

**A SAMOAN SOCIO-RHETORICAL READING  
OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE USING AN  
*ATOAU* HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH**

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This re-reading of the Epistle of Jude is an attempt to make sense of the biblical text using the Samoan art of *tatauing* (tattooing), or the way of life that is *tatauing*.<sup>1</sup> Integrated with elements of sociorhetorical interpretation, they provide the basis for an *atoau* approach that is at the heart of this study. This *atoau* approach is also borne of my social location as a *tautua* (servant) of my *aiga* (family), my *nuu* (village), and my *aulotu* (church parish). The main argument is that the Epistle of Jude is an attempt by the author to “clothe” the emerging community of faithful believers. This “*tatauing*”—giving the community form, shape, and identity—is necessary in a context that is indicative of the life of the early church. The threat of infiltrations and intrusions by different factions and false teachings warrant establishing a distinctive identity for the people of God. Hence, the *tatauing* or “clothing” of the emerging faith community in the mercy of God and faith in the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> See Albert Wendt, "Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed., Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers INC., 1999), 399-412.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

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

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

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents Legalo Samau and Leua Samau, and my aunty Alofa Legalo and Lopau Taavili Legalo, who raised and taught me to always put God first in everything to do in life, and inspired me in every struggles and difficult times of my life.

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## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: *Ato-au with tools*, (39)

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## List of Abbreviations

NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
ECE	Edition Critica Maior
SRI	Sociorhetorical Interpretation
GNT4	Greek New Testament 4

## Introduction

The Epistle of Jude (hereinafter referred to as Jude), one of the shortest and often overlooked books in the New Testament canon, presents a unique challenge for biblical interpretation. Its brevity and cryptic nature leave room for various interpretations and raise questions about its intended message and relevance for contemporary readers. In light of this, there is a growing interest in exploring alternative hermeneutical approaches to re-reading and understanding Jude.

This thesis is a re-reading of Jude using an *atoau* hermeneutical approach which draws inspiration from the Samoan ritual and art of tattooing. The hope is to follow the recent trend in biblical studies which incorporate indigenous wisdom and cultural elements into biblical interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon the art of tattooing,<sup>2</sup> this study foregrounds the unique cultural aspects of the Samoan *tatau* (tattoo) to design a hermeneutical approach to read the biblical text.

Employing some elements of sociorhetorical interpretation, an *atoau* hermeneutical approach acknowledges the significance of one's social location, cultural and contextual background in shaping interpretation, and emphasizes the active participation of the reader in “clothing” the text to give it meaning. By applying an *atoau* framework to the Epistle of Jude, we may gain a deeper understanding of its themes, messages, and relevance for our lives today. To some respect, and using ancient Samoan tattooing language, the aim of this *atoau* approach is to “clothe” the biblical text with meaning. The hope is to make sense of the biblical text from my social location, bridging the gap between the context of Jude and our contemporary world.

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of such Samoan studies, refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.3 of this thesis, below.

<sup>2</sup> Wendt, "Afterword," 400.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one reviews the literature on the Epistle of Jude. Chapter two discusses some of the conventional approaches to reading the biblical text in contrast with recent approaches by some of the Samoan biblical scholars. Chapter three describes various tools in the art of tattooing and their functions within the *atoau* approach. Chapter four places the *atoau* approach in dialogue with the biblical text of Jude. Chapter five is the *samaga* which brings everything together to conclude the art of tattooing.

# Chapter 1

## Review of the Literature on the Epistle of Jude

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the scholarly works on the Epistle of Jude. It begins with a discussion of some of the issues concerning authorship, date, and location. This is important to frame the historical context of Jude. Following, I review some of the extant scholarly works with emphasis on the various approaches taken. The overall aim is not only to help find placement for my thesis within the contours of current scholarship, but more significantly, to contribute to the on-going *talanoa* or discussion concerning the use of contextual and cultural elements in biblical interpretation.

#### 1.1.1 The Authorship

The first verse in the epistle, “Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James”, offers no clear indication of the author. Who exactly is he?<sup>4</sup> Five people with the name Judas are mentioned in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> According to the Book of Acts 9:11, there is a Judas of Damascus, the one who lived on Straight Street. Judas Barsabas, along with Silas, was chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to relay the Council of Jerusalem's decision in the Book of Acts 15:22. There is obviously, Judas Iscariot. In addition, John refers to Judas the Apostle as "not Judas Iscariot" in John 14:22. There are others like Judas, known also as Thaddeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18. Last,

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Quandt, "An Exegesis of Jude." Presented to the Fall Pastoral Conference of the Colorado Conference, Nebraska District, October 3 (1995) Accessed September 29, 2023. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Michael+J.+Quandt%2C+%E2%80%9CA+n+exegesis+of+Jude%2C%E2%80%9D+&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Michael+J.+Quandt%2C+%E2%80%9CA+n+exegesis+of+Jude%2C%E2%80%9D+&btnG=).

<sup>5</sup> See, Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (T&T Clark, 1990); Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, 2006); Charles Bigg, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Classic Commentary Library, Macmillan, 1901).

but not least, there is Judas, the Lord's brother, who is mentioned in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55.

None of the first three Judases named above have been seriously considered as the author. Throughout the ages, many have attributed authorship to Judas the Missionary. However, this conclusion is skewed by two factors. The author in verse 1 is described as "the sibling of James" though Judas is the "child of James" (Luke 6:16). In addition, the author does not personally make any claims to apostleship. When he writes, "But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold" (v.17), he distances himself from it. Since Jude, also known as "Judas," is referred to in the same sentence as James, Jesus's brother, this makes Jude the most likely author. Matthew attests in 13:55, "Isn't this the son of a carpenter? Isn't Mary his mother's name, and aren't James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers?"

One of Jesus's half-brothers is Jude. He is the sibling of James, later known as James the Fair, who became the head of the Christian gathering at Jerusalem. It would seem that Jude and his brothers did not initially accept Jesus as the Savior and the Son of God. In any case, at some obscure time, Jude and his siblings became adherents. He and his brothers appear to be among the believers who had gathered in Acts 1:14. In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul says that they were involved in the church's work. James, Jude's brother, became a leader of the Jerusalem church after the Lord's resurrection (Acts 15). Paul even refers to James, Peter, and John, as "pillars" of the church. Jude's brother James' testimony may have convinced him to believe.

### ***1.1.2 Place and Date of Writing***

The location and era of Jude's origin remain disputed. The issue of location is far vaguer. While it may have been written somewhere in Palestine, the only offer of proof is the epistle's Jewish-Christian tone and the traditions regarding the descendants of

Jude.<sup>6</sup> According to Gene Taylor, “Jude was written during the second half of the first century, as indicated by the contents of the letter, which speak of itinerant false prophets gaining entrance to the churches – a situation less likely in the more structured church context of the second century. Exactly when Jude is dated depends to some extent on the literary relationship with 2 Peter.”<sup>7</sup>

External evidence is severely lacking since Jude's life and activities are poorly documented. As a result, the letter's internal evidence serves as the foundation for the majority of academic hypotheses. However, the task of pinpoint accuracy remains complicated. Neither does the references to apocryphal writings are of any assistance.

According to some scholars, “the letter of Jude and the second chapter of 2 Peter are so similar in language and thought that there is a historical connection between the two, they can hardly have originated altogether independently of each other.”<sup>8</sup> Luther adds, “concerning the epistle of St. Jude, no one can deny that it is an extract or copy of St. Peter’s second epistle, so very like it are all the words.”<sup>9</sup> Lenski lends in, “the fact that Jude uses 2 Peter, or that 2 Peter uses Jude is obvious”. Even though there are striking parallels that may in fact connect these letters historically, the question of “which epistle came first?” persists.<sup>10</sup>

There are numerous arguments. Some would argue that Jude's original, focused style, makes it more likely that later authors will lengthen and smooth out the “rough edges.” Others would suggest that since 2 Peter contains expectations that Jude presents as facts, Jude would accordingly be obliged to it. Jude could have been written before

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<sup>6</sup> Quandt, “An Exegesis of Jude,” 2. Also, Franzmann, Martin H. *The Word of the Lord Grows: A First Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 231.

<sup>7</sup> Gene Taylor, “Investigating the Word of God: Jude,” 2023, no. September 30. (2006). <http://www.armorcenterministries.com/uploads/2/4/8/6/24865330/jude.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Quandt, “An Exegesis of Jude,” 1.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s works*, “Volume 35.” *Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) 397.

<sup>10</sup> Richard C. Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude,” in *Publications of the Academy of American Franciscan History/Monograph series* (1966), 597.

AD 65 or 66, the suggested date for 2 Peter, if indeed, Peter used Jude's letter as inspiration for his second letter. On the chance that Jude utilized 2 Peter, Jude's epistle would have been composed any time after 65. This letter may be dated as late as the 80s by some; if Jerusalem had been destroyed before the writing of this epistle, it would likely have served as one of the warnings that Jude takes from God's divine judgments. The majority of experts believe that Jude was written between AD 64 and 70 due to the lack of evidence.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.1 Some of the approaches to reading Jude

For Tommy Wasserman,<sup>12</sup> the Epistle of Jude (Jude) contains numerous complicated issues. The textual complexity associated with Jude has yet to be reflected in the amount of factual textual research compared to other New Testament texts. Part of the problem is that Jude needs to be addressed in the history of exegesis in general. Wasserman uses textual criticism<sup>13</sup> to reconstruct the history of the text and, ultimately, the original text. In his study of Jude, Wasserman highlights ECM (*Edition Critica Maior*), exploring textual problems in individual verses of Jude and reflections on a single manuscript containing Jude. I find Wasserman's approach appealing, especially his textual critical way of exploring Jude.

More significantly, Wasserman describes the Epistle of Jude as an amulet.

Practically all of the biblical citations on the extant  
amulets indicate that Jewish and Christian amulets

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<sup>11</sup> For some scholars that agree with this date, see Lenski, "The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude." (1966). Also, P. H. Davids, *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2006); Roger L. Omanson, *A textual guide to the Greek New Testament: an adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual commentary for the needs of translators* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); H. W. Bateman, *Jude: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 100-101.

<sup>12</sup> Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, Vol.43 (Lund University, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude*, 72.



generally had either an apotropaic or a curative function, judging from the text of Jude. On the other hand, a malevolent role of a Christian amulet seems paradoxical since it would contradict Christian doctrine in general and Jesus' command to love one's enemies.<sup>14</sup>

This is like a magical force with apotropaic and curative functions. Wasserman provides examples of the text that apply amulet to understand his idea. For instance, he notes that in verse 11, "there is an assertive utterance of "Woe" against the evil enemies, followed by their eternal damnation in verse 13, which signals a "forceful climatic conclusion of such an amulet."<sup>15</sup> However, a question was asked: would someone choose this text for a charm and its particular function? The answer refers to unique divine acts of judgment and salvation, which functioned as *historians* in apotropaic texts. In Jude, verse 6 states that the Lord sent the fallen angels to be kept under darkness for judgment. This and similar notions play an essential role in Jewish and Christian magic. The apotropaic function is "a prophylactic measure because of the perceived threat of the unclean spirits escaping from their prison and returning to torment human beings."<sup>16</sup>

The notion of a text functioning as an amulet with apotropaic and curative aspects is similar to the Samoan belief regarding the *tatauing* (body tattoo). Taking it further, there is an interpretive space to argue that the cultural value of the *atoau* provides a similar effect. Instead of an amulet, the *tatauing* can be interpreted as apotropaic and curative, protecting against the evil threats of infiltrators and false apostles.

Blake A. Jurgens<sup>17</sup> also uses textual criticism to evaluate the relationship between the Epistle of Jude and Qumran Pesharim or the Qumran understanding in

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<sup>14</sup> Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, 64.

<sup>15</sup> Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, 71.

<sup>17</sup> Blake A. Jurgens, "Is It Peshar? Readdressing the Relationship between the Epistle of Jude and the Qumran Pesharim," *JBL* 136 (2017): 491-510.

reconstructing textual form in the text alone. Peshar<sup>18</sup> in Hebrew means interpretation. Jurgens uses peshar as a genre to ascertain which features are necessary and sufficient components of peshar exegesis and then address whether Jude 5–19 possesses these essential characteristics and should be referred to as an example of peshar exegesis. The relational studies that Jurgens introduces are interesting, especially the great value of doing a multi-method approach to reading Jude. Taking it further, I will argue that an *atoau* approach will also illuminate meanings from the text.

John Calvin's<sup>19</sup> commentary also deals with a general exegetical work for the Epistle of Jude. Calvin follows a narrative-critical approach. His argument is more on agents of the antichrist that have constantly assailed the Church. His exhortation is for the Church to beware of such pests. I find the use of narrative criticism useful. I may add, though, that much can be gained by going outside the inner-texture of the text.

Charles Landon<sup>20</sup> provides an eclectic text-critical analysis. It evaluates the extent to which the text of Jude in the Greek New Testament (GNT4) can be described as a mixed text. London proposes to do an eclectic text-critical analysis of Jude, by evaluating individual readings exclusively based on internal criteria and interrogating the text presented in the fourth edition of the GNT4 to determine what extent it is eclectic. He also mentions in his study that three factors reveal that Jude is a suitable text for an eclectic text-critical analysis. Firstly, it has never been subjected to a text-critical complete survey. Secondly, the author is consistent in his writing style; and thirdly, it's materializing on exegesis, style, and rhetoric. Continually in his research, he

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<sup>18</sup> Peshar refers to a distinct type of ancient interpretation of biblical prophecy or to a text that represents that type of interpretation. In Hebrew word whose verbal root, *psh*, means loosen or interpret. This interpretation is exemplified in the sectarian documents found at Qumran.

<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Jude* (1979). [https://media.sabda.org/alkitab-7/LIBRARY/CALVIN/CAL\\_JUDE.PDF](https://media.sabda.org/alkitab-7/LIBRARY/CALVIN/CAL_JUDE.PDF)

<sup>20</sup> Charles Landon, *A Text-Critical Study of The Epistle of Jude* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), 25.

identifies two parties of the eclectic New Testament textual critics. Those groups are the Eclectic generalist and thoroughgoing eclectic groups, with the later as the most relevant part to his study. He devoted little time to explaining the theoretical bases of the approach, so instead, he placed more attention on the practical aspects of this version of eclecticism. Eclectic is referred to as selecting from a range of text-critical methodologies rather than selecting readings from different manuscripts. Hence, Landon's usage of eclectic comes under the umbrella of textual criticism, as Holger Szesnat states,<sup>21</sup> “eclectic is a part of textual criticism.”

Overall, Landon's work is mixed, with weak theoretical underpinnings and a stronger evaluation of individual variants. He lacks theoretical justification for adopting Kilpatrick and Elliott's methodology and lacks theory for dealing with 2 Peter's evidence. Landon also fails to consider patterns of variation in certain witnesses or text types. Despite these weaknesses, he uses excellent secondary sources, particularly Afrikaans, Dutch, and Swedish studies, and brings his knowledge of specific manuscripts, particularly Psi, to evaluate variants. While Landon's arguments for particular readings are helpful, they should be considered critically and consulted by those familiar with textual criticism before accepting his arguments.

William Brosend<sup>22</sup> writes, “Not so long ago it was obligatory to begin one's commentary, article, or monograph on the letter of Jude concerning the lack of commentaries, articles, and monographs on the letter of Jude.” Despite this lack of sources and writing on this most neglected letter (Jude) in the New Testament canon,

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<sup>21</sup> Holger Szesnat, “Textual Criticism: a short introduction for theologians,” Unpublished class note, Pacific Theological College (2010): 1-27.

<sup>22</sup> William Brosend, “The letter of Jude: a rhetoric of excess or an excess of rhetoric?” *Interpretation* 60, no. 3 (2006): 292-305. Downloaded from int.sagepub.com at University of Birmingham on June 13, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430606000305>, 293.

Brosend uses narrative criticism to evaluate whether Jude is a rhetorical excess or an excess of rhetoric. He explores the internal literature of the letter. This is similar to J. Daryl Charles, who says<sup>23</sup> that the “Epistle of Jude is the most neglected book in the New Testament.” Regardless, Charles still interprets the Literary Artifice in the epistle of Jude using literary criticism. One of the categories he highlights is repetition, which “serves many and diverse functions in a literary composition.” He adds that repeated words or lines “are not a result of haphazard or arbitrary construction; rather, they have a rhetorically significant purpose and arrangement.”<sup>24</sup> Also, in Thomas R. Schreiner’s commentary,<sup>25</sup> he echoes that Jude is the most neglected book of the New Testament. Schreiner uses not only historical but also narrative and literary criticism to explore both 1, 2 Peter, and Jude.

The similarities between the content of Jude and 2 Peter is further discussed by Terrance Callan.<sup>26</sup> Looking at the close relationship between Jude and 2 Peter, Callan offers “a detailed description and explanation of this adaptation, and also describes at the level of vocabulary and syntax the way 2 Peter has modified Jude and attempts to understand the significance of these modifications.” His undertaking follows a literary criticism approach to interpret the level of vocabulary and syntax and the significance of these modifications.

Gene L. Green’s<sup>27</sup> study of the Epistle of Jude, titled, “Jude & 2 Peter”, is part of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. In this commentary,

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<sup>23</sup> Daryl J. Charles, "Literary Artifice in the Epistle of Jude," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 82, no.1-2 (1991): 106-124. [https://www.cloudfront.net/d1wqtxts1xzle7/V36N02\\_57-libre.pdf](https://www.cloudfront.net/d1wqtxts1xzle7/V36N02_57-libre.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Charles, “Literary Artifice in the Epistle of Jude,” 107.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Terrance Callan, “Use of the Letter of Jude by the Second Letter of Peter,” Vol 85, *Gregorian Biblical Press* (2004): 42-64.

<sup>27</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude, and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2008).

Green provides an in-depth analysis of the Epistle of Jude, exploring its literary, historical, and theological dimensions. The commentary examines various aspects of Jude, including its authorship, audience, and historical context. Green delves into the key themes and concerns expressed in the letter, such as the dangers of false teaching, the importance of contending for the faith, and the need for believers to build themselves up in the faith. Furthermore, Green also explores the relationship between the Epistle of Jude and the letter of 2 Peter, examining their similarities and differences. He pays special attention to the distinct contributions of Jude within the New Testament canon and highlights its theological significance. Throughout the commentary, Green provides detailed explanations of the Greek text, engages with relevant scholarly discussions, and offers insights into the practical implications of Jude's teachings for the Christian community.

Green's contribution is a valuable resource for scholars, pastors, and students seeking a thorough examination of the Epistle of Jude, its context, and its theological messages.

S J Joubert<sup>28</sup> focuses on the relationship between language, ideology, and social context of the Letter of Jude. Jude encodes and articulates vivid religious control and social consequences, like the author, readers, their beliefs, practices, realm, and values. Joubert also identifies Jude's overall strategy as a 'positive/negative presentation' strategy. The implied readers are presented positively, while the opponents are characterized negatively. He uses a (socio) linguistic approach by introducing a new angle of incidence, a new set of presuppositions, questions, conclusions, and, hopefully, some new answers that will contribute to a better understanding of the letter of Jude.

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<sup>28</sup> Stephan J. Joubert, "Language, ideology and the social context of the letter of Jude," *Neotestamentica* 24, no. 2 (1990): 335-349.

The outcome of his work clearly states that Jude's language is a language of social and religious control. Such a sociolinguistic approach is further clarified by Esther Figueroa,

Sociolinguistic approaches allow us to study the impact of social factors on cognitive processes as this result in the acquisition of a new linguistic system. Sociolinguistics is a well-established branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of the impact of society, including the impact of social context, on the way language is used.<sup>29</sup>

Understanding this approach of studying social factors, social context, and how language is used in the text seems interesting. This may be how ideology comes in because it means different things to different people.

Robert L. Webb<sup>30</sup> uses literary criticism to explore eschatology and its rhetorical and social functions in the Epistle of Jude. The rhetorical function of Jude's eschatology is to convince his readers and engage them in judgment: to pronounce the intruders guilty of ungodliness and reassure them that they will not be judged but are being guarded by God. On the other hand, Jude's eschatology's social function is to create a separation between the original community and the intruders. These two functions address both the external threat of the intruders and the internal danger of their negative impact on the readers' ethics, theology, and unity. Webb, in one of his articles, introduces three stories interwoven in the letter: narrative episodes from the Jewish scriptural tradition, the story of Jesus, and the story of the Christian believer's community by rhetorical criticism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Esther Figueroa, *Sociolinguistic metatheory* (British: Elsevier Science Ltd, 1994) ISBN 0 08 042399 X.

<sup>30</sup> Robert L. Webb, "The Eschatology of the Epistle of Jude and Its Rhetorical and Social Functions," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (1996): 139-151.

<sup>31</sup> Robert L. Webb, "The Use of 'Story' in the Letter of Jude: Rhetorical Strategies of Jude's Narrative Episodes," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31, no. 1 (2008): 53-87.

Adding further clarification on the literary and rhetorical criticisms as Webb used in his study, Guy Cook states in his work, all different aspects that are included in the use of literature.

The literary communicative situation, in the field of literary theory and criticism, the ‘author’ is the matter of concern of literary scholarship and biography; ‘text’ is studied by formalism, linguistics, linguistic criticism, and stylistics; ‘performer’ by acting theory; ‘reader’ by phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception theory, reader-oriented and reader-response theory.<sup>32</sup>

Regardless of Cook’s meanings and explanation of academic areas of study, literary criticism is the study of the literature of the text within formalism, linguistics, which is the language of the text, and stylistics. Therefore, Webb’s issue was discovered within the literature of the text; it studies the language, formalism, and stylistics of the Epistle of Jude. For me, I love the communicative areas of literary criticism. Still, it’s just the internal literature of the text.

Daryl J. Charles,<sup>33</sup> reads the Epistle of Jude as one of omission or misunderstanding text and the most neglected letter in the New Testament canon. Therefore, Charles thinks most of the scholars of this epistle are highly derivative commentaries that need a more thoughtful inquiry. So, to explore the value of this text, he focuses to find out the use of Jewish traditional material in the Epistle of Jude and uses historical criticism for his findings. Charles perceives that Jude shows a familiarity with the Jewish haggadic tradition. So, the hand of the haggadist reveals that the past is united with the needs of the present in a forceful and thoroughly Jewish mode.

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<sup>32</sup> Guy Cook, “Discourse and Literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind,” Oxford University Press (1995):128.

<sup>33</sup> Daryl J. Charles, “The Use of Tradition-Material in the Epistle of Jude,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4, no. 1 (1994): 1-14.

For Alicia J. Batten, Jude's rhetorical structure and style, even the text, is a sophisticated letter. Batten says that Jude engages in "character assassination, invoking effeminacy in the manner that he describes his opponent's behavior, and placing them in a long line of debauched and condemned figures from ages past."<sup>34</sup> He uses rhetorical criticism to evaluate his concern between the traditions and values of Greco-Roman invective within the style and structure of the language of Jude.

Duane F. Watson's<sup>35</sup> study of Jude is quite useful for this study as it provides a full-scale rhetorical analysis for comparative study. It is essential as an analytical method but also for the meaning and purpose of the epistle itself. In his "evaluation of the rhetoric",<sup>36</sup> Watson stresses Jude's adherence to conventional rhetorical principles of invention, arrangement, and style. He denies this false impression, but his interpretation supports such speculation. Therefore, Watson calls one aspect of Jude's rhetoric that might be regarded as being deficient, namely, the absence of "any attempt to counter the arguments posed by the sectarians."<sup>37</sup> However, he explains this lack of proving statement as an indication that Jude's acknowledgment by eschatological concerns, is a sentence that makes the need to identify the sectarians' primary.

Richard Bauckham's research<sup>38</sup> explores the possible familial relationship between the author of Jude and Jesus. While he presents arguments supporting the likelihood of a familial connection, it is important to note that scholarly opinions on this matter are diverse, and Bauckham's findings have been subject to ongoing debate and discussion within academic circles.

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<sup>34</sup> Alicia J. Batten, "The Letter of Jude and Graeco-Roman Invective," *History of Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1-7.

<sup>35</sup> Duane F. Watson, "Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter," SBLDS 104; Atlanta (1988).

<sup>36</sup> Watson, "Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter," 78-79.

<sup>37</sup> Watson, "Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter," 79.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (T&T Clark, 2004), 2.



Peter H David's research provides a detailed analysis of the Epistle of Jude, addressing various interpretive issues and historical contexts.<sup>39</sup> His findings shed light on the theological concerns of the author, emphasizing the need for believers to contend for faith and resist the influence of false teachers. Davids also explores the author's use of Judean and Jewish traditions in crafting his message.

Lastly, Neil Elliott's<sup>40</sup> research emphasizes the intertextual connections between the Epistle of Jude and Jewish literature, such as the Book of Enoch. His findings highlight the influence of these texts on Jude's theology and concerns, offering insights into the author's engagement with Jewish traditions.

## 1.2 Summary

Overall, this chapter helps frame the history of interpretations for a re-reading of Jude. More significantly, it gives a sense of the diverse and eclectic extant approaches to reading Jude, including textual criticism, narrative criticism, sociolinguistic analysis, rhetorical analysis, and more. These approaches offer a literary platform of different lenses through which I can analyze the text, uncover its literary structure, and grasp its theological and ethical messages for my hermeneutical reading site.

Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on scholars who explore connections between Jude and other texts such as 2 Peter, Qumran Pesharim, and Jewish literature like the Book of Enoch. Understanding these comparative studies provides insights into how the author of Jude engaged with and responded to other literary traditions. Moreover, this chapter points out some of the recurring theological themes in Jude, such

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<sup>39</sup> Peter H. David, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Neil Elliott, "Intertextuality and the Epistle of Jude: A Case Study in Methodology," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 4 (2004): 447-470.

as contending for the faith, resisting false teaching, and judgment. These themes are essential for grasping the core messages and concerns of the epistle.

The review also reveals practical implications. Some scholars' interpretations emphasize practical implications of Jude's teachings for the Christian community. Understanding how their messages can be applied to real-life situations contributes to an understanding of how Jude relates to contemporary contexts. Furthermore, discussions of the historical context and societal concerns reflected in Jude's writing shed light on issues the early Christian community faced.

Yet, I find that there is space for contextual biblical re-reading of Jude. Much can be gained from using hermeneutical readings of Jude utilizing indigenous and cultural frameworks. In the next chapter, I will review some of the western approaches in biblical studies. Following, I will then discuss some of the more recent approaches using Samoan cultural and indigenous framework to read the biblical text. Reviewing these approaches will help situate my methodological approach, and interpretive framework of my study.

## Chapter 2

### Approaches to Reading the Bible in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### 2.1 Introduction

This study is a Samoan sociorhetorical reading of the Epistle of Jude, using an *atoau* hermeneutical approach. This approach is based on a sense that there is a need for some integration between my Samoan indigenous frame of reference and western approaches to biblical interpretation. In that case, I blend certain aspects of the art of tattooing, an important cultural aspect of the *fa'a-Samoa* (Samoan way of life), and certain textures of sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI).

This *atoau* approach also underscores my social location as a *tautua* in my *aiga* (family), in my *nu'u* (village), and in my *aulotu* (parish). It is a blended approach that embraces notions of wisdom in using western tools for reading the bible, and wisdom drawn from the experience and philosophies of my indigenous frame of reference.

In the first section, I survey some of the approaches utilized by scholars of the modern era to read biblical texts. I look at their features, functions, and applications. The order is as follows: historical criticism, redaction criticism, social-scientific, narrative criticism, textual criticism, and reader response.

Secondly, I review some of the approaches taken by Samoan scholars to read biblical texts. I look at the approaches taken by scholars like Vaitusi Nofoaiga, Arthur Wulf, Brian Kolia, and Fatilua Fatilua, exploring some of their different features, functions, and applications. A summary of the main points concludes the chapter.

## 2.2 Western Approaches to Reading the Bible

### 2.2.1 Historical Criticism

I begin with historical criticism, which many call higher criticism. According to Paula Gooder, historical criticism “does not constitute a particular method of study, but includes a range of techniques to increase our understanding of the social and cultural world of the New Testament and further our understanding of the New Testament itself”.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that historical criticism covers various other approaches or techniques for studying the text. The underpinning principle overall is to account for the multiple aspects of the world of the text.

David E. Aune supports this.<sup>2</sup> Describing “historical criticism” and “historical-critical method,” Aune states these are “umbrella terms for a group of related methods and approaches employed by mainstream Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish biblical scholars for interpreting the Bible.” These include other criticisms such as source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, social science criticism, etc.

Aune also describes historical criticism as a mirror and a window to evaluate the text’s origin. The focus is on the source and the meaning behind the text. Components, like the grammatical principle which uses knowledge of language to understand the text, and the historical principle focusing on the author and audience’s social context of geography and topography, all underpin a return to the source or original intent behind the text. Perhaps this is why many scholars regard historical criticism as analogous to the scientific method.

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Gooder, *Searching for meanings, An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 2008), 5-15.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Aune, “Historical Criticism,” in *the Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 101-115.

While historical-critical approaches elevate the significance of going back to the source and the meaning behind the text, there is much to gain from shifting focus to other aspects of interpretation, namely the sense “in” the text and “in front” of the text. We can gain much from following a multi-method approach that crosses over the boundary points of interpreting the text.

### ***2.2.2 Redaction criticism***

Before the Second World War, it was widely believed that the gospel writers were editors who compiled the gospel stories' accounts in a mechanical ‘cut and paste’ fashion. After the war, however, several different studies were conducted that vastly altered the common perception of the evangelists and the depth of their contribution. Christopher Tuckett states,<sup>3</sup> “By putting the material together in the way they had, the evangelists had at times modified their traditions, and their adaptations were sometimes very revealing of an underlying theology in the work of the original Gospel writers.” Today the term ‘redaction’ is used to label this process of adapting the ‘traditions’ available to an evangelist. Redaction criticism examines the creative ways biblical evangelists have presented their traditions.

### ***2.2.3 Social-scientific criticism***

According to Naomi Steinberg,<sup>4</sup> “one of the pitfalls of the biblical critic can be a failure to look at the scriptures through the appropriate societal lens. This is due to ‘projection’ - an interpretation grounded in the individual's circumstances. This flawed way of analyzing the biblical texts is called “ethnocentrism,” to avoid its limitations, scholars

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987): 116-134.

<sup>4</sup> Naomi Steinberg, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, eds. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 46-64.

have often based their approaches on the social sciences.” This type of criticism essentially holds to the idea that by first understanding the society in which the book under scrutiny takes place, true and accurate comprehension of the story’s significance can be found.

James D. Dvorak<sup>5</sup> writes that social scientific criticism is an exegetical task that evaluates the text’s social and cultural worldview and environmental context. It uses theory and models of social science research. Social scientific criticism is a component or subcomponent discipline of the historical-critical approach. He also clarifies,<sup>6</sup> “Social-scientific criticism of the Bible has taken shape as a “sub-discipline of exegesis,” two major methodological focal points have become clear. The first focuses on the “social and cultural conditions, features, and contours of early Christianity and its social environment.”

According to this scholar's explanation of social scientific criticism, social science is the approach that evaluates biblical text regarding social and cultural environmental context based on theory, models, and social science research. It’s all about truth.

#### ***2.2.4 Narrative Criticism***

Narrative criticism is a standard methodology used in the criticisms of the Gospels and other Bible books that adopt a story-like format. In his monograph, *Narrative Criticism of the Gospels and Acts*, Mark Powel states that the goal of narrative criticism is “to read the Gospels in the manner intended by their implied author and in the manner expected of their implied reader.”<sup>7</sup> Gooder, citing Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, that narrative criticism “concentrates on the world internal to the text rather than its external

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<sup>5</sup> James D. Dvorak, “John H. Elliott's social-scientific criticism,” *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (2007): 251-278

<sup>6</sup> Dvorak, “John H. Elliott's social-scientific criticism,” 254.

<sup>7</sup> Mark A Powell, *Narrative Criticism of Gospels and Acts*, (Fortress: Baker Academic, 2009), 17-19.

references and relationships.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, narrative criticism evaluates the text based on various literary tools, including form, plot, setting, characterization, and so forth. Therefore, the focal point is between the author and the reader. Gooder also talks about the real and the implied author, the audience, and the implied audience. The historical background expressed in the language of the text is concerned with the implied author and the implied audience. The implied author is the one who would be necessary for a particular narrative to be told or written, and the implied audience is the one who would be required for a specific description to be heard or read. On the other hand, the narrative critic is wary of the “intentional fallacy.”

Moreover, Narrative Criticism is an analysis of a text to understand “what” message the author is conveying and “how” the author delivers this message to his original audience. But how can we approach a text using narrative criticism? The focus questions for narrative criticism are:

Plot and Structure: What is the overall structure of the narrative? (e.g., linear, circular, fragmented) How are events arranged and connected? Are there any significant turning points or climactic moments in the plot? Characters: Who are the main characters in the narrative? How are they developed and portrayed? What are their motivations, conflicts, and relationships? How do the characters contribute to the overall meaning of the narrative? Point of View and Perspective: Who is the narrator, and what is their relationship to the story? Is the narrative presented from a particular character's perspective or an omniscient viewpoint? How does the choice of narration affect the reader's understanding of the events and characters? Setting and Atmosphere: Where and when does the narrative take place? How does the setting contribute to the overall mood or atmosphere of the story? Are there any symbolic or metaphorical

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<sup>8</sup> Gooder, *Searching for Meaning*, 81.

aspects associated with the setting? Themes and Messages: What central themes or messages are conveyed through the narrative? How are these themes developed and explored throughout the story? Are there any underlying moral, social, or cultural implications? Literary Devices and Techniques: What literary devices (e.g., symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony) are used in the narrative? How do these devices enhance the storytelling or contribute to the meaning?”<sup>9</sup>

These questions provide a starting point for analysing a narrative using a narrative criticism approach. However, the specific questions and focus may vary depending on the particular texts and the goals of the analysis.

Jan P. Fokkelman<sup>10</sup> postulates narrative criticism as a reader’s attitude “Consider that as our traps in negative terms of reading texts.” Our desire to know, after reading, and then end up into finished the interpretation in front of us. “Firstly, we satisfy the picture that we capture after reading, but we forget to check our situation to see if it’s possible for us. Secondly, we allowed our energy and attention to accept the historical context of the author's writing the story. And lastly, an insidious form of delusion is the spectacles we wear.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this is more like reader response approach.

Alfred Agyenta<sup>12</sup> carried out a narrative critical reading of the tension between Esau and Jacob. The narrative approach clearly shows that the two brothers were reconciled without doubt of their past enemies. Reading it straight from the eyes of the

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<sup>9</sup> See Mieke Bal, *Narratology, Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (University of Toronto Press, 2009). Also, Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Hill and Wang, 1970); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1961); Seymour Chatman, *Story, and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Cornell University Press, 1978); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Cornell University Press, 1980); David Herman, *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Routledge, 2012); Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading biblical narrative: An introductory guide*, Vol. 1 (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999), 207.

<sup>11</sup> Fokkelman, *Reading biblical narrative: An introductory guide*, 207.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Agyenta, "When Reconciliation Means More than the "Re-Membering" of Former Enemies: The Problem of the Conclusion to the Jacob-Esau Story from a Narrative Perspective (Gen 33, 1-17)," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 83, no. 1 (2007), 123-134.



character's movements and actions in the story gives a better image of reconciliation between these two. From my perspective, though, this is just the meaning of the internal literature of the text, but what if we explore the external evidence of the text? Does it change the meaning of the text?

Lastly, narrative values the internal literature of the story or the internal features of the story. It is a window to look through and understand more about the story's background or history. The story is more like a picture. This approach highlights the story's meaning rather than the author's contribution to the final set of the story. It is grounded firmly in the purpose and tells how the story communicates its meaning. In a sense, I am reminded of the Samoan phrase, *e le'o le fale a'o le anofale* (it is not about the house but the essence of the house). Narrative criticism, in a sense, focuses more on the "internal" or *anofale* of the structural alignment of the story.

### **2.2.5 Textual criticism**

Regarding textual criticism, it is generally agreed amongst scholars that two different fundamental processes are involved in textual criticism. One focuses on "external evidence," and the other focuses on "internal evidence." Holger Szesnat,<sup>13</sup> in his unpublished class notes, describes the difference between external evidence and internal evidence from the perspective of textual criticism:

How old are they? Where do they come from? Can we determine whether they were copied from other manuscripts we already know? Can we establish patterns among them (textual families) which demonstrate, for example, regional or geographical relationships?" Internal evidence, however, apprehend the "probability and likelihood that particular readings are 'the original' form of a particular verse. The most straightforward cases

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<sup>13</sup> Szesnat, "Textual Criticism," 5.

concern transcriptional probability: what kinds of mistakes were scribes likely to make?<sup>14</sup>

### ***2.2.6 Reader Response***

Reader-response refers to an approach that focuses on how readers interpret and engage with the Bible. It recognizes that readers play an active role in understanding the text and that meaning is not just found in the words on the page. The footnote below shows some of the scholars and their thoughts about reader response.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the Reader-response theory says that each person brings their background, beliefs, and experiences when they read the Bible. These things shape how they understand and connect with the text. This means that different people may have different interpretations of the same Bible passage, and that's okay.

In biblical studies, scholars who use reader response theory look at how readers, both in the past and present, have responded to the Bible. They study how readers emotionally and intellectually connect with the text and how their own experiences affect their understanding. They also consider that everyone has their perspective, and that influences how they interpret the Bible. It is important to remember that reader response does not ignore the original meaning of the Bible or the historical context it

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<sup>14</sup> Szesnat, "Textual criticism," 22.

<sup>15</sup> For examples, Louise Rosenblatt is considered one of the pioneers of reader response theory. Her influential work, "Literature as Exploration" (1938), emphasizes the importance of the reader's active engagement with a text. She argues that meaning is not fixed within the text itself but emerges from the interaction between the reader and the text. Also, Wolfgang Iser, a German literary scholar, contributes significantly to reader response theory. In his book, "The Implied Reader" (1972), he proposes the concept of the "implied reader," suggesting that texts contain gaps and ambiguities that readers actively fill through their interpretation. He emphasizes the role of the reader's expectations, horizons of understanding, and the negotiation of meaning; Stanley Fish is known for his influential work, "Is There a Text in This Class?" (1980). He argues that meaning is not solely determined by the author or the reader but is shaped by interpretive communities or shared social contexts. Fish emphasizes the importance of communal norms and conventions in shaping readers' interpretations of a text; Umberto Eco, an Italian semiotician and novelist, explores reader response in his work, "The Role of the Reader" (1979). He emphasizes the idea that the reader actively constructs meaning by combining their own experiences, knowledge, and cultural background with the text. Eco proposes that the reader's interpretation is subjective but also influenced by social and cultural factors.

was written in. Instead, it adds another layer of understanding by recognizing that readers bring their own thoughts and feelings to the text.

Overall, reader response in biblical studies shows that readers play an active role in interpreting the Bible. It acknowledges that different people may interpret the same passage differently, and it encourages scholars to be aware of their perspectives. This approach helps us see how the Bible continues to speak to people in different ways over time.

These different methodologies are unique in their own approaches and contents. But they can also be viewed as complementary in the sense that they have common grounds that can produce complement and holistic interpretations of any biblical texts. With this line of argument, local interpretive methodologies can both interrogate and also complement such traditional western approaches to arrive at more related and relevant interpretations, as the following Samoan hermeneutical readings demonstrate.

### 2.3 Approaches by Samoan Scholars

To help situate my study, I engage recent approaches taken by Samoan scholars. In this regard, I find Vaitusi Nofoaiga's work helpful.<sup>16</sup> Amongst many established and emerging Samoan scholars, such as, Mosese Mailo,<sup>17</sup> Peni Leota,<sup>18</sup> and Martin Mariota<sup>19</sup> are contributing to this important field in biblical scholarship. The scope of this study limits the focus of this engagement on Nofoaiga, Arthur Wulf, Brian Kolia, and Fatilua Fatilua. The aim is to situate my *atoau* approach within the paradigm of Samoan hermeneutical readings of the biblical text.

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<sup>16</sup> Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Mathew* (SBL Press, 2017), 41-42.

<sup>17</sup> Mosese Mailo, *Bible-ing My Samoan* (Piula Theological College, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Peniamina Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic," (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Martin Mariota, "Moses, Both Hebrew and Egyptian" in *Sea of Readings*, ed. Jione Havea (Society of Biblical Literature, 2018), 103-16.

### 2.3.1 A *Tautuaileva* perspective

Vaitusi Nofoaiga<sup>20</sup> creatively uses the Samoan concept of *tautuaileva* (service in-between spaces) to explore discipleship in Mathew 4:12-25. To help him in his task, Nofoaiga employs elements of sociorhetorical criticism including innertexture, intertexture, social and cultural texture.

To elaborate, a *tautuaileva* hermeneutical approach provides a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the concept of discipleship in Matthew 4:12-25 from a Samoan perspective. The analysis explores the localization of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and highlights the emphasis on serving the needs and rights of the local people. The use of the hermeneutic *tautuaileva* as a lens to understand Jesus' role as a servant and bridge different identities and cultures is a compelling approach. Nofoaiga delves into the idea of hybridity where Jesus embodies diverse identities as the Son of God and the Messiah while engaging with the local community's specific needs. The interpretation of discipleship beyond traditional notions of master-disciple relationships, focusing on serving and considering the context of the local people, adds depth and relevance to the analysis. The examination of *tautuaileva* as an in-between space where individuals negotiate different understandings and values within their social and cultural hierarchies further enriches the understanding of discipleship in this context.

The comprehensive hermeneutic analyses of inner texture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture provide a structured approach to understanding the localization of discipleship in the passage. The author's engagement with Samoan culture and the use of relevant Samoan terminologies and values contribute to the authenticity and applicability of the analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading*, 39.

Overall, Nofoaiga offers a thoughtful and insightful examination of *tautuaileva* as a lens for understanding discipleship in Matthew 4:12-25. It highlights the importance of localized ministry, serving the needs of the local community, and navigating different identities and values in discipleship. The analysis bridges the gap between ancient biblical contexts and contemporary cultural perspectives, making it a relevant and valuable contribution to the study of discipleship and faith.

### ***2.3.2 An Autalaga approach***

Arthur Wulf incorporates a Samoan task in everyday life, *autalaga*, as a method to read Genesis. *Autalaga* is a word derived from the Samoan verb *autala*. In a recent article,<sup>21</sup> Wulf clearly and meticulously clarifies the term, meaning, and function in daily activities. It subsequently leads to its use as an interpretive method to read the biblical text. *Autalaga* requires the interpreter to carry out two related steps. First, *tala* requires the interpreter to peel the text into layers. Second, *au* sorts those layers into groups. These acts function together to help unveil meaning and to clarify the point of the interpreter's concern.

Wulf's use of *autalaga* offers a valuable and culturally resonant method for analysing the book of Genesis. By grounding the interpretive approach in a familiar and relatable concept from Samoan daily life, Wulf facilitates a deeper understanding of the biblical text and its relevance in diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, the notion of *autalaga* derives from the Samoan verb *autala*, and Wulf's meticulous clarification of its meaning and function provides a solid foundation for its application as an interpretive tool. In Samoan culture, *autalaga* refers to the act of properly sorting and arranging items in various contexts, such as organizing household goods or arranging

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<sup>21</sup> Arthur J. Wulf, "Anthropogenic Climate Change Un-creates God's Creation in Genesis 1," *Samoa Journal of Theology* (Malua Theological College, 2022), 1-9.

seating during traditional gatherings. This process of purposeful organization aligns well with the task of interpreting literary texts, where untangling complex narratives requires systematic approaches to uncover meaning.

The two essential steps of *autalaga* - *tala* and *au* - serve as critical stages in the interpretive process. The first step, *tala*, invites the interpreter to delve into the layers of the text, much like peeling back the intricate layers of an onion. By analysing the text deeply, the interpreter can discover hidden nuances, underlying themes, and subtle connections that may have otherwise remained obscured. The second step, "au," involves grouping the peeled layers into coherent categories. This classification helps the interpreter make sense of the various elements within the text and establish meaningful connections between them. In essence, *au* creates a framework that organizes the textual components, enabling the interpreter to identify patterns, contrasts, and recurring motifs within the biblical narrative.

The application of *autalaga* as an interpretive method to analyse Genesis offers a fresh and culturally sensitive perspective. By utilizing this Samoan concept, readers gain insight into the richness of Samoan cultural heritage and how it enhances biblical understanding. The integration of *autalaga* into biblical scholarship illustrates the universal applicability of interpretive tools, regardless of cultural background. Moreover, embracing diverse interpretive approaches fosters inclusivity and opens doors for cross-cultural dialogues in theological discussions. The use of *autalaga* serves as a bridge between the ancient biblical narrative and contemporary contexts, empowering readers from different cultural backgrounds to engage with the text in meaningful and relevant ways.

Overall, Wulf's introduction of *autalaga* as a method for interpreting Genesis showcases the value of incorporating cultural perspectives in biblical scholarship. By

employing the steps of *tala* and *au*, *autalaga* facilitates a deeper understanding of the biblical text, shedding light on its intricate layers and allowing for a more nuanced interpretation. This approach enriches the field of hermeneutics and encourages an appreciation for the diverse cultural lenses through which the Bible can be understood.

### 2.3.3 A *Tulou* perspective

Brian Fiu Kolia, in analyzing the sensitive language in Song of Songs, uses the *tulou* hermeneutic.<sup>22</sup> To enable him to carry out this task, Kolia follows a reader response criticism to formulate his hermeneutical lens of *tulou*. The *tulou* hermeneutic offers a fresh and nuanced approach to biblical interpretation by embracing the complexity of human experience and cultural context. It challenges the tendency to shy away from difficult or controversial passages, instead encouraging readers to engage openly with the text while remaining respectful of its content.

One of the significant contributions of the *tulou* hermeneutic is its recognition of the reader's horizon, *tu*, and its acknowledgment of diverse cultural backgrounds. Each reader brings a unique perspective shaped by their personal experiences, traditions, and values. By valuing the reader's horizon, the *tulou* hermeneutic promotes inclusivity and empowers readers to actively participate in the interpretive process. This contrasts with traditional approaches that may impose predetermined interpretations based on the dominant cultural or theological paradigm.

The Song of Songs serves as an apt test case for applying the *tulou* hermeneutic. This ancient biblical book, known for its explicit language and erotic imagery, has been the subject of various interpretations throughout history. By embracing the *tulou* hermeneutic, readers can navigate the sexual themes of the Song without disregarding

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Fiu Kolia, "Lifting the Tapu on Sex: A *Tulou* Reading of the Song of Songs, in *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the South Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea (SBL Press, 2018), 87-101.

or spiritualizing them. Instead, they can engage with the text openly and meaningfully, seeking to understand its deeper messages within the context of human relationships and desires.

Through the lens of the *tulou* hermeneutic, the Song of Songs can be approached as a celebration of human love and intimacy. It provides a platform for readers to explore and appreciate the complexities of romantic relationships, desires, and the boundaries of cultural traditions. By recognizing and respecting the *tapu* (sacredness) of the text, the reader can explore the nuanced interplay between the sacred and the human aspects of the Song.

Moreover, the *tulou* hermeneutic encourages readers to critically examine their own cultural assumptions and negotiate their identities. It allows readers from diverse backgrounds to bring their unique cultural contexts into the interpretive process. In doing so, readers can find new and relevant meanings within the text that are informed by their contemporary realities.

Overall, Kolia's *tulou* hermeneutical lens presents a compelling framework for interpreting challenging texts in a way that upholds the integrity of the text while respecting the reader's horizon. By applying this approach to the Song of Songs, readers can appreciate the richness of its content, celebrate its portrayal of human love and desire, and engage with its sacred and human elements. This hermeneutical method invites readers to participate actively in the interpretive journey, fostering a more inclusive and respectful engagement with biblical texts.



### 2.3.4 A *Fāiā* perspective

Fatilua Fatilua integrates a Samoan perspective with sociorhetorical criticism to read Romans 13:1–7.<sup>23</sup> His *fāiā* analysis also explores the Samoan cultural designation of the Church as *feagaiga*, which for centuries has governed Christian political thought and response in Samoan society. From this indigenously-derived approach, Fatilua argues that “the text of Romans 13:1–7 offers space for the Church to be adaptive and reflective in its relationship with the State. This is developed upon a *fāiā* (connections) reading.” Fatilua uses sociorhetorical criticism to evaluate his concern towards biblical text as he uses Paul’s letter to the Romans with his hermeneutical lens *fāiā*.

In the discussion of Fatilua’s thesis, the focus remains on the exploration of Romans 13:1-7 and its implications for Church-State relations in Samoa. The analysis revealed that the traditional understanding of the Church's role, as symbolized by the *feagaiga* (covenant) designation, might have contributed to the marginalization of the Church. By confining the Church to a fixed and submissive role, the State gains the upper hand in defining the Church's function within society. This raises concerns about religious freedom and non-discrimination, as the State now determines what constitutes a legitimate religion, thereby marginalizing non-Christian religions.

However, the *fāiā-i-upu-ma-fatua'iupu* reading of Romans 13:1-7 presents an alternative perspective, emphasizing a *feagaiga* or face-to-face orientation between the Church and the State. This orientation allows for a more fluid and adaptable role for the Church in response to governing authorities. Instead of blindly submitting or being entirely subversive, the ambiguous nature of the passage opens up space for the Church to engage in critical dialogue and discernment with the State.

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<sup>23</sup> Fatilua Fatilua, “*Fāiā* analysis of Romans 13:1-7: Integrating a Samoan perspective with sociorhetorical criticism,” (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2018).

The Samoan context further underscores the importance of recognizing the living and adaptive nature of the Samoan culture. It challenges the view that Samoan culture is static or defined, advocating instead for a more open and dynamic understanding. Integrating this Samoan worldview with sociorhetorical criticism helps in revisiting the traditional *feagaiga* concept, providing a fresh perspective on the Church-State relationship. While the observations offered in this study are specific to the Samoan context, they contribute to the broader discussion on Christian political thought and responses. It is important to recognize that the interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 is not absolute but influenced by the reader's context and cultural background. This highlights the need for continuous dialogue and engagement with diverse perspectives in interpreting biblical texts.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are limitations. The focus solely on Romans 13:1-7 restricts the scope of the research. Future studies could integrate other Pauline writings and the Gospels to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Christian political thought and responses to government. Additionally, recognizing the risks of ambiguity, further research may explore the challenges and opportunities presented by the living and adaptive nature of biblical texts in addressing contemporary social, cultural, and political changes over time.

Overall, Fatilua's thesis demonstrates the significance of adopting a contextual approach to biblical interpretation, particularly in the context of Church-State relations in Samoa. The *fāiā-i-upu-ma-fatua'iupu* reading, grounded in the Samoan worldview, offers an alternative perspective that challenges the traditional understanding of the Church's role in society. It encourages a more dynamic and reflective response, fostering critical engagement and dialogue in the face of ambiguous biblical texts. This study paves the way for continued discussions on the intersection of faith, culture, and

politics, inviting scholars and practitioners to explore the ever-evolving complexities of biblical interpretation and its application in various contexts

## 2.4 Summary

The brief survey of some of the western and Samoan hermeneutic interpretive approaches provides an overview to help situate my attempt to re-read Jude using the *atoau* approach. Such scholarly works help frame the context and placement for my study.

Overall, the current trend to employ cultural and contextual elements and features particular to the interpreter as hermeneutical apparatus for reading helps to make sense of the biblical text within the reader's world. Despite this growing trend of interesting, creative, and eclectic sundry approaches, there is some space for further explorations. I propose a study using the framework of sociorhetorical criticism, onto which a Samoan ritual and artwork of tattooing, *atoau* is incorporated as a hermeneutical lens to make sense of the biblical text in my context. Tattooing is not only an art design but is deeply rooted within the Samoan conscience. Hence, it has become integral to the Samoan indigenous frame of reference.

I recognize that this is one particular context and that my context is different and cannot be extrapolated to other contexts. However, my particularities can be helpful to other individuals with similar predispositions in their attempts to make sense of the biblical text in their world.

In the next chapter, I describe the art of tattooing and the concept of *atoau* in the Samoan culture. The resulting *atoau* approach is drawn from Samoan cultural wisdom and experience. Integrated with elements of SRI, the *atoau* approach can be seen also as a methodological approach and interpretive framework for reading the biblical text.

## Chapter 3

### The Samoan *Atoau* Approach and Interpretive Framework

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach and interpretive framework for this study. The idea of a methodological approach and interpretive framework is inspired by Vaitusi Nofoaiga,<sup>1</sup> who uses elements of sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) blended with his indigenous formative concept of *tautuaileva* to explore discipleship in Matthew. Similarly, this study's methodological approach and interpretive framework are borne of my indigenous Samoan frame of reference. In particular, I draw both from the Samoan ritual and art of tattooing.

The chapter begins with a discussion of certain aspects of sociorhetorical interpretation, which are subsequently blended with key elements of the art of tattooing. The focus is on the tattooing tools (*atoau*) and their functions in “clothing” the bodily canvass. This is followed by an integrated description of relevant elements of SRI and the art of tattooing giving rise to an *atoau* approach. The chapter concludes with a summary.

##### 3.1.1 Sociorhetorical criticism

Vernon K. Robbins developed sociorhetorical criticism to establish a dialogue between the world of the text, the world behind the text, and the world in front of the text. Setting up a systematic approach to reading the text, Robbins establishes five textures:

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<sup>1</sup> Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Mathew* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

innertexture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.<sup>2</sup>

R. Allan Culpepper adds that innertexture “looks at the texture of the text, repetitive progressive texture, open-middle-closing texture, narration texture, argumentative texture, and sensory-aesthetic texture.”<sup>3</sup> David B. Gowler also describes various forms of intertexture, such as “oral-scribal intertexture, cultural intertexture, social intertexture, and historical intertexture”, which point to a notion that “every comparison has boundaries.”<sup>4</sup> Oral scribal is a recitation, re-contextualization, and reconfiguration of other text. Cultural refers to reference echo (evokes cultural traditions). Social value looks at the practices and conventions of people in social situations. Historical is the historical background.

Furthermore, Gowler perceives oral-scribal intertexture as a new text created from the metaphors, images, and symbolic world of an earlier text through references and echoes of earlier scripture. Recitation presents a speech, narrative, or both in either oral or written form. in word a text in exact words or indifferent with a phrase similar to it is written. Re-contextualization presents words from biblical text without mentioning that the terms are reported elsewhere. Reconfiguration reconstructs earlier traditions. Cultural intertexture is a way new text is created from references or echoes of culture. Reference refers to the occurrence of words, phrases, or clauses that describe a personage or tradition known by people in a culture, and echo is when a word or phrase evokes or potentially evokes a cultural practice. Social intertexture is a way new text is created from the concepts of social interaction at the time. Ideas to consider include

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<sup>2</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the texture of texts: A guide to socio-rhetorical interpretations* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> R Allan Culpepper, "Mapping the textures of New Testament criticism: A response to socio-rhetorical criticism," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20, no. 70 (1998): 71-77.

<sup>4</sup> David B Gowler, "Socio-rhetorical interpretation: Textures of a text and its reception," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 2 (2010): 191-206.

honor and shame, client-patron, and so forth. Historical intertexture is an experience at a particular time and place in history.

For the social and cultural texture, every meaning has a context as it uses anthropological and sociological theory to explore the social and cultural nature of the voices in the text under investigation. It is based on 1<sup>st</sup>-century social and cultural concepts in the Roman Empire, such as, letter writing, paterfamilias, teachers of top families, kingship, shame and honor, Roman military orders, Greek athletic competitions, sickness/healing, table fellowship, city versus countryside, temple vs. household and hospitality. There are categories of Culture, including dominant culture which is perceived as the primary culture that explores the system attitudes, values, and disposition and is regularly supported by social structures vested with the power to impose goals on people in broad geographical regions. Sub-culture is part of a primary culture, whereas counterculture stands against the central civilization.

In ideological texture, every theology has politics. So, ideology harbors our thoughts and belief systems in connection with our society's power structure and power relations. According to Robbins,<sup>5</sup> “those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving, and believing, have some kinds of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power.” Ideology impacts words and actions. Ideologists also exist in the text due to history, authoritative traditions of interpretation, intellectual discourse, and individuals and groups interactions. Therefore, in the sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI), we can apply ideologies in practical performance and ideologies in individuals and groups relationships. In so doing, Robbins suggests using Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza’s idea of “investigating the ideology of the text, including power dynamics and social

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<sup>5</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, “The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology,” Taylor and Francis. Kindle location 801-803. Or Vernon K. Robbins, *The tapestry of early Christian discourse: Rhetoric, society, and ideology* (Psychology Press, 1996).

system.”<sup>6</sup> It thus, defines the system of differentiations that allows dominant people to act upon the actions of people in a subordinate position. It also articulates the types of objectives held by those who work upon the actions of others and identifies the means for bringing these relationships into being.

Such textual variants and their interpretive impacts may help in formulating this *atoau* hermeneutic, where different tools within this *atoau* can produce different results, which can all contribute to the holistic expression of the Samoan *tatau*. As an analogous hermeneutical approach, an *atoau* reading of the Epistle of Jude may illuminate a relevant interpretation that truly resonate with our contemporary Samoan context.

### 3.2 The Art of Samoan Tattooing

Historically, the Samoan art of tattooing or *tatau*-ing is said to have been brought to the Samoa islands by two women from Fiji, whose arrival culminated with the attainment of tattooing tools and knowledge. Traditions relay they sang a song that initially stated only women should be tattooed or “clothed” with the *tatau*. But as they were approaching land, there was a mixed-up in the words which instead resulted in the current practice that only men should be tattooed. In the beginning, perhaps due to the painful agony involved, people did not show much interest in the art of tattooing and the skills needed. It was a challenge to convince anyone of its importance and relevance. However, eventually, a Samoan chief decided to take a risk and offered himself to be tattooed. This brave decision opened the door for the art of *tatau* to become a cherished tradition of bravery and manhood within families and spread throughout the Samoan culture.

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *Democratizing biblical studies: Toward an emancipatory educational space* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 52.

Lafaele Suluape concurs that “the origin of the *tatau* in Samoa is told in a myth about twin sisters, Tilafaiga and Taema, who swam from Fiji (as in Fitiuta, Manu'a) to Samoa with a basket of tattooing tools.<sup>7</sup> But as they swam near the village of Falealupo on the island of Savai'i, they saw a clam and decided to dive for it. When they emerged, their song had changed with the new lyrics saying that only men could get the tattoo.”

Albert Wendt discusses the art of tattooing in the context of clothing the human bodily canvass.

In many Pacific cultures, body decorations and adornment is considered clothing. We have to be candid about those terms though because much of what has been considered “decoration” or “adornment” by outsiders has to do with identity (individual–aiga–group), status, age, religious beliefs, relationships to other art forms and the community and not to do with prettying yourself.<sup>8</sup>

In a similar way, an *atoau* approach looks at ways to “clothe” the text, giving it meaning (alternative), though from my social location as a *tautua* (servant). The tools and functions of the art of tattooing are applied analogously in ways to read and make sense of the text. In this case, an *atoau* approach can be seen as methodologically inclined. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

Meanwhile the notion of clothing the body can also be applied as an interpretive framework. For example, could it be that Jude is “clothing” the community of Jesus’s followers in the first century, thus, providing them a sense of identity and hence warning against those infiltrating the community and preaching false teaching about the faith. In this manner, this *atoau* approach can be seen as an interpretive framework for re-reading the biblical text. This will also be discussed later in the chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Personal interview with Lafaele Suluape, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Wendt, “Tatauing”, 400.



### 3.3 What is *atoau*?

The *atoau* (also called *tunuma* or *tuluma*) is a cylindrical wooden container covered by a piece of *siapo* (*tapa* cloth). It is within this *tuluma* that the tools of the tattooist are “housed”, as seen in Figure 1 below. This is best captured in the Samoan proverbial saying, “*o le tuluma e momoe faatasi ae le fepiitai*” (the *tuluma* (*atoau*) implies sleeping together but not wrestling with each other). This proverbial saying literally reflects the traditional understanding of tools sleeping together. Therefore, it refers to tools that are “housed” together with their own distinct purposes. The tools are unique but are interconnected in their overall objective with overlapping authority over one another. A Samoan word for this overlapping is, *aiā’a’i*. According to Ma’ia’i’s Samoan Dictionary, *aiā* can mean authority over another, individual right, or ability to interfere with,<sup>9</sup> whereas *’a’i*, according to Pratt, can be a prefix or suffix to verbs usually denoting reciprocal action.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 6: *Ato-au with tools*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Papalii Semisi Ma’ia’i, *Tusiupu Samoa: the Samoan Dictionary of Papalii Dr Semisi Maia* (Auckland, NZ: Little Island Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>10</sup> George Pratt, *Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary Samoan – English, English – Samoan* (Trubner & Company, 1878).

<sup>11</sup> This picture is downloaded from, <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/tatau-a-history-of-samoan-tattooing>.

The *atoau* then is a toolbox that houses all the required tools for the art of tattooing. As an *atoau* interpretive approach, it underscores a collective effort and signals interconnectedness among distinct and varying functions for a collective outcome.

### 3.4 Tools and functions

The different tools required in the art of tattooing include the *autā* (*sausau*), *au*, *lama*, *solo*, and *lagotaafi*, as laid out in Figure 2 below. I will expand on each tool and its functions in the following subsections.



Figure 7: Set of tools<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.4.1 *Autā – pressing the lama (ink) into flesh*

The *autā* (hafted bone needles) is made from *olosina*. The primary purpose of *auta* is to tap or strike the *au* transmitting the *lama* (ink) into the body. This repetitive tapping produces a distinctive tone and sound. The rhythm and depth of tapping or striking have much to do with the design and shape of the “clothing” of the body.

<sup>12</sup> This picture was downloaded from, <https://www.girlmuseum.org/tattoo-comb/>

### 3.4.2 *Au – tattooing tools, or tattooing points.*

According to both Wilson Su’a Fitiao and Lafaele Suluape,<sup>13</sup> the *au* is crafted with three components: a wooden handle made of turtle shells, a plate, and bone points. The serrated part of the *au* is made from the lower tusks of wild pigs. After polishing, this can be cut into sharp points that are fine enough to stab the dermis without making too large a wound while being sufficiently strong to resist the repeated taps of the *sausau* (*autā*) transmitted through the plate.

In making the sharp points of the *au*, the lower tusks of the wild pigs are boiled or heated to a low temperature in the fire so that the ivory becomes fragile enough to enable shaping the tusk into an *au*. According to Wilson,<sup>14</sup> this process poses health problems for Samoan tattooists who occasionally apply their trade abroad where sanitary standards require that all equipment be sterilized, an operation impossible to do on ivory without altering its properties of resistance to shock and dermis penetration. This means that the tattooist ought to give great attention to the process of producing the tools as this may have tremendous repercussions on the quality and beauty of the “clothing”, beside the health concerns.

Even though there are other names given to the different *au* used in the art of tattooing, this study will focus on the followings, the *au-mono*, the *au-sogiaso*, and the *au-tapulu*, as further explained in the following subsections.

### 3.4.3 *Au-mono – Filling the gaps*

The *au-mono*, as shown in Figure 3 below, is used to fill the gaps or crevices in the canvas of the body. It is also used to provide fine details in the design of the tattoo as well as joining intersecting lines and filling in the painting areas that need to be

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<sup>13</sup> Personal interview with both *tufuga* (tattooists) who explained the same construction process for the *au*, or the tattooing tools in a traditional Samoan way, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2022.

covered. Furthermore, Lafaele explains that “the *au-mono* has been used traditionally to remove birthmarks or skin conditions in newborn babies.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is believed that there is a certain *mana* to the *au-mono*, having a therapeutic and healing function.



Figure 8: Picture of *au-mono*<sup>16</sup>

#### 3.4.4 *Au-sogiaso* – Drawing straight lines and curves

The *au-sogiaso* (see Figure 4) is used to mark lines in the structural design.<sup>17</sup> It is usually the first and the last tool to use because the art of tattooing is mostly about curves and straight lines, intersecting points, and gaps to create different patterns. Each line pattern has a name. For example, the *aso moelua* (two-sleeping lines) are simply two parallel lines creating gaps between separate parts of the *tatau* and preventing patterns of the *pe'a* from joining. Not only that, the *au-sogiaso* is also a multi-function tool, not only to draw the starting and ending points, but also to help with detailing, the painting and furnishing pattern formats.

<sup>15</sup> While conducting this interview with Su'a Suluape Lafaele, he shared this important application for the *au-mono*.

<sup>16</sup> This picture is downloaded from, <https://www.girlmuseum.org/tattoo-comb/>

<sup>17</sup> These '*aso*' or lines include *aso laititi*, *aso faaifo*, *aso faalava*, *aso moelua*, and *aso taliitu*, which connect the whole the *tatau* in its structures and outlines. They also contribute meaningfully to the storyline of the tattoo. *Aso laititi*- small lines on the sides symbolise respect and are given first preference. *Aso tali itu* are propping lines that symbolise relationships and accomplishment (supporting line). *Aso faaifo* are the curved lines which signify rank and commitment. *Aso moelua* represents honours and respect in relationships in the family.

Tapping the *au-sogiaso* requires a specific rhythmic tempo that gives the artwork its beauty. The irregular tapping percussion makes it go deep, creating an excellent texture of the *lama* (ink) on the skin.



Figure 9: *Au-sogi'aso*<sup>18</sup>

### 3.4.5 *Au-tapulu* – Context and Situational Coloring

The *au-tapulu* (Figure 5) is used to create solid and wide frames. It is the widest of all the three tools. It also has other functions. It connects missing lines from the *au-sogiaso* and useful to a vast area of the design. The tapping tone is loud because the percussion and the beat are slower and more complex. It is identified by a regular and forceful tapping for the beauty of the *lama* (ink) to stand out. Sometimes a tattooist would convince the patient to believe this is the tool of rest. It is often believed that this tool inflicts less pain compared to the *au-mono* and *au-sogiaso*.



Figure 10: *Au-tapulu*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> This picture is downloaded from, <https://www.girlmuseum.org/tattoo-comb/>

<sup>19</sup> This picture is downloaded from, <https://www.girlmuseum.org/tattoo-comb/>

While the three different *au* have distinct functions, their markings often intersect in the act of “clothing” the body and giving the tattoo its form, shape and identity. According to Su’a Faalili Suluape, this harmonious outcome is achieved from a painful process of varying degree because different *au* have certain tempo and depth of tapping, which produce different amount of pain.<sup>20</sup> For example, tapping the *au mono* requires a fast and light percussion beat while the *au tapulu* requires a slower and more forceful rhythm. Due to the width of the *au tapulu*, a heavier strike (*sausau*) is needed. The sound produced on contact between *au* and the strike indicates the tool’s efficacy. A dull, non-vibrating sound reveals a better design and well-assembled parts. It is also considered a bad omen if the *au* breaks during the tattooing. It is often interpreted as a sign of an inappropriate behavior on the part of the patient or their family. The *au* has the power to deliver a positive visual message that can also make a scar on the patient’s body. The tattooist, in this case, is always sensitive to the cultural and spiritual values of the tools they command.

#### 3.4.6 *Lama (pigment, ink)*

Another essential element in *tatauing* is the pigment, *lama* (ink), with its many taboos that may cause bad omens if not adhered to. The *lama* is often produced by burning nuts from the *lama* tree. The two kinds of *lama* have hybridized names—*lama kaleseni* (burning benzene *lama*) and *lama papalagi* (Indian ink). According to Wilson, *lama Samoa* is seldom used today but has properties that deserve our attention. In the beginning of the century, it was the responsibility of the patient’s family to produce the *lama*, and it is the *tufuga* who usually makes this pigment correctly and manages its

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<sup>20</sup> Personal interview.

different stages of production.<sup>21</sup> Lafaele also shares the danger of breaking any of the rituals and taboos of the *lama Samoa* explaining that while the nuts can be collected by children, burning the seed is dangerous as it may likely attract evil spirits, *aitu*. In particular, the smell given off during its burning can attract harmful spirits.<sup>22</sup> In addition to this process of burning, the responsibility of turning the nuts into pigment was entrusted to the *nofotāne* (a woman married into the family). They do the burning in a shed especially reserved for this purpose and must constantly ‘watch over the flame’ (*tāpua’i le afi*) to ensure it does not go out.

Breaking any of such traditions for preparing the *lama* may lead to the pigment’s deterioration, known as *lama ’avea*. Sometimes, even if the traditions are adhered to, pigment deterioration may also suggest the failure of the person getting the tattoo, or one of his family members, to respect the *sā* (ritual prohibitions) that are normally stipulated by the *tufuga* before the tattooing begins. *Lama ’avea* may also suggest bad relations between the family of the person getting the tattoo and the tattooist’s *autufuga* or crew. Thus, the *lama* is believed to be not just an ink, but also gives form and shape to the *tatauing* story and the Samoan tradition, values, customs, culture, and relationships.

### **3.4.7 Au-solo (understudy) – Cleaning the tattooing points**

The *au-solo* are not a tool per se, but are deemed nevertheless as having an important role in the sequence of functions essential to the art of tattooing. To *solo* is to wipe the point of tattooing. In addition, to *toso* is to pull and stretch the flesh in order to fully expose the skin for tattooing. To perform these two interrelated and vital functions, the tattooist is usually assisted by his understudies, the *au-solo*. Thus, the *au-solo* or the

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<sup>21</sup> Personal interview.

<sup>22</sup> Personal interview.

wiping crew is also space to observe and learn from the *tufuga* or master tattooist at work.

#### **3.4.8 *Lagotaafi (pillow) – Providing support***

Providing supports and encouragement for the person receiving the traditional clothing of *tatau* is also important during the process of tattooing. This is the meaning behind *lagotaafi* (supporting and steadying). It is an essential aspect of keeping the relationship between the tattooist and the person getting the tattoo steady and stable throughout the “clothing” of the body. Adjusting the positions of both the tattooist and the person getting the tattoo is vital to maintain balance and continuity.

Overall, these required tools for a *tatau* possess the power of respectful interpretation and meaningful agency to convey a message through the *tatau*, when all ritual prohibitions given by the master tattooist are adhered to with care. The outcome, the *tatau*, represents a meaningful message for its wearer and artist, which can be open to various interpretations by the observing audience.

In this sense, Wilson insists that every piece of art has texture, because texture defines art elements that can be felt through touch (tactile texture, actual texture, roughness or smoothness) or through sight (visual texture). There can also be “invented texture”, which is conceived in the abstract or exists only in the conscience. Simulated/visual texture would be a drawing or painting of something with natural texture. Adding to it is the skin texture and tone, the appearance or consistency of a surface or substance. Tone texture considers voices and feelings, visuals, and senses.

Given this understanding of textures in the art of tattooing, there is a great opportunity to make a connection with biblical interpretation. Using SRI and its approach to biblical interpretation using different textures, this study finds an opportunity to explore biblical interpretation based on wisdom drawn from the art of



tattooing. Thus, in the next section, I will explore the art of tattooing as a methodological approach and interpretive tool to read the biblical text.

### **3.5 *Atoau* as both a methodological and interpretive approach**

This *atoau* approach underscores the notion of “clothing” the body. That is, to give form, structure, identity, and meaning to what is conceived in the abstract. In other words, the tattoo is the concretization of an abstraction. This transformation of the abstract to concrete form is enabled by the use of indigenously derived tools with distinctive features but with a united purpose. Each straight line, curve and patterns in the design carries a story narrated through the rhythm and distinctive features of each tattooing point. Each piece of tool represents a location or space for interpretation.

Altogether, while the methodological approach in this study is indigenously driven, an *atoau* approach blends in also elements of the SRI. In particular, I find the ways that SRI looks and explores the innertexture and the intertexture of the text helpful in my attempt to conceptualize how the various tools of tattooing can be utilized in a similar manner.

#### **3.5.1 *Au-tapulu* –framing the text**

As mentioned earlier, the function of the *au-tapulu* is to provide the wide solid frame, or in other words, the context or the setting of the *tatau*. As the largest of the tattooing points, the purpose is to give the background, outline, and design placement. In reading the biblical text, I think of the *au-tapulu* as “clothing” the setting or the context, and a general structural outline of the passage.

### 3.5.2 *Au-sogiaso – linguistics, and translations of the text*

This place of interpretation locates to study fine lines in the text. As the second from the largest tattooing point, I think of the *au-sogiaso* as “clothing” the innertexture of the text. In this case, the *au-sogiaso* can relate to different aspects of narrative criticism, which include descriptions of the language of the text, point of view, narration, symbolism, plot, characters, and repetitions within the text. For example, the ‘*aso fa’aifo*’ of the text are the fine curving lines which carry the meaning with its narration, plot, characters of the text and so forth.

Also, *au-sogiaso* helps to analyze the linguistic features, patterns, and techniques employed by authors to convey meaning through lines. It involves examining aspects such as word choice, sentence structure, figurative language, and the use of literary devices. Therefore, *au-sogiaso* seeks linguistic analysis enhancing the understanding of how language shapes the overall meaning and impact of a text.

The *au-sogiaso* also helps in the translation of the text from one language (the source language) into another language (the target language). Therefore, the translators aim to convey the meaning and intent of the original text accurately while adapting it to the linguistic and cultural conventions of the target language. It is a complicated process that requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a deep understanding of the cultural context and nuances of both languages. Therefore, the translators face challenges such as idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and maintaining the author’s style and voice. This is crucial for making texts accessible to a wider audience and facilitating cross-cultural communication.

Overall, in the context of literary texts, linguistic helps in understanding the language used by the author and its impact on the text’s meaning and artistic qualities, and translation enables the dissemination of literature across different languages and

cultures, making it accessible to readers who may not be familiar with the original language. Both linguistics and translation contribute to the study and appreciation of texts by illuminating the linguistic intricacies and enabling intercultural exchange. This is how I see the function and role of the *au-sogiaso* in the “clothing” of the text, giving it meaning, shape, structure, and identity.

### **3.5.3 *Au mono – gaps in the text***

The *au-mono* identifies gaps in the text because this tool is the smallest of the three tattooing points. The main function is to provide the fine details and fill the gaps in the text. These gaps in the text refer to the absences, omissions, or ambiguities within a literary work that leaves space for interpretation. These gaps can be intentional or unintentional, and they can serve various purposes within the text.

Therefore, gaps in the text serve as opportunities for readers to actively participate in the construction of meaning, fostering a more interactive and engaging reading experience. It can also invite readers to contemplate, speculate, and explore various possibilities, contributing to the richness and depth of the literary text. To identify and fill the seams in the text, the *au-mono* provides for the finer details and fill in the gaps in order to satisfy what is needed in the interpretation of the text.

### **3.5.4 *Au-solo – clearing the dirt, noise, and asking questions***

As described above, this is an important aspect of the art of tattooing. To *solo* is to wipe clean in order to have a clear look at the flow of the text. If there are “stains” such as voices, and other factors causing trouble reading the text, *solo* warrants asking questions and querying certain points of the “clothing” in order to gain clarity and direction.

To elaborate more on the task of *solo* in a literature perspective, clearing the dirt, also means acknowledging any biases, assumptions, or preconceived ideas that might

prevent a clear understanding of a literary work. It involves approaching the text with an open mind and being aware of any personal barriers that could get in the way of a fair analysis. To elaborate more, asking questions refers to the process of actively engaging with the text by asking inquiries that deepen understanding. It involves asking simple or complex questions about the plot, characters, themes, or author's intentions to gain a better grasp of the interpretation, and encourage critical thinking. Similarly, to *toso*, is to pull and stretch the text in order to gain clarity and a better sense of its contours and configuration. Overall, the *au-solo* (including cleaning and pulling) underpins accepting biases and presupposition. Meanwhile, this warrants asking questions which involves actively exploring the text through inquiries to enhance understanding of the text.

### ***3.5.5 Lagotaafi – providing support***

Providing support in the art of reading refers to the inclusion of evidence, examples, or reasoning to bolster or substantiate the claims, arguments, or ideas presented in a literary work. It involves offering supporting information or details to reinforce the author's perspective or to provide a foundation for the reader to understand and engage with the text more effectively. Here are a few ways in which support can be provided in a literary text:

By providing support in the text, authors enhance the clarity, credibility, and persuasiveness of their ideas. It helps readers engage with the text more effectively, encourages critical thinking, and fosters a deeper appreciation of the author's arguments or artistic intentions. From a reader-response perspective, questions and presuppositions on the readers' part can provide support to enhance the reading experience and open opportunities for an informed conversation between the receiving text and the interpretive reader using available human senses and capacities for discernment.

### 3.5.6 *Autā – rhythmic tone and applications*

Finally, the rhythm of the *autā* is essential. Because the texture of the flesh can vary, the tempo and rhythm of the tattooing points are also adjusted accordingly. It also helps to enhance the outlook of the *lama* making for a lasting and convincing “clothing” of the text.

In the process of reading, *autā* represents the application and impact of the interpreted biblical text. It emphasizes the practical implications of the interpretation in personal, communal, and societal contexts. By living out the transformative power of the biblical message, positive change can be brought about in individual lives and wider communities.

## 3.6 Summary

This chapter discusses the indigenous frame of reference from which I design this study’s methodological and interpretive framework. Tattooing is an integral element in the cultural and social fabric of Samoan society. An *atoau* methodological approach offers a unique and indigenous framework for biblical interpretation. It draws inspiration from the Samoan tattooing process, where specific tools with distinct functions come together to create a unified design. This *atoau* approach views the biblical text as the concretization of an abstract concept, just as ink transforms an abstract design into a tangible *tatau*.

Within this framework, each tool represents a specific location or space for interpretation. The *au-tapulu*, the largest tool, frames the text by providing the context, setting, and general structural outline of the passage. It helps establish the background and design placement of the text, similar to how the *au-tapulu* outlines the design in tattooing. The *au-sogiaso* focuses on linguistics and translations of the text. It examines the internal literature of the text, including its language, symbolism, plot, characters,

and repetitions; it also traces the narrative of the storyline within the text. Linguistic analysis helps understand how language shapes meaning, while translation enables cross-cultural communication and accessibility of the text. The *au-mono* is used to detail and fill in gaps within the text. It explores the absences, omissions, or ambiguities in literary work, such as narrative gaps, informational gaps, time gaps, structural gaps, and linguistic gaps. These gaps serve as opportunities for readers to actively participate in constructing meaning and contribute to the richness of the text. The *au-solo* represents the process of clearing the dirt and stretching, asking questions in the text. It involves removing biases and preconceived ideas that hinder a clear understanding of the text. Asking questions deepens understanding and encourages critical thinking, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation. The *lagotaafi* serves as a pillow providing support in the interpretation. It involves providing evidence, examples, reasoning, expert opinions, and historical or literary context to bolster the claims, arguments, or ideas presented in the text. This support strengthens the clarity, credibility, and persuasiveness of the interpretation. Finally, the *sausau* (mallet) represents the application and impact of the interpreted biblical text. It emphasizes the practical implications of the interpretation in personal, communal, and societal contexts. By living out the transformative power of the biblical message, positive change can be brought about in individual lives and wider communities.

Overall, the *atoau* interpretive framework combines indigenous wisdom with elements derived from Western epistemology, offering a holistic and creative approach to biblical interpretation. It encourages attention to detail, tracing the narrative, broad stroke interpretation, clearing obstacles, contextual support, and practical application of the biblical text. By engaging with the Scriptures through this framework, individuals can deepen their understanding, foster personal growth, and promote spiritual

transformation. The next chapter begins the exegetical analysis based on this *atoau* approach to re-read the epistle of Jude using different tools of *tatau* to clothing the text in order to provide shape, form, identity and meaning.

## Chapter 4

### Re-Reading Jude using the *Atoau* approach

#### 4.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter of this thesis, an *atoau* approach is a methodological and interpretive approach that is inspired by the Samoan art of tattooing. The *atoau* approach also benefits greatly from blending Samoan indigenous wisdom and elements of sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI).

In this chapter, I apply the *atoau* approach to re-read Jude. I “clothe” the text using aspects of the art of tattooing. To do this, I use the tools and functions described in chapter three as guidance. Overall, I argue that Jude contains a “clothing” of the early church community providing it shape, form, meaning, and identity. This is warranted in a context where there are numerous evidence of false teachings infiltrating the community.

#### 4.2 *Au-sogiaso*: Structural Design and Outline of Jude

The *au-sogiaso* explores the outline and the structural design of the Epistle of Jude. The repeated words, such as “beloved” (verses 1, 3, 17, 20), “people” (verses 4, 5, 10, 16, 19), “ungodly” (verses 4, 15 (2), 18), and “mercy” (verses 2, 21, 22, 23), each carry significant weight in the context of the letter. The repetition of “beloved” throughout the text highlights the deep affection and concern the author has for the recipients of the letter. This term conveys a sense of endearment and serves as a reminder of the special relationship between the writer and the readers. It underscores the importance of the message being conveyed, urging the readers to pay close attention to the upcoming exhortations.



The repetition of “people” underscores the author's focus on the human experience, particularly in the context of faith, salvation, and moral conduct. By addressing the readers as “people,” the author acknowledges their shared humanity while drawing attention to the broader significance of the message. It is a call to unity and collective responsibility within the community of believers.

The repetition of “ungodly” serves as a stark contrast to the beloved and faithful recipients of the letter. This term highlights the presence of those who have strayed from the path of righteousness, and it serves as a warning against the dangers of ungodly behaviour. The author uses this term to draw attention to the actions and beliefs of certain individuals who distort the grace of God, emphasizing the importance of staying true to the teachings of the faith.

The repeated mention of “mercy” underscores one of the central themes of the letter – the abundance of God’s mercy. This repetition is a reminder of the grace and compassion that believers should embrace with thanksgiving, and joyfully extend to others. It serves as a counterpoint to the ungodliness described earlier in the letter, reinforcing the idea that despite the challenges posed by the ungodly, the mercy of God can overwhelm such human deficiencies and remains a constant and powerful force for the faithful believers.

Overall, the repetitive use of certain words (“beloved,” “people,” “ungodly,” and “mercy”) in this passage is a powerful technique that emphasizes important ideas and reinforces the main themes of the message. “Beloved” shows the author’s deep care for the readers, reminding them of the special connection between writer and audience. “People” highlights the shared human experience in matters of faith and morality, calling for unity and responsibility among believers. “Ungodly” contrasts with the beloved and warns against straying from the right path. “Mercy” underscores God’s

abundant compassion, countering the ungodliness discussed earlier and highlighting the enduring force of divine mercy.

#### **4.2.1 The Opening (Jude 1:1-4): Introduction of the epistle (1:1-2)—*va'a***

The introduction of the epistle (Jude 1:1-2) is associated with the concept of *va'a*<sup>1</sup> in the Samoan *tatau*. These opening verses represent the background of the author and its relation to the recipients and message of the letter. Jude introduces himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and emphasizes his connection to his brothers, James and Jesus (verse 1). This establishes his authority and sets the context for his message. By identifying himself as a servant, Jude aligns himself with the role of a “*tautua*”<sup>2</sup> in a Samoan family, highlighting his commitment to serving the family of believers. This concept of servanthood sets the tone for the entire epistle, as Jude addresses his readers as the called, loved, and kept by God (verse 1). The *va'a* in the outline of Jude signifies the background and relational context in which the author proclaims his message.

#### **4.2.2 Purpose and Concern (Jude 1:3-4) – *pula laitiiti* and *pula tele***

The purpose and concern of the letter are expressed in Jude 1:3-4. To interpret this section using the *atoau* approach, Albert Wendt says, the patterns of *pula laitiiti*<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>*Va'a* means a canoe. Traditionally, this canoe is used by untitled men in a Samoan family to serve and feed the whole family by fishing for their sustenance. In this role, *va'a* symbolises the concept of *tautua*, to be a servant for the family. From a tattooing perspective, *vaa* represents family lineage and connection. With its broad design and prominent placing in the *tatau*, the *va'a* embodies this *tautua* analogy as it encompasses the *tatau*'s design and purpose.

<sup>2</sup>There are different types of *tautua* in our Samoan traditional values and cultural way of living. For discussions on this issue, see Sam Amosa, “Did Jesus Sweat Blood – in the Light of *Tautua toto*” (BTh Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2010); Melvin Taupulega Apulu, “*Tautua fa'atamalii*: (Servanthood with Absolute Integrity) Engaging with Samoan Young People” (MPhil. Thesis, Massey University, 2010). Vaitusi Nofoaiga, “Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel” (PhD dissertation, The University of Auckland, Auckland, 2014); Aiono, Manu, Faaea. “The pathway to leadership is through service: Exploring the Samoan *tautua* lifecycle,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2021).

<sup>3</sup>Mauaiaivao Albert Wendt, “NZEPC- Albert Wendt-Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body” (2015), 15-29, states that *pula laiti* are also known as *tama'i pe'a* (the image of the young of the flying fox), which the mother naturally carries under her wings. This *tatau* design/pattern reminds the wearer of his *tautua* to protect, provide, and nourish his immediate family.

*pula tele*<sup>4</sup> can be employed. These patterns represent the principle of caring, protection, and nourishing relationships within the family. Jude initially intended to write about salvation but shifts his focus due to an urgent concern. He urges believers to contend earnestly for the faith (verse 3) and repetitively warns them against false teachings and godless apostates (verse 4). The patterns of *pula laititi* and *pula tele* highlight the importance of caring for and protecting one another within the spiritual family. Jude's concern for the well-being of the believers is evident as he describes them as “called, loved, and kept by God” (cf. verse 1). He sees it as his duty, as a servant *tautua*, to protect and nourish his spiritual family. By using the patterns of *pula laititi* and *pula tele*, Jude conveys his role as a servant who offers his life to safeguard and nurture his fellow believers.

#### **4.2.3 Middle (Jude 1:5-19): Historical Examples (1:5-7) – ‘aso fa’aifo**

Jude refers to historical examples of divine judgment in Jude 1:5-7 to support his warning against false teachers. This section can be associated with the pattern of *'aso fa'aifo* in the *atoau* approach. *'Aso fa'aifo* simply means curved lines representing rank and commitment. By referencing the punishment of the Israelites in the wilderness (verse 5) and the fallen angels (verse 6), Jude highlights the consequences of disobedience and warns about the judgment that awaits false teachers. Let's explore these examples in more depth and how they relate to the concept of *'aso fa'aifo* in the *atoau* approach.

Firstly, the punishment of the Israelites in the wilderness: In this warning, Jude refers to the Israelites who were delivered from slavery in Egypt but later rebelled

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<sup>4</sup> Wendt, "NZEPC- Albert Wendt- Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," 15-29, describes *pula tele* to reference the same principle of caring but for the whole extended family. This is implied in a Samoan proverbial saying: *Ia pupula ou mata, ia malama ou ala, aua nei e soli aiga, ina nei vaipaaaina oe!* (Be aware, may your paths be clear, don't commit incest, or you'll have no heirs).

against God in the wilderness. This refers to the events recorded in the Old Testament, particularly in Exodus and Numbers. Despite witnessing God's miraculous acts, such as the parting of the Red Sea and receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites grumbled, complained, and rebelled against God's authority. As a consequence, God punished them by not allowing that generation to enter the Promised Land. This serves as an example of divine judgment for disobedience. In the *atoau* approach, the pattern of 'aso fa'aifo, curved lines representing rank and commitment could be associated with the Israelites' failure to maintain their commitment and loyalty to God. The curved lines may symbolize the deviation from the right path and the consequences that followed their disobedience.

Secondly, the punishment of the fallen angels: Jude also mentions the punishment of the angels who abandoned their proper place and engaged in sinful behaviour. This alludes to a story or belief not explicitly described in the canonical books of the Bible but is found in Jewish and early Christian traditions. For example, 1 Enoch 15:2 talks of how the “Watchers of heaven” have left the high eternal heaven, “and done like the children of earth”. The idea is that certain angels, enticed by their desires, rebelled against God's authority and engaged in immoral actions. As a result, they faced divine judgment and were cast out of their original position. In the *atoau* perspective, this example of fallen angels could be seen as a deviation from the proper order and hierarchy established by God. The curved lines of 'aso fa'aifo, may represent the fallen angels' departure from their assigned ranks and their subsequent punishment.

By referencing these historical examples of divine judgment, Jude emphasizes the seriousness of the situation and the consequences that await false teachers. The concept of 'aso fa'aifo in the *atoau* approach adds a visual representation of the deviant paths taken by those who oppose God's truth and the repercussions they face. It serves as a

reminder of the importance of maintaining commitment, loyalty, and obedience to God's teachings. It is worth noting that while the *atoau* perspective is specific to Samoan culture and may provide additional insights into the interpretation of these passages, it is important to also consider the broader biblical and theological context when studying the Epistle of Jude.

#### ***4.2.4 Description of False Teachers (1:8-19) – 'aso fa'alava<sup>5</sup>***

Jude provides a detailed description of the false teachers who have infiltrated the community in Jude 1:8-19. This section can be connected to the pattern of 'aso fa'alava in the *atoau* approach. 'Aso fa'alava refers to the transverse rafter that lies above the iliac crest and is accompanied by other lines.

Using the pattern of 'aso fa'alava, Jude rebukes the false teachers for their immoral behaviour, rejection of authority, and blasphemous speech. He warns the readers about their influence and urges them to remain steadfast in the face of such deception. The pattern of 'aso fa'alava reflects the interconnectedness of the false teachers' actions and their impact on the community (cf. verses 10-16). Jude's description of the false teachers serves as a strong rebuke and a warning to the readers. Employing the pattern of 'aso fa'alava can highlight Jude's illustration of the pervasive nature of the false teachers and their false teachings, as represented by the accompanying lines. He emphasizes the importance of discernment and encourages believers to stand firm in their faith.

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<sup>5</sup> This phrase 'Aso fa'alava reflects the combined meaning of the two words included: 'aso means rafter, fa'alava means transverse. The expression simply highlights the one horizontal rafter that connect all the 'aso of the fale. The main purpose is to hold all the 'aso of the fale together on each endpoint. For tattooing, 'aso fa'alava is the transverse rafter of all the lines or 'aso of the tatau.

#### **4.2.5 Ending (Jude 1:20-25): Exhortation to Faithfulness (1:20-23) – ‘aso tali’itu<sup>6</sup>**

Jude offers exhortations to the believers in Jude 1:20-23, encouraging them to remain faithful and compassionate. This section can be associated with the pattern of ‘aso tali’itu in the *atoau* approach, which represents strength, support, and compassion.

Resonating with the pattern and purpose of ‘aso taliitu, Jude instructs the believers to build themselves up in their faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep themselves in God's love, and show compassion to those who doubt. He urges them to be strong and supportive, emphasizing the need for unity and caring within the community of believers. The pattern of ‘aso taliitu, symbolizes the strength and support, which on the narrative level, encourages (taps) the believers to find such resolve in their faith and their relationships with one another. Jude encourages his readers to persevere in the face of challenges and to extend compassion and understanding to those who may be wavering in their faith.

#### **4.2.6 Benediction (Jude 1:24-25) – ‘aso laititi**

The Epistle of Jude concludes with a doxology, offering praise and glorification to God. This section can be associated with the pattern of ‘aso laititi in the *atoau* approach. ‘Aso laititi represents the spar that supports the side and provides overall stability. Therefore, the pattern and essence of ‘aso laititi are reflected in the epistle and its author’s acknowledgement of God as the only wise God and attributes glory, majesty, power, and authority to Him. He recognizes God's ability to keep believers from stumbling and presents the promise of eternal life. The pattern of ‘aso laititi signifies the support and stability that God provides to His people. By employing the pattern of ‘aso laititi, Jude

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<sup>6</sup> This is ‘aso taliitu, ‘aso is a rafter or lines, tali mean support, or answer and itu is side. This means ‘aso taliitu is the supporting lines from the side of the *pe’a*. As for tattooing, this pattern or these fine lines on the side of the *va’a* of the *pe’a*, identify support, strength and compassion of the *tautua* in the family. These lines propping up your sides indicates relationship. All these meanings of ‘aso taliitu connect to an *aiga*/family.

conveys a sense of security and assurance in God's faithfulness. He emphasizes that it is God who ultimately upholds and sustains His people, ensuring their eternal well-being. This final section acts as a strong support and encouragement for the believers, reaffirming their trust in God.

#### **4.2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this *atoau* approach provides a unique lens through which we can use the *au-sogiaso* as part of the interpretive framework for the Epistle of Jude. By incorporating *tatau* patterns such as *va'a*, *pula laititi*, *pula tele*, *'aso fa'aifo*, *'aso fa'alava*, *'aso tali'itu*, and *'aso laititi*, they have provided a deeper understanding of the structural design and meanings that clothe the epistle. They help clarify the author's intentions, the significance of historical examples, and the description of false teachers, exhortations to faithfulness, and the ultimate praise and benediction. Therefore, the *atoau* approach adds depth and cultural context to my interpretation, enriching an understanding of the Epistle of Jude and its timeless message.

### **4.3 Au-tapulu: framing the context and setting of the text**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

In the *atoau* approach, *taga tapulu* in the Samoan *tatau* refers to the three upmost black patterns on the back, which are part of the *tapulu* pattern. The word *tapulu* itself means to strike (*ta*) and wrap up or cover (*pulu pulu*). The *tapulu* designs in the *tatau* often represent a uniform dark area, occasionally interrupted by small windows called *fa'aila*, which means “spot” or “high point” since they stand out brightly in the dark area. Similarly, in the Epistle of Jude, the *tapulu* represents the major themes that cover and

frame certain aspects of the text, with the *fa'aila* serving as the high points or bright spots that stand out prominently.

#### **4.3.2 *Tapulu* – apostasy**

Apostasy is one of the prominent themes in the Epistle of Jude. The repetition of the noun “people” emphasizes the impact they have on the community of faithful believers. These people are apostasy, referring to these people’s act of turning away from the faith, specifically turning away from Christ. Jude warns against apostasy and reminds his readers of the consequences of rebellion against God. He urges believers to be cautious and not drift away from their faithful commitment to Christ. The prominent *tapulu* pattern of the *tatau* can then be viewed negatively as representing such visible and problematic motif of apostasy in the epistle. But this human deficiency serves as a reminder to believers to remain steadfast and grounded in their faith, guarding against any false teachings or distractions that may lead them astray.

#### **4.3.3 *Tapulu* – contending for faith**

Another significant theme in Jude's epistle is contending for faith. This positive aspect of faithfulness can also be represented by the *tapulu* pattern of the *tatau*. In this analogy, the *tapulu* pattern of contending for the faith emphasizes the importance of defending and standing firm in the true faith. Jude indeed, addresses the presence of false teachings and deceptive individuals within the Christian community. Against such ungodly acts, Jude urges believers to earnestly protect the integrity of the gospel through action. Therefore, such necessary and positive involvement, represented by the *tapulu* pattern, signifies the need for believers to actively engage in the spiritual battle by defending against such falsity and remaining vigilant by preserving the teachings of the true apostles, not those of the false teachers.



#### ***4.3.4 Tapulu – false teachers***

False teachers and their influence are also key themes in the Epistle of Jude. Jude strongly warns against false teachers and leaders who reject the lordship of Christ, undermine the faith of others, and lead them astray. He describes their immoral behaviour, their rejection of authority, and their blasphemous speech. Such ungodly behaviour can represent a *tapulu* pattern of false teachers and their false teachings. But they also serve as a clear warning to believers, highlighting the dangers of following such individuals. This *tapulu* pattern symbolizes the deceptive allure of false teachings and the need for discernment to identify and avoid these ungodly individuals.

#### ***4.3.5 Tapulu – God’s judgements on the ungodly***

Ungodly is repeated four times in the whole text which emphasizes God's judgment on such practitioners. Jude uses various examples from Jewish history, such as the Israelites in the wilderness and the angels who rebelled, to illustrate God's judgment on those who reject his authority and engage in wickedness. This pattern of God's judgment which emphasizes the consequences that await the ungodly, can be perceived as the *tapulu* pattern in the *tatau*. Their purpose serves as a reminder of the certainty of divine judgment and the importance of living a godly life.

#### ***4.3.6 Tapulu – discernment***

Lastly, Jude emphasizes the need for discernment and spiritual wisdom. He calls believers to exercise discernment in identifying and avoiding those who promote division, immorality, and false teachings. Jude encourages believers to ground themselves in the truth of God's Word and to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The *tapulu* pattern of discernment highlights the importance of seeking wisdom and understanding to navigate through the challenges and deceptions that may arise. Thus represents the light of truth shining amidst the darkness of false teachings.

### 4.3.7 Summary

To summarize, the *au-tapulu* tool helps to deliver the major themes that frame and provide context to the Epistle of Jude. The *taga tapulu* patterns of major themes of apostasy, contending for the faith, false teachers, God's judgment on the ungodly, and the need for discernment all play significant roles in conveying the message of the epistle. Understanding these themes helps believers remain vigilant, faithful, and discerning within the Christian community while being aware of the consequences of ungodliness and the importance of standing firm in the true faith. The *tapulu* pattern of the *tatau* illuminating bright spots that stand out prominently, can be the flashing beacons on the narrative level to guide the believers towards truth, and warning them of potential pitfalls along their spiritual journey.

## 4.4 *Au-mono*: filling in the fine details

### 4.4.1 Introduction

The Samoan art of tattooing is a rich and intricate art form, steeped in cultural symbolism and meaning. As such, the *taga atigivae*<sup>7</sup> design of the *tatau* stands out as a visually striking element that immediately captures the eye when viewing the thigh from behind, a set of patterns in the background of the *pe'a*. Thus, it represents the meaning of everyday life of a Samoan *tautua*, and each pattern within this set in the *tatau* also signifies behind the scene responsibilities in connection to service rendered to family, village or church settings.

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<sup>7</sup> *Taga atigivae* is an expression comprised of a number of words. *Ta* means to strike, to play, or to tap; *taga* can be a pocket or a sack; *atigi* means shell, nails; *vae* means feet, toes, legs. Therefore, *taga atigivae* is striking toes nails. Traditionally, this identifies the value of feet in Samoa everyday life service. The set of patterns in the *taga atigivae*, thus, indicates the value of being a *tautua* in a Samoan family, as indicated by its placement within the *tatau*.

In the *atoau* approach, the patterns created by the *au-mono* resonate with the fine details and gaps within the text, which force the interpreter to look deeper for better understanding. From this perspective, the interpreter can delve deeper into the profound significance of meanings intertwined within the literary strategies and logic of the Epistle of Jude to explore historical significance, just as the *taga atigivae* patterns of the *tatau* illuminate historical treasures and significance for Samoans.

#### ***4.4.2 Historical Background of Jude***

While the exact authorship is uncertain, tradition ascribes it to Jude, who is believed to be the brother of James and Jesus Christ. This historical background lies within the early Christian movement of the first century AD. Therefore, such understanding is vital in considering the socio-cultural context, religious climate, and theological influences of the time.

During the first century, the early Christian community faced various challenges. It was a time of internal struggles and external pressures. False teachers had infiltrated the community, propagating distorted doctrines and leading believers astray. Additionally, immoral behaviour among Christians was a concern. In the face of these challenges, the author of the Epistle of Jude wrote to encourage and exhort believers to remain steadfast in their faith. The Epistle draws on references from Jewish and early Christian traditions. The author demonstrates familiarity with Jewish scriptures, incorporating stories and figures from the Old Testament into the letter. This suggests a shared religious heritage and highlights the continuity between Judaism and early Christianity. By referring to these familiar stories, the author reinforces the importance of upholding true faith and warns against straying from it. The letter also contains strong language and vivid imagery to describe the false teachers and their destructive influence. The author compares them to various historical examples of divine judgment,

such as fallen angels and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This language serves to underscore the seriousness of the situation and the urgency of the message.

#### ***4.4.3 Connected with Taga atigivae***

The *taga atigivae*, with its visually striking presence of the background patterns of the *pe'a*, serves as a powerful symbol of the *tautua*'s commitment to their role in the Samoan community. It represents their dedication to upholding the values of service, protection, and responsibility. On the narrative level, Jude himself assumes the role of a servant (*tautua*) by identifying himself as a servant of Christ (verse 1). By aligning himself with the concept of *tautua*, Jude underscores his commitment to serving the family of believers and fulfilling his responsibilities as a spiritual guardian.

Within the Samoan cultural context, the *tatau* patterns, including the *taga atigivae*, are not merely decorative elements but carriers of cultural narratives and identity. Each pattern signifies a specific meaning and connects the individual to their heritage and ancestors. Similarly, in the Epistle of Jude, the message conveyed through the text carries deep cultural narratives and connects the readers to their spiritual heritage as followers of Christ. The *taga atigivae*, with its historical background and cultural significance, serves as a bridge between the cultural context of the Samoan *tatau* and the message of Jude's letter. *Taga atigivae* also represents the *tautua*'s connection to their surroundings and their awareness of the impact they have on the community. Just as the *tautua* serves as a pillar of support and stability within the Samoan community, Jude's exhortations and warnings in his letter aim to provide guidance and protection to the early Christian community. The *taga atigivae*, with its prominent position on the thigh, signifies the *tautua*'s ability to observe and address the needs of the community, ensuring its spiritual well-being.

Furthermore, the patterns within the *taga atigivae* reflect the intricate balance between the *tautua*'s duties and their legacy. In the Samoan cultural context, the *tautua*'s actions and decisions have far-reaching implications, not only for their reputation but also for the reputation and well-being of the entire community. Similarly, Jude's admonitions to the believers in his letter emphasize the importance of faithfulness, discernment, and the preservation of the true teachings of Christ. The patterns within the *taga atigivae* serve as a visual reminder of the *tautua*'s responsibility to leave behind a positive and lasting legacy, just as Jude calls upon the believers to remain steadfast in their faith and be examples for future generations.

Moreover, the *taga atigivae* represents the connection between the seen and unseen realms, highlighting the spiritual dimensions of the *tautua*'s role. In the Samoan cultural belief system, the *tautua* is not only responsible for the physical well-being of the community but also for their spiritual guidance and protection. Similarly, Jude's exhortations in his letter address the spiritual challenges and dangers faced by the early Christian community. The patterns within the *taga atigivae* symbolize the *tautua*'s awareness of the spiritual realm and their role in guarding against false teachings and spiritual harm.

#### **4.4.4 Summary**

In providing the fine details and filling in the gaps in the text, I drawn upon the aspect of *taga atigivae* in the Samoan art of tattooing, which holds deep cultural symbolism and represents the responsibilities and obligations of the *tautua* within the community. By delving into the historical background of the Epistle of Jude and connecting it to the *taga atigivae*, we gain a richer understanding of the profound significance of this symbol. The *taga atigivae* serves as a visual representation of the *tautua*'s commitment

to their role, their connection to the community and their surroundings, and their awareness of the spiritual dimensions of their responsibilities.

Through this *atoau* approach, we can appreciate the cultural depth and spiritual significance of the *taga atigivae* within the context of the Epistle of Jude, strengthening the connection between Samoan values and the timeless message of faith and service conveyed in the letter. In addition, the historical background of the Epistle of Jude lies within the early Christian movement of the first century. The letter addresses challenges faced by the early Christian community, such as the infiltration of false teachings and moral corruption. Drawing on Jewish and early Christian traditions, Jude is an attempt to “clothe” the early community, emphasizing the importance of contending for their faith and remaining steadfast.

## **4.5 *Au-solo*: cleaning and stretching the text**

### **4.5.1 *Introduction***

The chance to reflect and re-think one’s position is integral to the art of tattooing. As described above, this is the undergirding value for *au-solo*—the chance to “wipe clean” and “stretch” the imagination for clarity. In my re-reading of Jude, this is an important opportunity to reflect and to ask questions of the text. In the next section, I explore the possibility of aspects of the *au-solo* in the text. The idea for exploring these aspects of the *au-solo* in the text is inspired by the use of intertexture and innertexture in SRI.

### **4.5.2 *Salutation (1-2) – the va’a of the tattoo***

In a Samoan context, where “*va’a*” (boat-shaped design) represents lineage and family background, we can approach verse 1 and 2 of the Epistle of Jude with this understanding. Using the *atoau* approach, I ask questions to find familial connections in

verse 1 and 2. I ask whether there are familial connections, ancestral heritage, and cultural context that shape Jude's self-identification as a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.

“Jude a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:1)

Wiping the point of interaction clean and stretching the narrative for possibility, I ask whether the author introduces three significant claims in the first part of verse 1. First, he introduces his name. Second, he is the servant of Jesus Christ, and third, he is the brother of James.

“Jude” is one of the very common Jewish names, also known as one of the twelve tribes of Israel, Judah. However, Jude is in the masculine singular form of the noun *Ἰούδας*, a nominative absolute introduces the nominative case in salutation material. This nominative absolute is used in the salutation of a letter with an exploring phrase added. Therefore, the noun form of Jude, is not unreasonable that this letter belongs to Jude, because he is the sender and is identified as “Jude”<sup>8</sup> with a twofold designation to that personal name.

Firstly of this twofold, he designates himself as a “slave of Jesus Christ”. This designation informs us that Jude considers himself to be a man owned both body and soul by Jesus and willed to follow and serve the Jesus literally, and he is also a dedicated follower. According to Thomas R. Schreiner,<sup>9</sup> the noun used is not *diakonos* which can also mean “servant,” but *doulos* meaning “slave”. Jude does not commence the letter by emphasizing the privilege of his brotherly relationship to Jesus Christ but his submission to Christ’s lordship. However, the NRSV version of the English Bible

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<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 366.

<sup>9</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 367.

uses the word servant instead of slaves, and in Greek, “servant” denotes a “bond” servant who is the property of his master and is not free to change masters.<sup>10</sup>

This supported by William E. Wenstrom,<sup>11</sup> who refers to a servant as either a “man or woman who was the property of a householder, and typically assigned any range of duties from the menial to those requiring special skills in the household.” From an Attic Greek perspective, Rudolph Tuentje<sup>12</sup> argues that for a servant, “personal freedom was his prized possession. So to be independent of others and to manage his own life and to live as he chooses is of the essence of such freedom. But for *doulos*, (slave) belonged by nature not to himself, but to someone else.” This follows Aristotle’s<sup>13</sup> perspective regarding the master-slave relationship, “the master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master but wholly belongs to him. Hence, we see what is the nature and office of a slave; he who is by nature not his own but another’s man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another’s man who, being a human being, is also a possession. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.”

Therefore, on the narrative level, *doulos* expresses the idea that Jude was completely under the authority of Jesus Christ; he is Jesus’ property because Jesus’ physical death on the cross redeemed Jude (and everyone else) from the slave field of sin. Theologically speaking, Jude belongs not to himself, but to Jesus Christ because of the latter’s sacrifice on the cross.

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Bolling Vinson, Richard Francis Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter: Jude*. Vol. 29 (Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2010), 379.

<sup>11</sup> William E. Wenstrom Jr, *Exegesis and Exposition of Jude 1* (Norwood MA, 2022), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 3, (Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 392-393.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Young, "Aristotle: Politics, Books I and II." *The Philosophical Review*. 1 (2000): 87-88. chapter 4, 1254a [Aristotle, Politics, Book 1, section 1254a \(tufts.edu\)](https://www.tufts.edu/~cyoung/philosophy/ARISTOTLE/ARISTOTLE.POLITICS.BOOK.1.SECTION.1254A)



Thirdly, the introduction of the word ἀδελφός expresses the idea of being a slave to the Lord Jesus, although Jude is a “brother” to both James and Jesus himself. Therefore, this construction expresses the idea that Jude possessed a “familial” relationship with James and Jesus. But, why did Jude describe himself as James’s brother instead of the Lord’s brother? J. Kelly thinks the failure to mention that he was the Lord’s brother is an indication of pseudonymity.<sup>14</sup> However, Schreiner<sup>15</sup> thinks otherwise that “this is a serious misreading of Jude’s intention. James also did not identify himself as the Lord’s brother, and neither did Jude since his relationship with the Lord...was one of slave to master, not brother to brother.” Likewise, I think Jude refrained from explicitly stating his fraternal relationship with the Lord as an expression of his humility. Neyrey rightly emphasizes the honour and status derived from Jude’s blood relationship with an important person like James.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Jude did not merely transmit his opinion in this letter. He wrote authoritatively as Jesus Christ’s slave and as the brother of James. In this sense Jude acknowledge both his familial connection with both Jesus and James, while explicitly emphasising the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In the second part of the first verse, there is another important claim of the supporting aspect of the background of the author. The adjective form of κλητός (called, verse 1), functions as a dative recipient, a verb construction such as salutation. As such, this “called” reveals to the recipients of Jude’s letter that they themselves are effectually called by God through Jude and the other apostles’ calling. They are summoned by God

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<sup>14</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 242.

<sup>15</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 367.

<sup>16</sup> J. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1993), 45, 47–48. But he engages in speculation in saying that the opponents claimed “achieved authority” in contrast to Jude’s claim to status by kinship. We have no evidence that the opponents even criticized Jude or contrasted themselves specifically with him.

to salvation. According to John Schultz,<sup>17</sup> “The most general of the three descriptive notes is the “called.” The idea of a “called” person pervades all Scripture. It appears in a variety of applications, of which the most distinctive is that of a call into the Messianic kingdom. This call is ascribed usually, we may perhaps say universally, to God himself.” Therefore, this call is a universal call for anyone. It is inclusive to all gender of God as John Calvin<sup>18</sup> alludes to being “called” to include all the faithful because the Lord has separated them for himself. But as calling is nothing else but the effect of eternal election, it is sometimes taken for it. Similarly, Schultz also believes that this “called” is universal. Therefore, this term is used in connection with the desired effect of the call on the heart. This is the serious, efficacious vocation of God which is extended through the means of grace. Therefore, Jude’s readers, just like Jude himself, are those who have been called to faith in Christ Jesus through the gospel that had been brought to them.

Another verb that needs “stretching” and “cleaning” is beloved (*ἡγαπημένοις*, verse 1). According to Peter Davids,<sup>19</sup> other manuscripts prefer the translation “sanctified” (from the ninth century and later), while those reading “loved” date from the fourth century. Roger Omanson<sup>20</sup> attempts to explain this by stating that although the word “beloved” is decisively supported by external evidence, the Textus Receptus and most minuscule manuscripts translate *ἡγαπημένοις* as the “sanctified” ones. Such reading was “introduced by copyists to avoid the difficult and unusual combination *ἐν*

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<sup>17</sup> John Schultz, *Jude*, 2. [https://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC\\_Jude.pdf](https://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Jude.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Jude* (1979).

<sup>19</sup> P. H. Davids, *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids (MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 2006)

<sup>20</sup> Roger L. Omanson, *A textual guide to the Greek New Testament: an adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual commentary for the needs of translators* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 519

θεῶ πατρὶ ἡγαπημένοις.” For Herbert Bateman,<sup>21</sup> “the problem is a theological one,” which John Schultz<sup>22</sup> tries to smooth over by suggesting that “the Greek word rendered “sanctified” is *agapao*, which means “to love,” or in this context, probably, “beloved” (NRSV translation), *agapetos* is a verbal adjective, derived from *agape*, meaning divined love, personally experiencing God’s love. Therefore, this is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only beloved Son into the world that we might live through him.”

Another loaded word used is “kept” (*τετηρημένοις*, verse 1), a dative masculine plural perfect passive participle conjugation of the verb *τηρέω* (to keep). The NRSV translation uses the adverb “safe” immediately after “kept” to explain how Jesus kept believers in His name, safely. “Kept” for Jesus does not mean that saints will never fall from grace. It simply means that as long as we keep ourselves in the faith, God will keep us. In other translations, they prefer using the word “preserve” instead of “kept”. Surely, this is the essence of our faith; we are preserved in Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude encourages the believers that they are kept safe by Jesus for his kingdom, impressing the idea that the Lord himself is operative in preserving his own, until the coming of Christ. In this epistle, where the threat of falling away is addressed, this is a key thought. It is Jude providing “clothing” warranted of the community of faithful believers, until the coming of Christ.

After stretching and cleaning of the first part of verse 1, Jude introduces himself as “Jude,” a common Jewish name associated with the tribe of Judah. He identifies himself as a servant (*doulos*) of Jesus Christ, indicating his complete dedication to Jesus as his owner and master. The term “slave” emphasizes Jude's submission and belonging

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<sup>21</sup> H. W. Bateman, *Jude: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 100-101

<sup>22</sup> Sources: [https://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC\\_Jude.pdf](https://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Jude.pdf)

to Jesus. Furthermore, Jude designates himself as the “brother of James,” highlighting his familial relationship with James, who is believed to be a half-brother of Jesus and a prominent leader in the early Christian community.

Overall, understanding Jude's familial background and lineage provides insights into his identity and the context in which he addresses the recipients of his epistle,

“May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance” (verse 2)

Jude makes use of the greatest blessings from the heart of our God. He wants mercy, peace, and love to be theirs “in abundance.” Those who have been called “beloved” and “kept safe” are accorded “mercy” as well. Jude’s wish is for that beautiful peace which the world could never give but Christ has given us all. Finally, Jude wishes for the most indescribable love of our God. It is that *ἀγάπη* (love) of our God that gives and gives to those who do not deserve such generosity. Some interpret these wishes to be subjective. In other words, Jude is prodding his listeners into displaying these three qualities in an ever-increasing fashion. Focusing on the subjective nature to the exclusion of the objective would do a disservice to this verse, especially in light of the preceding inspiration. Jude sets a fine example here. Considering these two verses, Christians are called, loved, and kept safe in God and Christ Jesus. In the face of anything which might threaten us, these blessings are the foundation of our security.

Furthermore, Jude expresses his desire for abundant blessings from God for his listeners. He wishes for them to experience mercy, peace, and love in abundance. These blessings are not attainable through worldly means but are bestowed by Christ. Jude emphasizes the indescribable love of God, which is generously given even to those who do not deserve it. While some interpret these wishes as a call to action, urging listeners to demonstrate these qualities themselves, it is important to consider the objective nature of these blessings. Jude sets an example by highlighting that Christians are

called, loved, and kept safe by God and Jesus Christ. These blessings serve as the foundation of their security in the face of any threats

#### ***4.5.3 Purpose and Concern (Jude 1:3-4): pula tele and pula laititi***

*Pula tele* and *pula laititi* (part of the *va'a* design of the *tatau*) reflect the principal of caring, protection, and nourishment. It is not a care of exclusiveness or individualism but a care of inclusion and corporation. It is a protection for everyone. The *pula* design and its significance is reflected in verses 3 and 4 of Jude's narrative, which are suggested herein as the "clothing" design of Jude. These verses represent words of protection to his implied audience, his family of all believers in Jesus.

Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who were long ago were destined for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jud 1:3–4)

Can verse 3 and 4 highlight the meaning of protection for familial connection (*pula* clothing pattern)?

Verse 3 gives the impression that Jude held the believers (Christians) in high regard, referring to them affectionately as ἀγαπητοί (the loved ones). Jude uplifts them in their faith, focusing on the "salvation" that all must have. I believe this "salvation" is a reference to God's grace of redemption, which is available to all. Hence, Jude's urge for the believers (Christians) to stand firm in their faith and defend the gospel truths. The word ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι (contend) may also be used in this context.

Since the subject of παραδοθείση is not expressed, there are divergent opinions regarding the identity of the entrustment agent. The unexpressed subject might be God, or it very well may be the witnesses and their biblical lessons. The accentuation here is not on the creator, yet on the way that such liberation of the πίστις has occurred and it

has been finished ἄπαξ. This trustworthy piece would agree that there is a πίστις, which is adequate for God's kin, currently in the presence of Jude.

In verse 4, the situation deals with particular issues. Apparently, a slippery gathering of men had “slipped in” (intruders) among God's kin. The fact that these men gave the impression of belonging to the fold is what makes them so powerful. They probably worshiped alongside Christians and probably talked like Christians. However, they were subtly exposing their godless theology to unprotected followers. They were not going to fool God, even though they were deceiving the believers. Their verdict was written down a long time ago. However, one might think that such remarks are too restrictive. The action word joined with the πάλαι in the severe sense focuses on something of old nature. The prophecies on the table are not specified by the author. Jude simply leaves the door open for more general references to all of God's warnings against such evils in the Old and New Testaments.

There are two ways that Jude demonstrates these men's godlessness. First, they turned God's grace into a passcode for immoral behaviour. These men, in essence, displayed little concern for the lengths to which they would go to manipulate God's grace. Grace was being twisted into a justification for sin so God's grace got bigger the more they sinned. In denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord (last part of verse 4), these false teachers were not by any stretch of the imagination terrified of God's judgment on their wicked demonstrations. It is reasonable to conclude that such a person did not believe in Christ's second coming to judge the world.

These “certain intruders” mentality serves as a reminder that visible Christianity is still pervasive. As in Jude's time, this corruption has sneaked in amongst Christian fellowships with a constant presence and Christians must be on the lookout for grace's depraved incarnations.

Overall verses 3 and 4 are narrated principles that can be associated with the *va'a* design of the Samoan *tatau*, which resonates with the Samoan concept of *tautua* (service), as argued in this thesis. Other similarities between the narrative of Jude and the Samoan context expressed through the *tatau* include the principles of caring and protection. Jude seeks to safeguard the believers' faith and encourages them to contend in their faith in the face of false teachings. The principles of inclusion are also evident, highlighting the salvation shared by all believers and the need to be aware of deceptive influences within the community. These principles reflect the values of *pula* clothing pattern, emphasizing the importance of caring for and protecting one another while promoting inclusion and unity amongst Samoan faithful witnesses and adherence to Samoan custom.

#### ***4.5.4 Historical Examples and Description of False Teachers (Jude 1:5-19): 'aso fa'aifo and 'aso fa'alava***

The pattern of *'aso fa'aifo*, (bend, and curve lines) meaning curve lines of the *tatau*ing, representing rank and commitment, and *'aso fa'alava* “the transverse rafter that lies above the iliac crest and is accompanied by other lines. Altogether, both represent In this part of his letter, Jude provides a detailed description of the false teachers who have infiltrated the community in Jude and that Jude is “clothing” the community of Jesus’s followers in the first century, thus, providing them a sense of identity and hence warning against those infiltrating the community and preaching false teaching about the faith. Let see if verse 5 to verse 19 highlight a bending and transverse commitment in the text.

I will use the *au-solo* tool to stretch and clean biases and assumptions, and ask questions to gain a clearer understanding in the *'aso fa'aifo* and *'aso fa'alava* “clothing” of the text, and employ it as intertexture of SRI by asking question.

“I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” (Jud 1:5)

What is the significance of this reference to the exodus from Egypt? How does it relate to the warning against false teachers? What does the mention of destruction imply about the consequences of unbelief?

I set aside any preconceived notions and consider the context of the reference to the exodus from Egypt. Jude begins by reminding his readers of a historical event from their own sacred scriptures - the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. This historical event holds significant importance in the Jewish tradition, symbolizing God's deliverance and redemption of His people from bondage. By referencing this event, Jude highlights God's faithfulness in saving His people and His judgment against those who did not believe and rebelled against Him. Then questions given in this verse identify the reference to the exodus serves as a cautionary reminder to the readers that God's judgment follows disobedience and unbelief. Just as the Israelites faced consequences for their rebellion and lack of faith in the wilderness, false teachers who reject the truth and lead others astray will also face God's judgment. The warning against false teachers emphasizes the seriousness of their actions and underscores the need for the readers to remain steadfast in their faith and avoid being led astray.

This intertexture, reference to God saving the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt and subsequently destroying those who did not believe draws on the historical account of the exodus in the Old Testament (Exodus 12-14). It echoes the theme of God's faithfulness and judgment in response to unbelief, which is a recurring motif throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is important by evoking the exodus narrative; Jude emphasizes the consequences of unbelief and disobedience. He uses this historical example to war his readers about the seriousness of rejecting God's truth and following



false teachings. Just as God punished those who rebelled against Him in the past, Jude conveys that false teachers and their followers will face divine judgment for their unbelief.

And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day. (Jude 1:6)

What is the context of the angels leaving their proper dwelling? How does this connect to the theme of judgment and false teaching in Jude's letter? What does the reference to eternal chains and deepest darkness signify?

After stretching and cleaning away assumptions and consider the background of this reference to fallen angels and their punishment. Jude now shifts the focus to fallen angels who did not keep their proper position but abandoned their heavenly dwelling. Beyond Enoch's faithfulness and peculiar departure from this world not much else is known within the Old Testament canon. Within the New Testament, however, the epistle of Jude declares:

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: 'See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of this holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' (Jude 1:14-15).

This text that Jude quotes is taken from the pseudepigraphical work of the Book of Enoch which can be seen within the following text:

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of

all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken  
against Him. (I Enoch 1:9).<sup>23</sup>

This reference likely draws from extra-biblical Jewish traditions, such as the Book of Enoch, which elaborates on the sin of fallen angels, and the concept of angels leaving their proper domain raises questions about their rebellion against God's order and their subsequent punishment.

The context of fallen angels leaving their proper dwelling implies their rebellion against God's authority, similar to the false teachers' rejection of divine order. The reference to eternal chains and deepest darkness signifies their severe punishment, indicating that even powerful angelic beings are held accountable for their disobedience. This serves as a stark warning against false teachers who, like fallen angels, will also face divine judgment for their rebellion.

This verse alludes to the concept of fallen angels, specifically the account of rebellious angels found in, (Genesis 6) and other apocryphal texts like, (1 Enoch). It also resonates with passages in the New Testament that discuss the punishment of rebellious angels (e.g., 2 Peter 2:4). The significance of this intertexture connection, Jude uses the example of fallen angels to highlight the consequences of disobedience and the certainty of divine judgment. By connecting this reference to the judgment of the great Day, he underscores the eschatological context of his letter and the ultimate accountability of all beings before God.

Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)

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<sup>23</sup> R. H. Charles, tran., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (New York, NY: Clarendon Press, 1912), 8.

How does the example of Sodom and Gomorrah relate to the warning against false teachers? What does the punishment of eternal fire signify in this context?

Jude draws another example from Jewish history, referencing the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were notorious for their wickedness and sexual immorality. The destruction of these cities serves as a biblical archetype of divine judgment against unrepentant sin and rebellion. By using this historical event, Jude emphasizes the gravity of the consequences that await those who engage in similar sinful behaviour. Therefore, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah highlights the severity of God's judgment against sin and serves as a warning to false teachers who propagate immorality and ungodliness. The punishment of eternal fire signifies the everlasting nature of the consequences for those who persist in their rebellion against God. This imagery reinforces the urgency of heeding the warning and turning away from false teachings and sinful ways.

This intertexture reference, the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah recalls the account of their destruction in (Genesis 19). It also aligns with other biblical passages that condemn sexual immorality and unnatural desires (e.g., Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27). It is important that Jude uses the example of Sodom and Gomorrah to warn against the dangers of indulging in sinful desires and pursuing ungodly lifestyles. The reference to eternal fire underscores the seriousness of divine judgment and the consequences of rejecting God's moral standards.

Yet in the same way, these dreamers also defile the flesh,  
reject authority, and slander the glorious ones. (Jude 1:8)

What does it mean for the false teachers to defile the flesh and reject authority? Who are the “glorious ones” they slander, and how does this relate to their false teachings?

To stretch and wipe away any assumptions and consider the actions of the false teachers described in this verse. Jude describes the false teachers as individuals who defile the flesh, reject authority, and slander celestial beings. These actions reflect their rebellious and self-indulgent nature, as they disregard divine order and engage in slanderous behaviour towards heavenly beings, possibly angelic beings or spiritual authorities. Therefore, the false teachers' defiling of the flesh likely refers to their immoral conduct and indulgence in sinful desires, disregarding moral boundaries. Rejecting authority indicates their refusal to submit to divine authority and human leadership within the Christian community. The “glorious ones” they slander could refer to angelic beings or spiritual authorities, and their slanderous behaviour may be driven by their desire to undermine God's divine order and promote their false teachings.

But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil  
and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to  
bring a condemnation of slander against him but said,  
'The Lord rebukes you! (Jude 1:9)

What is the context of this dispute over the body of Moses? How does this example relate to the theme of false teaching and the authority of the Lord?

To stretch and wipe away any preconceived notions and consider the significance of the archangel Michael's dispute with the devil. Jude refers to a disputed situation between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses, which is not recorded in the canonical Hebrew Scriptures. This incident may have been drawn from Jewish traditions or apocryphal writings. The nature of the dispute is not explicitly explained, leaving room for interpretation and speculation. Furthermore, the exact context of the dispute over Moses' body is not fully known, but it likely revolves around matters of divine authority and judgment. The use of this example may emphasize the importance of respecting God's authority, even in spiritual conflicts. It may also serve as

a reminder that even celestial beings, like Michael, rely on the authority of the Lord and refrain from condemning the devil directly.

But these people slander whatever they do not understand,  
and they are destroyed by those things that, like irrational  
animals, they know by instinct. (Jude 1:10)

How does the slander of what they do not understand contribute to the destruction of these false teachers? What does it mean for them to be compared to irrational animals?

To stretch and wipe away any biases and consider the consequences of slander and lack of understanding. Jude characterizes the false teachers as individuals who speak against things they do not understand and act like irrational animals, relying on instinct rather than reason. Their actions reflect a lack of discernment and a willingness to slander and undermine what they do not comprehend fully.

Answer for the question interpretation, the false teachers' slander of what they do not understand may lead to confusion and division within the Christian community. By spreading false information and misrepresenting the truth, they jeopardize their own spiritual well-being and that of their followers. Comparing them to irrational animals emphasizes their lack of wisdom and insight, suggesting that their behaviour is driven more by instinctual impulses than by rational thought or sound judgment.

Woe to them! For they have set out on the same road as  
Cain and have abandoned themselves to Balaam's error  
for the sake of gain, and have perished in Korah's  
rebellion. (Jude 1:11)

What do these examples tell us about the false teachers' actions and motives? How do these historical figures serve as cautionary tales for the consequences of their behaviour?

To stretching and wiping this verse, Jude draws on three examples from the Hebrew Scriptures - Cain, Balaam, and Korah - to illustrate the consequences of rebellious actions and false teachings. Cain's jealousy and murder of his brother, Balaam's greed and deception, and Korah's rebellion against Moses' authority all serve as cautionary tales of the destructive outcomes of disobedience.

These examples warn against the false teachers' motives, which may include jealousy, greed, and a desire for power and control. Their actions align with the patterns of disobedience seen in Cain, Balaam, and Korah, making them susceptible to similar consequences. By invoking these historical figures, Jude emphasizes the gravity of the false teachers' actions and the seriousness of their rebellion against divine authority.

These are blemishes on your love-feasts, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by the winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, uprooted. (Jude 1:11)

How do these false teachers disrupt the love-feasts and the fellowship of believers?  
What does it mean for them to “feed themselves” without fear?

Jude warns that the false teachers have infiltrated the Christian community and participate in their love-feasts (Christian communal meals) without fear. This intrusion raises concerns about the potential harm they may cause to the fellowship and unity of believers. In the other hand, the answer of the questions given are the false teachers' presence may disrupt the love-feasts by introducing false teachings and divisive ideologies, leading to tensions and conflicts among believers. “Feeding themselves” without fear suggests that they act with selfish motives, seeking personal gain or influence rather than genuinely seeking the welfare of the Christian community.

Second part of this verse, how do these metaphors characterize the nature of the false teachers and their lack of spiritual substance? What does it mean for them to be described as “twice dead” and “uprooted”?

Jude employs vivid metaphors to describe the false teachers as waterless clouds and fruitless autumn trees, emphasizing their lack of substance and inability to fulfil their promises. Therefore, the metaphors highlight the false teachers' emptiness and inability to produce spiritual fruit. Describing them as “twice dead” suggests that they were spiritually dead even before they started teaching, and their false teachings lead to further spiritual death and decay. Being “uprooted” indicates that they lack a stable foundation and cannot provide genuine spiritual nourishment.

Wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own  
shame; wandering stars, for whom the deepest darkness  
has been reserved forever. (Jude 1:13)

I stretch and wipe away any preconceived notions and consider the significance of these additional metaphors by questioning the text, how do these metaphors emphasize the restless and destructive nature of the false teachers? What does it mean for them to face the reserved darkness forever?

After *toso* and *solo* away any preconceived notions and consider the significance of these additional metaphors. Jude continues with more metaphors, depicting the false teachers as "wandering stars" doomed to darkness. This imagery intensifies the notion of their restless and uncertain nature, as well as the bleak fate that awaits them.

The metaphors of "wandering stars" and "deepest darkness" reinforce the idea of instability and a lack of guiding principles among the false teachers. Their constant movement and lack of fixed positions signify their inability to provide reliable

guidance. Facing "reserved darkness forever" signifies the eternal consequences of their false teachings and deceptive ways, underscoring the severity of their judgment.

Intertexture Connection interpretation, the reference to Enoch's prophecy draws from non-canonical texts like 1 Enoch. Enoch's prophetic vision of the Lord's coming with His holy ones to execute judgment aligns with other apocalyptic texts that describe the day of the Lord and divine judgment (e.g., Daniel 7:9-10). The significance of Jude cites Enoch's prophecy, is to underscore the certainty of God's judgment on the ungodly. This is also emphasizes the eschatological nature of Jude's message and the need for believers to be vigilant and faithful in the face of false teachings.

Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, 'See, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (Jude 1:14-15)

To stretch and wipe it, who is Enoch, and how did he prophesy about the Lord's coming? What is the significance of Enoch's prophecy being mentioned here in Jude's letter? How does Enoch's prophecy align with other biblical eschatological themes, such as the Day of the Lord and divine judgment? What does it mean for the Lord to come with ten thousands of his holy ones? How does this imagery enhance our understanding of the event? How does the phrase "to convict every one of all the deeds of ungodliness" emphasize the all-encompassing nature of God's judgment? What is the meaning of "all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him," and how does it relate to the overall context of Jude's letter? Why does Jude find it important to include this specific prophecy from Enoch in his letter? How does Enoch's prophecy serve as a warning to false teachers and ungodly individuals?



Enoch was a significant figure in the genealogy of Adam, mentioned in (Genesis 5:21-24). He lived during a time of great ungodliness and moral decline. According to the Book of Enoch (an ancient Jewish apocalyptic text not included in the biblical canon but known to early Jewish and Christian communities), Enoch was known as a prophet who received divine revelations about the future, including the coming judgment of God. Therefore, Jude's inclusion of Enoch's prophecy underscores the seriousness of the false teachers' actions and the impending judgment they will face. By referencing this non-canonical text, Jude draws from the broader Jewish tradition to warn his readers about the consequences of ungodly behaviour and the certainty of divine judgment. Also, Enoch's prophecy aligns with various eschatological themes found in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the "Day of the Lord," a time of divine intervention and judgment. Similar themes are present in the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Joel, and other prophets who foretold God's coming judgment on ungodliness and sin.

The image of the Lord coming with ten thousands of his holy ones denotes a grand and awe-inspiring scene of divine intervention. It emphasizes the vast number of heavenly beings accompanying the Lord, possibly referring to angelic hosts or redeemed believers who will participate in God's final judgment. This imagery portrays the solemnity and magnitude of the event, leaving no room for escape from divine scrutiny. In the other hand, the phrase "to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness" emphasizes the comprehensive nature of God's judgment. No act of ungodliness will go unnoticed or unpunished. God's judgment will expose every deed of ungodliness, leaving no room for evasion or denial. This underscores the principle of divine justice, where every individual is held accountable for their actions.

The phrase "all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him" refers to the false teachers' blasphemous words and slanderous attacks against God and

His truth. Throughout Jude's letter, he addresses the ungodly behaviour and deceptive teachings of these individuals. By mentioning their spoken offenses against God, Jude highlights their arrogance and rebellion, reinforcing the severity of their judgment. Therefore, Jude's inclusion of Enoch's prophecy serves as a warning to his readers about the consequences of ungodly behaviour and false teaching. By referencing Enoch, an authoritative figure in Jewish tradition, Jude strengthens his argument about the certainty of divine judgment. He calls his audience to take heed and turn away from the path of the false teachers, emphasizing the urgency of repentance and fidelity to the true faith. Furthermore, Enoch's prophecy serves as a stern warning to false teachers and ungodly individuals that God's judgment is certain and inescapable. Their ungodly deeds and deceptive teachings will be exposed and held accountable. Enoch's example of prophesying about the Lord's coming judgement on ungodliness serves as a cautionary tale, urging the readers to resist the allure of false teaching and adhere to the genuine faith delivered to the saints.

Therefore, Enoch's prophecy reinforces the message of impending divine judgment and the seriousness of ungodly behaviour and false teaching. By incorporating this prophetic tradition, Jude strengthens his exhortation for his readers to remain faithful to the true faith and avoid the fate of those who face judgment for their ungodly deeds and words.

These are grumblers and malcontents; they indulge their own lusts; they are bombastic in speech, flattering people to their own advantage. (Jude 1:16)

I ask a question to the text, how do these descriptions reveal the deceptive and self-serving nature of the false teachers? How do they manipulate others for their own gain?

Therefore, Jude characterizes the false teachers as grumblers, malcontents, indulging their own lusts, and flattering people for personal gain. These descriptions reveal their self-serving and manipulative nature. In the other hand, the false teachers' grumbling and discontentment likely reflect their dissatisfaction with God's authority and His truth. Indulging their own lusts suggests that they prioritize their desires over serving God and His people. By flattering people for personal gain, they manipulate and deceive others to gain influence, financial support, or followers, highlighting their deceptive tactics.

This intertexture connect while this verse does not have direct intertexture connections, its content aligns with other New Testament passages that warn against false teachers and their deceptive tactics (e.g., 2 Peter 2:18-19, Philippians 2:14). It is important that Jude provides a vivid description of the behaviour and characteristics of false teachers. This intertexture connection reinforces the universality of the problem of false teachings in the early Christian communities and highlights the need for discernment and spiritual maturity.

It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are  
causing divisions. (Jude 1:19)

To stretch and wipe away any assumptions and consider the consequences of being worldly and devoid of the Spirit, I ask a question, how do these false teachers contribute to divisions within the Christian community? What does it mean for them to be devoid of the Spirit, and how does this impact their teachings and actions?

Jude concludes by emphasizing that these false teachers are worldly, lacking the Spirit, and causing divisions within the Christian community. The answers for the questions given, Jude identifies the false teachers' worldly and divisive nature likely leads to disagreements and conflicts within the Christian community. Being devoid of

the Spirit means they lack the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in their lives and teachings. As a result, their teachings are void of divine wisdom and insight, and they fail to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Intertexture Connection, the concept of being "devoid of the Spirit" is also found in other New Testament writings that discuss the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers (e.g., Romans 8:9, Galatians 5:16-25). The theme of divisions within the church is addressed by Paul in his letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). It is important by describing false teachers as worldly and devoid of the Spirit, Jude emphasizes the spiritual dangers they pose and their lack of genuine spiritual discernment. This intertexture connection underscores the importance of living according to the leading of the Holy Spirit and discerning the spirits to distinguish between truth and deception. The mention of divisions further highlights the destructive impact of false teachings on the unity of the church.

In conclusion, Jude's letter highlights *'aso fa'aifo* and *'aso fa'alava* clothing as a powerful warning against false teachers who have infiltrated the Christian community, and bending in commitment. Through the use of historical examples, vivid metaphors, and references to non-canonical texts like Enoch's prophecy, Jude paints a clear picture of the deceptive and self-serving nature of these individuals. He emphasizes the gravity of their actions and the certainty of divine judgment for those who lead others astray and indulge in ungodliness.

Jude's letter also underscores the importance of discernment and spiritual maturity within the Christian community. It calls believers to remain faithful to the true faith and to resist the allure of false teachings. By drawing on various intertextual connections

and biblical themes, Jude strengthens his message of the impending divine judgment and the need for accountability in the face of ungodliness, bending and transverse “clothing” to be aware off for his believers.

In a world where false teachings and divisions can threaten the unity of the church, Jude's letter stands “clothing” as a timeless reminder to stay grounded in the truth, guided by the Holy Spirit, and vigilant against those who would lead us away from the path of righteousness

#### ***4.5.6 Exhortation to Faithfulness (Jude 1:20-23): ‘aso tali’itu***

Furthermore, in this portion of the epistle, Jude provides exhortations to the believers, urging them to remain faithful and compassionate, which aligns with the pattern of ‘aso tali’itu in the *atoau* approach. In *tatau*, “clothing” ‘aso tali’itu represents strength, support, and compassion. Therefore, *au-solo* will stretch and wipe these verses in order to clarify the clear essence of strength, support and compassion in the text.

I ask a question whether if there are support, strength and compassion in verses 20 to 23 as exhortation to faithfulness to all believers?

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies. (Jude 1:20-23)

In verse 20, Jude continues with the things that will help believers fight the righteous battle. In the first place, he asks the adherents not to believe the people who might ruin the congregation. Rather, they were to develop themselves in the most sacred confidence. This is the objective faith that has already been mentioned as once for all entrusted to the saints in verse 3 and that the readers even now possess. They are going

to keep establishing themselves in this faith, which Jesus himself is the substance of it. Secondly, Jude desires a going petition *προσευχόμενοι* in the Essence of God. We frequently discussed the spherical use of *ἐν* at the Sum. I would recommend that understanding fits well here. The prayer that draws its power solely from and takes its cue from the Holy Spirit is the most effective and powerful. After all, he, the Spirit, is the one who instils faith in our hearts, directs us toward the truth of the Bible, and maintains that faith in the face of difficulty. We could firmly establish this as the centre of our prayer lives.

Verse 21, is additional affirmations of the Christian faith are provided. Keep! “Yourselves in God's love” refers to God's love for us rather than our love for God. The children of God are going to stand well for as long as they remain in that love. To elaborate more on this love, the words of Christ himself are heard clearly: “I have loved you as much as my father has loved me. Stay with my love now” (John 15:9). Moreover, Jude makes an appeal to the “Heaven is My Home” thirst that the Holy Spirit has given to believers in the Lord. He encourages an on-going expectation of our Lord's mercy, which will eventually lead to life eternal. The question is how valuable is the divine Book? How valuable are those words, *εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*? As mature servant hood of God, we frequently assist in the burial of our members and Christian friends' departed loved ones. A situation like this can be heart breaking. Such a situation would be unbearable notwithstanding these enlivened words *εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*.

In the beginning of verse 22 there is a heavy-duty corruption of the original manuscript. Thus conclude these readings are so diverse and difficult to untangle that we just might have a passage which is beyond “correction.” For me, I would suggest any interested parties walk through the approach of Michael Green in the Tyndale

Commentary series.<sup>24</sup> He leaves the door open to possibilities and yet makes a fine argument for going one way with this. Without wading through it here, I would say that I concur with Green's bottom line which is to opt for a triad rendering here. Jude has done so all along, why change our translating pattern in favour of rather weakly attested variants which do otherwise?

The first of three groups that Jude urged believers to approach responsibly is described in verse 22. Having praised Green's printed skill; I will turn on him and pick the action word *ἐλεᾶτε* as opposed to *ἐλέγγετε*. Even though there is a lot of evidence, the first reading is harder of the two. Jude seems to be pleading with believers to show mercy to those who are now questioning their faith. Sadly, false teaching does not hold back in taking victims. Jude would encourage those in the vicinity to actively and compassionately assist the wounded. In the light of *aso taliitu* clothing pattern, this is one of the common patterns that enforce by Jude in his letter; "clothing" with pattern of encouragement and compassion to strengthen the audience.

In verse 23, this is another group of people comes into focus when you read, "And save others, snatching them out of the fire." The terms *ἀρπάζω, ἐκ πυρός* are lively enough to suggest that these individuals have sunk so deeply that they will soon be helpless. Jude believes that the only way to save him at this point is to act swiftly and clearly. Such measures are frequently met with opposition; however, the devotee is to make the endeavour. After all, the distinction between being found and being lost is the subject of our discussion.

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<sup>24</sup> Green, Michael. *The Second Epistle General of Peter, and the General Epistle of Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 18. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987).

In addition, “and show empathy to other people, with dread,” sets before us a second-rate class of people. In reference to verse 22, the believers are urged to deal with them ἐλεᾶτε in the same manner as the first class; Nevertheless, there is a distinction here. These are to be shown dynamic, real sympathy, yet this is to be done “with dread,” ἐν φόβῳ. These appear to be the most distant of the group. It could be their way of life, their heresy, or both. But because they are so dangerous, Christians who try to get close to them run serious risks. Jude issues a severe warning to the Christian, advising them to be well aware of the risks of being led astray themselves.

Everything associated with their impurities should be zealously avoided μισοῦντες. True, the Christian has a new garment to offer, “a robe of righteousness” (cf. Zechariah 3:3ff and Revelation 3:4) and he will offer it, but he must not toy with or strike compromise with the evil which exists before him.

In the light of *‘aso taliitu*, Jude encourages the believers to develop themselves in sacred confidence, relying on the faith that has been entrusted to them. He emphasizes the importance of prayer in the Spirit, which brings strength and power. By praying in alignment with the Holy Spirit, believers can strengthen their faith and find guidance in the face of challenges. This pattern of *‘aso tali’itu* highlights the need for spiritual strength and support. Jude also reminds the believers to remain in God's love, acknowledging the significance of God's love for them. He encourages them to anticipate the mercy of the Lord, which leads to eternal life. This pattern of *‘aso tali’itu* emphasizes the importance of remaining steadfast in God's love and having hope in His mercy. Jude calls for compassion and mercy towards those who question their faith, urging believers to extend support and assistance to the wounded. He also emphasizes the urgency of saving others who are deeply immersed in destructive paths, requiring



swift and clear action. This pattern of *'aso tali'itu* reveals the compassionate and proactive attitude believers should adopt towards those in need.

In overall, the pattern of *'aso tali'itu* shed the light of words from a mature servant hood, about the importance of “clothing” his believers in strength, support, and compassion. It calls for a firm reliance on God's love, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the practice of empathy and mercy towards others.

#### **4.5.7 Benediction (Jude 1:24-25): *'aso laititi***

The Epistle of Jude concludes with a doxology, offering praise and glorification to God. This section can be associated with the pattern of *'aso laititi* in the *atoau* approach. From a *tatau* “clothing” perspective, *'aso laititi* represents the spar that supports the side and provides overall stability.

In order to stretch and clean these verses, I use *au-solo* to ask a question, whether stability and support is present in the text as a benediction to the epistle of Jude (Jude).

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

In verse 24 and verse 25, this is the doxology of the letter Jude fittingly closes his letter by engaging the person who is within reach for their assistance and insurance. The verse, “Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling,” reminds the readers and all of us that “set us up blameless before the presence of his glory” refer to God's omnipotence rather than any of our own power. Out of God's presence, you and I deserve the only presentation or setting up. However, what amazing grace! One day, you, I, and everyone else who places their faith in that blameless, spotless Lamb will

enter that glorious presence without having to immediately think, "Woe to me!" Unfortunately, our delight will be wild! It is going to be thrilling. God be praised!

The mind-set of this epistle has been eclipsed with restraint. A destructive danger had sprung up in this piece of Christ's Congregation: Souls purchased with blood were in grave danger. Manipulating the life-giving gospel, godless men had entered posing as reps of God. Jude must write with powerful language. He had to wake up the believers and put them on alert, so he had to sound the alarm. However, in the midst of all of this, he is able to conclude his letter with praise, confidence, and victory. There is nevertheless one God, and he is our Guardian angel. His glory, majesty, power, and authority are what can and will assist, heal, and save us for all time. All praise and glory belong to him alone!

Jude praises and glorifies God, acknowledging His wisdom and attributing glory, majesty, power, and authority to Him. By employing it with *'aso laititi*, Jude is "clothing" his believers with "support" and "stability" that God provides for them. He emphasizes God's ability to protect believers from stumbling and offers the assurance of eternal life. Through this pattern, Jude conveys a sense of security and confidence in God's faithfulness, providing support and encouragement to the readers. As in verse 24, Jude appeals to God's power to keep believers blameless before His glory, highlighting the grace that allows them to enter His presence. In verse 25 emphasizes that despite the dangers faced by the believers, there is one God who serves as their Guardian angel. Jude affirms God's ability to assist, heal, and save His people for eternity, giving Him all praise and glory.

## 4.6 Summary

The art of tattooing in the Samoan context is also deemed the “clothing” of the body. It is not to hide the “nakedness” of the body, but rather to give it form, shape, structure and most of all, identity and meaning. Evidently, there is a threat of infiltrators leading the community of faithful believers away from the teachings of Christ. Jude, therefore, is not just an admonition, but also “clothing” the believers against threatening forces. It is a reminder therefore of their identity as people who have been “clothed” in the mercy of God and living in Christ.

The concluding phase of the art of tattooing is the *samaga*. In the next chapter, I provide an overall outlook of the whole thesis including the main argument. From the *atoau* perspective, I argue that Jude is a “clothing” of the faithful believers to withstand the threat of infiltrators and false teachings that are causing divisions and troubles in the community.

## Chapter 5

### ***Samaga* – Bringing everything together**

#### 5.1 Introduction

The *samaga* constitutes a time to celebrate. A time also of blessings and encouragement as the art of tattooing underscores, responsibility and accountability. The *tatau* is not just for body adornment and beautification. Wearing the *tatau* comes with a sense of acute sensitivity to service and to identity. Drawn upon these Samoan wisdoms, an *atoau* approach looks for parallels and asks questions of the biblical text. I argue that Jude is concerned with “clothing” the faithful believers of the early church. Against the threat of infiltrators and false teachings causing great anxieties and divisions in the community, Jude stands as a *tatau* for the followers of Christ. It gives form, shape and identity to those who are uncertain and unsure in a time of division.

The *samaga*, therefore, brings everything together. The aim is to sum up everything in order to give the whole picture of re-reading Jude using an *atoau* approach. The Epistle of Jude also provides a valuable opportunity to explore ways to bring the Bible closer to the experience of the Samoan people. Using an *atoau* approach, this thesis blends certain aspects of the art of tattooing including the *au-sogiaso* to explore *taga faiaso*, *au-tapulu* for *taga tapulu*, *au-mono* for *taga atigivae*, and *au-solo* for *taga ulufusi* and *ulumanu*, with elements of sociorhetorical interpretation, to find parallels in cultural symbolism and motifs in Jude. Such blended approach can do much to help bridge the interpretive void between first century society and our modern Samoan society.

### 5.1.1 Using the *au-sogiaso*

In the *Taga Faiaso*- structural design and outline of Jude, an *atoau* approach provides a unique lens through which we can interpret *Taga faiaso* in the Epistle of Jude. By incorporating patterns such as *va'a*, *pula laititi*, *pula tele*, *'aso fa'aifo*, *'aso fa'alava*, *'aso taliitu*, and *'aso laititi*, we gain a deeper understanding of the structural design and meanings within each section of the epistle. These patterns help us uncover the author's intentions, the significance of historical examples, and the description of false teachers, exhortations to faithfulness, and the ultimate praise and benediction. An *atoau* approach adds depth and cultural context to our interpretation, enriching our understanding of the Epistle of Jude and its timeless message

### 5.1.2 Using the *au-tapulu*

Secondly, *taga tapulu*- these are major themes, therefore, an *atoau* approach using the *au-tapulu* tool helps us interpret the major themes that “clothing” the believers in the Epistle of Jude. The *tapulu* “clothing” of major themes of apostasy, contending for the faith, false teachers, God's judgment on the ungodly, and the need for discernment all play significant roles in conveying the message of the epistle. Understanding these themes helps “clothing” the believers remain vigilant, faithful, and discerning within the Christian community, while being aware of the consequences of ungodliness and the importance of standing firm in the true faith. The *fa'aila* within each *tapulu* pattern serves as the bright spots “clothing” that stands out prominently, guiding believers towards truth, and warning them of potential pitfalls along their spiritual journey.

### 5.1.3 Using the *au-mono*

Thirdly, *taga atigivae*- this is the area where we were looking at the historical background of the epistle of Jude in relation to *taga atigivae*, which is a set of pattern

behind the *tatau*. Therefore, an *atoau* approach indicates the *taga atigivae* within the Samoan *tatau* holds deep cultural symbolism and represents the responsibilities and obligations of the *tautua* within the community. By delving into the historical background of the Epistle of Jude and connecting it to the *taga atigivae*, *au-mono* details a richer understanding of the profound significance of this symbol. The *taga atigivae* serves as a visual representation of the *tautua*'s commitment to their role, their connection to the community and their surroundings, and their awareness of the spiritual dimensions of their responsibilities. Through an *atoau* approach, we can appreciate the cultural depth and spiritual significance of the *taga atigivae* within the context of the Epistle of Jude, strengthening the connection between Samoan values and the timeless message of faith service conveyed in the letter. In addition, the historical background of the Epistle of Jude lies within the early Christian movement of the first century AD. The letter addresses challenges faced by the early Christian community, such as the infiltration of false teachings and moral corruption. Drawing on Jewish and early Christian traditions, the author emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith and remaining steadfast. While the *taga atigivae* is a significant element within Samoan tattooing, it does have direct historical connection “clothing” to the Epistle of Jude. The *atoau* approach, while valuable for understanding Samoan cultural practices, is not commonly applied to biblical texts

#### **5.1.4 Using the *au-solo***

And lastly, *Taga ulufusi* and *ulumanu*- this is where we looking at the patterns within the text. These patterns convey a concept of *pe'a matua* (mature servant) can be applied to interpret the Epistle of Jude using of *au-solo* interpretive tools analysis in light of an *atoau* approach.

Mature Servant hood: The pattern of *pe'a matua* emphasizes maturity in servant hood. In the Epistle of Jude, we can interpret this concept by examining Jude's own role as a servant of Jesus Christ (Jude 1). As a mature servant, Jude writes with authority and urgency warning to the readers about the dangers of false teachings and urging them to contend for the faith (Jude 3). A mature servant understands their responsibility and remains faithful to their calling. Jude highlights the responsibility of believers to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). This pattern emphasizes the importance of faithful stewardship and active engagement in preserving the integrity of the Gospel.

The *pe'a matua* in the Epistle of Jude also value an extension of the apostolic teaching and a call for mature servant hood in preserving the purity of the Gospel. Similarities with 2 Peter: The Epistle of Jude shares similarities with the Second Epistle of Peter, particularly in addressing false teachers and their destructive influence. By examining the intertexture between these two letters, we can gain a deeper understanding of the concerns and messages shared by both authors. This analysis helps us interpret Jude's call for maturity in servant hood as a response to the challenges posed by false teachers.

In the other hand, connection to Judean/Jewish Background: The Epistle of Jude, believed to be written by Jude, the brother of James, carries a Judean or Jewish background. By considering the intertexture with Jewish literature and traditions, such as the concept of servant hood in Judaism, we can interpret the *pe'a matua* in the Epistle of Jude as rooted in the rich heritage of Judean/Jewish thought. Through the lens of an *atoau* approach, the concept of *pe'a matua* provides a framework to interpret the Epistle of Jude as a call for mature servant hood. This approach emphasizes the responsibility, faithfulness, and authority of believers in contending for the faith and guarding against

false teachings. By incorporating *au-solo* analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of Jude's role as a mature servant, the connection to apostolic teachings, and the Judean/Jewish background that informs the message of the letter.

Moreover, in the Samoan context, where *pe'a matua* refers to a *tautua* who has faithfully served his *matai* (chief) and his family throughout his life, we can interpret the Epistle of Jude in light of this understanding: Faithful Servant hood: The concept of *pe'a matua* emphasizes a lifetime of faithful service. In the Epistle of Jude, we can interpret this concept by considering the faithful and dedicated service of the believers to God and His people. Jude encourages believers to "build yourselves up in your most holy faith" (Jude 20) and to keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21). This inner textual pattern highlights the idea of continuous and committed service to God and the community of believers. Loyalty and Obedience: A *pe'a matua* demonstrates loyalty and obedience to their *matai*. In the context of the Epistle of Jude, believers are called to remain loyal to the teachings of Christ and to obey His commandments. Jude warns against the influence of false teachers and urges the believers to hold firmly to the faith once delivered to them (Jude 3). This inner textual pattern emphasizes the importance of unwavering loyalty and obedience to God and His Word. Servant Leadership: The concept of *pe'a matua* can be connected to the theme of servant leadership in the Epistle of Jude. In the letter, Jude confronts false teachers who have infiltrated the community of believers, emphasizing the need for leaders who faithfully serve and protect the flock. By examining the connections with passages on servant leadership, such as Jesus' teaching on servant leadership in Matthew 20:25-28, we can interpret Jude's call for mature servant hood as a call for leaders who exemplify faithful and selfless service.

Addition, Communal Responsibility: In the Samoan context, *pe'a matua* implies a strong sense of communal responsibility. Similarly, in the Epistle of Jude, believers are



called to contend for the faith together, standing firm against false teachings and supporting one another in the midst of challenges. The intertexture of communal responsibility in the Epistle of Jude encourages believers to unite in their commitment to serve and protect the community of faith. By incorporating the Samoan context of *pe'a matua*, we can interpret the Epistle of Jude as a call for believers to embody faithful and lifelong service to God and His people. This interpretation highlights the themes of loyal obedience, servant leadership, and communal responsibility within the context of the Samoan cultural understanding.

## 5.2 Summary

In summary, an *atoau* approach incorporates the Samoan *tatau* tradition and focuses on different aspects of the epistle, including *Taga faiaso*, *Taga tapulu*, *Taga atigivae*, and *Taga ulufusi and ulumanu*. The *Taga faiaso*, which explores the structural design and outline of Jude, is interpreted through an *atoau* approach by incorporating specific patterns such as “*va'a*,” “*pula laititi*,” “*pula tele*,” “*'aso faaifo*,” “*'aso fa'alava*,” “*'aso taliitu*,” and “*'aso laititi*”. These patterns provide a deeper understanding of the author's intentions, historical examples, and themes within each section of the epistle.

The *Taga tapulu* represents major themes in the Epistle of Jude, and the *au-tapulu* tool of an *atoau* approach helps interpret these themes. The patterns of apostasy, contending for the faith, false teachers, God's judgment, and the need for discernment play significant roles in conveying the message of the epistle. The *fa'aila* within each *tapulu* pattern serves as guiding points, leading believers towards truth and warning them of potential pitfalls. The *taga atigivae*, connected to the historical background of the epistle, holds deep cultural symbolism and represents the responsibilities of the *tautua* within the community. By exploring the connection between the Epistle of Jude and the *taga atigivae*, a richer understanding of the symbol's significance is gained. The

*taga atigivae* represents the *tautua's* commitment, connection to the community, and spiritual awareness. Through the *Atoau* approach, the cultural depth and spiritual significance of the *taga atigivae* within the context of the Epistle of Jude are appreciated. The *taga ulufusi* and *ulumanu* represent patterns within the text, specifically conveying the concept of *pe'a matua* (mature servant). This concept can be applied to interpret the Epistle of Jude, highlighting the author's role as a mature servant and emphasizing responsibility, faithfulness, and authority in contending for the faith.

The Epistle of Jude also shares similarities with the Second Epistle of Peter and carries a Judean/Jewish background. By examining inter-textual connections with Jewish literature and traditions, an *atoau* approach helps interpret the letter as a call for mature servant hood rooted in Judean, Jewish thought. In the Samoan context, the interpretation of *pe'a matua* relates to faithful servant hood, loyalty, obedience, servant leadership, and communal responsibility. These concepts are aligned with the themes present in the Epistle of Jude, encouraging believers to serve God and His people faithfully.

Overall, an *atoau* approach provides a comprehensive framework to interpret the Epistle of Jude, incorporating cultural symbolism, historical background, and inter-textual connections. This approach enriches the understanding “clothing” of the letter's themes and their relevance in both the Samoan cultural context and the broader context of the early Christian movement.

## Conclusion

This thesis is a re-reading of Jude using an *atoau* hermeneutical approach which draws inspiration from the Samoan ritual and art of tattooing. To follow the growing trend of employing cultural and contextual elements as hermeneutical lenses, I find the opportunity to explore the biblical text based on an indigenously-derived approach drawn from my social location. In that regard, an *atoau* approach embodies also my sense of who I am as a *tautua* in my *aiga* (family), in my *nuu* (village), and in my *aulotu* (parish). It is a blended approach that embraces the wisdom in using western tools for reading the bible, and wisdom drawn from the experience and philosophies of my indigenous frame of reference, the *fa'a-Samoa*.

Drawing inspiration from the Samoan ritual and artwork of tattooing, an *atoau* approach offers a creative and indigenous framework for interpreting the biblical text. In re-reading Jude, I argue that Jude offers admonitions and encouragement to the growing members of the early church, against the threat of false teachings causing divisions. From an *atoau* approach, Jude is a “clothing” of the faithful followers of Christ. *Tatauing* for Jude carries a great responsibility, commitment and steadfast faithfulness in the love of Christ. As a methodological approach, each tool within the *atoau* framework represents a specific location for interpretation, such as providing context, analysing linguistics and translations, exploring gaps within the text, asking questions, providing support, and considering practical applications.

The blended *atoau* interpretive framework combines indigenous wisdom with elements derived from western epistemology, offering a holistic and creative approach to biblical interpretation. It encourages attention to detail, tracing the narrative, clearing obstacles, providing contextual support, and considering practical applications of the biblical text. Through an *atoau* approach, individuals can actively participate in

constructing meaning, contributing to the richness of the text, and promoting personal and communal growth.

I submit though that an *atoau* approach has its limitations, one in particular is its contextual specificity to the Samoan culture. Nevertheless, an *atoau* approach provides a valuable lens through which to approach biblical interpretation. Its potential to shed light on various genres, characters, and theological concepts is evident through case studies and exemplars.

Re-reading the Epistle of Jude using an *atoau* hermeneutical approach has provided valuable insights into the profound significance of this biblical text. By incorporating the Samoan *tatau* tradition and focusing on different aspects of the epistle, including *taga faiaso*, *taga tapulu*, *taga atigivae*, and *taga ulufusi* and *ulumanu*, this study provides the chance to explore the Bible from the perspective of a Samoan *tautua*. From this perspective, one gains greater appreciation of the notion of *pe'a matua* (mature servant) in the text of Jude.

The Epistle of Jude, believed to have been written by Jude, the brother of James, carries a Judean or Jewish background. By considering the intertextuality with Jewish literature and traditions, such as the concept of servant hood in Judaism, we have interpreted the *pe'a matua* in the Epistle of Jude as rooted in the rich heritage of Judean/Jewish thought. Through an *atoau* approach, the concept of *pe'a matua* provides a framework to interpret the Epistle of Jude as a call for mature servant hood, emphasizing responsibility, faithfulness, and authority of believers in contending for the faith and guarding against false teachings. These are the “clothing” warranted of true followers of Christ.

The application of an *atoau* approach has shed light on various aspects of the Epistle of Jude. The *taga faiaso*, representing the structural design and outline of Jude,

has been interpreted through the *atoau* approach by analysing specific patterns. These patterns, such as “*va’a*,” “*pula laititi*,” “*pula tele*,” “*’aso fa’aifo*,” “*’aso fa’alava*,” “*’aso taliitu*,” and “*’aso laititi*,” have provided a deeper understanding of the author's intentions, historical examples, and themes within each section of the epistle. This structural analysis helps us uncover the author's message and the significance of false teachers, exhortations to faithfulness, and ultimate praise and benediction.

The *taga tapulu*, representing major themes in the Epistle of Jude, has been interpreted using the “*au-tapulu*” tool of the *atoau* approach. The patterns of apostasy, contending for the faith, false teachers, God's judgment on the ungodly, and the need for discernment have played significant roles in conveying the message of the epistle. By understanding these themes, believers are encouraged to remain vigilant, faithful, and discerning within the Christian community, while being aware of the consequences of ungodliness and the importance of standing firm in the true faith.

The *taga atigivae*, connected to the historical background of the Epistle of Jude, holds deep cultural symbolism and represents the responsibilities and obligations of the *tautua* within the community. By delving into the historical background of the epistle and connecting it to the *taga atigivae*, we have gained a richer understanding of the profound significance of this symbol. The *taga atigivae* serves as a visual representation of the *tautua's* commitment to their role, their connection to the community and their surroundings, and their awareness of the spiritual dimensions of their responsibilities. Through the *atoau* approach, we have appreciated the cultural depth and spiritual significance of the *taga atigivae* within the context of the Epistle of Jude, strengthening the connection between Samoan values and the timeless message of faith and service conveyed in the letter.

The *taga ulufusi* and *ulumanu*, representing patterns within the text, have conveyed the concept of *pe'a matua* (mature servant). By applying some of the interpretive tools in light of the *atoau* approach, we have highlighted the author's role as a mature servant, emphasizing responsibility, faithfulness, and authority in contending for the faith. The themes of loyal service, obedient servant hood, servant leadership, and communal responsibility align with the Samoan understanding of *pe'a matua*, reinforcing the cultural and theological connections between the Epistle of Jude and the Samoan *tatau* tradition.

Overall, an *atoau* hermeneutical approach offers an innovative and culturally sensitive methodology and interpretive framework for re-reading the Epistle of Jude. It serves as a reminder that there are diverse and creative ways to engage with the biblical text, taking into account one's unique cultural and contextual background. As scholars and learners continue to explore and develop different hermeneutical lenses, including an *atoau* approach, we can foster a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the Scriptures. By actively participating in the interpretation of the Word of God, we promote personal and communal transformation and contribute to the on-going conversation surrounding biblical interpretation.

An *atoau* approach, incorporating the Samoan *tatau* tradition, has provided a comprehensive and culturally enriched understanding of the Epistle of Jude. By analysing the structural design, major themes, historical background, and the concept of *pe'a matua*, we have gained a deeper appreciation for the profound significance of this biblical letter. An *atoau* approach enables us to view the Epistle of Jude through a Samoan lens, aligning the values of faith and service within the Christian context with the rich cultural heritage of Samoa. This interdisciplinary exploration provides an opportunity to ask questions drawn from one's social location to engage with the

biblical text. Such an engagement is essential in our attempt to find relevance for believers in both a biblical and Samoan cultural context.

## Appendix

**Table 1: Patterns and Meanings in a Tatau**

Patterns	Meanings
Alualu	<i>Tama faapelepele.</i> A man should care for the sake of his family.
‘Aso faaifo	<i>Soo tino o le aiga.</i> Represents an excellent reconciliatory in a family
‘Aso talitu	<i>Malosi o le aiga, maimoa toatasi o le aiga.</i> The strength of the family, or the right hand of the family in anything.
Atigivae	<i>Tulaga maulalo o se tamatane.</i> A man should honor, respect, and be kind with generosity. This is also the set of patterns behind the thighs of the <i>pe’a</i> , which indicates <i>tautua</i> from behind the seen.
Ulumanu	<i>Faugafale. Lelei le faufale.</i> Represent a man as a builder, or carpenter
Umaga/punialo	<i>Punitia o le maasiasi.</i> To avoid humiliation.
Faaatualoa-sa	<i>Usugafa mo le mamalu o aiga.</i> a Samoan male seeks an honorable child bearer to honor his genealogy
Faaatualoa-tasi	<i>Va feagai o le tama ma lona tuafafine.</i> Highlight respect between a brother and his sister.
Faaila	<i>Lelei fale.</i> Identify a man as a builder of a family.
Faaululaufao	<i>O se aiga mau.</i> This represents the family having enough supplies. E.g., plantations
Faaulutao	<i>Tautua i tauā poo le tatu’i i malae.</i> Represent sacrificial life
Faamatāupega	<i>E le soli aiga.</i> Represent shameful life if the man doesn’t respect his genealogy lineage.
Faamulialiao	<i>Faaa’e le tai.</i> Represent fishing life
Faapefu	<i>Aiga malamalama.</i> Represent genealogy lineage.
Faatalalaupaogo	<i>Tamaoiga o se aiga.</i> A supplier for the economy of the family.
Faavae ‘ali	<i>Aluga-tofa o alii.</i> Samoan pillow for high chief.
Faavala	<i>Tausiga o le va tuutuu nonofo o tagata.</i> This represents relationship in a Samoan family.
Fusi	<i>Atoaga o le faiva ole tautai.</i> A man represent as a mediator for his family.
Gogo	<i>Faiva faatama tane o le gataifale</i> represents the fishing man.
Pe’a	<i>Tama-sa</i> represents relationship boundaries between a man and his family, village councils, and other people respectfully.
Pulatama / pula	<i>Malu ole alii/faiā/gafa.</i> A man is the security of all family identities, for example, land, titles, and everything in the family environment.
Pute	<i>Ola ma le oti mo le aiga.</i> Pute represents the life of a family.
Saemutu	<i>Mutaaga o le tautua leaga.</i> The <i>pe’a</i> represents new life for a man from whatever obstacles in life that came through from the past. Or reconciliation.
Selu	<i>Toaga e ta mea e faaoga i aso uma.</i> This represents a man as a sculpture in a family.
Sigano/faasigano	<i>Toaga e faamama ma faamatagofie meauma.</i> This represents the cleanness of the family environment.



Tafani	<i>Siosiomaga</i> . Represent a man and his connection with his surroundings.
Tapulu	<i>Auli ma vali mea faaletonu</i> . <i>Tapulu</i> represents love; whatever obstacles and tribulations in the family, the <i>tautua</i> must resolve and heal all these problems with generosity and love.
Vaa/vaataumalua	<i>Aumoega o le vaataumalua</i> reminds the root of the arrival of <i>tatau</i> i Samoa from Fiji by the twin sister Taema and Tilafaiga. The message for the Samoan man must have built canoes for the family—a canoe to serve a family for fishing, paddle around villages for trades, etc.

**Table 2: Patterns and Meanings in a Malu (Female leg tattoo)**

Types of Pattern	Patterns	Meanings
Atua anamua/ <i>gods spirit</i>	<i>Faaanufe, faaatualoa, vaetuli, gogo, gogo moelua, gogo togitogi</i>	God's spirit that people worship before the arrival of Christianity.
Fala ma Toga/ <i>mats</i>	<i>Faatalalaupaogo, faasigano, faatala.</i>	weaving
Faugafale/ <i>building houses</i>	<i>'aso, 'aso moelua, 'aso laiti, 'aso togitogi</i>	I am helping a builder as a wife and weaving fetch, etc.
Meataulima/ <i>handicraft</i>	<i>Faa'ali, faaila, faaulutao</i>	Saving properties
Sami/ <i>ocean</i>	<i>Alualu, faaaveau, faaaupega, faamulialiao</i>	Women also fishing
Siosiomaga/ <i>environment</i>	<i>Malu, fetu/faafetu</i>	Must know how to read the weather, stars, moon

## Glossary

Atoau/ tuluma/ tunuma	tattooing point toolkit
Tatau/ pe'a	tattoo
Tautua	servant
Aiga	family
Nuu	village
Aulotu	parish
Tautuaileva	service in between spaces
Autalaga	peel and sort
Au talatala	explain
Tulou	excuse
Fāiā	connection
Feagaiga	covenant
Autā	tattoo stiker
Lama Samoa	Samoan ink
Lama susunu	burning ink/ benzene ink
Lama papalagi	Indian ink
Lama aveva	sacred ink
Aitu	ghost/ evil spirit
Nofotāne	married women living in the husband estate
Au	needle/ point
Aiā	right
Au mono	caulking tool
Au sogoaso	lining tool
Au tapulu	painting tool
Solo	wiping/ clothe
Sa	prohibition
Toso	puller
Au tufuga	tattooing assistants
Tufuga	master tattooist
Tapuai	supporters
Tapua'i i le afi	watched over flames
Siapo	tapa clothe
Lagotaafi	pillow
Sausau	mallet
Vaa	canoe
Pula laititi	caring your nuclear family
Pula tele	caring your extended family
'aso	rafter
'aso moelua	two sleeping lines
'aso fa'aifo	curve lines/ rafter
'aso fa'alava	transverse rafter
'aso laititi	small lines signify support
'aso taliitu	supporting lines on the side
Taga tapulu	dark area
Taga atigivae	striking toes nail
Faaila	high spot
Taga ulufusi ma ulumanu	background patterns of tataua

Samaga  
Fusi  
Ulumanu  
Pe'a matua

bringing everything together, last part of tattoo  
ribbon  
birds head  
mature servanthood

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## Interviews

Interview with Su'a Lafaele Suluape on October 22/22.

Interview on October 22/22 Su'a Wilson Fitiao

Interview on October 22/22, Su'a Wilson Fitiao

This interview with Su'a Suluape Lafaele on October 22/22

This is the interview with Faalili Lafaele Suluape on October 25/22