

Talanoa Oceania 2008 Conference: Mana, Vanua Talanoa

From Jione Havea, Parramata Sydney Australia
(Jioneh@NSW.uca.org.au)

Abstracts

'Eveli Taungapeau (epeli.taungapeau@paradise.net.nz), "How can I be Tongan in a strange/promised land? Cultural and theological diversity in the MCNZ"

This paper outlines the social and religious issues of a "TALANOA" that most Pacific Islanders, especially Tongans, face when they migrate overseas and made their home in a foreign land. Although the talanoa are not new, it is important to revisit these experiences to identify key reference points that impact on the lives of the individual in the context of their family and how these factors will ultimately shape and inform how Pacific Island migrants fit in their new society. Several factors influence an individual's talanoa including social location, identity, dreams and aspirations and the integral place of faith, tradition and custom, life experience and the bible. This Talanoa outlines the journey to Aotearoa of a young nineteen year old Tongan male accompanied only by the talents, gifts and identity, and the discovery of the means to fulfill a dream by pursuing education success in NZ.

This talanoa explores the "call" to ministry in the Methodist Church of New Zealand and the importance of faith and tradition in the process of migration to the land of the Long White Cloud – Aotearoa New Zealand. It discusses several issues and some of the solutions that Tongan members of the MCNZ encounter within the Church. The commonalities within the talanoa provide useful tools for the church's people to explore the development of durable options/solutions and illustrate a possible way forward when working with Tongan families in the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

Eseta Meneilly (e.meneilly@yahoo.com.au), "Lacadrau Masi -- Weaving/Stitching the old roots with the new identity: A quilt in masi design"

Definitions:

laca = sail; *drau* = a hundred; *masi* = Fijian name for tapa cloth;

lacadrau = a patchwork of scraps of material, of any size, used as blanket or throw-over.

When 'home' is far away there is a sense of exile, of not wanting to be in this place, of not wanting to understand. What I experienced most was a feeling of cultural exile. When I first came across cassava and tinned tuna, six months after leaving Fiji with my Australian husband and three young Fiji-born children, I boiled the cassava, opened the tinned tuna and threw in with it onion, lemon juice and chilly. Then I ate the lot with my fingers. Suddenly I found myself crying. This 'food of the poor' critically became for me the link between everything that is past and present. And also that which is future.

So I made a 'lacadrau masi' a patchwork quilt of stitched together squares of calico, hand-painted with masi designs. The lacadrau is an expression of the resources that are abundant in this new place. The masi



designs are an expression of that which will always be a part of me. The colours are an expression of the links between my old roots and the new. The work is an expression of the things I have come to appreciate about life.

.....
Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (katalinat@nsw.uca.org.au), "Multicultural Ministry as Tool for Racial Justice: A Reflection on the Roles and Responsibilities of Customs and Traditions"

Abstract not available

.....
Litiana Qiosese (lqiosese@adventist.org.au), "The Deuteronomy Model in a Changing World"

I am a second generation Fijian woman currently residing in Sydney and am really interested in exploring the dissonance that is happening and continues to happen between our Island born and raised parents with their Aussie born and bred children. I am primarily interested in the challenges faced by our parents and their children due to the lack of mentoring that is occurring in our homes. I'm looking at this through the eyes of Christianity, focusing on the passage in Deuteronomy that talk about parents as the primary spiritual mentors for their children. I would apply this further to our cultural heritage and address perhaps the perceived loss of connection (in the young people) not just to the land but to its people, the language and na i tovo vaka Viti (attitudes and what make us Fijian).

For Pasifika parents whose children grow up within urban contexts, there is often a tension of being islanders living in Australia. Can parents successfully transfer spiritual and cultural values to their children? The Deuteronomy Model may offer some insights. God has a Dream, We have a Problem, God has a Model, We have an Opportunity!

.....
Apelu Tielu (apelu.tielu@internode.on.net), "Thy Kingdom Come: God's Kingdom on earth and implications for Church and culture"

The purpose of this paper is to explore the issues implied by the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed. Did Jesus mean for it to be established on earth, in this life, or was he talking about a kingdom in "heaven" where the "saved" would go after they die? If Jesus meant for it to be founded on earth, what type of kingdom would it be like, and what are the implications for church and culture?

It is our contention that Jesus intended for the kingdom of God to be established on earth, in this life. And based on his teaching and life ministry, the kingdom would have no systems of power; that is, there would be no dominating element in it. In politics, no one would have more power than anyone else. In economics, no economic agent would exercise any influence on markets, and even charity would be incompatible with it. This would have implications for church and culture. For the church, it would need to apply these kingdom-principles to the way it does things within the church. Further, it can bring about kingdom-like practices to the wider community through its resources and its members, and therefore promoting egalitarian communities that Jesus envisioned.

The implications for culture would, also, be profound, and in particular for the Pacific cultures with their traditional hierarchical power structures. Pacific cultures have managed to survive in diaspora for decades,



but if they are to be faithful to the call of the kingdom of God, then the traditional power structures would have to come down at all levels of diasporic Pacific Island communities.

.....
Lynne Frith (pittst.presbyter@methodistcentral.org.nz), "A view from the top table"

Seating arrangements at the "top table" are significant indicators of hospitality and respect in the traditions of many Pacific nations. For a feminist palagi/pakeha ordained woman in Aotearoa, working in a multi-ethnic setting, this and other traditional customs present significant challenges and opportunities.

While there is a growing body of literature arising from the experiences of ethnic diversity in Christian community, much of it emerges from the migrant communities within the church. It can be dangerous ground for a palagi to reflect upon the traditional practices of such communities. The risks of causing offence and thereby damaging respectful and trusting relationships are inherent in the discourse. This may explain the relative silence of palagi women in cross-cultural theological discussion.

This paper examines my experience as a feminist palangi ordained woman, over 10 years as Parish Superintendent in Wesley Wellington Parish, which comprises English speaking, Fijian, Samoan, and Tongan congregations. The intersections and contradictions of culture, theology, differing expressions and expectations of what it is to be Christian in Aotearoa, power and status, and pastoral relationships are some of the issues to be addressed daily in this context. The paper is offered as a gift both to the parish and to the community of women theologians in the Pacific.

.....
Sylvia 'Akau'ola Tongotongo (sylviaa@wesley.school.nz) & Ali'itasi Aoina Toleafoa (aliitasit@wesley.school.nz), "We are what we eat: A Wesley College Perspective"

The title alludes to a gastronomy (the art of good eating) praxis of ministry. The context of this presentation is Wesley College, the oldest secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand and the only Methodist Church School.

- What theological treats are offered at the banquet table?
- What culturally is on the bill of fare?
- Does it make for good eating?

The following is presented for consideration:

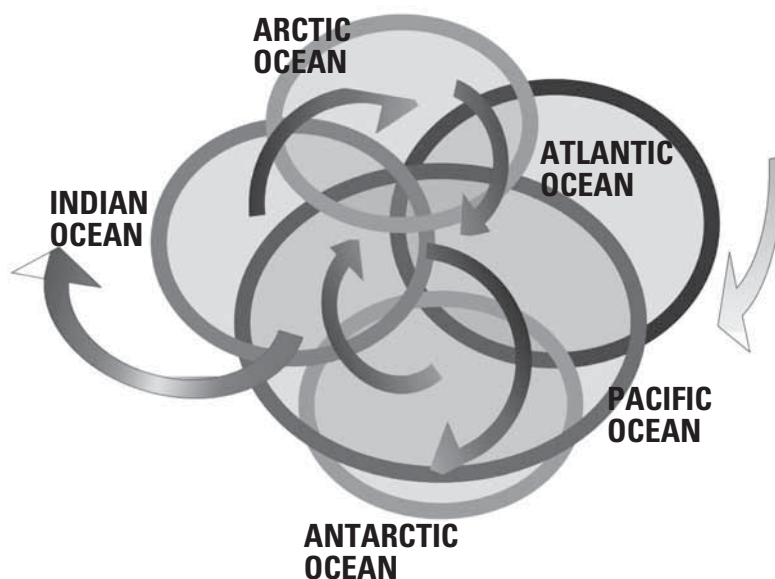
1. That the 'needs' as outlined in the Talanoa Oceania 2008 brief (TOb'08) are specific to a migrant population.
2. That many New Zealand born Pacific Islanders (NZ PIs) celebrate living out from 'under the shadow' (TOb'08) of said 'needs.'
3. That many NZ PIs rejoice in the oceanic depth and breadth of talanoa already shared and experienced, personal and communal, past and present. This is what grounds us.
4. Further talanoa and deeper grounding continues but from a different sea and by new fishermen - 'fishers of people'.
 - a. The ripple effect - an identity - vanua, fenua, fanua, whenua is re-shelled anew, courage is re-cast afresh, deep sea traditions and a new found direction is re-navigated by the Christ star of hope as well as compass. A direction no longer cast by the 'shadows' of a net that serves to keep us caught up, but to point us onwards.



- b. The reference to stars and compass is a coming together of the old with the new. We cannot know where we are going if we do not know where we have come from. It is the old - traditions, culture, family upbringing and so on that enable us to be where we are, in ways that are life giving.
 - c. Inherent in the continuing talanoa is the collective mana of faith, belief, tradition, culture and ancestry, at the waters edge respecting all who break upon New Zealand shores - tapu, transforming, re-creating, healing and all in the name of the one Creator.
5. So what theologically is gastronomically served up at Wesley? What is on the cultural fare?
 6. Positive/practical examples. Recognition of Talents – Adults and Students.
7. **The Challenge:**
- How do we grasp the opportunities that present themselves?
 - The best recipe is what you create!
 - The ingredients: Creativity, Vision, Commitment, Determination, Sustainability, Leading the way (taking people on board, and not leading the way going alone).

Winston Halapua (winstonh@stjohns.auckland.ac.nz),
“Moana Methodology of Leadership”

How can the Oceanic people express the immense love of God in a dynamic way which will honour the integrity of Creation? The Moana Methodology uses talanoa to address this question.



Sela Mafi Taufu (Sela.Taufu@anu.edu.au), **“The Research Model of Talanoa: A lesson in being a Tamaitai Samoa living in the Diaspora in Australia”**

This paper came out of many “talanoa” sessions between Tuimavave Katie (a matai and a decision maker of village life in Samoa even though she is living outside Samoa) and Pafuti Sera (the western trained academic). I once asked Tuimavave why she wanted a matai title in our village when she is based in Australia and her response left quite an impression on me as a child nurtured in the diaspora: “Being a matai is not about mana (prestige), but rather it is about ensuring the voice of social conscience, promoting social justice and



ensuring a female representation within the local governance of our village fonofono." This paper came out of many conversations with Tuimavave Kathleen Fruean between August-October 2004, when I was carrying out a component of my PhD fieldwork in Samoa. I am indebted to Tuimavave for this body of knowledge. I would like to dedicate this piece of work to the memory of my late aunty Rosie Mulipola and my aiga potopoto who wholeheartedly embraced the returning home of a daughter of the Maota of Amaile, Aleipata.

In this paper I will discuss the following issues:

- a. The practice of "talanoa" and how it can be used as a research methodology when studying and carrying out research fieldwork amongst people of the "Moana".
- b. The role of a researcher and research participant as informers, agents and participants in telling their own history and genealogy.
- c. Contextualizing the contributions of our great ancestors in order to move forward and define ourselves by our own contributions to our cultural world.
- d. The notions of inherited mana versus contemporary mana and the use of 'talanoa' as a research tool to inform the thinking behind these notions.
- e. The formation of new formed consciousness (service) and transformed nuances (dignity and mamalu) amongst contemporary Samoan youth living in the diaspora.

.....
Sela Mafi Taufa (Sela.Taufa@anu.edu.au) & Sioana H. Faupula,
"Molumalu mo e Ngeia 'a Fafine Tonga"

The main issues to be discussed in our paper are:

- a. Explaining the etymology of Molumalu and Ngeia
- b. Acknowledging the kudos of Tongan knowledge and epistemology
- c. Explaining the practices of these two values within the country of origin
- d. Tracing examples of women who exemplify the "Molumalu moe Ngeia a Fafine Tonga" over time
- e. Examining traditional frameworks versus western frameworks where cultural values must be contextualized in order to develop a more appropriate methodology in studying and researching the Tongan Diaspora
- f. The issues for Tongan women in practicing and implementing the values of 'Molumalu' and 'Ngeia' with their Australian-born children

.....
Ilaitia Tuwere (ilaitiat@stjohns.auckland.ac.nz),
"Sa Meke Tiko Na Vanua [The Vanua {land} is now dancing]"

This paper seeks to explore the nature and function of the Fijian meke or dance. This meke or dance has nothing in common with the dance of the White races. It is a language in itself that speaks about differing subjects that are related to the *Vanua*. There are mekes on war, the fields, the woods, storms, calms, rains, the heavens, gods, devils, travels by land or sea, men and women etc. The approach used will be a doxological approach that seeks to describe the Fijian mekes as songs of God's *creation*— here understood as *Vanua*. It is an exploratory paper that hopefully will have implications for Christian worship in general. *Meke* essentially is *movement* in different ways and rhythm. Through this language of meke, this paper will move on to explore the idea that God the Creator is "Movement" *par excellence*.



Nasili Vaka'uta (nvakauta@gmail.com), "Tālanga: theorizing a Tongan mode of interpretation"

This paper reconsiders the task of (biblical) interpretation from a Tongan standpoint, and thus focuses on the concept of talanga. Talanga (*tā-langa/tala'anga*) is one form of talanoa that involves critical engagement between two or more parties. Its basic goal is to offer alternative perspectives on any subject of interest. Talanga is about morality, multi-voicedness, and dialogue. It presupposes community and otherness, and endorses openness and freedom of expression. These and many other aspects of the concept will be discussed alongside interrogating the claims and assumptions that shaped Western/colonial approaches.

*Tevita Finau (tfinau@gmail.com),
"A perfect match: Church and State in Tonga" [Ongo 'olive 'e ua kae mālohi ha fonua]*

This talanoa engages the fact that history is written by the winners and heroes, that is, the "big and mighty." In the case of Tonga, the Church and the State are the big and mighty. It is for their interests that the history of Tonga is written and constructed. This talanoa will take a different approach. I will explore what the history of Tonga looks like from the perspectives of what the "big and mighty" like to think of as the heathens, pagans, primitives and uncivilized.

This talanoa will look especially at the mutual ambitions of King George Tupou I and the Rev John Thomas, through the eyes of the victims of the processes of evangelization and the unification of Tonga during the 19th Century.

Angie Elia (angie@asdah.school.nz), "P.I. stands for Performing Informatively"

This paper comes out of a wider project funded through the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) which focused on identifying successful literacy teaching approaches for struggling adolescents. Our own inquiry has been concerned with the extent to which the scope and sequence of literacy skills (McDonald & Thornley, 2005) can positively impact on the learning of Pasifika students in secondary schools. The fluidity of the model helped teachers to practice elements in incremental steps until confident enough to add other elements of the model to their "*kete of knowledge*". The hooks that saw our adolescent Pasifika learners shift in their literacy practice was instrumental in helping us to become adept at assisting our Pasifika learners to confidently navigate the 'oceans of texts,' they encounter in a high school setting.

Talanoa Panels

Roots and Routes: Who are we?!

1st General panel: Liva Tukutama, Filimone Olivetti, Alisa Peacock, Seini Afeaki, Ruta Tonumaipea, Manongi Tavelia

This panel explored the challenges that Pacific Islanders face when they migrate overseas. Once they settle and interact with the new environment, they are torn between their commitments to the homes from where they came and the necessities of settling into new homes. They come from predominantly village based cultures to the bright lights of urban living. Their desire to maintain their island cultures and identities create tensions with the new way of life. The expectation that they are moving to land of milk and honey proves



to be a myth. PIs continue to struggle to find adequate housing, good employment, maintain healthy living, understand the education system, make church practices relevant to the new context and sustain healthy relationships amongst family members and others.

Most PIs don't give top priority to educating their children which directly affects their opportunities for further education and finding good jobs. Parents find it hard to understand the education system. Domestic violence, and violence in general, have become synonymous with PIs; many families are adversely affected because of domestic violence. When children are brought up in violent situations, their lives are scarred for life. They become perpetrators of violence themselves hence one of the reasons of the high statistics of PIs in juvenile centres and prisons in NSW.

The panel will also explore issues that PIs face as they try to understand the Christian faith in their new context in Australia and New Zealand, and health concerns amongst PIs as they take on new lifestyles. The members of the panel and their areas of focus:

- a. Liva Tukutama (Convener) will give a brief overview (Niuean)
- b. Filimone Olivetti will address the challenges for PI churches in Australia (Tongan)
- c. Alisa Peacock will address the health issues in Western Sydney (Samoan)
- d. Seini Afeaki will address issues related to education in Sydney (Tongan)
- e. Ruta Tonumaiepa will address Domestic Violence in Australia & Western Sydney (Samoan)
- f. Manogi Tavelia will discuss these issues from the Aotearoa/New Zealand perspective (Niuean)

Roots and Routes: Who are we?!

**2nd General Panel: Ma'ata Havea, Raymond Joso, Nicole Fleming,
Salesi Faupula, Dorothy Reid**

This panel will also explore the challenges that Pacific Islanders face overseas, focusing on the experiences of second generation PIs. What issues attract, energize and/or trouble our young people? What issues draw together and/or distance the second gens from the first gens? Dare we talk about alcohol, love, body and sex in public for the sake of second gens? Where and what is our future? How may we connect second gens with our home islands? Should we? Why? The panel will address some of these and other questions.

Vanua panel: Home in Diaspora

Panel members: Peleti Lima, Seforosa Carroll

Home (vanua, fenua, whenua) is embodied experience and memory. Home is a recurring theme for PI migrants manifested in questions such as; where is home? What does it mean to be at home? How does one feel at home in diaspora and in the homeland? How does one settle on foreign soil and/or re-inhabit the vanua on return? How are belonging and identity negotiated in the homeland and diaspora? The panelists will explore these questions from their own experiences highlighting different understandings and experiences of the notion of home as well as strategies of negotiating identity and belonging.



Talanoa: Language and identity

Panel members: Uani Havea, Tevita Finau

Many islanders who live overseas see themselves as Pacific Islanders because they speak one of the native languages of the Pacific Islands. We live in foreign lands, and one of the things that connect us with our native homes is our languages. In this regard, our languages shape who we are. At the same time, it feels as if we are 1 or 2 generation(s) away from losing our native languages. What will this 'loss of language' mean with regard to our identity? Do we need to preserve our native languages when we are in foreign settings?

These are some of the concerns that this panel will address, with the awareness that languages have the capacity to develop, grow and/or die away.

anahine Pasifika: "Out of the womb: reflections on women and theology from the Pacific and Pacific Diaspora"

Panel members: Seforosa Carroll, 'Iakati Hui, Meleane Pouvalu

In the early 1990's Tongan theologian, Sr Keiti Ann Kanongata'a articulated a revolutionary theology from the perspective of Pacific Island women using the metaphor of birthing. Keiti Ann observed way back then that Pacific women's theology was in the process of birthing. She also warned "to stay forever in the womb would be fatal". Oceanian women's theology is well and truly past the process of birthing – or is it? A decade later following the establishment of Weavers in Suva, another vision was born, Manahine Pasefika. Its primary objective was to "make Oceanian women's voices heard through publications". Manahine also widened the circle to include Oceanian women in diaspora. This panel will explore through story and experience to test whether Pacific women and theology are actually out of the womb (or is their tendency to crawl back into the womb for safety) and if they are how well are we faring in the Pacific and Pacific diaspora. Are there gaps in our experience or tales untold? This panel comprises Oceanian women from the Pacific and the diaspora, with varying backgrounds, experience and age.

Pasifika~Oceanic models of leadership

Moderated by Veiongo Mafi

This session will be a chance for participants to talanoa, informally, about different methods of leadership in Pasifika, in response to the presentations thus far in the Talanoa Gathering. This talanoa session will be an open forum, and will be moderated by Veiongo Mafi.

Pasifika~oceanic modes of thinking and theologizing,

Moderated by Sisilia Tupou-Thomas

This session will be a chance for participants to talanoa, informally, about different modes of thinking and theologizing in Pasifika. This talanoa session will be an open forum, and will be moderated by Sisilia Tupou-Thomas.

