

THE HUMAN COVENANT WITH MOTHER EARTH

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The wisdom passed down by our ancestors tells us that all humans have two mothers and two fathers; the two mothers are our biological birth mother and, Papa our Earth Mother. In Polynesia, a newborn's umbilical cord is wrapped in Ti leaves and ritually buried in the sacred ground. The physical act of burial, ritually conducted by elders symbolically connects the newborn to Papa or Earth Mother.

Today the modern meaning of fanua in Samoa is land. Its original and ancient meaning is placenta or afterbirth. Eleele today means dirt and palapala is mud. The original and ancient meaning of both words is blood. Ma'a today means stone but its original meaning comes from the word fatu ma'a that means heart. The very language of ancient Polynesia discerns the earth as living and as mother that birthed all life and material from the progenitor of the heavens, Tagaloa Lagi.

All elders of Polynesia are revered as the living stewards of the seeds of our living covenant to Papa the Earth Mother. It is believed that the life tree within our elders bears and carries the seeds of the living covenant that is passed on to each generation by breathing it into each new life.

Holding the newborn, the grandmother or senior elder conducts a ceremonial prayer over the infant that ends by breathing into the nose and mouth of the child. In that manner, the spiritual seeds of the covenant are planted within the lungs of the child. The mana, or spiritual energy carried by the breath of the elder, enters the child and flows throughout with the child's every breath carrying the seeds of the covenant to the extremities. In time, the body of the infant and covenant grow into a living oneness. The covenant and infant become one and the same.

Hence, every child is and must be treated as a living covenant and a reminder to all, of the promise between human and earth mother. As a living covenant, it is the responsibility of all in the village to nurture and cultivate each child with Alofa (love), till the fruits of maturity are expressed through actions of respect and love that reaffirm the covenant in all humans do with

Papa. The basis of the covenant is the reaffirmation of love, respect and actions that are consonant with the health, wellness, harmony, beauty, balance and sustainability of Papa and Tagaloa's gifts of life to tagata mao'i (genuine or native human being in Samoan. The Hawaiian term Kanaka Maoli has an identical meaning.) ¹

It is the collective responsibility of all adults of the village (i.e., human society) to nurture and cultivate the health, well-being and wellness of all children as repositories of the ancient promise. The seed of the covenant, when it matures, produces the fruits of Alofa (Love) and Fa'a aloalo (Respect) which are the basis for harmony between humans and the universe, humans and nature, human and fellow human, and human and self. It is only when all four harmonies are consonant with each other that there is true balance, harmony and peace on earth.

Papa's health, wellness, beauty and life are dependent on the harvest of love and respect produced by the covenant. With the symbolic connection created by the burial of the umbilical cord in the earth, human fate is inextricably bound to the fate of Papa. If Papa is well, humans will be well. If Papa is ill, humans will become sick. If Papa is dying, humans will die.

A COVENANT MISPLACED

THE WHALES HAVE LOST THEIR WAY...
THE SEA TERN THAT CHOOSES ONE MATE FOR LIFE; FLIES ALONE...
THE CORAL IS BURNED BY THE SUN...
THE WINDS CARRY THE SALT OF YOUR TEARS.

ALL ARE REMINDER'S; THAT WE HAVE MISPLACED OUR FEAGAIGA
(COVENANT) WITH OUR MOTHER EARTH.

WE HAVE MISPLACED OUR FEAGAIGA (COVENANT) BY HOLDING IT
ALOFT WHERE THE BIRDS OF SELF-INTEREST AND PRIDE HAVE
PECKED ON IT; WE HAVE PLACED IT UPON THE GROUND WHERE
CREATURES OF GREED, PROFIT AND EXPLOITATION HAVE CRAWLED
OVER IT; WE HAVE HELD IT IN OUR TREMBLING HANDS WITH
TIMIDITY WHERE IT HAS HARDENED WITH THE MOLD OF
CREATURES THAT HIDE FROM THE LIGHT OF THE SUN.

WE THANK THE GREAT WINDS THAT HAVE BROUGHT YOUR CHILDREN TO THIS GATHERING, AND FOR REMINDING US THAT THE FEAGAIGA (COVENANT) IS SOMETHING THAT ONE DOES NOT HOLD UP IN THE AIR, LAY UPON THE GROUND OR HOLD IN ONES HAND. THAT A FEAGAIGA'S (COVENANT') LIFE IS NOT POSSIBLE OUTSIDE OF OUR OWN.

WE WILL PLACE OUR FEAGAIGA (COVENANT) BETWEEN OUR HEARTS AND OUR LUNGS SO THAT, SO LONG AS OUR HEART BEATS AND OUR LUNGS BREATHE OUR FEAGAIGA (COVENANT) LIVES.

SO LONG AS WE LIVE, OUR COVENANT WILL LIVE; SO THAT WE WILL SEE TO YOUR HEALTH, YOUR WELLNESS AND YOUR BEAUTY. WE WILL HELP THE WHALE TO FIND ITS WAY; THE SEA TERN TO FIND ITS MATE, THE WAVES TO COMFORT THE CORAL, AND THE WINDS TO CARRY THE MESSAGE OF LIFE.

RETURN TO YOUR DWELLINGS, LANDS AND ISLANDS AND BREATHE LIFE IN ALL THAT YOU DO. ALOHA, ALOHA, ALOHA OE.

Note

¹ The cultural reference to being 'mao'i, maoli or maori' is a reference to blood purity. The purer your Alii (blood line), the more mao'i or 'genuine' your biological link to the gods, Papa and Tagaloa Lagi. Polynesian Alii titles are descendant from their gods. An interesting contact dilemma with the west arose in 1840 when the first missionary to Samoa was received by my great great grandfather Malietoa Vaiinupo.

This first missionary, John Williams, introduced Christianity to Samoa. He also told the biblical story of God creating (manufacturing?) Adam from dust and Eve from a rib of Adam. The Alii of Samoa were perplexed that western man had no genealogical connection to God other than as a product *created* by God. Perhaps others were manufactured by their gods, but the Alii of Samoa believe they are *descendant* from theirs; Papa and Tagaloa Lagi. In many ways to this day, the Christian services in the islands are more Polynesian than Christian — to the great exasperation of more western based conventional believers.

In western histories, fierce wars and battles were often fought over treasure, property and other material things of value. In Polynesian history, the most ferocious of wars were fought over what is considered the most precious of treasures, the bloodline. Toto mao'i, or koko maoli refers to blood purity, or a bloodline that can be traced to the ancestral gods and affirmed by chants of genealogy. Challenges to claims of bloodline purity with its inherent connection to traditional Alii titles are the primary cause of warfare in Polynesia, Samoa in particular. These descendent Alii titles proclaim connection to Papa, Mother Earth and Tagaloa Lagi, Father Universe. *It is for this reason, that the Alii of Oceania must speak to the suffering of their mother Papa, and not defer to the urgency of the scientist or the spinning of the politician. It is their responsibility as the indigenous elder children of the earth to speak to her suffering with actions to assuage her pain and restore her health.*