

FUTUNA

A NAME FOR MY ISLAND



Chrismaela MANUHAAPAI

English

Fiction

Blending legend and memory, this story takes us deep into a Pacific island where destinies intertwine, fade and carve themselves into wood and hearts.

Through the journey of a young sculptor, the tears of a king, and the gaze of a foreign visitor, a name is born—Futuna. Rooted in tradition and emotion, this tale is a tribute to origin, loss, creation and legacy.

This is a rewritten english version of my original work, first published in 2014 in the book "TOKU MOTU".

My goal is to share this story again with a wider audience.

A NAME FOR MY ISLAND

Cover and the illustration page 6 made by AI

Chrismaela MANUHAAPAI

English

MATA-UTU, HAHAKE, Wallis et Futuna

Copyright © 2025, Chrismaela MANUHAAPAI

[Needs Copyright](#)



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

You are free to make commercial use of this work. You may adapt and add to this work. You must keep the copyright and credits for authors, illustrators, etc.

Feel free to use the illustrations but do not use my story without my consent thanks !

This is a rewritten english version of my story publish in 2014

Chrismaela MANUHAAPAI

Chapter 1: The Death of the King

On an island lost in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there lived a king named Futu'itoga. He was a great leader, respected by his people, who affectionately called him “Futu.” One day, while his village was at war with a neighboring one, the king fell seriously ill. So he asked his youngest son, Vaa, to go in search of a cure on the island of Pulotu. The remedy came from a rare plant that grew only on certain lands in the Pacific. Healers had used it before during their visits to the island.

The next morning, as the sun began to rise, Vaa prepared his canoe and left without saying goodbye. After a week of sailing, he finally saw an island that matched the description his father had given him. At first glance, it looked deserted—even the animals seemed to avoid it. There was little to describe, except that its name suited it well: Pulotu, the island of demons. It looked like a cursed place, as if everything had been destroyed by an evil force. When he stepped onto the land, he saw only two nearly identical bushes behind a large rock. Not knowing which one to choose, he took a branch from each.

Back home, he learned that his father had died shortly after his departure, and that his three older brothers had been killed in battle. It was a great sacrifice that brought victory and earned the village's gratitude. Overcome with sadness, the young prince went to his father's grave and planted the two branches he had brought back.

Once the ceremonies honoring the dead were over, the village elders crowned Vaa as king. This decision made him both proud and anxious, because it was a heavy responsibility—and he was only 15 years old. He decided to expand the village and build more *falé* (traditional houses). He created a central square from which several paths would lead. Major construction work took place over the years, and the growing population seemed very happy with this prosperity. Vaa found a wife and together they had several children.

Chapter 2: The Young Sculptor

Twenty years passed in the calm of restored peace. Then, a grand wedding was organized: Vaa had given his daughter Vai—whose name means “water” in their native language—to the son of the neighboring chief, to seal a lasting alliance between their villages. For the occasion, a huge falé (traditional house) had to be built to welcome all the guests from both communities. As king, Vaa oversaw the construction. He decided to use the two trees that had grown over the years on his father’s grave. They had become very tall and he had them cut down and taken to the carpenter. But despite the length of the trunks, there was a mistake during the cutting: the logs were too short to reach the proper height for the new falé. Seeing no further use for them, the king ordered them to be thrown into the river near the cemetery and requested new ones.

A few days later, on a sunny afternoon while repairing his fishing nets, a young fisherman named Tunahagamaitai—better known as Tuna—saw two tree trunks floating on the river’s surface. He immediately decided to take them home. Passionate about sculpture since childhood, Tuna let his imagination run free and began working on the wood. From the first trunk, he carved a bowl resting on three legs. Once shaped, the wood revealed beautiful dark veins. From the second, he crafted an object with a long handle topped with a piece of flint. To avoid drawing attention from his neighbors, he carefully hid his creations under his bed in a woven polapola basket, keeping them safe from curious eyes. He was waiting for the right moment to offer them to the king.

Days went by, and preparations for the feast were well underway. That’s when the young sculptor heard about a stranger who had come from a distant land. He spoke a simple form of Futunian and was said to be there to “evangelize” the people. At that moment, he was staying with the king, exchanging ideas about the customs and traditions of the island. His name was Pierre Chanel.

When Tuna learned that a very important celebration would be held in the stranger's honor, he rushed home, took out his sculptures and polished them with care so they would shine. He wanted to present them to his king and to the foreign guest during the event.

Chapter 3: The Stranger Pierre

The big day had arrived. Tuna wrapped his creations in lau kape (yam leaves) and proudly walked toward the great falé. From afar, he could see the crowd. There was plenty of food laid out on mats: several pigs cooked in the ma'umu, three baskets overflowing with fish and chickens dripping with delicious juice! There were also all kinds of yams, taro, cassava, and breadfruit. In the center of the falé, he saw the king standing next to the stranger, Pierre Chanel, who wore flower and shell necklaces that covered half his face. Feeling a bit nervous, Tuna entered the falé. At that moment, all eyes turned toward him. He walked forward as proudly as he could and presented his sculptures to the king. Everyone was amazed by the beauty of the carvings. The pale-skinned guest remained silent. He didn't know what these strange objects were for. "Maybe they're offerings?" he wondered.

The king, curious, asked the young sculptor what the sculptures were meant for. Not knowing what to say, Tuna had to improvise! A few steps away, there were three kava plants. Tuna exclaimed loudly, "My king, this bowl will be used to prepare kava. I call this vessel the TANOVA. I offer it to you in honor of your greatness and your traditional chiefs. It will be used only for special occasions." The crowd applauded and congratulated him. The king nodded and turned to the second sculpture, again asking what it was for.

Just then, a great warrior entered and sat near the stranger. Tuna immediately walked toward the giant and declared, "This LOMU is a powerful weapon that can crush the skull of any enemy!" He placed the Tanoa in the center of the crowd, then handed the Lomu to the warrior, who spun it in his strong hand with delight.

The king, very intrigued by these objects, looked at them silently. They seemed familiar. “Tell me, Tuna, what kind of wood are these sculptures made from?”

“I don’t know, Your Majesty,” Tuna replied, a bit embarrassed. “I found two trunks floating near the mouth of the sea.”

“The mouth below the river that runs near the cemetery?”

“Yes... That’s right,” Tuna answered hesitantly.

“Very well! You did the right thing by retrieving that wood!” The king smiled at Tuna and shook his hands, tears in his eyes and full of gratitude.

“In the end, those plants did serve a purpose,” he thought to himself. Tuna didn’t dare ask the reason for such emotion.

The white man had watched the scene without being able to take part but he was enjoying the moment and appreciating all these new customs. The celebration lasted late into the night. Everyone was drunk, the women danced, and the children played outside.

Only Pierre Chanel remained sober.

Tuna was very proud of how popular his sculptures had become. As night fell, he decided to leave the party so he could be ready for the next morning—a day of abundant fishing. He left with a heavy heart.

Chapter 4: Futuna, My Island

The next morning, Tuna woke up early and prepared his canoe for the long-awaited fishing trip. He sailed far out to sea, hoping to catch enough big fish to offer half to the king and his guest, and keep the rest for himself and the village. He spent the whole day on the water and managed to catch four large tuna and seven smaller ones. As the sun slowly sank below the horizon, he decided to return home.

Back on the beach, he picked up the four big fish and headed toward the royal falé, his heart light. “What a great catch! What joy!” he thought. But as he reached the royal house, he heard men shouting and women crying in sorrow.

His eyes turned toward the falé where the stranger had been sleeping. He saw a crowd gathered at the entrance and ran toward it, still holding his fish. At the doorway, he saw the lifeless body of the white man—and next to him, the Lomu. It was only then that Tuna realized the weapon he had carved with his own hands had caused the missionary's death. Frozen by the scene before him, Tuna dropped the fish and collapsed in tears. He didn't understand what had happened, but he felt as if the stranger had died because of him. His heart tightened when he saw the Lomu stained with blood. Suddenly, he ran away like a madman, as far as he could. He didn't look back, afraid to see the scene again.

He rushed into his small falé and stayed there alone for a long time, forgetting both hunger and exhaustion. To him, it was all his fault—if he hadn't carved that weapon, none of this would have happened. To cope with Pierre Chanel's death, he decided to live far from his people unable to forgive himself for the tragedy. Since then, no one ever saw Tuna again. Some villagers said he had vanished, others believed he had drowned at sea.

And so, it was with the Tanoa that Pierre Chanel drank his final kava, and with the Lomu that he died shortly after.

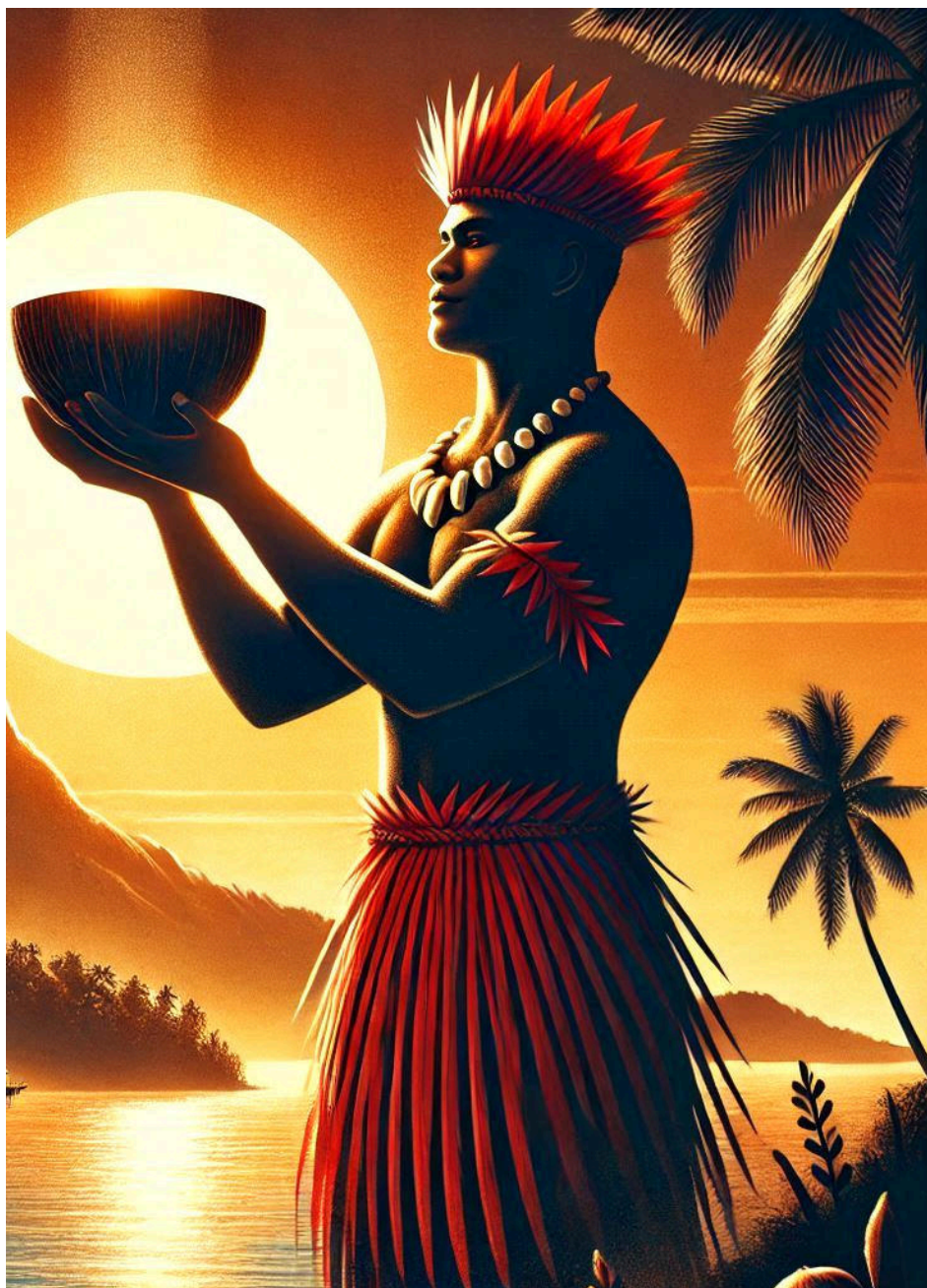
After his death, other foreigners arrived on the island.

Most of them were missionaries. Wanting to better understand the land, one of them asked King Vaa what the island was called.

Without hesitation, the king chose the name of his father, the former king Futu—whom he had never stopped mourning—and the name of the young fisherman Tuna, whose talent he had admired. He combined the two.

“FUTUNA!” he cried, raising a coconut shell filled with kava, paying tribute to the two men from his past.

And so, Futuna—Wallis's sister island and the name of my native island—appeared on the map of the Pacific.



On a remote island in the Pacific, a young prince rises from tragedy to become a visionary king. Years later, a gifted fisherman discovers two mysterious tree trunks drifting near the cemetery—wood that will shape his destiny and that of the island itself.

As a grand celebration unfolds, Tuna presents his handcrafted sculptures to the king and a foreign visitor, unaware that one of them will become the instrument of a shocking event. When the stranger is found dead, the island is thrown into grief, and Tuna disappears without a trace.

Who was this stranger? What secret did the wood carry? And how did this moment give birth to the name of an island now known across the ocean?

