

***Names as Hermeneutics to read texts: Fofogaolevai and John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-15)***

A Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of Malua Theological College

Samoa

In Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Theology

By

Clarke Tusani Stowers

2017

## **CONSENT FORM FOR THE RETENTION AND USE OF THE THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER**

I, **Clarke Tusani Stowers**

---

agree that the thesis/research paper be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Malua College Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis/research paper\*.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Subject to the Policies of the Malua Theological College Library

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, which is **15,452** words in length, excluding the bibliography, has been written by me, that it is the result of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous written work for an academic award at this or any other academic institution.

I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my dear Fofogaolevai Stowers and my lovely children Bernadette Josephine, Leafaitulagi Jacinta and Robert Leonidas Stowers. This work is also dedicated to the memory of my dear father Tusani Laititimalu Dick Stowers not forgetting Fofogaolevai Nanai our grandmother who taught us that nothing is impossible to GOD.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This work would not have been possible without the support, guidance and patience of many people. I want to thank my supervisor Rev. Dr. Vaitusi Lealaiauloto Nofoaiga, his encouragement, searching questions, insight and comments kept the work focussed. I can never forget the assistance from the department of New Testament in Malua Theological College. To Dr. Julie Nanai for helping us edit this work. And to my Spiritual parent Rev. Panapa and Leafaitulagi Fata Too and Rev. Elder Senara and Olita Tautiaga for their constant encouragement in silence gave me strength to continue. Faafetai tele.

## ABSTRACT

A name is one of the most significant parts of an identity of a Samoan. It carries one's family honour within the family and village and of course to the world. Names are important in the New Testament as well. It is the task of this study to utilize the significance of names as hermeneutic to explore a meaning of a text. The focus is revisiting Mark 1:1-15 from my understanding of the name, *Fofogaolevai*. Reading the selected text from *Fofogaolevai* as the hermeneutic will be carried out using the reading approach, '*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*', an adaptation of the Socio-rhetorical criticism.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
1. The world of the reader and biblical interpretation now	1
2. Names as identity in relation to place – <i>fa'asinomaga</i>	2
3. The thesis	5
4. Thesis format	5
CHAPTER ONE: <i>Fofogaolevai</i> as hermeneutic, and ' <i>Suesue mamanu o le tusiga</i> ' as reading method	7
Introduction	7
1. <i>Fofogaolevai</i> as a name and hermeneutic	8
1.1. <i>Fofogaolevai</i> as a name	8
1.2. <i>Fofogaolevai</i> as a hermeneutic	11
2. ' <i>Suesue mamanu o le tusiga</i> ' as the interpretational tool	12
Summary	14
CHAPTER TWO: ' <i>Suesue mamanu o le tusiga</i> ' of Mark 1:1-15	15
Introduction	15
1. <i>Suesue mamanu anofale</i> (Exploring the inner textures of the text)	15
1.1. Beginning (vv. 1-3) Messenger sent to prepare Jesus' way	20
1.2. Middle (vv. 4-13): The baptism of Jesus	22
1.3. Ending (vv. 14-15): The messenger named John is arrested	26
2. ' <i>Suesue mamanuina mai fafo</i> '	27
Summary	34
CHAPTER THREE: <i>Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai</i> and analysing the reading from <i>Fofogaolevai</i>	35
Introduction	35
1. <i>Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai</i> of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit	35
1.1. Honour and Shame in the Markan text	36
Summary	39
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION	40

1. Analysing the reading from <i>Fofogaolevai</i>	40
2. Overall result and significance of the study as a biblical interpretation	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44



## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The world of the reader and biblical interpretation now

Biblical interpretation now considers the world of the reader which brings a new dimension.<sup>1</sup> It regards important the reader's bringing of his or her own questions to the interpretations of the text which helps shape a framework to interpret the text. These questions can be considered as a hermeneutical way of seeing a text.<sup>2</sup> In this way, biblical interpretation gives us, the readers in our own worlds, the opportunity to make sense of what the Bible means in our every-day life activities.<sup>3</sup>

This paper is an exercise of interpreting the Bible using an understanding or experience of a reader's world as a hermeneutic. The understanding emphasised in this study is the importance of names in our cultures and contexts. An example is the name of a person. This study suggests that the name of a person does not just identify who the person is; it also identifies the place that the name belongs to. Thus, a name exhibits a relational identity. This relational sense of a name as an identity is expressed in the meaning of the Samoan translation of identity which is *fa'asinomaga*.

---

<sup>1</sup> The scope of this paper does not allow me to give an overview of what hermeneutics is in relation to the field of biblical studies.

<sup>2</sup> The historical outline of the progress of hermeneutics is briefly explained in, David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 104-06. See also, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical Philosophical Description with special references to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 24-47; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 356-57.

<sup>3</sup> The reading of the text shown here could be looked at as an Islander hermeneutical reading of the Bible. Islander hermeneutics is now a recognized area of biblical interpretation in the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), according to Vaitusi Nofoaiga, the secretary of Oceania Biblical Studies Association. The following publications and theses on Islander Hermeneutics are good examples of readings using Island hermeneutics. See Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *Bible, Borders, Belongings: Engaging Readings from Oceania* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014); Nasili Vaka'uta, *Reading Ezra 9-10 Tu'a-Wise: Rethinking Biblical Interpretation in Oceania* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); Peni Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic," (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005); Vaitusi Lealaiauloto Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel," (PhD Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2014).

Defining *fa'asinomaga* is important in understanding the significance of names in the Samoan social and cultural world, and will be the task of the next section. The definition will be dealt with from the point of view of 'identity' in relation to 'place'. Thus, the main question for the thesis is: 'How can names help us understand the meaning of an historical event such as the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, as shown in Mark 1:1-15?'

## **2. Names as identity in relation to place – *fa'asinomaga***

According to *The New Zealand School Dictionary*, identity means “who or what a person or thing is; being identical; sameness; distinctive character; a person who is well-known in a particular place”.<sup>4</sup> This definition reveals that identity is defining and showing how I am the same as and different from others. In other words, I am identified with either in accordance with my individual characteristics, or in relation to the characteristics of a group of people to which I belong. Generally, according to this definition, there are different types of identities. However, in this study, I will focus mainly on my social and cultural identity as Samoan depicted in the meaning of a Samoan name.

So to introduce what a name as identity means to me as a Samoan, I use the character of being a member of my family in Samoan culture – a family member whose name exhibits his/her significant roles and responsibilities as a family member.<sup>5</sup> That is, one who is able to listen to, see, and feel the needs of his or her family and village, and act to fulfil them despite challenges he or she will encounter in doing so. Indeed, identity is not just about identifying the person according to the family he or she belongs to but also how he or she puts that belonging into action. Thus, identity is

---

<sup>4</sup> “Identity” *The New Zealand School Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> For example, the name of a matai exhibits the roles and responsibilities of a matai to a family. Another example is a taupou name, which displays roles and responsibilities of a taupou to her family.

action-in-progress that is persistently shaped by the changes a family member encounters in the world/s he or she lives in. In this way, my sense of identity as a family member with a special name is not static but dynamic.

However, that sense of identity cannot be felt and understood without a sense of place. The *New Zealand School Dictionary* defines place as “a particular part of space, especially where something belongs”.<sup>6</sup> This means that place is a particular part on Earth, identified by how something such as a certain group of people or a certain named person or people live in that place. This person or these people has/have his/their own values pertinent to the place they belong. This implies that place is not just a location. It is also a space that is identified by the various situations emergent from interactions among people in terms of their human values. Thus, place is a location and a space lived in and controlled by people. It is the environment where I learn how to live and relate to other people. It is also the environment where I experience familiar and unfamiliar situations based on the human values accepted by people who inhabit that place. In this way, understanding the particular place a name belongs to in a society determines how we see and experience other places. More importantly, it shapes how we see other people in other places. Thus, a sense of place is important when defining a name in Samoa, and is expressed in the Samoan word for identity which is *fa’asinomaga*.

There is a saying in Samoan, ‘*O le tagata ma lona fa’asinomaga*’ meaning ‘The person and his or her sense of identity’. It expresses the connection a person has to a particular family or who the person is in terms of the family he/she comes from. This word is made up of two parts, *fa’asino* and *maga*. *Fa’asino* is a verb meaning ‘point’, or ‘direct’, which points a Samoan to a particular family and village that he or she belongs

---

<sup>6</sup> “Place” *The New Zealand School Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

or is linked to.<sup>7</sup> The particular families and villages that a family member belongs to, have title names, customary lands, and residential places particular to themselves. The second part, *maga*, is a suffix<sup>8</sup> that makes *fa'asino* a noun, *fa'asinomaga*. Thus, *fa'asinomaga* is a way of identifying a family member in and through his or her social and cultural links to a Samoan family and village in Samoan society. It is an honoured identity. *Fa'asinomaga* (sense of belonging to a place) of a family member also points a family member to particular relationships he or she has within his or her family, and certain roles he or she is to carry out to fulfil being part of those relationships. A family member's sense of place as *fa'asinomaga* concerns how he/she is linked to his or her family and the space which his/her family inhabits within a village. Part of that *fa'asinomaga* is the relationships to which he or she belongs and his or her role in those relationships.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to consider the importance of the reader's world explained above, this paper regards the significance of people's names in our Samoan social and cultural world as relational identities. Some of these names exhibit certain important historical events containing lessons on how people should live in certain contexts and cultures. They bear great memories of the histories of families and villages. The importance and significance of names is also shown in the Bible. Particular names of people and places in the Bible have meanings that recognise certain events that happened in the history of God's helping his people from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

---

<sup>7</sup> G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 50.

<sup>8</sup> Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 120.

### 3. The thesis

This thesis aims to explore how certain named people in the selected passage, and their relationships to places and spaces to which they belong in the world embedded in the text, show the meaning of the events considered as the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God in Mark's Gospel.<sup>9</sup> The study suggests that an examination of certain names and their links to particular places and spaces will elucidate the significance of an historical event told and shown in the text. I will use my understanding of the significance of a particular name that is important to me in my Samoan world as a hermeneutic to guide the reading framework that explores the text. This name is called *Fofogaolevai*.

Questions about the important links of names to a place or space will arise from this understanding which will be used as hermeneutical lenses to explore the names of Jesus and John relative to the event of baptism in the Gospel of Mark.

### 4. Thesis format

This interpretation will be conducted in the following order: Chapter One explores the historical significance of the name *Fofogaolevai*. Questions from this account will be utilised as hermeneutical lenses to revisit the selected text in two ways. First, the questions provide a guideline to analyse the general significance of names to discover the meaning of an event. Second, the questions signifying the name *Fofogaolevai* is used to analyse that reading. The latter part aims to analyse how the

---

<sup>9</sup> Halvor Moxnes one of the current known and popular New Testament Scholars is interested in the consideration of people's names in relation to the places they belong to, as another way of seeking understanding of the text. See Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Halvor Moxnes, "Identity in Jesus' Galilee – From Ethnicity to Locative Intersectionality," *Biblical Interpretation* 18, no. 4-5 (2010): 390-416. Moxnes here speaks of the importance of seeing who Jesus is and his ministry in relation to the place of Galilee. According to Moxnes, it is important to remember that Jesus' ministry begins in Galilee. Thus, understanding Jesus' ministry should take into account Jesus as Jesus of Galilee.

name is important to me and how it makes sense in light of the initial events of the good news in Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry. Part of Chapter One is the description of the method used in this study which is adapted from socio-rhetorical criticism called '*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*'. Chapter Two is the *Suesue mamanu anofale* which is exploring the inner textures of the text, followed by *Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai* which is exploring the social and cultural textures of the text. Chapter Three advances to the *Suesue mamanuina mai fafo* stage which depicts the exploration of the inter-textures of the text. The thesis ends with a conclusion.

## CHAPTER ONE: *Fofogaolevai* as hermeneutic, and ‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’ as reading method

### Introduction

This chapter describes *Fofogaolevai* as an example of meaning found through understanding the events from which the name stemmed. This account evokes questions that will identify the significance of names when seeking the meaning of an event and how names can impact one’s understanding of people and their relationship to their own world(s).

*Fofogaolevai*, is my wife’s name, and it has been passed on to three generations. This symbolises an intriguing aspect that prompted me to explore the genealogy of its origin and meaning to understand its significant place of existence within her family’s lineage. Therefore, this chapter begins with my findings on the *Fofogaolevai* name. It will discuss how the significance of *Fofogaolevai* as a name can be employed as a hermeneutic tool to analyse biblical texts. Reading the text through this hermeneutic lens, the thesis draws upon what I call in Samoan ‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’ which is an interpretational tool that will be used in due course of the next section. This method of reading is aligned with Vernon K. Robbins’ socio-rhetorical criticism.<sup>10</sup> The chapter ends with a summary.

---

<sup>10</sup> Socio-rhetorical criticism is one of the popular methods in biblical studies. Vernon K. Robbins the pioneer of this method considers this method as an integrated method which brings together the world in the text, the behind the text, and the world in front of the text. Its focus is the text. See Vernon K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1996); Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

## **1. *Fofogaolevai* as a name and hermeneutic**

### **1.1. *Fofogaolevai* as a name**

A Samoan saying goes, “E talalasi Samoa” meaning, Samoa has different versions of one story. *Fofogaolevai* has various versions of its origin. For example, one version depicts that the village of Nofaalii claims that *Fofogaolevai* originated from here. The name is regarded with high esteem and it is only used to address the matai title *Taimalie* in honour of his presence. On the contrary, the village of Sataoa (where my wife’s mother originates) argue that the origin of *Fofogaolevai* is from here. Lama Tone Taa, a villager of Sataoa,<sup>11</sup> relayed me his version, passed on from the view of his grandfather Taa – a well-known chief of Sataoa at that time.<sup>12</sup> This version of the story is generally accepted by the chiefs of Sataoa and also the “Satunumafono sect” of Safata. I refer to Lama Tone Taa, in this study, as Tone.

The story is that there was a man named Tunumafono at Safata with four sons Pule, Mauga, Afemata and Taa. According to Tone, Safata used to be divided into two parts, the Alataua and Tunumafono<sup>13</sup>. There were wars between the two sides. Alataua won the first war. Tunumafono then sought Nafanua’s help. Nafanua accepted the request and sent Tupa’i (one of Nafanua’s great men) to take revenge against Alataua. It was the beginning of the second war which ended with a victory to Tunumafono. This gave the Aiga Sa-Tunumafono the title the “strong family” (aigamalosi). Their strength was exercised after this war by gaining power and authority over the areas from Saanapu to Mulivai of the Safata region.

---

<sup>11</sup> Lama is the family member who is looking after the family at the moment. He was given all the measina (family histories and genealogies) by the late Taa Faamatala who used to be the sa’o (head chief) of the family

<sup>12</sup> Taa is a paramount chief name of Sataoa. The name is obviously linked to the name of the village Sataoa which simply means the family of Taa.

<sup>13</sup> Alataua (Mulivai to Nuusuatia) and Tunumafono (Lotofaga to Saanapu)



After this war, Tunumafono divided his blessings upon his four sons. Mauga and Pule were told to stay at the place called Lefagaoalii at Lotofaga. Tunumafono sent his son Afemata to reside at his mother's place at Tauese Apia. However Afemata did not want to go to Tauese so, instead, he asked his father if he could stay at Sataoa. Tunumafono accepted his son's request and gave him a damp area as his residential place. A requirement for staying on this piece of land was to serve his younger brother Taoo. Undertaking this service is expressed in Afemata's actual name which is spelled Afumata; Afumata means 'sweating on the eyes' which shows a person who works hard.

Taoa was the most blessed son of Tunumafono because of his service, mainly in the wars, to his father. This was known when Tunumafono, as part of his blessing of Taoo, said, "Taoa e te laitiiti i le fanau ae e te matua i tofiga" (Taoa, you are the youngest of my four sons and the most blessed one). Tunumafono gave Taoo the name "*Fofogaolevai*", meaning the eye of a well or spring in terms of transparency and accountability (manino ma le mama o le mata o le vai). This appointment meant Taoo was the main speaker of the district and village of Sataoa. His thoughts and ability to make sensible decisions should reflect the meaning of his name. Moreover the unity and peace within the villagers would depend on his "tofa" (point of view and wisdom).

The title and the blessing were given due to his good service to his father Tunumafono in wars and at all other times. Significantly, Tone added, the crowning of the name *Fofogaolevai* to Taoo was done in one of the sacred Samoan ceremonies called "manavaga o faamanuiaga". Taoo's father opened his mouth from a distance while Taoo, on the other side, opened his mouth, and Tunumafono blew the breath of blessings. In those days, this practice was like an anointing of a chief with the blessings of being a reliable speaker (tofamamao ma le utagapoto) and positive and wise speech

(fetalai, poo le gutupoto). Interestingly, the practice signifies blessings towards a forthcoming obligation that will be always blessed (tapuaia) by the father (chief leader of the family).

In addition, one of the Samoan traditions about controlling a village was the punishment of disobedient villagers in order to teach them a lesson. According to Tone, making the final decision in these circumstances was another role carried out by Taoa; Taoa usually saved villagers from these situations. This role of Taoa as *Fofogaolevai*, in making the final decisions in village council meetings, continues in the district of Safata and the village of Sataoa. Tone added that Taoa's decision-making should always reflect love and justice which is the tradition of *Fofogaolevai* when running his village.

According to Aukuso Taumate's thesis, in some villages the decision-making is done by the 'alii' (high chiefs). Then the 'aliimatua' (paramount chief) makes the final decision about any issue.<sup>14</sup> For the village of Sataoa, *Fofogaolevai* is the only person who has the final say on any issue. Therefore, the shaping of the lives of the villagers depends on decisions made by Taoa as *Fofogaolevai*. Furthermore, whenever King Malietoa visits the Sa-Tunumafono district, *Fofogaolevai* should be the only person to face Malietoa before the 'ava ceremony' (feiloaiga ma le nuu ma le Itumalo).<sup>15</sup> In other words, *Fofogaolevai* is the mediator between the district and the king.

The other significant part of the story is the place where *Fofogaolevai* resided. According to Tone, Tunumafono made the place called Siulepa<sup>16</sup> his dwelling place (tulagamaota in Sataoa). The name Siulepa came from a story about a boy who was stolen from Safata by Ape and Tutuila. Tone said the place was where the tears of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Aukuso Taumate, "Theological Interpretation of the Samoan Saying: "E Le Po Pea Se Nuu."" (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview: Lama Tone Taoa 25/12/2016

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of this name is 'the place flooded with tears of the boy brought by Ape and Tutuila.

stolen boy gathered, forming a small lake. This boy was made king by Aana. Tone added that this could be the reason for the arrival of the name *Fofogaolevai* at Nofaalii.

As I mentioned above, there are various versions of the same story. In fact, Nofaalii also has another version of the name “*Fofogaolevai*”. Based on Tone’s or Safata’s versions, the *Fofogaolevai* at Nofaalii was believed to come from Safata. He said the boy that was stolen from Safata was considered someone from the Tunumafono family (a brother). The landmark of this view was the residence of Taoo (tulagamaota of Taoo or Fofogaolevai) named Siulepa. Regardless of the differences in versions, the leading chief (Pule Nu) of Fasitoo said that the *Fofogaolevai* (Taimalie) at Nofaalii plays the same role as the one in Safata. He is the speaker for the king in Nofaalii at village meetings.<sup>17</sup>

## **1.2. *Fofogaolevai* as a hermeneutic**

*Fofogaolevai*, as the name mentioned in the story above, identifies a person, a place or space he or she belongs to. It is a *fa’asinomaga* of a particular people in a particular place. The significance of the links of *Fofogaolevai* as a name for Taoo, to the place of *Siulepa* and the role or responsibilities expected of a person with that name, exhibit implications of how a name could be a departure point for finding an understanding of an event. Thus, *Fofogaolevai* is a very important name that explains who my wife is in terms of a place to which she belongs; it evokes categories that will be used as hermeneutical lenses for reading the selected text. These categories will guide the revisiting of the significance of names of characters in Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:2-13.

- a. Name is *fa’asinomaga* – the sense of belonging to a place or space
- b. Name expresses identity in action with a purpose

---

<sup>17</sup> Personal interview: Pule Nu Pule 12/08/2016

To interpret the text from these lenses, I will use ‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’. The questions will be grouped in two parts. The first is the group of general questions about the significant of names in finding the meaning of a text. The second is the group of questions taken from the event where the name *Fofogaolevai* emerged. The analysis of the text could be interpreted as *Fofogaolevai*. How this method is used will be explained in the section below.

The first group of questions: What names are mentioned in the story? Do these names have any significant links to the places or spaces in the stories? Do these names have any significant links to events that happened in the story? If there are links, how do they help clarify the meaning of the text? Are these events meant to help people?

The second group of questions: Who could be looked upon as *Fofogaolevai* in the text? Can the beginning events of the good news can be read as events of *Fofogaolevai*?

## **2. ‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’ as the interpretational tool**

‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’ as an interpretational tool is adapted from Vernon K. Robbins’ socio-rhetorical criticism. A socio-rhetorical approach, according to Robbins, is a reading method that integrates social science with more literary-based advances in biblical studies.<sup>18</sup> His goal is to develop a rhetorical approach that combines literary, social, cultural and ideological issues in texts. The approach focuses on finding the meaning of a text by examining the values, convictions and beliefs in the world.<sup>19</sup> It examines how those values help shape meaning. As readers, we compare or contrast values and beliefs with the world in which we live, in order to make meaning relevant to

---

<sup>18</sup>Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 1.

<sup>19</sup>Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 1.

us.<sup>20</sup> My adaptation of this method is my use of Samoan words to translate the stages of the socio-rhetorical approach utilised in this thesis. The three stages are inner-texture, inter-texture, social and cultural texture.

According to Robbins, inner-texture examines literary features of the language of text such as patterns, progression of the text, and characters. I will consider inner-textual interpretation as '*Suesue mamanu anofale*'. *Anofale* is a Samoan word given to the internal core of a house or inside the house. According to *fa'asamoa*, this part of the house is the main structure of the house. In other words, it is where the strength of the house is laid. This part was built and planned in ways that would make a house strong. From this understanding, I consider *Suesue mamanu anofale* as an investigation of the world embedded in the language of the selected text, looking at how it is laid out in accordance with literary features of the text.

The next stage is inter-textual interpretation. The inter-texture stage, according to Robbins, examines phenomena from outside that are used in the text. I call this stage in Samoan '*Suesue mamanuina mai fafo*'. The use of prophecies from the Old Testament is an example. The third stage of the interpretation is social and cultural texture. Robbins considers this stage as investigation of the social and cultural values of the world behind the text, embedded in the language, for example, the values of honour and shame. I see this stage as '*Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai*'. These three stages will guide the interpretation and will be assisted by certain questions from the hermeneutic of *Fofogaolevai* which are shown below.

i. '*Suesue mamanu anofale*'

Its guide questions are: What are the names (of the people and places) in the story? How does the language of the text present the characters of Jesus, John, and

---

<sup>20</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 26.

God? Does the River Jordan, as an important space or place in the story, have any significance to baptism? Do the conversations between certain characters in the story have any significant links to John the Baptist and Jesus? Is there any significance of names in the story to the progress of Mark's story?

ii. *'Suesue mamauina mai fafo'*

Its guide questions: How does Mark's use of the following recitations from the Old Testament, which give more descriptions to who John is and who Jesus is, help us understand the text? Recitations from the Old Testament: Isaiah 40:3; 2 Kings 1:8; Zechariah 13:4; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1, 12-13; Psalm 91:13.

iii. *'Suesue mamau faaagafesootai'*

Its guide questions: One of the social and cultural values of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Mediterranean world at the time of Jesus that identified the differences in names is 'honour'. 'Shame' is another. There were honoured names and shamed names. How does the language of the text show social and cultural value of the names John and Jesus? Another important social and cultural value of that time was the patron and client relationship which was undertaken through the practice of 'challenge and response'. Is there a practice of challenge-response in the text? If there is who, what is it for?

## **Summary**

This chapter shows two important aspects of this study. The first is the hermeneutic used here as an experience and understanding of the significance of names that raise categories of name significance. These evoke questions that will be used as a guide for the interpretation of the selected text. The second is my adaptation of Robbins' socio-rhetorical approach to Samoan thinking to interpret the text. The interpretation will be the task of the following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO: ‘*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*’ of Mark 1:1-15

### Introduction

This Chapter deals with the first part of the exegesis of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit<sup>21</sup> guided by general questions (considered as hermeneutical lenses) that evoked from my experience and understanding of the significance of names as identities in my Samoan world. These names are significant in terms of their social and cultural links to certain places or spaces. Such significance is looked upon as a meaning or meanings of certain events in the text where particular names play important roles and functions. This exegesis is carried out using the interpretational tool of *Suesue mamanu o le tusiga* (exploring the textures of the text). The exegesis presented in this chapter is in two parts, according to the method used in this study. First is the *Suesue mamanu anofale* (exploring the inner textures of the text). Second is the *Suesue mamanuina mai fafo* (exploring the inter-texture of the text).

#### 1. *Suesue mamanu anofale* (Exploring the inner textures of the text)

The guide questions for this task are questions from the hermeneutic used in this study, which are about the significance of names such as *Fofogaolevai*. What are the names (of the people and places) in the story? How does the language of the text present the persons named Jesus, John, and God, in relation to the places of the River Jordan, and Nazareth, Galilee, and wilderness shown in the story? Does the River Jordan have any significance to what baptism means in relation to its place and space in the story,? Is there any significance of the names in the story to the progress of Mark’s story?

---

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy describes ‘rhetorical unit’ as a unit that has a beginning, middle, and an end. George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33-34.

From the hermeneutic of the importance of names and places, I consider Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit<sup>22</sup> which is a story about the persons named Jesus Christ and John the Baptiser, relative to God. These names are linked to the following places in this part of Mark's presentation of the good news of Jesus Christ: wilderness, heaven, the River Jordan, Nazareth, and Galilee. This unit is called 'the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ'.

Any rhetorical or narrative unit has opening and closing signs which mark the beginning and ending of a unit. The opening signs of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit are mentioned in these words of verse 1: *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. First, it indicates that the good news about the person named Jesus Christ the son of God has a beginning, according to Mark. That beginning is revealed in the following events told in the middle and end of the unit.<sup>23</sup> The events are the baptism of Jesus, the temptation of Jesus, and the beginning of the Galilean ministry. Second, it states the names associated with the good news. They are Jesus Christ and God (Jesus as the son of God). Significantly, the mention of the name Jesus as the son of God reveals heaven as another place or space of belonging for Jesus. Thus, the good news of the person named Jesus Christ is news from above. Hence, baptism, the temptation of Jesus and the beginning of the Galilean ministry in Mark's telling and

---

<sup>22</sup> The consideration of certain verses as the beginning of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry is varied. Some scholars consider 1:1-13 as the beginning such as Jack D. Kingsbury and Lamar Williamson. (See Jack D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 31; Lamar Williamson, *Mark* (Interpretation Commentaries; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983), 2, 28-39.) Other scholars regard 1:1-15 as the beginning of Mark's Gospel (as emphasized in this study) such as David B. Taylor and Hugh Anderson. (See David B. Taylor, *Mark's Gospel as Literature and History* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 51-76; Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 62-86.

<sup>23</sup> Other interpretations consider the word beginning mentioned in verse 1 as indication of the beginning to the whole gospel presented by Mark. I agree with this claim based on the consideration of this verse in light of the whole presentation of Jesus' ministry by Mark. Because the emphasis of this study is exploring the importance of the beginning events of the coming of Jesus relative to Jesus' and John's names, therefore the word beginning in verse 1 is interpreted as reference to the first so-called events of the coming of Jesus relative to John the baptizer.



showing of the good news are very important. They show the beginning of the story of Jesus' ministry.

The closing indicators of 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit are given in verse 15 which begins with the conjunction '*and*' (*kai* in Greek). This conjunction indicates that the unit is coming to its end. The ending mentions again the good news of God and this time shows Jesus' public proclamation of that message in these words: '*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.*' Thus, the opening and closing signs of 1:1-15, as a rhetorical and narrative unit, are interpreted as an *inclusio*.<sup>24</sup> Both verses identify 'good news' as the subject of the story. They speak of the good news as that of Jesus Christ that has now begun and is now fulfilled. Both verses identify the good news in relation to God. Verse 1 tells the good news as that of Jesus Christ the son of God. Verse 15 speaks of the good news relative to the kingdom of God. In this way, the name Jesus Christ, in relation to God and God's kingdom, is the main character of this unit. Hence, identifying the name Jesus as the son of God and in relation to God's kingdom in verses 1 and 15 can be considered as a rhetorical frame that surrounds the telling and showing of the beginning events of Mark's telling of the good news of Jesus Christ. In other words, the name Jesus, in relation to God and in the events told and shown in Mark 1:1-15, is significant to Mark's telling of Jesus' ministry. The analysis of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit will be based on its following threefold structure:

- Beginning (vv. 1-3):     Messenger sent to prepare Jesus' way
- Middle (vv. 4-13):     John the messenger and his baptism of Jesus
- Ending (vv. 14-15):     John's arrest marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry

---

<sup>24</sup> *Inclusio* is "signs of opening and closure." See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34, 82.

This threefold structure of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit considers vv. 1-3 as the beginning. In this part, Mark, as the author in verse 1, speaks of two important things with regard to the progress of his telling of Jesus' ministry. Firstly, the author mentions in verse 1 that it is the good news of Jesus Christ the son of God he will talk about. Secondly, the beginning of that good news starts with the announcement of the messenger that will come first to prepare the way for the main carrier of the good news: Jesus Christ the Lord.

This is followed by part two (vv. 4-13) of the threefold structure which is the middle part of the unit. This part states the name of the messenger first sent, and his roles to be played. His name is John the Baptiser.<sup>25</sup> One of his roles is baptising Jesus. This part speaks of a test encountered by Jesus as affirmation of his announcement as God's son in Jesus' baptism. The unit ends in vv. 14-15 which is interpreted as the beginning of Jesus' ministry, showing that he is now ready to undertake the proclamation of God's kingdom after baptism and temptation. Identifying the significance of the placement of Mark 1:1-15, as a rhetorical and narrative unit, in the progress of Mark's telling of the story of Jesus' ministry, is important to '*Suesue mamanu anofale*'. It shows why an author or implied author presents in a rhetorical or narrative way, in a particular part of his or her presentation of a story, a certain event or moment. It is part of the progression of the story leading the development of a story to a certain plot. Thus, it is important to explain the placement of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit, in Mark's telling of Jesus' ministry.

There are many structures of Mark's gospel but I have chosen to utilise Black's structure<sup>26</sup> of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry, shown below.

#### I. Prologue: Introducing Jesus (1:1–15)

---

<sup>25</sup> I refer to John here as baptizer according to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation.

<sup>26</sup> C Clifton Black, *Mark* (New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 965.

## II. The Early Days (1:16–10:52)

## III. The Final Days (11:1–15:47)

## IV. Epilogue: The Resurrection (16:1–20)]

The prologue (1:1-15) of Black's structure is considered the beginning introducing Jesus. This part is considered as well in this study as the beginning of Mark's presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Black, the prologue is followed by the early days of Jesus' ministry. The early days are the days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and Judea. The final days in part three of Black's structure is Jesus' time in Jerusalem. It is the passion narrative which ends with the telling and showing of the resurrection of Jesus. Black sees this part the epilogue.

Black's structure is geographical. That geographical emphasis is considered important in the placement of the text 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit in this study. What this means in relation to the interpretation explored in this study is that 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit has a literary function anticipating the following events of Jesus' ministry. This significance has an important link to the characterisation of the person named Jesus and the person named John in Mark's story.

In this way, I consider the beginning of the good news taking place in Galilee as showing the name Jesus as a name associated with the place called Galilee. More important to this study is that the name Jesus is examined not only in relation to what good news is but also how that good news is put into practice in the first place.

It is the task of the next section to examine the textures or *mamanu* of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit. The focus, as the purpose of this thesis, is to explore how the names of people mentioned and shown in this unit, and their relationship to each other, and the places embedded in the language of the text, might

accentuate what Mark as the implied author is trying to put through to the readers, in this part of the story.

- Beginning (vv. 1-3): Messenger sent to prepare Jesus' way
- Middle (vv. 4-13): John the messenger and his baptism of Jesus
- Ending (vv. 14-15): John's arrest marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry

### **1.1. Beginning (vv. 1-3) Messenger sent to prepare Jesus' way**

At the beginning of the unit, the name of the main character in the beginning of the good news is mentioned. He is Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> What is important about this name is that it relates to God. It shows the person named Jesus as the son of God.

Jesus' name in Greek is *Iesous* meaning 'Yahweh saves' and the task of the person named Jesus is 'to save' God's people from sin.<sup>28</sup> The name Christ in Greek is *Christos* meaning 'anointed'.<sup>29</sup> The name Jesus Christ itself, according to the meanings stated here, exhibits what the good news is: to save the sinful world.

Thus, the good news Jesus brings is news to be recognised and accepted. Following this telling of the beginning of the good news is a prophecy which seems to speak by God to Jesus. The prophecy shows that a messenger will be sent ahead of Jesus the son of God who will prepare Jesus' way. And the task undertaken by this messenger is to proclaim to whoever is in the wilderness the message of preparing the way of the Lord.

Shown in this prophecy are two important things about the functions of names and relationship to places or spaces in the story which help reveal what the emphases of the author could be in this part of the story. First, the place of belonging for the messenger who is coming ahead of Jesus is wilderness. Second, the place where preparation of the

---

<sup>27</sup>Kingsbury using narrative criticism speaks of the character of Jesus Christ in Mark as the protagonist and this is shown in the beginning of Mark's gospel. Kingsbury writes: "Mark uses the beginning of his story (1:1-13) to set the stage." See Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> W. Forester, "Iesous," *TDNT*, 360-361.

<sup>29</sup> W. Grundmann, "Christos," *TDNT*, 1322.

way of Lord begins is wilderness. Wilderness has a twofold symbolic meaning. It is a “[s]ymbol of the world without God, or, a place prepared of God for his own.”<sup>30</sup> The latter meaning which is “a place prepared of God for his own” speaks of wilderness as a place that has a significant function in revealing God’s plan of caring for his people despite their disobedience.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the name of Jesus Christ and the good news he brings are linked to the place of wilderness. Hence, this link must have significance.

The Greek word for good news is *euangelion*.<sup>32</sup> This is the word used in the Greek and Hellenistic world to call any good news brought to them by someone. If someone wins a war, it is called good news. If a woman gives birth to a child is called good news. The use by Mark at the beginning of his telling of Jesus’ ministry is significant in a similar way. It shows that what he is going to tell and show about Jesus Christ the Son of God is definitely good news and the beginning of that good news is with the messenger arriving before Jesus arrives.

The wilderness that the narrator refers to has significance. It is the place where the messenger sent ahead of Jesus is preparing the way for Jesus and where the message of good news is to be firstly proclaimed. It is the *faasinomaga* for both John and Jesus in this part of the story. It exhibits why the good news is important. From the hermeneutic of the significance of name in relation to place in my Samoan world, I consider important the symbolic meaning of the place wilderness. According to biblical tradition as mentioned above, wilderness as a place is seen as an image of disobedience and sin. It pictures the 40 years the people of Israel roamed the wilderness before reaching Canaan. Thus, the beginning of the proclamation of the good news by John the

---

<sup>30</sup> Kevin J. Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols and Types* (Oregon: Bible Temple Publishing, 1992), 180.

<sup>31</sup> See Conrad E L’Heureux, “Numbers,” in *The New Jerome Bible Handbook* (ed. R. E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 29-32.

<sup>32</sup> G. Friedrich, “euangelion,” *TDNT*, 267-272

Baptiser in the wilderness could be looked at as taking the good news of Jesus Christ the son of God to the place that needs it – the wilderness.

## **1.2. Middle (vv. 4-13): The baptism of Jesus**

The middle part of the unit begins with showing the name of the messenger the prophecy talks about. He is John the Baptiser, a Jew. The meaning of the name John in Hebrew is “Yahweh is gracious.”<sup>33</sup> I regard this meaning of John’s name significant in describing the role of John as baptiser. It shows that John, as the messenger sent first to prepare the way of the Lord, is part of the gracious love of God in His plan to save the sinful world. This is why the wilderness, as explained above where John begins his work, is important. This interpretation suggests that a person’s name that is linked to his or her role or function in a situation or occasion is more understood by identifying the significance of the place he or she or his or her role belongs to.

This part of the rhetorical unit mentions John preparing the way of the Lord. It proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism, as a rite of purification in Judaism, purifies the so-called unclean, the proselyte. The expectation is that proselytes, after baptism, keep the law. This significance of baptism is reflected in the baptism practised by John but in light of the coming of the Lord. This Lord is looked upon as the Messiah. Thus, the baptism carried out by John is the beginning of gathering the messianic community together. It is where purification of cleansing is connected to repentance.<sup>34</sup> Edwards in his article on the baptism of Jesus, speaks of this baptism as “the cornerstone of Mark’s Christological understanding” because it is not something that John did but something happened to him.<sup>35</sup> Edwards adds that it shows

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/john> seen 12 June 2017

<sup>34</sup> A. Oepke, “baptize,” *TDNT*, 92-94.

<sup>35</sup> James R. Edwards, “The Baptism of Jesus According to the Gospel of Mark,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Studies* (March 1991): 43-57.

that baptism is an inauguration of God's eschatological kingdom. What this means is that the person named John and his role to carry out God's plan is eschatological. And this role is carried on by Jesus to the next level that John cannot do as reflected in John's words: 'He baptises with water and Jesus baptises with the Spirit'.

This shift reveals baptism in the beginning of Mark's telling of the gospel as an eschatological phenomenon that is life-giving and everlasting. In other words, the middle of the unit shows how the person named John the Baptist carries out his preparing of the way of the Lord as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. It actually prepares people to repent while awaiting the arrival of Jesus. This is undertaken by baptising people in the river Jordan. This river is mentioned as the name of the river where baptism takes place. The symbolic meaning of river is life-giving flow.<sup>36</sup> Jordan's name means descending or dying to self.<sup>37</sup> This river according to Anderson has "many sacred associations e.g. in the prophetic careers of Elijah and Elisha, and especially in the story of Naaman (2 King 5)."<sup>38</sup> So river Jordan could be interpreted symbolically as showing a river that is given life in and through the ritual of baptism carried out by John. The river is placed in the wilderness. It shows that within the wilderness there is hope, or a way to revive or to bring life to someone who is hopeless.

John the Baptist's preparing of the way of the Lord by baptising people who come to him shows that the places to which he belongs (relative to his task and role) will become places of blessings. This means that the people who live in these places are given the opportunity to be saved. The point is (from the hermeneutic of the significance of names in relation to places and spaces) that a name's sense of belonging to a place and space, in terms of role-taking, is a blessing that helps people in those places survive. In other words, the belonging of certain names to particular places and

---

<sup>36</sup> Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols*, 163.

<sup>37</sup> Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols*, 150.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 71-72.

spaces is not only to fulfil the named person's need but also to take care of the places and spaces to which he/she belongs including people living in them.

This reminds me of one of the roles of the person named 'Taoa' who is also called *Fofogailevai*, the name I use in this study to show the significances of names in relation to places they belong to. This role is to save the villagers considered disobedient village members by the village council, from punishments such as leaving the village for life. John the Baptist is doing this role in this part of the story. He is acting in relation to the wilderness and river Jordan in order for the people there to survive physically and spiritually. More importantly, the people from neighbouring places come to John to be baptised. They want part of the blessings received by people of the wilderness.

It is apparent that John practises his belonging to the place he is identified with. John the Baptist shows himself as a survivor of wilderness not only in a physical way but also spiritual. This is mentioned in verses 6 to 8. The narrator speaks of John, in verse 6, as 'clothing with camel's hair, and eating locust and wild honey'. This is the reality of life faced by John in the wilderness. It is how he should live in that place he belongs to, in order to fulfil his role as the baptiser.

Verses 7 and 8 speak of John's proclamation. John is not proclaiming himself but God in Jesus Christ. His words suggest his humbleness before God.<sup>39</sup> He refers to himself as not worthy in relation to the person coming after him who is Jesus. Anderson comments on these words of John as showing a "note of eschatological urgency." This is a valid interpretation when Jesus' baptising people with Spirit is brought into the picture. And this interpretation is reflected in Williamson's interpretation. For Williamson, "the major emphasis in verse 6-8, however, is neither on the place nor the

---

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *Gospel of Mark*, 72.



prophet, but on the Lord whose way John prepares...”<sup>40</sup> From the hermeneutic of the significance of names in relation to a particular place, I disagree with Williamson’s interpretation especially the point on not considering important place as a certain location on earth a named person belongs to. The Lord’s coming is not fulfilled without people on a place (a certain place) – such as a place lived by people needing help such as wilderness.

Thus, John’s words about his consideration of the coming Jesus shows John’s sense of spiritual belonging to the place he belongs – wilderness and the river Jordan. It shows that John’s attitude and approach in his carrying out of his role as baptiser in his place of belonging is significant in these ways. Firstly, it explains that the significance of a name belonging to a place reminds us the importance of that place physically and spiritually. Secondly, it reminds the named person his or her role to be carried out for that place. Thirdly, it reveals the importance of allowing God to be part of that relationship. Thus, John the baptiser, the messenger sent ahead of Jesus according to the prophecy of Isaiah, is a name that belongs to the wilderness and the river Jordan in a physical and spiritual way. It shows that the role of John in preparing the way of the Lord is not only to prepare people but also himself for Jesus’ coming.

Verse 8 reveals that the task of baptism is also the work carried out by Jesus. John speaks of his baptising people with water and Jesus baptising with the spirit. This suggests that names of people are associated with certain roles and tasks at different situations in certain periods or times. This means that what John says suggests that the person named Jesus and his proclamation of the good news, which baptism is part of, goes beyond John’s human nature. Thus, it shows that there is difference between our names and who we are, and the name of God in and through Jesus Christ and his

---

<sup>40</sup> Williamson, *Mark*, 32.

mission. In other words, John is showing that we, with our names, belong to certain places and spaces but all these places and spaces with us belong to God. Therefore, it is important to remember God's sovereignty.

More importantly, John's baptism of Jesus, as mentioned in vv. 9-11, could be looked at as showing Jesus' preparation to carry out his role of proclaiming God's kingdom. This moment in the progress of Mark's telling of the beginning of Jesus' ministry is important. It is where the affirmation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is declared by God himself. It reveals that the person named Jesus not only has a sense of belonging to the local place of Galilee shown in his baptism but also has a sense of belonging to the spiritual realm of heaven.

The declaration of the person named Jesus as son of God and his places and spaces of belonging are more evident in a test by evil. Jesus now enters the wilderness, the place where John the baptiser first appeared for his ministry. According to the story, Jesus is victorious while the angels wait upon him. Jesus is here shown as more important than angels, meaning he is The Son of God. This shows that being a person named in relation to a particular place or space will not stop him or her from being tempted or tested by whatever is in that place or space. In other words, it is important to be aware of how things go or work on a place or space you consider belonging to.

### **1.3. Ending (vv. 14-15): The messenger named John is arrested**

The end of the unit begins with the arrest of the person named John the Baptist. This arrest is the reason the person named Jesus went to Galilee to begin his proclamation of God's kingdom. The end of this unit shows the preparation by John of the way of Jesus' coming. Jesus now takes over the mission undertaken by John. The transition from John to Jesus reveals that the person named Jesus Christ – the Son of God – mentioned in the beginning of the unit, is the person that will fulfil the will of

God for his people – the sinful world – the will of God that John firstly proclaimed in Mark’s gospel. It also shows that the name Jesus Christ is associated with the kingdom of God.

Therefore, the good news proclaimed by Jesus should be accepted by those this good news is proclaimed to – the sinful world. The proclamation is presented as an imperative, suggesting that the proclamation of God’s kingdom should be obeyed because it is the proclamation of salvation. I will elaborate on this proclamation as a command later in the analysis of the *Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai* (exploring social and cultural texture) of the text.

I will now move on to exploring the inter-textures of the text by extending the interpretation shown in the first part of Chapter Two. That is, the people named at the beginning of Mark’s telling of the good news of Jesus Christ have significance in identifying the meaning of the beginning of Mark’s gospel.

## 2. ‘*Suesue mamanuina mai fafo*’

The aim of this part of the exegesis is to look into what is called ‘*Suesue mamanuina mai fafo*’ (inter-texture). In Mark 1:1-15, several phrases from the Old Testament are used by the writer. Thus, the task of this part of the exegesis is guided by the question: ‘How does Mark’s use of recitations from the Old Testament expand on the significance of the persons named John and Jesus in revealing the good news in the beginning of Mark’s gospel?’ These are the recitations from the Old Testament that I will explore in this part of the exegesis: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 2 Kings 1:8; Psalm 2:7.

Isaiah 40:3 *A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for God.*

Mark 1:2-3 *As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight.’”*

Mark’s use of the prophecy by Isaiah affirms his account of John’s role and the coming of the Lord – the Messiah. The book of Isaiah is divided into three by many scholars of the Old Testament. Book one is chapters 1 to 39, known as the pre-exilic period. Book two is chapters 40 to 55 where the people are in exile. The last part is book three, chapters 56 to 66. This last part is regarded as the post-exilic period or where the people have returned from exile.

Chapter 40 verse 3 falls in the second division which is in the time of exile. Most scholars date this between the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and the downfall of the Babylonian empire in 539 BC at the beginning of the victorious campaign of Cyrus.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the ongoing debate about whose voice is crying out (that the prophet is referring to) that person is not important in Isaiah. Instead, its significance shows assurance that there is hope for the people of Israel. In the Hebrew language, both verbs *WrV.y*: (turn toward,) and *<ä WNàP*; (be straight, to make clear) are both in imperative forms and denote a sense of lament of someone who is in deep pain. In other words, it is a command asking the people to turn away or repent from their sinful ways. It sounds like a father saying to his children, “I don’t need anything but obey this command.”

The second Isaiah or what is called Deutero-Isaiah (according to some scholars), portrays a different Messiah. Roy F. Melugin comments in his book called “The New Vision by Isaiah” that Book 1 of Isaiah depicts a powerful being who will come with judgment. The Deutero-Isaiah talks about a king who will come to save his people.

---

<sup>41</sup>John Goldingay, *New International Biblical Commentary: Isaiah* (United States of America: Henrickson Publishers, 2001), 15.

This is reflected in an early chapter of Book two.<sup>42</sup> This restoration demands a divine intervention in history; the way through the desert presumes release from Babylon. This intervention is the construction of the way to freedom. Mark's re-contextualisation of this prophecy brightens the character of John the Baptist – the forerunner who comes to prepare the heart of the people. It does not seem good for a king to prepare his own way. John's preparing the way of the Lord heightens the status of Jesus in the story. Jesus is the real Messiah that the people of Israel were longing to welcome. Thus, John's appearance in the scene is part of God's divine plan to save the world from sin. Mark's recitation of Isaiah's prophecy is similar to the words in the Book of Isaiah except for the last part. The term αὐτοῦ is used instead of τοῦ θεοῦ which refers to 'his ways'. The Book of Isaiah uses God's way.

2 Kings 1:8 They answered him, *"A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist."* He said, *"It is Elijah the Tishbite."*

Mark 1:6 *Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist...*

In the context of the Book of Kings, it is the expression of the appearance of the prophet Elijah by the king's servant. Contextually, God instructed Elijah to return to Samaria to confront Ahab about the sinfulness of the people. The appearance of the prophet highlights that the purpose of his return is to bring hope to the people of Israel. At the same time, it portrays an image of a shepherd coming back to search for a lost sheep.<sup>43</sup> In the context of Mark it stands at the beginning of his account about Jesus. It depicts a return of the shepherd to save His people. This brightens the character of John in Mark's context, in the sense that the Jews knew about Elijah. Therefore, if Elijah in the Old Testament brought hope to them then, it is now fulfilled by John the Baptist.

---

<sup>42</sup>Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney, eds., *New Visions of Isaiah* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>43</sup>G. J. Wenham et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004).

Malachi 3:1 *See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before **me**, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple*

Zechariah 13:4 *See, I am sending my messenger ahead of **you**, who will prepare your way;*

Mark 1:2-3 ... *“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way; the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*

Secondly Mark also re-contextualises Malachi 3:1, but he only mentions the prophet Isaiah. In the context of Malachi, the preparation of the way of the Lord is a notion resting upon the eastern custom of sending a messenger ahead of a visiting king to inform the inhabitants of his coming and to pave the way, to make it passable; literally, removing all the obstacles. Many scholars generally date Malachi's ministry to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, most probably around 470-460 BC. This can give an idea of the use of the word temple, because if that was the time then it was about the rebuilding of the temple by Ezra and Nehemiah. The use of the pronoun 'me' in Malachi tells us that God directly spoke to the prophet about what would happen. In other words, this is the assurance of the coming of the Lord despite the fact that the time is not identified.

On the other hand Mark's use of this prophecy lays the foundation of the fulfilment; this is the time the prophet Malachi was talking about in his time. In other words, the author gives hope to the persecuted Christians to comfort them and at the same time it is a declaration of their salvation from God through His son as he mentioned in the first verse.

The Hebrew verb '*pana*' means to make clear, to prepare a way, to turn aside to remove. This word is in a form of Piel (intensive active). It shows the intensiveness of the kind of preparation that will be done by the messenger. It emphasises the importance of paving the way for the coming Lord. The Hebrew term '*pit'om*' here

means ‘unexpectedly’ or ‘surprisingly’. Thus, in spite of the preparation of the forerunner, the king’s arrival will be unexpected.

Moreover who “the messenger” is in the book of Malachi is continuously debated but most interpreters agree that the ‘messenger’ is a human being.<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that there is still argument about the Hebrew term *ha’adon* ‘the Lord’, whether it identifies either the Messiah or the messenger. The most important part here is the purpose of the messenger which is performing two complementary works. One is that he will judge and the other is that he will purify the people. Purification is a reason why Mark uses this part of Malachi’s prophecy because it suits the job of John the baptiser. This is the meaning behind John’s practice of baptism.

*Psalm 2:7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you”*

*Mark 1: And a voice from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*

This Psalm is classified with the first Psalm as two part introduction to the Psalter. The Psalms is divided into four parts or stanzas, vv.1-3, vv.4-6, vv.7-9 and vv.10-12.

- Stanza. 1      The “king of the earth” rebel
- Stanza. 2      The divine king enthroned in heaven
- Stanza. 3      The Davidic king enthroned on Zion
- Stanz. 4      The “kings” are warned<sup>45</sup>

Verse 7 is found in the third part of the Psalm where David’s kingship was enthroned on Zion. The theme of the speech is kingship showing the king speaking about God’s word’s and promises. The verb  $\text{`}^{\wedge}\text{yTi}(\text{d} > \text{liyl})$  is in a form of qal perfect

---

<sup>44</sup> Pieter A. Verhoff, *The Books of Hagai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 888.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy deClaiss-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 68.

meaning to beget. To be born denotes the sense of adoption. Peter Craige notes that “*I have begotten you*” is a metaphorical language. It has a meaning that is more important than simply adoption. It has legal hints implying that a new birth of a divine nature took place during coronation.<sup>46</sup> The language emphasizes the relationship between God and a king, because it is now a “Father-son” connection. Contextually it implies God’s response to the rebellion of the earthly king. He will heighten the monarch of David on Zion and will fulfill the promise He had made to David.

In the context of Mark there is no hint of any adoption but showing Jesus as the real son. In other words Mark is not referring to Jesus as someone apart from God, but to show God incarnated in Jesus Christ. Thus, the person named Jesus is God himself. In reality no one can please God except His only beloved son, the chosen one. These are the words of assurance of the good news for the followers that the Messiah and salvation are now at hand. Hence, whoever is persecuted because of the name of the Lord will be rewarded by God.

Isaiah 42:1, 12-13 *Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ...Let them give glory to the Lord; declare his praise in the coastlands. The Lord goes forth like a soldier, like a warrior he shows up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.*

Mark 1:10 *And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him*

In this part of Isaiah the Deutero-Isaiah or the second author of the book Isaiah is directly giving hope to the people in the exile. There will be a time the chosen one with my Spirit will be with Him. The presence of the Spirit in the chosen one portrays an image of oneness between the father and the one who will come.<sup>47</sup> In Mark on the other

---

<sup>46</sup> DeClausse-Wafordet.al., *The New International Commentary*, 69.

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence Boadt, Richard Clifford, and Daniel Haarrington, eds., *Reading Old Testament: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2012), 179.



hand re-contextualizes this as a way of grounding the relationship between God and Jesus. It brings forth the unity of the Son and His Father; it is God who is now incarnated through Jesus. In terms of character we are now noticing the merging of the two characters in the story. In other words we have started with three characters and it is now leave us with only two, John the Baptiser and God who is in Jesus in the valley of Jordan.

*Psalms 91:13 You will tread on the lion and the lion adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.*

*Mark 1:13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him*

This Psalm is divided into three major parts; (1) Setting the stage v 1, (2) Encouragement to trust v2 -13 (3) God's words of confirmation v 14-16. The verse 13 is found in the second division of Walford.<sup>48</sup> If we look at verses 10-13 it has a list of things we most fear and it denotes the authority of God over all these. Furthermore the trampling of the serpent echoes the original failure of man in the book of Genesis, but it is God's time to shows His sovereignty over evil. The overall effect is stressing that God is always with the faithfulness.

On the other hand Mark only hints this at Jesus temptation with a short phrase that the angel were waited on Him. It affirms the presence of God with His beloved at any time. Characteristically God is vindicating His Son and gives confirmation to the readers that nothing can stop God's will on earth. Moreover the recitation of the Psalm grounds the presence of God in His Son as it is recorded in verse 11. Whilst at this point we can see the oneness of the character of God and His Son Jesus. It most likely whenever we won over the evil it is God who is in control.

---

<sup>48</sup> deClausse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Tanner., *The New International Commentary*,.

## **Summary**

Shown in this interpretation is affirmation of the historical and theological significance of the persons named John and Jesus in the beginning events of the good news according to Mark's gospel. It reveals that the coming of the person named John relates to the place called wilderness. John's relationship to this place has theological significance which is revealing the good news at hand as good news to save the people in the world of sin – as symbolically exhibit in the place of wilderness. The mention of river Jordan as the place where baptism is held also has symbolic significance. It is water to cleanse people from sin. Theologically, this pictures purification of body, heart, and soul in and through repentance – expected as the response from the people of the world considered to baptize by Jesus with Spirit.

Mark's use of recitations from the Old Testament as explained above strengthens the importance of John and Jesus in the beginning of Mark's gospel. They reveal that John as the messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord (Jesus) is all part of God's divine plan of salvation. Thus, the persons named John and Jesus in relation to the events of baptism, temptation, and beginning ministry, in the beginning of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry are very important.

## **CHAPTER THREE: *Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai* and analysing the reading from *Fofogaolevai***

### **Introduction**

This chapter has two parts. Firstly, it explores the social and cultural texture of the text (*Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai*), extending the interpretation initiated in Chapter Two. Secondly, it analyses that reading from the actual meaning of the name *Fofogaolevai* and its significance to my own Samoan social and cultural world in attempts to make sense of a name I consider important in light of Jesus' proclamation of the good news as presented by Mark. It is a contextual exercise to explain who we are or who I am as a Samoan with regards to the Gospel teachings.

#### **1. *Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai* of Mark 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit**

*Suesue mamanu faaagafesootai* method interprets the text by exploring the social and cultural elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Mediterranean world featured in the language of the text. In our Samoan social and cultural world, names of chiefly titles relatively exhibit honour associated with particular places and occasions. In honouring the importance of these names particular practices and actions are performed by certain people in terms of their particular functions and roles in specific places and spaces. One who possesses such knowledge and the epistemological understanding determines honorific words to acknowledge the ontological positions. The reception of their words by an audience depends on the authority of the speaker. In this respect, is he or she an honoured person?

The Mediterranean world is widely considered as the social and cultural context of Mark's community reflected in Mark 1:1-15 text.<sup>49</sup> It is not the purpose of '*Suesue mamanu o le tusiga*' reading to provide a thorough discussion of Mark's community and its social and cultural values. Instead, it targets only the social and cultural texture encoded in the language of this text extending the interpretation undertaken in this thesis. Hence, this part focuses only on the pivotal values of 'honour and shame' as social and cultural texture. Although the interpretation is not about Mark's community and its historical, social and cultural values, understanding how these are embedded in the text significant for its interpretation.

### **1.1. Honour and Shame in the Markan text**

'Honour and shame' have been widely regarded among the New Testament scholars as pivotal values of antiquity which structured the daily life of people in the Mediterranean world.<sup>50</sup> Scholars have considered it important, for it brings an understanding of the significant difference between being of worth or being shamed in various social, cultural, religious, and economic situations of the first century.

In the Mediterranean society, the person with 'honour' was a person with high status either in the external or internal government which places great significance of a name. It might be his/her first name or the name of his/her father. This person had abundance of land and was born from an elite family. People receive and achieve honour when their worth and standing are acknowledged in public in accordance with

---

<sup>49</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Understanding New Testament Persons," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard Rohrbaugh; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 42-43. Here, Malina suggests that to be fair to the writers of the New Testament, it is important to understand how they understood people in their own world. Another question could be raised here regarding the writer or author of Mark. But, this study assumes that the Matthean Gospel was written sometime in the first century Mediterranean World in the time of the Roman Empire.

<sup>50</sup> These books provide useful examination of 'Honour and Shame'. See David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 43-93; Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard Rohrbaugh; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 19-40.

the public political, social, cultural, economic and religious expectations.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the value of ‘shame’ is the reverse of honour. Despite the sense of negativity entailed in ‘shame’, it has a cultural acceptance in the Mediterranean world.<sup>52</sup> For example, gender difference which regarded the man’s place as public and woman’s place as private considered the woman’s role as carrying ‘shame’ in terms of her housework. Being shamed in that sense was accepted as a normal way of life. Given these social and cultural values, interpreters need to be attentive to the rhetoric of the text in which these values are embedded.

The first century writers who studied ancient rhetoric in Greek learned to write events, histories and stories using different components of ‘progymnasmata.’<sup>53</sup> One of its main elements is called ‘rhetoric of praise and blame.’ Whoever was educated with this method of writing has entered into the Hellenised way of writing and thinking. This method was commonly used in the Mediterranean world. Neyrey writes that such common use indicates that understanding the ‘rhetoric of praise and blame’ in the text will give us understanding of the social and cultural topic of ‘honour and shame’ in the Mediterranean world.<sup>54</sup>

The rhetoric of praise and blame is an epideictic speech which explains an important subject elucidated by a comparison of praise and blame. The importance of the message held by that speech should be reflected in the life of the character of the speaker – a person with a name (honoured or shamed). This is why it is important to consider that message in the presence of the speaker in the present in relation to the

---

<sup>51</sup> See John Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 130, 133-134.

<sup>52</sup> Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” 31-33.

<sup>53</sup> Progymnasmata is where a student learns composition in writing such as styles and forms of composition. See George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix-xiv.

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle writes that there are three types of rhetoric; “(1) deliberative; (2) forensic; (3) epideictic” which he explains: “The business of the deliberative kind is to exhort or dissuade, its time the future, its end the expedient or the harmful; of the forensic to accuse or defend, its time the past, its end the just or unjust; of the epideictic praise or blame, its time the present (sometimes the past or the future), its end the noble or the disgraceful.” See Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

speaker's life in the past. That consideration is significant as it will make certain the continuity of the importance of the message of that speech. Such a comparison identifies 'honour and shame'. Aristotle writes that in delivering an epideictic speech, "[i]ncidentally the orator will be able to produce a certain impression as to his own moral character, the ethical kind of proof..."<sup>55</sup>

The Markan use of rhetoric of praise and blame presents both the characterisation of God, Jesus, and John some of the characters in the story as 'ethical', 'emotional' and 'logical'.<sup>56</sup> God's ethical character is revealed in Mark's presentation of Jesus Christ as His Son (1:1). God's emotional character is shown in His declaration of Jesus as his beloved Son (1:11) and God's logical character is revealed in the coming of Jesus Christ, the one sent as He promised to save. This promise is reflected in the prophecy of Isaiah in Mark 1:2-3. This Christ is the Lord whose way will be prepared by a messenger and according to Mark this messenger is John the baptiser.

Mark's telling of this coming of Jesus as good news reflects Jesus' ethical, emotional and logical character. Jesus' ethical character is shown by way of his characterisation as Son of God (as shown in God's declaration of Jesus as his Son (Mark 1:11)) whose honour is displayed in Jesus preaching which were recognized publicly by the fishermen in 1:16-20. Jesus' emotional character is expressed by his compassion for his first called disciples where he called them to follow him so that he could make them fisher of men and his logical character is shown by John's use of prophecy (1:2-3) to underpin Jesus' coming as the coming of the Lord. The characterisation of the person named John the baptiser as ethical, emotional, and logical in the story is significant in showing the difference between his role and Jesus' role

---

<sup>55</sup> Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxviii.

<sup>56</sup> Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvi; writes that "artificial proof in rhetoric has three kinds; (1) ethical, derived from the moral character of the speaker; (2) emotional, the object of which is to put the hearer into a certain frame of mind; (3) logical, contained in the speech itself when a real or apparent truth is demonstrated."

identifying why the person named Jesus is more ethical, emotional, and logical. John's ethical character is reflected in his words – he baptizes with water but the one coming after him baptizes with the Spirit and he is not worthy even to.... John himself confesses that Jesus as the Lord coming after him is more important than him. John's emotional character is revealed in those words of him. John is saying he is not worthy meaning he is humble by his being the person sent to prepare the Lord's way. John's logical character as baptiser is shown in his words that he baptizes with water to show the difference between his person and Jesus. John's honour is displayed in his practice of baptism which was recognized publically by people who came to him from Judea and Jerusalem. The ethical, emotional, and logical characteristics noted above of God, Jesus, and John describe Jesus as the character in the Markan story who has competence as a preacher of God's kingdom to know those who deserve praise or honour. In other words, those who listen and accept his proclamation deserve praise or honour.

## **Summary**

What this interpretation means in relation to the significance of names in the beginning of Mark's telling of the good news of Jesus Christ is that a name and its meaning in a story has significance in portraying what the story means. In other words, the functions of names have significance in telling and showing what an event or occasion means, which could be regarded as having an impact on the lives of a coming generation. And this is revealed in the functions of characters named in this part of the story as ethical, emotional, and logical. Thus, the names of people as significant names exhibit the will of God in certain contexts such as in the context of the coming of Jesus Christ as the coming of the good news according to Mark.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The conclusion is twofold. Firstly, I will analyze the exegesis shown above in light of the name of *Fofogaolevai*. It is my attempt to make a contextual analysis of the name *Fofogaolevai* in light of my interpretation of the person named Jesus and John. Secondly, I will explain the overall purpose of this study as a biblical interpretation and its result and significance to exploring a bible text from our own life experiences and understanding.

### 1. Analysing the reading from *Fofogaolevai*

I mentioned in the beginning of this study that *Fofogaolevai* as a name is very important to me. I have shown one significant contribution of that name in the purpose of the study made here. That is, using the general significances of *Fofogaolevai* as a name that belongs to certain people and a certain place or village, as hermeneutical lenses to explore the meanings of events that begin Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry.

To extend my treatment of the name *Fofogaolevai*, a very important to me, it is the task of this section to contextualize the exegesis shown here (which is the interpretations of the significances of the persons named God, Jesus, and John in the beginning of Mark's Gospel) in light of significances of the name *Fofogaolevai*. The main questions in this contextualizing exercise are: Could the characters of the events in the text be considered as *Fofogaolevai*? Can the events in the story be described as *Fofogaolevai* events? The simple answer is yes. Therefore, this part of Chapter Three is an attempt to show how the beginning events of the good news according to Mark and its characters could be described as *Fofogaolevai*.



*Fofogaolevai* as a name has significant roles as mentioned in the beginning of this study which will be mentioned again in the following account. The person named ‘Taoa’ as *Fofogaolevai* is the youngest of his father’s (Tunumafono) children. Taoa was the most blessed son because of his obedience. And one of the rewards for Taoa’s service to his father is the name *Fofogaolevai* which means, ‘the eye of a well or spring in terms of transparency and accountability.’ Tunumafono’s giving of this name to Taoa is appointing Taoa as the main orator or speaker of the village of Sataoa. As such, the village depends on his wisdom in times of need. Taoa in this way is looked upon as the person whose wisdom brings life and success to his village – the village of Sataoa. Whose character in the exegesis of the beginning of Mark’s gospel could be looked at as *Fofogaolevai*?

I will start with John the baptiser. John the baptiser’s role in the beginning of Mark’s gospel reflects this role of Taoa as *Fofogaolevai*. John is the messenger sent and his role is to prepare the way of the Lord. In doing so, John proclaims the message of the coming of God’s kingdom. John in this action could be looked at as *Fofogaolevai*. He is doing the role of speaking to proclaim the message of salvation – the message of hope that will save the sinful people. John as *Fofogaolevai* is also reflected in his work of baptizing people. He even baptizes Jesus as part of his preparing the way for the Lord. He baptizes people with water. He is actually doing his work of helping people linked to water which its symbolic meaning is spring of life.

Jesus the son of God also suits this role of *Fofogaolevai*. Jesus is the coming Lord whose way is to be prepared by John the baptiser. When Jesus comes, John baptizes him. And when John is arrested, Jesus continues John’s proclamation of God’s kingdom. In this way, Jesus becomes the *Fofogaolevai*. Jesus is now the saviour. His doing the work of saving people is more important than John. Jesus is helping people

both physically and spiritually. This role of Jesus as *Fofogaolevai* is affirmed in the story in two declarations. One is the prophecy by Isaiah in 1:2-3 followed by God's declaration of Jesus as his son in verse 11. It is like Tunumafono choosing of Taao as *Fofogaolevai* – a person whose main task is to make sure that people of his village live together in peace and harmony. This is the purpose of God's sending of his son Jesus Christ as Mark portrayed in the beginning of his gospel. God could be also looked at as *Fofogaolevai* as reflected in his voice from heaven declaring Jesus as his beloved son.

## **2. Overall result and significance of the study as a biblical interpretation**

Overall, from the exegesis made here which signify the importance of 'name' such as the name *Fofogaolevai* emphasized here, I consider Jesus as the *Fofogaolevai*. Jesus not only proclaims the message of salvation but he also puts it into actions as shown in the rest of Mark's gospel.

This whole exercise as the aim of this study is twofold. One is to practice dealing with a biblical text using an experience or an understanding from one's context such as a social and cultural context to develop general questions or general understanding that guides exploring a meaning of a text. The experience and understanding I use in this study to practise that way of approaching the bible for meaning is 'the importance of names in relation to certain people and certain places.'

The result of the exercise is that I was able to explore the beginning of Mark's gospel which I looked at as 1:1-15 as a rhetorical and narrative unit in light of the significances of the name Jesus and John in relation to the places river Jordan and wilderness. It shows that the significances of the names Jesus and John in relation to God's plan of salvation is that God's people associated with places considered hopeless is showing assurance that God will definitely be there to help.

The study also reminds us the importance of who are we – our *faasinomaga* – in terms of our names in relation to places and space we belong to. Regardless of what type of places we consider belonging to, we can make them home by relating ourselves, our names, to those places. They are gifts from God. As such we need to look after them and to find ways to make these places fruitful for us in order to make use of these places to/for us.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Hugh. *The Gospel of Mark*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*. Translated by J. H. Freese. Massachusetts: Harvard, 1991.

Bardsley, Dianne., ed. *The New Zealand School Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Black, Clifton. *Mark*. New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.

Boadt, Lawrence., Richard Clifford, and Daniel Harrington., eds., *Reading Old Testament: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2012.

Bruce J. "Understanding New Testament Persons." In *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*., edited by Richard Rohrbaugh. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.

Conner, Kevin J. *Interpreting the Symbols and Types*. Oregon: Bible Temple Publishing, 1992.

deClaisse-Walford, Nancy., Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*. Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2014.

deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

Edwards, James R. "The Baptism of Jesus According to the Gospel of Mark." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Studies* (March 1991): 43-57.

Elliot, John. *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

Goldingay, John. *New International Biblical Commentary: Isaiah*. United States of America: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

Havea, Jione., David J. Neville and Elaine M. Wainwright., eds. *Bible, Borders, Belongings: Engaging Readings from Oceania*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.

Jasper, David A *Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

Kennedy, George A. *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Kingsbury, Jack D., *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989.

Kittel, Gerhard., and Gerhard Friedrich., eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

LealaiaulotoNofoaiga, Vaitusi. "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel." PhD Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2014.

Leota, Peni. "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic." PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005.

L'Heureux, Conrad E. "Numbers." In *The New Jerome Bible Handbook*. Edited by R. E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992.

Melugin, Roy F., and Marvin A. Sweeney., eds., *New Visions of Isaiah*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Milner, G. B. *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Moxnes, Halvor. "Honor and Shame." In *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*. Edited by Richard Rohrbaugh, 19-40. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Identity in Jesus' Galilee – From Ethnicity to Locative Intersectionality," *Biblical Interpretation* 18, no. 4-5 (2010): 390-416.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003.

Robbins, Vernon K. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Taumate, Aukuso. "Theological Interpretation of the Samoan Saying: 'E Le Po Pea Se Nuu.'" Malua Theological College, 2015.

Taylor, David B. *Mark's Gospel as Literature and History*. London: SCM Press, 1992.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical Philosophical Description with special references to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein*. Exeter: Paternoster, 1980.

Vaka'uta, Nasili. *Reading Ezra 9-10 Tu'a-Wise: Rethinking Biblical Interpretation in Oceania*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.

Verhoff, Pieter A. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Wenham, G. J. , J. A. Motyer, D. A. Carson, and R. T. France., eds. *New Bible Commentary*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004.

Williamson, Lamar. *Mark*. Interpretation Commentaries; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983.

### **Personal Interviews**

Personal interview: Lama Tone Taoa 25/12/2016

Personal interview: Pule Nuu Pule 12/08/2016

### **Internet Websites**

<http://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/john> seen 12 June 2017