

# Tauhi Vā: The first space

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1. 'Making' is more appropriate than just 'build', since *tauhi vā* can permeate the different stages of the *fale*'s realisation: conception, organisation internally and externally on site, materialization and building ethic.

2. The designation of rooms in a Tongan *fale* does not fix one purpose to a room, instead it demarcates a space for several appropriate activities. *Tauhi vā* helps to define what is 'appropriate' for a particular social engagement.

3. '*Inasi*' is a framework the author is developing to present an indigenous understanding of why Tongans appropriate non-original architecture; this paper continues to build this framework. Refer to 'Ilaiu (2009)' for further reading.

4. Ironically the concerns of Loos and Le Corbusier with 'architectural baggage' is already proven 'nostalgic' in Tonga's case, since the *fale* of the Tongan laymen was inspired by non-original sources, even before Western contact. The more recent appropriations now include the Western-styled *fale*, including *fale 'Amelika*, sourced from industrialised cities: Auckland, Honolulu etc ('Ilaiu 2009). This may be seen to complicate the notion of architectural primitivism and simplicity implied in Loos and Le Corbusier's commentaries.

In memory of my *kainga Tonga* aboard the MV Princess Ashika, tragically lost to the *moana vavale* during the final course of this paper. I dedicate these reflections of our *tala o Tonga* to your passing *vā* with your *kainga 'ofa 'anga*. 'Ofa ange 'ae 'Otua kē Ne tataki ho'o fononga lolotonga 'etau māvae, 'ofa atu.

## Introduction

In 'weaving' together an architectural, cultural, archaeological and anthropological understanding of *fale* in Tonga, *tauhi vā* — maintaining beautiful social relations — is the essential underlying strand. *Tauhi vā* motivates certain *fakalahi*, or spatial enlargements, *teuteu*, or materialisations, *fakalokiloki*, or designated<sup>2</sup> spaces, and the application of '*inasi*'.<sup>3</sup> '*Inasi*' is a Tongan practice of appropriating architecture from non-original sources to advance indigenous intentions. *Fakalahi*, *fakalokiloki*, *teuteu* and '*inasi*' become outcomes that are not exclusively architectural, when *tauhi vā* informs *fale* architecture. Thus, the very concept of a 'primitive hut,' key to Rykwert's thinking of architectural origins, may become an erroneous opening for discussion of Tongan architectural origins. Rather, such discussion could begin specifically with a Tongan understanding of 'first space': the realm of *kakai*, or people and their society.

The closing remarks in Rykwert's book concerning "... why we build and what we build for ..." gain pertinence in this respect (1972: 192). Since laymen are the primary commissioners and designers of domestic *fale* in Tonga, Rykwert's appeal to an essential question of building can be responded to by investigating the laymen's *fale*, as this paper aims to present. The question as to whether it is the architect or in Adolf Loos's term, the "peasant" who holds more "tulleric wisdom" or "*Ausgeglichenheit*" (27); or a discussion of "first men" having, as Le Corbusier terms it, "unadulterated reason" remains as a future discussion with respect to Tongan architecture and comparative study<sup>4</sup> (16). However, as a fundamental tenet of Tongan culture (Ka'ili 2007: 17), *tauhi vā* will unlikely be superseded in the making of Tongan domestic architecture, whether it be a specialist or layman who initiates the *fale*.

Perhaps *tauhi vā* may be thought of, in Rykwert's terms, as a perpetuated 'paradigm of building'. But again there is a nuanced thought: *tauhi vā* is not only about 'building' per se but the 'making' of Tongan architecture. 'Making' here implies a freedom to invent new architectural models rather than being fixed to a *modus operandi* of architecture. *Tauhi vā* substantiates these inventions, rejecting on the one hand the loaded label of 'primitivism' and, on the other, a notion of making as mere experiment. Guided by Tongan architectural history, the paradigm of making shows that the *fale* form certainly changes in correlations with Tongan's *tauhi vā* in differing historical and socio-political settings.

## **‘Uluaki vā: first space**

*Tauhi vā*, which this paper acknowledges as the ‘first’ space of Moana<sup>5</sup> or Oceanic people, is discussed in the recent work of Tongan socio-anthropologist, Dr. Te-vita Ka’ili *Tauhi Vā: Creating Beauty through the Art of Sociospatial Relations* (2007). Ka’ili builds upon the work of anthropologists Alessandro Duranti (1997); Helen Morton (1996); Heather Young Leslie (2002); Okusi Mahina (2004); poet Albert Wendt (1999); economist Sitiveni Halapua (2000); educator Konai Helu Thaman (2004), to name a few. They describe *vā* primarily as a relational socio-space (all referenced in Ka’ili 2007: 18-26). *Vā* is not exclusive to Tonga, since other cultures, including Japanese, Samoan and Māori, have a similar concept (Refiti 2009; Ka’ili 2007: 20). Concentrating on the Tongan condition, it is Tongan anthropologist Dr. ‘Okusitino Mahina’s *tā* and *vā* theory of time and space, which Ka’ili engages to explain *vā* as “... relational space between two time-markers (*tā*). It is a space that is fashioned through the relationship between time-markers – beats, things, or people.” (Mahina 2004) *Vā*, in its widest sense, is the space between two bodies or entities, and ‘the nature’ of that relationship. By *tauhi* – literally meaning to nurture or maintain — the *vā* — or relational space in-between — a person can create harmony or beauty, particularly when there is a symmetrical or mutual exchange of *tauhi vā* in return.

The harmony is heightened when one maintains her connections to all of Tongan society. Mahina describes society as the horizontal *vā* to *‘api*, or immediate family, and *kainga*, or kin. Simultaneously, as Mahina explains, society also maintains vertical relationship to *eiki*. The divine representations of *eiki* were once the high chiefs and now at national level they are represented by Tongan royalty and aristocrats. In addition, *eiki* at a local level are the esteemed elders of one’s immediate family: including *fahu* (female) or *‘ulumotu’ā* (male) (Mahina 1992). A Tongan can *tauhi*, or nurture his *vā* by performing social duties, or *fatongia* through these relationships. In performing *fatongia*, one reaps from the reciprocal or cyclical benefits of *mālie*, or beauty, *ongoongo*, or recognition, *lāngilangi*, or honour — the latter two are interchangeable with the Māori meaning of mana (Ka’ili 2007: 16; Mahina 2004). There is a Tongan saying, “*tu’ā e sinō ka oku ‘eiki ‘a e fatongiā*”: a person may be a commoner but his *fatongia* has chiefly status. This shows how fulfilling social duty becomes “... a source of honor and dignity, and a mark of good citizenship ...” (Ka’ili 2007: 33). These various *fatongia* permeate Tongan society at familial level, locally, nationally, and internationally. Consequently, these social strata and exchanges influence Tongan architecture. *Tauhi vā* is an extensive topic, which exceeds the scope of this paper. However, to bridge an understanding of *tauhi vā*’s significant role in making Tongan domestic architecture, this paper responds firstly to critical notions raised in Rykwert’s book, and concludes by investigating how *tauhi vā* makes the Tongan *fale*.

## **Neither paradisiacal nor primitive**

In nurturing a good *vā*, one arrives at a state of *nonga*, or peace, *mālie*, *ongoongo*, *lāngilangi*. These aspects represent Tongan *palataisi*<sup>6</sup>, or paradise. For this reason, the idealised Pacific hut in an idyllic paradisiacal setting is nostalgic and a one-dimensional image of Moana architecture. Hence, *palataisi* does not begin with scenery or architecture but is attained when one maintains good *vā* with others. So, when *tauhi vā* informs the making of the *fale*, architecture participates in a paradisaical moment. Paradise, then, according to the Tongan psyche is a state of

5. The author uses *Moana*, or Ocean instead of Pacific, because it empowers Pacific people in postcolonial discourse, which does not reference colonial naming and territories. The Tongan scholar, Epeli Hau’ofa, inspired this indigenous re-naming in his book *A new Oceania: Rediscovery Our Sea of Islands* (1993) which scholars use in support of this vision and according to its literal meaning.

6. The Tongan word for ‘paradise’ highlights that *pālataisi* is a non-indigenous term, perhaps introduced by early European travellers having visited the ‘exotic’ island setting. Historically the Tongan language describes the emotions and traits which this author attributes to the notion of paradise: *ongoongo*, *lāngilangi* and *nonga*. The linguistic variety of Tongan words used to express one western idea suggests an architectural parallel, where the Tongan *fale* and its various architectural traces do not objectify or clump an architectural experience.

being and not necessarily a physical setting in which to reside. The architectural outcomes of *tauhi vā* can be seen as attempts to achieve such paradise: '*inasi*, *teuteu*, *fakalokiloki* and *fakalahi*. To ensure the integrity of *tauhi vā*, these architectural attributes should not operate independently or be used to justify the *tauhi vā* of a *fale*.

Tonga's '*uluaki*, or first *fale* which, in Rykwert's terminology, may be thought of as a 'primitive hut', was not the now iconic and familiar *fale Tonga* (Fig. 1):

This structure has a curved roof ... [demarcating] an oval floor plan [below]. The roof supported by an even number of *pou*, or posts, arranged in a double row, offset from the perimeter of the house. On top of these posts there are a series of cross beams, from which struts rise to support the eaves. [The roof structure lashed beautifully using '*uli*, black and *kula*, red coloured sennit.] Non-structural *pou* and *pola* panels, or plaited coconut and sometimes sugarcane leaves enclose the circular interior. The main entry was a curtained opening, located centrally in one of the longer wall spans. Often there are side openings through the round ends into the *leke*, or private rooms. ('Ilaiu 2007: 26)

Although this *fale Tonga* was popularized as the paradigm for domestic buildings from the nineteenth century until the late twentieth century, narratives collected by contemporary historians, architectural researchers and commentaries of early explorers identify earlier buildings as Tonga's '*uluaki* *fale* (Potungaue Ako 2005; Kaloni 1990; Tuita 1988; Ferdon 1987; Anderson 1983; Anderson in Cook 1955-67; Ellis 1782). Today the domestic *fale Tonga* is rarely commissioned by families and many *fale Tonga* are left dilapidated or used only as ancillary structures to a new Western *fale* ('Ilaiu 2007: 26-68). This suggests that Tongan laymen no longer consider the *fale Tonga* as the ideal physical representation of their '*api*. Certainly Tongans have moved on to other *fale* models to support their *fatongia* of *tauhi vā*, such as *fale 'Amelika* that will be discussed in concluding this paper. Thus, the once paradigmatic formal model of the *fale Tonga* coupled with its antecedent forebears and its non-first-house status, complicates a simple transposition of Rykwert's understanding of the primitive hut as the image of perpetual reconstruction to a Tongan setting. Rather the Tongan *fale* is conceived first in the *kakai* space of *tauhi vā*, before it can be considered as a structural translation into the realm of architecture.

### **Tauhi vā makes architecture**

The nuances of *tauhi vā* are best understood through Tongan conduct and ceremonies in customised *fatongia*. The designated ritual areas, the movement paths, arranged seating areas and the various tasks outlined by *fatongia* organize a *fale*'s layout accordingly. Existing *fale* are modified over time to suit and new buildings are acquired or constructed because they help inhabitants carry out their *fatongia* of *tauhi vā*. As a corollary discussion, the architectural outcomes of *tauhi vā*: *fakalahi*, *fakalokiloki*, *teuteu* and '*inasi* are therefore the architectural means to fulfil *tauhi vā*. It is important to acknowledge that each *fale* has its time and place in Tongan architectural history. *Tauhi vā* can influence the *fale*'s conception from original or non-original sources, considered in terms of '*inasi*, *teuteu* or the materialisation of the *fale*, the *fakalokiloki* or designated spaces and its increased scale or *fakalahi*, as it responds to the specific social, cultural and political milieu of the *fale*.

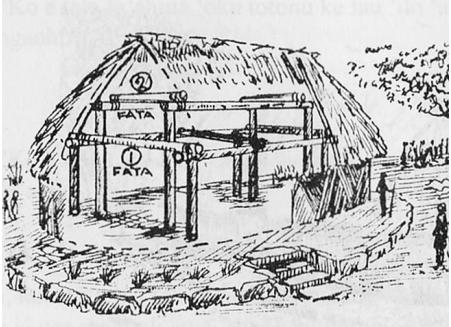


Fig. 1: Fale Tonga. Courtesy of Potungaue Ako (Ministry of Education, Tonga) 2005



Fig. 2: Fale faka-Hekeheke. Drawing: Ilaiu 2009



Fig. 3: Fale Hunuki. Courtesy of Potungaue Ako (Ministry of Education, Tonga) 2005

In his quoting of Vitruvius, Rykwert implies an evolutionist or progressivist development of architecture from rude beginnings to ever-improved refinements. Hence, his reference to the refinement of ideas and craft, from “... confused and wandering ideas ...” to a certain “... reasoning of symmetry” (Rykwert 1972: 106). This evolutionary paradigm implies that the constructions of earlier societies may be mere huts, lacking substantial conceptual or structural significance. However, such a paradigm requires a holistic understanding of dwelling in its more complex socio-cultural milieu. This paper aims to address such holism in discussion of the ‘uluaki’ Tongan *fale*: *fale Hunuki*, *fale faka-Hekeheke*, *fale faka-Funa* and *fale Fa’ahiua*, emphasising that *tauhi vā* is the architectural substance of these early *fale*.

The Tongan architect Solomone Tuita suggests that the first *fale* was the *fale faka-Hekeheke* (Fig. 2), which he describes as being built around a tree:

Branches from local vegetation were broken at the same length and the manner of construction was simple. One end of a broken branch was sharpened to a point and pierced the ground at an incline plane and the tops of these branches leaned inwards supported by a tree’s trunk. The roof was covered with leaves, thick enough to keep the sun and rain out, and the floor, with layers of leaves, comfortable enough to sleep on. The basic function of this shelter was for sleeping at night and to provide shade from the sun during the day. (Tuita 1988: 40)

The New Zealand architect, Andrew Anderson, in his architectural thesis written before Tuita’s work, begins with the *fale Hunuki*<sup>7</sup> as “... possibly the oldest form of shelter constructed” (Anderson 1983: 58) (Fig. 3). This is the commonly held view, as the educational Tongan history textbook ‘*Tala o Tonga*’ explains that European explorers saw “... fa’ahinga fale kekeheke na’e nofo ai a’e kakai he matātahi ...”: many different *fale* that people lived in by the sea. The *fale Hunuki* was “... sipinga malohi ... faka’aonga’i lahi i he taimi afā ...”: a strong typology, useful during cyclone times (Potungaue Ako 2005: 42). Structurally, the *fale Hunuki* differed from the *fale faka-Hekeheke* using a constructed post that replaced the tree, which Anderson calls “... an architectural column positioned at the centre of the entry into the hut” (Anderson 1983: 58). This new column raised the roof entirely off the ground by resting also on top of a smaller post at the opposite end.

Anderson explains further that the structure consisted of “... rafters forming the roof and walls going from the ground up to a junction at the apex, and lashed together poles of 65 -100 with cross members lashed longitudinally” (58). This *fale* had a roof that was covered “... with grass ... woven in layers similar to a mat” (Tuita 1988: 41). According to oratory, the *fale Hunuki* is the first rectangular planned *fale*, providing a larger interior space than its predecessors (44; Anderson 1983: 58, Lolo 2007). The structural lift from ‘natural’ ground level and support ‘structures’ highlights an improving expertise, but more importantly the desire for a larger interior space.

7. *Hunuki* is a word used to describe an object that pierces into a surface.

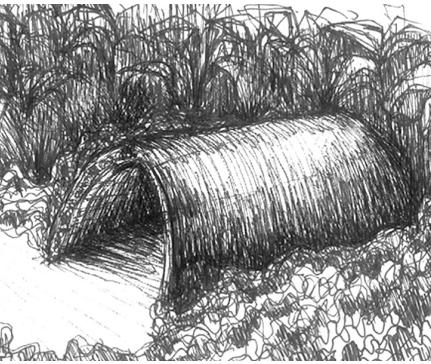


Fig. 4: Fale faka-Funa. Drawing: 'Ilaiu 2009.'

8. A contemporary temporal structure used for shade from the mid-day heat at plantations is called fale Hunuki; however its stylistic variety and scale indicates only nominal connections.

The *fale faka-Funa* (Fig. 4), perhaps contemporaneous with the *fale Hunuki*, continued the tradition of wall and roof being one architectural element. Tuita points out that the *fale Hunuki* differed with the inclusion of two posts in the "... centre of each end with a beam across on top ..." (Tuita 1988: 41). However, the *fale faka-Funa* was achieved "... by using curved posts — two in each end facing inward to form an arch-type structure ..." with harvested vegetation covering this curving structure (Tuita 1988: 41), as the *fale Hunuki*'s slanting roof allowed only a small volume of space at the rear end and was only used for sleeping. The *fale faka-Funa*'s arching structure provided a uniform and again larger interior space, particularly with the two end posts now eliminated. Clearly, these '*uluaki fale* express the occupant's persistent desire for *fakalahi*.

Professor Futa Helu, a renowned Tongan scholar, suggests that prior to Western contact the idea of the nuclear family in Tonga did not exist: "It was never society ..." since it is only a social unit that is "... on the way to society" (Helu 1999: 123). He elaborates on his position by emphasizing that Tongan society was made up of "... interacting groups of people ..." of shared interests (Helu 1999: 121-124). This understanding helps to explain the small scale of earlier *fale*, which according to the available narratives must have accommodated approximately one to four reclined people at most. These first *fale* would have operated as an entity within a larger community of buildings. Hence *tauhi vā* had to operate more outwardly suggesting residents nurtured their *vā* with others beyond the walls of their own *fale*. This is conceivable since daily activities were more communal, operating on an outdoor *mala'e*, or open space or under larger structures. These may have been the double-height buildings that the early European explorer Ellis describes in his accounts as being "... fifty to sixty feet long, but only from sixteen to eighteen feet wide" (Ellis 1782: 75; Ferdon 1987: 18; Barnes and Green 2008: 29). The early *fale* is thus conceived of as a place of solitude where a person may look after her internal *vā* by, for example, being still and resting from sun. Regardless of their scale and simple construction, *fale faka-Hekeheke*, *fale Hunuki*, *fale faka-Funa* are significant in their accord with *tauhi vā*.

Archaeology settlement patterns would assist in developing a greater understanding of how *tauhi vā* organised the community of early *fale*. However Tongan archaeological records extend currently to ancestral and historical narratives, comprising information about burial grounds, road systems and floor depths of singular *fale* floors (Barnes and Green 2009; Burley 1998; Spennemann 1987). The raised floors are said to have been between 0.15m and 0.30m thick (Spennemann 1988: 40), which oratory and historical accounts explain were layers of sennit, coconut leaves and then woven pandanus mats (Lolo 2007; Ferdon 1987: 20; Cook 1955-67). Unlike Samoa's house mounds, which distinguish the house of a chief from the commoner, archaeological evidence on Tongatapu suggests that Tongans did not build large mounds for their chiefs (Barnes and Green 2008). Instead, one excavation revealed a sequence of layers of the normal type and thickness, representing 13 house floors. This indicates that Tongans constructed their houses in one location over a long period of time (Spennemann 1988: 41). The *fale*'s fixed position and preferred site highlights an '*api*'s connection to *fonua*, or land and the favourable *vā* to others in the vicinity, such as the chief's '*api*' (Ilaiu 2007: 20). These '*uluaki fale*' were no longer built<sup>8</sup>, from perhaps the early nineteenth century when other *fale* types became more desirable. However, the '*uluaki fale*' did set an architectural precedence of *fakalahi* for the next

series of *fale*. These next models move their roof structures entirely off the ground, hence increasing an internal volume, reflecting greater emphasis on accommodating *tauhi vā*.

In the early 1800s, Tonga experienced significant socio-political changes as it moved away from a decentralised tribal system, to a more kingdom-nation, with greater emphasis on immediate kin and gender roles of individuals (Helu 1999: 319; Kaeppeler 1999: 15; Gailey 1987: 178-188; Tuita 1988: 43-45). Certainly, this socio-political context significantly influenced the development of the next *fale*, as *tauhi vā* became more stratified. Helu suggests it was "... a new society that looked more to the land and less to the seas, a society which was becoming rigidly organized [into 'api or family units], more centralised, and increasingly hierarchical [with more available aristocratic titles for commoners]" (Helu 1999: 128). As society changed, the *fale* appears to have increased in scale, expanding its internal purposes. Concurrently, the 'api and its *kainga* mirrored the socio-politics of Tongan society at a micro-level within the *fale*. For example, the *tauhi vā* towards an individual with 'eiki status—historically, the title of a village chief—is now represented by elders of a family, such as *fahu* and *'ulumotu'a* (Mahina 2009). Consequently, the *fatongia* to an 'eiki — which functioned only in a *mala'e* and communal *fale* — can alternatively be conducted within the immediate realm of an 'api's *fale*. Hence, the *fakalahi* of the *fale* allowed such *fatongia* to continue 'domestically', as the subsequent *fale*: *fale Fa'ahiua*, *fale faka-Fisi*, *fale faka-Tonga* and *fale faka-Manuka* exemplify. These models become more exclusive with defined openings and wall elements, as Tongans apply *teuteu* and *fakalokiloki*. However, these enclosed features are actually installed because the family want to *tauhi vā* with the wider community under its roof. From the *fale Fa'ahiua* onwards, it becomes clear that the Tonga *fale* 'domesticates' the communal aspects of *tauhi vā*. Therefore these 'community'-orientated *fale* are best understood by the customs and ceremonies that accomplish *tauhi vā*.

### Tauhi vā: *fale* for one's *fatongia*

The study of gender roles in Tonga is widely researched by Helu and Mahina, and anthropologists Christine Gailey and Elizabeth Bott (Gailey 2003; Helu 1999; Mahina 1992; Bott 1982). A particular example of Tonga's *fatongia* with respect to gender within the 'api is the duty of a Tongan women to collect and store her valuable *koloa*, including bark cloth, fine mats etc<sup>9</sup>. Her production, collection and storage of *koloa* are important to *tauhi vā*. For example, a woman nurtures her family's relationship with others when she exchanges her *koloa* at a ceremony. Reciprocally, when her *koloa* is received, this honours her ethic and 'api with *langilangi*. She is respected, according to anthropologist Ping Ann Addo, as a 'good Tongan' woman (Addo 2004: iv). Therefore *koloa*'s storage in a *fale* is very important for *tauhi vā*. The indigenous *fale Fa'ahiua*<sup>10</sup> ensured this important *fatongia* was accommodated, as a historical narrative describes: "na'e fa'u hono fata ki 'olunga 'a ia ne ngae 'aki ki hono tuku ai 'a e koloa faka-Tonga kae 'ata pe 'a e fale ki he nofo 'anga" (Fig. 5). In translation this means: the *fale Fa'ahiua*'s *fata*, or roof beam, was constructed above to create an area for the storage of *koloa* and allowed more room for many more people to commune (Potungaue Ako 2005: 43). The same narrative suggests that for these reasons the *fale Fa'ahiua* or *fakalakalaka* advanced the smaller *fale Hunuki* (43).

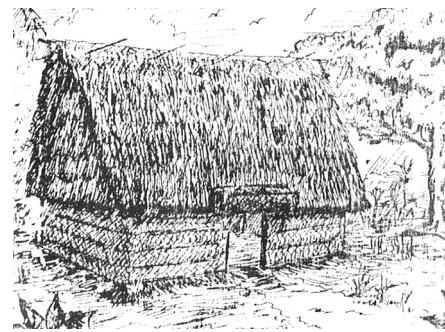


Fig. 5: *Fale Fa'ahiua*. Courtesy of Potungaue Ako (Ministry of Education, Tonga) 2005

9. *Koloa*, meaning 'treasure', describes women's labour or what they produce. Their *koloa* includes, amongst other items, weaving mats and baskets, tapa making and coconut oil manufacture. Men's *ngāue* are 'masculine' tasks: heavy lifting, outdoor cooking, fishing, boat and house building. Refer to Gailey (2003).

10. *Fa'ahiua* literally means something with two sides. This refers to the gabled roof and its two sides as opposed to a uniform oval roof. Note that some references have misspelt this *fale* as 'Fa'ahiva'.

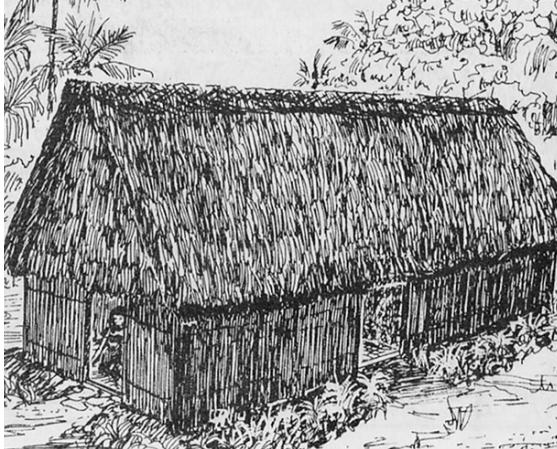


Fig. 6: Fale faka-Fisi. Courtesy of Potungaue Ako (Ministry of Education, Tonga) 2005



Fig. 7: Putu, or funeral ceremony in village of Pea. Living room converted into a focal area of ceremony where deceased lies. Photo: Ilaiu 2007, Tonga

The *fale Fa'ahiua* was popular between 1820 and the early 1830s (Gailey 1987: 178-188; Tuita 1988: 43-45). Tuita suggests a relationship between Tongan contemporary social hierarchy and the verticality of the *fale*. He interprets the *fale*'s vertical elevation off the ground as a Tongan desire to be free from customary social pressures and from being "buried" in their earlier low lying dwellings (46). Tuita's interpretation refers to the earlier obligations to chiefs, which the kingship government centralised with one line of royalty and selected nobles. Tongan people, having been released from their many chiefly obligations, could now focus their efforts on their own family and *fale*. Thus the *fale Fa'ahiua* reflects this interesting shift, the structural complexity suggesting the strengthening networks within the local vicinity. The *fale Fa'ahiua*'s structural verticality, complex roof structure, jointing and cladding systems reflect the wealth of ideas, skills and labour available in the community to build an '*api*'s *fale*'. The building process is an important time for *tauhi vā*, and involves many opportunities for *kainga* and neighbours to fulfil *fatongia*. For example, to ensure an efficient working party, a prior *fatongia* involves collecting raw materials to fabricate the building elements, such as coconut fronds, which are then plaited to create the wall cladding. Another important *vā* for the host family to *tauhi* is the harvesting and preparation of food for the labourers during these weeks of construction (Gifford 1929: 145). This community build encouraged neighbours to *tauhi vā*. Assisting a neighbour's *fale* reciprocally secured workers for one's own *fale*.

### **Tauhi vā: fale for kin**

The *vā* between *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine*, or a brother and sister is historically the most esteemed relationship in Tongan society, nurtured by *faka'apa'apa* or respect (Helu 1997: 121). In particular for architecture, the *faka'apa'apa* between *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine* organises where each kin sleeps and, to some extent, how they dwell. For example, at the onset of puberty the brother moves to the most distant sleeping quarter from his sister as a sign of *faka'apa'apa*. In doing so, the brother's *tauhi vā* maintains good relations with his sister and parents, whilst he is acknowledged and respected reciprocally for his appropriate Tongan etiquette.

During the popularity of *fale Fa'ahiua*, another model — the *fale faka-Fisi* — was appropriated from Fiji (Fig. 6) (Potungaue Ako 2005: 44). As an example of '*inasi*', Tongan people manako, or found the Fijian *fale* appealing because it was stronger. It also offered more room than the *fale Fa'ahiua* and was *fakalokiloki*, or organised into rooms (44). Thus, according to this narrative, the *fale faka-Fisi* set the precedence for the iconic *fale Tonga*, as described earlier, with rooms on curved ends and a general central space. This *fakalokiloki* supported the *tauhi vā* between *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine* because the sister and brother can sleep separately when



Fig. 8: Putu, ceremony in village of Pea. The hall way becomes a processional space, waiting/seating area for guests who have arrived. It is also a place to move koloa, as seen above, from presentation area to a bedroom converted storage area. Photo: 'Ilaiau 2007, Tonga'

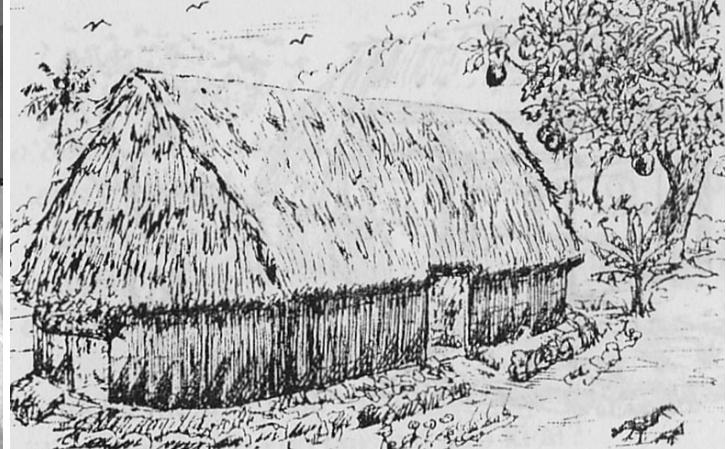


Figure 9: Fale faka-Manuka. Courtesy of Potungauae Ako (Ministry of Education, Tonga) 2005

needed. This custom also gave rise to the 'boy's hut', which is a smaller building commonly built near the main *fale* ('Ilaiau 2007: 54). This particular *tauhi va* persist in the organisation of the living arrangements of contemporary Western *fale*, such as the *fale 'Amelika*. This *fatongia* between kin has been considered architecturally in several ways: designating the most distant rooms within a *fale* to *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine*, a modified garage space or as seen in Tongan villages now as an accompanying makeshift *fale* made out of coconut fronds beside a Western-style *fale* (54).

### **Tauhi vā: fale for ceremonies**

Tongans have many ceremonies conducted in the *fale*, including *putu*, or funerals, *mali*, or wedding ceremonies, *fai lotu*, religious services, *kai pola* or banquets. All require different eating, ceremonial, gift collection and kava arrangements. For example, the *putu* includes an '*a pō*' or a wake and *fai lotu* which could span from a week to a month in the *fale* area. Often the actual burial date occurs in the middle of that month with a *fai lotu* and '*a pō*' prior, then post-burial there is another week or two of *fai lotu*. A Tongan funeral establishes *fatongia* for those involved. In fulfilling these ceremonial duties one ensures *tauhi vā* or the maintenance of good relationships, particularly with the family of the deceased. Ceremonies require an open and adaptable space to carry out *fatongia*, viz., food preparation, cooking, gift exchange and presentation, kava ceremony, religious ceremony, and the seating of the chorus and general guests (Figs. 7 and 8).

Therefore, the desire of early Tongans to *fakalahi* shows their concern for such ceremonies. The ideal *fale* would be a versatile interior with easy access to outdoor space, where ancillary shelters can be easily erected around the main *fale*. The partitioned interior of the early *fale faka-Fisi* with two rooms would suit the variety of areas that an '*api*' requires. According to Anderson's commentary, in the early days the *fale Fa'ahiua* was re-used after its peak period as an ancillary structure to the new *fale faka-Tonga* (Anderson 1983: 55). Nowadays, tarpaulin structures are often erected for these outdoor activities. For these ceremonial reasons, *tauhi vā* prompted a *fale*'s *fakalahi*.

Another significant aspect, particularly for the next two models, is *teuteu*, or the adornment of a *fale*. The materialisation of a *fale* must consider its external appearance and how it reflects the family within. A "*ma'opo'opo*" or neat and securely fabricated *fale* shows the family's good working relationship (Taumoe-folau 2007), as well as *fakapotopoto* or responsible Tongans. When ceremonies are hosted by a *fale*, the building inevitably is an observed building by community guests. Hence, *teuteu* is very important. In maintaining good relations, Ton-

11. *Fale faka-Tonga* is interchangeable with *fale Tonga* described earlier and *fale Hau*, or the *fale* of the King. These two models became the principle ‘traditional’ *fale Tonga* buildings because they were the most widely built *fale* at the time of European settlement (Tuita 1988: 46).

12. The anthropological and archaeological work of Shawn and Barnes (2008: 29) disagree that the *fale faka-Manuka* has historical and archaeological links to the Manu'a islands of Samoa. This opposes a historical and commonly held view that says *fale faka-Manuka* is an appropriated model from Samoa, as linguistically the place of origin and ‘*inasi*’ is documented in the Tongan name of that *fale*. This naming tradition continues as Tongans appropriate, e.g., Tongans call the ‘American kitset’ *fale* ‘Amelika’, in reference to the United States which is the primary source. According to linguistics and the history of ‘*inasi*’, this paper for now supports the common view.

gan people often adorn their *fale* to ensure the public’s favourable opinion. The Samoan phrase, *teu le vā* has the same meaning as *tauhi vā*; however *teu*, meaning to adorn, is more pertinent for this notion of *teuteu* (Refiti 2009; Ka’ili 2007: 18). Hence, in ‘dressing’ the *fale*, a family also adorns its socio-relational space or *vā* with its community, as the next two *fale* exemplify.

The *fale faka-Tonga*<sup>11</sup> and the *fale faka-Manuka* appear the same from the outside but structurally their roof members are slightly different (Fig. 9). The *fale faka-Tonga* used *teke tau 'olunga*, or vertical struts, supported by *lango*, or beams, whilst the *fale faka-Manuka*’s roof had three *teke*, or angle struts, supported on three *lango*. By employing a range of materials, Tongans *teuteu* their *vā*. The difficulty of sourcing and applying the material gave the selection greater value. For example, the ‘*api* gained more status when the family chose *au*, or sugarcane leaves instead of *lou niu*, or coconut branches for the roof cladding because *au* was rare (Potungaue Ako 2005: 44; Taumoefolau 2007). The internal roof structure of the *fale faka-Tonga* and *fale faka-Manuka* displayed the wealth and power of high-ranking Tongans, particularly in the complex *kupesi*, or design produced by the *lalava*, or lashings that held the roof members together (Kaloni 1990: 47). The *kupesi* also conveyed stories from the owner’s heritage (Lolo 2007). In this way *tauhi vā* materialised the *fale* and promoted the ‘*api*'. Early European explorers observed the variety of *fale* that signified their occupants’ social status. The English missionary William Ellis claimed that dwelling size depended on wealth and rank of the inhabitants (Ellis 1782: 75). Furthermore, the explorer William Anderson described the houses of the lower class as small huts (Anderson in Cook 1955-74: 935). In this way *teuteu* became a dressing to reflect the status of its residents, an important aspect for *tauhi vā*.

### **Tauhi vā: fale across the Moana**

Sometimes *tauhi vā* also applied ‘*inasi*, viz., the *fale faka-Fisi* from Fiji, *fale faka-Manuka* from the Manu'a Islands of Samoa<sup>12</sup>, and more recently the *fale* ‘Amelika from the United States of America (Fig. 10). The earlier *fale* were appropriated because they provided larger interiors for communal activities within *fale*. The *fale faka-Manuka* arrived during a time of inter-marriage between Tongan chiefs and Samoa’s elite women (Potungaue Ako 2005: 49). In this nuptial arrangement, “... na'a nau langa ai ha ngaahi *fale tautau mo honau fale* ‘i Ha'amo'a”: they [Samoan residents in Tonga] built *fale* according to their *fale* in Samoa (49). Most likely the *fale* was seen as a ‘gift’ from Samoa to Tonga. In this case the appropriation of the *fale faka-Manuka* contributed to Tonga’s strengthening alliance with Samoa — maintaining good *vā* between nations (Mageo 2002; Burley 1998: 338).

As Moana people migrate to urban Pacific Rim cities like Auckland, Honolulu and, to some extent, Sydney, the transnational Tongans maintain *tauhi vā* with relatives back in the homeland (‘Ilaiu 2009; ‘Ilaiu 2007). Good relations are sustained by sending regular remittance. ‘*Inasi*’ includes architectural remittance, which includes appropriated building materials, architectural concepts and sometimes an architectural kitset exported back to Tonga for the ‘*api*’s *fale*. Again, appropriated architecture from industrial cities constituting remittance complicates any simple reading between Rykwert’s understanding of the primitive hut within Eurocentric architectural contexts and any idealism of a Pacific primitive hut. This is particularly so when the ‘American dream’ inspires many Tongan migrants to create wealth, enabling them to be the resource for relatives



Figure 10: Fale 'Amelika in Nukunuku village.  
Photo: Ilaiu 2007



Figure 11: Pacific Island family living in Auckland loads a container of 'architectural remittance'. Photo: Ilaiu 2007

in Tonga. *Tauhi vā* motivates the architectural remittance of Tongan people, even though it is easily read within contexts of western imagery and idealism. It is interesting that once transplanted to a Tongan village, the *fale 'Amelika* is soon appreciated by Tongans as an image of connectedness, *'ofa* or love. In other words, the transnational Tongan has fulfilled *fatongia* to the family. Locally the *fale 'Amelika* gives the residents *ongoongo*; it shows the *'api* has external assistance and resources abroad (Ilaiu 2009). So as *fale* that have traversed the *Moana* — with origins recorded in their names — *fale faka-Fisi*; *fale faka-Manuka*; and *fale 'Amelika* are architectural markers, or *tā*, of Tongan expanse, representing the strong network of Tongan people operating according to *tauhi vā*, even across oceans.

## Conclusion

In tracing successive paradigms of the Tongan *fale*, from what is considered to be the first *fale* to those imported from Fiji or Samoa, and to contemporary architectural remittances, this paper has emphasised, in its reference to Rykwert's primitive hut, a necessary distancing with respect to the understanding of origin and primitive. Clearly Rywert's argument of a perpetuated image of the primitive hut in architectural history does not fit precisely with Tonga's architectural situation; nor does it need to. Tongan society, like many other non-western cultures, operates within its own customs, insights and social nuances constituting the essential contexts for its architecture. As this paper shows, the *fale* of the Tongan layman historically changes its structure and was never fixed to an ideal form. Such form was contingent. However, what has persisted is *tauhi vā* — the essential space of all Tongan *fale*. As *tauhi vā* operates on a socio-relational level, it inevitably permeates the making of Tongan domestic space. Thus, when *tauhi vā* is eventually accomplished through architecture, *nonga*, *ongoongo*, *lāngilangi*, *mālie* — the paradisiacal state of being good Tongan men and women — is also realised.

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