

WORLD MUSIC

TONGA

WD-TO1 United Kingdom 1976

PEKA (THE FLYING FOXES)

WD – Ethnic – Vocal – Bat Sounds

Comp: FELETOA

Perf: **KOLOVAI FREE WESLEYAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Prod. Co: Tangent Records; London

Rec. Eng: Lavinia 'A. Finau

Liner Notes: Lavinia 'A. Finau

Time: 2:01

LP: MUSIC FROM TONGA – THE FRIENDLY ISLANDS

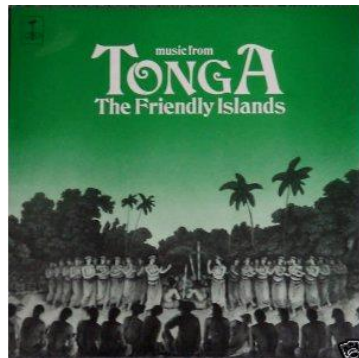
Tangent TGM 122 (mono) (DOC-RBB#)

12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 1)

Notes: The large fruits bats (*Pteropus tonganus*) honored in this song are not cave bats. They roost in trees during the day.



The village of Kolovai, where this song originates, is located in the northwestern peninsula of Tongatapu Island in the Tonga Archipelago. Here there is a Flying Fox Sanctuary where these bats are "tapu" (sacred) despite the enormous damage they do to fruit plantations. In Tonga only members of the royal family are allowed to hunt them. Elsewhere in the South Pacific, the islanders often eat them. (Swaney 1990)



The liner notes tell the story – “At the centre of the village of Kolovai you will see the ‘flying foxes’ (fruit bats) and as described by Thomson ‘thousands upon thousands hang there from their hind claws, sleeping, crawling, squealing, quarrelling, stretching their uncanny sails, and scratching their light brown heads with a winged claw. They are taboo despite the immense damage they do to the plantations. They can only be hunted by the Royal Family. At sunset half go away to feed, while the others keep guard during their absence, but they never fail to come back about midnight to take their turn of sentry duty.’

The last flock flies in the morning and its function is to wake up the children for school and those who go to work in town. It is an extraordinary fact that whenever an albino flying-fox is seen, it is, alas, to forewarn the forthcoming death of a chiefly-born person.” (Liner notes)

The children’s choral sings a couple of stanzas then we hear the audible clicking sounds of bats. The choral returns with another stanza and some slow mournful verses. Then more clicking sounds, the choral singing again, the clicking sounds, some final sad-sounding verses followed by the clicking sounds which fade out. Unfortunately we don’t have the transcribed lyrics.

Ref: Grant, Gilbert S. 1996, Kingdom of Tonga: Safe Haven for Flying Foxes, *Bats Magazine*, v. 14, n. 2, Summer 1996, batcon

Music from Tonga – The Friendly Islands, Amazon

Swaney, Deanna 1990, *Tonga*, Lonely Planet, p. 87