

***“UA LOGO I PULOTU LE MAPU A TAI’I” [THE
SIGH OF TAI’I WAS HEARD IN PULOTU]:
SEEKING A SOLUTION/S FOR SUFFERING OF
SAMOANS FROM A SAMOAN PERSPECTIVE***

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College
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Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Theology

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Consent Form

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Abstract

As we draw near to the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century we become acutely aware of not only our finite existence, but also the most pressing current issues of our time: climate change, trade wars between the United States of America and China, and the continuing increase of tribalism and racism in the world, amongst others. In such a world, as Samoans and as Christians we experience different types, and varying degrees of suffering in life. Suffering that could be, but not limited to that of a physical, psychological, emotional, social and maybe even spiritual or theological nature.

Therefore, it was the concern of this thesis to find a theological solution/s to a Samoan experience of suffering, that I have defined as *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. To do so, I describe and analyse a well-known Samoan *alagaupu* (proverb), “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” Together with an analysis of two key examples from Scripture, I successfully synthesise the overlapping connections between the three different “texts” to solve the issue at hand, and answer the Research Question, “How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” be used to find a solution/s for a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective.

The investigation concluded with an explication of the findings of this research, and in-turn posited insights about the nature of God, the presence of God in a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, and the call and challenge to once again value, preserve, nurture and love our *siosiomaga* (environment), as part of our identity as the Creation and humankind of the Triune God. Thus proving that there are many ways that the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” can be used to find a theological solution/s for a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*.

Declaration of Authorship of Thesis

I, _____ (full name of student- printed)

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

Signature: _____

Date: _____ (month and year)

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated firstly to my dear parents; Tuiloma Tusa Posiulai Simati and Va’alele Leifi Simati. The humility they lived their lives and the love they shared not only within our family but also the Church, has become the inspiration behind my desire to serve the Lord in His ministry.

This thesis is also dedicated to my wife Dorothy – her undivided love, patience and courage has never dwindled, especially in our times of need. She has *suffered* with me in taking on this challenge, namely, in giving our lives for service to the Lord.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0. Background and Motivation

Growing up in Samoa I have seen and experienced first-hand many difficulties that Samoans face on a daily basis, to the point that many may see their life situation as a type of suffering. As a country, we suffer from the threat and reality of natural disasters due to climate change.¹ Families, particularly in urban areas, respond to their difficult living conditions or ‘poverty’ by sending out their children as street vendors, instead of attending school.² As individuals, we all face our own particular battles, both internal and external, which impact on our mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. In the past, suffering was also endured by our people through wars and fighting.³ The fact that Samoa is heralded as an idyllic place for the holiday maker to escape their modern lives does not diminish the realities of life that we share with the rest of the world. In other words, Samoans also undergo suffering like everyone else.

However, as a Samoan, I have always been aware of the cultural and social value of Samoan *alagaupu* (proverbs). Used on different occasions within family,

¹ Such a reality can be appreciated when it is understood that even the Government of Samoa has established an office that specifically deals with disaster management. See the webpage "Disaster Management Office," Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, <https://www.mnre.gov.ws/about-us/divisions/disaster-management-office/>, accessed July 1, 2019.

² One of the main concerns of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development is the monitoring of childhood vendors, and the implementing of strategies that attempts to work closely with families and villages in order to seek alternative forms of income for them. Information regarding this area is sought through the Community Sector Coordination Division, see "Community Sector Coordination," Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, <http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/divisions/division-for-sector/>, accessed May 1, 2019.

³ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 73-88. Meleisea in his book provides a scholarly and very well researched account of a history of Samoa that has become an authoritative resource concerning the early interactions of Samoans and Europeans. Meleisea is also very informative regarding the political alliances and struggles that followed the acceptance of Christianity with the arrival of the missionaries in the 19th century.

village and church settings, they point towards a pre-Christian era, a time which holds valuable insights to how Samoans lived, and how they made and found meaning in their everyday lives.⁴ Therefore, such a reality in-turn has allowed *alagaupu* to act as ‘timeless truths’ that continue to be relevant and meaningful for Samoans in our contemporary times.⁵ Furthermore, due to the nature of an *alagaupu*, it must also be appreciated as being the product of an actual historical event, and as such, can offer hope, encourage, and inspire Samoans through life and the difficulties we may face.

This is the contemporary context in which I live and have been raised. A context where not only Samoans undergo suffering/s of different sorts, for different reasons, but a world where the relevance of *alagaupu* is critical and cannot be discounted in looking for a solution/s in addressing such suffering. Thus, as a final year theological student in Malua, I have decided to conduct a theological investigation, that takes seriously my contemporary Samoan context, and bring it into dialogue or critical conversation with Scripture, in search for a solution/s for suffering of Samoans, from a Samoan perspective.

⁴ Vagatai Va'aelua, "Alagaupu and Preaching Ministry" (Malua Theological College, 1999), 1. Va'aelua points to the two words that form the *alagaupu*. According to Va'aelua, *ala* means path, or way and *upu* means word. So, *alagaupu* in his understanding, rightly allows the correct navigation through words. Through this definition, Va'aelua points to *alagaupu*, as having ‘compass’ like properties, for any Samoan who wants to correctly apply the meaning and power of Samoan words. Va'aelua is a current *faifeau* (Ordained Minister) of the Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (Congregational Christian Church Samoa or CCCS), in Westmere, Auckland, New Zealand.

⁵ Arthur Delbridge and JRL Bernard, *The Macquarrie Concise Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: The Macquarrie Library, 1998), 929. Delbridge and Bernard are quite particular in their definition of what constitutes a proverb. It is a “short, popular saying that has been in use for a long time expressing some familiar truth.” For the chosen *alagaupu* of this research, such a definition acknowledges both the fact that it is short, but also that it continues to convey familiar truth, even in these contemporary times.

1.1. Methodology

Due to the brevity of this research and the word-limit constraints by which it is conducted, a fully developed methodology is not possible. However, let it be stated that as an exercise in contextual theology it follows closely the understanding that Stephen Bevans shares, regarding what he labels the anthropological method.⁶ As M. Richard Shaull accurately observes,

The anthropological model...emphasizes the cultural identity of each Christian. The theologians, who employ this model, while taking the Bible and the Christian tradition seriously, also seek for God's self-revelation within the values, relational patterns, and concerns of particular cultures.⁷

As can clearly be appreciated through both what has been noted with Bevans, and Shaull, the anthropological model allows for the serious consideration of one's cultural resources in the doing or articulation of one's theology. Even to the point (as will be made clearer as this investigation proceeds), God's self-revelation can also be positively found within one's cultural values and symbols. Therefore this thesis will proceed to answer the above Research Question by first addressing the *alagaupu*, as a viable resource for theology, and then proceeding to Scripture to enlighten any theological

⁶ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 88-109. In the fifth chapter of his revised edition, Bevans offers clear insights as to how he understands the anthropological model. I am indebted to Bevans for embracing this contextual approach, which in my view correlates well with how a lot of Samoans do theology, with a high and valued appreciation of our ethnicity and culture. As Bevan's states, "...the primary concern of the anthropological model is the establishment or preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith."

⁷ M. Richard Shaull, "Models of Contextual Theology: A Book Review," *Theology Today* (1994): 634. Shaull engages in a very informative and critical review of Bevan's book, *Models of Contextual Theology*. His acute and very accurate understanding of Bevan's work is clearly displayed in the succinct summaries of the different models Bevan's included in his first edition.

tendencies that can be raised from an analysis of the *alagaupu*. In that way, both my Samoan contemporary context and Christian faith are taken seriously in this contextual and/or anthropological approach to theology.

1.2. Suffering as *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* – A Samoan Definition/s

Before we proceed further with this investigation, it is important at this stage of the thesis that a clear definition/s of suffering is established to focus further discussion. Upon consulting the latest definition offered through a reputable, academic online source, the Oxford English Dictionary (now known as Lexico) defines suffering as, “the state of undergoing pain, distress or hardship.”⁸ Clearly, by such a definition, we can see that it can apply to not only the beginning of one’s state of pain, distress or hardship, but it can also refer to the actual experience and the entire gamut of emotions that accompany such an ordeal. Furthermore, there is ambiguity regarding just exactly what type of pain, distress or hardship is been stated. For example, is the definition limited to the physical realm, or does it also include one’s psychological and social state?

Also, an important question that is pertinent for this research is: Does such a definition adequately cater for pain, distress or hardship that is experienced at a spiritual level or that which can be defined as been theologically relevant? It is for this reason that a more nuanced and context-specific definition is required for this research, that resonates not only with the Samoan experience of suffering in these contemporary times, but also with the possibility of highlighting any spiritual or theological import that a definition of suffering may contain.

⁸ "Lexico," Oxford Dictionaries, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/suffering>., accessed July 15, 2019.

To satisfy these two important criteria, I propose a definition for suffering that is reflected in the Samoan words that are commonly used to depict such a condition. When one suffers from a Samoan perspective, one is said to be *tigaina*, and/or *puapuagatia*. George Pratt, a missionary for the London Missionary Society, first created a Samoan-English Dictionary that not only is ethnographically accurate, but also takes into consideration the meanings and nuances in which the missionaries used in their translation and formation of the first Samoan Bible. In this respect, Pratt's definitions and work must be considered authoritative, when looking at both the contemporary and theological value of Samoan words and phrases.

Thus, according to Pratt, *tigaina*, depicts the passive voice of the word *tiga*, which means "to be in pain, body or mind...to be in trouble or distress...to be near death."⁹ This definition explicitly shows a theological belief in the direct relationship between physical and psychological pain. Ultimately, Pratt's definition of *tigaina* runs the full gamut of human emotions that can in many ways be interpreted as one seeing their experience, as a near to death experience! This is the type of suffering that this thesis seeks to find a theological solution/s for.

Futhermore, *puapuagatia* is defined by Pratt as the passive voice of the verb, *puapuaga*, which means "to be tormented."¹⁰ Again, we find that *puapuagatia* goes further than the basic definition of suffering, in that it depicts a situation of harassment, abuse, and utter violence. Such a complementary definition is critically relevant and equally important to a theological solution/s as it rightly captures the essence of the biblical experience of suffering that is highlighted in this thesis.

⁹ George Pratt, *Pratt's Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4th ed. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 309.

¹⁰ Ibid., 248.

In summary, the Samoan terms of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* as defined by George Pratt, are more potent and meaningful for achieving the purposes of this research. As complementary definitions, both capture the essence of Samoan suffering/s that is at the heart of the theological task at hand in this thesis.

1.3. Thesis Statement and Research Question

Therefore, in this thesis, I have chosen to conduct a theological investigation for a solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective, by first looking at the meaning, place and role of the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*.” (“The sigh of Tai’i was heard in Pulotu) in these contemporary times. In turn, this approach embraces the challenge and words of Paulo Koria, a former lecturer of Malua Theological College, Academic theologian, and current *faiifeau* of the CCCS, in which he states that, “A Pacific theology therefore is at liberty to utilize and appropriate all available cultural resources for expressing the message of the Gospel.”¹¹ Thus, the Research Question at the heart of this thesis is: How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*.” be used in finding a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective?

¹¹ Paulo Koria, "Moving toward a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts," *The Pacific Journal of Theology* II, no. 22 (1999): 4. At a time when Pacific Theology was increasingly becoming a viable means of doing theology for theologians in the Pacific, Koria is clear on the immense resources at the disposal of Pacific theologians and their relevance for constructing meaningful and timely contextual theologies for the people of the Pacific.

1.4. Chapter Divisions

Now that the definition/s of suffering as *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* have been firmly established, I proceed now to explicate briefly how the following chapters will proceed to conduct an investigation for a theological solution/s for the suffering of Samoans from a Samoan perspective. The following chapter, Chapter Two will address directly the Samoan contemporary context of the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i.*” It will provide a brief summary of the background story behind the *alagaupu*, and then highlight the meaning, place and role of such an *alagaupu* to Samoans in these contemporary times. Such an analysis is the first step in the anthropological approach of this thesis, which will raise the issue or problem of seeking a theological solution/s for the experience of suffering of Samoans from a Samoan perspective.

After raising the issue, the Research Question will be confirmed: How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” be used in finding a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapugatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? Once the Research Question is posited it will then be brought into dialogue or critical conversation with the Scriptures. Therefore, Chapter Three will involve a biblical analysis of *tigaina* and *puapugatia* by looking at two key references that have been chosen because of the fact that as well-known scriptural references in the Bible, they accurately resonate with the Samoan definitions of suffering already alluded to. The first text is from the Old Testament: Exodus 3:7-8. I believe there is a need to study the significance of the “cry” of the Israelites to the LORD when undergoing their sufferings in Egypt. The second text is from the New Testament: Mark 15:33-37. This gospel account in Mark depicts

the “cry” of Jesus on the Cross on a very human level. In my view, there is no other “cry” as significant or memorable as the Lord’s loud cry on the Cross.¹²

Once a biblical understanding of *tigaina* and *puapugatia* has been articulated, then Chapter Four will seek to synthesise the findings of the two previous chapters, so that both the historical, social, cultural and contemporary context/s of the *alagaupu* and my Christian faith as explicated by the Scriptural analysis can be brought into critical conversation, climaxing in providing a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective. As a conclusion to this research, Chapter Five will revisit the Research Question posited and confirm that it has been answered. Secondly, the theological insights taken from the research will be presented in relation to the relevance it may have for the life and ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Samoa and overseas. And finally, any recommendations that this thesis can make for future research will be presented, to allow the findings of this thesis to encourage future scholarship.

¹² Pratt, 210. It must also be noted here that Pratt’s definition of *mapuea* (the full word), which means “to breathe hard”, or “to be out of breath”, has an inherent and implication of hopelessness and despair. In this way, sigh or cry as pointed in the biblical text carry synonymous elements in their final application, especially in regards to the *alagaupu* in question.

Chapter Two: “*Ua logo i Pulotu, le mapu a Tai’i*” [The sigh of Tai’i was heard in Pulotu] – A Samoan Experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*.

2.0. Introduction

As already intimated in the introductory chapter, this investigation is purposefully conducted with a view in promoting the relevancy and poignancy of Contextual theology, by what has been called an anthropological approach. Thus, this chapter will seek to fulfil this objective by directly addressing the Samoan contemporary context of the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*.” First, it will provide a brief summary of the background story behind the *alagaupu*, and then highlight the meaning, place and role of such an *alagaupu* to Samoans in these contemporary times. As the first step in the anthropological approach of this thesis, this chapter will not only serve to raise the issue or problem of seeking a theological solution/s for the experience of suffering of Samoans from a Samoan perspective. But, it will also conclude by articulating the Research Question necessary to address such a problem: How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*.” be used in finding a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? It will be the task of the following chapter to bring into dialogue or critical conversation with the Scriptures the results of the following analysis.

2.1. The Contemporary context – The Story behind the *alagaupu*

Before proceeding to briefly provide a summary of the story behind the *alagaupu* in question, it must be stated at this stage, that an attraction of actually

studying this *alagaupu* was the fact that it is highly accessible as a literary source. This fact does not dispel however the reality that is part and parcel of its existence in these contemporary times as an *alagaupu* that is spread through oral transmission. The important point to be made here is that many who today use and are familiar with the chosen *alagaupu* of this study, will have most likely encountered it for the first time through the *lauga* (speech) of a *tulafale* (Samoan orator/Talking chief). Such a reality speaks volumes for its continuing presence in the *Fa'aSamoa* (Samoan way of life), and its vitality for Samoans who will always treasure their cultural heritage and inheritance.

Thus, in its literary form that follows, the story behind the *alagaupu*, and the *alagaupu* itself both act as sources of historical fact, wisdom, instruction, and spiritual insight:¹

... As a savage war was fought out in the big island of Savaii between warriors from the A'ea-Sasa'e (East) against warriors from the A'ea-Sisifo (West). High Chief Lilomaiaava, the leading warrior of the A'ea-Sasa'e, was a savage man.²

¹ Other scholars have also chosen to locate an understanding of this *alagaupu* by actually focussing on Nafanua as the main character or protagonist in the events that unfold. Here is one version covering that background and proceeding forward to an account of the *alagaupu*, “*Tilafaiga* eventually married her uncle *Saveasi'uleo* in *Pulotu* and bore him two daughters, *Nafanua*, the famous war-goddess and *Suaifanua*. Thus the prophecy of *Saveasi'uleo* was fulfilled “*O le a ta feiloai i i'u o gafa*”. In those days *Falealupo*, *Tilafaiga*'s home town, suffered under the yoke of *Salega*. The victors took delight in ill-treating the vanquished. *Tulafale Tai'i*, for instance, was forced to climb a coconut tree feet foremost and pluck nuts. When he reached the top, breathless from the effort, he emitted a **whistle sound** (author's emphasis) such as the Samoans are wont to do at a heavy job. The sound penetrated to the twins in *Pulotu* and, taking pity on their poor relatives, they asked the war-goddess to avenge them. We see here with Schultz-Ewerth's version that he translates/interprets the sigh of *Tai'i* as a whistle sound. I believe he is misguided here in that although *mapu* can be defined as “whistle”, it is not helpful in forming an appreciation of the actual predicament that *Tai'i* had found himself in. Let it be noted though, that many Samoan stories differ for this very reason, due to conflicting assumptions made by people who seek to take Samoan words out of their context. See Erich Bernhard Theodor Schultz-Ewerth, *Samoan Proverbial Expressions: Alaga'upu Fa'asamoa* (Auckland: Polynesian Press 1980), 231.

² Lafai Sauoaga, *Mavaega I Le Tai* (Apia: Methodist Church in Samoa, 1988), 55. The following story is a translation of Lafai's work that I have attempted to present and translate in the most accessible of

After winning the war and claiming all the land and power from various subdivisions of Savaii for himself, he enslaved the A'ea-Sisifo warriors and the people from the west, including those from the village of Falealupo, and put them to hard labour. As a strange form of punishment against his enemies, Chief Lilomaiaava forced his captives to climb coconut trees feet first and head downwards. One of Chief Lilomaiaava's captives was Chief Tai'i from Falealupo. As he did with his other captives, Lilomaiaava ordered Tai'i to climb a coconut tree feet first. As Tai'i made the climb, he lamented its difficulty and let out a loud sigh. So loud was the sigh of Tai'i, that it was heard in all corners of Savai'i, and even reached the depths of the Spirit World, Pulumotu.³ Hence the proverb "Ua Logo i Pulumotu le Mapu a Tai'i", which simply means that, "The sigh of Tai'i was heard in Pulumotu". Unbeknownst to Lilomaiaava, Tai'i was the brother of Saveasi'uleo, the god who presided over Pulumotu. Saveasi'uleo heard the sigh of his brother, and became enraged. With a thunderous voice that shook the earth, he awakened his daughter Nafanua from her deep slumber, "My daughter! My daughter! Go forth into the land of the living and right the wrong that has been done to our people. But first, go to the Toa tree and cut it down."⁴ From it, fashion four weapons that you shall take

English language, with a strong consideration of the value of dynamic equivalence. That way, the sense and essence of the original Samoan and Lafai's version is retained.

³ C Steubel, A Kramer, and Iosua Toafa, eds., *Tala O Le Vavau: Myths, Legends, and Customs of Old Samoa* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1995), 125.

⁴ Due to the constraints of space, I have decided here to at least provide an explanation of the weapons or clubs that Nafanua took with her to war. This information reiterates the centrality of Nafanua to the understanding of the story and especially various other *alagaupu*,...To prepare for this war, Nafanua had four clubs made out of a toa tree, infusing it with the spirits of Pulumotu. These powerful weapons, once completed, were given the names *tafesilafa'i*, *fa'auliulito*, *ulimasao*, and *fa'amategataua*. The *tafesilafa'i* which is the *nifo'oti* was her first and primary weapon and she used it most of the time during the battle. It is shaped like a wide hook facing side out and has three to four pointed sharp teeth facing sideways. During wartime, this weapon is plain and not painted or decorated. The *fa'auliulito* is the weapon that Nafanua had assigned to Matuna and Matuna (her adopted parents) to

with you into battle.” In order to save High Chief Tai’i, Nafanua avenged High Chief Lilomaiaava and saved his uncle, and destroyed all of A’ea-Sasae.⁵

2.2. The Contemporary context – An Analysis of the *alagaupu*

It is clear from the literary form that has been presented of the story behind the *alagaupu* that it has been recorded with the intention of highlighting the successful liberation of *Saveasi’uleo* and ultimately *Nafanua* of their kinsmen, village, or family. Such a fact raises the importance of the maintaining of familial loyalties and connections that are at the heart of the *Fa’aSamoa* and Samoans in general. In this respect, the story we have just read can actually be seen through the hermeneutical lenses as that of a family love-affair, where the values of honour and faithfulness are seen to be preserved through the relationship of *Saveasi’uleo* and *Tai’i*. As a lesson in brotherly love, it runs deep in showing the extent to which siblings will go in appeasing each other from mortal danger, heartache, pain, or as has already been defined suffering,

use while fighting. Through Chief *Matuna* and his wife, also called *Matuna*, *Nafanua* ordered the *Falealupo* people to prepare for war. *Nafanua* had asked the couple to strike from the enemy side. She had planned to come in the middle so that she could meet the enemy and try to convince them to unite in peace and harmony. She told her adopted parents to be careful as it was difficult for her to identify the enemy. Accidentally, she killed her adopted parents; hence the saying, “*Ua ola i fale le la’au a Nafanua*”, meaning that *Nafanua*’s weapon killed her own people. The *fa’auliulito* is shaped like a plain stick but has a rounded, thick, heavy and wide edge. The *ulimasao* is a stand-by weapon to be used to end war and bring peace. *Ulimasao* also means driving safely. It is shaped like a canoe paddle with round, smooth sides and one pointed edge. “*Ia ulimasao le la’au a Nafanua*” also signifies that may there be a happy ending to *Nafanua*’s undertaking. *Fa’amategataua* - This is a second reserve weapon and it is the most dangerous weapon of the four. This war club was not meant to be used. However if necessary, she would use the club. It was fortunate that *Nafanua* did not need to use the fourth weapon which can basically be translated or called the “Weapon of Death”. It is so powerful that if used it would kill everyone including her family. The *fa’amategataua* is shaped like a spear but has teeth on both sides. The number of teeth varies from five to seven. For further elaboration and confirmation of this particular version see Suafo’a Taua’i, “The Legend of Nafanua, the Guardian and Goddess of War in Samoa,” <https://www.nps.gov/npsa/learn/historyculture/nafanua.htm>., accessed July 3, 2019.

⁵ Steubel, Kramer, and Toafa, 126.

in the sense of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. On this level, the sigh of *Tai'i* becomes a cry for help and justice. As a Chief, his honour has been diminished through the demeaning act required of him, that of climbing upside-down up a coconut tree. He is helpless to help himself. This is a type of helplessness or more accurately, a hopelessness that he shares with his immediate family and people. They are powerless before a very “savage” and powerful captor. If his honour is to be restored, if there is to be any notion of justice in the world, *Tai'i* can only respond accordingly to the punishment with which he has been dealt. It is not clear from the narrative whether *Tai'i* anticipated a response from his very powerful brother *Saveasi'uleo*, but it can only be assumed that *Tai'i* had reached a point of no return, of near death, where his only option was not some calculated signal, but rather a reflex action of a mortal, sighing in despair, hoping, albeit praying, for someone, anyone to save him and his people from their dire predicament, from their *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. *Pulotu* for *Tai'i* despite the connotations of a dark, spiritual world of existence actually carries for him at least, the hope of salvation, and the chance for liberation. In other words, if *Tai'i* is to be saved from his mortal *tigaina* and *puapugatia*, the solution can only come by way of the spiritual and not simply just the physical realm.

Another key aspect of the story which is clear is that the Chief *Lilomaiava* as the captor and tyrant appears to not fully comprehend the ramifications of what he has actually done to *Tai'i* and his people. He is not aware that *Tai'i* is actually *Saveasi'uleo*'s brother! The question begs: Why wouldn't *Lilomaiava* know such an important piece of information? Are we been led to believe that even the greatest of tyrants, like *Lilomaiava* also possess an inability to fully appreciate the consequences of his tyrannical actions? Maybe *Lilomaiava* knew, but felt that he was strong enough to hold off any threat that *Saveasi'uleo* could muster from the depths of *Pulotu*? Can we

safely conjecture that *Lilomaiava* too has fallen victim to the age old adage of underestimating the potential resilience of his enemies. For whatever reason, we can only wonder why *Lilomaiava* lacked such knowledge, which would have spared him and the people of *A'ea-Sasa'e* unnecessary and avoidable destruction and defeat.

The enraged reaction of *Saveasi'uleo* and his subsequent summoning of his daughter *Nafanua* to avenge the *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of their people is also worth noting. In many ways, it can be viewed as a type of controlled aggression as *Saveasi'uleo* reacts with a strategic plan. He is not to go himself, and place himself in harm's way. Instead, he recognises the innate abilities that his daughter *Nafanua* possesses to bring about the victory. Not only that, but his knowledge of the trees of Samoa is such that the Toa tree contains the necessary strength in which suitable clubs and/or weapons can be fashioned to assist *Nafanua* in her fight. The nature of the weapons, and the expertise with which *Nafanua* will use them and wield them, will be critical to her success. Thus, we can safely conclude that even before *Nafanua* leaves for battle, her success can already be anticipated with not only the excellence and particularity of the armoury that she has collected and at her disposal, but also the fact that everything she has done in preparation has been at the instruction of her father, the god of *Pulotu*, *Saveasi'uleo*.

A final look at the *alagaupu* confirms the dire nature of *Tai'i's* situation, and the type of force and expertise needed to liberate him. The word *logo* simply means “being heard”⁶ So the tense is such that we can rightly propose that *Tai'i's* sigh was not just for a moment, but also carries the weight and connotation of a prolonging and ever-resonating value to it. In other words, in the same way *Saveasi'uleo's* “thunderous

⁶ Pratt, 189.

voice” shook the earth when he heard *Tai’i’s* voice, *Tai’i’s* sigh equally possessed the enduring power to awaken, and encourage a response. As already intimated earlier the word *mapu* that is used in the *alagaupu* is better understood by looking at the word in its fullness, and that which would make sense in this context. Thus, the word *mapuea*, is understood as meaning, “to breath long and loud”⁷ indicating suffering, *tigaina* or *puapuagatia* by means, or as a direct result of brutality, violence, torment and punishment.

In the end, the sigh of *Tai’i* as the product of a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, acts not only to reinvigorate familial relationships and kinship ties, but also highlights the hope of *Tai’i* that even in his darkest hour, there is always the chance for liberation from *Pulotu*, or the spiritual realm. Such help, despite its spiritual origin has the power, impetus and ability to liberate the physical, emotional, social and spiritual nature of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, that totally enveloped *Tai’i* that day on the Coconut tree.

2.3. The Contemporary context – Place and Role of the *alagaupu*

As a contemporary reality in today’s Samoan society, the *alagaupu* of “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” contains emotive potential when used in oratory and public speaking. As mentioned above, it possesses the ability to engender positive responses surrounding the need to maintain strong familial ties and/or genealogical connections. In this sense, it becomes a cry for unity, brotherhood, sisterhood, and even nationalism to a certain degree. For a family that has long remained torn apart by petty arguments and childish grudges, it can be used to soothe over these very harmful ruptures that can

⁷ Ibid., 210.

exist even between the closest of siblings and family members. For a community, village, district, or church, the *alagaupu* calls out for single-mindedness, dialogue, peace and understanding.

As encouragement for individuals undergoing *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, the value of the *alagupu* chosen becomes invaluable. As Samoans, many different forms of suffering may seem to overwhelm us and in-turn counter-productively occupies our thinking, negatively impacting on our lives and our relationships. However, the analysis above has revealed that in today's contemporary context, if we are *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* to the point of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair, we have a Samoan experience that speaks of hope, and the possibility of liberation. For not only did such an event take place as an historical fact, but the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual ramifications of the victory in the story speaks of the temporality of the notion of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* that Samoans may be enduring. In other words, Samoans already possess a narrative of liberation, and hope, in the *alagaupu*, "*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai'i.*"

Finally, acknowledgement must be made to the connection between the created order or the *siosiomaga* (environment) that is indelibly etched into the understanding of the *alagaupu*. It is not by accident that *Tai'i's* sigh came from climbing a Coconut tree! *Lilomaiva* as *Tai'i's* captor sought to demean him by partaking in a reversal of an activity that would normally symbolise life, sustenance and provision. Instead, with *Nafanua's* liberation of *Tai'i* from the Coconut tree, we can understand anew the symbolic nature of such a vital member of the Pacific *siosiomaga*. Intended by *Lilomaiva* to be a site of mockery, humiliation and *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* for *Tai'i*, the Coconut tree must continue to be seen as a fountain and source of life, hope, and love. It speaks of the created order's provision of Samoans daily needs, and hearkens

back to a pre-Christian belief in the sanctity of a covenant made in love, and a commitment to reciprocally provide for each other.⁸ Again, Samoans can find in this story, and the *alagaupu* at hand, the inspiration to preserve, love and care for not only the Coconut tree, but their *siosiomaga* as a whole.

2.4. Issue/Problem – A Samoan Experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*

As the previous section on the place and role of the *alagaupu* in these contemporary times alluded to, Samoans are people who are not only closely tied to their pre-Christian stories of origin/s, but continue to be maintained and inspired by the inherent practical applications and wisdom that reside within them. Thus, the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” can accurately be seen to represent a viable Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. For not only did such an *alagaupu* come to existence through an actual historical event, but the fact that it continues to be preserved through the oral transmission of *tulafale* speaks of its enduring legacy for current and future generations of Samoans. To the point that even for Samoans who may not share any particular knowledge of the background of the *alagaupu*, they can still identify with some of the resonant themes and moral currents that have already been alluded to, as they are in many ways, universal and applicable across different social contexts.

Now that a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* has been established, we will make a final turn in this chapter to seek to formulate a Research Question, that

⁸ As with many Samoan stories, there are many different versions in circulation. A very accessible version and one that can be considered a very consistent one can be found online with ease. See, “Sina and Her Eel (Tuna),” National Park of American Samoa, <https://www.nps.gov/npsa/learn/historyculture/sinatuna.htm>, accessed July 3, 2019.

will help us focus our dialogue and critical conversations with Scripture of the following chapter.

2.5. Seeking a theological solution/s for a Samoan Experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* - “*Ua logo i Pulotu, le mapu a Tai’i*”

Now that an appreciation of the contemporary context of the *alagaupu* has been established, we must formulate a Research Question to help us focus our engagement with Scripture. Thus, the Research Question that is seen to be most pressing and necessary for this investigation can be stated as such, How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*.” be used in finding a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? As has been highlighted through the analysis of the *alagaupu*, and the subsequent explication of its place, role, and meaning in these contemporary times, there are definite lessons of a moral and spiritual nature that must now be measured against an appreciation of Scripture. For as a Christian articulating a contextual theology, there must be equal consideration of the validity of Scripture to a possible theological solution/s to the issue of a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. Again, reiterating and reconfirming the nature of the anthropological approach of this research.

2.6. Summary

In this chapter, the *alagaupu* of “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” became the focus for the purpose of explicating the contemporary context and a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* that this research seeks to solve. Through the analysis it was seen the need to consider seriously the story that lay behind the *alagaupu*, in turn

adding value and setting a context for the consideration of the *alagaupu* and the resultant lessons that would emerge for further discussion. Ultimately, this chapter led to the formation and reiteration of the Research Question at the heart of this research, which will now be used to dialogue and critically converse with Scripture, which is the primary concern of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The “cry” of the Israelites and the “cry” of Jesus Christ – A Biblical and Theological Understanding of Suffering

3.0. Introduction

In this chapter we will take seriously Christian Scripture that lies at the heart of Christian faith and practice. In many ways, we will exercise the dictum which holds true for all Christian theological endeavours, namely, that theology is also “faith seeking understanding.”⁹ Notwithstanding that, the commitment of how this investigation is been conducted remains, which is, to follow closely the anthropological approach in the name of Contextual theology. Therefore, I have purposefully selected two examples from the Biblical text, one each from the Old and New Testaments, that resonate strongly with the lessons that have emerged from the previous chapter on the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i.*”

First, we will consider the “cry” of the Israelites to God during their unjust, harsh and in many ways inhumane predicament they found themselves in, as slaves and/or prisoners of the Egyptian empire and Pharaoh as portrayed in the book of Exodus. Secondly, we will consider the “cry” of Jesus Christ on the Cross, as presented in the Gospel of Mark. As already mentioned, both examples can already be anticipated in some way as having a symbolic relationship with the *alagaupu* at hand. Thus, it is the objective of this chapter to expose that relationship, by showing how they can answer the Research Questions posited in the previous chapter, How can the *alagaupu*,

⁹ It is widely held that St. Anselm of Canterbury was the first to coin this phrase. See the following academic and peer-reviewed source for further information regarding St. Anselm’s life and work, James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, “Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109),” <https://www.iep.utm.edu/anselm/>, accessed July 8, 2019.

“*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” provide a theological solution/s for a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapugatia* in these contemporary times? In-turn, completing and articulating what can only be described as a Samoan perspective, honouring both my Samoan contemporary context and Christian faith.

3.1. Exodus 3:7-11 – Understanding the “cry” of the Israelites.

Before looking at our chosen text from the Old Testament, to establish somewhat of a background, it is helpful to understand the purpose of the Book of Exodus as promoted by scholars. The over-riding consensus amongst the most prominent of Old Testament scholars is that, the purpose of the Book of Exodus is best understood as focussing on the notion of celebrating God’s gracious deliverance of the chosen people Israel. Such a notion is founded on the fact, that the actual title of the Book is the product of taking a transliteration of the Greek (koine) word meaning “exit” or “departure” and translating into the English word Exodus.¹⁰

This is consistent with the Septuagint (LXX) translators, as they gave the book its title because of the major event in it, namely, the Israelites' departure from Egypt. These facts add to the significance of the chosen verses of this study, because despite been only five verses, they establish clearly the reason/s and motivating catalyst behind God’s eventual liberation of the Israelites, delivering his people from bondage in Egypt,

¹⁰ Robert K. Feaster, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 55.

Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”¹¹

3.2. The LORD God – Anthropomorphic Tendencies

As we can appreciate from the New Revised Standard Version above, the text in question is highly literal in its translation of the Greek texts that it privileges. The result is the presentation of an image of God, or the LORD who is active, present and very aware and cognisant of all the events leading up to his discourse with Moses. In other words, the equating of anthropomorphic tendencies with the LORD is brought to the fore, as the LORD “observes”, “hears”, “knows”, “comes down”, “delivers”, and promises to “send” Moses on His behalf, in His name to free and deliver His people, the Israelites from the clutches of Pharaoh and their Egyptian oppressors.

Biblical scholar J.P. Hyatt also views the text using similar sentiments, in that he believes that the account is clearly the first instance when God “commands” Moses to

¹¹ Exodus 3:7-11. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical references used in this research are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible.

lead Israel, beginning therefore his own ministry.¹² He continues to add that God's subsequent explanation of giving his reasons for revealing Himself to Moses is captured in the first three verses. In other words, the suffering of His people has touched His heart. Thus, He has not only heard their cries and seen their affliction and oppression, but He acknowledges that such a situation is untenable, and void of His righteousness and justice. To Thomas Constable, the hard labour provided by their taskmasters is the very reason why their "cry" has been heard by the LORD. Instead of providing supervision, and a controlled environment of work and labour, the taskmasters have created a situation of violence, resplendent with the negative stench of fear, helplessness and hopelessness.¹³ There can only be one choice of action by a Sovereign, Almighty and Righteous God. He must deliver them. Moved by compassion, the LORD must act decisively. The use of the first person singular makes it sharply clear that the language of the text comes directly from God's own heart and will.

It may seem strange that Exodus should use the expression "I have come down", which apparently presupposes that the Godhead needs to descend to earth in order to act thereon, after employing the verbs see, hear, know, which imply that God hears and sees and knows everything from His throne of glory. But the difficulty can be explained in the light of the history of the Hebrew language. The term "come down" is, in such a context a normal idiom for describing Divine intervention in human affairs, and was inherited by the Hebrew tongue from the Canaanite literary tradition, which, when using this or similar phrases, understood them in their literal signification. Furthermore, these do not imply that God has corporeal and spatial limitations; rather, it

¹² J P Hyatt, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 70.

¹³ Thomas Constable, *Commentary: Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2016), 69.

points to the notion that God is a living person who can and does follow the stream of human events and who can and does at times directly intervene in human affairs.¹⁴

3.3. A Point of Transition – The Context of the Text

Thus, Chapter three of Exodus then is a very significant point of transition. It begins with our chosen verses, and then moves to the revelation of God to Moses from the midst of the “burning bush.” It develops with the commissioning of Moses to go back to Egypt and the Pharaoh and to deliver God’s people from their oppression and bondage. It ends with the beginnings of Moses’ reticence and resistance toward the task which God has given him. Now Jewish and Christian interpreters have long seen the “burning bush” which follows closely after our chosen verses, as a symbol of “the nation of Israel,” which is ignoble or common in relation to other nations. The value of appreciating the “burning bush” is that the “fire” most probably symbolises the affliction of Egyptian Bondage. When we extend this understanding further, the Israelites may well have been “suffering” as a result of this hostility, but just like the “the bush”, God did not and would not allow them to be consumed.¹⁵ Ultimately, “the bush” becomes a central symbol of the presence of God in Moses’ calling, and the LORD’s recognition of His people’s plight. As a vivid symbol, the “burning bush” marks the beginning of God’s direct intervention into the affairs of history. It is the basis for the call of Moses to return to Egypt as Israel’s deliverer. It is the beginning of the end of Egyptian oppression.

¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, *Exodus*, ed. Frank E Gaebelin and Richard P Polcyn, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 288.

¹⁵ Jorge Pixley, *Biblical Israel: A People's History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 43.

J.P. Hyatt states in this chapter that God commands Moses to lead Israel, where he started his ministry. I strongly support what Hyatt have stated because in my opinion God proceeded to explain the reason for His revelation (Exodus 3:7-10). The suffering of His people had touched His heart. He had heard their cries and seen their affliction. Now He purposed to deliver them. The compassion of God stands out in these verses.

Another important and final point to made in the verse directly after our chosen text, is the importance not of the instrument by which God will liberate His people, but the highlighting of the One calling the instrument to task. The LORD's promise of His presence immediately raises His intentions to be ever present during the entire ordeal of liberation. God is a God who not only "calls" but also "leads", "accompanies" and "is present" with those whom He "calls."

3.4. Understanding the God of Exodus – Theological Attributes

From our analysis above, we can conclude that the theological attributes of God are herein defined ever so clearly. God is Omnipotent, in that He has chosen to act and now deliver His people from their misery. God is Omniscience, in that God knows and to a degree, "feels" the plight of the Israelites and their oppression and "suffering". And finally, God is Omnipresent, in that God does not deny His Sovereign ability to be ever-present with His people, and in especially in their liberation through Moses and his calling. In selecting this text from the Old Testament, we have been able to consider it and appreciate it in its own context as a key part of Israel's narrative of deliverance, and even more importantly, a turning point or juncture in their history which can act to remind them of God's faithfulness, love, mercy and loyalty to them as the God of the

Covenant with their ancestor Abraham, the I AM that calls them through the power of His own Sovereignty.¹⁶

3.5. Mark 15: 33-43 – Jesus “cries” out to His Father

Due to the length of our chosen text from the Gospel of Mark, I will not present the actual text here in full. Instead, clear correlations to the text and events therein will be made in the analysis that follows. Mark's account of Jesus' death included five climactic events: the darkness, two of Jesus' cries, the tearing of the temple veil, and the Roman centurion's confession. All of these events happened during the last three of the six hours of Jesus' sufferings on the cross. For the first three of Jesus' six hours on the cross he suffered in daylight at the hands of humans. In the darkness of the second three hours He suffered at the hands of God.

3.6. Supernatural Darkness and its Significance

All three synoptic evangelists recorded the supernatural "darkness" that covered all of Judah from what is widely accepted as been 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. However, none of them actually explains and elaborates further on it. It appears that evidently they all viewed it as a sign of God's judgement on Jesus. In other words, The Father withdrew the light of His presence from His Son during the hours when Jesus bore the guilt of the world's sins. Perhaps darkness covered "the whole land" of Israel because according to scholars, it also symbolized God's judgment on Israel for rejecting His

¹⁶ See Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 for references to the Abrahamic covenants that highlight the privileged position of the Israelites in the “eyes” of the LORD God, and His intentions for them to play a vital role in His blessings for all peoples of the world.

Son.¹⁷ Darkness at noon, by its paradoxical nature, was a fitting sign for divine Omnipotence to give to those who had rejected the light.

3.7. Jesus' "cry" in Historical and Literary context

In addition to the darkness of the Exodus, it was a commonly held belief in the Ancient world that darkness was often associated with, or presaged, the death of great men. This "cry" came at the ninth hour, namely, 3:00 p.m. Jesus' "cry" expressed what the darkness depicted. "Jesus cried out" loudly, not weakly, with His last available energy. His great agony of soul was responsible for this "cry."¹⁸

What must be remembered at this point is that Mark recorded Jesus' words in Aramaic. Most probably Jesus spoke in Aramaic in view of the crowd's reaction. Even though the physical "sufferings" that Jesus experienced were incomparable, the spiritual agony that He underwent, as the Son of Man who came to "suffer", taking away the sins of the world was infinitely greater.¹⁹ Such an acknowledgement of the power of Jesus' experience on the Cross words are no doubt reflected in their English translation, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*"²⁰ Jesus' "suffering" and agony is expressed as a question. It is of a rhetorical nature, so in reality it is expressing an affirmation of His relationship to God as His Father and an acknowledgment that the Father had "abandoned" Him.

¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 37-39.

¹⁸ Mark 15:37

¹⁹ See Mark 8:31

²⁰ Mark 15:34

In no uncertain terms, God the Father poured out His wrath on the Son, who took the sin of the world upon Himself on the Cross.²¹ Jesus, at the same time, bore God's curse and His judgment for sin. God, who cannot look on sin, turned His back, so to speak, on Jesus who bore that sin in His own body on the Cross. Jesus experienced "separation" from God when He took the place of sinners. That this "separation" was not literal or permanent and yet was a real event experienced in time and history is supported also by the fact that Jesus proceeded to address the Father in prayer: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit".²² Jesus' strong "loud cry" indicates that this was not simply the last gasp of an exhausted, demoralized, or defeated man. Jesus' "cry" was a shout of victory! He triumphantly announced: "It is finished!"²³ Then He dismissed His spirit and breathed His last. It is possible that Jesus' last shout and the dismissal of His spirit took place simultaneously. Most likely, he dismissed His spirit with a triumphal shout.

As already mentioned, one of the consequences of sin is the total separation from God. Jesus, who carried the sin of the world, was the substitute for human-race. He laid down his divinity and as a human went through the horrific pains and agony of the burden of sin. It was at that moment that he felt the separation from God. That has also been cited by scholars as a possible reason for why Jesus chose to "cry" out the opening words of Psalm 22.²⁴ This Psalm has been described at the same time as the lament of a righteous sufferer and his confident hope of vindication. So if Jesus is

²¹ Pixley, 15.

²² Luke 23:46. At this time of the analysis, it is important to include a cross-reference of events of Jesus' Passion experience to fully be able to capture the richness of the underlying spiritual and theological significance of his "cry" on the Cross to this research.

²³ John 19:30.

²⁴ Psalm 22:1a.

considered as the ultimate righteous sufferer, how much more then can we be assured of his confidence and hope of vindication from the Cross?

Despite the obvious links that can be made to the Psalm, by just understanding the original Greek word that is used for “cried” as *‘boaó’*, which means “shouting with intense feeling” or “to make an urgent distress-call” allows us to read closer to the written text, providing a very vivid and convincing illustration of Jesus’ despair, pain, agony, “suffering” when He cries out to God His Father, without focussing too much on the Psalm.

What has been firmly established now with the analysis of Jesus’ Christ’s “cry” on the Cross is that it can clearly be interpreted as a “cry” of anguish, pain and most importantly, *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*! Jesus’ suffering is symptomatic of not only the physical ordeal that He had to endure, but also the spiritual abandonment that He had to undergo through eventual separation from God the Father. This separation should not be viewed as a total reflection of Jesus’ desperation, but must be balanced against Jesus’ conscious choice to take up His Cross, and also His commitment to accept the will of His Father.

3.8. Summary

In this chapter we proceeded to discuss and analyse two notable texts from the Scriptures that resonated strongly with our *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i.*” What we discovered was that the call of the LORD God to Moses to deliver His people from bondage in Egypt was a direct result of the LORD revealing His anthropomorphic tendencies, which can be theologically understood as God’s Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence. God indeed “hears”, “sees” and “moves” according to His Sovereign Will and Divine Love. In appreciating Jesus’

“cry” on the Cross, we were able to once again acknowledge the unique relationship that Jesus as the Son has with God the Father. A unique and divine relationship that underwent “separation” and “abandonment” in such a way so that Jesus was able to deliver the sinful world from its sin without avoiding the physical, social, and ultimately spiritual *tigaina* and *puapugatia* that typified his experience on the Cross. With my Samoan perspective firmly established now through the analysis of both the *alagaupu*, and the Scriptures of my Christian faith, we now move to the next chapter where the Research Question will be addressed through a synthesis of the overlapping insights gained from thus far.

Chapter Four: Synthesis – A solution/s for the *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective

4.0. Introduction

In this chapter we will synthesise the analysis that occurred in the previous two chapters with the aim of answering the Research Question at hand, “How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” provide a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? As was revealed in the previous chapter, three theological attributes of God, or the LORD emerged from our analysis. In many ways, these attributes continued to be revealed in Jesus’ “cry” on the Cross, if we view the event and experience of Jesus’ on the Cross as a Trinitarian event. In others words, the Cross is also a time when the Triune nature of God was also revealed, because at the Cross God is unashamedly omnipotent, omniscience and omnipresent.²⁵ In other words, such a nature was revealed in the somewhat absence of God the Father, the “cry” of the Son, and the commending of His Spirit through His last breath, once again reinforces the identity of the Christian God. Ultimately, we can say that the Israelites and the God of Scripture underwent a Samoan experience of “suffering” as *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*.

Therefore, in reciprocating fashion, we can begin to appreciate the story behind the *alagaupu*, of *Saveasi’uleo* sending his daughter *Nafanua* to avenge the plight of his

²⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1976). Moltmann is probably the most recognisable theologian of modern times that focussed on explicating the notion that the Cross of Christ was a Trinitarian event. In this way, Moltmann follows the Great German Reformer Martin Luther in finding theological inspiration in meditating on the Cross and its significance. For an appreciation of the connections that have been made across the ages concerning Trinitarian theology consult, Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006).

brother *Tai'i* and his people to also reflect the undergirding and overarching love, commitment, faithfulness and hope that is engendered in not only the liberation history of the Israelites, but also the salvation history of Creation and humankind, culminating in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Thus, this chapter will seek to develop further the potential seeds that have already been clearly sown and laid out in the previous chapters, leading us ultimately to what contribution this research can make to the CCCS in general, its ministry and future research.

4.1. Tai'i, the Israelites and Jesus Christ –

As we discovered, the three victims of oppression, power, and violence were that of *Tai'i*, the Israelites and Jesus Christ. *Tai'i* a man of honour, prestige and stature in his village and within his family is ridiculed, harshly treated, and forced to endure physical, psychological, social, and spiritual *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* at the hands of his captors, namely, Chief *Lilomaiaava* and the people of *A'ea-Sasa'e*. For to climb feet first up a Coconut tree is not only a near impossible task to achieve, but reflects a very demeaning and humiliating posture for a Samoan male.²⁶ Furthermore, the Coconut tree formerly a source of life and sustenance, was now been viewed as a site for punishment, ridicule and hopelessness. In many ways, *Tai'i's* plight can also be understood as a reflection of the immense and vast distancing that the Samoans of the time would be experiencing with their *siosiomaga*, as the damage would have been extensive, due to the years of war and its carnage. The sigh of *Tai'i* takes on new

²⁶ Here it must be noted, that there is a strong likelihood that *Tai'i* would have actually exposed his lower body area, i.e. genitalia to all and sundry, due to the posture with which he had to climb the Coconut tree. Such humiliation would only have added salt to injury.

meaning as not only a recognition of his personal plight as an individual, but also as a representation of the pregnant possibilities that remain for those who will dare to hope, hold on, and keep the faith, despite their circumstances.

In a similar way, we can understand the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt as *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. Just as the sigh of *Tai'i*, was heard by his brother in the Spirit World of *Pulotu*, so too the “cry” of the Israelites was heard by the LORD God in the Heavenly realm. The motivating force for *Saveasi'uleo* may have been rage and revenge, but the LORD God's concern is promoted as justice, righteousness, mercy and divine love for His people. And, just as *Saveasi'uleo* called his daughter *Nafanua* to take up the challenge of avenging his brother and his kinsmen, the LORD God calls Moses to return to Egypt to release the Israelites from their bondage.

Jesus' “cry” can also be seen as a sign of assured victory and vindication from His Father, if we allow the cross-referencing and reading from the Gospels of Luke and John to inform our chosen texts from Mark. In saying that, Mark's apparent presentation of the God the Father's absence, and lack of response to Jesus' “cry” must be tempered against the fact that Jesus' “cry” comes in the form of a rhetorical question. In other words, Jesus' “cries” on behalf of those He is taking the punishment of the Cross for. He experiences “separation” and “abandonment” because that is the will of the Father, and the necessary step needed to bring about the salvation of His Creation and humankind. Jesus' “cry” is both a cry of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, and victory of sin, death and the grave.

4.2. Saveasi'uleo, The Lord God, Jesus the Son of God The Father.

It is clear from the story behind the *alagaupu*, that *Saveasi'uleo* is the god of *Pulotu* who wields his power, and musters his ability to successfully plan the

destruction of his brother *Tai'i*'s captors. We are not told of any other details about *Saveasi'u*leo, other than when he hears *Tai'i*'s sigh he immediately responds in rage, and begins to strategically plan for *Nafanua*'s mission of revenge. It is *Saveasi'u*leo's excellent suggestion for *Nafanua* to fashion the necessary weapons for battle that is a critical ingredient to her success. Are we to assume that somehow these weapons carried with them the mana and presence of *Saveasi'u*leo with her daughter *Nafanua*? The story stops short from stating as such, but by mere instruction, we have a parallel here with the LORD God's calling of Moses' to return to Egypt in His name.

It is the LORD God that hears, sees, and feels the oppression that His people have been submitted to. He is the One who is deciding to act. In fact, as the name I AM can represent, He is Sovereign to do what He chooses and pleases, because He is God! In feeling compassion for the plight of His people, the LORD God reveals the intense desire He has to remain in relationship and covenant with His chosen people. Ultimately leading to enjoying the blessed communion with all the world, as He promised through Abraham and His descendants.

It is this same LORD God that Jesus "cries" out too on the Cross! His Father who loves Him dearly, who appears to be absent, but is in fact more present than ever in Jesus' final "cry" and breath, in which He commended His Spirit to return to His Father. The Cross as intimated before is a Trinitarian event where the circular nature and procession of the Triune God can be fully appreciated with the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all equally playing a role in the salvation of Creation and humankind. In other words, Jesus' "cry" of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* reveals the true nature of God for all to see. Thus, likewise, the "sigh" of *Tai'i* reveals a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* for all Samoans to identify with, but to now see and appreciate anew through the Christian faith, and Cross of Jesus Christ.

4.3. The Coconut Tree, The Burning Bush, The Cross of Christ

For *Tai'i* and his people, the Coconut tree threatened to become a symbol and site for pain, violence, abuse and destruction. As *Nafanua* avenged *Tai'i*, and subsequently destroyed Chief Lilomaiva and his captors, the Coconut tree once again took upon a meaning of life, sustenance and provision. It would continue to provide not only from its trunk, but also its leaves, right through to its fruit, juice and husk. As theologians like Sione Amanaki Havea argued in the 1960's, a theology fitting for the Pacific is one that can also be called, "Coconut Theology" because the Coconut tree is the "tree of life" for the Pacific people.²⁷ For Samoans, the liberation of *Tai'i* from his humiliation on the Coconut tree points to the very timely and relevant need in today's contemporary context to address and embrace the issues of climate change that beset our *siosiomaga*.

Likewise, the "burning bush" did not get consumed in the presence of the LORD God. In fact, it symbolised the notion that there is an underlying desire from the Living God to not only be ever-present and in relationship with His Creation, but that He will also be part of the solution in appeasing the world of its *tigaina* and *puapugatia*. The "burning bush" remains a beacon of hope, and ever regenerating life, as is vividly portrayed in the Exodus account.

Finally, the Cross of Christ was meant to be not only a form of unbearable punishment, but also a site of victory for Jesus' enemies, who denied His advances of

²⁷ Ever since its creation in the mid-1960s, the Pacific Theological College has been at the forefront of shaping Pacific and Contextual theology in the region. Rev. Sione Amanaki Havea was the first Principal of the College, and along with other pioneering theologians and students, ushered in a new era of theological enterprise centering on the validity of Pacific symbols as viable resources for theological discourse. See the following two sources for the type of theology that has been produced and published by PTC graduates, Lalomilo Kamu, *Samoan Culture & Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996)., and Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Neuendettelsau: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Departments, 2000).

love, peace, harmony and fellowship. Instead, the Cross of Christ, and His “cry” on the Cross symbolise and represent the dawning of new hope, and new life for all who will come to faith in Jesus Christ and trust in Him. The Cross as a symbol and site of violence, hatred and destruction has been liberated through the eventual resurrection of Jesus Christ from death and the grave. More accurately, the Cross is a timeless reminder of Jesus’ salvific love, and God the Father’s everlasting faithfulness and mercy to all those who will repent and believe in Him. It continues to reassure all disciples, believers and followers of Christ, that whatever *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* we may go through in life, He knows what we are dealing with, and He promises that there will always be a Resurrection, and a new beginning awaiting the faithful and trusting believer.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter we attempted to answer the Research Question, “How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” be used to provide a theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? By looking at elements of all three “stories” or “texts” raised in this investigation that resonated with each other, we were able to successfully synthesise, and bring into critical conversation and dialogue, the “sigh” of *Tai’i*, the “cry” of the Israelites, and the “cry” of Jesus Christ on the Cross. What was produced was a rich array of theological solutions to the Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* from a Samoan perspective. It is my contention, that such an array of theological solutions can no doubt contribute positively to the life and faith of the CCCS and also encourage future endeavour and scholarship. The task of articulating such possibilities will be the outgoing concern of the final chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

To conclude this investigation, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, we must revisit the Research Question posited and confirm that it has been answered. Secondly, if there are any theological insights that have been discovered and can be taken from the research we shall present these findings in relation to the relevance it may have for the life and ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Samoa and overseas. And finally, recommendations on where the direction of future research can proceed in the hope of encouraging future scholarship will be the closing concern of this concluding chapter.

At the heart of this investigation was the Research Question, “How can the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” be used to find a theological solution/s for a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of Samoans from a Samoan perspective? This question has been answered in many ways. First, the *alagaupu*, “*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai’i*” has shown to provide spiritual and theological solution/s for *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, in the way of understanding *Tai’i*’s “sigh” in light of the “cry” of Israelites in Egypt, and the “cry” of Jesus Christ on the Cross. In that way, *Tai’i* is considered alongside the Israelites and Jesus Christ as fellow sufferers of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, who sought vindication and deliverance, and eventually received their timely liberation. Second, the origin of liberation and deliverance for a Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*, is emphatically one of a spiritual origin. In the case of *Tai’i*, it came in the form of his brother *Saveasi’uleo*, the god of *Pulotu*. For the Israelites, it was the LORD God, and for Jesus Christ, it was His Father. Finally, there is a notable reversal that takes place when the Coconut tree of *Tai’i*, is considered

alongside the “burning bush” and the Cross of Jesus Christ. What is meant here is that instead of these sites been places of hopelessness, helplessness, pain, agony, and despair, they in-turn become revolutionary places of hope, new life, resurrection and new beginnings. Furthermore, the close connections that these sites have with the *siosiomaga*, also carry impetus for a potential re-appreciation and rejuvenation of an ecologically centred approach to theology. In fact, in these contemporary times, it is the *siosiomaga* of the world that is also *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* in some many ways.

These insights are all relevant for the current ministry, life and faith of the CCCS. It challenges the CCCS to be on the side of, identify with, and even fight for and with the oppressed and *tigaina* and *puapuagatia* of the world. The theological lessons are just reminding us that if we want to see, hear, know and understand God from a Samoan perspective, then we can now also see God through *Tai'i*, and his Samoan experience of *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*. This investigation sees such a solution as one that the CCCS needs to continue to realise as part of its ongoing mission and service. Instead of being the oppressor of families and individuals, they need to liberate people from any unnecessary, self-inflicted, but socially fuelled *tigaina* and *puapuagatia*.

Also, the CCCS needs to be instrumental and at the forefront of a turn towards the *siosiomaga* in all our practises and faith-oriented work. As this research identified, the rupturing of Samoans relationship with their true *siosiomaga* goes hand in hand with our alienation and abandonment from not only God’s blessings inherent in our *siosiomaga*, but also our God-given responsibilities as its custodians. Much value will be drawn from seeking to create sites of new life, hope, and new beginnings in our immediate *siosiomaga*, by embracing a lifestyle that contributes positively to decreasing the harmful nature of climate change.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to encourage future scholarship in Contextual Theology, with a renewed focus on revitalising and rejuvenating the nature of Pacific and Samoan contextual theology. For by maintaining our uniqueness as Pacific people and as Samoans, we not only acknowledge the creativity and love of our Maker, but we also will live lives geared to going outside of our comfort zones; to seek out the lost, bring good news to the poor, and set those who are captive, oppressed and prisoners of the world and its false prophets through the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One who calls us all to His life and work.

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