

EATERS OF LONGHORN LARVAE

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In Fiji, Futuna, Niuafo'ou and Samoa large longhorn beetles of Olethrius spp. produce wood-boring grubs which are eaten with relish, as is the huhu grub of Prionoplus reticularis in New Zealand. In Niuafo'ou, these grubs are called afato or 'ofato, and are prized as a delicacy when the larva is fully grown and has stopped eating, preparatory to becoming a pupa. In NZ, the cognate word awhato is given to 'vegetable caterpillars', the larvae of Porina spp. invaded by Cordyceps fungus.

This pop song was composed by Kitione Mamata, a Tongan Wireless operator, during a term of service in Niuafo'ou. It was sung at kava parties by the Malua-o-Vailahi group.

'OFATO

'Ofato ko e mafi 'ofato totolo
Ka foto 'o ka soso
'Eke 'e ha sola ko si'ene fie'ilo
Fanongo he hake pea mo e hifo
'I si'ono 'eke'i holo pē ko e hā hono ifo
Tama 'oua e pehe'i si'oto kakala manako.

'Ofato afenga 'o si'ete faka'aho
Tu' he la'a tu'u he hako
Ke toli mo fili hao manako 'ene anganofa he taulalo
Viki e lelei fakama'unga ki ai 'ete manako
Taha'i kuonga ne lato he foaki 'a e taumama'o
Pohopoho lava, ko ia koa ho fakamalo?

'Ofato hingoa 'o si'ete sia ngako
'Efinga si'ete 'ilo
Pitenga si'oto ifo, pununga'anga 'o e manako
'Ofa loto 'i si'oto mahu he 'ikai ngalo
Fiu hono kumi holo, ta na'a te tuku 'i loto
Ki si'ete kopate malu ko e 'akau popo he vao

Kitione Mamata, 1967

And the English translation by Wendy Pond -

'Ofato, the champion creeping grub
Appearing amongst crowds
The inquisitive visitor wants to know,
Having heard in the comings and goings
Having asked around, what does it taste like?
Fellow, don't mention my favourite grub.

'Ofato, my diversion at luncheon
Be it fine, be it windy
Take your pick from its compliant lowly haunt
Praise its excellence, the mainstay of my craving
Each generation was satisfied with God's creation
Goodness gracious, was that His gift?

'Ofato, my jar of dripping
My hamper of food
Metropolis of my taste, nest of desire
From love of plenitude, never forgotten
Fed up with searching? Look! I left it here inside
My coolsafe, the bush-felled rotten wood.