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The Self- Sacrifice of Malietoa- Faiga's Son and the

Self- Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter:

A Cross Cultural Critique

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this thesis is the attempt to utilize one of most influential exegetical methods in the world of Modern Biblical exegesis, more specifically, the **Cross- Cultural Approach**. This investigation will be enriched as I endeavour to pursue this research using a comparative study. The objective therefore is to acknowledge the important usages of Samoan Cultural concepts and the Samoan context, in influencing my reading and interpretation of the Bible. This is the crux of the Cross-Cultural Approach.

Therefore, this investigation will focus primarily on the values and merits of the Samoan Legend *Malietao- Faiga's Son Poluleuligaga and his Self- Sacrifice* and how it relates to the culture of Samoa and its people, especially to the people of Fatitu Sale'imoa, where this legend took place.

The focus of this paper is to identify vital cultural principles of the Samoan culture presented in this legend and compare it to some cultural aspects of the Ancient Israel in the account of Jephthah's daughter and her Self- Sacrifice. The main purpose of such exercise is to see how these two stories might be linked to a common understanding of cultures, here in Samoa and the biblical world.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this Thesis "*The Self-Sacrifice of Malietoa-Faiga's Son and the Self-Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter: A Cross Cultural Critique*" indicates my intentions for this project. That is, a cross-cultural reading of Judges 11, or simply reading the story of Jephthah's vow in Judges 11 in light of the story of Poluleuligaga's self sacrifice.

This approach could be a sin in the eyes of the conservative historical critics who might accuse me of reading too much of my context into the text rather than attempting to understand the mind of the author in his or her own context. Furthermore, I may be guilty of committing the crime of eisegesis from the perspective of the conventional historical-critical analysts.

However, supporters for this approach could be found among the contemporary biblical scholars who perceive the need for readers to acknowledge the influences they impose on the process of interpretation. One of them is Fernando F. Segovia who claimed that all, "exegesis is ultimately eisegesis."¹ For him there is no such thing as pure exegesis, thus we can never annihilate ourselves from our interpretation. Furthermore he summons all readers to be honest and up front in their reading approaches, by acknowledging their social and cultural contexts as well as their preconceive presuppositions. In this case, it is therefore vital for me to first identify my Samoan cultural background as a prerequisite in reading the self sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. This approach will compel me to survey the story of Poluleuligaga, for it plays a pivotal role in my existence and that of my people.

¹ Fernando F. Segovia, "Cultural Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Discourse", in F.F. Segovia and M.A Tolbert (eds) *Reading from this Place Vol.2 Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) p. 16

Geographically, the legend of Poluleuligaga took place in a sub-village of Saleimoa called Fatitu. Sale'imoa lies in the Tuamasaga district at the Northwest of Upolu, the main island of Samoa. The legend holds a unique place in the lives and existence of the people of Fatitu in terms of communal identity. Who we are and where we belong is designated by this legend. It is our heritage and identity.

In short, the legend is about Poluleuligaga. He was heir to the Malietoa title, and he performed an act of self-sacrifice during the cruel administration of his father, who practiced cannibalism tradition. Poluleuligaga offered himself for his father's daily meal in place of another youth whom he found weeping on the sea shores. This specific event broke his father's heart and thus led to the abolishment of cannibalism, and consequently the salvation of many Samoans who feared being victims of this barbarous and inhumane act.

However, "*O Samoa o le ia iviivia*,"² (Samoa is a fish with many bones) indicates that in oral tradition it is common to have different interpretations of a myth or legend. The legend of Poluleuligaga is no different, as it has a couple versions circulating among the Samoan people, each version with its own interpretation, causing a following and representation by two different parties. Fatitu and Saleimoa perceive and understand the story as simply a historical redemptive work of love performed by Poluleuligaga.

In view of this, the account of Jephthah daughter's self sacrifice becomes appealing and attractive to me. Initially, in the process of surface reading I see the sacrifice made by Jephthah's daughter also as a redemptive work, to redeem the foolish and self-centered vow made by his father. In my view, to arrive at such an interpretation

² "*O Samoa o le ia iviivia*,"² (Samoa is a fish with many bones). This is an expression used to describe the numerous versions in circulation for every Samoan tradition.

clearly indicates that the story of Poluleuligaga influenced my reading of Judges 11. However at this stage further analysis is required in order to validate a reading of Jephthah's vow.

In doing so, cross-cultural criticism will be employed. It is a method of investigating the biblical text through the contact of the interpreter with the text, its author and original readers. Cross cultural criticism is a strand of the newest development in biblical studies that was initiated and developed in the 1970s. This development brought to the fore the new understanding of how the social and cultural background of the readers, consequently influences the reading and interpretation of the Bible. In other words in this particular study, for interpretation to be valid the interpreter is required to realize the significance of his or her own cultural situation which serves to be a vehicle to enter the sphere of the original author and original reader's own culture and social dimensions.³

This paper will follow such lead;

In Chapter One, a historical-literary critique of the *Poluleuligaga* story will be conducted. This analysis is vital, because this is where my intended perspective for reading the selected text will be defined and discussed. In other words it is an attempt to know what the story of *Poluleuligaga* is really saying.

³ James Earl Massey "Reading the Bible from Particular Social Locations" Eds. Leander E. Keck et.al, *The New Interpreter's Bible: VOL I*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p150 and Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. (Louisville: John Knox, 2001), pp 42. Also see Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert "Toward a Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement." *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) and Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Resource for Reclaiming and Regaining Land, Dignity and Identity, in the Bible in Africa: Transaction, Trajectories and Trends*. Ed. Gerald West and Musa W. Dube (Pietermaritzberg: Cluster Publication, 1993), p15.

In Chapter Two is a critical analysis of Judges 10: 6- 11: 40 will be carried out. I will attempt to highlight the existing debate on why the Deuteronomist(s) would tell about the self-sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. That is an attempt to know what the story of Jephthah and his daughter is really saying. This exercise will be based on Thomas Romer⁴ and David Jenzen's⁵ proposal.

Chapter Three offers a comparative study of the two different stories. Here I will draw parallels between the two narratives to exemplify the influence the Poluleuligaga story had on my reading of the account of Jephthah's daughter. In other words, it is an attempt to illustrate what the story of Poluleuligaga would say about the story of Jephthah's daughter.

⁴ Thomas Romer "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?" *JSOT Issue* 77(JSOT Press: 1987) pp 27- 40.

⁵ David Jenzen "The Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter *JSOT Issue*: 29.3 (London: SAGE, 2005) pp 339

CHAPTER ONE

What does the Story of Poluleuligaga Say?

This chapter offers a historical-literary critical analysis of the story of Poluleuligaga. Firstly, it will retell the story from a Fatitu perspective. Secondly, a literary critical analysis of the Fatitu version will be forwarded followed by a historical critical examination. The objective in this analysis is to illustrate the various interpretations and functions of the account as identified, understood and interpreted by the various parties.

1. The Story of Poluleuligaga from a Fatitu Perspective

Poluleuligaga was the son of Ganasavea and the grandson of Malietoa Savea, the first ever Malietoa and he was adopted by Malietoa-Faiga (the half brother of his father Ganasavea) and Lealainuanua. The word '*faiga*' means hard to please, hard to satisfy or even 'to be cruel'. It is identical with the word '*fe'ai*' (wild) when used as a suffix. In fact most of the names ending with '*faiga*' or '*fe'ai*' indicate that their bearers were not only cruel, but most of them were also cannibals. Malietoa-Faiga was no exception. He would ask his people to present him with a healthy young man or woman for his meals. Not wanting to displease the chief-king each village sent a healthy young man or woman to be sacrificed.

The chiefs from the village of Malie¹ performed a ceremony when accepting human offerings. These chiefs were referred to as Malietoa-Faiga's demons. They usually sat in front of the house of the chief-king. When the offerings arrived, they were thanked by the reception council and then immediately directed the young man or woman to be

¹ Malie was the residence of Malietoa-Faiga and the center of the government in those days.

dispatched and cooked. There was a flat smooth rock on which the victim was placed to be killed before being taken to the cook house. There the victims' arms would be tied to the body, seated in the oven, to be roasted with legs folded under whilst he or she was still alive. When the victim was cooked to the satisfaction of the chiefs, the victim was then taken to the house of the chief-king and cut up. The chief-king dissected the heart, with the remainder of the body parts distributed among the lesser chiefs and orators, as well as to members of their families.

One day, two young men were sent from the Island of Savaii by their village as a sacrifice, as the usual provision for the king. They came from the Itu-Salega district. As they journeyed they finally arrived one late evening, on the Peninsula to the east of Malua which is presently called Fatitu. When they came on shore, one of them said to the other, "*Alas, this dawn bodes our death, will our lives be spared?*" Ironically, the young men were dressed in their best attire for an occasion that would usually foster mourning to loved ones, and grief to the victims.

That same evening, Poluleuligaga was spending the night on the Peninsula. As he was returning home in the early dawn strolling on the beach of Sale'imoa, he heard the crying and the bewailing of two people from underneath the coconut trees. Curiously he decided to go there and find out what the problem was with the intention to help them. Poluleuligaga found these two young men and he asked them, "Friends, who are you?" And they answered him, "We just arrived from Savaii as we were ordered to come here for the king's day." He asked again, "What exactly is going on?" And one of them spoke, "My friend here, he will be taken first tomorrow for the day of Malietoa-Faiga." In receiving the news Poluleuligaga's heart was touched. He realized from thereon the

extent of his father's terrible and cruel act. As they continued in discussion Poluleuligaga spoke again, "Alright friends, I want myself to be presented in front of him! I now understand this is a bloody cruel thing my father is doing to you and to all the others like you!" The young men were surprised, when Poluleuligaga made aware his plan. "Look here friends, you can plait me up in the coconut leaves, and then you take me there. You will do this for the purpose that my father will end this inhumane and cruel habit to people like you and all the others!"

So Poluleuligaga ordered them to meet there again the following day, then he departed and left for home. The young men were uncertain and doubtful about whether their new friend could fulfill his plan as their saviour. They wondered "Would he keep his promise? Would he really return?" But Poluleuligaga too, had little sleep, anxious about his plan and about what the future held.

The following day the two young men were surprised to see Poluleuligaga return. Poluleuligaga ordered them to do everything he commanded knowing very well that the time was near for them to be taken away for Malietoa-Faiga's day. Without hesitation they plaited him carefully with coconut leaves, so well disguised it looked as if it were a huge sacred fish wrapped up. Then Poluleuligaga ordered them to carry him on a pole and placed him before the king. They did as he commanded.

They reached Malietoa-Faiga's place in the morning, entered the house and placed their offering before the king. Malietoa-Faiga was so surprised. He looked at this well plaited offering, and thought it could be a huge sacred fish or alternatively, a food offering that was not cooked properly. In Malietoa's mindset, it was unusual to receive a food offering early in the morning. Furthermore his curiosity increased knowing that a

well prepared food offering had to be presented before him, one that was well cooked and decorated beautifully. So then Malietoa-Faiga asked, "What is this?" And the two young men answered, "This is a fish sacred to the king?" Then the head chief said to one of his lesser chiefs and orators "Go ahead with your job. Untie the plaited offering first."² So one of them undid the plait and saw before them their master's son. Shockingly, they said to the king, "It is not a sacred fish but your son Poluleuligaga!"

And when the chief saw that it was Poluleuligaga who was plaited inside the coconut leaves, he was shocked. It was fortunate that he had ordered first his servant to undo the plait otherwise the consequences would have been disastrous if he had ordered for the plait to be cut up. Malietoa-Faiga cried out in a loud voice. Deeply in sadness and greatly distressed his thoughts and images burdened him, conscientized of the fact that there were other sons and daughters of his people, who were virtually sacrificed for his needs. Malietoa cried out to his son, "Poluleuligaga, you won! How can you be so cruel to me! I cannot do it. You are the flesh of my flesh and the blood of my blood. I understand clearly what you intend to let me know about this." And *Poluleuligaga* replied "*A saga tili a ifea lou laualo?*" (How far would you go to satisfy your appetite?).³ Malietoa replied, "*E te fia tupu e le tapuai Samoa i ni atua se lua.*" (Do you want to be king? Samoa cannot worship two gods).⁴ However, your friends will live, and from this day onwards, let this be the end of my malicious habit. Men and women shall be spared and our day shall consist of fish." Malietoa kept his word culminating in the end of

soon as the servants remove the coconut wrappings. In this scene Poluleuligaga therefore was never in grave danger.

² 'Untie the plaited offering first, (*tatala le fili alii*)' is a Samoan proverbial saying that originated from this story.

³ This was the origin of the chiefly title *Tilialo*.

⁴ This was the origin the chiefly title *Luatua*.

cannibalism in Samoa. The whole land heard the great news and its people were joyous in the king's new declaration.

Afterwards, Poluleuligaga and the two returned joyfully to the shores where they had initially met. The two brothers leapt into a nearby pool and shouted out in joy, "*E, ua ta tofu ina ua ta ola.*" (Alas I have leaped because I am saved.) To this day this pool is known as *Tofuola*.

2. A Literary Critique of the Story of *Poluleuligaga*

A literary survey of the Poluleuligaga story has raised a number of issues due to some inconsistencies evident in the story itself. Firstly, is the question of whether Poluleuligaga knew his fate or not prior to the offering, whether he knew before hand that his father will not have taken his life or not? Suspicions were raised because the offering of Poluleuligaga for Malietoa's day was inconsistent with the usual practice highlighted in the story. He was presented straight to Malietoa wrapped up in a coconut leaf rather than to the reception council who cooked and decorated the offering before presenting it to the king.

This irregularity is suggestive of a few things. First, Poluleuligaga master minded the way he was to be presented in order to avoid being taken to the slaughter and the cookhouse, so that no harm can come to him. No wonder why he strictly ordered the young lads to place him right before the king in order for his stepfather to identify him as soon as the servants remove the coconut wrappings. In this sense Poluleuligaga therefore was never in grave danger.

Leaula Amosa and Galumalemana Fatagogo both agree with this reading. They claimed that Poluleuligaga was no fool. He knew from the start that his stepfather would not have hurt him and he presented himself in a way to surprise Malietoa and force him to repent of his cruelty. This is why he volunteered without hesitation to perform such an act.⁵ However there could be doubt on this claim. There is ample evidence in the story to suggest that there was a bit of hesitation on Poluleuligaga's part. This can be seen in the event of the night before the offering. Clearly, Poluleuligaga did not get a good night's sleep, because of the challenge that lay ahead.

On the other hand, Pula Samuelu disagrees with such an interpretation. For him Poluleuligaga never knew his fate, and he was offering himself unselfishly to save the two youths.⁶ Luatua Tutoatasi strengthens the latter. He suggests that despite the unusual way of presentation in the case of Poluleuligaga, there were still a lot of risks involved. Poluleuligaga was putting his life in jeopardy. Who knows what might have happened if Malietoa ordered the offering to be placed in the oven straight away?⁷

This question says it all. It identifies the fact that despite the improper presentation, Poluleuligaga's life was still in a lot danger. Informal presentations on such occasions could result in mixed responses. On the one hand, it could make the receiver curious like Malietoa in the story of Poluleuligaga or, on the other hand, it could bring out hostility and animosity towards the presenters. Under such light, what Poluleuligaga did can be viewed as a redeeming act, offering himself no matter what happened to redeem not only the two brothers but the youths of Samoa as a whole.

⁵ Leaula Tavita Amosa, (interview with author), 21 August, 2007. He was the former head of Samoan Studies in the National University of Samoa. & Galumalemana Fatagogo, (interview with author), 2 July 2007. They are both chiefs of the Malietoa family.

⁶ Pula Samuelu, (interview with author), 3 August 2007.

⁷ Luatua Tutoatasi, (interview with author), 24 July 2007.

Secondly, the unusual way of presentation proposes a break away from traditions or the orthodoxy. This sets the tone for the rest of the story that is to overturn the traditional habits of the king. It gives the reader a hint about the character of Poluleuligaga. He could be seen as liberal minded, willing to implement changes to the lifestyle of his people. Aiono Fanaafi agrees with this assertion. For her what Poluleuligaga did changed the outlook of Samoa. It marks a turning point in the history of Samoa; it is a step from the state of savagery to Christian norms and way of life.⁸ Fanaafi, not only sees the account of Poluleuligaga as a historical event, but clearly stress the significance of the account in bringing a huge change to the people of Samoa. Apparently these changes were evident at the culmination of the story when Malietoa renounced his cannibalism lifestyle.

This change was good news to the rest of Samoa who took turns in providing young men and women for Malietoa's day. In this sense, Poluleuligaga therefore can be seen as an agent of change who transformed the Samoan society in a liberating manner from the cruelty of his stepfather. This change was welcomed by the people of the land who rejoiced when they heard of Malietoa's unexpected decision. Under such light Poluleuligaga therefore should be hailed as a hero who saved the lives that were destined for his stepfather's feast. This is how we the people of Fatitu perceived Poluleuligaga. Every person from Fatitu takes pride in this story and we see and identify ourselves as descendents of the saviour of Samoa.

⁸ Aiono Fanaafi, (interview with author), 1 April 2007. She is currently a Professor of Samoan Studies at Leamoamosa University.

Unfortunately, this reading of the Poluleuligaga account had been challenged by other versions of this incident dispersed among the Samoans. The Malie⁹ version of the narrative stated that Poluleuligaga tricked Malietoa as an act of rebellion because his stepfather sends him to reside at the periphery of Malietoa's district where his real father Ganasavea was appointed by Malietoa Savea to reside at. For Sia Atonio this version presented a proper portrait of Poluleuligaga. He sees him not only as a trickster but also as a rebellious child.¹⁰ The Fatitu version made allusions to this as well. This is apparent if we consider the tone of the dialogue between Poluleuligaga and his stepfather at the conclusion of the story. The accusations made by Poluleuligaga and Malietoa towards each other imply hostility between the two. However Ualolo Patea¹¹ defended the Fatitu version suggesting that the accusations made could not be seen as a sign of hostility, especially if it is read from the context of the father-son relationship.

However, despite this variation, the two versions conclude with Malietoa declaring an end to his cannibalism custom. So, regardless of what portrait of Poluleuligaga is presented in the Malie version, the vital thing is his actions still have similar consequences as the Fatitu version above.

Moreover, there is another version¹² that differs from the Fatitu version, in its claim that Poluleuligaga had no blood ties to the Malietoa royal family. It claimed that

⁹ Malie was the village where Malietoa-Faiga resided. And they were the ones who benefited from Malietoa's leadership. The majority of those in the reception council mentioned in story were from this village.

¹⁰ Sia Atonio, (interview with author), 3 March 2007.

¹¹ Ualalo Patea, (interview with author), 13 May 2007. He is a Doctor in Samoan Studies and is currently a lecturer at the Leamoamosa University.

¹² Brother Fred Henry *Ose Talaaga o Samoa*. Trans. Tuitele M. T. (American Samoa: Department of Education, 1980), p. 84 and Augustine Kramer *The Samoan Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa; Vol.* Trans. Dr Theodore Verhaaren (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1995), p 315.

"Poluleuligaga was the son of Ulufanuatele, a son of the Tuitoga and a brother of Alainuanua, the wife of Malietoa-Faiga. He was adopted in order for Malietoa to increase his influence abroad. Also absent from this version is Malietoa's claim that Poluleuligaga was the "flesh of my flesh and the blood of my blood." This absence is comprehensible. It might be a conscious omission to avoid contradictions within the story since Malietoa's claim could highlight the fact that he is connected to Poluleuligaga through blood. This omission therefore consolidated the claim that Poluleuligaga had no blood ties to the Malietoa royal family.

This claim is absurd according to the Fatitu people. They strongly reject such assertion. Their view is well represented by Sofara Nonumalo who sees this problem as an inaccuracy in the part of those who recorded the story. For him the Europeans who recorded this version were certainly misinformed by their sources and it deprived the people of Fatitu of their heritage as rightful heirs of the title Malietoa.¹³ However despite these discrepancies, this other version still agrees with the Fatitu version in the way Poluleuligaga's actions were described. That is both presented Poluleuligaga as a saviour who offered himself, to redeem and liberate the people from his foster father's tyranny.

3. A Historical Critique of the Story of Poluleuligaga

The first historical question that relates to the story of Poluleuligaga is the issue of authenticity. As mentioned earlier, modern historians, like Lambie¹⁴ and Steubel,¹⁵ see the account as just a legend with an aetiological purpose of providing explanations for the

¹³ Sofara Nonumalo, (interview with author), 21 September, 2007.

¹⁴ R. K. Lambie. *History of Samoa*. (Apia: Commercial Printers 1993), p. 33

¹⁵ C. Steubel. *Tala o le Vavau*. (Auckland: Petone Press, 1976), p. 39

already existing location, names, titles, and phenomena, like the absence of cannibalism in Samoa today. They arrived at such a conclusion because for them the nature of the account is comparable to that of myths and legends.¹⁶ Steubel for example categorized the story of Poluleuligaga as a myth similar to Samoan creation stories.¹⁷ In this case therefore these historians seem to deny any historicity attached to the story of Poluleuligaga.

On the other hand there are also those who preserve the historicity of the story. The first group could be seen as liberals who, despite seeing the story as a historical event, identified some elements that are not historically accurate. They could be fairly represented by Misilugi Tofaeono¹⁸ and Aiono Fanaafi. Both Tofaeono and Fanaafi see the account of Poluleuligaga as a historical occasion. Tofaeono, for instance, went further and placed the event in the fourteenth century. For him that was when Malietoa-faiga inherited the title, some eight years after the Tongan administration departed Samoa.

Nevertheless, both see the practice of cannibalism to be an insertion to the story. For them the practice of cannibalism is foreign to Samoa and not a usual practice of ancient Samoa. In this case, the practice of cannibalism may draw its designation to the neighboring islands of Fiji and Tonga where cannibalism flourished. On this note therefore the mention of cannibalism for them in the account was very odd.

Amosa has the same opinion on this claim. For him the use of cannibalism in the story referred to the human sacrifice practiced in ancient Samoa for the sake of chief-

¹⁶ "Myths" are stories that have compelling drama and deals with basic elements and assumptions of a culture. "Legends" are traditional narratives or collection of related, popular narratives with historical facts. Bodley, H. John "Myths and Legends" Microsoft® Student 2007 Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2006.

¹⁷ C. Steubel. *Tala o le Vavau*. (Auckland: Petone Press, 1976), p. 40.

¹⁸ Misilugi Tulifau Tofaeono. *The Crown and Title: Malietoa of Samoa*. (Petone: GP Print, 1992), p. 32.

king. He referred to this human sacrifice as the *tautua* (servant). Traditionally, when the title Malietoa became the dominion ruler in Samoan, one of his policies was for all villages under his control to present him with a male or female youth to his residence in Malie to be his servant, and definitely not for consummation reasons. This poses a question: Why then was cannibalism mentioned in the story? (This question will be dealt with later on).

The second group that defends the historicity of the story is us, the people of Fatitu. We see the story as a pure historical account and we have evidence to prove it. Firstly, we have the landmarks mentioned in the story such as the *Tofuola* pool and the Fatitu Peninsula. And secondly, the chiefly titles that originated from the story of Poluleuligaga are being used in our village today. As a matter of fact the two chiefly titles Luatua and Tilialo are the paramount chiefs of Saleimoa. So, how can it be just a myth or legend while we have the historical proofs to prove the historicity of the story?

As mentioned before, another historical issue that needs to be addressed here is the question of purpose and function. What is the function of this story in the Fatitu context or the Samoan context? Why, is this story being told and rehearsed over and over again? [This is the key question and my personal opinion is that etiological or historical answers are not sufficient answers] And whose intentions are being served by this story? Firstly, from a literary perspective the story could serve an etiological function. Proponents of this view arrived at this conclusion because of the nature of the story.¹⁹ That is it reflects elements of the myth or legend genre. However, the story of Poluleuligaga though it

¹⁹ See Lambie (1993) p. 34 and Steubel (1976) p. 40

contain explanations for some occurrences, its function cannot be comparable to that of myths and legends, in the sense that there is historical proof supporting its historicity.

Secondly, it is also apparent from the Malie version and interpretation of the Poluleuligaga story, that the story can be seen as a mockery towards the Malietoa administration based in Malie. Poluleuligaga is seen as a trickster who tricked Malietoa into relinquishing his malicious behavior. Oka Fauolo alluded to this view. He theologizes the Poluleuligaga event and claims the demise of Malietoa as the defeat of evil long before Christianity came.²⁰ Apparently, Fauolo here sees the achievement of Poluleuligaga as a triumph over his tyrant stepfather. In this manner the story of Poluleuligaga therefore, can be seen as mocking the Malietoa administration by exposing Malietoa as a disappointment. Poluleuligaga's triumph on the other hand, can be seen as a victory for the oppressed. Amosa also agrees with this function of the narrative. However, for him the mockery is not directed towards the Malietoa administration. Instead it is directed towards the Tongan administration that just departed Samoa after four hundred years of colonization. For him the renouncing of cannibalism can be seen as the removal of Tongan influence in Samoa.²¹ In this light, Poluleuligaga achievements, therefore, can be seen as the suppression of Tongan culture, thus depicting the superiority of the *fa'a Samoa* (Samoan way of life) over their Tongan counterpart.

Thirdly, it is also apparent from the story itself that it is attempting to expose the cruelty of the Malietoa government. Evidently, the story yielded a negative image of Malietoa and his form of government. That is a form of government where only a few reaps the benefits while the rest of the people were oppressed. Patea's allegorical reading

²⁰ Rev Oka Fauolo, (interview with author), 1 March 2007.

²¹ Amosa, (interview with author), 2007.

of the Poluleuligaga story supports this view. For him the cruel act of cannibalism depicted in the story represents the oppressive state of the people during Malietoa's rule while the make-up of the reception council (containing only Malietoa's chiefs) depicted a powerful ruling minority who benefited from Malietoa's policies.²² It is therefore possible that the story of Poluleuligaga can be seen as a representation of those oppressed and persecuted under the rule of Malietoa.

Fourthly, the story of Poluleuligaga can also function as an ideology to maintain the law and order in Malietoa's territories. Fatagogo and Sia represented this view. They both looked at what would have happened if somehow Malietoa did not have a change of heart. For them the obvious outcome will be rebellions and uprisings from the people under Poluleuligaga's influence.²³ In this light the outcome of the story therefore presented a portrait of a repented Malietoa that is acceptable to the people. This could create a sense of liberation among the oppressed and therefore settle possible tensions arose due to Malietoa's previous injustices. However, the story could have the opposite effect. It could also work against the Malietoa government in the sense that it could encourage the people to revolt who could not dare to disobey their king. Ualolo, in rebutting Fatagogo and Sia agrees with this usage of the story. For him, Fatagogo and Sia could be true especially if we read the story from the Malie perspective. However, their views could not apply to the Fatitu version of the story since it was told and narrated by those at the margin of the Samoan society.²⁴

And lastly, as alluded to earlier, the story of Poluleuligaga defines the existence of the people of Fatitu. It defines our inheritance and identity: the story justified our land rights,

²² Ualolo, (interview with author), 2007.

²³ Fatagoo, (interview with author), 2007 and Sia (interview with author), 2007.

²⁴ Ualolo, (interview with author), 2007.

our chiefly titles, and our place in the Samoan society as probable beneficiary and heirs to the Malietoa title. Pula Samuelu sums up our situation very well. He claims that, "For us if the story is not historically true, then our existence as a people is void."²⁵

4. Summary

It is clear from the above observation that there are two sides to the story. We the people of Fatitu are on the one side and the other side is our opposition, which includes the people of Malie and the critics. Firstly, we the people of Fatitu claim our version and interpretation of the Poluleuligaga story to be authoritative, and we therefore reject the view that some elements included in the story like the practice of cannibalism, are insertions. Firstly, the story of Poluleuligaga defines our existence as a people: the story justifies our land rights and hereditary privileges and identifies us as the descendents of Poluleuligaga the saviour, who unselfishly offered his life to redeem his friends and the rest of Samoa from the cannibalism habits of Malietoa-Faiga. Under this light it is clear that our reading represents the marginalized; those who suffered and were oppressed under the malicious rule of Malietoa-Faiga.

The latter on the other hand, challenges various aspects of the story. Firstly, the historians on the one hand challenge the authenticity and the historicity of the story. However, their views at this stage are just mere speculations and calculations. Secondly, the people of Malie challenge our interpretation of the story. From their perspective the story is an ideological construct to sooth and quiet Malietoa's oppositions. For them Poluleuligaga was a rebellious son who attempted to cripple his stepfather's control.

²⁵ Pula Samuelu, (interview with author), 15 March 2007. He is a high ranking chief of Fatitu.

Apparently the Malie interpretation and version represents the elite and the authorities of the time and they still carry this loyalty up to this day.

The account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter has raised numerous questions amongst readers. Narrated in four episodes, Judges 10:6-16 sets the scene in Deuteronomistic (Dt) language by highlighting the moral decline of the people. Judges 10:17-11:11 then describes Jephthah's appointment as judge, and Judges 11:12-28 his victory over the Ammonites. Finally, Judges 11:29-40 is his vow and execution, which of all the episodes has generated a host of questions. Why would he make such a vow? Did his daughter know of her father's vow? If so, why did she greet him in the first place? Why did no one, not even Yahweh, intervene to prevent its execution? Why did her friends, or her unnamed mother, not convince her to escape? Did Jephthah literally sacrifice her, or did he offer her for the service of Yahweh?

These questions raise historical issues, which are instructive for considering present concerns surrounding the Patai account of the Patai story highlighted earlier. Did Dt compose the account of Jephthah and the fate of his daughter? What was the intention of Dt? Alternatively, is it an insertion into the Deuteronomistic History (DeH)? If so, does it intend to support or destabilize the ideology of Dt? In terms of the Patai story, did the story of Patai originate with Patai or outsiders? Does it intend to support or undermine the aspirations of Patai?

With regards to the biblical account of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, Thomas Rimer has argued that this is post-Dt, with its author a colleague of Qohleth.

CHAPTER TWO

Jephthah's vow and the Sacrifice of his daughter

The account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter has raised numerous questions amongst readers. Narrated in four episodes, Judges 10.6-16 sets the scene in Deuteronomistic (Dtr) language by highlighting the moral decline of the people. Judges 10.17-11.11 then describes Jephthah's appointment as judge, and Judges 11.12-28 his victory over the Ammonites. Finally, Judges 11.29-40 is his vow and execution, which of all the episodes has generated a host of questions. Why would he make such a vow? Did his daughter know of her father's vow? If so, why did she greet him in the first place? Why did no one, not even Yahweh, intervene to prevent its execution? Why did her friends, or her unnamed mother, not convince her to escape? Did Jephthah literally sacrifice her, or did he offer her for the service of Yahweh?

These questions raise historical issues, which are instructive for considering present tensions surrounding the Fatitū account of the Poluleuligaga story highlighted earlier. Did Dtr compose the account of Jephthah and the fate of his daughter? What was the intention of Dtr? Alternatively, is it an insertion into the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH)? If so, does it intend to support or destabilize the ideology of Dtr? In terms of the Poluleuligaga story, did the story of Poluleuligaga originate with Fatitu or outsiders? Does it intend to support or undermine the aspirations of Fatitu?

With regards to the biblical account of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, Thomas Römer has argued that this is post-Dtr, with its author a colleague of Qoheleth,

trained as he was in Jewish and Hellenic culture, criticizing official Dtr theology.²⁶ In opposition to Römer, David Janzen has recently argued that the account is a Dtr construction intended to warn Israel that when it sacrifices as foreigners do, it also acts like foreigners.²⁷ This debate over the historical background of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter enlightens present tensions surrounding the story of Poluleuligaga.

1. Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter: A Non-Deuteronomistic composition

According to Römer, the Dtr did not compose the account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter (Judges 11.30-31[32], 34-40) because it does not fit into the context of the DtrH and the Dtr ideology.²⁸ For Römer, the upper class perspective of Dtr, which composed the DtrH during the Exile,²⁹ reflected an ideology of segregationism (esp. in Deuteronomy³⁰) and imperialism (esp. in Josh 1-12).³¹ The Dtr would not have told the story of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice because it did not originally belong to the war account in 11.29, 33; 12.1-6, which it interrupts. To support his view he argues it belongs to another literary stage than the surrounding verses. The repetition of the final words of v 29 at v 32a implies the vow sequence in vv 30-31 is a redactional interruption between v 29 and 33.³² Later on in 12.1-6, Jephthah describes their earlier 'crossings,' but does not refer any event related to the vow and sacrifice

²⁶ T. Römer, (1998), p. 38.

²⁷ D. Janzen (2005), p. 339.

²⁸ Römer, (1998) p. 28.

²⁹ This does not mean that deuteronomism started with the Exile. I agree with N. Lohfink, 'Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswirks,' in J. Jeremias and L. Perlitt (eds), *Die Botshaft und die Boten* (Festschrift H. W. Wolff; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), pp. 87-100, that some texts of the DH (e.g. Josh 1-12) were probably written during the reign of Josiah.

³⁰ Particularly Deut 7.1-6, 12.2-5.

³¹ In 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings the people almost disappears from the scene.

³² Römer, (2005) p. 28. B.G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTSup, 46; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1987), p. 62.

story.³³ In Judges 10-12, Jephthah's house is supposed to be in Mizpeh-Gilead but 12.1 implies he lived in a place called Zaphon. Finally, the *inclusio* between v 30: 'And Jephthah made a vow' and v 39a: 'according to the vow he had made,' implies that vv 39b and 40 are a note standing outside the narrative unity.³⁴ For Römer, a redactor composed the story to fit into its present context.

In relation to human sacrifice, this was simply a transgression of Deuteronomic Law³⁵ (cf. Deut 12.29-31; 18.10). For Römer, the worst thing Israel's and Judah's rulers did was to 'make children pass through the fire' (2 Kings 16.3; 17.17; 21.6) and it was Josiah, the Dtr's favorite, who brought this abomination to an end (2 Kings 23.10).³⁶ In Samuel's farewell speech of 1 Samuel 12, the Dtr mentions Jephthah in v 11, as among the chosen few to represent Yahweh's intervention during the time of the Judges. This would hardly have been possible if the Dtr was aware of the story of his daughter's sacrifice!

With regards the date of composition, Römer draws links between the stories of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice (Judges 11.30-40) and the story in Genesis 22. Since Judges 11 transforms the 'happy' conclusion of Gen 22, its author knew Gen 22 and used the 'binding of Isaac' as background. In Römer's view, Gen 22 dates to the postexilic

³³ Römer, (2005) p. 29. For 'crossings' as an important theme in Judges, see Judges 10.8, 9; 11.17, 18, 19, 20, cf. R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist. I. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 179-181.

³⁴ Römer, (2005) p. 29; R. G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (AB, 6A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), p. 209.

³⁵ Cf. R. G. Boling, 'Jephthah,' *ABD*, III, pp. 680-683 (681).

³⁶ Römer, (2005) p. 31; G. N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchy* (HSM, 53; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), II, p. 186 n. 24.

period so the author of Judges 11 can hardly be earlier.³⁷ With motifs like the silly father who vows to sacrifice the first thing or person he meets or to offer his own child, Römer believes the author drew on the Hellenistic legend of Iphigenia. In this legend, there are different endings, with the maiden either spared at the end or meeting her death. This is important for Römer since there is uncertainty whether Jephthah killed his daughter or consecrated her as a virgin to the service of Yahweh's sanctuary.³⁸ With knowledge of the double ending to the Iphigenia legend, the author may have tried to bring them together in Judges 11.30-40. Killed or dedicated to the divine, the girl disappeared as a 'virgin' without entry to the genealogy of her family.³⁹

According to Römer, the author's fatalism reflects a trend in post-exilic Judaism that disagreed with the 'official' Dtr ideology of retribution and theodicy.⁴⁰ Here, Römer cites the daughter's words in Judges 11.37 as an example of the ironic or even subversive feature of the story. While the NRSV translates her words 'so that I may go and wander on the mountains,'⁴¹ Römer retains the MT: 'I will go down on the mountains,' as a technical term for a theophany, especially in the Sinai tradition (Exodus 19.18, 20; cf. also 3.8). Its use in Judges 11.37, in Römer's view, may be ironical: there is no more God coming down on the mountains, since the girl has to go on her own. The Dtr concept of direct divine intervention for salvation or punishment does not work any more.

³⁷ Römer, (2005) p. 32 cites F. Garcia Lopez, 'Gen 22, entre la interpretacion Historio-Critica y la Literario Teologica,' F. Garcia Lopez and A.G. Garcia (eds), *Biblia, Literatura e Iglesia* (Salamanca: Publicaciones Universidad Pontificia, 1995), pp. 47-62.

³⁸ See D. Marcus, *Jephthah and his Vow* (Lubbock, TX; Texas Technical Press, 1986), pp. 20-21.

³⁹ Römer, (2005) p. 35.

⁴⁰ Römer, (2005) p. 36. For Römer, this is evident in the books of Job and Qoheleth, where Qoheleth's answer to deuteronomism is skepticism. The same mentality occurs in the Greek tragedies where humans have to manage their lives without any guarantee they will understand the divine plans.

⁴¹ See for example, R. G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (AB, 6A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), p. 209; J. Gray, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Morgan and Scott, 1986), p. 319.

The text implies the neutrality of God, since God does not intervene. For Römer, the story of Jephthah's sacrifice reflects the same fatalistic ideology as Qoheleth 5.3-4(4-5):

When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it.

The author of the story of Jephthah's sacrificing his daughter is a colleague of Qoheleth, trained as he was in Jewish and Hellenic culture and criticizing the official Dtr theology.⁴² Inserting his story in the Dtr context, he confronts Jephthah with a courageous daughter to create an ambiguous text. The narrator sacrifices the Dtr ideologies of divine pedagogies by making the Hebrew Iphigenia accept her sacrifice to confront the reader of the DtrH with theological problems.

Despite the attractiveness of Römer's view of the ideology of the Dtr, there are two basic weaknesses in his view concerning the account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice. Firstly, he points out that the Old Testament clearly deals with human sacrifice. Yet, without attempting to explain the biblical material, he opts to rely on uncertain external Hellenistic sources. Secondly, a main part of his view relies on the argument that the author of Judges 11.30-40 knew Gen 22, which is a postexilic text. However, it is just as easy to argue that Gen 22 is a corrective of Judges 11.30-40. In this respect, the alternative view of Jenzen seems more plausible.

⁴² For Römer, the author of Judges 11.30-40 is also referring to Gen 22, picking up some motifs from 2 Kings 3. Since Qoh 5.3-4 quotes from Deut 23.22-24, the 'quotation' in Qoheleth seems ironic since Deut 23.22-24 insists on the fulfillment of the vow. Qoheleth turns Deut 23.23 into its opposite. See Römer (2005), p. 38.

2. Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter: A Deuteronomistic composition

According to Janzen, the story of Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter fits quite well into theology or ideology of Dtr, as well as into the Dtr's structuring of the book of Judges and the story of Jephthah as a whole (Judges 10.6-12.7). The story reflects Dtr's most important theological motif: when Israel worships like foreigners, it will act like foreigners.⁴³ In telling this story, the Dtr intends to show the continuing decline of the character of Israel and its judges. Judges 2.19, which introduces the cycle of disobedience, states that each time the Israelites acted even worse than their ancestors did, which is evident in the stories of the judges who follow.⁴⁴

In relation to human sacrifice, Jephthah's sacrifice is a sin from the perspective of Dtr and hardly acceptable to Yahweh. Although most commentators take the story as implying that God accepts the sacrifice,⁴⁵ Janzen argues that this may well have been the point of view of the story's pre-Dtr setting, but Dtr's stance on child sacrifice is beyond doubt.⁴⁶ In particular, his vow specifically connects to a corrupt plea for victory in battle:

And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, to be offered up by me as a burned offering." (vv 29-31).

⁴³ Janzen, "(2005) p. 341.

⁴⁴ Janzen (2005) p. 341. See also D. Olsen, 'The Book of Judges,' in Leander Keck (ed.), *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol II (Nashville: Abingdon press, 1998), pp. 762-764, 831-832.

⁴⁵ See Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, p. 209; Polzin, p. 180, Tribble, 1984), p. 97; Exum 1995), p. 75; Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, p. 180; P. Tribble, "The daughter of Jephthah: an inhuman sacrifice," *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 97; J. C. Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose interests are being served?", in Gale Yee (ed.), *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 75.

⁴⁶ Janzen (1987), p. 344.

However, earlier in v 27 when he was negotiating with the Ammonites, Jephthah concluded with a call to Yahweh to decide whether the Transjordan belonged to Israel or Ammon:

“... Let the LORD, who is judge; decide today for the Israelites or for the Ammonites.”

Given that the victor in battle reveals Yahweh's decision, Jephthah's vow is effectively to bribe Yahweh, whom he had called on earlier to judge. According to Janzen, not only did Jephthah bribe Yahweh, but also offered to Yahweh a foreign sacrifice, one prohibited in Yahweh's law.

Moreover, the Dtr also accuses the daughter, who represents all Israel in this foreign sacrifice. When Jephthah realizes that his only child has come out from his house to greet him, he tells her ‘... For I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back by vow’ (11.35). Yet his daughter agrees with him, parroting his faulty reasoning, ‘My father, if you have opened your mouth to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth’ (11.36). For Janzen, she had every right to reject her father's vow and sacrifice, both of which, in Dtr's eyes, are sins, and yet she meekly complies, thereby implicating her from Dtr's perspective.⁴⁷ She collaborates in her own death because she accepts the same wrong assumption about sacrifice that her father does. Instead of rebuking him for his vow and his plan to fulfill it, the daughter agrees to it.

For Janzen, Israel's recounting of her in its annual festival celebrates her complicity rather than condemnation of her father's crime. It does not join Jephthah in

⁴⁷ Janzen, (1987), p. 348

his sinful worship, but it does signal its approval of the act, like his daughter. For Dtr, Israel had still not learned the evil of that sacrifice, since it continues to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah, and thus to commemorate her failure to condemn and her participation in the sin her father committed. (Could a daughter rebuke her father in that culture? Would she have known Dtr's perspective?)

To emphasize the point of the Jephthah story, that when Israel sacrifices like foreigners it acts like foreigners, the Dtr attaches to it the account of Ephraim's invasion of Gideon in 12.1-6. In the Dtr construction, such an invasion makes the Cisjordanian tribe of Ephraim seem just like Ammon, a foreign country claiming land that Yahweh has given to others. Like the foreign Ammonites in the story of Jephthah, the defeat of Ephraim is the result of their foreignness, since their foreign accents give them away.

In Janzen's view, the Dtr tells the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter to show that for Israel, foreign sacrifice and foreign morality accompany each other. Unlike Römer, Janzen does not see the story as a tragedy from the Dtr's point of view. Jephthah attempted to bribe Yahweh by offering Yahweh a foreign sacrifice to which even his daughter, the victim, agrees. For the Dtr, Jephthah is not a tragic figure but a failure along the lines of Saul and Eli's sons. Like them, he believes that any kind of sacrifice outweighs the necessity of obedience. Since all Israel commemorates that then rejects his foreign offering to Yahweh, both his sacrifice and the people's attitude toward it are just one more step in the decline of Israel in Judges.

In summary, the Dtr composed the account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice to show the growing deterioration of the nation. When Israel worships Yahweh as foreigners do, it also acts like foreigners. As a story composed during the Exile, it

explains the causes of the nation's exile as a result of foreign worship and foreign morality. At the same time, such an ideology provides a path forward for their recovery and expansion. Israel needs to separate itself from foreigners and worship Yahweh.

This explanation of Dtr's account of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice may account for the series of questions mentioned at the opening of this chapter. *Why would Jephthah make such a vow?* For the Dtr, Jephthah's vow was an attempt to bribe Yahweh into granting him victory in the battle with the Ammonites. It reflected the foreignness of Israel's worship of Yahweh and their degenerating moral state. *Did his daughter know of her father's vow? If so, why did she greet him in the first place?* She was not only aware of her father's vow, but also had the right to reject her father's vow and sacrifice, both of which the Dtr considered sinful. Yet, she accepts the same wrong assumption about sacrifice that her father does. *Why did no one, not even Yahweh, intervene to prevent its execution?* For the Dtr, they needed to turn from their sinful actions. *Why did her friends, or her unnamed mother, not convince her to escape?* Their commemoration of the daughter's self-sacrifice indicates that they approved her sinful actions. *Did Jephthah literally sacrifice her, or did he offer her for the service of Yahweh?* For the Dtr, Jephthah's sacrifice was symptomatic of foreign worship and practice.

This analysis of the purpose and intention behind Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter provide the basis for a cross-cultural reading of the Poluleuligaga story.

CHAPTER THREE

What does the story of Poluleuligaga say about the story of Jephthah's Daughter?

This chapter is primarily a comparative study of the two stories in question in this research. The focus is to compare and identify some cultural elements that the story of Poluleuligaga and the story of Jephthah's daughter share. Firstly, comparisons will be made on the literary stage before attempting to discuss some of the problematic interpretive issues surrounding both stories. In addition, where it is possible, judgments will be made from our Fatitu perspective.

1. Literal Comparison

My understanding of the characters in the story of Poluleuligaga allows me to pass judgment on the characters of the story of Jephthah's daughter. It is obvious that some of the characters of the Poluleuligaga story are comparable to those in the Jephthah story.

1.1 The Characters of Malietoa- Faiga and Jephthah

Malietoa- Faiga according to the Fatitu version of the Poluleuligaga story is the most immoral bearer of the Malietoa title if compared to the two previous holders of the title, Malietoa Savea and Gana- Savea. His cruelty and viciousness portrayed him as an evil character of the story.

Malietoa Faiga and his cannibalism exemplified him as a self-centered human being. He showed no love for the Samoan people, other than pleasing his ego. He never

felt any sympathy for the victims, except fulfilling his own desire. Malietoa-Faiga was a power hunger individual. His leadership and control over the Samoan people was administered in an oppressive manner. When Poluleuligaga confronted the brothers at the beach, asking who they were, they answered "We have just arrived from Savai'i as we were ordered to come here for the king's day." The brothers' story echoes the voices of an oppressive community suffering under a cruel administration. These voices of pain and grief have all gone unnoticed by the heartless Malietoa-Faiga.

Jephthah's character shares some significant resemblance with that of Malietoa-Faiga. Before marching to war with the Ammonites, he decided to make a vow to YHWH. The wording of Jephthah's vow portrays doubt. He was doubtful whether he could win the war against the enemy of Israel. His words indicated that he was politically-minded. One way or the other, he desired power and authority. He was not in a conscious state of any consequences that his vow might take.

His self-centeredness, power hunger and political indulgence turned against him when his daughter greeted him on his return from victory over the Ammonites. His joy turned into a nightmare, when he realized that the fate of his daughter now lay in his hands.⁴⁸

1.2 The Character of Poluleuligaga and Jephthah's Daughter

Poluleuligaga's character and his voluntary act of self-sacrifice are remembered by the people of Fatitu. His redeeming act earned him the respect of all Samoa, for his action not only saved the brothers, but all the youths of Samoan. He was in effect a redeemer for the Samoans; his redeeming act not only saved many lives but it also saved

⁴⁸ This perception of Jephthah is similar to that of Romer and Janzen discussed in Chapter Two

his father's dignity and reputation. After this incident, Malietoa Faiga relinquished his cannibalism and became a respectable king of the Samoan people in the later years of his reign.

Jephthah's daughter in the account of the Judges performed a similar act that classifies her as a redeemer as well. This act of self-sacrifice by the daughter redeemed her father from breaking God's law and the consequences of not fulfilling his promise. This law is inscribed in Numbers 30: 2;

If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind him with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

The consequence for not fulfilling God's law is death. Under this light Jephthah's daughters' response saved her father from the ultimate death penalty. In addition, since Jephthah is a representative of the Israelites his action could have national consequences. In this sense, what Jephthah's daughter did, could be seen as a redeeming act for the people of Israel.⁴⁹

1.3 The Reception Council of Malietoa-Faiga and the Elders of Israel

The council members who received the daily offering for Malietoa were worshippers at the Malietoa residence. They also took part in the tradition of cannibalism for they approved the merciless rule of Malietoa-Faiga over the Samoan people. They received the lives of the young Samoans in silence and thankfulness, but never apprehended the suffering and misery that the victims and their families had to undergo.

⁴⁹ This reading of the daughter's self sacrifice supports Romer's reading in Chapter 2.

The council thus remained silent throughout this malevolent process without questioning the inhumane actions of the king.

This council is comparable with the Elders of Israel. It is in fact clear that Jephthah had no choice but to fulfill his impractical vow with his only child despite the fact that it is an abomination in the eyes of God's Law. If so, why didn't the elders voice any concern about Jephthah's action? Why did they not remind him that human sacrifice is against God's will? They remained silent and turned a blind eye to this aspect of the Law, as if they approved Jephthah's action. As such, they fell into the same flaw as the reception council of Malietoa Faiga.

2. Historical Comparisons

Here my understanding of the historical issues surrounding the story of Poluleuligaga will be used to discuss and pass judgment on some of the historical issues that had occupied the story of Jephthah's vow.

2.1 Functions of the Stories

One of the most debatable issues surrounding the two stories is the question of function and usage. A number of proposals have been put forward.

2.1.1 Etiological Significance

As mentioned earlier, the story of Poluleuligaga and the account of Jephthah's daughter both performed an etiological function. The story of Poluleuligaga on the one hand explains why the practice of cannibalism was abandoned in Samoa, and the

existence of some historical sites, chiefly titles and proverbs in Samoa. The legend of Poluleuligaga is still remembered today. The people of Fatitu have continued to pay homage to the legend by bestowing the chiefly titles that originated from the account. The pool *Tofuola* still exists and the proverbs that originated from the account of Poluleuligaga are still in use by Samoan orators during their oratorical speeches today.

On the other hand, the fate of Jephthah's daughter's gave birth to a ritual practice by the Israelite community, where young women went to the hills of Mizpah to commemorate the memory of Jephthah's daughter. According to Bernard Robinson there is a strong possibility that the ritual in the story of Jephthah's daughter existed sometime in the history of the Israelites or the Canaanites. Either there was an annual ceremony of commemoration existed at one time in Northern Israel, or perhaps there was a tradition of a four day period of lamentation among Israelites and Canaanites.⁵⁰

2.1.2 Ideological Usages

It has been suggested above that the two stories carried the ideologies of certain social groups. On the one hand, the story of Poluleuligaga has been interpreted by some as a medium used by the ruling elite to suppress their oppositions. Others have claimed that the story was used by the Samoans as a way to expose the oppressive nature of the Tongan colonial rule. However, we the Fatitu natives see the story as a means to expose the oppressiveness of Malietoa's policies. The story of Poluleuligaga therefore, is a representation of the voices of the oppressed.

⁵⁰ Bernard Robinson, "The Story of Jephthah and his Daughter: Then and Now," *Citing Electronic Exegetical Papers of Judges 10: 6- 11: 40*. <http://www.apologeticpress.org> (22 February 2007).

This inquiry is also reflected in the scholarship of the story of Jephthah's vow. On the one hand we have those who saw the Jephthah account as an ideology of the elite. But on the other, we have those who say that the story represented the unfortunate, by criticizing the upper class.⁵¹ Apparently, from the Fatitu perspective the latter interpretation for the story of Jephthah's is more appropriate. It depicts our reading of the Poluleuligaga account as well.

2.2 Cannibalism and Human- Sacrifice Traditions

As mentioned before, some argued that the practice of cannibalism identified in the story of Poluleuligaga is problematic, in the sense that it does not fit well with Samoan traditions. They considered it as an insertion borrowed from the Tongans and Fijians used as a metaphor to describe the reality of Malietoa-Faiga's reign. However, we the people of Fatitu disagree with such an assertion, for us Malietoa-Faiga historically practiced cannibalism and his habits caused a lot of suffering among the people of Samoa.

The story of Jephthah's vow and the sacrifice of his daughter also face a similar issue. Biblical scholars are still debating whether the vow and the sacrifice are original to the story. Some have proposed (as illustrated in chapter two) that these are foreign influences inserted later into the original story. While others have suggested that these elements were original elements of the story of Jephthah.⁵²

Regardless, of the fact that the practices in question here are of different natures, the two can still be viewed on a similar plain because the authenticity and sources of both

⁵¹ See Romer's discussion in Chapter Two.

⁵² See comparison of Romer and Janzen made in Chapter Two.

traditions are doubtful. In an attempt to pass judgment here, I side with those who see Jephthah's vow and sacrifice as originals to the story.

3. Summary

All in all, the above observations clearly illustrated the fact that the two stories have several significant similarities and thus set the stage for dialogues between the two. In other words my understanding of the story of Poluleuligaga aided my interpretation of the story of Jephthah and allows me to formulate my stance on the various debates concerning historical issues related to the story. So, what does the story of Poluleuligaga say about the story of Jephthah's daughter? Briefly, it is saying that the story of Jephthah's daughter is a production of the inferiors about a girl who offered herself as a sacrifice to redeem her egocentric father's vow.

CONCLUSION

This paper has clearly demonstrated that employing the Cross-Cultural approach to read a Biblical narrative brings out new and fresh insights. This was achievable by allowing the interpreter to bring in his or her own cultural context into the interpretive process. Knowing one's cultural self enable dialogue between the reader and the text and the world behind the text. Through this dialogue the text would be able to speak to the reader and at the same time the reader would be able to translate and understand what the text is saying in his or her own terms. This process can surely bring into being a fusion of the interpreter's horizons with that of the text and author.

In this study I have found out that knowing my cultural background had equipped me well for my engagement with the story of Jephthah's daughter. Such prior preparation has given me the ability to draw out meaningful interpretations of the text, relevant to my context. Apart from that, the process had also made me aware of the biases I took into the interpretive process. These biases were usually disregarded or ignored before. This mind set gives me an open mind to appreciate the reading and meaning drawn out of texts by other interpreters, since we all have different social and cultural locations. For this reason, cross-cultural criticism cannot deem its interpretation final, because one's interaction is always a part of a wider activity of interactions in which others are involved.

Through the employment of cross-cultural exegesis I was able to authenticate my immediate interpretation of the story of Jephthah during my initial encounter with the text. Because of my cultural background my attention was shifted away from the rest of

the Jephthah narrative and drawn closely to his vow and his sacrifice. In this case I place more emphasis on the daughter's actions rather than on Jephthah. This shift, leads me to the conclusion that Jephthah's daughter although unnamed in the story performed a significant act of salvation far more important than the war her father had won for his people.

This shift in the interpretive center occurred due to the reason that the story of Poluleuligaga greatly influenced my cultural self and understanding. In this case, my understanding of Poluleuligaga as a saviour for my people was unconsciously imposed on the character of Jephthah's daughter. However this was just one of the many parallels and comparisons I have already outlined in this study. It seems that there are many more than meet the eye. I have illustrated that the two stories not only have literary parallels but the two also have similar historical issues surrounding them. Amazingly, these comparisons sustained my initial reading in one way or another. This is further confirmation of the influence of the story of Poluleuligaga (cultural background) in shaping my interpretive approach for the reading of the Jephthah narratives.

On this note, I believe the objective of this study had been achieved. I have proven without any reasonable doubt that my cultural background shaped the outcome of my encounter with the studied text. Although my interpretation may have its limitations, it can be added to one of the many readings and interpretations of the Jephthah narratives. This study has certainly witnessed the potency of cross-cultural exegesis. It is therefore the belief of this study that any interpretation of biblical texts must always take cross-cultural exegesis into account.

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