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# Monumentality and the Chiefly Sport of Pigeon Snaring in the Dynastic Tongan Chieftdom

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## Résumé

The Tongan dynastic chieftdom was among the most complex in Polynesia, arguably bordering on the level of an archaic state, and extending across an archipelago of 169 islands. Beginning AD 900, this complex and emerging socio-political configuration is reproduced on the landscape through administrative centres, sepulchral architecture, chiefly bathing wells and other monumental features identifying rank and privilege. By no later than AD 1450 the suite of markers incorporates large flat-topped mounds with central depressions for the chiefly sport of pigeon snaring. Previous archaeological study has identified and mapped several of these mounds across multiple islands in the central Ha'apai island group. Some are substantial investments of labour, the largest measuring 52 m diameter across at its base, 7 m high and with upwards of 9000 m<sup>3</sup> of fill in its construction as well as large beach rock slab retaining walls and access ramps. Early historic accounts and traditional histories provide insight into the sport and its importance as a chiefly endeavor. Recently available LiDAR data provides new insight into the distribution and nature of these mounds as they occur on the southern island of Tongatapu, the administrative centre for Tonga's paramount chiefs. Comparative analyses of the Ha'apai and Tongatapu data sets facilitates discussion of monumentality, privileged behaviors and our abilities to read socio-political complexity and its scale on the Tongan landscape.

**Mots-Clés:** field monuments, chieftdom, LiDAR, social reproduction, chiefly sport, Polynesia, Tonga

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