

INDIGENOUS ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE KAVA MYTH IN MANU'A

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THE CONCEPTS OF INDIGENOUS ANTHROPOLOGY, genealogy, positionality, and mythology affect the way we look at the values, beliefs, and practices of our own indigenous societies. Specifically, these concepts can assist in the description and analysis of the Samoan myths about the origins of *kava*.

In this article, I explain how the concepts of indigenous anthropology, genealogy, positionality, and mythology affect the way we look at the values, beliefs, and practices of our own indigenous societies.

More pertinent, these concepts are employed to assist in the description and analysis of the Samoan myths about the origins of *kava*. For ease of reading, I have used the Anglicized word *kava* instead of the Samoan *ava*.

The present article is the outcome of my participation in two of the ASAO sessions on indigenous anthropology held in Kauai, Hawai'i, in 2005 and Canberra, Australia, in 2008 and one session on the *kava* also at the Canberra session in 2008.

In the early sessions on this topic of indigenous anthropology—that is, at Kauai in 2005 and San Diego in 2006—there was general discussion on the theme of genealogy in part because of the great importance that Pacific Islanders give to this topic.

Finally, after the Canberra and Santa Cruz (2009) meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, genealogy has come to

emphasize genealogical connection not just to Oceania (Moana) but also to intellectual tradition.

As a topic in itself, indigenous anthropology is not new because before the Kauai meeting, it was already being extensively discussed by many authors, including Hauofa (1975), Ka'ili (2005), Māhina (1999), Morauta (1979), Tengan (2001), White and Tengan (2001), and others.

Indigenous anthropology can, therefore, be defined as anthropological research conducted by indigenes (in this case, Pacific Islanders), that is, the employment of Western concepts of anthropology and relevant methodologies to describe, interpret, and analyze social phenomena in the Pacific Islands through the worldviews of the indigenes.

Naturally, there is no one way of describing, interpreting, and analyzing such social phenomena because of the differences in cultures, religions, and economic and social institutions, even among the indigenes of the Pacific Islands, also referred to as Moana (Ka'ili, 2005; Māhina, 1999).

That is to be accepted, but at the same time, this openness to variable explanations provides a richness and a depth to understanding sociocultural phenomena in Moana and enforces the truth of the maxim *e pluribus unum* (from many to one).

That is to say, while the hypothetical superstate of Moana includes many Pacific countries, cultures, and languages, they share many things in common and hence encourage a philosophical outlook called the Pacific Way.

Genealogy in Moana usually refers to biological connections, parents, children, and their descendants and is attested to through genetic markers, but it can also refer to mythic connections, as is often the case with adopted children and other co-opted members.

More important here, genealogy also refers to other kinds of connections, for example, intellectual connections, referring to teachers and educational institutions. Many American anthropologists, for instance, have been trained in the Boasian tradition of anthropology because their teachers were students of students of Papa Franz Boas, the father of American anthropology.

Many British and other Commonwealth anthropologists were trained in the anthropological tradition of Cambridge University, a tradition that was originally founded on that of anthropologists trained by Bronislaw Malinowski.

It is to this intellectual tradition that I belong because my first supervisor at the Australian National University in 1984 was Professor Derek Freeman, who was supervised for his PhD by Meyer Fortes, who was a student of the great Malinowski. Not only that, but my alma mater, the Australian National University, was dominated by Cambridge-educated anthropologists.

Positionality, as the word suggests, is the intellectual position or stance that one adopts in relation to a topic. In my view, this is an important distinction in literary productions and other kinds of intellectual productions because one always writes from a distinctive viewpoint.

In the case of indigenous anthropologists like myself, I tend to write from a cultural and therefore Moana point of view as distinct from an “other,” or Western, point of view. Because of cultural differences among anthropologists, these two different viewpoints may be contradictory and sometimes lead to tension.

When such tensions result, there is often an attempt by the dominant cultural group, in this case, Western or *palagi* anthropologists, to downplay the importance of what indigenous anthropologists have to say simply because their views do not conform to the Eurocentric point of view of the majority.

The refusal to face “facts,” to admit difference in social and scientific opinion, will probably lead sooner or later to fragmentation of these dominant cultural groups as minorities break away to form their own small circles of academic and professional societies.

Indigenous anthropology, therefore, is characterized by the tendency to be different from the mainstream perspectives of the majority because, first, their numbers are small and, second, their perspectives are geared toward their own traditional social realities in relation to Western, capitalistic, palagi realities.

Mythology, the study of myth, has many meanings. But as used here, it is closer to what Maurice Leenhardt (1979) means by myth, that is, a lived reality, a psychological experience grounded in the roots of traditional custom and history. In short, it is the language of emotion, of how people should feel in particular social contexts.

But it is more than just emotional experience. For it is also the ordered experience of *ta* and *va*, of time and space (Māhina 2004): of time as measured in the cycles of the moon and flower-bearing trees of the forest and of space as measured in the forms of obeisance shown to one’s chiefs or king.

In fact, *ta* and *va* are legitimated by mythic experience just as the latter is also legitimated by *ta* and *va*. The mutual dependency of these two key tropes results in the obliteration of time, as understood in the West, and the elevation of spatial relationships (cf. Māhina 2004, 2009).

Thus, in Moana culture, *ta* and *va* may be construed as intellectual constructs and myth as an emotional experience that is considered mythical yet real. It is mythical because it is based on feeling and emotion and real because it is experienced.

The two combined represent the *do kamo* of Leenhardt, or the true, authentic person, the modern citizen of Moana, who, in Leenhardt's eyes, is a person of education who is rooted in the traditions of one's society. This is the essence of Moana culture.

Intellect without spirituality, as represented by emotion, is a nihilistic form of existence; that same can be said of emotion without its intellectual appurtenances. This is the challenge of the modern period, for Moana, indeed for the world!

The Kava Myth

Having said that, by way of introducing the kava myth in Samoa, the perspective that is accorded the myth should now be more transparent. It is the product of indigenous anthropology, a description and commentary by an indigenous Samoan anthropologist, focusing on customary and traditional experience.

The anthropologist employs the tools of modern anthropology in his or her attempt to explain the myth. He or she is at the same time influenced by noted scholars of traditional societies, such as Maurice Leenhardt among the Kanaks in New Caledonia and above all by his own former supervisor, Professor Derek Freeman, at the Australian National University.

The myth is described and analyzed from an indigenous, Samoan point of view. It is perceived conceptually as a lived reality; that is to say, while the story may not be true in the literal sense, it is true in a figurative sense, provides a charter for the origin of the kava drink, and inculcates the emotions suitable for the various stages of the kava ceremony, among others.

When Samoans talk about the genealogy of the kava (*gafa o le ava*), they are talking about the origins of the kava and how it spread around the Samoan islands. Kava refers both to the plant and to the drink made from it. There are many varieties of the plant, and Samoans prefer some to others because of their superior taste. Therefore, some varieties are more popular than others.

In Samoa, kava was used in connection with religious rituals. For instance, kava was said to have grown out of the (dead) body of an ancestor, and therefore the juice made from it symbolized the body of that ancestor. By drinking the juice in the context of a kava ceremony, one was in fact imbibing the spirit and mana of the ancestors, and the ritual thus constituted a communion service.

But the act of drinking is not just a symbolic one because the kava does have a narcotic effect on the body. It abets a psychophysical state that

facilitates acts of mental attunement with the ancestors, and therefore it belongs to kinds of drinks that are associated with religious ceremonies in other parts of the world, both past and present. The wine may have this effect in Christian ceremonies, for instance.

Archaeologists estimate that the lapita settlers, from whom the Samoans are descended, had settled the Samoan archipelago by at least 1000 BC (Bellwood 1987; Kirch 1984; Green 1979; Jennings 1979). The kava plant was almost certainly one of the plants these settlers brought with them from their Oceanic homeland in the Bismarck Archipelago. It is known and extensively used for the same purpose in other parts of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

Therefore, as a biological phenomenon, the kava plant has a long history that stretches back to the mists of time in the migrations of the Austronesian peoples into the South Pacific. What is new in Samoa, however, is the ceremonial use of the kava as a drink connected with the ancient religion of the Samoans and with their social etiquette.

What this signifies is that the genealogy of the kava refers to this ceremonial use in the context of the worship of personal gods, family gods, village gods, district gods, and national gods (Turner 1861). For the kava was both drunk and offered to the gods in the privacy of an individual's home or in the public domain of a village or district meeting.

The use of kava both as food and as a component of a highly complex ritual evolved in importance over the centuries and, like the Samoan fine mat, the *ie toga*, may truly be called one of the *mea sina* (treasured possessions) of Samoa.

The kava ceremony in Samoa, for instance, is one of the most elaborate rituals of welcome and worship in Samoan culture (*aganu'u Samoa*). There is a set protocol to which all parties must adhere, including welcoming remarks (*tuvaoga*), presentation of the kava by the host and visitors (*sufiga o le ava*), formal acknowledgment of the gifts of the kava root (*folafolaga o le ava*), and speeches of welcome and thanks (*lauga*).

In the actual ceremony, the ceremonial drinking of the kava drink would be held according to the dictates of Samoan chiefly protocol, followed by the presentation of a gift by the guests (*lafo* in the form of money, similar to the Maori *kohu*) and a lavish meal for all (*fono o le ava*). In the old days, there would also have been a *poula*, or traditional entertainment at night.

These various stages of the kava ceremony constitute separate rituals that must be performed in the correct manner; otherwise, the hosts would be put in a bad light because of their ignorance of the correct protocol. The kava ceremony is thus not just a simple ceremony for drinking kava, as is being done today commercially, but also an occasion for negotiating social space (*va*).

There are several versions regarding the origin of the kava. Basically, these may be divided into two: one emanating in Eastern Samoa (the Manu'a version) and one emanating in Western Samoa (the Western version).

There are some similarities (and some differences) between the two versions. Similarities include the "fact" that the kava plant grew from the body of a dead ancestor who requested that any plants that sprouted from his grave should be used for the benefits of his relatives. The plants were the sugarcane and the kava.

The differences were that in the Manu'a version, all events took place in Manu'a; that is, in Samoa, while in the Western version, the events took place in Fiji, and the plants were brought to Samoa by the dead ancestor's brother and sister, who swam across the ocean. There are some Samoan scholars who argue that Fiji is actually Fiti-uta in Manu'a, but that is another story.

It is the Manu'a version, however, that is generally regarded as the more authoritative of the two versions from several perspectives: Manu'a is regarded as the birthplace of Samoan culture, of its arts and crafts; general population movements of the past appear to have occurred in an east-to-west direction, with Savaii in the west being the last Samoan island to be populated. Space will not permit me to elaborate on these general beliefs at this time.

Thus, this article concerns the Manu'a version about the genealogy of the kava. It is about the first known kava ceremony involving only two leading characters, Tagaloa-ui and Pava; it is about the ceremonial use of the kava by the Sa Tagaloa family; the violation of a prohibition, or *tapu*, pertaining to the kava; the attempt to punish the violator of this *tapu*; the breakup of the Sa Tagaloa family; and the spreading of the kava to other parts of Samoa.

Tagaloa-ui Son of the Sun

According to the Manu'a myth, the Sun was a cannibal. The people suffered. So, in an attempt to "tame" the Sun, the boy Lua and his sister Ui conspired to put an end to the Sun's cannibalism, and to this end they argued about who was to carry out their mission.

The sister, Ui, won the argument, and so when morning came, the girl went to the place where the Sun rose. She spread out her legs directly opposite the Sun's face (Kramer 1994, 551). The Sun thereupon agreed to give up his evil ways provided that Ui became his wife, which was, after all, what Ui had intended all along.

The Sun also made the girl promise that when she gave birth to his son, he was to be named after them. That is to say, he was to be called Tagaloa-Ui, made up of the Sun's name, Tagaloa, and that of the girl.

When she returned to her brother, they talked about running away and so swam in an easterly direction toward the Atafu islands, in the Tokelaus. While there, they stole a bird and a shell trumpet belonging to Li'i, another refugee from the Sun's wrath.

The brother and sister continued their swimming, this time south toward the Manu'a islands, carrying with them Li'i's goods. They landed at the place now called Saua, but Lua never made it to land, for he died and sank below the waves carrying with him Li'i's shell trumpet.

Ui continued on to land with the sultana bird she had stolen (Kramer 1994, 551). The bird ran away while Ui gave birth to the Sun's son on the beach. At that time, the golden plover (*tuli*) came along and told Ui to tell the boy his name, and that was how the boy got the names for his limbs: the knee, *tulivae*; the elbow, *tulilima*; and the top side, *tuliulu*.

Soon after, another bird came and sucked the boy's nose, and that was how this bird came to be called the *miti*. The mother and child then went up to the coconut plantation and lived there. This place came to be called Faleniu, the house of coconuts. The boy himself came to be called Tagaloa-Ui, in accordance with the Sun's decree (Kramer 1994, 552).

After a lengthy sojourn in the coconut plantation, Ui died, and Tagaloa-Ui now set out to find other people living in the area. That was how he came into contact with Pava and his two children, whose house "stood on a hill above a running stream." Tagaloa-Ui told the boys to fetch their father, and they did so.

But Pava did not approach in the usual manner. He covered himself with taro leaves and floated down the river to where Tagaloa-Ui was bathing. Tagaloa-Ui opened the taro leaves, only to find Pava, who laughed and thought it was a great joke. Not so Tagaloa-Ui, who became angry and told Pava he was a bad man because he played tricks on others.

The stage was now set for what is reputed to be the first kava ceremony in Samoa involving Tagaloa-Ui and Pava and acknowledged in the famous expression *O le taeao na i Saua*, meaning the morning (great historical event) at Saua. This expression is often used in kava ceremonies even to this day.

Pava fetched a kava root that he deposited in front of Tagaloa-Ui, who instructed the young men to prepare it while he conducted a conversation with Pava. Tagaloa-Ui complained about the wild kava plants that scratched him and the difficulty of finding his way, thus the origin of the expression *saua i ava*, meaning "threatened by the kava" (Kramer 1994, 552).

While the two were drinking their kava, Pava's young son was fooling around the kava bowl, and despite warnings from Tagaloa-ui to Pava to control his son, Pava did not heed the advice. Finally, the boy fell into the kava bowl, and Tagaloa-ui reacted by hitting him with the rib of a coconut leaf, cutting him in two.

Tagaloa-ui offered Pava one-half of his son, and he kept the other half for a kava meal called *fono o le ava*. Pava's grief was great, and he would not eat. Seeing this, Tagaloa-ui felt sorry for his host and so pasted the two parts together, bringing the child back to life. This act is commemorated in the clapping of hands in a kava ceremony before cups of kava are served. The ceremony then resumed. But before they rested, they pledged to continue their kava drinking the following day.

The next day, Pava again went to dig up a root for their kava drink, and again the young men prepared the kava as the two men continued with their friendly conversation. Tagaloa-ui was having a stomachache from drinking too much kava and no food, so he asked Pava for some snack to go with the kava. Pava then sang:

E u i fea fono o le ava?
E u i tai fono o le ava:
Se 'ata'ata, se manini saupata.
Se sagaga, se 'ava'ava.
Se asopolata, se igaga,
Se aloama, se vana,
'Atoa 'uma mea, 'o i le moana.

The song referred to fish and other food from the sea. When he had finished, the food from the sea came as if magically on their own and filled up the house. Then again he sang:

E u i fea fono o le ava?
E u i uta fono o le ava.
Se toa alaga, se pua'a fata,
Se fa'i o se aupata,
Se 'ulu o se ma'afala,
Se ufi e 'eli i le palapala.

The song referred to foods from the land, including fowl, pigs, bananas, breadfruit, and yams. When he had finished, these foods again came as if magically on their own and filled up Pava's house.

According to the myth, Tagaloa-ui was exceedingly glad because of the abundance of food for the kava. This kava ceremony came to be called the *Taeao na i Namo*, meaning “the morning” (great historical event) at Namo. Both of these two “mornings,” or great historical events at Saua and Namo are commemorated in the Samoan kava ceremonies even to this day. And both occurred in Manu'a, even though some *matai* (chiefs) in Western Samoa claim that they referred to different events and that both occurred on the big island of Savaii, which, from both historical and traditional accounts, were settled much later than Manua.

After the kava session with Pava, Tagaloa-ui bade farewell to Pava and continued on his way in his search for other residents of the island and their communities. And perhaps this is a suitable place to conclude this particular myth about the first kava ceremony in Samoa.

In this particular myth, the kava is a wild plant whose properties as a drink were, however, well known to Pava. The kava session by Pava and Tagaloa-ui gave rise to aspects of the kava ritual that were later to be incorporated into the kava ceremony.

These include the formal welcome (by Pava to Tagaloa-ui), the presentation of the kava root as a gift (by Pava to Tagaloa-ui), the clapping before imbibing the kava drink (by Tagaloa-ui in restoring the life of Pava's son), and the participation in a sumptuous feast, *fono o le ava* (provided by Pava).

Although many of the events in the myth may be regarded as magical, this should be construed as only a literary device calculated to heighten the importance of the various aspects of the kava ceremony.

Sa Tagaloa and the Culture Hero, Lefanoga

In the beginning of Samoan history, which archaeologists have dated to about 1000 BC (cf. Jennings 1979 and others), there were no chiefs (*matai*) in Samoa, only the family of Tagaloa, or Sa Tagaloa for short (Mailo 1972).

According to High Chief Mailo, chairperson of the Historical Commission of American Samoa in the 1950s, the *matai* system had not yet evolved, and the archipelago was ruled by a council of elders based in Manu'a, the oldest and most easterly island of the Samoan group.

The elders were all called by the same name, Tagaloa, and the only way of distinguishing between them was the use of a suffix—Tagaloa-ui, Tagaloa-leniu, Tagaloa-lefau, and so on—while the high god came to be called Tagaloa-lagi, the male ancestor of all the Tagaloa, who was also synonymous with the Sun. (Many myths show that the early Samoans were a Sun-worshipping community.)

In the second myth (Kramer, 1994, 562), the Manu'a legend continues. Tagaloa-ui has found other humans on the island of Ta'u, where Saua is located on the eastern end, and has found a niche for himself and his family.

As a member of the Sa Tagaloa council, which today would be the equivalent of the village council, Tagaloa-ui and his son Taeotagaloa were entitled to attend the council meeting. Noninitiates—people not considered elders of the Sa Tagaloa family—were prohibited from attending the meeting on pain of death. This meeting was held at regular intervals in heaven (*lagi*), which may be translated as the mountains of Tau island.

The story goes that Tagaloa-ui's young son, by the name of Lefanoga, often saw his father and elder brother leave at night and was burning with curiosity to find out why. So the next time the two left at night to attend the Sa Tagaloa council, Lefanoga followed at a distance, unknown to them. Imagine therefore the shock of the council when Lefanoga emerged in their midst. For nobody had ever entered the council chamber uninvited.

Regardless of Tagaloa-ui's prestige and mana, regardless of the fact that the boy's mistake was an innocent one, the conclusion was inevitable: the punishment was death. He was ordered to bring the kava roots from Logopapa, where they grew wild, in the expectation that he would be killed by the poisonous plants.

But it was not to be. With a normal human being, death would have been the inevitable result, but Lefanoga was equipped not only with tremendous strength but also with exceptional skill. He succeeded in overcoming the wild, poisonous plants and managed to bring the kava for the council to consume. The cosmic battle between Lefanoga and the kava plants is commemorated in a Manu'a chant (Kramer 1994, 562) as follows:

<i>O le 'ava na ia saia</i>	<i>The kava was hewn off by him</i>
<i>O uso na ia tu'ia</i>	<i>The root was struck by him</i>
<i>Na ia suatia, na ia fulia</i>	<i>Dug up, toppled over</i>
<i>Na ia fa'amanumanutia</i>	<i>And its branches torn off</i>
<i>Na ia lafo ia, na ia faataia</i>	<i>Thrown to the ground, its weight tested</i>
<i>Na ia savalia'iina, telea'iina</i>	<i>Gone away with it, run away</i>
<i>Ta'alili, ina ta'alili le 'ava</i>	<i>There was roaring and trembling</i>
<i>Le 'ava i Logopapa</i>	<i>By the kava in Logopapa</i>
<i>Lulu le malae i lulu pa'u</i>	<i>The malae shook when the root</i>
<i>(Lefanoga) fa'ataupa'u</i>	<i>Fell down and Lefanoga fell with it</i>

The next few lines would suggest not only that Lefanoga survived the physical and mental test against the magical powers, as it were, of the kava plants

but also that, because of his victory over the plants, he had in effect tamed the plants, enabling the Sa Tagaloa council to use the drink derived from them for a ceremonial purpose.

The kava ceremony between two individuals—the son of the Sun, Tagaloaui, and the son of Man, Pava—has been transposed onto that of the wider community. So Lefanoga's victory marks the formal introduction of the kava into the affairs of humans.

That the wild kava has been tamed, socialized, to become the link between the ancestors and their descendants attests to the spiritual links between the living and the dead and serves the needs of society through common worship in the form of the kava ceremony. Thus,

<i>'Ava i tou fasia, tou maia</i>	<i>The kava is cut for you, now chew it</i>
<i>Satagaloa i tou taumafatia</i>	<i>You Tagaloa people can now drink it</i>
<i>Vaitina na ia taofia</i>	<i>The vaitina piece, however, I will keep</i>
<i>O le aso ula lenei, o le aso fiafia</i>	<i>This is a happy day, a day of joy</i>
<i>Na ifo, na ifo ai mea a le lagi</i>	<i>I shall take these things down from heaven</i>
<i>I le Fale'ula ma le 'aumaga pa'ia</i>	<i>To the Fale'ula and [aumaga paia]</i>
<i>E tapua'i ava, na toia</i>	<i>Blessings may the kava bring you, planted</i>
<i>I se papapapa ma se ma'ama'a</i>	<i>On cliffs and rocks</i>
<i>Ata se le'aulu ma se le'apua</i>	<i>The trunk of the le'aulu and le'apua</i>
<i>Tatou te taumafa ava e, ava o Saua</i>	<i>Let us drink the kava, the kava of Saua</i>
<i>Ava o Leituomanu</i>	<i>The kava o Leituomanu</i>

The test imposed by the Manua council did not end there, for there were two more (Mailo 1972; Mailo, pers. comm.), but again Lefanoga managed to pass these with honors, and this was why he was accorded a prestigious manaia title, *Siliaga* (invincible conqueror). After his death, Lefanoga was to be deified and become the god of several pre-Christian Samoan communities.

For instance, the ancient god of the important district of Saleimoa in Western Samoa was called Lefanoga, who was incarnated in the owl (*lulu*). The owl's favorite food was rats (*imoa*), and that was how the district got its name: *sa* means "prohibited," and *imoa* means "rat." It was forbidden to

the people of that district to kill rats because these were reserved as food for the owl, the incarnation of Lefanoga. It also shows that this culture hero, Lefanoga, was not a figment of the imagination.

According to this myth, Saua is the birthplace of the Samoan kava, the parent (*matua*) so to speak, and from here, on the eastern side of Tau, the main island of the Manua group (consisting of Tau, Olosega, and Ofu islands), the kava plant and ceremonial use spread to other parts of Samoa. The spread of the plant therefore was from east to west, that is, from Manua to Tutuila and Aunu'u, to Upolu, and finally to Savaii.

Whether of course this is historically true is another matter, but a strong case can be made for the ceremonial use of the kava because it is generally accepted, even in the west, that the traditional form of the Samoan government (e.g., rule by elders and later by matai or chiefs) began in Manua and from there spread to the west. This applies equally to the royal genealogies of the god Tagaloa-lagi, Tui Manua, Tui Atua, Tui Aana, and the more recent Malietoa title.

Kava Root Spreads

The myth affirms the kava's beginnings in Manu'a. From there it spread outward, first to Olosega, the island next to Ta'u, and then to Tutuila and Aunu'u, all islands now part of the territory of American Samoa under the control of the U.S. Congress. Places specifically mentioned include Fagalele and Osogavasa, Aunu'u, Puava, Masefau, Lenau, Fagafue and Aoloau, and Leone, all in the east. From there, the kava spread to the western isles (Kramer 1994, 562) as follows:

<i>Tuitele ma Lualemaga</i>	<i>Tuitele and Lualemaga</i>
<i>Ia sauni sa oulua malaga</i>	<i>Both of you prepare for a journey</i>
<i>Ina oso ava i Vini ma Tapaga</i>	<i>Take the kava to Vini and Tapaga</i>
<i>Ava ai Aleipata</i>	<i>That also Aleipata may have kava</i>
<i>A fa'asavali le gafa o ava</i>	<i>[Continuing the kava's genealogy]</i>
<i>Ava ai Falealili, ava ai Saga</i>	<i>The kava got to Falealili and Saga</i>
<i>Ava ai Siumu ma Safata</i>	<i>It got to Siumu [and] Safata</i>
<i>A fa'asavali le gafa o ava</i>	<i>[Continuing the kava's genealogy]</i>
<i>A e gau le ata i le itu Anoama'a</i>	<i>Its trunk broke at the Anoama'a</i>
	<i>side</i>
<i>Na ava ai le Tuamasaga</i>	<i>And Tuamasaga received kava</i>
<i>A fa'asavali le gafa o ava</i>	<i>[Continuing the kava's genealogy]</i>
<i>Ava ai Aana, ava Lefaga</i>	<i>Aana received kava and Lefaga</i>
<i>A fa'asavali le gafa o ava</i>	<i>[Continuing the kava's genealogy]</i>

<i>Ava ai Manono, ava ai le olo</i>	<i>Manono received kava and its fort</i>
<i>A fa'asavali le gafu o ava</i>	<i>[Continuing the kava's genealogy]</i>
<i>Sole, o Fune ma Fotu, na iai le</i>	<i>Fune and Fotu, you two planted</i>
<i>tolua i ava</i>	<i>kava</i>

A few lines in the English translation have been altered for the sake of convenience. For instance, “*A fa'asavali le gafu o ava*” is translated in the main text as “*Further wandered the progenitors of the kava.*” In order to fit the words into a single line, the original translation has been changed to “*Continuing the kava's genealogy.*”

In some respects this may be more accurate because *fa'asavali* means “made to walk” (e.g., a child); genealogy refers to pedigree, the list of ancestors, who married whom, and who were the children. In this context, *fa'asavali* is being used metaphorically and refers more to revealing information about the processes of pedigree, namely, the origin and spread of the plant from east to west. Of course, it is more than just an alleged statement of fact: it has every mark of also being a political statement by the chiefs and orators of Manu'a.

Other comments on the text are that Tuitele is a high chief of the village of Leone, while Lualemaga is his counterpart in the village of Aasu, both in American Samoa. The fact that they are asked to prepare for a journey to take the kava to Aleipata, the neighboring district in Western Samoa, signifies that travel was frequent between Tutuila and Upolu in pre-Christian times.

So obviously, the kava root was transferred from place to place not by ordinary untitled people but by high chiefs, again signifying the importance of kava as a cultural icon. The kava has become domesticated. It is no longer just a natural plant it has also become a symbol of Samoan sociality of the highest order.

As a leading orator of Manu'a, Fofu Sumia (1997, 66), said, “*E sili ona taua le ava i aganuu faatino uma a Samoa.*” This translates as “Kava is the most important aspect of Samoan cultural practice.” A controversial view but close enough to the truth. In support of his opinion, Sumia refers to the use of the kava in many Samoan rituals, such as at public meetings (*fono*), at house and church dedications (*umusaga ma faaulufalega*), in reconciliation between aggrieved parties (*ifoga, faaleleiga*), in engaging the services of a church minister (*osiga o le feagaiga*), in village council meetings (*fono a le nu'u*), and so on.

The myth does not mention the names of people who took the kava to other parts of Western Samoa, but presumably, as in the case of Tuitele and Lualemaga, they were also chiefs. At that time, many people in the

west would have gladly welcomed any innovation from Manu'a, considered the homeland of the Samoan people, Samoan arts and crafts (*faiva faatufugaga*), and language and culture (*gagana ma le aganuu*) in general (cf. Sunia 1997; Mailo 1972).

Manono's fort referred to is clearly Apolima, very handy and impregnable. According to Kramer's (1994, 628) notes, Fune and Fotu refers to the villages of Safune and Safotu, respectively, and the kava land, Toluaiava. According to the Savaii tradition, a culture hero by the name of Sao brought its kava direct from Fiji.

But according to the Manu'a tradition, Savaii exchanged its kava from Manu'a for a fat hen. Perhaps it is an example of another political statement from the Manu'a chiefs to put Savaii in its place, a minor one at that, especially as the myth says derogatively (Kramer 1994, 564), Savaii is a place without chiefs and therefore not recognized in the Samoan chiefly hierarchy.

The nature of the genealogy of the kava is quite clear, however, from the text, a genealogy that is accepted by a wide cross section of Samoan chiefs and orators in both Samoas. In the more important kava ceremonies, such as historical occasions and the reception of VIPs, it is not uncommon to hear orators refer to this Manu'a genealogy while performing the function of announcing kava root gifts (*folafolaga o le ava*). A knowledge of this genealogy would contribute greatly to the prestige of a Samoan chief, especially an orator. For knowledge is power.

The kava that was used in the meeting between Tagaloa-ui and Pava was obtained from wild plants that grew in Saua. There is no reference to its origins. But other myths seek to explain the origin of the kava. For example, a popular version has it that it originated from a plant that grew on the grave of Avaalii, son of the god Tagaloalagi (Aumua 2002; Mailo 1972, 2:22). And, of course, there is the Upolu and Savaii version that it grew from the grave of an ancestor and was brought from Fiji to Samoa.

These versions, however, must be construed as political statements that seek to legitimize the existing social orders of various sectors of Samoan society. Why then should the Manu'a version appear to be the more authentic version? The answer is it goes to the very beginning of Samoan society, to the Sun god and his son, Tagaloa-ui, and therefore enjoys a kind of precedence that the other versions (those for Upolu and Savaii, hence, *tolu-ai-ava*, three origin stories) do not have.

Which was the first kava ceremony? Mailo (1972, 2:10) argues that the first kava ceremony marked the installation of the first chief, or matai, in Samoa, Tagaloa-leniu, who had defeated his brother Tagaloa-lefau in a battle to determine the position of chief of the Sa Tagaloa family. Wars were often the way to determine chiefly power.

However, it appears that this particular kava ceremony marked the installation only of the first matai of Samoa and not necessarily of the Sa Tagaloa council of elders, who received the kava from the hands of the culture hero, Lefanoga. That is to say, the context needs to be taken into account when considering what constitutes the first kava ceremony.

While these different versions do complicate the question of precedence in time, one must adopt a diachronic perspective to give meaning to the various histories. One must look at the very beginning of Samoan settlement and the introduction of this particular plant, which is widespread in Polynesia. One must also look at the evolutionary history of the kava as a socialized drink in the different periods of Samoan history.

The kava ceremony itself must be perceived as a simple one in the beginning that later increased in complexity as Samoan society itself evolved to where it is today. The complexity of the Samoan kava ceremony increased with the political evolution of Samoan society, from one governed by the Sa Tagaloa elders, as in prehistoric times; to one governed by district chiefs, such as Tui Manu'a, Tui Atua, and Tui A'ana; and finally to one ruled over by myriad chiefs, both *ali'i paia* and *tulafale* (sacred and secular chiefs).

The kava plant is undoubtedly one of the many Southeast Asian plants brought by the Austronesians to Oceania, Remote Oceania, Central Pacific, and Polynesia by the lapita people, and this view is supported by linguistic evidence (see, e.g., Bellwood et al. 1995). The calming, soporific, and other soothing properties of the plant must have been evident quite early to the lapita settlers; otherwise, they would not have carried it with them to most of the islands they settled in the Pacific. The use of the kava in ritual, however, evolved over time and varied from society to society.

This is also what happened in Samoa. It was at first a simple drink from a plant that grew rapidly and spread in the wilds. Then it became part of a ritual, and this is the significance of the kava ceremony by Tagaloa-ui and Pava, first at Saua and then the next day at Namo. This is why the event continues to be articulated as one of the great events in Samoan history.

The ritual was perpetuated by the Sa Tagaloa council after Lefanoga conquered the ferocious kava plants in an epic battle at Logopapa, where they grew in abundance. Indeed, Sa Tagaloa wanted to put Lefanoga to death for his transgression in attending the meeting uninvited, but the consequence was ultimately beneficial because it enabled Sa Tagaloa to utilize the kava plants for their own purpose.

The scandal that resulted from Lefanoga's transgression, however, was to slowly lead to the disintegration of the Sa Tagaloa government. Mailo himself claimed that this incident was responsible for the mass migration of Samoans to the east (Mailo, pers. comm.). And the Tagaloa title itself gave way in importance to other titles that subsequently came into being.

The new leaders that emerged came to be known as Tui Manu'a, Tui Tonga, Tui Atua, Tui Aana, Tui Uea, and so on. During their time, beginning around AD 1, lapita gradually gave way to plain pottery until, by about AD 500, pottery had practically disappeared in the Samoan islands. The new material culture emphasized woodwork (e.g., tanoa) over pottery.

These leaders and others continued the traditions of the Sa Tagaloa council, including especially the kava ceremony. So when Mailo claims that the first kava ceremony was held to mark the bestowal of the first matai title on Tagaloa-leniu (Mailo 1972, 2:10), it was not really the first kava ceremony as such but only the first kava ceremony associated with the emergence of the new matai class, one that continues to rule Samoa even today.

Conclusion

How does this myth relate to indigenous anthropology, genealogy, positionality, and mythology? Simply this: that in considering the meaning and messages of myth, that we should look at such through the eyes of the people who own the myth in the first place. This is the primary role of indigenous anthropologists because, if we do not do it, who will do it for us?

Genealogical connection, as I stated in the beginning, refers to intellectual influences on the development of indigenous anthropologists. These provide the tools needed for their work. But it is not enough. Indigenous anthropologists should also have if not biological, then at least cultural links to their subject. They must possess the cultural ethos of the people they are studying. For lacking this, they will also lack intellectual coherence.

Positionality refers to the indigenous anthropologist's stance on a given topic, and here again intellectual development of the highest order is required if an indigenous anthropologist is to make anthropological sense of his indigenous world. But such knowledge needs to be supplemented by a deep learning, understanding, and appreciation of one's cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

The marriage of intellectual achievement and *verstehen*, an understanding and appreciation of one's indigenous worldview, provides the essential springboards for developing that unique perspective on social and cultural issues. The indigenous anthropologist is therefore more than just another anthropologist: he or she is also a proactive member of his cultural milieu. He or she fights for his or her beliefs.

Mythology is the heart and soul of the indigenous world, as exemplified in the Dream Time of the Australian aboriginals, in the *Solo o le Va*, the creation myth of the Samoans, and so on. This is because myths generate

the feelings and emotions appropriate for everyday events of the indigenous peoples. Without these, we as indigenes are in danger of losing our identities and therefore *our* *raison d'être* in the world of being.

In August 1983, Professor Derek Freeman of the Australian National University was the keynote speaker at the first graduation of the Iunivesite o Samoa, an indigenous university owned and operated by the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. I was among six students who graduated B.A. My major was Samoan studies.

At that ceremony, Professor Freeman said that there were five stages in the development of anthropology. Four have been completed, and we are now entering the fifth.

The first stage was dominated by the missionaries, who studied and recorded the cultures of the small communities they were trying to convert to Christianity, such as John Williams, John Stair, George Turner, and George Brown in Samoa.

The second stage was dominated by the so-called armchair anthropologists and was characterized by many of the European and American anthropologists of the nineteenth century, such as Edward Tylor and James Frazer of England. These were the people who depended on the data supplied by others, often the missionaries.

The third stage was dominated by men and women who did not just sit in their armchairs but went out to study the indigenous people at their own habitats, such as the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski among the Trobrianders. These were today's active, pioneer anthropologists.

The fourth stage is the one we are now passing through: highly trained anthropologists who excel in various fields of theoretical and applied research and well versed in both the past and the modern methodologies of the discipline.

The fifth stage is that of the future, one dominated by indigenous anthropologists who have more than their discipline's interest at heart, for they are also concerned with the cultural integrity and preservation of their societies.

These are not just empty words, Professor Freeman argued. For there are many lessons that the Western societies can learn from small communities like Samoa, such as the importance of *faaloalo* (respect), *tapuaiga* (praying for others' success), and *ifoga* (begging for forgiveness). These values and others, he maintained, will be the most valuable contributions that small communities can give to the world in the future.

The indigenous anthropologist's contributions therefore are, first, to set the record straight in the description and analysis of elements of his or her own culture and, second, to provide useful models that others can use for the improvement of their own societies.

There is one final question to be considered. Why place the Manu'a version of the kava on a high pedestal in comparison with say the Upolu and Savaii versions? I have already referred to the reasons for the primacy of the Manu'a version.

In my view, the kind of kava version an orator will use in his or her speech will depend to a large extent on the nature of his or her audience. If the audience consists mostly of Upolu people or if the subject of a meeting concerns Upolu only, then most probably the Upolu version of the kava will be used. The same for Savaii.

But when people from all three island groups are assembled, then the Manu'a version is the one most likely to be used because there is a general consensus that Manu'a was first settled by Samoans (per oral traditions) and was the birthplace of Samoan language, culture, arts, and crafts.

Another possible reason was that as Samoans moved westward over the centuries; they carried with them and amended the oral histories they originally brought with them from Manu'a. The overall effect would be that the myths and legends would appear to have originated in Upolu or Savaii rather than Manu'a.

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