

**FEFINE, FONUA, TONGA:
A Voice Towards Climate Change¹**

Paula Onoafe Latu PhD
HOD., History and Wesley Studies Department.
Sia'atoutai Theological College
Nafualu,
Kingdom of TONGA

STC. Presentation team:

***Narrator:** Ms. Victoria Kavafolau (tutor Gender Equality Theology)*
***Kele² (Actor Fefine):** Ms. Christina Liu (tutor, Meth. History Dept).*
***Biki (Actor Tangata):** Mr. Tevita Tongamohenoa Taka (tutor, History Dept.)*
***Performer:** Ms. Selafina Finau (STC student)*

**Oceania Biblical Scholars Association,
Pacific Theological College, Suva, FIJI.**

April, 2019.

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Sioeli K. Vaipulu for his advice on the theological framework of this work and to the presentation team Ms. Vikatolia Vaipulu, Ms. Christina Liu, Ms Selafina Finau, and Mr. Tevita Tonga Mohenoa Taka for performing this project to the Oceania Biblical Scholars Association Conference held in PTC., Suva, 18-20 April 2019. Alter-natively, it is a *Fakamotu* Biblical-Cultural view for climate change from our Tongan fale. It argues that Climate Change is the retaliation of the environment to the global world, most especially to leaders for their various business programs that have destroyed the integrity of creation – the land. As such the voice of the woman should be heard as it conveys the wailing, the pains and the agony the land as mother earth face from the destruction humanity caused on the land.

² Creation story of Tonga tells of how Biki and Kele were born as twins from a rock Touiaofutuna, and Kelekele here refers to the either the second descendant of Kele and Biki, or rather all descendants of the same. See creation story in Moulton. 376-380.; James Egan Moulton, "Notes on Tongan History and Tongan Legends," in *PMB Manuscript* (Canberra: Australia National University Library, Pacific Manuscript Bureau, n.d.).

Dedicated

to

Her Majesty

Queen Nanasipau'u

and

all the women of Tonga.

“FEFINE, FONUA & TONGA:

A Voice towards climate change (Woman, Land, and Tonga)”³

Text:

Genesis 3:20

“Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living” (NIV)

Abstract:

Tongan traditional/cultural concept of *Fonua* carries with it four different, yet related connotations, with respect to a Tongan woman’s view of indigenous culture and tradition; *Kelekele* (Fa’e [mother], the Land), *Manava* (Fonua [land], my womb), *Tangata* (mankind) mo e ‘*Ulungaanga fakafonua* (Feilaulau [sacrifice], our culture) and *Fa’itoka* (return the child to be with Ancestors in the womb).

A Fonua-Fefine *Kele* shares her Talanoa, to the tangata *Biki*, about one who is being destroyed and exploited; the fruits of her womb are being enslaved and murdered; her cultural mat – the people and culture of Kava – is being tortured to the point that a dead person returns to the womb of her/his motherland in the *Fonua ‘o Tonga* naked of dignity and respect.

This Talanoa aims to bring out the woman’s view of how her *Fonua* is being exploited, abused, and destroyed, suppressed, and dehumanized by political, economic, and social pursuit of material innovation and transparency. Climate change is the retaliation of the environment to the global society. Unless, the global humanity listens to the voice of the woman on land, the environment will not stop wailing as it retaliates to what the world have done to ruin the land, people and ecology systems.

³ At the first place, this presentation was originally written for the OBSA 2019, Oceania Biblical Scholars Association 2019: Pacific Theological College, Suva, FIJI, and we asked to perform in Tongan language to the Conference. But was advised by organizers to switch to English only because of time factor. It was hoped that this presentation is made in the Tongan language so that it offers all its indigenous meaning, philosophy and rationality in the language that was first conceived and treasured. We are obliged to do justice to our ancestors who are here with us now in spirit, we must pay homage to them. Our ancestors are the owner of these indigenous realities. It is with pity that the English language and logic of presentation had colonized the world over, and we the weaker people of the world must comply and uncompromisingly present our valued realities in this foreign language. In particular the weaker nations and their indigenous knowledge, the meanings of their ancestor’s wisdom and knowledge are being disrespectfully translated only to suit the demand of the palangi world. Our values are changed or transliterate only to suit the meaning and make sense to the small-nut-shell world of the palangi without any respect to the island people, the custodians of the culture, and to our ancestors who are the owner of the valued knowledge and wisdom. It is believed this is the most unjust cause that the world of western education continues to push through their own agenda of colonization all over the weaker societies and their wealth of knowledge.

Narrator: Victoria Kavafolau

In this presentation we incorporate Nasili Vaka'uta's "alter-native" framework, which uses "*native insights to alter existing knowledge and modes, and to alter native insights...*"⁴ from serving the interests of colonizers to serving the interests of the colonized instead. We also employed Jione Havea's "*fakamotu*" model in which we present ourselves in our *motu*-island way by turning to the wisdom of our ancestors and thus bringing forth the voice of the indigenous community.

Such wisdoms and cultural values had been untimely and successively recreated through generations to produce a cultural mat of Tonga today. Therefore, we now present our case in our *motu*-cultural mat. In view of the space between one *motu* and another. In other words, *fakamotu* refers to how small, watery, and unimportant are our islands indigenous wisdoms and cultural values.

Our task is to attempt to alter that existing knowledge of our *motu* people and bring out women's view of the "*Fonua*" from a "*Tongan-motu*" perspective.

Our topic is Fonua and Tonga

What we seek to remind this OBSA meeting is that Tongan women have something to offer in contribution to Climate Change Resilience.

Firstly, this presentation aims to draw your attention toward the *Fefine-Tangata* dialogue by highlighting the practical issues that causes the present exploitation procedures exercised by global industries and organizations to the land - our mother.

Secondly, it is significant to raise the cries of native women's concerns to the world and the devastating operations that destroy and diminish the *Fonua* but especially the integrity of creation.

Fonua carries four different, yet related meanings in Tongan indigenous culture:

⁴ Nasili Vaka'uta, "*Talanga: A Tongan Mode of Interpretation*," in *Talanoa Ripples: Across Borders, Cultures, Disciplines...* ed. Jione Havea (Massey University: Directorate of Pasifika@Massey, 2010). 149.

- i. Fonua as the *Kelekele*⁵ – the Mother-land Kele;⁶
- ii. Fonua as the *Manava* – Womb of the mother;
- iii. Fonua as the *Feilaulau* - People and culture;
- iv. Fonua as the *Fa'itoka* - Graveyard.⁷

My role in this presentation is to introduce the origin of the concept “*Fonua*” in Tongan indigenous culture.⁸ The purpose of this presentation is to impart a Tongan woman’s view of *Fonua* in alignment with its four meanings. The task of today’s presentation will focus on two of these meanings. The first is that *Fonua* represents Motherland or similarly the land itself. The second is that *Fonua* represents the womb of the woman.

On that case, I’d like to recall a statement by Richard Heitzenrater, in his *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, which stated that “every account of origins is laden with myths and legends.”⁹ It is upon this conviction that the Hawaiian author Robert Borofsky suggests ‘poetic forms’ as starting point for history study.¹⁰

1. Samoan scholar and poet Albert Wendt “Inside Us the Dead.”

Poetic framework of history is never been a new discovery. The famous Samoan poet and historian, Albert Wendt, embarks on this framework in his statement “Inside Us the Dead.”¹¹ Whether this poetic statement could be taken as myths or legends, it portrays elements of facts (of the reality) about the people of history. Dead people are taken historically as facts of the past. Their stories remain with us in the present. Those people’s names and memories are not merely congruent parts of living generations. They also exist within us as absence partners (David Tracy), exerting significant influence on our feeling,

⁵ In my own view, this concept “Kelekele” means the descendants of Kele, the first woman of Tonga, the twin sister to brother Biki, the first children of the original rock Toiua-’o-futuna. See J. E Moulton, “Tongans ” in *Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics* ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh T & T Clark 1921). 379. See also Hufanga ‘Okusitino Mahina, “The Tongan Traditional History *Tala-E-Fonua*: A Vernacular Ecology-Centred Historico-Cultural Concept” (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1992). Figure 2.1.

⁶ See a diagram of “The Beginning” of Tongan Cosmos in Mahina thesis of the first twin brother and sister Biki and Kele born of the rock Touia-’o-futuna in the Vahanoa-Pulotu (in my view, this is the Moana). . Figure 2.1.

⁷ See a definition of *Tala-e-Fonua* as “lit. telling-of-the-land-and-its-people” on a study by ‘Okusitino Mahina *ibid.* vi.

⁸ With respect, I acknowledge works that have been published before concerning inputs and perceptions on the concept of *Fonua* and its relevancy to Tongan culture and tradition. However, this presentation seeks to perceive *Fonua* from the light of an indigenous Tongan woman’s perspective.

⁹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1995). ix.

¹⁰ Robert Borofsky, “Frames of Reference: Making Histories,” in *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). 35.

¹¹ Albert Wendt, “Inside Us the Dead,” in *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, ed. R Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). 35.

thinking, and choices, here and now. In his summary of Wendt's statement, "Inside Us the Dead," Borofsky writes:

...it stresses...that history telling is not simply about facts and events, but about people. And history can be something within you – something quite personal, something poetic. (History need not be written in academic prose.) History telling charts identities. In framing the past in terms of the present, it adds meaning to life.¹²

In this presentation we are standing poetic with the past in a way that the present moaning voices of the *Fonua* could be made visible in the suffering womb of Tongan women who often find themselves and their children oppressed and victimized by dehumanizing patriarchal conceptualizations. In order to overcome this dehumanizing patriarchal conceptualization of the *Fonua*, we must be willing to hear the suffering cries of Motherland and at the same time heed her needs and respect her demands.

(all Characters come forward on stage)

Drama Presentation

Part 1: Fonua - as Motherland

Narrator continues...

Tongan people often refer to the *Fonua* as woman, most specifically, a mother. Sione 'Amanaki Havea, accounted that "When we Tongans step on the Kelekeleland, we take it that we step on the face of our mother."¹³ As a way of paying respect to our motherland, Tonga people wear *ta'ovala* – waist band mat. We wear *ta'ovala* to show our deepest respect to our mother – the land. Our ancestors cover themselves up with the sail of the *kalia*, which was originally a woven mat, before they stepped on the land after a long sea-voyaging trip.

Fonua is our motherland. And the consequences of climate change is taking its toll on our motherland.

Kele (Fefine-woman) and Biki (Tangata-man) Dialogue

LAND DESTRUCTION BY GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Christina Liu & Tevita Tongamohenoa Taka

¹² "The Selections" in Borofsky. (2000), 33.

¹³ Sione 'Amanaki Havea during a lecture on "Bible and Culture". BD class Sia'atoutai, 1988.

1. KELE - Fefine: (dressed in Tongan indigenous costume of Ngatu, with a very soft, old age voice)
“POHO EE! POHO EE! as a mother of the land; My labour has not ended ...(*lifting your hand*)... look at my children ... red, black, white, coffee, brown, silver, blue, and yellow UOI. UOI. HOOOOOOIIIIIIII.....”

2. BIKI - Tangata: (dressed in big Tongan ta’ovala)
“POHO EE! POHO EEE! THAT IS TRUE FEFINE! YOU HAVE LABOURED WITH PAIN TO FILL THE FACE OF THE EARTH WITH YOUR LOVELY SMART CHILDREN..... (*“HUH SMART!” Kele intervenes*) (*Biki con’t*)”YOU MUST BE VERY PROUD! (laughs hysterically)...”

3. KELE - Fefine:
“LOOK WHAT I HAVE PRODUCED POPULATING THE EARTH. I have peopled the earth all over with my children ... My children have exceeded 7 billion in the last 20th century world census ...

4. BIKI - Tangata:
“THAT IS A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT. FEFINE!” YES! YES!.

5. KELE - Fefine:
**“BUT! My pain is increasingly serious...even now. Look at what my children have done to me. (*Soft wailing*) Hooiiii.... “Land Clearing, Ploughing and Deforestations had caused my erosions and loss of my skin ... now ... I lay bare and naked to the sun and the atmosphere. Hooiiiiiiiiii.
“Nuclear testing had poisoned my eyes; they have cut me up in small pieces selling on markets for cash and even worse ... drilling and mining my flesh in search of my treasures hidden within me. Wooww have they collect a lot of money of me.”**

6. Biki - Tangata: – man silenced by Kele – Fefine’s cry. (one hand holding his chin and feeling pity)
“But! We need to grow crops to feed your children.”

a more complex denser understanding of the dynamics at works.”¹⁵

Klaus message is for us to take note of the “Colonial perspectives” as trash in writing and remaking history.

Both Hempenstall and Klaus emphasise two important factors of remaking Pacific history, which are the “Voices of the people studied,” and the “colonial perspective” as trashes.

From this light, *Fonua* takes on another meaning in which it symbolises *manava* (the womb of motherland or the womb of the woman). The womb of the woman takes on the task of populating the earth. However, the progression of this reproduction has its repercussions.

KELE-FEFINE AND BIKI-TANGATA DIALOGUE.

1. KELE - Fefine:

**HOOIII..... MY STOMACH IS ACHING, IN SERIOUS PAIN
MY DEAR.....MY VOICE IS NOT HEARD IN THE WORLD.....WHY
ALL THESE WARS?TO KILL ALL MY CHILDREN? WHY THE 6
MILLION JEWS KILLED BY HITLER’S REGIME?**

**ALAS! CAN YOU LISTEN TO THE CRY?...THEIR VOICES!.....THE
VOICES OF CHILDREN!! ... MURDERED IN THE HOLOCAUST,
KILLED IN THE TWO WORLD WARS.....THE MAJOR
TERRORIST ATTACKS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND MOST
RECENTLY...DONT YOU LISTEN TO MY VOICE? THE VOICE OF
MY WOMB IS CRYING LOUDLY EVERYWHERE...**

**TANGATA!!!! WHERE ARE YOU! ANSWER ME NOW.....MY
PAIN IS SO GREAT.....**

BIKI: KEEPS QUIET....CANNOT REALLY ANSWER THE QUESTIONS OF KELE.....

SO CONFUSED OF WHAT MEN OF BUSSINESS, POLITIC AND OTHERWISE HAVE
DONE TO THE FRUIT OF THE WOMAN’S WOMB.

Narrator: Victoria Kavafolau

¹⁵ Klaus in Borofsky’s words, in Newmann Klaus, "Starting from Trash," in *Remembrance Fo Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). 33.

Fonua as manava produces fruits for the earth in the form of populating the earth. Climate change in this aspect is the exploitation of the resources and the misuse of support and sustenance brought forth by the womb of the woman.

The growing pain of the womb of the woman is due to the political oscillation of power between nations and world leaders. Thus, resulting in world conflicts such as wars, terrorist attacks, religious massacres and genocide that causes the death of millions. The rise of economic issues plays a role in adding to the pain of the woman's womb, with the fruits of its womb affected by inflation/deflation rates, labour issues and impacts of new technology. The womb of the woman bellows for her children who are oppressed, exploited, enslaved and murdered. The womb of the woman wails in longing and aching.

That is the pain of the *manava*. The *Fonua* as the womb of the woman wails as it witnesses destruction of its fruits.

Part 3: Fonua – as the People and Culture

Narrator: Victoria Kavafolau

In today's presentation we would like to direct your attention to the final two concepts that surround the indigenous understanding of *Fonua* from a Tongan perspective. From our previous presentation we sought to demonstrate a theoretical outlook of *Fonua* as Motherland, and the womb of the mother. Today, we bring to you a practical ceremony of *Fonua* as a sacrificial ritual for the people and culture. A sacrificial ritual that is not often appreciated and is at times taken advantage of.

CEREMONIAL VALUES:

Borofsky noted the Rotuman scholar and historian Vilisoni Hereniko in his "Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism" who emphasised that:

"History telling...involves more than theoretically inclined prose. It involves a set of performances, a range of activities. [he also asks a telling question] How can Islanders and Outlanders make a go of it together, in rendering, interpreting, and finding meaning from their overlapping pasts?"¹⁶

¹⁶ Vilisoni Hereniko, "Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism," in *Remembrance to Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, ed. R Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). 34.

Narrator: Introduces the kava ceremony

I take this opportunity to recall the significance of *Fonua* in our *kava* ceremony.

In Tonga, history is about people it is about re-generating of people. History is not always about re-creating of thoughts of the past. It is a representation of *Talanoa*, of how we live and our way of life through actions, singing, dancing and kava. In this session, The Kava Myth is most appealing. The situation was one of an experience of value juxtaposition – where cultural embedded Tongan loyalty to kings were being met by Tongan loyalty to nature. The story goes that Tonga was in a famine – and this is the greatest enemy of Tongan loyalty to kings.¹⁷ In the sense that a Tongan person feels foolish when his or her obligation to the chiefs and king cannot be met due to scarcity. So the Tu'i Tonga was in a fishing voyage, and had come to rest in the island of 'Eueiki after a long unsuccessful journey. Living in the island was a couple named *Fevanga* and *Fefafa* with their only child, the leprous Kava.

The couple were no less aware of what it means to be loyal to the Tu'i Tonga. They also realised what it means to be loyal to the suffering of nature due to famine. One demands obligation. The other demands responsibility. The tension became more intense when the Tu'i Tonga happened to be resting against the only left over crop of the island – the *kape* tube plant. With the *kape* tree out of the question they only had one treasure left – the fruit of their womb – Kava.

The poor daughter was sacrificed, slain and put into the 'umu (earth oven) in honour of both nature and the Tu'i Tonga. Upon hearing the news of the sacrifice, the Tu'i Tonga resolved to leave the island before the 'umu was unearthed. Consequently, the 'umu became a grave from which sprung two important plants. The plant which grew out from the head side of the grave was named *Kava* (liquor), to represent the bitterness of the sacrifice. The plant that grew out at the foot of the grave was named *To* (sugarcane), to represent the sweetness of respect paid by the Tu'i Tonga towards the sacrifice – one which left the earth oven unopened forever. The two spirits of this sacrifice have now become the stronghold of our Tongan culture of loyalty to both the king and the earth as well. Today, kava is used for gathering or ceremony of unification of all confederacies, all tribes, and all people with differences.

¹⁷ There is a Tongan saying "Me'a fakavale he anga ka ko e masiva" (Scarcity makes a person's behavior foolish). It relates that a Tongan person feels foolish when his or her obligation to the chiefs are not met due to scarcity.

Fonua as the people and culture symbolise sacrificial and ceremonial values. Such values are that of sacrifice brought forth by Kava, service in the form of the *tou'a* (or the *fefine* that serves the kava) and a blessing or honouring by the *fefine tau'olunga* (a Tongan lady dancing).

In that understanding, we present before you the beverage of kava in a ceremony that upholds the sacrifice that took place to honour our king (who represents our people) and land (who represents our culture). Now we invite you all, or whoever wants to participate to partake in this ceremony.

What we have before you is the setting of the kava oval. We have the *tou'a* to represent service. And the two gentlemen the *angaikava*. And if you fill in the left and right lane you complete the *kava oval*. There is only one *hala* into the kava circle. And that is through the front. In the understanding there is only one pathway into the kava oval. And not multiple ways.

Now, the *fefine* will perform to bless and gracefully honour the conference with the chant of *kava*. This will be performed by Selafina. This presentation aims to tell our *fonua* history as people and culture.

(A tanoa – with a *tou'a*, men sitting around the circle, men playing the song of “Kava ko e Kili mei Faa'imata ko e tama 'a Fevanga pea mo Fefafa.....”)

Along comes Ms. Selafina to perform the tau'olunga on KAVA.

Part 4. Fonua – as Graveyard.

The final connotation of *Fonua* in Tongan indigenous culture is that of the *fa'itoka* or graveyard. *Fa'itoka* symbolises a place of resting. Upon the death of the children of motherland, the *putu* ceremony (or the burial of the dead) celebrates a moment of re-entering the child to the womb of his or her mother. It is a process of re-turning the child to the ancestors, it is a homecoming of the child into the *Fonua*.

Fonua is a cycle of life. As the *Fonua* populates the earth with the fruits of its womb, the *Fonua* yet again welcomes back the fruits of its womb upon death.

Such an event is not to be presented until an actual event happens.

Biblical Application on Genesis 3:20: Mohenoa Taka

GENESIS 3:20 Fefine as Mo'ui'anga.

Women questions us Men of our stewardship role of the land as a mother, the womb, the culture, we take care of the land because it is God's creation.

In Genesis 3:20, *Eve* derives from the Hebrew *hawwāh* which denotes life giving.¹⁸ Its verb form denotes to live, have life (Genesis 31-32), give life (Job33:4), revive, refresh and to restore life.¹⁹

Climate change is the major issue that disturbs the worldwide mindset. However, from the light of Genesis 3:20, we should hear or respond to the voice of women or *fefine* for it is the pathway to saving us from the harmful consequences of climate changes.

Fonua as the *kelekele*, the mother land it provides different variety of sources to satisfy our daily needs and wants.

Fonua as the womb of the mother populated the face of the earth.

Fonua as the people and culture, synthesize both the previous in the form of a sacrificial act performed by "Kava" the daughter of "Fevanga" and "Fefafa". Not only was the fruit of the womb of her mother but she also became the child of the land sprouting as the "Kava" plant.²⁰ This sacrificial act in Tonga was then marked as a ceremonial task that unify all the *ha'a* or tribes of Tonga.

Standing on the biblical platforms from an analogy perspective, Mary as a mother bore a child named Jesus. Jesus Christ's one and only sacrifice on the cross unify, unite, or merge different races that disperse on the earth saving them all.²¹

Fonua as *fa'itoka* or cemetery, burial process; Tongan traditionally believe that we return children back to the womb of the mother. Even when we as men disregard and remain deaf to the voices of the women – fonua, she will still merrily welcome all that was from her womb back to her. She labored, mourned and even when unheard cuddles her children as they are returned back into her. If we do not address the issues and negative outcomes of climate change, the mother – fonua will never the less cuddle or gather her children.

¹⁸ F. Brown, Driver.S and Briggs C., , *The Brown Drive-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2014).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰

²¹ This famous narratives was well emphasize in the four gospels, they all paint this one and only sacrificial to save the whole universe from sin.

In order to be safe or secure, from the harmful disaster of the climate change whole humanity should listen to the wailing voice of the woman whose fruit was Jesus the savior of the world.

Conclusion: Victoria Kavafolau

Fefine as Mo'ui'anga

Fonua as portrayed by the four connotations of Kelekele, Manava, Feilaulau and Fa'itoka takes the form of a woman. In the light of Genesis 3:20, *Fonua* symbolises the mother of all the living in which *fefine* is *mo'ui'anga*. In the sense that *Fonua* provides, nurtures, sustains and gives life to all.

However, today *Fonua* is being exploited, abused, dehumanised by political, economic and social pursuits. The fruits of her womb are being enslaved and murdered. Her cultural mat – the people and culture of Kava – are being tortured to a point that a dead person returns to the *fa'itoka* naked of dignity and respect.

The exploitation of the *Fonua* is best represented in the events that we emphasise this weekend (Easter weekend). The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the *manava* of the woman that God blessed and enabled the coming of our Saviour. The wailing of the *Fonua* can be identified when Mary is crying under the cross because of the treatment of her son. And in the light of Kava's sacrifice, it is echoed in the cross as Jesus the fruit of the womb pours out his blood as sacrifice for all. The flow of blood from Jesus' side is a symbolism of kava ceremony for the world. As you partake in this kava ceremony you are experiencing Kava's sacrifice for her people and culture. This ceremony is a continuous ritual that takes place every time kava is present in any event. At the same time, despite the significance of Kava's sacrifice, her voice is often taken advantage of and her sacrifice not appreciated.

On that note, in Tonga, the most sacred position of the *Fonua* in the Tongan Society is the woman. Therefore, the objective of this presentation is to direct our *Talanoa* towards the voice of the woman, towards the voice of the *Fonua*. It calls for all to listen and heed the wailing voice of the woman. Because climate change is a retaliation of motherland to the destruction done by humanity to the ecosystem through its various social, economic and political developments.

Our challenge for all today is this:

When will OBSA, when will Oceania and when will the world listen to the wailing voice of the *Fonua* that have been tortured by various cultures of the world?

We need to review our cultural mat and perhaps reform our ways that contribute to the detrimental of our climate. This presentation suggests that climate change is a retaliation of the environment. A wake up call that we should listen to the voice of the land as our mother, to the generations as the fruits of its womb, to the sacrifice of the kava in our various cultural mats for the people and culture, and lastly to our mother as she awaits to cuddle each and everyone back together with our ancestors upon death.

Fonua becomes our motherland, we must respond to the voice of the woman. we as fruits of the womb must heed the voice of the womb. As the president of the Methodist Church of Fiji said, “we are placed in the *Vanua* with tasks to be caretakers.”²² To be good caretakers of the *Vanua* we must listen to the voice of the woman.

This way only the woman can bring back the tone of joy. Because it is the voice of the woman that holds valuable indigenous wisdom.

This way she can assist the stewardship role of men in cultivating and maintaining the earth in accordance to the integrity of God’s creation.

Fonua is the land as a mother, the womb, a sacrifice for the people and culture, and graveyard.

Through this can she only assist the stewardship role of men in cultivating and maintaining the earth in accordance to the integrity of God’s creation.

Fonua is the land as a mother, the womb, the culture, and graveyard.

Mālō ‘aupito.

POL & STC presentation team.

²² Rev. Epineri Vakadewavosa, speech given during the opening of the OBSA 2019 Meeting

NOTES:

Tonga traditional history holds four different, yet related definitions for the concept *FONUUA*, *whenua*, *Fanua*, *Vanua* etc.

- i. Fonua: is the symbolic term for most familiar reality of life known as Kelekele (Kele & Kele) – the Land. Tongan Tala-Tukufakaholo holds that our ancestors believed that *fefine* is a progeny of Kele (slimy), who was the twin sister of her brother Biki (Sticky). This twin was offspring of a rock known as Touia’ofutuna.²³ In reality, it refers to the mud from the Lolofonua – underworld born out of the volcanic fire. From that mud grew Biki and Kele whose descendants Taifulifonua, claimed to be the Father of the Tongan pantheons; Kau Tangaloa, Kau Maui and Hikule’o and descendants thereof.
- ii. Fonua – refers to the womb of the mother, the live environment from whom all human beings at foetal stage were conceived, impregnated, and brooded before birth to enjoy life in the physical world.
- iii. Fonua – in symbolic collective terms, refers to both the people and culture, the way they performed in forms that value life. Substantially, it refers to the actual sacrifice that Kava; a *fefine* was slaughtered baked in earth oven, left unopened at the dictate of the Tu’I Tonga. After a long time, two plants sprouted from the unopened earth-oven, one on the head was named Kava and one on the toes was named *To* - sugarcane. Eventually, the Kau Lo’au – later migrants arrived in Tonga and learnt about the story of the sacrifice of Kava – the leper girl. Collected the story and put together to articulate the *Laulau o Kava* – Chant of Kava. The beverages from the Kava plant was taken as the *Fonua* - to serve for cultural ceremony. Whereas the beverage from the *Too* plant was used as sweetener of their tastes
- iv. Fonua – refers to the graveyard of a dead person. In actual fact burial of a dead corpse is taken in cultural Tongan terms of *fonua*, as the burial of a dead person. The actual burial event is taken in cultural terms as the returning of a child to be with the ancestors in the womb

²³ Whose later children were twin male ‘Atungaki and female Maa’imoo’olongona. Later children were the Land turtle and Sea-turtle, and the last twin were Hemoana and Lube. Refer to “Cosmogony” in Moulton. 379.

of the mother land. As the Samoan poet Albert Wendt says; “Inside us the Dead.”²⁴

Fonua as the mother-land:

- a. The eldest child of Biki and Kele was Taufulifonua, followed by a sister Havea Lolofonua. Biki and Kele created an island named Tongamama’o and put their children there. Brothers cohabited with his sisters whom Vele Lahi gave birth to the Kau Tangaloa and Vele Ji’I gave birth to the Kau Maui.
- b. Taufulifonua divided the Langi and Lolofonua, with Tangaloa on the upper deck and Maui on the under-deck respectively. Hikule’o was the son of Taufulifonua and his sister Havea Lolofonua, whom were known to live naked on the land, and discovered sex by accident, resulted in the baby boy Hikule’o to govern the land.
- c. From the interactions of Tangaloa of the Top deck world and Fefine - woman of the underworld, the “Tala ‘o e Fonua” – Tale for the Land was instituted. The governor Hikule’o, or the Tail of the Sound lived in Puluotu, the purgatory world and controlled the Fonua-world.

Our ancestors held Tongan people’s tupu’anga (origins) – to be of a three decked cosmos - world. The top deck was known as the Langi – a world above, the underground deck is known as Lolofonua – e underworld and the middle deck is known as the Fonua – the land. From the Langi-sky came the Kau Tangaloa – whom ‘Eitumatubu’a was known to be the father of the Tongans. This Tangaloa came down on the island of Tonga and met ‘Ilaheva a descendant of the fefine, whom was believed to be the descended from the Kele – the under-world, the lower deck of Lolofonua.

²⁴ Wendt. 35.

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