

Unit 3: Rulers of Tonga: The Master Langi Builders

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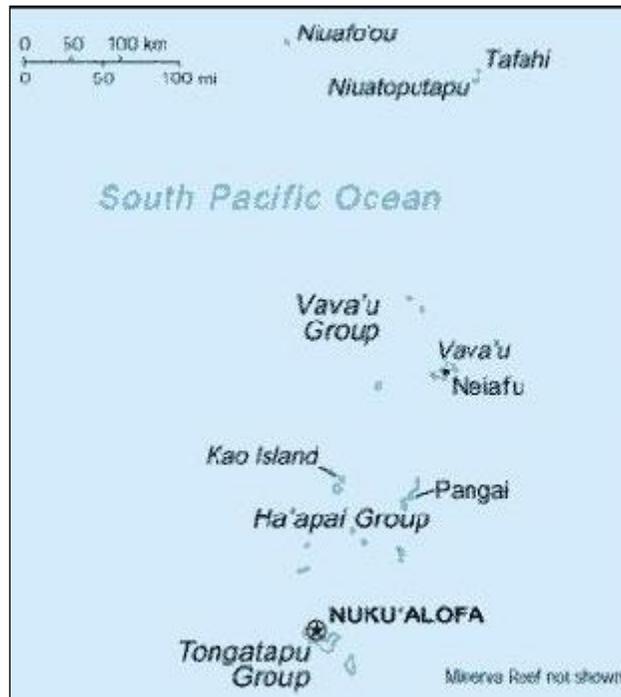


Figure 3.1. Map of Tonga

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

- See the relationship between the person (Tu'i Tonga) and the place (the Langi)
- Understand the meaning and purpose of the Langi
- Know how the builders made the Langi

Introduction

The origin of *Langi* or stone terraces used for burials is unknown. In Tonga *Langi* is commonly called '*Otu Langi*'. '*Otu* means rows. *Langi* means sky. '*Otu Langi* means rows of sky.

In each level of the terrace a line of stones were planted and dirt built up behind it to form a terrace. A series of terraces then formed a rectangular or square shape of the Dome. The shapes of the *Langi* are similar to those of the Maya temples in Central America.

In Tonga, the '*Otu Langi* were built as the burial places of the Tu'i Tonga; the rulers of all Tonga. The top level is reserved for the Tu'i himself, and the lowest level is reserved for the lowest ranking person. The first row next to the top is called the '*Otu Laine Toputapu*'. People buried at this level were mainly children of the Tu'i Tonga. Many of the Tu'i Tonga were master builders of *Langi*.

There are *Langi* in Ha'apai, Vava'u and many in Tongatapu.

Ancient Capitals of Tonga

After identifying the residences of several Tu'i Tonga in Tongatapu, I have found a *Langi* or a group of *Langi* in each place. Legend says each *Langi* contained the body of a person of high rank. It is believed that six Tu'i Tonga were buried at *Langi 'Atuli* between Pelehake and Fu'amotu. The name Tu'ione became the chief's name in Pelehake from that time. The residence of the Tu'i Tonga between Pelehake and Fatumu is known as Ha'avakafuhu.

Langi Mo'ungalafa is at Afa, *Langi Tu'imatamoana* is between Afa and Kolonga and *Langi Niutamato* is in Makaunga. *Langi Tu'imatamoana* is facing the Utukakai sea port. It is also believed that the Tu'i Tonga built the famous *Ha'amonga-'a-Maui* at Niutoua (see Fig. 3.1).

The presence of the *'Otu Langi* and other stone works like the *Ha'amonga-'a-Maui* in Heketä indicated that the Tongan civilisation was once centred in Heketä. The historians Wood and Gifford confirm that the Tu'i Tonga lived at Heketä. After the eleventh Tu'i Tonga, the seat of the Tu'i Tonga was transferred to the *Fangalongonoa* at Mu'a. Mu'a, the old capital of Tonga was probably the home of the *Langi* Builders from 1120-1700.

The *Langi* Builders were believed to be the rulers of Tonga. The first Tu'i Tonga was believed to be the son of god Tangaloa who lived in the sky. The first Tu'i Tonga to settle at Mu'a was Tala-i-Ha'apepe, the fourteenth Tu'i Tonga.

Several reasons are suggested as to why they moved to Fangalongonoa. One was believed to be a request from Fatafehi to her brothers because the *utu* was too noisy at Heketä. If this was the sole reason, the *Fangalongonoa* (quiet sea) was the most suitable place. Both Wood and Gifford agreed with this suggestion.

However, I think another possible reason for moving from Heketä was the attempt of Tu'itātui's children to escape the curse and shame of their father's folly. Tu'itātui was known for some unpopular personal behaviour, such as chasing other men's wives and daughters. Such behaviour caused serious conflict between him and his relatives and friends. He escaped to Eua where he died.

Thirdly, Fatafehi is believed to be buried at the *Langi Tu'imatamoana* between Afa and Kolonga. This may have happened before they moved to Ha'aloto.

Niutamato Became Tu'i Tonga

Tala-'a-tama succeeded his father as the twelfth Tu'i Tonga. Unfortunately, he died and was buried at the *Langi Heketä*. Tala-i-Ha'apepe, the brother of Tala-'a-tama, was the one responsible for the moving from Heketä most probably because he thought that the death of his brother and his sister Fatafehi was caused by the behaviour of Tu'itātui. Tala-i-Ha'apepe took with him all the skills of *Langi* buildings and other stone works.

A study of oral traditions and legends revealed that the *Langi* builders moved to Ha'aloto between Hoi and Makaunga. Perhaps Tala-i-Ha'apepe was not sure whether the people of Fangalongonoa and Mu'a would welcome them or because he wanted to leave all the past behind before he entered Fangalongonoa.

According to the legend, a piece of wood became the heir to the throne. The piece of wood was called Niutamato. It became the thirteenth Tu'i Tonga. This may be a story explaining or

disguising Ta'a-i-Ha'apepe's preparation to leave the past, avoid the curse (*mala*) that was caused by Tu'itātui', and start a new life.

Niutamatou was married to a woman of high rank. They lived together and had a son. He was named Tala-I- Ha'apepe. He became the fourteenth holder of the *Langi* Builders' title, the Tu'i Tonga.

At the death of Niutamatou (the piece of wood) a royal burial was carried out at the *Langi Niutamatou* at Makaunga. Tala-I-Ha'apepe was then the rightful heir to the sacred title. He was believed to have received all the power and authority direct from Tangaloa.

The historian McKern was given permission from Queen Salote to excavate the *Langi Niutamatou* and found nothing of the remains of Niutamatou. The findings have confirmed, however, that the Tu'i Tonga once lived in Ha'aloto. The other evidence that proves that the Tu'i Tonga lived at Ha'aloto was the presence of so many (*sia*) mounds in the area.

Tala-i-Ha'apepe in Fangalongonoa

Tala-i-Ha'apepe the son of Niutamatou became the fourteenth Tu'i Tonga. It is believed that during his rule the Tu'i Tonga residence was transferred from Ha'aloto to Fangalongonoa at Mu'a. This took place in abotu 1120 A.D.

The surroundings of Fangalongonoa were favourable. The sea was calm and deep and safe for the Tu'i Tonga's *laulāafi* (fleet). Legends say that there were three very important *kalia* of the Tu'i Tonga. They were the *'Akiheuho* and the *Tonga Fuesia*. Later the famous *Lomipeau* was built and arrived from Fiji. Water springs were also located nearby. These springs are: Fangafe'atu, Peka and Vai'utulupe. The late Queen Sālote explained in the *Nailasikau* the building of the *Lomipeau* from Fiji:

*'Isa 'e ngalo ange 'ia au
Ko e 'aho ni'e tukufolau
Ka kuo u fie talanoa aut
Ki he naga homau vaka tapu
He vaka ni ko e fakatangitama
He lauliki 'a tahitala
Fa'u 'e Lavele mo Lavamutu
'O fakatoukatea 'ene tu'u
'O tuku he fanga ko Muliutu*

*Si'i fehi 'o e ifi laupakola
He fanāfotu ka ne 'iloa
Pea toe fai ki ai e tala
Nailasi kau he ne telekanga
'Avea e vaka ki moana*

At Fangalongonoa, the *Langi* Builders built the two famous sea ports (*taulanga*). These ancient *taulanga* were called *Felemei* and *Kolongahau*. The exact place where they landed was marked by the building of *Langi Tauhakehena*. This was abotu 1120 A.D. *Langi Tauhakehena* was later called *Langi Tōfāua*. *Langi Tōfāua* simply means two kings were buried there.

The Building of the 'Otu Langi at Mu'a

Builders of some of the 'Otu Langi in Mu'a were unknown. However, these immense terraced tombs remain as evidence for the rule and life of the people who lived in those days. There are eleven Langi at Mu'a according to the Ministry of Land and Survey's record.

Langi Namoaala	Paepae-'o-Tele'a
Langi Leka	Langi Töfäua
Langi Malu-'a-Tonga	Langi Tau-'a-Tonga
Langi Tu'ofefafa	Langi Taetaea
Langi Tu'oteau	Langi Tuituiohu
Langi Lo'amanu	

The workmanship on the 'Otu Langi proved that the Langi Builders had the skills and knowledge required for building complicated architecture.

The name of some of the 'Otu Langi stands for the important events that happened in that particular period or bearing the name of the builders. For example, Langi Malu-'a-tonga was built by Talakaifaiki the fifteenth Tu'i Tonga. Talakaifaiki was the Tu'i Tonga who was expelled from Samoa by Malietoa and his men. He found peace in Tonga and the Langi was built as his burial place. Malu-'a-tonga means – Tonga is safer.

Talakaifaiki's son Talafapite became the sixteenth Tu'i Tonga. He built for himself the Langi Fapite. The seventeenth and eighteenth Tu'i Tonga Maakatoe and Tu'i Tonga Puipui followed Talafapite's example.

When Havea I became the nineteenth Tu'i Tonga, people were suppressed and many started to speak against the supreme rule of the Tu'i Tonga. Most probably, they were fed up with Langi building and did not have time for their plantation and other tasks. As a result, Havea II was murdered as well as Takalaua, the twenty-fourth Tu'i Tonga.

Takalaua was the builder of the Langi Tau-'a-Tonga. The name Tau-'a-Tonga stands for the important events that happened during the period. It means 'Tonga was at war'. Takalaua was murdered in 1450.

The Tu'i ha'atakalaua and the New Reforms

Takalaua's children revenged the death of their father. Kau'ufonua, the eldest son, became the twenty-fourth Tu'i Tonga. He made some very important changes in the political system of the country. He made his younger brother, Mo'ungamotu'a, the first of a new line of Rulers. He named the new line of rulers, the Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua in memory of their father.

The first Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua set up his residence at Fonuamotu. Fonuamotu was a small island off shore from Fangalongonoa. He ordered the building of Halafonuamoa to connect Fonuamotu and the main land. Fonuamotu was known as the Kauhala'uta referred to 'Oletele. During the rule of the Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua from 1400 to 1799 the following fale were created to take care of different tasks and responsibilities to the Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua.

- Fale Pulemalo
- Fale Tuipapai
- Falefakauö
- Fale Ha'akili
- Lo'amanu

The Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua ordered a *Langi* to be built for each of these *fale*. These *Langi* are smaller and located at the beach which marked the beginning of Fonuatanu. The *Langi* are:

- Langi Fale Pulemalo
- Langi Fale Tuipapai
- Langi Falefakauö
- Langi Fale Ha'akili
- Langi Lo'ämanu.

The *no'o'anga kalia* at the *Taulanga Felemei* is located beside the *Langi Lo'amanu*. The *Langi* building did not end after the assassination of Takalaua. The *Langi* builders recruited labourers from other islands in the Pacific, including Samoa, Fiji, 'Uvea and Futuna and possibly some *papalangi* people later.

Evidence of the presence of these people in Tonga is found in cultural matters such as the creation of the *Fale Fisi* and the re-establishment of the *Falefä*. The new additions to the original *Falefä* were Tu'i Matahau and Tu'i Talau to replace Maliepö and Tu'i 'Amanave to replace Matakehe. Each one of them has special tasks to perform for the Tu'i Tonga.

The *Fale Fisi* came into existence during this period at Mu'a. The beginnings of the *Fale Fisi* were the children of Sina'ekakala and Tapu'osi. Sina'ekakala is buried at *Langi 'Amanave*.

The other significant evidence of the presence of foreigners in Mu'a during this period is shown in the *Langi Paepae-o-Tele'a* (see Figure 3.2.). Workmanship in this *Langi* is finer than in the *Langi* that were built before. However, each *Langi* is evidence that something happened during that period. The name of each *Langi* will help to explain it.

The Langi Paepae-o-tele'a

The late Queen Säloté talked about the amazing skills of the *Langi* Builders in the *Nailasikau*, verse 3:

Ke ke 'eve'eva he Paepae

'O mamata ai he Makaofe

Ofo'anga e kau pasese

Accurate angles and measurements found on the *Paepae-o-Tele'a* amazed many scholars. Considering the kind of tools they used it is even more surprising. Tools that were used for these kinds of jobs were made from hard stone and sea shells.



Figure 3.2. Ha'amonga-'a-Maui at Niutoua



Figure 3.3. Langi Paepae-'o-Tele'a

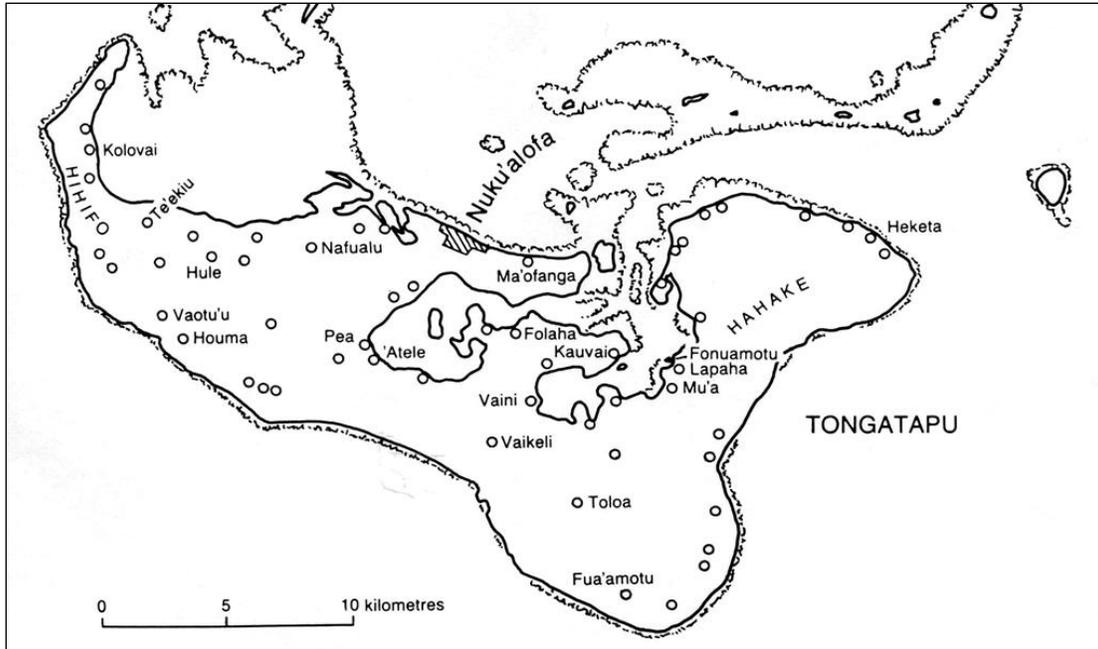


Figure 3.4. Map of Tongatapu. Can you find some of the places where the Tu'i Tonga settled and built Langi?

The Stone Cuttings

Legend says that the stones used for the *Langi* building were cut and brought from other islands, especially from Futuna and 'Uvea (Wallis Islands). Some of the stones weigh about 18 to 20 tons. How were these stones transported from abroad? Nobody knows for sure. However, there are songs and legends that tell stories of how the 'Otu Langi were built and how the stones were brought from other islands and put into position. Marks of stone cutting are found in many places in Tonga and in the shores of 'Uvea and Futuna.

These heavy stones, according to songs, poems and legends were transported by the Tu'i Tonga's famous *Kalia*. One of them was the *Lomipeau*. The possible resting place of the *Lomipeau* will be discussed later.

To cut stones, people began at low tide. The cut pieces were then wedged up from the original bed. Three or four lines of strong ropes made from coconut fibre were placed underneath with the ends hanging out at the sides. At high tide, the *kalia* was then brought up to sit on top of the piece of stone. They then slowly pulled the stone up with the loose ends of the ropes between the body of the *kalia*. The ropes were tightly knotted to the *kiato*. *Kiato* were the pieces which hold the two *kalia* together. The stone pieces were hanging underneath.

Once this preparation was done, the *kalia* was then pushed back to sea and set sail for the destination. In another means of transportation, they used a net made from coconut fibre ropes. Three or four pieces could go together in one load.

Once the *kalia* reached the destination more people were required to do the landing of the stones. Hundreds of people were gathered in answer to the command of the *Langi* builders. It is believed that many *vaka* (one that used to take *puaka toho* or *kava toho* to the *fakapanga*) were placed in the *kele* at fanga'uta below sea level. The *kalia* has to land on top of these *vaka*. The ropes were then untied leaving the stone piece on top of the *vaka*. The people then sang *tau'a'alo* and dragged the pieces to their positions. Sand and wood rollers were used to help the people once the piece reached dry land.

The landing of the stones for langi building was believed to have taken place at Felemei and Kolongahau. Felemei and Konongahau were built for the Tu'i Tonga's *folau kalia* (*lauläafi*).

Felemei is located at the eastern side of Lapaha close to the *Langi Paepae-'o-Tele'a*. Kolongahau was built at the seaward side of the Catholic Mission at Mu'a. Konongahau is now cleared for the residence of Kalaniuvalu, the high chief of Mu'a.

Lomipeau was believed to be damaged after the heavy tasks of transporting stones from 'Uvea and Futuna. Legend says that the Tu'i Tonga 'Uluakimata Tele'a ordered Felemei to be closed and the *Lomipeau* was buried there. Kava Pele, Mailau and Ve'a Mtahau who are current heads of the *Falefä* confirm that the *Lomipeau* is buried at Fonautanu.

That part of the Fangalongonoa is now called Fonautanu. The total area of Fonuatanu is estimated at about 100 acres. The *Langi Paepae-'o-Tele'a* and *Langi Namoala* are located on Fonuatanu. The last group of *Langi* to be built in Mu'a were *Langi Tu'ofefafa*, *Langi Taetaea*, *Langi Tu'oteau* and *Langi Fanakava*.

The 'Otu *Langi* help to explain much of the unwritten history of the rule of the Tu'i Tonga.

Questions and Activities

1. What were the 3 possible reasons for the Tu'i Tonga moving to Fangalonganoa?
2. How and why did a piece of wood manage to inherit the thirteenth Tu'i Tonga title?
3. Who named the *Langi Malu-'a-tonga* and why?
4. Why would the residents be fed up with building *Langi*? Or some other question relating to the builders having to be brought from other islands?
5. Fill in the blanks with the following words: *Kau'ufonua sea shells, Felemei, Ha'aloto, Kolongahau, the sky*
 - a) Tools used to build the langi were made from hard stone and _____
 - b) The landing of the stones for langi building was believed to have taken place at _____ and _____.
 - c) The first Tu'i Tonga was believed to be the son of god Tangaloa who lived in _____.
 - d) A study of oral traditions and legends revealed that the *Langi* builders moved to _____ between Hoi and Makaunga.
 - e) _____, Takalaua's eldest son, became the twenty-fourth Tu'i Tonga

6. Look at the photo of the trilothon in *Figure 3.2* and write a page on how the stones might have been moved. Look at 'The Stone Cuttings' section for clues.