

SAMOAN VALUES

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Christians inherited from the Hebrews the thesis of Creation. God created the first man who was Adam and subsequently, out of one of his ribs, God created the first woman, who was Eve. God designated Adam and Eve the Garden of Eden on one condition; they shall not eat the fruit of the apple tree. The Devil in the form of a snake tempted Eve who succumbed and induced Adam the husband to share with her the forbidden fruit. Shortly after, God sought them out; they tried to hide. Part of the hiding was covering themselves in fig leaves.

In the Samoan version of Creation, there is no Adam and Eve. There is no Eden and no tempting snake. There is no forbidden apple and no camouflage of fig leaves. In the Samoan version, God is the progenitor of man. Man is therefore God descended. There were marital links with the Sun, the Moon, the Seas, the Rocks and the Earth from which eventually issued Man.

In Hebrew belief Man is God-created and is the principal, in God's creation. The Earth, the Seas and the Skies support and supplement Man, the principal.

In Samoan belief, even though man is God-descended, he is not the principal. Man shares descent and divinity with the Sun, the Moon, the Stars and the Earth.

In Christian belief, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, are co-equal entities in a single divinity. In Samoan belief, the Sun is a divinity, as are the Stars, the Moon, the Rocks, the Earth and Man.

In Hebrew/Christian belief, there are two principal boundaries: the boundary between God and Man and the boundary between Man and Man. (*I am using the word 'boundary' in the Samoan sense of rules governing relationships.*) These two boundaries are the reference points of law and good governance. In Samoan belief, the boundary between Man and Sun is 'tapu' as is the boundary between Man and the Moon, Man and Wind and Earthquakes, Man and the Seas, Man and the Earth, Man and Man. It is 'tapu' because they share descent and divinity.

When you carve a kava bowl, the trunk of the tree has to be restored to its original site and then covered in leaves in observance of the *tapu* of Manuvao (the god of the forest) lest the structure of the *tanoa* fails or breaks.

When you cut a tree, the word is *oia* for the purpose of constructing a house, double canoe or a canoe, you have to ask the indulgence of the gods of the forest lest a curse fall on your construction. I am using the word *oia*, which derives from the word *oi*, meaning to cry in pain. Presupposing the tree suffers pain, and possesses *agaga* or soul.

The daily schedule is regulated by the *mana* of the sun. Thus the word *itula* meaning the 'side of the sun'. We built coral formations like *haamonga* in Tonga or wood structures by which time was measured by the shadow it casts. The shadow ends where sunshine begins and where sunshine begins is what is referred to as the 'side of the sun' or *itu o le la*. This determines time of the day.

The phases of the Moon determines when, what and how to fish. The Stars guide our double-hulled canoes to various points in the Polynesian triangle. *Tonga* is a landmark. *Tonga* in Samoan, is south. *Rarotonga* is further south.

A woman's *placenta* is buried ritually in the earth, as is the umbilical cord. The umbilical cord of a child of the fishing guild is ritually thrown to the sea accompanied by chant. Another word for blood is *palapala* (mud) or *eleele* (earth). These are some of the core symbols of the Samoan religious culture, which underlines intertwining links between man and earth, man and the sea, man and the sun and the moon and the stars.

The Hebrews believe that Adam and Eve's breach of God's prescription is serious and Christians' views diverge on the implications of this breach. According to Catholic belief, *original sin* originates from this breach and is shared by all Adam and Eves' descendants. Protestant belief is that you are accountable for your own sins and not for the sins of your original parents. Calvin asserted that there is original sin in that Man's nature inclines towards sin. But there is no original sin in the sense of descendants sharing guilt with the original man and woman.

There is no concept of *original sin* in Samoan religious culture. Man lives by what was weaned from Tagaloa and the family of sa Tagaloa eg. kava, fire, chicken. Or, what was conceded by Tagaloa and the family of sa Tagaloa when they were defeated by Lu. Lu was the leader of the mortals in the war against the celestials. In the death of a chief, we chant:

Tulouna a le lagi!
(My respects to the heavens!)

Thus celebrating the victory of Lu over the family of Sa Tagaloa, or the victory of the mortals over the celestials. If you analyse the chants and the dramatics in the *auala* or the funeral rites, the mortals are challenging the celestials. The essence is: Even though you take a life away, so long as I have the power to reproduce, I am still one up on you.

Take the *auala* or funeral rites of Salelesi, a village in the Atua district. There is a human formation symbolising a boat. The three main factors in the formation are the *tu foemua*, the man in front with the paddle, the man in the middle, the *taliu*, and the man at the back with a paddle known as the *tu foemuli*. As the boat moves along, the front paddle begins the chant: *Ina soso atu ia i lalo o le 'aute, o loo iai le toeaina ma le loomatua. Tiususu!* Meaning, let us proceed to the 'aute tree under which is the old man and the old woman. As they chant, the man at the rear paddle, performs with the paddle what symbolises the sexual act. At a certain point, the front paddle (*tu foemua*) calls out: "We have struck an obstacle!" Then he calls to the *taliu*: "The boat is leaking!"

For approximately twelve hours, the *taliu* has drunk only water and abstained from food. His role is twofold. Firstly, he fills the coconut shells or containers with piss and when the front paddle calls: "The boat is leaking!" he goes through a motion of clearing water from the boat and then sprinkles his piss on the crew.

The boat symbolises that life is a journey. The temporary obstacle struck is death. The old woman and the old man under the 'aute tree and the rear paddle's performance with the paddle, represent Man's power to reproduce. The sprinkling with piss represents semen as the water of life.

There is nothing in the ritual, which reflects deference or repentance. For indeed Man is parlaying with his progenitor and equal, Tagaloa and Sa Tagaloa.

The ritual challenges and taunts the gods by celebrating life. The principal objective is to underline a fundamental truth, that life and death is one and equal. So that you accept death by celebrating life. Life equates with death and mourning is inimical. For death is not an abyss but a mere boundary between the mortals and their forbears in the heavens.

Much of our religious culture and our spiritual reference points have been affected by the concept of original sin and the fig leaf. The fig leaf syndrome symbolises covering of what needs to be hidden. In Samoan religious culture, man's private parts are not for hiding, for it is the essence and pinnacle of existence. The high point in a *poula* (night festivities) which is much condemned by missionaries is where the participants throw off the *titi* and the *siapo* or in the *auala* where people celebrate the human form, as according to Samoan culture, men and women are clothed if they are tattooed. The tattoo was never meant to be hidden. It was meant to be displayed. If you look carefully at the Samoan tattoo you will discern the obvious. The tattoo was intended to celebrate and sanctify the private part of man.

When I read the missionaries' condemning tones about the *poula*, my mind reverts to Calvin: "There is original sin in that Man's nature inclines towards sin". And Macaulay, who says: "The Puritan is opposed to bear-baiting, not because of the pain endured by the bear but because of the pleasure enjoyed by the spectators." I detect a note of envy in the joy of the revellers in a *poula*.

Much of the rituals in our funeral rites is lost because of missionary influence. As well our marriage rites. Each village in Samoa has a marriage chant. For many villages, if you ask the villagers to chant their marriage chant, they can't, it is lost. Due mainly to missionary prejudice, because once you chant:

*Palapu e faatu lou i'u
Ua lata mai lou mata i aitu?*

Palapu is the god of love so you chant:

(Palapu e, get your prick up
For soon you will have a privileged view)

The missionary interpose: "Enough! It is pagan!" As a result, we lose the ritual, the poetry and the drama. Even the great etymologist Pratt translates into Latin when his delicate sensitivities are affected. I have always been intrigued why Pratt succumbs to Latin. Are the crudities of pagan culture more translatable in Latin or is he deliberately trying to restrict readership?

The missionary preoccupation with the fig leaf syndrome, imposed a dress code which is unsuitable to climate and health. I am referring to coats and ties. They are unsuitable for the tropics. For the elderly, it is an awesome chore, which causes them to sweat profusely. And when dispensed of the coat and tie, they become vulnerable to colds and worse. And we persevere with coats and ties in the mistaken belief that without, we are discourteous to God and fellow man. It is high time that we design a dress code suitable to the tropics. Who knows, the missionaries might have insisted on the coat and tie to conceal the body lest it succumb in Calvin's words: "to the inclination to sin". For this penchant to conceal, we are condemned to wear a coat and tie, defying nature and common sense. It betrays a mind that is still colonised by missionary prejudice.

In Catholic catechism, the good man dies and heads for Heaven, where he joins God, the angels and the Saints. Those who die unbaptised are relegated to limbo. Those who die and tainted by venial sins are purged in Purgatory before entering Heaven. The damned are condemned to Hell. Some Christian sects reject limbo and purgatory.

In Samoan religious culture, there are those who are deified after death like *Savea Siuleo* and *Nafamua*. Others rise to *heaven* to become a star like *Tapuitea*. Others pass through the eastern most point called the *Fafā* on their way to *Pulotu*. Others transform into mountains, like *Vaea*, while some transform into stone formation. Others become owls and herons like the children of *Tui Manu'a*. The owl is the manifestation of divinity in *Saleimoa* and the heron is the manifestation of divinity in *Manono*. The *octopus* is a sacred fish for some villages because the *octopus* is the progenitor of the octopus (*Fe'e*) family in *Pulotu*.

Samoa religious culture does not condescend to the *sun*, the *stars* and the *moon*. Nor the *mountain*, the *rock* nor the *earth*. Nor the *owl*, the *heron* nor the *snipe*. Nor the *lizard* nor the *gecko*. Nor the *fish* in the sea.

I'll use the fish to illustrate my point.

Tagaloa and sa Tagaloa fished Manu'a out of the sea, very much like Maui fishing Aotearoa out of the sea. The *tapu* relationship between man and fish is expressed by the word *faa-tamasoalii* – chiefly language for fishing, literally meaning seeking after the chief's aide.

In mythology, there are times where man is the chief and the fish is the aide. And there are times where the roles are reversed. For instance, where a man was drawn by a turtle from Salailua in Savaii to Falefa in Upolu from which originates the titles *Alai'asa* and *Savaiinaea* meaning the passage of the sacred fish and the Savaii man who rose from the sea: the turtle is the principal and the man is the aide. In the legend where Sina turns into a shark and her mother into a turtle, there is no separation

between chief and aide because the daughter becomes a shark and the mother becomes the turtle. Some years ago *Readers Digest* carried the story of the phenomenon of the fish and the turtle who appear in the village of Vaitogi, Tutuila when people chant:

Laumei faiaga, faasusu si au tama

Meaning

Turtle, slack and slow, suckle your baby

The inheritance of the villages in the district of Atua derives from the distribution of the portions of fish. The portions of fish is the equivalent of *manna* in communion possessing spiritual and a moral content, establishing inheritance, legacy and heritage.

The origins of the Word *faa-tamasoalii* meaning fishing and *tamasoalii* meaning the chiefs aide.

The Skull from Salega possessing supernatural powers brought back to life the daughter of Tui Fiti who was visting Samoa by restoring her soul which had been stolen by one of the Tui Fiti's wizards. In gratitude the Tui Fiti returned to Fiji and commanded his retainers: "Take these fish to Samoa i.e. *anae* (mullet), *atule* (mackerel) *manini*, and whichever chief receives you well, gift them a fish which will be an aide to the chief. Thus, the word *tamasoalii* the man who is the aide of the chief and fishing or *faatamasoalii* meaning to seek after the man who is the aide of the chief. And thus the *anae* (mullet) of Pu'apu'a, *atule* (mackerel) of Asau and the *manini* of Auala. I am citing only the villages, which I am referring to in this paper; there are other villages similarly endowed.

In Pu'apu'a the chief *Taala* who received the Tui Fiti's delegation with ill grace is penalised up to this day. He has to go out in the sun and stand at a point in the coral reef and welcome the school of mullet by waving a white fan (*ili tea*). Lemalu, who received the Tui Fiti's delegation generously, awaits the coming of the mullet on dry ground.

Evidence given by Fao Avau regarding the coming of the atule (mackerel) of Asau.

When the small fish known as the *fa* appears, the people will say that the *tamasoalii* (the man who is the chief's aide) is about to rise. The *tautai* or the head fisherman consults with his gods about when to receive the *tamasoalii*. On the appointed day, the head fisherman and the *aiga tautai* (fishing guild) proceed to a point known as *Maluafiti* in *Utulooa*. *Utulooa* is a sub village of *Asau*. *Maluafiti* means the endowment from Fiji, recognising the origin of the *tamasoalii*. At this point, they light a fire from carefully selected wood. The fire burns throughout the night, until the mackerel is formally received. Throughout the day, the *tautai* (head fisherman), the *aiga tautai* (fishing guild) abstain from food and special food is prepared to break their fast. Banana leaves are heated to form wrappings for taro and bananas soaked in coconut cream and baked in *umu*. The taro skins are collected, taken in baskets and thrown

into the rear end of the fishing net, which was laid early in the morning. Before midnight, the head fisherman and the fishing guild break their fast.

Early in the morning, the head fisherman on his own, paddles his canoe to what is known as the *ava o atule* or the entry of the mackerel. He addresses the school of mackerel in chiefly language:

Afio maia oe le manaia
(I welcome you the manaia)
Manaia is the honorific for the head
of the untitled men's group

Afio maia oe le tausala
(I welcome you the *tausala*)
tausala is the honorific for the belle of the villages ladies' group

O lea ua talisoa le aiga o Tautai
ma le au taliuta
(The fishing guild and the village await you)

O loo faatali Aiga ma Salafi ma lo latou maopu
(The village of Asau (honorifics) await you)

Afio mai oe le tamasoalii
(I welcome you, the man who is the aide of the chief)

The mackerel heed the call of the *Tautai* (head fisherman) and proceed to the *Tautai*'s canoe and accompany him to the net, which is laid close to shore.

This is the high point in the head fisherman's spiritual culture representing a mystical union between Man and Nature. This is the ultimate in harmony and is celebrated by the proverbs: *O le i'a a le tautai e alu i le faalolo*. (The *tautai*'s fish defers to his will.)

As the *tautai* and the school of fish move towards the shore, the fishing guild and the reception party chant:

Afio maia oe le manaia e
Afio maia oe le tausala e
O loo talisoa lou nu'u ma lou aiga

(I welcome you the manaia
I welcome you the *tausala*
Your village and family await you)

When the head fisherman is close to the net, he calls out:

Ia solia a faufau!
Logo i taiao! Ae 'aue ne'i leua lau o le fo!
Aua uputuu mai anamua ma le igaga to!

Translation: The head fisherman instructs to stop the chanting and each section of the fishing guild to attend to their individual tasks; exhorting them to bear in mind that this is no ordinary chore, that it is part of their heritage from time immemorial.

When the fish is distributed, the first portions go to the *tautai*, the head fisherman and the fishing guild. Then the fish is divided equally among matai, women and children. There is also *tapu* in the baking of the fish. Cooking is a ritual. No untattooed man is allowed to bake. The dress code is flowers in both ears, and '*ula* (necklace) and *titi* (skirt) and crown of flowers or banana leaves.

The following is the evidence of Pupu Luki of Fagafau about fishing for sharks

We left our village at about eleven at night. We proceeded beyond the reef to the open sea (*moana*). The night was calm but dark. After rowing for about an hour, I began to use my shark rattle. The shark rattle is made of coconut shells slotted into an orange tree stick with a holding bend at the end. I put it down into the sea and twist it around to make the sound or the noise similar to the movement of *bonito*.

At this point I began to address the shark with the traditional chant:

Afio maia oe le manaia
(I welcome you the manaia)

Afio maia oe le tausala
(I welcome you the tausala)

Afio maia oe le tamasoaalii
O loo ou faatali atu
(I welcome you the *tamasoaalii*
I await your coming)

I address the shark as if it was a formal gathering of *aualuma* (group of ladies) and *aumaga* (group of untitled men). Then I saw a shark approaching us. So I addressed it in soothing language.

Afio maia ua manaia le ele o
le savili i lou seese mai
(Welcome! The wind is in tune with your passage).

The fish came and began to circle our canoe and we noticed it was very big. The fish took a while in circling our canoe, so I turned to my companion and said:

“Look here! The fish is not coming. It means you are afraid. You must be brave.”

My companion replied: “Yes I am afraid! The fish is so big and our canoe is small!” And I said: “You must be brave. God has given us this fish. You must be brave because I am going to put the noose around the shark.”

Then I turned and addressed the fish formally:

*Ua mae'a on laolao le va o a'u ma le soa
Afi'o maia oe le manaia
Afi'o maia oe le tausala
E le vale sou tali
O le a ou faatali atu*

(I have sorted out the problem with my companion
And now I welcome you the manaia
I welcome you the tausala
You will be given due recognition
And I await you!)

As if deferring to courtesy, the fish approached me and I carefully put the noose around its neck and tightened the noose and allowed the fish to swim away. I instructed my companion to hold steady with his paddle because sometimes sharks will take a dive taking the canoe under with it.

Fortunately for us, the shark kept close to the surface and for about three hours, led us on a joy ride. At one point the shark stopped moving and I gave the rope a short pull and the shark surged forward and I let go. There was a repeat of this performance a second time. On the third time, when I pulled, there was no resistance and the fish slid gently towards the canoe. I drove it to the side of the outrigger, then hauled up its head while my companion struck its head with a club about six times and I then tied its head to the outrigger, and began to row towards the shore.

When we entered the reef, it was still dark although dawn was breaking. Because our catch was a *naiufi* acknowledged as a sacred fish, we were bound to observe protocol. We had to wait until dawn and the village people to waken. When we saw people moving, we then began the ritual. My companion gave the victory yell, jumped up and threw himself into the sea. I stood up and began to twirl my paddle. People began to gather in the foreshore and there was chanting:

*Oi le manaia e
Oi le tausala e
Oi le manaia e
Ua a'e i fanua e
Mua ia ina mua!*

(Behold the manaia
Behold the tausala
Behold the manaia
who will tread on our land
Let us chant this first, for indeed
he is first in my consideration)

*Oi Luki e le manaia
 Oi Luki e o le tautai e
 Oi le alii o le tautai e
 Mua ia ina mua!*

(Behold Luki the manaia
 Behold Luki the master fisherman
 Behold the chief of the seas
 Mua ia ina mua!)

Wooden and tin drums were struck with stones and sticks. There was lolling of the eyes, flailing of the hands and general exultation. These are all features of the protocol welcoming the master fisherman who has caught the sacred fish.

When the fish is pulled to shore, someone covered the fish with a fine mat and the master fisherman and his companion were presented with fine mats. The fish is taken to the chief's house for distribution and the master fisherman and his companion are escorted to their homes. Again there is a dress code when cooking the sacred *naiufi*. Men must be tattooed, wearing a crown of leaves or flowers, flowers on both ears and *'ula* (necklace) and garbed in skirts of *ti* or banana leaves.

Breaching the protocols of courtesy invites retribution. For example, from a storm or a man-eating shark.

The mullet of Pu'apu'a and the mackerel of Asau have *teva* – meaning, have withdrawn in distress or in a huff. People attribute this to breach of *tapu*. For example, the use of dynamite and the poisonous crushed *ava niu kini* root. While the *tapu* was observed, fish was plentiful. *Tapu* imposed by the head fisherman or the fisherman's guild, were secured by the severest penalties.

When I was a toddler round about 1947/1948 I used to visit an uncle who resided in Vaialua. Within an hour of fishing, the fishermen would bring in sacks full of crayfish. Nowadays, you have to go beyond the reef to catch crayfish.

There are no strict protocols in Christian ethic governing conduct while fishing for the sacred *naiufi*, or where you welcome the *naiufi* as if it was a revered guest. There is no formal courtesy extended to the catch on a British Japanese or Italian fishing vessel. There is no dress code in cooking which implies that the fish is a gift of Tui Fiti or an endowment from Tagaloa. Nor is there an eating regimen in Western culture which recognises that fish is manna from the gods.

The fish *anae*, *atule*, *naiufi* is acknowledged as the *manaia*, the *tausala*, the *tamasoaalii*. A fine mat is ceremoniously presented to cover the *naiufi* when it lands on shore.

Luki is congratulated because he as *manaia* of the land has overcome the *naiufi* who is the *manaia* of the sea.

The fish is welcomed with joy and gratitude. Gratitude for the fish's courtesy and consideration and gratitude for the gods' benevolence.

If you want insight into the two religious cultures, then imagine someone buying shark meat from the market and brings it home. After cooking, the shark meat is laid on the table with all the trimmings and then grace:

*Bless us O Lord for these thy gifts
Which we are about to receive
Through thy goodness. Amen.*

Compare this rendering with the joy, verve, and panache with which the people of Salega welcome the chief's aide or *tamasoaalii*:

*Oi le manaia e
Oi le tausala e
Oi le manaia e
Ua a'e i fanua e
Mua ia ina mua!*

*(O the manaia e
O the tausala e
O the manaia e
who will grace our land
Mua ia ina mua!)*

Soifua