

Political Reform and the Media in Tonga

*An examination of cultural, political and media attitudes towards
democratic reform in two Tongan newspapers*

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Attestation of Authorship

I, Josephine Latu, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:



Date:

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Abstract

The issue of political reform has been widely debated in Tonga, as calls for a modern democracy continue to challenge cultural modes of traditional leadership. Democratic changes to government remain problematic because of the intimate relationship shared between current political structures of power, and cultural demarcations of authority based on relational social networks in the *kainga* or Tongan kinship system. While social development and modernization have greatly increased awareness amongst the educated population about governance issues, large sections of the grassroots community have yet to acquire a thorough knowledge of government and political structures. Within this context, the local media body holds a pivotal role as both a cultural and political actor, in its dissemination of reform-related messages to the public.

Using a culturally thick approach, this thesis examines messages about political reform communicated by two independent newspapers in Tonga – the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and the *Talaki* - during the month of November, 2006. The timeframe represents a significant period in the nation's struggle towards democracy, which saw the unprecedented riots of November 16, 2006. The thesis relates emergent themes in the newspaper texts to dominant cultural attitudes towards power as well as specific historical developments, in order to locate the media's role within the Tongan social context. In facilitating a deeper understanding of the cultural dynamics at work behind political media discourse, the thesis concludes with some preliminary suggestions as to how local cultural frameworks can be incorporated into modern forms of democracy, good governance and media freedom.

Chapter 1:

Introduction – Does culture have a place in Pacific journalism?

“I don’t think you are Pacific journalists. I think you are journalists of a Pacific background, rather than Pacific journalists.”

– Elma Maua, veteran Pacific broadcaster, at 2008 PIMA conference, Auckland, New Zealand

In October 2008, I attended a major conference organized by the Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) called “Pac2theFuture”, which was held at AUT University. One of the panel discussions was related to improving the visibility of Pacific Island people in New Zealand mainstream media, and featured well-known practitioners in the field including some of Television New Zealand’s (TVNZ) Pacific news team. During the discussion, the question arose about whether practitioners’ ethnic or cultural identity influenced how they covered or produced the news. Below are some of the comments I recorded as a student reporter for Pacific Media Watch (Latu, 2008):

“I’m a journalist mate. Ethics are ethics... We can’t cover a story based on how it may or may not impact on a community – we just have to make sure it gets covered fairly.”
(TVNZ One News Pacific correspondent, Barbara Dreaver)

“Some stories wouldn’t have made it on the news if I wasn’t a Pacific Islander... No matter what, as a journalist you are influenced by your upbringing.”

(TVNZ One News producer, Tati Urale)

“If you’re a Pacific person telling a Pacific story, you’re more likely to get it.”

(TVNZ One News reporter, Adrian Stevanon)

“Gun him down. If he’s a crook, he’s a crook.”

(TVNZ One News political journalist, Kris Fa’afoi, on reporting stories about corrupt Pacific Island chiefs, given the customary cultural deference to people in positions of authority)

After the floor was opened for questioning from the audience, veteran broadcaster Elma Maua, originally from the Cook Islands, made this comment to the panel: “I don’t think you are Pacific journalists. I think you are journalists of Pacific background, rather than Pacific journalists”.

While Maua’s comment did not generate much reaction from the panelists, it resonated with my own dilemma as an international student and reporter from Tonga. The issue was also reflected in the journalists’ comments, whether they realized it or not. This dilemma can be described as a “double consciousness”, which involves the struggle of negotiating two or more identities, one of which is imposed by a dominant external culture. The phrase “double consciousness” was coined by Pan-Africanist activist W.E.B DuBois (1903) (expanded by Frantz Fanon, 1967/1952) to explain the experience of African-Americans in forming an “American” identity, while being excluded from mainstream American society at the same time. DuBois referred to it as a “peculiar sense... of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (1903, p.2).

Although the dynamics are different, mainstream New Zealand media, as in most developed nations, is generally defined through the eyes of the Western liberal experience. This has resulted in a strong focus on objectivity, freedom without prior restraint, wariness of governments, along with strong capitalist and market-driven agendas. Following this, the Pacific journalist is obliged to learn these principles, methods and knowledge systems, although rarely do their own cultural perspectives play any major role in constructing the character of conventional media practice. While many have debated the suitability of the “Western” or liberal model of media practice in developing countries (see Loo, 1994, 2009; Romano, 2005; Xiaoge, 2009), due to variations in economic fortitude, political structures and social values, the cultural conditions faced by local journalists in Pacific nations remain largely underappreciated in academic and professional discourse.

In this thesis, I wish to focus on this issue by highlighting the problematic process of negotiation that occurs when newly learned principles related to democracy, good governance and media freedom, encounter local cultural dynamics in traditional Tongan society. While this thesis does not take up any argument for or against Western practices, I maintain the argument that liberalist, Fourth Estate ideals traditionally connected to media can only be effectively promoted and absorbed in the islands with an acknowledgment of how the local culture works. Without this basic understanding, the search for a compromise between local and Western perspectives will continue to be sidelined as “inconsequential”, resulting in an ethnocentric fight for media freedom and professionalism.

The following chapters will take a “culturally thick” approach (Wasserman, 2009) in locating Tongan media within its specific socio-cultural context, and examining how this may affect the role and practices of local political journalists. I focus on a pivotal

point in Tonga's national history, where traditional cultural attitudes were directly confronted by aggressive calls for political reform. For Tonga, the month of November, 2006 was a divisive period that culminated in an unprecedented night of rioting that left the capital city of Nuku'alofa in ruins. The event brought the subject of political change to the forefront of the national psyche, which was also reflected in media discourse. This thesis will examine local news coverage in two Tongan newspapers during this time, and analyze media messages against relevant historical, cultural and political conditions present in the nation. This way, I hope to bring a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the press as an agent of democracy in the Pacific.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review exploring currently available texts written by academics and journalism practitioners, on the subject of media practice in the Pacific Islands. Because of the political and cultural slant of this thesis, I also include a review of relevant literature pertaining to social and cultural frameworks of power in Tongan society, including the prevalent kinship system known as the *kainga*.

Chapter 3 describes my theoretical approach in detail, mapping out the parameters of a culturally thick methodology, and the significance of this approach to understanding Tongan politics and its relation to media. I explain the indigenous Pacific notion of *va* as the backbone of Tongan social relationships (including power relations), in both the *kainga* and current political systems. The notion of *va* is an important element that will inform later chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 4 details the specific methods undertaken in the course of my research. This includes a textual analysis of media coverage, a historical exploration into the development of modern democracy in the nation, supplemented by personal interviews

with various media practitioners and relevant community figures in Tonga. I explain the use of locally-based research methods of *talanoa* and *kakala* to frame a culturally conscious approach to gathering data.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of major historical developments in Tongan politics over the past three decades, tracing the rise of the pro-democratic movement in the 1980's and the pivotal role the media played in sustaining early calls for reform. This chapter is aimed at providing a solid background to the events of November 2006, allowing for a more meaningful examination of the media texts.

Chapter 6 is a report of results from my media coverage analysis, which explores both surface characteristics of the data – including length, placement, leading topics and sources – as well as discursive themes and media messages regarding political reform that emerged in the texts.

Chapter 7 discusses these findings against the historical and cultural backdrop of Tongan society, relating this to information gathered from my interviews and literature review. In this chapter, I use the research findings as a basis to form a preliminary theory of how to incorporate indigenous or local cultural ideology into modern media practice and democratic governance.

Chapter 8 sums up the thesis by revisiting the original scopes and aims of the research, and addressing how I fulfilled these in my work.

Finally, as a creative output, I include a 50 minute documentary video that seeks to communicate the overriding significance of cultural beliefs in both social and political life in Tonga. This also represents a call for stronger efforts in incorporating these beliefs in our journey towards political reform, as well as the development of a more culturally relevant role of the media in society.

Chapter 2:

Literature review

“News stories are never written or broadcast in a vacuum, for they are always written and told within the framework of cultural, social, and historical contexts.”

– Kalafi Moala (2007)

2.1. Pacific Islands media research

Media in the Pacific Islands has garnered little in-depth scholarly investigation, when compared to media systems in other parts of the world. Any specific focus on the Pacific in global journalism textbooks often lacks detail, coverage and depth, and is further eclipsed by the domineering shadow of vast Asia under the regional designation of the “Asia-Pacific” (see for instance DeBeer & Merrill, 2009). Sweeping normative frameworks that have been long-established for global media, such as the “Four Theories of Journalism” (authoritarian, libertarian, communist and socially responsible) proposed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), are also difficult to apply singularly to the region, given the wide diversity of cultures, population distributions, economic levels and political structures, which continue to change in an increasingly globalized world. This yawning gap in the literature is filling slowly, although the great majority of Pacific Island-related works so far have been descriptive in nature. Only a few works

produce innovative theoretical frameworks for island media, especially in terms of accommodating indigenous perspectives on communication into practice.

Thus, Pacific Island media research remains in a burgeoning stage, although it has gained a growing number of determined and enthusiastic contributors. The available literature has multiplied greatly since its beginnings in the 1970's, when Richstad and McMillan's (1977) comprehensive bibliography highlighted a clear lack of theoretical media studies and reports of systematic research in the region. Most academic work since then has been based on empirical surveys, descriptive analyses, historical accounts, or personal experience in the field of journalism. At this stage, the focus still lies in describing, rather than theorizing, media practices in distinct island groups, although this is acutely important groundwork to cover as new technologies such as the internet enter into Pacific societies¹.

However, several challenges remain that affect the development of media research in the region, especially in terms of overarching media paradigms. Evangelia Papoutsaki and Ushar Sundar-Harris (2008b) have noted the vast discrepancies amongst the 14 localities that make up the "Pacific community", calling for attention to both local specificities as well as regional issues that all islands face as developing nations. Papua New Guinea (PNG) for example, is a resource-rich country of over six million culturally diverse people, 40 percent of whom live in the rural highlands, speaking 700 known Melanesian languages with as many indigenous tribes (Romaine, 1992). PNG media features educated, rambunctious journalists, with a leading national newspaper running about 30,000 copies per quarter (6873 PNG, 2009). In comparison, the island of Niue holds a local population of less than 2,000 people, with high rates of out-migration and

¹ Some key works, for example, have tracked the effects of blogging on the post-coup political scene in Fiji (Foster, 2007; Walsh, 2010).

a negative economic growth rate of two per cent (Population and welfare, n.d.). Media in Niue consists of one privately owned newspaper and a state-owned radio and television station, which remain largely undocumented in scholarly research.

Education levels, income levels and communications infrastructure in the region also stretch across a broad spectrum. Noting the historical specificities in media development, Philip Cass (2004) underlines the importance in understanding the diversity of Pacific audiences and their media needs (as does Seward, 1999), highlighting how each island group has followed its own distinct path towards national independence, especially with regards to the influences of churches, government and private business in media ownership. Cass favours the description “media in the Pacific”, to designate the variety in communication developments in the region, rather than the blanket term “Pacific media” (2004, p.83).

Nonetheless, the Pacific is far from a group of dissociated fragments of land, and interrelated similarities also warrant their common identity as a region. With the exception of Papua New Guinea, Oceanic countries have relatively small populations, and all share previous experiences with semi- or full colonization. Furthermore, because of their developing economies and infrastructures, there is a need for regional interdependence in order to compete with the larger world. Given their geographic proximity, it is also easy for Pacific people to draw from each other’s cultures, lifestyles and communities. Many nations share similar oral traditions and historical origins of migration, generally placing a high value in community, kinship ties and cultural primordialism. A large number of Pacific Island Studies specialists have also promoted a “Pacific worldview” to counter internationally dominant Western ideology. They draw focus on the differences between Western thought driven by objectivity, individualism and analytical linear thinking, and Oceanic perspectives that are distinctively more

subjective, relational and holistic (see Borofsky, 2000; Helu Thaman, 2003, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999 for example).

Given this variety of factors, only a few authors have been individually able to carry out the grand task of compiling reliable, thorough data about region-wide journalistic practices, and framing overarching patterns. Suzanna Layton (1992, 1998) was able to gather responses from a survey mailed to 164 journalists from nine countries around the region, to gauge demographics, education and socio-economic levels of journalists. Her research mapped basic differences amongst Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian locations, and although many changes have occurred since this decade, no update of such a survey has yet been published. Helen Molnar (2008) contributed a report about the media's capacity to facilitate good governance in different islands of the Pacific, based on a project that involved 20 researchers from 14 countries conducting interviews and news content analysis of governance issues. The aim was to develop improvement strategies for inter-sectoral information flow, using the media in this capacity to facilitate social development. However, these pieces could only provide basic reports of factual data without much in-depth exploration to social and cultural specific dimensions.

To a much more immersed and detailed extent of research, Robert Seward's *Radio Happy Isles* (1999) documents broadcasting practices observed during his travels in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga, supplemented by information gathered from region-wide correspondents, such as members of the Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association (PIBA). He distinguishes a "local" regional Pacific, as opposed to the "other" metropolitan powers, although he notes that most broadcasting practices in the Pacific derive from a traditional public service model pioneered by colonial authorities. Taking a more functionalist approach, David Robie (2004) offers a methodical and

exhaustive examination of the newsroom demographics and journalism educational systems in Fiji and Papua New Guinea in his book *Mekim Nius: South Pacific media, politics and education*. His work is more focused on organizational systems and journalistic procedures, and their relationships to government bodies.

Despite the shortage of such broadly based investigations from a single author and volume, other noteworthy articles have been compiled into edited books, for example *Nius Bilong Pasifik: Mass media in the Pacific* (1995), edited by Robie. This volume features commentaries from a range of local practitioners from Tahiti, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Fiji and New Caledonia. The Pacific voices featured in the book, supported by a few from overseas-based correspondents, go far to represent vibrant grassroots views to which other islanders can relate and link in relevance to their own lives. For instance, Tongan pro-democracy MP ‘Akilisi Pohiva (1995) gives an impassioned first-hand account of the heavy-handed censorship tactics he faced under the monarchical government system, while editorial staff at the Fiji periodical *The Review* (1995) take on scandal and corruption in their account of then-Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka’s political (and personal) activities. The “community voice” in this collection, while decidedly non-academic, is styled with insightful, plain-spoken language and shorter descriptive articles drawn from actual experiences.

More recent volumes reflect the increase of more academic input in the field, such as *South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional perspectives, local issues*, edited by Papoutsaki and Sundar-Harris (2008a). This collection includes content analyses of news reports about conflict-resolution in the Solomon Islands (Iroga, 2008), domestic and sexual violence in Papua New Guinea (McManus, 2008), and the independence movement in West Papua (Matbob & Papoutsaki, 2008). Shailendra Singh and Biman Prasad (2008; 2009) have also put together two recent anthologies, including a special

edition of the *Fijian Studies Journal* (2009) that focuses solely on the struggle for Fijian media freedom and democracy over the past two decades. Meanwhile, articles from around the Asia-Pacific region are compiled in *Media and Development: Issues and Challenges in the Pacific Islands* (Singh & Prasad, 2008), addressing the role of the media in regional development. Areas covered include public health, environment, economic and political journalism.

More academic literature can be found in specialist journals, such as the *Pacific Journalism Review* (PJR), the now-defunct *Pacific Islands Communications Journal*, and to a much lesser extent, the *Australian Journalism Review* (AJR). However, perhaps because the PJR and AJR are published in New Zealand and Australia respectively, and perhaps due to Pacific practitioners' busy lifestyle, lack of higher academic exposure, or simply a short supply of resources to promote their contributions, the wide range of Pacific Island "community voices" has waned in these publications when compared to the late 1980's through to the 1990's. While the academic calibre of output has certainly improved, the pool of locally produced researchers and writers has not expanded at the same rate. This scarcity of indigenous Pacific Islanders writing about their own local contexts have been noted by Sharp and Papoutsaki (2008) in their analysis of journalism education trends in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Moreover, it appears that a great deal of Pacific-related research is dominated by a Fiji and/or Papua New Guinea focus - these being the larger, more developed nations, as well as the homes of the three of the region's four main journalism schools (the other being in Samoa). For example, in the five years between 2005 and 2009, less than a third of the total 103 academic articles published by the *Pacific Journalism Review* concentrate specifically on media in the South Pacific Islands, while the bulk focuses on Australian, New Zealand and Asian contexts, or journalism in general. Of the 29 articles

that directly deal with the Pacific region, half (14) concentrate only on Fijian contexts. This limited variety of perspectives remains a concern to be addressed by both indigenous and non-indigenous academics in the field.

Outside of specialist publications however, one may still find worthwhile contributions to Pacific media research, such as Bruce Hill's (2007) spot-on observations about the Tongan government's strained relationship with foreign reporters, based on his experience as a long-time Radio Australia correspondent for the Pacific. Meanwhile, Samoan veteran journalist Lance Polu (2000) provides an assessment of human rights, media freedom and what he calls a Samoan "cultural smoke screen", created when those in power wish to avoid accountability, which was presented at the 1998 UNESCO colloquium on cultural rights, held at Waikato University. Another regional conference about human rights and the media held in 2008 by the Pacific Foundation Corporation also highlighted new topics of interest, such as environmental and climate change reporting (Jackson, 2008; Kirby, 2008; Nadkarni, 2008) and media coverage of children's rights (Toleafoa, 2008). Regrettably, annual conferences held by the regional major media bodies, Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) and the New Zealand-based Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) generally do not involve research or academic presentations, mostly involving dialogue and panel procedures.

In light of the available literature, it was challenging to find a solid, thorough theoretical analysis of Pacific media that addressed the context I wished to explore. Because of the importance of cultural belief systems in the production of the Tongan political structure, I was seeking a framework that could relate the work of the media strongly to its Pacific Island cultural context, whereby I could draw some connections between the Tongan journalists' professional role in reporting political issues, and their cultural identity within the larger community. While some academics have touched upon an identifiable

“Pacific” style of journalism (Cass, 2004; Papoutsaki & Sundar-Harris, 2008b), the idea has since remained largely uncultivated. I also found many references and descriptions of certain “cultural constraints” on Pacific media, though few unpacked the various roots of these constraints in any analytical way. Of the views that do venture into this realm, Cass (1999; 2001; 2004) has offered some notable culturally aware explorations into media and political structures in the Pacific, while anthropologist Lissant Bolton (1991) takes an in-depth look at the powerful influence of radio on cultural identity and nationalism in Vanuatu.

2.2. Development Journalism theory

Nonetheless, in terms of theory, I note here that “development journalism”, now a recognized framework in many Asian and African contexts, has seen a growing number of adherents amongst Pacific-based researchers. Development journalism, a term credited to Alan Chalkley in 1968 (Romano, 2005), targets the conditions of so-called “third-world” countries, aiming to promote national development through the informed reporting of locally relevant processes rather than just major events (Loo, 1994).

Originated in the 1970’s as a hypothetical solution to counter Western monopolization in transnational flows of information, the theory has continually faced criticism because of its perceived equivalence to “government say-so” journalism (Ogan, 1982), mainly due to its collaborative approach towards state-endorsed development initiatives.

However, other proponents have also focused on the elements of transparency, watchdog journalism and grass roots level nation-building, although the exact parameters of the model continue to be subject to “bitter contestation” (Romano, 2005).

In the Pacific, Devi and Chand (2008) assert that “development journalism” is simply another term for “good journalism”, incorporating “truthful, comprehensive, intelligent” accounts of events and process in a meaningful context (p.271). Robie (2008) proposes

that development journalism follows a stage of revolutionary or radical journalism, as newly independent states grapple with the question of how to “become the nation [they] want to be” (p.22). Papoutsaki (2008) sees development journalism as a possible answer to the apparent “blind adherence” of Pacific Island journalists to Western methods of sensationalism and non-contextual reporting. She calls for a more “participatory” approach from the media in enabling positive social change.

2.3. The Tongan media context

While the issue has not been rigorously examined in the Pacific context, the value of cultural identity in framing journalistic models is housed within the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) original scheme for a “New World Information and Communication Order” (NWICO) adopted in 1980. At the 21st UNESCO general conference in Belgrade, UNESCO outlined the “respect for each people’s cultural identity and for the right of each nation to inform the world public about its interests, its aspirations and its social and cultural values”, as part of nine key elements in the development of NWICO (Macbride, 1980). Strains of development journalism as such can be seen to emerge in my own research, although I take a distinctly different route in addressing domestic cultural attitudes towards political and social power, then placing the role of Tongan media within this context by investigating the messages they communicated about reform. In doing this, I seek to critique both the challenges and opportunities it provides for local media bodies.

To handle these issues I looked to a range of Tonga based work, such as Kalafi Moala’s (2002) revealing book about his newspaper’s pivotal journey as a supporter of political reform during the 1990’s. Although it is told as a personal narrative from Moala’s standpoint, it is one of the few publications that facilitate a more discerning look into

how a country's culture and politics can influence the role of the local media, as well as the real lives of journalists.

Moala has since written a number of recent articles that further place the role of the media in the context of a complex "elitist" local culture. He encapsulates the government's attitude in the 1990's towards media freedom, as one where "...you only have the right to know what we allow you to know; if you insist on knowing more or report beyond that, you are a rebel, seditious, and culturally insensitive" (Moala, 2008a, p.180). However, while this attitude has often been misunderstood as a solely political characteristic of an oppressive government, he points out in his most recent publication that the culture of "domination-oppression", is an all-embracing feature in Tongan society, where power is wielded by "men over women, parents over children, aristocrats over peasants, nobles over commoners, teachers over students, priests and ministers over laity, and rulers over people" (Moala, 2008b, p. 31).

Besides Moala, there are few published works that analytically address Tongan media and its social context. However, an MA thesis by Kitekei'aho Tu'akalau (2005) aptly describes the rise of the independent media in Tonga and its pivotal role as a form of government opposition – even when journalism was simply regarded as "neutral".

Tu'akalau focuses on two controversial publications of the 1980's, namely the *Kele'a* ("Conch Shell" - a quarterly newsletter) and the weekly *Taimi 'o Tonga*. The explosion of information they provided played an essential role in paving the way for the successful formation of Tonga's pro-democracy movement in the 1990's and popularizing the notion of democracy amongst the general public. The founder of the *Kele'a*, 'Akilisi Pohiva, was elected into parliament as a People's Representative in 1987 and has been voted into this seat at every election since. He has also written and made presentations about his personal experiences facing heavy censorship from the government during his tenacious struggle for democratic change (Pohiva, 1995; 2002).

Meanwhile, a presentation paper by political scientist Malakai Koloamatangi (2004) addresses the Tongan press and local politics, detailing interviews with Moala as well as then-assistant editor of government newspaper *Kalonikali* (Tongan Chronicle), Sione Tu'itahi. His analysis of *Kalonikali* articles shows that news was mainly centred around government work and achievements, gathered from elite sources such as cabinet ministers and high officials. To gauge public opinion about democratic reform, he looked at letters to the editors in both the *Taimi* and *Kalonikali* between 1993 and 1996, which showed that the public had conflicting views about the political status quo. Koloamatangi offers the theory that the “Tongan mind” does not necessarily see things in “black and white” (i.e. a choice between monarchy versus reform), but is able to relate many contingent ideas – gathered from peers, media and social institutions - and thus easily rationalize contradictory beliefs about an issue. While this may have the advantage of an “open-minded” people, the danger exists of public opinion “being easily led, and insidiously influenced by others” (Koloamatangi, *ibid.*, p.7), including the media.

From a legal perspective, John Maloney and Jason Reed Struble (2008) study the development of democracy in Tonga by addressing a number of landmark court cases, including those involving the press. Maloney and Struble conclude that the legal precedents set by these court decisions directly influenced the development of political reform in the Kingdom. For example, a 1996 Supreme Court ruling overturned a guilty verdict found by the parliamentary court, involving *Taimi* 'o Tonga editor Kalafi Moala, senior journalist Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and People's Representative 'Akilisi Pohiva. After being jailed for 26 days for contempt of court², their release for lack of a fair trial was a

² The three had been sentenced to 30 days in prison for contempt of court, after the newspaper published an impeachment notice leaked by Pohiva, which alleged that Justice Minister had travelled overseas to watch the Atlanta Olympics after being denied leave by the parliament chair.

symbolic victory for the movement, and international news coverage about the case publicised the reality of the state of media freedom in Tonga.

2.4. In search of a cultural approach – Tongan politics and culture

Altogether, these works provided a decent basis to guide my research, although the strong political and cultural focus of my thesis prompted further exploration into academic literature addressing social attitudes towards power and democracy. This is a plentiful field, and I drew strongly from the detailed overview of Tongan history by Ian Campbell (2001), who also covered the developments in the reform movement up to the early 2000's (Campbell, 2005), and later, carefully traced the events surrounding the November 2006 riots (Campbell, 2008a; 2008b). Tongan historian Sione Latukefu's (1975) key digest about the history of the constitution provided a useful reference, and his fascinating account of the early pro-democracy movement, featured rare morsels about the backgrounds and early activities of some of Tonga's most well-known politicians today (Latukefu, 1993). Meanwhile, 'Ilaisa Futa Helu's (1992; 1995; 1997) papers represented a local voice that was always far ahead of his time, drawing firmly from Western constructions of democracy to counter what he saw as an oppressive elite who employed culture to maintain their status. 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) probes this further in an exhaustive examination of Tongan aristocracy, whose role in society has changed vastly since the founding of the constitution in 1875 and the wave of social development in the 1960's. He notes that despite the growing calls for democracy, the nobility has paradoxically retained its position as "foci of [Tongan] culture and identity as a single people, as well as being the signposts of our historical continuity as a nation" (Hau'ofa, 1994, p.426-427).

As Tongan politics is inevitably tied to traditional rank, I also sought a solid understanding of this crucial social element to supplement my own knowledge gathered

while growing up in Tonga. Tongan conceptualizations of rank are highly complex and symbolic, but several anthropologists have admirably dissected the subject, such as Elizabeth Bott (1981), Adrienne Kaeppler (1971) and George Marcus (1978). Rank is based on the concept of *va*, which are binding interpersonal relationships between people that perpetually carry the terms of who is superior and who is inferior within that relationship.

The *va* framework has been explored by Tongan scholars in a number of different fields. For instance, Konai Helu-Thaman (2008) posits *tauhi va* or “nurturing relationships” as basis for peace, sustainable development and education, while similar studies of communal relations have been carried out by Tracie Mafale’o (2004) in the field of social work, and Robert Soakai (2003) in resource management. Tevita Orson Ka’ili (2005) looks at reciprocal cultural practices based on *va*, amongst diasporic Tongans in Hawaii, while ‘Okusitino Mahina (2004a, 2004b) frames a unique ontological theory of space and time based on the concepts of *va* (relation) paired with *ta* (rhythm), which interact together to produce social harmony and beauty. These works focus strongly on the relational aspects of *va*.

In relation to hierarchical connections, Johansson-Fua (2009) explores the role of *va* in providing social demarcations for leadership in the community, using this as a basis for a culturally sensitive educational model for Tongan teachers. Giovanni Bennardo and Charles Cappell (2008) also refer to a “cognitive radiality” amongst Tongan villagers, who were found to socially orient themselves to external “referential nodes” rather than to their individual selves (see also Bennardo, 2009 for further detailed analysis).

Bennardo and Cappell use original mathematical computations to illustrate the multiple degrees of social influence exerted and experienced amongst villagers in their study. My thesis will address both crosswise and hierarchical elements of *va* in Tongan politics.

2.5. The Tongan riots of November 16, 2006

With a wide basis for understanding of the Tongan media as well as its social and political context, I then looked to gathering information about the events of November 2006, which was the centre focus of my analyses. Campbell (2008a) makes the only published scholarly contribution, aside from news coverage, that comprehensively details the chain of events which led to November 16. He also places the riots into a larger historical and political context, contending that it was “merely a dramatic incident” (Campbell, 2008a, p.95), with numerous omens of coming calamity effectively ignored by the government in the previous two years. However, Campbell also doubts the sincerity of the pro-democracy movement in upholding the interests of the people of Tonga, suggesting that the revolt was more about “vengeance, xenophobia, settling of scores or personal ambition”, and less about democracy (2008a, p.109).

Likewise, in a chapter of his most recent book, Moala (2008b) also describes his belief that the riots were a result of how the “Oppressed” (the people’s movement pushing for democracy) became the “Oppressor”, by failing to sustain a non-violent demonstration and therefore stripping away the people’s rights to safe and free expression. He also claims that the current pro-democratic movement, led by his former confederate Pohiva, forces its ideology on its followers, in effect “brainwashing” them. Moala places full responsibility of the destruction on the activists, claiming the group has veered far from the original democratic ideals it began with in the 1990’s, and has become fixated on self-interested power games. His statements were later attacked in the media by Pohiva’s supporters.

Another Tongan academic, ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki (2007), weighed in on the events of November 16, albeit in a confidential report to the University of the South Pacific,

where she is a professor of education. Again, she found both the government and opposition movement guilty of mishandling the democratic demands of the people, and further implicated vulnerable populations – namely youth and deported youth from overseas – of playing major roles in the violence. Political adviser to the Tongan Prime Minister, Lopeti Senituli (2007), later issued a public response to Taufe’ulungaki’s report, attacking alleged fallacies, while giving his first-hand account of the parliamentary debates leading up to November 16, as politicians heatedly thrashed out proposed reform models without reaching a peaceful consensus.

There is evidently almost no literature (other than limited news coverage) which documents in detail the views of the people who participated or supported the demonstrations on November 16. What is currently available in terms of opposing views, are the responses from pro-democracy leaders Pohiva (2007) and Lepolo Mahe Taunisila (2007) to Senituli’s (ibid.) statements, published online on the *Planet-Tonga* website. Both argued that November 16 was an obvious and expected result of the government’s prolonged rejection of public frustrations with the political status quo. In his statement, Pohiva (ibid.) revisited the historical development of the democratic movement over the decades, quoting well-known Tongans who had been part of the early movement. While he mentioned that he was “right in front of an angry mob... to stop them from attacking [Senituli]”, Taunisila (ibid.) also defended the crowd’s right to demonstrate near parliament, while criticising the near-universal demonization of the protesters in the Tongan media as “menacing” and virtually sadistic. I found that the only other academic scholars to refer to the demonstrations as “peaceful” (at least initially), are Maloney and Struble (2008).

The lack of exploration into this side of the story is probably due, firstly, to the fact that many of the academics that have published works about the riots are non-Tongans (for

instance, Campbell, 2008a, 2008b; Maloney & Struble, 2008; McClellan, 2009; Powles, 2008) who often have to source each other's works, or source *Matangi Tonga*, the only independent English language news site. Voices that may be otherwise found in the four operating Tongan language newspapers at the time are often overlooked. To add to that, locals are likely to self-censor any endorsement or agreement with the episode, due to the cultural contempt held against deviance and rebellion. Politics aside, there was also a genuine feeling of shock and sadness amongst the community at such a national catastrophe. Finally, Tongan scholars may simply lack the time, interest or nerve to undertake such a multi-faceted bulk of work on such a sensitive issue. Kalafi Moala, for instance, has suspended a planned book project because he felt there were too many stories to tell that deserved thorough, dedicated and upright examination (personal communication, July 21, 2009).

Against these available resources, it is safe to say that there has been no published work specifically addressing the media coverage, local or international, of the November 2006 riots in Tonga. While I summarize the chain of events that day by looking at information gathered from local news coverage, the purpose of my thesis is to take a comprehensive view of the historical processes that led up to it, and then locate the political messages found in the text within this context. By doing this, I hope to implicate the role of Tongan journalism in reflecting the larger social and cultural dynamics that continue to pervade local politics. This can bring a more meaningful understanding of the challenges and opportunities that Pacific media face in the small island context.

Chapter 3:

“Decolonizing” journalism - a culturally thick approach

Nofo ‘a Maama kae kailao ‘a Fakafa’anga

– “Mortals are seated while the Spirits dance” (Tongan proverb) *

Fakafa’anga refers to the realm of Spirits. Apparently these spirits hold grand celebrations of which worldly mortals are completely unaware.

Meaning: When a person or people are ignorant of occurrences happening elsewhere.

3.1. Why culture?

With regards to Pacific Island media research, the literature review showed a need for more variety in ongoing studies, especially in those that are locally driven or culturally focused. So far, much of the literature have framed media bodies as very structural and defined systems which monitor the government on one hand, and public opinion on the other. This stems from the Western-borne construction of the independent “Fourth Estate”, charged with scrutinizing state decisions in the interest of a free and informed public. This watchdog role of press, as “one of the central guarantors of political democracy” (Sparks, 1988, p.209), is undergirded by the principles of equality, freedom of speech and information, and the mechanisms of an elected government. Following this, aspects of media freedom, ownership, ethics, professionalism and education have been aptly examined in Pacific media.

* Proverbs are taken and translated from my own knowledge of their local usage.

However, little emphasis has been placed on the importance of the role of Pacific Island culture in media analysis. Howe (2000) claims that because continental Westerners often see the Pacific Islands as isolated and insignificant dots in a vast sea, island cultures are accordingly regarded as inconsequential (p.61). Local cultural forces – which permeate extensive aspects of social life in Oceania - are often overlooked, avoided, or inadequately articulated because of the American model of the press that has “enthroned itself globally” (Merrill, 2009), and set the agenda for most media research and journalism education in the region. As such, the nature of a great majority of Pacific Island media research, notwithstanding their undeniable contributions to regional development and democracy, have been somewhat “colonized” by an unconscious, Eurocentric assumption that legal, political and economic structural factors are the most crucial issues island media have to address.

Although these are certainly vital, other global media specialists have since pointed to a degree of inadequacy of these structures in capturing the “fluid, dynamic” ways in which people use the media in various cultures around the world (Wasserman, 2009). Wasserman (ibid.) argues that political and economic factors are interdependent with cultural aspects, and a culturally “thick” approach can point to a “richer understanding of the ways in which media users interact with structural conditions and negotiate meanings within them” (p.28). Similarly, Loo’s (2009) study about Asian media pushes for a variation from “Pulitzer-type” criteria of journalism excellence, arguing that “best practices in journalism are culturally interpreted and best understood from within the realities that define the socially transformative work of the respective Asian journalists” (p.7). In other words, the media is informed by a greater cultural reality, which shapes and is shaped by people’s interpretations of the world around them.

The adversarial watchdog role of media thus remains problematic in Tonga and similar Pacific Islands where prevalent cultural attitudes are “directly opposed” to democratic

values (Helu, 1992, p.2). Cultural ideals based on communal unity and hierarchical rank, are often valued over and above the tenets of equal individual rights and an elected democracy. The local press in Tonga is then faced with a dilemma where its status as a democratizing agent, inherent in the act of disseminating knowledge, has to be negotiated against their cultural identification with a nation fiercely protective and proud of their indigenous autonomy.

My thesis seeks to unpack this tension in the role of media in Tonga, moving beyond political-economic interpretations towards a more inclusive framework that appreciates Pacific journalists as cultural beings connected to the larger community. As such, I will be able to better address Kalafi Moala's (2007) observation that "news stories are never written or broadcast in a vacuum, for they are always written and told within the framework of cultural, social, and historical contexts" (p.241). My approach to the topic seeks to contribute to the "decolonization" of journalism studies in the Pacific, by accommodating a deeper understanding of the nature of Tongan culture, and its relation to media work.

3.2. Defining "culture"

Before one can examine its influences in media, the meaning of "Tongan culture" in this thesis must be clearly defined. The term "culture" is heavily intricate, but some scholars, most famously Raymond Williams (1974) of the Birmingham School of cultural studies (following this, Bocock, 1992), have sketched a general evolution of the term since its earliest documented usage in the 15th century. From its first references to the cultivation of land and animals (retained in current terms such as "agriculture" and "horticulture"), the term "culture" went on to mean the cultivation of minds and people, connoting a linear process of human development which culminated in being "civilized".

However, this supposed universal process of “civilization” and the belief that European countries were the forerunners of this phenomenon, was later put in question in the 18th century by German philosopher Herder. Herder introduced the idea (to Europeans) that there were not one, but many civilizations, opening the definition of culture to mean any “distinctive ways of life, social values and practices shared by groups...and historical periods” (as cited in Bocock, 1992, p.232). Concurrently, the notion of being “civilized” or “cultured” had also taken on an association with the fine arts, characterising an elite “high culture” accessible to only certain classes of people, as opposed to “low culture”. Williams (ibid.) notes that these definitions often overlap and that there is no single “true” definition, given the complex progression of the term.

Most recently, another layer of meaning has emerged from cultural studies, which has had a significant impact on the social science field (Bocock, 1992). This new approach is similar with previous definitions in that it considers a particular group’s shared meanings and values, but focuses in particular on how a group (re)creates and communicates these meanings through the use of *symbols* and *signifying* practices (“language”). In other words, the theory maintains that events and objects do not have intrinsic meanings, but only acquire value when people refer to them through words, imagery, art, movements, or any system of communication. Rooted in the works of Levi Strauss (1958/1963) then expanded in the domains of semiotics and discourse, this definition involves three main aspects – firstly, the shared meanings within a group; secondly, how these meanings are only created through communication; and finally, how these meanings are exchanged, reiterated and regularly reconstructed through everyday communication practices. As such, culture refers to “the set of practices by which meanings are produced and exchanged within a group” (Bocock, 1992, p.233).

3.3. “*Anga faka-Tonga*”: *va* and the culture of relatedness

In the case of Tonga, there is no direct translation of the word “culture” in the native language – certainly none signifying the complex history of how the word developed linguistically in Europe. However, indigenous cultural meanings can be housed under the common phrase *anga faka-Tonga*, literally translated as “Tongan way(s)” – with *anga* meaning behaviour or attitudes, and *faka* as a pre-fix denoting likeness or causation. Kalafi Moala (2008b) suggests that the Tongan understanding of culture is closest in nature to Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of “habitus”, which is a set of learned system of “dispositions” or blueprints of subjective behaviour, based on objective conditions encountered from childhood (as cited in Moala, 2008b, p.102). These blueprints are relatively permanent, and become embodied in the mind as “models of behaviour” that continue to inform a person’s social attitudes at the subconscious level.

Following this idea, one can say that the shared blueprint, or cultural meanings of the “Tongan way” is fundamentally based on the concept of *va*. The practice of *tauhi va* or maintaining/nurturing relationships has been explored by many as a fundamental aspect of the Tongan lifestyle (Bennardo & Cappell, 2008; Helu-Thaman, 2008; Ka’ili, 2005; Mafile’o, 2004; Mahina, 2004a, 2004b; Poltorak, 2007; Soakai, 2003). It is also shared by many Pacific societies as a basic framework for understanding social environments, and have been expanded to the construction of government social policies and academic methodologies (for example, Anae, 2007, 2010; Mageo, 1998; Taule’alo, 2001). At the simplest level, *va* (*wa* in Maori) means the space between any two people, ideas, or things. However, rather than an empty or open space, the *va* is loaded with mutuality, inter-orientation, and fellow-consciousness, acting as the connector between two or more entities. Whereas Western-based individualistic understandings tend to focus on each unit’s separate qualities or features, a *va* perspective emphasizes the how the two

relate, and how to maintain this relationship harmoniously. Samoan writer Albert Wendt (1999) explains:

“Va is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, *the space that is context, giving meaning to things....*” (p. 402, italics added.)

Va, as a context that “gives meaning to things”, undergirds the dominant collectivist social structure of the *kainga* or kinship system in Tonga. An example of *va* in an everyday situation is given by Koloamatangi (2004), who describes two farmers, Sione and Tavake, who live in the same village, go to the same church, know and respect each other, although not as intimate friends. Sione visits his fellow villager’s home with the intention of borrowing a spade for plantation work. He begins with a typical enquiry about how the yams are faring, which flows naturally on a course of its own, into a lingering, comprehensive conversation about crops, last Sunday’s sermon, rugby updates, and an agreement to go fishing together sometime, until finally they feel the heat of the sun and realize the time. Sione suddenly remembers the spade and asks for it.

Koloamatangi refers to this typical “round-about” style of thinking and doing things as part of “the collection of elements that is known generally and loosely as *fakaTonga*, the Tongan way” (2004, p.7). The style of conversation between the two men can be described as *talanoa*, which means unrestrictive, open, comprehensive communication, without a limiting agenda or pre-determined outcome (Halapua, 2007)³. In this specific example, the dialogue between Sione and Tavake is a conventional social habit often

³ Halapua has also introduced the “talanoa” framework to the political arena, applying it to political dialogue and conflict resolution in Fijian, Cook Island, and Tongan situations. Online reports available from the East-West Center Pacific Islands Development Program website:

<http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pidp/talanoa.htm>

carried out unthinkingly, acting to re-establish their commonness and trust by evoking their shared lives as friends, fellow villagers, and Tongans, while briefly overriding the importance of time and individual schedules. Finally, the exchange of the spade becomes both a practical gesture, as well as a representation or reiteration of their communal relationship (*va*), building upon the dynamics of the previous conversation.

In the *va* framework, individuals mutually seek to maintain harmony and mutual support for each other by carrying out cultural obligations and duties, known as *fatongia*. These can be a great many, often extending from the family to the larger community. For example, if a member of the family marries, or if a co-worker's close family member dies, or if there is the need to build a new church in the village, people are expected to contribute, and expect a contribution when they are in similar positions of need. As such, an individual will have multiple relationships to attend to, such as the *va* with one's children, spouse, friends, church, school, neighbours, workmate, and so forth. Thus, the *fatongia* to each needs to be prioritised, and is subject to urgency, availability of resources, degree of closeness in the relation, personal preferences and so forth.

3.4. *Va* and hierarchy

Now, it is also important to note that the relationships or *va* in the *kainga* system (at least in Tongan custom) are rarely egalitarian, often ambiguous and highly contextual. Relations are guided by associations of superiority and inferiority as laid out by Christine Gailey (1987, p.47): older is superior to younger; maleness is superior to femaleness; and sisterhood is superior to brotherhood. The result is an intricately weaved social system that is "strongly rank conscious" (Bleakley, 2002), where "no two people are of equal rank" in a group (Bott, 1981; Campbell, 2001; Kaeppler, 1971). When Tongan people say "*Oku 'i ai ho ma va*" ("We have a relation/connection"), the

relationship also carries with it a designation of who is superior and who is inferior within that particular context, as well as the accompanying duties expected of each. Such relationships in the clan system are interconnected in uneven lattices, where the paramount positions of power rest in the *'ulumotu'a* (oldest male head) and to some extent the *mehikitanga* (father's sister), although individual ability and the support of *kainga* members are also factors (Johansson Fua, 2009).

Following this, all Tongan customs and traditions involve significations that reinforce this hierarchical connectedness. While income and occupation certainly play a part in projections of power, as far as the cultural framework goes, the imperatives of the *kainga* system is maintained as a central point of reference. For instance, at the beginning of any formal speech, a speaker always carries out the *fakatapu*, which is a form of greeting that acknowledges all ranking persons present, from highest to lowest. In social functions such as weddings and funerals, the highest ranked *mehikitanga* (father's sister) holds the position of the *fahu* (which her children, male or female, will also carry), and receives the best gifts and mats. In traditional group performances, the position at the centre of the front row (*vahenga*) is reserved for the dancer with the most elevated status. Tongan culture may be thus defined as *the shared modes of communication and symbolization, which primarily emphasize group unity and harmony through hierarchical va relations*.

While such a framework can be initially taken as blatantly inequitable, "balancing" mechanisms exist which allow shared access to authority. In the kin matrix, an individual will always be underprivileged in one relationship, while simultaneously having a privileged position in another. For instance, a man may be obligated to his sister, but at the same time, he is privileged above his mother's brother. Or, a teacher may have authority over a student, but in a different context, may be obligated to the

student's family through kinship ties. Moreover, ascribed social roles are often taken as a beneficial counter to economic inequalities amongst members of the community. In large social functions, certain key kin members automatically have say over the distribution of wealth (such as food or traditional objects like mats) or allocation of duties, rather than the hijacking of authority by someone with the most material status⁴. As one Tongan reasoned: "if the rules of traditional hierarchy were taken away, whoever has the most money will have the power" (Puloka, personal communication, July 29, 2009). In these ways, *va* and *kainga* system operate successfully in the small group context to promote reciprocity, communal welfare, as well as stability through recognized sources of leadership. At the same time, cultural identities are multiple, layered, highly contextual, and as in any other social system, subject to unfair exploitation.

3.5. Cultural hegemony and *va* in the political realm

Conflicting views arise when the *va* context is taken to the modern political realm. On one hand, traditionalist Tongans view the monarchical structure as a natural expansion of the *kainga* system, where the king – through his blood relations – is the '*ulumotu*'a or head of all Tongan clans (Mapuhola, personal communication, July 29, 2009; see also Latukefu, 1975, pp1-13, esp. p.7). This position as *hau* or traditional leader warrants his authoritative powers in running the kingdom (technically made up of his inferior extended *kainga*). The king thus sits at the head of society, followed by the closely related aristocracy or *hou'eiki*, and finally, the very distantly related commoners or *tu'a* at the bottom rung of society. It is uncertain whether this pyramidal political system is

⁴ On the other hand, it means that individuals can be held captive in their allocated social role. However, it is an interesting contrast to other indicators of power such as material wealth or occupation. My father pointed this out to me saying that "in a large family function, it is always a great thing to see all the family come together, and it doesn't matter how rich you are, or how high your position is in the workplace. When the '*ulumotu*'a [commanding male elder] gives instructions, even if he lives in a rural village shack, all the family members will listen."

based on kinship hierarchies, or whether kinship hierarchies developed as a reflection of how people were ruled at the overarching political level. In any case, the semblance between the two makes the process of democratization highly sensitive, as it can be seen to implicate traditional systems of kinship and commune.

Nonetheless, other Tongans have questioned such a smooth adoption of the *kainga* framework as a political construct. Helu (1997) points to a key shift in the dynamics of *va*, which will naturally occur when a society expands and conflicting interests arise. At this point, the *va* function moves from a “benign” practice of sharing and balancing social power, to one serving solely to “maintain or consolidate the power of the ruling elite” (Helu, 1997, p.1). The digression of the Tongan political system as such, can be seen in the loss of “balancing mechanisms” mentioned earlier which allow simultaneous positions of privilege and non-privilege at the *kainga* level. Conversely in the political realm, stratification is centralized and relatively permanent, and cultural obligations are heavily biased towards the demands at the top. In other words, there is no “alternative” context where a commoner can be an aristocrat, in the same way a person can always hold a *fahu* status through one family circle or the other.

However, everyday discourse in Tonga lacks overt differentiation in these two levels of *va*. In fact, the current structure of government has taken great advantage of the Tongan cultural condition, in creating a sense of nationalism marked by the fusion of political and communal paradigms. The result is a cultural hegemony that has not only congealed the political hierarchy as “natural”, but makes it a virtual affront to Tongan identity to question it. Antonio Gramsci (1971) outlines cultural hegemony as the political dominance by a particular social class which is not secured by outright force, but instead, *normalized* through everyday cultural practices and language (as communication systems), thus existing with the “consent” of the subordinates. In the

Tongan case, cultural hegemony occurs when shared meanings, rooted in the concept of harmonious *va*, are used to reproduce and reinforce the current political structure.

There is an interesting historical development behind this. When the Tongan nation-state was created in the latter half of the 19th century, it followed a long period of civil war where power was routinely contested amongst the chiefs, who were ruling the country as fragmented factions after the decline of the sacred and all-powerful Tu'i Tonga line in previous centuries⁵. The period was marked by increasingly “intolerable cruel, inhuman and arbitrary” attitudes from the chiefs, who “came to regard commoners as mere chattels to be exploited exclusively for their own benefit and amusement” (Latukefu, 1975, p.15). Political dominance was largely wielded by brute force and harsh cultural taboos⁶, until an ambitious young chief named Taufa'ahau rose above the rest to make his mark in history. Through combat, political strategy and the ideological promotion of introduced Christian values, he united Tonga under a singular rule and founded the modern constitutional government.

The new government fell into place after a series of key codes of law that were established over decades, culminating in the Constitution of Tonga passed in 1875. This document brought unprecedented rights to the masses, who were until then fully subject to the absolute rule of their chiefs. A declaration of rights proclaimed that all Tongans, chiefs and commoners, would be equally subject to the rule of law, and that everyone had the right to their own property, religious practice, and freedom of speech.

⁵ Helu (1992) asserts that up until the 14th century, Tonga experienced a long era of peace and stability until various changes took place which transformed the social ethos, such as a new division of labour, the elevation of the status of women and the consolidation of the Tu'i Tonga power. However, stringent hierarchical regimes were exercised throughout both periods.

⁶ Latukefu (1975) describes severe punishments wielded on commoners who broke taboos or orders, including beating, bounding and then leaving a person in the sun for days without food or water, and even killing (p.12-13). Wood-Ellem (2007) tells of the chief Tuku'aho who was said to have cut off the arm of any cook that displeased him (p.125). Finger sacrifices and strangulations were also practiced as sacrifices to the gods.

Furthermore, although the duties of nobility towards the general population are not mentioned in the Constitution (as opposed to the specified duties for commoners to pay them land tariffs), a new patriarchal role of the nobility was outlined by Tupou I, who ordered chiefs to “show love to the people you have under you” (from the Vava’u Law Code, as cited in Latukefu, 1975, p.22)⁷. The constitution – drafted by ex-British missionary Shirley Baker - also played a critical role in gaining credibility for Tonga as a valid, stable state by Western standards, and enabled the king to sign various international treaties, making it harder for annexation to occur.

Tongans thus hold great pride in their constitution and the success of what King Tupou I referred to as a transformation from an era of “darkness” to an “era of light” (as cited in Latukefu, 1975, p.41). The new era coincided with the increasing conversions of Tongans to Christianity by missionaries, spurred by expected ideological shifts which come with European contact – the desire for European material goods, new technologies, literacy, as well as disillusionment with the comparative failure of Tongan gods to enact physical protection in war and against introduced diseases (Campbell, 2001). The idea that everyone was “equal” under the Christian god would have also been appealing to the oppressed masses. Taken in retrospect, King Tupou I had achieved one of the greatest feats in Tongan history, and exhibited tremendous foresight, considering he upset powerful traditions by bringing forth the notion of individual rights and a representative government. He is often locally referred to as the “founder of modern Tonga”.

⁷ A modern example of this patriarchal role can be seen in an ABC interview with the Niua Islands’ Lord Fusitu’a, who once stated that he sees himself as the “father of his people”. According to his explanation, in practice, a noble’s duties include allocations of land as needed by villagers, guidance in civic affairs such as taxes and civil laws, as well as overseeing development projects in the village. (Adler, N. & Sherwood, C., 1994)

Nonetheless, the development into a state-government structure meant that power could no longer be contested by rival chiefs and their clans through the complicated politics of relational layers of rank and authority. In fact, to maintain support for his new ruling scheme, Tupou I did not eliminate aristocratic rule altogether, but selected 20 chiefs – those who had most supporters from the general population – to be entitled permanently as “nobles” and given land estates to govern, following the British model of feudalism. As such, Hau’ofa argues that “little did people know then, or consciously know even today, that they were released from one form of bondage only to be subjected to another, relatively benign, form of subordination” (1994, p.416). In other words, the power structure shifted from one implemented through open force and severe traditional religious taboos, to a hegemonical form of nationalism, incorporating pride, Christian obedience, and indoctrinated gratitude to the “benevolent” monarch for “liberating” the Tongan people from the old system. The idea fortified the king’s position, because in contrast to liberation processes in Europe and North America a century before, “freedom” had been gifted peacefully, rather than through a violent overhaul by the oppressed masses.

Music, poetry, education curricula and the annual celebration of ‘Independence Day’, have since “ensconced the monarchy firmly and centrally in the national psyche, and in the national affection”⁸ (Hau’ofa, 1994, p.416). Societal divisions continue to be reiterated in the use of a different set of verbs and nouns when referring to the King, the aristocracy and the commoners. *Va* concepts of interpersonal hierarchy, obligation, as well as community unity, are now consentingly engaged in the perpetration of the

⁸ For example, when I was a primary school student in Tonga, we celebrated the opening of parliamentary sessions every year with all the primary schools marching in the street from the palace to the parliamentary building. The song we sang each year while we marched was called “Tau’atina” (Freedom) and consisted of one verse thus translated: “Our freedom/ bestowed to us by the King in Mala’ekula/ Tonga give your heartfelt thanks/ for the sweet day of liberation/ Rejoice! Shout and the top of your lungs! Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!” The tradition and the song continue to be performed today.

apparently benevolent ruling system. Today, *tauhi va* (maintaining and nurturing relations) is heavily associated with duties and deference to the upper echelons of society, but with much less emphasis on the reverse obligation from elite groups to the masses. Altogether, the prevalence of the top-down configuration of Tongan historical progression towards modern democracy, the seeds of which were sown in Tupou I's reign, means that the aristocracy continue to be the "foci of [Tongan] culture and [Tongan] identity as a single people, as well as being the signposts of our historical continuity as a nation" (Hau'ofa, 1994, p.426-427). This is compounded by a cultural commitment to national cohesiveness, peace, and stability, over individual rights, modernization, and violent change. Democratic efforts – including the fight for media freedom – thus face impressive challenges against this backdrop.

3.6. Placing Tongan media in the cultural context

The social system in which the media in Tonga must operate can be captured in the blunt description provided by esteemed local academic 'Ilaisa Futa Helu – "Tonga is the state, Tonga is the culture – our culture is the nation" (1997, p.4). In other words, the relationship of the media to the nation-state includes with it the indispensable realm of cultural ideology. As such, the promotion of media freedom can be approached at two main levels: the first involves the structural, formalized, officialized and well-publicized demarcations of political rights to free speech and freedom of information. The second layer engages more subtle yet equally powerful, hegemonically absorbed parameters that rely on cultural understandings of *va* (social relationships) and *fatongia* (social duty). The challenge for journalists is finding a way to address the deeper cultural condition and incorporate this into the role of media in society as a mediator for democracy. The methods of my research will take some initial steps in this direction, as the following chapter will detail further.

Chapter 4:

Aims and methods

<i>your way</i>	<i>my way</i>
<i>objective</i>	<i>subjective</i>
<i>analytic</i>	<i>gut-feeling like</i>
<i>always doubting</i>	<i>always sure</i>
<i>the truth</i>	<i>of the truth</i>
<i>until proof comes</i>	<i>the proof</i>
<i>slowly</i>	<i>is there</i>
<i>quietly</i>	<i>waiting</i>
<i>and it hurts</i>	<i>and it hurts</i>

- Konai Helu Thaman, “Our Way” (2008)

4.1. Aims and scope

Part of my interest in framing the cultural scope of this research grew out of my own experience in news media, both in Tonga and New Zealand. I noticed a much greater ease in the way Kiwi journalists pushed the ideal of media freedom without prior restraint, especially in reporting political issues. News content was punchy, hard-hitting, revealing, and dramatic. By contrast, Tongan news angles were relatively tame, less conflict-driven, and more about relaying information rather than uncovering hidden facts. At the same time, cultural protocols were followed almost unthinkingly by the local media, such as using the correct vocabulary when referring to people of certain social standing, wearing certain types of cultural dress to official functions, or editing taboo stories about sex-related crimes. This was based on the consideration that entire family units, which maintain cultural codes of behaviour between certain male and

female members, usually share one newspaper. Generally these practices did not hinder journalistic work, but were carried out as routines learned since childhood. Journalists often found creative ways of going around cultural constraints in order to do their job⁹.

To delve deeper into how these kinds of cultural influences translated into the work of the media, especially in political reporting, given the social understandings of *va* explained in the previous chapter, I framed three overarching aims for my research:

- (1) To understand the socio-cultural context in which the Tongan media is located;
- (2) To examine how selected Tongan media communicated the notion of democratic political reform within this context; and
- (3) To reflect on how these findings implicate the role of media in the political reform process.

4.2. Research methods

Two methods were used in carrying out these tasks. The first was a thorough analysis of selected print media coverage during the month of November 2006, aimed at mapping out journalistic patterns and inherent political messages. I chose to focus on this incident as it represented a milestone in the nation's struggle for democratic change which brought political discourse to the forefront of the media. Both content and discourse analysis were used to investigate dominant themes that emerged in the coverage. The second task involved personal interviews with local media and key community figures,

⁹ One example given by a local publisher was the method of slipping in just enough information about a taboo story and letting the reader "figure out the rest" (Moala, personal communication, July 21, 2009). When his paper covered the birth of the King's first great granddaughter conceived out of wedlock, the story congratulated the new parents, and then innocuously mentioned their wedding date, which was only six months prior. Another veteran journalist described elitist media blocks on culturally significant events, which reporters handled by simply dispersing and then filtering in later along with other guests, unnoticed (Fonua, personal communication, July 23, 2009).

aimed at substantiating findings from the textual component. They sought to explore possible reasons behind patterns, attitudes, or values that may emerge, especially in relation to cultural aspects. Interviews were also filmed and edited into a 50 minute documentary, as a creative and accessible output of my thesis. Specific steps in carrying out these methods are described below.

4.2.1. Textual analysis

(a) Selection of media

While Tonga has a vibrant media body¹⁰, print media was chosen in the interest of convenient access to complete archival material, available at the University of Auckland Library. Out of the four regularly published newspapers operating in the country, the *Talaki* (“Informer”) and the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* (“Times of Tonga”) were selected for analysis because of their relatively high circulation numbers (3,000 – 3,500 locally), and reputations as independent sources for general news. Both are privately owned Tongan-language newspapers, although the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* (often referred to as *Taimi*) has been publishing regularly since 1989, compared to the much younger *Talaki*, founded in 2005. The other two print media not used in this research were the state-owned *Kalonikali* (“Tongan Chronicle”), which primarily published in the interests of government, and the *Kele’a* (“Conch Shell”), which is a political tabloid spread representing oppositional views to government. While these offer important insights

¹⁰ The Tongan media currently consists of four weekly newspapers (*Taimi ‘o Tonga*, *Talaki*, *The Tongan Chronicle*, and *Kele’a*); four monthly or bi-monthly church-based periodicals (*Taumu’a Lelei*, *Tohi Fanongonongo*, *Liahona* and *Tonga Star*); two national television stations (TV Tonga and TMN-2 – a third station, OBN stopped operating in 2006 right before the riots); two cable TV providers (Digicel TV – formerly Tonfon Television – and Sky Pacific); one AM radio station (Radio Tonga/A3Z); five FM radio stations (KOOL 90FM, Millennium Radio 89.1FM, Radio Nuku’alofa 88.6FM, Christian station 93FM and new station 88.1FM - founded 2009); and one regularly updated online news site (*Matangi Tonga Online*).

into Tongan media and its role in society, I wished to focus only on establishments that claimed no political agenda as a more neutral representation of general public opinion.

During the chosen timeframe, *Talaki* was publishing 28 pages weekly every Wednesday, while the *Taimi* published two 36-page issues each week on Monday and Thursday. Both papers publish in “tall tabloid” size (roughly 17inch x 11inch), six columns wide, mostly in black and white with select pages in full colour (including front, back and centrefold pages). The *Taimi* featured a much higher percentage of advertisers (including the entire six pages from the midpoint), which is double the amount of centre-fold advertisements in the *Talaki*. News content was similar to many community newspapers in New Zealand, featuring a regular mixture of hard news, community news, human interest stories, sports news, as well as a somewhat irregular “youth page” (normally consisting of pop song lyrics, vox pops and horoscopes). However, the *Taimi* newspaper also regularly featured a substantial section for letters to the editor, while this section was only occasionally featured in the *Talaki*.

(b) Sampling

Samples were taken from news coverage beginning on the week of November 1, 2006 and ending the week of November 30, 2006. While the riots took place within one day, the weeks immediately prior also saw critical political developments in the lead up to the main event. I included the two weeks of coverage before and after November 16 as an adequate amount of material to represent the political atmosphere in the nation at this significant point in history. A preliminary sampling of content taken from the three months before and after the riots (August 2006 to February 2007) also showed that the

most substantial coverage was carried out in November, thus providing a convenient and reasonable parameter for my research¹¹.

The sample for analysis included five editions of the weekly *Talaki* newspaper (November 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29) and ten editions of the twice-weekly *Taimi* (October 30, November 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27 and 30)¹². All articles that mentioned the phrase “political reform” (translated from the Tongan phrases “*fakalelei fakapolitikale*” or “*liliu fakapolitikale*”, sometimes shortened to “*liliu*”) at least once anywhere in the article were selected. This included news articles, commentary and opinion pieces, although cartoons and letters to the editor were not counted. In total, 119 articles were analyzed (76 from *Taimi*, 43 from *Talaki*), including 93 news articles, 17 editorial opinions and columns, and nine vox pop pieces.

(c) Analysis

The method of textual analysis was partly drawn from Stuart Hall’s introduction to *Paper Voices* (1975), which involved three separate readings of the given text. The first entailed a “long preliminary soak” whereby every article in the sample was read, date-by-date, to get the overall gist of the content. In addition to this preliminary reading, I conducted some background research into Tongan political history for a better understanding of the circumstances that led up to the riots of November 16, 2006. Such a violent corollary of democratic activism did not develop overnight, but occurred after years of power wrestling that have been well-documented by historians and the media. An overview of these developments is included in a separate chapter.

¹¹ The preliminary sampling garnered over 300 articles related to reform over the span of six months, too large for a thorough analysis to be conducted within the time and resource limitations of this thesis.

¹² As November 1st fell on a Wednesday, the October 30th (Monday) edition of the *Taimi* was also included for an even sampling.

Following Hall's method, a second reading was then conducted, which involved a thorough content analysis of the following surface characteristics found in the samples:

Prominence of stories in each edition was examined by dividing the newspaper into four sections: front page (FP), priority pages 2 – 5 (P), less priority pages 6 – 13 (LP), which include the pages up to the middle/centrefold advertising pages, and low priority pages 14 and up (LWP).

Length was analyzed by dividing the newspaper page into four equal sections. Articles were classed as running either one full page or more ($FP \leq$), those that took up at least half a page but less than a full page ($HP < FP$), those that were at least a quarter of a page but less than half a page ($QP < HP$), and finally, brief stories that took up less than a quarter of one page ($< QP$).

Leading topics were noted as the most *dominant* issue in each individual article, although it is important to note that topics were rarely covered exclusively, and often overlapped in many of the sampled pieces.

Sources included any person or organization from which information was cited, quoted, or paraphrased as part of the article.

Finally, a third reading was carried out to examine more 'in-depth' characteristics in the media coverage, by studying the language used to describe political reform issues. As the newspapers were published in Tongan, I relied on my own fluency in the language in translating relevant texts for analysis. This was relatively uncomplicated as the journalistic style of writing was simple and straightforward. The third reading looked for dominant media messages and themes which may not have been directly obvious, but nonetheless conveyed effectively through vocabulary selection, images, layout and writing style found in the samples. Following a cultural studies approach, this technique

sought to examine how Tongan media language (discourse) reinforced or reconstructed certain cultural and political values (“meanings”) through its news content.

4.2.2. Interviews

(a) Selection of participants

In order to thoroughly grasp the cultural environment in which the media operates in Tonga, key media figures and opinion leaders were consulted for their views on media and political reform. Because this part of the research was conducted mainly as a supplementary component to the textual analysis, parameters were more flexible in terms of sampling and selection of sources. Generally, I aimed to interview at least two senior media practitioners from each print outlet, who were also working during November 2006, as well as various opinion leaders with expertise in culture, politics and/or government, or involved in grassroots community work. The varied backgrounds of participants helped me to gain a better picture of public impressions towards political issues.

The selection of media practitioners was relatively uncomplicated, as I aimed to interview either editors or senior journalists, easily identified in Tonga’s small newsrooms¹³. Opinion leaders were selected through a “snow ball” method, using my own contacts and networks. I compiled a preliminary list of 20 potential participants for my interviews, all of whom were based in Tonga. I judged this to be a feasible number for the research purposes, and outlined the distribution as follows:

¹³ Print media newsrooms in Tonga average four to five full-time journalists, along with other administrative staff.

Table 1: Preliminary list of potential interviewees

Media practitioners		Other opinion leaders	
<i>Taimi</i>	2	Political figures	2
<i>Talaki</i>	2	Cultural experts	2
<i>Kalonikali</i>	2	Grassroots workers/villagers	2
<i>Kele'a</i>	2	Human rights activists	2
Other media	2	Government officials	2

Preliminary contacts with participants were first made by telephone, email, or in-person visits to explain the scopes of my research and request interviews. Participation was stressed as voluntary, and all interviews were carried out in Tonga. In respecting Tongan cultural expectations, I also took care to let participants know who I was in the communal network, including my past involvements in Tongan community, my village of origin and close kin genealogy (father's family). I note here that for Tongan researchers, this approach eases the interview process tremendously, because it allows the participants to trace a relation to the researcher, rather than have to share information with a stranger. This will be discussed further in Section (b).

At this stage, it became clear that I would not be able to secure the exact participants I had hoped for, due to technicalities such as conflicting schedules and difficulty in reaching certain people (for example, being out of the country). However, a reasonable outcome of 16 participants was reached, which still fulfilled the research purposes. This included seven media practitioners (three from the *Taimi*, one each from the *Talaki*, *Kele'a* and *Matangi Tonga*, as well as one former journalist who covered the riots for the government news site *Tonga Now*, now defunct), two senior government officials from the Prime Minister's Office, one publically elected Member of Parliament, three

established experts on cultural knowledge, one human rights activist, one rural district officer, and one rural villager (see Appendix II for details).

(b) Interview method and practice of *talanoa*

Because I was dealing with members of a cultural group (granted they were my own), I chose to engage indigenous methods in the interview process. Using the Polynesian method of *talanoa*, I conducted interviews through open, face-to-face, informal conversations, with minimal structural agenda and only occasional prompts from myself to guide the interview around the research topic. Originally developed by Tongan academic Sitiveni Halapua (2007), the *talanoa* method seeks to establish a relationship of mutual and open sharing of stories amongst participants, resulting in a deeper and more holistic appreciation of each other's point of view. As one scholar put it, "*talanoa* research is collaborative, and removes the distance between researchers and participants, and provides respondents with a human face they can relate to" (Vaiioleti, 2006, p.25). Interviews were filmed by either me or one other local cameraman, and each lasted for about an hour. They were then transcribed by myself and returned to the participants for final checking.

(c) Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns arose due to the recording of indigenous knowledge for research purposes. Using Tongan-based methodologies as well as the Maori-based Treaty of Waitangi as a guide, I employed three principles of partnership, participation and protection to ensure that participants were not taken advantage of in the course of this research. Details are described below.

Partnership: I strove for a mutually beneficial relationship, acted out in good faith between the participants and myself as researcher. As a Tongan national (born and raised), I first consulted with members of the community in my personal networks,

with the aim of bringing a Tongan and Pacific Island cultural perspective into the realm of academic knowledge production. I was inspired by Tongan scholar Konai Helu Thaman (1999a, 2007) and her use of the *kakala* (“garland”) metaphor as a research model. This model draws from the practice of making floral garlands in Tonga, outlining three holistic steps of *tolu* (gathering), *tui* (making/creating), and *luva* (giving away/gifting). The third element, *luva*, involves giving back to the community and sharing the benefits of research. I aimed to do this by producing work that could act as a learning tool, an academic precedent for future students in the field, and an output for local views underrepresented in media literature. I also wished to add a creative component that was more accessible to ordinary Tongans. Keeping in mind the “insider/outside” dilemma commonly faced by indigenous researchers (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), I kept occasional contact with most participants through email, or through personal networks in an effort to keep a two-way line of communication open between us. Furthermore, based on our Tongan cultural values of reciprocity and connectedness, it was generally understood that my assistance would be available to the participants if they needed it in the future. For example, shortly after an interview with one of the participants, he referred another Tongan student to me for advice on research. I will also provide each with copies of the final research outputs (thesis and video) and invite their critiques. If accepted or invited, I hope to present my findings to local forums for debate and discussion, such as at the Tonga Institute for Higher Education (TIHE), which runs a journalism diploma program in conjunction with AusAID, as well as the local branch of the University of the South Pacific.

Participation: Input from the participants and transparency were important elements in the interview process. *Talanoa* sessions were not strictly confined to the research topic or questions, neither were they confined to the researcher asking

questions to the “researched”. I allowed participants to ask questions about myself and my research aims, and all were also encouraged to inquire or provide feedback about the research at any time. Participants were given an entire month to withdraw their input or make clarifications on their interview transcripts.

Talanoa also helped in relieving reservations about appearing and speaking on camera. While most of the participants had no problem being on film, I made sure that the more reserved of the group – especially those from the rural community – thoroughly knew the scopes, purposes and expectations of the interview. Separate in-person visits were made to these participants to *talanoa* about this issue, before the actual interview itself. All were provided with a Participant Information Sheet, with Tongan translations for those who needed it (see Appendix III). Interestingly, many preferred the verbal, personal explanations through *talanoa*, rather than the formal documents.

Protection: The rights of the participants to safety, confidentiality, and privacy were paramount in the consideration of ethics. As such, I only conducted interviews with full and signed consent from the participants (see Appendix IV), who were also given a copy for their records. All were explicitly asked whether they would want to be identified or not in the thesis and/or the documentary, and these choices were respected. I explained the option of saying things ‘off-the-record’ if they wished, relieving any pressure to disclose anything that would put them in professional or personal danger or discomfort. Interviews were conducted in safe and reasonably secure areas, where participants felt comfortable to talk – mostly in their workplaces or homes. Afterwards, participants were given the transcripts of the interview for approval, engaging their right to control the representation of their persons to the public, especially in academia where records are permanent, open to vigorous scrutiny and analysis, and available for re-use in other ways. The one other person

involved in the filming process also signed a strict Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix V).

(d) Creative output and documentary film production

While the interviews were conducted mainly for information, I also produced an additional video documentary to visually capture the main ideas about political reform put forward in this thesis, which could also be accessible to ordinary people who would otherwise not encounter my research in non-academic contexts. As it was my first time to produce any video work, the experience became a personal learning curve in communicating the multiple facets of Tongan culture through digital media storytelling. My main challenge was framing the documentary to reflect what I had learned about Tongan politics from academic literature, and merging this with the information given to me in my *talanoa* interviews.

Shooting the video was conducted using a Sony high definition camera on mini-DV tapes. In most interviews, one other cameraman was involved in filming, although I also carried this out alone when he was not available. Footage was transferred to my personal laptop and I edited this on Adobe Premier Pro software, which I trained myself to use. While most of the footage is original, I also included segments from freely available personal home videos depicting the 2006 riots, as well as recordings of King George Tupou V's coronation ceremony, which I obtained with permission from the Tonga Broadcasting Commission library. Various photographic items were also provided with consent by the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and *Talaki* newspapers for my project. These contributions have been appropriately acknowledged.

To guide the editing process, I again referred to Helu Thaman's (1999, 2007) methodology of *kakala*. The term literally refers to fragrant flower garlands created as gifts for special occasions or persons in Tonga, and used as a model to reflect the

“integrated and holistic” worldviews found in the Pacific (Helu Thaman, 2007, p.62).

The method involves three simple stages of gathering (*toli*), weaving (*tui*), and gifting (*luva*).

Toli involves a selection of ingredients based on the occasion for which the “garland” is aimed, to whom it will be presented, as well as the resources available to the author of the work. Following this, I took into account the educational purpose of the film, as well as the possibility that my target audience not only included thesis examiners, but also members of the Tongan population. I wished to offer a representation of Tongan society that effectively highlighted our culturally conscious ways of life, which have thus far been under-recognized outside of Pacific circles. While my resources were very limited, I attempted to add as many supporting components as were available, such as archival photographs and footage to complement the interviews.

The *tui* or weaving process involved selection of grabs and quotes from the interviews to use in editing the film. To tackle this, I approached the material in their totality, reading through the individual transcripts as different windows into the same story about political reform. While also consulting background data gathered from the textual research, I pieced together an expository narrative that was rooted in the November 16 riots, but also implicated the overarching political history and socio-cultural setting. I incorporated selected interview components to reflect this theme, while also adding supportive audio-visual elements to communicate the significance of cultural tradition to Tongan people, which had come through strongly as a key concern in all the interviews. I used available footage of the sacred *kava* ceremony, as well as background traditional music – including the nose flute, drums and traditional chants – to signify the omnipresent backdrop of Tongan culture in political reform discourse. In the end, I produced a 50 minute (approx.) overview of the November 16 riots, interspersed with historical remembrances of the past, and re-visitations of the multi-faceted present.

Finally, in following the final stage of *luva*, the work will be gifted back to the Tongan community by providing each participant with a copy of the video and thesis.

Chapter 5:

Historical background to the reform movement in Tonga

“Tonga is the State. Tonga is the culture – our culture is the nation.”

- ‘Ilaisa Futa Helu (1997)

5.1. Seeds of change and the early pro-democracy movement

As part of my preliminary reading of the media samples, I conducted some supplementary research in into the development of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga in order to put the events of the November 16 riots into perspective. Until recently, the democratization process in the kingdom has been typically sluggish, due in part to a common reluctance in challenging a political system buttressed by interlaced hierarchical social networks, Christian values, and elements of nationalistic cultural identity. As former government loyalist (now a People’s Representative) Clive Edwards summed it up in a television interview with ABC Australia: “Our system of government is a way of life” (Bradford, 2003). Another key official has recently echoed this in describing the Tongan parliamentary structure as “a *replication of the social structure*, with each of its three pillars – His Majesty and the Royal Family, the Nobles of the Realm, and the People – electing their own Representatives” (Senituli, 2007,

italics added). Government authorities continue to evoke these aspects today against any forceful forms of political reform.

While historic changes to the constitution are set to take place in November 2010 to increase the number of seats elected by the people, the current government yet sees vast executive prerogatives held by the King to veto laws, dissolve parliament, and decide the national legal tender (Latukeyu, 1975). As monarch, he also appoints a Prime Minister as he sees fit, who then advises him on the selection of 12 to 16 cabinet ministers. This advisory capacity of the Prime Minister was a recent variation made in 2006, whereas previous practices allowed the king full say over the matter. While Campbell (2008b) points to the advantages of having royally appointed ministers “best fitted by education, training or experience who would not otherwise have been interested in a political career” (p.3), many factors - especially family connections and proven loyalty – normally feature strongly in the end decision. Apart from the Cabinet ministers, the Tongan parliament is made up of nine representatives elected by 33 titled nobles, and nine representatives elected by the general population, both for three-year terms.

The top-down distribution of power became the fodder of intense political debate, which rose particularly in urgency during the 1980’s and 1990’s during the reign of King Tupou IV. To be fair, none of Tupou IV’s progenitors had enjoyed completely undisputed rule. In fact, Tonga had a spirited Democratic Party in parliament as far back as the 1950’s¹⁴, although their efforts were quickly quelled before having any widespread effects (Wood-Ellem, 1999, pp. 235-236). Nonetheless, the 1980’s was distinctive because of the social conditions set up in the previous two decades, including

¹⁴ Two candidates from this party, Loloma Mataele and Semisi Koloamatangi, stood for the 1954 elections but did not get elected. Another defiant MP by the name of Samisoni Puli’uvea Afuha’amango was charged with sedition (and later acquitted) in 1957 after he accused the monarch, Queen Salote Tupou III, of nepotism and government mismanagement.

major moves towards development made by King Tupou IV. Unlike his mother, Tupou IV was an optimistic believer in progress and modernization, and actively bolstered educational, agricultural and infrastructural development in the islands. This included the initiation of Tonga's first radio station in 1961 and the government newspaper *Kalonikali* in 1964 when he was still Crown Prince. As the only university educated Tongan at the time, he "understood like no other Tongan could, the necessity for the kingdom to change in accommodation to the demands of the times" (Hau'ofa, 2006).

The irony, as Campbell (2001) notes, is that these new policies would lay the grounds for the challenge of authority from amongst the populace. By the 1980's, new professional and business opportunities had led to the increased status of commoners, whose skills could now surpass traditional elites in various fields (Hau'ofa, 1994). A growing number of educated commoners had also begun to publically critique the government structure and its activities. In 1982, a weekly political radio program (called "*Matalafo Lau Kai*" – "Watchers Keeping Score") was set up to discuss contemporary affairs of the state. Hosted by a university-educated teacher's college instructor named 'Akilisi Pohiva, the program featured panelists who freely debated issues regarding transparency, accountability, and popular participation in government. In 1985, after three years on air, the show was abruptly terminated, and soon after Pohiva was fired from his government teaching job without explanation. His case against the state for wrongful dismissal (which he later won) was a turning point in legal history, and proved to Tongans that the traditional system of leadership could be held accountable for injustice.

To replace his radio show, Pohiva established an independent quarterly newsletter in 1986 named the *Kele'a*, which probed into the corrupt practices of politicians and the misuse of government resources. Also at this time, another publisher Pesi Fonua had

been issuing a simple bulletin summarizing debates in parliament, although it was targeted at English-speaking subscribers (Fonua, personal communication, July 23, 2009). The *Kele 'a* reached more of the general population and immediately struck a chord amongst its audience, with content that “fell like seeds on hungry soil” (Helu, 1992, p.146). Pohiva was elected into parliament the following year, and his editor, Viliami Fukofuka was later elected in 1990.

A vibrant independent media body developed on the tail of *Kele 'a*, including the bi-monthly magazine *Matangi Tonga*, founded in 1986 by Pesi Fonua, and the weekly newspaper *Taimi 'o Tonga*, founded in 1989 by Kalafi Moala. Notably, Pohiva, Fonua and Moala had all been educated overseas before returning to Tonga to set up their businesses. Their publications brought to light significant issues discussed in parliament, which had been previously obscure to the general public. The emergent independent Tongan media quickly became politically conscious sources of information, catering to an increasingly curious mass of readers (Fonua, personal communication, July 23, 2009; Moala, personal communication, July 21, 2009).

A string of serious missteps by the king and government during this period also fanned the fires of public disapproval, which now came from a number of well-educated, well-respected members of the community, including ‘Atenisi University founder ‘Ilaisa Futa Helu, heads of the Catholic and Wesleyan churches Bishop Patelesio Finau and Reverend ‘Amanaki Havea and established lawyer Laki Niu (see Latukefu, 1993). One of the most notable cases involved the selling of Tongan passports to Hong Kong Chinese nationals, and the subsequent loss of the profits - an estimated USD\$26 million – in bad overseas investments. Petitions, lawsuits and parliamentary boycotts made by the People’s Representatives about the issue were virtually ignored (see Campbell, 2001; Lawson, 1996 for detailed accounts). Instead, the elite-dominated parliament

retroactively legalized the passport sales by amending the constitution, sparking a protest march from more than a thousand people who opposed the motion and called for the resignation of the Police Minister who had authorized the sales (Helu, 1992, p.147).

A few years later in 1992, the Pro-Democratic Movement was founded, chaired by Catholic priest Father Seluini 'Akau'ola. A historic national convention was held, bringing together a range of scholars, professionals, civil servants, and community leaders to discuss opportunities for democratic constitutional reform. Amongst them, academic and author 'Epeli Hau'ofa, law specialist Guy Powles, historian Sione Latukefu, 'Ilaisa Futa Helu, Bishop Patelesio Finau and many others presented their thoughts during a week-long public affair attended by up to 1,000 people (for papers presented, see Report on the Convention on Constitution and Democracy in Tonga, 1992). Government officials wrote it off as inconsequential, but saw enough threat to warrant a ban on public servants from attending, refusing entry visas to foreign participants, while effectively boycotting the convention for its duration.

5.2. Acts against the press

Later reactions to the democratic press would again highlight the overbearing attitudes of the authorities towards popular movements, demonstrated in a series of brutish legal attacks made against the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper in 1996, 2003 and 2004. The *Taimi* was hugely popular, often running scandalous stories about the royal family and other prominent people, and acting as an outlet for pro-democratic invectives from the People's Representatives. To the authorities, it was seditious, lacked media ethics, and was a threat to public order. Inherently, it was also a cultural and ideological hazard.

In 1996, *Taimi 'o Tonga* editor Kalafi Moala, deputy editor Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and People's Representative Pohiva, were jailed for contempt of parliament after publishing leaked details about an impeachment motion against the Justice Minister. The three

fought the case at the Supreme Court level, where the sentence was later overturned, awarding them USD\$26,000 in damages. However in February 2003, government instituted a ban against the paper, claiming that it was stirring disaffection amongst the population and campaigning “to overthrow the country’s constitution” (Pacific Islands News Association, 2003). A Supreme Court judge ruled to lift the ban in late April, only to have it reinstated “a half hour later” (“Tonga Privy Council issues new ban”, 2003). After a month of legal struggles, including a threat from the newspaper to file for contempt of court, the government finally agreed to allow redistribution of the paper in June. However, authorities had since moved to amend the laws of free speech, adding a segment to Clause 7 of the Constitution that would outlaw any threats by the media to the “cultural traditions of the Kingdom” (Senituli, 2003). The bill was passed by a majority vote in October, despite 8,000 protesters marching to parliament with a petition ten days earlier (Braddock, 2003).

Later that year, the Newspaper Act and the Media Operator’s Act were introduced which prohibited the operation of newspapers without a state-approved (until then, newspapers could operate freely without a license). This included the requirement that at least 80% of shares had to be owned by Tongan nationals. The result was yet another ban for the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*, whose owner, Kalafi Moala, was a naturalized American citizen, as well as the suspension of the *Matangi Tonga* magazine which was partly owned by Mary Fonua, the New Zealand born wife of founder Pesi Fonua. A Supreme Court ruling reversed both acts in October 2004 as unconstitutional, finally allowing the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* back on the stands, while the *Matangi Tonga* shifted to publishing solely online.

5.3. Moves towards reform

The effect of the Supreme Court rulings was described by Moala as “a wind that swept through Tonga and turned the tables around” (personal communication, *ibid.*).

International outcry against the media gags was widespread, and despite the severe strikes against the press, several unprecedented moves by government indicated a begrudging acceptance of the need for change. In 2004, the appointment of four elected members of Parliament (two nobles and two commoners) to become ministers of the Crown was hailed as the beginning of a more populist government. One of those selected from the People’s Representatives’ table, Dr. Feleti Sevele - a well-known businessman and democratic reformist - would later be appointed as Prime Minister in 2006. It marked the first time in Tongan history that a commoner held the position of advising the monarch on the most important of issues. Some journalists pointed out that around this time, government seemed to do a complete turnaround in its attitudes towards the media, such as holding regular press conferences and showing an overall increase in transparency (Maama, July 16, 2009, personal communication; Moala, personal communication, *ibid.*).

However, the new ministerial appointments were met with a mixed reception amongst the public. Distrust and wariness of the government’s intentions meant it was not enough to convince people of its earnestness for reform (Teaiwa & Koloamatangi, 2006; Moala, 2007). Teaiwa and Koloamatangi claim that people were skeptical, even “aghast” because the new appointments “came on the heels of such characteristic intransigent wielding of power” (2006, p. 29). The new ministers had only been brought in after the forced resignations of previous officials, who were held responsible for the multi-million dollar collapse of the national airline. Moala adds that there was some suspicion that the new “reforms” were simply to paint a positive image to global

financial institutions that required a move towards democracy as a condition for aid and loans (2007, p. 243).

In a worsening situation, the following year of 2005 was marked by a string of demonstrations that expressed the increasing frustrations amongst the public with issues of governance. In May, an estimated ten percent of the Tongan population (about 10,000) (Kami-Enoka, 2005) marched in protest against the Shoreline Company, the monopoly supplier of electricity to the nation, partly owned by Crown Prince Tupouto'a (now King). Months earlier, a whistleblower named Piveni Piukala had come forward to the *Kele'a* newspaper claiming excessive executive salaries and prevalent financial fraudulence in the company. Demonstrators petitioned for lower tariffs and the return of ownership to the state as a public enterprise. Less than two weeks after, another demonstration by local farmers called for their exemption from a newly imposed consumption tax. The atmosphere of public mobilization was building in Tonga, setting the stage for the most significant demonstration of the year which was yet to come.

About two months later, in July 2005, a general public service salary review saw the lopsided pay rise of almost 60 percent given to high-ranking officials. Lower-earning employees who had been anticipating similar raises received much smaller cuts or in some cases, none at all. As a result, over 6,000 government employees from all ranks of the workforce walked out of their jobs and staged a sit-in in the Pangai Si'i Park in Nuku'alofa, facing the Parliament Building. They demanded 60, 70 and 80 percent wage increases to match those given to ministers and executives¹⁵. Support poured in from various sectors of the and after six weeks of unsuccessful negotiations, the government was forced to buckle down to the strikers' whopping demands. The move painted an image of the government as "fumbling, irresolute and bowing to popular

¹⁵ Employees at the bottom rung of the workforce were to receive the highest wage increase of 80%, with the argument that this was the minimum to raise their wage above the poverty line.

pressure” (Campbell, 2008a, p. 97). The following day, another massive march was held in support of political reform, and the momentum for change continued to pick up pace.

5.4. The reform process and the NCPR

In November 2005, parliament finally endorsed the formation of the National Committee for Political Reform (NCPR). Led by the king’s nephew Prince Tu’ipelehake ‘Uluvalu, a high ranking royal who was sympathetic to the democratic cause, the committee held open forums across the country, as well as consultations with migrant communities¹⁶ overseas to gather public input on the issue. However, during the course of these discussions, Prince Tu’ipelehake and his wife Kaimana were both killed in a car accident in July 2006 in San Francisco, USA. This was a huge blow to the cause, as the Prince - dubbed the “People’s Prince” by the media - was a vital moderating link between the government elites and the reformers. Dr Sitiveni Halapua, a Tongan academic and director of the Pacific Island Development Program at Hawaii’s East-West Center took over. Finally, on September 1, 2006, the final NCPR report was presented to an ailing King Tupou IV ten days before he died at the age of 88.

The long-anticipated report did not bring the resolution hoped for. While it announced that “99 per cent” of people approved of some kind of political reform (“99%”, 2006), both the government and pro-democratic group disagreed with its proposed model. The NCPR report had competently offered a “middle ground” amalgamation both sides, proposing an increase in the number of seats for elected People’s Representatives to 17 while the nobles’ delegates remained at nine. It also called for the King to appoint the Prime Minister from these elected members, and finally for the Prime Minister to choose his Cabinet ministers, similar to the general Westminster system of democracy.

¹⁶ Tongans have huge numbers of migrant population, especially in New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Remittances from these migrants provide about to 20% of the average cash household income (Tonga Department of Statistics, 2006).

Unfortunately, the government saw these proposals as too radical, later referring to it as the “overhaul of the country’s Constitution” whereby the “disenfranchisement of His Majesty and the Royal Family [would] ultimately lead to the erosion of their political significance within Tongan society and the implosion of the monarchical system” (Senituli, 2007). Meanwhile Pohiva and his team (who had been skeptical of the NCPR’s independence from government and formed their own reform committee named the People’s Committee for Political Reform or PCPR) called for a more extreme reduction to the number of nobles from nine to six.

5.5. Leading up to the November 16 riots

By the start of November, three proposed models were on the floor. Besides the NCPR model, the government had proposed 14 People’s Reps and nine Noble’s Reps, as well as the king’s right to choose one third of the cabinet. The pro-democratic team led by Pohiva proposed 20 People’s Reps to six from the nobles, although they abruptly changed this in the second week of November, to 21 and nine respectively. Time was working against the reform process as parliament was due to close by mid to late November, until the new session opened in May the following year. Debate raged as the pro-democratic party demanded an immediate vote on their model, threatening continued demonstrations from their supporters. The Prime Minister’s pleas to allow for a “tripartite committee” to continue dialogue was rejected as simply another ploy to delay any action to the following year.

Meanwhile, the pro-democratic leaders had made public calls for people to gather in support at Pangai Si’i Park, located directly across the Parliament Building. While the park had been populated casually since the 2005 strike by meager groups of sit-in demonstrators, the November tensions brought a revived bout of protests. Huge crowds numbering in the hundreds, sat out in the opening, playing loud music on speakers and

making heated speeches that could be heard from within the parliament enclosure.

Pohiva (2007) would later argue the demonstrations were called to show government that although the People's Representatives were the minority in the elite-dominated House, they "were the majority outside". Meanwhile, the media reported that some nobles and ministers in Parliament feared for their personal safety ("Parliament halted", 2006).

On the morning of November 16, another protest march of several hundred people took place, involving an eviction order served to the OBN television station, notorious for broadcasting brazen and uncensored pro-democracy meetings in the outer villages. This group marched from their quarters and also convened in Pangai Si'i. Because of the commotion, Speaker of the House Noble Lasike halted parliamentary sessions, which he refused to reconvene until the demonstrators were relocated away from the Parliament Building. The crowd was growing increasingly restless and media reported that some youth were already intoxicated with alcohol (Siale, 2006). They then moved across the road to gather right outside the gate to the Parliament Building, stepping up the pressure on the politicians to make a decision. While a special security meeting was held by cabinet members and law enforcers to address the problem, violence broke out.

The first stones were thrown from a rowdy crowd at the Parliament Building and the adjacent Prime Minister's Office at about 2pm - 3pm (Campbell, 2008a; Siale, 2006). Setting off a destructive domino effect, this quickly escalated to overturning parked vehicles in the street, and then to targeted raids on politically significant establishments. The Molisi supermarket owned by the Prime Minister's family, the Shoreline Company's head office co-owned by the Crown Prince, the Leiola Duty Free shop co-owned by the Princess, and others were raided, trashed or set alight. Goods were freely handed out to onlookers, while uniformed policemen were helpless to stop them. During

this time, parliamentarians dashed through emergency talks as they received word of the worsening violence. By the time the Prime Minister finally signed a hastily put together government “notice”¹⁷ agreeing to model of 21 People’s Reps to nine nobles, the damage was extensive and continuing unchecked.

By evening, the anarchy had snowballed from its political incentives to widespread opportunistic looting. In a gripping eye-witness account of the events, one Tongan journalist described the scene as a “town gone wild” (“Nuku’alofa up in smoke”, 2006). Chinese-owned shops were the hardest hit by the attacks, and alcohol taken in the pillaging fuelled the violence further. At the same time, men, women and children walked the streets of Nuku’alofa in a carefree, festive mood, stocking up on free merchandise ranging from foodstuffs and diapers to full-size refrigerators. As Campbell described, “of the two types of participants, the first appears to have been people who planned and deliberately carried out both phases of destruction; the second were people who simply took advantage of the opportunity to have an early Christmas” (2008a, p. 106). Later, at around 6.30pm, Pohiva and fellow MP’s ‘Isileli Pulu, Lepolo Taunisila, ‘Ulitu Uata and Clive Edwards went live on Radio Tonga claiming “victory” and pleading with the people to end the destruction (Fonua, 2006). The announcement did nothing to quell the chaos.

5.6. Aftermath

In the wake of the mayhem, 80 percent of Nuku’alofa’s central business district lay in ruins, running an initial book value of TOP\$123 million in damages (Senituli, 2007). The National Reserve Bank of Tonga (2008) would later record a marked drop in economic growth from 2.9 percent in 2005/2006, to minus 3.2 percent the following year. Eight people had suffocated to death inside the Shoreline Building as it burned,

¹⁷ This notice would be later rejected on the legal grounds that it was signed under duress.

while the livelihoods of ordinary, politically unaligned families were lost after catching fire. Decades-old businesses were reduced to charred debris. Immediately after the riots, there was a general feeling of shock at what had actually taken place. Government dubbed it “Tonga’s day of shame” (Ministry of Information, 2007).

Under Emergency Powers Regulations, Tongan law enforcements (while effectively absent on the actual day) quickly extended to round up over 1,000 men and women charged with crimes related to riots. These included five of the pro-democracy leaders who were accused of sedition (all were later acquitted). The media, as well as some NGO’s, would report numerous complaints of assault and abuse at the hands of soldiers (Blake, ‘Esau, Guttonbeil Likili et al., 2007; National Centre for Women and Children, 2006). While the pro-democracy camp claimed that the destruction was an expected explosion of pent-up public frustration, a heavy media backlash indicated public disillusionment with the cause.

Nonetheless, by the 2008 elections, despite heavy censoring by the Tonga Broadcasting Commission of radio and TV political programs - especially those from the pro-democracy candidates - the public showed a renewed confidence in its representatives. Six were voted back into Parliament (out of the nine People’s seats), including front men ‘Akilisi Pohiva, ‘Isileli Pulu, ‘Ulitu Uata and Clive Edwards. It appeared that while the riot in itself was a painful memory, people’s calls for reform were resolute and genuine. Later that year, government took action and established the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC) to again compile and review public proposals for reform. Then, just days before his delayed coronation ceremony in August 2008, King Tupou V publicly affirmed his endorsement for political reform by the year 2010.

5.7. Retrospect

Campbell points out that the 2006 riots were “merely a dramatic incident” (2008, p.95), and numerous warnings were unwisely ignored by government in prior years. The record public demonstrations in 2005 were especially critical indications of a discontented public ready to mobilize their demands. Until then, there had been an apparently growing “outrage and resentment at what commoners perceived to be government leaders’ lack of respect or simple human concern toward the people as fellows, workers, and citizens” (James, 2003, p. 324). Given the developments since the 1980’s, the changes proposed for the 2010 elections seem long overdue.

Yet despite such perceptions, many Tongans still find the speed of such a change quite daunting. For instance, a considerable number of writers to local newspapers have since questioned the “rush” towards reform. One writer to the news website *Matangi Tonga* suggested that Tonga’s political system only needed “minor [improvements] here and there” but no significant transfer of power (Fatani, 2009). Moreover, the pro-democracy camp itself has faced conflicts of its own, lacking a unified voice even from the early stages of the movement. While Pohiva has remained consistently in the spotlight, his allies have often changed¹⁸. Today, the Pro-Democracy Movement is dominated by new participants who only came into the public eye after the 2005 strike. These include OBN Television’s Sangster Saulala, business owners ‘Ofa Simiki and Tu’i Uata, as well as civil servants such as Mele ‘Amanaki.

¹⁸ A number of former members of the 1992 Pro-Democratic Movement have detached themselves because of disagreements with Pohiva’s militant stance, including former president of the Tonga Law Society Laki Niu who left as early as 1993. Founding members ‘Ilaisa Futa Helu and Seluini ‘Akau’ola also became part of a separate democracy group called the People’s Democratic Party in 2005. Other former members have opted for a collaborative approach towards government, including *Taimi ‘o Tonga* publisher Kalafi Moala, who now manages the state-owned *Kalonikali*. Prime Minister Dr. Feleti Sevele, and his political advisor Lopeti Senituli were also very outspoken in the movement before their current appointments.

Nevertheless, Pohiva's ability to unabashedly oppose authorities, paired with an indefatigable campaigning style and a strong rapport with grassroots communities has won him a substantial base of faithful devotees. How much his adherents understand about the concept of democracy and its processes, however, is widely debated. Campbell suggests that the Tongan public have only a "dim" to non-existent comprehension of these concepts but are willing to accept them on "trust" (2008, p. 109). This was reflected in the government's Constitutional and Electoral Commission's (2008) report, which found that "many ordinary Tongans have little interest in politics or the structure of government". The report stated that the bulk of ordinary people were more concerned with how reform would affect land tenure and day to day survival, rather than government procedures. In my interview with a rural villager in Tongatapu (Lasike, personal communication, 2009), he stated that while he was satisfied with the moves towards reform, as far as his livelihood was concerned, he would "still be working in the plantation".

Still, the persistent calls for political change over the past 30 years are hard to disregard as unqualified. Considering the cultural obstacles, the journey of the democratic movement has been remarkable in the least. While the elite have continually employed the cultural argument against reform, popular movements have adopted a rights based approach, honing in on the lack of government transparency and accountability. Effective to a degree, this approach acts upon Western-based strategies of petitioning and protesting, while avoiding a direct confrontation with the cultural system. Consequently however, it also means that culturally-based arguments – including their reliance on hierarchical *va* systems – remains a card to be played as a deterrent to outright democracy.

Chapter 6:

Media coverage analysis

Mata lafo lau kai –

“*Lafo* watcher keeping score” (Tongan proverb) *

- The proverb is derived of the traditional disc-throwing game of *lafo*, often played in past centuries by the chiefs. Spectators were not allowed to keep score, and punished if they said it out loud.
Meaning: Warning against asserting oneself beyond one’s designated role, or openly bringing attention to mistakes by elites.

With Tonga’s political history and cultural context in mind, I then analyzed a total of 119 media articles (76 from the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* and 43 from *Talaki*) chosen from the selected timeframe as outlined in Chapter 4. The sampled stories – all of which had mentioned “political reform” at least once – included 93 news articles, 17 opinion columns, and nine vox pop segments. Using Stuart Hall’s (1975) method of analysis, I examined “surface” content characteristics first, and then related these to dominant discursive themes which became apparent within the text. Significant patterns and findings are discussed in this chapter.

6.1 Surface characteristics

6.1.1 Prominence and length

Political reform was mentioned prominently in both papers. The *Taimi* mentioned the phrase in an average of 14 articles per week (seven per edition) while the *Talaki* ran an

* Proverbs are taken and translated from my own knowledge of their local usage.

average of about nine articles per week (see Table 2). The number of stories in both papers spiked dramatically in the week immediately before the November 16 events, when the protests in Pangai Si'i were intensifying. *Taimi* held a steady coverage over the following weeks, while the coverage in the *Talaki* dropped.

Table 2: Number of article samples by week

	Week 1	% of Total	Week 2	% of Total	Week 3	% of Total	Week 4	% of Total	Week 5	% of Total	TOTAL
<i>Taimi</i>	6	8%	9	12%	20	26%	20	26%	21	28%	76
<i>Talaki</i>	4	9%	1	2%	16	37%	11	26%	10	23%	43

- % of Total means percentage of total sample for the individual newspaper.

Both papers featured over a third of their samples within the first five pages of the paper. But between the two, political reform was mentioned more prominently in the *Taimi* (see Table 3). The *Taimi* ran 37% of its sample (28 stories) within the first five pages - 8% on the front page and 29% in pages 2-5, while the *Talaki* ran 35% (15 stories) in the same space. However, only 2% of political reform stories made the *Talaki* front page, while 33% appeared on pages 2-5. A total of 58% of the *Talaki* sample appeared before the halfway mark of the paper, compared to 72% in the *Taimi*.

Table 3: Prominence of sampled articles

	Front Page (FP)	% of Total	Pages 2-5 (P)	% of Total	Pages 6-13 (LP)	% of Total	14 to back (LWP)	% of Total	TOTAL
<i>Taimi</i>	6	8%	22	29%	27	35%	21	28%	76
<i>Talaki</i>	1	2%	14	33%	10	23%	18	42%	43

- % of Total means percentage of total sample in the individual newspaper.

In terms of the length, there was a more distinct difference between the two newspapers. *Taimi* ran significantly longer articles in the sample (see Table 4). A total of 21% (16 stories) of the *Taimi* sample took up at least one entire page of coverage, compared to only 7% (three stories) in the *Talaki*. Most of the *Talaki* stories (42% of sample) were shorter items less than a quarter of a page. However, as the *Talaki* only publishes once a week, this is a likely reason for restrictions to space available for coverage.

Table 4: Length of sampled articles

	Full =<	% of Total	FP>HP	% of Total	HP >QP	% of Total	QP>	% of Total	TOTAL
<i>Taimi</i>	16	21%	17	22%	18	24%	25	33%	76
<i>Talaki</i>	3	7%	8	19%	14	33%	18	42%	43

- % of Total means percentage of total sample in the individual newspaper.

6. 1.2 Leading Topics

Three broad topics dominated the samples in both newspapers. These were: (1) details of the riots; (2) political models and analyses; and (3) public protest events (see Table 5). The riots coverage included eyewitness accounts of the chain of events that day, as well as descriptions of the damages and public reactions. These featured as the dominant theme in 38% of the *Talaki* and 40% of the *Taimi* sample. Second to this was the coverage of political reform models, found in news reports, analyses, in-depth interviews and commentaries. These made up a substantial bulk in the *Taimi* sample (39%) and about a quarter (26%) of the *Talaki*'s. In the *Taimi*, the political model stories over the month of November surpassed the riots coverage by 1%. This indicated a relatively high awareness of reform as a far-reaching issue, rather than a one-dimensional corollary of the riots. Public protest news - including those about marches, petitioning and demonstrations at Pangai Si'i - was the third leading topic. These reports

made up 19% of the sample in the *Talaki* but only 9% in the *Taimi*. Although public protesting was mentioned throughout the reportage, it was often not the leading issue of the article. Other parliamentary topics covered less thoroughly in the samples included changes to the House schedule, issues about the nobility's powers, land issues as well as one report about a brawl amongst parliamentary members. Less dominant topics also included issues about corruption, a youth club in Australia that hosted political leader Prince Tu'ipelehake, as well as coverage about the eviction of a television company from its previous location.

Table 5: Leading topics for sampled articles

	Riots	% of Total	Political Models/analysis	% of Total	Protest	% of Total	Other (parliament)	% of Total	Other	% of Total	TOTAL
<i>Taimi</i>	29	38%	30	39%	7	9%	4	5%	6	8%	76
<i>Talaki</i>	17	40%	11	26%	8	19%	7	16%	-	-	43

Other parliamentary topics						Other topics		
	House schedule	Nobility	King's speech	Land issues	Brawl	Corruption	Youth Club	OBN eviction
<i>Taimi</i>	-	2	1	1	-	4	1	1
<i>Talaki</i>	2	2	1	1	1	-	-	-

- % of Total means percentage of total sample in the individual newspaper.

When analyzed by length and prominence, the highest levels of coverage generally followed the hierarchy of leading topics. The longest and most prominent articles were dedicated to the coverage of the riots, including four front page stories in the *Taimi* and the only front page story of the *Talaki* sample (see Tables 6 & 7). Seven articles about the riots ran at least one full page in the *Taimi*, as well as one article in the *Talaki* (see

Tables 8 & 9). Both newspapers also featured photo pages of the events, mostly filled with pictures of burning buildings, people looting, and vandalism.

Compared to the riots coverage, political models and analysis stories featured mostly before the midpoint of each newspaper, but rarely on the front page. However, these articles were also fairly long, especially in the *Taimi*, where they almost matched the riots articles in length. *Taimi* dedicated significantly longer articles than the *Talaki* to this subject. The topic of public protests was not as high in importance in either of the newspapers, although between the two, it featured more prominently in the *Taimi* (mostly on pages 2-5), and less so in the *Talaki* (most in pages 14+). Lengthwise, this topic also paled in comparison to the riots and political model coverage.

Table 6: Prominence by leading topic – *Taimi* ‘o Tonga

<i>Taimi</i>	16/11 riots	Political mods/analys	Protests/petition	Other (parliament)	Other	Total
Front Page	4	1	-	1	-	6
Pages 2-5	6	8	6	1	1	22
Pages 6-13	13	13	1	-	2	29
Pages 14+	6	8	2	2	1	19

Table 7: Prominence by leading topic - *Talaki*

<i>Talaki</i>	16/11 riots	Political mods/analys	Protests/petition	Other (parliament)	Other	Total
Front Page	1	-	-	-	-	1
Pages 2-5	6	5	2	-	-	13
Pages 6-13	3	4	-	3	-	10
Pages 14+	8	2	5	4	-	19

Table 8: Length by leading topic – *Taimi* ‘o Tonga

<i>Taimi</i>	16/11 riots	Political mods/analys	Protests/petition	Other (parliament)	Other	Total
Full <=	7	5	2	1	1	16
FP>HP	6	9	1	1	-	17
HP>QP	6	6	2	2	2	18
QP>	10	10	2	-	3	25

Table 9: Length by leading topic - *Talaki*

<i>Talaki</i>	16/11 riots	Political mods/analys	Protests/petition	Other (parliament)	Other	Total
Full <=	1	1	-	1	-	3
FP>HP	8	-	-	-	-	8
HP>QP	4	6	3	1	-	14
QP>	4	4	5	5	-	18

6. 1. 3 Sources

A range of sources provided information for the articles. These sources were broadly divided into political figures, non-political members of the community, as well as the newspaper editorials. “Political figures” were classified as those directly involved in parliament at the time (King, government officials, nobles and elected People’s Representatives), as well as other known associates of political groups. These included people such as NCPR head Dr Sitiveni Halapua, and political party members Semisi Tapueluelu and former MP Teisina Fuko. “Non-political” sources included academics, media figures, church leaders, high ranking civil servants (non-MP’s), and business owners. They also included diasporic Tongans, random “people in the street”(vox pops), as well as “anonymous” or unnamed sources (see Tables 10, 11, 12).

Table 10: Sources in sampled articles

	Political sources	% of Total	Non-political	% of Total	Editor	% of Total
<i>Taimi</i>	48	63%	34	45%	13	17%
<i>Talaki</i>	30	70%	14	33%	4	9%

- **% of Total** means percentage of total sample for the individual newspaper. Percentages will not add up to 100% as more than one source can appear in one article.

Table 11: Political sources in sampled articles

	PRs	% of Total	Govt.	% of Total	Nob.	% of Total	King	% of Total	Other	% of Total
<i>Taimi</i>	18	24%	15	20%	9	12%	1	1%	5	7%
<i>Talaki</i>	14	33%	7	16%	5	12%	1	2%	3	7%

- **% of Total** means percentage of total sample for the individual newspaper. Percentages will not add up to 100% as more than one source can appear in one article.

Table 12: Non-political sources in sampled articles

	Acad- emics	%	Media figs	%	Ch- urch	%	Biz	%	Civ Serv	%	Vox Pop	%	Oth - er	%
<i>Taimi</i>	11	14%	3	4%	1	1%	3	4%	3	4%	5	7%	8	11%
<i>Talaki</i>	2	5%	1	2%	2	5%	1	2%	-	-	4	9%	4	9%

- **% of Total** means percentage of total sample for the individual newspaper. Percentages will not add up to 100% as more than one source can appear in one article.

Despite the wide range of voices, both papers sourced the bulk of their reports from political figures, with almost 63% of the *Taimi* sample and 70% of the *Talaki*'s citing views from this group. Of this, the People's Representatives to parliament were sourced most heavily, especially in the *Talaki*. A third (33%) of *Talaki* stories quoted and cited People's Representatives, compared to about a quarter (24%) of stories from the *Taimi*. In comparison, the *Taimi* was more apt to cite pro-establishment sources than its counterpart. For example, if the King, nobles, and government ministers were taken as a group, their collective voice would outweigh the People's Reps in the *Taimi* (33% to 24%). Interestingly, the King's views are only directly cited once in both papers, covering his speech at the closing of parliament ceremony.

Non-political voices came from a range of community members, who featured as information sources in 45% of stories in the *Taimi* and 33% in the *Talaki*, without counting editorials (editorials and editor's columns made up 17% of the *Taimi* samples and only 9% in the *Talaki*). Academics, as a single elite group, featured most strongly in the *Taimi*, with 15% of stories centered solely on their views. Most of these academics were New Zealand and Australia-based and only one, 'Ilaisa Futa Helu was based in Tonga. Comparatively, only 5% of stories in the *Talaki* cited the academic voice, all of which were sourced from Helu. It is also significant to note that Helu was involved in

political activism in the early to mid-1990's and Hu'akau eventually ran for parliament in 2008, meaning their voices could also be seen as political. Media figures, business people, and church leaders also featured as sources, although each appeared in less than 5% of samples in each paper.

Most opinions from those in the general population featured in the regular vox pop segments (called *Lau/Le'o 'a e Kakai* – “People's Say/Voice”), which made up 7% of samples in the *Taimi* and 9% in the *Talaki*. These featured opinions from five to six people selected by reporters to give brief responses to a question posed by the newspaper. In terms of newspaper layout, the newspaper's question is presented as a heading (such as, “How do you feel about the riots?”), followed by a photograph of the person, and a one or two sentence quotation. Covering only about a quarter page in the *Talaki* and less than that in the *Taimi*, the vox pop section remains problematic as a definitive source of public opinion because of their brevity and lack of context. The selection of respondents was also heavily biased to men, with 21 male and four female commentators in the *Taimi*, while the *Talaki* featured 20 men and only seven women.

Other than the vox pops, sources from the general population appeared in stories based around communities overseas and those covering the protest demonstrations at Pangai Si'i. Such stories made up 11% of the *Taimi* sample and 9% of the *Talaki*'s. In the protest focused reports, sources were always unnamed (classified in the table as “other”), and often presented as part of reporters' eyewitness descriptions, rather than drawn from direct, focused interviews. As sources, they were also largely referred to as an unspecified mass, using the phrases “the people in Pangai Si'i” (*kau nofo 'i Pangai Si'i*) or the “supporters of reform” (*kau poupou ki he liliu*). The only individually named people in these articles were political leaders. In a very literal interpretation of their position as “People's Representatives”, the views of pro-democratic MP's, primarily

Pohiva, were reported alongside the protesters, as representing their voice. I found only one story that specifically named and directly quoted protesters, which appeared in *Taimi*'s coverage of a pro-reform protest march on Auckland's Queen Street, written by *Taimi*'s New Zealand correspondent, 'Ulu'alo Po'uhila (2006).

6.1.4 Summary of surface content analysis

Overall, the patterns of prominence, length, leading topic, and information sources showed that political reform was a significant public issue at the time. Coverage was characterized by prominent and lengthy articles, although this was more evident in the *Taimi* than in the *Talaki*. Focus was placed especially on the riots of November 16 as an extraordinary news event, although this was underpinned by comprehensive political reform analysis. This indicated a strong concern from the media about the extensive implications of the riots as part of a democratic struggle, rather than focusing solely on the riots as a news event.

However, in exploring these implications, the source analysis showed a common journalistic reliance on elitism, with a heavy inclination towards the views from government officials and people in accepted positions of leadership. While the bias towards political figures is expected, given that political reform is primarily their line of work, non-political elite sources were also privileged over ordinary people. There was a clear lack of reportage about the specific views of the latter, and even less so from minority groups amongst the general population (youth and women). Evidently, while the protests and demonstrations featured as one of the leading topics, the main subjects of the stories (the people) were not given a direct voice.

6.2 Dominant themes and in-depth characteristics

The most apparent thematic pattern found in the samples involved the polarized characterizations of “good” and “bad” types of reform. In this framework, government leaders were favorably associated with careful, conservative approaches to democratization, while the opposition was strongly condemned as overly aggressive and lacking in both experience and ethics. These depictions were heavily influenced by nationalistic and cultural values regarding peace, stability and communal benefit. A third theme emerged in the lack of public views in the text, and depiction of public demonstrators as ignorant and “blind” cohorts of change. As such, media coverage was dominated by elite figures, following the established configuration of local politics. The following sections describe these themes in detail.

6.2.1 The Good: Government and the “conservative” democracy

Both newspapers showed a strong editorial preference for “moderation” in the push for democratic changes. Headlines urged for approaches that were both thorough (“True reform needed”, 2006; “Careful discussion for political reform”, Moala, 2006a) and socially appropriate (“Editorial: Tonga needs fitting remedy for political situation”, 2006; “Political rule suitable for the lives of Tongans”, Puloka, 2006b). These headings were backed by analytical pieces which took on historical and cultural strains of arguments, rather than an impulsive support of the status quo.

An example appears in the *Talaki* editorial that ran on November 15 (“Editorial: Tonga needs fitting remedy”, 2006). The article summarizes the buildup of democratic aspirations from 1991 to 2006, pointing out the 1992 democratic convention (see previous chapter) as the turning point of political ideology in Tonga. But rather than deriding the government for taking 15 years to act, it applauds the budding initiatives taken by the king towards “dialogue” and peaceful change.

An excerpt from the editorial reads:

“It took 15 years for the reform initiative to be accepted. Now that the Cabinet has finally agreed to a revision of existing establishment, Tonga again needs *political patience* in taking the first step to examining ways for improvements. We are facing a new era, as the Rising Sun [King] has already initiated changes for the *benefit of the whole* of Tonga... In our quest for reform, the one thing that we must always hold to is our motto: God and Tonga are my heritage.” (“Editorial: Tonga needs fitting remedy”, 2006, italics added)

The Cabinet’s acceptance of change is underlined as a major development because it literally went against established cultural norms of power. However, the editorial rejects any ensuing disruptive social implications, by calling for careful and deliberate steps to improvement. National and cultural unity remain a key value, as seen in references to the “benefit of the whole” and the national motto. Furthermore, the veneration of the monarch in the metaphor of the “Rising Sun”¹⁹ (symbol of permanence and hope) reaffirms the top-down configuration of politics that has become the “Tongan way”. The protection of cultural integrity thus results in a paradoxical re-establishment of the government elite as the legitimate agents of change.

The following selection from the *Taimi* editorial on October 30 (“Editorial: Political life”, 2006) further highlights the cultural considerations in politics:

“So far, our people have learned from Western political values, where no one cares about *va* [keeping harmonious relations with each other], and the only focus is on winning and losing, whether it be ideological or personal... The question is whether there is a political method that is fitting and appropriate for Tonga... Given our unique social system, can we not challenge ourselves to have a political arena free of conflict? ... What about our Tongan values such as mutual respect, humility and meekness? Societies are not all the same... Tonga can still have its own method of dealing with politics.”

¹⁹ The late King is commonly referred to as “the Sun which has set”.

In this passage, a clear differentiation is drawn between Western conventions of democratization and Tongan values. The notion of “keeping good relations” espoused in *va* ideology means that activism – the vigorous pursuit of a political or social end – is tempered by a culturally driven concern for one’s fellow countrymen, who may well be on the other side of the political fence. At the same time, a column by the *Taimi*’s editor-in-chief defines a “democratic spirit” in Western societies akin to the Tongan idea of *va*, in its promotion of the mutual respect of human rights in society (Moala, 2006b). However, because *va* is fundamentally based on a system of hierarchy, political support ultimately gravitates towards socially accepted leaders, as shown the following week’s editorial (“Editorial: Support the King and Prime Minister”, 2006):

“We should support the King and Prime Minister’s reform program, because they work together with the Cabinet for the *benefit of Tonga as a whole*.... This is a new King and a new Prime Minister, and not only are they well-educated, they are also skilled and accomplished... Useless commotion has come from other media [referring to the pro-democratic *Kele’a*], including pointless personal insults and immature recklessness, disguised as the “voice of the people”... It’s time to stop individual recklessness and vindictiveness, while we work together to support the King and Prime Minister in leading the people to what will bring *benefit for the whole of Tonga*.” (Italics added)

In this passage, the King and the Prime Minister are portrayed as educated, skillful, “bona fide” leaders with the interests of the nation at heart. These figures are given generous benefits of the doubt in terms of righteous leadership qualities, which is completely absent in the portrayal of the pro-democracy group. The latter is depicted as vindictive, careless “impostors” who disguise personal thirst for power as the “voice of the people”. In my preliminary reading of both newspapers spanning from August 2006 to February 2007, I found no direct evidence in the reportage that could validate the accusation of self-interest amongst the democratic group. While the threat does exist in the business connections held by several well-known supporters of reform, this is

countered by the fact that the Prime Minister and king (at least before a required divestment of these interests when he ascended the throne) also own large businesses. Given that many members of the pro-democracy group are also educated and skilled, the moral approval placed on the king and prime minister seems to be primarily driven by cultural norms related to traditional positions of authority.

Several commentaries that ran in the newspapers also emphasized the danger in the “rush” towards reform. In particular, UK-based academic Mele’ana Puloka (2006a) used an instructive parable about a mother and daughter shopping at the marketplace, whereby the young girl excitedly fills their basket with every attractive food she finds, until the weight of the goods cause the basket to split and the contents to spill. An excerpt reads:

“Difficult tasks should be undertaken by those God has prepared for the job. An inexperienced person is like the overly keen young girl who stuffed together tomatoes, eggs and cakes, squashed under corn stalks and cabbages, ending in a disaster, because she *did not know the nature of what she what she was handling*... The mother was not only experienced, but she took her time in choosing what to put in the basket, carefully considering the weight it could handle.” (Italics added)

The mother-daughter comparison personifies the government side as wise, experienced and fit for the job, while the democracy activists are over-zealous, immature, and ignorant towards “the nature of what [they] are handling”. While democratic ideals are themselves not the problem (the foods are “attractive”), it is when “difficult tasks” are handled by those “unprepared by God” that results in political chaos (symbolized by the splitting basket). It is a powerful message, given that over 75% of Tongans are practicing Christians. In a follow up article, Puloka (2006b) further warns against the removal of “age-old inheritances” that “one did not build”, consecrating the current form of government as an inherited communal possession. In such a framework,

universal approval – rather than persistent activism from one group – becomes the most essential condition for change.

In essence, the analysis articles and commentaries suggest a wariness of the social and cultural implications of reform. Since society is held together by the hierarchical *va* system, unraveling the political pecking order carries the threat of replicating in the social sphere, by sanctioning defiance to traditional roles of authority in the clan system. For instance, one Tongan journalist describes the media's role in questioning governmental authority as a "two-edged sword", arguing that while it provides a check and balance for leaders, it creates an attitude of "rebellion" to all forms of leadership, including those within kin relationships (Moala, personal communication, *ibid.*). In the interest of avoiding such an overhaul, a path for change is thus negotiated by supporting current authorities in their reform initiatives. However, it also results in a biased regard and deference to established figures of authority, while the opposition is rebuked and sidelined in the process.

6.2.2 The "Bad": Pro-democracy activists and "violent" reform

It is interesting to note that while the pro-democratic MP's were the most cited sources for information, this did not necessarily translate to positive publicity. Negative media attitudes were fixated on the militant approach of the activists, and the looming tone of violence, which finally actualized on November 16. Violence was denounced both for its concrete results in death and destruction, as well as its moral significance as "un-Christian" – and thus, "un-Tongan".

In its edition immediately before the riots for example, the *Taimi* ran a front page story titled "Akilisi calls for war", with the subheading "We will seize our rights, and we will seize power" (Maama, 2006b). The subheading phrase was part of a speech made

by Pohiva to demonstrators at Pangai Si'i on Tuesday November 14th. The report quoted an excerpt from Pohiva's speech, in which he stated:

“We will seize our rights and we will seize power! Why do they [nobles] complain at being given nine seats [as opposed to the proposed 21 seats for the People], when this is better than nothing? Too many educated people of this country have migrated and now work in Fiji and neighboring countries. If it was easy to migrate to New Zealand and America, everyone in Tonga would migrate there too and only the pigs will be left here. I want to speak freely because I cannot take it anymore. Come to Pangai Si'i tomorrow and come again on Thursday, and we will *do this*.” (Italics added)

In my interview with the author of the report, local editor Faka'osi Maama, he highlighted the vague last phrase “we will do this” (*ke tau 'ai*) – perhaps better translated in the vernacular as “get things cracking” – as a warning of violence (personal communication, *ibid.*). The insinuation of force in the word “seize” in the headline is also presumed by the paper as a “call to war”. While such language of fear permeates the article, there is no exploration at all about Pohiva's claims about out-bound migrants exasperated by the system. Neither is any comment made about the nobles' complaints about the lesser number of seats proposed for them in the reform models, which they regularly expressed during parliamentary debates (“Parliamentary nobles concerned”, 2006).

Instead, the focus on violence in the report is backed by descriptions of the pro-democratic group as having “lost its morals”, “strayed from justice”, and bent on “satisfying their political agenda”, in an accompanying editorial (“Editorial: Reformers have lost morals”, 2006). It also claimed the party had “absolutely no concern for what is best for the whole of Tonga”. The evidence given included the group members' alleged business interests, a “false” concern for the poor while supporting a 60% pay rise amongst parliamentarians, and a “complicity” in violence. The final accusation stemmed from their apparent refusal to tame the growing hostility amongst their

supporters. The editorial goes on to call the pro-democracy leaders “liars” and “full of corruption”.

November 16 seemed to affirm the warnings of chaos in previous commentaries, and both papers focused strongly on the element of destruction in their reportage of the riots. The events of that day were described as “tragic”, “appalling” and, “devastating”, while proponents of the violence were said to be “uncivilized”, “shameful” and “immoral”, amongst other superlative adjectives. At least two articles made comparisons between “9/11” (September 11 attacks in the U.S.) and “16/11” (November 16), while others referred to “terrorism” and made comparisons to Iraq. Rather than viewing the riots as the natural overflow of political frustrations amongst the public – as the pro-democratic group claimed - the media framed the event as the ultimate “crime against Tonga”.

The question of who to blame soon became the focus in various reports. Initial accounts in both papers implicated “youth” (Po’uhila, 2006a; Siale, 2006) although they were portrayed as only minor players to other “masterminds”. Citing a range of views from academics, media figures, community members, and editors, two major parties – the government and the pro-democratic People’s Representatives – were put forward as main role players. In a tally of articles, the People’s Reps were directly cited as the responsible party more times than the government side (Table 6k). These included explicit allegations made by other sources as well as editorial opinions.

Between the new newspapers, the *Taimi* took a much stronger stance against the pro-democratic group. In total, eight opinion columns specifically pointed to the People’s Representatives as the cause of the riots, while none pointed to the government leaders. Still, five news reports did cite the government as responsible, which were all written in a very direct, concise and focused style, technically fulfilling the elements of balanced reporting. But in comparison, various reports naming Pohiva’s group used highly

emotional adjectives and extreme moral judgments, making it difficult to differentiate between these reports and opinions.

Table 13: Tally of direct references of responsibility in causing the riots in sampled articles

<i>Taimi</i>	Gov't	P.Reps	<i>Talaki</i>	Gov't	P. Reps
Editorials	-	5	Editorials	-	-
Commentary	-	3	Commentary	-	1
Reports	5	7	Reports	3	4
Total	5	15	Total	3	5

For example, in a “report” by *Taimi* journalist ‘Ulu’alo Po’uhila (2006b), he first describes the damages caused by the riots, then concludes with a series of weighted questions about democracy:

“What is clear is that while the government and the People’s Representatives were thrashing things out in parliament, the democracy supporters could no longer contain themselves and attacked from the outside... The damages have caused sadness for many uninvolved people – will anyone avenge them? Will these people still believe in the much-hyped democracy? Is this the type of rule we want, where people rule and elect leaders, and when they are not satisfied, they burn the town... in the name of democracy? That’s up to you. But there are many unanswered questions.”

In comparison, none of the *Talaki*’s editorials named any guilty groups, staying focused on the angle of tragedy. Still, the paper’s front page immediately after the riots spoke volumes about the connection of the reformists in the violence (see Figure 1). The page layout includes an image of Pohiva with outstretched arms and a contorted facial expression, shouting on the microphone in Pangai Si’i. His image is superimposed against an enlarged background photograph of a raging inferno, while the headline reads

in large block letters: “Hell in Nuku’alofa: The end result of reform”. Next to Pohiva is a cutout of a Tongan military man in uniform, while across the top of the page are smaller insets of individual pro-reformist MP’s. While images portrayed Nuku’alofa as a dangerous “war zone”, Pohiva’s frightening image comes across as wicked, even satanic. His colleagues are styled as a criminal lineup. No other political parties are portrayed on the cover, so that the destruction is deliberately and solely associated with Pohiva’s group.

Figure 1: *Talaki* front page cover, November 22, 2006.



The underlining of destruction as the “result of reform” also indicated a backlash in the media against the democratic cause as a whole. Debate thus far had been mainly framed as a zealous Pohiva demanding democracy “by any means necessary” versus the softer calls by “moderates” for slow, deliberate negotiation. However, the *Talaki* editorial that week (“Editorial: Murder, destruction”, 2006) hinted that if violence was the outcome of democratic struggle, then society was better off without it, citing:

“If 16/11 was the goal of political change, then we have reached this goal by changing the face of our capital to blackened debris. If the aim was for justice, more injustice has been done in the crimes committed. The laws of reason, the laws of conscience, as well as the laws of religion absolutely forbid any quest for justice through unjust methods.”

Such views from the journalists were reflected by more powerful commentary from some members of the public, such as a published release from the “Tongan youths of Waikato, New Zealand” (“The price of democracy”, 2006). This ambiguous group openly called for a complete halt in the democratic movement altogether:

“If this is what democracy has demonstrated to our little island of Tonga, then we plea to Pohiva and the pro-democracy movement to set our people free from the ‘battle of democracy.’ Whatever we believed in democracy before has led us to the fact that we want no part of it now, due to the destruction and turmoil witnessed over the past few days... More so, we wonder [that] maybe this tragedy is a ‘warning sign’ that perhaps ‘democracy’ may not be a ‘safe haven’ for us Tongans, at least not for now.”

The message from these unnamed youths (which ran unedited across a number of media) is that the violent courses of action taken by the pro-democratic group backfired. In essence, the reformists were again held responsible for destroying their own cause.

6.2.3 The Silent: The minor role of the dissenting public

Throughout the media coverage, the political discourse revolved around the battle between the government and the People's Representatives, as the main protagonists. These two groups were charged with "speaking for the people", whether as benevolent leaders who worked for the "benefit of the whole of Tonga" (government), or as "corrupt" politicians who disguised their personal agendas as the "voice of the people" (People's Representatives). However, the analysis also showed that the public they were actually called to represent took the back seat in most of the reportage. Moreover, the public's views – especially those in support of Pohiva – were observably less prominent in the samples than the editors' voices.

This is especially remarkable in the weeks after the riots, when the vox pop sections suggested that the media was out of step with public opinion regarding the issue of culpability in the riots. The majority of vox pop commentators pointed the finger at government, rather than the People's Representatives, as the main cause for the violence. In the *Taimi* for instance, the question posed after the riots was: "Who do you think should be blamed for what happened on November 16?" ("People's say", 2006).

Out of five respondents, three (60%) believed that the Prime Ministers and Cabinet ministers should be blamed, while two (40%) said that both government leaders and People's Representatives were guilty. When the same query was presented by the *Talaki* ("People's voice", 2006), three out of six respondents (50%) again blamed the government for not paying attention to the needs of the population, while only two (33%) named the pro-democratic group. A sixth person said both sides were to blame (17%). To be fair, later reports in the *Taimi* cited the newspaper's own independent surveys on December 4 ("Taimi 'o Tonga survey", 2006) and December 14 (Maama, 2006c) to gather a wider base of the public's reactions. The latter survey of 1,267

people declared that 64% of respondents believed Pohiva and company were responsible, but this was not published until several weeks after the event happened.

In both sets of samples, most public reactions to the riots came from prominent people in the community such as academics, church leaders and business owners. The only members of the non-elite public to be quoted directly and in context (other than the vox pops) were the “Tongan youths in Waikato” who condemned the democratic movement, and a group of pro-reform protesters who marched down Queen Street in Auckland. This march was described in the *Taimi* as ill-attended (the headline read “Few attend march to demote Prime Minister”), ill-timed, and ill-informed (Po’uhila, 2006c). The two quotes chosen from protesters came from a young man who “did not know the march was for the PM’s demotion”, and another from a New Zealander who was naively there in support of workers’ rights. In addition, the leader of the march, ‘Alani Taione was deridingly described as such:

“...’Alani burned a picture of [PM] Dr Sevele to show his disapproval of his premiership. However, we all know of ‘Alani’s habit of burning. He burned that Tongan flag, mowed down the gate at [King’s NZ residence] ‘Atalanga then burned the car, burned the *Taimi* ‘o Tonga newspaper, and now he’s burned the PM’s photo. Unfortunately, it is as if burning has become a preferred method of protest amongst the reformists. The technique has crept in and caused the burning of Nuku’alofa, at which we remain stunned.” (Po’uhila, 2006c)

Meanwhile, other news reports tended to *describe* actions by the public, rather than actively search out reactions and information from them. This was especially evident in the coverage of the public protests at Pangai Si’i. Out of the entire sample, only one report cited specific (although anonymous) views collected from the protest speeches made at Pangai Si’i (Lavemaau, 2006), while the rest simply reported “very aggressive” and “disrespectful” statements made at the podium. Reports about the demonstrators were also heavily angled from the point of view of the nobles and ministers who were

“disturbed” by the commotion from Pangai Park (for example, Maama, 2006a; “Parliament halted”, 2006). Little investigation was carried out as to what the people were saying at these protests and why they felt that way.

Nonetheless, editorial discretion was taken in questioning the agency and ability of these pro-reform supporters to make clear decisions. For example, in another opinion-fused report by the *Taimi*, the focus was on whether the protesting masses “truly understood” the concept of political reform or not (Maama, 2006d). An excerpt from this article reads:

“One of the most important questions we have to ask now is whether the reformers informed their supporters or not? Did their supporters know for sure whether the ills of the current government would actually change after the reform or not? For example, people pointed out the ministers’ Pajeros [expensive vehicles]. But if the reform happens, the new ministers will still be riding in Pajeros. Neither will any new ministers have control over electricity tariffs, taxes, water bills and telephone bills. Did the reformers do enough to correct this misinformation, or not?”

In the article, responsibility for thoroughly informing the people lies solely with the pro-democracy leaders. The supporters from the public are not charged with the task of informing themselves. While this removes the blame from them, the element of political agency amongst ordinary people is also devalued. Unconsciously, the report also implies that the media did not fulfill its role in informing the public fully about the reform process.

In a support of this strain, *Talaki* reporter Tevita Motulalo’s (2006) personal eyewitness account also describes the protesters at Pangai Si’i as “programmed machines”, at the beck and call of their leaders. An excerpt from this article captures the intensity at Pangai, while framing a subordinate role for the public:

“...No one came to Pangai Si’i holding exactly the same views as the People’s Representatives. However, after given enough

evidence and grounds by the People's Representatives, they were convinced into supporting their views... I sat about five meters away from ['Akilisi Pohiva] when he made his speech [and] I felt the intense heat of the moment, as if an angel was standing before me. His voice rang throughout Pangai like thunder. Every single one of his supporters surrendered to him, and he became like a general calling on his soldiers before going to battle."

In the passage, Pohiva's formidable image overpowers the role of the public, whose characterization amounts to that of brainwashed followers. Similar descriptions were carried in the *Taimi*, such as a satirical column describing Pohiva as a "god", whose commandments to his followers included "murder and bloodshed if it will help the cause" (Moala, 2006d). Another article described the reformists as having "poisoned" the minds of their followers, using the analogy of cult leader Jim Jones, who led his followers to a mass suicide in 1978 (Moala, 2006c). In other words, the pro-democratic group was portrayed as relatively omnipotent, thus effectively replicating the elitist political framework, even amongst the opposition. The overall result was a devaluation of civic dissent in the media discourse.

Chapter 7:

Discussion of results

To 'ukai mo hono lohu –
“Every fruit season has its instrument”
(Tongan proverb) *

Lohu is a long stick used to pick breadfruit when they are in season. When the stick wears out, it has to be replaced for the new season.

Meaning: Every era or cycle requires appropriate practices or tools, or, all tools have an appropriate time to be used.

The events of November 2006 represented a direct confrontation between modern democratic demands and traditional positions on political authority. During this critical point in history, the *Talaki* and *Taimi* newspapers were inclined to support slow, government-endorsed political change, based on a nationalistic, culturally driven perception of what would “benefit the whole”. This logic prevailed over unyielding oppositional stances from the government’s opponents, as well as any diverse views from the public. At the same time, certain historical developments, hinted at in the editorials and described more fully in previous chapters of this thesis, have laid the grounds for challenges and opportunities faced by local journalists that are different from those found in Western democracies. In this section, I will discuss these issues more deeply, and explore ways in which indigenous cultural values can be incorporated in formulating a framework for media practice that corresponds to the Tongan social context.

* Proverbs are taken and translated from my own knowledge of their local usage.

7.1. Changing and unchanged attitudes towards politics and media

As explained in previous chapters, the official liberation of the commoners in the late 1800's occurred when early contact Tongan society, ruled by brutal power-wielding chiefs, was replaced by a united, Western-inspired constitutional structure governed by a more "benevolent" elite and a single undisputed monarch. Throughout the transformation, hierarchy remained as a deep-seated element of political life, and communal authoritarian values at the kin level were left untouched. In fact, the kin system served to buttress the new political structure, even though the two had completely different dynamics in terms of *access* to power. As noted earlier, kin relations allow for each person to hold a privileged and underprivileged role at the same time, while an individual's political status is virtually frozen in either an elite or subordinate class.

However, the hegemonic fusion of the two realms has been successfully employed in slowly building and firmly binding the Tongan nation throughout the first half of the 20th century, through the formulation of a national identity that focused on unity, order, and peaceful interpersonal relations, exemplified in *va*. In due course, the 1960's brought significant social changes through the initiatives of the relatively progressive King Tupou IV, who "set out drag the country into the twentieth century, while maintaining its existing political and cultural institutions" (Hau'ofa, 2006). Amongst his initiatives to develop the nation's economy, international relations, and education systems, were the state-run *Kalonikali* and Tonga Broadcasting Commission, created in the interest of increasing literacy levels and informing the public of government activities.

At the same time however, these projects were carried out firmly in support of national development, rather than any intention for political or cultural transformation. State-run

media controlled the flow of information, while almost all educational institutions, from elementary to tertiary levels, operated under the government or the churches. As such, the nation developed within the paradigm of a benevolent and forward thinking ruler who knew what was best for his people.

Ironically, these new policies would lay the grounds for the challenge of authority from amongst the populace (Campbell, 2001). By the 1980's, a growing number of educated commoners had begun to publically critique the government structure and its operations. On the media front, three independent publications were founded successively by Tongans who had all studied and lived overseas for a number of years. Although these forerunners entered with varied objectives, the collective impact of their publications was significant. The *Kele'a* overtly held an oppositional political agenda, while the *Taimi* and *Matangi Tonga* were set up with more general aims of providing information to the public on important issues. Yet even this simple act of dissemination was viewed negatively by authorities, who until then had held total control in defining the parameters of public discourse. In our interview, founder of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* Kalafi Moala (personal communication, *ibid.*) explained:

“... We were not going out there with an agenda to get anybody, we were just doing what you normally do in a newspaper – report what's happening... But a normal newspaper in say, Auckland, New Zealand or in Honolulu, Hawaii is different from a normal newspaper in Tonga. We were then in those first few years perceived as a paper that was anti-government and controversial...”

Similarly, *Matangi Tonga* owner Pesi Fonua was hassled for a weekly parliamentary bulletin, which he had been issuing even before the launch of his magazine in 1986. It included a simple summary of debates taken from available parliamentary house minutes, and while its readership was limited to a small number of English-speaking subscribers, government attempted to stop its publication:

“At that time, the total number of minutes that was published by the Tongan parliament was only 25, so [that] what was going on in the House, no one knew anything about it... It was very interesting at that time to actually get into the house, read about what’s going on. And of course they[government] tried to stop us... At that point, we said ‘Can you go back to Clause Seven [of the constitution] and read about the freedom of the media.’ And it was almost the first time that they seriously looked at it” (Fonua, personal communication, *ibid.*).

Evidently, although the *Kele’a* was the only paper with a party line, the independent media in general assumed both political and cultural significance by democratizing access to information. This role became especially influential when they publicized poor decisions, such as acts of corruption and mismanagement of funds at the parliamentary levels. In effect, the press allowed the public to challenge authority, by revealing that their leaders were not always the wise and benevolent figures defined by convention.

At this stage, the *Taimi*, which was the only independent weekly (*Matangi Tonga* and *Kele’a* were publishing either bi-monthly or quarterly), took on a more pro-democratic stance in its material. Reportage focused strongly on negative developments in government, as well as the call to “put the leaders in a reformed structure that [would] decrease their ability to make bad decisions” (Moala, personal communication, *ibid.*). The call for reform reflected a distinct momentum in the pro-democratic movement that continued from the late 1980’s to the 1990’s. Proponents persisted in highlighting the structural flaws in a government which had placed too much power in the hands of a small number of people.

However, while debate raged at the educated and parliamentary levels, the mass of the ordinary population were only beginning to comprehend the nature of contested politics. Under the watchful eye of authorities, Tonga had so far sustained a fairly common culture, language and religious ideology, which proved inhospitable to radical revolutions. Nation-wide education schemes – while acting as a “leveler” in terms of

providing equal access to instruction (Johansson Fua, 2009, p.111) – continued to promote orthodox attitudes towards social roles and authority²⁰, while the prevailing *kainga* system maintained hierarchical unanimity through every day practices and customs. Furthermore, government retained a considerable influence over public knowledge through the operations of the *Kalonikali* and the national radio. While the independent media and its newfound political awareness had challenged social attitudes to an extent, a decade of existence had yet to fully suffuse doctrines which had been entrenched in society for over a century.

This became more apparent in the late 1990's and early 2000's, when the question of change became more focused on a change to *what* and *how*. To their credit, the pro-democracy movement and the independent media had by this time, successfully informed and assured the general public of the need for reform. However, the subsequent task of stimulating popular debate about alternative political structures was comparatively much more difficult. Even today, various challenges faced by the media mean that their role in promoting political agency is still in development. Small independent newspapers normally have to grapple with a lack of resources and manpower, compounded by limited training in aspects of ethics, investigative reporting and structured journalism writing. Moreover, while senior media practitioners have only gradually gained a thorough knowledge of political dynamics, younger cadets trained on the job face a steep learning curve. As Fonua (personal communication, *ibid.*)

continued:

²⁰ Helu (1992) also contends that education systems in Tonga (at least in the 1990's) were “mostly pro-democratic” and “sympathetic to the cause” (p.146). This is possibly a reflection on the growing awareness amongst the population at time to the mechanisms of government. However, throughout my primary and high school education in Tonga, we were consistently taught traditional values of obedience, hierarchy and community, with comparatively little focus on individual expression, creativity, and any roles outside of being a “student” (except perhaps in English class activities involving creative writing and drama). Still, I interpreted this more as a lack of encouragement rather than direct prohibition.

“Even me, I didn’t really understand at that time [1980’s] how the Tongan government really functioned, and how it’s structured, until I really got into it... And that’s what really inspired me to [report it] because even today, a lot of Tongans still really don’t know how their parliament works, or how the government functions. It’s our duty to simplify it and make it more widely known. And we’re trying. There’s still a long way to go. It’s more confusing now because people are talking about reforming, which is ok - but it would have been really great if you’re talking about reforming, and you already know what you’re reforming from.”

Moreover, the political scene in the new millennium has been marked by a splintering of the pro-democratic movement, which corresponded to conflicting approaches and demands amongst the leadership. Various media reflected this by taking a diverse range of outlooks on the subject of political reform. Since the mid-2000’s, the *Taimi* became increasingly pro-government, while the newly formed *Talaki* opted to build a reputation as the source of “balanced” news. Meanwhile, the *Kele’a* continued its unabashed drive for democratization, supported by another privately owned television station, the Oceanic Broadcasting Network (OBN) – which has since been out of action after being evicted from its premises in November 2006.

Amidst these developments, a lack of media literacy amongst the public has made it difficult for them to “discern critical issues, utilize the information and/or respond appropriately to any misleading reports” (Motulalo, personal communication, July 9, 2009). Another former senior journalist described the danger this embodies in the formation of sound public opinion:

“I don’t want to put Tongans down, but at the grassroots level, the readership is not at a stage where they could be critical enough of what they receive... Because what they read, they believe it’s in a newspaper, it’s published, it *must* be true. And so when the factions that own the newspaper start attacking each other, it confuses the reader. Who do I believe? Because apparently everything published here is ‘true’.”

(Fukofuka-Fulivai, personal communication, July 29, 2009)

Journalism responsibility in providing accurate information through ethical practices becomes paramount in this framework, although in recent years, some newspapers have become embroiled in politicized inter-party rivalries. At one stage the *Taimi 'o Tonga* faced a major backlash from supporters of the pro-democratic camp because of its change in perspective regarding reform. Business owner 'Ofa Simiki refused to sell the publication in her store in 2006, while last year, Tongan activists in New Zealand – including Pacific Media Freedom Award winner 'Alani Taione who was arrested in 2004 for transporting banned copies of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* into the country– publically set fire to the newspaper and called for a boycott (TNews, 2009). Meanwhile, in July 2009, the *Talaki* and the *Kele 'a* ran a series of articles attacking each other over political reports. The stage of internal media animosities at the time I conducted my interviews (July 2009) was aptly summarized by political adviser and press secretary to the prime minister, Lopeti Senituli (personal communication, July 29, 2009):

“Well I think quite clearly the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper has taken a more pro-government line, I mean you will have to agree. The *Talaki* newspaper has tried to play the impartial reporter [politically neutral], but you'll find that it's increasingly pretty critical It's become like a personal tit for tat between *Kele 'a* and *Talaki* newspapers if you read their editorial pages weekly. And instead of reporting what the real political actors are doing, here are the newspapers fighting amongst themselves... and I don't think that's healthy for any democracy or any country, where the messengers are the ones fighting over what should be happening.”

Irregular patterns of civic participation in political dialogue forums also indicate that the *Taimi's* doubts about public political awareness levels, evident in my analysis, cannot be entirely discredited. Given the juvenile state of systematic political education in the nation, most people still prefer to follow the more experienced and prominent reformers, rather than having the confidence to express themselves individually in any official gathering. For instance, while thousands of people turned out for various unofficial protest demonstrations in 2005, the subsequent community consultations held separately

by the NCPR, the People's Representative's Committee, as well as the government's civic education body (CER) to gather opinions about the reform process, consistently turned out less than 30 people for each village district (Afeaki, personal communication, July 17, 2009; Maama, personal communication, *ibid.*).

Various reasons have been given for this critical lack of enthusiasm, ranging from exasperation amongst the public in having to reiterate their feelings to unresponsive authorities (Pohiva, personal communication, July 20, 2009), to claims of conflicting schedules between the political dialogue meetings and other events in the village (Afeaki, *ibid.*). Meanwhile, *Taimi* editor Maama (personal communication, *ibid.*) suggested the trend was due to minimal public awareness and apathy towards political issues, while *Matangi Tonga* editor Fonua (personal communication, *ibid.*) and *Taimi* publisher Moala (personal communication, *ibid.*) both pointed to the cultural anomaly of speaking up in formal forums, since such traditional-style *fonos* normally entail a one-way communication of directives from the leaders to the people.

Hence, the rationales from the independent media editors indicate the prevalence of a cultural system based on socially ascribed communal roles, in delineating authority and the right to speak. In the traditional framework, vigorous engagement and leadership in the political arena are not "ascribed" to ordinary people, in the same way kinship authority is not ascribed to a young member of the family. Furthermore, the national "golden" values of respect, humility, loyalty, and keeping good relations automatically counter impulses towards dissention and assertiveness. This results in a fundamental challenge to the promotion of political agency, which is based on an individual's ability to independently enact change in society.

In light of these considerations, the *Talaki* and *Taimi* coverage during November 2006 marked a deceleration in the customary calls for reform, as both the public and the

media sought to make sense of their complex socio-political situation. As a mirror of society, the media had reflected the gradual maturation in the political role of the public, who, after experiencing the shock waves of new consciousness in the 1980's and 1990's, were now coming to terms with the vast responsibilities to be afforded to them in a self-governing polity. While the historical prominence of elite government figures have been confronted by forefront reformers, the bulk of ordinary people have yet been reluctant to take on assertive, accountable roles. This framework has been echoed (perhaps unconsciously) in media reportage dominated by politicians, while sidelining the voices of non-elites. Nonetheless, the last few years have seen responsive steps collectively taken by government, the media and independent political bodies, to engage the public in discussions, although these are in nascent stages. The developments so far have thus been summarized in Table 13.

Table 13: Historical summary of media and political progressions in Tonga

	1875 – 1950's	1960's-1970's	1980's – 1990's	2000's
Political reform	Founding of hierarchical constitutional system; political and cultural realms fused in national construction of identity	Progressive monarch brings social development; low levels of political resistance; continuation of "benevolent monarch" prototype	Growing political awareness creates united pro-democratic push; calls for reform based on bad decision-making by established leaders, including the monarch	Conflicted reform movement; government edges towards democratization; new focus on extent and depth of public awareness to reform
Role of the Media	First media freedom laws set; propagandist pamphleteering by rival European missionaries faded out by turn of the century; national media largely dormant afterwards	State-run media brings literacy and new levels of public information, although subject to state endorsement	Independent media democratizes political knowledge through the dissemination of state information; <i>Kele'a</i> founded as key oppositional media	Independent media more diverse, reflexive on political issues; Proliferation of new media outlets and channels; government perspective still dominates the powerful TBC

7.2. Development journalism in the Tongan context

These developments point to unique challenges faced by Tongan media, especially in political journalism, given the intimate and inextricable relationship between local politics and culture. In the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and *Talaki* samples, texts were marked by the following key journalistic attitudes: (1) a primary concern with social unity, stability, peace and cultural continuity; (2) endorsement of government initiatives in national development, including reform; (3) consideration of historical and cultural contexts rather than simply reporting events; (4) descriptive and prescriptive reporting, especially in relation to values in (1); and finally (5) reliance on elite perspective, whether coming from the establishment or leading reformers.

Although development journalism has been offered as a model for the Pacific (Devi & Chand, 2008; Papoutsaki, 2008; Robie, 2008; Sing & Prasad, 2008), the aforementioned journalistic values draw out some difficulties in shifting the framework to the Tongan context. Firstly, the tenets of development journalism as outlined by Galtung and Vincent (1992) as well as Loo (1994; 2009) are based on a “bottom-up” type of communication, focused on the voices, concerns and welfare of the grassroots community. This involves the promotion of social change framed by a thorough awareness of issues such as poverty, public health, environment, and gender relations. As such, development journalism is presupposed by an existence of democracy and human rights, as locally valued social principles.

In Tonga, these precepts have not been fully formed or fully incorporated into the social culture. For instance, a leading human rights activist I interviewed stated that in even up to the late 1990's, the notion of innately and individually held human rights was “not accepted in most [parts of] society in Tonga, in all levels – from the community, family, church, and the nation” (Blake, personal communication, July 17, 2009).

Furthermore, it was a “taboo subject”, especially in relation to women’s and children’s rights in the kin system. As she put it: “our culture is already set in a way that you take whatever goes. You have to listen, you have to obey your husband or the elders and you must do whatever culture is” (Blake, *ibid.*).

The lack of rights awareness in the media was reflected in the samples, which showed little connection drawn between the issue of political reform and the promotion of equal human rights. Both the government and pro-democratic camps (and the media) were focused solely on political rights in terms of access to leadership and government, while issues about gender, sexuality, youth development and discrimination against minorities were seldom addressed at any meaningful level, or associated as imperative elements of democratic change. In other words, political reform was primarily tied to government re-structuring, while the effect on communities in terms of interpersonal relationships and social roles have yet to be addressed.

To complicate this, media in Tonga that do not follow development journalism principles, such as the “radical” *Kele’a* political newspaper, retains their role as decisive – even necessary – outlets for political resistance in the community. The *Kele’a* continues to be highly popular at the grassroots level, and public dissatisfactions with the government are usually taken up with the paper before any other publication. For instance, when the Prime Minister accused former Justice Minister ‘Alisi Taumoepeau of “misleading Cabinet” after statements she made at inquiry hearings regarding the fatal sinking of a government-operated ferry (“PM says ‘Alisi resigns”, 2010), Taumoepeau took her story to the *Kele’a*, which then printed confidential letters between herself and the Prime Minister over the matter. The relevance of the *Kele’a* as an oppositional media thus marks a disparity in public levels of confidence placed in the current government as objective implementers of the nation-building process.

What is more, development journalism, as a promoter of nation-building, can only be successful when paired with good governance. As such, its bearing in the Tongan context is still budding, as widespread appreciation of governance issues has only begun to emerge in recent years. Government has so far shown great potential in initiating systems of transparency and accountability, although consistency has yet to be proven. For example, since 2008 the government has set up websites for all its state departments, boosting its rank as one of the top 20 e-governments in the world (Brookings Institute, 2008). Furthermore, since the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2007, Tonga has jumped 76 places ahead in Transparency International's corruption index within three years, from its ranking at number 175 out of 179 countries in 2007, to 138 in 2008, and currently at 99 since 2009 (Transparency International, 2007; 2008; 2009).

However, these achievements were dampened in August last year, when systematic failures in due diligence saw 74 innocent lives lost in the sinking of the state-owned MV Princess Ashika ferry, in the nation's biggest maritime tragedy of the century. After 54 days of independent hearings carried out by a royally appointed Commission of Inquiry, a scathing report found that the cause of the disaster was rooted in careless management practices in purchasing the vessel, and a "failure of those in authority, when exercising their powers or performing their duties, to do so properly and adequately" (Andrew, James & Handfield, 2010).

During the course of the hearings, former Minister of Justice and SCP board member 'Alisi Taumoepeau released a statement describing a prevalent "culture of fear" in the public sector in speaking up against authorities, because of the threat that "one may be forced to retire early, go on leave or sidelined" (Taumoepeau, 2010). Meanwhile, the refusal of the Ministry of Information to circulate the report to the public until it was

tabled in parliament has meant there has been no official government release of the inquiry findings up till now (June 2010), although the English version of the full report as well as transcripts of the hearings, are freely available on the Commission's website (www.rcimvprincessashika.to).

The Ashika Inquiry also revealed a tendency for government to invite systems of transparency and accountability, but criticize them when they implicate traditional cultural norms. For example, when Assistant Counsel to the Royal Commission Manuel Varitimos queried the Prime Minister on the king's authority to appoint law lords, the PM indignantly called it "a direct attack on His Majesty's constitutional authority," before remarking to the counsel that: "you may be an excellent counsel in Australia, but when you are in the Kingdom of Tonga, please try to understand our constitution and show some respect for our monarch, for our government, our people and our culture" (Transcripts of Proceedings, 2010, p.5808). While the comment was censured by the Chairman, it signified the susceptibility of cultural beliefs to be used against systems of good governance in the kingdom.

7.3. *Va* and *Fonua* in journalism and governance:

Incorporating cultural frameworks into media and government practice

Questions that emerge for the media in Tonga are thus, whether good governance can exist alongside a cultural system that avoids confrontation with authorities, and secondly, what ways are there for journalists to get around cultural constraints while simultaneously maintaining the relevance of their cultural identity in professional practice. These cultural dynamics have yet to be covered in Pacific articulations of development journalism, although they effectively remain as a significant part of the lives of local people. To borrow from similar explorations by Johansson Fua (2009) regarding the validity of cultural values in the educational profession: "organizations

need to recognize that people... cannot peel off their culture and hang it by the door as they enter the organization” (p.123).

I thus looked towards framing a locally inspired framework that allowed for both cultural recognition, as well as the freedom to enact democratic principles in the interest of the community. To deal with this, I revisited the concept of *va* as the fundamental backbone of the Tongan worldview (shared by other Pacific cultures), and expanded on its significance in the understanding of *fonua* (*vanua/whenua/fanua/ples* in other Pacific languages). *Fonua* literally means land, but carries with it “social and spiritual as well as physical dimensions” (Helu Thaman, 1999b, p.69). While *va*, as described in previous chapters, draws out the importance of inter-reliant and reciprocal relationships between people, its correlation with *fonua* involves a holistic relationship between the community and their environment, including the institutional and political structures that govern people’s lives. Tu’itahi (2009) outlines five dimensions of *fonua*, including the *taautaha* (individual), *kainga* (family/kin), *kolo*(village), *fonua* (nation) and *mamani* (global society), which “complement each other” and require maintenance to create “peace, harmony and progress”.

However, I have found that while most Tongan scholars have focused on the laterality of *va* and *fonua* relationships in community networking, inadequate attention has been dedicated to the elements of superiority and inferiority within those relationships, and their implication in social realms. Because my research involves a heavy focus on political power relations, I needed to fully address this core element of the Tongan *va* system. The first step was recognizing that hierarchy can be beneficial in that it fosters order and structure in the community. Even the most stringent democracies have a political chain of command, although the difference between these systems and the Tongan structure lies in the parameters for the public’s access to power – theoretically,

any law abiding citizen with the relevant education, skills and leadership capacity can become a New Zealand Prime Minister, while in the traditional system of Tonga, birth and fixed kinship roles direct one's rights to authority.

However, the restrictions that naturally arise from this context are alleviated to some extent by the "balancing mechanism" of having multiple roles in the kin network, which allows an individual to have simultaneous positions of obligation as well as privilege at any given time. These "balancing mechanisms" have not been carried to the political realm, resulting in an oppressive pyramidal cultural construct that has become increasingly contested throughout the historical political development of the nation.

On the other hand, it also means there is an opportunity to enact and promote new "balancing mechanisms" at the political level, as part of harmonious *va* and positive development of the *fonua*. As such, good governance – including the notions of rights, justice, transparency, and accountability – can be incorporated to reflect the *va* patterns found at the *kainga* level. In other words, top-down hierarchy may be maintained in the interest of social order and communal cohesiveness, along with the essential balancing elements of good governance to facilitate power-sharing.

Such a framework promoting "good governance as good *va*" can be feasibly endorsed in Tongan society by pointing out the following:

- (1) The framework follows traditional values of unity, stability and harmony;
- (2) The framework follows traditional values of power-sharing and reciprocal relationships for the benefit of the community ("balancing mechanism");
- (3) Its fundamental elements, including rights and individual freedom, are technically already outlined within the constitution, and only needs to be highlighted and promoted as such; and
- (4) Similar frameworks have already emerged from the grassroots level, specifically in the calls for incorporation of justice (*fakamaau totonu*) as a "fifth" core value,

in addition to the four “golden” foundations of respect (*faka’apa’apa*), humility (*loto to*), loyalty/dedication (*mamahi’i me’a*) and good relations (*tauhi va*)²¹.

Within this framework, media freedom can be argued as a necessary part of good governance, allowing for the scrutiny of political activities and the promotion of transparency and accountability as part of a harmonious relationships in the *fonua*. Following this, the “benefit of the whole”, which emerged as a primary concern for the media in my analysis, can be reframed through an understanding that power-balancing is a necessary element of Tongan communalist culture. The role of the media as a democratizing agent can thus be enacted as a “guardian” of judicious *va*, that will benefit all levels of the community.

7.4. Capturing and communicating culture on video

In producing my documentary I set out to draw out various social and ideological aspects involved in Tonga’s political reform process, in order to better represent the social context in which the local media role is located. During my interviews, cultural factors were consistently expressed as a significant influence people’s understandings of politics, as well as the nature of their work. These dynamics make up a paradoxical condition for Tongan politics, where the constraints to democracy found in interdependent hierarchical relations, are simultaneously the basis of a cohesive, stable community, which has been the source of pride for Tongans over the generations.

However, the focus of my research was not to highlight the schism between a democratic government and the status quo, but to point to the process of negotiation that occurs when two varying paradigms have to meld together in the interest of social

²¹ This element of justice was mentioned by at least one of my interview participants (Taufa, personal communication, July 9, 2009), as well as expressed in a number of political rallies I attended while in Tonga, although it has yet to be taken on in the academic or parliamentary realms.

survival. At this point of conciliation, diverse reactions will naturally occur, and the most significant realization I made during my interviews, was that public views about democratic reform were not uniform. Not only was it accepted at multiple degrees, people were also concerned with varying, often overlapping aspects of the phenomenon. Even the most extreme of Tonga's reformers, 'Akilisi Pohiva (personal communication, *ibid.*) expressed his lucid conviction in the irrelevance of native customs to the struggle towards development, but at the same time, acknowledged the importance of sustaining kinship ties in the community. Similarly, traditionalist Manu Mapuhola (personal communication, *ibid.*) would decry democratization as the grounds for social extrication and the loss of identity, and then admit that reform would be helpful, granted it was not sweeping. It was then extremely interesting to see how these views from the community were negotiated in the political sphere, over the history of the reform movement. I found that one of the most interesting proposals for negotiation came from the grassroots level, noted in the video by 'Etimani Taufa (personal communication, July 9, 2009), although I also witnessed similar expressions in various community gatherings in Tonga. This idea was the addition of a "fifth golden value" – namely truth or justice – to the established four core "golden" values of respect, humility, loyalty/dedication, and harmonious relationships.

The video thus sought to reflect the fundamental idea of my thesis, which is based on the recognition that Tonga's cultural fabric informs community life at all levels, bringing both challenges and opportunities for social change. At the same time, the culture is changing as people modernize, and inevitably, it is not happening uniformly. While most of those I interviewed were quite conscious of the social transformations already unfolding in society, reactions to the process were varied. I also note that I did not interview anyone below the age of 25, although youth involvement is an issue I wish

to address separately in a future project. My own preliminary observation is that young people welcome change, but have not acquired enough awareness or confidence in their political potential, given the cultural subjugation of their social status in favour of elders or older people. However, the evidence from my research show that there is at least a substantial amount of socially conscious debate about political reform in the media, and while a final unified direction has not emerged from the discourse, a complex process of negotiation is under way.

Chapter 8:

Concluding remarks – Revisiting the aims

*Democracy
is an extension
of the Family Unit
at work
in the wider Community
of the Human Society.*

- Grace Mera Molisa (from “Democracy”, 1992)

To round up this thesis, I will refer back to the original scopes of this project and address them one by one.

8.1. Aim 1 - To understand the socio-cultural context in which the Tongan media is located

The Tongan social system is underpinned by a relational framework based on the concept of *va*. *Va* is the physical and non-physical space between two people or things, which is imbued with meaning, and connects everyone in a cohesive kin-based matrix known as *kainga*. Ascribed roles in the matrix entail certain duties, and the performance of these duties is meant to promote peace, stability, unity and harmony in the community.

Power relations exist in the *va* framework which delineates positions of superiority and inferiority in all relationships. However, because an individual’s kinship roles are multiple, contextual, and interconnected, there is a degree of fluidity that allows shared

access to authority and power. At the communal level, *va* acts to provide clear conventions for leadership, group organization, as well as counter-balancing any undue usurpation of authority by other means, such as financial, educational or professional status.

The political realm reflects the element of hierarchy in the *kainga* system through the pyramidal monarchical structure of 'king over nobles over commoners'. However, it does not embrace the same flexibility in allowing individuals to hold multiple positions in each social stratum, as seen in the *kainga* system. Therefore, political power is securely configured in a top-down framework, which has been legalized in the constitution and absorbed by convention. Nationalistic indoctrination has fused the political structure with Tongan cultural identity, making it hard to confront the difference between power wielded in the interest of the community (for example, enforcing public education through law), and power wielded simply in the interest of maintaining the political status quo (such as giving biased educational opportunities to the elite). References to civic rights in the constitution provide some access to power, but have not been absorbed as part of Tongan culture (whereas Christian values of humility and meekness have).

Criticism of the political structure has grown within the last three decades, due to increased education and modernization. Political reform has gained widespread support, although thorough knowledge of the government system is still lacking amongst large sections of the grassroots community. The public still rely mainly on established political actors to express their needs to the state, but are reluctant to take on more assertive and accountable roles themselves. This is partly because the social system ascribes certain leadership roles to certain people, and in the political realm, leadership is generally ascribed to the established elite. While attitudes are changing, some

apprehension remains about whether political reform will result in weakening the hierarchical bonds in the *kainga* system, which holds Tongan communities together as cohesive networks.

8.2. Aim 2 - To examine how selected Tongan media communicated the notion of democratic political reform within this context

The Tongan media selected for analysis (*Taimi 'o Tonga* and *Taimi* independent newspapers) covered the subject of political reform prominently during November 2006, as political debates reached intense levels in parliament. Both papers exhibited similar patterns in strongly distinguishing between “good” and “bad” types of reform. “Good” reform involved slow, measured steps that took into account Tonga’s political and cultural history, while “bad” reform was equivalent to aggressive activism and violent change, inconsiderate of possible harmful effects on the community. This dichotomy was reflected in polarized characterizations of government officials as sensible, capable leaders, interested in the overall welfare of the public, while pro-democratic politicians were portrayed as selfish, negligent, violent and unfit to lead the people in the reform process.

Strong arguments about communalism were made to justify the inclination towards the government side, specifically in the context of what would “benefit the whole”. More focus was placed on the values of order, stability, peace and cultural continuity rather than civic rights, public discontent, political activism, and even democracy. Meanwhile, the voices from the public, especially the dissenting public, were sidelined significantly in the reportage, while elite figures from both political camps dominated the discourse. This not only reflected cultural attitudes towards hierarchy, but also the underdeveloped state of political agency amongst ordinary people. In effect, the media favored a reform

process directed from the top down, rather than a revolutionary overhaul from the bottom up.

8.3. Aim 3 - To reflect on how these findings implicate the role of media in the political reform process

The research showed that political journalism attitudes in the two selected newspapers corresponded to established cultural values regarding authority, communalism and social stability. As such, they served to temper aggressive calls for democracy by promoting a collaborative approach with government in negotiating slow and measured steps to political reform. However, in doing this, they also delimited the value of public dissention and replicated a construct where the “benefit of the whole” is defined by accepted elite parties. The risk in such lines of thinking is that without supportive elements of good governance, the system is open to unfair exploitation and abuse of power.

While the dilemma exists between preserving cultural beliefs and promoting democratic principles, the opportunity for media is to merge the two by highlighting the need for good governance, and re-articulating this not only as a vital part of a healthy community, but also a vital part of Tongan culture. Within this framework, elements of good governance – such as equal rights, transparency and accountability, freedom of information and press freedom – can be promoted as important power-balancing mechanisms, resembling existent practices of *va* at the *kainga* level. Ultimately, this will serve for a healthier form of democracy, by including the needs and perspectives of ordinary Tongans as relevant factors in defining political decisions that will affect the nation.

8.4. Value of the research

The value of this research lies in its attention to the cultural dynamics present within local Pacific Island contexts, which are often overlooked or undervalued in currently available academic discourses on Pacific media. In the case of Tonga, principles of democracy and press freedom that are taken as the “norm” in developed societies often have to confront contrasting social values and ideologies in the local context, based on the nation’s small population, level of modernization, unique social history, and prevalent cultural attitudes focused on group cohesiveness and healthy inter-personal relationships. The challenge therefore is finding a way to negotiate a space for democracy within the existent social and cultural framework, in order for it to be absorbed as a bona fide part of the Tongan lifestyle. To this end, this research offers some preliminary suggestions on how the concept of *va* can be used to promote good governance and media freedom for the benefit of the Tongan people. The hope is that this encourages more Pacific-based approaches in revisiting the role of media to fit our local contexts. In this way, practitioners can become “Pacific journalists” who identify with and work for the development of their community, rather than simply being “journalists of a Pacific background.”

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APPENDIX I: Facts about Tonga

Geography: 20 00 S, 175 00 W, 747 sq.km, about 170 islands – 36 inhabited.

Government: Constitutional monarchy with unicameral Legislative Assembly (parliament); Head of State is King George Tupou V, who appoints Prime Minister and 12-16 ministers, 4 of which are appointed from among elected members of Legislative Assembly; Legislative Assembly is currently made up of 14 Cabinet ministers sitting ex officio, 9 nobles elected by a pool of 33 peers and 9 elected by popular vote (People's Representatives) both for 3 year terms. Amendments to the constitution passed in 2010 will usher in a new form of government based on elections held November 25, 2010. The voting population will elect 17 representatives and the nobles elect 9 representatives to parliament. Out of this pool, members will elect a Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will then choose Cabinet ministers from the same pool, with the option of bringing in up to 4 others from outside the pool if necessary (for example, if no one with health expertise or legal expertise is voted in, the PM can bring other qualified people to run those respective ministries.)

Total Population (2006): 101,991 (51,772 males and 50,219 females), average annual rate growth of 0.4%.

Population on main island of Tongatapu: 72,045, with urban population of 23,658 (23.2% of the total population)

Population density: 157 people/sq. km

GDP per capita (constant prices): USD \$3042

GDP per capita (current prices): USD \$5258

Median age: 21 years old

Infant mortality rate (IMR): 19 (22 for males and 16 for females)

Life expectancies at birth: 67 years old for males and 73 years old for females.

Average age at marriage: 28 years old for males and 25.6 years old for females.

Annual net migration rate: -1,800

Dominant religions: Free Wesleyan Church 37%, Latter Day Saints 17%, Roman Catholic Church with 16%, and Free Church of Tonga 11%.

Literacy rate for 15-25 years old: 98.5%

Subsistence workers: 17% of males, 19% of females (growing or gathering produce or fishing to feed their families). Of this, 21% in outer islands, 9% in urban areas .

Unemployment rate: 1.1%, without counting subsistence workers. Counting subsistence workers, unemployment rate is 36%.

Tenure: 72% of all households owned their dwelling outright, 4% rented their dwelling, and another 23% resided in their dwelling rent-free.

Source: *Tonga Department of Statistics, 2006*

APPENDIX II: *Talanoa* participant profiles

Adams, Telesia (July 16, 2009): Deputy editor at *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper.

Afeaki, Viliami (July 17, 2009): Director of Civic Education and Reconciliation project, Tonga.

Blake, Betty (July 17, 2009): Director of NGO Ma'ae Fafine mo e Famili (For Women and the Family), human rights activist.

Fihaki, Siale (December 8, 2010): District officer for Nukunuku 1, pro-democratic activist.

Fonua, Pesi (July 23, 2009): Founder of Vava'u Press and publisher/editor of *Matangi Tonga Online*.

Fukofuka-Fulivai, 'Olivia (July 29, 2009): Former Assistant Editor at *Kalonikali* newspaper, former Media Adviser at Reform Information Office (RIO), Tonga Revenue Department.

Lasike, Muli (December 14, 2010): Villager and farmer, Lavengatonga, Tongatapu.

Maama, Faka'osi (July 16, 2009): Editor (Tonga News) and political journalist at *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper.

Mapuhola, Mana (July 29, 2009): Operator of 'Ulutea Kava Club, Nuku'alofa Tonga, cultural expert.

Moala, Kalafi (July 21, 2009): Founder, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, CEO of Taimi Media Network.

Motulalo, Tevita (July 9, 2009): Deputy editor and political journalist at *Talaki* newspaper.

Pohiva, Akilisi (July 20, 2009): Number 1. People's Representative to Parliament, founder of *Kele'a* newspaper and leading pro-democracy reformer.

Pohiva, Po'oi (July 16, 2009): Publisher of *Kele'a* newspaper, director of the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement (formerly Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement), son of pro-democracy leader 'Akilisi Pohiva.

Puloka, Mapa (July 29, 2009): Psychiatrist and cultural commentator, member of the 'Ulutea Kava Club.

Senituli, Lopeti (July 29, 2009): Press Secretary and Political Adviser to the Prime Minister, former director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement.

Taufa, Etimani (July 9, 2009): Former lecturer in Tongan Studies, Tonga High School and former parliamentary clerk, cultural expert.

Appendix III: Ethics approval from AUTECH committee



MEMORANDUM

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH)

To: David Robie
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTECH
Date: 6 July 2009
Subject: Ethics Application Number 09/130 **Communicating 'democracy': Media attitudes towards political rights and reform in Tonga.**

Dear David

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH) at their meeting on 15 June 2009 and that I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTECH's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTECH's meeting on 10 August 2009.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 6 July 2012.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 6 July 2012;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 6 July 2012 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTECH and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Banda'.

Madeline Banda
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Jospheine Latu tvr6458@aut.ac.nz

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

27th May 2009

Project Title

Communicating 'democracy': Media attitudes towards political rights and reform in Tonga.

An Invitation

My name is Josephine Latu and I am a Communications Studies student at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand.

You are invited to participate in this research study I am conducting about how the Tongan media communicate the idea of "political reform" to the public. This includes an examination of Tongan social culture in which the media is located, and how this may influence news values and style.

This research project is part of a thesis leading to a Master's degree in Communications Studies.

Participation in this project is voluntary and you may refuse or withdraw from this interview at any time, without any adverse consequences.

This information sheet is to ensure you have the relevant and correct information about your part in this project. Please take the time to read this information carefully and feel free to ask any questions.

What is the purpose of this research?

The overall aims of this research is to

- Explore the treatment and attitudes of Tongan media towards the subject of 'political reform';
- Examine the journalistic techniques and styles used to frame this issue;
- Explore the reasons behind such treatment and techniques;
- Investigate how the Tongan cultural environment affects media practice; and to
- Comment on the role of media in Tongan society and the formation of public opinion.

The outcome of this project will be a 45,000 – 60,000 word thesis, as well as a short research documentary (about 45 minutes). This work will go towards attaining my Master's degree in Communications Studies.

The material you provide for this study will be only be used for academic and educational purposes only. This includes adaptations and reproduction for educational public exhibition.

How were you chosen for this invitation?

As a member of the Tongan community, you qualify for this study. You have also been chosen based on your professional knowledge, prominence in the community and/or personal experience relating to the research topic.

I am interviewing senior media workers in Tonga, and a range of key community members with relevant experience in Tongan culture and/or politics.

What will happen in this research?

This research will be carried out in two parts – (1) A documentary analysis of Tongan newspapers in the specified time frames, and (2) Interviews with Tongan media practitioners, opinion leaders and key community members.

Interview questions are open-ended, but I will provide a list of indicative questions beforehand so that you know the gist of our interview.

Interviews will be recorded – but you have the choice whether you wish to be filmed, tape recorded or only allow note-taking. These recordings are optional. This will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time.

The recordings will be transcribed and translated by myself and that any cultural knowledge or information imparted will be acknowledged as belonging to the community and/or people of Tonga.

The information I receive from the interviews and the newspaper analysis will be used to produce a thesis, as well as a short educational documentary. The official copyright for these outcomes will belong to the researcher and I may show the documentary in educational forums, for example, in a class or public seminar.

I welcome your ideas and feedback to this project. You may also contact me about the progress of my thesis at any time. I will also provide you with a copy of the thesis and documentary after the completion of the project.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Depending on your own personality and beliefs, you may feel uncomfortable to be filmed on camera, or you may want to avoid speaking about political issues.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

I will only conduct an interview when I receive your full consent.

I will provide you with a list of indicative questions beforehand so that you know the gist of the interview. We can also discuss any concerns you have at this stage.

During the interview you are under no pressure to discuss anything that you may find embarrassing or uncomfortable.

You can withdraw at any time during the interview without any adverse consequences. You can also say things 'off the record', which will not be used in the research. You also have the option of remaining anonymous, in which case I will only identify your profession.

You can review the transcripts of the interview afterwards and withdraw comments you do not wish to make public.

I am culturally obliged by Tongan values of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *tauhi va* (maintaining relationships) to consider the effects of my research on all participants, while putting their dignity first.

What are the benefits?

There is very little academic material available about Tongan media and this research can provide certain benefits in this regard. For participants (Tongan media practitioners, Tongan people), the research can act as

- A learning tool and source of information, both for the Tongan public as well as media practitioners;
- An academic precedent, setting some groundwork for future research (especially by other Tongans);
- An output for participants' views, highlighting Tongan perspectives on media, culture and society, and democracy, and bringing it into the public and academic arena where Oceanic points of view are under-represented;
- A documentary film which would become an accessible, share-able version of academic knowledge to ordinary people.

I fully see this research project as collaboration between participants and myself in offering our own interpretations of media in the Pacific Island context to world knowledge.

Any cultural knowledge or information imparted during the research procedure will also be acknowledged as belonging to the community and/or people of Tonga.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity will remain strictly confidential, unless you give me your specific consent to be identified in the written report and/or be videotaped for the documentary film.

You can agree to be identified in only one medium and not the other, or not to be identified at all.

If you do agree to be identified or to appear on camera, you can review our interview transcripts before giving approval for this information to be used. You will also have the option of viewing your videos and quotes and confirming your consent before they are used.

If you wish to remain anonymous, you do not have to appear on camera, and your name and any information that could identify you will be removed from the written thesis to protect your anonymity.

I will not provide any of your personal details to any third parties.

Those who will assist me in filming, editing and transcribing will have to sign confidentiality agreements that prevent them from sharing any information in any manner about the contents and specifics of the interview or your identity.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs, but I will need 1 – 2 hours of your time to explain this project and to conduct a face-to-face interview.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research, you may sign the attached Consent Form.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will inform you by email about any major developments in the research (e.g. completion of editing, defence, submittal etc), and feel free to email me any queries you may have.

After my degree work is completed, I will then email you a copy of the thesis, and mail you a copy of the documentary on DVD at my own cost. The projected end date is March 2010.

You may also borrow a hard copy of the thesis from the University of the South Pacific library at Atele, Tongatapu, to which I will provide a copy.

Please note that the official copyright for these outcomes will belong to the researcher.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors, Dr David Robie, david.robie@aut.ac.nz , +649 921 999 ext 7834 and Dr Janet Bedggood, janet.bedggood@aut.ac.nz, +649 921 999 ext 7015.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, ATEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , +649 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *July 6, 2009*,
ATEC Reference number *09/130*.**

Fakamatala ki he Fekumi Fakaako



‘Aho na’e fa’u ai ‘a e ngaahi fakamatala ni:

27 Me 2009

Hingoa ‘o e Poloseki:

Ko ha ‘analaiso ‘o e ngaahi founa hono talaki pe faka’ilo ki he kakai, ‘i he ongoongo, ‘a e ngaahi me’a lalahi ‘oku hoko ‘i hotau fonua, ‘o kau ki ai ‘a e fakalelei fakapolitikale.

Ko ha tohi fakaafe:

Ko hoku hingoa ko Sosefina Latu pea ‘oku ou lolotonga fakahoko ha feinga ako ‘i he mala’e ‘o e fetu’utaki ‘i he AUT University ‘i ‘Aokalani, Nu’usila.

‘Oku ‘oatu ‘a e fakaafe ma’ulalo ke ke kau mai ki he’eku fekumi fakaako ‘oku lolotonga fakahoko fekau’aki mo e ngaahi founa ‘oku ngaue’aki ‘i he fai ongoongo, ke fakamafola ki he kakai ke nau ‘ilo ‘a e ngaahi me’a fekau’aki mo e ngaahi me’a lalahi ‘oku hoko ‘i hotau fonua, ‘o kau ai ‘a e ngaahi me’a fakapolitikale mo fakasosiale foki.

‘Oku kau heni ha vakai ki he ngaahi ‘ulungaanga fakafonua ‘o Tonga, mo hono kaunga ki hono takiekina ‘a e founa fai ongoongo ‘i hotau fonua.

Ko e fekumi fakaako ko eni ‘oku fakataumu’a ki hono fakalava hoku mata’itohi MA ‘i he mala’e ‘o e fetu’utaki. Ka ai ha’o tokoni ki he fekumi ko ‘eni, ‘e fakahoko pe ia ‘i he loto tau’atina, pea te ke tau’atina pe ke ke faka’ikai’i pe holomui mei he fekumi fakaako ko eni.

Kataki ‘o lau fakalelei ‘a e ngaahi fakamatala ‘oku ‘oatu ‘i he la’i pepa ni ke fakapapau’i ‘oku ke mea’i lelei ‘a e ngaahi taumu’a, founa ngaue, pea pehe foki ki ho’o kaunga ‘i he fekumi ko eni. ‘Oku ‘ata pe fakahoko mai ha fa’ahinga fehu’i pe fekau’aki mo e ngaue ni.

Ko e ha ‘a e taumu’a ‘a e fekumi ko eni?

Ko e taumu’a ‘o e fekumi fakaako ko eni ko hano

- Vakai ki he founa fai ongoongo ‘oku fa’a ngau’eki ‘e he kau ngaue ‘i he mitia, tautefito ki he ‘u nusipepa, ke fakamafola ki he kakai ‘a e ‘uuni ongoongo fekau’aki pea mo e ngaahi me’a lalahi ‘oku hoko ‘i hotau fonua, ‘o kau ki ai ‘a e tafa’aki fakapolitikale mo fakasosiale foki;
- Vakai ki he ngaahi ‘uhinga ‘oku nau fili ai ‘a e ngaahi founa ngaue me founa fai ongoongo ko eni;
- Vakai ki he ngaahi tui pe ko e ngaahi tefito’i mo’oni fakaengaue ‘oku ne fa’a takiekina ‘a e founa ngaue ‘a e ngaahi kautaha fai ongoongo;

- Fakatotoalo ki he ngaahi founa 'oku hukitonu 'e he'etau 'ulungaanga fakafonua faka-Tonga 'a e founa ngaue 'a e kau fai ongoongo;
- Fakatotoalo ki he tu'unga 'o e ngaue faka-fai ongoongo pe ko e mitia 'i Tonga ni pea mo 'enau kaunga ki he loto 'a e kakai (public opinion), fekau'aki mo e ngaahi me'a lalahi 'oku hoko 'i hotau fonua, 'o kau ki ai 'a e ngaahi me'a fakapolitikale mo fakasosiale foki.

Ko e iku'anga 'a e ngaahi fekumi ko eni ko ha tohi fakamatala fakaako (thesis) 'oku lea 'e 45,000 – 60,000, fakataha mo ha filimi vitio fakaako (research documentary) 'e fakafuofua ki ha miniti 'e 45. .

Ko ho ngaahi fakamatala pe tokoni 'e foaki mai ki he fekumi ko eni, 'e toki ngaue'aki pe ia ki ha ngaahi taumu'a fakaako, 'o kau heni hano faka'ali'ali ki he kakai. 'Oku toe malava pe ke 'etita'i mo fakanounou 'a e ngaahi fakamatala 'e 'omai, pe toe ngaue'aki pe ki ha ngaahi me'a kehe pe ('o hange ko ha 'esei fakaako), pe pehe ki hano fa'u ha ngaahi tatau (copies) 'a e ngaue ni.

Ko e ha e 'uhinga na'e fili ai koe ke ke kau mai ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni?

Ko kinautolu na'e fakaafe'i ke nau kau mai ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni, na'e fili pe kinautolu koe'uhi ko 'enau nofo tonu 'i Tonga ni, pea pehe foki ko e loloto 'enau 'ilo fakapalofesinale ki he tafa'aki 'o e mitia pe fetu'utaki, pea ki he tafa'aki 'o e politikale, pe ko e tala 'o e fonua, pe ko 'enau ngaue tu'ukimu'a 'i he komiuniti 'i he ngaahi tafa'aki 'oku nau fakakaungatamaki ai. Na'e toe fakaafe'i pe mo kinautolu na'e hokosia tonu kiate kinautolu ha me'a mahu'inga fekau'aki mo e kaveinga 'o e fekumi.

Ko e ha 'a e ngaahi founa 'e fakahoko'aki 'a e fekumi fakaako ko eni?

Ko e fekumi ko 'eni 'oku 'i ai hono kongia 'e ua:

Konga 1: Ko hono 'analaiso 'a e 'uuni ongoongo na'e pulusi 'i he ngaahi nusipepa Tonga 'i ha vaha'a taimi mahino;

Konga 2: Ko hono faka'eke'eke 'o e kau ngaue faka-fai ongoongo, mo ha ni'ihia pe 'i he komiuniti 'o fakatatau ki he'enau felave'i mo e kaveinga 'o e fekumi.

Ko e founa faka'eke'eke 'oku lalahi fakatatau pe ki he founa 'e fiemalie ki ai 'a e tokotaha 'e fai ki ai e faka'eke'eke. 'E pau pe ke 'oatu ha lisi fahu'i fakaangaanga kimu'a 'o e faka'eke'eke, ke ke mea'i 'a e ngaahi kaveinga 'e hu'u ki ai 'a e faka'eke'eke, ka 'e 'ikai pehe ia ke ta'emaue'i 'a e 'u fahu'i ko 'eni.

'E fakafuofua 'a e fuoloa 'o e faka'eke'eke ki ha houa nai 'e taha pe ua, pea te ke tau'ataina ke fili pe 'oku ke fiemalie ke hiki vitio, hiki tepi, pe hiki tohi ho ngaahi fakamatala 'e 'omai.

'I he lava 'a e faka'eke'eke, 'e ta'ipe'i leva 'a e ngaahi fakamatala ni pea 'uluaki 'oatu ke ke vakai ki ai mo fakapapau'i 'oku ke fiemalie ki he tu'unga mo e totonu hono hiki 'o e ngaahi fakamatala.

'E liliu leva 'a e ngaahi fakamatala ko 'eni 'o faka-Pilitania, 'o ngaue'aki leva ia, fakataha mo hono 'analaiso ko ia 'o e ngaahi ongoongo 'i he 'u nusipepa, ke fa'u'aki ha tohi fakamatala fakaako (thesis) mo ha filimi vitio fakaako (research documentary). Ko e mafai leva ki hano toe pulusi pe faka'ali'ali 'a e naunau ko eni (tohi fakamatala mo e filimi vitio) 'oku ma'u pe ia 'e he tokotaha fai fakatotoalo (Sosefina Latu).

'Oku fakaafe'i atu leva kapau 'oku 'i ai ha'o ngaahi fakakaukau, ngaahi fehu'i, pe ko ha tala'a ki he fekumi ko eni ke fakaha mai kae fai ki ai ha ngaue. 'E malava ke ke fetu'utaki mai pe kiate au 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pe fekau'aki mo e tu'unga 'o e feinga ako ko eni. 'I he lava lelei 'a e fekumi ko eni, 'e malava pe ke foaki atu leva ha tatau 'o e tohi fakamatala pea mo e filimi vitio fakaako na'e fa'u mei he fakatotolo ni.

'E 'i ai nai ha ngaahi fakatu'utamaki pe faingata'a 'e malava ke hoko 'i ho kau mai ki he fekumi ni?

'Oku 'ikai ke 'i ai ha ngaahi faingata'a pe fakatu'utamaki 'e fa'a hoko kiate kinautolu 'oku kau ki he ngaahi fakatotolo pehe ni, kae tefito pe 'i ho'o ngaahi tui pe loto fakafo'ituitui, 'e malava pe ke ongo'i ma pe ta'efiemalie ha taha ia ke hiki vitio ia, pe 'e tala'a ke fakaha hangatonu hono ngaahi tui fakapolitikale. 'Oku faingofua pe hono solova pe fakanonga 'a e ngaahi tala'a ko'eni 'o hange ko ia 'oku ha 'i lalo.

'E anga fefe hano solova pe fakanonga e ngaahi me'a ko 'eni?

'E 'ikai fakahoko ha faka'eke'eke ia kae'oua kuo ke fakaha mahino mai 'oku ke loto lelei ki ai.

'E 'oatu pe ha lisi fehu'i fakaangaanga kimu'a hono faka'eke'eke koe, koe'uhi pe ke ke mea'i lelei 'a e ngaahi kaveinga 'e fai ki ai e faka'eke'eke. Kapau 'oku 'i ai ha'o veiveiua pe tala'a ki he ngaahi kaveinga 'oku 'ata pe ke fakaha mai.

'E 'ikai fakamalohi'i koe ke ke talanoa ki ha fa'ahinga me'a pe te ne ta'efakafiemalie'i koe. 'Oku ke mau 'a e tau'ataina kakato pe te ke fie tali ha fehu'i pe 'ikai.

'Oku 'ata pe ke ke holomui pe ta'ofi 'a e faka'eke'eke 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pe. 'E toe malava pe foki ke 'oua faka'asi ho hingoa 'i he fakamatala, kae 'asi pe ho tu'unga fakangaue (profession).

'E malava pe ke ke toe vakai ki he ngaahi lekooti 'o e faka'eke'eke, 'o toe to'o pe ha ngaahi fakamatala ia he'ikai fiema'u 'e koe ke fakaha ki tu'a.

Ko e faka'eke'eke 'e pau ke fakafou atu pe 'i faa'i kavei koula 'etau nofo faka-Tonga, 'a ia ko e faka'apa'apa, tauhi vaha'a, mamahi'li fonua, pea mo e loto to.

Ko e ha 'a e ngaahi lelei 'e ma'u mei he fekumi fakaako ko eni?

'E kau 'a e fekumi ko eni ko ha fakalahi ki he 'ilo faka'ekatemia fekau'aki mo e mitia pe ko e fai ongoongo 'i Tonga, pea pehe ki he Pasifiki. 'Oku toe malava peke hoko a e fekumi ko eni ko ha:

- Me'angaue fakaako mo ha ma'uanga fakamatala ma'ae kakai Tonga, kae pehe kiate kinautolu 'oku fakakaungatamaki 'i he mala'e 'o e fai ongoongo
- Tanupou ke sipinga'aki ha toe fekumi fakaako 'a e fanau Tonga 'i he kaha'u
- Founa ke 'ilo'i pea fakamahu'inga'i 'a e ngaahi 'ilo makehe 'a e kakai Tonga, fekau'aki mo 'etau founa fetu'utaki, 'ulungaanga fakafonua pehe foki ki he sosaieti, he 'oku honge 'a e mala'e faka'ekatemika ha tu'unga 'a e kakai Pasfiki 'i he ngaahi 'isiu ko 'eni
- Filimi vitio fakaako ke ma'ungofua mo vahevahe ai e kainga 'o Tonga, 'o 'ikai ko e kakai ako pe.

'Oku ou tui ko e fekumi fakaako ko eni ko ha faingamalie ke fai ha fengaue'aki mo kakai 'o Tonga ke tanaki atu 'etau ngaahi taukei mo 'etau ngaahi 'ilo ki hotau fonua, ki mamani lahi.

'E anga fefe hono malu'i ho tau'ataina fakaekita (privacy) kapau te ke kau mai ki he fekumi ko eni?

'E tuku fakapulipuli pe ho hingoa 'i he fakamatala, **tukukehe** kapau te ke fakaha mahino mai 'oku ke loto lelei pe 'asi o hingoa 'i he tohi fakamatala pe ke 'asi ho 'imisi 'i he filimi vitio.

Kapau te ke loto lelei pe ke 'asi ho hingoā pe 'asi ho 'imisi 'i he filimi vitio 'e malava pe ke ke vakai ki he ngaahi lekooti 'o e faka'eke'eke ('e ta'ipe'i kakato pea 'oatu) pea ke toki fakapapau'i mai te ke loto fiemalie ke ngaue'aki 'a e ngaahi fakamatala ko 'eni. 'E toe malava pe ke ke toe vakai ki ho 'imisi 'i hono 'asi he filimi vitio kimu'a pea ngaue'aki.

Fakatokanga'i ange 'oku 'oatu pe ha vaha'a taimi ko ha mahina 'e taha ke fakaha mai ha 'u liliu pe ta'efiemalie ki he fakamatala na'e 'omai, kae fakahoko ki ai 'a e ngaue 'analiasio mo faka'etita.

Kapau 'oku 'ikai te ke loto ke 'ilo'i koe 'i he fakamatala, pea 'ikai te ke loto ke 'asi 'i he filimi vitio, 'e to'o ho hingoā mo ha fa'ahinga fakamatala pe te ne lava 'o fakapapau'i ki tu'a ko koe 'a e ma'uanga fakamatala. 'E 'ikai ngofua ke toe 'oange ha fakamatala fekau'aki mo koe ki ha toe tokotaha kehe.

Ko kinautolu leva te nau tokoni mai ki hono hulu, 'etita'i, mo fakatonulea'i 'a e ngaahi fakamatala te ke foaki mai, kuopau ke nau fakamo'oni aleapau ke 'oua na'a nau toe vahevahe atu 'a e ngaahi fakamatala na'e fakahoko lolotonga 'a e faka'eke'eke.

'E 'eke ha totongi ka ke kau mai ki he fekumi ko eni?

'Oku 'ikai ha totongi pa'anga 'e toe 'eke 'i ho kau mai ki he fekumi, ka ko e kole pe ha houa 'e taha pe ua ho'o taimi ke fakahoko ai e faka'eke'eke.

'E anga fefe hano fakaha te ke loto lelei ke ke kau mai ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni?

Kapau 'oku ke loto lelei ke ke kau mai ki he fekumi ni, kuopau ke ke fakamo'oni 'i he la'i foomu 'e 'oatu.

Te ke toe ma'u ha fakamatala 'i he kaha'u fekau'aki mo e tu'unga 'oku 'i ai 'a e fakatotolo ko 'eni?

Te u fetu'utaki hangatonu atu pe 'i he email fekau'aki mo e ngaahi fakalaka lalahi 'o e fekumi ko 'eni, pea 'e 'ata pe ke ke fetu'utaki mai kapau 'oku 'i ai ha'o ngaahi fahu'i.

'I he lava kakato 'a e ngaue ni pea ma'u mai mo e ola 'eku feinga ako 'oku fakahoko, 'e malava p eke li atu leva he meili ha tatau 'o e tohi fakamatala 'i ha CD, fakataha mo ha tatau 'o e filimi vitio 'i ha DVD. 'Oku fakafuofua 'e toki lava kotoa 'a e ngaue 'i Ma'asi 2010.

'E toe foaki pe mo ha tatau 'o e ngaue ki he laipeli 'o e Univesiti 'o Pasifiki Saute (USP) 'i 'Atele ke lava 'o ma'u mei ai.

Fakatokanga'i ange ko e ngaahi mafai kotoa pe ki hano toe pulusi pe faka'ali'ali 'a e ngaue ni, fakakonga pe kakato, 'oku ma'u tokotaha pe ia 'e he tokotaha fai fakatotolo (Sosefina Latu).

Ko e ha e founa te u lava 'o fakaha ai ha'aku ngaahi hoha'a pe ta'efiemalie fekau'aki mo e fekumi fakaako 'oku fakahoko?

Ka ai ha'o ongo'i ta'efiemalie ki he fekumi ko eni, kataki 'o fetu'utaki hangatonu ki ha taha pe 'o e ongo faiako 'oku na tauhi 'a e fakatotolo ko eni, 'a ia ko Dr David Robie, david.robie@aut.ac.nz, +649 921 999 ext 7834, pe ko Dr Janet Bedggood, janet.bedggood@aut.ac.nz, +649 921 999 ext 7015.

Ka ai ha'o ongo'i ta'efiemalie ki he founa ngaue na'e fakahoko'aki 'a e fekumi ko eni, kataki 'o fetu'utaki hangatonu ki he Sekelitali Lahi 'o e univesiti 'i he tafa'aki ko eni (AUTEK), 'a ia ko Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, +649 921 9999 ext 8044.

Ko hai te ke fetu'utaki ki ha toe fakamatala ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni?

Tokotaka Fakatotolo (Sosefina Latu):

'I TONGA:

Tofoa, Tongatapu or
PO BOX 101
Nuku'alofa
Tonga.
Ph: +676 23798
Email: josie_latu@hotmail.com

'I NU'USILA

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**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *July 6, 2009*,
AUTEC Reference number *09/130*.**

Consent Form



Project title: **Communicating ‘democracy’ – Media attitudes towards rights and political reform in Tonga**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Janet Bedggood, Dr David Robie**

Researcher: **Josephine Latu**

This form is to gather your consent to take part in this research project. Signing this form indicates that you agree to following statements:

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the **Information Sheet** dated _____.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews, and I am free to choose whether or not the interview should be audio taped and transcribed.

I **agree/ disagree** for this interview to be audio taped and transcribed (please circle one):

- I understand that I have the **right to view the transcripts** for this interview and approve or withdraw information.
- I understand that I **may withdraw** myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I **agree/ disagree** to be identified in the research
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: Date

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on **July 6 2009**
AUTEC Reference number **09/130**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Fakamo'oni ke kau 'i he fekumi



Hingoa 'o e poloseki: **Ko ha 'analaiso 'o e ngaahi founa hono talaki pe faka'ilo ki he kakai, 'i he ongoongo, 'a e ngaahi me'a lalahi 'oku hoko 'i hotau fonua.**

Supavaisa: **Dr Janet Bedggood, Dr David Robie**

Tokotaha fai fakatoto: **Sosefina Latu**

Ko e la'i pepa ko 'eni ke fakaha 'oku ke loto pe ke ke kau mai ki he fekumi fakaako 'oku fakahoko fekau'aki mo e founa fai ongoongo 'i Tonga. Ko ho'o fakamo'oni 'i he foomu ko 'eni 'oku fakaha ai ho'o tali lelei 'a e 'u me'a 'oku ha atu 'i lalo:

- Kuo u lau pea mahino kiate au 'a e ngaahi fakaikiiki na'e 'omai 'i he la'i pepa fakamatala ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni 'i he 'aho _____.
- Kuo u ma'u ha faingamalie ke u 'eke ha ngaahi fehu'i fekau'aki mo e fekumi ni, pea kuo tali mai 'a e ngaahi fehu'i ko 'eni.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au 'oku ou tau'atana kakato pe ke fili pe 'e hiki tepi pe hiki vitio 'a hono faka'eke'eke au pe 'ikai.
'Oku ou **loto/ 'ikai ke u loto** ke hiki tepi pe hiki vitio 'a hono faka'eke'eke au. (Siakale'i ha fili pe 'e taha)
- 'Oku mahino kiate au 'oku 'i ai 'eku totonu ke u vakai ki he lekooti tohi 'o e faka'eke'eke, pehe ki ha'aku 'imisi he filimi vitio, pea u toki fakapapau'i 'eku loto ke ngaue'aki 'eku ngaahi fakamatala pe ko hoku 'imisi ki he fekumi ni. 'Oku mahino kiate au 'oku malava pe ke u to'o pe kaniseli ha ngaahi fakamatala kimu'a pea toki ngaue'aki ki he fekumi, ka 'e pau pe ke fakahoko ange 'a e ngaahi liliu ko 'eni 'i loto ha mahina 'e taha mei hono faka'eke'eke au.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au 'oku ou tau'atana kakato pe te u fie ta'ofi ha'aku kau ki he fekumi ko 'eni, pea ke fakafoki ha'aku ngaahi fakamatala pe 'imisi he vitio 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pe kimu'a pea lava 'a e taimi tanaki fakamatala 'a e tokotaha fai fakatoto 'i Tonga ni, 'o 'ikai ha kaunga kovi kiate au. Ka u ka fili ke u holomui mei he fekumi ni, 'oku mahino kiate au 'e faka'auha kotoa 'a e 'u lekooti 'o 'eku 'u fakamatala, 'o kau ai ha'aku 'imisi na'e 'asi he filimi vitio.
- 'Oku ou fakangofua heni 'a e tokotaha fai fakatoto ke ne ngaue'aki pe ha fa'ahinga 'imisi vitio mei he fekumi ko 'eni, mo ha toe tatau pe vesione 'a e ngaue, kakato pe fakakonga, 'o kau ai hano toe tanaki ki ai mo fa'ahinga tohi pe fakatata, 'o ngaue'aki ia ki hono (i) fa'u ha lisi ngaue 'a e tokotaha fai fakatoto; (ii) faka'ali'ali fakaako 'a e ngaahi ola 'o e fekumi ki he kakai, pehe ki hono sivi 'e he kau fai sivi 'i he univesiti; (iii) ngaue'aki pe ki ha toe me'a 'oku fakalao 'o kau ai 'a e tafa'aki ki he tu'uaki mo e fefakatau'aki 'o fakatatau ki he ngaahi taumu'a 'oku 'asi 'i he la'i pepa fakamatala.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au ko e ngaahi mafai ki hono pulusi pe faka'ali'ali 'a e ngaahi naunau 'e ma'u mei he fekumi ko 'eni 'oku ma'u pe ia 'e he tokotaha fakahoko fakatoto (Sosefina Latu), pea 'oku 'ikai ke u toe ma'u 'e au ha mafai ki he ngaahi naunau ko eni (tohi fakamatala fakaako pea mo e filimi vitio fakaako).
- 'Oku ou loto ke u kau ki he fekumi fakaako ko eni.

- 'Oku ou **loto/ 'ikai ke u loto** ke 'asi 'eku hinga pe ko 'eku 'imisi 'i he ngaahi ola 'o e fekumi fakaako ko eni.
- 'Oku ou fiema'u ha tatau 'o e lipooti pe tohi fakamatala 'e ma'u mei he fekumi ni: **'lo/ 'ikai**

Fakamo'oni: 'Aho

Hinga:

Fika telefoni pe ko e email:

.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on July 6, 2009
AUTEC Reference number 09/130

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix VI: Confidential Agreement Form

Confidentiality Agreement



Project title: **Communicating ‘democracy’ – Media attitudes towards political rights and reform in Tonga**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Janet Bedggood, Dr David Robie**

Researcher: **Josephine Latu**

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to film/ edit/ transcribe is confidential (circle one).
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:..... Date
.....

Transcriber's name:
.....

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):
.....
.....
.....

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on July 6, 2009
AUTEC Reference number 09/130

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.