



NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY



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The Temple of Faleme'e: Archaeological and Anthropological Considerations of a Pre-Christian God-House on the Island of Ha'ano, Kingdom of Tonga

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ABSTRACT

Traditional religious practices in the Kingdom of Tonga are poorly understood. In a 1991 archaeological survey of Ha'ano Island, northern Ha'apai, a stone enclosure and corner posts of a pre-Christian god-house were recorded. Oral tradition and previously collected narratives about this site allow it to be identified as Faleme'e, a temple to the goddess Hikule'o. As one of three principal gods within the Tongan pantheon, Hikule'o was deity to the Tu'i Tonga lineage, the most sacred and highest ranking chiefs in the country. Archaeological and anthropological contexts are provided for Faleme'e.

Keywords: TONGA, HA'APAI, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY, ORAL NARRATIVE, GOD-HOUSE, HIKULE'O.

INTRODUCTION

The pre-Christian religious beliefs of the Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga are incompletely documented in historical and anthropological records. The Tongan pantheon was large and complex, being incorporated within a loosely defined hierarchy of structural relationships that mirrored the political and social configuration of the chiefdom itself. Gods were accessed through a priesthood who maintained knowledge of appropriate rituals including, at times, human sacrifice. Individual gods had consecrated enclosures and houses that also served as sanctuaries for those in need of refuge. By the 1830s, Christianity and the Wesleyan mission had gained a secure foothold within the island archipelago. Within a few decades, and championed by a number of influential chiefs, long-standing temples, religious objects and the earlier priesthood were eradicated and traditional religious practices shunned.

In 1991, during an archaeological survey on the island of Ha'ano in the northern Ha'apai group, stone uprights and enclosure supports of a small yet unique structure were recorded in the village of Ha'ano (Fig. 1). Local residents referred to this structure as 'Fale Mei', translated literally as 'house of breadfruit'. According to local tradition, this house was situated on a *mala'e* (cemetery) and received its name from the wood which had formerly enclosed its compound. Subsequent research has shown the site to be Faleme'e, a temple to the pre-Christian goddess Hikule'o. The survey, documentation and historical record of Faleme'e provide a basis on which to examine a Tongan god-house and its anthropological context. The remains of this temple were destroyed in 1992 and its stones were removed and used in the construction of a fence.

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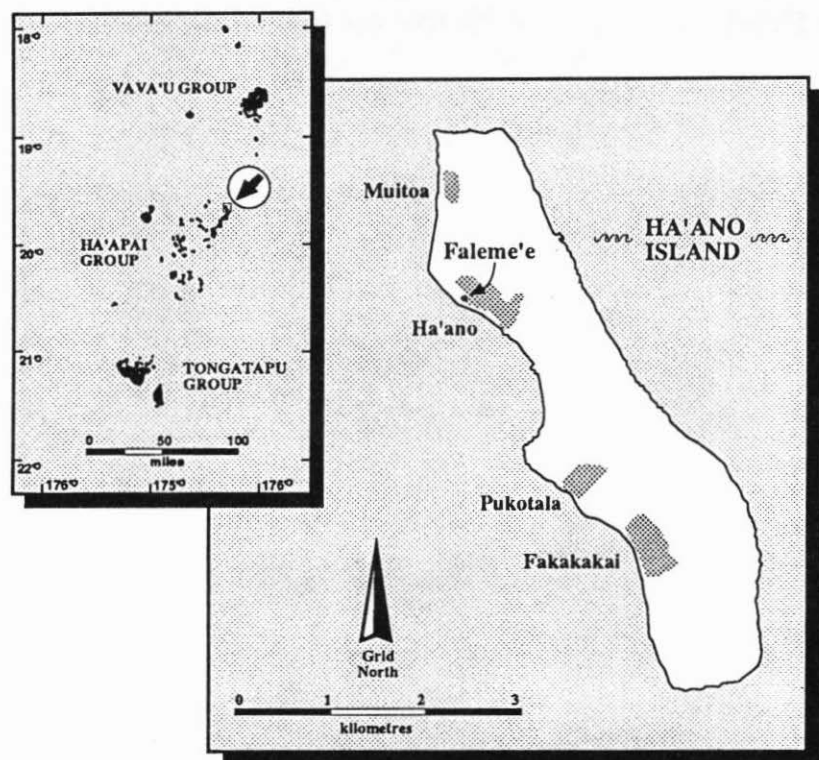


Figure 1: Ha'ano Island, Kingdom of Tonga, and the location of Faleme'e.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NARRATIVE RECORD OF A GOD-HOUSE

Between 1990 and 1992, archaeological survey and limited excavations were conducted on several islands of the Ha'apai group, including Ha'ano (Burley 1991, 1992). Ha'ano is one of the most northerly islands in the group and is relatively isolated. Access is restricted to private motor launch. The three villages on the island, Ha'ano, Pukotala and Fakakakai, have long term population continuity and each maintains a distinct history through associated oral traditions. The village of Ha'ano is the seat of power of the Tu'iha'angana, a noble whose title and lineage bear considerable antiquity (Bott 1982: 95). In July 1991, several sites of archaeological interest were recorded either within or adjacent to this village. Among these were Langi Lahi and Langi Si'i, both elaborately constructed, stone-faced tombs of the Ha'a Ngana². Also present were several burial mounds, former house platforms, beach rock quarrying sites, a chiefly bathing well and concentrated areas of

²The Ha'a Ngana is the lineage name of the Tu'iha'angana. The Tongan word *langi* means sky or heaven and its reference to burial structures was reserved only for those of the highest and most sacred chiefs, the Tu'i Tonga and members of their lineage (McKern 1929; Kirch 1990).

occupation midden with broken shell, burned coral rock and carbon-rich sediments (Burley 1992: 99–118). Many of the recorded sites had names and to varying degrees each was documented in village tradition.

One of the Ha'ano village sites was unique among archaeological features recorded in Ha'apai. This site was situated in front of the village primary school, a location that had been heavily eroded by the general range of school yard activities. The site was a partial enclosure of quarried and roughly dressed pieces of beach rock set on edge, defining an area approximately 4 x 4 m (Fig. 2). The perimeter blocks ranged in length between 0.35 and 1.22 m, varied in width between 15 and 25 cm and had a maximum height above ground of 35 cm. The enclosure was positioned off-centre on top of a low, artificially constructed mound 40 cm high. Two roughly dressed stone uprights were positioned on the enclosure's northeast and northwest corners (Fig. 3). The eastern post was 1.6 m high with a maximum width of 25 cm and a maximum thickness of 15 cm. The other was 1.55 m high, 50 cm wide and 20 cm thick. A third, now fallen upright (1 x 0.37 x 0.25 m), was situated in the southeast corner. It was learned that a fourth corner post had been removed in 1983 for use as a memorial stone when the village's Wesleyan church was opened. This stone is currently positioned near the church entrance and supports the building's dedication plaque. The enclosure's name, as stated by local residents, was 'Fale Mei'. Literally translated, this means house (*fale*) of breadfruit (*mei*).

Questions of history or chiefly genealogy in the village of Ha'ano are almost always referred to a single individual, Vake. Vake is a title name associated with the position of *Motu'a Tauhi Fonua* (old men who guard the land). In one role *Motu'a Tauhi Fonua* are the traditional guardians of a locality's *fakamatala*, the stories of the land, its names and its relationship with people (Evans and Young-Leslie 1993: 6). At the time of the survey in 1991, Vake was a man in his early seventies whose ancestry was closely linked with the

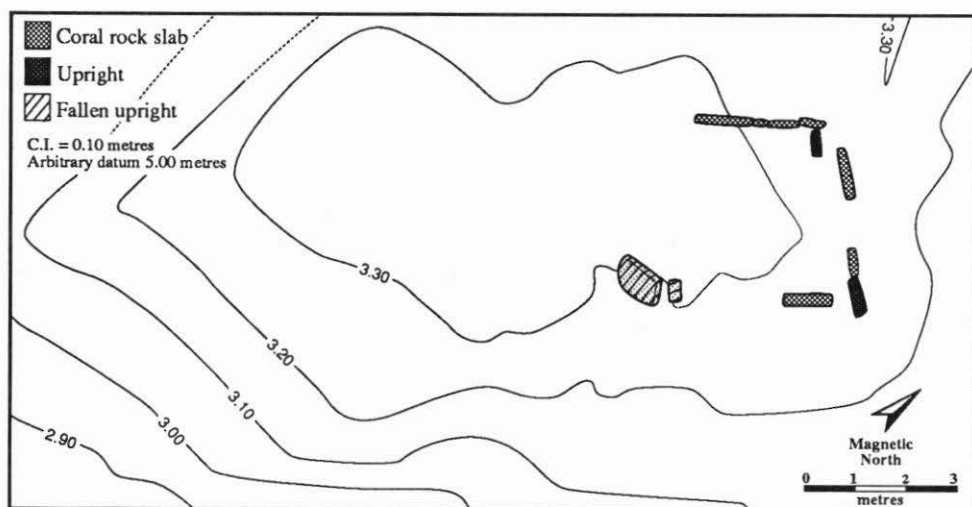


Figure 2: Archaeological remains of the temple of Faleme'e.

Ha'ano landscape (Gifford 1924: 205). When questioned on the stone enclosure of 'Fale Mei', he provided the following narrative³:

This structure is a burial house that sits upon a *mala'e* (cemetery)⁴. When originally built, it was enclosed with *mei* (breadfruit wood). It had been built for an *ula* singer who was very good. He was so good that many of the Ha'ano people became very jealous and beat him to death. Fale Mei is similar to a house on 'Uiha called Fale Niu (House of Coconut) that is close to Mala'e Lahi. A third house, Fale Fehi (House of Plantain), is situated on Tungua close to the *langi* for the Tamaha (interview of July 15, 1991).

No matter how tempting, literal interpretations of such oral traditions are fraught with problems. Nonetheless, the structure of the narrative, the pivotal associations of 'Fale Mei' with the death and burial of an *ula* singer, and its relationship to houses on 'Uiha and Tungua, are important considerations.

After the survey documentation of 'Fale Mei' and interview with Vake, a second narrative was located in which alternative reference is made to the site's historical context and function. In a lecture given on November 2, 1866, Shirley W. Baker, the former missionary and Prime Minister, stated the following:

I have stood in the old Fale Mee at Haano, which is the last *fale otua* (temple of their god) still standing in Haapai. At the foot of the principal post there is buried a man, who was said to be the best singer in all Tonga. He was offered a living sacrifice to the god at the building of the temple as an act of dedication (as cited in Gifford 1929: 323).

The above similarities of name, event and location suggest that Vake's *fakamatala* is a transformation of the one told to Baker. This transformation removes reference to the human sacrifice of an earlier religion, as might be expected given the strength of Christianity today, and attributes the death of the *ula* singer to jealousy, an understandable motive within contemporary Tongan society. The name 'Fale Mei' and its added explanation also appear as a modification of 'Fale Mee'. This latter name can be translated as dance house (Gifford 1923: 55), which correlates well with the *ula* reported in Vake's story. The *ula* is a traditional Tongan dance and song carried out by individual performers. To undertake such a performance is referred to in Tongan as *me'e* (Churchward 1959: 525).

In 1920 and 1921, Gifford conducted anthropological research in Tonga as part of the Bayard Dominick expedition of the Bishop Museum. Travelling throughout the country, he collected a wide range of ethnographic and historical data, including numerous oral traditions (see Gifford 1923, 1924, 1929). Among the historical narratives was a third specific reference to Faleme'e. Gifford states:

³Vake died in May, 1993. His narrative was translated by Pilimi Halai of Pangai, Lifuka Island.

⁴*Mala'e* is a word which, while currently used to refer to cemetery plots, might also be taken to mean village green or sacred enclosure. In this case Vake was clearly referring to a cemetery.



Figure 3: Archaeological remains of Faleme'e; Ha'ano Village primary school in background.

At the site of the present town of Haano, Haapai, there once stood a temple of Hikuleo. The temple was called Falemee. It was located on a tract called Fanakava. The priest of the goddess was named Manakoto, and her sacred animal was the sea snake (*tukuhali*). This temple was a famous place of refuge. If a person became sick, his relatives went to Manakoto and cut off little finger joints to make him well. Bodies of executed persons were taken to Manakoto. If Manakoto were angry, a human sacrifice might be made to him, the sight of which made him happy. The following anecdote is told:

Kavaanuku was the name of the Foa Island chief who had soldiers for war. The soldiers from Tonga came to Foa and fought with Kavaanuku's soldiers. They fought and Kavaanuku's soldiers ran to Manakoto's place. They were whipped and feared the Tongan soldiers. The soldiers from Tonga tied with rope a man and took him to Manakoto and Kavaanuku, before whom they strangled him. Then Kavaanuku, likewise strangled a man as an offering to the goddess. Thereupon the soldiers from Tonga strangled two Tongan men and took them to Manakoto, because they wanted Hikuleo's permission to enter her sanctuary and to destroy Kavaanuku's soldiers. Permission was gained when the Tongans sacrificed the two men to the goddess. The sacrificed men were left on the ground to rot outside of the goddess' house. Then the Tongan soldiers attacked and killed all of Kavaanuku's men. That was the first time anyone had attacked the sanctuary of Fanakava. This happened in the time of the great great grandfather of the Tu'i Haa Ngana (Gifford 1929: 291-292).

In further discussion of Hikule'o, Gifford (1929: 292) reported a second house for the goddess on the island of 'Uiha where she was patron to Malupo, another title of the Ha'a Ngana. This identification provides an important cross reference to Vake's story and his claims for a similar house (Fale Niu) on 'Uiha.

Combined, the *fakamatala* of Vake, the statements of Baker and Gifford's description and narrative provide considerable information about the archaeological feature recorded in 1991. This site can be identified with confidence as a *fale otua* or traditional temple that was dedicated to the goddess Hikule'o. The priest of the goddess was Manakoto who, at times, became Hikule'o incarnate. To invoke the power of Hikule'o, sacrifice was the common prescription, either the traditional practice of little finger sacrifice or, in specific contexts, the offering of human lives. The temple, together with its tract of land known as Fanakava, was a long-standing and well defined place of refuge. On the basis of this identification and in view of the persistence of oral traditions into the present, a degree of antiquity can be expected for the site. Finally, Gifford's association of Hikule'o with Malupo of 'Uiha Island and the presence of Faleme'e in the traditional village of the Tu'iha'angana indicate a potential association between this goddess and the lineage of Ha'a Ngana.

On a return visit to Ha'ano in July 1992, it was learned that Faleme'e had been destroyed, an unfortunate consequence of modern upgrading of the primary school. The enclosure stones had been excavated as an easy source of construction material for a school fencing project on an island with few alternatives. As the supports were being removed, however, human skeletal remains were found in association (Evans and Young-Leslie pers. comm. 1992). Though hardly a verification of Baker's claim for the living sacrifice and burial of an *ula* singer at the foot of the principal post, the coincidence seems highly suggestive.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF FALEME'E

The anthropological context of Faleme'e as a temple to the goddess Hikule'o can be more fully explored through an examination of traditional Tongan religion and its relationship to chiefly lineages. This is not a well recorded aspect of Tongan culture. Even by the first decades of the twentieth century, Collocott (1921a: 161) and Gifford (1929: 287) were given to remark that few individuals had knowledge of earlier practices, and the information that they had been able to assemble was far from complete. Why this should be so after only 60 to 70 years of Christianity is a consequence of several factors, not the least of which was an intensive and zealous campaign of religious conversion in the mid-1800s (see Latukefu 1974: 64-67). Equally significant, the complexity of earlier religious structures ensured that few if any individuals commanded a comprehensive knowledge to begin with. This is underscored by the statements of William Mariner, a captive and adopted son of the Tongan Chief Finau 'Ulukalala in the early years of the 1800s. Estimating that there were 300 original gods and numerous other supernatural beings, he opined that "the names of very few are known" (Martin 1991: 301). The significance of individual gods and the powers they held also differed from island group to island group and between the many competing chiefly lines (Collocott 1921a: 159; Ferdon 1987: 70).

Collocott (1921a, 1921b, 1923) has provided the most comprehensive treatment of traditional Tongan religious practices and belief in the supernatural. Tongan deities as characterised by him varied drastically in power and influence. The great gods "... were resorted to by the nation as a whole; others were the gods of powerful chiefs and their tribes and clans, whilst others enjoyed a more limited prestige, their devotees being the little group of allied households which forms the social unit" (Collocott 1921a: 159). Mariner (Martin 1991: 301) also reported no fewer than six classes of gods, two of which included the 'souls' of chiefs and *matapule* (chiefly attendants) as they were manifest in the Tongan afterworld of Pulotu. Pulotu was neither a heaven nor an underworld, being described as an unseen kingdom west of the island of Tongatapu (Gifford 1929: 287; also Geraghty 1991).

All who have written on the subject concur that of the principal gods, three were pre-eminent. These were the sky god Tangaloa; Maui of the underworld; and the goddess Hikule'o, deity of Pulotu⁵. Tangaloa and Maui are gods with widespread distribution throughout Polynesia; this suggests substantial antiquity. In Tonga it is necessary to speak of *kau* Tangaloa and *kau* Maui, for they were not single deities but collective representations whose individual members were responsible for the creation of the Tongan world, its peoples, and many of its large scale catastrophes⁶ (Collocott 1921a). Far removed from the everyday affairs of humans, *kau* Tangaloa and *kau* Maui were not worshipped as other gods

⁵There is some question as to the sex of Hikule'o. Most researchers concur that Hikule'o was female (see Mahina 1990: 42), with at least a few acknowledging that, like several other Tongan gods, Hikule'o may have been bisexual, able to appear in male or female form (Gunson 1990: 17).

⁶The Tongan word *kau* preceding a personal name denotes plurality (Churchward 1959: 254). Its use as a prefix for Tangaloa and Maui has precedent in the work of Latukefu (1974: 4).

nor, collectively, do they appear to have had a priesthood (Collocott 1921a; Gifford 1929)⁷. They were nevertheless important and figure prominently in the ideational realm of chiefly position. The mythologies of *kau* Tangaloa and *kau* Maui continue to be told, albeit today within the *genre* of Tongan fairy tales.

Hikule'o was different. She was sovereign of Puluotu in which resided the souls of the ancestors, themselves transformed into secondary gods to be consulted in times of war, travel or other earthly matters. Hikule'o was also goddess of harvest and weather, and in these capacities had control over the fertility of the land and the success of its peoples (Latukeyfu 1974: 4). Hikule'o's power and influence in worldly affairs appears to have been mediated only by the other principal deities. As told to Collocott (1921a: 153) she "... was bound by a great cord, one end being held by the Tangaloa in the sky, and the other by the Maui in the Underworld" (see also Farmer 1855: 132–133). The powers of Hikule'o were invoked by a hereditary priesthood and several temples, including Faleme'e, were maintained for consultation and sacrifice. Yet it also appears that the powers of Hikule'o were feared, for invocation might well bring disaster to the world (see also Gunson 1990: 17). Gifford (1924: 153–180) has documented several narratives in which the authority of Hikule'o and her omnipotence are clearly illustrated.

Gunson (1990: 16) has stated that the priesthood of Hikule'o had superior knowledge and *mana*. Calling them 'shamans', he has suggested they were probably the most powerful in all of Tonga. Traditional Tongan priests formed a hereditary class which incorporated both male and female attendants (see Gifford 1929: 316–321). Through spirit possession they acted as mediators, and in this state became gods incarnate and were treated as such. Gifford's description of Manakoto and Hikule'o as one and the same graphically illustrates this interpretation. Priests acted not only as mediator between a chief and his gods, but also between a lineage and the spirit of its ancestors.

As Manakoto was to Faleme'e, priests were the caretakers of the temple. The compound of the temple was sacred and it was this characteristic that allowed the place to serve as a sanctuary. The elaborateness of the structure itself, however, appears of minor consideration, for god-houses were described as being little different from a typical household (e.g., Ferdon 1987: 76–78). Within the temple walls, gods were manifest in such objects as whale teeth, carvings or stones. Collocott (1921a: 155) described each object as a "Totem", its role "...to act as a vehicle whereby the god might bring himself into physical relation with the material surroundings of human life." This appears to have been further accomplished through a reproduction of the supernatural realm within the fabric of the god-house itself. Gifford (1924: 171), for example, described the home of Hikule'o in Puluotu as built of human bone and noted that recently deceased individuals were chosen by her "...as posts for his [sic] fence, and some as supports for the log on which tapa is made, and some were taken as posts for the gate..." (Gifford 1929: 328). Thus the sacrifice of an *ula* singer at Faleme'e, the burial of his body at the foot of its principal post, and the continuous offering of executed persons to Manakoto seem structural parallels of ritual significance.

Latukeyfu (1974: 4) and others (Kirch 1984: 230; Ferdon 1987: 72; Campbell 1992: 29) have commented directly on the ideational integration of religion and polity in Tonga. In

⁷This claim may be an over-generalisation. Gifford (1929: 145), for example, states that Tangaloa Tufunga was patron god of the professional class of carpenters. However, it is noteworthy that Tangaloa Tufunga is the only god recorded for a professional class of artisans and Gifford makes no mention of either a temple or a priest.

this respect, mortals and gods were intricately bound together through the most sacred and highest ranking chief in the country, the Tu'i Tonga. The first Tu'i Tonga, 'Aho'eitu, was the son of a sky god, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, and a Tongan woman, Va'epopua (Gifford 1924: 25–29). Sent by his father to rule over Tonga, he was accompanied by his celestial half-brothers whose descendants became the *falefa* (second house, advisers). The Tu'i Tonga was the god's representative on earth and was himself treated as a god. Upon death, Tu'i Tonga were buried in elaborate stone-faced tombs known as *langi*, not insignificantly the Tongan word for sky and heaven (Churchward 1959: 282). The sovereignty of Hikule'ō over Puluotu was mirrored in the day to day world of humans by the Tu'i Tonga. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hikule'ō has been documented as the principal deity of the Tu'i Tonga lineage (Latukeyu 1974: 23; Urbanowicz 1973: 85; Campbell 1992: 29).

The most important temple of Hikule'ō, as identified by the early missionary Reverend John Thomas, was known as Olotele (as cited in Urbanowicz 1977: 252, 262). Olotele was situated within Mu'a, the thirteenth to nineteenth century capital of the chiefdom and the seat of power of the Tongan paramount chiefs. Here the association of Hikule'ō and the Tu'i Tonga was dramatically affirmed, for Olotele was also the name of the Tu'i Tonga's compound and house (McKern 1929: 94–95). Adjacent to Olotele at Mu'a was the *mala'e* (green) of Fanakava. This Fanakava was recognised as the most powerful place of refuge within the chiefdom, being under the protection of the Tu'i Tonga and his gods (McKern 1929: 96; Gifford 1929: 324). Gifford was further told that there existed "...a Fanakava in Puluotu, the unseen world, of which the earthly Fanakava in Tongatapu is a duplicate" (Gifford 1929: 324). So too, it may be argued, was the Fanakava of Ha'ano with which Faleme'e has been associated.

Hikule'ō, as goddess of the Tu'i Tonga lineage, formed an integral component of the rationalising ideology of Tongan social and political order. On an annual basis this ideology was reaffirmed in the annual ceremony of *'inasi*, an archipelago-wide submission of tribute to the Tu'i Tonga through the ritual guise of a first fruits' ceremony. Failure to provide *'inasi* "...would result in calamity and the whole land would suffer from divine wrath" (Latukeyu 1974: 4). The festival of *'inasi* was as much an offering to Hikule'ō as it was to her earthly representative, and the two were bound intimately together in the Tongan mind (Mahina 1990: 44).

The firm association of Hikule'ō with the Tu'i Tonga at Mu'a, and the potential association of this goddess with the Ha'a Ngana chiefs of Ha'apai (after Gifford 1929: 292), begs the issue of genealogical relationships, especially as they might reflect upon the antiquity of Faleme'e. Mythological origins of the Ha'a Ngana tentatively confirm this postulated association. The myth in question relates to the 20th Tu'i Tonga, Tatafu'eikimeimu'a, who became infatuated with a beautiful Samoan woman named Hina and spent considerable effort in trying to win her love (see Gifford 1924: 55–60). These attempts were unsuccessful, frustrated by Hina's attraction to the Tu'i Tonga's handsome younger brother, Nganatatafu. This latter individual lived on the island of Ha'ano and is claimed as the founding ancestor of the Ha'a Ngana (Bott 1982: 102). As a junior member of the lineage to which Hikule'ō was deity, Nganatatafu can be considered as the possible builder of Faleme'e. This event would have occurred between the late thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries A.D., on the basis of a genealogically based estimate for the rule of Tatafu'eikimeimu'a (Campbell 1989: 42).

Accepted and documented genealogies of the Kingdom alternatively attribute the elevation of the Ha'a Ngana as a noble lineage to events of a more recent nature, albeit ones continuing to associate the Ha'a Ngana with the Tu'i Tonga line. In this later account,

Tu'iha'angana Fifitapuku married both the sister and daughter of Paulaho, the Tu'i Tonga encountered by Captain James Cook in 1777 (Bott 1982: 148). The daughter, Fatefehi Lapaha, was of most critical importance, for as eldest sister to the subsequent Tu'i Tonga, Fuanunuiava, she became Tu'i Tonga Fefine. According to Tongan social organisation in which women have higher status than men, she thus outranked her brother and her children would be well positioned within the structural hierarchy of the chiefdom⁸. This was symbolically recognised in the construction of Langi Lahi, a large stone-faced tomb in the village of Ha'ano in which Fatefehi Lapaha and descendants of the Tu'iha'angana are now interred (Burley 1992: 100–104). As Tu'i Tonga Fefine, her principal deity is likely to have been Hikule'o. It is also noteworthy that the assault on Faleme'e previously cited was said to have happened "in the time of the great great grandfather of the Tu'i Haa Ngana" (Gifford 1929: 292). The great great grandfather of Tu'iha'angana in 1920/1921, the years in which Gifford undertook his fieldwork, was Fifitapuku, husband of Fatefehi Lapaha (see Gifford 1929: 137).

In spite of the preceding, the late eighteenth century seems too recent for the origins of Faleme'e and, although it is circumstantial, the association of this site with Nganatatafu is preferred. For example, the fact that Malupo of 'Uiha Island also claimed Hikule'o as a patron deity (Gifford 1929: 292) suggests a relationship with the Ha'a Ngana before the divergence of this title, an event long pre-dating the eighteenth century (Bott 1982: 102). As well, Gifford's narrative of the assault does not speak of the temple's construction, but only of its presence. One can assume a much earlier origin for such a well known sanctuary. Finally, it may also be significant that Fuapau, father of Fifitapuku, was given the name Hikule'o (Bott 1982: 148). This implies, again circumstantially, an association of the goddess with the Ha'a Ngana before Fifitapuku's high ranking marriage.

No matter what the origins of Faleme'e, its presence in the village of Ha'ano would seem to bear on some earlier association of the Ha'a Ngana and the Tu'i Tonga lineage. In this relationship, Vake's original claim about a similar site (Fale Fehi) on Tungua Island can be supported. Tungua is the island of the Tamaha, the eldest daughter of the Tu'i Tonga Fefine and, in Tongan social order, the highest ranking individual in the chiefdom (see Gailey 1987: 69–72). Her god, like that of the Tu'i Tonga Fefine, is believed to have been Hikule'o. Finally, both Vake's statements about Fale Niu on 'Uiha Island and Gifford's description of a temple to Hikule'o under the stewardship of Malupo and his people are also explained within the genealogical history of the Ha'a Ngana.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The recording of a small architectural feature in 1991 on the island of Ha'ano in northern Ha'apai has led subsequently to the narrative interpretation of a pre-Christian Tongan god-house and its deity. This narrative has been pieced together from extant oral traditions in the village of Ha'ano, from stories recorded by Gifford and others, from anthropological

⁸Tongan social organisation, while complex and ambiguous, follows two basic principles. Within a sibling group, females have higher status than males, with primogeniture being the secondary consideration for rank. However, there is a clear distinction between status, power, and authority. Gailey (1987: 47–83) provides a penetrating analysis of these relationships.

records of the Kingdom as a whole, and from genealogical accounts of the chiefly lineages of the Tu'i Tonga and Ha'a Ngana. Though piecemeal and far from complete, the picture that emerges is of an archaeological site with considerable importance in traditional Tongan culture. The objectives of this paper have been to present the factual data of both archaeological configuration and oral history and place these within an anthropological context of traditional Tongan religion.

Faleme'e, and its compound of Fanakava, were dedicated to the goddess Hikule'o. As a principal Tongan deity ruling over the afterworld of Pulotu, Hikule'o was patron to the highest ranking lineage in the chiefdom, that of the Tu'i Tonga. The presence of a temple to this deity in Ha'ano, and her association with the Ha'a Ngana chiefs in general are telling. Genealogical considerations of the Ha'a Ngana illustrate linkages to the Tu'i Tonga through at least two associations. It has not been possible to establish when and by whom the temple was built, though suggestions have been made. On firmer ground, the dedication of this temple appears to have been involved with the human sacrifice of an *ula* singer and his burial near a principal post. This burial, reflecting the construction of Hikule'o's house in Pulotu, provides a structural parallel between the spiritual realm and that of mortals. Moreover, not only was Faleme'e a site at which Hikule'o could be confronted by her priest, Manakoto, but the temple and its compound of Fanakava were a long recognised sanctuary in Ha'apai. Fanakava, not insignificantly, was also the name of the Tu'i Tonga's sanctuary in Mu'a and of another sanctuary in the afterworld of Pulotu.

From the late 1700s until the 1850s, Tonga was gripped in a series of chiefly wars in which Christianity and religious conversion ultimately became a factor. As these wars continued, traditional religious practices, sacred objects, temples and the priesthood were progressively eliminated throughout the country. Indeed in 1866 the Wesleyan missionary and later Prime Minister Shirley W. Baker was given to state that he had visited Faleme'e and that it was the last *fale otua* of the heathen gods still standing in Ha'apai. The archaeological remains of Faleme'e continued to stand for another century and a quarter, to be recorded during an archaeological survey in July of 1991. The unfortunate destruction of this site in 1992, and the re-use of its materials for a school yard fence, underscore the contemporary problems of heritage conservation not only in Tonga but in many developing countries throughout the Pacific.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological fieldwork conducted in the Ha'apai Islands between 1990 and 1992 was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I wish to thank M. Evans and H. Young-Leslie for allowing me to cite an unpublished conference paper and for reading an earlier draft of this article. Nicole Oakes, Andrew Barton, Janet Davidson and two anonymous reviewers have also provided comments on earlier drafts and I am most grateful. Maps have been prepared by Shannon Wood. Field research was conducted under permit to the Tongan Government of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV and I am grateful for this permission. I also wish to acknowledge the hospitality and patience of the people of Ha'apai, especially Pili Halai of Pangai, Lifuka Island. Finally, without the narrative of Vake, the research upon which the paper is based would have been severely limited. Vake's death in May 1993 was a substantial loss to the people of Ha'ano, both of a person and of a source of knowledge about traditional Tongan culture and history.

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Received 17 July 1993

Accepted 4 December 1993