is Sāmoans, or Mexicans are all over here, and Black are over there ... when you faikava, it's a peaceful feeling that brings people together, and in our kava kalapu we have Hungarian, Mexican, Asian, Tongan and Sāmoan people all together.

As KIS. B explained here, multi-ethnic kava groups are mindful of their relationships and realities that extend beyond an isolated Tongan one. Although most kava groups in my research are generally composed of primarily Tongans, today they are also increasingly multi-ethnic in diaspora settings. As I have continuously pointed out in this thesis, ancient Indigenous kava practices were also multi-ethnic as they overlapped, exchanged, and adapted between peoples across the Moana. It is possible they became more rigidly distinct in their

modern isolation as “remote” islands, yet modernity cannot contain a ‘sea of islands’.

Tongans are teaching kava culture to others they connect with on the basis of common working-class experiences, neighborhoods, religious affiliations, collective values, urban realities and more.

Anzaldúa (1987) argues that “Rigidity means death” for those who live or embody the borderlands as peoples between societies (p. 101). She explains that the future depends on those who break down binary paradigms by “straddling...two or more cultures...creating a new mythos” (p. 102). Borderlands people collapse modern binaries by shifting perceptions of reality giving rise to a new consciousness. Anzaldúa argues that the problems with the modern western dichotomies of race and gender can be healed by suturing the splits it creates. The challenge or desire to maintain a Tongan identity outside of Tonga increases in nation-states that demand assimilation. How does one maintain a place based Indigenous identity from the tropical zone outside of it? Whether in Utah or New Zealand, Indigenous identities if they hope to be free of western control, continue to value ancestral place while necessarily adapting to new place. I have discussed in chapter seven and drawn from Ka‘ili’s example earlier in this chapter that this requires a respect for local Indigenous authority and struggles. There are opportunities in collaborating with other marginalized peoples to survive, thrive, and imagine different futures and possibilities. For kava groups like KIS. B’s they maintain their Tongan identities by expanding them, and broadening what it means to be Tongan in the process.

Hip Hop is a prominent adoption among Tongan and Moana peoples at home and abroad. Founding father of Hip Hop, DJ Kool Herc explained that Hip Hop culture and music comes out of oppression and provides a space to ‘come as you are’ (Chang, 2007). Kool Herc explains, “I set down the blueprint, and all the architects started adding on this level and that level...it’s about you and me, connecting one to one. That’s why it has universal appeal” (p.

xi). Kool Herc argues that Hip Hop in the seventies bridged cultural gaps, just like what kava is doing today for multi-ethnic urban Moana groups. Hip Hop has become global but is rooted in its robust cultural complexity of arts, including DJing, MCing, Graffiti, Breaking, dress and language styles, with a value of being true to oneself. DJ Kool Herc shared, “hip-hop is there for you. It has become a powerful force. Hip-hop binds all of these people, all of these nationalities, all over the world together” (p. xii). The temporal context of the Hip Hop generation however has lived through societal “color-conscious racism” up to a “new colorblind racism [that] claimed not to see race yet managed to replicate racial hierarchy as effectively as the racial segregation of old” (Collins, 2006, p. 3). Inclusion of Hip Hop in the popular culture industry “created a seemingly authentic Black American culture that glamorized poverty, drugs, violence, and hypersexuality” which has reached the far expanses of the globe and part of many urban people of colour’s experiences (p. 4). Urban Black and Brown Indigenes are both racially visible while their Indigeneity is ignored. We embody experiences of ‘colour’ while those struggles are disregarded in being seen, while not being understood. Hip Hop and Kava culture overlap in urban diasporic spaces where newer Indigenous diaspora arrivals (e.g., Tongans) connect with Indigenous African diaspora legacies of resilience and urban struggle on ancestral space of Amerindians on Turtle Island.

KIS. B (Fonua, 2015) uses Hip Hop in a similar way that Queen Sālote used her poetry to speak her truth, to draw from the mana of her ancestral identity. KIS. B explains:

My story comes from my roots and my culture. Where I’m from kava is a big deal so I think that’s how it connected for me, from kava to Hip Hop... also, being around all these musicians, I wanted to be a musician, reggae’s not my thing, but I do Hip Hop ... that kind of connected me to who I am as a music artist, but it comes from kava. Kava connected me to my music.

Additionally, Tongan comedy, oratory, and storytelling traditions connect with the Indigenous African and Amerindian sounds, storytelling, and oratory that survives in Hip Hop (Bainbridge & Maiorana, 2017). In the concrete jungles of diaspora these different Indigenous

traditions connect. Hip Hop places a tremendous value on place and speaking your truth by keepin' it real, which Pasifika peoples have been utilising since they were introduced to the art (Zemke-White, 2000; 2004; 2005; 2006). They are speaking the new lines of genealogy and experience today, extending the reach of the well-trodden paths from before.

There is power in the way 'traditional' peoples utilise music to express truths (Zemke-White, 2000). Similar to Hip Hop, the other prominent musical adoption among Moana peoples is reggae. King and Bays (2002) explain that reggae music came out of Ska, which was a combination of mento (Jamaican Indigenous music), Jazz, and Rhythm and Blues. They add that "popular critics and music scholars generally have failed to appreciate their protest message" (p. 4). JanWillem van der Beek is a New Zealand born Sāmoan/Dutch reggae artist who is now based in Utah, and leads the multi-ethnic and pan-Moana reggae group, Natural Roots. He uses the protest legacy of reggae in his song compositions and adds new layers of meaning to roots with their band also comprising a kalapu (van der Beek, 2017). He sings in the song *If it ain't natural* (Natural Roots, 2012a):

It's Jah music, our mission is to keep it out of Babylon control... When all things are brought into Jah light, the humble and the meek will win the fight. The music is a message to the poor and downtrodden, the wicked man can keep I down no more. Up to I and I to reveal the truth ... if it ain't natural it ain't roots... So when trials and tribulation come your way, hold onto your roots.

Natural Roots localizes reggae to tell the stories of diasporic identities in their community.

Another example is their song *Words of Jah*, which says "He's just a young man trying to find an identity, doesn't matter what the zip code my friend, it's the state of mind you're in" (Natural Roots, 2012b). The band Natural Roots addresses oppression, makes relevant links to roots music, adding meaning with roots drink, and imagines beyond it by bringing the past into the present in a rootz way of thinking.

#### 9.4.1 Faikava at Haua Mansion

While faikava spaces are generally open and inclusive, especially for men, what about those who still feel out of place? What about the ‘outcasts’, ‘misfits’, ‘trouble makers’, ‘the wretched’ in both settler-colonial nations and in the independent Kingdom of Tonga, or one’s own community and family? In this section I look to the Seleka art and kava collective who push the boundaries not only of western hegemony, but of Tongan hierarchy and society which alienates them. The Seleka collective is found in the heart of the Kingdom’s urban centre and capitol. Seleka is a play on the word kasele, which means toilet or outhouse, a nickname given to the group because of their divergence. Seleka is an art collective where downtrodden urban youth paint and drink kava together. They also have a broader playlist than most kava clubs, including punk, rock, heavy and death metal. Unfortunately, their Tongan fale (*traditional palm house*) was destroyed in the February 2018 cyclone that hit Tonga. When I visited them in November 2016 the interior was colourful and bright, and there was a bookshelf full of books that could be read there or borrowed by anyone. Founder Tevita Latu (2016) shared with me that many who go to Seleka are fed up with authoritarian relationships within families and their society. Latu has had his share of negative experiences with the nation-state, having been arrested for protesting against the government. He has been accused of treason in the past, after which charges were dropped, but not until after being incarcerated and tortured first (Hamilton, 2013; 2017). Seleka provides a space where Tonga’s urban youth can be themselves, do something positive, and overcome the difficult backgrounds and challenges they face in life.

Taniela Petelo (2016) is a prominent member, leader, and artist of Seleka who joined during its founding. Petelo explained that initially it felt different, but it grew on him. He shared that he was also weary of the comments made by others referring to them as kasele in the beginning. Eventually they would own the name and transform it to Seleka. He explained

to me that on one occasion they even put a toilet seat on top of the colourful multi-use pot they drank kava out of. This act was quite controversial because of dominant perspectives on proper respect for kava. They even refer to kava as ‘ta‘e’ a word that depending on how it is used means feces or “shit” (Hamilton, 2015). They have been criticized by clergy and community for drinking kava with mental patients from the hospital, with women, and with fakaleiti (*transwomen/like a lady*) (Hamilton, 2014; 2015; 2018). They give a middle finger to their rejection by owning their marginal status within their society. They previously had a painted sign that said ‘Kindy Haua’ in front of their old fale, referring to being called the ‘haua club’, meaning a ‘kindergarten for outcasts’ (Fonua, 2018). Churchward (2015) defines haua as having been beaten about, to be ragged and tore up by wind and rain, to wander as if one is more or less considered mentally insane with nowhere to go. I have heard haua used to refer to the homeless, in this case scattered or homeless youth, the downtrodden of Tongan society.

Tupac’s concept of Thugz Mansion that I mentioned in chapter seven provides a lens to also consider Seleka. Tupac conceptualized Thugz as the underdogs, those on the bottom, the oppressed. Instead of combatting society’s label they accepted the reality of their marginality and spoke from that position instead. To accept being marginal in an oppressive society is a critique of one’s society, such as when outlaws become s/heroes. In this sense to be Haua is like being a “Thug” and like Thugz Mansion that was imagined as a place where the homies could ‘kick it’ in peace, Seleka is a Haua Mansion where Tongan misfits can create art. The oppressed speak difficult truths because they have less to lose in a society that does not accept or embrace them to begin with, they must cultivate and draw from their own mana because they do not have inherited elite standing. This is another function of identity, to collapse it, by challenging its mana and tapu (e.g., church, state, gender, and kava). In successfully doing so they increase their own mana in surviving the dangerous actions of

violating or changing the standing tapu as they create something different. Haua and ‘Thugz’ play an important role in revealing disharmony and imbalance in society, by departing from conventional solutions and rules, being inconvenient, and through uncomfortable disruptions to the status quo. In the standpoint of one’s true self, one becomes a creator of narrative rather than a follower of established ones.



**Figure 29. Seleka.**

**Tevita (left) is face painting. Taniela (right) is painting while they wait for the next round of kava. Photograph was taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

#### **9.4.2 Names and Titles Becoming of Gods**

Tongan-ness is grounded in kava, and outlined between chiefly knowledge and privilege and oppressed marginal positions. From this range of diverse roots the significance of names and titles in identity are realized in their connectivity to deification and creativity. The literature on Tongan religion before Christianity explores the “possession” rituals of

priestesses and priests who would temporally become gods/Gods (Gunson, 1987; 2010; 2011; Collocott, 1921a; 1921b; Dale, 2008). Tongans represented or embodied the gods/Gods in pre-Christian rituals. Kava is often referenced as a part of these rituals and transformations. Transformation or “possession” ranged in expression including a changed voice in a person when the God spoke through them (or when they became the God), or when a unique performance outside of normal convention occurred, or even through a tumultuous bodily experience. Wade Davis (2010) argued that the voodoo acolytes in Haiti cannot be understood in modern western concepts of religion. He explained that instead of worshipping a singular male god or intermediary, they become Gods/Ancestors through ritual. Drawing from my Mayan cosmovisión, I see a world of connectivity in that one has the potential to become what one is a part of or descended from. John Trudell (1993) adds to these ideas by explaining that because one is connected, one can be, or embody that connection, and draw from that power. In this same way we have the potential to become as the Gods. People are not “possessed” or transformed in the same manner as before, but are nonetheless the embodiments of the names, titles, and creativity they temporally perform.

Kava participants become ancestors and represent them through names and titles, and invite ancestors into the space by ceremonial clapping, singing about them, and reciting their compositions. Who you are (who your name is) informs your performance of identity as to which God you transform into. For example when I have inquired about the arrival of or presence of a chiefly titled person even in a common kava gathering, it was expressed that the dynamics change. If a high chief were to enter a faikava many people commented that if they were not appropriately dressed (not wearing the ta‘ovala/waist mat), then they would leave or go put one on. They also mentioned that they would recognize where the chief is sitting and align themselves accordingly as well as be mindful of drinking order. When I have asked chiefs about this, they have expressed that the space also is to be considered. For example if

they wanted to go to a kalapu and participate like everyone else then they would enter using a different name other than their title. Once someone is titled that is usually the only name they go by once they have received it, so using another name transforms them temporarily.

Another aspect of naming is using the talking chief or matapule name/title of a clan or village when they are not present. I have regularly observed this in faikava settings and untitled people will be called after their village matapule, representing, embodying the closest proximity to their family/village's chiefness (A. Pasi, 2015; Taumoefolau, 2013). I cannot say whether the 'possessions' of priestesses and priests in ancient Tonga was like this or not, but contemporarily there is a sense of becoming or performing a title, a name, an ancestor, the God within as I have explained.

Tongan identity is richly complex and diverse and offers insights into broader discussions of Indigeneity. Knowing who you are and where you come from is significant and has power. Indigenous identities are tied to a holistic and complicated ancestry and tradition rooted in place, and adaptable to new place(s). There are different ways to generate the mana from one's own tapu, and identity. This can be done through genealogical chiefly connections in the face of adversity, or in rejecting a downtrodden state by questioning society. Tongan ancestors created new cultures out of the old, building upon the previous works and generations, which their descendants continue to do so today. Kava settings and songs hold onto and reveal the living histories of Tongan identities. I have drawn from Tongan scholars to ground Tongan identity in ancestral stories, land, autonomous marking of time in space through performance, resilience, and kava. Kava songs are significant markers of Tongan identity and reflect complex evolving ontologies from traditional Tongan music to contemporary adoptions and mixed compositions. The spectrum of Tongan-ness is rooted in ancestors, relationality, place, history, kava, and mana.

## **Chapter 10. Metaphors of Kava**

### **10.1. Introduction**

Kava's close association with land and sea is a result of it being a metonym for them, a substitute for fonua. Fonua being literally land and placenta emanates metaphors of the relationships that extend from them, which is found in tradition, poetry, song, and culture. The relationship between metonym and metaphor in faikava phenomena gives important insights to understanding identity and Indigeneity. Metaphors give meaning to an animate world through poetic expression that emerge out of metonyms. Metaphor and allegory are vital in Tongan poetry, song, and story, which are prevalent in faikava. After discussing metaphor and metonym as it relates to Indigeneity, I explore some specific metaphors of kava. The various metaphors that will be explored in this chapter give added meaning and context to the lyrics of songs, chants, and words from the stories shared in this thesis. These include the kava bowl as metonym and metaphor of navigational knowledge, kava and tō (sugarcane) as socio-political historical mediations, and life and death as the balance represented in Tongan cosmology. The metaphors presented in this chapter are not exhaustive or absolute claims of historical meaning. They however engage with core aspects of Tongan cosmology in this ethnography alongside my experiences. I conclude with some overall thoughts on how this informs the themes of this thesis surrounding modernity, Indigeneity, kava, and urban diasporic identities.

### **10.2. Metonym and Metaphor**

Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavy Head (2014) first introduced me to metonyms and their role in Indigenous spirituality, identity, and knowledge. They discussed the Blackfoot tribe's beaver bundle and how each element was an actual organic material from the land, found in their local ecology, which forms their culture and language. They compared the role

of the actual to the symbolic by saying that instead of worshipping an abstraction of deity or intermediary such as in Christianity, the worldview of Blackfoot people is centred on local organic physical reality (nature). ‘Inoke Hafoka (2015) had heard Blood and Heavy Head’s presentation with me at the 2014 American Indigenous Research Association conference. After reflecting on metonyms in Indigeneity, Hafoka brought up how kava is metonymic for land during a faikava in Utah. Hafoka explained to those in the kava circle:

Kava is not a metaphor, it’s a metonym... kava is the blood of the land, it is actually part of the land. It’s not this metaphor that we are imagining or symbolising it as... These are real things that we actually believe.

Indigenous spirituality is a complex web of knowledge and experience, which includes a reverence and respect for life systems, a holistic combination of elements, entities, and beings that make up an Indigenous reality. This includes the physical (local ecology, land, sea, nature), the metaphysical (spiritual, dreaming, supernatural, subconscious, conscious, inner space), the communal (kinship, community, tribe, culture, society), ancestral wisdom (inherited knowledge, place-based language, tradition, ceremony), the four legged, winged, and finned relatives (fellow animals, insects, fish, birds, and other sentient beings), and the cosmos (heavens, stars, outer space). Indigeneity is a practical reality tied to place and connected to ancestry and tradition, a metonymically based belief system that is unique and evolving in time and space. Kava and ta’ovala (*Tongan waist mat regalia, tied with coconut sennit rope*) have been explained by Ka’ili (2017a) to be the principle metonyms of Tongan identity today. The actual land that clothes the people, or that is ingested by the people.

Farella (1993) argued that in western anthropology some things that are recorded should not be, and they become as arbitrary as capturing wind in a jar. He adds that western thought, such as Aristotle’s genus and species dichotomy, yields a by-product that fragments people and experience. Farella explains that “Categorizing an experience necessarily makes it less intense. Like dealing with the category death, or grief, or mourning, or funerary ritual,

rather than with our friend or lover's death" (p. x). He argues that categorization (fragmentation), method (focusing on one thing, which distracts or ignores from what really matters or cannot be recorded), not listening (western interpretation), and emphatic open-mindedness (insistence on being non-judgmental through 'objective' distance), are ways of limiting experience from the get go by attempting to control or edit them. "People who are well socialized in Western thought are pretty much able to avoid life" (p. xi). He explains that place is central in Indigenous life where "meaning is found and expressed in stories that are structured by and anchored in...place" (p. 17). Place is inseparable from Indigeneity, as I have explained in chapter seven. The transportable metonyms that anchor us in diaspora settings are the lifelines to our own Indigenous identities, while we adapt to place that has local Indigenous identities and authority that are elder. This is why kava is so meaningful to me, as a diasporic Mayan, seeing transportable land tied to an identity based on mobility (voyaging), it pulled on my soul. The metonym of kava was like ixim (corn) or kakaw(a) (cacao/chocolate) for me, the sacred foods which my family transported to maintain our connection to our ancestral lands.

The logics of modernity (western colonialism, patriarchy, racism, capitalism, etc.) does not accept non-linear cycles of time and renewal, and refuses death, thus continues to live as a zombie (Byrd, 2011; Campbell, 1991; Killsback, 2013). Modern language and expression is ironic and contradictory by ignoring *his* own time of death, and forcing *himself* upon the land in *his* way, while simultaneously unable to see the land is alive. The language, culture, and expression of Indigeneity is that of place, of a living world that is connected, rather than the destructive project of imagining a monochromatic world of disconnected objects. Kimmerer (2015) explains that modern western science is "a language of distance which reduces a being to its working parts; it is a language of objects...based on a profound error in grammar, an omission, a grave loss of translation from ...native languages" (p. 49).

Western modernity lacks words for mystery, for in between actions and space, for life forces and the unknown. Modernity only has terminology for defining “boundaries of our knowing. What lies beyond our grasp remains unnamed” (p. 49). The mystery does not have credibility in ‘rationality’, the restrained emotion of western logic does not see the ‘abstract’ or metaphysical as ‘real’, only that which is tangible to modern *man* (Smith, 2012). Modern *man* is blind to the unseen energies in the world of being that affects and animates everything, so *he* continues to abuse *her*. The ‘force’ in the star wars universe for example, is a reduction for many mainstream audiences of a fictionalized western fantasy in modernity, yet it is a grammar of animacy that is an Indigenous reality (Campbell, 1991).

Metonym is a foundation for Indigeneity, where earth is not a metaphor of life, it is life. As I have discussed in chapter eight, the mana of woman and earth is parallel. They are sources OF life, not resources FOR life. The conflict and confusion lies with modern western thought and the legacy of the narrative that woman was created by man, for man. Kimmerer (2015) explains that creation stories and cosmologies are how we orient ourselves in the world and make sense of it, telling us who we are. Kimmerer says “We are inevitably shaped by them no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness” (p. 7). She tells of the colliding intersection between Skywoman (Indigenous deity of Turtle Island) and Eve (Biblical/western first woman), saying:

One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven. And then they met – the offspring of Skywoman and the children of Eve – and the land around us bears the scars of that meeting, the echoes of our stories. They say that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and I can only imagine the conversation between Eve and Skywoman: 'Sister, you got the short end of the stick...' (p. 7)

I imagine that Hikule‘o would respond similarly to Skywoman upon meeting Eve. Farella (1993) explains that there is a general tendency to politely talk about Indigenous thought in a dismissive way. For example, when it comes to the Earth being mother he says, “we virtually

never talk about the literalness of this. Politeness that is false, translating their ideas into our own image” (p. 18). The metonymical amnesia of modernity results in the problem of the human, which falsely justifies the vision of modern western *man* as ‘master creator’ and the standard for ‘human’ (Juárez & Pierce, 2017; Wynter, 2003). “The arrogance of English is that the only way to be animate, to be worthy of respect and moral concern, is to be a human”, perpetuating an anthropocentric human/object binary (p. 57). The only way to make something alive or recognize it as alive in modernity is to make it human (white, Christian, civilised, modern, cisgendered, male etc.). All “others” are ranked on a scale based on one’s closeness to the proximity of *man*, a ‘humanizing, whitening, civilising’ project that can never be fulfilled by ‘non/sub-human things’ (Fanon, 1963; 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2008). This is a process of being fragmented, depersonalized, split, alienated, objectified, and being fungible in the eyes of the ‘master’ (Juárez & Pierce, 2017). This results in “making the living inanimate, a reverse genesis” (Farella, 1993, p. 4). Indigeneity does not require a western anthropomorphism however, of any animal or person. Indigeneity allows all that is animate to have its own voice, language, expression, animacy, on their own terms (Richardson, 2012).

Indigeneity is premised on the idea of having claim to connections that predate the inception of modernity. Indigeneity bridges the remnant and emergent knowledge of the metonyms of ancestral realities, knowledge, and identity. Rifkin (2012) explains that metaphor is not merely decorations or replacements of metonym but is a process of unfolding truths anew. Metaphor marks the actual and the potential by its mystic transformation of the immaterial into material or the material into immaterial. Metaphor is impressed by what is already in existence but unseen or unacknowledged in ordinary language. Metaphors are negotiations of existing socio-political formations. Metaphor is a language for energy that precedes movement, for affect, the in-between moments and stages. Metaphor exists in the *vā* between agency and hegemony. Metaphor remembers, protects, extends, expresses, and

makes ambiguous the metonym. The movement between metonym to metaphor are expressions of tā, temporality, the pulse of life which is rhythm/vibration, and vā, the temporal and spatial points in between everything. The mo‘ui, life force or energy, moves through and animates space in time. Metaphor and metonym are thus the thresholds between the actual and the emergent, the residue that endures and can continue to be.

The roots of metonym cultivate a language of poetry, a grammar of animacy to reflect a living world (Māhina, 2004; 2011a; 2011c; Kimmerer, 2015). For example, Kimmerer (2015) shares that “in Potawatomi and most other indigenous languages, we use the same words to address the living world as we use for our family. Because they are our family” (p. 55). Awareness of this living connection is what yields the potential to become as the Gods, which I discussed in chapter nine. The grammars of animacy (Indigeneity) see plants, animals, rocks, water, fire, mountains, and places as potentially animate. “Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even stories, are all animate” (p. 55-56). The fonua is possessed with life and spirit, which produces a language of kinship with all the animate world. The mo‘ui of the fonua is imbued with and transmits mana, and those who can see it, feel it, flow with it, do so by making the connection with their own mana. “The animacy of the world is something we already know, but the language of animacy teeters on extinction – not just for Native peoples, but for everyone” (p. 57). Manufactured landscapes in the cosmology of modernity fosters this growing inanimacy.

Indigenous metaphor makes it possible to liberate modern rigidity and fragmentation, where new realities can be created through a relationship with the original, including all memories. Metaphor is the face of metonym. Metaphor is the vision and the reach of metonym. A relationship with metonym allows for a reciprocating, recycling, relational, and reinvented metaphor. This allows for an evolving identity and knowledge within changing contexts that is anchored by the original. Indigeneity transforms as metonym does because it

is an embodied experience, a sensation, and affect that reveals complex relationships in the actual conditions of modern life. Indigenous presence and identity is a memory of past future possibilities that shift the cosmology of existing circumstances. Indigeneity collapses the borders of presence and absence, the walls between past and future, and the divide between physical and psychological. The past is metonym for the present, it is the life force that animates the now. Indigeneity is thus a metaphor for the metonym of ‘the past, the ancestral’, the origins and basis of human experience.

Killsback (2013) suggests that new “Societies reinvent themselves through the manifestation of new ceremonial practices, laws and customs” (p. 95). He also argues that the past cannot be undone, thus colonization cannot either, however it can be endured and overcome. “This is what indigenous societies must do to emerge into a new reality of indigenesness, and they must do so in accordance with the teachings from their elder societies” (p. 111). Memory is traced in metaphor, and the metonym reinvigorates the memory, keeps it alive, and reminds us to keep it warm so it can maintain animation. This is a lesson from the metonym of kava. To return home, to go home as Sione Vaka (2016) shared, referring to reaching a point in the faikava where they begin to play songs that bring the ancestors into the room. One of my Kava elders from Utah also shared that kava is a transporter that takes you back in time, back home. Ka‘ili (2017c) shared how people of the Moana regularly return to homelands in life and in death, and to the spirit world of Puluotu in the case of Tongans. This is a common practice with other Indigenous peoples as well, whether that means one returns periodically in life or permanently in death, physically visiting past sites, or to do so ritually and metaphysically. For example, I grew up with stories about returning to past places in my tribal history. My father explained to me that a story can refer to multiple events and places that have been named after past places, events, and people. This is so we could keep going ‘home’, and bring home with us, thus having multiple homelands.

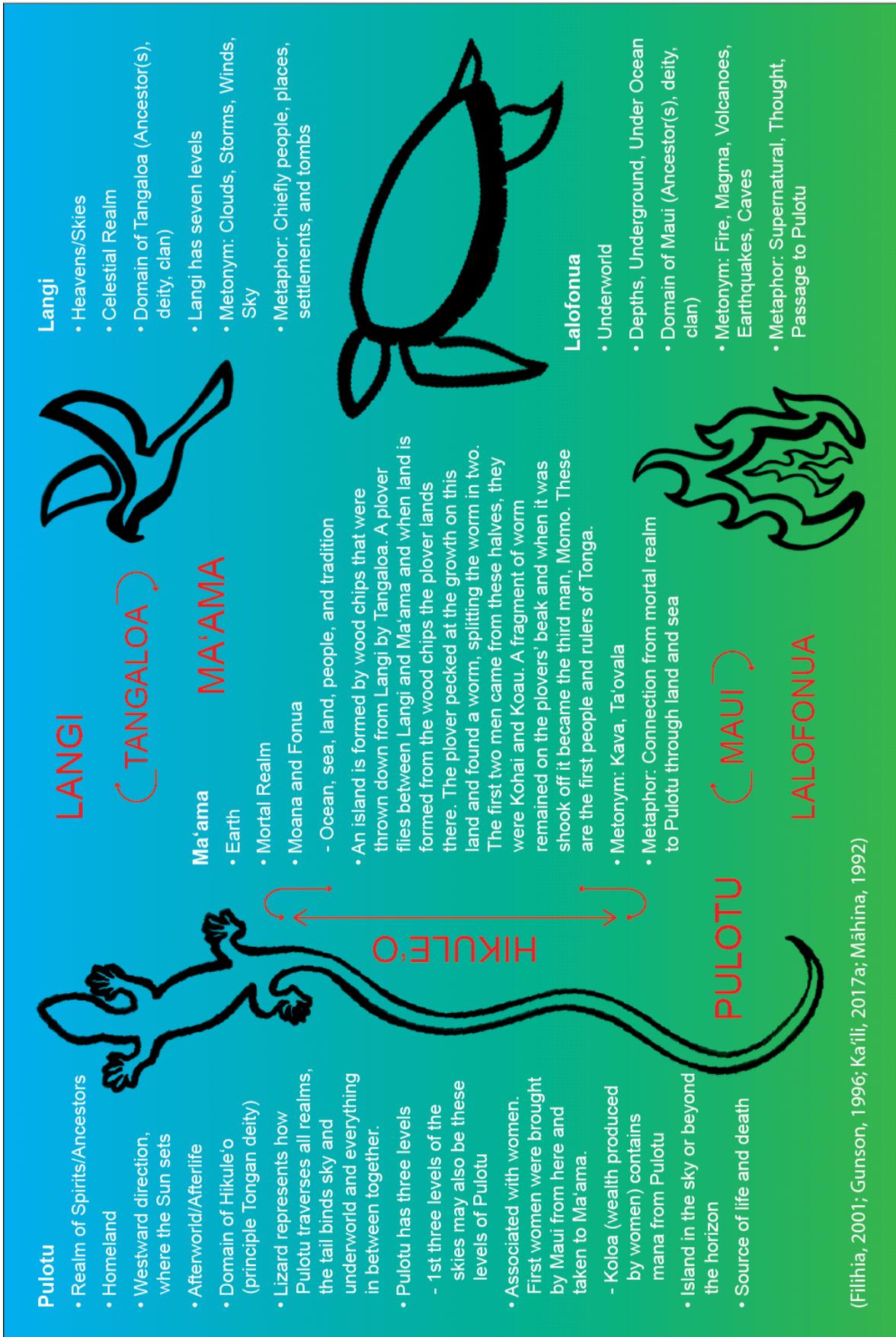


Figure 30. Tongan Cosmology.

Representation of Tongan Cosmology/Cosmogony, which will be referred to in this chapter. Researched, drawn, and commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and digitised with colour by Seline McNamee.

### 10.3. Kava Metaphors

Kava is land, a metonym for fonua; the placenta, land, people, knowledge, tradition, culture, and heritage. Kava being one of the two paramount metonyms for Indigenous Tongan identity and as the focus of this thesis, the remainder of this chapter explores some of the various heliaki that surround kava (Ka‘ili, 2017a). Heliaki has been defined as symbolic or figurative words, surrounding the point rather than going straight to it, and symbolically saying something while meaning another (Ka‘ili, 2017a; Kaepler, 1993; Māhina, 1992; Wood-Ellem & Taumoeolau, 2004). Māhina (In Ka‘ili, 2017a) argues that heliaki encompasses the epiphoric and metaphoric, including an exchange between related entities and merging associated historical events into one. Ka‘ili (2017a) adds that heliaki includes the metonymic process of standing for the whole, where heliaki is a poetic device for mediating temporal and spatial meaning. Heliaki in the following also stands for poetic metaphor, allegory, double-meaning, and innuendo. Because fonua is alive, kava and its physical and metaphysical counterparts are also alive and have mo‘ui (*life, life force, energy*). Heliaki are thus the materialization of lessons from the ancestors and from kava through word, craft, and song. They are animated through listening to kava, to hearing what fonua is saying. They are formed out of finding the rhythm of and responding to fonua, the tala ‘o e fonua (*speaking/words/story of fonua*) (Māhina, 1992; 1993).

#### 10.3.1 Kava‘onau

In chapter four I discussed the kava origin story and the sacrifice of the young woman Kava‘onau by her parents. I also explained that Taumoeolau (2016) suggested that Kava‘onau being a leper could be a metaphor for uno‘uno‘a (*kava dermatopathy*). Bott (2003) suggested that this leprosy could also refer to the appearance of parts of the kava plant. However there are other possibilities in understanding the metaphor of Kava‘onau of which kava is named after. During two different talanoa, one in Aotearoa, and one in Tonga, an

alternative explanation arose suggesting this is a disguised critique of socio-political power.

Why would you offer up someone who was leprous to the highest and most sacred chief? It was suggested by some that the parents should have offered one of themselves as sacrifice. This could be a *heliaki* that gives acknowledgment to political power with a human sacrificial offering, and simultaneously criticizes it with an offensive offering (leprosy). Bott (2003) adds that a human sacrifice itself might also be an insult, assuming that the person being offered it is a 'kaitangata' (*maneater/cannibal*).

Who is being criticized and from what perspective? Some have suggested that this story responds to the tyranny of the rulers in Tonga when the kava ceremony was constructed by Lo'au in order to bring peaceful resolution to the society. Others have suggested that this is an indication of a rupture in the Tu'i Tonga lineage and title. For example, Aho'eitu is the first Tu'i Tonga, and although subsequent names that come after him are known, there is little to no mention or stories surrounding this title until the tenth, Momo, and his son Tuiatui (Herda, 1988; Herda et al., 1996; Gunson, 2011). Some have speculated around the kava bowl that maybe Momo, Tuiatui, or someone within that time was not a rightful heir, but they had obtained the title anyway, so the offering of a leper indicates obligation of respect to a title holder yet a subversive slight that identifies a shift in the titles lineage. There are others still who see the leprosy as a much more recent historical slight, bringing the critique into the present, suggesting that this is in reference to the Tu'i Kanokupolu who is the younger sibling title in relation to the Tu'i Tonga. These proponents argued that this represents respect of the current title holder in the present-day Tongan nation-state monarchy, yet indicates remaining tensions from this shift in power.

Ka'ili (2017c) shared with me the following ideas about the sibling age and title tensions in Tongan society and history:

There's been a battle, a mythological battle. It's been happening of course, for centuries. Between the Tangaloa clan and the Maui clan, in fact in the Tongan

cosmogony, Tangaloa is the older brother, Maui is the younger brother. So, Tangaloa he is considered to be the one that possessed all the knowledge that comes to the first born and is very protective of that knowledge and wants to keep it only within that particular family. Maui on the other hand who is the younger brother doesn't have a lot of status like Tangaloa. He is the one that would gain knowledge and would just share it with people. I think that's where the basis of his power was, his basis of power was for sharing knowledge... To me, that's a tension between the two siblings, and it's something that's been going on for generations. Aho'eitu [descends from] the Tangaloa clan. He is a Tangaloa by title, and what you begin to see is a tension that has been going on in Tonga [between] the elder brother and the younger brother... The tension of Aho'eitu comes down in the Tu'i Tonga line... [The] Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, or Tu'i Kanokupolu, are all younger siblings [to Tu'i Tonga]... The tensions have been going on between [them], since Tangaloa and Maui all the way down to today.

Kava'onau embodies the mana of deep history, medicinal knowledge, and continually negotiated socio-political tensions. This is the namesake of kava.

### 10.3.2 Kava and Tō

Māhina (2011b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017) has emphasized that we cannot forget about tō (*sugarcane*) in the origins of kava. He reminds us that tō also grew from the earth oven turned tomb of Kava'onau. Māhina (2016a) explained to me that tō brings balance to the bitterness of kava. After the trials and sacrifices one endures, represented by the many cups of bitter kava one drinks, the sweet chaser afterwards brings you into balance, and is sweeter in contrast with the bitterness. Lebot et al (1992) explain that origin stories for kava are often also sugarcane origin stories “with both growing from the germinant corpse... Sugarcane is twinned with kava as its antidote” (p. 131). They explain that in kava stories, rats or chiefs are poisoned with kava and are then revived when they eat sugarcane afterwards. Both kava and tō are planted similarly in mounds (like burial tombs) and have long stalks. Kava and tō are both traditionally chewed as well and their fibres spat out. Kava and tō are both medicinal and social. Kava and tō are highly esteemed offerings in Tongan ritual gifting. Lebot et al explain that:

Traditionally, many kava drinkers sucked on lengths of sugarcane to eliminate kava's taste from their mouths. Sugarcane is the archetypal revivifying antidote to the stupors of poisonous or bitter kava (p. 131)

The poisonous of course is a metaphor, some varieties of kava have been used as fish poison when fishing, but the kava that is drunk is not harmful in this way. The poisonous references are thus metaphors of the soporific effects of kava.

Tō like kava yields its own set of metaphors that complement the metaphors of kava. Where kava is death, bitterness, spiritual, tō is life, sweetness, and physical. Together they are the cycles of night and day, life and death, where kava is night/death, and tō is day/life. Fakaifoifo means something that is sweet, a sweetening element, which is commonly referred to in kava settings. Tō takes on the form of a fizzy drink/soda, lollies/sweets, or snacks in its metonymical forms in faikava. Additionally, tō also takes on metaphorical non-material forms, such as actions, words, or songs. For example, when a tou‘a fefine (discussed in chapter eight) is graceful and is serving and presenting kava “so ‘eiki” (*in a graceful chiefly manner*), it can be referred to as fakaifoifo. The slow and graceful dips of the ladle into the kava with careful circular stirring, followed by delicate serving of kava in the ipu that is passed to be drunk can be so sweet it is erotic. This makes bitter kava “ifo inu”, delicious to drink, without a physical sweetener. Poetry, speechmaking, and comedy can also be fakaifoifo in a kava setting. Tō sweetens the bitter, just as laughter softens the critical, allowing for truth to be spoken without fear of reproach. Music and song, especially hiva kakala, the sweet fragrance songs, often accompanied by string bands and with falsetto voices are also fakaifoifo. Even the kava groups that push boundaries in protocol and convention have this balance, such as the Seleka club I mentioned in chapter nine. Seleka shared with me that they have put food colouring in kava at times to make it colourful. They have even put teabags in it before so it would smell nice, each of these acts a fakaifoifo to bring balance to kava. I propose that one of the reasons why reggae music has become so widely adopted by youth and overseas populations is because it is both political and smooth sounding. Reggae can be critical and uplifting, with philosophies of liberation, unity, and love simultaneously.

Additionally, reggae makes regular references to the old testament of the bible, making the music appealing to the Christian sensibilities of many Tongans. Reggae is familiar and a harmonious fit with faikava because it embodies elements of kava and tō.

There is a dislocation occurring however with these balances in diaspora contexts, which I have argued in chapter seven is a temporal and spatial displacement. The relationship to kava is changing through capitalist commodification as I have mentioned in chapter one and six. Combined with the anxieties and struggles of diaspora, kava must also be restored or maintained autonomously by the Moana. Tō has already been severed and transformed into refined processed sugars and the like, which has been a plague on many Indigenous communities and the world. The fruits of modern sugar include addiction, diabetes, pain, amputations, and early deaths. This causes an imbalance in the potential balance between Indigenous relationships between kava and tō. ‘Ulu‘ave-Hafoka (2015) shared that “sugar is cursed for what America did to get it” and thus this curse must be lifted for sugar to be restored as tō once more. When the mana of kava is honoured and tō is restored to its actual (*sugarcane/fruit*) states or expressed in non-material metaphors (e.g., poetry, song) it becomes antidote once more. This balance is a powerful anaesthetic to controversy, hard truths, and difficult histories.

### 10.3.3 Kumete, Tāno‘a/Tanoa, Kava Bowl

The kava bowl itself takes on various metaphorical meanings, marked by the name it is given between functional and ritual use. The legs and bowl are also given astronomical meanings in addition to their symbolic cultural values explained in chapter nine. In this section I explore these symbols and metaphors of the kava bowl and their relationship to Tongan ideas about identity. Jacob Fitisemanu (2015) who has lived in Aotearoa, Hawaii, and is now a prominent leader and knowledge holder in the Utah Pacific Islander community explains some of the ritual transformations of the kava bowl. He explains:

In my interviews with Sāmoan elders and Sāmoan orators and talking chiefs and folks that have experience with these rituals, I was interested in the terminology...there's many instances in the kava ceremony where an ordinary object for example, a wooden bowl...all of a sudden has a different word that refers to it once it's involved in a kava ceremony. For example 'Umete, is a general name ... that refers to any kind of a wooden bowl ... The kava bowl with multiple legs can also be called 'Umete, however once it's placed into the ritual context of a kava ceremony, it becomes used as a receptacle for kava it is no longer appropriate to refer to it as 'Umete, it transforms into Tānoa ... it becomes sacred and has to be rendered noa ... It involves everyday people, it involves everyday objects, but in the context of that ritual they are then transformed, or transcend into something more sacred ...when they're used in that context they take on a higher meaning and a transcendent use...noa meaning free of tapu, its unrestricted, it's an ordinary object, and tā-noa, meaning to render or to return it to its unsanctified state"

In the Tongan contexts today kumete is the most common reference to the kava bowl and is in regular use. However the taumafa kava, regal ceremony, still changes the name of the kumete to tāno'a, which is equivalent to tānoa and tanoa in Sāmoan and Fijian.

The use of kumete for Tongans is a way to distinguish faikava from taumafa kava, respecting the protocols and difference of higher chiefly rank. Kumete may also refer to the frequent use of kava and its general presence among Tongan communities as well, indicating that it is common and regular, reserving tāno'a for less common events and rituals. The mana of kava makes the session tapu once it is poured into the kumete. The consumption of kava by participants in the circle makes them noa to each other, opening up and neutralizing the space of each of their individual mana and tapu. As I have indicated in chapter five, while they may be noa to each other, they become tapu to those outside. Additionally, drawing from the tā vā theory, tā, being a metaphor for time, temporality is suspended and neutralized through kava. Kava and the kava bowl, tā - no'a/noa, neutralize tempo through aligned rhythms of energies converging in a faikava, collapsing time. This is why those outside of the circle may feel like they are waiting for a long time for participants, because they are not in the realm where time has become noa, a temporal relativity of those in the space.



**Figure 31. T. Fale and Kava bowl.**

**Tēvita Fale holding a kava bowl in his right hand with humu design drawn on it. Retrieved from: <http://thfale.com/traditional-polynesian-education/>**

Tongan astronomer Tēvita Fale (2015) argues that the kava ceremony and bowl is embodied with astronomical knowledge. He was keen to talanoa with me when I met him in Tonga because of my Mayan ancestry. He argues that the systems of knowledge are the same between Mayan and Tongan approaches to astronomy. He explained that Maui's kava bowl is modelled after a small carved-out bowl on top of the Ha'amonga 'a Maui (stone trilithon) on Tongatapu Island. The lateral points in the design represent the solstices, and the middle point the equinox. There are several people who have explained to me that there are three pathways at the Ha'amonga 'a Maui site, which correspond to the three points in this design that can be seen aligning with the movement of the sun across the horizon (Ka'ili, 2017c; Suren, 2015; Tu'itahi, 2016a). The downward triangular protrusion on the front of the kava bowl will be explained later in this chapter, which indicates the eastern direction. Fale explains that the Tu'i Tonga kava ceremony had the kava bowl facing east, with the chief sitting in the east. The current taumafa kava is reversed, after the manner of the Tu'i Kanokupolu, where the bowl faces towards the olovaha/chief sitting in the west (see figure 19). Fale explains that the kava ceremony means that something that was hanging up, such as the kava bowl by the

rope/chord tied to the front of the bowl is brought down. He shared with me that “It means they bring down the heaven and set the kava, and they use it for the kava ceremony”. Kava is a cosmic arrangement where the heavens are brought down and the people are taken up, an intersection between sky and earth.

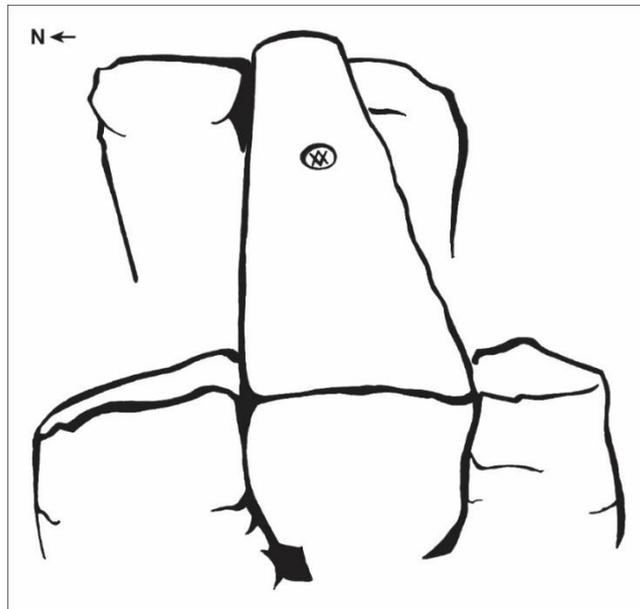


Figure 32. Approximate imagination of an aerial depiction. Drawn by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

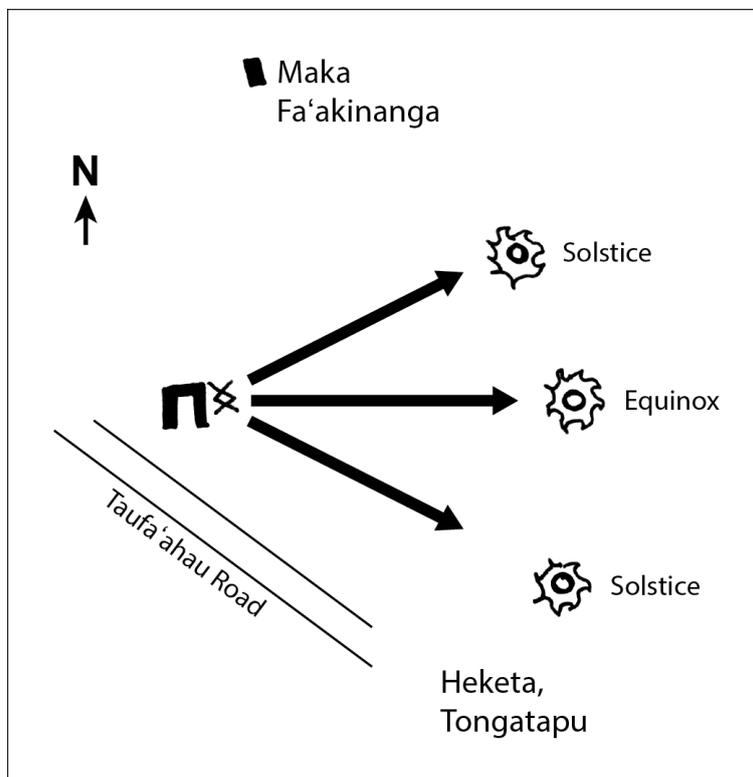


Figure 33. Solar pathways at Ha'amonga 'a Maui. Drawn by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).



Figure 34. Ha'amonga 'a Maui. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

Tu'itahi (2016a; 2016b) explained to me that the humu design is also used in lalava (*Tongan chiefly patterned lashings*) that can be observed on the ceiling of a chiefly fale (*traditional house*). Ka'ili (2017c) shared with me that humu is a design for the trigger fish. When I learned of these connections to the astronomical design of solstices and equinox, I recalled some time spent with fishermen who spearfish and dive in the Ha'apai and Vava'u island groups. I learned that the humu has a unique dorsal spine that it uses to lock itself into a place, like within a cavity in the reef. One person shared that you cannot scare them out or even physically pull them out, when they are locked in place there is no moving them. I have conceptualized the kava bowl as a canoe that carries land and people through time and space. Kerr (2016), Siope (2016), and McKenzie (2017) of the Haunui waka (*kalia/double-hulled canoe*) in Aotearoa have shared voyaging stories with me, and given me the opportunity to go out on the Moana with them. McKenzie (2017) in particular has shared much of his experiences with me over a bowl of kava and explained that navigators anchor the waka in place with stars. Meaning that the islands are fished out as the stories say, because they come

to you as you are fixed in place. The world moves around you rather than you moving across the sea. This parallel's the faikava existential phenomenon of collapsing time in space, where you align with the rhythms of people and place to be anchored by roots while time moves around you and outside of the circle. Kava as a cultural anchor is similar to the humu, allowing people to root themselves into ancestral values and Indigenous identities.



**Figure 35. Lalava Humu design.**

**Lalava (Tongan chiefly lashings) of humu design. Fale Pasifika University of Auckland. Lashings by: Filipe Tohi. (Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez)).**



**Figure 36. Drinking Kava with Numa.**

**Drinking kava with Numa McKenzie (right) at Papakura Art Gallery. Photograph shared by Numa.**

I had a Fai Kava with Vaha Tu‘itahi and Rizván Tu‘itahi during a trip to Tonga in my first year of this research. We had just returned from visiting the Ha‘omonga ‘a Maui at the village of Heketa, where Vaha was raised. After an evening of talanoa regarding Tongan history and having acknowledged the ancestral spirits at the Ha‘amonga ‘a Maui, kava revealed the kupesi manulua to me. That evening in a dream I faced an ancestor, he wore only ngatu (*barkcloth*) around his waist covered in the kupesi manulua (*double frigate bird design*). This ancestor had an afro and a deep bronze glow off his dark skin and sturdy build. As he faced me he asked what I was searching for. I said “only what is for me to know”. He replied “what do you desire to know?” and I replied the same, only what was for me, and he repeated yet again his second question of what I desired to know. I then replied I want to know the knowledge of kava. He then told me that I would have to earn it, and as he finished saying this the kupesi manulua from his ngatu flew out, both sets of bird wings in triangular form flapping and then reuniting to their original design form in the base of a kava bowl. Looking from above the manulua became part of the bottom of the bowl and the intersecting middle point in the centre of the design sparked as they met in balance, equilibrium, noa. It was at this point in the dream that both of my calf muscles cramped, causing me to wake up in a manner I had never experienced before and have yet to again. The kupesi manulua is a design of two frigate birds that are crucial in navigation and would at times also be transported on kalia and released when land was close. The manulua appears on the base of the bowl as you take a posterior view and draw lines from east to west and north to south, according to the face of the bowl, and then draw lines connecting the legs of the bowl, revealing eight right triangles (half-square’s). These diagonal points from the kava bowl legs could represent the contemporary points of Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. Thus, the kupesi manulua can be imagined as a merging of different compass designs in the design of two navigational birds whose wings create a balanced symmetry. Through direct

relationship with land in the metonym of kava; this becomes a contemporary Indigenous metaphor for the crucial role identity formation and reinforcement in faikava plays in navigating life.

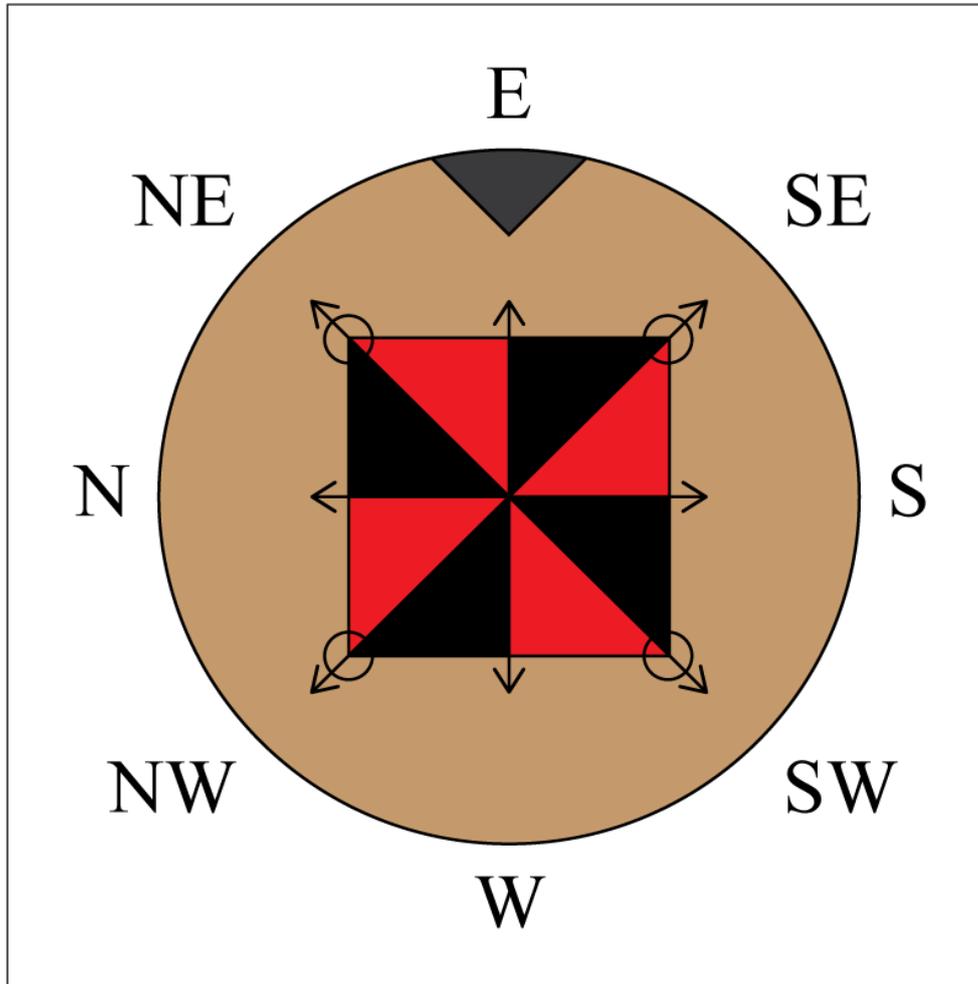


Figure 37. Kupesi Manulua in Kava bowl. Commissioned by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) and created by Seline McNamee.

Cultural anchors and navigational compasses are ecologically and socially linked as I have explained in this section. This allows people of the Moana to navigate their life experiences with truths revealed in kava, becoming steadfast in their identity, in the mana of knowing who they are. Faikava allows participants to plant roots of identity as they consume the roots of the land, which is traced in the metaphorical knowledge emanated from kava, and the kava bowl.

#### 10.3.4 Facing the Kava Bowl

There are a few metaphors for the front of the kava bowl that is a protruding carved out downward triangle or V. These include being a face of or to face the kava bowl, as well as a vagina. Fijians refer to it as mata ni tanoa, or face of the kava bowl. There are others who have also explained it to be a chalice and the entrance to the female body, the land, the fonua, which leads to kava. The rope or chord that is still prevalently used in Fijian kava bowls was also previously used in Tongan and Sāmoan bowls to hang them up when not in use. This rope is representative of the umbilical cord that leads back to the womb of the earth on the kava bowl.



**Figure 38. Kava bowl cord.**

**Face of the Tongan kumete. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez) at the Auckland War Memorial Museum.**

Lebot et al (1992) explain that in regions of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, kava sprouts from a vagina or navel and has generative and fertile components. In some Vanuatu stories, the phallic shoots of kava appear in order to copulate with woman so it can be continually regenerated and grown. Kava is both feminine and masculine at times across the Moana, and often bisexual or androgynous, being both male and female at the same time. In the case of Tonga, the young woman kava'onau is sacrificed and her death gives life to kava. There is also the story of Aho'eitu, the son of Tangaloa who is killed by his half-brothers and

is then resurrected inside of a kava bowl. Lebot et al (1992) explain that higher ranking women in Tongan, Sāmoan, Tahitian, Hawaiian, and Pohnpeian chiefdoms, as well as “women elsewhere past menopause, whose gender status typically becomes masculinized as they age” would have “traditional rights to drink kava” (p. 137). Hikule‘o the principle deity of Tonga is a masculinized female deity, who may also be considered fakatangata (see chapter eight). The earthly God Faifaimālie who drank kava in the realm of Hikule‘o is also described as an older woman. One of the reasons why kava can yield harmonious relations and peaceful conflict resolution is because as Tu‘itahi (2016a) expressed “kava outranks everyone present”. Kava is ageless women, being both the young maiden, and an older woman, which as woman and elder is the highest rank that is yielded to in the circle. This is one meaning of the face of the kava bowl, which is to face the mana of woman, of earth, and the potency of life cycles in which kava is earth. The phallic shoots of the kava plant grow out of the life giving earth, and the magic and mana of kava is found deep within, where the roots extend and grow. The roots are what is drunk and carry the kavalactones that give the physical effects of drinking kava, but the leaves are also useful in medicine such as wrapping around cuts. The stem (metaphorical phallus) is what is used for replanting, and is inserted into a hole in the ground to yield new kava plants for regrowth. The process of planting kava is also metaphorically a sexually reproductive one.

There is one other metaphor of the face of the kava bowl I would like to propose as well. Fale (2015) had suggested to me that when one faces the bowl directly only the front two legs are visible, which he said were the posts of the Ha‘amonga ‘a Maui. Tu‘itahi (2016a) explained to me that the Ha‘amonga ‘a Maui represents a gateway in time because it not only tracks the sun, it also holds up the present as a monument of the past. Tu‘itahi further explained to me that the burden of Maui is that of serving the people and becomes the responsibility of the rulers of Tonga to serve and guide the people. Ka‘ili (2016a) has

explained that when Maui holds up the sky he is metaphorically pushing against tyrannical rule of some chiefs in history. In considering these explanations as well as various dreams I began to have in Tonga, I started to see the trilithon as a metaphor for Maui. The lateral stone posts are his arms that push up the heavens, and the sky is represented by the stone that is held up on top. Māhina (2016a) explained to me that the sun is a metaphor for ruler and chief, and in reflecting on this I thought of the head of the Tu'i that was tapu and could not be touched by any lower ranks, marking them as high chief. As Maui holds up the sky he captures the sun in the Ha'amonga trilithon. This is done by tracking the solstices and equinoxes that appear in alignment with the humu design whose pathways are marked out at this site, explained earlier in this chapter. This is also part of the metaphor of the kava bowl, the V in front of the bowl being a chalice, the birth canal, a head, the face of the bowl or the facing of it. The front legs are the arms of Maui and the lateral posts of the trilithon. The rim of the bowl is the sky and where the legs stand is the underworld, and inside the bowl is the middle realm, the earth, fonua.

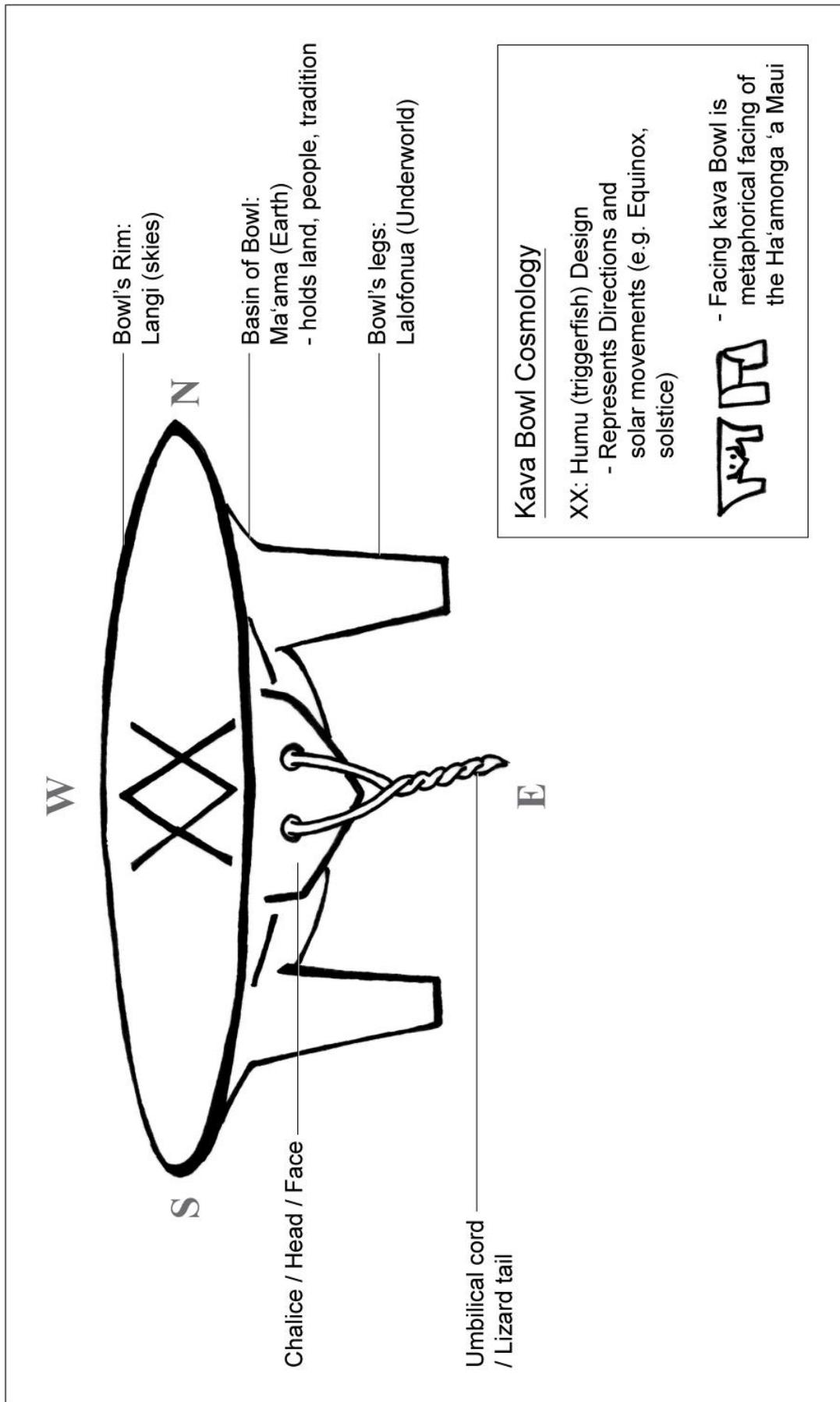


Figure 39. Kava bowl cosmology. Drawn and constructed by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

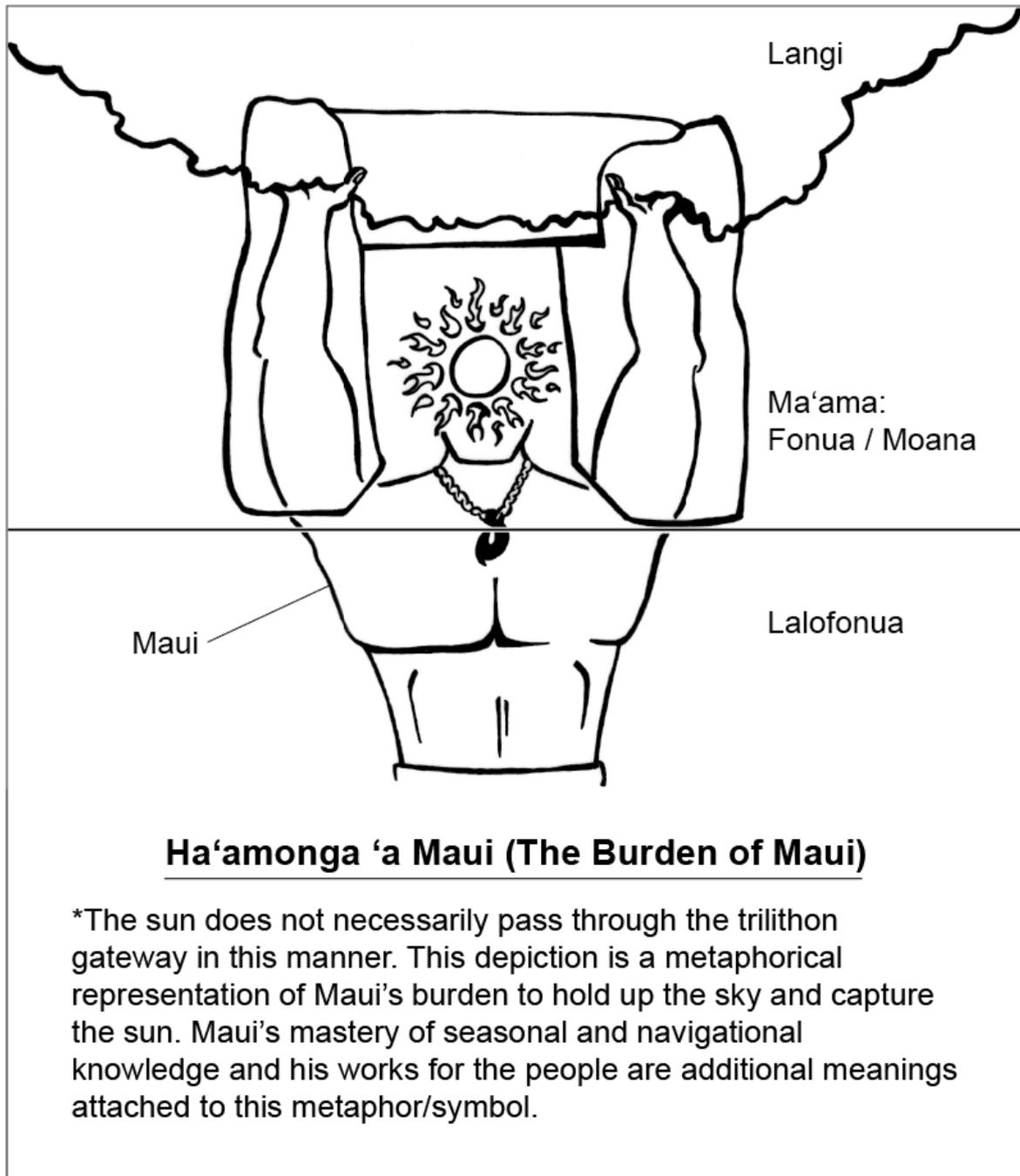


Figure 40. Maui drawing. Drawn and constructed by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

### 10.3.5 Death and Dreaming

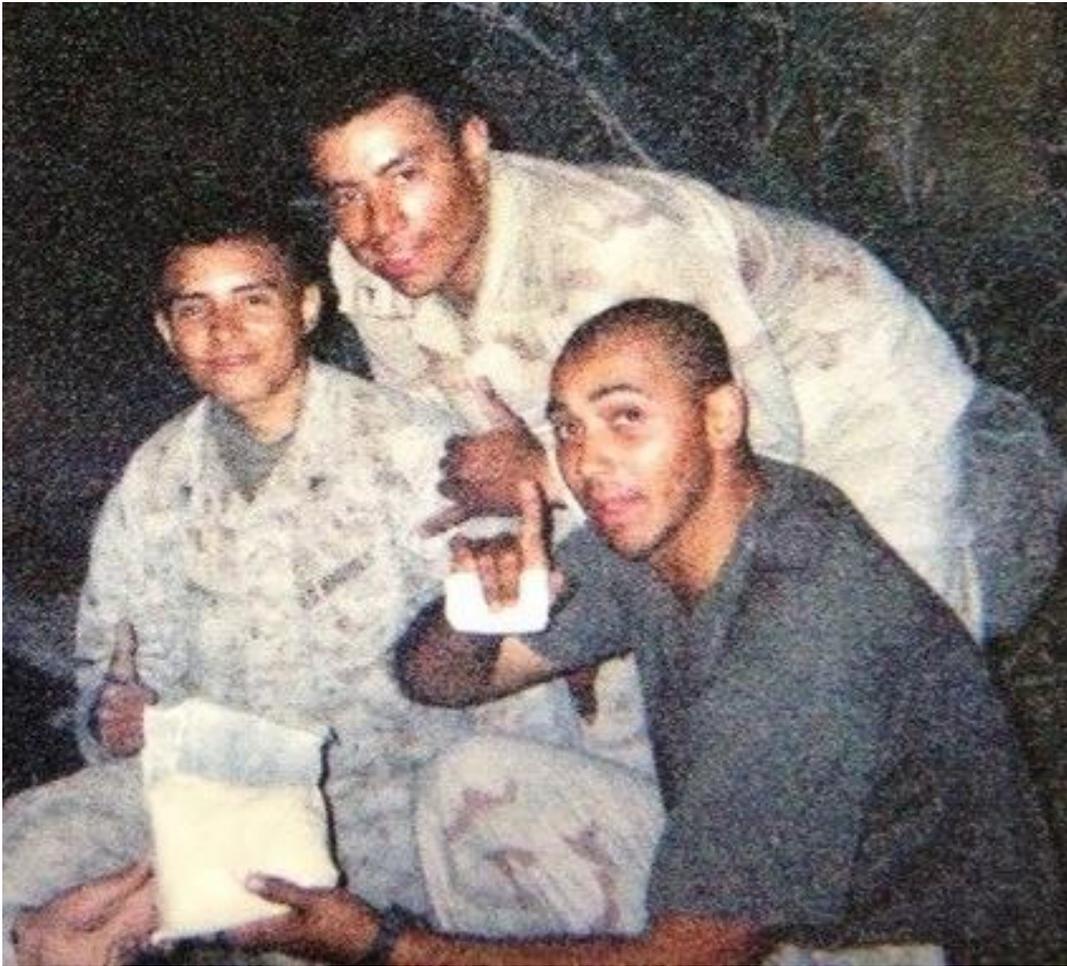
The physical effects of kava are metaphorically linked to death, spirits, and ancestral consciousness. The word kona means bitter in Tongan and not only describes the taste of kava but the effects. When one is bittered, the word kona becomes konā, which means to be intoxicated by kava, literally to be poisoned. This word is heliaki, a metaphorical death where

one enters the realm of spirits. In this section I explore the role of metaphorical death, dreaming, consciousness, and night in faikava.

On one occasion drinking kava with a small pan-Moana kalapu the significance of kava, death, and funerals was particularly pronounced. On this occasion there had been a recent tragic death of a young person in the community. The host of the kava session established at the beginning that the young person would be honoured that evening. Funeral kava extends before and after the funeral at a central location hosted by close kin. Although there is a central location, supporting and extended kin and friends across the globe may send their support by drinking in their respective kava circles to see the deceased off into the next realm. Ka‘ili (2017a) explains that traditional beliefs are that one returns to Puluotu after death, the spirit realm, the homeland. On this particular occasion we joined together to meet this young person on their way home. The host set out an extra cup to represent the deceased person and would call out their name at each round, after which each person in the circle took a turn drinking on their behalf in proxy. Through metaphorical death by becoming *konā* and going in between consciousness of slumber and awakening we joined them on their journey home, meeting them half way.

Kava is also drunk to welcome people home, say farewells, or proxy drink on someone’s behalf who is far away and possibly in danger of death, such as in military service. Through the night and spiritual realms, one can travel to support their loved ones afar, in life or in death, but it is through the death and renewal of night that this journey can be taken. Lebot et al (1992) explains that drinking kava to the point of becoming *konā* “is like death; it is sexual rapture; it is tranquil sociability” (p. 141). They add that kava gifting, exchange, and consumption for Tongans and elsewhere in the Pacific for funerals are crucial rites of passage, which “transform the dead person into an ancestor and make survivors into widows,

widowers, and orphans” (p. 143). Kava at funerals officially bestows title of ancestor to the deceased.



**Figure 41. USMC Kava.**

**Mario Cadenas (middle) and Robert Reeves (right) introduced me to kava. They are stationed in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps in this picture. Robert is holding a bag of kava to mix and drink before and after their combat tour. Robert’s brothers Havili and Sione Reeves of the Ogden Kava Boys Kalapu were also drinking kava on their behalf at home, along with other friends and relatives. (Photograph shared by Mario Cadenas).**

Sione Vaka (2016) shared with me his experience and knowledge surrounding the significance of drinking kava during the night, the role of meditation, and nature:

I think doing it at night is very important, it has some special connections with nature as well ... Our society has sort of been structured to have different activities in the day, and [kava] functions are much more suitable at night... maybe that’s why we’re much more connected with our past ancestors ‘cause we’re doing it during the night... we’re moving backwards into the future... The further we move to our ancestors, the deeper we are looking into the future ... and there’s no other time to do that but at night ... If you want to connect with the people past before you, you may need to take a lot of meditations ... and [enter] a different state of mind ... which would be very difficult to achieve during the day, there is too much disruptions, too much distractions during the day ... the nature of the kava, and the relaxation, aligns well with the night.

Wihongi (2016) explains these effects as a way to centre you, ground you, while Vaka (2016) adds that the renewal power of night and kava has a stabilizing effect. Bott (2003) explained that the generally mild tranquilizing or anaesthetic physiological feelings of kava are socially intensified. Bott shares that despite these relatively mild effects of kava, Tongans “treat kava as if it were strong stuff. And so it is, but the strength comes from society, not from the vegetable kingdom” (p. 184). The added strength of kava comes from the energy of night and the “communication with ancestors as sources of power” (Turner, 2012, p.31). The renewal power of kava as death in the night is a way of restoring and repairing relationships, balance, and recovering ancestral memory. This is a collective power and potency that intensifies the feelings, effects, and experience of faikava. This is done by drawing energy from the mana of kava and from the ancestors present through chiefly titles and people’s ancestral names (Abramson, 2005; Pollock, 1995; Turner, 1986; Tomlinson & Bigitibau, 2016). Turner (2012) explains that Indigenous supernatural relationships are “personalized as ancestors, gods, or spirits whose moods and intentions affect human affairs, interaction with them is essential to well-being” (p.32).

Kava death and dreaming is part of Indigenous Tongan epistemology and ontology. Through death, balance can be calibrated with life, while death occurs, life is also renewed. Gregory (1988) explained that during his experience exploring the mental effects of kava, “many old memories seemed to move from the unconscious to the conscious level. Stories learned in childhood, teachings of kin, omens, symbols and signs, all came up” (p.16). Bott (2003) explains that kava ceremony is like dream structures in revealing the subconscious even when people are not aware that it is happening. Metaphorical kava death is also metaphor for dreaming, consciously aware dreaming, and the movement between slumber (death/dreaming) and awakening (conscious dreaming). Handy (1940) explained that night activities refers to more than sleep:

Polynesians extended the applications of “night” (po) to mean: (1) the “other world” of spirits of the dead and the realm of gods, who were all directly or indirectly ancestral; and (2) a primordial condition before the origination of the world and its forms, animate and inanimate, when the “World of Light or Day” ... became manifest (p. 309).

Dreamers are seers, and premeditated dreaming, as well as dreaming in sacred or ancestral places gives access to knowledge and wisdom. Dreams are visions by the spirit, revelations that are received (Handy, 1940).

Kava signals a time apart or out of everyday life where conflicts are mediated and social and political rank is suspended through temporally dying. Tongans eventually play slower songs and become more silent the deeper into the evening one gets, which in much of Vanuatu happens earlier on in the evening, different kava customs get to similar places at different paces. Kava drinkers are able to increase their audial capacity and listen to kava, night, and death, where they can hear “the voices of their ancestors” (Lebot et al, 1992, p. 140). Kava stimulates supernatural aid and attention by entering the spirit realm where the ancestors reside, making connections to Gods and ancestral spirits. Death through kava is “an important means of inspiration” where participants can receive knowledge, gain ancestral favour, and access spiritual sources of wisdom (p. 120).

In turn one must be revived from death to return to the mortal realm. One way is to eat. Troy Wihongi (2016) drawing from both his Tongan and Māori ancestries and knowledge shared the following:

An interesting thing, for the Māori, they don't [traditionally] drink kava, but they have many things that are tapu. When you go onto the marae and you're speaking back and forth and everything else [it] becomes something that is very tapu. So, in order to remove the sacredness of it, what they do is they go and partake of food, because [eating is only done by those] who have bodies, so the spirits that have passed on that are there and present on the marae and with everyone else, it's a way to say it's time to separate ourselves from all our kindred dead, from those who have passed on. In order to separate themselves they have to do something that is physical, so partaking of food is something that's physical and it nullifies the tapu, noa... So, drinking kava is also something that's ceremonial, and something that's spiritual, and I often thought about [this]... we eat afterwards to nullify [tapu] and bring us back to something that's earthly, that's physical again... if you just drink a medium amount of kava and then

you go and eat, the flavours and everything are there, it tastes so good, because you've been drinking this drink that's just very bland, there's very little taste ... then you fill your mouth with all these flavours and it's the opposite and it's just wow! Then the kava that you put into your body reacts to the food you've eaten and the lactones react with that and all of a sudden you may have been feeling a little bit, on a scale of 1-10, at a 5 konā level, and you eat your food and all of a sudden you jump up to a 7 or an 8 sometimes.

Going into the spiritual realm and returning intensifies the physiological effects of kava, which reflects the process of Indigenous knowledge production. You go to the realm of Pulotu and then you return with something from there and your mana increases, you feel life because you have died. This is what many ancestors did in the past that have become deified over time for such great feats of obtaining and doing knowledge. When one goes deep into the mind it is like traveling to the spirit world. When one returns with knowledge obtained there through critically reflecting and thinking, it is like overcoming death. Kava assists in retrieving this knowledge by giving passage to the spirit realm.



Figure 42. Troy drinking kava. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

Another way to revive the metaphorical death is through clapping. Some have explained to me that clapping wakes up the ancestors. This is similar to whistling at night, singing falsetto, or playing the nose flute, all of which can potentially acknowledge or wake up spirits that are around. Lebot et al (1992) explained that clapping during kava preparation and distribution is “a common technique to awaken the awareness and interest of the supernatural” (p. 139). The ancestors being acknowledged, welcomed, and recognized in the present, in turn outrank everyone in their elder status (Tu‘itahi, 2016b). Thus, because of the deep respect for elders, one respects conventions of peaceful interactions in front of the ancestors that are present, where kava represents a gateway between physical and metaphysical realms. Kava clapping varies but is composed of *fū* (*deep clap with cupped hands*). I have observed Tongan protocol consist of one or two claps to call for their kava or to identify themselves when their name is called in more formal rituals. When drinking with *iTaukei* they will usually clap once before drinking, and then three times after drinking. Fitisemanu (2015) shared with me that in a Sāmoan story involving Tangaloa and other high chiefs, a young child disrupted the kava ceremony and was punished by being cut in half. The chief who executed the young boy felt remorse for taking the life of a friend’s child. Tangaloa instituted the first kava ceremony in this story by mixing kava with water and tears of mourning, and with the first cup of kava poured it over the two halves of the child and the body was reconstituted as one. Jacob Fitisemanu (2015) explained that:

In commemoration of that re-joining [and] resurrection of life, the kava being used to instil life into a lifeless being, the chiefs clapped and the Gods clapped, and that’s where that came from ... there’s something in that, it was celebratory but also symbolized a reawakening, or a resurrection of life, and that metaphor, that symbolism of kava of giving life or restoring life, has been there since the inception, since the origin story of kava in the Sāmoan context.

Kava is both death and the power to overcome death. For example, the Tongan stories are of Kava‘onau dying and giving life to kava and *tō*, and of Aho‘eitu, being killed by his brothers

and then resurrected in a kava bowl. Deep into the night when people begin falling asleep in their sitting positions or drifting between consciousnesses, the claps by the group to drink again, revives them. When the claps are heard, the nodding heads pop up and they awaken to imbibe once more. Clapping thus revives the living who metaphorically die in kava sessions as well as awakens the deceased who now reside in Pulumotu.

### 10.3.6 Chewing Kava and Kava as Blood

Chewing kava is both metonym and metaphor of Tongan cosmology. This section will explore the significance of kava as blood or connection to blood. The chewing of kava is a practice that was done away with through missionary influence that saw it as unsanitary. Western missionaries were unaware of the chemical properties of kava and overlooked the millennial tradition of its consumption (Bott, 2003; Dale, 2008; Lebot et al, 1992). The chewing of kava is symbolic of sacrifice, blood, and ritual cannibalism (Helu, 1999; Māhina, 2011b; 2016b; Shumway & Smith, 1999; Thomson, 1984; Turner, 1986). Kava is a metaphor of ancestor that is consumed, bestowing ancestral mana upon the imbiber of kava as the deified ancestor enters the physical body coming to life again. In this section I explore these symbols and metaphors further.

The kava chant explained in chapter four refers to kava being chopped and chewed. Newell (1947) explained that the Taumafa Kava, regal ceremony, metaphorically chops and chews the kava in pounding green kava root with stones. Newell explains that in this ritual the kava represents Aho'eitu who went to Langi (*the heavens/sky*) to find his father Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a. Aho'eitu was killed and eaten by his jealous half-brothers while in Langi. After eating Aho'eitu, they were commanded to vomit him up by their father, which they did so in a kava bowl that was then covered with leaves and where he was reconstituted and came back to life. Gunson (1993; 2010; 2011) argues that this story alludes to a shamanic and priestly role of the sacred Tu'i Tonga paramount chief, having become anew after trial and

death in pursuit of higher knowledge, eventually taking on a new name/title/role. The adaptation in today's Taumafa Kava of using stones is a re-enactment of the chewing of Aho'eitu and the previous practice of preparing kava by chewing it. Lebot et al (1992) explains that:

Kava inebriation brings one into a communion with the gods and ancestors. In so doing, it also provides access to potentially valuable and powerful knowledge...a form of sacrifice to the gods – the body (rootstock) of kava chewed or pounded (killed) before being communally consumed as a sort of religious offering...kava consumption rituals often do appear to entail sacrifices of kava to the gods (p. 152).

Thus, the kava root is ancestor, sacrifice, resurrection, and offering. A resuscitation or making anew of Aho'eitu brought back to life when mixed with water. This ancestor is then consumed and animated in the living who drink his sacrament. The physiological effects of kava are testaments of the living energy in kava, the mana of chiefly founding ancestors.

Kava as ancestor is also the blood of that ancestor or the blood of ancestral land. The colour red is tapu as it contains the mana of life. Red makes a symmetrical pair and complimentary duality with the colour black, which is death (Potautaine & Māhina, 2007; Ka'ili, 2017a). This is a similar reason to why the colours red and black are also sacred for my people (Mayans), red being east, where the sun rises and gives life, and black where the sun sets and enters death, both colours together representing the cycles of life. This is also similar to Māori use of these colours as well, which can be found on the Tino Rangatira Flag in Aotearoa today. Some have shared with me that the colour of kava that appears brown is metaphorically the colour of dried blood. For example, the dark reddish brown of dried blood is similar to the red bark painting on ngatu that goes brown-ish with age and as it dries. Matagi (2015) shared that the Moana practice of burying the placenta after birth, which is the life blood in the womb, is connected to kava. He explained that because the placenta is returned to the earth through burial, this is symbolically the same place where kava roots grow. The roots of the kava plant are thus fed with that same blood in the ground. Kava is the

blood of the fonua (placenta and land). Kava is metaphorically red, blood, and connected to the sun (red/east) as I have explained earlier regarding the Ha‘omonga ‘a Maui.

Hau‘ofa (2008) wrote a poem called “Blood in the Kava Bowl” which draws on a different connection to blood in kava. He wrote, “. . .he tastes not the blood in the kava. . .to chew for the king the kava mixed with blood from their mouths, the mouths of all oppressed Tongans” (p. 181). He refers here to the story of the twenty third Tu‘i Tonga Takalaua who was oppressive to the people, and in retaliation, two older men killed him. However, the revenge upon these assassins came by the hands of Takalau’s sons who eventually captured them after chasing and battling them across various islands (Gifford, 1924; Thomson, 1984). When the assassins were finally captured they were not immediately killed but rather brought to Tongatapu to chew kava root for the royal ceremony. They were old and without teeth and thus their gums bled and the kava included their blood as oppressed Tongans. They met a painful and prolonged death as they were cut up while still alive and chewing throughout their kava preparation. Those in the kava circle would periodically cut pieces off of them to be eaten alongside the kava until they finally perished a long and painful death to tyrannical rule that they fought against. The tragedy of this story is juxtaposed in Hau‘ofa’s (2008) poem where he says the ceremony takes place “under the aegis of the priest of Maui” (p. 181). Maui, as a younger sibling in title, clan, and family, fought against the oppression of elder siblings, chiefs, and clans, yet his priest in Hau‘ofa’s poem officiates the brutal punishment to those who killed a repressive chief of their time (Ka‘ili, 2016a; Māhina, 1992; Thomson, 1984).

The blood of oppressed Tongans in the story of Takalaua’s revenge in Hau‘ofa’s poem also alludes to the kava origin story. Lo‘au as an author and architect of Tongan society reminded that there must be a balance between chiefs and people to prevent such atrocity and societal chaos or imbalance (Bott, 1982; 2003; Biersack, 1991; Newell, 1947; Turner, 1986).

Lo‘au’s kava ceremonial construction responded to the conflicts of the past and anticipated conflicts of the future, thus kava as blood is a reappearing reminder of cycles of conflict and the need to restore balance through sacrifice across social strata. Māhina (2011c) argued that juxtaposing opposing forces of criticism and harmony as poetic stories brings tō (comedy) and kava (tragedy) together. This is a socio-political reminder and remedy that death and life represent balance between social and ecological relationships.

The act of chewing happens on the top part of the body with the mouth being part of the face (head), which is a tapu area and region. I will return to the head, but first I discuss the metaphor of the head in Indigenous Tongan cosmology represented by the coconut. Gunson (1996) described a pre-Christian Tongan priestly description of the world demonstrated by a coconut split in half. The top half where the eyes and nose (three dots) of the coconut lie represent Langi and the seven levels of heaven, which is held up by two trees that hold up the sky. One tree is a toa (*ironwood*) tree that was used by Aho‘eitu to climb up to Langi and then return to Ma‘ama (*earth*). The other tree is found across the horizon and in the spirit realm of Pulotu and there this tree is known as ‘Akalea or Pukolea (*hernandia tree*). Between Pulotu and Ma‘ama lies the founding rock in the middle of the sea where the first peoples descend from. This is represented as the space between where the coconut is split. The underworld is represented by the bottom half of the coconut shell where one finds volcanic fire. The sky is the realm of Tangaloa and the underworld the realm of Maui and the earth their meeting grounds. Their relative Hikule‘o is the guardian of Pulotu, and she/he is the principle deity of Tonga. Hikule‘o is connected to all realms and this is represented by a rope or lizard tail that binds sky and underworld together with earth and spirit realm in the middle.

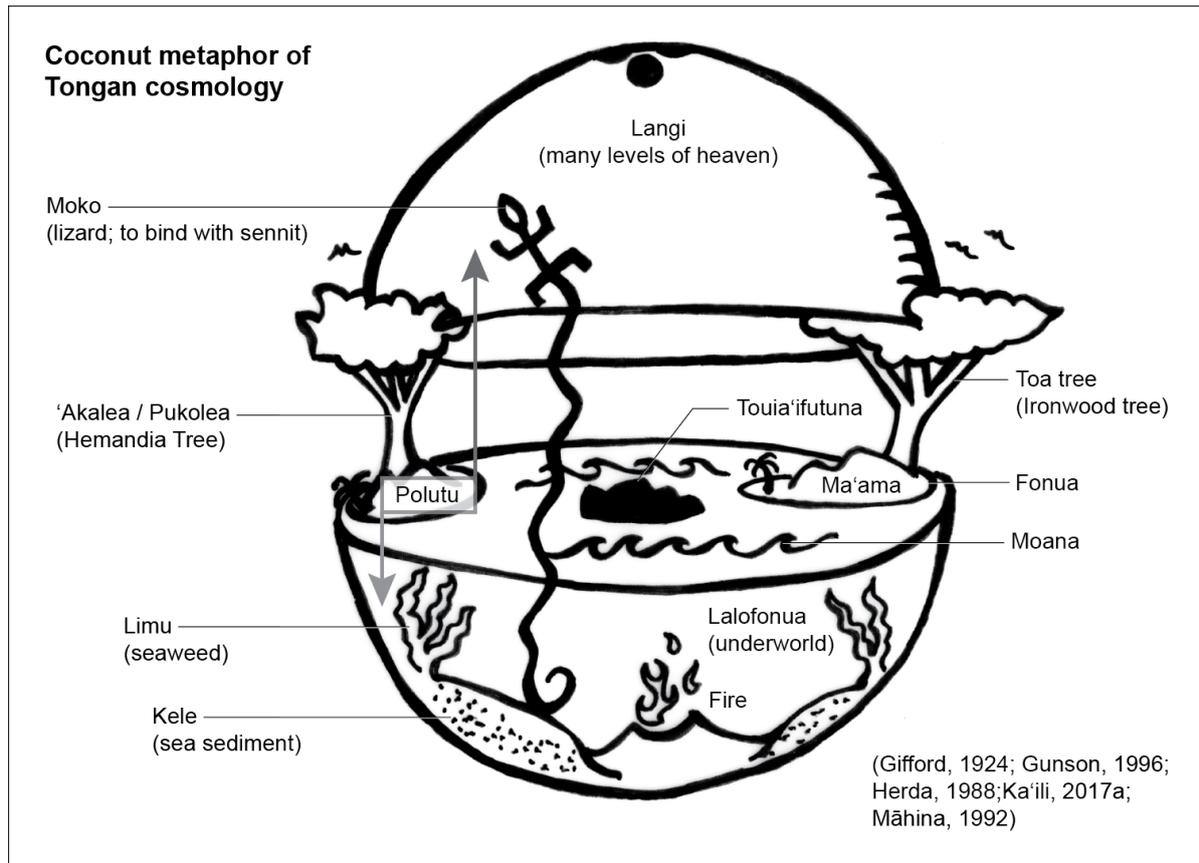


Figure 43. Coconut Tongan Cosmology.

Tongan Cosmology represented by the coconut, re-interpretation of Gunson (1996) drawing. Drawn by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

The significance of the coconut representation of the world is that this also exists in the head, the skull, which the coconut is metaphor for, although with shifted spatial dimensions. Similar to Mātauranga Māori, the upper jaw of the skull is Langi, sky or celestial knowledge and the lower jaw is Ma'ama, earth, or temporal knowledge. The cranium or brain is the Lalofonua or underworld and the spirit/ancestral realm is the life that animates and traverses sky, earth, and underworld. The two trees that hold up the sky (upper jaw) are the kava and tō plants because these cause the skull to open its mouth to chew them. When Gods and ancestors go up and down from underworld and sky they are symbolically the opening and closing of the jaw. This is a metaphor for consciousness, intelligence, life, and animation through speech, word, language, and song. Mills (2016) explains that before the word *loto* (*heart/centre*) was used, *manava/mānava* was used by Tongans to explain the processes of animation, which is etymologically derived from *mana*. *Manava/mānava* signifies the heart,

lungs, stomach, other organs, and it is also breath. Mills explains these organs of the manava system perform the body's processes of exchange:

Taking in air, water, food and sperm; expelling carbon dioxide, urine, faeces, menstrual blood and neonates – [mediating] the physical boundary between an organism and its environment (p. 80).

Chiefly mouths were considered highly tapu before Tongan Christianity as their heads still are today. Lower ranks were to face away from an eating chief and avoid the danger of their open mouth (Dale, 2008; Mills, 2016). Likewise a chiefly rank (title, elder, or superior) could also avoid the danger of the people when performing a vulnerable act such as opening their mouth when eating. Takalaua was eating when he was killed by the two men who would eventually chew the bloody kava in his son's revenge for his assassination, which I related earlier (Gifford, 1924; Hau'ofa, 2008; Thomson, 1984).

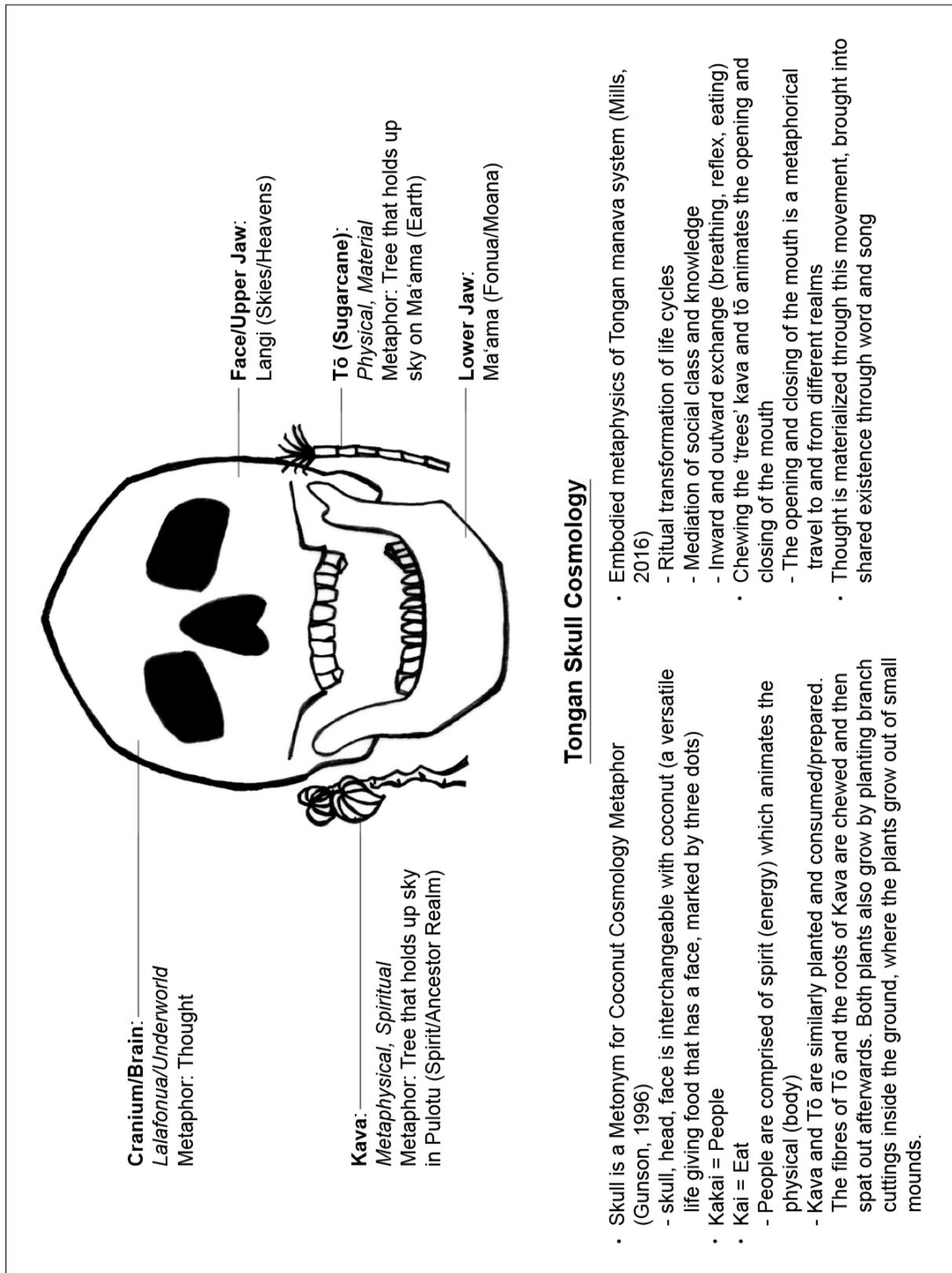


Figure 44. Skull Cosmology. Drawn by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).

Kakai, kainanga, and kāinga are all related words that refer to people(s), and kinship. They are all derived from the word kai, which means to eat. Kaivai means the people of the ocean, because they are so familiar with it, it is as if they eat the sea. They mastered the knowledge of an ocean life, and it was as normal and common as eating, an everyday basic necessity of life. Kakai/Kainanga ‘o e fonua, to be people of the land is to know the land in the same way as the sea, a familiarity and mastery like unto eating. iTaukei often refer to relatives as kai, derived from the Indigenous word for Fiji, Kaiviti (lit. eat Fiji). Indigenous identity is a familiarity and intimacy to place that is as natural and necessary as the desire and requirement of eating. To eat is to be mortal, physical, and acknowledges the spirit realms in the process of eating. To eat distinguishes the material and immaterial, the secular and the spiritual, and the physical with the metaphysical. One cannot live without eating, and Indigeneity cannot exist without land or sea. Indigenous identities are premised and thrive on this intimate relationship with place(s) and ancestors. The tail of the Hikule‘o lizard binds all realms and is like the umbilical cord that binds one to the fonua, which is represented in the metaphor of the rope tied to the face of the kava bowl. These examples of binding the different realms in Tongan cosmology are the knowledge of identity, life, peoplehood and personhood according to ancestral memory. The metaphors and symbols of the kava bowl, Ha‘amonga ‘a Maui, coconut, and skull/head are ecological, socio-political, and spiritual navigational tools and maps for life in Indigenous Tongan cosmology.

#### **10.4. Indigeneity and Metaphor**

Indigenous use of metaphor is the language of place, movement, and spatial-temporal mobility. Heliaki is defined by Churchward (2015) as speaking ironically or to say one thing and mean another, but it is commonly defined in English as metaphor. I believe that defining heliaki as ironic or as misdirection is an incomplete interpretation because heliaki alludes to movement as well. Heliaki means something else because the meaning has moved there, the

concept has mobilized, has been animated. The ironic component is an embrace of contradiction, which is to confront truth and the contradictions and conflicts of the present. It is not a utopian logic but rather one of a constant relationality that must be calibrated. This chapter has explored the grammars of animacy through the relationship between metonym and metaphor. Kava as metonym of fonua emits various metaphors of relationships to life in 'place'. The Indigenous knowledge of place and transportable land, such as kava and the body, is reflected in the metaphors of land, sea, life and personhood that animate Tongan cosmology, identity and ancestral memory. Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and identity is the memory and alternative reality to exclusive notions of what it means to be human in paradigms of western modernity. Indigenous identity is an anchor that roots one's position in time and space to be a wayfinder in life's various realities, which is grounded in navigational knowledge from seafaring legacies found in the metaphors of kava. Kava has many metaphors for Tongan Indigeneity, including life, death, ancestry, history, land, sea, blood, and intimate relationships with place. To be Indigenous is likewise a metaphor to be a person, in our original identities, when we came to be a person, a people, a family, a community, a tribe. This has changed before and it will change again, it has been transported before and it will again, but who gets to decide and when is the conflict faced today. Indigenous identity is metaphor for life on earth.

## Chapter 11. Concluding Thoughts



**Figure 45. Kai and Kava.**

**Manioke (Yuca/Tapioca) and Mutton to eat after Fai Kava. Photograph taken by Arcia Tecun (Daniel Hernandez).**

This thesis has demonstrated what Fai Kava is today, through ethnographic research with specific attention given to songs. Additionally, it has demonstrated what it means to be Indigenous today in urban spaces and diasporic paradigms. Kava has been growing in visibility across the globe with increased interest and use by western(ised) peoples and nations. This thesis reveals some of the story of Moana people's relationship to kava. The kava phenomenon manifests Tongan knowledge by mediating mana and tapu to create noa. Tā and vā are arranged with the aim to create beauty and harmony by balancing time in space, such as the performances of singing, comedy, speechmaking, and storytelling in faikava settings. Tongan concepts of time are socially constructed in relation with nature through mindfulness of space. The mana of kava reveals truths of harmony or disharmony within

individuals, groups, and communities. This ethnography utilised Tongan and Indigenous concepts, theories, and methods of knowledge production and negotiation. Talanoa as a relationally mindful critical oratory mediated conflict to collapse distance and reveal intimate truths, while tauhi vā as a performance art of maintaining harmonious socio-spatiality grounded ethics of what to reveal and how to do so. The multi-sited nature of this ethnography was crucial to demonstrate the global connectivity and continued mobility of Moana peoples today. The mentors, leaders, friends, colleagues, and new relationships developed in this research provided a rich, complex, and broad spectrum to respond to the research questions of this thesis addressing both local nuances and tackling meta-questions relevant to humanity.

The experience and concept of diaspora is one within the paradigm of western modernity, which intensifies conflict, creates confusion, and dislocation from Indigenous identity. Urban diasporic Indigenes navigate various layers of multiple colonial subjectivities. Diaspora is an existential phenomenon of both temporal and spatial displacement, positioning Indigenous people in circumstances that must navigate the temporal displacement of space, and the spatial displacement of time in paradigms of western modernity. We move in and out of paradigms and realms, and however much ‘time’ we spend in each respective space influences who we are, were, and become in respective moments of time and space. Indigeneity emerges out of the inception and construction of modernity and survives coloniality. Indigeneity is a native antonym to western hegemony in the paradigm of modernity. Indigeneity is the same differently, and differently the same across the globe. It is similar in its relationality to people, place, and grounded in ancestral tradition. Indigeneity is different in the unique expressions, relevance, and experience of locale. Fai Kava is a social vehicle that transports ingestible land which collapses time and space, allowing for Indigeneity to be nurtured and cultivated in the present. The songs that are played and sung

around the kava bowl bring ancestors to life and sustain evolving traditions. The land and sea are metonyms for Tongan Indigeneity, which are animated through song and story around the kava bowl.

Kava, songs, and singing, have spiritual power to heal through generating mana, yielding māfana, the energy and warmth derived from bringing ancestors into the present. Songs about kava are auto-ethnographic stories of kava activities and Moana identities in the past and in the present. Reggae music and Hip Hop culture are adopted and merged with kava settings and Moana populations abroad, allowing for a broader range of diasporic and contemporary experiences to be expressed. The kava phenomenon is a physical and metaphysical relationship with land, sea, and ancestors that has the potency to calibrate balance between all of these relations. Kava reveals tensions and collaborations with western introduced religion and Indigenous spirituality and worldviews. Aspects of Indigenous Tongan spirituality remains housed within Christian vessels and reappears in activities such as faikava. The memory of resisting Christian conversion, as well as spiritual negotiations with potential points of overlapping beliefs, remerge in kava use today. Tapu is upheld, although it has shifted from ecological restrictions to Sabbath ones, but the discipline and respect associated with the concept remains. Faikava songs sung in the minor key are considered to be the closest to the pre-Christian styles and sounds of the spirits called fakafa‘ahikehe. Associating sounds with ancestral spirits brings the past into the present in the same way roots (past) are dug up in order to be imbibed (present). Drinking kava mediates mana and tapu between various socio-political and other relationships in order to create noa. The state of noa allows for various restrictions outside of kava to become temporally suspended. Faikava establishes noa through the mana of fonua. This is an act of nurturing relationships with land, sea, and people. Kava consumption reflects an intimacy with land that is maintained through ingesting fonua.

Kava is controversial in many communities, revealing tensions between western modernity and Indigeneity. The controversies with kava, within the paradigm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, includes a move away from extended family structures to a nuclear family focus, as well as a narrative that kava participation disrupts the logics of capitalist labour. Latter-day Saints who drink kava embrace hymn singing in their sessions and privilege compositions that are authored by Tongans rather than Anglo compositions that have been translated into Tongan. However, church narratives of Pacific Islander origins as well as imaginations perpetuated by a church owned tourist centre perpetuate an exotic and frozen image of Moana peoples. Many Moana Mormons embrace reggae and Hip Hop music and culture in order to express experiences and realities that hymns and dominant church narratives cannot. Despite ambiguous positions on kava, which range from no official church stance to local lay-clergy leaders instituting bans. Mormon kava groups reinvent religious and Indigenous culture and responsibilities by merging the two. Church and kava negotiate external power and local agency, paralleling early Christian encounters in Tonga, bringing out old tensions in new forms.

Gender relations, rank, and identity are revealed through kava practices and there is an emergence of women re-joining the faikava today. Men are also responding to the critiques of spouses who are strained by nuclear family isolation when male spouses go out to faikava frequently. Many men are increasingly drinking kava with spouses or at home so they can meet the necessities of supporting a nuclear family based home. Brothers and sisters still have to mediate Indigenous traditions of distance and separation but there is a growing number of co-ed kava circles that is expanding this social boundary. Tou‘a fefine negotiate limited opportunities to make money and fulfilling responsibilities when serving kava. Some tou‘a fefine confront harassment by some men who feel they have purchased their time and presence and can behave anyway they like to them. Tou‘a fefine attend faikava for various

reasons including: to learn information about men in the community, monetary gain, and some also enjoy the event and join in on the banter and singing.

Men in faikava combat the colonial hyper masculine stereotypes of the binary of exotic “savage” gangster or hyper-masculine athlete. Moana masculinity in the kava space reveals men openly sharing their feelings and expressing love and service to one another. Faikava is a setting that reveals truth and creates noa. The equilibrium that is calibrated through mediating various relationships in kava settings opens up the space where one can express their truth without usual social restrictions (e.g., speaking to a parent or minister directly). The desire for the erotic that is openly expressed in Indigeneity is suppressed by the paradigm of western modernity, which reappears in kava circle courtship and flirtation with tou‘a fefine, revealing both desire and conflict. Faikava also collapses gender binaries when queer identities transcend brother-sister restrictions and gendered expectations. Kava has a strong feminine energy as a metonym for fonua. Tongan origins of kava and tō grows from a young women’s grave. This yields mana of women that is necessary in order to transcend and move between physical and spiritual worlds in faikava, by drinking kava and then eating tō.

Tongan Indigenous knowledge is nurtured in the passage to metaphorical death and return to life, which parallels the origin story of the first Tu‘i Tonga. Balance is sought in balancing the life cycle with kava and tō as conduits. Death or kava can be bitter truth or reality that is brought into balance with the sweetness of tō, which can be actual sweet fruit, lollies, or metaphorical sweetness that is manifested through humour or sweet fragrant songs. Tongan identities are rooted in language skills and cultural values that include these relational balances that are reinforced in kava circles. Identity is grounded in connections to ancestors, place, Tongan epistemology and ontology. Tongan-ness is mana derived from identity and knowing who you are, which demonstrates your depth and rootedness. HRH Queen Sālote Tupou III’s composition of Hala Kuo Papa is a cultural identity anthem that demonstrates the

tradition of following ancestral paths. The Kingdom of Tonga is a new national formation that rests over the paths set before by paramount chiefly lineages. Queen Sālote faced many challenges and obstacles as the first female monarch of the kingdom nation-state, and this poem turned song exemplifies standing in one's Indigeneity, identity, roots. Hala Kuo Papa uses various heliaki to speak indirectly of Queen Sālote's chiefness and inherited authority, which is a Tongan sensibility to assert mana humbly, being mindful of relationships. The Seleka kava club demonstrates a different path to identity outside of genealogical inheritance, where oppression and marginality yields the potential and necessity to create something new, thus increasing mana through creative processes and imagination. The different routes to cultivating and standing in one's identity potentially re-animate the ancestor Gods of before in the names, titles, and creativity of today. Kava, songs, and Indigenous identity bring to life the roots of yesterday as they are remembered and reinvented today.

We are the metonyms of reality, we animate, and our animism is existence, everything is connected. This is an Indigenous perspective of a living world. Drawing from Tongan thought and wisdom, the life force and energy that runs through all things is mo'ui, which is also known as mauri or mauli in other parts of the Moana. When you can see life by feeling it, one can channel it, which generates mana. The potency of mana is protected by placing tapu around it, protecting, restricting, and setting it apart. All things must be brought into balance, and the process of completing cycles of equilibrium yields states of noa when mana calibrates with tapu. This is a process of channelling and neutralizing energy in space, through knowledge and manifested wisdom such as in the performance of song and story. Mana is neither good nor bad, for it can be used in whatever way the possessor, holder, doer of mana wields this potency and generative force. Tapu is pragmatic and practical knowledge which adheres to relational restrictions that are set in place or inherited from the past. The potential for moving beyond current horizons emerges when new imaginations and acts of mana

challenges or collides with established tapu. This results in energies between unpredictable agents surfacing, which must be mediated. This is a process of making and perpetuating good relationships by getting in tune with the new or old rhythms of people and place, their flow and force. Indigenous knowledge is a memory of practical survival and holistic historical memory, which yields a collaborative ethos in the acceptance of the reality of this tension. Indigenous knowledge thus includes ancestral memory of conflict prevention and resolution. Closeness rather than distance, recognizing connected living systems. Ikanamoe Ma‘u (2016) would remind me of this as we drank kava together, making the comment, “inu na momoko,” meaning we should drink before the kava got cold. She metaphorically was referring to the living energy of kava that animates ancestral knowledge and identity through us as we actively keep it alive, keeping it warm, so it does not get cold. Fai Kava is a space where food, knowledge, songs and stories are shared as all those present must also do in order to safely voyage together on the same canoe.

Tongan kava is about remembering what it means to be Indigenous, to be human from a Tongan worldview. By opening up space, kava reveals truths that can be mediated and that are neutralized so they can be shared. The songs elevate the space and teach lessons and pass on memories to broaden temporal knowledge. Kava sessions utilise lessons from the ancestor spirits, the energy of night, and the poetic metaphorical use of nature in the music. Kimmerer (2013) states that:

We... are reluctant to learn a foreign language of our own species, let alone another species. But imagine the possibilities. Imagine the access we would have to different perspectives, the things we might see through other eyes, the wisdom that surrounds us. We don't have to figure out everything by ourselves: there are intelligences other than our own, teachers all around us. Imagine how much less lonely the world would be... I'm not advocating that we all learn Potawatomi or Hopi or Seminole, even if we could. Immigrants ... [bear] a legacy of languages, all to be cherished. But to become native to this place, if we are to survive here, and our neighbors too, our work is to learn to speak the grammar of animacy, so that we might truly be at home (p. 58).

Kava brings roots forward, it brings land and place and past into the present. This is Indigeneity, an overt and explicit connection to ancestral wisdom and relationship to place. Kava reveals truth and is potent, it can be wielded for any purpose of those who possess it, whether they desire to curse or to bless with it. The potential of kava is to utilize its mana to render tapu into noa. This mediates the potent energies that can collide, allowing open truth speaking to occur. Faikava is a space of “keepin’ it real” through critical, controversial, and difficult words that can be spoken. This is also brought into balance with the counterpart of kava, which is tō, the sweetness of comedy, beauty, songs, and fruit. Like the flow of song, faikava cultivates a mindful attention to rhythm and tone. Finding the rhythm of noa for urban Indigenous diaspora people provides healing through songs and story that collapse time in kava spaces. The potential result is a collapsing of rank, gender, history, diaspora, and religion in kava space, reflecting temporal and spatial balance.

Kava facilitates various performing arts and many songs have now been written about kava because of its significance in communities and identity. Songs are metaphysical power that can heal, remember, and animate the world through poetic metaphor. This thesis has revealed through comprehensive and critical research that Indigeneity is a creative living memory of alternatives to modern western paradigms. Modernity is transcended through decolonization, which is an undoing of dominant western metaphysics, where Indigeneity can thrive and expand beyond the parameters that have necessarily brought it into existence. Indigeneity is a rooted way of operating in the world, and demonstrated in the Moana practice of digging up kava roots and then ingesting them. Mindful and explicit transfer of ancestral roots brought forward into the present and remade in new contexts is a roots way of thinking that reflects Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. The past is brought into the present and imbibed, constantly anchoring the living and dynamic adaptations of today with

the roots of the past. Indigeneity maintains and revives relationships with ancestors and place(s) continually.

Modernity has selective memory, conscious forgetting and abandonment of “pagan/heathen/primitive” pasts, which yields insecure narratives of exceptionalism and fear with historical amnesia. Modernity is an incomplete, fragmented, and hegemonic system of governance, which privilege artificial constructions rather than natural and cosmic systems. Modernity forces *himself* upon natural time and space as if *his* ways are universal. Modernity maintains *himself* through mass scale imperial and colonial violence maintained by a fear of being discovered a fraud. Modernity is not pure and isolated, it uses place and knowledge of “others” and reconfigures them as the presumed author of them. Modernity creates pain and suffering through utopian pursuits that justify recurring unsuccessful violent means to an unaccomplished end. Indigeneity means to be an ancestral person, to be of the people of a particular place, subject to the governing of natural laws experienced in place. Indigeneity is carried as ancestral memory and mobilized as it carefully adapts and merges with new relationships to place and people, created out of the roots of the past before us. Indigeneity is a language and life of animacy that sees and engages with an animate cosmic world. Indigeneity is not a utopian future, it is a utopian past, meaning that the depth of ancient wisdom outranks the information of the present and must be respectfully mediated for a sustainable future. Indigeneity anticipates and accepts conflict in order to prevent it, but is also pragmatic with protocols in place to repair and mediate relationships that have been harmed. Indigeneity accepts death and darkness alongside life and light. Indigeneity is metaphor for people, for person. Those who remember the ancestors and place. Indigeneity is the memory and practice of both secular and spiritual as one whole. The metaphysical and physical, concerned with both the questions of how and why simultaneously. The soundtrack

Rootz Vaka Transits

of Indigeneity is rootz music, the sounds of ancestors in various forms that cultivate māfana.

Kava is raised to an elevated place, prepared and ready to be served. Kava Kuo Heka!

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