

Chapter 2

Origins of Nanumea's Chiefly Traditions

Chapter 1 traced the beginnings of Nanumean society, and especially our chiefly lineages, to our famous ancestor, Tefolaha. This chapter takes a close look at some of the differing family traditions explaining the development of Nanumea's chiefly system. These stories all begin with the children of Tefolaha, children whose names are familiar to us all. In the centuries since Tefolaha first came ashore at Nanumea, many important leaders and their families have come and gone. As the generations passed there were periods of peace as well as periods of war in Nanumea. Some of the wars involved Nanumeans defending themselves against outside invaders (from Tonga, Kilipati, etc). Other struggles have been internal ones pitting Nanumeans against each other.

There was no mechanism for recording or handing down traditions or history which related to the island as a whole. Memories of events and individuals remembered today have been preserved as narratives handed down within families. Nanumean extended families, and not the community as a whole, have guarded the traditions explaining important events of our island. These family traditions always focus on the names and actions of key family members of the past. They also justify a family's position within the islands' political structure.

The Wives and Children of Tefolaha

If you sit in the Ahiga of Nanumea and listen to different elders speak you would not be surprised that the stories they tell differ somewhat. They come from different social and political groups and their opinions reflect not only their own personal views, but are grounded in the traditions of the family they have been raised in. Their stories are our history – our oral history. It is widely known that oral history (history that is not written, but is passed down by word of mouth from one listener to another and remembered) is variable, that it always exists in differing versions. And so it is with Nanumea's history – there are several differing versions of the historical narratives about the wives and children of Tefolaha. These versions are taken very seriously by those who tell them, since they explain the position of the family through its descent from Tefolaha. It is important to recognize that these narratives are political – they may establish a family's position in a way that gives it power or prestige, or in other ways that will benefit the family and its members. People's reputations

can be enhanced by these histories. Particularly because these stories are a key way to establish influence and power, Nanumea's family traditions differ from each other.

In this chapter we have gathered together historical narratives about the origin of Nanumea's chiefly system. The examples here represent the major variations found in our historical traditions. Our goal has been *not* to take sides, not to join one or another political faction. Rather, we have put our discoveries, these important stories, on display for all to view them. They present a rich history, something that all Nanumeans can be proud of. We *have* made an effort here to distill out the common features in our historical narratives, and to draw from them some guidance for the political future of Nanumea. This "guidance" forms the last section of this chapter. But first, let's look at these historical traditions and what they tell us about our chiefly system and its development.

Koli and her Brothers

Did Tefolaha and Laukite have children who all had mouths like the *paala* fish? Some people believe so. Did Tefolaha kill them all, because they were cannibals? Or did his daughter Koli escape because she was not a cannibal? Did Koli marry and are her descendants today in a special position in relation to the chiefs of Nanumea? Your answers to these questions will probably depend on your own family traditions. There are many extended families on Nanumea today that claim Koli as their key ancestor or as a sister of one of their ancestors. Let's begin by considering this story in more detail, as a starting place for looking more broadly at the origins of our chiefly system.

The elder Tepou explained his family's history to Kiti and Ane in the 1970's, and again in the 1980's.¹ According to Tepou, Tefolaha came from Samoa (not Tonga, as many other family traditions assert). After tricking Pai and Vau, Tefolaha married the atua Laukite. The name of Tefolaha's first wife is not widely known in Nanumea, Tepou said, but was part of the family tradition handed down to him. Tefolaha himself had both an *aitu* and a human nature. Laukite gave birth to a girl. The baby had a jutting jaw with sharp teeth, much like a *paala* fish. She was also a cannibal, so Tefolaha killed her. Again Laukite gave birth, and

¹ Tepou's story recounted here is taken from Keith Chambers' *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp. 90-102. Tepou was born in 1909. His father was Hoa. Hoa's father was Tepou, whose brother was Moulongo. These two, Tepou and Moulongo, were well-known Toa, warriors, at the time when the Christian religion was introduced to Nanumea in the 1860's and 1870's. Moulongo is remembered as being one of Nanumea's main warriors, and as strongly opposed to the new religion. In time, he decided to allow Christianity to come ashore, and it is said that in his old age he converted to Christianity himself. Teuhie and Teakaka are other warriors of that period who became Christians and helped bring the new religion to Nanumea.

again the daughter had a fish mouth and was a cannibal, and he killed her. In all there were four daughters like this, and all were killed by Tefolaha: Lei, Finehau, Moega, and Nenefu.

Finally, the couple had a child who was not a cannibal, though her mouth was still like that of a fish. This daughter, Koli, was Tefolaha's first real child. She grew up and to her Tefolaha entrusted the rule of Nanumea – to her he gave the *aliki*. Thus far, Tefolaha had been acting in his spirit, *aitu*, nature, Tepou explained. Now, he had two further children, sons who were born to his human side. Tepou was not sure if Laukite was the mother of these children. He explained that according to his father, Hoa, the two sons were *fanau tamana*, “born of the father” or *fanau tagata*, “born of man.” Tepou felt these phrases referred to the fact that the sons were born not in darkness, *pouliuli*, but in light, *malamalama*. They were not associated with the former gods or spirits, but were fully human. Laukite may have been transformed to a human nature by then too, he added.

Tefolaha wanted to return to his homeland, Samoa. He left Koli in charge of the two small boys. Time passed, and Teilo and Tepaa grew up. Their sister gave to them the chieftainship of Nanumea, which Tefolaha had given her. She said, “Come and sit as chiefs, because I am a woman. My position, though, will be to remain and watch over this island.” Koli ordered this and so Teilo and Tepaa became chiefs. Eventually, Tefolaha returned from his voyage. Koli said to him, “Tefolaha, I have given the chieftainship to my brothers, to sit as chiefs. But my position will be to remain just as you told me. It is I alone who am in charge of the island.” Tefolaha replied, “Well, that is all right.”

From this point on Teilo and Tepaa reigned, each in his own turn, while Koli remained to oversee their actions and to tell them when they did something wrong. Teilo, the firstborn son, was to be the first chief. When he or his descendants reigned as chief, the island was blessed in a special way. Teilo's blessing, *kata*, was that there were plentiful deep sea fish, abundant rain, and a bountiful coconut crop. When Tepaa or his descendants, *Te Alike a Muli*, reigned, his blessing was that there were plentiful reef fish and huge schools of fish which swarmed close to shore. The coconut crop was also abundant. These blessings were the hallmarks, *failoga*, of these two chiefs.

When Tefolaha returned, he brought with him a new wife. Tepou said that people generally said that she had come from Tonga.² With them came their three sons, Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega. Tefolaha said to these three: “You are to come and serve your two older

² Although Tepou did not name this wife, others who share the same tradition say that her name was Puleala.

brothers.” These three were to serve the reigning chiefs.³ The duty of Tutaki, the eldest, was to distribute things whenever there was something going on in the Ahiga. Fiaola, the next son, was to be in charge of the division of food in the Ahiga, particularly the proper cutting up of large ocean fish for distribution. All community gatherings in the Ahiga were under the supervision of the ruling chief. To the youngest son, Lavega, Tefolaha gave the responsibility to care for (*tausi*) the reigning chief. Wherever the chief went, whether to the bush or by canoe to the other side of the atoll, it was Lavega’s responsibility to go along. It was especially important for Lavega to take part if there was to be a canoe voyage, for he could prevent any mishaps through powers given to him by Tefolaha. If a canoe were in danger of sinking, Lavega could call *te ika a Lavega*, “the fish of Lavega,” which would come and support Lavega while the canoes were repaired. Then the voyage could resume. Lavega also had powers to control the winds so that canoe voyages made by the reigning chief were assured of a favorable wind. Lavega’s group were thus the “Chiefs of the Sea,” *Aliki o te Tai*.

On land, however, Lavega’s main responsibility lay in overseeing the process of installing a new chief. Normally, when a chief from the lineage of Tepaa stepped down, it became the turn of a chief from Teilo’s line to take over. Lavega’s job was to search for an appropriate person to be installed as high chief. Lavega would speak to the representatives of the chiefly families about this. He was also in charge of the arrangements for the installation ceremony, *fakahopoga*. He would speak to the people of the island, saying “These things we will do for the chief’s installation...” He or his descendants would assign to each chiefly family the appropriate food contribution to supply for the installation and, in particular, would lead the chiefly lineages in discussions over what was to be done.

So it is that the three younger brothers (half brothers) all had responsibilities to serve the island and the reigning chief of Nanumea. They were counted among the *aliki* themselves, but had specific supportive responsibilities, *pologa*, given them by Tefolaha. Through Koli’s act of giving the chieftainship to Teilo and Tepaa, Koli retained for herself the role of *pula*, “watching” out, which Tepou explained meant having ultimate responsibility for the well-being of the island. If all were going well, Koli did nothing. If there were trouble, or if the chiefs were not doing their jobs, Koli spoke out. Despite the important role Koli and her descendants play, Tepou said that she and her line were not counted among the *aliki* of Nanumea because she had given this responsibility over to Teilo and Tepaa. Tepou

³ We are using the word *aliki* to refer to Nanumea’s traditional chieftainship. But as Chapter 4 explains, the term *pulefenua* is used for this office today.

said that his family's traditional name is *Falemua*, "first house," since Koli was Tefolaha's first real child and she established Nanumea's "first house." (See Chapter 12 for information about kopiti such as *falemua* and other kopiti as well.)

Tepou continued with his family tradition, saying that Teilo as the eldest son was known as *Te Aliko a Mua*, "the first chief," while his younger brother Tepaa was *Te Aliko a Muli*, "the behind chief." *Te Aliko a Mua* and *Te Aliko a Muli* are the true chiefs of Nanumea, he said. In ancient times it was only they who reigned, each providing a ruling chief in turn. In recent times, some of the other supporting lineages of chiefs have begun to provide chiefs from time to time. He emphasized that the supporting lineages from Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega are all quite different in their descent, as none comes from Teilo and Tepaa. Each of them has supporting roles (*pologa*) to play. In contrast, the two lineages of Tefolaha's first sons, Teilo and Tepaa, had no such work to do, their positions were simply to "sit" and occupy the "chair" *nohoaga* of the chief.⁴ The various family connections described above are shown in **Illustration 2.1**.

This family tradition may not be known by all Nanumeans, of course, though we believe that many people have heard of Koli and of her special position as described in Tepou's and Molaulau's stories. It is likely that some people do not accept this story as true, because their own family account of the origin of the chiefly system differs. We ask our readers to withhold judgment and read on, for there are several other accounts which follow in this chapter.

Likilua's Heritage

Teilo and Tepaa are no doubt universally associated by Nanumeans with the two key lineages which Tepou's story identifies, *Te Aliko a Mua* and *Te Aliko a Muli*. But not all Nanumean traditional histories agree that Teilo and Tepaa are sons of Tefolaha, as the story above says. In fact, a prominent tradition which we will now consider argues that these two men came later in Nanumea's history. And they were not brothers of Koli at all, since this

⁴ The family tradition of Molaulau, an elder who descended from Tepaa and was born about 1849, is generally similar to the story of Tepou's family. As related to Keith and Anne at Nanumea in December, 2003 by Peue, a great grandson of Molaulau, Koli's full name was Kolitoga. Her special relationship to her brothers Teilo and Tepaa was that of "fafine faialiā." This term, probably Samoan in origin, was used by Molaulau to explain Koli's favored status.

Tepaa's original name was Tepapamalie, though in later generations this was divided into two names, Tepaa and malie, and family members were named after them. Peue also stressed that Koki reserved especially for Tepaa the *kata* of the *ika ake*. The other *kata* (*te ulufenua* and *te moana*) were shared by the lineages of both Teilo and Tepaa.

story says that Koli had no brothers and no descendants.⁵ Nor were Teilo and Tepaa brothers, or half brothers, of Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega, but in fact they descend from Lavega. With differences like this, it can be difficult when one is listening to oral history to know what is “true” and what is not. Later in this chapter we will return to the idea of truth, and consider how we can relate this idea to our own history.

This next oral history account came from Takitua, a influential elder in Nanumea in the period of the 1950’s through the 1970’s.⁶ Takitua’s version of the origin of Nanumea’s chiefs tells us that Tefolaha was a Tongan warrior, in the days when Tonga, Fiji and Samoa were continually at war. With a group of other Tongan warriors, Tefolaha fought successfully in all those places, gaining a reputation as a fierce fighter. He remained in Samoa and married a Samoan woman named Teati. She bore him no children, however, and he left her and with his crew went voyaging looking for new lands. Eventually he came to Nanumea, had a contest with Pai and Vau, and won possession of the island. After the island was his and Pai and Vau had departed, Tefolaha returned to Tonga. There he married a woman named Puleala. With her and her brother Tetea, he went to Samoa looking for crew members. Having picked up a large crew of Samoans, Tefolaha, his wife Puleala, her brother Tetea and two Samoan women sailed for Nanumea. On the voyage northward they stopped at all the islands in Tuvalu except Niulakita. Each island was a barren sandbank, as Nanumea had been. At each place a few of the crew went ashore and planted coconuts. By the time they arrived at Nanumea, there were just five people left in the canoe: Tefolaha, Puleala, Tetea, and two unnamed women from Samoa.

Tefolaha and Puleala had three sons, all born in Nanumea. Oldest was Tutaki, next was Fiaola, and youngest was Lavega. Each eventually married, and all founded lines which have continued on to the present day. Before his death, Tefolaha made a will. His youngest son, Lavega, was to succeed him as chief, *aliki*, while his brothers were to have supporting

⁵ In his conversations with Keith and Anne, Takitua acknowledged that someone named Koli may have existed at the time of Tefolaha. However, he dismissed her as an *aitu*, a spirit, of no consequence, and someone who had no descendants.

⁶ Born in 1903, Takitua was a leading member of the chiefly lineage *Tūmau*, also known as *Te Aliko o te Tai*. Takitua was active in affairs of the *aliki* and was elected as chair of the *Kaualiki* in the 1970’s. He also served as Nanumea’s reigning chief from 1958-60. Takitua’s thick family ledger book contained traditional material which Takitua said had come down to him from his father’s brother, who had served as secretary to Nanumea’s Council of Chiefs late in the 19th century and early in the 20th century.

Takitua met on several occasions with Keith and Anne to discuss Tefolaha and the chiefly lineages during their work in Nanumea in 1973-75 and 1984, and allowed them to see his family ledger book. The material presented here comes from Keith’s *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp. 76-88.

roles: they were to *tausi*, protect, the chief. Tutaki, the eldest, received Tefolaha's war spear, *Te Kaumaile*, and was to use it to protect Lavega. The *Kaumaile* has come down in the line of Tutaki's descendants and is still in their possession today. Tutaki also received from Tefolaha the duty of distributing food portions to the assembled community members when functions took place in the Ahiga, and seeing that proper etiquette was followed. Fiaola was responsible for dividing the food portions, especially fish, during Ahiga functions.

Lavega's line provided the ruling *aliki* of Nanumea, a line which Takitua traced down to his father and to himself, about 22 generations after Lavega. In this tradition there was an important event two generations after Tefolaha that would henceforth shape Nanumea's chieftainship. This was a branching which took place in Lavega's line. Lavega's son was Likilua. Likilua married Lofale, who was believed to be a daughter of Tutaki. Likilua and Lofale's three sons were Tematua, Teuhie and Temahafu. Likilua learned that his father, Lavega, was having an incestuous affair with his wife, Lofale, and so he fled from Nanumea (some say he went to *folau*, to commit suicide by drifting off to sea). His canoe reached Nanumaga but he was driven away from there and not heard from again.

Meanwhile, his three sons met at Nanumea and decided they would leave Nanumea and abandon their claim to the chieftainship. As their canoe sailed away, one brother, Teuhie, slept. The other two talked. Tematua said that he really did not wish to abandon the chieftainship. Temahafu advised his brother that if he wanted to return to Nanumea, he should do so while the other brother slept. If Teuhie should come to try to catch Tematua, he was sure to run into the female spirits who had cared for their ancestor Tefolaha and they would protect him.⁷ So Tematua returned to Nanumea. Teuhie later woke up. When he learned that Tematua had gone, he went after him. When Teuhie got to Nanumea, he saw that his way was blocked by the women spirits. He returned to the canoe and he and his brother Temahafu continued on their way. It is not known where they went.

Tematua remained in Nanumea as *aliki*. He was saddened at the loss of his brothers, though, and one day he went to look for them. His canoe reached Niutao and he remained there. He married a Niutao woman named Hikiga and they had a son named Teilo. One day Tematua dreamed. His ancestor Tefolaha came to him in the dream and told him to return to Nanumea to his chieftainship. Tematua (and, we believe, his wife Hikiga and their son Teilo)

⁷ We are not clear who these female spirits who are said to protect Tefolaha might be. Keith and Anne were shown a list in one family ledger book they examined at Nanumea in 1973-75 which mentioned *lua Faafine Faatinaa*. They do not know who or what this phrase referred to, but thought it meant spirit women. Does anyone know anything more about this phrase, or the female spirits Takitua's account mentions?

returned to Nanumea. He found that the family of his Nanumean wife had assumed the chiefly prerogatives, but he was able to gain these back.

From Tematua's two wives, and the two sons of those unions, came two lines of *aliki*. From the Nanumean wife came Tepaa, whose line is known as *Te Alikī a Muli* because, this account says, Nanumea lies "behind," *muli* in its relationship to the island of Niutao.⁸ The line of the other son, Teilo, is known as *Te Alikī a Mua* because of its Niutao descent – from the perspective of Nanumea, the island of Niutao is to the "front," *mua*. Tematua's son with his Nanumea wife was Tepaa; his son with his Niutao wife, Hikiga, was Teilo. Both sons continued the chiefly descent line from Tefolaha, with Teilo's line called *Te Alikī a Mua* and Tepaa's called *Te Alikī a Muli*. This gives the descent situation diagrammed in **Illustration 2.2**.⁹

One other important event created the position today of the lineage Tūmau, of which Takitua was a member. (Remember that we are considering here what Takitua's family tradition says about its own position in the chiefly system of Nanumea.) In this account, the two lineages of chiefs named above alternated in providing the *aliki* of Nanumea, and generations passed. According to Takitua's ledger book, it was in the tenth generation after Tepaa that Nanumea was invaded by a war party from Kiribati to the north. The warriors leading this group were from Beru, and are remembered in Nanumea today by their Nanumean names, Taitai and Temotu. Besides a crew of warriors, they were accompanied to Nanumea by their sister Tēputi. Taitai and Temotu and their group were able to conquer Nanumea and banish all the chiefs, who fled to nearby Tuvalu islands, some to Nanumaga, some to Niutao. Others were lost at sea and may have drifted windward to places such as the Solomon Islands. Only the ordinary people remained on Nanumea, and all lived in fear of the warriors from Kiribati who married and settled down on the island.

Although the Gilbertese warriors believed that all the chiefs of Nanumea had been driven out, in fact one remained on the island. Logotau was still a young, unmarried man at

⁸ Although Takitua did not provide a name for Tematua's Nanumea wife, the family tradition of Loto Mātio does: it is Hina o Magale. Keith and Anne recorded this story from Eseta Kaifou Pelesese, and she heard it from her father's father Loto, who was the son of Mātio, who lived in Nanumea before the coming of the church. This story was shared with Keith and Anne at Nanumea in January, 2004.

⁹ Kaati ko te valu o kautama/tupulaga mai ia Tefolaha, ni motu i ai a te gafa tele-tagata o Teilo. A Taualepuku mai te aliki a muli(Tepaa) ni avaga kia Pua te tama-fafine e tokotahi a Mataele mai te aliki a mua(Teilo) tela la koa hepaki nei a Teilo mo Tepaa. Tela ni avake i ai a Tepaa ke fai mo aliki-hopo, ona la ia Teilo koa tele-fafine. A te avaga muamua a Taualepuku ko Hina-o-magale, e tokotahi a te la tama ko Tagafa, kae i tena avaga lua tenei ko Pua, e tokotahi hoki a te la tama ko Tui-helea. Ko maga la konei e 'tau o maua i ai a te aliki-fakahopo ki te Tui-Nanumea.

the time. His father, Togia, had died and he lived with his mother, Paua. Paua's brother Maatio helped Logotau hide from Taitai (who was married to another sister of Maatio). Maatio sent Logotau to his land in the bush, instructing him to sleep in coconut trees and to return to the village only at night, lest Taitai find and kill him.

Teeputi, sister of Taitai, was skilled in magic, which told her that one chief remained on Nanumea. When Maatio realized that Taitai was plotting to kill his *lāmutu* (sister's son) Logotau, he made a plan. He told the men of Nanumea to cut posts and bring them to the village, where they would renew the island's meeting hall. The women were all to dress festively, for this was to be the day they killed Taitai. Taitai joined in the digging of the post holes for the new meeting house, encouraged by the admiring young women dressed in garlands and dancing on the sidelines. At the proper moment the men took from their hiding places the spears they had brought for this purpose and stabbed Taitai repeatedly as he was digging. Though he had magical powers, Taitai was finally overcome before he could reach the house of his sister and renew his magical strength. His fellow warrior, Temotu, was killed at the same time and in this way, Nanumea became free of the rule of the Gilbertese invaders.

During the time of their banishment, the chiefs of Nanumea used magical seeing devices to check on the situation at home. Now they looked and saw that all was clear on Nanumea.¹⁰ They agreed among themselves that they would race their canoes to Nanumea and the first to arrive would be the ruling chief. The chiefs raced back from Nanumaga and Niutao, only to be met on the beach by the young man who had remained there all along, Logotau.

Logotau asked, "Where did you all go? The real men remained here to drink blood, and where did you go?"

The chiefs were ashamed, and replied, "All right, you stay and make the island your island." They offered the chieftainship of Nanumea to Logotau.

However, he said to the group of chiefs, "No, you, all of you come and accept the position of the ruling chief. I will sit behind and oversee your work. If there is someone whose work is not good, I will tell that person to step down and let someone else who is good take over."

¹⁰ The power to see things that were, in reality, too far away to see, and to predict events using various magical means, are powers many Nanumeans believe our ancestors had in the distant past. One device they used was called a *Mataili*. This may have been a hollow coconut shell with some water or oil inside it, into which a person skilled in using the *Mataili* would look to see a vision. There were other ways to see afar and predict events – the chapter on this topic is still to be written.

So, Takitua explained, his lineage, the descendants of Logotau, became the leaders of the chiefs of Nanumea. The chieftainship was rightfully theirs alone, but because of Logotau's decision, his lineage's duty would be, from that time on, to watch over the chieftainship. If the ruling chief behaved improperly, Logotau's lineage had the power to ask him to step down and to appoint the next ruling chief from among the various chiefly branches, *maga*. Takitua told Keith and Anne that since that time his lineage had carefully kept track of the many chiefly lineages. He also explained that from the time of Logotau down to today the various other chiefly branches from whom the reigning chief is selected have authority over the land. But whenever the ruling chief makes a trip by canoe, whether a voyage to another island or just across the lagoon, the chieftainship passes to a descendant of Logotau for the duration of the voyage. This group is thus known as *Te Aliko o te Tai*, "The Chiefs of the Sea." An alternate name for this lineage is *Tūmau*, referring to the fact that its founding ancestor, Logotau, remained (*tūmau*) in Nanumea when the other chiefs fled.

In Takitua's explanation of the foundations of the Nanumean chieftainship, there are seven chiefly descent groups (*maga*), all of which trace descent from Lavega, the youngest son of Tefolaha. Because in Tefolaha's will, his *mavaega*, the chieftainship was given to the youngest son, it remains with these descendants today. Later, as we have just seen, the chieftainship was reorganized in the time of Taitai and Temotu's invasion, and Logotau and his lineage *Tūmau* came to have an overseer relationship to the lineages of chiefs which were to reign, *hopo*. Although there are seven lineages in all, Takitua explained that two of them have a special "blessing" or *manuia* associated with their rule.¹¹ When chiefs from either *Te Aliko a Mua* and *Te Aliko a Muli* lineages reign, Nanumea is blessed with plentiful fish in the Ocean, reef and lagoon, and a bountiful harvest of coconuts. No other *maga* has this same blessing, and Takitua told Keith and Anne that for this reason, Nanumeans preferred to select their ruling chiefs from these two lines. He added, however, that despite this preference, the other lineages now are allowed to provide a ruling chief for Nanumea, all except his own group, *Tūmau*. See **Illustration 2.3** for these relationships.

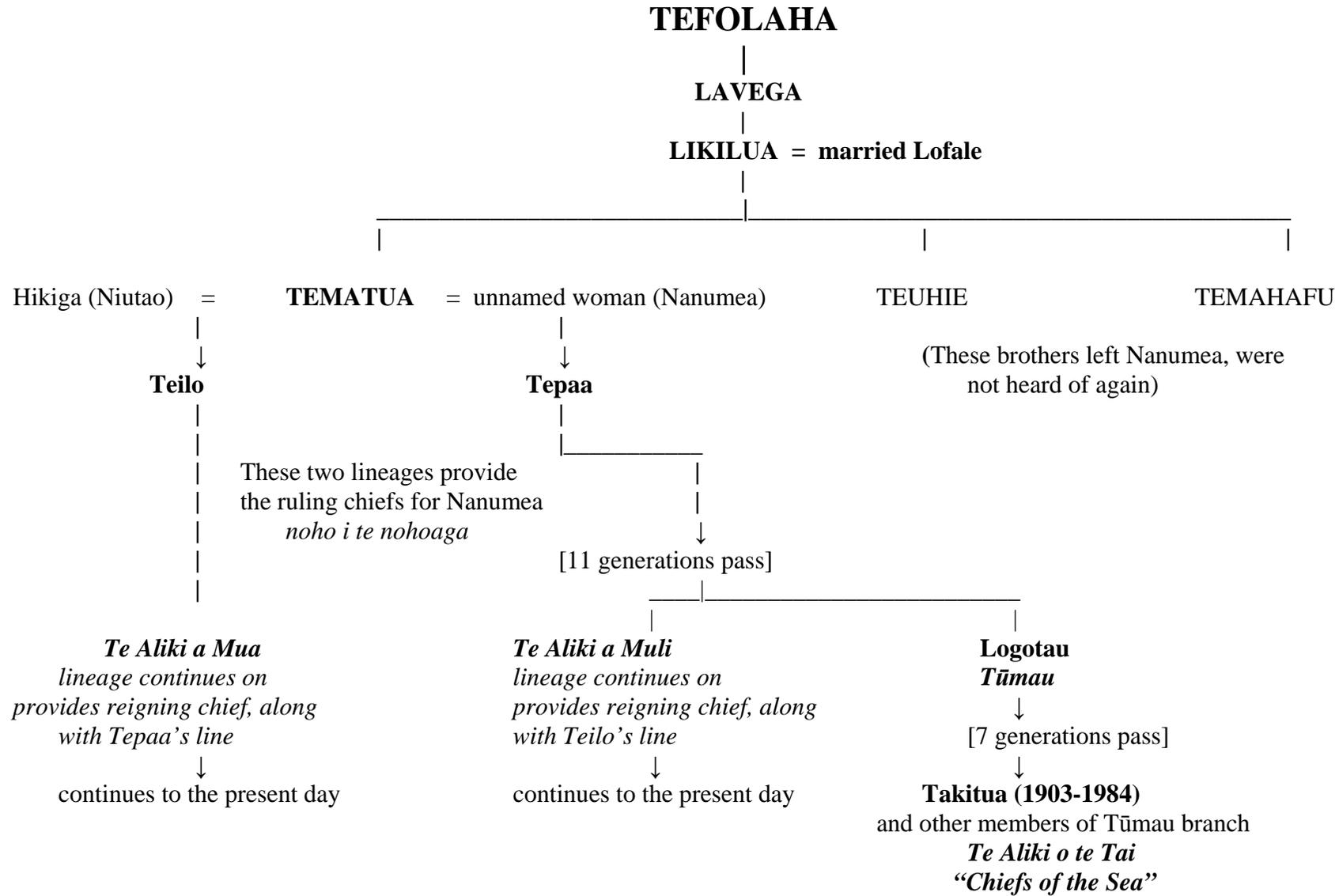
Contrasting the Two Core Stories

The two stories we have considered here differ in some important ways (we summarize those differences a bit later, in Illustration 2.5), but these two different family

¹¹ The word Tepou used to describe this blessing associated with the reigns of *Te Aliko a Mua* and *Te Aliko a Muli* was *kata*, which we believe to be a true Nanumean word, while *manuia* is a Samoan word. Another Nanumean word which means "blessing" is *tāuga*.

Illustration 2.3

Takitua's Family Tradition – Teilo and Tepaa, Logotau, and Tuumau



traditions about Tefolaha also agree on many points. These points of agreement are important because they offer a solid foundation for the chieftainship of Nanumea. The points of agreement are:

- Tefolaha is the founding ancestor of Nanumea
- Today's chieftainship derives from Tefolaha through descent from his children
- There is a special "blessing," a *kata* or *tāuga*, which comes to Nanumea (both its sea and its land) when the lineages of Tepaa or Teilo reign. It is best for Nanumea if the chieftainship is reserved for these two lines
- The Tūmau lineage serves the chiefs as "Chiefs of the Sea," *Te Alikī o te Tai*. It should normally not *hopo* to serve as Nanumea's reigning chief
- Nanumea has several other lineages of chiefs which have special roles to play in serving the reigning chief, including *Tufa* and *Nifo*
- There is a special caretaker role to watch over or care for the chieftainship, and to suggest corrections if things are going badly on the island. However, the two accounts differ on the origin of this role

Many people in Nanumea today seem to be quite intense about the details of these stories, and prefer to focus on the smaller points of disagreement, instead of looking at the substantial areas of agreement we have summarized above. Thus, if you strongly believe that Tefolaha was a Tongan, you may find it hard to agree with any of the rest of Tepou's story. If you really believe that Koli was an important figure in Nanumea's past, you may have trouble accepting any of Takitua's story, since he denies that she had any role to play, she had no children at all! Clearly, there are many differences in the stories that families have inherited from their ancestors, differences that stand in the way of the desire we all share to know the "truth" about Nanumea's past.

The accounts from Tepou's and Takitua's families presented above represent the two dominant strands of our founding tradition. Many other families share one or the other of these two traditions, although each family may tell the story with its own distinctive details. Nevertheless, their stories clearly share the main features of one or the other dominant tradition.

Besides these two dominant traditions, there are other family stories which blend key features from both stories. Two examples of these "bridging traditions" are presented next. We have grouped these stories together to emphasize that they share much in common. Each of them merges some of the aspects that are in opposition in the accounts of Tepou's and Takitua's families. Please consider these and then we will pause and see where our journey into Nanumea's historical oral traditions has taken us.

Bridging Traditions

Nanumea's traditions about its chieftainship exist in competing versions. There are many differences in small details, as well as some differences in the key structural relationships which ground the chieftainship. Some elders commented on this to Anne and Keith during their work in Nanumea in the 1970's and 1980's, saying: *e hē tahi te tala*, "there is not just one story", or *e fifi te tala*, "the story is tangled", or *e uke a fakamatalga*, "there are many explanations." The bridging traditions which we are about to consider here combine various elements from the two dominant traditions (from the family stories of Tepou and Takitua). The main features of each story are summarized in **Illustration 2.4** below.

Vaha's Story

One of these stories was offered by Vaha in Nanumea's Ahiga in May 1984.¹² Keith had gone to the Ahiga to visit with some elderly men, most of whom were rolling *kolokolo* cord on their thighs as they talked, getting ready to sell the cord to the handicraft buyer who would soon be coming from Funafuti. The talk turned to Keith and Anne's work in recording the traditional history of the chieftainship. Vaha offered a brief account of Tefolaha, his wives, and his children.

Vaha's story began as had that of Tepou and Takitua. Tefolaha came to Nanumea, tricked Pai and Vau, and returned to his homeland. He returned to Nanumea with his wife Puleala, and they had not three children but four. These children were (as in Takitua's story) Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega, but also a sister, Koli! After these children were grown, Tefolaha prepared to leave Nanumea again and return to Samoa. Before he left, he gave to each of his three sons a *vaega*, "portion" of responsibility. Tutaki was to distribute (*tufa*), and Fiaola was to apportion (*nifo*) foods in the Ahiga. Lavega was given the chieftainship, but he said to his father, "No, leave it to Koli and leave me the *mataili* [a magical device for seeing afar]." Koli replied, "No, leave the *mataili* to me and you take the role of choosing, *filifiliga* the chief." And so it was, down to this day.

In this version presented by Vaha, all of these lineages, including Koli's, stem from Tefolaha and his wife Puleala. Koli's line comes down to Tepou and others related to him. Lavega's line eventually branches (as Takitua's story says) to produce Teilo and Tepaa and the two main branches of chiefs. Several days after Vaha told this short story, Kiti went to see him to ask a few questions. Vaha explained that he had shared his story because he felt it offered a way out of the dilemma created by Takitua's and Tepou's opposed stories. Tepou

¹² Vaha's story is adapted from Keith Chambers' *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp. 254-57.

claimed a priority based on his descent from Koli, the founder's first child, while Takitua argued that Koli was a spirit, *aitu*, who never gave birth. But, Vaha said, his grandmother, a distant relative of Tepou, had told him that in fact Koli was their ancestor. Vaha's solution to the "tangled tales" was to conclude that the only reasonable line of descent was one which incorporated elements of both tales. Tepou's ancestor thus became a full sibling of Takitua's ancestor. Vaha also commented that he felt his presentation of Koli as a sister of the three brothers removed a problem some people had with Tepou's tale, the supposed fact that Koli was a spirit. In Vaha's story, Koli received the magical *mataili* she requested. Vaha did not say whether Tepou's line thus had special responsibilities, *tofī* received from Tefolaha.

Tolugafua's Story

This family story, told by Tolugafua, was offered to Keith and Anne at Nanumea by his grandson Faiva in December, 2003 (Tolugafua's son was Tovia, Faiva's father). This story describes Tefolaha as a Tongan warrior, descended from the turtle spirit Sagone, with a long lineage of Tongan ancestors. Tefolaha voyaged to Nanumea and chased away Pai and Vau. He stayed on Nanumea and married the spirit (*feao*) named Laukite and had children with her. He then made many voyages back and forth between Nanumea and Samoa and Tonga and fought in various wars there and brought back settlers from both these places to the other islands of Tuvalu as well as to Nanumea. After one of these many voyages, he was told that people were disappearing on Nanumea. Tefolaha acknowledged that he had been away too long and was not looking after Nanumea properly. Early in the morning he went out to sea, used a spell to cover Nanumea in a magical fog, changed to his spirit nature, and returned to his house. He heard his wife, Laukite, and their three daughters, Nenefu, Moega and Finehau, laughing happily as they returned home. Tefolaha said to them, "You smell of human flesh!" But Laukite said they had only been fishing. Tefolaha heard the gogo birds making noise out in the area called Moega and knew that they had eaten people. Thus Tefolaha took all four of them out to Moega. He chanted (*ōga, lalau*) from morning to sunset, causing them to disappear forever. Only his daughter Koli was spared, since she had not eaten people. She had a human body but the mouth of a pāla fish.

Tefolaha then returned to his sister in Tonga and asked her to find him a wife. Tefolaha married Puleala in Tonga and they returned to Nanumea, where they had three sons: Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega. At some point after this, Tefolaha decided to begin voyaging again. So he gathered all four of his children together and spoke to them as follows: "Tutaki, my first son, your responsibility is the Nifo (katikati and helehele) and Tufa, distribution. Fiaola, my second son, your responsibility is priestly functions between the chief and the

gods (*olioli* and *fakatāula*). Lavega, my youngest son, your responsibility is the ruling chieftainship (te papa aliki).” Tefolaha went on to tell his three sons that they must care very diligently (tausi faka ‘lei) for their sister Koli. “Anything that Koli desires must be given to her. If you have food, your sister may inspect it and chose whatever she wishes to eat.”

Tefolaha left Nanumea in the care of his children and resumed his voyaging. See

Illustration 2.4 for a summary of the descent lines in this story.

Faiva went on to say that the rest of his family tradition had not been written down, as the part above had, but that it was generally similar to that of Takitua. It detailed the descent line of Lavega, to his son Likilua and Likilua’s son Tematua. Faiva felt that Tolugafua’s story provided an important piece of information missing in any other story he knew of regarding Lavega’s line: the name of Tematua’s Nanumean wife, Hina o Magale. This missing piece provides not just the name of this important Nanumean forebearer but also of course the name of the mother of Tepaa, head of an important line of Nanumean chiefs.

Tolugafua’s story also presents Koli as a sister of Tutaki, Fiaola and Lavega, though her mother is the spirit, Laukite, while theirs is the Tongan woman Puleala. As in the story by Vaha, the chieftainship was given by Tefolaha to Lavega and the other brothers were given supporting roles. However, both the tufa and nifo responsibilities are given to Tutaki and his descendants alone, while Fiaola and his descendants are made responsible for priestly functions and the connection between the chief and the gods.

Let’s take a moment and step back to consider the stories we’ve just presented. They provide a wealth of information on the origin of our chiefly system. Each story has its own important points to make and each presents slightly differing details. Individually, each story comes from one family’s tradition. Taken together, they give us a richer and more complete picture than any single story could. So perhaps our many “tangled traditions” (*fifi a tala*) are in fact a form of wealth for Nanumea. Why must we say that the differences in these historical stories result from lies or manipulation of information? It would be better to value their diversity and to see it as our collective heritage.

Illustration 2.5 below provides a comparison of features in these four traditions. Notice that the two “bridging traditions” each include the major points from the two core traditions of Takitua and Tepou.

From Tonga or from Samoa?

Many Nanumean families believe that Tefolaha was from Tonga. Others say he was from Samoa. Let’s look at this issue in more detail.

Illustration 2.5

Comparison of Features, Narratives of Chiefly Origins

FEATURES	Core Traditions		Bridging Traditions	
	Takitua	Tepou	Vaha	Tolugafua
Tefolaha's Homeland	Tonga	Samoa	Not stated	Tonga, but raised in Samoa from childhood
Wives of Tefolaha	Teati (Samoa); then Puleala (Tonga)	Laukite (spirit/god), then Tongan woman	Puleala	Laukite (spirit/god), then Puleala from Tonga
Aitu (spirit) children of Tefolaha	No	Yes	No	Yes
Chieftainship given by Tefolaha to	Lavega, youngest son	Koli, Tefolaha's daughter. Then by her to her younger brothers Teilo and Tepaa, with Tefolaha's consent	Lavega, youngest son (though Lavega tried to give it to Koli)	Lavega, youngest son
Origin of lines of Teilo and Tepaa	Teilo and Tepaa are sons of Tematua, who descends from Lavega several generations after Tefolaha. Different mothers: Teilo's mother was from Niutao, Tepaa's from Nanumea	Teilo and Tepaa are sons of Tefolaha and Laukite (in her human form)	These two brothers branch from Lavega's line some generations after Lavega	Same as Takitua's tale
"Blessing" during <i>aliki</i> reign?	Yes, with reign of Teilo or Tepaa only	Yes, with reign of Teilo or Tepaa only	Not mentioned, but probable	Not stated
Importance of Lavega	All true chiefs, <i>aliki</i> , descend from Lavega	His descendants are <i>aliki</i> but do not <i>hopo</i> . Instead, they serve the true chiefs, Tepaa and Teilo	All true chiefs, <i>aliki</i> , descend from Lavega	All true chiefs, <i>aliki</i> , descend from Lavega
The Seven Chiefly Lineages (<i>maga</i>)	All originate from Lavega, Tefolaha's youngest son. All may <i>hopo</i> except Tuumau. Lineages from Tutaki and Fiaola are not considered <i>aliki</i>	Stem from all of Tefolaha's children, except Koli. Only Teilo and Tepaa's lines can <i>hopo</i> . Seven because there are seven "tips" (<i>tui</i>) of the island. Tutaki and Fiaola are considered <i>aliki</i>	No details provided, but assumption is that all stem from Lavega; the special <i>branches</i> of Teilo and Tepaa come from Lavega	Same as Takitua's tale
Supporting Roles	Distribution and Division of foods in Ahiga by Tutaki (<i>tufa</i>) and Fiaola (<i>nifo</i>)	Distribution and Division of foods in Ahiga by Tutaki (<i>tufa</i>) and Fiaola (<i>nifo</i>). In addition, Lavega's lineage "serves" the reigning chief	Distribution and Division of foods in Ahiga by Tutaki (<i>tufa</i>) and Fiaola (<i>nifo</i>)	Distribution and Division of foods in Ahiga by Tutaki alone (both <i>tufa</i> and <i>nifo</i>). Fiaola's role is to connect chief to the gods (<i>olioli and fakatāula</i>).
Duties of Tuumau lineage	"Leader," <i>pule</i> in charge of the <i>aliki</i> . Selects and asks chief to step down. Normally does not reign. In charge while at sea	"Cares for," <i>tausi</i> , the chief including organizing food contributions of chiefly lineages when chief is installed. In charge while at sea	Not stated	Not stated
Duties of Koli's lineage	None	Overseer role, "to watch," <i>pula</i> , and suggest corrections if things are going badly. Koli is <i>tuagane</i> , "sister," to Nanumea's chiefs	Overseer role, she has the magical <i>mataili</i> to allow her to "watch over"	Not stated, but she is to be specially cared for by her brothers
Who is to have overseer role in Community Affairs?	Tuumau lineage is to be <i>pule</i> , "leader"	Koli's lineage is to sit and watch, <i>pula</i> .	Koli's lineage has <i>mataili</i> to watch. Lavega's line chooses the chief	Not stated; Fiaola is to enforce rules

Source: adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha* (1984): p. 98, 254-57, and interviews in Funafuti and Nanumea, November 2003 to January 2004.

People whose family traditions say that Tefolaha was from Tonga point to the existence of words and expressions in the Nanumean language that are very similar to Tongan. For example, the letter “h,” which sets the Nanumean language apart from the rest of Tuvalu (except Nanumaga) is also found in Tongan, but not in Samoan. Some recently collected Nanumean genealogies also provide considerable detail on Tefolaha’s Tongan lineage before he came to Nanumea, even mentioning his sister and other relatives. An example can be found in the tradition of the Homasi family, which holds that Tefolaha descends from the chiefly lineages of Tonga, from the branch of Fasi-a-pule, the youngest child of the Tui Tonga Tupouniua Tauti Tau’taufa’hau. This high level of detail (naming surnames and chiefly titles) is more common in written traditions. It was not part of the orally transmitted knowledge that elders shared with Keith and Anne in their initial work in Nanumea in the 1970s.

The family tradition of Tolugafua discussed above is also an example of a story giving Tefolaha a Tongan origin. It says that:

Tefolaha’s lineage began with the spirit Sagone (who could change to a turtle). Sagone’s daughter was Hinamoana. Hinamoana gave birth to Tupouniua, a male. Tupouniua had three sons, Tuitonga, Tuitātia, and Fāsiapule. Fāsiapule had a son named Tupoukukuma. Tupoukukuma had a son named Ofanua. Ofanua had a son Teputepuimaka. Teputepuimaka had two children, Tefolaha and a sister, Hinamoe. Tefolaha was born in Tonga but voyaged to Samoa with his mother Sina when he was still small. So Tefolaha grew up in Samoa, with a warrior’s strong body.

Faiva, who shared this family tradition in Nanumea in January 2004, said that he also felt it was unusual to have this much detail about Tefolaha before he came to Nanumea. But this information was in his family ledger book. He pointed out that in ancient times our ancestors could communicate with the spirits (*aitu*). If elders were searching for their family’s lineage in the distant past, the spirits may have helped them get this information.¹³

However, as we saw with the family story of Tepou, there are also traditions which say that Tefolaha’s homeland was Samoa. The accounts and explanations below support the Samoan origin of Tefolaha. The following material is from a report written by LMS missionary George A. Turner after his visit to Nanumea in 1874 (G.A. Turner 1874):

Moiono [a Nanumean leader of the day] also presented me with a great curiosity. It was the ‘tootoo’ [orator’s staff] of the father of the Nanumeans. According to their

¹³ Anne and Keith met with Eseta Kaifou Pelesese and her husband Pelesese Poke in Nanumea in January, 2004 and collected a detailed family history which Eseta learned from her grandfather, Loto. This story provides details of Tefolaha’s Tongan origins and names of ancestors, and has many other names, including the name of Lavega’s wife, which Eseta gave as Tauaho, youngest child of Patuki Haulagi. We have not had time to include this story here in more detail, but plan to do so in future.

tradition they are sprung from a man called Folasa, a Samoan, who was drifted away from his home and reached Nanumea... They say the present generation is the 31st from Folasa. The said 'tootoo' is like a regular Samoan tulafale's [orator's] tootoo, and is made of toa – a wood which does not exist on Nanumea. It is very much decayed and has been partially patched.

The following note, written by a British scientist about this staff, is also interesting. It was published in 1877 (see Rankin 1877 in bibliography):

A most decisive proof of [the Tuvaluans'] history was recently obtained by Dr. G.A. Turner while visiting the missions of the group. He was shown, and he ultimately obtained a spear or staff, which their orators held while speaking, a Samoan custom indicating the holder's right to speak. This staff was very ancient, and the greatest treasure of their heralds and genealogists. They said they brought it with them from Samoa, and named the valley they came from thirty generations back. The staff was worm-eaten, and bound together by splints and sumit [sic, sennit]. Dr. Turner took it to Samoa, found that it was made of Samoan timber, visited the valley they named, and discovered a tradition there of a large party having gone to sea exploring, and never returning.

Finally, Turner himself put a handwritten note at the end of his 1874 LMS journal adding to his report:

Subsequently at Samoa I found that the name Folasa is a family name at Falefa in Atua, that Moiono is also a Falefa name, & that the old men of the said family have a tradition of one of their family, by name Folasa, having been drifted away many generations ago, and never heard of again.

The orator's staff that Turner was given in Nanumea in 1874 is probably the staff remembered in Nanumean oral tradition as Tefolaha's *ketuketu*, cane. According to many elders, Tefolaha brought two things with him to Nanumea: his *ketuketu* cane, and the Kaumaile war spear.¹⁴ Elders say that early in the colonial days British officials took away from Nanumea both the Kaumaile and the *ketuketu* for analysis. Later the Kaumaile was returned, but not the *ketuketu*. This cane or staff may be in a museum in England today. Keith and Anne wrote to the LMS offices in England in 1977 about this staff and other items

¹⁴ In all, there seem to have been six things associated with Tefolaha, most of which are mentioned in oral tradition. These are:

- Kaumaile spear (said to have been used by Lapi to kill the giant Tulapoupou)
- The *ketuketu* (probably this orator's staff)
- Another war spear, the Tao (believed to have survived until recently when it was burned up in a fire in Esekia's house)
- Tefolaha's magical weapon the *Pā Moloti*, a flat disk of pearl shell that could fly magically to hit enemies, and then return to its sender. Some say Tefolaha threw the *Pā Moloti* into Nanumea's lagoon before finally leaving the island
- Tefolaha's canoe seat used in his first voyage to Nanumea (mentioned by early outside visitors as having been used in religious rituals)
- His skull (also mentioned by early visitors as having been used in rituals).

that LMS missionaries collected from Nanumea. They were told that the LMS collections (from Nanumea, Tuvalu and other parts of the Pacific) had been turned over to the British Museum in London many years ago. It would be an interesting project to try to locate this staff which apparently once belonged to Tefolaha! Anne and Keith will try to visit the British Museum and search for this staff in 2004, circumstances permitting.

Regardless of where he was from, most Nanumean family traditions present Tefolaha as a warrior who went back and forth between Samoa and Tonga many times. He must have had strong ties to both places. Some family traditions also tell of the voyages of Tefolaha and his crew to other Tuvalu islands. For instance, the family story of Tolungafua, above, mentions four crew members, two each from Samoa and Tonga brought by Tefolaha to Nanumea in an early voyage: Sualau and Tefeke from Samoa, and Patuki Haulagi and Takafili from Tonga. In a later voyage to Tuvalu, Tefolaha brought back settlers and coconuts to plant at each Tuvalu island except Niutao and Nanumaga. In yet another voyage he brought back six Samoans. They were led by the warrior Tefoalagi and included Seluselu, Mataika and two other married men, and Faitafaga, a young unmarried man. These six were left to settle Niutao, with Tefoalagi set up as chief by Tefolaha. Still later, the barren sandbank of Nanumaga was planted and settled by some of Tefolaha's descendants. Prisoners from Nanumea were sent to Nanumaga from time to time. Likilua was in charge of the planting of the island, while Lapi also visited.

This tradition of Tolugafua also tells us that Nanumaga had no name at that time. Tefolaha's descendants thought hard about this, and after considering many names, came up with Nanu-Maga. The "nanu" is in remembrance of Nanumea, and "maga" is because the island was a "branch" of Nanumea. A report from the early colonial period says that Nanumea's chiefs ruled over both Nanumea and Nanumaga. The tradition above seems to support this, saying that Nanumaga was settled by Nanumeans and that prisoners were sent from Nanumea to Nanumaga from time to time.¹⁵

The Seven Branches of Chiefs

It was customary for people in the 1970's and 1980's to talk about the group of chiefly lineages as the "Kau Aliko," Council of Chiefs. This group was also described as "The Twelve," *te tinogafulu mo te tokolua*. Today, people usually say there are seven branches, *fitu maga o aliki*. We also hear the phrase "the seven," *te toko fitu*, in reference to

¹⁵ Nanumagans today generally do not accept that this was ever the case.

the group of chiefly representatives, who include Nanumea's reigning aliki, the Pulefenua. What are these seven branches? What are their duties? What information do we have about Nanumea's chiefly branches in the past?

The seven chiefly branches that are included today in "The Seven" are as follows:

- Te Alikī a Mua (Pihelea)
- Te Alikī a Muli
- Tūmau (te Alikī o te Tai)
- Tuinanumea
- Taualepuku
- Pāheilōa (Fakavalevale)
- Pologa

The seven branches listed above were also the same ones that were recognized in the 1970's and 1980's.

The Tūmau branch is given the role of overseeing the selection, installation and stepping down of the reigning chiefs. People prefer that a reigning chief come from The Alikī a Mua and Alikī a Muli branches. But today the other branches (except for Tūmau) can also provide reigning chiefs if there is no acceptable representative from the Mua and Muli branches.

During Keith and Anne's work in Nanumea in 1973-75, they discussed the chieftainship with many elders, including Tinilau (born 1904). At that time, Tinilau shared his family ledger book, which had belonged to Tuufue, his mother's brother, *tuātina*. This is the earliest record we have of the chiefly branches and people in them. Tuufue's book recorded a meeting of the *aliki* of Nanumea which took place December 3, 1909. The ledger book does not tell us what the meeting was about, but we can assume it was an important meeting. Perhaps the *aliki* were discussing their organization.

The entry from this book is reproduced in **Illustration 2.6** below. The book does not provide names of the branches, *maga*, nor does it use this word. But it does provide a list of names of individuals divided up according to their *pologa*, duties.

Illustration 2.7 provides an interpretation of the page from Tuufue's book based on the collective knowledge of elders in Nanumea, as shared with Keith and Anne in 1973-75 and 1984. Note that names of branches have been added for each of the original groupings, together with notes about the individuals named. Interestingly, there do not seem to have been seven groups in 1909. Instead, just five groupings or branches of chiefly families were identified by elders using this list. However, we cannot be entirely sure whether there were only five *maga* in 1909 or not, since the list is divided by *pologa*. We are also not sure whether the words *pologa* and *maga* refer to exactly the same thing.

Illustration 2.6

3 Tesema 1909 O Igoa o Tagata ote Kauliki e tofu mo latou Pologa¹

This is a typed reproduction of the complete entry as it appeared in Tuufue's ledger book. We have kept the original order and spacing. Compare this to Illustration 2.7, which provides our own guesses as to the *maga* these individuals belonged to.

Kaimoko		Malulu
Likilua		Lipeka
Matakea		Mahi
Tekino		Halue
Togia		Kautoa
Tihala		Fakaua
Founuku		Faiao
Hipa		Malita
Poke		
Pale		
Sosene		
Taupea	“fafine”	
Paia	“fafine”	
Paitela		
Pou		
Moulaulau		
Nakeagi	Luapeia	
Mami	Tinilau (e an Tematua)	
Malesa		
Maheu		
Hou		
Tauila		
Tagafa	Solomona	
Kanava		
Teulu	Pinau	

¹ Source: Ledger book of Tuufue, courtesy of Tinilau, its owner. Seen at Nanumea, 1974. Adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp. 329-333.

Illustration 2.7

3 December 1909 Names of the Men of the Council of Chiefs along with their Duties¹

All names appeared in Tuufue's ledger book as shown here. To assist readers we added the numbers and notes below, and the chiefly branch names in **bold**. None of these were present in the original.

1. Kaimoko	}		26. Malulu	}	
2. Likilua	}	Te Alik	27. Lipeka	}	Te Alik a Mua
3. Matakea	}	o te Tai	28. Mahi	}	
4. Tekino	}		29. Halue	}	and
5. Togia	}	and others,	30. Kautoa	}	
6. Tihala	}	see notes²	31. Fakaua	}	Tuinanumea³
7. Founuku	}		32. Faiao	}	
8. Hipa	}		33. Malita	}	
9. Poke	}				
10. Pale	}				
11. Sosene	}				
12. Taupea	}	“woman”			
13. Paia	}	“woman”			
14. Paitela	}				
15. Pou	}				
16. Moulaulau	}				Te Alik a Muli⁴
17. Nakeagi	}	Luapeia			
18. Mami	}	Tinilau (of Tematua)			
19. Malesa	}				
20. Maheu	}				
21. Hou	}				
22. Tauila	}				Fakavalevale⁵
23. Tagafa	}	Solomona			
24. Kanava	}				
25. Teulu	}	Pinau			

¹ Source: Ledger book of Tuufue, courtesy of Tinilau, its owner. Seen at Nanumea, 1974. Adapted from Keith Chambers, *Heirs of Tefolaha*, pp. 329-333.

² Names 1-5 are Te Alik o te Tai. *Maga, Branch*, of 6 and 7 are not known to us. *Maga* of 8 is Taualepuku (Hipa's name was Haleti before being changed). Number 9, Poke, may have been in Uma, not a *maga*. Numbers 10-11 may have been in Fakavalevale, but we are not certain. Number 12, Taupea, was the wife of former reigning chief Manatu, while number 13, Paia, was the wife of former reigning chief Vaetolo.

³ We believe that the listing of these two *maga* together is because they were somehow connected, both being *maga* that were to *hopo*. Lipeka and Fakaua were important members of Tuinanumea. Faiao, number 32, and Malita, number 33 (daughter of Fakaua, no. 31), were both women and we do not know why they are listed here. Were these two women assisting their aged fathers at the meeting?

⁴ We believe the gap shown in the list of names of this *maga* indicates two sub-branches of the *maga*. Pou (15) served as Nanumea's reigning *aliki* early in the 20th century. Luapeia is a woman, daughter of Nakeaga (no. 17). She may have been Nakeagi's only remaining heir.

⁵ The names shown are all key members of this *maga*. Number 20, Maheu and 22, Tauila, both served as reigning chief late in the 19th century. Solomona, number 23, is the son of Tagafa, and Pinau, number 25, is the son of Teulu. They were probably adults at the time of the 1909 meeting, perhaps ready to take over as leaders of their families?

How can this 1909 list be integrated with today's idea that there are seven *aliki maga*? **Illustration 2.8** presents a comparison that might help to resolve this question. This comparison draws on information collected in the 1970's and 1980's (presented in *Heirs of Tefolaha*) as well as the list of chiefly branches recognized today (as listed in the Saavali 2003 document, see the end of Chapter 4). Five of the branches recognized today appear to be the same ones assigned *pologa* in 1909 (provided that Pihelea is accepted as an alternative name for *Te Aliko a Mua*). These are: Te Aliko a Mua/Pihelea, Te Aliko a Muli, Tuinanumea, Fakavalevale/Pāheiloa, and Tūmau/Te Aliko o te Tai. The contemporary branches *Pologa* and *Taualepuku* seem to be missing from the 1909 list. These two branches (perhaps without their current names) might have been included in one or another of the five groupings in Tuufue's book at that time.¹⁶

Illustration 2.8 Chiefly Branches, Nanumea 1909 through 2003

Groupings Represented in in Tuufue's 1909 List	Branches named in Saavali 2003 document	Branches documented 1973-75 on Nanumea (Chambers 1984, <i>Heirs of Tefolaha</i>, p.317-20)
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<i>Te Aliko a Mua</i>	Yes	Yes (also called <i>Pihelea</i>)
<i>Te Aliko a Muli</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Tuinanumea</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Tūmau</i> , also known as <i>Te Aliko o te Tai</i>	Yes (<i>Tuumau</i>)	Yes
<i>Fakavalevale</i> also known as <i>Paaheiloa</i>	Yes (<i>Pa Heiloa</i>)	Yes
No, so far as we can tell	<i>Pihelea</i>	<i>Taualepuku</i> . (For <i>Pihelea</i> , see above)
No, so far as we can tell	<i>Pologa</i>	Yes

Many people say that number of chiefly branches has probably increased over the years. There also seem to have been several major reorganizations of Nanumea's

¹⁶ Anne and Keith were told in Nanumea in January 2004 that *Taualepuku* had branched off from *Te Aliko a Mua*, and that its traditional role was to "speak for the chief and to chant, *lautapatapa*, at ceremonies for the installation of the high chief."

chieftainship since contact with Europeans began. One of these probably took place around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, and another seems to have taken place in the the 1930's. However, most people say that the traditional form of the chieftainship of Nanumea had just two branches or lines of chiefs who could *hopo*, sit in the seat. These were the two lineages *Aliki a Mua* and the *Aliki a Muli*, the front and back chiefs, or the first and second chiefs. Those who support this view argue that for any other branch to sit in the seat is to violate the traditional constitution of Nanumea, which draws the reigning chief from just these two lines. The customary seating places for these two branches also supports their unique role. Elders explained to Anne and Keith in the 1970's and 1980's that the *Aliki a Mua* used to sit at the Haumaefa end of the āhiga, while the *Aliki a Muli* branch sat at the Lolua end. The ends of the building thus each seated one of these two important branches. It seems likely that this seating pattern predated the origin of the two village "sides" as we know them today.

The repeated emphasis on two chiefly lineages in the five family traditions laid out above, as well as information in the historical materials presented here and in Chapter 4, lead us to agree that just two branches of chiefly families originally held the right to *hopo* to the position of Nanumea's *aliki*. They probably did this in turn, first one and then the other. The good of the island and its people was believed to be connected to their reigns, and the "blessing" or *kata* each brought was a major reason for continuing to have the chief chosen from these two branches. As our traditional stories tell us, the other branches also descend from Tefolaha, but they descend from children other than his youngest son. That is, they are supporting *maga* descended from Tutaki and Fiaola, in some traditions, not from Lavega. In other traditions where they descend from Lavega, they descend from lesser branches in his line, not the lineages *Te Aliki a Mua* or *Te Aliki a Muli*.

It is clear that the chiefly traditions of Nanumea have been interfered with greatly over the last 150 years. As Chapter 4 will explain, changes imposed on Nanumea's local government have made it difficult for the community to maintain full knowledge of local political traditions, particularly during the many decades that the chieftainship in Nanumea was dormant. Perhaps some of today's differences in opinion about how to select the *Pulefenua/Aliki* also result from the complicated history of the chiefly branches themselves. Today's difficulties also surely stem from the nature of oral tradition, in which different versions of these valuable histories co-exist and compete against each other.

Today, many of us are searching for the "true" origins and traditions of Nanumea. We need these traditions to provide a basis for our chieftainship so that it can serve the

community's needs in the 21st century. It is important for us all to recognize that the rich, yet varied, traditions of our elders *are that truth* we are seeking. The fact that the stories are not unified and that the historical past of Nanumea is complex should not discourage us. Let us celebrate the existence of these different traditions, which we can use to build a foundation for a strong future. Strands of knowledge from all these traditions can be used, together with information from Chapter 3 about the Āhiga, to braid together a strong traditional rope, *he filiga faka vaipua*. This rope of Nanumean traditional political organization is what we need to anchor our community securely in the future.