

**A *TAULE'ALE'A* READING OF
NUMBERS 26: 52 – 56**

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the Malua Theological College
Apia

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

by

Nu'ufaigatā Peleiupu Mulipola

July 2020

**CONSENT FORM FOR THE RETENTION AND USE OF THE
THESIS**

I, *Nu'ufaigatā Peleiupu Mulipola,*

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of the Lands and Titles Bill 2020, the issue of alienation of Samoa customary land has once again resurfaced. For the opposition of this Bill, their argument is, the Bill will endorse the alienation of customary land. They claim that this Bill will increase the power of the Government and the *matai Sa'o* to deal with the use and/or lease of customary land, without the consensus or approval of the extended family.

This thesis endeavours to address this issue from reading the biblical passage of Numbers 26:52-56, which talks about the allocation and distribution of land to the Israelites when they reached the Promised Land. Moreover, this reading of Numbers 26:52-56 will be informed by a Samoan hermeneutics called *taule'ale'a*. My use of the *taule'ale'a* perspective is intentional. Currently, discussion and consultation in the villages about the Bill involves mostly the *matai* as representatives of families. This research provides an opportunity for the *taule'ale'a* to have a voice and perspective in the discussions. This is important because the acquisition and loss of customary land impacts greatly on the roles and functions of a *taule'ale'a* within a family as well as in the village.

It is my hope that this *taule'ale'a* reading of Numbers 26:52-56 will provide relevant meanings for a Samoan reader of the Bible. This reading will also give Samoan readers a biblical and theological basis for understanding the impact of the Lands and Titles Bill 2020 on ownership and rights to customary land.

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 this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife and daughter

La'ala'ai Mulipola and Anniversary Nu'ufaigata

For taking this journey together as a family with me.

Also to my parents and siblings

Paiutu Peleupu Mulipola and To'aiva Mulipola

Puaseisei, Vaituia, Fa'amati, Taunuu, Saili, Lafoga, Elija and

To'aiva Blessing

And to my dearest uncle (whom I am named after) who is still battling with
cancer.

(May God's healing power be upon him)

Nu'ufaigata Mulipola

And to all my families in Samoa and overseas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	viii
List of Abbreviations	x
Introduction	1
The Issue – Lands and Titles Bill 2020 (Bill)	2
Purpose and Aims of the Study	4
Methodology and Perspective	5
Text Selection	6
Thesis Structure	6
Chapter One <i>Methodology and Hermeneutic</i>	8
Introduction	8
1.1 A brief background	8
1.2 <i>Taule'ale'a</i> as Hermeneutic and Perspective	11
1.2.1 A Definition	11
1.2.2 Roles and Functions	13
1.3 Historical Criticism	15
Summary	16
Chapter Two <i>The Book of Numbers: A Historical Background</i>	17
Introduction	17
2.1 Historical Background	17
2.1.1 History of the Text	18
Summary	23
Chapter Three <i>Exegesis and Taule'ale'a reading of Numbers 26: 52 – 56</i>	25
Introduction	25
3.1 Priestly (P/H) view of land	25
3.2 Exegesis of Numbers 26:52-56	26
3.3 A <i>Taule'ale'a</i> Reading of Numbers 26:52-56	29
Summary	31
Conclusion	33
A. Lands and Titles Bill 2020 and <i>Taule'ale'a</i> Reading of Numbers 26:52-56	33
B. <i>Taule'ale'a</i> Reading and Island Criticism	34
C. Relevance to EFKS Ministry	35

Glossary	36
Bibliography	37

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank God for His wisdom, knowledge, understanding and guidance that have helped me to complete this work. I know I have achieved and abled to complete this journey because of HIS continuous presence. HE has given me the strength and ability to handle all the difficulties and problems while working on this paper. To GOD be the glory now and forever more.

I am grateful to the assistance and patience of my supervisor Rev. Makesi Neemia for making this work possible. Thank you for your time, commitment, wisdom and knowledge that you have shared with me during this whole time while working together. Also, I thank you for the encouragement that gave me strength to work till the end of this research.

I also acknowledge with a sincere heart the great contribution given by my spiritual parents in Malua, the Principal, Rev. Ma'afala Limā and *Tinā* Lalokava, especially for encouraging me to never lose focus on what I wanted to achieve. I pray for God's blessing to be upon you in your work and ministry in Malua. *Malo le faalototele ma le faalaeiau!*

To my dear wife La'ala'ai and daughter Anniversary, *fa'amalo ma fa'afetai* for your prayers and support in so many ways. I believe, you have helped in maintaining my self-esteem and confidence, especially in difficult times during my research. Now we have completed this work together, and we glorify God for His never ending love upon us all.

Lau *Susuga* Rev. Talosaga ma le faletua ia Neta Hitila, of the EFKS Tutoatasi Church in Siutu, we are so thankful for your never wavering support and especially for your prayers. Also, we are grateful for the continuous support of Rev. Sepi and *faletua*

ia Meafou Gafa of the CCCS Solosolo which enabled us to complete our studies here in Malua. Fa'afetai le alolofa!

I also want to say thank you to all my families here in Samoa and abroad for your support and prayers. *Faafetai le agalelei! Malo le Tatalo!* Finally, I sincerely thank my dear parents in Savaii. Thank you so much for your words of encouragement, prayers, and continuous support which always bring hope and comfort in our journey here in Malua, and especially in completing this thesis. *E le galo lo oulua alolofa!*

To end, I want to say a special thank you to my dear uncle, whom I am named after, for his wise words and encouragement. Hope our good Lord will heal you as you battle with cancer. *Faamanuia le Atua!*

I strongly believe, without God, and without all of your help, prayers, and support, this work would not have come to its fruition. To you all, I dedicate this thesis.

Faafetai Alofa! Malo le Tapuai!

List of Abbreviations

EFKS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
HS	Holiness School
LTRA 2008	Land and Title Registration Act 2008
MTC	Malua Theological College
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

Introduction

In 2008, the Government introduced the Lands and Titles Registration Act (LTRA) 2008 which attracted a lot of criticism from the people of Samoa. The main reason behind this Act was the Government's drive for customary land to be made available for lease to interested investors. The main argument put forward by the Government was the numerous financial benefits for the people of Samoa if their customary lands are leased out. However, the Samoa Constitution¹ and existing Acts² concerning customary lands prohibit customary lands to be leased out for economic purposes such as commercial business and so forth. This is why the Government proposed the LTRA 2008, to allow business dealings on customary lands.³

Critics and opposition argued that the LTRA 2008 would allow customary land to be alienated. The Government vigorously defended their position, claiming that the LTRA 2008 would not affect the ownership or authority of Samoans over their customary lands, because they are protected and secured under the Samoa Constitution.

The Lands and Titles Bill 2020 (hereinafter called 'Bill') has revived this same controversy with regards to the authority or rights of the *aiga potopoto* on customary land through the Bill.⁴ In this thesis I will endeavour to explore the issue of the Bill and its impact on ownership and rights to customary land from a *Taule'ale'a* perspective. I will

¹Article 102. "No Alienation of Customary Land." *The Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa* (2005);

²*Land Act 2013*; Part 2(a): Leasing and Licensing *Alienation of Customary Land Act 1965*.

³See Esera Esera, "An Economic-Political Reading of 1 Kings 21:1-4 in Light of the LTRA 2008 Controversy." (BTh Thesis Malua Theological College, 2018)

⁴Lanuola Tusani Tupufia-Ah Tong, "Land and Titles Courts overhaul could redefine land." *Samoa Observer* found in www.samoobserver.ws/category/samoa/61927 accessed 28.07.20.

also attempt a reading of a particular Old Testament text using the Samoan *Taule'ale'a* as lens to provide a biblical perspective on the issue.

The Issue – Lands and Titles Bill 2020 (Bill)⁵

The Bill is the current issue that raises many questions and concerns from the Samoan public. They have raised and expressed their frustration against this Bill especially its implications on the *Pule* (authority or ownership) of a *matai* or chiefly title and customary land. For the people, *matai* titles and customary land are some of the most important possessions of Samoan families; they are *measina* or valuable treasures which are to be embraced and protected at all costs.

As mentioned above, the latest Act that had direct impact on customary land was the LTRA 2008. The LTRA 2008, not only required all customary land to be surveyed, but registered as well. All this information was to be registered and kept in a Government Registry secured at the Government's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The change to compulsory registration of a legal description of surveyed land under an owner was because the process had now been changed from a Deeds system to the Torrens system. The Torrens system requires a name of the owner and a legal description of the land he owns; for this purpose, proper survey of all lands including customary land must be carried out for registration. The Deeds system does not require these details.⁶

⁵The Lands and Titles Bill 2020 has completed its second reading in Parliament. It is part of the three Bills proposed by the Samoa Government that deal with some changes in the Samoa Constitution, Lands and Titles Court (LTC) Act, and Lands and Titles Registrations Act. The final stages of consultations are now in progress. Many individuals, villages, and organizations, both local and international, are raising concerns about the impact of these Bills to human rights, customary ownership of land, the power of the Government to choose and dismiss judges in the LTC Court and so forth. Therefore, there is a chance that the Bills might be postponed or cancelled. However, given that the Bills have passed their first and second readings in Parliament, it is most probable that they will be passed and become Acts in their third reading.

⁶Ruipin Ye, "Torrens and Customary Land Tenure: A Case Study of the Land Titles Registration Act 2008 of Samoa." *University of Wellington Law Review*, no. 40 (2009); R. Crocombe, R. and Malama Meleisea (eds), *Land Issues in the Pacific*. (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1985); Fingleton, J. *Privatising*

It was in these details of land registration under the Torrens system that most Samoans rejected the LTRA 2008. Their main concern was that the LTRA 2008 would provide a loophole for customary lands to be alienated. The registration of the family land under the *matai Sa'o*⁷ would likely give sole authority to him and his heirs over the land, but not the *aiga potopoto* (extended family). Furthermore, the *matai Sa'o* would have the authority over the land without the consensus of the *aiga potopoto*. In other words, the legality of any dealings regarding the use of the registered customary land only requires the signature of the *matai Sa'o* and without consensus of the *aiga potopoto*.

The Bill, according to the protestors, will further increase the possibility of alienation of customary land. In other words, the Bill will give too much power to the Government. Apart from other implications, this power will greatly impact on *matai* titles. Since the Government will have power to interfere on how a family chooses their title holders from time to time. This is especially true for the number of people a family wishes to appoint. The Bill stipulates a fixed number for the bestowal of the *matai* title at one time, and in some cases the Government will choose the person for the *matai* title, not the family. So a family cannot select more than what the Government specifies in the Bill; this does not take into consideration an expanding family with more lines of descent who are entitled to the *matai* title. Opposition to the Bill believe the right to choose the number of people and whomever the family sees fit for the title must be the prerogative of the family, not the Government or anyone else for that matter.

Furthermore, the limitations on *matai* title holders will allow an individual or a small number of *matai* to control the legal ownership of a family's customary land. The Bill

Land in the Pacific: A Defence of Customary Tenures, The Australia Institute, Discussion Paper No. 80, 2005 found at www.tai.org.au, last accessed 20 June 2014.

⁷The *matai Sa'o* is the highest rank chief of the family. He is the head *matai* of the family who is responsible for making final decisions within the family. He is also the spokesperson for the family in the Village Council.

will enable the individual *matai* or *matai Sa'o* to entertain the possibility of becoming the sole legal owner(s) of family land when the land or lands are registered under their names. In this regard, ownership and rights to land of the extended family will be greatly threatened.

Purpose and Aims of the Study

It is the impact of the Bill upon ownership and rights to customary land that I would like to explore further. As someone who was a *taule'ale'a*⁸ and performed the roles of a *taule'ale'a* before coming to Malua, some of the questions about this Bill come to mind: What does the Bill and its impact on land mean from the perspective of a *taule'ale'a*? What does land or acquiring land mean to a *taule'ale'a*? What does the threat of losing land mean to a *taule'ale'a*? How would this Bill impact the roles and functions of a *taule'ale'a*? These are some of the questions that I want to seek answers to. Also, I want to use this opportunity to give a voice of a *taule'ale'a* in this conversation about the Bill and its impact on customary land. This is because most of the discussions and deliberations about the Bill involve only the *matai* as head of families and villages.

Moreover, given that I am a theological student and am currently studying the bible; I am also interested in what the bible has to say regarding my questions about land from the perspective of a *taule'ale'a*. This is why I wish to engage with this issue, so that in the end, I hope to understand more about this issue as well as the Bill from a *taule'ale'a* perspective. Moreover, I want to use the same *taule'ale'a* perspective to read a particular biblical text to provide Samoans with a biblical perspective on the above issue.

⁸*Taule'ale'a* in this sense refers to not only the term for an untitled young man but also implies the roles of being a *taule'ale'a*.

Methodology and Perspective

As I have mentioned above, my interest lies in both the Samoan context and the Bible. My methodology, therefore, will take into account the Samoan context and the context of the selected biblical text.

a. Samoan Context

In exploring the Samoan context, I will use the *taule'ale'a* perspective to read the issue of the Bill. I will explain and define *taule'ale'a* by giving its meaning, roles and functions, and its significance within the Samoan social setting. I will then use aspects of its meaning and roles to highlight the impact of the Bill on the people of Samoa, especially in relation to customary land.

b. Biblical Context

Historical Criticism will be used to explore the biblical text, with special focus on the *History of the Text*. Hayes and Holladay explain, “[The *History of the Text*] includes the situation out of which the text arose—both of the author and the audience.”⁹ Therefore, this exploration will focus on the social and historical background of the author, readers and audience of the text. In addition, it will venture into the issue of land in this given background.

c. Samoan Reading of the Biblical Text

My *taule'ale'a* perspective will be applied in a reading of Numbers 26:52-56 to address this issue of land. The expectation is to provide a Samoan reading which will help Samoan readers to not only further their understanding of the biblical text, but to

⁹John. H Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's handbook* Third edition (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 57.

also give a biblical perspective on the issue regarding the Lands and Titles Bill 2020, especially its implications on customary land.

Text Selection

In light of the above discussion, Numbers 26:52-56 will be explored as the focus text of this study. My text selection is intentional because this text talks about the distribution of land when the Israelites came to settle in the Promised Land. Given its historical background, the importance of acquiring land and owning land to the Israelites will be understood. Another question which will be answered is how land was obtained by the Israelites, and what God's expectations were for the people in relation to the land. These are some of the focus points, together with those from the Samoan context, which will lead my exegesis of the text.

Thesis Structure

To accomplish the aims and purpose given above, the thesis will be structured as follows. Chapter One will discuss the methodology and perspective of the study. A brief survey of recent studies which use a similar methodology will be provided in this work; this will give a broad picture on the emergence of my chosen methodology and how it will be utilised. Secondly, I will explain the Samoan *Taule'ale'a* as hermeneutics and how its aspects will be used as lens to read both the Bill and the biblical text of Numbers 26:52-56. To exegete the biblical text, Historical Criticism is used to explore the history of the text; this exercise will focus on the author, audience, purpose and events of the historical background of the text.

Chapter Two will focus on the Book of Numbers. The exploration includes the issues of authorship, audiences, social and historical background.

Chapter Three will provide a Samoan reading of the selected biblical text, and show how this reading can enhance an understanding of the text. This chapter will also analyse how this biblical perspective can provide a biblical understanding of the Bill, and its impact on customary ownership of land. The Conclusion summarises the argument and findings of the thesis.

Chapter One

Methodology and Hermeneutic

Introduction

This chapter will outline the method and perspective utilized in this thesis. Firstly, I will give a brief introduction on the general background of the origin and status of the methodology and the approach that I wish to use in this work. Secondly, I will outline my methodology where the Samoan concept of *Taule'ale'a*, will be used as perspective and viewpoint. In this regard, I will give a definition of *Taule'ale'a* and analyse its aspects regarding his roles and responsibilities within the Samoan social context. From this discussion, I will identify some aspects of the *Taule'ale'a* to be utilised as lens to read the issue of the Bill, together with the selected biblical text. Thirdly, I will discuss Historical Criticism by using it as a tool to interpret the biblical text. Specific focus will be on the history of the text, where I will examine the author and his world, the social and historical background of the text, and its intended audiences. Overall, this is to accentuate the issues regarding land, behind the text, and how the text responds to these issues. The result of this exploration will then be used to read the biblical text in the following chapter.

1.1 A brief background

The use of local concepts in reading and interpreting biblical texts is the current trend with scholars and students of the bible in our Oceania region. This trend has also been encouraged by the official acknowledgement by the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) of Island Criticism, as a formal methodology for biblical studies.¹ Samoans, more

¹This good news of the formal acknowledgement by the SBL of Island Criticism was announced at the Oceania Biblical Studies Association (OBSA) meeting at Trinity College, Auckland New Zealand 2017. OBSA is one group that encourages these readings of the bible. Members of OBSA are predominantly

specifically Malua Theological College (MTC) staff and students, have engaged and practiced this approach in their works regarding the biblical studies area. Although there are no set guidelines or a fixed systematic procedure in doing Island Criticism yet, the underlining idea of using local concepts, traditions, and culture as hermeneutics and reading lens perhaps forms the basis of such a criticism. I will emphasize a few works by MTC staff and students in the Old Testament and New Testament departments as examples of the above approach, and hopefully it will give a general outlook on my own methodology.

In Arthur Wulf's PhD thesis, uses a Samoan concept of *Gafataulima* as a hermeneutic to give an ecological reading of the creation story in Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Wulf also utilises a *tala-mamanu* reading which he claims to be a Samoan version of narrative-grammatical criticism, to further evaluate the biblical text. The point is to use local ecological situations in the interpretive process. A considerable step achieved by Wulf in his work is his employment of both an island hermeneutic and an island methodological tool.² Melepone Isara also utilises a similar approach in his MTh thesis. His economic reading of the two biblical stories of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) and King Solomon (1 Kings 1-11) uses the Samoan concept of *Tamāo 'āiga* as lens and *Vaa* as a framework.³ Isara's reading provides an alternative assessment of the so called 'wise men' (Joseph and Solomon), who advocate developments with a 'not so wise' outcome. Martin Taumate attempts a

faculty members and students of Universities and Theological Colleges/Schools in Oceania. They now meet every two years at a member school in different countries. Presenters in these meetings are encouraged to use local concepts, traditions and culture, to read the bible.

²Arthur John Wulf, "Was Earth Created Good? Reappraising Earth in Genesis 1:1-2:4a from a Samoan *Gafataulima* Perspective." (PhD Thesis University of Auckland, 2016)

³Melepone Isara, "Relocating Wise Economics: A Samoan *Tamāo 'āiga* Reading of Two Biblical Economies." (MTh Thesis Pacific Theological College, 2018)

Taofiofi reading of Ruth 1:6-18, where elements of *Taofiofi* are used as lens to reading the issues behind the biblical text. Taumate uses his experience as a theological student at Malua Theological College and the Samoan village cultural setting, *Fono a le Nuu* (Village council) to bring about a meaning of *Taofiofi* which he uses in his study. He also uses a postcolonial concept of intentional hybridity to further analyse the text.⁴ His *Taofiofi* reading of the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi highlights resistance and hybridity.

Vaitusi Nofoaiga's work in the New Testament explores discipleship in Matthew. He draws on his experience of discipleship in his Samoan world, to revisit discipleship in Matthew's Gospel. Nofoaiga critically assesses the globally emphasized traditional view of discipleship in the First Gospel, as asserted by traditional interpretations of discipleship, by considering his Samoan perspective, accentuating the need of people in a local place as part of the work of a *tautua* in the Samoan world.⁵ In Apela Ah Him's MTh thesis, an application of the Samoan concept of *Tafesilafa'i* ('let us be face to face') is utilized to read Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Matthew. He also uses Social Scientific Criticism as a tool to further analyse the text. Ah Him concludes that Jesus embodies the essence and core of the *Tafesilafa'i* concept, which serves to protect some from dishonour, whilst at the same time, bringing others to shame.⁶

The above examples are just a few of the works recently done by MTC staff and students relating to the concept of Island Criticism. Even though the works differ in certain aspects, they share a commonality with the application of local concepts such as hermeneutics and lens to further illuminate meanings of the biblical texts. I believe that

⁴Martin Kapeneta Taumate, "A *Taofiofi* Reading of Ruth 1:6-18." (BTh Thesis Malua Theological College, 2019)

⁵Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew*. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017)

⁶Apela Ah him, "Jesus Inclusive Ministry in the Gospel of Matthew." (MTh Thesis Pacific Theological College, 2015)

this is one of the pivotal aims of these approaches, to apply and utilize contextual perspectives and produce meanings which are more relevant to local readers.

My methodology is similar to that of the approaches used in the above studies. I will explain a Samoan concept then use its elements as lens to read the biblical text. This will provide a basis for a Samoan reading and understanding of the biblical text. Also, historical criticism is used to further illustrate the issues behind the text as presented by the biblical text. This Samoan reading of the text will assist to address the land issues instigated by the Bill. In all, this study is also another attempt in doing Island Criticism.

1.2 *Taule'ale'a* as Hermeneutic and Perspective

1.2.1 A Definition

A *taule'ale'a* is a young untitled man or a young man with no *matai* title in Samoa. He has a significant role and function within the family, village, and church. Within the family setting, he is also known as the *tautua*.⁷ A *tautua* is responsible for the needs of the family, especially the *matai*. He cooks, cleans, and provides the necessities for the family and the *matai*.

In the context of the village, the *taule'ale'a* is a member of the social group called the *aumaga*.⁸ The *aumaga* consists of all the *taulele'a* or untitled young men of the village.⁹ In today's context, these young men are mostly those who have left school and are

⁷George Pratt, "Tautua" in *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. (Apia, Malua Printing Press, 1977), 245; Milner G. B, "tautua" in *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan English, English Samoan*. (London, Oxford University Press, 1966), 306.

⁸Iati Iati, "The good governance agenda for civil society: Implications for the *fa'a Sāmoa*" in Lise Huffer and Asofou So'o (eds) *Governance in Samoa (Pulega i Sāmoa)* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies USP, 2000), 72.

⁹*Taulele'a* is the plural for *taule'ale'a*.

unemployed. This group is an integral part of the village; they are referred to as *O le malosi o le nuu* in its literal meaning “the strength of the village”. This most likely refers to the roles and functions they perform in the village. The *aumaga* or *taulele’a* provides the manpower and labour force especially in large projects within the village. For example, construction of a school building or church building.¹⁰ The *aumaga* or group of *taulele’a* also perform the above duties in their own homes for their family/ies; hence, the *taule’ale’a* can also be called *o le malosi o le aiga* (‘the strength of the family’). There is also a similar social group for young women of the village which is called *aualuma*. Like the *aumaga*, they also “contribute to the general welfare of the village through a variety of social, economic, and ceremonial activities.”¹¹

According to Seiuli Vaifou Temese, a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa, the common understanding is that the etymology of the word *Taule’ale’a* is derived from two words which forms the word *taule’ale’a*;¹² they are *tau* and *le’a*. *Tau* is a short form of the word *tatau* which means squeeze or mixing. *Le’a* is another name for the *ava*.¹³ The word *taule’ale’a* originates from the role the young untitled men of a village perform when the *Fono a le Nuū* or Village Council convenes.¹⁴ The *aumaga* is always responsible for preparing the *ava* to begin deliberations of the *Fono a le Nu’u*. Since the *ava* ceremony is like a thanksgiving

¹⁰Iati, “The good governance agenda for civil society.” 72.

¹¹ Lowell D. Holmes, *Samoan Village* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winton, Inc, 1974), 32.

¹²Seiuli Vaifou Temese. Personal Communication, 15th of May, 2020 at National University of Samoa, Papaigalagala Campus, Toomatagi.

¹³Milner George Bertram, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan English, English Samoan*. London, Oxford University Press, 1966), 177; George Pratt, *Pratt’s Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. (Apia, Malua Printing Press, 1977), 104.

¹⁴ All the village *matais* are members of the *Fono a le Nuū* (Village Council) or *Fono a Matai* (*Matai* or Chiefly Council) and they are representatives of their families in this council. This council is basically the governing body of the village where village policies are established as well as the judiciary for all matters within the village. When a family has no *matai* in the *Fono a le Nuū* that family practically has no say in village matters. It is also important for a *matai* and his family to have a member in the *aumaga* as well. Since it is not really comfortable for a *matai* to talk of big projects in the *Fono a le Nuū* but he has no *tautua* in the *aumaga* to carry out his words.

service, it serves a purpose to give thanks to God for the protection, care and the many blessings observed in the village. Furthermore, it is also to welcome everyone present at the meeting and to acknowledge one another during the *Fono a le Nu'u*; the use of honorifics during the *ava* acknowledges the ranking or status of the *matai* in the village.

The normal process of preparing the *ava* is to mix the *ava* or *le'a* powder in a *tanoa* or bowl of water. The mixture or *palu* is done by a young man; to create the *palu* the young must *tatau* the mix in order to bring out the juice of the *ava* or *le'a* powder. The leftover dry powder is then thrown out. This act of *palu* and *tatau* is repeated until the *ava* or *le'a* is well mixed and ready to be served. It is therefore in this act of *tatau* of the *le'a* or *ava*, that the word *(ta)taule'a(le'a)* or in its short form *taule'ale'a* originates from. This is why the term *taule'ale'a* also embodies the roles and responsibilities of the untitled men when the Council of *matai* assemble.

1.2.2 Roles and Functions

In the following discussion I will emphasize three aspects of the roles and functions of a *taule'ale'a* to convey as lens/perspective in reading the biblical text. These components are *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei*.

1.2.2.1 Taule'ale'a as Tautua (provider and servant)

As briefly discussed above, the *taule'ale'a* role is mainly to serve and provide for the family and especially in relation to the *matai* of the family. In this regard, he is also called the *tautua*. The Samoan word *tautua* refers to both the one doing the service (*tautua*) and the actual service done. Therefore, the *taule'ale'a* is the *tautua*, and the service that he performs is also called *tautua*. This *tautua* is mostly performed on the land making use of the land to supply and provide. Therefore, the land is an integral and significant aspect to the *taule'ale'a* framework. In my opinion in respect to what I have observed, without land, it would be exceedingly difficult for the *taule'ale'a* to fulfil the aspect of *tautua*.

Therefore, without land, the significance of the *taule'ale'a* in a Samoan village context, would be greatly affected, and in turn will have major impacts on the social and economic welfare of a family and village. Hence, maintaining the social order and economic welfare of everyone in a village setting depends highly on the successful execution of the roles and duties of a *taule'ale'a*.

1.2.2.2 *Taule'ale'a* as *Malu*(protector/security)

Another role the *taule'ale'a* performs is protection of the family. A *taule'ale'a* is also known as the *malu* of the family; this duty also contributes to part of his *tautua*. *Malu* in Samoan literally means safe, secure, and protected.¹⁵ The *taule'ale'a*, in the family, provides security and protection for the *matai* and all the family from outside threats. These threats could be in a form of physical danger from a different family within the village, from other villages, threat of famine and drought, or from natural disasters such as cyclones and flooding.

In addition, the *taule'ale'a* has a vital and crucial role in relation to his sister. As a brother, the *taule'ale'a* is responsible for the welfare and protection of his sister.¹⁶ A Samoan saying *O le tuafafine o le ioimata o le tuagane* ('The sister is the pupil of the brother's eye') fully embodies this role.¹⁷ The saying also emphasizes the place of the sister in relation to his brother; she is treated as the most precious and most important part of a brother's life. In other words, the brother, as a *taule'ale'a* is the *malu* of and for his sister.

¹⁵George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary*, 202.

¹⁶In the Samoan context, the sister is called the *feagaiga*. Also, the brother and sister relationship is called the *feagaiga*. In this *feagaiga*, the brother's role is to protect and serve his sister. For a detailed discussion of *feagaiga* see Penelope Schoffel, "The Samoan Concept of *Feagaiga* and its Transformation" in *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*. Judith Huntsman (ed). (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1995), 85-109.

¹⁷Faalata Leauomoana, "Covenant and *Feagaiga*: A Samoan Contextual Reading of Exodus 19:3-6 (BTh Thesis Malua Theological College, 2016), 10.

1.2.2.3 Taule'ale'a as Talimalolelei (Good host/hospitable host)

Given the above etymology of *taule'ale'a*, it also draws attention to another role of the *taule'ale'a* as *talimalo*. In Samoa, the *ava* is not only performed at the *Fono a le Nu'u*, it is also performed during special occasions, such as welcoming guests. Thus, performing the *ava* ceremony is not only a mark of respect but also a gesture of hospitality or *talimalolelei* on the part of the village. So, the *taule'ale'a* plays an essential and crucial role as *talimalo* to guarantee the successful hosting of the village guests.

1.3 Historical Criticism

Historical Criticism is mostly drawn to the world behind the text. The world behind the text considers the historical, social and cultural backgrounds in relation to when a text was written, and the motivation regarding its composition.¹⁸ Therefore, the study will mostly explore the 'history of the text' which centres mainly on the author and audience, social and historical background. The interpretation of the selected text will be informed mainly by the social and historical background of the text. Special focus will be on the land aspect of the text and what it means in relation to land issues reflected in its social and historical background.

¹⁸W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach 3rd Edition* (Peadody: Hendrickson, 2008), 2-4. For a more detailed discussion of Historical Criticism, see, John Hayes and Carl R. Halladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginners Handbook 3rd Edition* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2007), 53-61. See also, J. Maxwell Miller, "Reading the Bible Historically," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (eds) (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 17-22.

Summary

The preceding discussion outlines my methodology which will be used in the following exegesis and analysis of the biblical text. The *taule'ale'a* perspective and its lens will guide the evaluation of the biblical text with the help of the Historical Method to unravel the land issues behind the text.

Chapter Two

The Book of Numbers: A Historical Background

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to establish and provide a historical background of the Book of Numbers. As discussed in the previous chapter, the discussion will include the issues of authorship, date, audience, composition, the social and historical background of the Pentateuch. The assumption here is that the five books of the Torah (Pentateuch) was composed together as a corpus; that is, the author(s)/ editor(s)/ redactor(s) of the Torah are basically the same for individual books. The outcomes of this exploration will form the basis of the exegesis and interpretation of the selected text from the Book of Numbers in the following chapter.

2.1 Historical Background

To delve into the historical background of the Book of Numbers I will utilise the aspect of historical criticism known as the ‘history of the text’. As explained in Chapter 1 above, this aspect will look into the author(s), audience, setting (date and location), and the social context behind the text.¹ The assumption here is that the issues behind the text will become apparent in this social and historical context.

¹John Hayes and Carl R. Halladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 53-61.

2.1.1 History of the Text

2.1.1.1 *Composition (Pentateuch): Authorship, Date, and Location*

Traditionally, the authorship of the Torah (or Pentateuch) is attributed to Moses himself.² However, this claim has been challenged by critical scholars since the seventeenth century. Although a few scholars still accept the traditional view, more have abandoned it based on a critical analysis of the biblical texts. This critical view of authorship is closely related to the issue of the composition of the Torah or Pentateuch as a whole; in other words, the view of multiple authorship has a consensus in the current scholarship. These critical views are based mainly on source critical analysis, redaction and literary assessment of the biblical texts.³

Early critical scholars claim that the Torah is a combination of different traditions or sources; therefore, it is unlikely a single author penned the whole work. This line of scholarship culminated in Julius Wellhausen's most famous hypothesis known as the Documentary Hypothesis or in short form JEDP.⁴ Wellhausen proposed that the composition of the Torah was a long process. He suggested that the final form of the Torah was a combination of four sources namely Jahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomic (D), and Priestly (P). The Priestly writers were the final editors who composed the whole work using the four sources above. The order of the individual sources (JEDP) also

²The Torah is the first major section of the Hebrew Bible which includes the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Christian Traditions (Catholic and Protestant) also accept this section as the first major section of the Holy Bible but called it The First Five Books of Moses or The Pentateuch. See Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* 2nd edition. (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 4-7.

³See for example Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, 69-83.

⁴Jason M. H. Gaines, *The Poetic Priestly Source*. (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2015)

reflects their date of composition; for example, the Jahwist Source (J) is the earliest and the Priestly Source is the latest.⁵

Even though the Documentary Hypothesis has faced a lot of scrutiny over the years (especially the existence of sources and dating), it still provides a basis for most studies of the Pentateuch. The relative dating of the P Source as the latest in the Pentateuch's composition is still widely accepted but its actual date is still debated.⁶ However, recent scholars seem to lean to the Persian period as the most probable dating of the P materials.

Moreover, the Priestly Tradition has also been extended to include the Holiness Code (H) (mainly in Lev. 17-26). Most of the discussion regarding the relationship of the two strands was based on two claims. The first claim regarded the relative dating of the two strands; that is, earlier scholars claimed the priority of H over P, but this has been reversed with most scholars now accepting the priority of P over H.⁷ The second issue is with regards to the relationship of H to P; that is, whether H is a supplement and revision of P or an independent tradition. The current consensus about this issue suggests that H is a supplement to P. In other words, it is basically an extension of the P tradition although at times they have different views.⁸

⁵ See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel: with a reprint of the Article Israel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (New York: Meridian Book Publisher, 1958)

⁶ Israel Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). Also see Jacob Milgrom, "H_R in Leviticus and Elsewhere in the Torah." in *Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, Rolf Rendtorff and Robert A. Kugler (eds). Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 93; Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature 3 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Siebeck, 2007). These two Jewish scholars accepted the relative late dating of P compared to other sources like D, but argued that P is pre-exilic in contrast to a late Persian period dating.

⁷ The leading proponents of this view were Israel Knohl and Jacob Milgrom. See Israel Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*; Jacob Milgrom, "H_R in Leviticus and Elsewhere in the Torah.", 24-40.

⁸ Jeffrey Stackert, "The Holiness Legislation and Its Pentateuchal Sources: Revision, Supplementation, and Replacement." in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Biden (eds), *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 95. (Zurich, Switzerland: Theologischer Verlag, 2009), 187-204. For a brief discussion of the relationship

Regarding H, scholars also identify some of its editing activities outside the Holiness Code and the Book of Leviticus. This led to the claim that a Holiness School (HS) was responsible for the late editing and ultimately the final form of the Pentateuch. Most scholars agree that the latest and final editing by the P/H (HS) is found in the Book of Numbers. Therefore, although there are some dissenting views, it has now the consensus that the late and final editing of the Pentateuch is ascribed to the Holiness School.⁹ Furthermore, the work of the Holiness school is accepted to be in the Persian period.¹⁰ In light of the consensus regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, the dating can be confidently established between the fourth and second century BCE.¹¹ This puts it during Persian rule when the exiled people of Judah were allowed to return to their homeland.

2.1.1.2 Place of Composition and Audience(s)

The place of composition and audience follow naturally from the date established above. The Pentateuch was composed in Jerusalem, Yehud,¹² and this document provided a basis for the restoration works such as the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of the city. Moreover, it also served as a guide or manual for worship and the religious life of the people (for a new identity of the people, and the set up or structuring of the new

between P and H see Jeffrey Stackert, "Holiness Code and Writings" in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Law*, Vol 1 ADM-LIT, Brent A. Strawn (ed). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 389-396.

⁹Konrad Schmid, "Post-Priestly Additions in the Pentateuch: A Survey of Scholarship" in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America Forschungen zum Alten Testament 111*, Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Konrad Schmid (eds) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 589-604.

¹⁰David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 217-220. The analysis of the composition and dating of the Pentateuch was dominated by redaction criticism focusing on the redactional and editorial levels of the literary texts. For a recent discussion of the formation of the Pentateuch see Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Konrad Schmid (eds). *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America Forschungen zum Alten Testament 111*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

¹¹Walter Houston, *Pentateuch*. (London: SCM Press, 2013), 132-135.

¹²Yehud is the Persian province which was formerly known as Judah. Its centre is still Jerusalem city but the land area has been significantly reduced.

restored community). The Pentateuch was therefore directed to the people who had settled in Jerusalem and in Yehud. These people included those who did not go to exile and the *golah* community, or those who had returned from exile.

2.1.1.3 Social and Historical Context

2.1.1.3a Persian Social Context

The social and historical context of the final editors or P/H in Yehud is closely related to Persian imperial policies in Yehud. Persian policies were different from the previous empires before them such as the Babylonians and Assyrians. Cyrus the Great (539-530 BCE) restored exiled people to their territories and rebuilt their temples. This is the widest social context for interpreting events and biblical texts during the Persian period. These biblical texts highlight Persian benevolence towards the people of Yehud. To strengthen the imperial centre Cyrus developed conquered territories at the periphery. He achieved this by releasing former exiles back to their lands, and restoring local temples. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah provide a picture of events during this period in Yehud. These books interpreted the return of the exiled as Yahweh's favour. However, the Persians promoted a federalist ideology, they were able to incorporate the conquered territories and retain control at the centre like previous empires.¹³ In other words, Persian interest in Palestine was not simply religious but of a wider socio-political scope.¹⁴

¹³Peni Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic." (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005), 54.

¹⁴Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud." 54.

One major aspect of this control was the restructuring of ethnic communities for taxation purposes.¹⁵ This involved ownership of land which is reflected in the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah; that is, separation from foreigners provided clarity within ethnic groups and ownership of land. In implementing this, Ezra and Nehemiah relied on the Law (Torah) as justification. This was possible because the Persians were flexible towards local legal customs as long as they served their interests as well. Thus, they worked within the local legal structures rather than imposed a rigid set of imperial laws.¹⁶

2.1.1.3b Yehud Social Context

Although the wider social context is influenced by Persian imperial policies, the local context also had their own issues. According to the biblical books, the most pressing issues for the Yehudites was the question of true remnants which is also connected to land rights. The *golah* community claimed that they were the true remnants, but the people who remained argued otherwise. Furthermore, the land area of Yehud was greatly decreased and was populated by people who the *golah* claimed to be aliens and who had no rights to the lands¹⁷.

Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt the restored community on the concept of holy seed. They relate the holy seed to priestly views in the Torah as justification of their exclusive policies; policies that excluded other tribes as aliens with only the tribes of Judah and

¹⁵See Peter Ross Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah*. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), 185-229. Also see Joel Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community* Translated by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher JSOT Supplement Series 151. (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1992), 105-138.

¹⁶Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah*, 213.

¹⁷See Oded Lipschits, and Oren Tal. "The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz, (eds). (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 35.

Benjamin as the holy seed. Other traditions of the same period reflect contrasting views to Ezra and Nehemiah such as the Books of Chronicles as well as the P/H traditions.¹⁸

Summary

This chapter endeavoured to establish an historical background of the Book of Numbers. In this exploration the issue of authorship and audience is closely connected to the composition of the whole Torah (Pentateuch) or the first five books of the Bible. The critical analysis of these books dismisses the traditional view of Moses as the sole author of the Torah or the individual five books. Furthermore, the consensus concludes that the composition of the Torah was a long process by multiple authors/ editors/ redactors. This process culminates in the completion of the final form of the Torah during the Persian period. The Torah was composed in Jerusalem, Yehud and became the basis for the restoration of the new community. This new community includes the returnees or *golah* and those who remained during the Babylonian exile. Issues in Yehud were mostly influenced by Persian imperial policies which appeared prevalent but which also served their own imperial interests. In addition, there were internal issues between the *golah* and those who remained. Conflicts were mainly connected to the issues of true remnants and the real owners of land, especially given the land area of Yehud had been reduced significantly. These issues are clearly apparent in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The policies of these Persian sponsored officials not only served the exclusive agenda of the *golah* community but also (unknowingly) Persian imperial interests as well.

¹⁸ See Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 61.

It is this historical background that will inform the exegesis and analysis of the selected text from the Book of Numbers in the following chapter. The Samoan hermeneutic and lens as already discussed will be employed as well in the analysis.

Chapter Three

Exegesis and Taule'ale'a reading of Numbers 26: 52 – 56

Introduction

This chapter will start with a discussion of the Priestly view of land since it has a significant bearing on the exegesis that follows. The second part of this chapter is an exegesis and analysis of Numbers 26:52-56 in light of the historical background discussed in the previous chapter. Thirdly, the historical reading of Numbers 26:52-56 will also be read through the *Taule'ale'a* hermeneutics. To conclude the chapter, a *Taule'ale'a* reading is presented and will be used as a biblical and theological perspective to read and understand the Bill.

3.1 Priestly (P/H) view of land

The Priestly document from the start presents land as a gift from *Elohim* to the ancestors and their seed. It appears in this part of the priestly tradition that Israel's land claims depend primarily on God's gift, rather than on obedience to divine commands. In other words, the priestly tradition in general does not promote possession of land through conquest and settlement. Moreover, this gift of land is part of God's promise; Jacob Whorle claims that this promise of land is given to every generation anew.¹ So for the Babylonian *golah*, the promise of land is also still valid for them. This generation's claim to the land is yet to be realized; however, their claim will have to take into account the

¹Jacob Wöhrle, "The Un-Empty Land", in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts*, E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds). (BZAW 404; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 199. For a discussion of the 'Empty Land' concept see John Kessler, "Images of Exile: Representatives of the 'Exile' and 'Empty Land' in Sixth Fourth Century BCE Yehudite Literature" in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts*, E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds). (BZAW 404; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 309-351.

people already on the land. The returnees, through the promise, will “regain the right to live in this land. But they have to live in it side by side with a foreign population.”² In other words, the returnees still have their rights to the land as reaffirmed by the repeated promises to the ancestors; but, they have to live with the reality of the exile where “the land is now and remains inhabited by foreign population.”³

Furthermore, P commonly refers to the land promised and given to the ancestors as אֶרֶץ (‘*ahuzza*).⁴ This P term does not imply total ownership of land; the land is given to Israel not as possession but as a right to its usufruct.⁵ So the returnees, as seed of the Patriarchs, also have a valid claim to land utilisation in light of this continuously renewed promise. In this case, people who have been out of the land (in exile) for whatever period of time can still claim land when they return to their homeland.⁶

In light of this brief discussion, the Priestly view of land is inclusive. It is likely that the Priestly Tradition is trying to find a common ground between the *golah* and the remainees who were currently sharing and living together on the land. This being the case, the Israelites claim to land required peaceful negotiations and positive interactions with the people already on the land.

3.2 Exegesis of Numbers 26:52-56

⁵²The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁵³To these the land shall be apportioned for inheritance according to the number of names. ⁵⁴To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance according to its enrollment. ⁵⁵But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit. ⁵⁶Their inheritance shall

²Wöhrle, “The Un-Empty Land”, 206.

³Wöhrle, “The Un-Empty Land”, 206.

⁴ An exception is found in Exod 6:8 where the word מורשה (*morashah*) is used.

⁵Usufruct is a legal right to use and enjoy the fruits or profit of something belonging to another.

⁶Wöhrle, “The Un-Empty Land”, 206.

be apportioned according to lot between the larger and the smaller. (NRSV)

The passage highlights a few important issues with the Lord's command to Moses about the distribution of land.

- i. The land shall be an inheritance.
- ii. The land allotments shall be distributed according to number (names) and size of tribes.
- iii. Land shall be apportioned by lot.

The term translated 'inheritance' here is *nahala*. This is a common term used by the Deuteronomic Tradition (D) to refer to the land promised and given by Yahweh to the Israelites. For D, *nahala* implies ownership which the Israelites will inherit through their descendants. This is in contrast to *ahuzza* which refers only to its usufruct. Furthermore, D emphasizes that Israel's claim to their *nahala* was through conquest and settlement. This is clearly portrayed in the Books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.⁷

The appearance of *nahala* in this P text can be explained in two ways. P knew some form of the D document and decided not to make many changes in its editorial work, especially since *nahala* still recognizes Yahweh as the real owner, which P also concurs. Moreover, the most common name for Israel's God in P, especially in the Genesis narratives is *Elohim*. However, when God revealed his name Yahweh to Moses for the first time in Exodus 6, P then used Yahweh instead of *Elohim* (or other nuances like *El Shadday*, *El Elyonetc*) in the rest of its document.⁸ Thus, the use of *nahala* and Yahweh

⁷Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 6-7.

⁸Konrad Schmid, "Judean Identity and Ecumenicity: The Political Theology of the Priestly Document" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Manfred Oeming (eds) (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 4-10.

implies P is later than D. Also, P reworked these materials and combined them in its editorial activities to relay its own interpretation of events during its time.

For a P reader during the restoration period, the command to take the land as inheritance still resonates with ownership. However, it was problematic for the *golah* community because the ownership was not just for them but also for those already settled on these lands. This understanding implies an inclusive claim to land in P's context.

The command to apportioned land according to the size and number of names also highlights the problem of land size. The land area in Yehud decreased significantly, so in order for the Israelites to get their own portion, the land had to be distributed fairly according to the numbers and the size of the tribes.

For P, its inclusive approach is also highlighted in his understanding of the tribes to include all the twelve tribes of Israel rather than the few implied in Ezra/Nehemiah's holy seed approach. P is conscious of the size of the land in Yehud hence the emphasis on distributing it in accordance to the names and size of the tribe.

The command to apportion the lands by lot is a common method in Israel and neighbouring nations to invoke the deity's approval.⁹ Casting lots are also mentioned in other texts and is used for a variety of purposes (For examples, 1 Samuel 10:22 and 14:41; Exodus 28:30 and Joshua 19:30). Robert Alter explains the purpose of the two methods of distribution; he claims that the use of lots is for the selection of particular regions and does not apply to the size of the territories granted.¹⁰ For P, the result of the apportioning

⁹Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 227.

¹⁰Robert Alter, *The Five books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 769-770.

of land by lot is related to Yahweh's divine approval; that is, it is a way to ensure that whatever portion of the land one receives, it is the will of Yahweh. P (like D) reaffirms that Yahweh owns the land, and P also indicates that the people are just sojourners on this land.¹¹ This is why P emphasizes the importance of peaceful negotiations between people when claiming land.

In light of the above discussion, the connection of Ezra/Nehemiah's 'holy seed' to the Priestly Tradition is perhaps misguided.¹² Since the laws of P in Numbers and Leviticus in the Persian period declared aliens and foreigners to be the same as native Israelites.¹³

It is most likely that the land distributions and allotments in Numbers 26:52-56 is P's attempt to address the conflicts between the *golah* and the people who remained, by giving an inclusive account of the early years of the Israelites before they entered the Promised land. P, in other words, opposes Ezra/Nehemiah's exclusive 'holy seed' policies.

3.3 A *Taule'ale'a* Reading of Numbers 26:52-56

The three aspects of *Taule'ale'a* which will be used here as lens are: *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei*. The focus question which guides the *Taule'ale'a* reading is: Are *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei* reflected in the distribution and allotment of land in Numbers 26:52-56?

¹¹Mark Brett, "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition", *VT* 63 (2013), 7.

¹²Brett, *Genesis*, 6-7.

¹³See Rainer Albertz. "The Canonical Alignment of the Book of Joshua" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B. C. E.*, Obed Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Rainer Albertz (eds). (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 287 – 303.

If I may draw an analogy of both contexts, P can be seen as representing the *Taule'ale'a*, while Ezra/ Nehemiah represents the Samoan Government and its Lands and Titles Bill 2020.

The 'holy seed' policy is exclusive only to a limited number of people/tribes in Ezra/Nehemiah's case, they are the *golah* community and are only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This community, according to recent scholars are small in numbers.¹⁴ The 'holy seed' policy renders the rest of the tribes and people as outsiders or aliens and must be removed even though they are many and have already settled on the land. This follows a D theology of conquest and settlement more than a P distinction of pure and impure used by Ezra/Nehemiah.

The P text, Numbers 26:52-56 promotes an inclusive policy where everyone must have a portion of the land. P also implies that even though the land is small, it is sufficient for everyone. Also, the number of the *golah* community is not as many.

From a *tautua* lens, land is vital and significant for survival and serving Yahweh. In other words, performing one's *tautua* to Yahweh, to their families, and to the community, is only possible when they each get a portion of land. Otherwise, this would be difficult when separated from land.

Ezra/Nehemiah's policy also suggests that only a few can perform this *tautua*. If the *golah* are children of the elite who went to exile, then they are part of the elite as well. So it is also an issue of the elite verses the lowly or peasant farmers of the new community in Yehud. From a *taule'ale'a* perspective, performing the *tautua* to the *matai*, *aiga*, *lotu*,

¹⁴See Charles E. Carter, "The Province of Yehud in the Post Exilic Period," in *Second Temple Studies 2*, Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards (eds). (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 129-137.

and *nuu* would be near impossible under Ezra/Nehemiah's policies. However, the *taule'ale'a* perspective is identical with P's inclusive policies. Everyone is part of the community and have the same rights to use the land. They only need to learn to live peacefully together.

With regards to *malu*, the remainees would not be *malu* under Ezra/Nehemiah's policies. In fact, the foreign women and their children were expelled in order for the Israelites to be part of the 'holy seed'. Even members of other tribes were not included and their security in the land was threatened since they were regarded as aliens or foreigners as well. The only way to get *malu* was by obtaining rights to a portion of land. A *taule'ale'a* would be in the same predicament when his security of land is lost. This is why a *taule'ale'a* would resonate well with P's view of land because it provides them with *malu* or security. Land plays a significant role in both contexts for someone being a *malu* and for him to provide *malu* for the family and community.

The *talimalolelei* is obviously absent from Ezra/Nehemiah's 'holy seed' policies because a great number was excluded from their community. In fact, even their own fellow Israelites from other tribes were regarded as aliens and foreigners. It is only when we look at P's inclusive approach that *talimalolelei* becomes apparent. The land distribution and allotments in Numbers 26:52-56 promotes *talimalolelei*. Not only is everyone given a fair portion of the land, but the lands are also allotted according to size and number. This divinely apportioning of land implies fairness and equality. In other words, no one will get more land than their fellow brother and sisters.

Summary

This chapter set out to provide a *Taule'ale'a* reading of Numbers 26:52-56. In achieving this, an analysis and exegesis of the text was provided using the historical

methodology which focused on the history of the text. The results established a social and historical background of the text during the Persian period, when the Israelites were allowed to go back to their homeland and rebuild their lives and surroundings. The main issue emphasised in this social background was the conflict between the *golah* community or those who returned from the Babylonian exile and those who remained in the land.

The main focus of the thesis was the conflict regarding land claims. This land conflict was informed by Ezra/Nehemiah's 'holy seed' policies as a basis for the restoration work in Yehud. In accepting P as the final editor or composer of the Pentateuch (which includes the Book of Numbers) it was more relevant to interpret the selected text in light of P's response to the exclusive land policies of Ezra/Nehemiah.

The exegesis and analysis highlights that Numbers 26:52-56 reflects an inclusive P view which opposes Ezra/Nehemiah's exclusive land policies. In utilising the *taule'ale'a* hermeneutics and lens of *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei* they further enlightened the inclusive P policies reflected in Numbers 26:52-56.

The following conclusion of the thesis will use this *Taule'ale'a* reading of Numbers 26:52-56 to inform the Bill of Lands and Titles Bill 2020. Hopefully it may provide a biblical and theological perspective for Samoans to read and understand the Bill.

Conclusion

The following conclusion summarises the findings of the exploration in the thesis. It answers the questions raised in the introduction in light of the results achieved in the body of the thesis (chapters 1, 2, and 3). However, first, I will revisit the issue of the Bill and its implications to customary land as outlined in the introduction. The analysis will be informed by the *Taule'ale'a* reading of Numbers 26:52-56 given in the previous chapter.

A. Lands and Titles Bill 2020 and *Taule'ale'a* Reading of Numbers

26:52-56

The main concerns for the opponents of the Bill are similar to the ones raised against the LTRA 2008. One of the concerns was directed to the alienation of customary land. The current Bill revived the same concern about customary lands. Even though the Bill does not directly say anything towards alienation of customary lands, the opponents feel the Bill indirectly impacts on ownership of customary land. The intervention of the Bill on *matai* titles and their registrations would grant one or a few *matai* of an extended family, the power to alienate customary land through a lease.

Recently, a growing number of individuals, groups, villages, and even international institutions gave submissions outlining their concerns about the Bill. Most of these submissions recommended that the Samoa Government either revise the Bill or cancel it altogether. The current situation has many in the country divided on this Bill, whilst at the same time, the Samoa Government is steadily gaining more support for the Bill. My *Taule'ale'a* reading will hopefully give the Samoan people a biblical and theological perspective on the issue.

Another reason behind my selection of *taule'ale'a* as perspective and hermeneutics was to give the *taule'ale'a* a voice on this matter. The *Taule'ale'a* reading utilises *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei* as lens to read the biblical text. In this exercise, the *Taule'ale'a* reading not only supports the Priestly inclusive intentions in the text, but it further solidifies the significant connection of the land and everyone, including people like the Samoan *taule'ale'a*. So in the event that a Bill, like the one we currently have, emerges and contains troubling implications for a Samoan or a *taule'ale'a* claim to land, it is worth serious reconsideration.

Like P's theology and view of land, the *taule'ale'a* reading embraces inclusiveness and equality in land claims. It also embraces peaceful settlement and peaceful negotiations. Only in these circumstances can the *taule'ale'a* perform his *tautua*, *malu*, and *talimalolelei* to its fullest. If the Bill fails to embrace and safeguard the above, then there should be concerns about its implementation. Therefore, Samoan people should seriously look into the validity and application of this Bill before it is passed as law.

B. *Taule'ale'a* Reading and Island Criticism

As indicated from the start, this thesis is also an exercise in doing Island Criticism; I believe this thesis has something to offer the growing trend in our Oceania region. Utilising the *taule'ale'a* hermeneutics will develop a deeper meaning of the biblical text, especially when it is informed by an analysis and exegesis of the text (in this case, its social and historical background). This hermeneutic also resonates with a Samoan reader, especially with Samoan concepts prompting the reader to read more into this type of approach to the bible.

A *taule'ale'a* reading can also give a voice to members of Samoan society whose voices are silent in discussions and deliberations of important matters. It not only

emphasises their importance in society (although usually in the background) but it is also a way to acknowledge their service and contribution to society.

C. Relevance to EFKS Ministry

Island readings and approaches to understanding the bible are very relevant to the EFKS ministry. This is especially true to the present generations, not only locally but also to our people overseas. The validity of these readings from our Samoan perspective lies in our passion to utilise our own concepts, culture, and traditions in reading the bible and the Gospel to acquire meanings that are appropriate and meaningful to us given our unique identity and environment.

I believe my *taule'ale'a* reading discussed above has a lot to offer in terms of understanding the bible. Samoan readers, especially *taulele'a* or people of similar social standings would relate to it and the meanings it generates are more relevant to them as well.

The above mentioned reading and approach, is also a way to transfer and record local traditions and culture for future generations; especially when all the Samoan concepts and terms used in the reading are defined and explained. This reading therefore becomes a resource and an archive of Samoan words, concepts, and so forth for the *fai'feau* and his congregation.

Glossary

<i>aiga potopoto</i>	extended family
<i>aualuma</i>	group of young women of the village
<i>aumaga</i>	group of untitled men of the village
<i>ava/ le'a</i>	kava
<i>Fono a le Nuu/ Fono a Matai</i>	Village Council/Chiefly Council
<i>lotu</i>	Church/church service
<i>malosi o le aiga</i>	strength of the family
<i>malosi o le nu'u</i>	strength of the village
<i>malu</i>	protector/ security
<i>matai</i>	chief
<i>matai Sa'o</i>	High Chief
<i>nu'u</i>	village
<i>talimalo lelei</i>	good host/ hospitality
<i>tamaitai</i>	unmarried girl/lady
<i>tatau</i>	squeeze/ mix.
<i>taule'ale'a</i>	untitled young man
<i>taulele'a</i>	untitled young men
<i>tautua</i>	servant/service.

Bibliography

- Ah Him, Apela. "Jesus Inclusive Ministry in the Gospel of Matthew." MTh Thesis Pacific Theological College, 2015.
- Albertz, Rainer. "The Canonical Alignment of the Book of Joshua" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B. C. E*, Obed Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Rainer Albertz, (eds). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007, 288 – 289.
- Alter, Robert. *The Five books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- Article 102. "No Alienation of Customary Land." *The Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa* (2005).
- Boadt, Lawrence. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* 2nd edition. New York: Paulist Press, 2012.
- Brett, Mark G. "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition", *VT* 63 (2013)
- *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Carr, David M. *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Crocombe R, R. and Malama Meleisea, (eds). *Land Issues in the Pacific*. Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1985.
- Esera, Esera. "An Economic-Political Reading of 1 Kings 21:1-4 in Light of the LTRA 2008 Controversy." BD Thesis Malua Theological College, 2018.
- Gaines, Jason M. H. *The Poetic Priestly Source*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gertz, Jan, C. Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Konrad Schmid, (eds). *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America Forschungenzum Alten Testament 111*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016.

- Hayes, John H. and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's handbook* 3rd edition. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- Holmes, Lowell D. *Samoan Village*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winton, Inc, 1974.
- Houston, Walter. *Pentateuch*. London: SCM Press, 2013.
- Iati, Iati. "The good governance agenda for civil society: Implications for the *fa'a-Sāmoa*" in *Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Sāmoa*. Lise Huffer and Asofou So'o (eds). Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies USP, 2000, 67-78.
- Isara, Melepone. "Relocating Wise Economics: A Samoan *Tamāo'āiga* Reading of Two Biblical Economies." MTh Thesis Pacific Theological College, 2018.
- Jeffrey Stackert, *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, Zurich, Switzerland: Theologischer Verlag, 2009.
- Jim, Fingleton. 2005 *Privatising Land in the Pacific: A Defence of Customary Tenures*, The Australia Institute, Discussion Paper No. 80, 2005 found at www.tai.org.au last accessed 20 June 2014.
- Knohl, Israel. *Sanctuary of Silence*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Land Act 2013*; Part 2(a): Leasing and Licensing *Alienation of Customary Land Act 1965*.
- Leaumoana, Faalata. "Covenant and *Feagaiga*: A Samoan Contextual Reading of Exodus 19:3-6." BTh Thesis Malua Theological College, 2016.
- Leota, Peni. "Ethnic Tensions in Perisan-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic." PhD Thesis Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005.
- Lipschits, Oded and Oren Tal. "The Settlement Archaeology of the Province of Judah: A Case Study" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E*, Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz, (eds). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007, 33-52.
- Maxwell, Miller J. "Reading the Bible Historically." in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (eds). Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999, 17-22.

- Milgrom, Jacob. “H_R in Leviticus and Elsewhere in the Torah.” in *Leviticus: Composition and Reception*. Rolf Rendtorff and Robert A. Kugler (eds). Leiden The Netherlands: Brill, 2007, 24 – 40.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*. Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
- Milner, G. B. “le’a” in *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan English, English Samoan*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 177.
- “tautua” in *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan English, English Samoan*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 258.
- Nofoaiga, Vaitusi. *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
- Pratt, George. “le’a” in *Pratt’s Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. (Apia, Malua Printing Press, 1977), 104.
- “malu” in *Pratt’s Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977, 202.
- “Tautua” in *Pratt’s Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. Apia, Malua Printing Press, 1977, 306.
- Schmid, Konrad. “Judean Identity and Ecumenicity: The Political Theology of the Priestly Document” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*. O. Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Manfred Oeming (eds). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011, 3-26.
- “Post-Priestly Additions in the Pentateuch: A Survey of Scholarship” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America Forschungen zum Alten Testament III*. Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni and Konrad Schmid (eds). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016, 589-604.
- Schoffel, Penelope. “The Samoan Concept of *Feagaiga* and its Transformation” in *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*. Judith Huntsman (ed). Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1995, 85-109.
- Stackert, Jeffrey. “Holiness Code and Writings” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law*, Brent A. Strawn (ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 389-396.

- Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* 3rd Edition. Peadody: Hendrickson, 2008.
- Taumate, Martin Kapeneta. "A *Taofiofi* Reading of Ruth 1:6-18." BTh Thesis Malua Theological College, 2019.
- Temese, Seiuli Vaifou. Personal Communication, 15th of May, 2020. National University of Samoa, Papaigalagala Campus, Toomatagi.
- Tupufia-Ah Tong, Lanuola Tusani. "Land and Titles Courts overhaul could redefine land." *Samoa Observer* found in www.samoobserver.ws/category/samoa/61927 last accessed 28.07.20.
- Weinberg, J. P. *The Citizen-Temple Community* Translated by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher JSOT Supplement Series 15. Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1992.
- Wellhausen, Julius. "*Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel: with a reprint of the Article Israel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica.*" New York: Meridian Book Publisher, 1958.
- Wohrle, Jakob. "The Un-Empty Land." in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts*. E. Ben Zvi and Christoph. Levin (eds). BZAW 404; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010, 309-351.
- Wulf, Arthur John. "Was Earth Created Good? Reappraising Earth in Genesis 1:1-2:4a from a Samoan *Gafataulima* Perspective." PhD Thesis University of Auckland, 2016.
- Ye Ruipin, "Torrens and Customary Land Tenure: A Case Study of the Land Titles Registration Act 2008 of Samoa." *University of Wellington Law Review*, no. 40 (2009).