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Understanding the transformative value of Tongan women's kau tou lālanga: mobile mats, mobile phones, and money transfer agents (Final Report)

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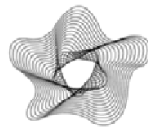
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*Understanding the transformative value of Tongan women's  
kau toulalanga: mobile mats, mobile phones, and money transfer  
agents*

*Annual Report by Charmaine 'Ilaiu Talei and Paul Memmott  
University of Queensland, Aboriginal Environments Research Centre*

*In association with Institute for Money,  
Technology & Financial Inclusion (UC Irvine)  
August 2014*



**IMTFI**  
INSTITUTE FOR MONEY, TECHNOLOGY  
& FINANCIAL INCLUSION

## Abstract

This research project defines 'transformative value' as the potential to move away from an uncontrollable financial situation to a position where one can manage financial challenges with confidence. In seeking to understand the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga*— a collective weaving enterprise in Tonga—the research asks: How does *kau tou lālanga* enhance Tongan weavers' ability to financially support themselves and their dependents through weavers' wages and business profits. Furthermore, how do mobile phones and money transfer mediums, contribute to the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga*?

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out among two remote island groups in Tonga, and included surveys with seven weaving collectives from four primary villages, leading to more in depth discussions with selected participants over a six to nine month period. Using visual anthropology to document participant and site observations, this research records the progress of each *kau tou lālanga*, usage of money exchange mediums, mobile phones, and associated economic events. Analysis of the literature continues to inform the ethnography.

This research looks at the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga* in an economy that moved quickly from subsistence only to include monetization. We suggest that *kau tou lālanga* can potentially increase household income levels and develop financial confidence amongst Tongan weavers and their families.

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the *kau tou lālānga* of Vava'u and Ha'apai and the participants of this study. Thank you for welcoming us into your working spaces, and generously sharing your time and expertise. This work could not have been completed without your invaluable contribution.

*Mālō 'aupito, 'ofa atu*

## Project Team



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Note: All photos in the report, excluding these, were taken by C. 'Ilaiu Talei



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## Glossary

angi	a weaver that negotiates between her collective and overseas customers
fala	a fine mat woven with two layers of strands, and therefore has two good faces
fala hinehina	a bleached mat made from the pandanus species locally known as 'kie'
fala pāongo	a brownish mat made from the pandanus species locally known as 'pāongo'
fetokoni'aki	Tongan custom of helping each other
hala	a term given to explain the weaving across or forward of the strands of a mat, most groups weave 10 strands to create the width of 1 hala
hole	a term given to a number of tefuhi (see below) that are knotted together in a chain before retting in seawater
'iate	a business negotiation where weavers charge customers a certain rate per foot to weave a mat
kātoanga	a business negotiation that involves exchanging mats for cash or mats for other goods at a gathering between weavers and a group of customers
kau tou lālānga	weaving collective
kau tou lāngānga	tapa making collective
kavenga	a customary obligation or responsibility
koloa faka-Tonga	the umbrella term referring to Tongan textile goods encompassing fine mats and bark cloth
lōtaha	a mat woven with only one layer of strands, and therefore has only one good face
māfana	a term that describes a 'gift of warm feelings', displaying one's joy or excitement during a kātoanga
palapala	a dimension agreed upon by kau tou lālānga to help measure each weaver's daily quota, often recorded on a stick or piece of pandanus twine
te'ete'e puaka	the state of a curled pandanus leaflet as ringlets
tefuhi	a term given to 20 leaflets of pandanus that are tied together at the top
TOP\$ (pa'anga)	Tongan Pa'anga, the local currency ( 1 TOP = 0.54 USD, <a href="http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/">http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/</a> 24th August 2014)

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## 1.0 Background

The Kingdom of Tonga is located in the South Pacific (20 00 S, 175 00 W) and is an archipelago of 169 islands stretched throughout 747 square kilometers. The main central island is Tongatapu, where the capital Nuku'alofa is located.

Since the 1960s, Tongans have been migrating in large numbers to countries around the Pacific Rim for higher education and temporary work opportunities. These arrangements were not meant to be permanent, however during the 1970s in New Zealand, for example, many overstayed their visa dates and in time became permanent residents (Campbell 1992: 198; Besnier 2009: 221). Based on their kinship relations, these diasporic and transnational Tongans sent back money in the form of remittances and large amounts of purchased goods to families back in Tongan villages (Eriksen 2007: 113; Besnier 2009:222). Several researchers have discussed how private remittances were critical to Tonga's income and consumption, and a key cash source for Tongan based families (Bertram and Watters 1984: 379; Bertram 1999: 119; Lee 2003: 32,33). However, since the 2007 – 2008 global financial crisis, private remittances from the Tongan diaspora have declined and the Tongan government needs to consider alternatives to generate local income and consumption (pers. comm, Siosi C. Mafi, 6 September 2012). Within this critical national discussion *kau tou lālanga* becomes a more significant topic of research, since this collective enterprise allows Tongan women and their immediate families to determine their own financial futures.

*Kau tou lālanga* is a group of Tongan women who collectively weave fine mats to barter and sell. Their prime customers are Tongan women living in diasporic communities around the Pacific Rim. However, as this report shows, attracting the business of such overseas customers has its challenges. “Transformative value” was first defined by the authors at the project's conception as ‘the potential to move away from an uncontrollable financial situation to a position where one can manage financial challenges with confidence.’ The report will refine this statement, by presenting key insights and key findings that elaborate on the business of *kau tou lālanga* and its potential transformative value.

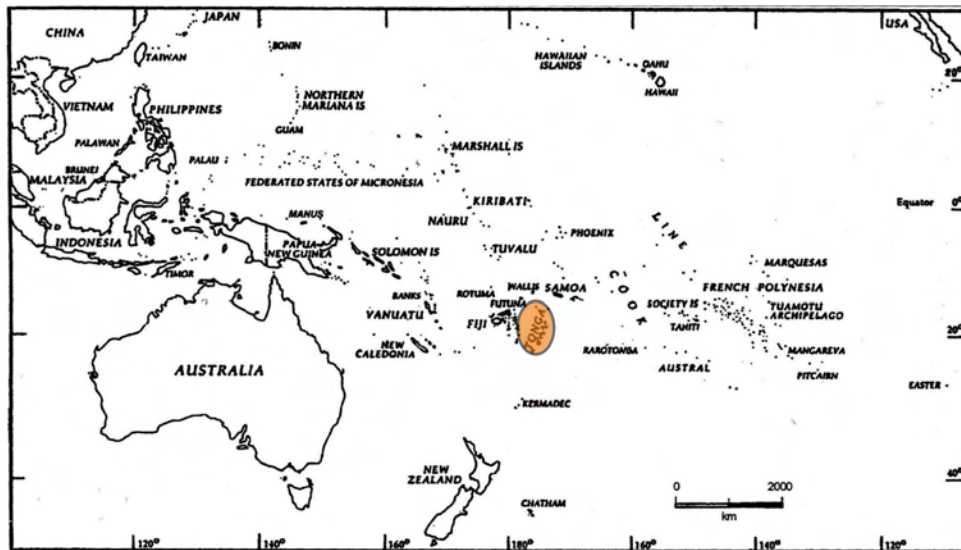
### 1.1 Objectives

This project aims to understand what is the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga* in Tonga and secondly how mobile phones and money transfer platforms help to achieve this transformation.

The transformative value of *kau tou lālanga* is an important topic to investigate because we can understand how the business and its outputs affect the weavers and those dependent on them.

Other key research questions have also emerged as the project progressed:

- \* Are the cash incomes of the weavers increasing through such enterprise?
- \* What aspects of the weavers' lives are changing for the better or worse?
- \* What motivates weavers to weave?
- \* How does the *kau tou lālanga* change their roles in their communities?
- \* What do the weavers perceive as the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga*?
- \* What are the challenges that restrict weavers from achieving such value?
- \* What is the role of mobile phones and currency exchange technologies in the operation of weaving businesses?



Map 1: Pacific Ocean - Kingdom of Tonga highlighted



## 2.0 *Fala*, Mats

Tongan mats, or *fala*, are part of a wider system of customary gift exchanges within Tongan society. In this customary sense, Tongan mats are cashless forms of value storage. Such value is traditionally activated during a Tongan occasion, such as funerals, weddings, birthdays and today more contemporary events like university graduations, baby dedications and baptisms. A customary gift from guests to hosts or vice versa could consist of some *tapa* cloth and several types of mats. Apart from weaving mats to sell on, a few weavers of *kau tou lālanga* still weave mats to gift and to fulfill their cultural obligations, or *kavenga*. Such mats are usually stored under bed mattresses for such occasions. Furthermore, when they do not have cash to give or to purchase, in some instances weavers can give a mat that they have made to barter. The weaving groups involved predominantly weave large mats for their customers to present as gifts, but they also weave smaller items to be worn by their customers, such as the *fala vala*, *lokeha* and *ta'ovala* for funerals and weddings. Thus mats, which are the products of *kau tou lālanga* businesses, are highly prized items in Tongan material culture, or as Tongans call *koloa faka-Tonga*.

This work is part of a wider discussion involving Tongan gifts of exchange studied by anthropologists, namely: Adrienne Kaepler (1999), Phyllis Herda (1999), Ping-Ann Addo (2004), Ping-Ann Addo and Niko Besnier (2008), and Fanny Wonu Veys (2009). Although this current literature is useful as a base, our review highlights several gaps: firstly, to date no published material discusses in detail the subject matter of *kau tou lālanga*; secondly, existing literature looks at the collective enterprise of bark or *tapa* cloth, called *kau tou lānganga*; thirdly, textile transformations of bark cloth within the diaspora and finally it examines the historical fine mats of Tongan royalty (Herda 1999; Kaepler 1999; Addo 2004). *Kau tou lālanga* presents a new type of collective model where mat weavers can deal directly with their customers from overseas often with no 'middleman.' This shows the entrepreneurial attitude of Tongan weavers in their desire to create their own transactions through their own purchase order systems.

Previous studies have concentrated on the transnational situation of pawnshops, their wealthy middlemen (or as this report calls it 'trading agents') and Tongan textiles within diasporic

communities (Addo 2004; Addo and Besnier 2008). However, this project gathers original perspectives from the local Tongan women who make these woven mats at the start of the production chain.

Adrienne Kaeppler's (1999) work focuses on Tongan fine mats, however she devotes her studies to mats of rank and prestige in Tongan hierarchy as they are exchanged amongst royalty and nobles. Our research, by contrast, is interested in how entrepreneurial commoners produce these mats to sell or barter, especially with other Tongan commoners living overseas; we look at how mats have become a democratic form of possession and value storage.

Most existing literature does not focus on the monetary benefits that Tongan weavers gain from collective enterprises. At present, only one study by Addo and Besnier's begins to break down the monetary value of mats within the context of Tongan pawnshops during 2001 (Addo and Besnier 2008: 48). Building upon their 2001 analysis, this research will identify the current cash value of *kau tou lālanga's* fine mats. This is useful for understanding the mats' monetary value prior to and after the recent global financial crisis.

Bark cloth production in Tonga is concentrated on the main central island of Tongatapu where the raw material for making Tongan bark cloth, paper mulberry plants, are plentiful. These women who make bark cloth on the main island have greater access to alternate means of cash employment than their counterparts living in the remote islands. For this reason, this research project prioritizes *kau tou lālanga* from marginalized remote island villages.

Certainly valuable research about *koloa fāka-Tonga* has been established, but a focus on *kau tou lālanga* from the perspective of the village female weaver and an in-depth documentation of the financial value of these mats and their transformative potential is still an under-researched area. Thus in contributing to these research gaps, this project about *kau tou lālanga* expands our current understanding of these Tongan weaving collectives.



Above left: Various bleached *kie* mats with *tapa* worn by a bride, groom (center) and wedding entourage in Tongatapu. Above right: Ceremonial gifting consisting of *tapa* cloth (top) and a *fala pāongo* (bottom) for a church fundraiser in Brisbane, Australia. Bottom right: A *ta'ovala* made from bleached *kie*, Ha'apai  
 Bottom left: A *fala hinehina* rolled up to be delivered to a customer overseas, Ha'apai

## 2.1 Making mats today

Our research revealed two main types of mats were woven by weaving groups:

*fala pāongo* and *fala hinehina*. The former uses the pandanus species named by locals *pāongo* and the latter is made from the pandanus species known by locals as *kie*. Other species of the pandanus plant that were also used but to a lesser extent were: *tūtu'ila*, *totolo* and *tofua*.

The *pāongo* mat's raw materials are relatively easy to prepare for weaving compared to other mats. Once the leaflets have been cut from the plant, they are covered up with a large cloth so the leaflets begin to soften with air moisture.

Once soft enough the leaflets' prickly hard edges are removed on the sides and back with a

knife, then the *pāongo* leaflets are curled into ringlets, or as Tongans call it *te'ete'e puaka*.

The dry curled leaflets are tied together and hung inside a building to further air dry. Drying is never done outside because dew can settle and make the leaflets too brittle for weaving. The ringlet makes it easier to straighten by pressing out the leaflet against one's lap using one's palm. Once straightened, the leaflet can be stripped into appropriate strands to suit the type of mat using a knife or other sharp tools.



Above: Images show *pāongo* in different stages of processing.

Bottom: Participant from Leimatu'a village, Vava'u stripping *pāongo*.

The *fala hinehina* are bleached mats. The *kie* appears to be a softer pandanus leaf type than the broad *pāongo* leaf. Such mats have greater monetary value than the *pāongo*, because it is more laborious to prepare *kie* for weaving.

Once the *kie* leaflet is cut off the plant, its prickly edges are removed again on the sides and back, then laid out in the sun to soften by air moisture. Then each leaflet is rolled into small bundles to be boiled over a fire for around six hours.

Once the boiled bundles have cooled down, it is unraveled and the leaflet is stripped into two

halves along its mid-rib, and tied at the top in groups of 20 strands, called *tefubi*. When there are a number of *tefubi*, they are knotted together in a chain, called *hole*. The *hole* is then retted at sea for seven nights.

Once retting is complete it is laid out in the sun to further assist the bleaching process. The dry strands are dunked in clean water to rinse off dirt, grit and seawater. Then they are made into ringlets and hung to dry. Once dry, these ringlets are undone and straightened out using one's palms, before being stripped for weaving.



Left and center: Images show *kie* at different stages of processing.  
 Right: *Hole* retting at sea, Ha'apai.



Above left: Processed *Pāongo* stored as a coil. Above right: *Fala binehina* decorated with wool around its borders and a flower symbol made from *pāongo*.



Above: Participant weaving a *pāongo* mat. Bottom: A decorator with a design on a *fala hinehina*.



The pandanus ringlets of both species can be rolled up and stored as a coil. This helps the strands remain straight while weaving continues. If weavers are unable to prepare their own material, they can also purchase pandanus in this coiled state at a local market. Weavers use the plain weave technique to weave their various mats. Whilst sitting down in one row along the width of the mat, weavers can weave collectively by working only on the area ahead of them shifting forward together. In this way, it is more efficient than working alone on one mat. Their hands tend to sweat in the heat of the day, so it is common to see baby powder or flour used to keep their hands dry.

One feature that increases the monetary value of a mat is the number of strands used to weave the mat. The word *fala* refers to the double layer of strands woven together when weaving. For this reason it has two aesthetically good sides and is therefore more expensive than the *lōtaba*,

which is woven with only one layer of strands. The width of a mat's strands can also vary. Slender strands produce a more expensive mat. Similarly, the larger the size of the mat, the higher the price.

Once woven, the mat is decorated using different materials that are woven into the mat, either around the borders or within the mat itself, creating a symbolic feature. One participant shared a collection of designs saved in a simple graph book to which she refers as she decorates. The designs are added at the end of the weaving process if the customer has requested a decorated mat. The materials used to apply the design could include colored wool and plastic ribbons imported from overseas, or other pandanus fibres that are a color that contrasts with the mat. The latter natural elements are more expensive when applied.

### 3.0 Research Methods

Fieldwork and participant research—both in person and over the phone—were the main research methods used to gather primary data. During fieldwork, surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted with participants (Appendix A, B) Human ethical clearance forms were first given to participants before interviews commenced (Appendix C, D). Workshop techniques were also conducted to elicit opinions and responses to preliminary findings and research questions (Appendix E). Voice recordings documented all interviews and workshop discussions. Fieldwork observations were also captured through video, photography, and drawings to help recall important moments and activities. We continued to review important literature around the field as we carried out the project. All of the fieldwork was carried out by the principal author, Charmaine 'Ilaiu Talei, (CIT).

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Sites

Three fieldwork trips were conducted within the project timeframe. A total of eight weeks was spent in two remote island groups in the Kingdom of Tonga: Vava'u and Ha'apai. Being remote islands they have less access to cash making opportunities in comparison to the main island. Vava'u and Ha'apai are also mat making epicenters—Vava'u is renowned for the *fala pāongo*

and Ha'apai for the *fala hinebina*. The fieldwork sites in Vava'u included the rural village of Leimatu'a and Kāmeli district in Neiafu, an urban village. In Ha'apai, the sites included the rural villages of Fangale'ounga on Foa Island and Pukotala on Ha'ano Island, and finally the urban village of Pangai. These sites were selected based on existing contacts and referrals of where to best find *kau tou lālanga* groups. Similarly, it was important to select rural and urban villages to elicit a range of opinions.

Fieldwork 1, August – September 2013: This three-week trip established participant relationships and ongoing support for the project with four *kau tou lālanga* from Vava'u and four collectives from Ha'apai. Two of the four collectives from each island group are rural villages and the other two are from the urban villages. From these *kau tou lālanga*, a total of nineteen active weavers and two trading agents were interviewed. A survey was conducted with this first group of participants. The survey was based on a combination of work on different literature, earlier discussions with key informants, and my own 'hunches', and then translated into the Tongan language. A limitation I found when conducting interviews with weavers from the same group was their tendency to repeat information. Interviews were conducted in the work setting, people talked as they worked, and perhaps the use of such a setting exacerbated this situation—colleagues often listened in during an interview and pitched in their ideas, swaying the interviewee. However, due to time restraints of both the interviewee and interviewer, this setting was often necessary. After initial interviews I decided to change my approach to referrals, and select key people from the group who are negotiators, leaders, treasurers, younger or older members, or trading agents to gather different perspectives. I also talked to micro-enterprise organizations that lent some of the participants a micro-loan. In addition, archival, photographic and video studies were collected during this first trip.

In April 2014, phone interviews were conducted with selected participants to understand the destructive impacts of cyclone Ian (January 6, 2014) as well as other recent events and their current business status at that time (Appendix F). Interviews were conducted with a few of the weavers' customers from Sydney and Auckland to understand their perspectives about the *kau tou lālanga*, and begin an understanding about the sustainability of the overseas market. Such



phone conversations informed a set of new questions for the second fieldwork trip.

Fieldwork 2, May - June 2014: This two-week trip gathered essential missing data from previous interviews and more in-depth answers regarding financial, social, material, and technological transformations. Based on earlier findings, there was a need to select informants to conduct in-depth discussions. Unfortunately the dynamic situation of *kau tou lālānga* meant that some initially selected informants were too busy for an interview, and some had changed groups or were on a break from weaving. In this case, new participants were selected to represent previously sampled weaving groups. A total of nine weavers were interviewed in-depth and also two trading agents. To ensure the interviewee's integrity, interviews were conducted in a more private corner, away from other weavers during work hours.

Fieldwork 3, July 2014: This final three-week trip was an opportunity to return and present preliminary findings back to the respective collectives for their feedback. It was a chance to ensure information was correct, before the final writing of this report. It also provided an opportunity to create group discussions about the transformative values of *kau tou lālānga* and deliver some recommendations regarding challenges. Six A1 color posters displaying tables, photographs and graphs were translated into Tongan to help discuss these findings.

### 3.2 Participants

A total of twenty-four participants were interviewed over the course of three trips, fourteen from Vava'u and ten from Ha'apai. Twenty were sole weavers and four acted as trading agents. Some twenty-two of the participants were women and two were men. The following table further summarizes participants involved in this project. The weaving collectives do not possess formal group names; often they would make one up for the sake of the question. Normally people identify the groups by the head weaver's name. For this reason we identify them as VK1, VK2, VL1, VL2, HF1, HP1, HP2, and HH1.

Data Collection Summary: Fieldwork during August 2014 – August 2013			
Tongan Island Group (Types of Mat)	Village of Origin	Number of Participants Interviewed	Weaving Collectives Data Identity
Vava'u (Piango mats)	Neiafu urban village, Kamefi district	5	VK1
	Neiafu urban village, Kamefi district	2	VK2
	Leimatu'a rural village	3	VL1
	Leimatu'a rural village	1	VL2
	Neiafu urban village, Kamefi district	1	Trading agent V1
	Tefisi rural village, transnational living in Melbourne, Australia	1	Trading agent V2
	Neiafu urban village and Nuku'alofa town	1	Trading agent V3
(Hinehina mats)	Based in Pangai urban village, Lifuka Island. All weavers originally from Ha'ano Island	3	HP1
	Pangai urban village, Lifuka Island	2	HP2
	Fangale'ounga rural village, Foa Island	4	HF1
	Pukotala rural village, Ha'ano Island	1	Trading agent / weaver HH1
<b>Total Number of Participants:</b>		<b>24</b>	

Table 1: Data Collection Summary from fieldwork

### 4.0 Key Insights

This following section presents insights from fieldwork that form the understandings of the *kau tou lālānga* business and where it sits within the trade of mats. Therefore it is important to first have a business overview of the trade flows of Tongan mats. There are three sectors of the trade of Tongan fine mats: production of raw materials, secondly, the *kau tou lālānga*, and finally the market, as our diagram below displays.

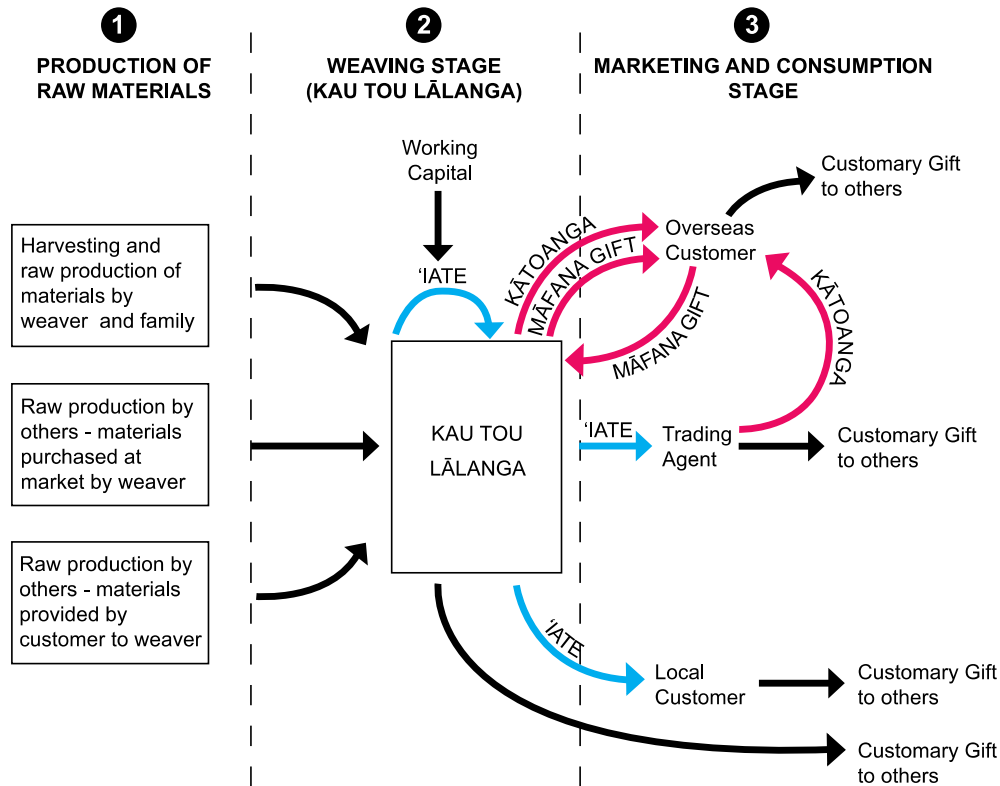


Diagram 1: Two stages of production of Tongan woven mats followed by third stage of marketing and consumption; also showing 'Iate and Kātoanga transactions.

#### 4.1 Organisation of the *kau tou lālanga*

A *kau tou lālanga* is organized as a collective, where weavers work together on one another's mats. At present it is customary for only Tongan women to weave, not men. There is often a leader, also known as a chairwoman, who is usually a mature, diplomatic, well spoken and sometimes a well-connected person in the market. The chairwoman can also hold the position of the *angi*—the person who negotiates between her group and their customers. As a leader, she is often expected to provide a space to work, like the living room of her home, or another space that is available. Other spaces that were observed include abandoned houses, a church hall and a makeshift house with old corrugated sheets as walls, mink blankets lining the roof and thatching on top.

Other important roles in a collective can include a treasurer, a cook, and a decorator. The last role requires special skills to visualize and realize decorations on a mat. Decorators can be employed within or outside the collective to apply designs on the mats. Each group varies in their approach to collective saving, for example, all members of a group in Leimatu'a, Vava'u—the only group with a treasurer—deposited TOP\$5 each into their fund per month to assist with their leader's power bills. Their treasurer and its assistants deposited the money into their Tongan Development Bank account. They also explained if they host their customers in their village, this same fund could assist such expenses. On the other hand, one collective in Pangai rotated around the working spaces of each weaver's house. The role of a cook is assigned to each member of the group and they take turns daily. However, if there is no allocated cook, members are expected to bring their own lunches, water bottles and provide their own toilet paper.

There are no prerequisites to join a *kau tou lālānga*, but rather only a willing attitude to learn and be committed to the collectives' working days and times. Most learnt weaving by watching their mothers or grandmothers weave, and started weaving themselves in their late teens or early twenties. The findings highlight that weavers were primarily mothers and homemakers. The flexibility of *kau tou lālānga*'s working conditions allowed women to work in or near their homes and simultaneously provide for her families or look after their children. Thus, an appealing work situation exists for the growing number of younger mothers joining collectives.

A few of the single women weavers had professional careers. But as they became mothers or circumstances changed, such as that they lost a management job due to business bankruptcy, they took on weaving. Notwithstanding any specific agreement with the customer, weavers must usually provide their own raw materials, stripped and ready to weave.

## 4.2 Business Negotiations

There are two business negotiations of a *kau tou lālānga*: firstly, to weave per lineal foot also known as *'iate* and secondly, to weave towards a 'gathering', or *kātoanga*.

An *'iate* negotiation starts with a customer, usually a local person, making an order to a

collective to weave one or two mats—only a small quantity. This customer may need the mat urgently to fulfill a customary role at a funeral or church event. The collective will then weave the order according to their set price per foot for that size and type of mat. There are variations, such as a weaver acting as a trading agent between the group and on behalf another customer, where she could make an extra profit for herself. Another variation could be a weaver who requires a mat to be woven urgently because she needs to make a large quantity of mats for a *kātoanga*. In this case, she pays her own colleagues at a member's discounted rate per foot for all the weaving required. Since wages for this negotiation are usually paid at the end of the week or immediately after the mat is completed, the weavers enjoy receiving their payments quickly and more frequently during the year.

The second negotiation, *kātoanga*, is a gathering between a number of weavers from a collective who wish to participate, and a group of customers who are mostly Tongan women from overseas. There are cases where there are gatherings with Tongan women from the main island Tongatapu and such exchanges include *tapa* cloth for mats without cash—only one group from Pangai had participated in such an event. Before a *kātoanga*, the parties involved negotiate the number of mats to be exchanged, the sum of cash for the order, other extra items weavers or customers would like from each other, and the date and venue of their gathering. For example, Mele Kafoa from a group in Leimatu'a, agreed in 2013 to exchange nine 20ft by 9ft *pāongo* mats (valued at TOP\$1300 each) for a house to be built by her customer, a builder from New Zealand. Another example is a participant named Meliana Tuimoala from Fangale'ounga, who in 2013 agreed to exchange with a United States of America based customer, five 15ft by 5ft, two 7ft by 30ft and five 6ft by 4ft *hinehina* mats for a total of TOP\$10,000. It is most common to have the overseas customers meet the weavers in their home villages to relieve the Tongan based women of large travelling expenses. However, the weavers in this case host their overseas customers in their homes.

A good case study is a collective from Leimatu'a. To make things fair, the leaders of both the weaving collective and customers negotiated a fixed sum of cash for every weaver to promote fairness. The type of mats to be woven can differ but the total value would always equal the

agreed lump sum. Their overseas customers drew out of a hat the names of their allocated weaver who would weave their desired mats.

Some variations to this negotiation could include extra mats that are given to a customer, named *fala* 'māfana', which translates literally as mat of 'warmth', meaning the joy in exchanging. This is a gift that a weaver gives voluntarily and can include an extra mat or a woven item that a customer can wear like a *ta'ovala*. The customer may respond with a gift of warm feelings, such as extra cash above the agreed amount. The same case study collective filmed their *kātoanga* with Australian customers held in Leimatu'a village in January 2014. Observing their recording it displayed a loud, musical, and cheerful event with customers and weavers dancing together on top of the mats at the time of exchange. A scene of joy shows an overseas customer dragging a large bag of goods on top of her purchased mats, and dramatically pulling out duvet blankets, bed sheets, and curtains purchased from overseas, as she danced. Such *māfana* can be spontaneous acts of giving. But for others, *māfana* is pre-negotiated before the event over and above the agreed mats and cash amount. Some negotiations require weavers to weave extra items to pay back customers' travelling expenses. Certainly, a *kātoanga* negotiation provides large amounts of money, however a weaver must wait until the gathering day to receive her full payment, unlike *'iate* negotiations.

### 4.3 Organization of a day's work

A day's work depends on the type of negotiations that a weaving group holds. If a group is weaving an *'iate* order then weavers collectively weave per foot and they each receive a payment according to what they were able to weave. However, if the *kau tou lālānga* is weaving mats for a *kātoanga*, each weaver is allocated a day (in a five or six day week) when the collective weave her mats. The weaver of the day usually can rest that day from working, or some groups give them the less strenuous work of stripping more strands to weave or cook meals for the day.

Depending on the size of the group a weaver may get one or two days per fortnight, as it rotates through the members. Each weaver weaves the group's agreed daily quota, which is quantified by a dimension called '*palapala*'. For this reason, there is no official start and finish time for a day's work, rather a weaver just needs to ensure she has woven her quota for the day. The

*palapala* according to the collectives interviewed varied between 1ft to 6ft, usually recorded on a timber stick or a piece of pandanus twine. The group's daily quota is a certain number of *palapala* woven per day. Closely related, is another technical term called '*hala*', which refers to the direction *palapala* is woven: across or forward on a mat, which depends on the size of the mat and the number of people weaving. One *hala* can equal a width of six to ten strands woven together across or forward, and again this varied amongst the collectives interviewed. What is clear, these technical measurements affect the speed of weaving and energy needed by each weaver to complete the work for the day.

#### 4.4 Working capital

Working capital is critical for a weaver who hires her own colleagues (or less commonly another collective) to weave her mats under an '*iate*' negotiation. A constant flow of cash is required to pay wages while weavers work. Only five of the 20 weavers operated in this mode. Such weavers, were often the high earners of the group and were constantly involved in *kātoanga*. Astutely, they would reinvest their profits in more mats for the following year's *kātoanga*. Other forms of working capital were gathered from other businesses, which a weaver may hold and usually operated with her husband. For example, two Vava'u weavers grew and sold tobacco or *kava*—a plant used in making a local brew—at local markets. A few participants from Kāmeli and all participants from Fangale'ounga were involved in a small business development and a micro-financing program. They could qualify for a small loan to invest into their businesses. However, several complained about the high interest rates and strict repayment schedule, which soon encumbered them.

#### 4.5 Trading agent

A trading agent's capacity and role varies in their engagement with *kau tou lālānga*. There is no official Tongan name for them, however one called himself an 'exporter' which is just as suitable. As the findings highlight, they can be female or male. They are equipped with fundamental business skills, and are sometimes a transnational—living between an overseas base and Tonga (Eriksen 2007: 113). It is also crucial for these agents to have dual networks of customers and weavers. Similarly, since they prefer to purchase the mats through an '*iate*

negotiation, they must have working capital to pay for wages whilst work is carried out on their mats. Sometimes weavers set the price per foot as explained in section 4.2, which is higher than their internal member's price. However agents are known to wrangle a reduction to this already low rate. Weavers do complain but they are also desperate for cash and often reluctantly accept such a rate. In this way, a trading agent can receive a larger profit than under a *kātoanga* negotiation. In Vavau, there were several trading agents known by collectives, one was a gentleman, local entrepreneur and politician, Salesi Paea, who referred to himself as an exporter, and Tae Tuna'ula Guttenbeil, a local businesswoman. Both were customers acting as trading agents for the Vava'u based collectives. A recently established agent (and thus unknown to participants) was a gentleman Sione Vaiola Māhina—a Tongan entrepreneur from Melbourne, who was also interviewed. In contrast, most Ha'apai collectives were not aware of any trading agents and relied on their contacts overseas to negotiate their work. One exception, I encountered at the time of the first fieldwork was a participant, Fine Tuimoala from Pukotala—normally a weaver—who was acting as a trading agent working between her collective and an Australian-based customer.

A trading agent can act as a private customer or as a group's representative and seller to their network of overseas customers. For the latter they organize the *kātoanga* event: the venue, the date and time; and similarly negotiating with the customer the prices of the mats on behalf of the collective. Salesi and Tae work in this capacity. In 2013, Salesi provided accommodation and food for his Vava'u weavers when they are gathered on the main island to meet their overseas customers. Furthermore, using his business networks, he negotiated cheaper ferry fares for his collectives from Vava'u and a discount on freight costs. Salesi claims that in 2013 his four *kātoanga* events brought TOP\$541,000 to Vava'u's weavers (pers. comm., Salesi Paea, 7 June 2014). Sione Vaiola Mahina operates more as a private customer, purchasing many mats from several groups around his village Tefisi. He then takes his mats overseas to Australia and sells the mats from his home. He organises his network of customers to make direct deposit transactions into his bank, so they can pay off their mats slowly while he is away in Tonga and they will then receive their mats from his home on their final installments.



#### 4.6 Customer

A customer is a local or overseas person who requires mats to essentially fulfill their cultural obligations. All of the *kau tou lālānga* involved in this survey expressed a higher preference for an overseas customer than a local customer because they assume overseas customers have more available money to spend on their mats. It is also interesting that the overseas customer is helping to evolve the design of mats. Collectives explain how such customers order extravagant mats that are longer than the standard lengths and more ornate in decoration. In this case, the customers like to pay for their desired decoration materials and send them from overseas for the weavers to incorporate into the mats.

Interviews with customers from Sydney and Auckland revealed a range of diverse features that they request in their mats. The list includes mats that are woven straight along the borders, mats in which the fibers have a consistent color and tone, mats that use thinner strands, mats that are woven to the exact size and sometimes the particular form of decoration. The same overseas customers also explained they engage *kau tou lālānga* in Tonga because they want to help these women, and it was their way of giving back to their communities in Tonga. For this reason, when participating in a *kātoanga*, customers agree to engage the same group annually for a three to five year period before having a break, a type of philanthropy towards a particular village.

#### 4.7 Competitive Advantage

When asked what is your competitive advantage over other collectives who make similar mats, the common answer from all participants is to decorate their mats to be more appealing to customers. Clearly a group's competitiveness is precariously measured solely on decorations. This highlights a gap in expectations between the weaver and customer. Fieldwork observations indicated that price is another key factor for local customers and trading agents, as is also business integrity to complete an order. Weaving efficiency does not appear to be an advantage since a year is given before a *kātoanga* occurs, and in the case of *iate* the weavers can achieve a small order quickly. At a presentation in Fangale'ounga, a weaver responded to these requests of the overseas customers by arguing that they as weavers should set their prices high for the work

requested. Others accepted they would ensure optimum quality on all aspects of the mat to win and maintain customer satisfaction.

#### 4.8 Price of Mats

Several insights were gained when comparing the prices of collectives' mats. Firstly it becomes evident that there is generally a price range that is acceptable for the size of a mat one buys. But also this price range can show huge differences from one weaving group compared to another, for example a 12ft by 6ft mat in an *'iate* negotiation of the bleached mats can cost from TOP\$25 per foot to TOP\$50 per foot. Similarly, in a *kātoanga* arrangement in Vava'u, a 20ft by 8ft *pāongo* mat can vary drastically across the collectives involved from TOP\$1200 to TOP\$1800, as displayed in the following tables.

As implied earlier, a weaver can certainly make more profit from a *kātoanga* negotiation than an *'iate* purchase; at times double the amount for the same mat. However, a drawback of a *kātoanga*, as some weavers complained, is when a customer refuses to pay the full amount because they are supposedly unsatisfied with the quality of the mats or simply changes their minds on the number of mats. Certainly there are business issues around price standards and valuation of mats by weavers and customers alike.

Vava'u collectives' price lists of Pāongo Mats (\$ Tongan Pa'anga)				
Type of transaction	VL1	VL2	VK1	VK2
'Iate, or Weave per foot	Generally: \$4 per 3ft internal price \$5 per 3ft external price  12ft x 7ft = \$200 15ft x 8ft = \$400 20ft x 8ft = \$600 30ft x 9ft = \$1000		Following priced when customer provides raw materials:  10ft x 5ft = \$150 12ft x 6ft = \$350 15ft x 7ft = \$400 20ft x 8ft = \$600-\$800 30ft x 9ft = \$1300	15ft x 8ft = \$25 in/\$20 out 20ft x 8ft = \$35 in/\$30 out 30ft x 9ft = \$35 in/\$40 out
Kātoanga or Gathering	10ft x 6ft = \$300 12ft x 7ft = \$500 15ft x 8ft = \$800 20ft x 8ft = \$1200 30ft x 9ft = \$3000	10ft x 5ft = \$400 12ft x 6ft = \$500 15ft x 7ft = \$800 20ft x 9ft = \$1300	10ft x 5ft = \$500 12ft x 6ft = \$600 15ft x 7ft = \$800 20ft x 8ft = \$1200 30ft x 9ft = \$3500	10ft x 6ft = \$500 12ft x 7ft = \$800 15ft x 8ft = \$1000 20ft x 8ft = \$1800 30ft x 9ft = \$4000

Table 2: Price list of *kau tou lālānga* from Vava'u. Source: C. 'Ilaiu Talei

Ha'apai collectives' price lists of Kie Mats (\$ Tongan Pa'anga)			
Type of transaction	HF1	HP1	HP2
'iate or Weave per foot	10ft x 5ft = \$20 per foot 12ft x 6ft = \$25 per foot 15ft x 7ft = \$30 per foot 20ft x 8ft = \$45 per foot 30ft x 7ft (lōtaha) = \$30 per foot	Following priced when customer provides raw materials: 10ft x 5ft = \$30 per foot 12ft x 6ft = \$40 per foot 15ft x 7ft = \$50 per foot 20ft x 8ft = \$60 per foot 30ft x 7ft (lōtaha) = \$30 per foot	Following priced when customer does not provide raw materials: 10ft x 5ft = \$40 per foot 12ft x 6ft = \$50 per foot 15ft x 7ft = \$60 per foot 20ft x 8ft = \$70 per foot 30ft x 7ft (lōtaha) = \$30 per foot
Kātoanga or Gathering	10ft x 5ft = \$800 12ft x 6ft = \$1000 15ft x 7ft = \$1200 20ft x 8ft = \$2000 30ft x 7ft (lōtaha) = \$1500		10ft x 5ft = \$800 12ft x 6ft = \$1000 15ft x 7ft = \$1500 20ft x 8ft = \$2500 30ft x 7ft (lōtaha) = \$1500 30ft x 9ft (fala) = \$3500

Table 3: Price list of *kau tou lālanga* from Ha'apai. Source: C. 'Ilaiu Talei

### 4.9 Wages

It was important to understand what annual incomes and hourly rates weavers were receiving through *kau tou lālanga* from 2012 to 2013. In the first survey it became clear that weavers could earn a lot of money through this business. In-depth interviews further distinguished the proportion of 'iate from *kātoanga* sales in their annual incomes, and for one participant her earnings from decorating a mat. The data from these interviews reveals that a particular weaver from Kāmeli village, Vava'u, was the highest earner with a total income of TOP\$30,000 in 2012. This divided into TOP\$20,000 from *kātoanga* and TOP\$10,000 from 'iate sales. The lowest earner gained just over TOP\$500 in 2012. The same highest earner from Vava'u dropped 50 percent to receive only a total of TOP\$15,000 in 2013 with TOP\$12,000 from *kātoanga* and TOP\$3000 from 'iate. In contrast the lower earners earned more in 2013. Other discussions with high earners revealed a general decline in their incomes in 2013 from 2012. Weavers at each workshop were asked why they think there was a declining trend in some incomes between 2012 and 2013. They responded:

Kāmeli groups, Vavau

“Customers complained that their money dropped due to the financial crisis and now can not afford to pay us the agreed amounts...we were desperate for cash so we dropped our prices”

Leimatua groups, Vavau

“There are times *kātoanga* do not happen”

“There were more family *kavenga* (customary obligations) in 2012 that required more money and so it forced us to work harder”

“We had more energy to work in 2012 than 2013”

Fangale’ounga groups, Ha’apai

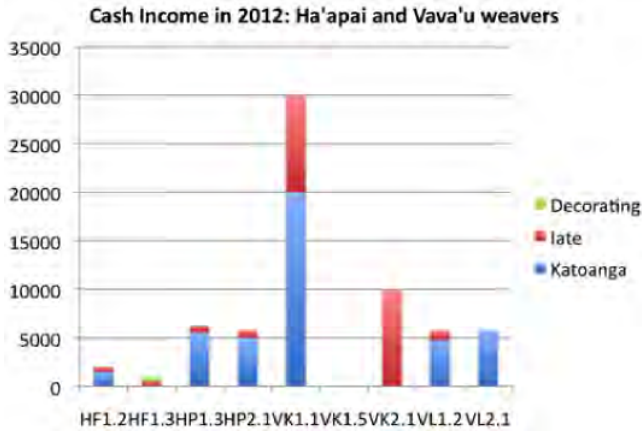
“Customers change their minds and our circumstances also change” (referring to cyclone Ian that destroyed their pandanus plants)

Pangai groups, Ha’apai

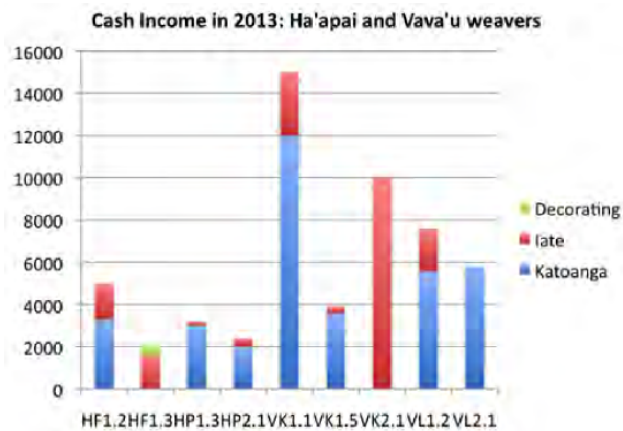
“That’s all one could negotiate that year...”

Their answers highlight that one’s wages depends almost equally on personal motivation and external influences.

The hourly rates of those involved in the second interviews were calculated and presented back to weavers so they could know the monetary value of their time. The hourly rates ranged in 2012 from 40 cents to just over 8 paanga, and an average of TOP\$2.50 per hour. In 2013, the hourly rates ranged from 85 cents to just over 4 paanga, and an average of TOP\$2.10 per hour. Although Tonga does not have an official minimum wage, for comparison sake the minimum government salary was collected and used. A permanent government employee at the lowest salary scale starts at TOP\$5187 (with 5% cost of living allowance, or COLA) per annum (pers. comm., Fo’ou Akauola, 30 May 2014). Similarly a government labourer’s daily wage is TOP\$18.83 (with 5% COLA) (ibid). The high earners of *kau tou lālanga* thus well exceed the incomes of such civil servants. The other low to mid range weaving earners are certainly comparable. Therefore it is surprising that the unassuming village weaver can earn in some cases more than a government worker!



Graph 1: Weavers' cash income in 2012. Source: C 'Ilaiu Talei



Graph 2: Weavers' cash income in 2013. Source: C 'Ilaiu Talei

#### 4.10 Savings

In Western societies, one's savings account can be a marker of prosperity and security. To understand if this was the case or a completely inappropriate definition of prosperity for Tongan weavers, the second survey asked weavers whether they saved and if so, how they saved, how much they saved and for how long? It became clear that all the weavers from the second set of interviews do save; however, slightly more save for relatively short periods such as less than six months, with some saving for under one year and others who are currently saving. A lot of weavers joked that "...money comes money goes..." once they receive their payments. But if there is any leftover cash it is deposited into their local bank accounts, which for many is the only form of recording of their business earnings. For those who are currently saving, they often hold a joint account with their husbands who also have an income,

such as a farmer who sells produce or a salaried professional. The weavers, who save for periods of under six months, agree that a lot of *kavenga* throughout the year quickly dissolve their savings. This reinforces a prevalent perspective amongst Tongans that by spending on cultural and family obligations they are participating in their communities, which is another way to ensure social well-being and security. The respected Tongan concept of *fetokoni'aki*, meaning 'to help each other', is relied upon for reciprocal payments in the future. In this way cultural economy can easily supersede cash economy, and diminish any savings. Another way of seeing this is that stored value has shifted from cash to more long-term dependable social capital.



Graph 3: Length of time weavers saved in 2013. Source: C 'Ilaiu Talei

## 5.0 Key Findings

Investigating the transformative value of *kau tou lālanga* has revealed that economic, lifestyle, relational, and technical changes have occurred and certainly in positive directions. In answering the project's core objectives the following summaries are drawn from the key insights and wider discussion with participants.

### 5.1 Transformative value of *kau tou lālanga*

Initially this project had defined 'transformative value' as the potential to move away from an uncontrollable financial situation to a position where one can manage financial challenges with confidence. By asking a set of questions in the first survey about (a) motivations for joining a *kau tou lālanga* (b) understanding one's financial role in their family and (c) what one spends their profits or wages on, the survey attempted to shape an initial understanding about the

transformative value of *kau tou lālānga*. Preliminary findings show that paying childrens' education fees, maintaining one's home through utility bills, feeding dependents, donations to church offerings and supporting village fundraisers are reasons why participants weave and join *kau tou lālānga*. The three top reasons ranked in order are (1) to pay household utility bills, (2) to pay childrens' education, and (3) to make church donations.

After the first fieldtrip it became clear that the original definition was limiting of the emotional motivations of the weavers. For this reason the interviews of the second fieldtrip asked weavers why they chose to do this business and in other words what value they see in *kau tou lālānga*? Their responses certainly highlighted that it is not about creating a huge savings account but instead creating a sense of personal satisfaction when one has met the needs of their families. The outcome of providing therefore embeds value into what they do as weavers.

The third field trip allowed me to present back a summary of their responses. They were asked to vote yes or no if they agreed with this statement as accurately describing transformative value of *kau tou lālānga* and why they choose this business. All the weavers present at all presentations answered in confidence 'yes' to this statement of transformation. This is the Tongan version they heard:

*Koe mahu'inga 'oe pisinisi ko'eni kiate koe, 'oku 'ikai ke ma'u pe 'ae pa'anga ke fakamole 'atu pe ke malu'i, kā koe tu'unga ke faka fiemali'e fakapaanga ae ngaahi fiema'u vivili ho'o famili i he taimi 'oe fiema'u moe fiema'u kotoa pe. Koe fakatauataina fakakaukau mo faka ē loto mei he tu'unga lelei koeni 'oku lava ae pisinisi o vete ange kiate koe. Koe 'uhinga mahu'inga koeni 'oku ke fili ai ae ngaauē tou lalanga moe pisinisi fala.*

And translated into English:

*The transformative value of this business for you as a weaver is not about receiving money to spend or save, but being enabled to financially satisfy the needs of your family, at the time of need and every type of need. Importantly, it is from this position that you gain emotional and mental confidence. It is for this significant reason why you choose to weave and partake in the business of mats.*

## 5.2 Transformation of family roles

This study broadens our focus of transformations that take place because of the business of *kau tou lālanga*, such as socio-cultural changes in the role of weavers in their families. This is partly due to a historical movement away from subsistence farming and the sole dependence of villagers only on the agricultural exports of traditional cash crops such as bananas, copra and squash. Alongside with increasing popularity and favorable financial outcomes of women's weaving work. For these reasons, the role of the primary 'breadwinner' is shifting to the weaving women of the family. The parallel change is inevitable as the father or elderly male member of the family becomes a supportive business partner. His contribution begins with planting the pandanus plant, through to processing the raw materials and perhaps at the end, cleaning up the mat by cutting off loose strands with a small blade. These activities of growing, harvesting and processing raw materials for weaving unite the family as an entrepreneurial unit; even the children can assist as well. Traditionally, mats have been considered the woman's domain in Tongan society and it was shameful for a man to dabble in women's work. Evidently, the financial appeal of the business has normalized the dual gendered activity of making mats and has helped to remove the male shame of helping, especially when many hands do make the work easier. Undoubtedly, *kau tou lālanga* is changing the female weaver's role and consequently others in her family within the wider Tongan society.

## 5.3 Transformation of the 'making' of mats

Technological change is also happening in the actual 'making' of the mats. This has occurred over time, since many participants remember their grandmothers and mothers weaving in a *kau tou lālanga* setting and recall the differences. Some of the changes are: how much mat is woven in a day's work, the speed of work due to present-day tools and technology, the way work is timed during a day, and the overall aesthetic quality of work. It appears that earlier manufactures of the mat were less stringent on a weaver's contribution to the group's work. In earlier decades, one would weave between the working hours 8am to 5pm, and whatever she wove would be approvable or if the weaver happened to miss that day's work it was just dismissed. There were obvious loopholes in this way of working which, if applied to the current

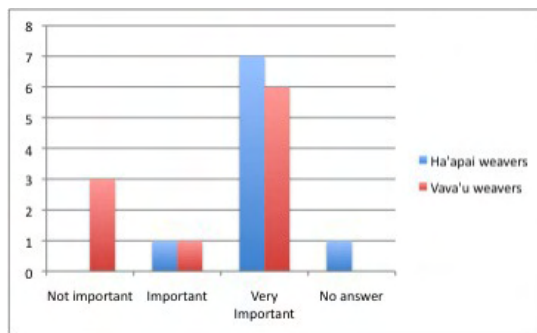


mode of working, would create a degree of conflict amongst the group members. It was also expressed that mats woven today used smaller strands of pandanus than earlier days. This claim is unsubstantiated, but possible since today there are steel tools that strip a pandanus leaf into many strands with one action, more efficiently than manually stripping each individual strand using an edge of a shell or bone. These modern stripping tools are currently sold at local markets for TOP\$10 each. Like commercial changes in other modernizing societies, business organizations have become more structured and there is a promotion of efficiency in production. Clearly, the driving force of such technological changes in *kau tou lālānga* today is the need to produce more within less time.

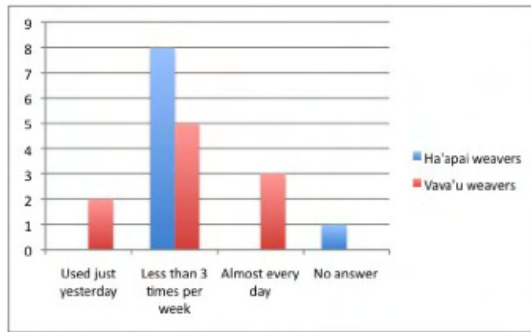
Another example of technical changes include the modern elements used in decorating such as fluoro-coloured wool and plastic ribbons, as mentioned earlier in the report. Finally, the age of one who weaves is also changing. The strong financial attraction to *kau tou lālānga* draws a younger population of female weavers, different from the aging members of earlier days. This latter transformation is culturally positive, and helps to self-perpetuate the tradition of weaving in Tonga.

### 5.4 Contribution of mobile phones and money transfer agencies

In order to understand the contribution of mobile phones and money transfer agencies to the transformative value of *kau tou lālānga*, a series of questions were asked regarding the importance of these technologies and their usage for business purposes. The following graphs depict the data collected.



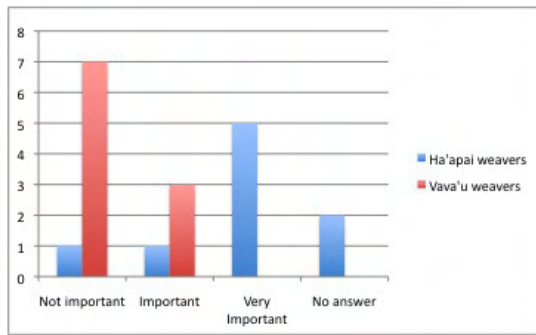
Graph 4: Importance of mobile phones to Ha'apai and Vava'u weavers. Source: C 'Ilaiu Talei



Graph 5: Usage of mobile phones by Ha'apai and Vava'u weavers. Source: C. 'Ilaiu Talei

Evidently, mobile phones are important to weavers. However, in Ha'apai most claimed to use their phones less than three times a week, whereas Vava'u weavers used their mobile phones almost daily. A potential reason could be that Ha'apai weavers live closer to their working spaces compared to those in Vava'u. Interview discussions highlighted that most mobile phone communications are between weavers locally rather than to customers. International communication is reserved for the *angi* or the trading agent, who are the only representatives speaking to customers. A generally held view amongst *angi* is that less communication with their customers is better because more talk can confuse the verbal contract and create problems. Thus, the *angi* will talk one to three times during the year with their head customer, often waiting on their overseas person to call, due to the cost of calling them.

It is interesting that many weavers and even those with *angi* positions did not carry a personal phone. Often they borrowed phones from their husbands or children. For the purposes of the study, it was difficult to make phone contact with weavers during the day. Phone calls to mobile phones and landlines were planned during the evenings or early mornings when weavers were at home and near other family members who held the mobile phone. Clearly, a mobile phone can be a shared item of a family, similar to how landlines are treated. Some participants explained new phones are too difficult to use and require the assistance of their children. They can only answer a phone call and do not know how to make a phone call or text. Evidently there is a technology knowledge gap for older members of collectives, who are also the leaders and decision-makers in the group. This gap delays business innovations like mobile money and the use of banking applications to facilitate transactions.



Graph 6: Importance of money transfer agencies to Ha'apai and Vava'u weavers. Source: C. 'Ilaiu Talei

Money exchange platforms were less important and less used than originally assumed. Those who do use this facility for business transactions were mainly the weavers from Ha'apai compared to Vava'u. In Ha'apai, a common way to secure a *kātoanga* negotiation was to initially exchange a mat for a portion of the agreed money from the overseas customer. Such an installment was sent via Western Union or Moneygram to weavers. Therefore this explains Ha'apai's higher usage of money exchange platforms than Vava'u. The very establishment of *kātoanga* negotiations stresses that weavers and customers alike still prefer to transact face-to-face, so customers can thoroughly check mats before closing a deal and weavers can count their money before releasing the mats. In this way money transfer agencies have not displaced the practice of *kātoanga*.

## 6.0 Discussion and Recommendations

This research crosses fields of social science, material culture, development studies and economics, providing an interesting case study that contributes in particular to theories of livelihoods and hybrid economies.

As Stephanie Collins (2004:4) explains 'livelihoods' theory grew out of participatory poverty analyses which examines diverse strategies and activities undertaken to make a living. Collins (ibid) draws on Chambers (1995) to explain livelihood:

*...livelihood refers to far more than income from employment. It includes intangible assets*

*such as claims that can be made for material or practical support on others or on the state, livelihood capabilities such as the capability to be in good health, and tangible assets such as shelter and income.*

In a similar vein, Tongan weavers have determined a livelihood beyond just making an income, which is the obvious tangible feature. *Kau tou lālanga* has merged with socio-cultural intangible assets of working together with family to make raw materials and participating in a community through spending (giving) money or mats away and relying on the cultural capital of future reciprocal returns. Western business sense would raise concerns over no real savings towards long-term goals and no sustainable increase of incomes, however diverse ‘survival’ strategies are activated through *kau tou lālanga* presenting a valid hybrid of capitalist and cultural economies.

There are two significant areas of further research and recommendations that have emerged from the findings: firstly, the issues around market sustainability of *kau tou lālanga*; and secondly, the need to calibrate mat prices to ensure they are fairly priced and match the increasing cost of living in Tonga today. Understanding the sustainability of the overseas market is vital to understanding the profitable future of *kau tou lālanga*. The current market consumers abroad are aging Tongan women who use these textile gifts to fulfil customary duties in their diasporic communities. However, anthropologist Helen M. Lee explains that second generation Tongans are distancing themselves from remittances sent to relatives back in Tonga. (2004: 236, 240). We would argue not on purpose, but hypothesize second and even first generation Tongans have been acculturated into dominant cultures of their new home-lands. Through this cultural change process, such Tongans can move away from a more relational or ‘dividual’ personhood to prioritize a more individualistic or ‘possessive’ personhood, combining two personhoods that are activated under different circumstances (Smith 2013; Appell-Warren 2014: 66-67). Thus, such socio-cultural changes can impact the traditions of gifting and *fetokoni’aki*. Revealing even more the precarious future of *kau tou lālanga*, especially if their *kātoanga* events are reliant on overseas customers ‘helping’ those back home. As a first generation New Zealand born Tongan woman, I would stress changes are also occurring in gifting customs as witnessed at our own family occasions. Envelopes of money and modern gifts

of mink or crochet blankets and duvets are replacing natural textile Tongan gifts. Surely alternative gifts will continue to emerge as the cultures of Pacific diaspora evolve. So will there be a demand for Tongan mats in the future? Understanding such changes in customer profiles and attitudes towards Tongan mats would be an area of attention for further research. Equally, research regarding customer diversification to understand where and how new markets can be opened locally and abroad.

Our second recommendation pertains to the huge differences in the pricing of mats, which can obstruct collectives from receiving a fair share of the market income; also to the unfair treatment towards weavers when customers pull out of deals or haggle below reasonable prices. Firstly, it is important for the *kau tou lālānga* of similar mat productions to assemble and allocate fixed minimum prices for each size of the mat. The Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industries could assist in convening and documenting such proceedings. A schedule of the reasonable prices for mats could help to fairly adjust the competition for a share of the market. Secondly, a standardized fair trade agreement could be established for use between *kau tou lālānga* and customers to foster an understanding of the work involved, what are the fixed prices for mats and an allowable reduction. These figures must be indexed and adjusted annually to follow an increase in living costs. The Tongan monarch and the Legislative Assembly of Tonga can support such changes with appropriate Acts of Parliament that enforce these controls. Additionally, equipping weavers with business skills such as negotiation techniques and budgeting and contract management may further increase productivity and profitability. In order to further develop these recommendations, further case study work and economic feasibility studies of the Tongan mat weaving industry would help..

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## 8.0 Appendices

Items attached are presented in their original formats in the following order:

- Appendix A Survey conducted during fieldwork 1 (English & Tongan versions)
- Appendix B In-depth interviews conducted during fieldwork 2 (English & Tongan versions)
- Appendix C Participant Information Sheet (English & Tongan versions)
- Appendix D Participant Consent Sheet (English & Tongan versions)
- Appendix E Presentation posters delivered at workshops during fieldwork 3 (Tongan version only)
- Appendix F Phone interview questions conducted from Brisbane (English&Tongan versions)