Revisiting the Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah 29:1-14: A Samoan La-tō Reading using an Oceanic Hermeneutic

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by
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis with honour and much gratitude to my beloved father, the late Rev. Tuimalatū Leuila Ofo’ia. You are gone but truly not forgotten. I remember you in every way; you disciplined and taught me. I love you Papa with all my heart. RIL

And to

My mother Makerita Ofo’ia

And

My wife Inamorata Rowena Ofoia and children:

Tauvaga Numerator Junior, Wennarator Irae, Cecilia Inamorata, Belteshazzar Mapusaga and Jacob Berakah.
Abstract
This project explores the feasibility of a Samoan approach to the Judahites’ ‘exile,’ with particular reference to Jeremiah 29:1-14. The word ‘exile’ in the Hebrew Bible can imply discipline as an act of love, life, and hope rather than hatred and wrath. This positive interpretation challenges the dominant negative Samoan view of the Babylonian Exile, which was influenced by Pacific missionary pioneers and the tacit acceptance of the Bible in Samoa.

Specifically, this project will develop a la-tōi (‘travel away from home’) perspective as an alternative reading approach, reflecting opportunity and hope that results from exploration. The project also raises concerns about apparent inaccuracies in the translation of the Samoan Bible that influence modern believers to be either victims of misinterpretation or silently to tolerate the limitations of the missionary translation.

Ideally, a la-tōi approach is one that enables Samoan readers to engage with the Bible in light of their own contextual reality. By utilising this Oceanic, specifically Samoan, approach, this project re-visits the Babylonian Exile in order to view it through a Samoan lens.
Acknowledgments

Tatalo Fa’afetai:
Le Atua e, ia vi’ia oe e fa’avavau, ona o lou alofa ma lou fa’amaoni, o lau Afioga Paia e lē o se futu na tafea, e tau fesiligia sona magāvai po’o sona fa’asimomaga. Ae o le Upu o le ola na tō ma tafea fa’auto i vasā, mo le fa’amoemoe, ina ia pipi’itia ni ‘ai o le Talalelei, ia tupu-ola ma maua’a lou finagalo i o matou loto. Le Atua va fa’amatou le tautai matapalapala, malō le la-tō i le tai, malō le la-tō i le ala, ua malie lau fa’aaloalo. Ua e tali i a matou tatalo ma tapua’iaga, ua e fa’ainu fo’i lo matou galala fa’aleagaga. Ia saga vi’ia pe a le Atua Tolu Tasi Paia e lē aunoa.

O le agaga fa’afetai ma le fa’amalō e le fa’aititiitia i le tapuaiga mau ma le nofo tatalo a le Ekalesia Metotisi i Samoa ma atunu’u i fafo. Le Afioga i le Peresitene, Rev. Apineru Lafai aemaise le Peresitene sili o le Au-uso Fealofani, Seti Apineru Lafai. Ua fa’amalō le tapua’i ma le faitatalo, fa’afetai tele mo mea uma, aemaise le avanoa ua mafai ona fa’atinoina ai lenei fa’amoemoe taua. Ou te fa’afetai fo’i i le Afioga i le ali’i Sea, Rev. Logo Ofe ma Sunema Ofe aemaise o le Sinoti a Niusila i Saute i le lagolago i lenei fa’amoemoe. Ou te fa’afetai fo’i i le Susuga ia Tualagi Ah Yek ma le Faletua aemaise le Matagaluega Metotisi i Dunedin mo le lagolago aemaise le tapua’iga. Fa’afetai, fa’afetai tele lava.

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Last but not least, I owe a great debt to my lovely wife, Inamorata Rowena Ofoia. Your love and support gave me the confidence to continue on, such that words cannot explain. You are truly my blessing. I am also grateful for my children, Tavaga Numerator Junior, Wennarator Irae, Cecilia Inamorata, Belteshazzar Mapusaga, Jacob Berakah and my nephew Brad Watson for unlimited support. I am so blessed to have all of you in my life. Thank you for being my strength, shelter and my family. God has an amazing plan, future and hope for everyone. Jeremiah 29:11.
# List of Abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEV</td>
<td>Authorised English Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFBS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCH</td>
<td>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESC</td>
<td>Editorial Sub – Committee Minutes BFBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOB</td>
<td>Fresh off the Boat</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>The New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Samoan District Committee (LMS missionaries)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSJ</td>
<td>South Seas Journals</td>
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<td>SSL</td>
<td>South Seas Letters</td>
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<td>SSO</td>
<td>South Seas Odds</td>
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<td>SSP</td>
<td>South Seas Personals</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTT</td>
<td>Leningrad Hebrew Old Testament (BibleWorks)</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Babylonian Exile is commonly interpreted as a negative event in the Bible, due to its nature and the victims’ experiences; the people of Judah were captured and taken into exile, to a foreign land away from their home and origins. In a similar way, Samoans interpret the Exile as a banishment and punishment which is called fa’ate’a ma le nu’u or fa’atāfea meaning, ‘banishment from the village’ or ‘kicked out from home and origin.’ Both interpretations imply negativity and give a similar impression: the exiled must leave their homes in order to serve their punishment.

1.1. My Turning Point

When I read about the Exile in the Bible, I struggle to relate my context to this interpretation, not only because of the Samoan translation but also because it has political implications. Consequently, I feel disconnected as I currently live in a land not my own.\(^1\) Much of the biblical text shows the exiles living in a foreign land and away from Jerusalem (‘home’) as negative, and the Samoan interpretation does the same by highlighting being away from home as punishment and banishment. This negative impression has drawn me to challenge this common interpretation of the exile from my personal experience of Samoan-ness\(^2\) away from home. I am inspired to challenge this

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\(^1\) Aotearoa New Zealand.

\(^2\) I refer the word “Samoan-ness” to “my origin as a Samoan,” because it expresses better what I feel about being a Samoan. It is in a profound sense that I use it here, meaning a lot more than just having been born in Samoa of Samoan parents. It represents my Samoan community, culture, traditions and beliefs as well as the status quo.
negative interpretation because of my own context and who I am as a Bible reader. We need to revisit the Babylonian exile from another perspective.

1.2. ‘My’, the writer’s context

I am Samoan, born and raised in Samoa until the age of 21; my context then changed when I left my ‘mother-is-land’. Growing up in a poor family was such a challenge, especially when understood from being far from favourite in our family of seven, second to the youngest of five brothers before two younger sisters. ‘I’, being caught in my own little family’s hierarchical sphere, found it almost impossible to have a say within our family perimeter. It emerged that emancipation is required indeed in my family context, either to voice-out or to get-out. Consequently, this experience strengthens and moulds me, to be optimistic in terms of voicing my own interpretation. Also, and as a result of being caught in my own family sphere I found that I needed to get out.

These family and local experiences have given me a prevailing critical mind, to analyse what comes forth that challenges my Samoan context. I had 21 years to learn and to understand what draws and underpins the tradition of our cultural values. This context has impacted and influenced me in terms of interpretation and approaches in our own Samoan status quo.

I married in 1994 and moved to New Zealand in 1995. Living in New Zealand and Australia for fifteen years has blessed me and my wife with numerous experiences, together with five lovely children. Here, however, I entered into another context. The

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3 I refer to ‘mother-is-land’ as ‘motherland’ or ‘home-is-land,’ which means, my land of origin as well as my home is an island in comparison to States and Continents. See, Numerator Ofoia, “Tama a le Eleele; Re-Reading of Ezra 4:1-5 an Oceania Diaspora Hermeneutic” (Bachelor of Divinity, Piula Theological College, 2015), 9.

4 ‘I’ symbolises myself as I am the writer and my status as well as my position among my parents’ seven children.
experience of living in the land of others and yielding to other ethnic groups is priceless. Foreign experiences have vastly enriched and shaped both me and my family. There were no regrets but we have come to appreciate foreign cultures and the experience of living in a multicultural world.

In 2009, I moved back to Samoa with my family to attend Piula Theological College. I graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, having also become a minister of the Methodist Church in Samoa, the same church which appointed me to take on further studies at the University of Otago.

When I came back to New Zealand in 2016, my new title was *lupe fa’alele a le Ekalesia Metotisi i Samoa*, which translates as ‘flying pigeon for the Methodist Church of Samoa.’ This *lupe fa’alele* title is neither an emphasis nor a methodology for this writing, but reflects its positivity, which is based on an analogy with a practice in ancient Samoa. My new title, *lupe fa’alele*, has made me feel neither confident nor emancipated, knowing that I have a specific role that I am responsible for. And, I must admit, the expectations are high.

I used to think that I was fortunate to be a citizen of another country apart from my own and to be lucky to travel back to New Zealand to continue my studies. But, I find myself uncomfortable, because I am still classified by those I meet in New Zealand as a ‘foreigner,’ FOB (‘fresh off the boat’) at best, or sometimes ‘bloody coconut’

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5 The flying pigeon is a traditional home-trained pigeon that is purposely nurtured and trained in order to attract more pigeons. The most important activity is that the pigeon must learn and remember the knowledge of where its home is located. The whole idea is for the trained pigeon to attract more pigeons to bring home. ‘Pigeon-catching’ is an ancient Samoan event. Some missionaries like J. Williams and Pratt mentioned in their writings. For ‘pigeon-catching’, see, Richard M Moyle, ed. *The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832*, ed., Pacific History (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1984; reprint, 1984), 83, 142, 249. See also, George Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary* (Papakura [N. Z]: Southern Reprints, 1984), 119.

worst. Furthermore, when I went back to Samoa after 15 years of living overseas, my identity as a Samoan seemed to vanish and my belonging was questioned, as if I had not been born there. The negative aspect of being a foreigner, it seemed to me, not only applied in foreign lands but also at home. Everywhere I go, I am classified as a foreigner. Even my own Samoan community when I return classes me as fia-palagi, which means fia (‘to wish/desire’)\(^7\) and palagi (‘white European’) because of my foreign way of doing things.\(^8\) I could easily see myself being ‘caught again in between two cultures’\(^9\) – one is my own (Samoan), and a foreign culture is the other. Suddenly I came to realise, the issue here is not about me personally but it is about my context. Perhaps the influence on me by other cultures has disconnected me from my own identity and from where I belong. I struggle with being a foreigner and with negativity. Why?

As a student currently engaged in Old Testament studies, I am discouraged to find pervasive negativity in biblical interpretation, specifically around the term ‘exile’ – going to Babylon, which in my understanding is away from home. Moreover, I struggle with preaching the Exile according to its negative interpretation, especially since my audience are usually Samoans. Samoan people know that almost half of us have left home to find a better life overseas.\(^10\) So, as a preacher, I ask this question: does a negative interpretation of the Exile encourage people’s faith? This is what has led me to

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\(^8\) I am neither a palagi nor New Zealand born, but I feel similar to those who have this kind of experience, outside their own home country.


\(^10\) In New Zealand, Australia and the USA.
see if I can possibly turn the tables and challenge the common negative interpretation of exile.

1.3. Pacific Scholars Who Have Influenced Me

Scholars’ interpretation of Jeremiah and of the Babylonian Exile will be discussed in chapter three. However, this literature review focuses on Pacific scholars’ discussions and how they see the Bible contextually. These readings will highlight that the interpretation of biblical texts may be negative, because we Bible readers limit our interpretation by seeing them literally rather than considering the wider context. In other words, readers often fail to see the motive behind God’s overall plan and what causes it.

Reading some pioneer Oceanic scholars’ work, like that of Epeli Hau’ofa and Sione Amanaki Havea, reminds me that we Pacific Islanders cannot deny where we belong. Hau’ofa was one of the Pacific’s most influential leaders in the academic and creative arena of Pacific literature. His concern was that we belittle ourselves as Pacific natives because of our own negative experiences and the influence of others.¹¹ In a lecture, Hau’ofa admits, “soon the realization dawned on me. In propagating a view of hopelessness, I was actively participating in our own belittlement.”¹² He goes on,

According to this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific, that is, all of Polynesia and Micronesia, are much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the [centres] of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations.¹³

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¹² Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands”, 150.

¹³ Ibid.
Hau’ofa’s view reflects the reality of who we are as the Pacific people, that our existence is boundary-less when it comes to the ocean. He is famous for claiming that we Pacific Islanders are the ocean, and “the ocean [is] in us.”\textsuperscript{14} In other words, the Pacific is not just a ‘sea of islands,’\textsuperscript{15} but also a sea of families.\textsuperscript{16} Hau’ofa also suggests that there are two levels operating within our region. First, there are those who are in power and, second, there are the ordinary people.\textsuperscript{17} Hau’ofa states,

> In Oceania, derogatory and belittling views of indigenous cultures are traceable to the early years of interactions with Europeans. The wholesale condemnation by Christian missionaries of Oceanic cultures as savage, lascivious, and barbaric has had a lasting and negative effect on people's views of their histories and traditions. In a number of Pacific societies people still divide their history into two parts: the era of darkness associated with savagery and barbarism; and the era of light and civilization ushered in by Christianity.\textsuperscript{18}

Hau’ofa sees this belittlement as the consequence of dominant power which “tends to overlook or misinterpret grassroots activities because they do not fit with prevailing views about the nature of society and its development.”\textsuperscript{19}

I am also influenced by the work of the founder of the Pacific theology, Sione Amanaki Havea, who has raised many similar matters, such as the study of Christology and how it can be rooted in the Pacific in terms of culture and appropriate models. Havea’s work has brought a new awareness of contextual reading approaches allowing us to conceptualise our own Pacific thoughts and ideas. Pacific theologians contextualize cultural models in their theological approaches towards the Bible. For

\textsuperscript{14} Epeli Hau’ofa, \textit{We Are the Ocean: Selected Works} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 41.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{17} Epeli Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” ibid. 6, no. 1 (1994), 148.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 148.
example, Havea has developed something called coconut theology. Charles W. Forman remarks about it:

Havea coined the term “coconut theology,” suggesting that it might well be the description of Pacific theology. In many ways the coconut could symbolize Christ, since it gives life to human beings, and when it is broken new life springs forth. The Pacific use of time might be called coconut time, since the coconut comes to fruition at its own pace, without hurry or concern for punctuality. Havea claimed that the Gospel, instead of coming with the missionaries to the Pacific, affected the whole world simultaneously at the time of Christ.  

James S. Bhagwan used a similar approach in a seminar in historical theology in a paper titled: ‘Coconut Christ: Augustine’s Christology in the Symbolism of Oceania.’ He concludes by saying that “Christ is not the coconut, but the tree of life points to the life giver.” Here, Bhagwan employs the Christ figure metaphorically relating to the coconut as a life giver and provider, similar to Havea’s theology. Again, the point is to contextualise what is understood for Pacific Island readers, rather than to distance the Bible from our own Pacific context.

Current Pacific scholars, such as Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, Jione Havea, Nasili Vakauta, Mosese Ma’ilo, Upolu Lumā Vaai and many others give voices to the voiceless of Pacific Island readers, in terms of contextual theology and biblical interpretation.

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23 Nasili Vakauta, “Reading the Bible Tu'a-Wise: Tongan Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation,” (PhD dissertation, University of Auckland, 2008), 5. Note: Vakauta states, “Those who read contextually are member of a community of people with whom they share similar experience,” with reference to marginalised people.
1.4. Contextual Island Readers of the Bible

Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere shares a similar approach to Hau’ofa, believing that “Land is people, people is land.” His theology is based on how the Fijian people see the land.\(^\text{24}\) Tuwere states,

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Vanua literally means land. In its very broad sweep, it encompasses many things and includes earthly turf, flora, and fauna of a given place, rivers and mountains, fishing ground (vanua ni qoliqoli) and more. Put simply, it means place. It can also be used for one’s country, district or village. When used in terms of actual turf, it includes practically everything on it.\(^\text{25}\)

According to Tuwere’s view, the land encapsulates its existence more profoundly than its literal sense. Land is a source that provides for the needs of the people, just as the land relies on the people in terms of cultivation. The people and the land care for and respect for each other. Tuwere believes “without the people, the [land] is like a body without a soul.”\(^\text{26}\) Here, the connection of the people to the land is similar to Hau’ofa’s view of the ocean; ‘we are the ocean’ reflects life and respect. Put simply, this relationship needs more than just a connection.

Upolu Lumā Vaai shares the similar connection and intimacy within relationships in his contextual understanding of the Trinity, through the Samoan connection that reflects the centrality of the fa’aaloalo (‘respect’) within the Trinity relationship.\(^\text{27}\) Vaai has purposely engaged a Christology that connects to his Samoan context and encapsulates cultural values to interpret the Trinity. Using the Samoan fa’aaloalo expresses the unity which relates people together in discussion of Trinity and also

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\(^\text{25}\) I. S. Tuwere, Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place, (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2002), 33.

\(^\text{26}\) Ibid., 35.

reflects the church relationship to its members. This idea explicitly relates us Pacific readers when we see the Bible through our own reading lens.

Similarly, Vakauta’s initiative suggests that our relationship as Island readers must not to be distanced from the biblical texts. He has developed his own method from his own Pacific Island context (Tongan) rather than falling into the “borrowing and employing existing methods of biblical interpretation.”

Vakauta states,

The main reason for such an undertaking is the fact that existing methods were neither developed within a vacuum nor should be regarded as universally applicable. Instead each method was shaped by a reading perspective of some sort that reflects a particular social and cultural location.

Vakauta suggests an “alter-native way of reading the Bible, from a Tongan perspective,” and his suggested methodology is called ‘Reading the Bible Tu’a-wise.’ Vakauta’s idea allows him to voice what he interprets through his own eyes; it particularly expresses his connection to the biblical text from his status as a tu’a (‘commoner’) highlighting his point of engagement.

J. Havea encourages the way of talanoa, which is commonly practised in Pacific Island cultures in a rippling and sharing sense. Talanoa is a way to understand and to dialogue through storytelling and having conversations among two or many people. He believes that the talanoa mode allows a mind-set which emancipate the reader from the

28 Ibid., 268.
29 Vakauta, “Reading the Bible Tu'a-Wise: Tongan Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation,” 3.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., ii.
32 Ibid., 1.
33 Ibid.
34 Jione Havea, “Bare Feet Welcome: Redeemer Xs Moses @ Enaim,” in Bible, Borders, Belonging(S): Engaging Readings from Oceania, ed. Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine Mary Wainwright (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 209-11. Note: See also Maliko, who used the talanoa as a methodology to undertake his case study interviews in Samoa. Selota Maliko, “Restorative Justice: A Pastoral Care Respose to the Issue of Fa'ate'a Ma Le Nu'u (Banishment) in Samoan Society,” (PhD dissertation, University of Otago, Dunedin, 2017), 60-70.
mental slavery. Havea illustrates this by referring to Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” which imitates Pacific Island readers singing their songs of freedom. When Havea suggests the talanoa as a reading mode, he refers to how an Island reader should approach and interpret the biblical text. He also suggests, “Talanoa draws one out of one’s lived worlds so that one moves and engages, departs and drifts.” Havea believes that the talanoa reading mode offers flexibility to readers to free the texts and meanings through a Pacific Island way of talanoa, which means, the ripples of ‘storytelling and conversation.’

Ma’iło seems no different from others, Tuwere, Vaai, Vakauta, and J. Havea. Ma’iło created a reading approach called Tama a le Pō (Tamaalepō), which is translated ‘Child of the Dark’ or ‘a son of the darkness,’ with reference to the fatherless aspect of Jesus Christ. Ma’iło highlights this to expose the secret which was hidden from us Samoans by missionary translators. To the Samoan context, it conveys the negativity of Jesus as a fatherless and illegitimate child. Ma’iło referred to the disgrace of what the Tama a le Pō means in Samoan. As a result, the missionaries

35 Havea, “Bare Feet Welcome: Redeemer Xs Moses @ Enaim,” 210.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Tamaalepō is used by Ma’iło as one word for a title, but I spread the word into tama a le pō, which detailing rather than a title. However, either way, it means the same. See in, Mosese Ma’ilo, “Celebrating Hybridity in Island Bibles: Jesus, the Tamaalepō (Child of the Dark) in Mataio 1:18–26” Islands, islanders, and the Bible rumInations (2015): 65.
39 My own translation for Tama a le Pō in relation to what Ma’iło suggests the ‘Child of the Dark’. Ibid.
40 Ibid., 71.
41 Ibid., 72.
42 Ibid.
avoided using this shameful Samoan term, *Tama a le Pō*, simply because, the Samoan meaning did not serve the interests of Christianity in their mission.\(^{43}\)

Ma’ilo critiques a similar issue which highlights the political influence and manipulation of the Samoan Bible by the missionary translators.\(^{44}\) He mentions the political choice of chiefs by missionary translators to assist in translation, which captured their preferences in terms of acquaintance – highest ranking in the Pacific,\(^{45}\) which assumed that chiefs had more knowledge than the lower ranks including women and young people.\(^{46}\) Others were chosen differently. Ma’ilo states,

> Other pundits were selected not because of any political ranking, but because they were converts and committed to the missionaries’ cause. The reason for using them was the belief that as new converts, they were simple and easily controlled.\(^{47}\)

According to Ma’ilo, the priority focused on someone who carried authority and power, who is chosen over powerless people. Those who did not have power had to be a convert and committed to the mission in order to be chosen. Ma’ilo believes this is political, which means, what mattered to the missionaries was what served their own political and colonial interests. Lefevere, cited by Ma’ilo, discusses similar issues in ‘Translation, rewriting, and the manipulation of literary fame.’\(^{48}\) Ma’ilo refers to this political manipulation by the translators as the misuse of the Samoan terminology.\(^{49}\) He

\(^{43}\) Ibid. The ‘interest of the Christian mission’, See also, *Bible-ing My Samoan*, 43. Ma’ilo used the word ‘manipulate or bend’ in relation to the local languages, in terms of serving the interest of the Bible translation by the translators.

\(^{44}\) Ma’ilo, *Bible-ing My Samoan*, 43.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 53. This is a similar issue to ‘ranking’ that Vakauta discusses in reference to his *tu’a* (‘commoner’) status within Tongan society, cf. Vakauta, “Reading the Bible Tu’a-Wise,” 3.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.


\(^{49}\) Ma’ilo, *Bible-ing My Samoan*, 228.
discusses the transition from oral languages to writing, which Ma’ilo claimed as the manipulation of the Samoan language through the Bible translation.

Moreover, this manipulation according to Ma’ilo not only serves the political interest of the Bible translation, but also the conversion of the natives to Christianity and the promotion of literacy, rather than for the sake of the translation. He added, “This conviction matches the missionaries’ priority and superiority of writing and literacy over oral citation and memory.” Beside this political interest lies British imperial power, which impacts on the Bible translation. Ma’ilo also discusses examples of mistranslation which contradict the context of the Samoan readers. For example, the word ‘circumcision’ was translated to *peritome* instead of Samoan words *tefe* or *tefega*, deliberately avoiding the Samoan words because the root verb *tefe* is a swear word. He adds, “[T]he dominancy of cognitive abstract ideas in the missionaries’ search, and their irrational underestimation of the native concepts and religious experiences have paid the price in mistranslation.” Consequently, the missionaries’ Samoan Bible has given room for the Samoan reader to misinterpret biblical texts.

On the other hand, Ma’ilo suggests another effect of this political and superior attitude from the Samoan Bible translators towards the translation. He also highlights a loss in translation from the original language to the Pacific Island languages. He believes,

The [missionary translators’] superior attitudes towards native tongues were not hegemonic enough to guard what biblical scholars refer to as the ‘originality’ of biblical languages. Hebrew and Greek – with their associated cultural symbols – were not universal enough to remain unaffected when crossing the barriers of language and cultural difference. Missionary translators could not resist the pressure of

50 Ibid., 166.
51 Ibid., 167.
52 Ibid., 45.
53 Ibid., 160-61.
island (recipient) languages in order to effectively transfer biblical ideas to island readers. Likewise, island languages were fairly limited to fully accommodate biblical ideas.\textsuperscript{54}

The loss between the original language and the translated language has resulted in limited understanding between both ‘two parties,’\textsuperscript{55} in terms of crossing barriers of cultures. This loss has caused Ma’ilo to suggest that “the poetics of such Bibles [are] and [remain] neither the one (Greek/Hebrew) nor the other (Samoan/Fijian/Tongan, etc.).”\textsuperscript{56} This reflects the misuse of some Samoan terminology, resulting in not only misinterpretation and mistranslation issues for the readers,\textsuperscript{57} but also uncertainty about which context the Bible belongs to.

Throughout this Pacific discussion, it seems that these modern scholars’ discoveries and valuable insights are the fruit of what has been planted by the pioneers of this Pacific theology and biblical hermeneutic studies. The progress and the development of Pacific voices in biblical interpretation have been built on solid contextual platforms. Having said that, Pacific theologians and biblical scholars have developed methodologies and reading approaches based on what exists in the Pacific rather than engaging in some reading methods which may apply only to certain contexts, e.g. the European context. The rise of these Pacific scholars and their contributing ideas are significant and valuable for the future. One scholar of the Old Testament, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, advocates the emergence of Pacific biblical scholars, encouraging them to appreciate their own context towards the Bible. He states,

First, there is clear significance to the suggestion that Islander Exegesis represents a demonstrably significant perspective. Second, it

\textsuperscript{54} Ma’ilo, “Celebrating Hybridiity in Island Bibles: Jesus, the Tamaalepō (Child of the Dark) in Mataio 1:18–26,” 65.

\textsuperscript{55} I refer the word ‘two parties’ to the missionary Bible translators and the speakers of the native language.

\textsuperscript{56} Ma’ilo, “Celebrating Hybridiity in Island Bibles: Jesus, the Tamaalepō (Child of the Dark) in Mataio 1:18–26” 65.

\textsuperscript{57} Ma’ilo, Bible-\textit{Ing My Samoan}, 228.
is equally clear that as islands are numerous, so too are the tasks ahead. Third, the very diversity of different island cultures means that unique treasures of thought and experience are to be shared from different contexts.58

In this light, I can see the significance of allowing our voices as Pacific Island readers to be heard. Also, it is important to understand what contributes to the negative interpretation that we Islanders often find when we are reading the Bible. Creating our own Pacific Island way of interpreting the Bible by employing our own contextual and cultural resources is integral to developing culturally aware Bible islander readers.

However, this research is neither for colonial preferences nor a post-colonial reading, but I appreciate both sides, since I have highlighted my two different contexts as a Bible reader: native Samoan-ness and a Samoan-foreigner. I have emphasised my experiences and influences from both contexts to re-visit the exile in terms of re-reinterpreting.

Through this, I acknowledge the missionary contribution in terms of making our Pacific language a written language, with numeracy and literacy, rather than just oral. This same contribution allows the Bible to be translated into our own Pacific languages, despite there being issues in mistranslations and misinterpretation. In this same light, I can see also the positive aspects of the missionaries’ translation which reflects hope and future prosperity rather than negativity.

Similar to Pacific post-colonial scholars’ concerns, I acknowledge their views and insights as positive contributions to the literature as well as suggesting contextual reading approaches. I believe that they are significant in reading the Bible through our own Pacific Island lens, which connects our context closer to the Bible. A positive lens allows this writing to focus on investigating what was the dynamic that underlay the

Exile. Does this reflect the same with the Samoan concept of banishment? After all, is there any hope?

The emphasis of this thesis is to unleash what affects me as a Bible reader when I read the negative interpretation of the Exile. Selota Maliko’s thesis, accepted in May 2017,\(^59\) discusses the negativity of Exile and the extreme Samoan banishment imposed by village councils as a punishment for offenders. It is called *fa’ate’a ma le nu’u* ('banishment'),\(^60\) which shares a similar meaning to *fa’atāfe’a* ('adrift'). Maliko describes the nature of this Samoan traditional punishment, which includes, “banning [offenders] from village affairs, or by forcing them to leave [home] and resettle outside the village for a period of time or for life.”\(^61\) The Samoan way of punishment has been recorded by George Turner. He was a missionary translator who discovered the seriousness of traditional Samoan punishments. Turner states, “They [Samoans] have a curious mode of punishing a thief in some parts of this group. They lash together a number of unhusked cocoa-nuts, put the culprit on the top of the pile, and then set him adrift on the open sea.”\(^62\) According to Turner’s statement, this Samoan traditional punishment is serious and unforgiving, ‘set[ting] [the offender] adrift on the open sea,’ which is called, *fa’atafēa* ('adrift').\(^63\) Maliko points out that “when the word *tafea* is

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59 Selota Maliko just recently graduated in May 2017. His PhD thesis is vital to this research, especially when Maliko undertook interviews in his case studies in Samoa about Samoan traditional banishments. His research highlights the negative experiences of the exile from the Samoan perspective. ‘Case Studies’ see, Maliko, “Restorative Justice: A Pastoral Care Respose to the Issue of Fa’ate’a Ma Le Nu’u (Banishment) in Samoan Society,” 60-157.

60 Ibid., 16, 36.

61 Ibid., 16.


63 Maliko used the word *fa’atāfe’a* with the macron on the vowel ā while commonly, the macron is usually on the vowel ā e.g. the word *fa’atāfe’a*. In this case, the differences will be only the sound but does not change the meaning of the word from ‘adrift’.
combined with the prefix fa’a to become fa’atafea,64 it becomes a deliberate act.65
Such banishment might be a consequence of a rebellious act towards the matai
council,66 Maliko suggests, e.g. “[family] destruction, often by burning or confiscation
of their properties and dwellings.”67 These acts are “an expression of retributive
justice,” which contrasts with Maliko’s restorative justice approach to traditional
banishments.68

Maliko mentions restoration and reconciliation through traditional ifoga (‘bowing
down, an act of submission’),69 which means a traditional Samoan sincere apology.70
This traditional way of presenting an apology highlights a Christian theology of
leadership, which is manifested in the “power of love rather than the love of power.”71
Ifoga is a traditional way to reconcile and create peace within the community in the
relationship between the offender and the matai councils or village polities.

I find Maliko’s work useful in relation to my approach to exile. His pastoral
approach addresses hostility within the community by providing peace, restoration and

64 Maliko, 18.
65 Ibid.
66 Ofoia, “Tama a Le Eleele; Re-Reading of Ezra 4:1-5 an Oceania Diaspora Hermeneutic,” 42-47.
This is a case study undertaken by the writer in Samoa at the village of Lona Fagaloa, when the victim
was shot as a consequence of a rebellious act against the iuga o le fono a matai (‘village council’s
decision’). The issue was the result of different implications in different contexts. The victim used to live
in New Zealand and, when he returned to Samoan, he wanted to exercise his human rights as being
influenced by foreign culture. This was not accepted by the villagers. He declined to comply with village
rules, which led to him and his family having all sorts of problems and resulted to his death.
67 Maliko, “Restorative Justice: A Pastoral Care Response to the Issue of Fa’at’a Ma Le Nu’u
(Banishment) in Samoan Society,” 15.
68 Ibid.
70 The ifoga is a Samoan traditional way of apologising and seeking forgiveness. This traditional act
of sincere apology – bow down with fine mat, and covers over the whole body. The ifoga is usually
practiced in times of serious offences. This does not apply to minor offences, unless something is really
concerning the village councils. E.g. murdering someone, etc. See also Maliko, “Restorative Justice: A
Pastoral Care Response to the Issue of Fa’ate'a Ma Le Nu'u (Banishment) in Samoan Society,” 226-41.
71 Ibid., 238.
reconciliation. However, the traditional Samoan practice of *ifoga* only suggests peace, with a sincere apology by the offender, but does not necessarily show any repentance. Also, *ifoga* is usually practised by the parents of the offender or the *matai* who are related to them. In many cases the offender[s] themselves do not appear during the *ifoga*, and it is done on their behalf. Arguably, the traditional *ifoga* does not give evidence of repentance, but rather is meant to keep the peace and also to express forgiveness within the community. *Repentance* is significant in this research, which believes that it is the way for the exiles to find their way back home. In this light, hoping envisions a similar outcome that is reflected in the discussion of the exile from the *la-tō* reading approach.

By articulating a *la-tō* reading approach, this research focuses on hearing the voice of the master-mind behind the plan, hoping to highlight the purpose and the initiative of the Exile and their banishment. This would be coming through Jeremiah who did not join the Babylonian Exile. In this research, the prophet is in that position, one who has seen the exile from this positive perspective. He also sees the positive hope behind the plan of the exile from home.

Before I define the *la-tō* approach, I need to point out that there is no specific discussion of Samoan *la-tō* available or anyone who has talked about the Samoan *la-tō* as a reading approach. There is no specific writing about the *la-tō* in the Pacific literature, even in the Samoan language dictionaries. The *la-tō* is not a term that is used in our Samoan everyday living; it is used only on occasions of people returning home or celebrating the people’s arrivals. *La-tō* is a specific term relating to people being away from their origins and when they return home. It is significant for this research, however, regarding when people are ‘away from home’.

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72 Ibid., 230-40.
The organizing motif of this research is to use la-tō as a reading approach, to see and to uncover what is behind all the negativity. My questions are: Is there any positive hope behind exile? If there is, how can it be positive and what are the implications? These questions are also implied regarding Samoan banishments. Are they really negative in the Samoan context? In this research, I will discuss the exile and banishment from a standpoint away from the exile. Despite mistranslation and misinterpretation as well as the political influences of imperialism to the Samoan Bible translation, in this research a positive outcome of the Babylonian Exile can be seen.

The next section will define the la-tō approach, which highlights the central emphasis of this thesis: exile and leaving home is not negative. Instead, I see it as a positive movement. I do not mean to give the impression that a negative interpretation is not an appropriate way to interpret the Babylonian Exile. Rather, this thesis suggests that a la-tō reading, re-visiting and re-reading the Babylonian exile from the Samoan perspective shows that exile can be positive as a way of discipline. It is also biblical and contextual, because discipline is about love and not hatred or wrath.

Chapter two will discuss the influence of missionary Bible translators on the Samoan translation, which accounts for some of the negativity. Chapter three is an exegesis of the first 14 verses of Jeremiah 29. Jeremiah sees the exile as positive and understands that there is hope in time of calamity. This exegetical discussion is before my application of the la-tō reading approach in Chapter four. The final chapter will be the conclusion, as well as an overview of the la-tō discussion throughout the thesis.
1.5. What is La-tō?

La-tō simply means travel for the purpose of migration.\(^1\) It also means ‘away from home.’ La-tō connects with the word *folau* (‘to sail/to voyage’)\(^2\) in a similar sense ‘leaving home,’ in traditional Samoan sailing canoes. The *la-tō* can be the process of leaving home, it can also describes an individual or a group of people who travel away from the origin. There are two types of *la-tō*, which are *la-tō i manū* and *la-tō i mala*. This will be discussed further below. The word *la-tō* is not commonly used in Samoan culture, except for a traditional celebration, when there is a meeting or gathering of people, between the ‘visitors’ (‘people at the *la-tō*’) when returning and the ‘hosts’\(^3\) (‘people at home’). This occasion of celebration is called *fesilafa iga*\(^4\) (‘reception, welcome’) or *ava o le feiloa iga*,\(^5\) which means ‘traditional *ava*’ for the welcome

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\(^1\) The common Samoan word for migration or traveling is *malaga*, however in light of this research, the word *la-tō* is preferable to be used here. Note: for the word *malaga*, see, G. B Milner, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (Auckland, [N.Z]: Pasifika Press, 2001), 122; Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 202.

\(^2\) Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 68.

\(^3\) The hosts are the people who awaited at the home while the people at the *la-tō* were away. The hosts or the people at home’s role, is to pray for the well-being of those at the *la-tō*, and for the well-being of the visitors when they are waiting for them to arrive at their home and land.

\(^4\) The word *fesilafa iga* comes from the word *fesilafa i*, which means, face to face. In this context the visitor and the host are face to face in the traditional way. The root verb here is *sila* or *silasila*, meaning to see or to observe. See Milner, Ibid., 209.

\(^5\) The *ava o le feiloaiga* is an occasion where Samoan people celebrate the arrival of the visitors or the people who have been away (*‘la-tō’*), when returned home. The word *feiloa i* means ‘to meet’ or to see one another. See, Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 153. This *ava* ceremony is provided the host or the people who waited at homeland. They practice this *ava* with gratitude and thanksgiving for the safe arrivals of the visitors or the *la-tō*. Samoans believe their prayers for welfare while the people were at the *la-tō* had been answered by God.

\(^6\) The *ava* is a Pacific traditional plant that significantly carries values of their culture. It has a long process of making before it serves as a drink. The *ava* important parts are the *aka* (‘roots’). Dry them first in the sun and pound them to become powder before mixing with water. For the use of *ava* as a Pacific Island identity and its significance, see S. Aporosa, “The New Kava User: Diasporic Identity Formation in Reverse,” *New Zealand Sociology* 30, no. 4 (2015): 60-61.
ceremony.’ The ‘host’ provides this ceremony by accepting the visitors or the la-tō upon their return, with honour and full of gratitude.

This ceremony specifically for welcoming the la-tō shows respect and appreciation for their safe arrival, which would not have occurred without the love of God and his protection. Thus, this ava ceremony signifies the social welfare for everyone through prayer interventions; the la-tō and the people at home’s prayers. In this Samoan la-tō context, praying for wellbeing is important. Usually during this ceremony is where the word la-tō would be heard. The tulafale (‘orator’) as a representative (‘host – people at home’) will often say to those who were travelling in a sense of welcoming them home, malō le la-tō i le tai, malō le la-tō i le ea, malō foʻi le la-tō i le ala, which could be translated, ‘Well done on your travelling (‘la-tō’), through the ocean (‘tai’), through the air (‘ea’), and through the ground road (‘ala’).

Etymologically, the word la-tō is formed of two smaller words put together: la and tō. The word la-tō is usually one word (‘latō’), but in this research, it is written in this form as a combined word (la-tō). Both la and tō express positivity and combine to create a concept which simply means to leave the home, or to leave one’s place of origin.

1.6. la

1.6.1. la – sail

La is the name given to the sail of the Samoan traditional canoe used for travel. The la is responsible for catching the wind when it is raised, and it is attached to opposite sides of the canoe. The la is also needed to regulate speed. Thus, the la and the wind are two

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7 ‘Praying for the wellbeing of the la-tō’ in the Samoan context is called tapuaiga, this word will be later discussed in this chapter.

major factors in traditional Samoan sailing that must cooperate smoothly under the masterful skill and control of the *tautai* (‘fisherman’; also ‘the skipper of the canoe.’)

There are two types of *la* or sail used in traditional sailing vessels: the *la-fala*, or sail made out of the pandanus leaf, and the *la-afa*, or sail made from a “plaited cinnet from the fibre of a coconut husk.” George Turner has noted: “The sail is triangular, and made of matting. When set, the base is up and the apex down, quite the reverse of what we see some other islands.” The *la-fala* (‘mat sails’) is raised when the sea is calm and the wind is not so strong, making for smooth and easy sailing. In contrast, during strong winds and rough seas the *la-afa* is raised, to manage the canoe during rough conditions. The *tautai* must know the correct time to raise the appropriate sail. To do this, the *tautai* must be able to read the nature of both the ocean and the weather depending on geographical location and time of day – this is called the *taimi ma le oga sami*, or time and space [ocean: reference to geography].

### 1.6.2. *lā* – sun

*Lā* (a noun) is also the Samoan word for the sun. In traditional sailing, the sun like the moon and the stars at night, is used as a point of reference in navigation. It is a vital element in traditional sailing in order to ensure one’s direction. Furthermore, the *lā* is

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9 Turner, *Samoa*, 164-165, 171. Turner specifically mentioned the making of the *la-fala* as the sail for the ancient Samoan canoe, he describes the common purpose of what the mats were made for, and making a sail for the traditional sailing canoe was one of the reasons. Samoans called *la-fala* because *la* (‘sail’) is made of the *fala* (‘mats’).

10 Ibid., 170-171. As I mentioned above, Turner revealed that almost everything of importance in the Samoan ancient style is fastened with plaited cinnet from the fibre of the cocoa-nut husk, e.g. garments, native cloth and mats. He also mentioned the cinnet was used in boat building. These cinnets (‘afa’) were used to make the *la* (‘sail’), and that is why they are called *la-afa*.

11 Ibid., 164.


also used in Samoan analogies, e.g. *e toe oso pea le lā* – ‘the sun will rise again.’ This analogy is an exhortation and encouragement for an individual who is facing some form of hardship in life – trouble will eventually pass, and a new day will bring new hope.

The Samoans’ traditional understanding of the *lā* in their analogies, in terms of setting and rising, renders the idea of a perpetual circulation that reflects continuous hope. The positive experience of the *lā* cycle applies persistently and effectively to many positive implications. *Lā* here not only gives the impression of incessant progress, but also recognises scientifically a source of energy, i.e. it gives light, heat, energy and life to plants, human and animals. The *lā* also generates and indicates the transition of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ significantly. When it sets, that determines the end of the day. Hence, when it rises it brings and shines the new fresh day. Through these definitions of the *lā* (‘sun’), hope can be seen.

1.6.3. *la* – directional pointer

The word *la* can also be used as a ‘directional pointer’ e.g. *O fea ‘la’ o i ai lou tina?* – ‘Whereabouts is your mother?’ *O fea e aga i ai lou ‘la’?* ‘Where are you heading to?’

This is important because voyagers need to understand which *itulagi* (‘horizon’) they come from and which direction they are going, which is called in Samoan, *la fa’aiilo folau* (‘directional pointer’). In light of this *la* as a directional pointer, hope can also be seen. These definitions of the *la* – sail, sun, directional pointer all relatively share their commonality, not only reflecting hope but highlighting the voyaging and oceanic implication of the word *la*. 
1.6.4. *la* – branch

*La* is a short form of the word *la-la* which means ‘branch of a tree.’\(^{14}\) Both carry the same nuance that branches connect to a plant. This meaning of *la* has been used by the missionary Samoan Bible translators in Jeremiah 23:5, to translate with the same meaning a branch in reference to the rise of David’s kingdom. Another example found in the gospel of John 15:2, with reference to Jesus’ parable of the true vine, *a o la uma e fua, e teuteu e ia, ina ia fua mai ai atili*,\(^ {15} \) which translates as “every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.”\(^ {16} \) There is a negative side to this parable in that some branches are taken away from the vine, but likewise there is also a positive side because the purpose of the pruning is to make it bear more fruit. Also, the positive side of the *la* (‘branch’) can be seen when the *la* is cut off and re-planted. It has a chance to grow and multiply and importantly the natural plant will remain the same. A similar positive implication of the *la* can be seen in Job 14:8-9.

1.7. *Tō*

1.7.1. *tō* – bring

The word *tō* (v) also has several meanings: (1) ‘*tō mai i lalo*’, means to ‘bring something down’.\(^ {17} \) In sailing, we bring down the *la* (‘sail’). (2) *tō fa’a-ua fa’amauiala* – ‘blessings shall pour down like rain’.\(^ {18} \) This use of the word *tō* is similar to the first meaning, but makes reference to something that pours down like rain.

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\(^ {15} \) O Le Tusi Paia, *O Le Feagaiga Tuai Ma Le Feagaiga Fou Lea, Ua Faasamoaina*, (Suva, Fiji: Bible Society in the South Pacific, 1992), 1019. This is a reprint from the original version 1887 of the Samoan Bible that was translated by the missionaries early on. This version is commonly used by the Samoans during Sunday services.

\(^ {16} \) NRSV.

\(^ {17} \) Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 311.

\(^ {18} \) Ibid., Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 268.
Both meanings have a reciprocal nature, meaning that which is brought down or poured down can also be given out or poured out, e.g. tō atu lau pule, means to give out one’s authority or right. This tō works reciprocally, tō mai meaning, ‘to bring’ and tō atu, meaning, ‘give out. Usually said in Samoan, au-māi, avā-tū which means, ‘to bring forth’ and ‘also to give back’.

1.7.2. tō – grant

Tō meaning, ‘grant’. Samoan culture values the tō as a grant significantly. There are two types of tō (‘grant’), which are igāga-tō and matūpalapala. (1) Igāga-tō, is a reward for an amazing act or service. Igāga-tō could be land, titles, authority or chieftainship. This igāga-tō grant is usually given with privilege and honour, showing respect and appreciation. The word igāga-tō is from two words; igāga and tō. The word igāga is a hereditary right or privilege, and tō is ‘to grant,’ e.g. the land is granted to a family forever, to be owned and used as reward of their amazing service. Igāga-tō is an everlasting reward, which means the recipient of the grant and all his/her descendants will hold that title or land. (2) Matūpalapala is also a reward similar to the igāga-tō in all the privileges of entitlements as reward of a successful service. However there is a difference between these two grants: the matū-palapala is a grant which is awarded only to the person who has earned the reward. Once the recipient of the title or land is dead, their descendants have no claim. Therefore, the difference here is that the igāga-tō is an everlasting grant for the recipient as well for all his/her descendants.

22 Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 268. The word igāga-tō is from two words; igāga and tō. The word tō is a grant of a land, e.g. to the Church forever, to be owned and used.
23 Ibid., 83.
descendants, while the matū-palapala is exclusively only for the life of the grant recipient but not for his/her descendants.

The igāga-tō is given only when the recipient demonstrates their ability to live a life of service to the satisfaction of the one who will grant the igāga-tō. In this sense, igāga-tō as a grant is a privilege and an honour. It is a part of Samoan culture that ensures the safekeeping, continuity, and honourable status of any family or village for generations to come. Milner refers this igāga-tō to the Salelesi ritual. For example: The Salelesi village has been given the privilege to present a traditional act that would make them distinct from all other Samoans, called the ‘Salelesi ritual.’ The Salelesi representative is allowed to walk in to a funeral gathering and help himself to all the food and whatever he wishes to take with him, i.e. lauava (‘families’ contribution to the funeral’), including wholesale goods, such as pusa apa (‘boxes of tinned fish’), pua’a (‘pigs’), povī (‘cattle’) and ie toga (‘fine mats’). This is a grant for satisfactory service provided by the couple named Sa and Lesi to the queen mother, Soa’emalelagi, the mother of the Queen Salamasina. When they practice this act in any occasions, no one could stop them. The Salelesi people have the right to take anything, and that right was the igāga-tō given to Sa and Lesi (their ancestors) in the early days. It is known by some other Samoans as ‘rude’ but the fact is that, it is a traditional and valuable ritual in many respects. Furthermore, the Salelesi have a significant role to play in Parliament meetings. The matai (‘chief’) from Salelesi announces the opening of the Samoan Parliament by calling “u –i – o, u –i – o” almost like screaming or like calling someone, every time they officially start the Parliament. To this day, the Salelesi village still has the honour to perform this act whenever it is required. This was a grant given to
Salelesi as an igāga-tō in ancient Samoa, and the descendants of those recipients are still entitled to it. The Salelesi igāga-tō is called O le afi tunu a Salelelsi.24

1.7.3.  tō – pregnant/pregnancy

The Samoan word tō is for both meanings: (1) pregnant (an adjective) and (2) pregnancy (a noun), which means, (1) to be with child, e.g. ua tō le teine – ‘the girl is pregnant’; (2) the period of being pregnant, e.g. o le a le umi o lau tō – ‘how long is your pregnancy’? However, the Samoan understanding of pregnancy is related to one’s tofi (‘inheritance’), much like the tō as a grant. Being with child ensures the continuity of one’s family line and gives new hope and blessing for the family or village that the unborn child will be part of. This is the Samoan understanding of tō as grant; whether as an adjective or a noun, both share an implication of hope.

1.7.4.  tō le fale – temporary relief.

The words tō le fale means ‘to build a house.’25 In this context, when the word tō is used, referring to ‘to build a house’, it is commonly understood in Samoan as a ‘temporary build’. For example: tō le fale o le tautai, translated as, ‘build the house of the fisherman’.26 This house is called, tō taufānu ’u, which is formed from the combination of two words: (1) tō (‘cast’) as in to cast a shadow, and (2) taufānu ’u,27 which is the name of the big black cloud that sometimes blocks the lā (‘sun’) from shining, and it also produces a shadow that blocks the sun for the relief of fishermen or, in some cases, voyagers on a very hot day.

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26 Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 268. Note: tō le fale o le tautai, see meaning (3) of tō

This tō le fale, as a temporary build can be seen below with other type of houses, which share the temporariness of building shelters for relief, i.e. tō lau api, meaning ‘to build a temporary structure of lau (‘leaves’) for the purpose of resting while on a long journey.’ Thus, there are two meanings here: (1) tō se fale lau api, meaning, ‘build a house with leaves to rest.’ (2) ia tō se fale ie, which means ‘build a tent.’ To build a tent, or to build a house with leaves, expresses the idea of settling only temporarily, but not necessarily to build permanently. Thus, tō is different from the words fau or fai, which also means ‘to make or to build.’ Fau or fai conveys the idea of to build for a longer term. i.e. fau le falesa, which means ‘to build the church’ or fai le fale (‘build the house’).

1.7.5. tō – to plant

Tō also means, ‘to plant,’ and tō is the short form along with tōtō as the longer form. While these two words share the same definition of, ‘to plant’, their difference will be, the tō carries the original notion of temporary but in a shorter term, e.g. tō ni laau, which means, ‘plant some plants’. In this sense, tō can also be combined as tō-gāvao, which means ‘a grove of trees.’ Similarly, tō-gālaau aina means ‘vegetable gardens.’

The word tōtō meaning, ‘to plant’, however also highlights the emphasis on the action, by repeating the same word tō. Hence, both words share the same temporary meaning of planting, but the word tōtō refers to the longevity or the future purpose of the planted trees or vegetables, e.g. tōtō fa’atoaga, can be translated as ‘plant

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29 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 315.
plantation,’ which suggests a longer process as a source for the family’s food supply. Both meanings share the positive nuance of life and future hope in terms of food supply.

1.7.6. tō – take away

The word tō or tō-ese meaning ‘to take away.’ This meaning sounds negative, but according to the Samoan contextual understanding of this word in the context of traveling or going away from home it is not negative. Tō-ese is usually used in a sense of tō-ese a nu’u potopoto which means ‘if we leave from our origin,’ we leave together as one, a nu’u potopoto’ meaning ‘one unit’. The whole village is recommended to depart and leave together, which highlights the oneness and unity of the village. The idea conveyed here is the unity; it means ‘to bind together and leave together as one.’

1.8. La-tō – Away from Home

1.8.1. la-tō i manū

The phrase la-tō i manū, means ‘to travel with blessing[s].’ This phrase not only acknowledges the travelling party or individual, but more importantly recognises those who are left behind and the notion that those left behind have the responsibility of praying and wishing the one who is about to leave well. The role of those left behind is just as important as that of the traveller and is often called la-tō manuia. This phrase indicates that the traveller will not be alone but will have the prayers and support of those left behind, indicating a strong spiritual connection.

32 Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 268.
34 La-tō manuia means the same as la-tō i manū (‘travel with blessings’), which is an outcome of prayer interventions between the la-tō and the people at home. This is called tapua’iga (‘cheers or worship’) for the wellbeing of everyone, responsively for both the la-tō and the people at home. The meaning and implications of this word tapua’iga will be further discussed in Chapter 4.
35 For the ancient Samoan ‘spiritual connection among their people’, see Toeolesulusulu Damon Ieremia Salesa, “When the Waters Met: Some Shared Histories of Christianity and Ancestral Samoan
1.8.2. *la-tō i mala*

*La-tō i mala*, has the opposite notion to the *la-tō i manū*, and means ‘to travel with *mala* (‘calamity’).’ The word *mala* is calamity, as in, *inā folau ai ma le fa’anunu mai o mala*, which is translated as ‘to sail away to avoid the coming of calamities.’ In this example given by Pratt, the *la-tō* is not mentioned, but the word *folau* means *la-tō*.37 Pratt suggests different meanings of *mālaia* as (1) (n) calamity, (2) (adj) unhappy, unfortunate, miserable, and (3) (v) to be unfortunate.38 This kind of *mala* (‘calamity’) happens when people travel away from their home and origin as a result of punishment. These people get punished and banished, even taken away from their villages and families when they rebel against the *pulega a matai* (‘chief council rulers’), with no hope of petition.

1.8.3. *fa’a-tō – curse*

The word *fa’a-tō* which means “to cast out, cut off with a curse (‘of a relative’)”.39 *Fa’a-tō* can also mean ‘to strip away from the land,’ or ‘to expel.’40 *Fa’a-tō* shares a similar meaning to *la-tō i mala*. The similarities are, the *mala* are expected to be inherited by the person who is *fa’a-tō* and *la-tō i mala* instead of blessings. However the word *fa’a-tō* is more specific: it expresses the guiltiness of the offender that caused him/her to leave home. When a person is *fa’a-tō*, he is definitely *la-tō i mala*, which is, the one who travels with calamity and is miserable. The word *fa’a-tō* comes from two

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37 Refer to my definition of *la-tō* that connects with *folau* which means, ‘to sail/voyage’, see, 1.5.


40 This is a common understanding of the word *fa’a-tō* in the Samoan culture.
words, with the prefix fa’a a causative added to the verb tō. Thus, to fa’a-tō is to curse as a consequence of a rebellious act against one’s parents, family or the village council.

The word fa’a-tō leads to another word fa’a-tōnu which means, discipline. To discipline a child is to fa’a-tōnu a child. Fa’a-tōnu is from the prefix fa’a, and tōnu (‘right’), which means ‘to straighten up or to get right.’ To teach someone in a way of discipline, which means, a’oa’i (v) or a’oa’iga (n). Fa’a-tō, fa’atōnu and aoa’iga share the same notion of disciplining someone to become better person.

In the Samoan family context, fa’a-tō also shares the same meaning as the word fetu’u which also means, ‘curse’. While these words fetu’u and fa’a-tō share the same meaning, ‘curse’, they have contrasting implications. The former does not have to leave the home of origin. Although the person has been cursed, they do not necessarily have to leave. The latter meaning: he has the curse, and the one cursed must also leave home.

The fa’a-tō exercises disconnection of the person from family blessings, so that the person who is banished will no longer be entitled to their family benefits. Despite the serious implications of this curse, Samoan culture sees it as only a temporary punishment. It applies to an offender as long as the offender learnt his/her lesson. Which means until the offender[s] finds their way back to the family through repentance and restoration. In this way, the punishment and the banishment that the offender receives in the Samoan traditional way can be seen as a fa’a-tō (‘a curse’) – can only

41 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 139. Note: This word fa’atōnu also means, ‘to instruct, order or to command.’ See Milner, Samoan Dictionary. 276.


43 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 158; Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 292. Milner gives the example of the fetu’u, e.g. “Sa fetu’u e iopu le aso sa faanau ai”, meaning, ‘Job cursed the day he was born’.

44 The word fa’a-tō is curse, it also means an act of cursing someone. The word mala or malaia also means curse.
come from either the parent[s] or senior members of the family, i.e. aunts, uncles or the matai councils. This fa’a-tō although it is a serious punishment has a temporary nature.

1.9. Taufanua – at home

The word taufanua refers to the person who remains at home. It is similar to the word taliuta, but the latter applies only to fishing. Taufanua applies to the people who remain on land or wait at home and is the opposite of the word la-tō. The la-tō are located away from home, while the taufanua are situated at home. The taufanua is the person who resides on and cares for the land, where tau means ‘to fight’ or ‘to defend’ and fanua is ‘land.’ The taufanua is the person who stays on the land and at home. However, in this context, tau does not exactly mean ‘to fight’ but refers to someone who is responsible for and plays an important role at home, like being responsible for the social welfare of the family. The taufanua also looks after the family’s valuable possessions such as titles. The original Samoan term was tau-malae, which is someone who resides in the malae (‘origin’) which identifies that person’s identity, because every village has a malae. However, the taumalae concept is inadequate to express someone who stays in the aiga (‘family’) on behalf of other family members to maintain and care for the land, even to defend the rights of the land. Therefore, I have expanded taumalae to create a new concept which Samoans will easily understand, called tau – fanua (‘taufanua’).

45 The word taliuta is from two words, tali (‘await’) and uta (‘homeland’), tali-uta, meaning someone who waits at the homeland for the return of those who travel or have gone away. This word is similar to the tau-fanua, but the difference is, tali-uta is specifically for those who wait at home for the return of someone who is going fishing. The person who tapua’i (‘cheers/worship’), which means the taliuta will pray for the wellbeing and also prepare some food when the people return from fishing.
Summary

The la-tō concept displays positivity within its elements. La-tō demonstrates life, direction and the rise of hope in a time of calamity. Though some aspects of la-tō such as tō-ese and fa’a-tō seem negative, they are not negative but positive in the Samoan contextual understanding and the implications of the word. These aspects display the hope that is reflected within the movement between ‘home and away’. Voyaging is a common event in the Pacific. Samoan people are la-tō to be enriched in order to bless those who wait at home for their return. Upon their arrival is where this la-tō concept is presented, in light of their ‘absences’ or ‘being away’ from home but safe arrival.

The nature of la-tō through voyaging and exploration reflects the advantage of the ocean within our life as Pacific Islanders, the way Hau’ofa claimed that ‘we are the ocean and the ocean is us,’ similar to how we (‘Pacific Islanders’) see our land as Tuwere stated. The next chapter will discuss what happened when the missionaries first arrived with the Bible, and how it still influences us as contemporary Samoan Bible readers.
Chapter 2

Introduction

This chapter will discuss five weaknesses of the early Samoan translation of the Bible that have been discovered in my research. First, transliteration rather than translation of Hebrew into Samoan. Secondly, word by word translation. Third, the adoption of non-Samoan (but still Polynesian) words by the translators. Fourth, pluralising words on the assumption that attaching a plural suffix will achieve pluralisation. Fifth is misinterpretation by the missionary translators. I note that the similarities among Polynesian languages\(^1\) were an advantage for the missionaries for communication and translation when they first arrived in the Pacific Islands. However, the missionaries and their local advisors were not always clear how those languages differed, and sometimes they made inappropriate assumptions. Readers now face the consequences of misinterpretation and mistranslations that are sometimes incorrect or even offensive.

In order to set this discussion in context, I begin with a brief history of how the Bible came to be translated in Samoa. Many of the weaknesses found can be explained by imperfect knowledge on the part of both European missionaries and their Pacific Island associates. All five of the weaknesses mentioned above can be found within Jer. 29:1-14. In each case, the problem is identified first, then the issue is discussed and an alternative Samoan translation is offered. Examples are offered in table form in the Appendix along with the passage in Samoan from the commonly used Samoan Bible.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) It is similar in Pacific languages, especially Tahitian was recognised by Captain Cook and early European explorers. See B. E. N. Finney, “Voyage to Polynesia's Land's End,” *Antiquity* 75, no. 287 (2001): 172.

2.1. The Bible Adrift in the Pacific

2.1.1. Where it all started

The arrival of Christianity started with Nafanua’s prophecy: “a [Samoan] legend, war goddess, [named] Nafanua, prophesied that a new religion would come to Samoa and end the rule of the old gods.” In 1820, Samoa was similar to other Pacific islands which had already been discovered by early missionaries. The same year, the Samoans were first approached by “the beachcombers who had begun to teach the Samoans about the religion of Christianity in 1820.” These pioneers of Christianity were known by Samoans as “Sailors’ Lotu.” However, their attempts were not very successful or even recognised by other missionaries who came after, as they were not theologically trained and qualified. Around 1820, a Samoan native started an ‘early Samoan Christian cult’ and his name was Sio Vili, so it was called the Sio Vili movement, and “[he] had travelled to other Pacific islands and Australia on a whaling ship.” Meleisea states,

Leadership of the Sio Vili movement was taken over by a woman who used the techniques of taulāitu to contact the new God ‘Seesah Elaisah’ (a mispronunciation of Jesus Christ) and prophesied that the new god would soon come to Sāmoa from the sea, bringing about the end of the world.

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5 Ibid., 52.

6 Ibid. 52.

7 Meleisea and Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 52.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.
This woman *taulāitu* (‘diviner’) prophesied an affirmation Nafanua’s earlier prophecy, which perhaps gave the Samoan people a future hope and an expectation soon to be seen in reality. In 1828, the Wesleyan Church arrived in Samoa; it was brought by a chief named Saiva’aia of Tafua-Salelologa in Savai’i, “who had brought news of the *Lotu* Toga to Samoa.”¹¹ Two years later, members of the London Missionary Society arrived in Samoa to become pioneers of Pacific Bible translation.¹² When the LMS mission arrived, most Samoans were already familiar with Christianity and expected that the Nafanua prophecy would soon be fulfilled.¹³

Previous influences of Christianity as well as Samoa’s prolonged expectation through prophecies meant that the people were far from surprised when the Rev. John Williams and his crew arrived in 1830. Williams was accompanied by Charles Barff,¹⁴ with the Bible as well, and they were welcomed with great and friendly hospitality by the natives.¹⁵ Williams and his crew members came by a ship called *Savali o le Filemu* (‘Messenger of Peace’),¹⁶ which was built by Williams with the help of some Rarotongan men in order to spread the Gospel in the Pacific.¹⁷ “Seven days after leaving the Friendly Islands [Tongatapu], the voyagers reached [Samoa].”¹⁸ The Samoan people offered neither violence nor rejection of the Bible mission but invited them in a friendly

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¹¹ Ibid., 60.
¹⁵ Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832*, 67-68.
¹⁶ Ellis, *The History of London Missionary Society* 1, xi.
¹⁸ Ellis, *The History of London Missionary Society* 1, 297.
manner to their shore.¹⁹ This friendly welcome forecasts the success and good reputation of their Bible mission. This is clear when Williams delivered his sermon to the Samoan natives. Ellis states that

Mr. Williams preached to an assembly of one thousand persons, and it is not surprising that he found it a delightful employment to tell the wonderful story of redeeming love to a multitude on whom the light of the Gospel was just beginning to dawn.²⁰

The arrival of the Gospel was a new light for ‘savage’ Samoans.²¹ Meeting new people could not have been easy for the missionaries, even though coming from Tahiti they would have found that all the Polynesian languages in that part of the Pacific belong to the same linguistic family.²²

Before the Samoan translation, the Bible was translated for the first time in the Pacific from English into Tahitian in 1817 by the Rev. Henry Nott, “one of the first missionaries who arrived in the Duff in 1797.”²³ In 1817, the missionary John Williams had first arrived in Tahiti.²⁴ The first translation took place in the same year when Williams had settled in Matavai Tahiti,²⁵ before another group of missionaries came to Samoa in 1830.²⁶ It took thirteen years before the Bible travelled across and was prepared for the Samoan translation for the first time. A.W. Murray states,

¹⁹ Ibid., 298. See also, Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 25-26.
²¹ Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 15. Note: “ulufale le malamalama o le fa’aolataga, ae mou malie atu le pogisa o le fa’apaapau ina ua suliu Samoa i ave malolosi o le talalelei a Iesu Keriso,” which means the ‘light of the Gospel-salvation has arrived.’
²³ Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 6. For the arrival of Rev. Henry Nott, see Wilson and Wilson, A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, 5.
²⁴ Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 3.
²⁵ Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 12.
²⁶ Ibid., 15.
Since 1830, when the Rev. John Williams and the Rev. Charles Barff conveyed the gospel to [the Samoan] shores, it has been coming more and more prominently before the friends of Christian missions and Bible circulation, and for a number of years its commercial value and importance have been growingly developed, and it has even become an object of interest to the “Great Powers,” who, under God’s overruling providence, control the destinies of the world. 27

The arrival of missionaries in Samoa made a huge impact, not only bringing European style but also language. European style and influences 28 were introduced to the natives and reflected European advances in civilization when the missionaries introduced their iron tools rather than “the native’s bones and stones.” 29 In Matavai Tahiti, trading exchanges took place 30 and also in Tongatapu the missionaries traded with them, exchanging breadfruit, coconuts, yams, spears and clubs. 31 Exchanging of goods through trading as well as learning the language by both the natives and the missionaries were a good start, and this was deliberately followed by the Bible mission.

The similarities between the Polynesian languages 32 were an advantage for communication, which was something the missionaries already knew before they came to this part of the world. 33 They were told by soldiers who had already been in the Pacific Islands about how simple Pacific languages are to speak, 34 one point which convinced the LMS to target the Pacific Islands. 35 This was an initiative which came

27 Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 37.
28 Moors states, ‘the conditions in all different islands have been modified by the arrival of the white settlers’, see H. J. Moors, With Stevenson in Samoa (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard & Company, 1910), 10.
30 Bellis, Captain Cook, 12.
31 Wilson and Wilson, A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, 97.
32 ‘Pacific language similarities’ see ibid., 1.
33 Ibid.
34 Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 6.
35 Ibid.
from one of the founders of the LMS, Thomas Haweis\textsuperscript{36} (known to the Samoans as Hauesi)\textsuperscript{37} who told the European missionaries before they left London that a corporal of the marines who had been in the Pacific Islands for three months spoke about the simplicity and the similarities of Polynesian languages.\textsuperscript{38} The captain of the ship \textit{Duff}, James Wilson, who took LMS missionaries to Tahiti in 1797, states:

> The discoveries made in the great [s]outhern [s]ea by the voyages undertaken at the command of his pre[s]ent maje[s]ty, George the Third, excited wonderful attention, and brought, as it were, into light a world till then almo[s]t unknown. I[s]lands, it may be [s]aid, innumerable, were found to cover the bo[s]om of the Pacific Ocean in different groups; [s]ome of them exten[s]ive, and many full of inhabitants, who di[s]covered, by the [s]imilarity of their language and religion, the [s]ame original race; though how they became di[s]persed over three or four thou[s]and [s]quare miles, with no other ve[s][s]el than a canoe, is truly marvellous.\textsuperscript{39}

The captain of the \textit{Duff} witnessed that the family relationship of Pacific people was such that even their languages were convenient for the Polynesians to communicate. The ability to exchange goods between the missionaries and the natives was a sign of successful progress toward understanding each other’s language.

Tahiti was the first Pacific Island to receive the Gospel. It may be possible to question why Tahiti received the Gospel first rather than other Pacific Islands such as Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. This research found no specific reason why Tahiti was visited first by the missionaries rather than other Pacific Islands. I assume that it was the preference and recommendation of those sailors from the \textit{Endeavour} and \textit{Dolphin} who

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} William Ellis, \textit{The History of the London Missionary Society}, vol. 1 (London: John Snow, Pattenoster Row, 1844), vii, 8. Rev. Dr. Haweis, who was one of the founders of the London Missionary Society, encouraged his colleagues to establish a Society in 1793 and then targeted the Pacific Islands. Lovett, \textit{The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1899}, 1, 120-21.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Fau’olo, \textit{O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i}, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Lovett, \textit{The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1899}, 1, 121; Fau’olo, \textit{O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i}, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Wilson and Wilson, \textit{A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean}, 1.
\end{itemize}
had been in Tahiti years before, when Tahiti had been considered by Captain Cook as the best place to observe the transit of Venus.\textsuperscript{40} Hannah Bellis states,

His [Captain Cook’s] work also attracted the attention of many of England’s chief scientists, in particular the members of the Royal Society. At that time, the Royal Society was especially interested in the planet Venus which, it was predicted, would pass between the earth and the sun in 1769. It was agreed that Tahiti was the best place from which to observe the ‘transit of Venus’ as the event was called.\textsuperscript{41}

British and French explorers came to the Pacific from other countries like Australia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, which means that they came from different directions north and west of Tahiti.

Beginning in the mid-1700s, the rival nations began to send out scientific expeditions to explore and chart the islands of the Pacific. French expeditions in this period include those of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (1766–69), Jean-François de la Pérouse (1785–88), Étienne Marchand (1790–92), and Antoine-Raymond-Joseph de Bruni d’Entrecasteaux (1791–93). British explorers include Samuel Wallis (1767–68) and Philip Carteret (1767–68). But by far the most wide-ranging and accomplished of the eighteenth-century explorers was the Englishman Captain Cook, who made three separate voyages to the Pacific in 1768–71, 1772–75, and 1776–80.\textsuperscript{42}

European missions targeted the Pacific rather than bigger countries. The missionary came with the mentality that the Pacific was theirs to harvest. J. Williams states, “Our Lord Jesus has taught us to appreciate the importance of this part of Missionary labour by describing such a state by the Similitude of a corn field ‘White to the harvest.’”\textsuperscript{43}

Hence the Pacific Islands were the target for the Bible mission. Tahiti is located on the eastern side of the Pacific while some other islands are more on the western side.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Bellis, \textit{Captain Cook}, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Eric Kjellgren, "European Exploration of the Pacific, 1600–1800," \textit{Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000} (2004), \url{http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/expa/hd_expa.htm}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Moyle, \textit{The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832}, 280. Haweis stated this in his sermon, “the Islands of the Pacific were an open field waiting for the Harvest.” See Ian Shevill, \textit{Pacific Conquest: The history of 150 years of missionary progress in the South Pacific} (Sydney: Pacific Christian Literature Society, 1949), 16. See also, Fau’olo, \textit{O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i}, 6.
\end{itemize}
Tahiti would be the first Pacific Island to meet the missionaries and to receive the Gospel. Hence, Tahiti became the main port to settle the missionaries from 1797.\textsuperscript{44} It was not only the main port for the European mission in their early settlement, but it was also “the central base of LMS activities in the Pacific”\textsuperscript{45} before spreading to other Pacific Islands. The Bible and the missionaries followed the sea currents and the prevailing west-to-east winds, a similar route to the one Pacific people used for canoe voyaging.\textsuperscript{46} Also, Tahiti is the closest of all the Pacific islands to Europe, approximately 9,554 miles going west as the crow flies.\textsuperscript{47} The missionaries were accompanied by Tahitian natives, and this became helpful in their attempts to understand others because of the similarities in the Pacific languages. Thereafter, the missionaries travelled and their Bible continuously drifted on to other Pacific islands such as the Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa.\textsuperscript{48}

\subsection*{2.1.2. The Pioneers of the Samoan Bible translation}

As mentioned above, John Williams, the leader of the missionaries, built the boat named \textit{Savali o le Filemu} (‘Messenger of Peace’) with the help of the Rarotongans.\textsuperscript{49} This was the boat that Williams used to travel around the Pacific for his missions, including to Samoa. On 24 August 1830, Williams arrived in Samoa at Sapapali’i Savai’i.\textsuperscript{50} Other missionaries arrived before him, such as the Methodist teachers from

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Moyle1830}Moyle, \textit{The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832}, 2.
\bibitem{Ibid}Ibid.
\bibitem{Murray}Murray, \textit{The Bible in the Pacific}, 40.
\bibitem{Fau'o}Fau'o, \textit{O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i}, 13-14.
\bibitem{Ibid}Ibid., 15.
\end{thebibliography}
Tonga and the English missionary Peter Turner in 1828. However this research is focused on the first translation of the Bible in Samoa, not on the first arrival of missionaries. Williams had brought the Tahitian Bible translation with him, and he brought missionaries with different talents that helped him along with the mission, even though everything was new to them. Skilful missionaries like George Pratt, who had a special knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, arrived in 1839.

The Samoan people were converted successfully to become Bible readers and Bible lovers. This happened immediately and then spread all over Samoa, even though they had been described by the missionaries as uncivilized. Indeed, the missionaries had categorised them as pagan worshippers. However, with the light of Christianity, the Bible would give Samoans greater understanding. As a result, it was necessary for them to translate the Bible into the Samoan language. The natives themselves were somewhat limited in communication in terms of literacy as they predominantly communicated orally; Jione Havea mentions in his Foreword to Ma’ilo’s work, “Our ancestors did not need translators then, for they had time to spar with and interrogate, and the native wisdom to understand, one another.” At this stage, they did not yet have writing or reading of any kind.

The uncivilized nature of the natives became an issue that could foster misunderstanding and misinterpretation, as well as misleading both parties. However, gradually translating the Bible changed all this because it enabled Samoan to become a written language. Thereafter, it became a success and Samoan natives were consumers of the translation project. The missionaries had to learn the language from the natives as


52 Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 1.

53 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, xi.
much as they could, based on their knowledge of the Tahitian language and help from the Tahitians they brought with them. This enabled them to teach the people how to read and write.

By 1836, Misi Uilisone (Samuel Wilson) translated Matthew 1-21, but it was rushed and imperfect. However, on 18 July 1839, the first translation in the Samoan language was published by Misi Sitea (John Betteridge Stair), with the help of two Samoan men from Sydney.54 Those two Samoan men, who had gone to Sydney, returned and worked in the office, were of great value to the printing project.55

The missionaries decided to focus on the Bible translations. Misi Parate (George Pratt) was the head of the Samoan translation project. His talent and his knowledge of the biblical languages made it natural for him to lead it. Pratt stayed in Samoa for about forty-one years, and became very familiar with the language.56 Misi Sitea’s contributions were helpful too. He brought copies of a spelling book in Tahitian which had been done by Misi Papu (Charles Barff) and published in Huahine (Tahiti) in 1834. This book helped to make a reliable translation of the Bible into Samoan.57

Pratt, the leader of the translation project, was accompanied by other missionaries. Mosese Ma’ilo has a list of all the missionary translators who contributed to the Samoan Bible, both the Old Testament and New Testament, and the places where the translation took place. Ma’ilo states,


54 Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1899, 1, 385; Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 74.
56 Ibid., 388; Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 73.
57 Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 74.

To know the translator of each book of the Bible is important in this research, as it highlights each translator’s influence as well as his knowledge of the Bible’s original languages and his understanding of Samoan. This may help to identify misinterpretation and mistranslation issues in regards of the translator’s experience as well as his influence in other context, e.g. George Pratt’s forty-one years’ experience of the Samoan language, plus his expertise in Hebrew and Greek. These missionaries are called Misionare o le Tusi Pa’ia, (‘Missionaries of the Bible’). The Samoan men who helped the missionaries with the translation were Malietoa Talavou of Sapapali’i, Euta Petaia, Leota Penitala of Matautu and Malai’ tai Leuatea from Lefagoali’i. The missionaries thought at first that relying on these four men would be enough, but later on they realised that they needed more. So, they added Va’aelu’a from Lalomalava, Tua’ina and Tua’ina Pili.
Maiava from Sato’alepai and So’oalo from Samauga.61 These people worked not less than eight hours each day for about nineteen years.62 They admitted that it was not an easy or short task. ‘Oka Fau’olo suggests that because of the people’s response, the Samoan language they used to make the translation was likely to become the official language for many generations to come.63

The translation of the New Testament was completed in 1845, ready to be checked before they sent it to London to be published. By 1846, they had carefully double-checked everything, and then sent it to be published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in London.64 In 1850 the New Testament was finally published. In 1855, the Old Testament was completed, and this also went through the same process to be double-checked, and then sent to London in 1859.65 It arrived back in 1860 to sell to the Samoan people.66 The final review was done by Misi Parate [Pratt], Misi Tana [Turner], Misi Nisapeti [Nisbet], Misi Mare [Murray], Misi Uitime [Whitmee] at Avoa Savai’i under the Talie Tree.67

These pioneers of Bible translations were not all Pacific natives. However, the collaboration of Europeans, Tahitians and Samoans made the Bible translation generally successful, and it was finally published and sold to the natives. Almost everything was a new adventure to the Europeans and to some extent to the Tahitians. They needed to familiarise themselves with foreign cultures and traditions as well as languages.68

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. The missionary translation language was “treated as the standard source of the Samoan written and oral language.” See Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 146.
64 Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 75.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 40.
mission would have been impossible without the collaborating support of the Pacific Island natives, both Tahitian and Samoan.

2.1.3. The Samoan Natives

At the time when the missionaries entered the Pacific, everything was a new adventure. The Pacific natives felt the same about the missionaries. When the Samoans first saw a white man, they said that the sky has burst and these white men are from the sky. So, they started calling them pa-lagi or papa-lagi, which means that they are from the sky because they are fully white. Even their messages were from the sky.69

In fact, Samoans were aware that people were coming, and they waited for this to happen. They predicted that someone would come from the sky to be the head of Malietoa’s kingdom. When this happened, it would fulfil Nafanua’s prophecy.70 Nafanua’s prophecy was also mentioned by James Edward Newell, an apprentice LMS missionary who served in Savai’i since 1880.71 His speech delivered to a Protestant audience in Germany in 1902 is quoted by John Garrett: “A widely believed tradition said the arrival of Williams in Samoa had been foretold by a woman prophet named Nafanua.”72 The prophecy by the Samoan female prophet had finally arrived and was fulfilled. Ma’ilo says, “[The] translating [of] the biblical ‘heaven’ into lagi, the malo o le lagi (kingdom of heaven) is semantically close to the wording of a traditional prophecy made by the Samoan prophetess Nafanua.”73

69 Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 17.
70 Ibid.
72 Ibid. See also in Garrett 213 for Newell’s speech made in Germany. Newell’s note on visit to Berlin, 20 March 3 April 1902.
73 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 200.
Ma’ilo refers to Malama Meleisea’s suggestion on Nafanua’s prophecy. He states, “She [Nafanua] had predicted to another Malietoa title holder a few decades before the arrival of the LMS missionaries to ‘tali i lagi se ao o lou malo,’ literally, ‘anticipate a ao (head) of your malo [kingdom] from the heavens.’”74 Samoa was therefore not really surprised when the missionaries arrived. They were expecting something like this to happen; it was just a matter of time. As a result, the Samoans welcomed the missionaries and accepted the Gospel straightaway.

Williams brought with him from Tongatapu in July 1830 one of the high chiefs of Sapapali’i named Faueā, with his wife,75 and he was an advantage and a light for the mission in Samoa. Ellis states,

They [William and his missions] found a chief of rank from the Samoa[s], who being anxious to return to his native country, very gladly accompanied them, affording them much useful information during the passage, and using all his influence with his countrymen to further their objects.76

On 24 August 1830, they arrived in Sapapali’i, Faueā’s village, which was also the village of Malietoa, the king of Samoa.77 Everything worked out well, as the missionaries had been hoping. When the ship arrived, the Samoans honoured Faueā, as was usual for their chiefs.78 The Samoans saluted in a traditional royal way when greeting each other. The “Chief rank touched noses with him,”79 a respectful greeting and expression of loyalty among Samoans. This is called sogi which means, ‘to rub

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74 Meleisea and Meleisea, Lagaga, 57; Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 200.
75 Ellis, The History of London Missionary Society 1, 298. ‘The high chief of Sapapali’i name Faueā, see, Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 4, 278. See also Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 18; Meleisea and Meleisea, Lagaga, 58.
76 Ellis, The History of London Missionary Society 1, 297. See also, Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 278-79.
77 Fau’olo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 18.
78 Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 68.
79 Ibid.
noses’ and ‘to salute’ in a Samoan traditional way. Fauʻolo mentions that no harm or rejection was given to the missionaries, but the Samoans made them welcome and allowed them to live peacefully. According to Ellis, the Samoan natives carried the missionaries on their shoulders to the shore when they arrived. He says, “[The Samoan natives] lifted [the missionaries] on their shoulders, not sitting up right, but lying horizontally, and bore them joyously, though not very gently, amidst music, dancing, and singing to the presence of the king and chiefs who were assembled to receive them.” This happened on the day after the native teachers who had accompanied the missionaries were sent first to the shore, as well as Faueā’s speech to his own Samoan people, convincing them and encouraging them that civilization would be a great advantage for them. Consequently, the word of God and Christianity has brought new light to Pacific countries including Samoa.

2.2. Samoan Translation

2.2.1. The Bible translated in Samoan

In the five years since John Williams arrived at Sapapali’i, the translation of the Bible into Samoan had been started in 1835 by George Platt and Samuel Wilson. Platt often

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80 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 267. This is a Samoan traditional way to greet and to welcome people, especially to the high chiefs. Samoans are still practicing the sogi to welcome people, but not the way they used to rub noses like in the Maori culture, called hongi. The sogi is now only applied to kiss someone on the face or the cheek” to greet and to welcome in the Samoan culture. Milner called it a ‘Polynesian method of kissing.’ See Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 213.

81 Fauʻolo, O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i, 16.

82 Ellis, The History of London Missionary Society 1, 299.

83 Ibid., 298.

84 Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 68. See also Ellis, The History of London Missionary Society 1, 298.

85 Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 68.

went back to Borabora where his wife resided during his time in Samoa. By 1836, the translation of the gospel of Matthew was completed. Samuel Wilson was the son of the Rev. Charles Wilson of Tahiti. George Platt had been the first missionary to work on the Samoan translation; later George Pratt with his linguistic talent took over the translation task. It is important to distinguish between these two men, because their names are so similar.

However, this thesis focuses on the book of Jeremiah, and also it is important who translated it and to clarify the circumstances under which the Old Testament was translated. According to Mosese Ma’ilo, “the minutes of the Committee meeting at Fasito’otai recorded that Slatyer translated Jeremiah.” Unfortunately, Slatyer did not stay longer for the revision of the book of Jeremiah. He left the mission due to his wife’s sickness; “[her] health had broken down in April 1842.” According to Buzacott (1842), cited by Crocombe, she suffered from “mania disease.” Crocombe states, “In the morning the drum beat for worship and all the people went to church [Leone, Tutuila]. Mr. Slatyer spoke first, giving his farewell address to the church members because he was leaving for the white man’s land. It was because of the serious illness of his wife.”

Thereafter, the book of Jeremiah was revised by Thomas Powell and then later revised by W. Harbutt. Pratt, who specialised in Hebrew and Greek, was also involved.

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89 Ma’ilo, *Bible-ing My Samoan*, 23. “The minutes of the Committee meeting at Fasito’otai recorded that Slatyer translated Jeremiah, SDC Meeting, Minutes, Fasito’otai, 31 August 1841, SSO.” Ma’ilo also commented that this was “mentioned in a letter by W. Harbutt, Letter to Directors, 26 Feb 1849, SSL.”
91 Ibid., 17-18.
92 Ibid., 17.
93 Ma’ilo, *Bible-ing My Samoan*, 22.
with final revision of the whole Samoan Bible with the help of eight others including “H. Nisbet, A. W. Murray and George Turner.”94 It was a cooperative venture,95 though Pratt was praised by his colleagues for his special linguistic gifts, especially after his forty-one years’ experience. By then he spoke the Samoan language like a native, which would have been an advantage for the translation of the Bible. Mr. S. J. Whitmee, cited by Lovett, states:

Mr. Pratt was a specialist. He was a born linguist, and he faithfully used and cultivated his special talent in the service of Christ. To him, more than to any other person, although several rendered efficient aid, the excellence of the Samoan version of the Scriptures is due. I think I may say he did more than all the rest put together. The translation, and then the revision of the Samoan Bible, was the great work of his life.96

Pratt became an expert. His Hebrew and Greek plus his Samoan fluency made him an important figure.

However, in spite of Pratt’s and other missionaries’ expertise, I argue that the influence of other Pacific Island languages and perspectives affected the Samoan translation. Murray mentions the availability of other Pacific language Bibles, such as Tahitian, Hawaiian and Rarotongan97 during their translations. Similarly, Ma’ilo claims that native teachers’ Bibles in their own tongues were helpful,98 and of course the knowledge they had of the Samoan language when they first arrived was limited. Undoubtedly some Bible versions were useful in terms of resources. Nevertheless, I will argue they initially created more confusion99 because of similar Pacific words in

94 Ibid., 23.
97 Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 43.
98 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 74.
99 For ‘confusions’ in Bible translation, see Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 260-265.
different contexts, e.g., the Pacific word *fanau*. This word is currently treated as an informal word in Samoan, and I will discuss in detail later.

Wilson and Platt started the translation project in Samoa imperfectly. A.W. Murray (one of the missionary translators) states,

Down to the time of our arrival the mission was considered an outstation of the Tahitian mission; and when we arrived we found the Rev. George Platt from Raiatea, and Mr. Samuel Wilson, son of the Rev. Charles Wilson of Tahiti, who had been sent to assist the teachers and superintend the mission till we might arrive. They had been about eighteen months on the group, so they had gained a considerable acquaintance with the language, which is closely allied to the Tahitian, and had done not a little to prepare the way for us.\(^{100}\)

Wilson therefore was neither Samoan nor a missionary, but he was an assistant who accompanied the missionaries.\(^{101}\) Ma’ilo mentions that Wilson initially served in Tahiti for one year.\(^{102}\) According to Murray, Samuel Wilson was just an assistant, the son of a missionary, Charles Wilson. Ma’ilo’s comment on his one year’s experience suggests that the Samoan Bible was first translated by someone who was neither a first language speaker of Samoan nor a missionary who was familiar enough with the Bible. One year in Tahiti is certainly insufficient to carry out such a complicated task, and also with just one year to learn the Samoan language. Consequently, the translation of the gospel of Matthew into Samoan by Samuel Wilson was imperfect.\(^{103}\) This was later revised by William Day.\(^{104}\)

The Tahitian teachers who helped and contributed to the Bible translation were familiar with similarities between Polynesian languages. “The missionary John

\(^{100}\) Murray, *The Bible in the Pacific*, 40.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.

\(^{102}\) Ma’ilo, *Bible-Ing My Samoan*, 20.

\(^{103}\) Murray, *The Bible in the Pacific*, 40.

\(^{104}\) Ma’ilo, *Bible-Ing My Samoan*, 21.
Williams called them pioneers.”¹⁰⁵ The native teachers’ contribution played a significant role in the ministry as well as in the Bible translation, and their own native languages became reliable sources for the missionaries. Ma’ilo states, “The mission strategy of sending the native teachers could not possibly succeed without the employment of the native teachers’ own Bibles in their own tongue.”¹⁰⁶ Praise and creditability was given to the missionaries’ expertise, but the native teachers’ contributions were less often mentioned.

The Samoan mission was a direct offshoot of the Tahitian,¹⁰⁷ and the similarity to Tahitian was an advantage, giving Wilson the confidence to begin the Bible translation. It was at this time that some cognate words from other Polynesian languages were introduced into the Samoan language, an assumption based on Murray’s mention of their translation resources. He states,

The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and our South Sea versions which had preceded our own—the Hawaiian, the Tahitian, the Rarotongan, and the Tongan—always were on our table. Boothroyd’s English version also, and of course the authorised version, and English commentaries, were all laid under contribution. Rosenmuller’s commentaries on the Old Testament were of great use, as were also those of Dr. Henderson on the prophetic books.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the commentaries, the Pacific Island Bibles mentioned here contributed to the Samoan Bible.¹⁰⁹ The similarities between the Pacific languages could be helpful, but they could also be harmful in terms of misinterpretation. I believe some adopted words were used when the translators could not find alternative words. Polynesian words are similar in some cases but that does not

¹⁰⁶ Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 28.
¹⁰⁷ Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 39.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 43-44. See also, Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 86.
¹⁰⁹ Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 74. Pacific Island Bibles, the Authorised English Version and other sources were used for the Samoan Bible translation.
necessarily mean they are the same in meaning. Wilson’s one year to learn Samoan was inadequate, and rushing the process shows their eagerness to pursue the translation purpose of the mission. With the European and Tahitian missionaries’ limited knowledge of the Samoan language, they relied on the help of Samoan natives, who were also limited due to the fact that they spoke neither English nor Tahitian.

2.2.2. The Gap between the Pioneers and the Samoan natives

The Bible in Samoa shows a vast gap in translation and interpretation. This gap still exists, simply because Samoans are still using the same Bible translation. The longer we use the same translation, the longer we (Samoans) carry these issues forward to generations to come. This translation problem was unavoidable, simply because the objective of the mission was to translate the Bible and to publish as much as possible to fulfil their mission.\(^{110}\) There may have been a different motive: for example, it was good for accumulating sales profit but not for the quality of the translations. Murray mentions, “Settling among a people of whose language we knew nothing, it was an immense advantage to have a gospel in print a few months after our arrival.”\(^{111}\)

These language barriers would have made it difficult for the natives to express their ideas from their own context, as well as for the European missionaries to fully understand the natives. John Garrett states, “[The London Missionary Society] in Samoa was led by Britishers. Most of them were Congregationalists, informally aligned in Britain with the Liberal Party.”\(^{112}\) Thus, their thoughts, influences, their English language, traditions, and as well as their interpretations were all influenced by English

\(^{110}\) Murray, *The Bible in the Pacific*, 40.
\(^{111}\) Ibid.
\(^{112}\) John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, 188.
perspectives. This was completely different to what the Samoan context was. Moreover, the barrier was not a physical island boundary, but the Samoan cultural and language barrier. It was vital for both the missionaries and the natives to understand each other in order to thrive in this mission.

Consequently, those translating the Bible worked reciprocally for both the missionaries and the Samoan people in terms of communication, in spite of the gap of understanding caused by the language barrier. Hence, this language gap has created issues of interpretation for modern Samoan readers, due to the complexity of words and their proverbial and metaphorical senses. Examples will be discussed with translation issues later in this chapter. They also appear in the table of translation issues in the Appendix.

The Samoan language has two different kinds of language. One pronounces the ‘k.’ Samoans called this gagana tautala, ‘orator’s language’ or everyday language. Sometimes Samoans called it tautala leaga (‘informal speaking’). The other language is the one with a ‘t.’ That is the language that the missionaries introduced to the Samoans; it is influenced by Tahitian, because in Tahiti they use a ‘t,’ e.g. tatou (‘us’), latou (‘you’), tama (‘boy’), tamaiti (‘kids’).113 In the Samoan oratory language, these words are, kakou, lakou, kama, kamaiki. The ‘t’ is used as a substitute for the ‘k’ in Samoan.114

Samoans generally understand that the missionary translators avoided the use of the ‘k’ in our alphabet, although the ‘k’ only existed in oral Samoan. However, they struggled to translate other words with our limited alphabet that they initially invented, e.g. A-V. They later added H, K, R to the alphabet, so they could transliterate words, e.g. Hilikia (‘Hilkiah’), Hanania (‘Hananiah’), Jeremia (‘Jeremiah’), Kemaria

113 Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 268-69.
114 Ibid., 270.
(‘Gemariah’). Simply they had the power to do what suited their translation best. Ma’ilo called this transition from the oral Samoan to the written Samoan language the manipulation of the language politically.\textsuperscript{115} For the missionaries, it was all about following the Tahitian language in order to simplify their translation, which has made for confusion and is complicated to understand. Samoans to this day are sometimes confused between the two kinds of language, the formal one with the ‘t’ and the informal one with a ‘k,’ because the missionaries preferred the one with the ‘t.’ In fact, we should identify the one with the ‘k’ as the real Samoan language. The \textit{tulafale} (‘orator[s]’) and the chiefs recommend using the ‘k’ one as original in their speeches, which shows its true tradition and significance in Samoan culture. Consequently, there is a gap from our original language of the words and terms that are not included in the written language, and we modern Samoans struggle to find evidence of our original language because of the lack of written sources. For example, there are words that cannot be found in Pratt’s and Milner’s dictionaries, like \textit{aki male lau mu le foaga} which means ‘banishment.’ Obviously, the \textit{tulafale} language has its own richness and profound implications which are lost in this gap.

\textbf{2.2.3. The Samoan prototypes have drifted away in Translation}

The Samoan language is proverbial and metaphorical. Proverbs and metaphors are the reflections of everyday living, for instance the natural environment. Themes and practical illustrations are found by Samoans observing their surroundings, e.g. animals, birds, fishing and hunting experiences. The language is just as complex as English and is not easy to interpret unless the Samoan context is fully understood. In fact, most of the words come from ancient legends and initially were created from Samoan life

\textsuperscript{115} Ma’ilo, \textit{Bible-Ing My Samoan}, 176-77.
experiences. The environment, land and sea, makes it unique in its form, and it often uses the passive voice. Doing so brings a respectful sense which matches the dignity of its culture. This passive implication is commonly known in Samoa as *gagana fa’aloalo*, (‘formal and respectful language’). This conveys good manners and respect.

The gap between the Bible’s original languages and the Samoan language has generated some confusion in the translation. There are words that have been either mistranslated or transliterated. The idea of transliterating may fit when moving from Hebrew to English; it is sounded as it is spelt. However, transferring the sounds of Hebrew into what a Samoan would use is confusing, and it is necessary to adjust for Samoan conventions like lack of consonant clusters. The Samoan language does not use the letters b, c, d, h, q, w, x, y, z, as the alphabet is different.

It is possible also to translate word by word. However, in Samoan, this is difficult due to the complexity of certain words which can have a meaning and also its opposite. There are words that are almost impossible to translate unless the translator understands the Samoan context. For example, there is a saying *ua tini paō le uto*, which literally means “the sound of a floater has arrived.” It means in Samoan that the time has finally arrived for a special event or occasion, but has nothing to do with the sound of the floater. This saying is a metaphor, which speaks about a legendary Samoan fishing event *faiva i Tapalega*. The saying gives a metaphorical sense of fulfilment or success. A word by word translation could mislead a reader unless the Samoan context is well understood.

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116 Fau’olo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavae’i*, 16. Fau’olo used this Samoan saying with reference to the arrival of the Savali o le Filemu, and that was also the arrival of the LMS church in Samoa by John Williams in 1830.
2.3. Translation Issues

2.3.1. Transliterated words

Of the transliterated words in Jeremiah 29:1-14, only the words *perofeta* (‘prophet’) and *eunuka* (‘eunuch’)\(^\text{117}\) are common nouns, and equivalents for these do not exist in Samoan. The rest are proper names. Transliteration is clearly the only possibility of names of people or places, and in those cases English translations do the same. The word סָרִיס is used in Jeremiah 29:2a to mean a court official. It has been transliterated from the Greek word εὐνοῦχος to *eunuka*, which has no meaning in the Samoan language. Presumably it was used to avoid a Samoan word like *fo* or *fofō* which means ‘to castrate an animal.’\(^\text{118}\) Transliteration may have been chosen by the early translators because a castrated man does not occur in Samoan culture, though it is done to animals such as pigs, horses and dogs. Pratt deliberately avoided the use of the word *fo*, *fofō* or *launiu*, in this similar sense, which Milner used to define the word ‘castrate,’ referring to this practice in animals.\(^\text{119}\) The word *fo* or *fofō* cannot be found in Pratt’s English–Samoan dictionary. However, under the word ‘castrate’ he gave meaning to the word *fa’alave*\(^\text{120}\) which is a short form of the word *fa’alavelave*, which means, ‘a hindrance.’\(^\text{121}\) Milner uses the other definition of the word *fo* or *fofō*, not for the word ‘hindrance,’ as Pratt has, but for ‘a solution’ for *fa’alavelave* (‘hindrance’). In addition, Pratt has another definition: *fa’alave* meaning 4, for castrate is ‘euphem.’\(^\text{122}\) The point here is that the translators deliberately avoided using words that referred to sex because

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\(^{117}\) English has borrowed both words from Greek.


\(^{119}\) Ibid.


\(^{121}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
it relates to some practice that maybe was evil and against the Christian mission. This is in contrast with the ancient Samoan belief that, as Tamasese argues, “sex was considered sacred.”

The majority of Samoan readers would not understand what eunuka really means. The Hebrew word סָרִיס means ‘castrated male’, or ‘high official.’ It is used in Gen. 37:36 for an official of Pharaoh. The general Samoan understanding of eunuka is that it refers to someone who is holy, loyal and who lives in the king’s palace. The word is mentioned during sermons or Bible reading and is understood to mean officials, which leads the people to a different meaning from what is intended by the Hebrew. In fact, the meaning ‘castrated man,’ as in 2 Kings 20:18, is neither taught in Samoan Bible Schools nor discussed by preachers in their sermons. The preachers only mention it as a transliterated word eunuka. Possibly the preachers themselves are also uncertain about this meaning of the word. As mentioned earlier, Ma’ilo discusses a similar issue of the deliberate avoidance of the Samoan word tefe or tefega which defines the word ‘circumcision,’ rather using the word peritome which transliterates the Greek word περιτομή. The word tefe or tefega is commonly known in Samoan as a swear word. Perhaps that was the reason why it was avoided in the Bible translation.

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123 For sex and evil, cf. the common missionary belief that the natives’ nakedness was evil and uncivilised. Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832*, 247-48. For this particular issue, ‘sex is sinful’ from missionaries’ perspective, see Pamela Stephenson Connolly, “Whispers, Vanities, Convert and Overt Fury...” in *Whispers and Vanities*, 209-10.


127 The common Samoan meaning of the word eunuka comes from the Samoan understanding of court officials. The word ‘court’ and ‘officials’ are relatively important people who carry out duties in connection with the monarch. However, this is not what the Hebrew word סָרִיס refers to.

128 Ma’ilo, 45.
Moreover, the transliteration seems not the only problem in Samoan translation. The missionary translators appear to believe that nakedness and sex are evil and uncivilised, belonging only to pagan worshippers and savages. This missionary view contrasts with the pre-Christian Samoan understanding of sex.\(^{129}\) Hence, mention of ‘castrated men’ in the Bible would be undesirable for the translators, so they resorted to transliteration – from Greek. But, as a consequence, modern Samoan readers are left with a misunderstanding about what the word means.\(^{130}\) Native customs that involved these terms were used by the missionaries to distinguish Pacific Islanders from white Christian people.

### 2.3.2. Word by word translation

Looking at Jeremiah 29:1, it appears that the translators tried several different methods of translation. They checked every single word in order to translate each word with its nuances, and Murray states that “[each verse] was considered clause by clause and word by word.”\(^{131}\) However, such a method can create great difficulties, because language is impossible to translate word by word. In order to get good sense in Samoan, a sentence must be translated as a whole into the most appropriate meaning. If it is done word by word, the translation could mean something else. The danger of word by word translations are further discussed below.

NRSV: 6a. Take wives and have sons and daughters;

Samoan Bible: 6a. *ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia fananau ai atalii ma afafine ia te outou;*


\(^{130}\) For more examples of the Samoan mistranslations in Jer. 29:11, refer to my discussion of these issues in the Appendix.

\(^{131}\) Murray, *The Bible in the Pacific*, 44.
In verse 6a.1, I have highlighted the three prepositions *ia* which have significance and which contribute to the meaning of the sentence.

*ina fai avā* (1) ‘*ia*’ *outou*, *ma* (2) ‘*ia*’ ‘*fananau*’ *ai atali*i *ma afafine* (3)*ia*’ *te outou*;

**Example:** (1) *ia*

The first *ia* in (1) is “subjunctive particle. The first *ia* signifies the action, process or state denoted by the verbal phrase is requested or required.”\(^{132}\) This indicates that the action requires to be done instantly and immediately. *Ina fai avā* ‘*ia*’ *outou* means ‘take wives now or straightaway.’

**Example:** (2) *ia*

The second *ia* is a modal ‘may’ which precedes the verb.\(^{133}\) This is in contrast with what Milner defines, so that the *ia* can also mean ‘let’ as in the jussive. It is a “pre-basic particle with optative function.” It also indicates a command,\(^{134}\) i.e. imperative, which is shown in *ia fananau ai atali*i *ma afafine*. This fits well with the first word of this verse in Hebrew, which is יָקָח qal imperative, masculine plural of the verb יָקָח ‘to take.’ Churchward suggests that the *ia* in Samoan grammar is usually connected with the preceding verb. Hence, Milner believes, this *ia* is a pre-basic particle with an optative function that has the same significance in terms of allowing the action to happen: *ia fananau* (‘to have sons and daughters’). Thus, Milner and Churchward agree on the use of *ia* which is just how Samoans use it today.

**Example:** (3) *ia*

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\(^{134}\) Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 81.
The third *ia* is the preposition ‘from’ or ‘by’ as in *ia te outou*, simply meaning ‘to have sons and daughters from/by you.’ Here, *ia* is a particle before a pronoun.\(^\text{135}\) It can also be an absolutive preposition\(^\text{136}\) in a passive sentence. This also in the third *ia* is a locative directional.\(^\text{137}\)

Here is a literal translation of verse 6 in Samoan:

(1) *ina fai avā ia outou*. Marry your sons and daughters and (2) *ia fananau mai ai atali ’i ma afafine*, have sons and daughters (3) *ia te outou*, from you.

Clearly such behaviour is not acceptable in either Hebrew or Samoan culture and is really against the teaching of the Gospel. The three *ias* cause possible misinterpretations. Modern readers can see that there is an issue here, but they overlook it because of their respect for the Bible. They become tolerant victims of the translators’ mistakes.

I suggest what would be a more sensible translation when interpreted from a Samoan perspective:

*ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia suli mai ai ni o outou atali ’i ma ni o outou afafine; ia fai avā foi outou atali ’i ma fai ni to ’alua o outou afafine, ina ia maua ai ni o latou suli; ia fā’ato ’ateleina ai outou i lea mea, ae ’aua le fā’ato ’aitititia.*

By avoiding a word by word method, this suggestion is explicit and more specific in meaning. The word *suli* highlights the sentence’s respectful and formal tone. This suggestion has specifically identified what is required, *ina fai avā ia outou*, (‘have wives’) *ma ia suli mai ai ni o outou atali ’i ma ni o outou afafine*, ‘so you may bear sons and daughters,’ *ia fai avā foi outou atali ’i ma fai ni to ’alua o outou afafine*, ‘also give your sons and daughters in marriage,’ *ina ia maua ai ni o latou suli*, ‘so they may also

\(^\text{135}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{137}\) Ibid., 592.
bear children,’ *ia fa’atoateleina ai outou i lea mea,* ‘multiply,’ *ae aua le fa’atoaititia* ‘and do not decrease.’

This translation suggestion has avoided the use of the third *ia* as discussed above (*ia te outou*), which changed the meaning of the sentence when translating the *qal* imperative into Samoan. My new suggestion for translation does not allow any interpretation that may mislead or be misinterpreted in the Samoan context. A back translation of my translation suggestion is “take wives, so that they may bear you sons and daughters; also give your sons and daughters in marriage so that they may bear children; multiply, and do not decrease.”

These issues were not intended by the missionaries to be offensive. However, Samoan readers have tolerated these misinterpretations for a very long time. Respect for their Christian beliefs allows them to accept what it says in the Bible, as the words are regarded the true Holy Word of God.

2.3.3. Adoption of other Pacific Island Words in Translation

The missionaries’ plan was to Christianise pagan worshipers and uncivilized savage Samoans. Perhaps they wished to avoid any word that resonated with native spiritual beliefs, so for God (YHWH) they used *Ieova* rather than *Tagaloa*, the pre-Christian Samoan God. Rev. William Wyatt Gill, one of the Pacific missionary writers, comments: “As in all other Pacific and New Guinea versions, the sacred name ‘Jehovah’ is transliterated, never translated, thus adding immeasurably to the force of the contrast between the ever-living God and the objects worshipped by the heathen.”

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Therefore, “[t]he translation decision, Ieova — a transliterated form of the English Jehovah—in the Samoan Bible was based on a certain intention.”\textsuperscript{139}

Tahitian words are used in the Samoan Bible translation that are cognate with Samoan because of their similarities in Pacific languages, e.g. (T) Vahine (S) fafine (‘woman’), (T) tane (S) tane (‘male’), (T) tamahine (S) afafine (‘daughter’), (T) Tamaroa\textsuperscript{140} (S) tamaloa (‘married man’).\textsuperscript{141} Samoan words from adopted root words are used also, such as nofo-tane (‘married woman’), fai-avā (‘married man’). These words are not considered in Samoan as formal words, but they are in the Samoan Bible. The words tane, afafine and fai-avā are in Jeremiah 29:6 in the Samoan Bible translation. Some of these words, when applied in the Samoan context, are offensive to some people, i.e. nofo-tane, fai-ava and tamaloa. They are unacceptable in the way some people interpret them, for these words or titles are usually given in a sense to denigrate someone. Lou mea [g]ofo-ka[g]e, lou mea fai-avā, lou [k]amaloa can be translated as, “you are woman thing, you are man thing, you are man.” In the Samoan context, when these words or titles are applied for addressing people, the recipient of these titles would assume that there is a political sense along with them, apart from their literal sense. Here we (Samoan Bible readers) seem to overlook the danger that is presented by the language of the Bible. When we go to church, we hear these terms and accept them because they come from the Bible, so that we become silent and tolerant readers. However, when we get out of church and hear the same words, we find them offensive because of their negative implications. Some of these terms are not used,\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{139} Ma’ilo, \textit{Bible-Ing My Samoan}, 192.

\textsuperscript{140} John Davies, \textit{A Tahitian and English Dictionary} (Papeete, Tahiti: Editions Haere Po no Tahiti, 1851; reprint, 1991), 80, 246-47, 308.

\textsuperscript{141} Pratt, \textit{A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary}, 143, 47, 232, 300. See also, Ma’ilo, \textit{Bible-Ing My Samoan}, 204-07. For more examples on similar issue discussed, refer to Ma’ilo’s discussion of the political influences on the Samoan from the missionary translators, using some of these Samoan words mentioned here.
neither in our everyday language nor on formal occasions. This is unlike what Fau’olo suggests that the missionary translation of the Bible should be the official Samoan language.\textsuperscript{142}

The missionary translators assumed the similarity in meanings without considering the consequence of different contextual implications. Nevertheless, in most cases the influence on the missionaries by other Pacific languages, such as Tahitian, seemed helpful but it still created issues of mistranslation. Ma’ilo adds,

\begin{quote}
The intention [of the translators] was to sustain the religious credibility and cultural authority of the Bible in its new context. Such ideological motives are related to the colonial discourse based on the Bible’s status as an authoritative eternal and original text. Native Bibles were therefore treated as translations, as copies of source texts. Foreign languages and cultural values were in total control of translation decisions and marginal references to make sure that the Bible is read and interpreted according to their original meanings.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

The word for ‘man/father’ in Tahitian is \textit{metua tane},\textsuperscript{144} but in the Samoan Bible the word \textit{tane} is used in reference to ‘male/husband,’\textsuperscript{145} but arguably, the word \textit{tane} has become a Samoan word from Tahitian. It is only used when someone speaks about himself or informally e.g, \textit{o le kage [tane] a lo’u afafine}, which can be translated as ‘he is my daughter’s husband.’ In Samoan, this word is not formal as words should be in the Bible. It is preferable not to give respect or formal address to yourself but to another. The word \textit{tane} usually applies when a lady marries and then lives with her husband’s family, when she will be called in her husband’s family \textit{nofo-tane} meaning ‘to be

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\textsuperscript{142} Fau’olo, \textit{O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i}, 75. There are other Samoan Bible Versions – new editions of the Samoan Bible, however this version is preferable for the purpose of this research because it is still currently popular with Samoan Bible readers.
\textsuperscript{143} Ma’ilo, \textit{Bible-Ing My Samoan}, 230.
\textsuperscript{144} Moyle, \textit{The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832}, 274-76.
\end{flushright}
married. The word *nofo-tane*, literally is derived from the meaning of these two words, *nofo* (‘live or dwell’), and *tane* (‘male or husband’).

The impression can be offensive because the common Samoan understanding of this word *nofo-tane* conveys the political notion of *pologa* (‘slave[ry]’). Oppression in some cases, if not all, is sarcastic in the Samoan culture, especially when the woman leaves her own family to be with her husband’s family. The political implication of this move reflects an unwelcome interpretation that the woman is serving her husband’s family as a *pologa* (‘slave’). In fact, Samoans insist that there are no *pologa* in Samoa; we have a culture where everyone is a king in his/her own family. The question of whether or not this is true is outside the scope of this thesis.

*Nofo-tane*, therefore, is a disrespectful title. Sometimes it is heard and interpreted as an insult to a married woman. It is the ultimate example of a loan word from Tahiti. Alternatively, the missionary translator could have used the word *ali’i* (‘husband’), which is more appropriate in the Samoan context. *Ali’i* also applies when addressing a woman in reference to her husband, e.g. *na lua o mai ma lou ali’i*, which means, ‘did you come with your husband?’ This word is more appropriate because it encapsulates the respectful and relational elements of the Samoan culture, rather than the offensive, political and sarcastic elements caused by adopting words from other Pacific Islands.

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148 This word *nofo-tane* is also used sometimes to insult a married lady, by saying, *Lou mea [gofo kage]* referring to a woman (‘*nofo-tane*’). For this word *nofo-tane*, see als, Ma’ilo, *Bible-Ing My Samoan*, 258.
2.3.4. Words pluralised

It seems to me that Pratt was influenced by Tahitian in his translations, even in his English-Samoan dictionary. With some words, we as Samoans feel obliged to agree out of respect, though we know they are incorrect. The verb *a‘auina* has the root ‘*au*, meaning ‘to send.’ ‘*Au* can be either singular or plural; both have the same spelling. However, Pratt has used *a‘au* to pluralize ‘*au* in his English-Samoan dictionary, but *a‘auina* appears in Jeremiah 29:3, 9 with reference to those whom Zedekiah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar. The translator has pluralised the word in the Tahitian style, and so makes it like another word *a‘au*, which has the entirely different meaning of ‘to swim.’

Another example is the word *fanau*, which has been pluralised to *fananau* in Jeremiah 29:6, where the word *fanau* has been used in the Samoan and Tahitian Bibles to translate ‘child-descendant.’ The word *fānau* in Tahitian means ‘to give birth to.’ The Tahitian translation of Jeremiah 29:6 says:

\[
E\ rave\ i\ te\ vahine,\ e\ fa‘afānau-tama\ i\ te\ tamarii,\ e\ horoa\ hoi\ i\ te\ Tamaroa,\ e\ te\ tamahine;\ e\ rave\ hoi\ i\ te\ vahine\ na\ ta\ outou\ mau\ tamarii,\ e\ horoa\ hoi\ i\ ta\ outou\ mau\ tamahine\ na\ te\ tane,\ ia\ fānau\ mai\ ati\ hoi\ ta\ ratou\ i\ te\ tamaroa\ e\ te\ tamahine;\ e\ ia\ rahi\ hoi\ outou\ i\ reitra,\ e\ etaha\ ia\ iti.
\]

The Tahitian word *fa‘afānau-tama* comes from the word *fa‘afānau*, i.e. the *fa‘a* with the verb *fanau*, which means, ‘to give birth to a child.’ Here we can see that the word *fanau* has been used in the Tahitian translation in this particular verse of Jeremiah as well as in the Samoan translation. Hence the word *fa‘afānau-tama* is used in verse 6a, in

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150 A macron over the first a is used in Tahitian but not in Samoan.


152 Ibid., 621.

a sense to give birth to a son. It also literally means in Tahitian ‘to support a woman in labour/to perform the duties of a midwife,’ which is equivalent to the Samoan word *fa'atosaga.* The point is that the word *fanau* has been transferred from the Tahitian context into a different Samoan context. The word *fanau* is used in Samoan for both human and animals in a same sense. The Tahitian word *fa'afānau-tama* does mean something similar in Samoan, to give birth and to practise a midwife’s duties. Since the Samoan understanding of *fanau* relates to all creatures including human, there is danger of misinterpretation. This particular word can also be interpreted as breeding babies or being the cause of giving birth, which I argue is not what Jeremiah has urged the exiles to do. He did not want them to breed like animals.

We know that the missionaries understood the use of the prefix *fa’a* as a causative like the Hebrew *hiphil.* They noted:

Most Tahitian verbs have a causative active and a causative passive form, resembling the Hebrew conjugation termed Hiphil, and its passive Huphal. All the regular active verbs may therefore be conjugated four different ways, as, for example; ‘ite’, to know; ‘faaite’, to cause knowledge, or make known; ‘ite hia’, known; ‘faaite hia’, to cause to be known. The causative form of the verb is denoted by prefixing ‘faa, haa’, or ‘ta’, to the verb; the passive by adding the ‘hia’, or in some instance the ‘a’; the causative passive by prefixing ‘faa’, ‘haa’, or ‘ta’, and affixing the ‘hia’; as ‘faa ora hia’, ‘faa amu hia’, ‘haa mau hia’.

However, in this case, possibly the use of the prefix *fa’a* in the Samoan translation in this verse for the word *fanau* was purposely avoided, because the Hebrew says “have sons and daughters.” If they had added *fa’a* to the word *fanau,* then the reference would

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154 Ibid., 64.
156 Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832,* 271-72.
have been to the work of a midwife and also may apply not only to humans but also to animals. In order to avoid this, I presume that they chose to pluralise the verb, from \textit{fanau} to \textit{fananau}, perhaps to clarify that the object (‘sons and daughters’) is plural. Adopting Tahitian terms for the Samoan translation was confused and confusing.

I am still pursuing here the danger of pluralising a word without fully understanding the target language. The word \textit{fanau} has been changed to \textit{fananau}, presumably in the Tahitian style, but in Samoan it refers to multiple births, i.e. giving birth several times in a single year. For women, it is a very rare occurrence. \textit{Fananau} is used in the Samoan translation instead of the Samoan word \textit{suli} or \textit{alo} (‘child’),\textsuperscript{158} which means heirs\textsuperscript{159} and refers to ‘children/descendants.’ The word \textit{suli} or \textit{alo} is not only appropriate for the purpose of translation but also distinguishes humans from animals. I argue here that \textit{fanau} is a Tahitian word brought by the missionaries. \textit{Fanau} is neither offensive nor disrespectful, because being either a verb or a noun it is translated similarly in all Polynesian languages as ‘to give birth’ or ‘descendant.’ However, when it comes to the Samoan translation, the word \textit{fanau} is both singular and plural. Making this noun \textit{look} plural—\textit{fanau} to \textit{fananau}—is where the dilemma occurs. The first book of the Bible ever to be translated into Samoan by Wilson and Platt from Tahiti, the gospel of Matthew,\textsuperscript{160} has the same word \textit{fananau}\textsuperscript{161} in a similar sense at 11:11. The Tahitian word has been pluralised to serve the purpose of the Samoan translation.

Thus, there is a great danger in adopting words from other Pacific languages without fully understanding the implications, the context and the consequences. It is the

\textsuperscript{158} Pratt, 71.
\textsuperscript{159} Milner, \textit{Samoan Dictionary}, 219.
\textsuperscript{160} Murray, \textit{The Bible in the Pacific}, 40.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{O Le Tusi Paia, O Le Feagaiga Tuai Ma Le Feagaiga Fou Lea, Ua Faasamoaina}, 912.
same when pluralising words in the way a different language does it. Local differences and contexts often lead to results that were not intended and may even be offensive.

2.3.5. Inconsistency in the Samoan Translation

The influence of the earlier Tahitian translation of the Bible has created grammatical anomalies in the Samoan language. A prime example of this is the use of the macron and apostrophe inconsistently. According to Ulrike Mosel, these were already established in Tahiti before the missionaries attempted to translate the Bible into Samoan, as the LMS recorded in their Tahitian and English dictionary. The missionaries were influenced by a Tahitian practice. In Samoan, without the use of the macrons, words are open to multiple interpretations, which highlights the differences in context. The purpose of the macron is to specify the meaning of the word according to its pronunciation. An example in verse 5; the difference in meanings between the word fāi (with a macron), and fai (without the macron). The word fāi (with a macron) that is used in the Samoan translation does not express the meaning of the Hebrew word בָּתִּים ‘to build or make.’ Fāi means ‘to abuse or to use bad language.’ The word fai (without the macron) in fai fale means ‘build or make houses’ and should have been used to translate the Hebrew word בְּנ֥וּ בָּתִּים. The word fai has a similar meaning to the word fau, i.e. fai fale or fau fale, which means, ‘to build or construct’ houses.

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162 Mosel, Samoan Reference Grammar, 43-44.
163 Ibid., 43.
164 Davies, A Tahitian and English Dictionary, 10.
165 Mosel, Samoan Reference Grammar, 43.
166 The word fai (without the macron) means the same as fau ‘to build or to make.’
167 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 142. Milner uses fāi to mean ‘to insult’ or ‘to bring shame on.’ See 55.
168 The fau fale delivers the similar notion to the fai fale, which means, ‘to build houses’, however, this research focuses on the words that are used in the Samoan Bible translation, such as fai fale. See also, Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 60. See here, for the definition of the fau as a ‘secured fix’.
inconsistency and confusion of the Samoan language impacts on the readers, simply because of the implications of the macrons on vowels as well as the glottal stop or raised comma.

Ulrike Mosel states,

Samoan orthography is and has always been quite phonological. In the original orthography developed by the missionaries, vowel quantity and the glottal stop were not indicated. From around 1850 and mainly due to influence from the grammatical works and Bible translations of George Pratt, writers started to indicate the glottal stop by an inverted raised comma and a long vowel by a macron over the vowel in printed works. As already become the established practice in Tahitian, both the macron and the raised comma were used inconsistently and mainly only in case where ambiguity was possible and where the context opened up two or more interpretations.\(^{169}\)

However, late in 1960, the Samoan Educational Department decided to change its policy and avoid the use of both the macron and the apostrophe in their publications.\(^{170}\)

The missionary translation has been considered biblical Samoan, with reference to Pratt and other missionary translators. This is in contrast with other more recent translations and publications from late 1950s onwards, such as school books and children’s books which are written with modern Samoan spelling.\(^{171}\) Samoan readers are caught between what was called the biblical Samoan, with reference to the missionary Bible translators, and the modern Samoan. The initial idea was to use these original orthographies similar to the Tahitian practice, then Samoan Educational Department decided to avoid these in any publications. Later, again, Mosel adds,

This orthography without macron (fa ’amamafa) and inverted comma (koma liliu) has now been generally accepted in Western Samoa and is used in the schools, in the newspapers, and in most publications by Samoan authors. The diacritics are only occasionally used to clarify or disambiguate a word in a text. Sometimes (especially in modern

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\(^{170}\) Ibid., 44.

\(^{171}\) Ibid., 45.
literary texts) a word is written twice, first without any diacritics and then in brac[k]ets with diacritics.\textsuperscript{172}

This complicates the difficulties and understanding of readers, and we as contemporaries are open to multiple interpretations, so that Samoan readers of the Bible are uncertain of the precise meaning of the Hebrew text. The inconsistency of the use of macrons and the glottal stop in the Samoan translation of Jeremiah can be seen in Jer. 29: 1-14, where the macron should be applied, e.g. tafea (‘drift’) and the glottal stop to faatafea (‘to be drifted’). This leaves the readers with nothing but confusion.

\textbf{2.3.6. Misinterpretation}

There are many issues of misinterpretation in Jeremiah 29:1-14 discussed in the Appendix. However, these notable examples discussed below highlight the danger of misinterpretation.

\textbf{Example 1.}

Jeremiah 29:1a

ואלה דברי חדברי משלי אשר שלח ירמיה הנביא מירושלים אליהו הנותרים

NRSV: These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles

Samoan Bible: \textit{O UPU nei a le tusi na avatua e Ieremia le perofeta ai Ierusalemia i e na totoe o toeaina na tāfe'a},

The issue here is the preposition ‘of’. It has been translated as \textit{a}\textsuperscript{173} as in \textit{a le} instead of \textit{o}\textsuperscript{174} as \textit{a le}. They are both possessive prepositions meaning ‘of’\textsuperscript{175} in the sense of

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 44.

\textsuperscript{173} For the preposition \textit{a}, see Milner, \textit{Samoan Dictionary}, 1; Pratt, \textit{A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary}, 53.

\textsuperscript{174} For the preposition \textit{o}, see Milner, \textit{Samoan Dictionary}, 159-160; Pratt, \textit{A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary}, 90.

\textsuperscript{175} Mosel, \textit{Samoan Reference Grammar}, 143.
‘belonging to.’ The correct preposition is required to be applied at different times, depending on the context, or on which kind of noun governs the prepositional phrase.\textsuperscript{176}

\textit{O le ofu a le fefine}….. The dress of the woman. \textit{O le tama a le fefine}…. The son of the woman.\textsuperscript{177}

The preposition \textit{a} and \textit{o} cannot be interchanged in these two examples. Both mean ‘belonging to,’ but the choice of which preposition is used depends on whether the noun which governs the prepositional phrase refers to something which also can be owned by other people. Refering to the example, the dress is owned by the woman, but it is also possible that the dress could be owned by other people or may be shared, thus the preposition \textit{o} must be applied. The ‘son of the woman…’ however is exclusively owned by that woman; no one can own her son except her, so the preposition \textit{a} must apply.

**Example: 2.**

The Hebrew שֵּׁה הֶּגְלָָ֧ה (‘whom [Nebuchadnezzar] sent into exile’) is translated in Samoan as \textit{na tāfea ia Nepukanesa}. The Samoan translation does not express what the Hebrew says. Instead, it has \textit{na tāfe a ia Nepukanesa} ‘[the people] were exiled to Nebuchadnezzar.’ But the \textit{ia} is ‘to’ as a directional preposition here not a demonstrative pronoun,\textsuperscript{178} which totally changes the meaning of the sentence. It should have been the preposition \textit{e} (‘by’) rather than the preposition \textit{ia} (‘to’). This minor issue may not be a large one, but nevertheless it is important to highlight it. The Samoan readers may not be confused by it, but the fact remains that according to the Samoan text the exiles were exiled to Nebuchadnezzar.


\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 81.
Example 3.

Hebrew: וַהַגְּבִירָה (‘and the queen mother’) translated in the Samoan Bible as, ma le sa’o tamaitai. The word גְּבִירָה is a title like “lady” and is given to honour someone in particular. The word גְּבִירָה refers to the queen-mother who is the mother of the reigning monarch. However, in the Samoan translation, the word sa’o tamaitai is used as a title to honor a lady who carries many responsibilities. But it does not mean the mother of the reigning monarch. It is a title that is given to a daughter of a village high chief or the sister of a high chief.

The word sa’o tamaitai in the Samoan translation is used in a sense that the queen mother is higher ranking than other women in relation to her status. This contradicts the idea in the Samoan culture, because the title does not imply higher status. It only alludes to her leading role and responsibilities, and she is respected by most people in the village, simply because of her significant role. As such, she is the auga fa’apaе, pae ma le auli, tausala or togiola and fai oa. In other words, the sa’o tamaitai plays a significant role towards the wellbeing of her family. Fana’afi Aiono states, “they are the most privileged group within the extended family and within the village, and are known as the feagaiga.”179 In the Samoan culture, as I mentioned, everyone is a king in his/her own family. Samoans do not have commoners, unlike the Tongans’ hierarchal system of monarchy and the European dynasties, where rank indicates superiority and importance. In the Samoan context, the only difference among people is their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the misuse of the words sa’o tamaitai is likely to result in misinterpretation and misunderstanding by Samoan readers because of their different context.

2.4. Multiple Contexts

2.4.1. Mixture of Contexts in Samoan Bible Translation

The LMS missionaries brought influences from their own context with them, culturally and traditionally as well as religiously. Garrett points out that “The London Missionary Society in Samoa were led by Britishers. Most of them were Congregationalists, informally aligned in Britain with the Liberal Party.”180 While this thesis does not have a post-colonial emphasis, as I mentioned earlier, it is still important to highlight the impact of colonialism on the Pacific. In fact, before the missionaries were engaged with the Pacific Islands, the missionaries were already influenced by the British government, reflecting imperial and colonial power. In addition, these missionaries were bearers of the Christian Gospel, another context. The mixture of these contexts highlights that the missionaries’ mission was an imperial and colonial approach to the Pacific using the Bible. Ma’ilo states,

In some cases, the connection of the Bible to Britain’s military sovereignty was implicated in certain indirect but obvious political moves. For instance, the missionaries, as bearers of the Bible, repeatedly intimidated the natives by reminding them of the British military capabilities when they felt insecure in the islands.181

Ma’ilo refers to the motive behind the missionaries as the bearer of the Bible to the Pacific, which reflects confidence in themselves, knowing they had the British military to back them up.182 This missionary confidence was an influence of their British context, and may contribute to the translation of the Samoan Bible and other Pacific Island Bibles. This contribution refers, in terms of decision making, to what words and

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180 Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, 188.
181 Ma’ilo, *Bible-Ing My Samoan*, 91.
182 Ibid.
interpretation to insert or avoid during the Bible translation. For example, in Jer. 29:2 the translators chose the transliterated word *eunuka*, from a Greek word, rather than to translate the Hebrew or find a suitable Samoan word or phrase. Thomas Powell however mentions in a letter that the missionaries were discouraged from transliterating from dead languages but encouraged to do so from English. It may be therefore that the direct source of *eunuka* is English and only secondarily Greek. I will discuss this example much more in Chapter three.

Since their arrival, there were more influences from different contexts. Moreover, Hebrew Scripture has its own context; in fact, we are all foreigners to the Bible’s contexts. The contributions of these many contexts through many perspectives were added to the context of the Hebrew text, before they were applied to the Samoan context. A prime example of this mixture of contexts that affects the language has left contemporary readers with nothing but confusion. Ma’ilo states,

The point, therefore, is that cultural hegemony in Bible translation is not only about the effect of the translation on the indigenous readers, whether from confusion or alienation from their cultural heritage. The problem lies in the structural forms of the translation problem, where cultural difference becomes the strategy of representing authority. The missionaries came to the Pacific with a mentality that was clearly mentioned in their remarks: “And while, as the language of a rude and uncivilized people, it has, as might be expected, many deficiencies, when compared with the highly cultivated and polished languages of Europe.”

This is the picture that unfortunately we must live with and accept, even though it has consequences. The missionaries used the word ‘rude’ with reference to the native as

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183 Thomas Powell, letter to Titman, 1 September 1857, SSL. Quoted in Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 74.
184 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 264.
185 Davies, A Tahitian and English Dictionary, i.
being uncivilized. The word ‘rude’ may have sounded normal at that time towards people in a pre-Christian context. However, contemporary Samoan readers understand the word ‘rude’ towards our native people to mean ‘disrespect.’ Again, the problem here is the influence of different contexts. The question may be asked by modern readers, what is Samoan and what is not? What are original Samoan words and what are adopted? Again, it is confused. This confusion is reflected in the inconsistent use of words with the root tafe, such as the noun tafeaga and the verb tāfea and also the phrase ave fa’atagataotaua in Jeremiah. Both are used to translate פִּילָה and שֵׁבֶה, but not consistently as we shall see below. For example, the Hebrew word פִּילָה in the qal infinitive construct is translated as the noun tafeaga in Jeremiah 1:3; in the hiphil perfect it is translated as tāfea in Jeremiah 20:4 (but note that the Samoan does not include the causative fa’a); again, in the hiphil perfect it is translated as tāfea in Jeremiah 29:1, also with no fa’a. In 29:4, however, the Hebrew root פִּילָה is used twice, once as the noun פִּילָה (‘exile’) and again as the hiphil perfect verb just as in verse 1. The Samoan translation has tafeaga for the first and fuatāfe'a for the second. (Note the lack of raised apostrophe in faa).

The British translators seem to have fairly consistently used Samoan words from the root tafe[a] to translate פִּילָה while they seem to have used the phrase ‘ave fa’atagataotaua for Hebrew words with the root שֵׁבֶה. However, this case of inconsistency is reflected again in translating the verb שֵׁבֶה. For example, Jeremiah 41:10, ‘ave ai lea fa’atagataotaua (‘he took as captives’),\textsuperscript{186} translates the Hebrew qal imperfect of שֵׁבֶה. The verb means ‘to take captive,’ which explains the fa’a in ‘ave ai lea fa’atagataotaua. The same thing is true in Jeremiah 41:14, except that the Hebrew

\textsuperscript{186} Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 358.
verb is perfect and the Samoan phrase is plural. However, the matter does not end there.

In Jeremiah 13:17, the missionary translator chose the passive of the verb tāfe'a to translate the Hebrew שְׁבַה in the niphal. There is also inconsistency in the use of orthography (e.g. macrons on the long vowels and raised commas), as we have seen. This creates confusion when reading the Samoan Bible.

The words שְׁבַה and גָּלה seem no different in meaning. Both express a similar idea of being captured and taken away under political and imperial power. However, in the Samoan context there is a difference between words with the root tafe and the phrase ‘ave fa’atagataotaua. Both imply a political exile/captivity event. However, in the pre-Christian Samoan context, tafeaga was when people were drifted away for survival because of a natural disaster, for example, like the lava eruption at Saleaula, and the tsunami on 29 September 2009. In pre-Christian Samoa, the phrase ‘ave fa’atagataotaua (‘to take as prisoner of war’) did not exist because in the Samoan wars the intent was not to capture but to kill in battle against their enemies. Anyone captured was killed.

2.4.2. Colonial Implication in Samoan Translation

The political context of the missionaries when they first arrived impacted on the Samoan translation. Their multiple influences from many contexts perhaps, have strategized political agendas in order to serve the interests of their mission, with an unavoidable effect on their mission including the Bible translation. Uili Feleterika Nokise states,

[Missionaries], whatever their nationality, have acted as powerful agents of culture change throughout the world. Their Christian teachings, together with what remains of the indigenous societies'
traditional ways, constitute the ideological basis that determines the current attitudes and outlook of the converted population.\textsuperscript{187}

This reflects that regardless of the missionaries’ ethnic background, their ideological interests as imperial agents were to convert and to rule the natives, culturally and of course spiritually. Similarly, Patrick Vinton Kirch adds, “These purveyors of the faith took a great interest in the languages, cultures and traditional of the peoples they endeavoured to convert.”\textsuperscript{188} The language, however, was one of the targets of the missionaries’ mission. France Mugler and John Lynch state,

The missionaries, traders and colonizers brought their own languages with them, of course. Although Christian missionaries in general preferred to use local vernaculars in their preaching and teaching, so as better to reach the hearts and minds of the people, colonizers usually had the opposite view. The language of the colonial power became the language of government, thus the language of power and advancement, in each Pacific colony. Although a certain amount of official status was given to vernaculars in some colonies, in others the local languages were totally or largely ignored as far as the operation of the colony was concerned.\textsuperscript{189}

“The missionaries established orthographies for indigenous language, encouraging large numbers of Polynesians to become literate.”\textsuperscript{190} Despite the political implication of the translation process, Ma’ilo believes “the Bible was the cultural birthplace to the Polynesians.”\textsuperscript{191} Hence, the missionary had control over whatever served the interest of the operation, and that relates to their translation of the Bible as well. For example, the political idea of captivity came into existence in Samoa with the missionaries and their


\textsuperscript{190} Kirch, \textit{On the Road of the Winds}, 16.

\textsuperscript{191} Ma’ilo, \textit{Bible-Ing My Samoan}, 76.
imperial background. That background influenced their choice of translation for 服务商 as ‘ave fa’atagataotaua.

Though, like other nations, Samoans practised taua (‘war’), in pre-Christian times, this word had not been joined to ‘ave (‘take’) and the causative fa’a to form the whole phrase ‘ave fa’atagataotaua. The context of pre-Christian Samoa was similar to other Pacific nations when it came to capturing enemies and often killing and eating them. Wilson highlighted that “They [the Fijians], moreover, retain the practice of eating the bodies of enemies they have killed.” Turner reported similarities in the New Hebrides. He stated, “When the body of an enemy is taken, it is dressed for the oven, and served up with yams at the next meal.” This common practice of eating enemies in the Pacific suggests that in the Samoan context, the act of keeping enemies in captivity was uncommon.

It was the missionaries who made this phrase and introduced the idea of captivity. This idea is found in the Old Testament translation of Jeremiah, which was translated by T. Slatyer and later revised by Powell and Harbutt, and became a reality half a century later in 1909 when Samoa first formed a political party (Mau a Pule) to oppose the German administration of the colony. The leader of the Mau a Pule and its members were captured and taken to exile in Saipan, simply for raising their own opinion against the power of the colonisers. Members of the Mau a Pule acted as they did to protect their rights, their culture and most importantly their forefathers’ land.

192 Wilson and Wilson, A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, lxxi.
193 Turner, Samoa, 313.
194 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, 23, 36. Thomas Slatyer translated Jeremiah but returned because of his wife’s health issue, see Crocombe, The Works of Ta’unga, 17. Slatyer served his mission together with Mr. Murray and Mr. Harbut[t] at Leone, Tutuila. See Ellis, The History of the London Missionary Society, 1, 388. See also Murray, The Bible in the Pacific, 199.
195 Meleisea and Meleisea, Lagaga, 119.
196 Michael Field, Mau: Samoa’s Struggle against New Zealand Oppression (Wellington: Reed, 1984), 129.
Mau Pule believed that they did not commit any criminal offence apart from disobeying the colonial ruling. Despite this, they were regarded as criminals by the colonial rulers, and were captured and sent into exile. Colonel Stephen Allen (the fourth administrator) decided that the only way that would break up the Mau a Pule petition was “to use the Samoan Amendment Act 1927 to banish people, and that involved the approval of the Governor-General.” Michael J. Field states, “On 30 October Allen asked for this in order to banish ten leading Mau to the villages for two years. Among them were Tupua Tamasese, Tuimaleali’ifano, Namulau’ulu, Alipia Siaosi, Autagavaia Siapiu, and Tagaloa.”

The experience of the Mau a Pule is the reflection of ‘ave fa’atagataotaua and the Samoan understanding of captivity. Political captivity only came to exist in 1909, when Samoa was a German colony. Political captivity can be seen when Judahites were captured by Babylonians. However, the Mau a Pule were sent into exile for defending their rights as natives of Samoa as well as their land, but they were guilty under colonial law.

When the Samoan Bible was translated, translators seemed to prefer ‘ave fa’atagataotaua to translate יָשָׁב, but used tāfeaga to translate the word יָגַל. The meanings of the two Hebrew words are very similar. Pratt’s definition of the exile refers to ‘exile in war,’ while Milner refers to the Mau a Pule exile at Saipan to define the word tāfeaga in his Samoan-English Dictionary. He states, “O le tāfeaga i Saipani (“the

197 Ibid., 128.
198 Ibid., 126-29.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid., 129.
201 Meleisea and Meleisea, Lagaga, 119.
In fact they both share the political meaning of ‘exile in war’, which is translated as ‘ave fa’ataotaotaua. This leads to another meaning ‘ave fa’apagota which means, ‘prisoner of war’ or ‘imprison’.204

This is when for Samoans tāfeaga was no longer a drift for survival but became a political event, which impacts on Samoan readers’ interpretation of the word in Jeremiah.

J. Havea states in his foreword to Ma’ilo’s work,

The need for translation came to Pasifika together with the producers and the products of writing (literacy), and they shackled the native minds and gnawed the native tongues (orality). These days, the need of the natives for translation is inherently interpretation. The overlay of translation with interpretation, and the temptation to control both translation and interpretation, are the gusts on the sails of what Ma’ilo calls the “politics of translation.”205

A good example of the political side of translation is the transliteration of YHWH as Ieova, which as Ma’ilo points out, is not the name of a pre-Christian Samoan god, allowing the missionaries to indicate that the God of the Hebrew Bible is not only different but also higher and greater than the local gods, or maybe the local gods don’t really exist. Ma’ilo states,

This case explains how the ideology, which is to galvanize the power of the biblical God, was influenced by ‘cultural differentiation.’ Transliterating Ieova was not based on a linguistic problem. It was based on an ideology of controlling the native’s knowledge and understanding of the Supernatural.206

Despite these political influences and the inconsistencies in the Samoan Bible translation, we cannot deny the fact that the common Samoan understanding of the tāfeaga is a process that offers hope and turnaround. This common understanding is

203 Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 226.
204 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 374.
205 Ma’ilo, Bible-Ing My Samoan, xii.
206 Ibid., 49.
based on a Samoan saying, *so’o se tāfeaga, e i ai lava le mea e to’a i ai*, which translates as, “for every drift, there is always a place for restoration.” In this light, the Babylonian exile can also be seen similarly as a positive event. Even though the Israelites were captured by the Babylonians, we Samoans can consider it as a tāfeaga from home and land, knowing that after 70 years they would return.

**Summary**

Misinterpretation can be a serious concern. For Samoans, the Bible is considered true and holy. However, the teaching of the Bible may contradict and not align with the context of Samoan readers. Earlier generations considered that the first interpretation of the Bible by the missionaries is the true one, as Fau’olo has stated that was the people’s response when the Bible was translated.\(^{207}\) Therefore, whatever the Bible says is accepted, even if it is against the culture and beliefs of the Samoan people. Uncritical acceptance is a serious threat, both to the church and to the Samoan way of living. The Bible is regarded as the source of truth by almost everyone in Samoa. Therefore, to get a meaningful and clear interpretation is important. Usually, problems arise due to transliteration and adoption of other Polynesian words, word by word translation, inappropriate pluralisation, and misinterpretation by the missionaries and their Tahitian associates.

In the next chapter I will discuss an exegesis of the first fourteen verses of Jeremiah 29 to unveil what is appropriate in terms of a translation from Hebrew to Samoan with particular emphasis on the nature of exile.

\(^{207}\) Fau‘olo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea‘i*, 75.
Chapter 3

Introduction

In order to make a closer comparison in terms of context, it is important to re-visit the historical context of the Babylonian exile in relation to the book of Jeremiah. This historical context allows a possible comparison to be drawn with the Samoan interpretation when I discuss the *la-tō* approach in the next chapter.

This chapter discusses the context of the Babylonian exile, at the time when big powerful nations, such as Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Persia battled for dominance of the Ancient Near East during several centuries BCE. Though the Babylonian Exile is an event of the sixth century, it is important to reflect that there was a commonality among events of this time in that the exile was used as a political strategy to dominate populations in countries that had been conquered. This chapter also highlights how these imperial powers were understood by the authors of Hebrew Bible as instruments to deliver God’s will to his people, with great devastation even though they were foreigners and enemies to God’s people. They were neither covenantal people nor worshippers of Yahweh, but God used them as instruments for his will (Isaiah 5:24-30; 10:5-6; Jer. 27:5-7, 10, 12).

The context of the prophet Jeremiah will also be visited in this discussion regarding his prophesying and how he approaches the exile from a positive perspective, even while the exiles were experiencing calamities in a foreign land. This encouragement reflects a light of hope for the suffering exiles, urging them to build, plant and multiply in a land that did not belong to them. This may be seen as a sign of hope, as this chapter will demonstrate. The discussion of each verse and its exegetical implications will explore God’s intention and his purpose in the exile. The prophet
Jeremiah called this exile process ‘God’s plan’, a plan which punished and banished his own people to prosper them and to give them future peace (Jer. 29:11), so that he caused his own people to suffer for a good cause.

In order to achieve an explanation of Jeremiah’s context, I will offer a discussion of each of the verses of Jeremiah 29:1–14 from the Hebrew. Verses 4–14 are not the entire letter; the full letter is from verses 4 – 23. However, I have selected only verses 1–14 because these contain issues in the Samoan missionary translation which I wish to highlight. These issues become clear when a careful track is made from Hebrew to Samoan, showing how differences in understanding come from different contexts.

I should note here that the letter contains an oracle in which Jeremiah derives God’s words to the exiles which give them specific information about what to do and how to act in Babylon. Furthermore, there are certain groups to whom they must not listen because those people lie. Finally, God tells them what to expect when the years of their exile have been completed. In fact, as John Bright says, the letter is a prophetic oracle, and it is instructive.¹

In this chapter, I will discuss an exegesis of the Hebrew text and its implications, which I will later compare to the Samoan missionary translation. Any variation between the Hebrew and the Samoan missionary translation will allow my own suggestions to emerge as a contribution to further discussions of the misinterpretation caused by the missionary translation.

3.1. The Historical Context of the Babylonian Exile.

In the year 722 BCE, the Assyrians were in power in the Ancient Near East; they demolished Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and they captured Israel.\(^2\) The ten tribes were deported and, according to 2 Kings, they never went back to their land (2 Kings 17:23). This shows how effective the Assyrian imperial strategy of capturing, demolishing, and conquering was; their usual strategy as imperial powers against other nations, including Israel and Judah.\(^3\) The Israelites were carried away to serve a form of a punishment for having sinned against God, according to the writer of 2 Kings 17:5-7.

Subsequently, Assyrian control came to an end when their empire collapsed in 612 BCE.\(^4\) The Assyrians were taken over by the Babylonians, and so, in 597 BCE, the Southern Kingdom was attacked. This was after “the enigmatic death of Josiah in 609 at the hands of Pharaoh Neco brought to an end the religious reform he [Josiah] had instituted,”\(^5\) which had come about after the discovery of the book of the Law while repairs on the Temple were being carried out (2 Kings 22-23). However, there were other political powers involved. Brueggemann states:

The power of Babylon to the north of Judah, however, was not the only foreign power with which Judah had to deal. Judah had to attend also to the Egyptians to the south, whose policy was to maintain Judah as a buffer against Babylonian pressure. Thus Judah was placed precisely and precariously between Babylon and Egypt.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) Ibid., 173.

\(^4\) Ibid., 175.


Brueggemann indicates that Judah was facing multiple powers and all sorts of threats, the Babylonians to the north and the Egyptians to the south and they were thus sandwiched between two imperial powers. In the year 597 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar and his army conquered Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:10-13), and the Babylonians took all the treasures of the House of the Lord, the treasures of the King’s house, and the vessels of gold in the Temple. Second Kings 24:14-15 says,

He [Nebuchadnezzar] carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land. He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; the king’s mother, the king’s wives, his officials and the elite of the land, he took into captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.\(^7\)

This political and social calamity was interpreted as a consequence of the disobedience that caused them to be taken into exile. Thus, in 598/7 BCE, the Babylonians forcibly deported the first ten thousand people from Jerusalem to Babylon. The smiths, the artisans and all the wise people were taken. This included King Jehoiachin, the officials and the elite of the land (2 Kings 24:12-17). Verses 14 says, “… no one remained, except the poorest people of the land.” The Judahites’ experience of exile was similar to the Israelites’ experience of the fall of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians, because empires used conquest and exile as tools of imperialism.

### 3.1.1. Political Power as an Imperial Instrument

Conquest was a popular political tool at this time, as imperial power and an imperial instrument, understood by some biblical prophets as acting on behalf of God – an invisible supernatural power. In this case, both the dominant foreign power – the Assyrians and the people of God are under instruction (Isaiah 10:5-6). Isaiah describes

\(^7\) NRSV.
God as allowing the Assyrians to act on his behalf as an instrument for his anger at his own people, and afterwards he would judge the Assyrians as well (Isaiah 10:12).

Subsequently, things changed dramatically, so the Assyrians went down and the Babylonians were dominant.⁸ The Babylonians too were used as an instrument to punish, and they completely demolished Jerusalem. Even the famous Temple that was built by King Solomon was destroyed (2 Kings 25:8-12). As a result, the Israelites had to obey and to comply with the king of Babylon in order to remain safe in that foreign land (Jer. 27:12). Clements believes that

Jeremiah further affirmed that the outcome of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem would be terrifyingly destructive and would prove to be a political and social catastrophe for Judah.⁹

### 3.1.2. Captivity, an Imperial Political Strategy

Captivity in this imperial context reflects a political ideology used by the strong nations. The imperial power ideally conquered other nations and captured people, taking them to the conqueror’s land. Both the Assyrians and the Babylonians used a similar strategy, and the Babylonians used it against the Judahites. Brueggemann mentions that the extensive deportation of the people of Jerusalem was a part of the Babylonian strategy to help the empire remain in power.¹⁰ The empire relied on the success and practicality of this strategy. Brueggemann called the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 587 BCE¹¹ the dominant shaping event of the Old Testament, since Judah would no longer be an independent political entity.¹² Even the king of Judah was identified as a

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¹¹ Ibid., 1, 2.
¹² Ibid., 2.
prisoner (2 Kings 24:12) because he could have been a focus of the political activity by the exiles.

3.1.3. The suffering

The people of Judah suffered severely as a consequence of imperial conquest by powerful nations. The empire made an impact by their power on the exiles as their colonial captives. Killing, desolation, and banishment were felt in the community. In addition, this form of political oppression reflects the experience of being oppressed under imperial control, as well as suffering away from their home. Second Kings interprets that the reason for their suffering is that the Judahites have despised the covenant and rejected the warning that was given to them by prophets. They did not listen but were stubborn, and this had brought them punishment (2 Kings 17:14-18; 24:1-4). According to the Deuteronomistic Historian, they deserved their punishments as a consequence of their disobedience.

3.1.4. Literary Context of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was a prophet who spoke about and seemed to feel responsible for the people’s future and hope during all these catastrophes (Jer. 1-3). Jeremiah was a son of Hilkiah, the high priest who found the book of the Law that gave hope to King Josiah while he reigned over Judah (2 Kings 22:8-13). Subsequently, the book of the Law was given to Huldah the prophetess to interpret, which caused the king to fear the Lord and then to demolish all the pagan gods, even the priests and the worshippers (2 Kings 23). Hilkiah’s involvement in this part of Judah’s history may have had implications for Jeremiah’s calling in relation to the book of the Law. Jeremiah’s emphasis was the Law as God’s commandment to be obeyed by the people, so no doubt he was influenced from Josiah’s reformation (Jer. 3:6; 36:2; 44). In other words, Jeremiah was concerned
for the worst to come upon the Israel and Judah as the consequence of their rebellious acts against their God.

Right at the beginning of his book, he has a genealogical connection with this event by mentioning his father Hilkiah (Jer. 1:1). Jeremiah was originally from the Northern Kingdom, from a priestly family in the territory of Benjamin (1 Kings 2:26-27), in the bloodline of Abiathar. Anthony R Ceresko states,

The opening words of the book identified Jeremiah as a member of the priestly family from the village of Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin (Jer. 1:1). Anathoth is only two miles north of Jerusalem and, although Jeremiah continued to have connections with his family and home village (Jer. 32) most of what is recorded in the book about his preaching and activity takes place in Jerusalem.13

Jeremiah’s northern background influenced his prophesying, for Ceresko mentions that Jeremiah talks less about Zion/Jerusalem or the promises to the house of David, unlike Isaiah.14 Ceresko suggests,

Jeremiah’s preaching stresses typical northern motifs such as the Exodus and Mosaic covenant traditions: Speak to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem, saying to them: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not observe the terms of this covenant, which I enjoined upon your fathers the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that iron foundry, saying: Listen to my voice and do all that I command you (Jer. 11:2-4; see also 2:5-8).15

Jeremiah purposely did not join the exile in Babylon but spent most of his time in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, he shared starvation as the fate of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Richard. D. Nelson states,

Famine was the greatest horror faced by those in a besieged city. Starvation set in motion desperate acts of inhumanity (Deut. 28:53-57; 2 Kgs 6:25-29; Jer.19:9; Lam 2:20; 4:3-10). According to 2 Kgs 25:3, food ran out for the refugee people of the land, that is, the rural populace who were taking shelter within the city.16

14 Ibid., 225.
15 Ibid., 224-25.
Then later Jeremiah left with Baruch and others to go to Egypt (Jer. 43:7), where “Jeremiah finished out his days.” He also prophesied in Egypt that Babylon’s power would be destroyed and that calamities would be brought upon them as well (Jer. 43:8-13), but King Nebuchadnezzar made him to remain in Jerusalem with the remnant.

Jeremiah’s stay in Jerusalem without joining the exile in Babylon turned out to benefit King Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah urged the king of Judah and the people to surrender to the Babylonians and not to fight against them, thus speaking for a foreign power in his own homeland. He continued to communicate with the people by letters and told them that when seventy years were over, then they would return to their land. Jeremiah stated that the punishment would come upon them at the hands of the Babylonians, as well as the restoration prophesied by him, to be delivered by another foreign power. Therefore, Jeremiah lived and acted within the context of foreign powers and responded directly to the future and hope of his own people.

Despite the conflicts and political calamities that the prophet was facing in his context, Jeremiah was one of the chosen ones, and God knew him before he was even formed in his mother’s womb (Jer. 1:5). Being a chosen one for God, does not necessarily mean Jeremiah was different from the context of others. Jeremiah’s “own life of suffering foreshadows the suffering of his people.” Louis Stulman suggests similarly, “the persona of Jeremiah acts as a mirror that reflects the nation’s descent into utter hopelessness (in chaps. 1-25) as well its emergence as an ill-treated yet enduring community (in chaps. 26-52).” Jeremiah was facing conflicts (Jer. 8:6-7) and was

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sometimes confused (Jer. 8:8-9). Dubbink adds, “The prophetic image portrays someone who stands opposed to the mainstream of contemporary thought, a ‘man of conflict’ ([Jer.] 15:10), for on every level, whether political, societal, or religious – he is in conflict with the dominant opinions of his time.”\(^{20}\) Despite all that, God gave his prophet Jeremiah assurance that he chose him, and promised that he would take care of him regardless (Jer. 15:20).

3.1.5. Literary Context of Chapter 29:1-14

Jeremiah found that he was able to communicate by letters with the exiles in Babylon. He specifically targeted the recipients who would receive it (the remaining elders) rather than the rest (Jer. 29:1), i.e. the elders would read the letter to the others. Nevertheless, the message was for all the exiles (Jer. 29:4). The letter was hand delivered, which means it was carried and distributed personally (Jer. 29:3). Holladay adds, “The word נון (‘letter’) in this context is a general word for any kind of document; it is used in [Jer.] 3:8 for a “bill (of a divorce)” and in 25:13 for the second scroll of [Jeremiah].”\(^{21}\)

The letter here signifies a document that was delivered with a message, which outlined who was involved; the sender of the letter, the recipients and the content, as well as the setting. These verses also express how definite is the message to be heard by the exiles. Brueggemann also states, “This chapter gives attention to those in exile since 598 who must find ways to live faithfully and hopefully in the midst of exile. In giving counsel to the exiles, this chapter implies a confirmation of Jeremiah’s proclamation in chapters 27-28.”\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 255.
The truth was that the exiles were not yet due to return to Jerusalem, and that was Jeremiah’s concern. Nonetheless, the emphasis of this research is not to focus on the letter itself, but on how Jeremiah as a prophet of hope dealt with the people’s situation. Likewise, how would he reflect the context of the Babylonian exile? This also includes his relationship with others whom he considers false prophets to the exiles. Clements notes:

The entire section from 26:1 to 28:17, in different ways, has been concerned with the question of true and false prophecy. Now this section is brought to a conclusion in chapter 29 with extracts from letters between the Babylonian exiles from 598 and the community that had remained in Judah.23

Clements has clearly stated that what has been mentioned in previous chapters as a controversy regarding false prophecy and a premature expectation of return has been concluded in chapter 29. Jeremiah had worn a yoke in obedience to God’s words which symbolised that the people of Judah must submit to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27). However, the prophet Hananiah declared that God had broken Nebuchadnezzar’s yoke and would return people within two years (Jer 28:3), and he broke Jeremiah’s yoke. Jeremiah responded by quoting God’s words to Hananiah that the wooden yoke would be replaced with an iron one and furthermore that God would “send you off from the face of the earth” (v. 16) for lying to his people. Clements points out that “God had acted to defend his honour and righteousness and in doing so had inflicted a fearful judgement upon Jerusalem and Judah.”24 This means that the exile was the people’s punishment from God (Jer. 25:7-38), and the exile had its own seventy-year term according to God’s will (Jer. 29:10). In this light, Jeremiah’s interpretation of God’s purpose reflects its authenticity and also serves his monotheistic interests.25

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23 Clements, Jeremiah, 170.
24 Ibid., 169.
25 Ibid.
The controversy of the false prophets has caused many issues and confusion, and committing this false act is a crime and the perpetrator shall be killed, especially when prophesying in God’s name illegitimately and unauthorised (Deut. 18:20). However, false agendas do not deny the fact that God had warned his people earlier. False prophecy was one of the agendas that God had reminded his people to be aware of (Jer. 27:5-12; 23; 28). It also concerns the fulfilment of the length of the exile as prophesied, until the seventy years is completed. This also seems to imply Jeremiah’s connection with Deuteronomy and the Law by emphasising obedience to God’s will. Foreign leaders and empires, the prophets, and God’s people are all charged with a similar mission – to comply, obey and to serve God’s will, even though they may not know it, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus.

3.2. The Letter: Jeremiah 29:1-14

3.2.1. Verse 1

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (NRSV)

The opening verses in Jeremiah 29:1-3 are not part of the letter, although these verses introduce the context of the letter. John Bright states that the text of the letter is given after this introduction by the biographer, with reference to the first three verses.26 William Holladay says that “verse 1 and 3 are therefore a superscription offered by an editor (Baruch) who preserved a copy of the letter.”27 Brueggemann suggests that “these

26 Bright, *Jeremiah, Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 211.
27 Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 137-38.
verses provide a frame for the pastoral letter of Jeremiah 29:4ff.”

Therefore, these first three verses introduce the context within which the letter was sent and how it is to be understood. This is true even though who the narrator is, is obscure. However, to find out who the author was is not the emphasis of this research; rather it focuses on the implications of verses 4-14 of the letter regarding its inference as a message for the exiles.

The following discussion describes more ideas about the communication process of the letter. The word שָלַח (‘he sent’) is derived from the verb שָלַח which means ‘to send,’ and it was the prophet Jeremiah who sent this letter to the exiles. The narrator gives authority to what he says by emphasising the words of the message, and the person who sent the letter is described as a prophet, showing that these words are from God. Jeremiah repeats the words “the word of the Lord” frequently throughout the book from the superscription on. Here, it is important to understand that the letter was sent מִירוּשָלָם (‘from Jerusalem’), which is where the prophet was as the time when the letter was written.

The introduction gives the intended recipients and specifically identifies elders and other significant persons among the exiles in general. Though the words include a masculine plural substantive and a masculine plural noun, it is not possible to conclude that there are no women among the recipients from the grammar alone. Masculine plural forms are used to describe groups that include both men and women, and this is confirmed later in the verse (cf. Jer. 44:1-10).

This exile refers to the first deportation—it is possible to mention a specific time (597 BCE)—the ones who went to Babylon for the first exile. Clements suggests that

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28 Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 256.

29 Clements, Jeremiah, 170.
the letter in Jeremiah 29 is the fullest report from Jeremiah to the exiles and is dated in 29:2 with reference to those who were deported to Babylon first.\(^{30}\) This verse mentions the people that were involved in this particular exile, and the letter is addressed to the priests, as well as the prophets and to all of the people. Those were the people sent into exile. As we will see below, in verse 4 the exile is described as God’s doing (Jer. 25). The verse ends by explaining where the exiles came from and where they went, which was to Babylon.

### 3.2.2. Verse 2

This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem (NRSV).

Obviously, this verse is not part of the letter, but it is important because it introduces the context, with the word after.\(^{31}\) This is followed by [they had] departed\(^{32}\) expressing the specific exile, the one during the King Jehoiachin’s reign. Jeconiah is a “shorter spelling for Jehoiachin”\(^{33}\) in 2 Kings 24:12. He is described by the word the king\(^{34}\) (‘the king’).

This verse mentions nothing about Jehoiachin’s motive for surrender, but Nebuchadnezzar did carry him away with the rest of the exiles to Babylon. He took with

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\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) In order to make the next part a sentence it is necessary to put in “this was”. The word after is a preposition indicating when the events in the previous verse happened.

\(^{32}\) Clines, “The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew,” Vol. IV, 254. Note: this verb is the *qal* infinitive construct of which means “to go out” or “to depart.”


him Jehoiachin’s entire court, including the queen mother (who was presumably Jehoiachin’s mother). Those who went into exile were those whom Nebuchadnezzar had recognized might have encouraged and organized rebellion had they been left in Judah. The author refers to many leaders of Jerusalem and Judah. In this case, it seems that Jeremiah has acknowledged both יرواש and ייהו (‘Jerusalem and Judah,’) including “court officials,” sometimes translated “eunuchs,” after the LXX. The word in Hebrew is סריס which means “high officials” usually at the king’s court (2 Kings 18:17, Isaiah 39:7; Jer. 39:13), in some texts, this word is used as “guardian” (2 Kings 8:6; 9:32; Jer. 29:2; 34:19; 38:7; 41:16) and in Isaiah 56:3-4, it is used as “castrated male person”.

King Nebuchadnezzar’s idea was to take only the elite rather than all the people of Judah. The elite were considered useful in comparison with the people who had been left behind (2 Kings 24:14; 25:12). The elite were potentially a threat to Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, so the king had to capture them. In this case, the person’s specialty became a selection criterion for the king. The words “craftsmen” and “metal-workers” are both singular but are to be understood as collective. The word מַסָּר is a more general term and depending on context may suggest any of several professions. In Exodus 28:11, it refers to a gem-cutter, in 2 Kings 12:12 (in a construct relationship with ‘wood’) it is a carpenter, and in 1 Samuel 13:19 it refers toarmorers. Perhaps the most accurate translation would be to follow KJV and use the now obsolete but general term ‘smith.’ All these people were ירווש (‘from Jerusalem’). Recognizing that these groups of people were those chosen to go into exile brings up the question of whether some of the craftspeople were organized into collectives. As collectives, they may have

35 The two proper nouns are connected with the conjunction “and”, which may signify Jerusalem as a city and Judah as the whole nation or Jerusalem as a separate entity (2 Samuel 5).
36 DCH 6, 197. See chapter 2, page 56-57.
been skilled politically and thus posed a threat to peace in Judah under Nebuchadnezzar’s rule.  

3.2.3. Verse 3

The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said:

The narrator explains the process of dispatching the letter and also the process of communication from Jerusalem to Babylon. “The letter was sent” is understood from the context of the previous verse and does not appear in the Hebrew, but בְיַדֵ֙ אֶלְעָשָ֣ה (‘by the hand of Elasah’) may explain who one of the messengers was who delivered it. The next words describe further who that messenger was. גְמַרְיִָּ֖ה (‘Gemariah’) was the other messenger, and that is followed by בֶּן־חִלְקִיָ ה (‘son of Hilkiah’). However, the next phrase is less clear, since it is uncertain whether the relative pronoun (‘whom’) refers to the previous name ‘Hilkiah’ or to Elasah and Gemariah.

It may have been King Zedekiah of Judah who sent these people to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Therefore, the letter went through official channels by diplomatic pouch in modern terms. That was probably done to ensure its safe arrival, given the hazards of travel at that time. The last part of verse 3 is the word ל אמֹּֽר (‘saying’). This expression is the ordinary way of introducing direct speech and signals the text of the letter which follows.

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37 The notion of taking the wise with selected exiles from Jerusalem reveals the input of the King of Babylon in the making of the punishment. The elites were taken and the poorest people of the land were left in Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah 25, everyone must go into the exile; however, the king seems to prefer only the wise over the poorest people. This may have occurred during the exile of 587/6 as well.

38 [The letter was sent] is inserted here so that this verse makes a sentence in English.

39 Shaphan and Gemariah who hand delivered the letter to the exile, are called ‘diplomatic courier’ by Critchlow. See Critchlow, Looking Back for Jehoiachin, 103. Bright believes these two messengers had shown friendship to Jeremiah (2 Kings 22:4), see Bright, Jeremiah, 208.
3.2.4. Verse 4

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: (NRSV).

In this verse, there is a shift from third person to first person, which Bright states is “frequent in prophetic address.” However, God is not only involved as first person, but also the mention of his names is significant in this verse, and also in verse 8. Verses 4 and 8 emphasise the sacredness of God, “thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel” that John Hills describes as ‘cultic,’ stating,

The use of such cultic language indicates a belief that YHWH’s power extends to foreign lands and is not in any way subordinate to the Babylonian deities. At the same time it borders on the blasphemous. As a foreign land, Babylon is unclean, yet the using of cultic language in vv. 4 and 7 has the effect of placing it on a par with the holy city of Jerusalem.

John Hills refers to the use of these verbs “seek” and “pray” indicating a cultic overtone, asking the exiles to pray for Babylon. Hills states, “In fact the letter begins with a reference to the full cultic name of YHWH.”

The use of God’s name here and in verse 8 spells out and enforces God’s extension of power and the importance of God’s attributes. This is not revealed through God identifying himself and making no comparison with the Babylonian deities’ unclean city but with the holy city of Jerusalem. The word צבאות is one of God’s titles, which means, Yahweh of armies, however in Jeremiah’s context, the title צבאות is an epithet of YHWH (‘God of hosts’) sometimes preceded by Adonai (Lord), and that is

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40 Bright, Jeremiah, Introduction, Translation, and Notes, 208.


42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.
how this title is used here in Jeremiah 29:4, 8, 17, 21, 25. God’s title is used in contexts which portray God’s sovereignty and might. Its earliest uses in the Hebrew Bible are at 1 Sam 1:11 and 17:45. Both contexts are set firmly within the Davidic tradition and argue a Judahite origin, so that the word provided covenantal protection and security. Why then are the very next words the “God of Israel”? Hebrew names in the biblical text are significant with reference to the “ethnic background of the people.” Jeremiah has used ‘Lord of Hosts’ and ‘God of Israel,’ which indicate the covenantal God speaking for the sake of his covenantal people.

In this light, verse 4 expresses that the Lord has a direct message to the exiles. The letter also targets the special recipients, which means everyone who went into exile, by saying נְכָלָּ֣֝ה (‘to all the exiles’), the ones אֲשֶר־הֵגְלְּ֛יתִי (‘whom I sent into exile.’). Jeremiah has urged the exiles by speaking ‘to all’ to be aware of the message. Unlike verse 1, the subject of the verb here is God, declaring that God himself sent his people into exile, מִירֵוֹלֶ֣ם (‘from Jerusalem’). It expresses that God has sent his own people from their own homeland. Therefore, Jeremiah had sent a letter to all the exiles, whom God himself had sent into exile away from their land. Sending his own people into exile has been mentioned in other biblical texts, e.g. 2 Kings 20:16-18 in Isaiah’s prophecy to Hezekiah; Jer. 32:5 when Jeremiah bought the field in Anathoth; Ezra 5:12 which quotes a letter written to Cyrus from the governor of the province Beyond the River.

3.2.5. Verse 5

44 DCH 7, 68.
46 This refers to those people who went into exile, specifically to all who went into the previous exile, who belonged to the first deportation in 597 BCE.
Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce (NRSV).

The word 'בְנ֥' is from the verb 'בָנ֣' meaning ‘to build’. The imperative 'בְנ֥' indicates a command and spells out the theme as well as the intention of the message. Jeremiah sent this message to encourage the exiles while they were in Babylon. The words of encouragement start with imperative verbs (build, plant, and multiply). They are to build as a positive confirmation of their stay in Babylon, and here Jeremiah does not mention a return. The letter was a vitally important message to settle the exiles’ uncertainty at being outside their comfort zone and away from their home.

‘Build’ as a verb has the direct object בָתִִ֖ים ‘houses,’ and they were not just to build the houses but settle “and live [in them].” This also serves the purpose of a counter statement against the false prophets who promised lies (Jer. 23:25). However, Jeremiah could also possibly have meant ‘build’ in a figurative sense (Deut. 25:9; Jer. 24:6) as well as a literal one. These could be words of exhortation to mentally settle, in order to spiritually restore them. Although they were in a foreign land outside their own, they were given God’s authority through this letter of exhortation to settle not just physically but also mentally and spiritually, so that to build could indicate renewing their covenant with God (Jer. 31:4).

The word ‘build’ is one of the covenantal words because in 2 Samuel 7:13 it is used of building the temple, and Solomon frequently used it in his prayer of dedication to God, saying that he ‘built a house’ (1 Kings 8:44-53). The words ‘build,’ ‘plant’ and ‘multiply’ convey a positive expression of hope. The similar principles continue here for the rest of verse 5: “build houses and live in them and plant gardens and eat from them.” In this context, the prophet’s message is to encourage the exiles that their uncertainty will be settled, but it does not mean that they will settle back to Jerusalem as yet.
3.2.6. Verse 6

Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. (NRSV).

Authority and permission are expressed by the way these words are said: Take wives and multiply. The word ‘multiply’ is related to the words ‘build and plant’ in the sense that both imply growth. All the people exiled are urged to have wives and to become the fathers of sons and daughters. Jeremiah has targeted the men in the exile, addressing them in relation to their wives, but then he shifts his focus to the children. The men are commanded to give their daughters in marriage, and they are then commanded in order that they may give birth to sons and daughters.” They are then commanded ‘and become numerous there’), (‘and do not be few’), the last functioning as a negative imperative. The authority that was given to fathers to give their sons and daughters in marriage serves the purpose of the covenantal word “multiply” implying increase rather than decrease, a word which appears both in this verse and in Genesis 9:11.

Jeremiah has instructed the exiles that men and women, sons and daughters, must all get involved with the marriage in order for their numbers to increase and not decrease. These multiple blessings are similar blessings to when God made a covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 12:2, God says to Abraham, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” This refers to a multiplication of offspring and descendants, though Jeremiah mentions neither Abraham nor the covenant. Here in Jeremiah we have a paradigm shift in the means of blessing, from an individual servant of God (Abraham) to a bigger and greater nation that came about when he obeyed God. Trito-Isaiah also declares the same encouragement for the people to prosper and enjoy blessing in the new creation (Isaiah
Thus the exiles are blessed, and “the exile has a measure of freedom, they are not prisoners of war.”

It means that the exiles would live normal lives in Babylon; they were even encouraged through marriage to keep multiplying.

3.2.7. Verse 7

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (NRSV).

Jeremiah urges the exiles to seek the welfare of Babylon, so that its welfare will become their welfare. Jerusalem no longer holds any hope. Jeremiah expresses the motive behind the message of the letter, urging the people to remain focused by saying, "(seek') and by instructing them to seek and ‘to care about’ (Jer. 30:14), אֲשֵֶּ֙ר הִגְל ִ֤יתִי אֶֹּ֔תְכֶּ֖ם שֵָּ֑ם ‘(where I sent you into exile)’. The exiles are also required הִּ֖וָּלֵּן בַעֲדָֽהּ ‘(and pray on its behalf’), with Jeremiah reminding the exiles that in Babylon (there will be well-being for you’). This encapsulates the whole theme of Jeremiah’s message profoundly, “But seek the welfare of the city..., for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Hills states, “Prayer for the welfare of Jerusalem, as

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47 Lundbom, Jeremiah 21-36, 351.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 In this context, it means to pray for guidance, blessings or forgiveness.
exhorted by Ps. 122:6, now becomes praying for the welfare of the enemy city." In the shift of location from Jerusalem to Babylon, the exiles no longer pray only for the welfare of their own city, but now pray for the benefit of others. Once they find the welfare of that city, then its welfare will become theirs; as Klein says, “Babylon’s future is your future.” The rhetorical power of this instruction contains a reversal in the customary order of things, as the exiles must now pray for their enemies in order to receive blessings themselves. However, we perhaps need to note here that the word שלום is related to the verb שלג means “be completed, come to an end.” Therefore, this could be possibly mean that the exiles would not leave Babylon unless they had completed their assignment, which would include serving the length of their punishment. The same theme appears in verse 10, and I will discuss it further there.

Jeremiah here focuses on encouraging the exiles. According to Hills, “Jeremiah gives the exiles directions about their life in Babylon.” Hills refers to the “significance of these three categories of exemption [which] become clearer in light of the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28:30.” Jeremiah reflects a positive assurance by reversing the curses, since the curses speak of: “You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit.” (NRSV).

If we look at it from the point of view of misfortune, Deuteronomy 28 illustrates the consequences of their disobedience. Jeremiah’s message to the exiles, however, seems like reversing the curse into blessing, from hopelessness to hope. He could have

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written this letter to show the exiles that there was a way in which they could be compensated for their misfortunes.

Brueggemann considers that the exiles practised faith during the exile by believing that they could earn their way back to God through repentance, even though they were in a foreign land. If so, the motive behind God’s plan outlined by Jeremiah would have been that they will have had to treat what belonged to the Babylonians as their own. Indeed, the well-being of others would become their own as well, which would reverse a curse into a blessing. This suggests again that Jeremiah was aware of the curse and the consequences of disobedience.

3.2.8. Verse 8

כִּי֩ כֵֹּ֙ה אָמֶַ֜ר יְהוִָ֤ה צְבָאוֹתֵ֙ אֱלֹהֵ֣י יִשְרָאֵל אַל־יַשִָ֧יאוּ לָכֶַּ֛ם נְבִֽיא יכֶּ֥ם אֲשֶּ֥ר־בְקִרְבְכִֶּ֖ם וְקֹֽסְמ
כֶּ֥ם וְאַֽל־תִשְמְעוֵּ֙ל־חֲלֹמֹּ֣ת יכֵֶּ֔ם אֲשֶ֥ר

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream. (NRSV)

In the previous discussion, exhortation became the focus of the prophet, and it reflects a positive approach towards the exile. In the next two verses, the tone changes. The prophet commands the exiles, “do not let, or allow anyone to trick or to deceive you,” not to listen to your prophets who [are] in your midst’. This suggests that there are one or more factions among the exiles who have a different point of view to the one offered by Jeremiah, so he continues telling the exiles about the things that they must not do. The noun your dreams’) contains a second person plural suffix. However, because of the context, BHS suggests changing this to third person plural in line with the LXX, which would give the meaning “their dreams.” The final

54 Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 259.
55 The verb כָּשָׁא in the hiphil means ‘to trick’ or ‘to deceive.’
part here is אֲשֶ֥ר אַתִֶּ֖ם מַחְלְמִֽים (‘which you [are] dreaming’). Again, a change to a third person pronoun in line with the LXX would make better sense in this context.

Jeremiah’s message could also be a *counter statement* against prophets like Hananiah (Jer. 27, 28). This is regarding the early return which was falsely prophesied by the prophets Shemaiah and Hananiah (Jer. 28:5-16). Clements states, “Shemaiah was also in Babylon; and others like Hananiah, were to be found in Judah.”

### 3.2.9. Verse 9

כִ֣י בְשֵֶּ֔קֶּר ה ַ֛ם נִבְאִ֥ים לָכִֶּ֖ם בִשְמִ י לֹ֥א שְלַחְתִִּ֖ם נְאֻם־יְהוָֽה׃

for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the LORD. (NRSV).

These are the words of God conveyed to the exiles by the prophet Jeremiah, something that is reinforced at the end of the verse. But who were these people and what was the lie which they were telling the exiles? It was a lie for which they have used God’s name, הָם נִבְאִ֥ים לָכִֶּ֖ם בִשְמִי “[that] they [are] prophesying to you in my name,” and this unauthorized prophecy has misled the exiles. God says, לֹ֥א שְלַחְתִִּ֖ם “I did not send them.” God has denied that he ever authorized them to prophesy in his name. They were neither from him nor did he send them.

Jeremiah had been troubled before by the false prophets who were unauthorized (Jer. 27:15), since they have been prophesying that “the captivity would soon be over.” God had warned his people not to listen to them (Jer. 27:9). Verse 9 says, כִ֣י בְשֵֶּ֔קֶּר “for [it is] with a lie.” The word כִ֣י (‘for’) here has significance in verses 8-11, and John L. Mackay states,

There then follow four verses [from 8 to 11], each of which begins with *ki*, ‘for’. They set out two main reasons (followed in each case by a

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subordinate reason) as to why the exiles should heed Jeremiah’s advice. Verses 8-9 are one sentence that focuses on the false expectations of the prophets who were active among the exiles; vv. 10-11 are concerned with the plans the Lord has for their future. 58

Jeremiah urges the exiles using the word of God not to be confused by the false prophets’ messages, and he will deliver God’s own message to be proclaimed to the same people. The false prophecy includes the premature return of the exiles, which is against God’s plan. Consequently, the people may be confused as to which message is the false message and which is the one from God. The false prophets were using God’s name to enforce their prophecy by saying “says the Lord.” They were thus committing a serious sin (Deut. 5:11). Therefore, the use of God’s name falsely could have easily been confused with what Jeremiah prophesied, because he used a similar approach of using God’s name to enforce his message. Jeremiah said, נְאֻם־יְהוָֽה “says the Lord,” which is a “fixed tech[nnical] term in prophetic speech.” 59

Klaus Koch reflects on the significance of God’s personal name, pointing to Jeremiah’s monotheism. Koch states,

“The name of Yahweh by no means denotes merely a personal power who has to do with individuals. Yahweh is a power who moves history, who intervenes in world events, even if in a highly differentiated and ‘graduated’ way; though he is also the One God whose name Israel alone knows and uses.” 60

Use of the name allows Jeremiah to ensure that the message is from their ‘One God,’ which reflects the power behind it, in comparison with false messages. Hence, the prophet Jeremiah uses this form of ‘says the Lord’ to ensure that the exiles recognize authenticity of his message, despite the fact that the false prophets are also using this name which reflects nothing but confusion to the exiles.

The statement “I did not send them” helps to clear the confusion and to clarify that God did not send the false prophets, although Jeremiah has no more proof of this than his opponents – other than a genuine long exile. God himself declared in this sentence that what has been prophesied by those false prophets and diviners using his name was a lie. God denies that he authorized them to prophesy in his name. These were neither from him nor did he send them.

3.2.10. Verse 10

For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. (NRSV).

In this verse, the prophet speaks of the future when he says, ‘full’ time is the one which is ‘seventy years’ for Babylon.

Thus, God says that in the fulfilment of their seventy years in Babylon, he will visit the exiles. Using the imperfect, the words of God continue to denote his future actions towards his people. The next words are, ‘and I will carry out for you my good word’). This assumes the seventy years God intends before the exiles return home. This promise is conditional (‘[only] when’), indicating that he has promised their return, but it is subject to the fulfillment of their time in Babylon.

Moreover, God himself speaks, which reflects his promise, and his promise is ‘to take action,’ which is expressed in terms of carrying ‘for you’ what is ‘good.’ This promise is a positive hope for the exiles, referring to their return, which is a positive action thorough God’s word (‘to bring you back to this place’).
God has said with reference to the fulfillment of those seventy years, אֶפְקֹּד אֶּתְכֶּם (‘I will visit you’). It is possible to interpret the completion of the seventy years in Babylon as the fall of the Babylonian Empire (Jer. 50-51). Bright states, “From the fall of Nineveh (612) [BCE] to the fall of Babylon (539) [BCE] was seventy years, from Nebuchadnezzar’s accession (605) [BCE] to the fall of Babylon was sixty six years.”

Elsewhere, he comments, “The figure no doubt originally intended as a round number (cf. xxvii 7, where Babylon’s power is to last to the third generation).” This indicates the time for the exiles to return, delivered by the hand of King Cyrus and his empire, to restore Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple and the wall (Ezra 1-6; Neh. 3), reflecting God’s time and plan to use foreign hands. Nebuchadnezzar delivered God’s will to capture his people and take them into Babylon (2 Kings 24-25; Jer. 17:4-7, 25). This conveys God’s control over the process of the exile in his own time. Bright points out that “Yahweh would, in his own time, fulfill their hopes and lead them home and that, in the meantime, they could call on him and find him – and without temple or cult! – even in the land of their exile.” Therefore, the exile was God’s plan, and he used whom he wanted to deliver his will at whatever time he wished for.

3.2.11. Verse 11

כִ֩י֩ אָנֹּ֜כִֵ֙י יָדֶַ֜עְתִי אֶּּ֛ת־הַמַּחֲשָּׂ֖בָּה אֲשֶׂ֣ר אָנֹּ֥כִַ֛י חֹשַׁ֖ב עֲ֑לֵיכֶם

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

(NRSV)

Jeremiah says that God’s words are that he has prepared (‘the plans which I [am] intending for you’) (Jer. 23:1-4; 24: 5-7; 29:11). Before God

61 Bright, Jeremiah, 208-09.
62 Ibid., 208.
63 Ibid., 211.
revealed that he had planned this for his people, he said back in verse 10 that when the seventy years are completed, then he will take action on what he had intended. This means that the exile was deliberately planned, as well as the whole process until the day that he had intended to return them. In other words, there were plans in place for the people in exile. God had plans for the exiles and they were מַחְשְבִ֤וֹת שָלוֹם (‘plans for [your] welfare,’ or ‘plans for prosperity’) וְלֹ֣א לְרָעֵָּ֔ה (‘and not for evil’). This means the exile was not a negative experience from God’s point of view; he had intended it for a good cause, although it may have looked negative to the victims, but the hope never departs from God’s divine plan. Robert Carroll states,

Hope has not entirely died out in ancient Judah or Jerusalem, nor are grounds for hope completely banished from the tradition. Life in the community could not be lived without hope and, for all its negativity and focus on destruction, the Book of Jeremiah reaffirms hope.64

God has spoken to his people through his prophet Jeremiah, in order that they could trust what he had intended for them. Mackay states, “The Lord declares that he has certain ends in view and invites them [exiles] to trust him.”65 Jeremiah advises the exiles during their calamities and confusion, and verse 11 says, כִּ֩י אָנֹּֽכֵַיר יָדֶַ֜עְתִי (‘for I know’). God has assurance of his own plan, but he requires trust from his people. He knows, אֶּת־הַמַחֲשָּׁ֨בָּֽת אֲשֶָּּ֧ר אָנַֹּ֛כִי חֹּש (‘the plans which I [am] intending for you’). God did not accidentally send his people into exile. He knew the plans he had for the exiles, and he did it deliberately and purposefully. Mackay points out that “the way in which their circumstances will change, and the time scale on which such change will arise is divinely determined and reliable.”66

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65 Mackay, Jeremiah, 166.

66 Ibid.
Jeremiah goes on to clarify this point by saying, לָתָּ֥ת לָכִּ֖ם אַחֲרִית וְתִקְוָֽה (‘to give to you a future and a hope.’) Thus, God intends their exile to be a source of hope rather than of רָעֵָה (‘evil’). Since Hebrew does not have many adjectives, it often uses two nouns linked by a conjunction to indicate a single idea. Therefore the last two words אַחֲרִית וְתִקְוָֽה (‘future’ and ‘hope’) may be better translated hopeful future or positive outcome. I will discuss this positive side of the exile in much more detail in the next chapter when I explain the Samoan concept of la-iō.

3.2.12. Verse 12

וּקְרָאתִֶּ֤ם אֹּתִיֵ֙ וַֽהֲלַכְתֵֶּּ֔ם וְהִתְפַלַלְתִֶּ֖ם א לָ י וְשָמַעְתִִּ֖י אֲל יכֶּֽם׃ Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. (NRSV).

In verse 12, God will allow the exiles to respond to him. Earlier they had been instructed to pray for the welfare of Babylon and inhabitants (v 7), and now the exiles are offered the opportunity to come towards God in the sense of a response: וּקְרָאתִֶּם אֹּתִי (‘and you will call on me’), subject to the completion of the punishment. God’s words expand on what he said in the previous verse about a positive outcome and he predicts a time when the exiles will turn once again to him and pray to him. He also assures them that when that happens, he will hear them. The verb הַפְּלַל is always in the hithpael, but there may be a sense of reflexive, as the meaning can be “to pray for oneself, for guidance.” Therefore, this may have a meaning that the exiles will pray for themselves as part of their response. God may refer to individual exiles and their individual positive response to him. Again, this emphasizes the positive nature of God’s response to his

67 DCH, 5, 784.
68 DCH, 6, 697.
people. God has shown his intention to let them prosper and to give them hope, and this verse shows that God allows the exiles to respond back to him. Mackay suggests, 

Perhaps this is to be understood as a series of contingent futures: “If you will call to me and come and pray to me, then, I will listen to you.” This would indicate that in the Exile the people were to come in repentance before God and develop a faith relationship with him, which would be in accordance with the teaching of Moses as to what would happen after the disobedient Israelites had been scattered among the nations: “When you are in distress and all the things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey him.”

Jeremiah expresses the idea that the exiles are required to respond in repentance and also that once that happens, God himself will listen to them. The word סעְמָה is important, because it can mean “‘to hear (with attentiveness)’ or ‘to listen to,’ i.e. to pay attention to, hear (and respond to).” The stronger meaning of the word emphasizes the positive nature of God’s response to his people. Furthermore, through the repentance that God requires, the kind of intimate relationship that he searches for with his people is promoted. Also, it predicts the new covenant which we find in Jer. 31:31-34.

3.2.13. Verse 13

When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart. (NRSV).

The exiles are called on to take the initiative to seek God first and then they will find God, but it must be “with all your heart” (Deut. 6:4-9). Bright believes that this “does not primarily refer to the emotions, but has the force: “with all your will, energies.” This verse also reinforces the positive nature of v. 12. The exiles are called to search for God; once they search for him, they will find him. However, in order for them to find

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69 Mackay, Jeremiah, 167.
71 Bright, Jeremiah, 209.
him, they must exercise initiative, "and you will seek me." The exiles who are addressed here must search for God in order for them to find him, but the verb נמצאת is perfect with waw conversive, implying the future. Therefore, they have not yet found him; they have neither called upon him nor searched for him yet.

I mentioned earlier that the initiative "to seek" is required as part of their seeking criteria, and בכללבכם ('with all your heart') is also necessary (see Deut. 30-31). Consequently, it is indicated that the exiles will find God when they search for him with their entire hearts, not hearts that are divided by other loyalties, such as those that Josiah had addressed during his reformation (2 Kings 23).

3.2.14. Verse 14

וְנִמְצַ֥אתִי לָכֶּֽם נְאֻ֖ם־יְהוָ֣ה וְשַבְתִ֣י אֶּת־שְבִ֑יתְכֶּ֥ם וְקִבַ֣ץתִּי אֶַּ֠תְכֶּּ֖ם מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִ֞ם וּמִכָּל־הַמְקוֹמָ֗וֹת אֲשֵֶּ֙ר הִדַָ֧חְתִּי אֶּ֤תְכֶַּ֛ם שִָּ֖ם נְאֻֽם־יְהוָ֑ה וַהֲשִבֹּתִ֣י אֵֶּּ֔ל־הֵַ֙מָקֵּ֔וֹם אֲשֶׂר־הִגְל ֥יתִי אֶּ֖תְכִֶּּ֖ם מִשָֽם׃

I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. (NRSV).

At this point, God who sent his people into exile is now working on getting them back. He promises that when they seek him he will be found and that when that happens he will work in favour of the exiles. He says he will gather them, although they are in foreign lands, even though he caused them to be scattered.

Here it seems that God has authorized all the exiles to find him, נמצאת ('and I will let myself be found by you [?]’). It was God who said it, using the same technical term we saw above נואם ('says the LORD'). Not only that, but God will make the exiles prosperous again and will return them to their homeland. In the words “from all the nations,” they will be gathered together, with the verb in the piel giving the more
intense meaning of “to gather people together.””\(^{72}\) God will gather them, שְׁבִיתְכֶּם (‘and from all the places to which I scattered you’). Here, God again takes responsibility for the exile, unlike verse 1, where the immediate responsibility lies with Nebuchadnezzar, “whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile,” where the words are spoken by the narrator. Verse 14 comes from within, in reference to God’s words, while verse 1 is from the narrator.

The two words שְׁבִיתְכֶם are alternative spellings for the direct object of the previous verb שִׁבַּת. Both mean something like “restoration [of your good fortune].”\(^{73}\)

In this expression, God is in action. After he gives the exiles authority to find him, then he allows himself to be found by them. He promises his people what will happen when they find him, וּמִכָל־הַמְקוֹמָ֗וֹת אֲשֵֶּ֙ר הִדַָ֧חְתִי אֶּתְכֶַ֛ם שִָּ֖ם (‘and I will gather you from all the nations’). The piel has the more intense meaning “to gather people together” (also at Deut. 30:3) and it will be וּמִכָל־הַמְקוֹמָ֗וֹת אֲשֵֶּ֙ר הִדַָ֧חְתִי אֶּתְכֶַ֛ם שִָּ֖ם (‘and from all the places which I scattered you there’), showing how God who sent them into exile now works to get them back.

But the final words in this section of the letter are the most important, והֲשִיבֹתִ֣י אֶּתְכֵֶּּ֔ם אֶל־הֵַ֙מָּ֖קֵּוֹם (‘and I will bring you back to the place’) (Jer. 33:10-11). God will bring them back safely to ‘the place,’ which is Jerusalem. (See 1 Kings 8:30; Hosea 5:15; Ezekiel 43:7) God has stated definitely that he caused them to be exiled but is continually in control of the exiles and even their return. The text leaves no doubt about where the place was; it was the place שְׁבִיתְכֶּם (‘from which I caused you to be exiled’). God has banished his own people by sending them into exile, but he then gave them the chance to find him. They are given the authority to find him, and he will work for them and bring them back to himself.

\(^{72}\) DCH 7, 174.

\(^{73}\) DCH 7, 173.
Summary

The portion of Jeremiah’s letter that has been discussed in this chapter highlights the positivity that he has expressed to the exiles. His words of exhortation give confidence, assurance and the light of future hope to the uncertainty, confusion and suffering that the exiles experienced. This is in spite of verses 8-9, where they are instructed ‘not to’ be deceived by false prophecy and diviners among them. Jeremiah is giving the message of truth for the people to serve their punishment and to stay the seventy years which is God’s time. Jeremiah has proved his prophecy to be true (cf. Deut. 18:22) by predicting that Hananiah will die, which comes to pass (Jer. 28:17). Because Jeremiah’s prophecy is authentic, the people must trust him in the light of God’s will. Though the immediate future seems negative, the purpose is protection for the exiles and concern that they can look forward to the future with confidence, not deceived by false hope. Thus, each portion of the letter emphasises Jeremiah’s message for the social well-being of the exiles.

The prophet also emphasises the intimate relationship between the covenantal people and God, repeating how God will respond to them precisely when they seek him wholeheartedly (Deut. 30:2-5; 2 Kings 23: 25). Despite living outside their own homes, the exiles can be settled comfortably and endure their time of trial. Jeremiah’s light of hope has shone across the exiles from Jerusalem, urging them to realise that their suffering is God’s plan. He sent them to Babylon for a reason and he has deliberately set the day when they will leave the foreign power they serve, as well as the time for return. Jeremiah gives hope to the exiles by encouraging them to build, to plant and to give birth which follows the positive multiplication in the persistence of hope. He reminds them of the way to seek God through prayers and repentance (Jer. 18:8-11; 25:5-6),
approaching them like a father to his own children, saying, “surely I know my plans.” Later, he will visit them and bring them home when they have sought him and found him with all their hearts. Therefore, the exiles’ suffering away from their homeland and in exile was only for the purpose of discipline, to repent, to be moulded and to be restored. In addition, Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles reflects the connection and unity between the exiles and the people at home, even though in Jer. 24 those left in Judah are described as “bad figs.” Those in Jerusalem and the homeland, of whom Jeremiah was one, continued in the land that was given as part of their covenant with God. Jeremiah was exempt from God’s judgement because he was a prophet, a messenger of God.

The next chapter will discuss this letter using the *la-tō*, a Samoan contextual approach. It will reflect a similarly positive image of the exile, showing that the sufferings were not caused by hatred but love, as seen by Jeremiah’s approach that gives the light of hope to the exiles. This positive understanding of the exile mirrors that view there is life, hope and a future at the end of suffering and calamities. This positive hope will be discovered in the discussion of the *la-tō* contextual reading approach.
Chapter 4

Introduction

This chapter will discuss an alternative interpretation of the exile; this is not a view of the exile from within but a perspective from outside of its setting. It is a perception from the homeland looking at the exile through the eyes of the taufanua.¹

The taufanua, a newly created concept, is a generic term which applies to anyone who is not away from his/her origin, but remains and awaits at home for the return of the la-tō. The taufanua also plays a significant role in cheering on purposely to encourage the wellbeing of the la-tō. Taufanua would be generally understood by Samoans, due to the etymology of the word tau-fanua, meaning tau (‘fight’) and fanua which means (‘land’). Thus, the word taufanua is someone who fights for the homeland.

In this chapter, I will focus on a Samoan contextual approach that expresses the intimate relationship between the taufanua and the la-tō. I have created the concept taufanua which identifies the positive movement of the la-tō to re-view and reinterpret the exile, not from their position in the foreign land but from the perspective of the homeland. In other words, the voice and the suffering experience of the exiles are seen and heard differently from the standpoint of the taufanua. This is in contrast with the view of those who are exiled and who classify themselves as the victims of the event. Although la-tō signifies absence and being away from home, I argue that la-tō is inclusive with reference to its spiritual and cultural connections and the connections between the la-tō and the taufanua.

¹ See definition of the word taufanua in my chapter 1, pages 31.
This *la-tō* reading challenges the interpretation of the negative experience of the exile by looking at it from the viewpoint of the *taufanua*, which is that there is hope after calamities. The general Samoan understanding of *la-tō* is as a positive experience, although negative to the victims. When considered from the *taufanua* perspective, it is a practice of discipline and a part of being in the *la-tō* process. Hence, this thesis suggests that the exile was purposely for the sake of discipline for God’s people to become better and to get wisdom.

4.1. *Tafeaga*: reflects three different face(s) of the ‘Exile’

The word *tafeaga*\(^2\) in the Samoan Bible translation to translate the word ‘exile’ confuses Samoan Bible readers because it may be used with different faces in different contexts: (1) to describe exile in terms of punishment and banishment,\(^3\) (2) as a refuge for survival, and (3) a face of political imprisonment. These multiple interpretations of the exile reflect the result of using the Samoan word *tafeaga* to translate it. This has confused Samoan readers in terms of interpretation, knowing that these three faces of the exiles are portraying three different perspectives of the exile in the Samoan context. The consequences of these confusions may affect the credibility of the Samoan Bible, which affects the readers and their sense of ethnic cohesiveness.

\(^2\) Note that the word *tafeaga* is inconsistent as to the use of a macron. However, Jeremiah 29:1-14 in the Samoan Bible translation, which is used for this research, does not have a macron. Therefore, it is preferable to use *tafeaga* without a macron.

\(^3\) See chapter 2, pages 75-81.
4.1.1. First Face – Punishment and Banishment

*Tafeaga* was used in the first translation of the Samoan Bible in 1887 to translate the word *exile*. To this day Samoans see *tafeaga* as a punishment and banishment. This interpretation came as a consequence of the translation of the word. Pratt’s definition refers to ‘exile in war,’ while Milner refers to the political exile on Saipan in 1909 during the German colonisation of Samoa.⁴

Arguably, the word *tafeaga* is confusing and open to misinterpretation. This word is not commonly used in everyday living. It refers not to an individual, but to a group of people. If *tafeaga* applied to an individual, then the root *tafe* would become *tafea* as a noun, ‘an exiled person.’ But if the event refers to a group of people, then the root verb *tafe* would become the verb *tāfea* or *tāfefea*. To form the causative, the prefix *fa’a* would be added, and the word becomes *fa’atāfea* or *fa’atāfefea*. Maliko believes this is a causative.⁵ Otherwise *tāfeaga* is the noun. Applying the macron makes the distinction between the plural form and the singular. During the *fono a matai* (‘chiefly council meetings’), when *iuga o le fono* (‘final decision of the meeting’) is to banish a village offender, the word *tafeaga* or *fa’atafea* is never used to express punishment or banishment within the *fono* (‘meeting’), because it does not apply to an individual. Samoan chiefs and the people in general use the word *fa’atea*, which means ‘to banish.’⁶

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⁶ Other Samoan words can be used, e.g. *fa’atula‘i* (‘kicked out’), *fa’asala* (‘punish’) *ati ma le lau, sola le aufuefue*, which means, ‘completely demolish everything that belongs to the offender,’ and then *savali i le ala*, meaning, ‘will let him/her leave the village without a right to dispute.’ These Samoan words convey the same sense of to punish and banish.
Arguably, the choice of the word *tafeaga* by the missionaries portrays the theological interpretation of the exile, that the people were banished from their home and land because of their guilt. This is not necessarily a Samoan traditional understanding. We Samoans hear the word *tafeaga* only in this context to understand it as a form of banishment, reflecting use of the word to translate the Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah.

4.1.2. Second Face – Refuge for survival

The *tafeaga* is understood by Samoans as a movement that drifts people from one place to another,\(^7\) e.g. the lava eruption in Saleaula, Savai’i in 1905 and 1911. Another example is the earthquake and tsunami on 29th September 2009, which was an experience of the *tafeaga* as an unpredictable, dangerous and unavoidable move that is caused by the natural disaster. These events caused a *tafeaga* which forced people to move out of places like Saleaula. The lava eruption was a natural disaster that forced people to drift. The word *tafe*
(‘to drift’) describes a natural force as if it was caused by the flow of the sea’s current. Thus, the *tafeaga* is an ocean(ic) event, even though strictly lava is not. Samoans automatically think of the ocean when hearing the word *tafeaga*, so they are understandably curious when hearing the word in the context of the Babylonian exile. This misunderstanding is a result of the use of the word *tafeaga* in the Samoan Bible translation.

The word *tafeaga* or *tāfeea* unavoidably leads to another word āʻumau (‘alien’ or ‘stranger’),\(^8\) one who settles away from home for a better life. Thus, those who āʻumau

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\(^7\) In this research I am challenging George Pratt’s and Milner’s definition of the word *tafeaga*. Here I am using the definition of the word *tafeaga* from the general understanding of the Samoan word in the Samoan context, as used in *tafeaga*, adrift for survival, e.g. *Lava i Saleaula* (Lava eruption in Saleaula, Savai’i).

\(^8\) Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 62; Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 35. Milner’s definition of the word āʻumau (v), (without a macron) is ‘to settle or dwell.’
and become āumau are aliens or foreign settlers and they are not necessarily guilty. A similar idea is expressed in the book of Ruth, where the famine as a natural disaster forced Naomi and her family to leave home for survival. The word āumau is used in the Samoan Bible translation in Ruth 1:1 in relation to a parallel scenario. This is seen too in the book of Genesis, in the story of Abram (Gen. 12:10) where he was āumau (‘settled’) in Egypt due to famine, like Isaac (Gen. 26:1-33) and Jacob (Gen. 43:1-34). This expression of leaving home for survival is echoed in the Babylonian exile, where the people were forced to leave their homes as their only way of survival. However, arguably the exiles left their homes not only for survival but also because they were guilty of sinful acts.

Since the noun tafeaga is used to translate “the exile” (נְגוֹלֶה) in the Samoan Bible, it identifies an enforced movement of people. This can apply to those who are guilty or innocent, as long as they are relocating their home, regardless of what purpose caused them to leave unwillingly. The Babylonian exiles considered their relocation from Judah to Babylon as the only option of survival. Jer. 29:3 says that his letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan, which means the exiles had travelled across to Babylon after their capture. Psalm 137:1-2 locates the exiles “by the rivers of Babylon.” The exiles walked across the longer distance inland, which may have contributed to their suffering, but there was no natural disaster that caused their drift from Jerusalem to Babylon. It was an exile and deportation after the war of conquest by the Babylonian Empire (2 Kings 24:14-16; Jer. 29:1-2). Therefore, the Babylonian exile is in contrast with the Samoan understanding of tafeaga. They were not stricken by any natural disaster but were forced to leave home because of conquest by the Babylonians.

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9 This is approximately 800 kilometres distance as the crow flies. They would have taken the much longer route through the Fertile Crescent.
4.1.3. Third Face – Political Imprisonment

The political and colonial face of exile is shown when the two words *tafeaga* and *ave fa’atagataotaua* are used to translate ‘to exile’ in the Samoan Bible. *Ave fa’atagataotaua* (Jer. 41:14) expresses the colonial term ‘to take captive’ as well as imprisonment. These terms did not exist in pre-colonial Samoa. An example of the imperial use is the Mau strike under colonial rule in 1909, when the strikers were sentenced to *o le tafeaga i Saipani* (‘the exile at Saipan’). Milner used this example to describe the word *tafeaga*, but Pratt defined it as ‘exile in war.’ This expresses the nature of *tafeaga*, to be drifted from Samoa to Saipan, which was political practice and a colonial enforcement. I will discuss the political and colonial implications of this word below when I suggest use of the *fa’a-tō*.

4.2. La-tō a drive of hope

As I discussed in chapter one, the positive implications of the two words *la* and *tō* appear when both are joined together to form a Samoan concept called *la-tō*. Both *la* and *tō* are complex in meaning; however, both highlight a positive drive of hope. The following section discusses the etymology of *la* and *tō*, the latter especially focusing on examples of grants such as *igāga-tō* and *tō le pule*.

*La* has numerous meanings: ‘sun,’ ‘sail,’ ‘directional pointer,’ ‘destination’ and ‘branch.’ Despite the variety of definitions, the common underlying factor is a positive aspect. *La*, as in ‘sun’, signifies hope through the sun’s continuous rhythm—the sun

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10 Refer to the discussion of pre-colonial Samoa in my chapter 2, page 79-80. For the political implications of *ave fa’atagataotaua*, refer to page 78-80.


12 Ibid.


continues to rise each day. *La*, the sail, captures the wind which the boat relies on to move. The product of this movement is the ability for the boat to explore further—when compared to human-powered rowing—and allows for greater adventures, bringing with it further hope. When locating direction, *la* suggests hope through its movement towards a destination or a place. The ‘branch’ meaning of *la*\(^{15}\) signifies hope through the growth and extension of the tree (Job 14:9). The regrowth of this *la* is portrayed in Job. When this *la* is taken away from the original tree, it is called *la-tō-ese* (‘a branch taken away’). Initially, the process of *la-tō-ese* may sound negative because of separation from the origin; however, in this context, the origin from which the branch came does not change and neither does the original type of branch. Having said this, this *la-tō-ese* does not refer to hopeless or inactive branches,\(^ {16}\) but refers to the branch in a sense of duplicating and multiplying. Even in this separation, the branch is able to be planted, to grow and to multiply like the tree from which it came. Thus, it reflects hope, because new life can come from the *la-tō-ese*. So, while *la* does have many meanings, there is always a sense of hope that relates these meanings together.

The word *tō* shares this characteristic with *la*. Some of the different meanings include ‘pregnancy’ and ‘gift.’ Pregnancy carries hope, because it represents the future of a family and tribal lineage. It is an incarnation of the expectancy that connects people to their origins and their identity. When considered as a gift, *tō* means giving or providing with pleasure and honour. Thus, hope arises from the act as both the grantor and grantee gain benefits. Like *la*, *tō* also has the element of hope which connects each meaning of the word to the others. The *taufanua* understanding of the *la-tō* as a positive

\(^{15}\) The Samoan Bible translation has used this word *la* to translate the word ‘branch’ in Jeremiah 33:15. The word *la-tō* can also refer to this, simply the branches that are taken away from the origin.

\(^{16}\) These unfruitful and hopeless branches appear in Jesus’ discourse about the True Vine in the New Testament (John 15:1-2). Jesus is the true vine, but the believers are referred to as *la* of the vine. When they are cut off from the vine they are called *o lā ua tō-ese*, which means, they are the branches that are taken away from the vine.
process is symbolised in *la-tō-ese* because of its origin, the *taufanua* reflecting the same positive image shown in the Babylonian Exile. Although they left Jerusalem, they were not disconnected from their origins.\(^\text{17}\) Brueggemann says that “the ones exiled are the bearers of Judah’s hope for the future and the special object of God’s attentive love and concern.”\(^\text{18}\)

Verses 5 to 7 highlight the positivity of the exile through its temporariness. To build houses, to plant gardens, and to have wives emphasises this positivity through their temporariness. I will discuss these three terms further below.

### 4.2.1. *igāga-tō* – an everlasting grant

Hope is also evident in the *igāga-tō*, an everlasting grant. Generally, a grant is given to a recipient as a reward for a service, as a *manū* (‘luck’ or ‘good fortune’);\(^\text{19}\) in other words, it is a blessing for satisfactory service. If the service is well-honoured and satisfying, the *manū* can be expressed as either *igāga-tō* or *matūpalapala*, each of which has slightly different meanings and will be explained below. However, if the service is unsatisfactory, then the *tō* is a punishment that will be a *mala* (‘calamity’)\(^\text{20}\) in the form of a curse.

While these two kinds of grant (*igāga-tō* and *matūpalapala*) honour the same service, their significance differs. *Igāga-tō* is a grant that exists through the generations forever. This grant does not exist only for the individual recipient but also extends to the

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\(^\text{17}\) Clements, *Jeremiah*, 171.


\(^\text{19}\) The word *manū* means, ‘luck’ or ‘good fortune’, which also reflects blessings. The word *manū* is a noun and when the suffix *ia* is added, the word *manūia* can be used as verb or adjective. Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 208-9; Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 130.

\(^\text{20}\) The word *mala* means ‘calamity’. It is a noun and when the suffix *ia* is added, the word *mālaia* can still be used as a noun, verb or adjective. Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 201-02; Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 122. The *mala* or *mālaia* can also refer to a curse.
recipient’s descendants, while the matūpalapala is only for the lifetime of the recipient and does not include the descendants. The distinction between these two grants is echoed in the word shalom in verses 7 and 11. Brueggemann explains it this way:

In the juxtaposition of Jer. 29:5-9 and vv. 10-14, we may observe a play on the word shalom. On the one hand, there is a contrast between the shalom which is a task for the exiles (v. 7) and a gift from God to the exiles (v. 11). On the other hand, the shalom of v. 7 is the welfare of the empire, whereas in v. 11 it is shalom for the community of exiles. Thus the two units together provide a subtle reflection on the subject of shalom, a subject which the exiles have on their mind even in their chaotic situation of displacement.

Brueggemann’s discussion of the word shalom also describes these two types of Samoan grant: igāga-tō and matūpalapala. In verse 7, shalom as a task means, the exiles would have to earn the shalom of the city Babylon, and when they find it, it will become their welfare. This shalom can be seen in the Samoan context as matūpalapala. The shalom will become theirs once the exiles find it, but they are still foreigners, knowing they will return to their home after seventy years. Again, this does not guarantee that their descendants will be entitled to claim this shalom as their grant in the future when the exiles’ days are over.

However, in verse 11, shalom refers to God’s plan for the exiles, which is the igāga-tō as an ongoing grant. This forever entitlement ran through lineage, from generations to generation echoing the genealogy of the patriarchs in Matthew 1, Genesis and 1 & 2 Chronicles. Critchlow states,

Matthew 1 selectively reproduces the genealogy of the patriarchs and kings of Israel in a mnemonic of fourteen generations each from Abraham to David, David to Jeconiah (and the Exile), and Jeconiah to Jesus Christ.

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21 Refer to chapter 1, page 24-25, for definitions of these two words, igāga-tō and matūpalapala
22 Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 259.
Obviously, since *igāga-tō* is a grant forever, it can be claimed at any time by those who are entitled to it. The Samoan understanding of *igāga-tō* is a grant earned from satisfactory service, but in context of the exile the exiles do not deserve God’s grant. However, his grace is irrefutable, verses 10-14 convey the notion of the *igāga-tō* as a covenantal grant which endures forever. Since the exiles were not original recipients of the *igāga-tō*, their claim to it does not depend on certain acts or behaviour; they were still fully entitled forever because of blood lines and family lineage.

In some cases, the *igāga-tō* can be given as a gift like the land of Canaan. In his discussion of the book of Joshua, Brueggemann refers to Canaan as a gift from God:

> The gift that YHWH will give is the land of Canaan. Thus, the verb “give” is pervasive in the beginning (1:2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15; 2:9, 14) and in the culmination (23:13–16; 24:4, 8, 11, 13). Most often, the verb concerns the gift of land, but sometimes it is to “give over” the enemies into the hands of Israel. The verb is also used regularly to report that Joshua should “give land,” but in these cases Joshua is simply a human agent for YHWH’s gift.  

This gift was given originally to Abraham as a grant (Gen. 12:1-9). The developed meaning of this covenant is found later in Jer. 30:22 as “And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” The same thought (though not the exact words) is found in Gen. 17:7-8, Exod. 19:5-6, 29:45-46; Deut. 14:2, while the exact words are found in Exod. 6:7 and Lev. 26:11-12. These examples highlight the hope and intimate interaction within the *igāga-tō*, since the exiles are forever entitled to rather than subject to a temporary grant, as *matūpalapala* would suggest. Jerusalem became the forever entitlement to the exiles as home, which reflects the *igāga-tō* that lies in midst of the exile, even though Jerusalem was not an explicit part of the original promise (2 Sam.

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5:6-9). However, Jerusalem was portrayed by Jeremiah as home for the exiles (Jer. 31:12, 23).

The hope of Jerusalem as the *igāga-tō* for the exiles is the realisation of their entitlement to their homes and land upon their return (cf. Jer. 32). The *igāga-tō* expresses its profound meaning as a grant because God has referred to the Israelites as “people of his very own inheritance” (Deut. 4:20). The people who became the Jews claimed that they were the covenantal partners, and thus they became forever the descendants of the same covenant (Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 31:1; 31:31-34; 32:38; Eze. 36:27-28; 37:26-27; Hosea 1:10; Zech. 13:9). This covenantal relationship shows in the intimate connection between God and his people (Hosea 11:1-9), and the *la-tō* reminds us that while there is a geographical displacement for the exiles, there is still a spiritual connection that remains within their relationship with the people at home. Judah is an *igāga-tō* to the *la-tō* as well as to Jeremiah as a *taufanua*. Judah becomes not just home to the *la-tō*, but it also represents the identity of the returnees from the exile and the people at home. Moreover, in this context of the returned exiles, not only the land—as an *igāga-tō*—becomes their identity, so does God as the centre of their religious faith. Daniel Block states, “In keeping with standard ancient Near Eastern perspectives, this sense of security was based on the conviction of an inseparable bond among national patron deity (Yahweh), territory (land of Canaan), and people (nations of Israel).”

Block conveys the triangular connection that strengthens the relationship between God, people and the land. This is similar to the spiritual and perpetual connection of the *la-tō* and the *taufanua* in the Samoan context. This similarity also appears in Jeremiah’s correspondence with the exiles. Clements states: “It is evident that those deported to Babylon were not dispersed and sold as slaves, as might have been expected. Instead

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they remained in tightly knit communities and were able to maintain regular communication with their homeland.”

Thus, the *la-tō* is not a process of physical disconnection that drives people permanently away from their origins and identity. Rather, it is a process of spiritual restoration which continuously re-connects the *la-tō* to the people at home. The letter in Jer. 29:1-14 highlights further how the exiles were not left alone or disconnected from their homeland. Although they were physically away from where they belonged and the place they called home, they were not actually disconnected because of their entitlement, their *igāga-tō*, to the land. This connection suggests both a family inheritance as well as the home to which they would forever belong. This family connection challenges the usual understanding of the exile as a negative experience due to disconnection and condemnation; the exiles were in fact still connected with their home and land. It also reflects the positive understanding of the *la-tō-ese* from its origin. The separation does not reflect any isolated element of the *la-tō*, but rather indicates ongoing strength through spiritual and communal connection.

In addition, the *igāga-tō* as a land gift solidifies the covenantal relationship between God and his people, even in the *la-tō* by providing the exiles with identity through their connection to their home and land. Jeremiah’s letter states in 29:1 that it is from Jerusalem, which is the site of the covenant with David, the place where God has chosen for his ‘Name’ to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5-7). Jerusalem is explicitly mentioned as the source of the letter, and the word itself is included four times within the first two verses of the chapter. Not only is the city of Jerusalem the centre of their spiritual life, but it is also a covenantal home for those who are away or in the *la-tō*. The letters and correspondence from Jeremiah to the exiles further emphasise the connection between

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the la-tō and the taufanua. Each letter was written purposely to reach the exiles in Babylon, with an exchange between there and Jerusalem. The exiles were not disconnected from their roots in Jerusalem, and these roots conveyed the identity of the people, as God had promised in the covenants with the patriarchs and Moses. The land that was given as an igāga-tō remains forever (Deut. 30). Therefore, regardless of how serious the punishment/banishment was, the exiles were still full heirs to the land of their forefathers forever, the land of Judah. Arguably, in this light, Jeremiah may have given the people the confidence to respond to a doubt among some other exiles that the covenant with God is still valid. Thus, God’s grace and peace can also be seen as igāga-tō, where the people are entitled forever and unconditionally.

Similarly to the connection with land, there is a connection signified by God’s personal name. In verse 4, the prophet has used two names of God that identify him as the covenantal God. The name צְבָאוֹת is translated into Samoan as o leova o ‘au, which means ‘Lord of Hosts,’ and אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל was translated as le Atua o Isaraelu which means ‘God of Israel.’ The ‘Lord of Hosts’ symbolises God as protective, he is the God of the hosts of heaven and earth, which expresses his majesty, power and authority to accomplish any scenario (Isa. 1:24; Ps. 46:8). The Hebrew name אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘God of Israel’ portrays his presence, accessibility and also that he is near (Exod. 3:14; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 25:11; 31:3; 107:13). The use of God’s names together in verse 4 may be intended to remind the people of his covenant with them. This explicitly spells out that God has a personal and intimate relationship with them.

In the Samoan context, a matai (a chiefly title) is significant, because it carries dignity, honour and authoritative responsibilities.27 The chiefly title gives the matai

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27 The use of the word ‘authoritative responsibilities’ symbolises the authority that is given to the matai because of his chiefly title. The chiefly title gives the matai (‘chief’) the authority to rule both the people of his/her family as well as their family lands.
authority to rule both the members of his/her extended family and their family lands, and the chief is responsible for the wellbeing of the whole family. In most cases, the matai can have several titles. Using two titles together is normal as it reflects the person as having both authority and respect. Jeremiah uses two of God’s titles twice, ‘God of Israel’ and ‘Lord of Hosts,’ in verses 4 and 8, titles which resemble chiefly titles. For Samoans, they emphasise loyalty and respect for God and his authority, which Jeremiah too may have wished the exiles to recognise and affirm.

4.2.2. tō le pule – grant of an authority

Granting authority in the Samoan context is uncommon and not easily done. The authority comes from the chiefs or leaders, or sometimes it could be parents. When an authority is given, it carries with it mana (‘power’) and full commitment. Authority will be granted to a chosen person only when they reach the stage of being trustworthy, highly honoured, and reliable.

The prophet Jeremiah was chosen and authorised by God to proclaim his words to the people (Jer. 1:9-10), even though Jeremiah had stated his unworthiness. It was a grant that came with mana, as 29:1 וְאֵלֶֹהֵדִיבְּרִים הַסַּפֶּר is translated o upu nei o le tusi, “these are the words of the letter,” the grant tō le pule. In this context, Jeremiah was in a position where God had tō le pule, meaning Jeremiah had been granted with an authority to reveal God’s word. This pule (‘authority’) is not just a grant; it comes with power and a message to respond instantly. It works distinctively in a reciprocal way of tō atu (‘giving’) and tō mai (‘taking’), which balance up both parties, the person who...
departs and the person who waits at home. The idea of reciprocity purposely unites everyone, the people who have gone into la-tō, when they leave on their own free will, as members of the community. When leaving home as a consequence of their punishment, they are fa’a-tō (‘cursed’) from their home and land. Nevertheless, their return is called tō a’i taunu’u, which means, ‘the people who left home have arrived.’

This applies in any circumstance, regardless of what caused them to leave.

In the Samoan context, the upu (‘words’) are authoritative and powerful. The words are also considered to be what feeds and disciplines us. The Samoan axiom, O tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala, a o le tama a le manu e fafaga i fuga o laau is translated “the children/offspring of people are fed with words and instruction, the offspring of birds are fed with seeds of flowers and plants.” Through Jeremiah, God has tō le pule with reference to the letter, in which the light of hope is communicated to the exile’s chaos. Furthermore, verses 4, 8, 9 and 14 say, “thus says the Lord,” explicitly stating that the message and authority are both from God.

4.2.3. Tautai in the La-tō

The tautai (‘fisherman’; also ‘the skipper of the canoe’) in the Samoan context plays a significant role as a leader or someone who is responsible for the faiva (‘fishing trip’). The tautai is in charge of any decision-making throughout the whole journey. The tautai are the people who apply their specialities, experiences and skills to monitor and guide the journey along the way. Their expertise is used in all sorts of weather conditions; for example, whether to apply the la-afa or la-fala 29 (‘sail’). The point here is that the tautai is the one who makes the right call at the right time and considers the options in relation to the conditions and the context.

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29 Refer to chapter 1, page 20-21, for the discussions of these two types of la (‘sails’).
The word *tautai* expresses a similar meaning to the words הָ֗זִּקְנִ֣י הַגּוֹלָּ֗ה. I have translated them as *ali‘i sili* (‘the elders of the ones deported into exile’), in contrast with the single word *ali‘i* that was used in the missionaries’ Bible translation. The word הָ֗זִּקְנִ֣י (‘elders’), as I have discussed in Chapter 3, is *ali‘i* meaning ‘elders,’ and the word הָ֗זִּקְנִ֣י refers to those who were deported into exile who were classified as seniors and had experience for the community. They were the ones that Jeremiah has targeted as the recipients of the letter.

In the Samoan context *tautai* in different scenarios will raise different *la* (‘sails’), so that the rougher the sea gets, the more is expected of the *tautai*. However, his experience and expertise would help him to decide whether to raise *la-afoa* or *la-fala*. A person who is highly experienced is called a *tautai matapalapala* (‘talented and experienced skipper’). The *tautai matapalapala* earns his title from his unique specialities, and he has the final say in most cases that face the canoe, as well as for the safety of the people on board. Relating to the context of the exile, it is possible to say that God has approached the exiles through his prophet Jeremiah from the perspective of the *tautai matapalapala* (‘a trustworthy and experienced skipper’), who gives the right call at the right time. In verse 11, God says that he knows his plan; this is a sign of the assurance which deals with the uncertainty and suffering of the exiles.

In this case, God’s instructions have been passed through Jeremiah to the *ali‘i sili*, who represent the *tautai* role within the exile community. While the *tautai* are in the *la-tō*, Jeremiah plays the role of the *taufanua* who prays for the well-being and the

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30 Refer to Appendix, page 181, 184, for discussion of these words *ali‘i* and *ali‘i sili*.

31 *Tautai matapalapala*: There are many *tautai*, but not necessarily all *tautai* can be given the title *tautai matapalapala*. It is almost impossible to have someone who has all the knowledge and experience that could possibly earn the title, *tautai matapalapala*. It is highly honoured and respected in Samoan culture.

32 Refer to my chapter 1, page 31, for the discussion of *taliuta*, which is similar to the *taufanua*.
success of the tautai. The instructions in the letter in verses 5-14 are similar to a Samoan understanding of choosing an alternative type of la (‘sail’) to raise. Due to the situation faced by the people, the tautai must decide for the people’s safety. This will give their journey peace, smooth sailing, and importantly give confidence and assurance.

The prophet has given words to the ali‘i sili (‘elders’) as targeted recipients of the letter regarding what to recommend to the people for their wellbeing. The word tō in this setting symbolically requires the right sail to be raised. Jeremiah was not allowed by God to get married and have a family, and he was dealing with starvation and turmoil because of the destruction of Jerusalem.33 His context in Judah may have encouraged him to reflect positively toward the people of the exile, to build houses, plant gardens and have wives and multiply. According to God’s plan they would return and restore Jerusalem when the seventy years was completed. This connects with a Samoan understanding of positive movement in times of calamity: to build houses, to plant gardens and to give your sons and daughters in marriage.

Moreover, the la-tō is usually a movement that deals with unexpected future challenges. Despite the expertise and skills of the tautai, the fact is undeniable that the sea has unpredictable conditions. It is called in Samoa e lē iloa taga e fai i vasa meaning, “when it comes to the ocean, it is uncompromised.” This is further expressed by the Samoan saying, O le sami o le tu'ugamau e lē 'elia which may be translated, “the sea is a grave that doesn’t need to be dug.” These unpredictable scenarios have brought Samoan people over the years to recognise major concerns when traveling, especially when crossing the ocean. These ocean threats not only concern the people who are in the la-tō but also the taufanua.

33 Nelson, Historical Roots of the Old Testament (1200/63 BCE), 165.
Sailing into a deep open blue sea means heading towards a wider world and a bigger picture of our small home and origin. Expectation is uncertain and survival is unpredictable. The only clue that one has on board is to listen to the tautai, to follow the la fa'ailo folau (‘directional pointer or signs’) and continue with the drift. This is when both the la-tō and the taufanua are responsible for intersecting with God through their prayers. Hence, despite the physical distancing of those who are in the la-tō from the taufanua, they become closer because of their spiritual concern for the safety of each other. Here we can see Jeremiah the taufanua intervenes with the la-tō to pray for the wellbeing of the city of Babylon (29:7) in order for them to prosper. As much as Jeremiah requires the la-tō to pray for their own wellbeing, the people at home also ask Jeremiah the taufanua to pray for God’s counsel and advice so that they may do well (42:2–4).

4.3. Taufanua view: A home-land perspective of the exile

Now that the role of the la-tō has been discussed, we turn to the perspective of the taufanua, which is in contrast to the la-tō experience. This perspective is from the homeland of the exiled ones and represents a further positive aspect. Fa’a-tō has different meanings: ‘discipline,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘divine justice,’ ‘parental justice,’ ‘God’s plan and His motive behind it,’ showing the positivity of the taufanua.

In the context of the exile, Jeremiah plays the role of the taufanua, who sees the exile from home, and also he sees the positive perspective rather than the suffering and condemnation. The remnant, or the people who did not go into exile, are not classified in this discussion as taufanua, because they were also guilty and deserved to go into exile. Failure to go into exile was not their choice but they were not chosen because they were classified as the poorest people of the land according to the king of Babylon.
(Jer. 39:10; 40:7; 52:16). That they were guilty may be deduced from the description of them as “bad figs” in Jer. 24:8.

4.3.1. Fa’a-tō (‘Curse’) – Exile

The word fa’a-tō rather than tafeaga reflects better the prophesied curse, as a consequence of the exiles’ evil acts (Jer. 2:13) that resulted in their banishment (Jer. 15:1-4). Before discussing the fa’a-tō, it is important to consider its relationship to the exile. The fa’a-tō encapsulates positive hope rather than the negative despair that may have been caused by the exiles’ guilt and rebellious acts. Fa’a-tō is understood as not the best way to leave the Samoan home, but it offers a remarkable turnaround through repentance (Deut 30). Repentance lies at the end of the fa’a-tō process, when the offender considers it as wise discipline for betterment. Thus fa’a-tō can not only be seen as a way to exit the home but also to re-enter it by reversing the curse into a blessing when the offender finds repentance.

Likewise, Jeremiah encourages the people to understand that they need to repent. Repentance is their only way back, by seeking God wholeheartedly. In the Samoan context, the fa’a-tō shares similarities to the exile, where repentance is required in order to return home. Although God used the power of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire as his instrument to punish his people, this positive lens shows that it was for disciplining them. Living in a foreign land and facing trauma was a space allowed by God for them to learn. In Samoan, they had tō-esea (‘go away’) into la-tō in order for their la to rise again. The exiles failed to see what God had planned for them – discipline to become better people. Rather than seeing it positively, they questioned the length of the exile (Psalm 89:46); they also disputed the authenticity of God’s covenant with them (Psalm
89:49). The exiles were left with a ‘broken promise.’ Jeremiah responded to the tragedies, offering hope and a future.

When considered from the position of the taufanua, the fa’a-tō can be seen as a form of discipline that is based on love rather than on punishment shrouded in hate. Similarly, God’s discipline is described in Jeremiah’s prayer, where he asks God to show his love by punishing (Jer. 32:18). Therefore, in the Samoan understanding of God’s discipline, according to Jeremiah’s prayer, the fa’a-tō does not mean that God condemns the sinner’s descendants but that he disciplines them because he loves them.

Jeremiah identifies those who joined the exile as good figs in a vision in 24:5, saying, “… Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.” Here God classifies those who were in the la-tō as good figs, in contrast with those who remained in the homeland as bad figs (24:8-9). Jeremiah’s interpretation of the bad figs affirms the guilt of those at home. They are not taufanua due to the fact that they too share the guilt of God’s punishment; the only difference is their location. Nevertheless, the good figs reflect the exile as a positive and useful event rather than a curse. The positivity is echoed in the temporary nature of the exile.

In Jeremiah 29:1, the verb הֶּגְלָָ֧ה is translated in the original Samoan Bible as nā tafea which means, “went into exile.” The use of the words nā tafea indicate the event as temporary as well as a drift away from home. The words do not indicate the guilt of the exiles but only portray the relocating of the people. Presumably the missionary

35 NRSV.
translators understood the temporary nature of the exile, because they used the particle nā rather than sā. However, the choice of the words nā tafea is imperfect.

Alternatively, I suggest the words nā fa’a-tō give a better understanding of the nature of the exile. The prefix fa’a works as a causative, placed in front of the verb tō, which means that God has caused this to happen to this specific group. They were the people that God had fa’a-tō, and he caused them to leave their homes in Jerusalem. The particle nā shows temporariness, which gives both nā fa’a-tō and nā tafea to highlight the temporariness of the exile. However, my point is what the words nā fa’a-tō offer rather than nā tafea. The words nā fa’a-tō is more appropriate because it not only expresses temporary dislocation away from home but also indicates the guilt of the exiles. Though guilt is not inherent in the Hebrew words, the Samoan translation, like all translation, exhibits a degree of interpretation.

I suggest that the noun fa’a-tō rather than tafeaga expresses more explicitly what the noun גּוֹלָה means in the context of the Babylonian Exile. Since the Babylonian exiles deserved their punishment and banishment, the word fa’a-tō gives the impression of tō (‘to give’) as a curse, and also includes tō (‘to take’) as in tō-ese (‘take away’) from one’s origin. Both meanings, fa’a-tō and tō-ese express the concept of a curse in this context. Consequently, they express what the law warned: the people went into the

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36 See Mosel, Samoan Reference Grammar, 340-42. The choice between sā and nā determines, whether the verbs are temporary or permanent. nā determines the temporary nature of the verb, e.g. nā tafea. According to Ulrike Mosel, “…the use of nā is restricted to the expression of temporarily limited situations which are marked off from other events.” She says that nā indicates a limited time, which means, the exile has a limited time frame. Sā, however, is used for a pre-existing event in the past without limitation. Therefore, the use of the nā before the word tafea in the Samoan Bible translation affirms the temporary implication of the exile, according to Mosel’s definition. In other words, nā would suggest a temporary event, but sā suggests a permanent one.

37 Mosel, Samoan Reference Grammar, 175.

38 Ibid., 340-42.


40 Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 268. Milner uses the word fa’atō’ese, meaning, ‘taken away’, and the word tō’ese means, ‘to take away’. Refer to my chapter 1, page 28, for discussion of these tō definitions.
exile because they had failed to comply (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). The fa’a-tō implies a form of discipline when the parents have no control over their children’s behaviour, drawing a boundary line to underpin the va within family perimeters, especially between parents and children. However, the word tafeaga was used by missionaries to highlight the relocation of people, as in the Babylonian Exile. According to the Samoan understanding of tafeaga, relocation for survival does not imply guilt. Therefore, tafeaga is inadequate because it doesn’t include the guilt of the exiles. Consequently, the suggestion of fa’a-tō not only expresses the relocation of the exiles but also indicates their guilt.

4.3.2. Fa’a-tō – a removable imposition

The fa’a-tō (‘curse’)\textsuperscript{41} expresses punishment which results in banishment. It is given out as a tō (‘grant’), the consequence of unsatisfying service, which may be in a legal or cultural sense. For example, a child may cross the boundaries disgracefully with their parents by showing disrespect, or similarly towards the community. In the Samoan context, this grant that can only be found communally or within the family context from the parents to the children and the village chiefs to village members. In this regard, the village in this context may also classified as a family. The fa’a-tō can only be granted in one direction, only from parents to their children; it does not apply from children to their parents, nor between siblings. In a similar way to the village councils and village members, only chiefs are entitled to enforce this grant.

The fa’a-tō grant is only a temporary imposition and is removable. It articulates the poor and unsatisfactory relationship within the family circle and is only granted to a son or daughter when there is no control over their behaviour. It highlights the top-down

\textsuperscript{41} Ma’ia’i, Tusi’upu Samoa, 594. The word ‘curse’ is translated into Samoan by several words, e.g. fa’a-tōina, fetu’u, fa’amalūaina.
power of parents over children. Its purpose is to minimise disrespect within the community and in the relationship between parents and children.

I would argue that the Babylonian exile in Jeremiah is a fa’a-tō – a removable imposition. As fa’a-tō, it shares the same top-down system that comes from God to his people in order to serve their banishment away from home. This top-down system reflects similarly the seniority within a Samoan family setting, between parents and their children – where respect is recognised. The fa’a-tō in the Samoan context usually comes as instructive and authoritative, and is delivered in upu (‘words’).

Furthermore, the fa’a-tō from the parents is not a punishment that harms their children physically, but within the powerful words, expresses the purpose of the fa’a-tō. The Samoan parent usually say this, when he/she fa’a-tō his/her child, e o’o mai lo’u oti ou te lē toe fia va’ai ia te oe, which could be translated, “to the day I die, I will never ever want to see you again”. This is a powerful statement and effective curse in the Samoan context. It condemns and breaks every bond and connection within the family sphere.

Although, these words are delivered in time of anger and despise to the end of a parent’s days, according to the Samoan culture, these are words of discipline that come with love and wisdom. When a parent is settled and has a peaceful mind-set, he/she realises and is sorry for what was said. In response, the parent usually ask to fa’afo’i mai a’u upu, which means, ‘to reverse my words’ of fa’a-tō, but to conclude and resolve the calamities with blessing the child again with ‘words’ of exhortation and wellbeing. Therefore, the fa’a-tō is only temporary and removable, and it was only for the purpose of discipline to better the child.

42 The top-down system applies in the Samoan culture where the fa’a-tō can only be from whomever is in charge. For example, parents to their children, matai (‘chiefs’) to the village members or God to his people. The fa’a-tō cannot be from bottom to top, which means, the children cannot fa’a-tō their parents. See also in this chapter the discussion of the word fa’a-tō as a parental concept.
Similarly, this *fa-a-tō* can be seen in God’s relationship with his people. God has said in the words of a curse that he would bring death and tragedy to his own people (2 Kgs 24; Jer. 15), which made the people believe that God had forsaken them. The exile fulfilled that curse. However, the exiles did not realise that the *fa’a-tō* was only for their discipline in order for them to be transformed. They also did not realise that it was only for a time and was a removeable imposition. God punished and at the same time provided shelter and hope by saying ‘build and plant,’ which reflects his concern and care (Jer. 29:5-7). Jeremiah has been appointed by God to remind them about his divine plan. Verses 10-14 express God’s *fa’a-tō*, a serious punishment that does not mean he forsakes them but that he wants to bring them closer to him than before (Jer. 31: 31-34).

4.3.3. The temporariness of the *fa’a-tō*.

The temporariness of *fa’a-tō* is expressed in verses 5-7 of the letter, where Jeremiah urges the exiles to build, plant, have wives, keep on multiplying and not to decrease. Previously these verses have been discussed in relation to the flexibility and the removability of the *fa’a-tō*, which gives the impression of being a temporary imposition in respect of community, family and children. The words מָנוּ בָתִים that Jeremiah uses in the letter was translated in the Samoan Bible as *fāi fale*. The Hebrew does not give a distinction of whether the building is permanent or temporary; all it says is ‘build.’

The verb *fāi* (with a macron) is used in the Samoan Bible translation, but I argue that it should be the verb *fai* (without the macron), which expresses not only ‘to build’ but also permanency, in the sense of a ‘secured fix.’ Thus *fai* conveys the impression of a solid and stable settlement which reflects longevity and security. The

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43 Refer to my chapter 2, page 68, for the word *fāi* and *fai*.

context of the exile is explicitly not permanent but obviously temporary. Alternatively, the word \( tō \) could be used, meaning ‘to build or make,’ which expresses the temporariness of the settlement.

I suggest that the words \( tō fale \) should be used in the Samoan Bible translation rather than \( fāi fale \). \( Tō fale \) not only expresses the initiative to build but also portrays the temporary nature of the exile. The word \( tō \) means, ‘to build’ \(^{47}\) ‘to put up’ or ‘to make’ just according to the appropriate timeframe but not necessarily for a permanent settlement. There are other similar temporary implications to \( tō fale \), such as \( tō le taufa’anu’u \) and \( tō lau api \) \(^{48}\) which are similarly related in a sense of providing a temporary relief, or the flexibility of removability.

According to my understanding, Jeremiah uses the words \( tō fale \) (‘build houses’) and \( nonofo ai \) (‘live in them’) and \( tōtō laau ma ‘aai ai i o latou fua \) (‘plant gardens and eat what they produce’) in a sense that suggests that the exiles will settle in Babylon only temporarily. Bright suggests “[the seventy years] was no doubt originally intended as a round number (cf. [27]:7, where Babylon’s power is to last to the third generation).”\(^{49}\) Furthermore, these words indicate hope of wellbeing as regards their

\(^{45}\) Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 310. See also in my chapter 1 page 26-27, in the discussion of \( tō-fale \) (‘build houses’).

\(^{46}\) Note the inconsistency of the use of a macron on the word \( fai \). The \( fai \) with a macron is used in the Samoan Bible translation does not mean ‘to build.’ Refer to my chapter 2, page 68, for the discussion of this issue.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) The word \( tō fale \) is applied to the \( tautai \) (‘fisherman’) in the phrase \( tō le fale o le tautai \), meaning, the \( tautai \) has to build his house to settle. It is symbolic in a sense that the \( tautai \) has to rest from all the hardships that he may be facing throughout his journey. In some cases, the \( tautai \) call it \( ua tō le taufa’anu’u \), which means the big black cloud called \( taufa’anu’u \), has covered the sun, and its shadow has cast on the \( tautai \). The shadow of the \( taufa’anu’u \) becomes a relief to the \( tautai \) from facing the hot sun during the day. Thus the \( tautai \) call this \( ua tō le taufa’anu’u \), in relation to the big black cloud as a shelter for him. The \( tō fale \) (plural) or \( tō le fale \) (singular), does not commonly apply to building a permanent house to settle. It only applies to the transitory uncertain context of the \( tautai \), who is temporarily facing a hot day. Hence, the \( taufa’anu’u \) (‘big black cloud’) becomes the temporary shelter of the \( tautai \) while fishing or working during a required project. The same principle applies when people are cheering or praying for the well-being of a special event. It is so called “\( tō fale tapua i’i \), (build houses for worshipping or cheering’). Again, the idea of \( tō le fale \) here is only temporary.

\(^{49}\) Bright, *Jeremiah, Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 208.
food supply. However, in a similar way to the translation discussed above, they do not portray the temporary context of the exile. The Hebrew words נטע Vânegan mean ‘plant gardens,’ but the words totōina fa’atoaga\(^{50}\) express the intention of making a longer settlement which could be permanent. The word fa’atoaga is commonly translated as ‘plantation’\(^{51}\) from the root word fa’ato’a meaning “(1) to commence a plantation, to cultivate land for the first time after being deserted, (2) To cause or allow to settle, to let subside.”\(^{52}\) Pratt’s definition delivers the notion ‘to settle,’ which affirms the common understanding of the word fa’atoaga as ‘plantation’ to distinguish it from a temporary garden. Furthermore, Ma’ia’i’s Samoan dictionary uses the words totōina to-ogā-laau-ola\(^{53}\) which is commonly known by Samoans as to-gā-laau-aina (‘vegetable garden’), which I suggest is the correct phrase because it is a temporary garden.

Verse 6a is ina faiavā ia outou, ma ia fananau ai atalii ma afafine ia te outou ‘take wives, and have sons and daughters.’ The nature of pregnancy and childbearing emphasises further the positive hope for the exiles, because pregnancy is a temporary process lasting approximately nine months and also it is temporary in terms of flexibility and mobility. Marriage and childbearing do not suggest any permanent settlement but portray the future hope that perhaps will be fulfilled in the return of the exiles in years to come, reflecting the image of a gift forever through family descendants and tribal lineage. Clements states, “None of those who had been taken to Babylon could hope to return to their homeland. Only their children might hope to do

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\(^{50}\) The word fa’ato‘aga has been used in the Samoan Bible translation, with neither a macron nor comma, though fa’ato‘aga is found in Pratt’s Samoan Dictionary.


\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ma’ia’i, Tusi’upu Samoa, 679.
This affirms that, though their stay was temporary, it was sufficiently long that they must continue to live ordinary lives.

This is also seen in verse 10b, כִַ֠י לְפִׁ֞י מְלָֹ֧את לְבָב (‘when Babylon’s seventy years are completed’) which could be translated, \textit{A mae’a le fitu sefulu tausaga}. The temporariness of the exile emerges when the timeframe is given as a sign of hope. This verse shows that when the seventy years is up, then the exiles will return again.

Lundbom points out in this regard that “Jeremiah’s word to them is, settle in for a time; you will not be returning home in the near future.” Lundbom highlights Jeremiah’s understanding of the exile – that they will return only when the seventy years is completed. This expression ‘completed’ shows that the return of the exile will not be soon, but eventually they will return after seventy years in Babylon (Jer. 29:10). Hence the exile is only a matter of time, it is not permanent but reflects their temporary removable settlement. Even so, not everyone returned and some decided to settle in Babylon.

4.3.4. \textit{Fa’a-tō} as divine justice

The \textit{fa’a-tō} reflects divine justice like the role of parents which God highlights through the exile to demonstrate the authenticity and the righteousness of God’s will. God punishes the exiles, and later he will punish Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians for their iniquities (Jer. 25:12). Not only did he punish the exiles, he also punished the people that remained in Jerusalem, even those in Egypt (Jer. 24:8-10). Through this, we can see God’s divine justice on each and every one to be disciplined. In his divine justice he plays a role of a father and a parent to everyone.

\footnotesize{
\begin{enumerate}
\item Clements, \textit{Jeremiah}, 172.
\item Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 21-36}, 351.
\end{enumerate}}
*Fa’a-tō* is important, as it ensures respect of the sacredness of the space within family relationships. The word *fa’a-tō* meaning ‘to curse’\(^{56}\) mirrors divine justice rather than human justice, in reference to the original Hebrew word \(\pi\gamma\upsilon\)\. In accordance with this word \(\pi\gamma\upsilon\) it is stated in Leviticus 26:14-39, and Deuteronomy 28:15-68, that it will be the consequence of the people’s disobedience to God’s commandments. It is mentioned in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that if you obey you will be blessed, if you disobey you will be cursed (Lev. 26:1-39; Deut. 28:1-68). The exiles fell into the hands of God’s divine justice rather than human justice, even though God used the imperial power of Babylon to punish his own people.

### 4.3.5. The *fa’a-tō* – God’s plan

In Jeremiah 29:11, God reveals that the exile was a part of God’s plan: a divine plan that is beyond human understanding (Isaiah 55:11). In this light, the exiles learn that the true motive behind his plan is his mercy. John L. Mackay states,

> ‘Hope and a future’ reverses the order of the Hebrew, ‘a future and hope’, where ‘future’ (*aharit*) refers to what is metaphorically behind one, and therefore unseen and unknown. Viewing the future in this way is the reverse of the English idiom. The two words probably convey one thought, a hopeful future (31:17), or the future you hope for. It is not something that will merely be a projection of human desires, but something divinely determined.\(^{57}\)

This reversal of order reflects the nature of God’s plan to punish his own people, but he says in the same verse that his plans were not to harm them but to make them prosper and give them hope. In this context, punishment is not only something that will make them suffer but also it will make the people better and blessed. This exile can also be

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\(^{56}\) Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 138. *Fa’a-tō* has another meaning, to give over, as land sold or given.

\(^{57}\) Mackay, *Jeremiah 2*, 166.
seen in the way God disciplines his own people, so that through suffering there is hope and a future.

God’s plan was not accidental, for it was planned through generations with many warnings. Brueggemann says, “God has a long-term plan for Judah.”58 His prophets prophesied the time that the exile would happen (2 Kings 20:16-19) and even the time that they will return (Isaiah 11:11-12, Ezekiel 20:34; 36:11; Zephaniah 3:8-10). Part of verse 10 says כִַ֠י לְפִי מְלָֹ֧את לְבָבֶַּ֛ל which is translated as A fa’aatoatoaina tauaiga e fitugafulu i Papelonia, meaning “when Babylon’s seventy years are completed.” This explicitly shows that God has planned, when to leave and when to return.

However, in verse 10, the Samoan missionaries’ translation has missed the point of emphasis by using the word fa’aatoatoaina (‘to complete’),59 which means to complete the actual seventy years. The context of the exile מְלָֹ֧את makes it clear that the fullness of the punishment must be completed. The point that needs to be clear here is that the word fa’aatoatoaina in the original translation may be inappropriate as it precisely reflects the exact seventy years. Arguably, the completion of the exile refers neither logically nor literally to the completion of the actual seventy years, but until the punishment is served completely. Brueggemann says “The reference to seventy years (25:11[29:10]) is apparently a convention, perhaps not to be taken literally.”60 I would argue, with reference to the rest of verse 10, that when the time is up, he will visit them there. Then verses 12-14 highlight the conditions to be met and fulfilled. Therefore, the conditions of the exiles here, may disregard the actual seventy years. The completion of their punishment reflects simply the certainty of their return.

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58 Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 258.
60 Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 258.
Alternatively, I suggest the word ma’ea (‘to be complete[d], to be well done, be ready’)\(^{61}\) rather than fa’aatoatoaina may give a better impression of the fulfillment of their punishment. Arguably, the word ma’ea not only conveys the completion of their banishment, but also allows another future event to be forecast, namely their return, because the word ma’ea can connect the present and the future. For example: *A ma’ea lau galuega ona e sau lea i le fale* means, ‘when your work is finished,’ then come home. *Ma’ea lau galuega* (‘your work is finished’) forecasts ‘come home.’

Furthermore, the seventy years in Babylon could possibly symbolize the length of human life as a generation, with reference to Psalm 90:10.\(^{62}\) This means approximately seventy years. When the older generation is gone then the new generation will return to rebuild Jerusalem. God’s plan has been scheduled to encapsulate the purpose and the understanding of the fa’a-tō.

### 4.3.6. Fa’a-tō i ai le loto (‘Motive behind the Plan’)

As discussed, God’s plan was not a coincidence without meaning or purpose. The motive behind God’s plan can be understood more deeply by an alternative Samoan translation from the Hebrew text of verse 11:

\[כִ֩י֩ אָנֹּ֤וֹ֙י יָדֶַ֜עְתִי אֶּת־הַמַחֲשָבָֹּ֗ת אֲשֶָּ֧ר אָנַֹּ֛י חֹּש ֥ב עֲל־יכִֶּּ֖ם נְאֻם־יְהוָ֣ה מַחְשְבִ֤וֹת שָלוֹםֵ֙ וְלֹ֣֚א לְרָעֵָּ֔ה לָת֛֝ל לָכִֶּּ֖ם אַחֲרִ֥ית וְתִקְוָֽה׃\]

This is translated in the Samoan Bible as

\[aua o a’u nei, ua ou iloa manatu ua ou manatu ai ia te outou, o manatu i le manuia, a e le o le malaia, o loo fetalai mai ai Ieova, e foaina atu ia te outou le iuga e i ai le faamoemoe.\]

It is not clear however what the word מַחְשְבִ֤וֹת ‘plans’ refers to. In the Samoan Bible translation, *manatu* describes God’s thought, but this Samoan word does not capture the profound intention behind God’s plan for the exiles. In the Hebrew text, his plan is

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described by the word מַחְשְׁבָּת which derives from the verb בָּשַׁח, which I translate as fa’a-tōtō i ai le loto (‘to intend’). The word fa’a-tōtō i ai le loto may be translated as ‘to plant what the heart desires.’ This translation encapsulates the intention behind God’s will, because it relates to planting: fa’a-tōtō derives from the verb tō (‘to plant’) with the causative prefix fa’a added. This conveys God’s intention for his people, what he deliberately planned, rather than manatu (‘thought’).

Speaking of God’s motive behind his plan, he fa’a-tōtō i ai le loto something that no one could see. The la-tō could not see or forecast God’s plan for them to stay in Babylon or even their return. In this light, verse 14 may be translated:

\[
E \text{ maua lava a’u e outou, o lo’o fetalai mai ai leova, ou te fa’afoisisa mai fo’i outou na fa’a-tō ma ou fa’apotopotoina outou ai nu’u uma lava ma mea na ou tō-esēina i ai outou, o lo’o fetalai mai ai leova; ou te fa’afo’isia mai fo’i outou i le mea na ou fa’a-tōina i ai outou.}
\]

This translation conveys the initiative of God’s plan, it forecasts the assurance that a connection still exists which will lead them to re-unite and be restored by saying, e maua lava a’u e outou (‘I will let you find me’). God has authorized his people to find him, which will allow them to reunite. In other words, he will make himself available, which further reflects that the fa’a-tō was not punishment because of hatred but because of love.

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63 Ma’ia’i, Tusi ‘upu Samoa, 731. Papaāli’i has translated the word ‘intend’ as fa’atōtō i ai le loto to express the profound meaning of the word ‘intend’ into Samoan, rather than just a thought.

64 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 311; ibid. The word tō is to plant, but sometimes the word tōtō is applied with the same meaning to plant. When the word tōtō is applied it usually reflects for longer term. In some cases, there may be a permanent implication, e.g. tōtō fa’atoaga, which means, plant plantations. This reflects a huge task, not a small job, but it could be carried on for a long time. The word tō can refer to just a small job, with reference to planting few plants, which shows the temporary nature of the word tō.

65 Ibid., 106.
4.3.7. The fa’a-tō – a parent/family concept.

The word fa’a-tō (‘curse’) refers to cultural values in Samoan culture which reflect people’s connections and relationships. Parents use fa’a-tō to demonstrate the value of respect through obedience to parents by their children within a Samoan aiga (‘family’).

I have mentioned that the fa’a-tō draws the boundary line that outlines limitations within the family perimeters especially between parents and children. Fa’a-tō can be seen as a serious punishment, i.e. ua fa’a-tō oe ma le aiga can be translated as, ‘you are banned from the family’, and this is usually said in a way of cursing a son/daughter from the parent for misbehaving. These fa’a-tō are very serious and not taken lightly by the children. According to Jeff S. Anderson,

The Bible expresses some of the same social relationships in cursing as in blessing, such as parents toward children (Gen. 9:25; 49:7), priests toward people (Num. 5:21-22), and other religious leaders toward the community of God’s people (Deuteronomy 27-28). Therefore curses can refer to the divine bestowal of these misfortunes and calamities. A curse can also simply denote the use of insolent language against individuals or groups. For example, it was expressly forbidden to curse one’s parents (Exod. 21:17; Lev 20:9). These curses were so powerful that if uttered improperly or undeservedly against guarantors of the social order (such as against God, a king, or a parent), then cursing became a blasphemous act and even a capital offense. 66

Anderson’s discussion of the curse in reference to biblical curses, is relatively similar to the Samoan contextual understanding of the fa’a-tō as a parental and family concept and its implications. Banishment here leads to the loss of all the family entitlements that the child has, for example, the land, titles and respect from parents and family members. His/her inheritance has been stripped and is no longer a blessing but has become his/her misfortune. To this extent, the child has been pushed to the edge to realise there is worse to come.

However, despite all these catastrophes as a result of fa’a-tō, this does not deny the fact that the parents discipline because of love not hatred. These words of fa’a-tō can only be heard when the parent[s] are irritated, which means, the fa’a-tō cannot be applicable when everything is going well. Fa’a-tō similarly illuminates God’s relationship with his people, when he cursed them before they were sent into exile, by saying, “…for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the Lord, my steadfast love and mercy” (Jer. 16:5b), and then he says, “…I am going to banish from this place” (Jer. 16:9). God expresses the loss of their entitlements by saying, “…your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your sin throughout all of your territory. By your own act you shall lose the heritage that I gave you…” (Jer. 17:3-4). At worst he says, “…And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies” (Jer. 15:9).

Although it is a serious punishment, however, through this Samoan understanding it is discipline. Behind this punishment and banishment, there is an intention which expresses love in order for the one banished to become better in life. God speaks from the standpoint of a parent who has love and compassion in order to discipline his own people. This may sound negative and harsh, but the motive behind his curse is love that is expressed by teaching and discipline. Jer. 16:21 says, “Therefore I am surely going to teach them, this time I am going to teach them my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the Lord.” Just as the father/mother discipline his/her own child in the Samoan context, so God disciplines his own people.

Through this discipline the fa’a-tō reflects not only a parental concept but also a family exemption, which highlight values within relationship. Indeed, the parents (and the village councils or the community) are a source of blessing for the Samoan people. The fa’a-tō is a regular occurrence, which ideologically echoes the role of the law and
family rules to be enforced. This becomes traditional and ideological within the family, because usually through them God’s blessings will be upon the people. Ideally, the Samoans believe that the blessing and cursing determines how well or how poorly we relate to our aiga (‘family’).

Blessings need to be earned in relation to cultural values and behaviours, otherwise curse will be the consequence. In relation to the curse, there are two types of mala: mala au matua – from the parents; and mala aunu’ua – from the village. The word fa’a-tō is a parental and family concept rather than individual. It is a concept that exists only when there is an intimate relationship. It is a way to regulate the behaviour of children within the family and community context. Rather than moulding these behaviours through physical punishment, discipline is effected through the curse.

In verses 4, 7, 14 אֲשֶּּר־הִגְל is translated as o ē na ou fa’a-tō which means “whom I have sent into exile.” Here God reveals that he has done the sending himself; he had fa’a-tō the people of Israel. With reference to discipline, this is a practice that will be applicable to parents when it comes to correction.

Sets of rules are usually given from parents to children in the form of instructions which outline boundaries within the perimeter of the family. These instructions are purposely for the children to become better. This can be seen with the verbs in verses 5-7. In this light, it may be seen that God has parental control over the exile as a father to his children.

Verses 10-14 shows God’s intimate connection to the exiles. This intimacy is reflected in the language that God uses, I will visit you, I will fulfil to you, I know my

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67 When the parents in some cases have failed to provide solutions for their children is misbehaviour, they pass them on to the village councils, called pulega a ali’i ma faipule of the village for charging. The village councils usually proceed with banishment, which is a fa’a-tō from the village. This is called mala aunu’ua.

68 Anderson, The Blessing and the Curse, 28.
plans for you, I will hear you, I will let you find me, I will restore and I will bring you back. This relationship shows not only the intimacy within the relationship but also God’s control over the exile and his people. Through this light we can see God in the position of a parent, like a father to a son. God had sent them into exile, and here, He promises that He will bring them back, in His own time.

These verses reflect family connections, similar to Samoan culture. Usually when children do not obey, they are punished and banished, sometimes severely. Despite any serious outcomes of this punishment, according to Samoan culture it is the revelation of love, concern and caring of the parent for their children.

In most cases, Samoan parents take the initiative to reconcile, restore and assure that everything is fine with the child after punishing them. This shows both love and discipline, which is reflected in God’s response to his people. After God condemned and banished his own people, He healed their wounds (Jer. 33). This is also shown in 29:10, which says that, after the seventy years in Babylon, he would אֶּפְקֹּ֣ד אֶּּכֶּ֗ם (‘visit you’), translated in the Samoan missionary translation as ona ou asiasi ai lea ia te outou. The relationship between the parents and their children has love and care, in times of trouble.

However, the word र was translated asiasi (‘to visit’). Pratt offers a meaning for the word asiasi as ‘to visit,’ in a form of an inspection. He gave O lē asiasi mālō which means, ‘the person who visits is a visitor – mālō.’ So, as translated by Pratt, God is an inspector. However, the word asiasi is not appropriate to convey God’s intention. God has said that he will visit, he will seek them out, which spells out the intimacy within the relationship between God and the exiles. So, the word र should be

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69 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 76. Pratt gives the same meaning for both words, as and asiasi.

70 See this definition of the word asiasi under the word ‘visit/visitor’, in ibid., 413.
translated as *asi* instead of *asiasi*. *Asi* is used in Samoan when a person is visiting someone who is suffering from sickness or calamity for comforting and sharing love. In the context of Jeremiah, God’s approach to his people is neither for an inspection nor as a tourist but for loving and caring. יָדַעְתָּהּ יְיָ יְיָ God says *ou te alu atu ma asi outou* which means, ‘I will come and visit you’.

4.4. *Va* (‘space’) – The Sacredness of the la-tō

Samoans commonly believe that there is space between all humans and even between them and their surroundings. This is called the *va* (‘space’) and is sacred because it embodies the people’s dignity, loyalty, respect, culture, and beliefs towards the life of what is around them. Thus, the *va* has *tapu* (‘restrictions’) which maintain the sacredness of this *va*. The space in between the la-tō and the taufanua is called *va tapu* (‘sacred space’). This *va* preserves respect between the two parties, and the *tapu* controls the *va* that exists within their relationship. For example, the *va* is seen in the relationship between a person and the environment. Tamasese describes this *va* in his discussion of the relationship between a fisherman and the sea.71 He states, “While man can fish from the sea, he takes only what he needs to live, knowing that he, the sea and the fish need to respect one another.”72 Similarly, Aiono suggests this idea with reference to the *va* “between the creator and the created.”73 She states, “[*Va*] governs all things and holds all things together.”74 This *va* reflects connections and, importantly, the respect must be reciprocal between the two parties in order to maintain this *va*, and it is this respect that makes the *va* in between sacred.

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72 Cited in ibid.
With reference to the *la-tō* and the *taufanua*, the *va* reflects the sacredness that determines the success of the venture, as well as the comfort of those who wait at home. The *va* is sacred also because both the *la-tō* and the *taufanua* are required to pray for each other’s safety, and this becomes the main focus of the two parties. In order to maintain their focus, both parties are required to pray, which is called in Samoan *fa’anōnōmanū*, meaning to seek blessings through prayers for a good outcome. In the Samoan context, the *fa’anōnōmanū* is applied mostly to the *taufanua*, who are usually silent but intervene with their prayers for the *la-tō*. The *taufanua* specifically have their own way of *fa’anōnōmanū*, which contrasts with the *la-tō*. The *la-tō* does not predict his/her own good outcome or future but relies on the prayers of the *taufanua*. In doing so, *taufanua* has tapu while people are in the *la-tō*. E.g. if the *la-tō* are at sea, then restrictions will affect the sea until the *la-tō* returns. The same applies with *la-tō* in the forest. Samoans believe in this *va* between the ocean and us humans similarly to what Tamasese highlights; the relationship has respect and if that respect is not cared for, it affects the wellbeing of the *la-tō*. Simply, if the *taufanua* do not comply with the *tapu* between them and the *la-tō*, then that shows the *la-tō* are not receiving blessings as the result of their *fa’anōnōmanū* (‘gentle prayer’). Aiono discusses the importance of this *va* between two parties in terms of committing to the *tapuaiga* as a sacred act of worship.75

Moreover, the sacredness of this *va* not only appears between the *la-tō* and the *taufanua* at a distance, but it also concerns the length of time. The time refers to while the people are in the *la-tō*, and this is also length of the *tapu* (‘restrictions’) until the *la-tō* returns home. *Tapu* time counts from the day the *la-tō* depart until the day they return. This *va* preserves its sacredness through keeping and maintaining the *tapu* within

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this *va* (space as a period of time). Similarly, this echoes the seventy years of the exile in Babylon as God’s plan. The sacredness of this *va* did not allow any false prophecy (verses 8-9) to determine the early return apart from the proposed length of the exile. These false prophets also lied about non-submission to the king of Babylon and the return of the temple treasures. Lundbom refers to these false messages as lies with reference to the false prophets mentioned in chapters 27 and 29.  

This directive is heard repeatedly in chapters 27-29 (27:9,14,16, 17, 29:8), countering prophets who are telling people not to submit to Nebuchadnezzar and that the Temple treasure taken to Babylon in 597B.C. will be speedily returned.

The directive to which Lundbom refers is Jeremiah urging the exiles not to listen to the words of the false prophets who preached that the Exile would last only two years (Jer. 28:11; 29:8-9). When the false prophets speak lies, they go against God’s divine plan for seventy years of exile. By complying with God’s plan, the exiles will show obedience to God’s will, but if they don’t they will face consequences.

In the Samoan context, the danger of breaching the *tapu* mentioned above during the time while the people are at the la-tō is costly and could be deadly in some cases. This is reflected similarly in the Babylonian exile, when the false prophet attempts to mislead the exiles about their early return which breaches the seventy years of the exile before they return. The seventy years was God’s time for the exile, which is sacred. In Jer. 29:21, Jeremiah reveals that those breaching this *tapu* (until seventy years), will be delivered to the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar and they shall be killed. Clements mentions that the death of these two false prophets in Babylon may have related to their false prophecy of the early return of the exile. These two prophets did not respect the

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77 Ibid., 191.
sacredness (va) within the length of time set by God. Therefore, to live safely in the sacredness of the va, according to God’s will, everyone must comply, connect and be in line with his proposed plan.

This is a Sabbath to God. Seventy years is God’s time. In 2 Chronicles 36:21,

to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its [S]abbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept [S]abbath, to fulfil seventy years. (NRSV).

God’s time and plan can be seen here not only to convey the punishment but also to allow this va to give Sabbath to the land to rest (Lev. 26:34-35). The sacredness appears in God’s time, and it seems that works well for both the people and the land. The la-tō can relate to this similarly, in terms of allowing the va between home and away, and within this va prayer intervention is required.

In verses 7 and 12, Jeremiah reveals to the exiles the way to connect with God, which is to pray and to seek him. If they do that, the letter says, שָמַעְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם “I will listen to you.” The Hebrew word in both these two verses, found only in the hithpael, has the root פלל which means ‘to pray and intervene.’79 It is also found with the same meaning in 2 Kings 6:17 and may express ‘to pray for oneself, for guidance.’80 This reflects the reciprocity and interaction within the relationship between God and humans and shows that God requires the exiles to pray. The peoples’ praying intervention displays a commitment that is required and that reflects the sacredness within the relationship.

79 DCH, 6: 697.
80 DCH, 6: 697. See discussion in my Chapter 3, page 109-110.
4.4.1. *Tapua’iga* predicts the well-being of the *la-tō*

The significance of a ‘good’ *tapua’iga* (‘worship’)\(^{81}\) is that it is needed for the *la-tō* to be successful in their venture. The role of the *taufanua* becomes to *tapua’i*. The word *tapua’i* (v) and *tapua’iga* (n) derive from the root word *tapu*, which means, ‘to make sacred’ or ‘place under restriction’.\(^{82}\) This highlights the nature of the *tapua’iga* or the reason to *tapua’i*.\(^{83}\) The *tapu* or restrictions are the peoples’ sacrifice, which make the *tapua’iga* sacred. Pratt states in his definition that people abstain from all their activities in terms of maintaining their *tapu*, i.e. work, games and to sit waiting for success in honouring those who are at war. In addition to these sacrifices, Pratt also reveals that the *tapua’iga* chew\(^{84}\) the *ava*\(^{85}\) to cheer and hope for the success of those who are at war or special events. This act, for the Samoans, *tapua’iga* is both traditional and religious worship.\(^{86}\) Moreover, this cultural practice expresses the values of the people and their relationships. The role of *tapua’iga* is challenging. They chew *ava*, which is not a pleasant thing to do, but the challenges and the bitterness of *ava* are all for the sake of those are away. At this point, the *tapua’iga*’s sacrifice for wellbeing assures the sacredness and especially the safety of those are away.

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81 ‘*tapua’i*’ is a verb, ‘*tapua’iga*’ is noun. Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 303. Pratt’s definitions of *tapua’i*: Meaning (1) To abstain from all work, games, etc. and to sit waiting for success in war or in sickness. (2) Applied to passengers in a canoe thanking the rowers who answer, *Fa’a fetai tapua’i*. (3) To give something to bring success, as ‘*ava*, e.g. *O loo mā* (‘chewing’) *ava e tapua’i ai ou faiva, e manuia ai*. (4) To offer religious worship. See also, Mosel, *Say It in Samoan*, 162. For discussions of *tapua’iga* in detail, see Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, “Tapuai: Samoan Worship,” 5-10, 32.


84 The word mā is ‘to chew’ in Pratt’s definition. See Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary*, 303. Refer to meaning 3 of *tapua’i* ‘something to bring success.’

85 For the use of the *ava* (‘*kava*’) as a Pacific Island identity and its significant, see, Aporosa, “The New Kava User,” 58-71. Refer also to my chapter 1, page 20, foot note 6, for definition of *ava*.

S. Apo Aporosa highlights the use of the *ava* (‘*kava*’) ceremony as a traditional Pacific Island ceremony, but it also transfers *mana* (‘spiritual power’), healing, recognition, reconciliation, affirmation and the peoples’ positive intention to their home and land.\(^87\) This act seeks blessings and highlights the importance of those who *tapua’i* and how they sacrifice during this *tapua’iga*. Samoans call this *fa’anōnōamanū*, which means, ‘seeking blessings spiritually and through gentle/silent prayers.’ Milner suggests, “Be[ing] in thought and sympathy at the time of [special occasions] is undergoing a test or ordeal (in the belief that this will bring about the success desired).”\(^88\)

In this act of worship, the *tapua’iga* assures the wellbeing of the *la-tō* and conveys the importance of family and communal living.\(^89\) The success of the *la-tō* is commonly known as *o malaga tapuai’a, o malaga manuia*, meaning that those who are in the *la-tō* are blessed because the people at home are praying for them in their absence and for their safe return. This is similarly reflected in the context of Jeremiah. He urges the exiles to pray for their wellbeing, Jer. 29:5, and also the people at home ask Jeremiah who plays the role of the *taufanua* to pray for their wellbeing as well, Jer. 42:1-6.

The prayer interventions connecting the *la-tō* and the *taufanua* are called *faiva tapuai’a*. The word *faiva* commonly refers to fishing; however, here it means speciality/task.\(^90\) A common Samoan belief is, *o faiva tapuai’a, o faiva manuia*, which can be translated as, ‘a speciality/task that spiritually cheers, will be a successful one. However, the *la-tō* without *faiva tapuai’a* will not have the same result. Hence, the

\(^90\) For the word *faiva*, see Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 56.
people who pray play a significant role in connecting, as well as in forecasting a successful outcome. The successful outcome or well-being of the la-tō becomes the purpose of these tapuai’iga; it is for the blessings to be granted upon them all. Usually during this process, the taufanua while tapua’i has traditional tapu (‘restrictions’) during the absence of the la-tō purposely for the safety and the well-being of those who are away and reflecting their unity in spirit. Therefore, the prayers demonstrate spiritual unity, connection and sacredness, as well as family and community within the process.

Moreover, the intention of these tapua’iga is echoed in verse 11, where the words מַחְשְׁבִ֤וֹת שָלוֹם are translated as manatu ina ia ou tō atu ai manuia ia te outou (‘plans for [your] wellbeing’). Again, this highlights the importance of the taufanua (Jeremiah), who intervenes in order to receive the tō (‘grant’) of שלום translated as manū or manuia meaning, ‘blessing’ or ‘wellbeing.’ The intention behind the tapua’iga is to keep the tapu of seventy years, so that everyone will experience well-being. As I mentioned above, Jeremiah is the only one who is considered to embody the role of the taufanua; thus Jeremiah is praying for the wellbeing of the exiles.

In addition, doing these tapua’iga demonstrates the practice of searching and seeking for God whole-heartedly. As mentioned in verse 13, when God made himself available again to the exiles, he said that he would be found when searched for with all their hearts.

4.4.2. Threats to the la-tō: False Prophets and Diviners – Atua o le Ala

One of the threats to the exiles during their time in Babylon was false prophets and diviners. Though they are not called false prophets in Hebrew, but in Greek they are called pseudoprophētai. It is clear that this is their role because they attempt to deceive the people with a lie (Jer. 29:8-9). This reflects the warning against false prophets and
diviners in Deuteronomy 18:15-22. Brueggemann suggests this concern is not a theoretical one but a practical one due to “the seduction of religious fantasy.”\(^91\) He suggests that false prophets and diviners were trying to deny the existence of the people’s exile and did not accept that Babylon was the real place where the exiles would live their faith.\(^92\) Also, the false prophets seem to have disregarded God’s purpose and plan by trying to deny the reality of the exile. God had warned his people, to be aware of these people and their false messages (Jer. 27-28; 29:8-9).

Similarly, in the context of the la-tō, other gods are seen as threats to the process. Samoans believe that when the la-tō leaves home, their journey may be attacked by other gods (the old pre-Christian Samoan gods) who purposely distract and try to see the journey fail. Before I left Samoa to go to New Zealand, this was the impression I received from my family. My parents said, “ia agalelei le Atua, ia ‘aua ne ‘i āfe la outou malaga e se atua o le ala, a ia outou la-tō i manū,” which means, ‘may God’s love protect you from other gods through your journey, so that you will not be deceived or attacked, but travel with blessings.’ Even today, this belief in ‘other gods’ still exists. In the context of Jeremiah, this similar distraction can be seen in the exile. The false prophets are the threats, hoping to deceive God’s people by proclaiming the early return and the return of Temple belongings, but that was not what God had planned for the exiles. Similarly, the Samoan atua o le ala play their part relative to the false prophets and diviners in the exile. These Samoan gods’ role is like the false prophets and diviners but they are manifested in many different ways. For example, there is le atua o le sami (‘god of the sea’) for the tagata folau (‘voyagers’) or le atua o le ala (‘god of the way’).

These threats are the reason for the obligation of the people who remain at home to

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\(^{91}\) Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 258.

\(^{92}\) Ibid.
"tapua‘i (‘to worship’) or make a tapua‘iga (‘worship’) while the others are away. These other gods cause the taufanua concern for the safety and wellbeing of the la-tō, and also they are the reason for special words said on their return. When the taufanua offers them greetings and welcomes them home, he has a special saying, “malō le la-tō i le tai, malo le la-tō i le ala” which means, “well done on your travel through the tai (‘ocean’), well done on your travel through ala (‘land’).” Though the old gods are not specifically mentioned here, the context of words directly indicates that their threat has been avoided.

This process is called la-tō tapua‘ia or tapua‘iga mo malaga (‘pray for the well-being of those who are travelling’). Verse 8 of Jeremiah 29 has £גא¥ transliterated in the Samoan Bible as outou perofeta (‘your prophets’); they have been a threat to the exiles, and Jeremiah warns the people not to be deceived by them. He also warns them against the taulaitu (‘diviners’) similarly. Both groups were among the exiles, and God said specifically, “I did not send them” (verse 9). The people, however, should have realised the distinction between the two prophecies, which was true and which was false. Dubbink states,

Jeremiah’s theology is different from that of his opponents; it is not based on certainties such as dynasty and temple but only on the word of YHWH. This certainty is of a different order: it is challenged, as the dialogues between true and false prophets illustrate. The prophets [are] drawn as a picture (in the Confessions, but not only there) of a man in a challenged position. He does not doubt that his version of the word of YHWH is right, but he suffers, afraid that he may not be convincing to others.93

The false prophets and diviners appear to be more of a concern than the Babylonians and the Babylonian king. Nevertheless, God specifically instructs the exiles in verse 7 to seek the welfare of the city of Babylon because its welfare will

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become their welfare, which may suggest that the exiles were not under any political oppression at this stage. This is in spite of the fact that they had experienced captivity and that they had been forced to leave home. Clements comments with reference to verse 14 that “life in exile was better than the extinction threatened upon those who had fled for safety to Egypt (cf. 42:16-17).”

4.5. La-tō i manū.

The la-tō expresses the significance of being away and leaving one’s home. This process in Samoan culture has two types: the la-tō i manū and la-tō i mala. When someone leaves on a good course, it is called la-tō i manū. The la-tō is considered as manū because they are either someone leaving of their own free will or possibly representing the family or community. This means that the la-tō i manū has happened with the support of those at home and the la-tō is a grant of blessing because of satisfactory service or maybe a grant because of successful achievement. People of the la-tō who leave home as representatives of families, villages, church communities and country representatives are called lupe fa’alele (‘flying pigeons’). They fly away in a way similar to a pigeon which has been taught to attract more pigeons to its home. They la-tō away from home to find more catches that will benefit the tapuaiga of families, church communities, villages and country in the homeland.

The la-tō i manū refers to those who are away from home not only of their own will but also as bearers of their family’s hope and future. This is usually given with

94 Clements, Jeremiah, 173.

95 Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 130. The word manū means good luck or good fortune.

96 Lupe fa’aalele, ‘flying pigeon’. The owner of the pigeon who trained this pigeon hopes that his trained one will return home with more pigeons. When the home trained pigeon is released, its task is to attract and bring more pigeons home, so it is called lupe fa’aalata lupe (‘a pigeon that attracts more pigeons’). For this ‘home trained pigeon’, see Moyle, The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832, 83. See also the word taufau for more description of ‘the home trained pigeon,’ in Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 283.
scholarships to continue studying overseas on behalf of the government, Church, family and their village communities. It applies to anyone who represents the country for any good reason. These people who are considered la-tō i manū leave their homes in order to return with additional knowledge to benefit their communities. The la-tō i manū can also be given to those who decided to migrate overseas to find a better living. La-tō i manū leave their home and origin because they wish to, and they leave of their own free will with blessings from their families and communities.

In the context of the exile, the people are not la-tō i manū: however, manū is not the only reason why people leave their home. In the case of the Babylonian exile, the people left their home because that was their only option for survival. They needed to leave home to serve their punishment. However, that does not necessarily mean that the exiled ones are valued less than the la-tō i manū. Both are entitled to blessings and inheritance. The only difference is their situations and how to capitalise on them. The la-tō i manū have to continue to do the right thing to maintain their blessings; the exiled have to reclaim their inheritance through moral transformation and repentance (Jer. 29:10-14).

4.5.1. La-tō i mala

The la-tō i mala means that the people travel without blessing or with a fa’a-tō as a consequence of their rebellious acts. All Samoan punishments have in common a sense of fa’a-tō, meaning that they la-tō i mala (‘leave with curse’). To some extent, these victims consider leaving home and their community as their only hope of survival. The la-tō i mala is when the people leave almost with nothing. It is crucial and dramatic for any individual, and also for the family if the punishment is for the whole family to be banished. The la-tō i mala purposely strips the person from the land and entitlements, so
that they are forced to go away. Therefore, they leave their home and origin not because they wish to but because they are forced to leave.

Despite all the extreme consequences of what the offender[s] receive when they are la-tō i mala, I argue that through the positivity of the Samoan understanding of the la-tō being away from home as well as the nature of the punishment for discipline, the la-tō has a reversal to hope. The discipline is only a matter of time, as it is not permanent. The hope of the la-tō i mala reflects not only reflects the temporary nature of the fa’a-tō (‘curse’) but also conveys it as flexible and removable. In some cases, in Samoan culture, the matai chief councils give the time frame for the offender to return.

Similarly to the way the Babylonian exile is viewed in Jeremiah 29, the exiles did not leave Jerusalem of their own free will. They were banished by God (verse 4) for their disobedience. This forced move which was for survival caused the exiles to view their banishment in a negative light. However, they were given a time frame to return (Jer. 29:10). The Babylonian exile also has shown temporariness and the turn-around; when their punishment is served God will bring them back (Isiah 40:1-2). The emphasis of the la-tō i mala for the exile according to this Samoan understanding is to discipline the people in order to return to God boldly and transformed.

4.6. La-tō reflects Wisdom

The concept la-tō is a result of being away from home regardless of whether it is by one’s own free will (la-tō i manū) or as a consequence of being fa’a-tō, known as la-tō i mala. Either way, wisdom can be seen and is bestowed through discipline, as is clear in the book of Proverbs (see Prov. 1:2, 7; 10:17; 12:1). The word discipline is a’oa’i or a’oa’iga.97 To practise discipline needs direction and instruction in order to deliver the

97 Refer to my chapter 1 page 29-30, for discussion of the word fa’a-tō as well as a’oa’i and a’oa’iga
logic of the a’oa’iga (‘discipline’). Thus, teaching is required and also the set of rules and obligations. Practically, the fa’a-tō is an extreme consequence when this discipline fails. Through discipline wisdom can be learnt. Wisdom can also be found in the space when leaving home, a space to rethink and restore. Discipline is to fa’atonu which means ‘to get it right or to straighten someone up by telling the truth’ and ‘to put right, to instruct or to direct.’98 Hence the la-tō is not for hatred but for moral transformation.

In Jeremiah’s context, this wisdom is reflected similarly. Dubbink states, “Israel’s wisdom is found in keeping the commandments, so that the surrounding peoples will view it as wise and understanding, and as a great people.”99 The fa’atōnuaga (‘instructions’) were given early enough from God to his people, through warnings to amend their ways, in order to be saved (Jer. 7:3-7). For the exiles, the la-tō can be understood as the fa’a-tō they deserved, because they failed to comply with the instructions and directions given by God. In this light, wisdom can be seen through correction.

God a’oa’i them through a form of discipline, similar to the fa’a-Samoan ‘Samoan way’) which has its own principles. The cultural values of a well-disciplined family can be recognised by what is seen in family members. Distinctive outcomes spell out how much discipline is in the family, with values, dignity and respect that highlight the true fa’a-Samoan.100 This expresses the initiative of discipline for better, not for worse.

Ma’ia’i uses the word a’oaiga, from a’oa’i (‘to teach’) with reference to the word ‘discipline.’ His definition refers to the word fa’asala, which means, ‘to punish.’101

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98 Pratt, A Grammar and Dictionary of Samoan Language with English and Samoan Vocabulary, 139; Milner, Samoan Dictionary, 276.
100 For the cultural principles of fa’a-Samoan, see Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o, “Beyond Governance in Samoa: Understanding Samoan Political Thought,” The Contemporary Pacific 17, no. 2 (2005): 312.
101 Ma’ia’i, Tusi’upu Samoa, 616.
According to Ma’ia’i’s definition, to punish is to discipline, but it also reflects the idea of teaching to become wise.

Whether the la-tō is for manū or mala, both share a purpose that advocates wisdom. In the Samoan context, those who were obedient leave their home because they have earned their wellbeing through a grant of blessing as a result of their satisfactory service. In contrast, the ones who had been the recipient of the fa’a-tō or the la-tō i mala, must earn their blessing through discipline in order to be transformed. Irrespective of what the la-tō experience, they gain the same wisdom and knowledge. In the context of Jeremiah, the exiles are the la-tō i mala, they did not have choices but had to go into exile. From there, they earned their blessings again, through repentance and seeking God wholeheartedly.

4.6.1. The upu – the words of discipline

In the Samoan family context, upu (‘word[s]’) signifies truth and life. The truth is emphasised when upu are spoken as discipline. Upu reflects wisdom from the top down as cultural values, beliefs and knowledge pass from the ancestors to contemporary people. Through this process, the upu articulates tapu that outlines boundaries and limitation through discipline within the family. Additionally, the upu not only express the truth but also bring to life; they comprise mana and sacredness, respect, limitations and determination of a future destiny. This image of life through upu starts within the family and communal living, and the upu determine whether you are blessed or cursed.

The significance of the upu through family discipline moulds the inner being and behaviour toward wisdom and love. A Samoan analogy says, O le tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala, a o le tama a le manu, e fafaga i fuga o laau, translated as “The son of a man is fed with words, but the son of an animal or a bird, feeds on flowers and grass.” Thus, parents show the incarnation of their love by feeding their children with
the *upu* of discipline. Instructions and guidance lead their children on paths of prosperity and better hope, and it is possible to blame the parents when their children are not disciplined. The same idea appears in Deuteronomy 21:18-21, where we can see the result of rebellious acts by children who disobey and reject words of discipline from their parents, and is constantly emphasised in Proverbs, when discipline is recommended (see Prov. 23:13-15). This disciplinary process can also be seen in the Samoan context when parents have often failed to discipline their own children. At that point, the issue is taken to the next level and the *matai* (‘village councils/polities’) become involved, leading to the practice of *fa’a-tō* (‘curse’). Rebelliousness is a sign of the people who refuse to be disciplined and often become stubborn. See also Jer. 7:28, 31:18.

Similarly, in the biblical context, the ‘word’ signifies power and authority that reflects discipline for the betterment of God’s people. The power of God’s ‘word’ has turned into a curse, like fire (Jer. 5:14) and like the hammer that breaks a rock in pieces (Jer. 23:29). The word of God is not only powerful but also can make history. “The word of YHWH sets an event in motion; it makes history. It may be seen as God’s revelation in history.”

This is in line with God’s approach towards his prophets, such as Moses (Exod 4:12, 15), Ezekiel (Eze. 2:7-8; 3:3), and especially Jeremiah: “[God’s] word seizes the prophet (Jer. 1:5).” God fed his prophets with words and divine messages by putting *upu* into their mouths. This reflects a similar idea to the parents feeding their children with words of discipline. Jeremiah was chosen by God and became his messenger to the people of the exile.

The significance of the *upu* connects with the words of Jeremiah’s letter. The *upu* has *mana*, which means it has power and authority. Verse 1 mentions “the words”, and

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103 Ibid.
verses 5-14 are the *upu* of encouragement, which are instructive and authoritative. The way the *upu* are said expresses the *mana* and the motive behind them, also the compassion that is needed in the context of the exile. The exile has been discussed earlier as the *upu* of *fa’a-tō*, a temporary and removable curse. However, the *upu* of exhortation eases pain and overcomes suffering.

The *upu* given as *fa’a-tō* is the worst punishment that any Samoan could receive in relation to any rebellious act against parents or village councils. This shows the undeniable and existing power of the *upu*. The *fa’a-tō* forces disconnection from the family, e.g. land, titles and home calling to mind that, in the biblical context, all Israelites inherited title to a plot of land. The person who is *fa’a-tō* is disciplined, and this process requires transformation, restoration and repentance. Bearing this in mind, Jeremiah has given *upu* of exhortation from God through his letter, encouraging the exiles to remain faithful. Hearing these words as an authoritative *upu* gives the exiles assurance and confidence which will encourage hope within them.

4.6.2. **Toe oso le lā** (‘the sun will rise again’)

*Toe oso le lā* provides a metaphor for understanding the exile, giving a sense of rebirth from the darkness of the night when the sun rises again. The experience of the exile represents the hopelessness and uncertainty of the people; however, Jeremiah’s position as the *taufanua* has given out a message that reflects hope and a new light to the exiles, similar to the rise of the *lā*. The continuous cycle of the sun demonstrates the idea of the *lā e oso ma toe goto, ma toe oso pea* (‘the sun that rises and sets, and then continuously rises again’). This is usually said in times of failure to uplift and encourage the Samoans positively, in order to raise the *lā* of hope again. In the biblical context, we can see that God promises a future hope that is similar to *toe oso le lā* (‘the sun rises again’) from the failure and calamities of the exiles. In Jeremiah’s context “the Songs of redemption
are to be heard all throughout the text (3:15-18; 12:14-17; 16:14-15; 23:1-8; 30:18-22; 31:1-6, 7-9, 10-14)."\footnote{104}

A turning point that demonstrates le oso o le lā (‘the rising of the sun’) is the impression that relates to the fulfilment of God’s promise. It says, יִקְרָאֲנִי לָם אֵת-דְבָרִי הַטָּוֶב translated as, ma ou fa’ataunu’ui na la’u upu lelei ia te outou (‘and I will fulfil to you my promise’).\footnote{105} Thus, the fulfillment in this context reflects the understanding of hope as the rising of the sun. This is followed by the expression of God’s promise, הָשִּׁיב אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה translated as toe fa’afoisia mai outou i le nei mea (‘to bring you back again to this place’).\footnote{106} Seemingly, the rise of the exiles’ lā determines their hope, not from anyone but from the particular will of God. He will fulfill his own promise, as his own divine plan, in his own time, to bring back the exiles to their home and land, in order to restore and reconcile.

The Samoan way of ifoga, stated by Maliko,\footnote{107} is a way to restore and reconcile Samoan banishment. I agree with Maliko to the extent that the ifoga is designed specifically to create peace and reconciliation, which reflects forgiveness between the parties. However, I argue that the ifoga does not highlight remorse, because it is done without the presence of the offender. In the case of restoration from banishment, the traditional ifoga does not guarantee or indicate repentance. I argue that through the la-tō reading approach and from the perspective of the taufanua, that the restoration of the offender[s] need more than just peace and reconciliation. This is not compromise; they are required to repent.

\footnote{104}{Carroll, “The Polyphonic Jeremiah,” 84.}
\footnote{105}{NRSV.}
\footnote{106}{NRSV.}
\footnote{107}{Maliko, “Restorative Justice,” 226-41.}
Summary

Disconnecting from the family as the form of punishment is tragically severe. To Samoans, fa’a-tō is not light but extremely serious in a family and cultural sense. Disconnection is interpreted as being killed, which means that the offender will live with a curse and hopelessness. This is reflected in losing all of his/her igāga-tō (‘permanent family entitlements’). For Samoans, fa’a-tō is something that we would neither dream about nor be willing to inherit.

The la-tō lens allows, however, the taufanua to see the positive aspects that exiled people are unable to see. Their short visions may have caused them to forget that God has given them their iagāga-tō. Their entitlement to their lands is forever (see Deut. 30:1-10). No matter how long they have been away from their home and origin, they can still claim their igāga-tō when they return. Through this light, we see the communal connections through prayer intervention, as well as the sacredness of the tapua’iga from the taufanua. The effect of their prayers predicts their wellbeing and hopefully for wellbeing of others. This positivity is reflected through the word of wisdom that has authority and mana, and the future hope encapsulates when the lā will rise and shine again. Jeremiah reminds the exiles that God has a plan, and through that plan God shows mercy, love, caring and future hope.

The motive behind God’s plan is revealed in verses 10-14, and God has not sent them there because he hates them, but rather because he wants a new covenant and a new relationship with his own people (Jer. 31:31-34). Neither the false prophets nor the diviners can change God’s will when he sent his people into exile, in his own time frame. Through Jeremiah God responds to his people, which reflects discipline and wisdom, and importantly his divine purpose for the exile, to return to him boldly.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Understanding the Samoan culture as community-based and family-oriented builds a solid cultural platform in a context where everyone is related. It applies not only to the Samoan context, but it also relates to others and their contexts. Either people are away at the position of the la-tō, or they are taufanua who remain at home. Through the la-tō cultural perspective, they are all spiritually connected, whatever ethnic background, regardless of whatever reason made them leave their home and origin.

People often tend to forget the significance of living in the land of others and the need to appreciate what foreign countries offer for their welfare. It is the same case with host countries, where people often refuse or reject the contributions of others to their land. People often forget to see positivity from others because of their own belittlement and negativity as a consequence of incorrect interpretation and short vision. We often seem to forget that we are not home-less but have a home-land, either native or foreign, sharing the same equality and privilege, settling at home or away.

Everyone’s prayers bestow sacredness in the va between the la-tō and the taufanua. Of course, while this va exists, it becomes imperative to pray for everyone’s wellbeing that binds us together and strengthens us as a family and as a community. In this light, we can see and understand the importance of caring for one another in time of calamity. The la-tō shares the positivity like the la fa’asino folau (‘directional pointer’) that points out directions for our wanderers and guides our sailings out into the ocean of unlimited opportunities. In this va, the la-tō between home and away undoubtedly lies much uncertainty and many issues. However, it is important not to sink or drown in this
va because of negativity and doubt, but to know positively that we are enabled to sail back to our land and home where everyone belongs.

The va is highlighted through the discussion of the la-tō that considers it differently, depending on how we end up in the va, whether we Samoans are either in the la-tō i mala or the la-tō i manū. The la-tō i manū, (‘those who leave their home in a sense of representing the country and family through success’) see this va as an opportunity for seeking blessing through exploration. La-tō i manū in this va carry the weight of responsibility and expectation to be fulfilled, similarly to the role of the lupe fa’alele in the Samoan analogy – to find a catch to return home with for the tapuaiga of the taufanua. However, the la-tō i mala (‘those who are fa’a-tō, cursed, punished and banished from home’) see this space as negative through their devastating experiences.

Nevertheless, the la-tō allows the taufanua to overlook negativity and to see the devastating experience as positive. The negative emphasis comes from three different faces of the exile that may have appeared as a consequence of mistranslation and misinterpretation. Despite those negativities conveyed by the missionaries’ mistranslations of the Samoan Bible, the la-tō can still see the positivity of traveling away from home and exploration. The positive light makes sense of the way we as Samoans read and interpret the exile. We often draw conclusions based on our current situation and experiences without considering hope. The la-tō approach allows a positivity and flexibility in our perspective. Similarly, this positivity is reflected in the va between parents and children. When discipline occurs, this va becomes a va saili tofā which means, ‘a space of rethinking and discipline.’

This va lies in the midst of the Pacific people contextual understanding toward their land and ocean, where the open-ness and the boundary-less are us. We explicitly expose and explore to discover who we really are, within our own home-is-land or from
outside looking back into our home. This *va* allows the *lā* (‘sun’) to rise again, meaning that *e toe oso pea le lā*, which can be translated as ‘the sun will rise again.’ When it comes to the cyclic process of the *lā* (‘sun’), the *lā* will perpetually rise and shine again. This idea is similar to a common Samoan saying, *o tala atu o afā o i ai maninoa*, translated as ‘behind hurricanes and strong winds there is calm and peace.’ After calamities and suffering, there is peace for the future and also hope. The *va* here lies between the present and the future, which forecasts *manū* (‘blessings’) ahead. This *va* allows the victims to regrow, regroup, realign and be disciplined.

The *la-tō* reading approach offers not only an opportunity within this *va*, it offers also flexibility and freedom of choice, whether to return home or stay. To return home for the *la-tō* is not compulsory; it is more whatever works best for an individual. Even during the Babylonian exile, not everyone returned to Jerusalem; it was freedom of choice. Whether to stay or return does not change the fact that the ‘home-land’ is an *igāga-tō* forever for everyone, including the *taufanua, la-tō i manū* and the *la-tō i mala*. The perpetual cycle of the *igāga-tō* continues as the *lā* (‘sun’), which benefits not only the recipients but also all the generations yet to come. Thus, by leaving home, punishment and banishment are positive and, most importantly, everyone in terms of God’s plan of wellbeing and future hope is included.

The *la-tō* lens allows us to read and interpret the exile from the *taufanua* standpoint, home and origin. We can look at the exile – away from home – in a positive and hopeful perspective, despite influences from different contexts. This lens brings us as Bible readers closer to the event, enabling us to have more meaningful understanding of the biblical text in relation to our own Pacific Island context. Through this light, we can see and hear the differences in images that reflect different experiences and voices – the voice and the experience of the exile victims and the voice of God and his will
represented by his prophet. Reading and interpreting the exile in this way makes us
Samoan readers realise who we are in relation to Babylonian exile in the book of
Jeremiah, which makes our view broader and more practical.

Discipline initiates future wellbeing and wisdom. *Fa'atonu ma a'oa'ī* (‘teaching
and discipline’) reveal God’s authentic will that comprises justice as well as grace - love
not hatred and condemnation (see Exod. 34:6-7). God can be seen positioning himself
as father to the people, before and during the exile. Although he banished them and
made them suffer and serve a foreign king in his land, God did not forsake his people.
Through Jeremiah, God warned them neither to be deceived by false prophets nor listen
to their messages. In other words, they should not be confused or distracted from God’s
divine will and his purpose of discipline. As a father, God showed that he cared by
giving out warnings before the exile, and even during the exile he still warned them
about things that they were not supposed to engage with. However, God’s people were
similar to any child who must be disciplined, and he punished them the way a father
disciplines his own child. The exile was severe, but that does not take away the fact that
God is the beloved father of the punished exiles.

Through Jeremiah, God’s message can be seen as *la-tō,* that God sees the *fa’a-tō*
of his people as part of his *fa’a-tōtō i ai le loto* (‘the motive behind his divine plan’),
full of justice. God reminds his people through Jeremiah that he knows his plan, which
is to make them prosper and to give them future and hope but not harm. He did not
accidentally *fa’a-tō* them to *la-tō* away from home. Jeremiah’s prophecy reveals God’s
future plans that they should expect, just as Nafanua prophesied the arrival of God’s
word in Samoa. The fulfilment of that promise became the new light and new hope to
our people, similarly to the exiles; their return to Jerusalem gave them freedom and
importantly God invited them back to renew their covenant. Discipline was only for a
matter of years. God set the limit that the exile would never pass seventy years; when their punishment was served and fulfilled, they would return to their own igāga-tō.

God spoke to his people through his prophet in the language of a parent to a child, I will visit you, I will bring you, I will hear you, I will let you find me, and I will restore your fortunes. This shows that the exile was not for negativity, misfortune and condemnation, but it allowed them to find God again. Thus, we see the intimacy when the seventy years was over and the new generation would return to restore the new Jerusalem. A new Jerusalem needed a new generation and a new covenant. After all, through his prophet Jeremiah, God had revealed his new covenant to his people, which contrasts with the former covenant with the forefathers. This new covenant would no longer be written on tablets but on their hearts (Jer. 31:34). The transition to the new covenant from the old one, from a physical tablet to the people’s heart, symbolises what God had intended as fa’a-tōtō i ai le loto, so that God’s divine plan and purpose for the exile was revealed. The new covenant embraced a new relationship, the refurbishment of the nation not only physically rebuilt but spiritually restored.

God invited his people to return to him after seventy years, but he laid down some conditions to consider and to fulfil, which were to repent and to search for him wholeheartedly. This means God expected repentance; in order to claim back all the exiles’ misfortunes and inheritance they were required to repent – to call upon me and pray to me, seek for me and you will find me. Repentance is the only way back, and this is Jeremiah’s message to the people.

Repentance is required in the Samoan context in order to restore and reconcile, which paves the way back to families, villages and home. As I mentioned, the word la-tō is heard only when people return home safely, when both the taufanua and the la-tō celebrate full of gratitude and thanksgiving to God as the result of a good tapuaiga.
ava ceremony is culturally significant at this point, because it represents a warm welcome for both types of la-tō. The celebrations may continue for hours in a traditional way that encapsulates what the return means to everyone. For the la-tō i mala, it is emotional and joyful because it represents repentance and moral transformation. The la-tō i manū celebrates the same way with an ava ceremony, as a result of their good findings, appreciates what has been brought home as their catch for the taufanua. Both la-tō i mala and la-tō i manū share the positivity and privilege of being la-tō away from home, although each left for a different reason. At this point, the la-tō are unified with the taufanua with home as the meeting place, and both share equally in their joy at the fulfilment of experiences of exploration, whether through acquiring benefits for the homeland or by transformation through repentance.

This la-tō reading approach makes sense of God’s will where everyone has a place of belonging, even when away from home. Jeremiah highlights that God’s divine justice is for everyone; he punishes both the exiles and the people at home. All of it was purposely so that they could share the same experience of betterment. Regardless of our iniquity God forgives, he shows everyone that we are full heirs of his grace. In this light God’s grace can be seen as the igāga-tō where everyone and their descendants are entitled and included, as long as we repent and are transformed.
Appendix

Samoan Bible Translation of Jeremiah 29:1-14:

O UPU nei a le tusi na avatua e Ieremia le perofeta ai Ierusalemia i e na totoe o toeaina na tāfēa, ma faiataulaga, ma perofeta, ma le nuu uma lava, na tāfēa iai Nepukanesa mai Ierusalemia i Papelonia;

2 ina ua mavae ona o atu nai Ierusalemia o Leokina le tupu, ma le sa’o tamaitai, ma eunuka, ma ali i Iuta ma Ierusalemia, o tufuga foi, ma e galulue i uamea.

3 Na ave e Eliasa le atalii o Safana, ma Kemaria le atalii o Hilikia, o e na aauina e Setekeaia le tupu o Iuta i Papelonia ua faapea,

4 O loo faapea ona fetalai mai o Leova o ‘au, le Atua o Isaraelu i le tafeaga uma, na ou faatāfeia mai Ierusalemia i Papelonia,

5 Ia outou fāi fale, ma nonofo ai; ma ia outou totōina faatoaga, ma aai ai ona fua;

6 ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia fananau ai atalii ma afafine ia te outou; ia outou aumaia foi avā mā o outou atalii, ma fai ni tane mā o outou afafine, ina ia latou fananau tama ma teine; ia faatoateleina outou i lea mea, a e aua le faatoaitiitia.

7 Ia outou sailiili foi ia manuia le aai ua ou faatāfeia ai outou; ma ia outou tatalo atu ia Leova mo lena aai; auā o lona manuia e manuia ai outou.

8 Aua o loo faapea ona fetalai mai o Leova o ‘au, le Atua o Isaraelu, Aua ne’i faaseseina outou e o outou perofeta ua ia te outou, ma o outou taulāitu; aua foi ne’i faalogo i miti, ua faia talu outou;

9 auā ua latou vavalo i le pepelo ia te outou i lo’u igoa; ou te lei aauina atu i latou, o loo fetalai mai ai Leova.
10 Auā o loo faapea ona fetalai mai o Ieova, A faaatoatoaina tausaga e fitugafulu i Papelonia, ona ou asiasi ai lea ia te outou, ma ou faataunuquina la’u upu lelei ia te outou, i le faafoisia mai outou i lenei mea.

11 Auā o a’u nei, ua ou iloa manatu ua ou manatu ai ia te outou, o manatu i le manuia, ae le o le malaia, o loo fetalai mai ai Ieova, e foaiana atu ia te outou le iuga e i ai le faamoemoe.

12 Ona outou vaalau ai lea ia te au, e o foi outou ma tatalo ia te au, ou te faalogo foi ia te outou.

13 E saili mai outou ia te au, tou te maua foi, pe a outou saili mai ia te au ma outou loto atoa.

14 E maua lava a’u e outou, o loo fetalai mai ai Ieova; ou te faafoisia la outou tafeaga, ma ou faapotopotoina outou ai nuu uma, ma mea uma na ou tulia ai outou, o loo fetalai mai ai Ieova; ou te faafoisia foi outou i le mea ua ou faatāfea ai outou.


The table below shows what this research has discovered, which is the differences in translation in Jeremiah 29:1-14 between the Hebrew text and the Samoan Bible translation. This table indicates issues that have been noted and considered over the years by Samoan readers. The use of a wrong preposition for example, may not seem very serious, but it can create a vast problem and an offensive interpretation. The issues below are as a consequence of transliteration, pluralising, adopting other Pacific Island words and word by word translation by the missionaries. Ma’ilo has highlighted similar issues, as well as the political manipulation of the Bible translation.1 His discussion affirms what I have been longing for in this project, and the section below discusses some of those issues which are found particularly in Jeremiah 29:1-14.

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1 For Samoan Bible translation issues, see Ma’ilo, *Bible-Ing My Samoan*, 147, 260-265.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (BHS)</th>
<th>English Translation (NRSV)</th>
<th>Samoan Translation G. Turner’s Version</th>
<th>My own Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jer. 29:1a</strong></td>
<td>These are the words that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles,</td>
<td>O UPU nei a le tusi na avatua e Jeremia le perofeta mai Ierusalema i e na totoe o tociaina na fa’atafe'a</td>
<td>O upu nei o le tusi na avatua e Jeremia le perofeta mai Ierusalema i e na totoe o tociaina na fa’atafe'a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.1</td>
<td>`דִּבְרֹתֵי חֹכֶםָּ֔ו</td>
<td>Upu a le</td>
<td>Upu o le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.2</td>
<td>מִירוּשָׁלָּ֞ם</td>
<td>ai Ierusalema</td>
<td>mai Ierusalema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.3</td>
<td>זֵקַנִּיִּ֙ים</td>
<td>toeaina</td>
<td>toai’ina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.4</td>
<td>הַגּוֹלָָ֗ה</td>
<td>tāfea</td>
<td>fa’atafe'a or tafea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jer. 29:1b</strong></td>
<td>and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom N. Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.</td>
<td>ma faitaulaga, ma perofeta, ma le nuu uma lava, na tāfea ia Nepukanesa mai Ierusalema i Papelonia;</td>
<td>ma faiatulaga, ma perofeta, ma i latou uma o e na faatafe'a e Nepukanesa mai Ierusalema i Papelonia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.1</td>
<td>אֶל־כָּל־הָָּ֔עם</td>
<td>nuu uma lava</td>
<td>i latou uma o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.2</td>
<td>נְבֽוּכַדְנֶּאצַַ֛ר</td>
<td>i latou uma o e</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jer. 29:2</strong></td>
<td>This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.</td>
<td>ina ua mavae ona o atu nai Ierusalema o leokina le tupu, ma le sa’o tamanai, ma eunuka, ma ali o luta ma Ierusalema, o tufuga foi, ma e galulue i uamea.</td>
<td>ina ua mavae ona o atu nai Ierusalema o leokina le tupu ma lana Afioga (tina o le tupu) ma ali o fō a le tupu, ma ali sili o luta ma Ierusalema, o tufuga foi, ma e galulue i uamea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a.1</td>
<td>הַגְּבִּירֵָ֙ה</td>
<td>ma le sa’o tamai</td>
<td>ma lana Afioga (tina o le tupu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a.2</td>
<td>הוֹסְךָּרִים</td>
<td>ma eunuka</td>
<td>ma ali o fō a le tupu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a.3</td>
<td>הַכָּרָ֖ם</td>
<td>alii</td>
<td>alii sili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jer. 29:6</strong></td>
<td>Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.</td>
<td>ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia fananau ai atalii ma afafine ia te outou; ia outou aumaia foi avā mā o outou atalii, ma fai ni tane mā o outou afafine, ina ia latou fananau tama ma teine; ia faatoateleina outou i lea mea, a e au a le faatoaitiitia.</td>
<td>ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia suli mai ai ni outou atalii ma ni o outou afafine; ia fai avā foi outou atalii ma fai ni toolua a o outou afafine, ina ia maau ai ni o latou suli; ia fa’atoateleina ai outou i lea mea, ae au a le fa’atoaitiitia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a.1</td>
<td>Take wives and have sons and daughters;</td>
<td>ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia fananau ai atalii ma afafine ia te outou;</td>
<td>ina fai avā ia outou, ma ia sulī mai ai ni outou atalii ma ni o outou afafine;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a.2</td>
<td>and have</td>
<td>fananau ai</td>
<td>sulī mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a.3</td>
<td>sons and daughters;</td>
<td>atalii ma afafine ia te outou;</td>
<td>ni outou atalii ma ni o outou afafine;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b.1</td>
<td>take wives for your sons,</td>
<td>ia outou aumaia foi avā mā o outou atalii,</td>
<td>ia fai ava foi outou atalii,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b.2</td>
<td>and give your daughters in marriage,</td>
<td>ma fai ni tane mā o outou afafine,</td>
<td>ma fai ni toalua a o outou afafine,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c.1</td>
<td>that they may bear sons and daughters;</td>
<td>ina ia latou fananau tama ma teine;</td>
<td>ina ia maua ai ni o latou sulī;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c.2</td>
<td>multiply there,</td>
<td>ia faatoateleina outou i lea mea,</td>
<td>ia faatoateleina ai outou i lea mea,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c.3</td>
<td>and do not decrease.</td>
<td>a e aua le faatoaititia.</td>
<td>ae aua le faatoaititia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5. Discussion of Translation Issues

**Hebrew:**

NRSV: ‘from Jerusalem’

**Samoan Bible: ai Ierusa lema**

The preposition *ai* is used to translate the preposition ‘from.’ This *ai* is usually a slang or informal way of speaking in Samoan. E.g. *ai fea?* There is a proper preposition to be used in formal language, such as *mai* or *nai* meaning ‘from’ instead of *ai*.

**Hebrew:**

NRSV: ‘elders’ (pl)

**Samoan Bible: toeaina (s)**

The word *toeaina* in Samoan is in same singular form as in ‘Issue 1a.3.’ In Hebrew, the word is adjectival in form though its use here is as a noun. It is the masculine plural construct of זֵקְנִי which means “elders-of,” and it is used here as a substantive. The Samoan

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word should be *toeaiina*, which is plural instead of *toeaina* which is singular. Thus, the missionary translation is incorrect when it says that there was only one elder who went into exile.

**Hebrew:**

NRSV: ‘the exile’

**Samoan Bible: tāfea**

The word *tāfea* here is a singular verb, meaning to drift by a sea current, and it can be plural or singular, depending on the subject. However, in verse 1 of the Samoan Bible, the subject is *toeaina* which is singular, so the word *tāfea* must be singular. The Hebrew word which immediately follows יִגּוֹלָה is a feminine singular noun meaning “the exile.” Here, the Hebrew noun is translated by a verb in Samoan.

**Jer. 29:1b**

NRSV: ‘all the people’

**Samoan Bible: nuu uma lava**

The word *nuu* means ‘village,’³ where groups of families (‘tribes’) are gathered together, the so-called *alalafaga* or *afioaga.*⁴ *Nuu uma lava* refers to those who went into exile in 587 BCE, but the Hebrew “and all the people” would be broader than a village. Moreover, *nuu uma lava* would not specifically identify just the people who went into exile but would imply that the whole village was taken. The word *nuu* identifies God’s people and Israel as a nation. Possibly, it was suitable when the

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forefathers were referred to, like the English word ‘tribes.’ However, the nation was divided when King Solomon died and his son Jeroboam became the king of the nation (1 Kings 12:19-24). So, by the time of the Babylonian exile, the word nuu or group of tribes (‘families’) should no longer exist, due to the fact that they had become two separate kingdoms. Thus, it should be changed from nuu to the atunuu (‘country’) or state. In the Samoan Bible, nuu is used for village or tribes and also instead of atunu ‘u (‘country’) (Jer. 28:5, 7, 8, 15; 29: 2, 14). However, the Hebrew refers to people rather than a village or a country. Therefore, I suggest using the Samoan word itua ‘iga (‘tribe or lineage.’)\(^5\) Although their kingdom was divided, their tribal identity was not wholly lost.

**Hebrew:**

\(שָרֵי\)

**NRSV:** ‘leaders’

**Samoan Bible: alii**

\(שַר\) is a Hebrew word for “leaders” or “chief persons,” translated as alii, which means ‘man/men,’ ‘boy,’ ‘gentleman/gentlemen,’ and occurs in either the plural or singular. The word can also be a title of the high chief of a village, so that o le alii o le nuu means the matai or chief of a village.\(^6\) The title alii can possibly indicate a matai status, which is higher than a tulafale (‘orator’) in the hierarchical system. However, the title sa’o alii can also applied to a woman when she is given with a high chief’s title. They can be called an alii taua or sa’o alii regardless of gender. Instead of alii, alii sili should have been used to distinguish them from others because they played a leading role in the life of community.

\(^5\) Milner, 88.

\(^6\) Ibid., 549.
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Samoan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a le – of</td>
<td>la-a fa – a sail that made o blaited cinnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’oa’i – to discipline</td>
<td>laau – tree, plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’oa’iga - discipline</td>
<td>la-fala – a sail that made of mats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afi – fire</td>
<td>lala – branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aiga – family</td>
<td>lalo – down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ala – the way, the road.</td>
<td>la-tō – travel away from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ali’i – male, man, chief</td>
<td>lau – your[s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ali’i ma faipule – village chief councils</td>
<td>loto – heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>api - settle</td>
<td>lotu – church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asi – visit</td>
<td>lupe – pigeon, dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asiasi – inspection</td>
<td>ma le – and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atunu’u - country</td>
<td>mala – calamities, curse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aumai – bring</td>
<td>malaia – misfortune, curse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ava – kava (‘traditional drink’)</td>
<td>manā – blaessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avā – wife</td>
<td>matai – village polities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avatu – give</td>
<td>matū-palapa – grant, recipient only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eunuka – castrated mn</td>
<td>nofotane – woman to have husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’a - is a prefix, means to be</td>
<td>nu’u – village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’a Samoa – to be Samoa</td>
<td>oso – rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’aaloalo – respect</td>
<td>oti - die, cut, goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’afo’i – to make return</td>
<td>potopoto – to gather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’alele – to let fly</td>
<td>pule – authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’amanuiaga – blessing</td>
<td>pulega – council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’amoemoe – hope</td>
<td>sa’a – straight, honour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’anōhanōmanū – gentle prayer</td>
<td>saili – seeking, search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’asimomaga - identity</td>
<td>Saleslesi –the village in Upolu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’atāfeea – to drift, to banish</td>
<td>sulī – heirs/descents as an identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’ate’a – to banish</td>
<td>tafea – to drift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’a-tō– curse</td>
<td>tafeaga – a drift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’atoaga – plantation</td>
<td>tagaloa Lagi – Samoan God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’atonu – to instruct or direct</td>
<td>tai – ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’a-tōtō – intend</td>
<td>tagata – people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’a’aua – like rain</td>
<td>tama – son, child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fafine - woman</td>
<td>tama a le eelele – the people of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fai – to build, make</td>
<td>taimaitai’i – lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fāi, fāifāi – blaspheme</td>
<td>tamalaoa - man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faiavā – man to have wife</td>
<td>tapua’i – to worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fale – house</td>
<td>tapua ‘iga – worshiping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fale ie – tent</td>
<td>taufānu’u – big black cloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fale lau vao – house made of leaves</td>
<td>tau-fanua – the person at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fananau – multiple birth</td>
<td>tautai – fisherman, skipper in sailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fanau – to get birth, children</td>
<td>tefē – to circumcise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fanua – land</td>
<td>tefega – circumcision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fatafata – chest</td>
<td>timu – rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fau – to build, make</td>
<td>tina – mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fea – where</td>
<td>tō – bring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feagaiga – covenant</td>
<td>tō – pregnant[cy]</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>fetu 'u – curse</td>
<td>tō – to build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fo’i – return</td>
<td>toe afua – refocus, re-start, re-store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folau – voyage</td>
<td>toese – to take away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fono a matai – chiefly meeting</td>
<td>tofā - knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia toe – again</td>
<td>tofī – inheritance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>igāga-tō – grant</td>
<td>tōōō – plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itulagi – direction</td>
<td>tulafale – orator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la – directional pointer</td>
<td>toe afua – refocus, re-start, re-store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la – sail</td>
<td>tunu – to cook, burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la – sun</td>
<td>va – space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


