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# Tapua'i – Samoan Worship

Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa

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Thesis Review  
Prof. Lau A. So'o

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By Tamari Mulitalo-Cheung

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## **TITLE OF THESIS : Tapua'i –Samoan Worship**

Author “ Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa

### **Summary :**

Aiono-Le Tagaloa starts her thesis by giving the backdrop of London missionary conversion where street volunteers and families were involved in the campaign to convert Pacific islands. Though many a missionary may be credited with good intentions, there were people like “William Ellis” who never hid his hostility towards indigenous cultures and vowed to “utterly reform their pathological condition of life”.<sup>1</sup> Despite his efforts remnants of old religions exist in Tahiti where he was, and other islands of the Pacific except Samoa. Aiono-Le Tagaloa states however that though part might be gone, there is a bit of the past lingering as in the *fono ma aitu* or the meeting between the spirits of those alive and those of dead ancestors.

She admits that since her research is delving into the supernatural therefore it is going into an area that might not be considered true history but since spiritual worldview permeates contemporary culture as it did in the past, therefore she was inclined to a dissertation that was both intellectual and religious.

She divides her thesis into three main chapters namely 1) *Solo le Va* dealing with the Samoan Cosmogony, 2) *Ola, Aitu, Maui* –the inner person, 3) *Fa'amalama, Alofisa* –Forms of Worship. Perhaps as this research also identified the origins of her name Aiono Le Tagaloa decided to go this route in this research. A different person would have tackled it a different way. For constraints of time (or maybe an area for future research, there be some research into worship unto family deities. Aiono-Le Tagaloa acknowledges her rise to the call to write about her *faasinomaga* as the responsibility (albeit a belated one) of a Samoan student of History and “not an exercise in positive discrimination or idealized action”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 2

<sup>2</sup> Page 6

### *Solo o le Va-the creation story*

She entitles the first chapter “Solo o le Va” which is particular to Manu’a but includes other creative and genealogical accounts. An extensive description of the word *va* is also given. An account of the genealogical creation of living things and humans is given in “The Ancestor of Earth and Man”.

She defines “*va*” as first of all, the relationship between the Creator and the created explaining that “it is this *va* that is expressed in the imperative, directing the created-person to make a spiritual connection with the Creator in the act of *Tapua ’i*-Worship. Between Creator and created and between all of Creation is the *Va*”.

In other words the writer seems to be saying that the *va* glues together the different levels of *va* between the created and creator and between created and other created beings. It lives on even after the missionaries arrived with Christianity. In particular *va* is pervasive as ever whether on island or for those residing overseas:

*Va* is relationship, connection, affiliation, boundaries, difference, separation, space, distance, responsibility, obligation, state of being, position, standing and so much more<sup>3</sup>.

Aiono’s definition is her contribution to the literature on *va* however examples would have been appreciated. She goes on to say that there are many different cosmogonic accounts of which she knows six. However she does not relate what they are diverting instead to talk about two types of cosmogony accounts Professor B Dixon talks about, namely : the evolutionary or genealogical one. The latter involves a superhuman being creating the universe while the former where one involves the birthing of generation by others.

One of the things I appreciated very much was her explanation of the concept of *fesili*<sup>4</sup> where for the outsider researcher coming in, they might have difficulty in getting it but as two examples show “no Samoan will refuse point blankly to answer a question but it is how it is phrased. She

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<sup>3</sup> Page 8

<sup>4</sup> Pp12-17

makes mention of Mead's question on a topic that was taboo and uncomfortable for her informants who made up stories to satisfy her.

This reminds me of a story my professor James Ritchie (Te Whare Wananga o Waikato) related one day in class –a Samoan girl was raped and stood for cross examination. When she was asked questions about her private parts in front of her family she started to giggle. The court questioned her credibility based on her reaction. Here the inappropriate approach goes against cultural upbringing and allowed a man walk free when he should have been behind bars.

In her book “*La Ta Gagana*” written in the vernacular, Professor Aiono Dr.Fanaafi Le Tagaloa states the problem of *fesili/question* in English by saying that is :

*E tu'u sa'o a latou fesili ...e lē afeifeia pe fa'ataamilo/ is given directly ... neither in the form of a euphemism nor in a trip around the bush. (my interpretation)*

Therein lies the danger because a Samoan applies va in asking and does so mostly in an indirect matter and in an apologetic way. Hence the idea that it is brutish and rude to ask a person straight up especially something personal.

Professor Aiono Dr.Fanaafi Le Tagaloa makes mention of the difficult first years of getting educated overseas where instructors asked her questions about pertinent issues that her parents never taught her to pursue :

*e le'i naunau o'u matua e fai i ai ni o'u manatu, e leai fo'i se faafailelega na fai e ou matua ina ia fai sau folasaga ma felafolafoai i nofoaga faitete i mataupu ia /my parents did not want me to comment on, and never nurtured me to respond to in public places”<sup>5</sup>*

An interesting example the professor brings up is the difficulty in asking straight up for someone's name. She recalls that even a teacher would ask a neighbor for the name of a girl next to them :

*E seasea fesili sa'o le faiaoga i le teine o lo o ona fia iloa le igoa. O le masani o le fesili i le isi teine o le vasega “[Po] o ai le igoa o le teine”. (m.t)\*<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Le Tagaloa, A.F, 2005 *La Ta Gagana*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Samoa: Lamepa Press

<sup>6</sup> Page 74. M.t=my translation

On other example of the difficulty of answering a straightforward question as such discussed by the professor was during WWII at the time the American marines had a base in Faleolo. When the marines asked the local girls for their names, they would give them made up names. Many ended up having English names like “Mary, Nancy and Alice”<sup>7</sup>.

In the wake of a low pass rate in the 1990s, I was assigned by the government Office of Information and Public Relations to interview a certain leader about some exam results. Having being taught as a journalist then to ask lighter questions before the main ones in such a situation, I had my start up questions lined up before asking the inevitable. As it was, the interviewee was busy for some time and I was finally allotted a brief space to field my questions. Hence most of the “beating around the bush questions” were left out and the main ones about the failure rate were asked early. I was told later that the leader dreaded any more interviews from me because of the too direct approach. Perhaps the subject matter didn’t help make the leader any more comfortable.

Perhaps slightly off the subject but interesting nonetheless, was the approach of who does the questions. A former Public Relations officer and Editor of the government publication Savali, who was quite aware of the sensitivity of probing questions, also chose particular people to ask those questions. Hence in our news rounds, I and other female colleagues were mostly assigned to interview the opposite sex and vice versa for our male counterparts. However, this seems to be a universal tactic and not just particular to Samoans.

Still on the subject of fesili and the level of directness used, I wish to bring up a current Pago based weekly radio program conducted by the governor of American Samoa as part of accountability and transparency in government.

Every Saturday the governor of American Samoa (or a government representative) conducts a program on the Showers of Blessing FM 104.7 where he/they report and answer concerns and questions by the public. Due to time constraints, the radio hosts usually ask the public to get to the point and forego the salutations traditionally meant for the governor or any other leader. This

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid p75

direct approach sometimes ends up in breaching the *va* in the traditional sense although it meets the purpose of a democratic process - of people airing their views and getting straight answers from their leaders.

In fairness Aiono-Le Tagaloa has a point when she recognizes she had “taken a lengthy digression to elaborate on the *fesili*”<sup>8</sup> because as she says :

“the delicate nature of *fesili* is because of the pervasive, all encompassing, and encompassing and underpinning importance of the *Va* to the Samoans.”<sup>9</sup>

When Aiono-Le Tagaloa discusses the *Solo o le va* or the “Creation” epic narrative Rev. Powell says he received “from Fofō, an old chief of Ta’u on December 28, 1870, she makes use of the expertise and collection of her mother and Samoan Studies Professor Aiono Dr.Fanaafi Le Tagaloa who has authored various books and translated many more. The mention of the genuineness of the records of the account of creation according to Rev. Powell is quoted here and in several other places. However there are discrepancies I would like to point out such as the fact that the *Solo o le Va* claims : “O fea le nu’u na lua’i tupu? O Manu’atele?” Which island was first created?” Manu’atele!”

According to Dr.David Addison<sup>10</sup> there has been some research done in the past to show that there are rocks in Savaii that are older than Manu’a. In addition, in an unpublished book on the history of American Samoa, the author Muliaumasealii Aleni Ripine (former Chairperson of the Samoan Language Department at American Samoa Community College) writes :

“Tagata mai Atafu” – Manu’ans say that when their ancestors arrived on the islands that are now theirs, people whom they called “*Tagata mai Atafu*” (*People from Atafu*) had already settled there. Fierce fighting for territorial control took place and their ancestors, possessing more effective weapons and better fighting skills, defeated the *Atafuans*<sup>11</sup> and drove them away. (+Tau’ese P. Sunia, late Governor of AS, 1977)

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<sup>8</sup> P14

<sup>9</sup> Page 16

<sup>10</sup> Dr.David Addison. 2007. Archaeology Presentation for Sam 111.2 & SAM 111.4. ASCC.

<sup>11</sup> [The Atafuans – The Manu’an legend about the Atafuans may support the theory by a number of anthropologists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which says that some Polynesian migrants arrived in the South Seas via a northeast route - through](#)

Aiono-Le Tagalao writes that the creator God “Le Tagalao”<sup>12</sup> dwelled in the Tenth Heaven and created the Ten Heavens “The Creator spoke the heavens were wrought”<sup>13</sup>. The heavens up to the ninth was peopled by the sa Tagalao family. Le Tagalao asked Tagalao Savali (messenger) or Tuliotalgalao to “go and see whether there were other lagi in space and to report”. Aiono Le Tagalao writes that Rev.Powell compares Tuliotalgalao or tuli to “Noah’s toro, the messenger that returned with the olive branch, after the deluge”.<sup>14</sup>

Another lagi is mentioned by Aiono-Le Tagalao and explains the “watery waste Le Tagalao’s messenger came upon:

There was no land, no rock upon the face of the waters and only utter darkness.<sup>15</sup>This lagi descended from Fe’e whose family was divided into two families. The two families which were Sa Vai and Sa Afi fought a mighty battle –afi was vanquished and the world of Fee was in darkness and watery waste.<sup>16</sup>

Tulitalgalao reported the watery waste to Le Tagalao and noticing that Tuli was giddy from flying Le Tagalao commanded and there were rocks from which islands were formed from such as Savaii, Fiti, Toga, Savaii but only after Manu’atele.

The peopling of the *lalolagi* came about when *Fuetagata*/person vine or Fuesā/sacred creeper was put on earth. After a little while the *Fuetagata*/rotted and produced “wrigglers’. The report to Le Tagalao this time was that “the offspring of the sacred creeper were faceless and merely wriggled in the sun”.<sup>17</sup> Tuliotalgalao under the guidance of Le Tagalao marked the human

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Micronesia. It may also support a “theory” that in the pre-Tagalao days, the Manu’ans had closer ties with the Tokelau islanders than with the Samoans in Tutuila and the Samoan islanders to the west. [NOTE FROM MAR’s book]

<sup>12</sup> Means “Boundless Freedom” p58.

<sup>13</sup> Page 22

<sup>14</sup> Page 23

<sup>15</sup> p24

<sup>16</sup> Page 24

<sup>17</sup> Page 30

features. Following this the *fatumanava* was brought from heaven. Here Rev. Powell and the author Aiono-Le Tagaloa differ where Powell translates *fatumanava* as heart's pulsation. Aiono-Le Tagaloa states : "a more accurate translation is –the godly attributes. These were placed in the creation which came to life as the human-le tagata"<sup>18</sup> When discussing the word *fatumanava*, orator, instructor and cultural specialist Pa'u Faleatua<sup>19</sup> claimed that *fatumanava* refers to the reproductive parts of the human body where new life can be formed from.

The author stops after the human/tagataola is formed saying it is important to know who created Samoa as this is "the necessary components for her purposes" in writing this thesis. This is proven further when she goes back to reiterate her original identity defining questions about : how it all began, where it came from, how it happened and who the Samoans worship.

Unlike the story of Adam's rib the author states :

the Solo o le Va did not produce the woman from Adam's rib, rather it established the essential perpetuation and completeness of life-that of having male and female as complementary to each other<sup>20</sup>.

Since Le Tagaloa<sup>21</sup> gave tagata the *fatumanava*/godly attributes (exclusively), therefore only this part of creation is instructed by the imperative to *Tapua 'i! To Worship!*"

Having said that, the author recalls the purpose of the thesis :

to recapture the essence of the Samoan *tapuaiga* and show exactly how this spiritual connection was carried out, to whom it was made and for what reasons.

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<sup>18</sup> P33.

<sup>19</sup> Pa'u P Faleatua. 2004. Talanoa method. Office discussion with MAR, Fiamalua etc.

<sup>20</sup> Page 36

<sup>21</sup> Le Tagaloa is also the chiefly title for the thesis writer's father while her mother's name is Fanaafiofaamalama.



### *Ola, Aitu, Maui –the inner person*

The author connects her first and second chapters by reflecting on what the previous chapter attempted to do. I find it unnecessary for her to repeat almost what she said in the previous chapter but perhaps she was after a thorough repetition enabling the reader to remember. She repeats the part about the face of the fuesa and its actions, the debate over the translation of *fatumanava*.

She explains that the *fatumanava* makes up the “inner person of the Samoan. It is from this place that the Samoan makes the *tapuaiga* or carries out the imperative to *Tapua’i*-to worship”<sup>22</sup>.

In the second chapter Aiono Le Tagaloa explains the ‘Inner person’ as divided into three parts ; *Ola, Aitu and Maui*. Of the three, Aitu and Maui stay around when *ola* is gone. Her description has no outside sources supporting this.

Aiono le Tagaloa states that *ola* “focuses on the physiological or the biological side of the person. *Ola* is therefore being able to breathe or being alive. When present, the person is a *tagataola* but when absent the person is dead or is called *tagataoti*. A mystery, nobody knows where it comes from and where it goes”.

The second word *aitu* is described by the author as rather problematic. The missionaries succeeded in changing the meaning of it the term to mean “a phenomenon that comes into existence when the body dies, when *ola* ceases”<sup>23</sup>. Thus *aitu* has been described by missionaries as part of a dead person not a living person, a ghost, a spirit or a demon and sometimes even a god of some description<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> P38-39

<sup>23</sup> Page 41

<sup>24</sup> Page 41

On the contrary Aiono-Le Tagaloa states that :

The *aitu* like the *Mauli* does not die but stays around.<sup>25</sup> /No one knows where it resides but one thing is sure, *aitu* is not a ghost, or the spirit of the dead. ... Every person's *aitu* is said to look exactly like that person complete to what they are wearing...evidenced by something which often occurs. There are times when you walk along and you see someone and recognize him or her. Then about five or ten minutes later you see the same person in a different location...Samoans would reply that you had seen the person's *aitu* on one of the two occasions<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, the author explains that the *aitu* rather than being spooky, dead and ghostlike :

is the creative and cheeky part of the inner being of the person but not related to the *faleaitu* but its shortened form *mitu* "used to describe someone full of verve, life, cheekiness, pizzazz, style and flamboyance.

Since the author is not quoting scientific research or anyone else's research for that matter, I will therefore take it that she has concluded by herself that the *Mauli* and *aitu* does not die. I am curious where this finding came from as it is very impressive information and one that would take the knowledge of in depth tradition to come up with.

The author discusses "*fono ma aitu*" as a meeting between the *aitu* of those where *ola* has ceased and those where *ola* is still present.

The idea of an ongoing presence of departed ancestors in the lives of Samoans is also reflected in the book called 'Talanoaga na Loma ma Ga'opo'a' by Tuiatua Tamasese especially in the picture on the cover page by Tate Simi; where a conversation is taking place between the living in the *fale* and the ancestor in the grave. It is not explained whether the conversation is audible from the ancestor's side nor whether the grave is host to a *aitu* that remains there 24/7 or whether they have other errands to do when not in conversation with members of the family, as in the story of the discoveries of Tofoipupū, a lady that went to Pulo-tu to find her husband<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Page 41.

<sup>26</sup> Page 42

<sup>27</sup> C.Steubul, A ,Kramer, Brother, Herman(adptd). 1995. The Samoan Hades in *Myths, Legends and Old Customs of Samoa*. Pasefika Press. NZ. pg 163

In a class discussion, a Manu'a born and raised teacher mentioned the *Fale'ula tau aitu*<sup>28</sup>, where spirits of the ancestors confer with those of the living. However he had only heard about it when he was young, because it has not been in operation up to now.

In defining *mauli* the author states : “the closest equivalent in English is the psyche and is a major part of the intellectual life of a person”<sup>29</sup>. Unlike Freud’s three divisions for the psyche, the author states argues that the *mauli* has seven parts or divisions :

1. Iloilo/ability to reason, intellect
2. Masalo/ability to divine, foresee or predict ...
3. Finagalo/ability to make promulgations, ceded to the Christian God
4. Mana/grace and/or power
5. Sau/breath of life
6. Mana'o/feelings, emotions and desires
7. Mafaufau/ability to remember, memories and memory itself.

Again barring external research, I am not sure how the author arrives at this and would be interested in finding out how this conclusion was arrived at. The author draws a parallel between the Samoan *mauli* and the Maori *mauri* and uses Elsdon Best’s example.

One of the most significant is that .. *mauri* is the immaterial shrine of the gods, the divine spirit in man.<sup>30</sup> This is similar, (according to the author) to that fact that the *mauli* is part of the godly attributes –the *fatumanava* brought by Le Tagaloa- the Creator and placed in the person<sup>31</sup>.

Unlike the Samoan *mauli*, the Maoris do not believe their *mauri* can travel<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> D.S.2008 Class discussion on afterlife.

<sup>29</sup> Page 48

<sup>30</sup> Page 56

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*

### ***Fa'amalama, Alofisa - Forms of worship***

The author focuses on two forms of worship in chapter three of her thesis. Firstly a more private form '*Fanaafi o Fa'amalama*<sup>33</sup>' and secondly the public "*alofisa* ... what is known today as the *ava* ceremony"<sup>34</sup>

Several authors are quoted by Aiono Le Tagaloa in supporting the existence of *Fanaafi o faamalama, tapuaiga faapaupau*. These include Newell, Pritchard and Turner whom Aiono Le Tagaloa writes were influenced by each other.<sup>35</sup> Both associate *faamalama* and the drinking of *ava* as part of the meals the Samoans had.<sup>36</sup> From the Newell papers came the explanation of the *tapuaiga*. According to Newell this worship placed importance on the lightning of the fire until the flames shoot up and lit up the whole house; this was referred to as *fanaafi o faamalama*. This took place in the *faletele* where a *magalafu* of a small fireplace was positioned towards the middle of the house. Aiono Le Tagaloa argues that this fireplace is reserved for the *tapuaiga* from the *fire that never goes out* although others have argued that *magalafu* is the fireplace in the *umukuka*.<sup>37</sup>

*Fanaafi o faamalama* was observed twice per day; once at about 5.00am and the other in the evening, when the fires are blown –*ula afi* for the embers to come alive again. When the chief of the family is absent, the *tamaitai matua* or *feagaiga of the aiga* leads the *tapuaiga*. Aiono Le Tagaloa makes mention of four prayers saved on microfilm.

The first asks for the kindness of God :”wrap us, cloak us in your goodness and kindness”. The second acknowledges the weaknesses and wilfulness of the worshippers. The third requests a redirecting of possible intruders/gods of sickness and diseases to uninhabited lands. The fourth asks for the covering: “cover us, hide us in the broad mantle of your love”. The last was the most

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<sup>33</sup> Page 63

<sup>34</sup> Page 81

<sup>35</sup> Page 80

<sup>36</sup> Page 78

<sup>37</sup> Pa'u Faleatua. 2004. *E tatala e le magalafu faamanuiaga*. Folasaga mo le Faleula –Hawaii.

emotional for the author's mother who recalled it as part of the prayer her own mother had uttered while she was alive.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas the private *Fanaafi o faamalama* involved fire votives the second form of *tapuaiga* involved the more public “*ava* ceremony/*alofisā* began with the *ava*, and ended with *anapogi*/fasting. An example of this kind of *tapuaiga* is when a dangerous expedition/*umuti* such as shark hunting takes place.<sup>39</sup>

The matai and fishermen would gather at a *fale tele*, where only two blinds would be kept up. The *alofisa* takes place with most of the blinds down then a meal would follow. The fishers then depart for their venture while the matai carry out the *tapuaiga* in silence until the fishers of sharks would return.

Samoans are indebted to Aiono Le Tagaloa for this information (or any other researcher who could have dug it out for other scholars/readers/locals) otherwise it would have remained as microfilm information, stored in the treasure house of a foreign nation who would then become wealthier in knowledge of local traditions and religion, or who would store it as part of dead culture.

### **Purpose of thesis :**

Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa's thesis is an attempt to retrieve what has been lost of Samoan worship, *tapuai o tapuaiga*. She takes the stance that to tackle the topic she needs the holistic approach hence her explanation of two central Samoan concepts : 1) *Va* and the Samoan philosophy “*e atoa li'o le masina*.”<sup>40</sup>

The author has succeeded in answering the questions she posted in the beginning.

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<sup>38</sup> Page 67. Professor Aiono's mother passed away when she was eight.

<sup>39</sup> Page 73

<sup>40</sup> Pg 96

## Literature Review

In this area she identifies the lack of material on the subject, hence she had to go all the way to London to search the London Missionary files and New Zealand as well but there was “very little, if any” thus she concludes that “this is telling of how much has been lost.”<sup>41</sup>

In fact, in an attempt to retrace the steps her mother and Samoan professor had taken to access records in London, the author stated that there were files missing that her mother had referred to earlier. Some, she said tongue in cheek –had sprouted legs and walked out of the library.

This was the first time I read Williams described as “megalomaniac in his approach to suppress Pacific traditions and “personally dictating which customs might be allowed to continue at least temporarily and that which must be banned at once. But without him the author acknowledges records of the past would be extinct and her work impossible.”<sup>42</sup>

A separate section on Literature Review would have been reader friendly but since the scant material was identified at the onset therefore this area was written into the text of the thesis. I thought it would have been really worthwhile to interview some more local people such as Tuiatua Tamasese and Oka Fauolo who has been in the CCCS church for a while and has been Chairman of the CCCS with the most current selection as Chairman of the National Council of Churches and others in the rural areas including Manu’a. This would gauge the local views as mentioned by Armand Crown, although it is specific to origin theories, it can extend to theories about other important areas of Samoan lives :

In the end however I fear my friend Dr Ieti Lima is correct when he says that "more local input into our origin theories is necessary before it gets away on us"<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Page 4

<sup>42</sup> Page 5

<sup>43</sup> Armand Crown. 2007 Appendix E: Responses. <http://solo.manuatele.net/response.htm> accessed 06/06/08

## Methodology

The author's way of tackling her subject involves "Historical methodology and Oral tradition". She spent hours in the London library in search of primary sources such as reports and copies of journals. A rather admirable feat since it would involve a great deal of funds to carry out such distant research. By doing so, the author gives the readers and researchers an affordable route to get such information - by reading her thesis.

She states that she also tried:

to interrogate the reliability of the surviving relevant written sources as well as their recorders and narrators. She also drew on cognate Polynesian concepts and the knowledge of experts on the Samoan language...In both content and method then, I contend that this small start on what is undoubtedly a much larger field is a valid aspect of Samoan history<sup>44</sup>.

Some ethical consideration is obvious especially where she makes mention of omitting specific names and places to protect the privacy of those concerned<sup>45</sup>. The author acknowledges her "insider view" which may influence her stance.

I still feel this section could have been more reader friendly as is my lazy approach to be able to see upfront where I am going in her thesis, in the sense that a section be put aside to clearly state that this is the way I went.

## Findings and Conclusion

Aiono-Le Tagaloa begins with the Samoan worldview and asks what she calls "identity-defining questions. How did it all begin, where do I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? She is able to shed some light through her research on some of the origin theories of Samoa, she might not find out all the answers in this paper but several breakthroughs came out including the fact that while on her trip in London she found out the meaning of her name "*Fanaafi o faamalama*" and the culture associated with it. She is also able to show that *alofisa* is another part of the original

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<sup>44</sup> Page 4

<sup>45</sup> p45

*tapuaiga* Samoans used to practice in support of ventures that might mean life or death to those who undertake it.

I wonder if given time, whether there would have been light shed on the kinds of worship towards family deities or gods but that could be another research. Reading about *fanaafi and alofisa* as forms of worship makes me wonder what kind of *tapuaiga* was given to the *Fe'e*, supposedly a family god on my father's side. On second thoughts ...

Thus, for the reader, a part of the jigsaw puzzle is found, for Aiono le Tagaloa and her mother – Professor Aiono, a journey comes to an end in search of an identity defining moment –Housed in the air conditioned rooms of a far away London library are the manuscripts of yesteryears pointing to the origin of a name –a name shared between mother and daughter, professor and doctoral candidate, both contributing to the pool of knowledge local researchers like this student and many others can draw from.

For that, Aiono le Tagaloa's research is a worthy and legitimate attempt in reconstructing a path missionaries almost succeeded in completely wiping clean from the Samoan slate. Thanks to some of those missionaries and locals who took time to record the past, such a journey can be undertaken by the financially able by going to London or by reading Aiono Le Tagaloa's thesis.

**Final words, begging indulgence : “E lē aoa'ia e Laupu'ā Tamafaigā”.**

I would like to pursue the idea of “decolonizing research and education” in the sense that our indigenous reference and way of doing things can be utilized to take into account any error committed unconsciously by the writer (or consciously and erroneously). Herein lies the beauty of the local approach, in tackling the very possible sin of doing injustice to a researcher who has toiled over their research with much *tapua'iga* from their support group or their family, yet in the process of meeting university requirements we are expected to be the overnight expert in their field and critique them. In this light the local proverb is quite appropriate in begging indulgence “E lē a'oa'ia e Laupu'a Tamafaigā”- in this particular case -be it far from me to instruct the experts in how to conduct research.



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