

EMBODIED FONUA EMBODIED FONUA
RECONSTRUCTING A TONGAN (CUSTOMARY) TĀTATAU IN AOTEAROA

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Abstract

In many ways, my journey with tātatau is a story of rediscovery and becoming, both in my creative and professional identity as an Indigenous artist and tattooist and my personal identity as a Tongan.

This exegesis offers an insight into aspects of my arts practice as I navigate the process of reconstructing a uniquely Tongan tātatau from within the diaspora. The research is guided by one question: How do I rebuild a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice when the specialised knowledge once held by the practitioners of the artform has long been forgotten?

To begin to answer the question of how, I survey historical material relating to tātatau within Tongan oral traditions and during the early period of encounter between Europeans and Tongans. I identify the key people and events that have been instrumental in the re-emergence of Tongan tātatau in the modern era and I go on to discuss why tātatau has become a valuable mechanism for diasporic Tongans to reconnect and reconcile their relationship to their ancestral homelands. And lastly, I focus on my own tātatau practice and the mode of tattooing that has helped shape a uniquely Tongan tātatau from within the diaspora.

As an artist, I am driven by a need to create. It is how I make sense of the world within the various contexts of my experience. Within a Tongan context, it is the utility of my art, arrived at through a process of knowledge-seeking and intuitive making, that defines its true value.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly mentioned), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Introduction: We are our Ancestors

“The past is alive in us, so in more than a metaphorical sense the dead are alive – we are our history.” Epeli Hau’ofa

This statement from Tongan writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau’ofa has had a significant impact on my practice as an Indigenous artist and tattooist¹. These words stir a deep sense of knowing that my ancestors are active participants in my daily life and that I am a living ancestor in every sense of these words. The world that Hau’ofa conjures is one where the boundaries of time and space are collapsed, and we are invited to engage with our histories in powerful and dynamic ways. Hau’ofa’s statement frees our histories from such constraints as nostalgia and tradition and animates our past as an active and vital part of who we are now and what we do today. For me, this statement stimulates innovation in my work and empowers me to explore new ways to express who I am as a Tongan through art and tātatau (Tongan tattooing). I strive to work in ways that reflect the history that is alive in me.

The origin story of Tongan tātatau has its roots in Fijian veiqia (customary Fijian tattooing), a practice that was exclusively the domain of women (Veiqia, n.d.), which, when imported to Tonga, became the indelible marks that defined Tongan men, and in time, also adorned the bodies of Tongan women². When the first Europeans found their way to the Tonga islands, tātatau was well established as a local and customary practice. The few written accounts and scant illustrations from these first encounters between Tongans and the Papālangi (Europeans) offer clues into a rich tātatau culture that seems to have been widespread across all the major settlements of the Tongan islands, from Niuatoputapu in the North, through Vava’u and Ha’apai to the sacred south, Tongatapu.

The written word accounts for much of the archival material on tātatau. Scattered amongst these records are the retellings of oral traditions captured in the writing of Tongan and European missionaries, anthropologists, historians, literary artists, and academics. These written, oral traditions are the stories, woven into myth and legend, of famous figures in Tongan history, some of whom were tattooed. Tātatau also marked the pages of the journals and diaries of European explorers and missionaries. From 1616 through the mid- to late-19th Century, observations of indelible markings on Tongan bodies were described in varying degrees of detail and circumstances. By 1839, a set of written laws for a newly unified Tonga had been formalised, and tātatau, along with other customary practices, would fall victim to the rise of a burgeoning political power (Ellis, 2008). This period of rapid change in Tonga’s history brought about the eventual demise of customary Tongan tātatau in its then-current form. Some believe that Tongans continued to seek out tātatau from Sāmoan tufuga tātatau until the mid-20th century. Tātatau likely continued in Tonga

1 Epeli Hau’ofa was born in Papua New Guinea in 1939 to Tongan parents. He was a citizen of Fiji where he died in 2009.

2 An origin story of Tongan tātatau is detailed in Chapter One.

for a period after the banning of the practice was written into law. However, the evidence of Tongan tātatau occurring into the 20th century is anecdotal. Given the relatively swift and almost wholesale conversion of Tongans to Christianity, I believe it would have been a very rare occurrence, if at all.

Toward the end of the 20th century, a renowned Sāmoan tufuga tātatau (expert tattooist) by the name of Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II developed an interest in customary Tongan tātatau and made the first attempt to revive the practice for modern Tongans. Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II was an innovator and a visionary artist in the truest sense of these words. He mentored and taught numerous Indigenous tattooists from across Moana Oceania, guiding these artists as they revived their customary tattooing modelled on the practices of their ancestors. His legacy lives on today on the bodies of those he marked with tatau, the tattoo revitalisation and reclamation movements of Tonga, Hawai'i, and Aotearoa, and in publications and scholarship on Sāmoan tatau (Mallon and Galliot 2018; Adams 2014).

In October 1999, Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II initiated the first marks of a modern-day customary Tongan tātatau in his Ōtara home in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. He tattooed a young Tongan man across the lower back and ribs with a design symbolic of the Tongan kalia, or double-hulled voyaging canoe. The kalia tātatau was the first section of what was to be a complete tattoo covering the area from the lower rib down to just above the knees. This tattoo would inspire the awakening of customary Tongan tātatau for a new generation of Tongan people.

That young man was me.

I was 26 years old and fresh to the world of Indigenous tattooing. That moment marked my body and the beginning of my journey with customary Tongan tātatau, as a student and later practitioner of the artform. For Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II, I think the tātatau might have served an additional purpose. I wonder if he saw the kalia tātatau as a process of reaffirming the relational ties between Sāmoa and Tonga. Su'a Suluape Paulo II not only initiated a reawakening of customary Tongan tātatau but also marked my skin with our shared histories. Collectively, we were energising the past through the process of tātatau, and in a way, we were embodying Epele Hau'ofa's notion that the past is alive in us and we are our history.

Locating Fonua

To consider Tongan tātatau in a historical context is to contemplate a somewhat mysterious time in Tonga's distant past and a period of rapid change in Tonga's history. Knowledge surrounding the customary practice of Tongan tātatau is fragmented and exists mainly in European texts. To rebuild tātatau is, in one sense, to reanimate an ancient way of being and doing that is quintessentially Tongan and fundamentally Indigenous.

The words "Ko e anga ha o mau fonua" were written in the diary of a Wesleyan missionary stationed on Tongatapu in the mid-nineteenth Century³. In the missionary's account of a visit to the home of a local chief in Folaha, he witnessed Tongans engaged in the practice of tātatau. He goes on to write, "I endeavoured to show them the folly and uselessness of such practices, but they only laughed and exclaimed, "Ko e anga ha o mau fonua" (it is the way of our country). The response the Tongans gave to the appeals of the Wesleyan missionary offers an important clue to the value that Tongans of the time placed on tātatau. "Ko e anga ha o mau fonua", or in modern lea faka-Tonga, "Ko e anga pe ia emau ki'i fonua", not only locates tātatau as a Tongan practice, but it also offers insight into the significance of tātatau as an integral part of Indigenous Tongan identity. As the Wesleyan missionary understood, fonua describes land, country, territory, and place. Additionally, fonua can refer to the people (of the land). The term can also be used when speaking of a grave and is the word for afterbirth or placenta. In a Tongan Indigenous worldview, fonua is inherent in life cycles and underpins the relationship between people, place, and the natural environment. With a fuller understanding of the depth and breadth of meaning contained in the term fonua, we could further interpret the Tongans' response as an affirmation that Tātatau is the way of our land, it is how we identify as a people, and it is part of our cycle of life. Tātatau reflects fonua and a Tongan way of being and doing.

Tongan academic and health researcher Dr. Edmond Fehoko proposed the notion of tātatau as inextricably linked to fonua, functioning as a transmission of knowledge towards defining Indigenous Tongan identity from within the diaspora⁴. Dr. Fehoko is a New Zealand-born Tongan who, at the time of our talanoa, was himself in the process of receiving tātatau. His insight was a pivotal moment in my understanding of why reconstructing Tongan (customary) tātatau is important to the Tongan community here in Aotearoa and potentially to other Tongans worldwide. In his 2014 Master's thesis, *Pukepuke Fonua: An exploratory study on the faikava as an identity marker for New Zealand-born Tongan males in Auckland, New Zealand*, Fehoko identifies the many social challenges faced by the Tongan diaspora in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and the impact these challenges have on the health and wellbeing of Tongan communities as they navigate life here in Aotearoa. Dr. Fehoko details how engaging in cultural practices

3 Detail shared through personal correspondence with archaeologist and PhD candidate Phillip Parton, who came across this statement during his research for his co-authored work, *Using lidar and Bayesian inference to reconstruct archaeological populations in the Kingdom of Tonga* a review of Parton's research notes has yet to identify the name of the missionary in question.

4 From a personal communication. In July of 2022 I tattooed Dr Fehoko. As part of the tātatau process we partook in faikava, during the subsequent talanoa we discussed the value of tātatau for the Tongan diaspora here in Aotearoa.

like faikava is a positive way of maintaining a connection to their Tongan identity and an effective means of transmitting Tongan cultural values and knowledge, resulting in significant and positive effects on a person's well-being (Fehoko, 2014). Tātatau, like faikava, is anchored in ancient Tongan knowledge, an Indigenous practice that binds us to fonua in all its complexity and meaning. Like faikava, which is more than the act of consuming a beverage, tātatau is a holistic process that functions beyond the surface-oriented act of marking the skin. The talanoa with Dr. Fehoko echoed the sentiment of the many discussions I have had over the years with the Tongans I have tattooed. Dr. Fehoko's linking of tātatau and fonua as a mode of defining Indigeneity and supporting wellbeing was, in a way, a distillation of all these past discussions and became an essential part of future talanoa to come.

This research project titled Embodied Fonua: Reconstructing a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice in Aotearoa offers an insight into aspects of my arts practice as I navigate the process of reconstructing a uniquely Tongan tātatau from within the diaspora. The research is guided by one question: How do I rebuild a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice when the specialised knowledge once held by the practitioners of the artform has long been forgotten?

To begin to answer the question of 'how?' I survey knowledge and my own practice within the exegesis across three sections. Firstly, section one, 'Remnants of an ancient past', surveys historical accounts of tātatau within Tongan oral traditions and during the early period of encounter between Europeans and Tongans. I outline the banning of customary tattooing in Tonga during mid 19th Century and point to further evidence of customary Tongan tattooing found in critical cultural artefacts. In section two, 'A new dawn behind us', I explore research methodology and define a mode of research and practice I have developed throughout the course of this research project, and I identify key people and events that have been instrumental in the resurgence of Tongan tātatau in the modern era. And lastly, in 'Constructing a Modern (customary) Tātatau Practice', I focus on my own tātatau practice and the mode of tattooing that has helped shape a uniquely Tongan tātatau from within the diaspora. All of this research culminates in my exhibition, the final part of this research project titled Embodied Fonua, Tongan (Customary) Tātatau in Aotearoa, at Māngere Arts Centre Ngā Tohu o Uenuku from 4 February – 18 March 2023.

As an artist, I am driven by a need to create. It is how I make sense of the world within the various contexts of my experience. Within a Tongan context, it is the utility of my art, arrived at through a process of knowledge-seeking and intuitive making, that defines its true value. Taking an autoethnographic approach (Whitinui, 2014; Iosefo et al., 2020), my documented journey with tātatau gradually unfolds over time to reveal certain elements that have formed the foundation of my practice and continue to inform my growth as an artist. Writing this exegesis has further contributed to my journey. The value of the written word when reconstructing a practice void of existing ancestral knowledge brought forward by a lineage of practitioners cannot be underestimated. My work acknowledges the value of both introduced and Indigenous forms of recording time and events.

Notes on Terminology and Language

Moana Oceania is a term commonly used today to describe the geographic region of the Pacific Ocean that comprises Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Australasia. A notion developed from within the diaspora, the term Moana Oceania positions Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and doing at the centre of Moana Oceania research and practice (Why 'Moana Oceania'?, n.d.). This grafted term, made up of Moana, an Indigenous word⁵ meaning deep sea or vast sea, and Oceania, a term given to the Pacific Islands Region by French explorer Dumont d'Urville (Oceania, n.d.), also acknowledges the European presence and impact in the region and accepts the value of shared histories and stories of Moana Oceania as told and retold by European explorers and Christian missionaries alongside Indigenous modes of recording and storytelling.

In this exegesis, I provide translations or glosses for each non-English word at first use but not thereafter. I do not use italics for non-English words, rather I provide a glossary at the end of the exegesis for easy reference. I follow orthographic conventions for the Tongan words I use, as detailed by Tongan linguist Dr. Melenaita Taumoefolau:

The glottal stop is represented by an inverted apostrophe. It is a consonant and can make a difference in the meaning of words, e.g., tu'i 'king' and tui 'knee', 'uma 'to kiss' and uma 'shoulder'. The macron over a vowel represents a long vowel. It can make a difference in the meaning of words, e.g., tu'ī 'king' and tui 'knee', 'uma 'to kiss' and uma 'shoulder'. The macron over a vowel represents a long vowel. It can make a difference in the meaning of words, e.g., kaka 'to climb', kakā 'parrot', kākā 'to cheat'. A stressed final vowel in a noun means it is definite, e.g., falé 'the house', but fale 'a house'. A stress placed on the final vowel of a word preceded by an enclitic or one-syllable word indicates that the final vowel of the word is pronounced together with the enclitic, e.g., motu'á ni 'this old-man' is pronounced /motu'ani/. (Taumoefolau, 2012, p368)

I also follow Dr. Taumoefolau's lead in my approach to a specific term I use in this exegesis. 'Alu 'o mui is a term that I have grafted to express a particular idea or way of being and doing within the context of my mode of practice and research. Dr. Taumoefolau states that "Not only are the ways of talking "idiomatic" but they are also "productive" through the creation of new metaphor, hence new combinations of forms" (Taumoefolau, 2012, p. 367).

5 Moana in reference to the ocean is known in Hawaiian, Māori, Niuean, Rennellese, Sāmoan, Tikopian, and Tongan languages. (Ross et al., 2007).

Remnants of an Ancient Past

The First Tattooed Tongan

An old Fijian story suggests that tātatau came to the Tongan islands via the island of Oqea, an outlier island that sits roughly halfway between Tongatapu and modern-day Fiji (Brewster, 1922).

The story recounts an ancient tale of an expedition sent westward by the Tu'i Tonga to confirm reports that Fijian women were tattooed. The Tu'i Tonga's vessel set sail for Fiji, eventually reaching land on the island of Oqea. After a lengthy negotiation with the local people, the Tu'i Tonga's subjects finally ascertained that Fijian women are, in fact, tattooed and bear the marks of the iqia. Satisfied with this news and deeming this leg of their mission a success, the Tongans set sail for their homeland. To ensure the message for their king was not forgotten, the Tu'i Tonga's subjects repeated over and over the words "qia na alewa", which translates as "women are tattooed." Along their path, the Tongans encountered turbulent seas in a stretch of ocean, known to the author as the Oqea passage, or Qia na tangane to the Fijians in the story. Shifting their attention to navigating their vessel safely on a course through the rough waters, the Tongans abandoned their chant of "qia na alewa" for a time. Once the vessel was steadied and the Tongans resumed their chant, the first words mistakenly exclaimed were "qia na tangane" which translates as "men are tattooed" this became the chant the Tongans repeated for the remainder of their journey. When the vessel

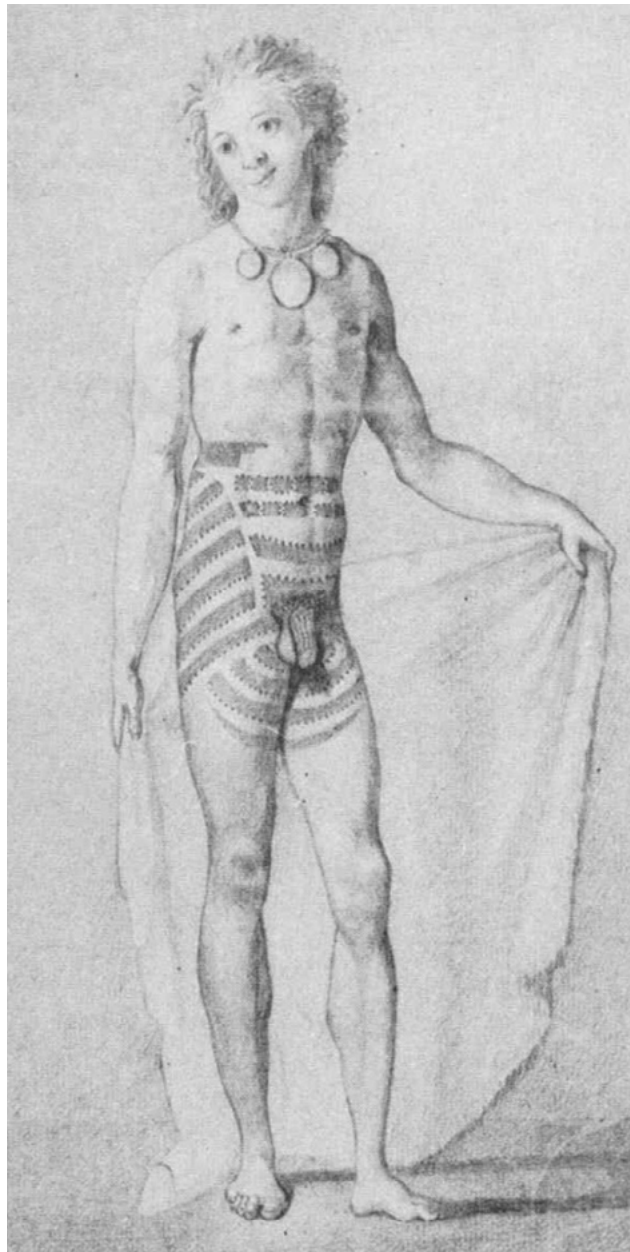


Fig.1 *Latu, from the chiefs' family in the Vava'u Islands* by Juan Ravenet, Vava'u, 1793.

reached Tongatapu, word was taken to the Tu'i Tonga that in Fiji “qia na tangane”—the men were tattooed, not the women. Hearing this news, the Tu'i Tonga resolved to have his own body tattooed and, in doing so, established the practice as one to be adopted by all of his subjects.



Fig 2. Tongan Islanders, by Isaac Gilseman, Tongatapu, 1643.

Tātatau the Men and the Women

Although no known oral traditions account for the origin of tātatau for Tongan women, there is mention of tātatau on the bodies of Tongan women in tala-ē-fonua⁶, and sufficient evidence in early European accounts to confirm that the artform was not reserved exclusively for Tongan men. Tātatau did adorn the bodies of Tongan women, a practice that may have evolved naturally over time or was introduced at another point in Tonga’s history. I wonder if tātatau might have been introduced, or reintroduced as the case may be, by Fijians, in a bid to correct or at least bring balance to the question of which sex should be tattooed. This theory is mere speculation on my part, but not outside the scope of possibility, given the regular and sustained contact between Fiji and Tonga through trade and exchange relationships (Latu, 2017; Kaepler, 1978; Statham, n.d.). Another possible scenario worth considering—and one that seems more plausible when compared to my Fijian introduction/reintroduction theory, particularly in the context of trade and exchange relationships and the entangled histories of Tonga, Fiji and Sāmoa—is that Sāmoan women, who often married into the Tongan chiefly class (Kaepler, 1978; Gunson, 1987), could have inspired Tongan women to be tattooed.

⁶ Tala-ē-fonua, as defined by Professor Hūfanga Dr. ‘Okusitino Mahina (Māhina, 1992), is Tongan traditional history. It is a term that I adopt in this exegesis to refer to stories and histories based on Tongan oral tradition.

A tripartite of complex trade relations, socio-political entanglements and interconnected chiefly lineages, the histories (and stories) of Tonga, Sāmoa and Fiji are deeply intertwined, inextricably linked and well documented (Gunsen, 1987; Helu, 1999; 'Ilaiu, 2007; Kaeppler, 1978; Kaeppler, 1999; Latu, 2017; Māhina, 1992; Spillius, 1982).

The Ha'a Fale Fisi, an ancient Tongan lineage (Latu, 2017), was established through the marriage of a high-ranking Fijian chief and the Tu'i Tonga Fefine⁷. Stretching back to before the 18th century, there was notable Tongan influence in areas of Fijian territory, and in the mid-19th century, the Tongan chief Ma'afu became a powerful force in Fijian affairs, having control over Lau, the Koro Sea and a significant portion of Vanua Levu (Thompson, 1938). Across the reign of the 39 Tu'i Tonga, at least seven of the sacred kings resided in Sāmoa. Amongst these were Tapu'osi I, Vakafuhu, and Kau'ulufonua I, also known as Fekai (Māhina, 1992). The Tongan monarchy today also has its roots in these entangled histories. The founding father and first King of a modern and unified Tonga, Taufā'ahau, King George I, held the hereditary title of Tu'i Kanokupolu; a lineage that dates back to the 17th century with the first Tu'i Kanokupolu, Ngata. Ngata's mother was a chiefly Sāmoan woman named Tohu'ia from Safata in Upolu, and his father, Mo'ungātonga, was Tu'i Ha'atala one of the three paramount chiefs of the Tongan Islands (Thomson, 1864).

Written into History

In a 1928 publication, *Tales and Poems of Tonga*, E.E.V Collocott recounts several tala-ē-fonua captured in European missionary accounts, early Tongan dictionaries, and anthropologists' field notes, stories, and poetry. Notably, amongst Collocott's sources are the genealogies of Royals and Chiefs as permitted by Queen Sālote Tupou III⁸. Collocott also had access to the diary of Siaso Tuku'aho, the third premier of Tonga and father to His Royal Highness Prince Tungi, Queen Sālote Tupou III's husband. In the preface of the publication, Collocott makes special mention of the help he received from Jione Havea, a Reverend and colleague at Tupou College in Tongatapu. Collocott acknowledges that without Havea's understanding (and translation) of the nuance in Tongan language, storytelling and poetry, the publication would not have been possible (Collocott, 1971).

Amongst the pages of *Tales and Poems of Tonga* are four stories where tātatau is described on the bodies of Tongan women and men. The descriptions of these tātatau include some insight into the motifs used, including a mutu'u, a wild pigeon now extinct in Tonga, and a lepoaki, an edible juvenile jellyfish. Here I retell one of these tala-ē-fonua; the story of the beautiful Talafaiva, wife of the Tu'i Tonga Tele'a, the 29th Tu'i Tonga who was also known as 'Uluakimata (Māhina, 1992). The story centres on Talafaiva's infidelity with Lepuha of Leimatu'a in Vava'u. Lepuha was said to be exceedingly handsome, and his reputation was known across Tonga, Sāmoa, and Fiji. Lepuha was the son of Felehuhuni, a beautiful woman from Ha'ano in Ha'apai, who was said to be a fefine-taula fa'ahikehe (a priestess or witch). One day, when the Tu'i Tonga Tele'a was attending

7 In ancient times the Tu'i Tonga Fefine was one of the highest ranked chiefs in Tongan society.

8 Queen Sālote Tupou III was Queen of Tonga from 1918 to her death in 1965 (Wood-Ellem, 2001).

to his Kingly duties, Lepuha climbed the fo'ui tree and entered the royal compound. So great was this Vava'u man's attractiveness that Talafaiva could not resist his advances. Before he left her, Lepuha tattooed a lepoaki design on Talafaiva's stomach as a mark of his conquest. Sadly for Talafaiva, the Tu'i Tonga Tele'a discovered the lepoaki tātatau and ordered his attendant Auka to kill her, an act which the Tu'i Tonga Tele'a instantly regretted. A large tomb was erected for Talafaiva on the high island of 'Eukafa in Vava'u. Remnants of the tomb still stand today.

Shifting from Tala-ē-fonua to the equally valuable accounts of early explorers and Christian missionaries, European observations of tattooed Tongans can be found amongst the pages of logbooks and journals from the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries. In May of 1616, Dutchmen Jacob Le Maire and Willem Corneliszoon Schouten were the first Europeans to encounter the people of the Tongan islands (Hooker, 2004). Written descriptions of tātatau from this first encounter are vague; however, the recollections of "blue blackish" marks on the bodies of the ancient Tongans provide a valuable clue (Suren, 2013, p. 7). On 21st January 1643, another Dutchman, Abel Janszoon Tasman, sailed into Tongan waters and wrote about the people he encountered at the islands of 'Ata, 'Eua and Tongatapu. He describes four men that came up along his ship in a pōpao canoe as "able bodied" with "their bodies painted black from the waste to the thighs." Tasman goes on to write, "many of these people have the lower part of their body painted black down to the knees" (Suren, 2013, p. 7). On 2nd October 1773, while in Tongatapu, Captain James Cook writes, "the men are tattowed (tattooed) from the middle of the thigh up to above the hips". Cook also notes, "the women are not tattowed in this manner, they have it only slitley (slightly) done on the arms hands and fingers" (Blackburn, 1999, p. 194). The Tongatapu women that Cook observed may have limited tātatau to the areas that Cook describes. In contrast, Vava'u women, as witnessed by Vice-Admiral William Waldegrave on 7th June 1830, "are tattooed in the legs and feet in a very pretty manner with small stars as a spotted stocking." Waldegrave also mentions that the Vava'u men are "tattooed from the hips to the knees, in front and behind" (Waldegrave, 1833, p. 194). Sir Oswald Walters Brierly recalls a visit to Tongatapu on the 19th of June 1850, and describes a local man as six feet in height with "really handsome features" who was "tattooed upon the breast and across the back of one hand." He also notes that this Tongatapu man had "lost one of his fingers" (Brierly, 1852).⁹

During the period of early encounters between Tongans and Europeans, tātatau was visible on the bodies of a vast majority of Tongan men, and Tongan women to a lesser degree.¹⁰ Tongan society, as observed in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, was highly stratified (Filihia, 2001, Gell, 1996, Kaeppler, 1999, et al.). By all accounts, tātatau was a social norm and may have served as one way to mark or distinguish rank, functioning as a mode or marker of socialisation (Turner, 2012). Therefore, we could say that to be Tongan was to be tattooed; subsequently, being tattooed was part of being or becoming Tongan.

9 The practice of nimakū (sacrificial finger amputation done in times of mourning or to gain favour with an 'Otua) was common in Tonga during this period.

10 The lack of visible tātatau on the bodies of Tongan women doesn't necessarily equate to the absence of tātatau on Tongan women. It's important to consider context; modes of dress, societal hierarchies of the time and cultural restrictions.

Etched into History

Pictorial evidence of early Tongan tātatau is rare. The few known examples support the written accounts of tātatau, pointing to what looks to be a varied tātatau practice, a promising source of reference material and inspiration as we continue to reconstruct Tongan (customary) tātatau into the future.

In January 1643, maritime illustrator Isaac Gilseman depicted a group of Tongans, one of whom has tātatau across their chest and upper arms. Gilseman was onboard one of two Dutch ships anchored in Tongan waters under the command of Abel Janszoon Tasman ('The King Who Lived at the Point Isaac Gilsemans's Contribution to the Records of Abel Tasman's Visit to Tongatapu in 1643', 1999). In 1827, Louis Auguste de Sainson, the official artist of Captain Dumont d'Urville's *Astrolabe* (Lithographs after Louis de Sainson | Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, n.d.), rendered an impressively detailed image of mid 19th century Tongan tātatau (St. Cartmail, 1997). Interestingly Alfred Gell claims that the Tongan in Sainson's image is a Vava'u man (Gell, 1996, p. 101). Juan Ravenet, an artist onboard a Spanish ship that visited Vava'u in 1793, created a superb drawing of a young Vava'u man proudly displaying his tātatau. The expedition commander, Alejandro Malaspina, had enlisted many artists who produced many drawings, providing a valuable illustration of 18th-century life in the Tongan Islands (Colmeiro et al., 2011). Another drawing attributed to Ravenet of the Malaspina expedition depicts a scene where two Vava'u women are grooming Malaspina. One of the women has tātatau on her upper arm and what looks to be tātatau around her neck area. In another etching by French Botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de La Billardière, a Tongan woman is shown with what appears to be tātatau around her neck area. La Billardière visited the Tongan islands between 24th March and 10th April 1793 onboard a French vessel under the command of Rear Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux (*Voyage In Search Of La Pérouse*, Volume II., n.d.). La Billardière's etching also shows another form of Tongan body marking called itai, a word that La Billardière listed in a vocabulary of Tongan terms that relate to tātatau and scarification (Roth, 1906).

I'm hopeful that over time more visual accounts of Tongan tātatau will surface to aid in the ongoing development of the artform.

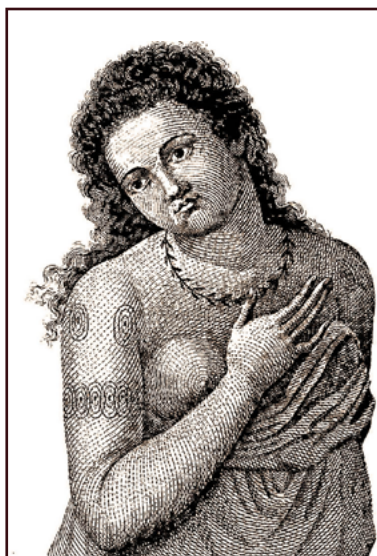


Fig 3. *Woman of the Friendly Islands* by La Billardière, 1793.



Fig 4. *Vava'u women grooming Alejandro Malaspina* by Juan Ravenet, 1793.

Written out of History

The Vava'u code of 1839 was part of a political stratagem designed to tip the scales further in the favour of the young Ha'apai chief Taufa'ahau, solidifying his position as ruler of Ha'apai and Vava'u, and strengthening the platform for his domination over the whole of the Tongan islands. The founding document of modern Tonga, the Vava'u code, was heavily influenced by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries who guided Taufa'ahau's conversion to Christianity and continued to play a role in Tongan politics for a considerable period. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries were instrumental in constructing a new Tongan society built largely on the foundations of Christian doctrine (Lātūkefu, 1974).

On the last page of the Vava'u code, the third decree from the bottom states, "It is not lawful to tatatau or to kaukau or to perform any other idolatrous ceremonies, if any one does so, he will be judged and punished and fined for so doing" (Lātūkefu, 1974).

Banning tātatau and kaukau (ritual circumcision) was part of a systematic process of cultural erasure. It was a way of stamping out Indigenous thought and practice and weakening the Indigenous spirit, softening resistance to the new wave of religiopolitical force sweeping across the Tongan islands. We can look at the decimation of these body-centred cultural practices as a way of prohibiting Indigenous knowledge and restraining the Indigenous Tongan body, denying the value of both, and effectively erasing Indigenous knowledge and the tattooed Tongan body from history. In her dissertation *Tapa mo Tatau* Cresantia Frances Koya (2013) examined the tapa and tattoo cultures of Sāmoa and Tonga to gather Indigenous perspectives on sustainability, education, and resilience. Koya found that many of the Tongan participants in her study were unaware that Tonga had a history of Indigenous tattooing, a consequence, she noted, of the tātatau ban instigated through the Vava'u code.

Firm Evidence

Historically, the tools employed for the hand-tap method of tattooing in Tongan are much like the customary tools still used by Sāmoan tufuga tātatau today (Robitaille, 2007). The names of these tools are also strikingly similar. In Sāmoa, the tattooing tool is called 'au, while in Tonga, the same tool is referred to as hau. The stick employed to strike the tattooing tool is called sausau in Sāmoan. The Tongan equivalent is kautā, which in modern Tongan refers to a drumstick. Collocott's informants suggest that kautā refers to the tattooist (Journal of the Polynesian Society: Supplementary Tongan Vocabulary, By E. E. V. Collocott, P 146-169, n.d.).

The mode of using these tools is well described in William Mariner's personal account of life in early 19th-century Tonga:

The instrument used for the purpose of this operation somewhat resembles a small tooth-comb; they have several kinds of different degrees of breadth, from six up to fifty or sixty teeth; they are made of the bone of the wing of the wild duck. Being dipped in a mixture of soot and water, the outline of the tattoo is first marked off before the operator begins to puncture, which he afterwards does by striking in the points of the instrument with a small stick made of a green branch of the cocoanut tree; when the skin begins to bleed, which it quickly does, the operator occasionally washes off the blood with cold water, and repeatedly goes over the same places; as this is a very painful process. But a small portion of it is done at once, giving the patient (who may justly be so called) intervals of three or four days' rest, so that it is frequently two months before it is completely finished (Roth, 1906).

In 1963, remnants of bone tattooing combs were discovered at the village of Pea on Tongatapu. The bone tattooing combs, which would have been part of a larger kit of tattooing tools, were found along with a small container believed to have been used to hold the tattooist's ink. Recent Radiocarbon dating has confirmed that these combs are 2,700 years old (Clark & Langley, 2020). To date, these are the oldest known tattoo implements in the Moana Oceania region, which places them in a time that marks the beginnings of Moana Oceania civilisation as we know it. Two of the tattooing combs were made from the bones of a sea bird. The other two are believed to be human bone. Anthropologists have suggested that the site may have been the burial place of the tattooist's family. These remnants of bone tattooing combs represent a history of Tongan tattooing that goes back to an ancient Tongan civilisation. These tools also raise some interesting questions about the choice of materials used in their manufacture; Why human bone? And what might this material symbolize for the artist and the person receiving the tātatau?



Fig 5. 2,700 year old bone tattoo comb discovered on Tongatapu in the 1960's.

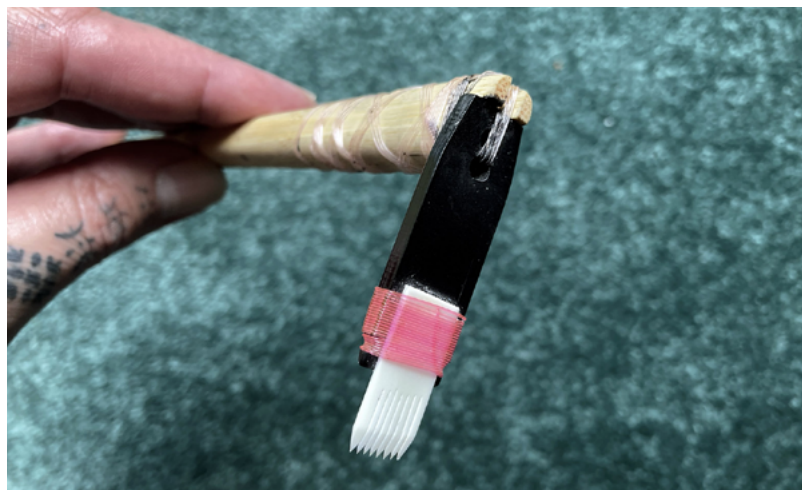


Fig 6. Contemporary tattoo tool showing how bone tattooing comb is affixed, 2022.

In 2019 I had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Cultures in Basel, Switzerland, to view a small but significant collection of Tongan artefacts in the storeroom. Nestled amongst the many items housed inside a shoebox-sized storage container was a bone implement that struck a chord within me. I had long wondered at the tool that might have been used to make certain single puncture marks. We later identified this tool in Basel as a tattoo needle. This was an incredible discovery. The museum records list the implement as a bone needle and part of a tattooing kit from Tonga. The records mention no date, but the needle appeared to be very old. It is made of an unspecified type of bone. On later examination of photographs, a colleague suggested it is human bone, given the density and colouration. Based on the bone tattooing combs found in the village of Pea, we know that human bone was a material of choice for tattooing tools. The tattooing needle measures approximately 100mm in length and is about 8mm at its widest part. The handle area is shaped into a number of notches and barbs and is relatively flat compared to the pointed end of this tool. The pointed end is chipped, but it is easy to imagine it's being sharp. About a third of this sharpened end is stained with a black pigment. To my knowledge, this is the first time a tool of this kind has been linked with Tongan tātatau. The mode of operating this tool is to first take hold of the handle, in this case, the wide end that has been shaped into notches and barbs. Next, the sharpened end of the needle is dipped into tattoo ink. Once a sufficient area of the sharpened end is covered in ink, the tattooist then repeatedly pushes the sharp end into the recipient's skin, using relatively quick stabbing motions to reveal the tattoo designs in the skin. This is a technique I am familiar with and have utilised many times in my tattooing practice, but not with bone tools. The technique is commonly known today as hand-poke and is done with conventional steel tattoo needles.

As a practitioner, the validity of this bone implement as a likely and effective tattooing tool was clear to me, and I confirmed it with the curator. Historical accounts of Tongan women's tātatau also support the use of a tool of this nature. Tātatau descriptions such as small lines, small crosses, spots, and small stars all lend to application with a single-point tattoo needle (Suren, 2013). Several weeks later, the head curator of the Oceania collection at the Museum of Cultures., Dr. Beatrice Voirol, who had been kind enough to provide me with the guided tour of the museum storeroom, sent me a silicone mould of the bone tātatau needle and a few replicas made of a resin material. I am designing a contemporary version of the bone tātatau tool from these replicas to present as part of my exhibition in 2023.



Fig 7. Bone tattooing needle from Tonga, 2019.

A New Dawn Behind Us

The Ocean of Island Methodologies

Following my inquiries into a number of existing Moana Oceania research and practice methodologies, the potential of the Kakala Research Framework (KRF) stood out to me as a Tongan centric framework that positions Indigenous Tongan (and Moana Oceania) knowledge and ways of being and doing at the centre of, and essential to, meaningful research (Johansson Fua, 2014). KRF then produces beneficial and potentially transformative outcomes for Tongan communities. Additionally, I was drawn to the research tools of Talanoa and Nofo said to have emerged from the development of the KRF. These research tools are grounded in a Tongan worldview and again built on the core values of modern Tongan society. While initially, KRF offered a relatively safe and well tested methodology for this project, it soon began to fall away as other possibilities arose to the surface.

Agitating the Sediment

The term fakahoha'a entered my vocabulary in 2021. Dr. Reverend Jione Havea used this term in his keynote presentation to the Tongan Research Association conference on September 25th, 2021. The title of Havea's presentation, 'Otua mo Tonga ko hotau 'inasi, proposed a reframing of the Tongan national moto from within the position of the diaspora, to enable a more meaningful connection to our Tongan homelands (Havea, 2021). Dr. Reverend Havea prefaces his talk with a forewarning for the audience, stating that the content of his presentation may fakahoha'a or disturb (disrupt and agitate). Havea establishes his position further by asserting that as an academic, his work is 'ground-based', which I read as fonua-based, land- and people-based, and that his presentation started from the ground (fonua, land and people). In his words, "80 percent of my work comes from the ground, the other twenty percent comes from underground" (Havea, 2021). He invites the audience to exercise patience and an open mind as he proposes an alternate reading of the official history of Tonga, which will challenge certain conventions and, for some, will very likely be difficult to hear. He states to attain a full and accurate understanding of historical events, we must be willing to ask hard questions and expose the underside of our history. He notes that the underside of history is too often ignored so as not to disturb the conventional narrative or upset authority figures. This partial or skewed reading of history can be a form of erasure. He then uses biblical texts to illustrate how modern Tongan conceptions of fonua, from a Christian viewpoint, are built on modes of colonialism. Furthermore, Havea challenges the exclusion of the Indigenous gods of Tonga in the conventional modern pantheon. Havea exalts Indigenous knowledge holders for their unique role and value in western academia and encourages Tongan

researchers and academics first to seek out the knowledge offered through their own Indigenous sources to better inform and ground the foundation of their academic pursuits in Tongan ways of being and doing.

Dr. Reverend Jione Havea's presentation was concise and impactful. I was inspired by a feeling of deep connection to the ideas that he proposed and the tone of his delivery. Leali'ifano Dr. Albert Refiti, who was in the audience, summed up Havea's presentation beautifully, stating that his gentle approach to "deconstructing the orthodoxy of how we read history" was refreshing and an example to be commended.

I recognised in Dr. Reverend Jione Havea's presentation a way of being and doing that very much aligned with my approach to research and my art practice. Within the context of my current project, it made a lot of sense. Researching and practicing Tongan tātatau was, in a way, an act of fakahoha'a. In my early days of research and practice, and to some degree still today, many Tongans (and others) refuse to acknowledge that a customary practice of tātatau existed and was practiced by the Indigenous people of the Tongan islands, disregarding the widely available written and visual evidence on offer. Many Tongans cite the 1839 banning of tātatau as some type of religious revelation, ignoring the political motivation behind the decree and that the banning of tātatau was also about the erasure of Indigenous thought, as much as it was about erasing a cultural practice. Some believe that Tongan women were never tattooed, failing to appreciate the socio-cultural context of the time and the first encounter contexts in which the early accounts of Tongan women's tātatau were recorded.

The notion of fakahoha'a as a model of research and practice started as light-hearted talanoa between a friend and me; I proposed the idea in passing to test the ground, so to speak. My friend responded with genuine interest and was keen to know more. As our talanoa continued, I realised that the seeds of the fakahoha'a model of research and practice had taken root, and the first tendrils had sprouted.

The Fakahoha'a Mode of Research and Practice

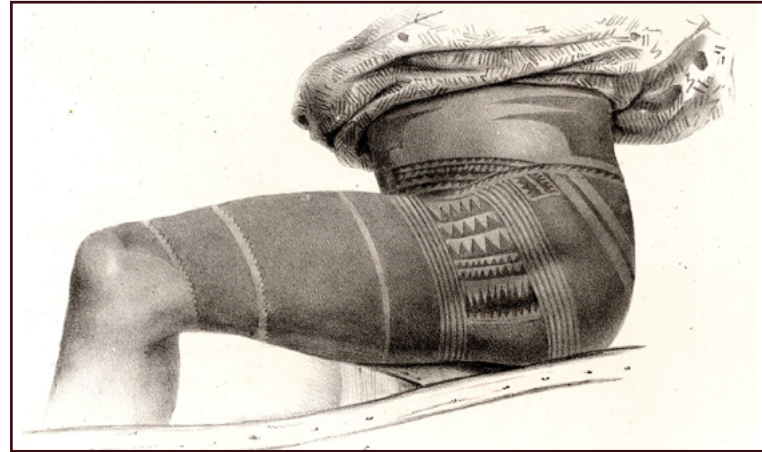
Although relatively early in the developmental phase and more of an evolving mode of research and practice than a fixed framework, the Fakahoha'a Mode of Research and Practice, much like the Kakala Research Framework, is anchored in the core values of modern Tongan society: Fefaka'apa'apa'aki (mutual respect), Feveitokai'aki (sharing, cooperating and fulfilment of mutual obligations), Lototoo (humility and generosity) and Tauhi vaha'a (loyalty and commitment). To these, I add 'ofa in the sense of careful consideration, that is, to operate from a place of thoughtfulness and empathy in all aspects of research and practice. Additionally, I include the term pukepuke fonua, which I initially encountered in the context of faikava (Fehoko, 2014). Pukepuke fonua means holding on tightly to fonua in terms of culture, land, and people. To me, pukepuke fonua is about

maintaining our sense of Tongan identity, specifically our Tongan Indigeneity. I also include the term *manavalahi*, which relates to courage and bravery, suggesting we stand firm in our convictions. 'Alu 'o mui is a term I propose to frame the notion of growth and development. Here I have grafted the words 'alu 'o, which, when combined, mean 'to become' or 'to become in the course of time', next to the word mui, which means 'place or space further back' and also 'time further back or the past'. So 'alu 'o mui literally translated reads, 'to become over the course of time the past', which could be further interpreted to mean 'to become the past over the course of time'. This could also suggest a movement into the future towards the past or facing the past as we move toward the future. To me, 'alu 'o mui evokes a notion of evolution or growth that constantly encounters and is in a dynamic relationship with the past but is not fixed in the past, and in some way echoes the notion of a past that is alive in us or a past that nurtures us as we journey through life.

Lastly, I include the phrase *tuhu ki he 'ūmata*, which means "to point at the rainbow". I encountered this phrase at the closing of Dr. Reverend Jione Havea's presentation (Havea, 2021). He explains that *tuhu ki he 'ūmata* means to stop what you are doing and look up at the rainbow. It was used to get people to pay attention, which he invited listeners to consider. I include this phrase in the founding rationale of the Fakahoha'a Mode of Research and Practice (FMORAP) because it encourages us to look deeper, contemplate, and pay close attention. I am also drawn to this phrase because I believe it's important and beneficial to our well-being, both personal and collective, to pause and consider the wonder of our existence and to be reminded of our place in and connection to *fonua*, in the sense of the natural environment, which Hawaiian activist, educator, author, and poet Haunani-Kay Trask describes as the Indigenous universe (No'eau Woo-O'Brien, 2019).

FMORAP encourages a thorough examination of our histories, confronting the difficult aspects of our past to bring them forward and facilitate growth toward a better future. FMORAP seeks understanding through productive agitation. Tongan cosmology captures this notion of productive agitation, where seismic disruption takes place to produce or create *fonua*. In this sense, FMORAP can stir up sediment to expose what might have been hidden beneath the surface.

Fig 8.
Tattooed thigh of
a Tongan man by,
Louis Auguste
de Sainson,
Tongatapu, 1827.



Who was that Tongan?

I first became aware of Tongan *tātatau* as a historical practice in the pages of Keith St. Cartmail's book, *The Art of Tonga*.¹¹ St. Cartmail allocates four pages and a few short but insightful paragraphs to the Indigenous tattooing practice of ancient Tongans. He offers two images to accompany the text: the first is a photograph of a tattooing tool comprised of a bamboo handle and a single-plate bone tattooing comb, beautifully lashed to the handle with coconut fibre sinnet. The second is a profile of a Tongan man's lower torso and thigh with *tātatau* covering from slightly above his abdomen to just short of the kneecap. The Tongan looks to be seated with his *vala* pulled up to reveal his *tātatau*. He is not named, and, although in a seated position, he floats on the page, suspended in space and frozen in time. The head, chest, arms and feet of the Tongan have not been rendered. This particular illustration is from a drawing by Louis Auguste de Sainson, a French artist on board Dumont d'Urville's voyage to the Pacific and New Zealand in 1826-29 (Sainson, 1800).

I acquired my own copy of *The Art of Tonga* in 1998. The sight of the tattooed Tongan, and the details that Cartmail had compiled about the tattooing process, historical accounts, and theories on the cultural significance of *tātatau*, sent my mind and heart into a spin. There was something seemingly sacred and powerful about that tattooed Tongan, even though in the drawing he is detached from one of his most sacred body parts, his head. I was overwhelmed by an unfamiliar sense of my own Tongan(ness), a feeling that I had not experienced before, that marked me deeply. In many ways, the tattooed Tongan in the image represented the Tongan I wanted to be; ancient, sacred, and empowered by the indelible marks in my skin. I would later realise that it was his Indigeneity, embodied in *tātatau*, that I felt a deep connection to and profound longing for.

Sainson's image of the nameless, dismembered Tongan with his striking *tātatau* stirred my imagination and excited feelings deep within me. I felt compelled to have something tattooed on my own body that expressed the feelings I was confronted with.

¹¹ The Art of Tonga, Ko e ngaahi'aati'o Tonga was published in 1997 and was the first book of its kind focused solely on Tongan Arts.

Navigating Velvet Crescent

I entered the physical (and spiritual) world of tātatau through the old ranch-slider doors of a converted double garage at Velvet Crescent in Ōtara. Stepping into the workplace of Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II was to enter a portal into a world where time and space were tempered by the rhythms of the sausau striking the 'au. Indigenous knowledge was enacted in a somewhat ordinary suburban setting, transforming and transporting the ordinary into the extraordinary, a time and space rich for learning and saturated with tapu and mana. I met Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II in early 1999. As I got to know him, he requested that I call him Paulo, so from here on, I will generally refer to him as Paulo (unless I am using his honorific name Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II). I had come to Paulo's home, where his workplace was located, hoping to get a tātatau. Although I was deeply moved by my encounter with tātatau in *The Art of Tonga*, at that moment, I had not considered the tātatau that Paulo would eventually propose. I had designed a Tongan armband tattoo. Island armbands were quite popular in Auckland at the time, something, when reflecting on it now, I could comfortably wear or feel was appropriate for me to wear. I borrowed design elements from the tātatau in Sainson's image and prepared a relatively decent drawing to show to Paulo. In reflection, I can't quite figure out why I was only prepared to dip my toes, or more accurately, my arm, into the water (ink). Maybe I was still grappling with the imposter syndrome that often reared its head when I attempted to participate in my Tongan-ness. Perhaps I thought I was not Tongan enough to be like the Tongan in the drawing, who I so desperately wanted to know. Maybe I did not feel like I was deserving of tātatau. After all, I am not your conventional Tongan (or so I thought at the time). I am hafekasi, Tongan and Norwegian Sami, more white than brown. By 1999, I could not speak Tongan anymore and barely understood the language. I did not go to church, and I never wore a ta'ovala. I was skinny, and none of my teeth were gold.

Yet I was born in Tonga, and my fonua is buried (replanted) in Tongan soil. I lived in Tonga with my Tongan grandparents for a significant portion of my young life. When I came to Aotearoa, I only spoke Tongan, and no doubt would have viewed the world through a Tongan lens. Yes, my biological father was Norwegian and Sami, a fair-skinned Indigenous people of the Arctic region, however, I never knew him, so my grandfather assumed that role in the way that Tongan families often do. For those early formative years, I was raised in all ways and things Tongan. I remember sitting with my grandfather at the faikava and travelling to Vava'u with him to see his people in Pangaimotu. My grandparents were devout Catholics; I remember, as a child, there was always an awareness of the other-worldly and the spiritual in both religious and other contexts. My grandmother, in particular, was very superstitious, and a long list of do's and don'ts was strictly observed in our house at Fasi.¹² My grandmother also knew old Tongan healing practices, so, as kids, my cousins and I were always taking herbal tonics and rubbed down in special oils. In many ways, I was completely and thoroughly Tongan for those first few years, at least. It was not until coming to Aotearoa, an environment that did not support Tongan ways of being, doing, or speaking, that I started to drift away from who I was as a Tongan and spent a long time trying to figure out who I might be in this new place.

12 An area in Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu known formally as Fasi moe afi 'a Tungī.

When I approached Paulo with my drawing of the Tongan armband tattoo, I also handed him *The Art of Tonga* open on the tātatau section to show where my inspiration had come from. He examined my drawing and informed me that he already had the book (one of many in his collection). He handed me back my drawing and the book and returned to his work. “Come back tomorrow,” he said, “and we’ll talk about it then.” I remember feeling confused and a bit embarrassed as there were a few people in the room. I had no idea how to be in this situation; I was ignorant of any protocols or the appropriate way to discuss the process of getting my tātatau. Eventually, I got up to leave and signalled that I would be back the next day, and as it turned out, I returned on many days after that. Often, I would spend hours sitting on the mat, watching Paulo work, and listening to the many conversations that took place as people moved in and out of the space.

When the subject of my Tongan armband tattoo came up again, Paulo raised a critical point; the identity of the Tongan man in Sainson’s drawing is unknown, therefore, in a way, the identity of his tātatau is unknown. Yes, importantly, the drawing tells us that Tonga had tātatau in the past, but the problem we are faced with is that the knowledge connected to Tongan tātatau is also largely in the past. Although striking visually, the motifs and the tātatau as a whole tell us very little. That is, we don’t know what these motifs symbolise because we don’t know who this man is. And in an Indigenous Moana Oceania context, knowing who someone is, who and where they are connected to, is critical in understanding how one might relate to that person or how it is that both people might relate to each other. In short, what Paulo was saying, is making a tātatau that takes inspiration (basically appropriates) the motifs from the tātatau of an unknown Tongan in a European’s drawing and placing them into an armband was a risky proposition and a move I would likely regret. He went on to say, “Why would you get an armband when you could have the real thing.”

“The real thing”, as Paulo put it, had never crossed my mind, and all of a sudden, “the real thing” was now not only on my mind but the fact that it was appropriate for me had just been validated by one of the most influential tufunga tātatau in all of Moana Oceania. The challenge was laid down, and without hesitation, I accepted.

A date was set for Paulo to begin my tātatau. In the weeks leading up to the 9th of October, 1999, I continued to turn up at Paulo’s place to sit and watch him work. Over that time, I witnessed the tattooing of pe’a and other more contemporary tatau on Samoans and a range of other people from around the world. All of whom had come, some over great distances, to receive tatau from Paulo. On occasion, Paulo would invite me to sit on the mat next to him to observe the work closer; this occurred only when he was tattooing pe’a.

We rarely discussed the tātatau that I would receive. I knew that Paulo had been working on drawings because on the morning of my tātatau he laid some out, not for me to see necessarily, but more for him to refer to as he worked.

Through his work, Paulo taught many of us the boundless possibilities of an ancient craft. Paulo was an artist tufunga. He operated in both the artistic and cultural spaces, carving out an entirely new expanse that very few, if any, had attempted before. Paulo pushed fearlessly at the very conventions that defined his field. Paulo was undertaking something that had not been done for over 150 years and never attempted in modern times. He was setting the wheels in motion for the return of Tongan tātatau.



Fig 9.
Video still of my mother and Aunt unwrapping me at Velvet Crescent, 1999.

Who is this Tongan?

I'll never forget a statement Paulo made on the morning he started my tātatau. I stood before him, or, more accurately, I was presented to him by my kāinga, wrapped in ngatu and fine mats as if ready to meet my bride. Paulo said, "It's fitting that you are dressed in this way, because you are about to marry your culture". Thinking about his words still brings up a well of emotion today. The day before, my mother and my grandaunt, the senior woman of the kāinga here in Aotearoa, had taken charge of the preparations for my tātatau. They staged a kava ceremony, which took place in the lounge area of my mother's home, prepared food, and arranged the mats and ngatu that I would wear the following day. I'd rarely seen my mother in that context, proud and strong in all of her anga faka-Tonga and supporting me to lean into my own sense of Tongan identity.

The morning of October 9 started very early for my family and me. I hadn't slept much, and I was still feeling the effects of the kava from the night before. My uncle Peter had driven up from Wellington to be the family spokesman and was waiting patiently for the women to complete the final preparations. My mother and my grandaunt applied some sweet-smelling oil to my skin and proceeded to wrap and bind my body in the ngatu and fine mats. Not many words were spoken; there was an air of calm and focus in the room while the work of wrapping and binding was carried out. My mother followed my grandaunt's lead, neither of them saying much. Although neither my mother nor my grandaunt had prepared anyone for tātatau, it seemed like every step of the process was natural and strangely familiar, as if they had done it a hundred times before. They were reconstructing the ritual and ceremonial aspects of Tongan tātatau intuitively, it seemed, led by a sense of deep knowing. By the time the women had finished preparing me so that I was appropriately presentable and ready for the next leg of my journey, several more family members had arrived, and there was a growing sense of excitement bubbling under the surface of stoic exteriors.



Fig 10.
Video still strip of
Sua' Sulu'ape
Paulo II
tattooing the kalia
tātatau, 1999.

Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II and the Kalia Ha'amoana

It was a short drive from my mother's house to Velvet Crescent in Ōtara. We arrived at around 9 am. We made our way up the driveway. I was at the front of the procession, flanked by my uncle Peter. My mother, grandaunt, and the rest of the family followed closely behind. We entered Paulo's workspace, and despite it being a familiar place this time, it felt strangely new. My uncle said a few words, and Paulo replied with the words I mentioned earlier about my marriage to my culture. When the talking was finished, my grandaunt and mother proceeded to unwrap the layers of ngatu and fine mats that encased my body. Each layer was shown to Paulo and then folded and placed on the floor in front of him. There I stood unwrapped, after only moments earlier being concealed in the precious koloa of my kāinga. I was now ready to have my tātatau, my new wrappings, revealed by Paulo.

I had been tattooed before, but I had never experienced the bite of the 'au. A couple of hours into the tattooing, there was a moment, as I lay prone on the fala, surrounded by family and friends, where I was overcome with a sense of profound solitude and calm. Although brief, that moment of powerful tranquillity somehow steadied my resolve and enabled me to endure the tattooing until Paulo had decided his work was completed for the day.

As Paulo worked, he occasionally paused to talk with members of my kāinga. As always, he was a wealth of knowledge in all things tattooing and tātatau. I recall a moment when he paused (one of several moments captured on video) and showed my uncle and the rest of the family another version of the Sainson drawing, this time rendered in a book of tattooing he had acquired from Tahiti. He said, "The Tahitians are saying that's Sāmoan tattoos, but it's not", and then produced another book with Sainson's original drawing. Paulo goes on to say, "and here, by D'urville, the French guy [pointing to the text underneath the drawing], it's Tongan".¹³ In the video footage, there are gasps and exclama-

¹³ Sainson's drawing of the Tongan tātatau is sometimes credited to Dumont d'Urville who was the captain of the *Astrolabe*, the French ship that Sainson carried out his role as expedition artist.

tions from my uncle and others. Paulo continues, “This is what we are doing now,” and “you see, I’m not just trying to do something new [indicating to the books containing the Sainson drawings], it’s in there.”¹⁴

Following his usual sequence of tattooing, which I had witnessed him do with pe’a, Paulo started with a vaka (va’a in Sāmoan) on an area of my lower back, just above my hip line. Whereas a Sāmoan pe’a will comprise of a single va’a, I was to carry a double hull vaka on my back, the kalia, the symbol of the Ha’amoana and the first leg of the journey to reclaim and reconstruct (customary) Tongan tātatau.

I had asked my brother-in-law to record the day of my tātatau with his video camera, a task he was happy to carry out across the entirety of the tattoo process until the tātatau was completed. We weren’t to know that this would be the last video footage of Su’a Sulu’ape Paulo II alive.

When Paulo had completed his work for the day, I recall a feeling of utter relief followed by dread and excitement for the journey ahead as we worked to complete my tātatau. There was a moment when Paulo expressed his pride in doing the first Tongan tātatau and bringing the practice back for Tongan people. Later in the day, my family would bring a selection of food offerings for Paulo, including a large suckling pig and various other Tongan dishes. I went back to see Paulo a couple of days later, we talked about the next stage of my tātatau and that he would be away overseas for a while, and we would begin the next stage when he returned. Paulo’s parting words to me were, “this is your journey now.” That was the last time I saw Paulo alive. The next time I visited Velvet Crescent in Otago, the day that Paulo had instructed me to return to talk more about the next stage of my tātatau, I was met by Police cars and police tape across the entrance to Paulo’s property. An officer told me I was not allowed to enter the property and instructed me to move on. I would later learn that Paulo had been killed.

Paulo had provided me with two pages of handwritten notes as an insight into the decisions he had made for my tātatau; a thing rarely done by a tufunga tātatau of his standing. The document wasn’t so much an explanation of his work but more a treatise for my future reference and, as it turned out, to aid me in the next chapter of my journey with tātatau. In this way, Paulo was signalling firstly that this work was of value to him while also providing a valuable record in written form to aid in the growth of Tongan tātatau. Importantly, Paulo positioned himself as an artist within the writing and declared that his artistic mind was employed alongside his cultural knowledge. He referenced the interconnected histories of Sāmoa and Tonga and how, ultimately, they were one people: the Sāmoana (Ha’amoana), the clan of supreme navigators.¹⁵

14 This video footage is included in a short documentary series I made about Tātatau which can be viewed on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgt45xLKe80&t=70s>.

15 Paulo wrote the word Sāmoana, which in Tongan would be Ha’amoana. Both Sāmoana and Ha’amoana mean people of the sea or clan of the sea spellings suggest the same (Journal of the Polynesian Society: The Meaning Of The Name Samoa, By Joseph C. Finney, P 301-303, n.d.) Tongan Academic Futa Helu also proposes that Sāmoana means Sea People (Ka’ili, 2017).

The Weight of the Kalia

The kalia was a large double-hull ocean-going vessel of the type encountered by several of the early European explorers in the Moana Oceania region. The kalia was based on the Fijian drua and had been refined by Tongans and Sāmoans. It could travel long distances and could hold well over 100 people (Canoes of the Tonga Group | NZETC, n.d.)

The Tongan word, fatongia, refers to one's duty and obligation. Many Tongans consider their fatongia, especially their fatongia to their family and community, a burden. In Aotearoa, I grew up outside of this cultural framework of fatongia. Likely, because I was, for the most part, considered pālangi by my Tongan relatives, I had a kind of free pass or a fatongia free pass. I never fully comprehended the notion of fatongia until Paulo was gone, and I was left alone, in many ways still at the beginning of what was a monumental journey, carrying what I felt at the time was the burden of Tongan tātatau on my back.

There were periods following Paulo's death when I wanted to walk away from my fatongia. My fatongia to (customary) Tongan tātatau and my fatongia to Paulo. Moments when the weight of the kalia on my back was too much to bear. But then I would think about my grandparents and my upbringing in Tonga. And although I veered away from my anga faka-Tonga for a time, the essence of my Tongan-ness was still within me, guiding me when I lost my way. My understanding of my fatongia was deeply woven into the fabric of my being.



Fig 11. Kalia tātatau, Tongatapu, 2019.

Constructing a Modern (customary) Tātatau

This is Your Journey Now

The time I spent with Paulo marked the formative period of my tātatau education. Paulo was not only an important cultural practitioner of Indigenous tattooing, but he was also a valuable artist. Valuable for Sāmoa and the rest of the Moana Oceania region. Recognised internationally for his work and contribution to the tattoo world, Paulo pushed fearlessly at the edges of his artform, shattering any perceived boundaries that might exist, no matter how long such boundaries may have been in place. To some, he was a controversial figure; his willingness to explore and break down the conventions of tatau was sometimes met with disapproval, particularly from people of his beloved Sāmoa. But to the vast majority, Su'a Sulu'ape Paulo II was an inspiration and set the standard for tatau as art, both within and outside of Sāmoan and Moana Oceania cultural contexts. At the time, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in the 1990s was a place where the possibilities for the art of tatau seemed limitless, and Paulo had long been at the forefront, forging pathways into new territories that had not been explored before. Paulo generated an infectious energy, which fuelled the possibilities for collaboration and sharing across cultures and disciplines. Paulo's untimely and sudden death sent shockwaves through the tattooing community and the art world. Many, including me, struggled to pick up the pieces and continue with the work, following the example set by this great man, mentor, teacher, and friend.

The first time I tattooed someone was in 2013. I created a peka tātatau for my cousin Feleti at my home in Mangere Bridge. In a Tongan context, Feleti is my older brother. As children, we both were in the care of our grandparents in Tonga. Feleti continued to provide me with opportunities to learn through tattooing him. At that point, I had not been formally instructed on how to use a tattoo machine, but I had watched the process many times, assisted in the process often, and had also been tattooed with both machine and 'au. Strangely, it seemed quite natural, and I took to tattooing with machines with a certain amount of confidence. I am a fast learner and learn best by doing.

Until this point, I had been making art, growing my art practice at a relatively steady pace. A lot of the art I made had a certain tattoo quality about it. I worked with line and geometric forms within symmetrical compositions, and balance and order in my artwork seemed to be my natural inclination. I explored artmaking possibilities in digital mediums using graphic design software. And I was drawn to compositions of light and shadow and the human form, which I explored through photography. I was an active advocate for Indigenous tattoo art and cultural practice. I created an event named Indigenous Ink that took place annually and later bi-annually between 2011 and 2017. Indigenous Ink provided a platform for Indigenous tattoo artists to celebrate their work and be celebrated for their work while growing a global community of indigenous tattoo practitioners. In a

way, I saw my advocacy role as fulfilling some part of my fatongia. Through Indigenous Ink, I was exposed to a number of the leading Indigenous tattoo artists from across the Moana Oceania region and the world. From the relationships that evolved during this period, additional teachers and mentors came into my life, including some who had also learnt from Paulo or had known him and had been impacted in some way by his work and legacy. Indigenous Ink was a time and space rich with learning.

I had been researching (customary) Tongan tātatau sporadically for several years and was designing tātatau for people based on my research findings. I was in many ways learning about the various aspects of tātatau and tattooing, and I was in some ways a part of the tattoo world, but more as a passive observer; I had still not fulfilled the most critical part of my fatongia, which was to tattoo. It was my daughter's interest in a tattooing career that was the turning point for me. Seeing her passion for the artform and supporting her development in the early part of her journey re-ignited a flame in me that had been flickering away, albeit dimly, for some time. In no time, I had stoked the tātatau fire again, and I was pushing ahead with renewed energy and, to some extent, an urgency, which seems to have aided the trajectory of my development as a tātatau practitioner.

(Re)constructing the Tools

One of the many vital lessons Paulo imparted was that there needn't be a hierarchy placed on tattooing tools. This attitude and belief have informed and shaped my approach to the materiality of my practice. Paulo used both the 'au and electric tattoo machines in his work. He moved fluidly and fluently between the two technologies. Each tool served a purpose, and he utilised both technologies to create exceptional artwork in people's skin.

I began to experiment with the handtools in 2016. At this point, I was working full-time as a tattoo artist using electric tattoo machines exclusively. And although I enjoyed using the tattoo machine and could operate it with some skill, I felt I was missing a fundamental ingredient in my development as an artist and tattooist. I understood that gaining proficiency with the hand tools was a necessary next step. A friend and mentor, Tim Hunt, who had learned to make 'au from Paulo, agreed to construct a set of three tools for me, which in Tongan are termed hau. Like the Sāmoan 'au, the hau used in early Tongan tātatau were made of sharpened bone combs and fastened to a support plate, often made of turtle shell, and lashed with cord made of plant fibres onto a wood or bamboo handle. Today many tufunga use steel tattoo combs fixed to a perspex plate with fishing line, which are then fastened to a handle made of wood and, in some cases, plastic. The beautifully constructed set of hau that were made for me would be my main teachers for the better part of the next six years. I was left alone to decipher these tools and gain an understanding of their use and construction.

I would often recall the rudimentary lessons I had gained at the feet of Paulo, lessons learnt through observations of him operating the 'au. And I would reflect on further lessons I had learnt in later years as an assistant to other tufunga tātatau, often helping

as a skin stretcher during the tattooing. On occasion, I tattooed with the hau I had been given, once again leaning into the support of friends and family who aided in my learning through their offerings of skin to be tattooed. I pulled the tools apart to learn how to put them back together; the lashing confounded me for a long time. One of the greatest gifts that Tim gave me was refusing to teach me how to lash the tools. He insisted that I figure it out myself to fully understand the form and function of this ancient binding system. I have now made several sets of hau, a process of constant refinement and ongoing learning. Earlier this year in 2022, I spent a few days with Tim as we fashioned bone tattooing combs for the hau I constructed. Previously, when I tattooed with the hau, I used steel tattooing combs. So, as I continue to refine my bone tattooing comb-making techniques, a new phase of learning is underway.



Fig 12. Hand crafted hau, 2022.



Fig 13. Tools and materials, 2021.



Fig 14. Learning to lash, 2019.

It Starts with a Village

In 2021 I undertook a significant and ambitious step in developing my practice and reconstructing a (customary) Tongan tātatau here in Aotearoa. Early that year, I was approached by a Tongan man seeking tātatau in the manner of his ancestors; his reference was Sainson's illustration of a tattooed Tongan in *The Art of Tonga*. I accepted the challenge without hesitation. I had been planning a tātatau for some time. Through my research findings and the experience I had accumulated over the years, as a student and practitioner of tātatau, I compiled various archival materials and my own notes and drawings to explore the various aesthetic possibilities of tātatau and my rationale behind purpose, construction, and layout.

I knew the hand tools had to be employed for this tātatau; the hau were the way forward with this work and critical in the next steps in my journey with tātatau. The fact that I had never made a tātatau of the scale or style that was proposed, using hand tools exclusively, didn't seem to factor in my decision to do the work. I leaned into a deep sense of knowing that this tātatau had to be done, and I was the one who had to do it. There was less thinking and more feeling and doing.

We started Sateki's tātatau in early August of 2021. As a country, Aotearoa was still gripped in a challenging period of uncertainty, along with much of the world, brought on by the Covid 19 pandemic. Unbeknownst to us, it wouldn't be long before another Covid 19 lockdown would halt our progress. Sateki arrived at my workspace dressed in a ta'ovala and accompanied by members of his family. We had delayed our start date to ensure Sateki's mother was able to be in attendance. We exchanged formalities and then set about to begin his tātatau. We had previously agreed that members of Sateki's family would assist in the tātatau process as skin stretchers, helping to keep his skin taut to allow better insertion of the tattoo ink. Sateki's family were always present through the tātatau process, providing hands-on help with skin stretching and cleaning, singing and praising Sateki and myself for our work, praising each other for their hands-on work, recording the process on video, providing food and liquid refreshment for our breaks, and importantly preparing and serving kava,¹⁶ which was the daily ritual at the completion of each tātatau session.

Kava has become an important ingredient in my tātatau practice. At first, it was used to signal the completion of the day's work. More frequently, kava is consumed throughout the entire tātatau process, from the beginning to the end of each tātatau session. Kava brings another layer of meaning to the tātatau process, reminding us and binding us tighter to each other and fonua. For Tongans, kava is symbolic of fonua (Fehoko, 2014). The consumption is the embodiment of fonua, both in a metaphysical sense and at a cellular level. Tātatau and kava are symbolic of our inherent relationship with fonua; fonua in the fullness and complexity of its meaning and as the essence of our Indigeneity.

¹⁶ Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is a ceremonial infusion consumed in both formal and informal settings.

Another powerful symbol of fonua is the ta'ovala.¹⁷ For Tongans, wearing a Ta'ovala is akin to wrapping our bodies in fonua. Similarly, for Tongans in the diaspora, tātatau can be viewed as a way to wrap and bind the disconnected Tongan body in fonua through indelible marks in skin.

Alfred Gell includes tattooing, along with Indigenous textiles tapa (bark-cloth), fine mats and bindings, as “components of the culture of the body in Oceania” (Gell 1993, p. 88). Gell discusses, in-depth, the social and political significance of tattooing in Tonga (and Samoa and Fiji) and its relationship to wrapping, protecting, and preparing the body.

The notion of tātatau as a preparatory act is particularly interesting to me as a practitioner. The natural question accompanying this idea is: what is the individual preparing for? As a student and a practitioner of tātatau, I have been privileged to witness the transformative power of this artform and the profound ways that tātatau can re-orient a person toward an empowered sense of self. For the Tongans I have worked with here in Aotearoa, tātatau is an act of reaffirming the fonua within them and an expression of their deep connection to a distant homeland. Embraced by a growing number of Tongans in the diaspora, the modern practice of tātatau is significantly more than a lament on time lost or forgotten. Tātatau can serve as both an anchor and a beacon, signalling our visibility as Indigenous people and reinforcing our value as Tongans of the diaspora. Tātatau is one way we can stand in and uphold our Indigeneity, guided by our past as we navigate familiar and unfamiliar lands that we now call home.



Fig 15. Sateki's family supporting him on his tātatau journey, 2021.

17 Ta'ovala is a waist mat worn by Tongans in both formal and informal contexts.



Fig 16. Sateki's family aiding in the tātatau process, 2021.



Fig 17. Sateki's partially completed tātatau, 2021.

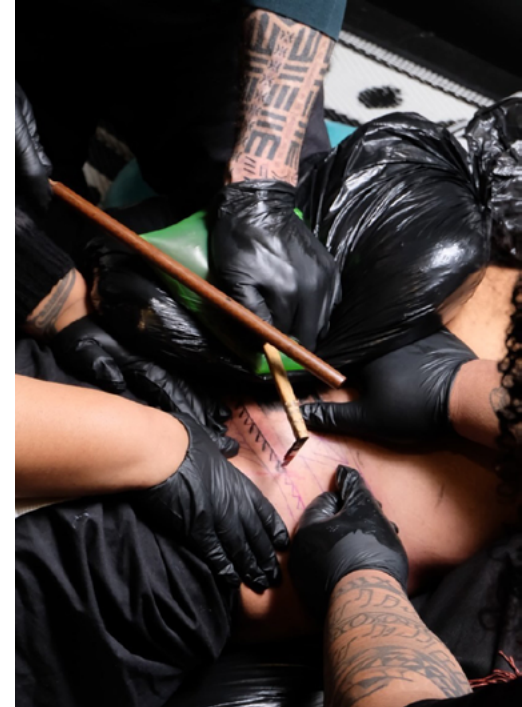


Fig 18. Making Sateki's tātatau, 2021.

Reconstructing the Indigenous Tongan Body

Tātatau specifically, and tattooing more broadly, is a body-centred artform that permanently transforms and, in many ways, redefines the body generally and within specific cultural contexts. The indelible marks inscribed into the skin not only change the physical appearance of the body but can also alter a person's relationship with and awareness of their body and relationship with and awareness of their newly changed body in the world. In this way, tattooing can, in part, be viewed as an artform that mediates the relational space between a person's interior personal world and their exterior social world (Turner, 2012).

Leali'ifano Dr. Albert Refiti describes tatau as a process of revealing the inner quality of a person; through tatau, an outward expression of the person's essence is made visible on the surface of the body, signalling to the world that this person is now ready to be of service to their community (Refiti, 2022).

Marking the Tongan body with tātatau necessitates a willingness from both the tattooist and the subject to engage with the politics of the Tongan body. Throughout the process of tātatau, we confront and are confronted by the Tongan body and its relationship to people and place. As a social construct, the Tongan body is, in part, designed to be an active player within a cultural mechanism of service. In his 2017 article 'Jonah, Arnold, and Me: Reading the Tongan Male Body' Makasiale Lutui provides insight into Tongan attitudes about the body, stating that "Tongans deal with their physical bodies as if they were a tool they had borrowed, rather than as the embodiment of who they are" (Lutui, Makasiale 2007).

As evidenced in various historical texts, Tongans were tattooed in various placements around their bodies (Roth, 1906, Gell, 1996, Surren, 2019). The tattooed parts of the Tongan male body include the loins, umbilical area, lower back, buttocks, and upper thighs down to the knees, chest, back, throat and tongue. Even the penis and the anus did not escape the tattooists' instruments. Tongan women were tattooed between the fingers, on the hands, palms, the umbilical area, legs, feet, chest, upper arms, and around the neck.

There is very little material specific to tātatau to aid in a clear understanding as to why certain parts of the Tongan body were selected to be tattooed. In his ground-breaking book *Wrapping in Images, tattooing in Polynesia*, Alfred Gell (1996) recounts the tattooing of the kalae (the rail, a bird known as Pukeko in Aotearoa) on the throats of the Tu'i Tonga's priests. He points out that the kalae is a sacred bird and has associations with death in ancient Tongan religion. Gell goes on to suggest that the kalae tattoo, placed on the throat of the priests of the Tu'i Tonga, is to signal their servitude to the Tu'i Tonga, the placement of the tātatau mirroring the Tongan custom of wearing leaves around the neck as an act of submission (Gell, 1996).

In his essay 'Bodies Permeable and Divine: Tapu, Mana and the Embodiment of Hegemony in Pre-Christian Tonga', Andy Mills (2016) discusses the relationship of mana and tapu within the context of the Tongan body. Mills' essay offers further consideration of the rationale that dictated the tattooing of specific body parts. Mills highlights the function of Tongan hands as the "primary source, and the alleviation of episodic tapu within the household" (p. 84). Mills also discusses the Tongan conception of manava, a complex system of bodily organs, openings, contractions, and expansions that, in part, house and animate various physical, emotional, psychological, and body-centred states, including fear, anger and courage. The manava system, sited predominantly in the torso and connected to the outside world by the openings of the body, could provide clues as to why this area of the body was tattooed, particularly in the case of Tongan men and women who we've established were tattooed on and around the torso area.

Adrienne Kaepler's assertion that the area between the waist and the knees is important in Tongan conceptions of the body offers another probable insight into why tātatau was often placed in this area. Kaepler's assertion might also explain why tātatau was absent from this area in the case of certain chiefly persons (Kaepler, 1999).

Lea faka-Tātatau

To date, I have accumulated a number of Tongan terms, most of which are archaic, that are specific to tātatau. These terms were recorded by early European explorers and Missionaries and reproduced in various written forms. The presence of these terms in the early records of the Tongan language provides an essential point of reference in defining certain practice-based approaches and technologies used in reconstructing a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice. Where possible, I have listed the original source of the recorded term. Otherwise, I have listed the publication where I located the term. I have listed a definition if one was provided with a term and maintained the spelling as written in the original texts. I also included terms that relate to other kinds of skin marking.

From his two-part article titled, Supplementary Tongan vocabulary, E. E. V. Collocott (1925) Lists the following terms:

1. Auta, meaning uncertain. Suggested by some that perhaps the word means tattooers, in which case it would be the Sāmoan form of a word whose Tongan form would be kau-ta
2. Bolo, mark on the face or body of a warrior
3. Huke, to renew tattooing; to repair a boat
4. Loa, marking or smearing on the body or face
5. Makauka, style of tattooing in which the skin is not entirely covered with pigment, but the design is drawn with separate lines

From the publication: Vocabulary of the Tonga language, arranged in alphabetical order to which is annexed a list of idiomatical phrases, The Rev. S. Rabone (1845) lists the following terms:

6. Hau, the instrument used in tattooing
7. Fuli, to be covered over with rings burnt in the skin
8. Mako, to be smeared from head to toe with black pigment
9. Matahema, The upper mark of the tattooing on the left side
10. Ta, to tattoo
11. Tabulu, one way of tattooing
12. Tatatau, to tattoo
13. Tatatau, the tattooing

William Mariner (1817) vol II recorded the following:

14. Loa, to paint the face in time of war
15. Ta, this name is also given to their mode of marking their bodies
16. Ta-tatto, (To strike the tattow). This operation consists in puncturing the body with an instrument resembling a small tooth comb, which is dipped in a mixture of soot; so that the place becomes indelibly marked. The instrument is struck with a piece of wood.
17. Tattow, the custom of marking the body by puncturing
18. Too'Too', or, burning the body in spots, with lighted rolls of ta'pa
19. La'fa, burning the arm in about six places, each in form of five or six concentric circles.
20. Toogi, beating the cheeks, and rubbing off the cuticle, with coa-nut husk, or some sort of plait, wound round the hand.
21. Foa oolo, wounding the head, and cutting the flesh in various parts, with knives, shells, club, spears, &c. in honour of the deceased, and as a testimony of respect for his memory and, fidelity to his family.

From an article titled Tongan Islanders skin marking H.L. Roth (1906) lists a few words Relating to tattooing and keloiding, recorded in 1793 by French botanist, Labillardiere:

22. Male, tatau, Tatu
23. Alla peka, in large rings round the waist
24. Foui, the thighs
25. Itai, in circles on the arms and shoulders
26. Kafa, in the form of large worms

From the same article, Roth (1906) also lists a few terms recorded by D'Urville in 1827:

27. Foa ulu, the act of bruising or lacerating one's body
28. Fugui, that of staining the cheeks with blood and lacerating the skin by means of cocoanut fibre or husk (bourre de coco) or bits of hair
29. Lafa, consists in burning the arm in five or six places forming five or six concentric circles

Churchward's Tongan Dictionary (1959) lists the following terms:

30. Maka'uka, certain kind of tattooing
31. Tā-tatau, to tattoo
32. Tumomosi, to burn beauty marks on the body
33. Fakapala, to treat a painful spot (especially at the knee or elbow) by burning and then applying a tiny green orange (dried)
34. Hau, instrument used in tattooing

In a 2014 publication *Collecting in the south sea, The Voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux 1791-1794*, Paul Geraghty provides a Tongan word list from D'Entrecasteaux's expedition. Labillardiere, mentioned earlier, was the botanist on this expedition. The terms Geraghty lists under tattooing, with additional reference to terms collected by Anderson on Cook's voyages, are:

35. Alapeka, tattoo in broad bands round the waist
36. Fui, tattoo on the thigh
37. Kafa, tattoo like a wart
38. Lafo, tattoo like a freckle on the face
39. Latetatau, tattooing instrument
40. Male tatau, tattooing; now male tap on the head
41. Tafa, other kind of tattoo; Anderson tafa raised marks burnt, to cut
42. Tai, tattooing in concentric circles on the arms and shoulders
43. Tatau, black mark on the body; Anderson tatau puncturation

This growing list of tātatau and body marking terms are vital in defining a uniquely Tongan tātatau language and offer exciting possibilities as we grow new knowledge and the modern practice of Tongan (customary) tātatau. Within my arts and tātatau practice, I continue to explore how these terms might manifest in various applications and specifically as marks in skin. For example, based on the definition of the tattooing term Maka'uka, which Collocott and later Churchward included in their Tongan language dictionaries, I have developed a mode of mark-making that produces spacious linear motifs referencing the Tongan lashing and weaving technologies known as lalava and lālanga respectively. Anchored in fonua, lalava and lālanga are ancient technologies of binding and interlacing that, much like tātatau, wrap, conceal, protect and reveal through their form and function. In a co-authored paper titled 'Kula mo e 'Uli: Red and Black in Tongan

Thinking and Practice’ Semisi Fetokai Potauaine and Professor Hūfanga Dr. ‘Okusitino Mahina conclude that within the hierarchy of Tongan arts, lalava binding is the apex from which many other Tongan arts, including tattooing, weaving, music, dance, and poetry, are derived (Potauaine and Mahina, 2007).

Lālānga, weaving, seems a primary derivation or elaboration. Adrienne Kaeppler (1999) discusses the socio-cultural and socio-political significance of certain lālānga applications found in the form and function of named ceremonial mats. The most prestigious named ceremonial mats or kie hingoa are of Sāmoan and Tongan origin. In her analysis of kie hingoa, Kaeppler draws a connection with tattooing by recounting the story of two named ceremonial mats that marked the tattooing of the Tu’i Tonga Fatafehi in Sāmoa. Because the Tu’i Tonga’s body was sacred, their tattooing could not be carried out by Tongan tufunga tātatau, as Tongans were forbidden to touch the body of the Tu’i Tonga. When choosing to be tattooed, Fatafehi enlisted Sāmoan tufunga tātatau to carry out the task. Tu’i Tonga Fatafehi is said to have travelled to the Sāmoan islands twice to have his tātatau done. On both occasions, the tufunga tātatau became ill and died as a result of tattooing the sacred body of the Tu’i Tonga. Kaeppler notes that while it is a Samoan custom to gift a fine mat to a tufunga tātatau, in these instances, the kie hingoa were given to the Tu’i Tonga; their intricate weaving affording balance with the intricacies of the tātatau and the status of their bearer.

Contained within the Tongan terms specific to tātatau and other modes of marking the body are clues to an ancient knowledge system that I believe will be gradually revealed over time through the practice of tātatau. When I introduce Maka’uka to skin, I am simultaneously recalling the relationships between fonua, lalava, lālānga and tātatau; between Tonga and Sāmoa; and between the kie hingoa known as “Valatauotuimanu’a” and “Vaofumoolosega” (Kaeppler 1999, p. 179), tātatau and Tu’i Tonga Fatafehi. I am also undertaking practice-led research. In this way, the terms, although not fully known to us now, form the foundation for further enquiry.



Fig 18. Maka’uka tātatau technique, 2019.

Conclusion: The Journey Backwards into the Future

“We must remember and reconstruct as much of our past as we can to present to the future” Epeli Hau’ofa



Fig 20. Hikule'o Adornment, 2022.

Pursuing Pulotu

Along this journey, I am presented with many opportunities to learn through ongoing practice and practice-led investigation. On the 9th of May 2022, the Tongan language radio station Talakoula 909fm KRCL broadcast a show called Tala 'o Tonga, which was streamed live on Facebook. It featured a presentation by Tā Vā¹⁸ proponents Professor Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr. 'Okusitino Māhina, Professor Maui-TāVā-He-Ako Dr. Tēvita O. Ka'ili and artist Tavakefai'ana Sēmisi Fetokai Potauaine. The presentation was centred on the fangufangu, a customary Tongan wind instrument from bygone days. Its manufacture and use were revitalised in recent years through the efforts of Professor Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr. 'Okusitino Māhina, and others. The presentation proposed that fangufangu were brought to Tonga from Pulotu, the ancient place of origin and afterlife paradise of the Tongan and Sāmoan people.¹⁹

The presentation suggested that in a Tongan context, all sacred and precious things come from Pulotu.²⁰ A slide showing a list of these precious items was visible on the screen. The list included certain chiefly foods, types of wood, animals, plants, and of

18 Tā Vā is an indigenous theory of Time and Space originally developed by Tongan Scholar Professor Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr. 'Okusitino Māhina.

19 This definition of Pulotu is borrowed from the Lagi Maama Academy and Consultancy website: Pulotu. (n.d.). Lagi-Maama Home Page. Retrieved 22 November 2022, from <https://www.lagi-maama.com/pulotu>.

20 In her paper 'Men are from maama, women are from Pulotu: female status in Tongan society', Meredith Filihia also recounts Tongan tala-ē-fonua that identify Pulotu as the source of sacred cultural items (Filihia, 2001).

course, fangufangu. Having previously considered how Pulotu might manifest in the development of my practice, it suddenly dawned on me that tātatau might have a place on the list of sacred and precious things that originate from Pulotu.

In Tongan cosmology, Pulotu is both the original land and the land of origin. In the beginning, there existed only the Sea and Pulotu (Filihia, 2001) Pulotu is very often said to be located somewhere in the northwest of Tonga (Geraghty, 1993). Recent theories support this siting of Pulotu and further relate Pulotu to Fiji and the ancestral past (Pulotu, n.d.). The origin story of Tongan tātatau, as outlined in Chapter One, points to Fiji as the source, where tātatau was the domain of women; that is, women performed the tātatau on other women, and only women wore tātatau, until it was imported to Tonga where tātatau was gifted to men. Tongan cosmology tells us the first human inhabitants of the Tongan islands were three men who evolved from the pieces of a worm; these men could be viewed as growing or evolving from fonua. These three men went on to become the first line of Tu'i Tonga. The ancestor god Maui, aware of what was happening, decided to travel to Pulotu and bring wives for these first Tu'i Tonga chiefs. These wives were the first women of the Tongan islands (Filihia, 2001). It is likely that the three women brought from Pulotu were tattooed, and probable that the process and technique of tattooing were known to at least one of these women, if not all three. Is it possible that these Pulotu (Fijian) women gifted tātatau, process, and technique to their new Tongan husbands as part of their wedding dowry? Were the first Tongan (customary) tātatau made by Pulotu (Fijian) women on Tongan men? These women being daughters of Pulotu, what of their leader Hikule'ō?²¹ Did Hikule'ō play a role in the tattooing process? Was she the original head tattoo chieftess of Pulotu? What are the implications for Tongan (customary) tātatau with the ancestor god Hikule'ō implicit in the artform? As a Tongan artist and Indigenous tattooist, I position Pulotu within my practice as the conceptual framework of unbounded potential, an energetic interface of past, present, and future. Tātatau, like Pulotu, expresses and activates Tongan indigeneity.

Further Back into the Future

This work is necessarily incomplete. It is part of an ongoing investigation toward determining what customary Tongan tātatau was historically, what it is today and what it can be moving forward, a process of discovery and growth to develop rich and meaningful questions. Our past constantly reveals itself, sometimes figuratively and at other times quite literally, as with the discovery of the bone tattoo needle in Basel.

Through my ongoing journey with Tongan tātatau, I have learnt that reconstructing a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice is more significant than mere patterns inscribed in skin. Tātatau is as much about our hearts as it is about our skin; in fact, I would say tātatau is centred in our hearts, which are revealed on our skin through the act of tattooing. As an Indigenous Moana Oceania artist, reconstructing a uniquely Tongan (customary) tātatau

21 Hikule'ō is an ancestor god in the Indigenous Tongan pantheon, and the ruler of Pulotu.

from within an Aotearoa New Zealand context has led me to understand the value of seeking that which connects us, as opposed to that which divides us, to grow a fuller and more complete knowledge of the interconnected nature of indigenous Moana Oceania arts and cultural practice.

I have learnt, importantly, that Tongan tātatau as a customary practice and system of knowledge is, for the most part, still a mystery and that my journey with tātatau, no matter how long or arduous, is a defining factor in constructing a meaningful Tongan customary and contemporary tātatau practice. A destination for Tongan (customary) tātatau may not make itself known, but the notion of a destination for the artform is no longer my concern. Placing value on the journey over the destination may seem a cliché, but sometimes we wrap great insights in reductionist terminology to help us confront the gravity of their truth.

Like the notion of Pulotu, tātatau has its origins in an ancient past, a past that we orient ourselves toward to guide us, in the process of 'alu 'o mui, knowing that a future, no matter how distant it may seem, is intrinsic in our work today. Reconstructing Tongan (customary) tātatau requires dedication, perseverance, and the ability to recognise the moments when we must tuhu ki he 'ūmata, that is, stop and raise our eyes up to consider the wonder of our existence and appreciate the gifts we have received. The true value of tātatau lies in what the process does for a person and how it changes them, not just physically but also emotionally and, for some, spiritually. Reconstructing tātatau today is not about nostalgia or a desire to live in or re-enact the past in some way; on the contrary, reconstructing tātatau is very much about the value the artform adds to our lives today.

As a young man, I was gifted a vaka, a finely crafted vessel built through genealogies and ancient technologies. A vaka capable of traversing great distances, constructed by the hands and heart of a great navigator, who has since taken his place amongst the constellation of revered ancestors. And like the celebrated navigators before him, he continues to illuminate my path as I forge my way forward, guided by his teachings and the vaka tattooed across my back.

Reconstructing a Tongan (customary) tātatau practice in Aotearoa is an ongoing process of doing and learning, defined by considered and deliberate action, and careful and spirited enquiry, and a methodology of fakahoha'a that enables me to agitate the sediment and consider how it lands. Ultimately knowledge of the practice grows through the questions that arise from engaging in the practice, each mark made offers something new.

What is evident through this research project is that the list of questions about what was Tongan (customary) tātatau, what is Tongan (customary) tātatau today and what Tongan (customary) tātatau might be moving forward, far outweigh any suggestion of definitive answers. This, in my view, is a healthy and productive place to be grounded in as we collectively continue to grow Tongan (customary) tātatau into the future, as a thriving part of Tongan cultural identity, anchored in Tongan Indigeneity.

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Glossary

My primary source for translation of Tongan terms is Churchward's (1959) 'Dictionary: Tongan – English, English – Tongan'. Additional non-Tongan translations are from other formal sources, personal communications, and literature.

'ofa:	To love, to care
Aotearoa:	Indigenous Māori name for New Zealand
'Au:	Sāmoan customary tattooing implement
Drua:	Fijian double hull long distance sailing canoe
Faikava:	To prepare and drink kava together with due form and ceremony
Fale:	House, building
Fekai:	Ravenous, ferocious
Fisi:	Fiji
Fangufangu:	Nose flute
Fatongia:	Duty, obligation
Fonua:	Land, country, territory, place, some times used in the sense of people (of the land), grave, afterbirth, placenta
Ha'a:	persons having the rank or status of, descendants of kings, race, tribe
Ha'amoana:	people of the sea, clan of the sea
Hau:	Tongan customary tattooing implement
Hoha'a:	To be uneasy, or troubled in the mind, to irritate, to grate on one's feelings

Iqia:	Fijian Tattooing tool
Kāinga:	relation, relative, to be related, relationship
Kakau:	to be circumcised
Kalia:	Tongan double hull long distance sailing canoe
Kava:	The beverage made from the plant, Piper methysticum beverage
Koloa:	Goods, wealth, riches, what one values
Kupesi:	Pattern, motif
Mana:	Spiritual power, prestige, status,
Manava:	Womb, heart, bowels, as the seat of affections of courage
Mutu'u	Wild pigeon
Ngatu:	Painted tapa cloth
Nifo:	Tooth, teeth, or something resembling teeth
Nimakū:	Having a finger cut off or cut short
'Otua:	Indigenous Tongan gods
Pangaimotu:	A village on Vava'u Island, Tongan Islands
Papālangi:	European, person belonging to any white-skinned race
Pe'a:	Sāmoan term for male customary tattoo
Peka:	Bat, flying fox
Pōpao:	Canoe

Puke puke fonua:	To hold on to or keep hold of the land (culture) to retain or maintain
Qia:	Fijian term for tattoo
Sausau:	A piece of stick used to strike the Samoan tattooing implement
Tā:	To strike, to beat, to tattoo
Ta'ovala:	A mat worn around the waist
Tala-ē-fonua:	Tongan traditional history
Tapu:	Sacred
Tātatau:	To tattoo, the tattoo, the tattooing
Tatau:	Equal, to be the same, symmetrical,
Tongiaki:	A kind of canoe with a larger outrigger
Tufuga tātatau:	Samoan tattooing expert
Tufunga tātatau:	Tongan tattooing expert
'Ūmata:	Rainbow
Vaka:	Canoe, vessel, embodiment
Vala:	cloth, dress
Vava'u:	An island in the northern Tongan Islands
Veiqia:	Fijian term for tattooing

Appendix A

Ethical Considerations



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

11 August 2022

Lana Lopesi
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Lana

Re Ethics Application: **22/113 A Striking Symmetry: The revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa and the revitalisation of tu'ufonua (Indigenous Tongan identity) from within the diaspora**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 11 August 2025.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: terjekstudio@gmail.com; Albert Refiti

Appendix B:

Consent Form



Consent Form

Project title: A Striking Symmetry: *The revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa and the revitalisation of tu'ufonua (Indigenous Tongan identity) from within the diaspora*

Project Supervisor: Dr Lana Lopesi, Dr Billie Lythberg, Dr Sisikula Palu Sisifa, Assoc. Prof. Albert Refiti

Researcher: Terje Koloamatangi

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 03 May 2022
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date on which the final approval was granted* AUTEK Reference number *type the AUTEK reference number*

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C:

Consent to Tattoo Procedure



Consent to Tattoo Procedure

Project title: A Striking Symmetry: *The revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa and the revitalisation of tu'ufonua (Indigenous Tongan identity) from within the diaspora*

Project Supervisor: Dr Lana Lopesi, Dr Billie Lythberg, Dr Sisikula Palu Sisifa, Assoc. Prof. Albert Refiti,

Researcher: Terje Koloamatangi

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 03 May 2022
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I do not suffer from a communicable disease or skin condition
- I have advised my tattooer about any history I have of hemophilia (bleeding) and of any medication I am taking that has any affect on blood thinning or blood clotting
- I have advised my tattooist about any type of infection or rash anywhere on my body
- I have advised my tattooist if I have a history of epilepsy or seizures
- I acknowledge it is not reasonably possible for the tattooist to determine whether I might have an allergic reaction to the pigments or processes used in my tattoo, and I agree to accept the risk that such a reaction is possible
- I acknowledge that infection is always possible as a result of obtaining a tattoo, particularly in the event that I do not take proper care of my tattoo. I have received aftercare instructions and I agree to follow them while my tattoo is healing.
- I acknowledge that a tattoo is a permanent change to my appearance and that no representations have been made to me as to the ability to later change or remove my tattoo. To my knowledge, I do not have a physical, mental or medical impairment or disability, which might affect my well being as a direct or indirect result of my decision to have a tattoo
- I acknowledge I am over the age of eighteen and that I have truthfully represented to my tattoo artist that the obtaining of a tattoo is by my choice alone. I consent to the application of the tattoo and to any actions or conduct of the tattooist reasonably necessary to perform the tattoo procedure

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix D:

Consent and Release Form



Consent and Release Form

Project title: A Striking Symmetry: The revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa and the revitalisation of tu'ufonua (Indigenous Tongan identity) from within the diaspora

Project Supervisor: Dr Lana Lopesi, Dr Billie Lythberg, Dr Sisikula Palu Sisifa, Assoc. Prof. Albert Refiti

Researcher: Terje Koloamatangi

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 03 May 2022.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I permit the researcher | artist to use the photographs that are part of this project and/or any drawings from them and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for (a) the researcher's | artist's portfolio; and (b) educational exhibition and examination purposes and related design works; and (c) all forms and media for advertising, trade and any other lawful purposes as stated on the Information Sheet
- I understand that the photographs will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- I understand that any copyright material created by the photographic sessions is deemed to be owned by the researcher | artist and that I do not own copyright of any of the photographs.
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix E:

Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

03-05-2022

Project Title:

A Striking Symmetry: The revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa and the revitalisation of tu'ufonua (Indigenous Tongan identity) from within the diaspora

An Invitation:

My name is Terje Koloamatangi, I am of Tongan and Norwegian Sami ancestry. Born in Nuku'alofa Tongatapu with ancestral ties to Kolovai, Pangaimotu Vava'u and Åmøya, in Northern Norway. I live in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. I am an artist and cultural tattoo practitioner. My tattoo practice is centred on tātatau (customary Tongan tattooing) based on historical accounts, gleaned from texts, museum collections and Tongan oral traditions.

I invite you to participate in my research project which will contribute to a Master's degree qualification through Auckland University of Technology (AUT). As someone whose opinion I value and respect, I ask for your feedback as I build toward a piece of work that I believe will be a meaningful contribution to Tongan arts. My research project is practice-based and centres on the revival of customary Tongan tātatau here in Aotearoa, and the impact this revived practice might have on the indigenous identity of the local Tongan diaspora. My project will draw on my years of research and practice as a Tongan tattooist, and include a series of video-recorded talanoa with indigenous tattoo practitioners and members of the Tongan community including artists and cultural knowledge holders. The final outcomes, in fulfilment of my Master's degree, will include a written exegesis and a public exhibition where I will carry out live tattooing.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of my research is to highlight the impact that the revival of customary Tongan tattooing in Aotearoa has on the Indigenous identity and wellbeing of local diasporic Tongans. Specifically, this research asks how engaging in the process of customary Tongan tattooing can stimulate and galvanise deeper awareness of and relationship to the land and sea of a Tongan homeland, beyond a sense of nationalism and patriotism. Through my research my aim is to contribute to a broader understanding of customary Tongan tattooing and its value and function in modern times as a process of framing Indigeneity in diaspora. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

When identifying and selecting participants for my project, I first looked to the networks I am a part of to seek out the appropriate people to take part in the research. My search included Tongan individuals I have tattooed or plan to tattoo, artists, indigenous tattoo revivalists, cultural practitioners and cultural knowledge holders, critical thinkers, and academics. People whose input, I believe, will add greater depth to the research I planned to undertake.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

To participate in my research project, you will need to complete a Consent Form/Forms depending on which part of my research project you have been selected for and agree to participate in. I can supply these forms to you via email or in print. Once completed and signed a copy of the forms will be made available to you and a copy will be included in my project records. Please remember your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

The primary method of knowledge exchange, utilised for my research, is talanoa. Centered on the Tongan value of faka'apa'apa (respect) my research will be carried out in such a way as to uphold the integrity of both you and I, as research participant and researcher. These talanoa sessions will be conducted one to one in a mutually agreed upon location, either at my studio or in your home. Each talanoa session will be video recorded and will be between 60 to 90 minutes in length. This research involves the collection of personally identifiable data but not of a sensitive nature. If you agree, you will be identifiable in the research findings. In this research project, your principal role is one of sharing information about your lived experience as a Tongan in diaspora and your values and perceptions about customary tattooing and its role in contemporary Tongan culture and identity. You will be asked to approve draft transcripts and chapter drafts, to ensure that you are comfortable with how you are portrayed.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As a participant in the talanoa session it is highly unlikely that you will experience discomfort or risk. If any discomfort or risk is experienced it might relate to discussing aspects of Tongan history that challenge the conventional views on church and state.

As a participant in the live tattooing procedure the discomfort and risk is relative to the tattooing process and may include Physical pain and some degree of emotional discomfort as a result. You might also experience embarrassment due to partial, but not explicit, nudity. The tattooing procedure comes with a degree of physical risk. Infection or other injury might result from poor aftercare, following the tattooing procedure.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If required AUT Student Counselling and Mental Health is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centre at WB203 City Campus, email counselling@aut.ac.nz or call 921 9998.
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet.

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on <https://www.aut.ac.nz/student-life/student-support/counselling-and-mental-health>

During the tattooing procedure coverings will be made available to cover a majority of your body, revealing only the areas to be tattooed. To minimise discomfort from the tattoo procedure, topical numbing cream can also be made available.

This risk of infection or other injury resulting from the tattoo procedure can be mitigated by following the tattooists instructions for a self-administered follow-up care plan. Enduring the pain of tattooing, over an extended period of time, can have both a physical and emotional toll on the participants. This can be well managed through regular breaks, adequate hydration, nutrition and rest.

What are the benefits?

The research outcome, lead by a Tongan/Moanan centred approach, is designed to benefit the participants, Tongan artists/tattooists, and researchers more generally. It furthers the literature in the under-researched area of customary Tongan tattooing and seeks to help establish customary Tongan tattooing as art and culture, and the participants within the art historical canon. This research will also contribute to a Master's degree qualification through Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

What compensation is available for injury or negligence?

In the unlikely event of a physical injury as a result of your participation in this study, rehabilitation and compensation for injury by accident may be available from the Accident Compensation Corporation, providing the incident details satisfy the requirements of the law and the Corporation's regulations.

How will my privacy be protected?

First and foremost protecting your integrity as a participant in my research project is paramount. Any privacy or confidentiality concerns that you have can be discussed in detail before any information is recorded. As a participant you are autonomous and therefore are free to refrain from discussing certain issues if your privacy comes into question. To respect your privacy and confidentiality, you also have the right to redact information at any stage.

To respect your confidentiality, access to any transcripts from our talanoa sessions are limited to the primary researcher and primary supervisor only and will be secured in locked storage at the primary researcher's studio.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

As a participant in the talanoa sessions I ask for 60-90 minutes of your time.

As a participant in the tattooing procedure I ask for up to four hours of your time per day for a period of 7 days.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Ideally three weeks, however, this can be negotiated if more time is required.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, I will provide you with a one or two page summary of the findings from our talanoa session

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Lana Lopesi, email: lane.lopesi@aut.ac.nz, mobile: 0226498675

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Primary Researcher, Terje Koloamatangi, email: terjekstudio@gmail.com, mobile: 0274464777

Supervisor, Dr Lana Lopesi, email: lane.lopesi@aut.ac.nz, mobile: 0226498675

Researcher Contact Details:

Terje Koloamatangi, email: terjekstudio@gmail.com, mobile: 0274464777

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Lana Lopesi, email: lane.lopesi@aut.ac.nz, mobile: 0226498675

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*.

