



Fa'alavelave

---

# FA'ALAVELAVE

## Samoan Gift Exchange

Fritz Toeta Fa'apoi Filisi

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Philosophy (MPhil)

2023

Te Ara Poutama

---

## Abstract

[\*Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange\*](#) is a short documentary exploring the context of how the cultural practice of ceremonial gift-giving, specifically around funerals, has changed from a village setting in Samoa to an urban setting of Samoan migrants and descendants in South Auckland. To respond to this inquiry, the filmed *talanoa* captures the perspectives of two elderly siblings, a brother and a sister, who are the migrant generation of an *aiga* spanning five generations in South Auckland, New Zealand. The artefact of a short documentary of sixteen minutes and the exegesis form a practice-oriented thesis.

Produced in the Samoan language with English subtitles, the ideas framing the documentary link to Barry Barclay's theory of Fourth Cinema, meaning cinema made by Indigenous filmmakers located outside the orthodox stories told about the modern nation-state. The exegesis therefore explores ways to situate Samoan language documentaries produced by Samoan filmmakers in Aotearoa, who are not Indigenous to the land where they reside, within the context of Fourth Cinema. By using filmed *talanoa* and an approach of 'talking in' borrowed from Barry Barclay, or talking in our Indigenous language among ourselves, the documentary content that the researcher has created in Aotearoa gives emphasis to memories and reflections of Samoa, the islands and villages of ancestral origin.

---

# Contents

Title	.....2
Abstract	.....3
Contents	.....4
List of Figures	.....7
Attestation of Authorship	.....9
Acknowledgements	.....10
Ethics Approval	.....11
Third Party Copyright	.....12
Chapter One: Introduction	.....13
Positioning the Research	.....15
Chapter Breakdown	.....16
Chapter Two: Contextual Review of the Knowledge	.....18
Literature	.....19
Barry Barclay's Fourth Cinema	.....19
<i>Talanoa</i> and <i>Fa'alavelave</i>	.....25
Film	.....28
Tusi Tamasese's Samoan Style	.....28
Chapter Three: Methodology and Process	.....31
Vā and Familial Relationships	.....32
Filmed <i>Talanoa</i>	.....34

Samoa Language	.....35
Rules of Conversation	.....35
Cultural Protocols	.....36
Phase One: Consultation	.....37
Table 1: Pre and Post Filming	.....38
Phase Two: Collaboration	.....43
No-Budget Film	.....44
Samoa Language Documentary	.....45
Chapter Four: Commentary	.....47
Scene One: Fiso's House in Ōtara	.....49
Scene Two: Eseta at <i>Fale o Samoa</i>	.....52
Significance of Ta Talanoa	.....55
Why the Village Funeral Setting Matters	.....57
Chapter Five: Project Reflection	.....59
Contextualising <i>Fa'alavelave</i>	.....60
Limitations	.....61
Further research	.....63
Fa'afetai	.....64
References	.....66
Films	.....68
Internet	.....69
Music	.....69

---

Glossary	.....70
Samoaan	.....70
Te Reo Māori	.....71
Appendices	.....72
Participant Information Sheet	.....73
Consent Form	.....79
Third Party Copyright Permission	.....81

---

## List of Figures

An assortment of photographs taken while filming *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* have been reproduced in the exegesis. The images are the personal property of the researcher and were taken by his supervisors. The list of figures cites the photographs in the order that they appear in the exegesis. Also cited are photographs of Samoan and Māori screen productions in cinema and documentary that are referenced to their source of publication.

- Figure 1: Page 1. Pamatatau, R. (2022a). *Fiso in Ōtara* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 2: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022a). *Fiso in Ōtara* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 3: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022b). *Eseta at Fale o Samoa*. [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 4: Page. The Orator: O Le Tulafale. (2011). Sāili, a little person and a *tulafale*, an orator, ready to give a speech at a *fa'alavelave* for his wife Vāiga's funeral in Tusi Tamasese's film, *The Orator: O Le Tulafale* [Photograph, website]. The Orator Film. [Synopsis - THE ORATOR \(theoratorfilm.co.nz\)](http://theoratorfilm.co.nz)
- Figure 5: Page. Pamatatau, R. (2022b). *Rewi Amoamo and Asim Mukhtar filming Fiso's talanoa* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 6: Page. Pamatatau, R. (2022c). *Fiso's filmed talanoa* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 7: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022c). *Eseta's filmed talanoa* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 8: Page. Pamatatau, R. (2022d). *Asim Mukhtar, Rewi Amoamo, and Teena Brown Pulu* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 9: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022d). *Eseta and Fritz* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 10: Page. Pamatatau, R. (2022e). *Fiso and Fritz* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 11: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022e). *Rewi Amoamo and Asim Mukhtar filming Eseta's talanoa* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.

- 
- Figure 12: Page. Screened as part of NZIFF 2006, *Ngāti* 1987, directed by Barry Barclay. (2006). Local Māori talking by an *urupā* in Barry Barclay's *Ngāti* (1987). NZIFF 2006 Archives. [Ngāti • New Zealand International Film Festival \(nziff.co.nz\)](http://nziff.co.nz)
- Figure 13: Page. Writer-director Tusi Tamasese talks about Samoan film *The Orator*. (2011, November 21). An *aiga* walking towards a funeral gathering to present their *fa'alavelave* of fine mats in Tusi Tamasese's *The Orator* [Photograph, website]. IF Film. [Writer-director Tusi Tamasese talks about Samoan film The Orator - IF Magazine](#)
- Figure 14: Page. Brown Pulu, T. (2022f). *Fale o Samoa, Samoan High Commission in Mangere, Auckland* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.
- Figure 15: Page. Pamatatau, R. (2022f). *Fiso and Fritz* [Photograph]. Fritz Filisi.

---

## Attestation of Authorship

I 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 another degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Fritz Toeata Fa'apoi Filisi

May 2023

---

## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the dedicated supervision of Dr Teena Brown Pulu who worked constantly with me on the documentary filmmaking process and provided proof reading, structuring, and editing support for the exegetical writing over two plus years. Richard Pamatatau, my second supervisor, shared his specialist knowledge of interviewing on camera and media methods of research inquiry. The faculty where this study was based, Te Ara Poutama at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), not only housed but nurtured my practice-oriented study by offering postgraduate wānanga at the marae during the semesters; a place where I could meet Māori student researchers and exchange friendship and ideas. I'u Tuagalu, an academic writing advisor at AUT library, offered one-on-one workshops for methodology chapter writing of which I am grateful.

The characters in this short documentary were my maternal uncle, Tu'u'u Atuatasi Fiso Tanuvasa Tofaeono and my maternal aunt, Eseta Leaia, who are my mother's siblings. I am indebted to them for representing our Tanuvasa Tofaeono *aiga* (family, clan) by sharing their knowledge and wisdom. My gratitude goes to the Samoan Consul-General Faaolotoi Reupena Pogi for giving permission to film on site at *Fale o Samoa* in Mangere, South Auckland, and to The Punialava'a Group for giving third party copyright permission to use excerpts of their music in this short documentary.

The film crew, Rewi Amoamo and Asim Mukhtar, gave their time and expertise to shoot the interviews and supplementary footage with my uncle and aunt in South Auckland. My *aiga* appreciates their teamwork conducted in the spirit of *manaakitanga*, a Māori term for generous acts that acknowledge the *mana* (importance) of others. The film editor and colour grader was Asim Mukhtar who took on this project while shooting and editing his own doctoral film. *Fa'afetai lava tele*.

This humble work is dedicated to my maternal grandparents Tamā and Tinā who raised me as a child. From them, I learned to treasure our people, customs, and the village we come from – Si'umu in Samoa.

---

# Ethics Approval

Research ethics for *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 4 April 2022: ethics application 22/61.

---

## Third Party Copyright

There are still photographs that appear in this short documentary that belong to Tu'u'u Atuatasi Fiso Tanuvasa Tofaeono and Eseta Leaia. Moreover, the music excerpts used in this short documentary belong to The Punialava'a Group. I have attributed the music excerpts I have borrowed to their rightful owners in the final credit roll of the film and in the references section of this exegesis. The content was provided to Fritz Filisi, the researcher, for making this documentary with the appropriate signed permission.

---

## Chapter One: Introduction



Figure 2: Fiso in Ōtara, 2.

My birthname is Fritz Toeata Fa'apoi Filisi and I come from Si'umu, a coastal village in Samoa with a population of twelve hundred people that lies twenty-four kilometres south of Apia on Upolu island. I was raised by my mother's parents, my maternal grandparents. When Tamā and Tinā were alive, our humble home was brimming with their children and grandchildren, and our relatives who often visited. Si'umu is therefore the place where I first learned, by observing my surroundings, about *fa'alavelave*, a Samoan cultural practice of exchanging gifts between families, which in Samoa primarily takes place at the significant life cycle event of funerals. Over time and through the migration and resettlement of Samoan people largely to Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United States of America, weddings, births, birthdays, reunions, opening churches and community buildings, and the bestowing of *matai* (chiefly) titles, have all become integrated into the cultural system of *fa'alavelave*.

---

When I remember back to my childhood in the village, there was a time when I was a young boy of ten. Tamā allowed me to go with him and Tinā to the village of Sa’anapu, sixteen kilometres eastward along the coastline. He was taking a *si’i alofa*, an alternate term for *fa’alavelave*, to the family of his relative who had passed away. With great care, he prepared fine mats which were kept underneath his and Tinā’s bed, along with taros and bananas from the plantation. My job was to look after his brown leather bag where he kept his notebooks, reading glasses, and other important documents. The bag accompanied him everywhere he went, except the plantation. From that day to this, I am still uncertain if money was ever used in Tamā’s gift exchanges.

What I do know for sure is that my grandfather always had his own personal supply of fine mats, taros, and bananas to contribute. At times he would load up the car with just taros and bananas from his plantation and deliver his presentation. As a child, I thought of myself as his little helper who packed away his note books and fetched the things he needed. Now, as an adult grandchild, I like to think that I am one of his direct descendants who is devoted to documenting and preserving his memory and carrying on the cultural values he taught us in his lifetime.

I write this memoir to convey that my learning journey began under the care and teaching of Tamā and Tinā, my beloved grandparents, and it was them who cultivated a desire in me to develop my knowledge and skills in maintaining the Samoan language and culture. When I migrated to New Zealand in 1984 to stay with my former geography teacher Matthew Campbell, who taught at Avele College in 1983 and then returned to Kawerau with his wife Elizabeth and four children, I was homesick for Si’umu and my *aiga* (family, clan). Despite the kindness and generosity of my host family, after six months I ended up moving to South Auckland where six of Tamā and Tinā’s children had settled and were raising their families.

South Auckland was not the same as Samoa, geographically, culturally, and by social structure. But certain suburbs such as Ōtara and Mangere had grown into an overseas hub of Samoan migrants and their descendants living alongside other Polynesian communities who had migrated from the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu. In the 1980s, I could walk around Ōtara shopping centre and hear the Samoan language being spoken publicly and comfortably as a normal part of everyday life. As a young Samoan migrant at the time, I cannot emphasise enough that it is simply self-affirming to have one’s mother tongue and cultural identity reflected in, and validated by, the people and place where you live.

---

What I am signalling is that Samoan families like mine that span five generations in South Auckland have culturalized the spaces and places where they gather and organise as a community, especially when maintaining the practice of gift exchanges between *aiga*. Although this aspect of *fa'alavelave* is somewhat alluded to in *Chapter Four: Commentary*, the critical question the thesis explores is this: how is *fa'alavelave*, with specific reference to funerals, different in the Samoan *nu'u* (village) compared to South Auckland? Relatedly, within the *fa'alavelave* process of gift exchange at funerals, how have the cultural practices of presenting the *fa'aalo'alo* (respect) and presenting the *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) changed? To give a brief explanation, the *fa'aalo'alo* is the presentation of a funeral gift to the grieving *aiga* of the deceased from another *aiga*. The *fa'atamāli'i*, by comparison, is the ceremonial reciprocity of a token of gratitude presented to another *aiga* from the deceased's *aiga*.

## Positioning the Research

I came into the Master of Philosophy programme at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) after completing a Master of Applied Indigenous Knowledge in 2019 at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Mangere. I am a resident of Mangere with my spouse, who is a New Zealand-born Samoan, and our children. I am also a *kaiako* (Māori for teacher) at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa where I guide Māori and Pacific students through the preparation programme for the New Zealand Police. Despite not having a filmmaking background or a degree in film and screen studies, I took up a practice-oriented thesis of making a short documentary in the Samoan language with English subtitles and writing up the filmmaking process from a culture-informed perspective. I wanted to use a visual and aural format that reached an audience of Samoan speakers, not just academic researchers, and if non-Samoans viewed this work, then my intention was that they would experience listening to our language and stories spoken by elders who were born and raised in Samoa.

My lofty ideals collided head on with the reality that a practice-oriented thesis is exactly that: by this, I mean that documentary filmmaking is highly specialised creative and technical work requiring years of practice experience, preferably in the film and screen industry, to develop one's professional knowledge of how to make an effective film suited for a particular audience. I had none of that expertise. What I did possess was my cultural knowledge and proficiency at performing cultural duties and familial obligations to kinfolk and village. I also had Samoan language interviewing skills and could transcribe and translate

---

data into English; skills I had learned from interviewing maternal aunts and uncles for my first master's thesis on memories and stories of their father, Tamā.

My supervisors Teena Brown Pulu and Richard Pamatatau helped organise a voluntary film crew of Rewi Amoamo, an undergraduate student at the University of Auckland who is my primary supervisor's son, and Asim Mukhtar, a doctoral candidate at AUT who is co-supervised by Teena and her colleague Harminder Singh. Teena and Richard teamed up to take still photographs at the shoots of my uncle and aunt's filmed *talanoa* with Fiso being filmed outside his house in Ōtara, and Eseta being filmed outside the *Fale o Samoa*, the Samoan High Commission in Mangere.

My role was firstly to consult with Fiso and Eseta, my maternal uncle and aunt who are siblings and residents of South Auckland, about how their *talanoa* would be filmed so they were comfortable on the set. Secondly, I was tasked with carrying out the interview conversations on camera in our Indigenous language, Samoan. Conducting an interview on camera in the form of *talanoa*, I found, required a different approach compared to interviewing with an audio recorder. There were two phases that the filmed *talanoa* went through, which I speak about in detail in *Chapter Three: Methodology and Process*. The first phase was the pre-filming and post-filming consultation with Fiso and Eseta, and the second phase was the collaborative work of planning and coordinating roles between me, as the documentary researcher and interviewer, and the film crew Rewi and Asim.

For the post-production stage, I collaborated with Asim Mukhtar who edited and colour graded the short documentary. *Chapter Four: Commentary* explains the process that I used to select relevant interview excerpts for this short documentary, and how the English subtitles went through a procedure of being translated literally, and then rewritten into a screen narrative to make clear and coherent sense to an English-speaking audience.

## Chapter Breakdown

*Chapter One: Introduction* tells the story of my cultural background. I speak about the social conditioning of growing up with my maternal grandparents in our ancestral village, and seeing them perform *fa'alavelave* at funerals for the families of deceased relatives. From a context-specific position of having being born-and-raised in Si'umu and migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand as a young adult, I am exploring how *fa'alavelave* or ceremonial gift exchange with reference to funerals has been adapted within the South Auckland environment.

---

*Chapter Two: Contextual Review of the Knowledge* presents the literature and film that have inspired, and in some way are connected to, the making of this short documentary. I discuss the relevance of Barry Barclay's notion of Fourth Cinema to Indigenous filmmakers, including Samoan language filmmakers living in Aotearoa New Zealand (Barclay, 2003, 2015). I talk about Tusi Tamasese's Samoan visual style in his full-length film, *The Orator: O Le Tulafale*, in terms of why *The Orator* can be interpreted as an ideal form of Samoan language cinema (Tamasese, 2011).

*Chapter Three: Methodology and Process* gives a detailed description of the methods used for the filmed *talanoa* of two interview conversations between myself as the documentary researcher and my maternal uncle and aunt. I consider the filmmaking process and outcomes with regard to working in collaboration with the film crew and editor, as well as the familial *vā*: that is, the relational space between a nephew and his elders within the communal structure of the *aiga*.

*Chapter Four: Commentary* summarises the thesis project in respect to the two scenes of filmed *talanoa* at Fiso's house in Ōtara and Eseta at *Fale o Samoa*, the Samoan High Commission in Mangere, South Auckland. I provide an interpretive view of the main discussion point that emerged from the filmed *talanoa*. The participants observed the cultural practice of *fa'alavelave* has changed in the South Auckland environment due to three factors. First, the geographic separation from the village setting in Samoa. Second, the replacement of the village setting with the church environment in South Auckland. Third, that the presentation of *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) at funerals now overshadows the presentation of *fa'aalo'alo* (respect).

*Chapter Five: Project Reflection* recounts my impressions of the thesis project from twin positions as a student of the wānanga model of tertiary education who has had to adapt to the university model of postgraduate research, and as an insider of my *aiga* (family, clan). I conclude with the project's limitations and possible areas that could be explored in future documentary research.

## Chapter Two: Contextual Review of the Knowledge



Figure 3: Eseta at *Fale o Samoa*.

In this chapter, I explore how the late Barry Barclay's theory of Fourth Cinema drew attention to the novel ways in which Indigenous peoples were telling their stories on-screen (Barclay, 2003, 2015). During and since Barclay's time, Indigenous filmmakers have been increasingly productive in making documentaries, historical period pieces, Indigenous language film, and fiction narratives, which over the past six decades have highlighted a shared principle of communicating their peoples' stories, identities, values, and beliefs. At the time that Barclay was writing, he emphasised that despite the small number of Indigenous filmmakers working in cinema compared to non-Indigenous filmmakers, as a group, their contribution to screen production had been significant in bringing the social realities and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples to wider, general audiences, particularly in the work of his people, Māori filmmakers of Aotearoa (Barclay, 2003, 2015). His famed lecture reproduced as a magazine article, *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*, showed that Indigenous cinema possessed the ability to tell stories that sit outside national cinema and orthodox understandings of the nation-state and national identity (Barclay, 2003, pp. 6-7). The chapter draws out some of the

---

intersections between Barclay's notion of Indigenous peoples' cinema and a culture-informed approach to Samoan storytelling on-screen.

Other literature is connected to the short documentary I have created for this practice-oriented thesis, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*. I consider the research approach of *talanoa* (talk, exchange) seen in the work of Tongan educator Timote Vaoleti. Vaoleti believed *talanoa*, if used according to cultural protocols in a research space, held the potential to create an open-ended conversation in which the researcher and participants are connected by *vā*, a relational space (Vaoleti, 2006, 2014). Related to *talanoa* is the manner in which research into Samoan cultural practices is framed and presented. I reflect on the findings of two theses written in different countries, Finland and Aotearoa New Zealand. Paula Pessi's thesis at the University of Helsinki examined the cultural politics driving the *fa'alavelave* process of "collective gifts" at weddings in Tutuila island of American Samoa (Pessi, 2007, p. 3). Comparatively, Lona Siauane's thesis at the University of Canterbury argued that the concept and practice of *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan way, was continuously evolving. In the case of Samoans settled in Christchurch, churches provided spaces for Samoan cultural practices, particularly for weddings and funerals to be maintained in an Aotearoa context (Siauane, 2004).

Alongside literature forming the body of theories and ideas related to this practice-led thesis, is film. I discuss how Tusi Tamasese's Samoan language film, *The Orator: O Le Tulafale*, has had a momentous impact on developing the Samoan style, or the visual and aural style of Samoan cinema (Tamasese, 2011). Therefore, I describe the foundations of the Samoan style with reference to the *fa'alavelave* scene of gift exchange in Tamasese's *The Orator* (Tamasese, 2011).

## Literature

### Barry Barclay's Fourth Cinema

The late Barry Barclay of Ngāti Apa and *Pākehā* (European New Zealander) *whakapapa* (ancestry) was an acclaimed Māori filmmaker of Aotearoa whose film work was located within the international field of Indigenous cinema. Barclay's filmmaking origins and the larger part of his screenography was in documentary. However, his fiction films *Ngati* (Barclay, 1987) and *Te Rua* (Barclay, 1991) had elements of history by way of telling stories of the resilience of *ngā iwi Māori* (Māori tribes) when upholding and valuing their cultural heritage within the confines of the modern nation-state. It is this very context of how the

---

history of colonialism and modernity led to the establishment of settler societies and the subsequent formation of modern nation-states to which Barclay offered a powerful critique. His approach to filmmaking captured in the theory of Fourth Cinema, or cinema created by Indigenous filmmakers, proposed a counter-narrative to the nation-state as the dominant political force signifying power and authority over how people perceive their identity and belonging to a country.

The article, *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*, was where Barclay gave an analogy of Fourth Cinema's distinctiveness to First Cinema (Barclay, 2003). I suggest that the notion of First Cinema does not singly represent "American cinema," as Barclay briefly put it, (Barclay, 2003, p. 1), but also gestures to the historical context of European colonialism. This colonial epoch of history, I believe, has had a permanent effect on the way that Indigenous peoples, their lands, resources, and systems of political organisation have been absorbed by the governing power of the nation-state (Wendt, 1995, pp. 2-3).

*The First Cinema Camera sits firmly on the deck of the ship. It sits there by definition. The Camera Ashore, the Fourth Cinema Camera, is the one held by the people for whom "ashore" is their ancestral home. "Ashore" for indigenous people is not usually an island. Not literally. Rather, it is an island within a modern nation state. We need to be crystal clear about this (Barclay, 2003, p. 9).*

Barclay's comparison puts across that First Cinema represents the national cinema of the nation-state, whereas Fourth Cinema sits within the state's political borders but "is an island," which figuratively means an expression of Indigenous sovereignty from within an ancestral land. The analogy of the lens looking from the ship and the lens looking from the shore correlates with his ideas of exteriority and interiority. Exteriority alludes to the observable elements of a film shown to an audience on-screen; elements that are constructed to present an Indigenous setting and story: "the rituals, the language, the posturing, the décor, the use of elders, the presence of children, the rituals of a spirit world" (Barclay, 2003, pp. 1-2).

Interiority, an idea borrowed from Māori artist of Ngāi Tahu, Rangihīroa Pānoho, communicates the spirit, essence, and inner-soul of an Indigenous film (Barclay, 2003, p. 1). Pānoho has written two pieces in which I can see that conceptualising interiority within Māori art is central to his line of reasoning. The first article, *The Harakeke – No Place for the Bellbird to Sing: Western Colonization of Māori Art in Aotearoa*, elaborated on the cultural

---

value of the Native flax plant for Māori weavers in Aotearoa (Pānoho, 1995). A comparison was made between the “outer leaves” and the “inner core” of the *harakeke* (flax plant), where the two were part of the whole and dependent on one another for existence (Pānoho, 1995, p. 13). However, it was the flax’s “inner core” or “awhi rito” that Pānoho likened to the very essence of Māori culture (Pānoho, 1995, p. 13).

*The awhi rito, to me, represents the aesthetic manifestations of the culture – our language and our oral, musical, dance and visual art traditions (Panoho, 1995, p. 13).*

The second article, *Kei hea te ngākau Māori? Locating the heart*, Shona Rapira-Davies and reading *Māori art*, acknowledges Barry Barclay’s stand that Māori filmmakers are not obliged to produce documentaries and films that non-Māori audiences find accessible and easy to understand (Pānoho, 2003). To the contrary, it is the Māori artist who may well be the one person who comprehends the interiority of the work. This is due to the artist possessing direct and first-hand experience of the exchange between the people they have filmed on camera, and themselves as the documenter and synthesiser of their knowledge.

*[Barry] Barclay’s idea about Māori film as invisible marae and talking in suggests that through such a lens art need not be created in order to be read easily by its etic, non-Māori audience. Instead a more emic positioning might suggest that Māori art is in fact multi-layered and has historically been created in such a way as to offer a range of entry points always relative to measured disclosure. While one might see the heart of the work the deeper meaning and significance of the work relate specifically to experience and knowledge entrusted to the artist through their own interface with their parent culture (Pānoho, 2003, p. 25).*

Interiority then, within an Indigenous cinema context, is symbolised in the lens from the shore, so to speak, signalling to the intricacy of seeing, sensing, and knowing the world as an insider of the “ancestral home” (Barclay, 2003, p. 9). On this point, Māori documentary filmmaker of Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Kahurangi Waititi, explained that the interiority of an Indigenous film “is a complex ingredient to convey,” and not often put into words due to being “difficult to define” (Waititi, 2008, p. 1). Māori film academic of Ngāti Porou, Christina Milligan, contextualised Barclay’s philosophy of practice documented in his book, *Our Own*

---

*Image: A Story of a Māori Filmmaker* (Barclay, 2015). She explained that in many ways, Barclay was a product of his time, and although he paved the way for new Māori filmmakers to emerge, times have changed in the Aotearoa film and screen industry (Milligan, 2015). Nowadays, as Milligan rightly puts it, “an abundance of Māori storytelling [is] on-screen that could not have been envisaged a decade ago” (Milligan, 2015, p. 348).

It is here that I will begin to weave my interpretive view into the discussion on Fourth Cinema to add a layer of Samoan discourse. I must make it clear that I am speaking from the position of a Samoan language speaker who has made a short documentary in my Indigenous language for a practice-oriented thesis. I am therefore interpreting Barclay’s ideas as a Samoan national who immigrated to Aotearoa and resides 2,878 kilometres away from my village in the land of a different Indigenous people to mine, *ngā iwi Māori*. However, Kahurangi Waititi’s insight that the concept of interiority is plain “difficult to define” speaks a cultural truth to me (Waititi, 2008, p. 1). The trouble with defining and confining interiority by one fixed idea that the spirit of an Indigenous film relates to a standardised, homogeneous construct is that this proposition is simply not true, in the case of Samoa and the Samoan diaspora. I can see sense in Waititi’s sentiment that interiority escapes a straightforward explanation (Waititi, 2008, p. 1) because within a Samoan cultural context, there is no one-size-fits-all definition for, what Rangihīroa Pānoho has termed as, “the aesthetic manifestations of our culture” (Pānoho, 1995, p. 13).

In Samoa, society is organised by a *nu’u* (village, community) system of family and clan groups who belong to certain villages and districts throughout an island archipelago of four inhabited islands, Upolu, Savai’i, Apolima, and Manono, and six uninhabited islands, Nu’ulopa, Nu’usafe’e, Nu’utele, Nu’ulua, Namua, and Fanuatapu (Riddle, 2006). Herein lies immeasurable diversity and heterogeneity in the way that various villages, districts, and islands collectively recall their past, their ancestors, their relationships to their lands, foreshores, waterways, and to other villages, and their role and place within the political formation of Samoa; a sovereign state which gained independence from the New Zealand colonial administration in 1962 (Holmes, 1980). For Fourth Cinema theory to operate in documentary practice within the diverse cultural terrain of Samoa and the Samoan diaspora, I believe, depends on the *tupuaga* (ancestry) or *whakapapa* (Māori for ancestry) of the filmmaker in terms of their relationship to the documentary participants. Hand-in-hand with *tupuaga* are the *tu ma aga* (protocols, customs) or *tikanga* (Māori for protocols, customs) guiding the documentary process (Muliaina, 2017).

One aspect that Milligan did note in her article, *Sites of exuberance: Barry Barclay and Fourth Cinema ten years on*, is useful for seeing that in his book, *Our Own Image: A*

---

*Story of a Māori Filmmaker*, Barclay held to strong beliefs about how he saw Indigenous cinema to be; beliefs that were shaped by his lived experiences and social reality (Milligan, 2015; Barclay, 2015). Fourth Cinema, in many respects, was oriented in Barclay's directorial style and force of personality. Perhaps more so, his personal tastes and preferences with regard to how filming ought to be conducted within Māori communities were, I imagine, rooted in his lived experiences as a Māori filmmaker (Milligan, 2015, p. 348).

*Key to this is Barclay's belief that indigenous cinema, the cinema of First Nations, differs fundamentally from what has gone before. This is the heart of his argument: the indigenous camera will see differently, frame differently, provide a different context and serve a different philosophy (Milligan, 2015, p. 349).*

Milligan was certain that the way Barclay knew Indigenous cinema to be essentially unlike all others was based on his belief in a different philosophical approach to filmmaking. She gave some context as to what this difference might look like when describing Barclay's conceptual framework of "the *marae* (communal meeting place)" as the model for cultural protocols and communication between the filmmaker and the Māori community being filmed (Milligan, 2015, p. 349).

*[I]ts most enduring contribution is Barclay's situating of the marae (communal meeting place) and its protocols as a central concept for film-making itself. He calls this concept the 'communications marae,' delineating it as 'an invisible (place), looking inward but open to all' (1990: 76). On the 'communications marae,' Māori stories can be told in a Māori way for a Māori audience; others are welcome to contribute, but must work within Māori protocol. This is a concept that preserves cultural integrity for the indigenous film-maker and privileges the indigenous audience, and this is the fundamental tenet of Barclay's theorizing (Milligan, 2015, p. 349).*

As a newcomer to documentary research operating within a culture-informed framework of *vā*, a Samoan and Tongan term denoting the relational space between myself as the researcher and the filmed participants (Ka'ili, 2005), I appreciate Milligan's clarification of the rules and protocols driving Barclay's Fourth Cinema theory (Milligan, 2015). Barclay's

---

“communications *marae*” (Milligan, 2015, p. 349), or “invisible marae” as Pānoho puts it (Pānoho, 2003, p. 25), intersects with the Samoan equivalent of *malae* (arena, space for gathering) and the Tongan equivalent of *mala’e* (arena, space for gathering). Constructing a *marae*, *malae* space for the exchange of talk and ideas, whether that space be non-physical and unseen on-screen, goes hand-in-hand with the concept and practice of *vā* when applied to Samoan documentary practice, as in my case. *Vā*, the space connecting myself to the participants in my film, is accompanied by the cultural understanding that when Samoan language speakers are engaged in *talanoa* on camera, they become situated within an invisible *malae*, meaning an arena or a space for them to gather as a people, which feels impenetrable by outsiders – non-Samoans, non-*aiga* members. The abstract *malae* signifies social structure and order, and within this structure the *vā*, the relational space bonding the filmmaker and the filmed participants is at work.

In *Chapter Three: Methodology and Process*, I give a description of *vā* and familial relationships in respect to filmed *talanoa*; that is, the Samoan context and practice of filming within a relational space with my maternal uncle and aunt. Moreover, in *Chapter Four: Commentary*, I provide an account of how I have applied Barclay’s notion of “talking in” of which Rangihīroa Pānoho has noted in his article, *Kei hea te ngākau Māori?*, to the undertaking of filmed *talanoa* with close family members who are the elders of my *aiga* (Barclay, 2015, p. 76; Pānoho, 2003, p. 25).

*I have come to believe that we need to be talking to our own people first – to be “talking in.” Some Māori colleagues will disagree, perhaps, while others will have come to that position long before I have. And to our supporters in the majority culture, a policy of “talking in” might seem a proposal to close off Māori culture to anybody who is not Māori. Surely if a culture is healthy and optimistic, it can afford to be outgoing, giving freely to everybody? Trying to cope with this major objection has led me to wonder whether it might be helpful for us to think of our work as a different sort of marae – an invisible one, looking inward but open to all (Barclay, 2015, p. 76).*

In the commentary chapter, I loosely translate Barclay’s “talking in” concept to *talanoa* in Samoan, which means let us talk with the emphasis on *us*, meaning ourselves, our people, as opposed to others positioned outside our *aiga* and *nu’u* (village, community) (Barclay, 2015, p. 76). *Ta talanoa* in the short documentary context of *Fa’alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* puts into practice the principle of talking among ourselves, primarily, with the target audience of our people firmly in mind. The talk is deeply coded on-screen, and for

---

non-Samoan speakers reliant on English subtitling, the subtitles should enable this audience to form an impression of the exchange. Nonetheless, acquiring a sense of the conversation is by no means equivalent to an in-depth appreciation of the nuanced meanings captured in the *talanoa* excerpts, and framed in the narrative. A deep and profound understanding of the documentary therefore belongs to Samoan speakers who possess a high-level of fluency in the language being orally transmitted.

### *Talanoa and Fa'alavelave*

The origins of *talanoa* as an approach to conducting research conversations is traced to the theorizing of Tongan educator, Timote Vaoleti. In my view, the first article Vaoleti published, *Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research*, is essential reading for understanding his personal views on data collection methods from a Tongan perspective (Vaoleti, 2006). Instead of focusing on the structure and process of formal interviews and focus groups for qualitative research, Vaoleti drew on customary ways of engaging participants in *talanoa* (talk, exchange) in the Tongan language for research purposes. He asserted that within an Aotearoa context, *talanoa* creates culture-specific spaces, such as “kava parties, social gatherings and official engagements” for Tongan people to not only maintain their cultural beliefs and practices, but to confirm that their connections, their interactions, are valued and highly regarded within their communities (Vaoleti, 2006, p. 25).

Applying *talanoa* as a method of data collection via forms of cultural communication is intended to draw out valid sources of knowledge and information from research participants; knowledge that shapes and informs not only the research process, but the desired outcome, “which may lead to solutions for Pacific issues” (Vaoleti, 2006, p. 26). I believe Vaoleti was alluding to *vā*, the relational space connecting people engaged in *talanoa*. He noted that, “Talanoa removes the distance between researcher and participant,” because the research process is grounded in close and trusting relations between the researcher and participants (Vaoleti, 2006, p. 25). Of particular relevance to me, as a Samoan documentary researcher who has created a screen production in my Indigenous language, is Vaoleti’s acknowledgement that his conception of *talanoa* as an appropriate communication method for research was derived from a visit to Samoa in the early twenty-first century (Vaoleti, 2006, p. 24).

*While in Samoa in 2002, my understanding of Talanoa from the local people was that it was an ancient practice of multi-level and multi-layered critical discussions and free*

---

*conversations. It also includes the way that community, business and agency leaders receive information from the community, which they then use to make decisions about civil, church and national matters (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 24).*

Underpinning *talanoa* communications as a method to transmit, collect, and process information for decision-making reasons is Vaioleti's explanation of how *talanoa* is exchanged in practice. He suggests that one's ability to use the *talanoa* research approach is determined by trustworthy relationships between the researcher and participants whereby they share a collective willingness to reciprocate by listening as well as talking.

*[Talanoa] is respectful, reciprocating interaction. Talanoa is a good conversation: one listens to the other. When to speak and what one says depend upon what the other has to say. The reciprocity embedded in Talanoa will raise expectations that researchers and participants have of each other, promoting mutual accountability, which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of the research (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 26).*

By my interpretation, there are rules of conversation associated with *talanoa*. Samoan researchers, Jacoba Matapo and Dion Enari, see *talanoa* in research practice to resemble an ordinary, everyday conversation between the researcher and the participants on matters that are relevant to their people and need to be clearly explained. Matapo and Enari observed that: "The purpose of *talanoa* is not to discover our own stories, but to co-construct meanings through conversation" (Matapo and Enari, 2021, p. 80). However, Vaioleti implies that the exchange of ideas and information through talk is regulated (Vaioleti, 2006). In this sense, how the researcher interacts with a participant is tied to the sort of responses the participant gives to conversation prompts and prods (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 26). Interactions are also situated within a certain kind of researcher-and-participant relationship in which the researcher is an insider of the community being researched.

My question is around the rules of conversation, and what this might look like when the researcher is carrying out *talanoa* in their Indigenous language with close kin and elders of their *aiga*. This was the social context in which I had to conduct filmed *talanoa*, filmed talks and exchanges, with my maternal uncle and aunt at separate locations in South Auckland; the area of the Auckland region where we reside in different suburbs that are largely Polynesian by population demographic. What I found is that, as Timote Vaioleti has suggested (Vaioleti, 2006), the rules of conversation regulate the exchange captured on

---

camera. Furthermore, in circumstances when the conversation is being filmed, the *talanoa*, the talk, becomes a formal exchange using proper, not conversational, Samoan language. *Chapter Three: Methodology and Process* is where I describe the rules of conversation between myself as the documentary researcher and my *tuagane* (uncle) and *uso o le tina* (aunt) when filming, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*.

On the subject of the *fa'alavelave* process of Samoan gift exchange, the findings of a thesis written at the University of Helsinki in Finland offered insights into cultural change in American Samoa. Paula Pessi's Master's thesis, *Fa'alavelave – changing tradition*, examined the cultural politics driving the process of "collective gifts" presented at *fa'alavelave* for weddings in Tutuila island (Pessi, 2007, p. 3). The findings of the research were threefold and interconnected. Firstly, the concept and practice of gift exchange is culturally determined by social reciprocity and the need to maintain "a balance between giving and receiving" (Pessi, 2007, p. 3). Secondly, the cultural obligations of *aiga* with regard to *fa'alavelave* are prescribed "and controlled by the village chiefs" (Pessi, 2007, p. 3). Thirdly, people nowadays, even in the village setting, are critical of the demands placed on them for donations of cash and goods for *fa'alavelave*. Relatedly, there existed a belief that village chiefs were motivated by "acts of greed or their competition over respect" (Pessi, 2007, p. 3).

Comparatively, Lona Siauane's Master's thesis at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch examined the concept and practice of *fa'asamoa*, referring to the Samoan way (Siauane, 2004). The research looked closely at what transpires when the Samoan system of culture moves across international borders with migrants and becomes re-established in an Aotearoa New Zealand diaspora (Siauane, 2004). A key finding of the research was that the term *fa'asamoa* is context-dependent. Communities perceive and practice their collective Samoan identity depending on where their community is geographically located within Aotearoa, and the ways in which ethnic and cultural identity has evolved over generations of inter-generational *aiga*. In Siauane's case study on the Samoan community in Christchurch, she concluded that churches were the one secure place where *aiga* can gather, practice, and uphold their cultural activities.

*The Church provided a safe environment for all Samoans to meet and conduct their affairs according to fa'asamoa. The Church also became the place where important 'life-cycle' events such as weddings and funerals were conducted and where the matai took their place as the 'traditional' leaders and representatives for the Samoan community (Siauane, 2004, p. 131).*

---

## Film

### Tusi Tamasese's Samoan Style



Figure 4: [The Orator: O Le Tulafale](#) (2011).

*The Orator: O Le Tulafale* is a slow film in the realism genre, written and directed by Samoan filmmaker Tusi Tamasese (Tamasese, 2011). Tamasese migrated to Aotearoa as a young adult to study film and creative writing. Since the film's public release in 2011, *The Orator* has remained the only full-length feature produced in the Samoan language with English subtitles (Tamasese, 2011). The larger part of the film is set in a small, rural village on Upolu island in Samoa in which there are "a range of entry points" for non-Samoans to read the subtitles, and interpret the visual storytelling on-screen, to paraphrase Rangihīroa Pānoho (Pānoho, 2003). However, the deeper and indirect meanings of the Samoan language script performed by the characters relate a different set of nuanced messages to Samoan speakers. This, I believe, has been purposefully calculated by Tamasese for Samoa to see ourselves reflected back in "our own image," to coin part of Barry Barclay's book title (Barclay, 2015; Purcell Sjolund, 2013).

My reflections are focused on the film's climax, which unravels for almost twenty-seven minutes towards the end of the story at 1:15:59 to 1:42:01. The main character is Sā'ili, a little person, who finds himself in a precarious situation. Arriving at the funeral of his

---

wife, Vāiga, whose body has been stolen from his house by her brother Poto and taken back to her village of birth for burial, Sā'ili has to stand as a *tulafale* (orator, talking chief) and face Poto, the *matai* (titled chief) for his *aiga*. Sā'ili is in attendance with Litia, Vāiga's teenage daughter whom she had out of wedlock before marrying Sā'ili. Litia herself has fallen pregnant to a rugby player in Sā'ili's village and has been spurned by the village women. Despite Sā'ili raising Litia as his own child, she resents his small stature and the way he is discriminated against and humiliated by village folk. Her mother's village is no exception. Vāiga was adamant before passing that she did not want to be buried there because she had been banished for becoming pregnant with Litia. Poto and his people show disdain for Sā'ili and ridicule his size.

The highpoint is the twelve-minute *fa'alavelave* scene from 1:28:53 to 1:41:15. Sā'ili is without cash or imported goods of corned beef and tinned fish to present at the gift exchange ceremony between titled men: Sā'ili representing his *aiga* and Poto representing his *aiga* who are Vāiga's relatives from her village. Instead, he offers his words in an oratory, making peace for his deceased wife and making peace with himself for not being with Vāiga when she passed. Importantly, Sā'ili asks Poto for Vāiga's body to take home and bury in his village. His presentation is an *'ie konga* (fine mat) woven by Vāiga to seek forgiveness from her family, and after her passing, the final touches were completed by her daughter Litia.

From the perspective of the Samoan language audience, this scene is the most significant part of the film and this is not because of the minimalist cinematography and long-takes of the village setting and *fa'alavelave* proceedings. Rather, Samoan speakers viewing this sequence are engaged in the oratory. Momentarily, at this point, they are privy to hearing and seeing the concept of "talking in," *ta talanoa* – let us talk, located within the *lāuga* (speechmaking) practice of the *tulafale* (talking chiefs) assembled on the *malae* (arena, space for gathering) (Barclay, 2015, p. 76; Muaiava, 2022). Samoan speakers understand the scripted performance on-screen to mean something quite certain in terms of cultural protocols guiding the *fa'alavelave* process carried out in a village and district setting of Samoa. Thus, the most important gift exchange in sorrowful times when a *tuafafine* (sister), an *afa'fine* (daughter) has passed is for the deceased's *aiga* (family, clan), which in this case is Poto, Vāiga's brother, to maintain harmonious relationships and connections between families and clans, especially with Vāiga's *tane* (husband) and *afa'fine* (daughter) who are her closest loved ones.

The reason why Tusi Tamasese's visual and aural style is considered the Samoan style by Samoan audiences is because the very centring of our Indigenous language means that the storytelling unfolds in a culturally authentic voice (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 23). The English

---

subtitles do not control the narrative. Film reviewers publishing in English do not control the analysis. In reality, the spoken Samoan language dictates the telling and receiving of a story that we believe belongs to us, could only represent our people, while at the same time, has the potential to speak to non-Samoans in a universal language of atonement, forgiveness, and repairing social fracture.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and Process



Figure 5: Rewi Amoamo and Asim Mukhtar filming Fiso's *talanoa*.

The concept and practice of filmed *talanoa* constitutes the methodology and process used for creating the short documentary, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*. By methodology, I am referring to the system in which the selected research methods are assembled to work together and make the artefact. For the filmed *talanoa* methodology, the process comprises of two phases. The first phase is consultation, which involves conversations with regard to preparing the participants for filming, and during the post-production stage of screening the short documentary to the participants to gather their feedback. The second phase is collaboration, which entails coordinating the roles, skills, and work of the researcher, film crew, and film editor to create the final artefact of a 16:28 minute documentary. Within the methodology itself, however, are three research methods that function in relation to one another for filming the participants' *talanoa* with the researcher: Samoan language, rules of conversation, and cultural protocols. Later on in this chapter, I will contextually detail each of these methods.

*Talanoa* is applied by Pacific researchers in the disciplines of education, health, social sciences, and arts and humanities as a culture-informed method of collecting data

---

from open-ended conversations with individuals and groups. In a research context, *talanoa* tends to be interpreted as ordinary, everyday talk between a researcher and research participants who share the same culture and ethnicity, and speak the same Indigenous Pacific language (Vaioliti, 2006; Matapo and Enari, 2021). However, a structural shift occurs in the exchange of *talanoa* when participants are filmed on camera for a documentary project. The *talanoa* consciously shifts from ordinary talk to formal talk. To explain why this shift occurs, I have drawn on the writings of two anthropologists from different regions of the world. Max Gluckman's notion of multiplex social relations among the Southeastern Bantu of the African continent, and 'Okusitino Māhina's Western Polynesian concept of *vā* denoting relational space between peoples in Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian societies, provide dissimilar lines of reasoning. Although my preference is the *vā* rationale, this does not altogether mean that I am disregarding the logic and research value of multiplex social relations. Instead, I am making *vā* a cultural priority when it comes to interpreting how *talanoa* functions in this practice-led study because from a culture-informed perspective, it is the framework that fits and makes sense of filmed *talanoa*.

### *Vā* and Familial Relationships

In 1962, British South African anthropologist Max Gluckman edited a book called, *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations* (Gluckman, 1962). His introductory paper, *Les Rites De Passage*, outlined what he called a "multiplex" approach to understanding social relations in tribal societies of the Southeastern Bantu of the African continent (Gluckman, 1962, pp. 26-27). Gluckman emphasised that Bantu societies were organised by "kin-groups" residing in "villages and homesteads," and that the nature of their connections and interactions were for a variety of reasons (Gluckman, 1962, pp. 26-27). Bantu tribes and clans thus practice ritualistic behaviour, which means their activities are performed in certain ways that over time have become custom and tradition.

*I am going to suggest that we seek to explain this high ritualization of tribal society from the fact that each social relation in a subsistence economy tends to serve manifold purposes. ...The characteristic productive sub-groups of these societies are villages and homesteads, and also kin-groups, parts of which form the cores of residential units. The relationships between the members of these groups serve a multiplicity of purposes: they are the main productive relationships and also the relationships within which goods are mainly exchanged and consumed. Their members hold land and other property, not all in common but subject to claims by*

---

*one another. Children are reared and educated almost entirely within these groups. The groups form political units of the larger society (Gluckman, 1962, pp. 26-27).*

Gluckman's description of the manner in which Bantu societies work at maintaining "relationships between the members of these groups [to] serve a multiplicity of purposes" resonates with the social organisation of my kin-group, my *aiga* from Si'umu village in Samoa (Gluckman, 1962, pp. 26-27). A "multiplex" approach could explain why the filmed *talanoa* of my maternal uncle and aunt resulted in a formal discussion with their nephew (Gluckman, 1962). The *nu'u* (village, community) structure of Si'umu is made up of *aiga* (family, clan) groups or social units that can, at times of *fa'alavelave* for funerals, mobilise their collective wealth for ceremonial gift exchanges on behalf of the *matai* (chief, title-holder) of the *aiga*.

For elders of the *aiga*, considering that some elders are *matai*, they can be tasked with multiple roles in being custodians of culture, advisers, speechmakers, and heads of the clan who make decisions. In the case of my uncle and aunt, it was not merely being put on camera that made their speech and conduct formal. Instead, they were put in a position where they felt their words and manner would be judged by a Samoan language audience as representing our *aiga*. As expected, they spoke how they thought was appropriate to the occasion of being filmed for a nephew's university thesis.

An alternative explanation has emerged from the Western Polynesian sub-region of Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji; the geographic area of Oceania where my people and this study is located. Tongan anthropologist 'Okusitino Māhina developed a philosophy of *tā* (time) and *vā* (space) (Māhina, 2010). Māhina's *tā* and *vā* theory, I believe, offered the most wisdom for why the filmed *talanoa* was formal talk, rather than casual talk. Māhina wrote about a Western Polynesian approach to conceptualising historical time and space. In his article, *Tā, Vā, and Moana: Temporality, Spatiality, and Indigeneity*, he claimed that the Indigenous societies of Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji "walk forward into the past and walk backward into the future" (Māhina, 2010, p. 170).

*People are thought to walk forward into the past and walk backward into the future, both taking place in the present, where the past and the future are constantly mediated in the ever-transforming present. The past has stood the test of time and space, and it must therefore be placed in front of people as a guidance in the present, and because the future is yet to happen, it must be placed to the back of or*

---

*behind people in the present, where both past and future are symmetrically negotiated in the process.*

When Māhina says to “walk forward into the past,” he is speaking figuratively about the process of recalling stories from history and memorialising the teachings to serve as an example in people’s lives (Māhina, 2010, p. 170). By venerating the deeds of ancestors in the olden days according to the oral traditions of Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian societies, these former times are therefore respected as a standard model of practice, even for today. From applying Māhina’s concept of putting the past “in front of people as a guidance in the present” to the filmed *talanoa* of Fiso, my maternal uncle, we can see the practice of “walk[ing] forward into the past” at work (Māhina, 2010, p. 170).

Fiso conducted his *talanoa* (talk, exchange) in the proper manner of a *matai* (chief, title-holder) who delved into his personal memory for real-life experience. The *vā* or the relational distance between Fiso and I as an uncle and nephew became traditional and ceremonial too, corresponding with the courtly language he was using. Thus, he drew on his recollections to illustrate his discussion. These memories were times where he had witnessed the importance of *fa’alavelave* as a space for connecting various *aiga* through acts of honouring the deceased and their family. Understandably, Fiso’s *talanoa* was delivered in a formal tone using polite, respectful language. For he was not only speaking as a *matai* on a thoughtful subject, but he was putting the past in front of the audience to serve as a model, an ideal, for virtuous practices around *fa’alavelave* (Māhina, 2010, p. 170). *Chapter Four: Commentary* explains the key points made by Fiso and Eseta, my uncle and aunt, in their filmed *talanoa* and the meanings they were conveying to a Samoan language audience.

## **Filmed *Talanoa***

In the case of making *Fa’alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, the methodology of filmed *talanoa* was used to gather data around a specific topic of inquiry; that is, a system of methods for exploring understandings and practices of *fa’alavelave* in the Samoan village compared to South Auckland from the perspectives of two elders and siblings. It is here that I must explain the specific methods that have gone into the methodology toolkit. Each of the subheadings below constitute a research method utilised for making the short documentary. By no means are the methods isolated from one another, but rather, form an interconnected

---

structure in which the language of communication, Samoan, comes with its own rules of conversation and cultural protocols that are known to the researcher and participants.

## Samoan Language

The Samoan language is the principal research method for creating this short documentary because it is the mother tongue of the research participants and the interviewer, and therefore, the language that they have been socially conditioned by as an *aiga* in terms of understanding their roles and relationships within the social unit of the family. Relatedly, Samoan is the language that enables all three people to articulate themselves clearly and confidently to other Samoan language speakers viewing the filmed *talanoa* on-screen. However, Samoan is a highly structured language that shifts from ordinary, everyday conversations to formal, oratorical exchanges depending on the social context of, and reason for, gatherings.

An example of this language shift can be taken from the film shoot conducted outside my uncle Fiso's house in Ōtara. We commenced the process with an informal conversation where I introduced my thesis supervisors and the film crew to my maternal uncle. Once the crew signalled to Fiso that they would begin filming, a shift from an informal conversation to a formal exchange occurred. By this, Fiso welcomed my supervisors and the crew by using the oratorical structure of Samoan *lauga* or speechmaking. A specific aspect of *lauga* was deployed in his oratory referred to as *fa'atulima*, which means "an oral and formal acknowledgement of the presence of guests and hosts by one another" (Muaiava, 2022, p. 58). The manner in which Fiso opened his filmed *talanoa*, therefore set the tone and context for a formal discussion to ensue on camera.

## Rules of Conversation

The rules of conversation during the filmed *talanoa* were embedded in various sets of culture and kinship relationships or different kinds of *vā*, meaning relational spaces that are not mutually exclusive but interconnected and overlapping. The most apparent *vā* to Samoan language speakers viewing the short documentary is the creation of an intergenerational space. On-screen, it is visually and aurally perceptible that a nephew is facilitating a social exchange with his maternal uncle and aunt for documentary research purposes. In this *vā* of intergenerational space, the nephew who doubles up as the interviewer is culturally expected to show regard for his elders by appealing to them for guidance and the sharing of knowledge on certain topics he wishes to discuss.

A subsequent *vā* is the relational space created around polite, respectful speech between people in a formal discussion. Explicitly, the rules of conversation within this

particular social context is that the nephew, as the interviewer, has to be careful that questions are put the uncle and the aunt once they have finished speaking on a topic. Interrupting an elder of the *aiga* while they are talking is considered disrespectful, and could potentially rupture the flow of storying from the participants to the interviewer. Questions are purposely framed in a general manner of speaking to allow the elders to lead the conversation by stamping their interpretative views on the topic.



Figure 6: Fiso's filmed *talanoa*.

## Cultural Protocols

The *tu ma aga* or cultural protocols shaping the social exchange during the consultation phase and filmed *talanoa* were part-and-parcel of customs associated with a particular *talanoa*, or a conversation that takes place between two people who are close kinfolk but different generations in terms of the age grouping they are positioned in within the *aiga* social hierarchy. Our common ancestry as the Tanuvasa Tofaeono *aiga* dictated the cultural protocols enacted on camera during the filmed *talanoa*, which was a formal conversation about *fa'alavelave* matters that are important to us as a family.



Figure 7: Eseta's filmed *talanoa*.

## Phase One: Consultation

The consultation between myself, as the documentary researcher, and my maternal uncle Tu'u'u Atuatasi Fiso Tanuvasa Tofaeono and aunt Eseta Leaia as the research participants, was culturally informed by *tupuaga* (whakapapa) and *tu ma aga* (protocols, customs). Similar to Māori documentary filmmaker Kahurangi Waititi of Te Whānau-a-Apanui, I found myself concentrating on *tu ma aga* (protocols, customs) and how Samoan protocols guiding interactions with my elders would take effect on camera (Waititi, 2008).

*[R]ather than focusing on technical aspects of filming, the focus was more on tikanga. These filming processes needed to firstly derive from the values of Te Ao Māori so that the procedure of filming was appropriate for those being filmed. The role of whakapapa and the connections to ancestors, for example, are fundamental (Waititi, 2008, p. 4).*

My primary supervisor Teena advised that the set needed to be constructed in a way that resembled a Samoan *malae* (arena, space for gathering). By doing so, aesthetically the

documentary would reflect how Samoan communities in South Auckland and Samoa create cultural spaces for meeting and exchanging *talanoa*. Such a set could be constructed without cost by placing a mat on the ground with two outdoor chairs for the participant and the interviewer. Teena also recommended that I practice interviewing with Richard, my second supervisor, who had media experience in radio and print journalism, and that the questions I wanted to put to my uncle and aunt were negotiated with them during the consultations so they were comfortable conversing about the topics on camera. There were three main questions in which the data collection for making the short documentary was anchored: (1) In your own words, tell me what *fa'alavelave* means? (2) Can you share a memory of seeing a *fa'alavelave* take place in Samoa? (3) Is the way *fa'alavelave* takes place in Auckland any different to Samoa? Through the consultation process, Fiso and Eseta were given the time and space to interpret the questions according to their lived experiences, and thus develop responses that offered contextual and culture-specific detail for Samoan audiences.

The university ethics committee had certain requirements for postgraduate students filming with participants in the Covid-19 environment, which the documentary project had to comply with. Ethics compliances involved ensuring the interviewer and the film crew maintained two metres physical distance from the participants, and that the filming took place at outdoor locations for individual interviews, not group conversations. My ethics application was approved on 4 April, 2022, and within a period of twenty-six days the process for filming and the sets were organised for a one-day shoot at two South Auckland locations on Saturday 30 April, 2022.

Table 1: Pre and Post Filming

Date	Discussion	Outcome
Consultation 1: Saturday 2 April, 2022	I spoke with Fiso at his house in Ōtara and Eseta at her house in Manurewa. At both participants' homes, we asked after one another's families, chatting informally until arriving at the topic of the purpose of my visit, which took on a more formal tone of conversation.	Fiso was supportive of the documentary research and willing to participate in the filmed <i>talanoa</i> .  Eseta was supportive of the documentary research and willing to participate in the filmed <i>talanoa</i> .

---

The discussion with Fiso was centred around inviting him to participate in a short documentary, which involved a filmed *talanoa* with the researcher.

I offered contextual detail around specific queries that I wanted to find answers to. Firstly, how is *fa'alavelave*, with reference to funerals, different in the Samoan *nu'u* (village) compared to South Auckland? Secondly, within the *fa'alavelave* process of gift exchange at funerals, how have the cultural practices of presenting the *fa'aalo'alo* (respect) and presenting the *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) changed?

The discussion with Eseta was centred around inviting her to participate in a short documentary, which involved a filmed *talanoa* with the researcher.

I offered contextual detail around specific queries that I wanted to find answers to. Firstly, how is *fa'alavelave*, with reference to funerals,

---

different in the Samoan *nu'u* (village) compared to South Auckland? Secondly, within the *fa'alavelave* process of gift exchange at funerals, how have the cultural practices of presenting the *fa'aalo'alo* (respect) and presenting the *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) changed?

Date	Discussion	Outcome
<p>Consultation 2: Saturday 9 April, 2022</p>	<p>I spoke with Fiso at his house in Ōtara and Eseta at her house in Manurewa.</p> <p>The discussion with Fiso was based on the following points: (1) An ethics document granting me third party copyright to film a photograph of him in Si'umu, Samoa, for the short documentary; (2) A disclosure fact sheet for him to read, which explained the research process, who would be present at the filming of his interview, and the potential risk of loss of privacy in being filmed and identifiable in the film.</p> <p>The discussion with Eseta was based on the following points: (1) An ethics</p>	<p>Fiso agreed to grant me third party copyright. He was aware of the potential risk of loss of privacy by being identifiable in the short documentary. However, he was eager to continue with the consultation process and participate in the filmed <i>talanoa</i>. I offered to give him some time to consider his decision.</p> <p>Eseta agreed to grant me third party copyright to film the photograph of her with her spouse and adult-son. This photograph was taken in Auckland, New Zealand, at her adult-son's university graduation. She did not want her family photographs taken in Samoa to be filmed for the short documentary</p>

document granting me third party copyright to film a photograph of her with her spouse and adult-son for the short documentary; (2) A disclosure fact sheet for her to read, which explained the research process, who would be present at the filming of her interview, and the potential risk of loss of privacy in being filmed and identifiable in the film.

for personal reasons, and I respected her wishes. Eseta understood the consequences of loss of privacy by being identifiable in the short documentary. However, like her brother Fiso, she was eager to continue with the consultation process and participate in the filmed *talanoa*.

Date	Discussion	Outcome
Consultation 3: Saturday 16 April, 2022	<p>I spoke with Fiso at his house in Ōtara and Eseta at her house in Manurewa.</p> <p>The discussion with Fiso was based on the following point: (1) Ethics documents of participant information sheet and consent and release form.</p> <p>The discussion with Eseta was based on the following point: (1) Ethics documents of participant information sheet and consent and release form.</p>	<p>Fiso understood both the English and Samoan versions of the ethics documents, and agreed to participate in the filmed <i>talanoa</i>.</p> <p>Eseta understood both the English and Samoan versions of the ethics documents, and agreed to participate in the filmed <i>talanoa</i>.</p>

Date	Discussion	Outcome
Consultation 4: Sunday 24 April, 2022	I spoke with Fiso at his house in Ōtara and Eseta at her house in Manurewa.	Fiso was confident to speak on camera and pleased with the content played back to him.

With Fiso, I first went through the questions for the filmed *talanoa*. We then had a practice run where I put the questions to him on-camera. Afterwards, I played back the raw footage to Fiso on my camera.

Eseta was confident to speak on camera and pleased with the content played back to her.

With Eseta, I first went through the questions for the filmed *talanoa*. We then had a practice run where I put the questions to her on-camera. Afterwards, I played back the raw footage to Eseta on my camera.

Date	Discussion	Outcome
Consultation 5: Saturday 2 August, 2022	<p>I spoke with Fiso at his house in Ōtara and Eseta at her house in Manurewa.</p> <p>With Fiso, I screened the short documentary (16:28 minutes) on my laptop, explaining that the English subtitles were yet to be synched into the <i>talanoa</i> given by him and Eseta. Our discussion after the film screening was based on the following points: (1) Was he satisfied with the artefact? (2) Were there any changes he wanted made to his filmed <i>talanoa</i>?</p>	<p>Fiso was happy with the short documentary. He appreciated the sound quality. He was pleased to know the Samoan language audience would be able to hear his words clearly. He asked why his <i>lāuga</i> (formal speech, lecture) which he made at the beginning of his filmed <i>talanoa</i> was not included in the film. I explained to Fiso that I wanted to select the main points of his filmed <i>talanoa</i> for a short documentary that was intended to be an estimated fifteen to no</p>

---

<p>With Eseta, I screened the short documentary (16:28 minutes) on my laptop, explaining that the English subtitles were yet to be synched into the <i>talanoa</i> given by her and Fiso. Our discussion after the screening was based on the following points: (1) Was she satisfied with the artefact? (2) Were there any changes she wanted made to her filmed <i>talanoa</i>?</p>	<p>longer than sixteen minutes of screentime. As it stood, the film was 16:28 minutes of screentime. Fiso understood and was happy with the artefact.</p> <p>Eseta was happy with the short documentary and did not want anything changed in the way the content had been assembled on-screen.</p>
---	--

---

## Phase Two: Collaboration

The collaboration between myself, as the documentary researcher, and Asim and Rewi as the film crew with Asim doubling up as the film editor and colour grader was organised within a project framework of a no-budget film. Rewi and Asim produced the shots for creating the short documentary on a voluntary basis where they pooled their own equipment. For the moving shots, Rewi brought his GoPro gear to the sets in South Auckland on Saturday 30 April, 2022. Packed neatly in a Nike duffel bag, he had a GoPro Hero 10 action camera and a GoPro Hero 9 action camera with accessories: GoPro Max Lens Mod, GoPro Media Mod, GoPro Shorty Extension Pole, Joby GorillaPod Action Tripod, Rode VideoMicro Compact On-Camera Microphone. Rewi also brought a Zoom Hn1 Handy Recorder with a windscreen and tripod-to-mic stand, which he gave to Fiso and Eseta to hold during their filmed *talanoa* for back-up sound recordings. For the still shots, Asim brought his Sony A7 full-frame camera with a 24-105mm lens and Rode Lavalier microphone.

The crew operated their cameras and sound equipment for no charge, filming at two different sets on the same day: 9:00am to 12:00pm for Fiso's shoot in Ōtara and 2:00pm to 5:00pm for Eseta's shoot in Mangere. During the lunchbreak from 12:00pm to 2:00pm, Rewi and Asim drove back to their homes to transfer the data from their secure digital cards to online data storage and portable storage devices and to recharge their cameras. My

---

supervisors Teena and Richard attended Fiso's shoot on the Saturday morning where Richard took the still photographs on Teena's Canon EOS M50 camera for the exegetical writing. At Eseta's shoot in the afternoon, Teena was in attendance without Richard to take still photographs.

For the post-production stage, I provided Asim with a cash *koha* (Māori for donation, gift) of NZD \$625.00, which worked out to be NZD \$25.00 per hour for twenty-five hours of film editing and colour grading to create the final artefact. Asim was given an easy-to-follow editing plan to work from, which identified the *talanoa* excerpts from the rough cuts and gave the order in which they were to be assembled on the editing bay. He was guided on where to insert the supplementary footage, the places where the music had to be synchronised into the frames, and the exact screentime for inserting each of the seventy-seven English subtitles.

The hours that Rewi and Asim put into our collaboration were more than what I have noted here when taking into consideration the time spent on communications, coordinating shot lists and details about the sets where they would be filming, setting-up and pulling-down equipment and set props, and driving to-and-from the sets. I have noted these details, which were recorded in my fieldwork journal, to open up aspects of the collaboration phase during the filmmaking process that are not apparent to the documentary audience and exegesis reader, thus requiring an account on my part. Making a no-budget film in the format of a Samoan language documentary is a truly collaborative experience that takes on certain interlinked characteristics.

## No-Budget Film

The short documentary, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, was a no-budget film for practical reasons. I did not have funding or personal savings to pay a film crew for the production stage, and a film editor and colour grader for the post-production stage. Hence, I used my primary supervisor's networks; her son and one of her doctoral students who were willing to work on a voluntary basis. I did manage to scrape together from my humble household budget a NZD \$625.00 *koha* for Asim's twenty-five hours of film editing and colour grading work. Effectively, the post-production stage created the final version of the short documentary submitted for examination. Therefore, I felt compelled to offer Asim a small *koha* of gratitude for his time and technical expertise, especially seeing that he was busy with the production stage of his doctoral film and was pressed for time. What I learned from no-budget filmmaking was that the amount of cash a documentary researcher has to spend on their project by no means determines the quality of the film, or the trusting, warm relationships between the researcher, the participants, and the crew.

---

## Samoan Language Documentary

There were two lessons about making a Samoan language documentary that I learned from the collaboration process, which warrant an explanation. First of all, although the film crew were not ethnically and culturally Samoan, they possessed a high-level of cultural competency for filming a Samoan language documentary with elders. Rewi and Asim were camera operators and sound recordists who came from cultural backgrounds where they were accustomed to speaking their respective Indigenous languages, especially when conversing with older migrants to Aotearoa.

Who the film crew are, in terms of their cultural background and cultural competency, matters when it comes to filming a Samoan language documentary. For getting the shots achieved on the shot-list, while working to tight timeframes for *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, the crew were successful because they could understand and appreciate the cultural environment they had to operate in. For example, they had to keep quiet on the set when Fiso and Eseta were being interviewed. Also, they were expected to keep their heads lowered when walking around the elders. Lastly, the crew was mindful to stay on the outside of the *malae*, the space where we gathered to talk and be filmed. By keeping to the edges of the *malae* they avoided disrupting the *vā*, the relational space between the interviewer and the participants.

The second lesson learned was the English subtitling experience. Asim, the film editor, waited patiently for me to send him the screen-times for inserting the seventy-seven subtitles. This task had to be done more than once as the initial attempt was unsuccessful. I had never before attempted such a technical task and had difficulty synchronising the exact timing for the subtitles to appear on-screen. The fact the English subtitles were not a word-for-word, literal translation, but an English narrative to make the Samoan meanings intelligible to an English-speaking audience was a complex method of post-production to grasp. As a newcomer to a practice-oriented thesis, I had learning challenges and sought help from my primary supervisor to finish the synchronizing process. The post-production stage was slowed down, impacting on the entire project. What I can say is that my Samoan language competency sits at a much higher-level than my English language proficiency. As a result, I could not comprehend an English-speaking audience needing to have meanings communicated in a way that they could understand because in my mind I could only envisage a Samoan language audience.



Figure 8: Asim Mukhtar, Rewi Amoamo, and Teena Brown Pulu.

## Chapter Four: Commentary



Figure 9: Eseta and Fritz.

The commentary offers the reader my interpretation of the heart of the dialogue exchanged in the filmed *talanoa*. Captured through two external shoots outside Fiso's house in Ōtara and outside *Fale o Samoa*, the Samoan High Commission in Mangere, South Auckland, were the personal views of my maternal uncle and aunt. One intersecting point the participants observed was that the cultural practice of *fa'alavelave* has changed among Samoans in South Auckland due to a combination of factors. Most notably, geographic separation from the village setting in Samoa has altered the way in which gift exchange is conceived and carried out. The village setting is now replaced with church organisations in South Auckland and as a result, funeral presentations of *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) provided by grieving families outdo presentations of *fa'aalo'alo* (respect) from visiting parties paying respect to the deceased and the bereaved.

The structure of the short documentary, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, was 16:28 minutes of screentime in which 14:12 minutes was participant discussion. Inserted in the film was a non-narrative entry sequence of 1:05 minutes, a non-narrative middle sequence of 1:11 minutes, and a non-narrative exit sequence of 1:00 minute. The three non-

---

narrative sequences had the original music of *The Punialava'a Group* synched into the frames (Punialava'a, 2022a, 2022b, 2020). Moreover, *The Punialava'a Group* gave third party copyright permission to the researcher to use excerpts from their selected songs in the final artefact (Punialava'a, 2022a, 2022b, 2020).

The purpose of the non-narrative sequences was to provide a visual geography on-screen where Samoan audiences in particular could identify with the South Auckland landscape. The wide-angle frame of Fiso outside his home captured state houses built in the 1950s and 1960s lined up across the road, which to Samoan audiences living in South Auckland look unmistakably like houses in Ōtara. For the non-narrative sequence of Eseta and I walking towards the *Fale o Samoa* inside the Samoan High Commission compound, the *fale* is the social indicator on-screen that Samoan speaking audiences know is located in Mangere, a South Auckland suburb which like Ōtara has a large ethnic Samoan population.

The visual style of the documentary was intentionally reflexive or self-reflecting. In this sense, I intended for the audience to watch the screen and be consciously aware that a film was being made and that the characters, Fiso and Eseta, were being filmed on make-shift sets in outdoor locations (Canet, 2018; 2022; De Groof, 2013; Frederickson, 1979). Make-shift refers to the sets having been temporarily and expediently constructed for the purpose of filming within three-hour periods of 9:00am to 12:pm and 2:00pm to 5:00pm on Saturday 30 April 2022. Chairs were arranged to resemble a *malae*, which in Samoan village settings symbolises a cultural space for people to officially gather and discuss important matters of a community. For Fiso's filmed *talanoa*, an outdoor mat was placed on the ground, a gravel drive, to demarcate a *malae* space and give the make-shift set a sense of formality. Comparatively for Eseta's filmed *talanoa*, the outdoor mat was not used because the backdrop of the *Fale o Samoa* made the make-shift set appear like a ceremonious space to conduct a formal conversation.

It is here that I must account for the process used to select relevant interview excerpts for this short documentary. Initially, the subtitles went through a procedure of being translated literally into English. However, this verbatim text was lengthy, wordy, and difficult to understand due to Samoan metaphoric language not translating straightforwardly into English. The subtitles had to be reworded for the screen because the English-speaking audience needed to be able to make clear sense of the narrative. Also, the screen could not be crammed with too many subtitles hurriedly piling in one after the other, as it would make Fiso and Eseta's *talanoa* difficult to read and understand in plain English. In the end, there were seventy-seven subtitles on-screen for the 14:12 minutes of participant discussion,

along with the film title and researcher's name, which appeared at the beginning of the 16:28 minute short documentary and the credit roll at the end.

## Scene One: Fiso's house in Ōtara



Figure 10: Fiso and Fritz.

Fiso's filmed *talanoa* comprised of seven excerpts, a total of 8:00 minutes screentime, selected from a longer conversation of 26:52 minutes of raw footage. I have cited the filmed *talanoa* in full with the intention of focusing my commentary on paragraphs (1), (5), and (7).

- (1) *This is an important question: many Samoans know the significance of fa'alavelave. No generation can erase fa'alavelave because it is fundamental to funerals. Fa'alavelave is a custom allowing different lineages and relatives to meet. When a person dies, people attend the funeral, despite the distance they have to travel. Their relationship to the deceased obliges them to go. Funerals are not the same as weddings, church openings, other life-cycle events. The thing about a funeral is that your physical connection to the deceased stops. Never again will you see them alive. You are obliged to pay respect to the deceased and their family. This is the very meaning of fa'alavelave. I am not speaking for all Samoans, but rather, speaking from personal experience.*

- 
- (2) *The importance of fa'alavelave comes up in the Land and Titles Court of Samoa. In this court for matai titles and customary lands, a judge can ask about fa'alavelave. I have witnessed this happening in person. One time, Si'umu families had a land dispute case at the court. I am not questioning the dispute but merely stating that family lines were disunited. Thus, the land dispute ended up in the Land and Titles Court in Apia.*
- (3) *In court, the judge asked the late Tofaeono Tanuvasa Tavale a question. "These circumstances have caused disunity, but when there is a fa'alavelave, do the family lines come together to look after one another?" Tofaeono responded: "Your honour, we still unite to look after one another." Families may run into conflict, but that will not impede fa'alavelave. Fa'alavelave reconnects family lines. To me, this is the importance of fa'lavelave. Samoans will not disregard their social responsibility when it comes to fa'alavelave.*
- (4) *Fa'alavelave is practiced differently in Samoa compared to New Zealand, especially at funerals. In Samoa, the auala protocol is upheld. Auala is specifically when the orators of the district gather at a funeral. The orators recite the historical connections of chiefly titles, and they affirm the sacredness of the village and the funeral ceremony. The orators understand their assigned role when participating at an auala. The important cultural practice of relating history and genealogies is designated to them. They are appointed to perform the oratorical language of fa'alavelave.*
- (5) *The difference lies in orators performing auala in the districts and villages. But in New Zealand, the church replaces the village. Auala is rare in New Zealand. Although in Samoa, it is one of the most important cultural practices.*
- (6) *When receiving my titles, the extended family gathered to commemorate the day. There was scarcely an orator present. I beg your pardon, Samoa. Some orators have used an orator's title for their personal gain.*
- (7) *I believe the cultural practice of fa'aalo'alo and fa'atamāli'i is profound. If I contribute a gift at a fa'alavelave, it is an expression of care and compassion. Fa'aalo'alo means I gift cash or a fine mat, and if an orator is present to help the family with funeral preparations, I will gift the orator a lafo, which can be a fine mat or cash. Fa'atamāli'i means the gift that is returned from the deceased's family in appreciation. You might gift a thousand dollars and receive double the amount in return: boxes of corned beef, chicken, five hundred cash for your return airfare. In situations like this, the fa'aaloalo and fa'atamāli'i process is highly inappropriate. People remark that it would have been far better if we did*

---

*not attend the fa'alavelave. They feel uncomfortable that the fa'atamāli'i amounted to more than what they gave.*

The key points of Fiso's filmed *talanoa* came to the fore in paragraph (1), where he introduced the topic of his discussion; paragraph (5), where he named *auala*, a gathering of chiefs to decide cultural protocol for a funeral, as the principal difference between *fa'alavelave* practices in Samoa and Aotearoa; and paragraph (7), his remarks about the inappropriateness of a funeral attendant receiving more in cash and material goods than what they had gifted to the deceased's *aiga*. Critically, my interpretive reading of Fiso's dialogue emphasises the logic that the *auala*, or the convening of village chiefs from a district in Samoa to lay down procedures for a funeral, is replaced by the authority of the church in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this sense, the village system of social order is substituted with a church organisational structure.

The first paragraph of Fiso's Samoan discussion saw him name specific Samoan language references associated with *fa'alavelave*, or ceremonial gift exchange, with regard to funerals: *so'otaga*, which can also be termed *faiā*, and *fa'asinomaga*. In the context of Fiso's dialogue, *so'otaga* or its alternate expression *faiā*, signifies connections or relationships between groups who attend a funeral and the deceased person through a number of ways, such as familial ties, marriage, or friendship. *Fa'asinomaga*, by comparison, implies a familial relationship through *gafa*, meaning a genealogical connection, or by way of common affiliations to a village title and the Native land associated with that particular title where the deceased is to be buried. The notion of respect, in this sense, suggests that people feel a cultural obligation to be physically present at a funeral to honour their connection to the deceased and share the grieving family's sorrow and loss.

In the fifth paragraph, Fiso's discussion returned home to Si'umu, his village of birth where he grew up with his *aiga* and kin-based community on their ancestral land. He stressed that *auala* symbolises the key difference between the way in which *fa'alavelave* for funerals in the Samoan village setting are organised compared to the Samoan diaspora setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Auala* in Samoa is the gathering of village and district *tulafale*, meaning titled orators, as a funeral is about to begin to firstly, conduct a ceremonial reciting the deceased's genealogical connections to significant ancestors and titles; and secondly, to discuss and decide the *fa'alavelave* proceedings on behalf of the deceased's kinfolk. Much of the *auala* is focused on the communal obligations of the village and district to ease the grieving family's burden, both emotionally by being present for the duration of the funeral, and financially by providing goods and labour to assist the deceased's closest

---

relatives. Lona Siauane's Master's thesis illustrated the logic of Fiso's observations by emphasising that Samoan churches in Aotearoa New Zealand are structured and organised by constitutions and the clergy who exercise their own set of protocols and customs (Siauane, 2004).

Fiso's closing paragraph reflected on the unequal distribution of gifts occurring at Samoan funerals nowadays. His main concern was that groups presenting their *fa'aalo'alo*, a gift symbolising respect for the deceased, can often find themselves in an awkward situation of receiving a *fa'atamāli'i*, a gift of reciprocity from the deceased's family that is more than what they gave. The very act of distributing more gifts to people who attend a funeral in the form of cash and goods was unfitting in Fiso's eyes, and in many ways, a distortion of village tradition. My interpretation of the context that has propelled this change in *fa'alavelave* custom is that the dominance of church culture has, to a certain extent, influenced an overall displacement of village culture. Further to this, Fiso's mention in the sixth paragraph that, "[s]ome orators have used an orator's title for their personal gain," implies that material gain via receiving cash and goods during *fa'alavelave* formalities can undermine the orator's traditional role of service to one's *aiga* and village community.

## Scene Two: Eseta at *Fale o Samoa*

Eseta's filmed *talanoa* comprised of five excerpts, a total of 5:09 minutes screentime, selected from a longer conversation of 17:43 minutes of raw footage. Again, I have quoted the entire filmed *talanoa* as it appeared in the short documentary with a mind to offering a commentary on paragraphs (2) and (3).

- (1) *Women provide service and advice within the family. They weave and present mats at fa'alavelave. These are some of the roles of women.*
  
- (2) *The difference is this: in Samoa, there is a right time and place for fa'alavelave. In Samoa, the process is straightforward and people connect without difficulty. They only listen to one person, the head of the family. In New Zealand, people live a distance from one another, which makes things difficult. In Samoa, cultural value is placed on fine mats as the form of gift-exchange. In the diaspora, fine mats are replaced with cash donations. Cash is easier in New Zealand, as Samoan fine mats are a rarity. Cash gifts are an attempt to simplify gift-exchange and family obligations.*

- (3) *My view is gift-exchange symbolizes love and support for those experiencing disruption. It is a cultural gesture of helping another person. Often more is received than what is given. But it is meant to be a collective effort to help people in need.*
- (4) *I delight in gifting to those who appreciate it, rather than having things returned. When more is given back, I feel sorry for the family who has suffered more. When I have asked about this practice, I am told this is the Samoan culture.*
- (5) *My older brother Tofaeono Tavale Tanuvasa began a cultural education programme. Guided by his passion for Samoan culture, this programme was for children. He wanted to enable the younger generation to grow up understanding their culture. Children learn the family's communal values and cultural obligations.*
- (6) *A Samoan proverb says: when one champion falls, another will rise. My older brother is currently leading our family. He is dedicated to upholding our family duties. The descendants of Tofaeono Tavale are continuing our cultural practices.*



Figure 11: Rewi Amoamo and Asim Mukhtar filming Eseta's *talanoa*.

---

In responding to the heart of the inquiry on *fa'alavelave* variations when in Samoa or South Auckland, the main themes of Eseta's filmed *talanoa* surfaced in paragraph (2), where she stated outright what "the difference is" between *fa'alavelave* practices in Samoa and Aotearoa; and paragraph (3), in which she explained the meaning of gift-exchange in her opinion.

The second paragraph of Eseta's discussion brought to light two interrelated differences in the manner in which *fa'alavelave* in the Samoan village setting transpires in contrast to the Samoan diasporic setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. Firstly, she remarked that in Samoa, "there is a right time and place for *fa'alavelave*." Essentially, her statement suggests that the best location to conduct *fa'alavelave* proceedings for a funeral is the village setting of a deceased person's ancestral origin. The village infrastructure is purposely designed to accommodate funerals and *fa'alavelave* ceremonies with *malae* (space for gathering), *fale autu* (main building), *umukuka lautele* (communal kitchen), and connecting family *fale* (house) arranged around the *malae*. Related to the physical surroundings is the social value of *'ie kongā* (fine mats) as the highest form of traditional wealth in *fa'alavelave*, or gift exchanges. In the Samoan diaspora of Auckland, New Zealand, Eseta commented that "fine mats are replaced with cash donations" for convenience due to the scarcity of traditional wealth outside of Samoan villages and districts.

Her second point referred to the role of the "head of the family" at funerals in the Samoan village setting. In a village locale, not only do families that make up an *aiga* live in close proximity to one another on their ancestral land, but rather, their close relationships are bound to the leadership of their kinfolk. This cultural context of physical and social closeness allows them to work within the *aiga* structure when it comes to funeral proceedings by listening to one voice to make decisions and give instructions on preparations to be made; the voice of "the head of the family," as Eseta put it. The *aiga* does meet and discuss important matters of what items and cash each family will contribute to a *fa'alavelave* for a funeral. However, the point that I am making is that after deliberations between families of an *aiga*, the final decision can often be made by the leader of the *aiga* who would be a senior title-holder.

The third paragraph saw Eseta affirm that in the cultural context of *fa'alavelave*, specifically at funerals, the fundamental obligation is to be physically present to show *alofa* (love) and *fa'aalo'alo* (respect) for the grieving family of the deceased. Whether a funeral presentation of *fa'aalo'alo* is big or small is inconsequential: the important aspect of *fa'alavelave* is to share the grief of the deceased's family by offering care and comfort.

---

Understandably then, when more gifts are returned to group who attend a funeral than what they originally gave, people feel uneasy.

My interpretation of the contextual circumstances described here is that this change in cultural protocols guiding the *fa'alavelave* gift exchange customs of *fa'aalo'alo* (to show respect) and *fa'atamāli'i* (ceremonial reciprocity) has created a site of social tension where people attending a funeral can come away feeling that they should not have showed up in the first place. The outcome of this kind of social tension can result in a fracturing of the *vā*, or the relational space between the bereaved family and visiting groups who come to make a collective *fa'aalo'alo* presentation at the funeral.

## Significance of Ta Talanoa



Figure 12: Local Māori talking by an *urupā* (graveyard) in Barry Barclay's [Ngāti](#) (2006).

By returning to the body of theory discussed in *Chapter Two: Review of the Knowledge*, I focus here on the literature and film that made an impression on how this documentary project was conceived and designed. Underpinning this practice-oriented project are the linkages between *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* and theoretical aspects of Barry Barclay's book, *In Our Own Image: A Story of a Māori Filmmaker* (2015) and Tusi Tamasese's fiction film, *The Orator: O Le Tulafale* (2011). Together, Tamasese's film and Barclay's text have influenced how I envisaged creating a short documentary with my maternal uncle and aunt.

---

Making *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* in the Samoan language was the primary method this short documentary used to connect with Barry Barclay's theory of Fourth Cinema (Barclay, 2003). Originally, Fourth Cinema was conceived as cinema made by Indigenous filmmakers where the stories presented on-screen were located outside the orthodox stories told about the modern nation-state. On this point, Barclay noted that Māori and "others may seek to rework the ancient core values to shape a growing Indigenous cinema outside the national orthodoxy" (Barclay, 2003, p. 11). However, Fourth Cinema has been reconfigured in the twenty-first century in the sense that Māori stories told by Māori filmmakers are central to understanding Aotearoa in past, present, and future contexts. Due to the national and international success of Māori cinema produced by Māori filmmakers over the past four decades, cinema centred around Māori settings, narratives, and characters symbolises Aotearoa on-screen (Barclay, 1987; Gardiner and Grace-Smith, 2021; Mita, 1988; Tamahori, 2016; Waititi, 2010).

With that said, I believe there are strategies that can be used to situate Samoan language documentaries produced by Samoan filmmakers in Aotearoa, who are not Indigenous to the land where they reside, within the original meaning of Fourth Cinema being stories that lie outside conventional understandings of the nation-state. By using filmed *talanoa* and an approach of 'talking in' borrowed from Barry Barclay, meaning to talk among ourselves in our Indigenous language (Barclay, 2015, pp. 74-80), the documentary content that I have created in Aotearoa lays emphasis on memories and reflections of Samoa, the islands and villages of my family's ancestral origin. The fundamental documentary method is therefore the Samoan language and the willingness of the interviewer and the characters to engage in a collaborative process of pre-filming conversations to think out the information, ideas, and priority messages to convey on-screen to Samoan language audiences.

*Ta talanoa*, which is my Samoan adaption of Barry Barclay's 'talking in' concept and practice, was integral to *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* for the simple reason that I was creating an introspective documentary. By constructing a familiar set and surroundings for self-examining and inward-looking talks with my maternal uncle and aunt, the *ta talanoa*, meaning the process of literally, 'let us talk,' was an invitation to speak among ourselves and about ourselves on camera. For Fiso, Eseta, and myself in the role of interviewer, our ancestral land of Si'umu village signified our place of birth; the place where we were raised under the care of their parents, my grandparents, Tamā and Tinā. More so, Si'umu was, and still is, the spiritual home of our Tofaeono ancestors; the ancestors from whom our family title comes from. The logic here is that no matter where we reside in the global Samoan diaspora, Si'umu represents the one place in the world we can truly call home. As expected, whenever Fiso's discussion, in particular, drew on examples of the meaning of *fa'alavelave*,

the memories and stories he drew from were based in Si'umu, the one village in Samoa he felt he had an undeniable right to speak for and speak about.

## Why the Village Funeral Setting Matters



Figure 13: [Fa'alavelave](#) in Tusi Tamasese's *The Orator* (2011, November 11).

Previously noted in *Chapter Two: Contextual Review of the Knowledge* was an explanation of Tusi Tamasese's Samoan language film, *The Orator: O Le Tulafale* (Tamasese, 2011), in which he used the realism genre to communicate nuanced messages, meanings, and expressions of Samoan culture and society in a village context. In this section, I touch briefly on the preceding scene to the climax of the film. The climax is the *fa'alavelave* scene performed by the protagonist, a little person named Sāili and his brother-in-law Poto. Both are playing roles for their respective villages and *aiga* as *tulafale* or titled orators. This highpoint was located in a village funeral setting where Sāili's oratory on the *malae* made a personal request to his brother-in-law Poto: he asked if he could retrieve the body of his deceased wife, Vāiga, and take her to his village for burial. Generally, the interconnected concepts and practices of *so'otaga* (connections, relationships) and *tu ma aga* (customs, protocols) provide social indicators to Samoan language audiences about the meanings of *fa'alavelave* in village funeral settings. However, in a village-specific context,

---

the lead up to the climax saw an *auala* gathering with the village *matai*; a scene that directly links to parts of Fiso's filmed *talanoa*, my maternal uncle whom I interviewed.

Undoubtedly, Tamasese's *The Orator: O Le Tulafale* (2011) communicates to Samoan language audiences the very fabric of cultural identity within the village setting in respect to conducting funerals and *fa'alavelave* via the *nu'u* (village) system of social organisation. *So'otaga* (connections, relationships) and *tu ma aga* (customs and protocols) form the fundamental concepts and practices that guide the speechmaking and gift exchange process between visiting groups and the deceased's family hosting the funeral. Significantly though, the *auala* scene at 1:16:40 to 1:21:00 minutes forms a critical part of the film narrative.

By this, I mean that in Tamasese's film the *auala* depicts the village gathering to discuss funeral matters for Vāiga under the leadership of Fousaga, the main orator (Tamasese, 2011). Fiso underlined in his interview that in Aotearoa, the *auala* hardly, if ever, takes place: "*Auala* is rare in New Zealand. Although in Samoa, it is one of the most important cultural practices." My uncle went on to pinpoint the social circumstances that have given rise to the absence of *auala* among the Samoan diaspora by stating outright that "in New Zealand, the church replaces the village." For this candid reason, the absence of *auala* in New Zealand *fa'alavelave* proceedings dominated by church culture, I believe the *auala* scene in Tamasese's film is essential to depicting the difference between the village funeral setting and the Samoan diaspora church funeral setting. Even if Samoan New Zealanders born and raised outside of their ancestral village in Samoa have not experienced attending the *auala* ceremony, to see this cultural practice visualised on-screen offers them a village context to grasp why the *auala* is integral to funeral proceedings.

## Chapter Five: Project Reflection



Figure 14: *Fale o Samoa*, Samoan High Commission in Mangere, Auckland.

Reflecting on the documentary process that has steered this project, two interrelated factors have emerged that I want to reaffirm. Firstly, filmed *talanoa* with close relatives and elders of the researcher's *aiga* is formal talk on camera. Secondly, the participants' willingness to speak about complex topics with integrity is due to the *vā* driving the conversation, in which *vā* refers to the relationship connection between the participants and the researcher. These factors are situated within Barry Barclay's theory of "talking in," a documentary practice whereby the interviewer has made a conscious decision "to be talking to our own people first" (Barclay, 2015, p. 76).

*Ta talanoa*, a figure of speech that mimics Barclay's way of saying, "talking in" (Barclay, 2015, p. 76), was the purposeful approach that I took when designing and creating the short documentary, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*. From the commencement of the project through to completion, my intention was to focus on "talking in" and "talking to

---

[my] own people first” for the simple reason that I wanted to primarily video record conversations with elders of my *aiga* from Si’umu, Samoa (Barclay, 2015, p. 76). My research agenda has taken an inward looking and insular approach. However, producing an artefact in the Samoan language to me, was always about giving the short documentary back to my people so we can say this is ours, this film belongs to us (Milligan, 2017).

## Contextualising *Fa’alavelave*

In Eseta’s filmed *talanoa*, she referred to *fa’alavelave* or gift exchange between *aiga* at funerals in a certain way that requires decoding.

*My view is gift-exchange symbolizes love and support for those experiencing disruption. It is a cultural gesture of helping another person.*

*Fa’alavelave* translated into English is literally to disrupt or to obstruct. This is the precise meaning that Eseta was drawing on by noting that her material contribution to a *fa’alavelave* at a funeral was about easing the “disruption” or trouble that the *aiga* of the deceased was going through. By comparison, the figurative understanding is gift exchange and it is this popular meaning of *fa’alavelave* that Samoans in the present-day apply to funeral proceedings. Gift exchange is also the popular concept and practice applied to studies on Samoan protocols surrounding life cycle events, such as funerals and weddings (Pessi, 2007; Siauane, 2004).

Likewise, Fiso’s discussion focused on *fa’alavelave* as being part of the funeral process. He interpreted “the very meaning of *fa’alavelave*” to be the cultural obligation one feels to be present at a funeral to “pay respect” to the life of the deceased. One’s social relationship with the deceased is finite, meaning that when a person passes away, interactions with them in this world have ended. *Fa’alavelave* therefore acknowledges the funeral attendant’s association with the deceased during their lifetime, and that their relationship with the grieving family who are living will continue.

*The thing about a funeral is that your physical connection to the deceased stops. Never again will you see them alive. You are obliged to pay respect to the deceased and their family. This is the very meaning of fa’alavelave.*

---

The perspectives of these two siblings and elders of the same *aiga*, elders who migrated from Si'umu village in Samoa to South Auckland in the 1960s and have direct memory of *fa'alavelave* being practiced in their village, have emphasised the Samoan funeral as a space of social connection. Rather than putting emphasis on material transactions of fine mats, cash, and goods between funeral attendants and the *aiga* of the deceased, Fiso and Eseta stressed cultural obligation. In their view, people who attend funerals ought to be present to honour the deceased and their relationship to the grieving family by offering a gift to ease their sorrow and emotional burden. The spirit of *fa'alavelave* rests in the gathering of people and the continuation of communal ties. The actual gift exchange was seen more as symbolic in the sense that it should not predominate over the funeral proceedings by outweighing the importance of *aiga-to-aiga* connections.

## Limitations

I want to address this section about project limitations in an honest and lengthy discussion because this is the place where I can reflect on my learning and practice. One restriction placed on this practice-oriented thesis arose from my limitations with English literacy and research competency. Over a period of two plus years, I strived to acquire the English literacy and research skills needed for undertaking postgraduate study in a university, which was not a *wānanga*. I received continuous writing, proofreading, and editing support from my primary supervisor, library workshops for thesis writing, and an academic writing advisor. I changed my enrolment status to part-time and then took a six-month extension due to mounting pressures of studying, working full-time while parenting dependent children, and maintaining familial obligations to my *aiga*.

The eight universities in Aotearoa New Zealand are not based on the *wānanga* model, and the standards for measuring achievement are very different. From my experience, a *wānanga* is a tertiary institute where learning, teaching, and assessment are carried out within the social and cultural environment of a Māori organisation; an organisation where academic and administrative staff are predominantly Māori people from various tribal backgrounds (Taurima and Cash, 2000). The university, however, is structured by academic disciplines using a variety of methods for gathering and analysing data to evidence findings, or to develop a concept or an argument. Despite a practice-oriented thesis being creative research using a process of documenting and synthesising data, there

---

is still a strong element of reflective and critical thinking in doing the work (Tavares and Ings, 2018).

I have found the learning journey most difficult in a western university when it came to reading and writing at a high-level of English, and thinking critically about the research design and my role in the creative process. I am used to learning from oral speechmaking and storytelling and writing in a narrative style, and this was the first time I had been introduced to critical thinking in creative research (Runko, 2003). Thankfully, I had supervisors who continually encouraged me to persevere with my study and not to give up; supervisors who were willing to put in extra hours of work to teach me how to do the work practice-wise; how to read the screen and read written texts for deeper meaning; and how to write a documentary explanation and connect the work to relevant theories and methods. The extra supervision hours that Teena particularly took on to fix up the grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sense in my writing, plus carefully explain how to think critically and write according to an exegesis structure was a remarkable effort. Personally, I know the time, knowledge-sharing, and *aroha, alofa* (care) that my primary supervisor gave to this student was far more than what can be expected. Moreover, I can honestly say that if it was not for the generous time and work that the film crew Rewi and Asim gave to produce and edit my short documentary, then perhaps the film would not have been made in light that I did not have a budget or any source of funding.

I can now fully appreciate some of the circumstantial factors leading to why Māori and Pacific peoples from community education or wānanga backgrounds, similar to mine, might not be successful with postgraduate study in a university system (Theodore et al, 2018). Right from the start, we arrive as high-needs students. We not only require extra resourcing and writing and proofreading support, and in my situation, voluntary film production and post-production support, but supervisors from our communities with genuine empathy for our people and their lives. Vital for our success is a learning environment properly resourced to raise the level of literacy and research competency in a culturally responsive way. The thesis journey can take longer than the regular route of a one-year Master's thesis and turn into two or more years, as was my case.

Although I am happy with the artefact, I acknowledge the project is restricted by my limits in documentary research, specifically skills for putting together a short film in the Samoan language that conveys a meaningful message to both a niche audience of Samoans and a much broader general audience of non-Samoans. Because the film structure, visual style, and exchange of ideas in the Samoan language is culture-specific, the content targets the tastes and interests of a Samoan language audience. As a result, the

---

content appeals to certain aspects of the nature and character of this cultural identity group of Samoan language speakers.

Firstly, I expect that the target audience will know that capturing the *talanoa* of elderly siblings on-screen is a *taonga* (Māori for treasure) for generations of family who come after them; future generations who will see this short documentary as a part of their family heritage. Secondly, it is my belief that Samoan language speakers will understand and appreciate the deeply nuanced speech around the different practices of *fa'alavelave* in the Samoan village and in South Auckland in a way that only people who have a high-level of Samoan language fluency can grasp.

I have taken a risk by making a short documentary that is not likely to appeal to a general audience because the meanings and messages conveyed in the filmed *talanoa* are hard to understand for viewers located outside of Samoan ethnic and cultural identity. This is a limitation, but a decision that I have chosen to make because I felt a sense of urgency to create an artefact that I could give back to my *aiga* and village-affiliates to Si'umu in Samoa for our collective archives. My maternal uncles and aunts, and my mother too, are aging quickly and I wanted to record conversations with them in a visual format for posterity.

Another noteworthy limitation is that the filmed *talanoa* presented in *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange* are excerpts taken from longer conversations with the participants. The selected excerpts when woven together on-screen point to a much larger conversation among *aiga* and *nu'u* in Samoa, and communities in the diaspora, about the extravagance and unnecessary expense of *fa'alavelave*. Outright criticism of the excessiveness of *fa'alavelave* in Aotearoa New Zealand received media attention in the weekly television show, *Tagata Pasifika* (*Tagata Pasifika*, 2009). However, the short documentary I have made should not be taken as a point of reference for Samoan opinion in a generalising way. The views of my maternal uncle and aunt are not an interview sample for a qualitative research project by any means, but a video recording of their voices at a moment during their senior years as grandparents, retirees, and elders of our *aiga*.

## Further Research

Further creative research that could be developed from the artefact for this practice-led thesis is an exploration of the concept and practice of *auala*, which Fiso discussed in his filmed *talanoa*. Fiso observed that one significant aspect of *fa'alavelave* at funerals in Samoan villages was the *auala*, or the gathering of *matai*, the titled chiefs of the district, to discuss and decide how the funeral ceremony will take place with reference to cultural

---

protocols, such as gift exchange. The customary process of *auala* is not commonly part of Samoan funerals in South Auckland, and according to Fiso, is seldom seen in an Aotearoa New Zealand context. Producing short video portraits of individual *matai* recounting their understandings and experiences of *auala* from the four villages of Si'umu, Si'umu Uta, Maninoa, and Sāga that constitute the Si'umu electoral constituency, or Faipule district, would make a valuable practice-led research project aimed at recording cultural knowledge and heritage for Samoa and the Samoan diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Short video portraits have a distinct format and visual style when documenting *talanoa* on film. This would not be a documentary film in the conventional sense of making a full-length documentary of sixty-plus minutes screentime with a narrative told by characters over three acts. My understanding of video portraits falls more in line with the creative research of Tongan visual artist, Talita Toluta'u. Toluta'u's practice-led doctoral thesis, *Veitalatala: Mātanga 'o e Talanoa*, was a synthesis of the video recorded *talanoa* of migrant Tongan women from her village in the Ha'apai islands and other visual artforms, such as ngatu (bark cloth), photography, and music (Toluta'u, 2015). Her intention was to bring out the poetry in *talanoa*, known as *veitalatala* in the Tongan language, as well as emotions contained in memories and stories of the home village in Ha'apai, Tonga (Toluta'u, 2015).

Related to a creative project on *auala*, which would involve individual video recordings of several *matai* of no longer than ten-minutes each, is a subsequent examination of *lāuga* styles of speechmaking at funerals. Despite the present-day standardisation of formal Samoan language and speechmaking according to a predetermined structure, a more meaningful research approach would be to look closely at the diversity of *lāuga* styles with specific reference to the speechmaking of *matai* from the four villages of Faipule district. Such an exploration would open up cultural possibilities for the Samoan language audience by allowing them to see, hear, and experience via video portraits the way in which *matai* from a region of Samoa arrange and deliver their oratory, poetry, and message.

## ***Fa'afetai***

I conclude this practice-led thesis with the words spoken in Samoan by my uncle, Tu'u'u Atuatasi Fiso Tanuvasa Tofaeono, on behalf of my *aiga* (family, clan). When Fiso began his filmed *talanoa*, he structured the opening in the format of a *lāuga* (formal speech, lecture). Although this exchange did not make the final cut of *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, it is culturally appropriate that the exegesis ends with Fiso's speechmaking. Firstly, my uncle expressed thanks to my kind supervisors and the film crew who helped me

---

greatly with shooting and assembling a short documentary on-screen. Secondly, he paid homage to our beloved homeland, Samoa, by praising the sacrality of the time-honoured *matai* (chiefly) titles of Samoa; titles which memorialise the genealogical ties of our people to our beloved islands.

In closing, this cultural support structure and the Indigenous spirit and practice of collaboration, together with supervisors and a film crew whose hearts are with communities, enabled me to make and present this work as a small gift to give back to my people of Si'umu village and Faipule district in Upolu island of Samoa. *Fa'afetai lava tele.*

*Avea ia lenei itula e fa'afeiloa'i atu ai i lau afioga i le tama'ita'i pule Teena, ae maise ai fo'i le susuga ia Richard, ma le crew.*

*E talitonu fo'i le manatu e ao pea ona tapa le pa'ia ma sa ma faiga o le atunu'u, e faigata fo'i o Samoa o le atunu'u tofi, e le o se atunu'u taliola. O lele ua uma ona tu'u laupua ma tu'umatamaga, e talatau Tonga ae tala tofi Samoa. Ua taele fo'i a magavai ua uma ona aisa le l'a i tupu ma tamali'i o le atunu'u. Ia o le pa'ia lava lea i le afio o aiga o tupu, aiga o nofo, aiga o papa, aiga tafa'ifa, tama ma aiga, aiga ma latou tama, pule ma tumua, aiga i le tai ma le va'a o Fonoti, le pa'ia i le motu i sasa'e le afio o Sua ma le vaifanua, fofo ma aitulagi ma launiu saelua, to'oto'o a le Faleula ma tama a le Manu'a tele, e le fa'agaloina fo'i le tapua'iga a le au sa Levi, o lo'o fa'afalelemalu ma tala fa'auto i itu e fia o lenei lalolagi, o lo'o noaina manu aua Samoa mo nei ma a taeao, ia o le fa'apa'i malu atu lenei i lenei taeao.*

---

## References

- Barclay, B. (2003). Celebrating Fourth Cinema. *Illusions: A New Zealand Magazine of Film, Television and Theatre Criticism*, July, Pp. 1-11.
- Barclay, B. (2015). *Our Own Image: The Story of a Māori Filmmaker*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Canet, F. (2018). Making Cinema, Thinking Cinema: Reflexive Practices in Spanish Film-Making. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 95(4): 273-302.
- Canet, F. (2022). Filmmaker-subject relationship in documentary filmmaking. *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 14(1): 23-40.
- De Groof, M. (2013). Rouch's Reflexive Turn: Indigenous Film as the Outcome of Reflexivity in Ethnographic Film. *Visual Anthropology*, 26(2): 109-131.
- Fredericksen, D. (1979). Modes of Reflexive Film. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 4(3): 299-320.
- Gluckman, M. (Ed.) (1962). Les Rites De Passage. In *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*, edited by Max Gluckman. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, Pp. 1-52.
- Gray, R. (2012). The other side of paradise: Tusi Tamasese on 'The Orator.' *Metro Magazine*, No. 172 (January): 30-32.
- Holmes, L. D. (1980). Factors Contributing to the Cultural Stability of Samoa. *Anthropology Quarterly*, 53(3): 188-197.
- 'Iliau, C. (2009). Tauhi Vā: The First Space. *Interstices: Journal of Architectural and Related Arts*, 10(10): 20-31.
- Jackson, L. S. (2012). The brutally honest orator. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18(1): 243-245.
- Ka'ili, T. (2005). Tauhi Vā: Nurturing Tongan Sociospatial Ties in Maui and Beyond. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17(1): 83-114.
- Māhina, 'O. (2010). Tā, Vā, and Moana: Temporality, Spatiality, and Indigeneity. *Pacific Studies*, 33(2/3): 168-202.

- 
- Matapo, J., and Enari, D. (2021). Re-imagining the dialogic spaces of talanoa through Samoan onto-epistemology. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 26(1): 79-88.
- Marcus, G. E. (1980). Role Distance in Conversations between Tongan Nobles and “Their” People. *The Journal of Polynesian Society*, 89(4): 435-453.
- Milligan, C. (2017). Storytelling for Our Own People: A Reflection on Working with Māori Filmmaker Barry Barclay. *MEDIANZ*, 17(2): 63-74.
- Milligan, C. (2015). Sites of exuberance: Fourth Cinema and Barry Barclay, ten years on. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 11(3): 347-359.
- Muaiava, S. (2022). *Lauga: Understanding Samoan Oratory*. Wellington: Te Papa Press.
- Muliaina, T. (2017). Grounding *Malaga* in ‘*Aiga Samoa: Alofa* as Manifested in Population Movement. Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies, The University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- Pānoho, R. (2003). Kei hea te ngākau Māori? Locating the heart, Shona Rapira-Davies and reading Māori art. *He Pūkenga Kōrero*, 7(2): 25-34.
- Pānoho, R. (1995). The *Harakeke* – No Place for the Bellbird to Sing: Western Colonization of Māori Art in Aotearoa. *Cultural Studies*, 9(1): 11-25.
- Pessi, P. (2007). Fa’alavelave – changing tradition: Implications about exchange economy, a gift and a wedding in American Samoa. Master of Economics, University of Helsinki, Finland.
- Purcell Sjolund, A. (2013). An Analysis of Samoan Reaction to *The Orator (O Le Tulafale)*’s *Fāgogo* Defining Samoan Identity. Master of Indigenous Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin.
- Riddle, K. (2006). The Pulenu’u in Sāmoa: The Transformation of an Office. Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai’i, Honolulu.
- Runko, M. (Ed.) (2003). *Critical Creative Processes*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Siauane, L. L. (2004). Fa’asamoa: a look at the evolution of the fa’asamoa in Christchurch. Master of Arts in Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
- Smith, J. (2017). Review: Our Own Image: A Story of a Māori Filmmaker by Barry Barclay. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 126(3): 353-355.

- 
- Taurima, W., and M. Cash. (2000). Te Wānanga: Developing a Bicultural Model Using Critical Systems. *Open Polytech of New Zealand: Monographs in Māori Business*, 2: 1-6.
- Tavares, T. and W. Ings. (2018). Navigating Artistic Inquiry in a Creative Production Thesis: the Narrative and Illustrative Potentials of Realismo Maravilhoso. *DAT Journal of Design, Art and Technology*, 3(2): 9-42.
- Theodore, R. Et. Al. (2018). Pacific university graduates in New Zealand: what helps and hinders completion. *AlterNative*, 14(2): 138-146.
- Toluta'u, T. K. (2015). *Veitalatala: Mātanga 'o e Talanoa*. Doctor of Philosophy in Art and Design, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland.
- Turner, S. (2013). Reflections of Barry Barclay's Fourth Cinema. In *The Fourth Eye: Māori Media in Aotearoa*, edited by Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Pp. 162-178.
- Vaioleti, T. (2006). Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 12: 21-34.
- Wendt, A. (1995). Introduction. In *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, edited by Albert Wendt. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, Pp. 1-8.
- Waititi, K. (2008). Māori documentary film: Interiority and exteriority. *MAI Review*, Intern Research Report: 1-10.

## Film

- Barclay, B. (Director). (1991). *Te Rua* [Film]. Pacific Films.
- Barclay, B. (Director). (1987). *Ngāti* [Film]. Pacific Films.
- Filisi, F. (Director). (2022). [Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange](#) [Short Documentary]. Fritz Filisi.
- Gardiner, A., and Grace-Smith, B. (Directors). (2021). *Cousins* [Film]. Miss Conception Films.
- Tamahori, L. (2016). (Director). *Mahana* [Film]. Jump Film and Television.

---

Tamasese, T. (Director). (2011). *O Le Tulafale – The Orator* [Film]. Transmission Films.

Waititi, T. (2010). (Director). *Boy* [Film]. Whenua Films, Unison Films.

## Internet

Tagata Pasifika. (2009, April 30). *The F Word* [Video]. YouTube. [TAGATA PASIFIKA: The F Word Fa'alavelave - YouTube](#)

## Music

Punialava'a. (2022a, February 18). *Sulu i Le Papa Gagala* [Video]. YouTube. [Punialava'a - Sulu I Le Papa Gagala - YouTube](#)

Punialava'a. (2022b, February 22). *Sina Le'a Vele* [Video]. YouTube. [Punialava'a - Sina Le'a Vele - YouTube](#)

Punialava'a. (2020, December 1). *Tagi Le Atunu'u Pele* [Video]. YouTube. [Punialava'a - Tagi le Atunu'u Pele \(Official Music Video\) - YouTube](#)

---

# Glossary

## Samoan

<i>Afa'fine</i>	daughter
<i>Aiga</i>	family, clan
<i>Auala</i>	chiefly gathering at funerals
<i>Fa'aalo'alo</i>	respect
<i>Fa'afetai</i>	thanks, gratitude
<i>Fa'afetai lava tele</i>	thank you very much
<i>Faiā</i>	connections, relationships
<i>Fa'alavelave</i>	lit. hinder, obstruct
<i>Fa'alavelave</i>	fig. gift exchange
<i>Fa'asinomaga</i>	identity
<i>Fa'atamāli'i</i>	ceremonial reciprocity
<i>Fale</i>	house
<i>Fale autu</i>	main building
<i>'Ie konga</i>	fine mat
<i>Lāuga</i>	formal speech, lecture
<i>Malae</i>	arena, space for gathering
<i>Matai</i>	chief, title-holder
<i>Nu'u</i>	village, community
<i>So'otanga</i>	connections, relationships
<i>Talanoa</i>	talk, exchange
<i>Tane</i>	husband
<i>Tuafafine</i>	sister

---

<i>Tuagane</i>	uncle
<i>Tulafale</i>	orator, talking chief
<i>Tupuaga</i>	ancestry
<i>Tu Ma Aga</i>	protocols, customs
<i>Umukuka lautele</i>	communal kitchen
<i>Uso o le tina</i>	aunt
<i>Vā</i>	relational space

## Te Reo Māori

<i>Awhi rito</i>	inner core of flax plant
<i>Harakeke</i>	flax plant
<i>Iwi</i>	tribe
<i>Mana</i>	importance, status
<i>Manaakitanga</i>	acts of care, respect
<i>Marae</i>	communal meeting place
<i>Ngā Iwi Māori</i>	Māori tribes of Aotearoa
<i>Pākeha</i>	European New Zealander
<i>Te Ao Māori</i>	Māori world, worldview
<i>Tikanga</i>	protocols, customs
<i>Whakapapa</i>	ancestry, genealogy



---

# Participant Information Sheet

## For Video Recorded Interviews

### Date Information Sheet Produced:

4 April 2022

### Project Title

*Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*

### An Invitation

*Talofa Lava!* My name is Fritz Filisi and I am a researcher from Samoa who is now living and working in South Auckland. Currently I am a Master of Philosophy student at Auckland University of Technology, and my research produces a short documentary exploring the Samoan concept and practice of *fa'alavelave* in South Auckland. This is an invitation to participate in my research. If you choose to participate or not, it will neither advantage or disadvantage you. The research findings will be used for making a 20-minute documentary film and a 15-thousand-word written report for my Master of Philosophy degree. As well, the film will be entered at film festivals and I will publish a journal article about the filmmaking process.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore the cultural concept and practice of *fa'alavelave* – Samoan gift exchange, among generations of my extended family in South Auckland. I want to find out how different generations of Samoans conceptualise and practice *fa'alavelave* in South Auckland settings. Second, I want to know how this particular Samoan custom is being maintained today.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are an ethnic Samoan who speaks the Samoan language and a member of my extended family of five generations living in South Auckland. As the researcher, I have consulted with you in person or over the phone or Zoom video about the research project and the screenplay.

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

The research is carried out by filming individual discussions in the Samoan language. These discussions, which are responses to interview topics, are filmed on camera by the researcher. Fritz will have a second camera operator helping him to film some parts of the documentary. By emailing the researcher your interest in participating in the research and by reading this information sheet and signing the consent form, you are consenting to participate in the research.

### What will happen in this research?

For this research, the researcher will give you the film screenplay and a topic of conversation you will discuss in the film. There is no script and you will be asked to articulate your views as yourself. The researcher will video record the discussion and take still photographs of you for the report write-up. You will have an opportunity to

---

view the rough-cut of your video recorded talk and withdraw any parts of the discussion you have contributed if you do not want this used in the film. The researcher will use the research findings to produce a documentary film and write an exegesis, that is, an explanation of the film for a Master of Philosophy degree.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

There should be no discomforts or risks in carrying out a filmed discussion on a topic in the film as the researcher has consulted with you in person about the film project and screenplay. You will be given a copy of the screenplay and the specific topic you will discuss on camera before the date of filming takes place, and you do not have to answer any questions or comment on any topic if you do not want to. Also, you can withdraw from the research without giving a reason while the research is in the film production stage from May 2022 to December 2022.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you do experience discomfort or feel there are risks involved in discussing a certain topic in the film, you can choose not to answer questions or respond to topics that cause discomfort, or you can withdraw from the study without giving a reason during the film production stage from May 2022 to December 2022.

**What are the benefits?**

The benefits for the researcher is using the research findings to produce a documentary film and written exegesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy. The documentary will present experiences of different Samoan generations in respect to their collective maintenance of *fa'alavelave* in South Auckland and will be entered at film festivals. The benefits for participants who choose to participate in filmed individual discussions is that they are contributing information to a new area of documentary research on Samoan experiences of *fa'alavelave* in South Auckland.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

You will be named and identified in the documentary film, which will be deposited online at the AUT library website for open theses and dissertations, and also entered at film festivals. However, you will have an opportunity to review the rough-cut of your video recorded conversation with another character or other characters, and withdraw any part of your talk you do not want included in the final cut.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The filming of your discussion in the film could take 1-2 hours of your time to complete. It will vary according the size of the speaking role you have in the film, and whether there are reshoots of parts of the conversation. For characters who have larger speaking parts in the film, the filming will be spread out into small two-hour shoots over two to three days.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have two weeks to consider this invitation.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Once the Master of Philosophy thesis has been examined and conferred, you will receive an email copy of the exegesis in PDF format. You will also be invited to a special screening of the documentary film at a community venue in South Auckland for characters who have had a role in the film and their families.

**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 Supervisor:

Dr Teena Brown Pulu

Email: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

---

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 5227

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the AUTEK Secretariat:

Email: [ethics@autec.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@autec.ac.nz)

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 6038

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Full Name: Tofilau Fritz Toeta Fa'apoi Filisi

Email: [fantangling@gmail.com](mailto:fantangling@gmail.com)

NZ Mobile: 027 223 1325

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Name: Dr Teena Brown Pulu

Email: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 5227

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on: 4 April 2022.**

**AUTEK Reference Number: 22/61.**

# Fa'amatalaga mo tagata auai

## Mo fa'atalanoaga e pu'eina i ata Vitiō

**Aso sa fa'amauina ai Fa'amatalaga:**

4 Aperila 2022

### **Ulutala mo lenei Polokeki**

*Fa'alavelave: Si'i alofa ma Fa'atau alofa*

### **O le Valaaulia**

Fa'atalofofa atu i lo outou pa'ia ma lo outou mamalu ae maise le tapuai'ga mamana a si o tatou atunu'u, nu'u ma alalafaga, aiga ma pelega i mafutaga masani o le a le o'o i ai se leo leaga o le pa'ia ua taoto e mai le vavau e le toe mafai ona suia se mata'itusi ina ne'i sala se leo. Talofa lava. O lo'u igoa o Fritz Filisi, mai le nu'u o Si'umu i Samoa, o se Samoa o lo'o faia se ata tau su'esu'ega o tala maumaututu fa'atokumeniteri ma ni mea sa tutupu po'o lo'o tutupu. I le taimi nei, ou te a'oga ma o lo'o su'esu'eina nei le tikeri o le Master of Philosophy i Auckland University of Technology. O leni su'esu'ega o le a pu'eina ai ma fa'amautuina se ata pu'upu'u fa'atokumeniteri e sa'ili'iliina ai le talitonuga po o le tu ma uiga ma le fa'atinoina o se fa'alavelave (si'i alofa po ole fa'atau alofa) i Aikilani i Saute. O se valaaulia leni e mafai ai ona e auai i leni fa'atalanoaga. E le afaina oe pe afai e te auiai pe leai. O leni tofa sa'ili po ole fa'atalanoaga o le a fa'aogaina e faia ai le ata fa'atokumeniteri e 20 minute lona umi ae sefululima afe upu tusitusia mo la'u tikeri i le Master of Philosophy. O le a fa'aulufaleina fo'i leni ata i nofoaga o ata fa'ali eseese ma fa'asalalauina fo'i se tusitusiga pu'upu'u e fa'atatau i le fa'agasologa o le faiaina o leni ata.

### **O le a le mafua'aga o leni tofa sa'ili?**

O le mafua'aga o leni tofa saili ina ia sa'ililiina ma va'ililiina le talitonuga ma le fa'atinoina o fa'alavelave – si'i alofa po ole fa'ataualofofa, i auga tupulaga a lo'u aiga i Aukilani i Saute. E toe va'ava'ai pe i ai ni suiga i le fa'atinoina o fa'alavelave mai i augatupulaga ese'ese i Aukilani i Saute. O lona lua, o le toe sa'ililiina o le fa'atinoina o leni talitonuga i ona po nei.

### **E i ai se mafua'aga ua vala'auliina ai a'u i leni tofa sa'ili?**

O oe o le Samoa e mafai ona e malamalama ma talanoa i le gagana Samoa ma o se tasi o lo'u aiga mai i totonu o auga tupulaga e lima o lo'o nonofo nei i Aukilani i Saute. Sa fa'atalatalanoa fo'i leni mataupu i luga o le telefoni, sumu, imeli ma fa'afesaga'i e tusa ai ma leni poloketi ma le fa'atinoina o le pu'eina.

### **E fa'apefea ona avatu so'u maliega ina ia auai i leni tofa sa'ili?**

O lou auai i leni tofa sa'ili e fai i lou finagalo malie e tusa ai ma lau filifiliga ma e le afaina lava oe pe afai e te auai pe le auai fo'i. E mafai ona e fa'amavae mai i leni sa'ili'iliga i so'o se taimi lava. Afai e te filifili e fa'amavae mai i leni sa'ili'iliga, e tu'uina atu ia te oe e te filifili ai fa'amatalaga uma e patino lava ia te oe e aveeseina pe fa'atagaina ona fa'aauau lona fa'aogaina. Ae afai ua fa'amautu uma nei sa'ili'iliga, o le a fa'afaigata ma e ui ai ina le toe mafai ona aveeseina ni fa'amatalaga patino ia te oe.

O leni tofa sa'ili e fa'aogaina le gagana Samoa e fa'atalanoaina ai ta'ito'atasi e o lo'o auai i leni ata. O nei fa'atalatalanoaga o le tali atu lea i mataupu fa'atalanoaina ma e pu'eina lea i vitiō pu'eata e le tufuga sa'ili. O le a fesoasoani fo'i ia Fritz se tasi i le vitiō pu'eata lona lua e pu'eina ai nisi vaega o leni tokumeniteri Ua e malie e te auai i leni tofa sa'ili mai i le meliina mai o lou naunauta'iga ina ia auai i leni tofa sa'ili, faitauina o nei fa'amatalaga, ma sainia le pepa o lau maliega.

### **O mea e tutupu i lenei tofā sa'ili?**

Mo lenei tofā sa'ili, e tu'uina atu ia te oe e le tufuga sa'ili le fa'asologa o vaega o lenei ata ma le mataupu e fa'atalanoaina i lenei ata. E leai ni fa'amatalaga tusitusia e te faitauina ae e tu'uina atu ia te oe le avanoa e fa'amatalaina ma fa'asoa lou silafia ma lou lava tomā. O le a pu'eina e le tufuga sa'ili nei talanoaga i vitiō ma pu'eina ata e fa'aaogaina i le tusitusiina o le lipoti fa'amaumau. E maua fo'i le avanoa e te maimoa ai i le ata vitiō o lau talanoaga ma aveeseina pe tipina ai vaega o lau talanoaga e te mana'o e aveese e le fa'aaogaina i lenei ata. Ou te fa'aaogaina ni fa'amatalaga e maua mai i lenei tofa sa'ili e faia ai lenei ata fa'akomeniteri ma tusiina ai le fa'amatalaina ma le fa'amalamalamaina o lenei ata mo le tikeri o le Master of Philosophy.

### **Oa ni fa'apopolega ma ni fa'aeteetega?**

E le tatau ona i ai ni fa'apopolega po'o ni fa'aeteetega i le fa'aauuina o le fa'atalanoaina o mataupu i lenei ata e pei ona fa'atalanoaina ai e le tufuga sa'ili e tusa ai ma lenei poloketi ma le fa'asologa o vaega o lenei ata. O le a tu'uina atu le kopi o le fa'asologa o lenei ata ma le mataupu fa'apitoa e fa'atalanoaina i lenei ata ae le'i o'o i le aso e pu'eina ai. E le fa'amalosia fo'i le taliina o ni fesili po nisi o fa'amatalaga e mana'omia ai sau fa'amatalaga pe afai e te le finagalo i ai. E mafai fo'i ona e fa'amavae mai i lenei tofa sa'ili e aunoa ma se tu'uina mai o se mafua'aga a'o o lo'o i ai i le vaega o lo'o pu'eina ai lenei ata mai i le masina o Me seia o'o atu ia Tesema i le 2022.

### **E fa'aapefa ona fo'ia nei fa'apopolega ma fa'aete'etega?**

Afai e fa'apopoleina oe pe lagonaina fo'i ni fa'aete'etega i le fa'atalanoaina o nisi o mataupu autu, e ia te oe le faitalia e te le tali ai i fesili ma mataupu e maua ai ni fa'apopolega, pe fa'amavae fo'i e aunoa ma se tu'uina mai o se mafua'aga i le taimi o pu'eina lenei ata mai ia Me 2022 se'ia o'o atu ia Tesema 2022.

### **Oa ni penefiti?**

O le penefiti mo le tufuga sa'ili o le fa'aaogaina lea o tala ma fa'amaumauga maua mai i lenei tofa sa'ili e faia ai le ata fa'atokumeniteri ma le tusitusia o fa'asologa ma le fa'amalamalamaina o lenei tikeri ole Master of Philosophy. O lenei tokumeniteri o le a tu'uina atu ai le soifuga silafia o auga tupulaga o Samoa e tusa ai ma le ola soifua i le fa'atinoina taofimamau o *fa'alavelave* i Aukilani i Saute ma o le a fa'aulufaleina i le nofoaga e fa'aalia ai ata eseese po'o film festivals.

### **E fa'aapefa ona puipuia fa'amaumauga lilo o lo'u nei tagata?**

O le a fa'ailoaina oe ma lou suafa i lenei ata fa'atokumeniteri, ma o le a tu'uina atu lea i luga o le laina ola a le upega tafa'ilagi a le AUT mo tusitusiga ma fa'amaumauga tusitusi e tatalaina, ma fa'aulufale ai fo'i i nofoaga o ata fa'aali. E i ai lou avanoa e te maimoaina ai le ata i talanoaga sa pu'eina ma le isi tagata po'o nisi fo'i, ma e mafai ai ona aveeseina mai vaega o lau talanoaga e te le mana'omia i totonu o lenei ata i lona teuteuga mulimuli.

### **Oa ni tau i le auai i lenei tofā sa'ili?**

O le pu'eina o lau fa'atalanoaga i lenei ata e tusa ma le 2-3 itula o lou taimi e fa'auma ai. E fuafua fo'i i le umi o le talanoa ma lau matafai i totonu o le ata, pe i ai ni talanoaga e tatau ona toe pu'eina. Mo latou e uumi a latou fa'amatalaga i lenei ata, o le a fa'aaogaina ni aso se lua pe tolu e vaevaeina ai itula ta'ilua e pu'eina ai.

### **O le a se umi o se avanoa e faia ai se filifiliga i lenei vala'aulia?**

E lua vaiaso e tu'uina atu e faia ai lau fa'ai'uga.

### **E maua mai ni fa'amaumauga ma fa'amatalaga i le taunu'uga o lenei tofā sa'ili?**

A mae'a loa ona iloiloaina nei su'esu'ega ma tusitusiga fa'amaumau o le Master of Philosophy ma fa'amaonia, o le a mauaina le kopi e meli atu i le faiga PDF. O le a vala'auina fo'i oe i le fa'ailoaina fa'apitoa o lenei ata fa'atokumeniteri i se fa'alapotopotoga i Aukilani i Saute mo'i latou uma sa i ai o latou fa'asoa fa'atasi ai ma o latou aiga i lenei ata.

---

**O le a se mea ou te faia pe afai e i ai ni fa'apopolega i lenei tofa sa'ili?**

So ose fa'apopolega lava e tusa ai ma le natura o lenei poloketi e fa'afeso'ota'i muamua lava le Supavaisa:

Dr Teena Brown Pulu

Email: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 5227

Mo Fa'apopolega e fa'atatau i le fa'atinoina o lenei tofa sa'ili ia fa'afeso'ota'i le failautusi o le AUTEC

Imeli: [ethics@autec.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@autec.ac.nz)

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 6038

**O ai e tatau ona fa'afeso'ota'i mo nisi o fa'amatalaga i lenei tofa sa'ili?**

Fa'amolemole ia taofiina lau pepa lenei mo fa'asino i se taimi lumana'i. E mafai ona e fa'afeso'ota'iina le au a lenei tofa sa'ili e pei ona i ai i lalo:

**Tufuga Tofa Sa'ili**

Full Name: Tofilau Fritz Toeta Fa'apoi Filisi

Email: [fantangling@gmail.com](mailto:fantangling@gmail.com)

NZ Mobile: 027 223 1325

Supavaisa o le Poloketi

Suafa: Dr Teena Brown Pulu

Meli: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

Telephone: +64 9 921-9999 Ext. 5227

**Fa'amaonia mai e le komiti o Aga ma Ala Tausili o le Auckland University of Technology i le aso: 4/4/2022.**

**Numera o mataupu fa'amaumuina a le AUTEC: 22/61.**

# CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

## FOR VIDEO RECORDED FOCUS GROUPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

*Project title:* Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange

*Project Supervisor:* Dr Teena Brown Pulu

*Researcher:* Tofilau Fritz Toeata Fa'apoi Filisi

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 4 April 2022.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I permit the researcher | artist to use the video recordings and photographs that are part of this project and/or any drawings from them and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for (a) the researcher's | artist's documentary film and exegesis; and (b) educational exhibition and examination purposes and related design works; and (c) all forms and media for advertising, trade and any other lawful purposes as stated on the Information Sheet.
- I understand that the documentary film and photographs will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- I understand that any copyright material created by the video recordings and photographic sessions is deemed to be owned by the researcher | artist and that I do not own copyright of any of the documentary film and photographs.
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

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

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on: 4 April 2022.**

**AUTEC Reference number: 22/61.**

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

# O Pepa o Maliliega ma le Tatala

## MO LE PU'EINA O ATA VITIŌ MA ATA PU'E MO KULUPU TAULA'I

Ulutala o le Poloketi: *Fa'alavelave: Si'i alofa po o Fa'ataualofa*

Supavaisa o le Poloketi: *Dr Teena Brown Pulu*

Tufuga Sa'ili: *Tofilau Fritz Toeata Fa'apoi Filisi*

- Ua ou faitauina ma malamalama i fa'amatalaga ua saunia i lenei tofā sa'ili e tusa ai ma fa'amatalaga fa'amaumau o lenei pepa i le aso 4 Aperila 2022.
- Sa ou mauaina le avanoa e fesiligia i fesili ma tali o fesili.
- Ua ou malamalama fo'i o le auai i lenei sa'ililiga e fai i le loto faitalia ma e mafai ona ou fa'amavae mai i lenei sa'ililiga i so o se taimi lava e aunoa ma se afaina ai o a'u.
- Ua ou malamalama fo'i afai ou te fa'amavae mai i lenei sa'iliga, o le a tu'uina mai ia te a'u le filifiliga e aveeseina ai ni fa'amatalaga e patinotonu ia te a'u pe fa'aauuina. Ae afai ua uma ona fa'amaumauina uma fa'amatalaga sa'ililiga, o le a faigata ona toe aveeseina ni fa'amaumauga patino ia te a'u.
- Ou te fa'atagaina le tufuga sa'ili e fa'aaogaina le pu'eina o vitiō ma ata o vaega o lenei poloketi, po ni ata tusitusi po'o nisi lava fa'amaumauga ma nisi lava suiga talafeagai mai i a'i latou, pe ato'atoa, pe le atoa, tuto'atasi po oni so'otaga mani upu po'o ni ata tusitusi e fa'atino tonu lava mo le (a) tufuga sa'ili ma le ata fa'atokumeniteri ma lona fa'amatalaina ma le auiliiliina; (e) fa'ailo fa'alea'oa'oga ma taofi i su'ega ma ala so'ota'i o lona ata ta'atia mai; (i) o auala uma tau fa'asalalau ma fa'atosina, fefa'ataua'iga ma nisi fa'amoemoe e tusa ai ma le tulafono e pei ona fa'amatalaina i lenei pepa.
- Ua ou malamalama o lenei ata fa'atokumeniteri ma ata pu'e o le a lē mafai lava ona fa'ailoa i so'o se auala e aunoa ma sa'u maliega tusitusia.
- Ua ou malamalama o aiatatau ma le puleaina o nei fa'amaumauga mai i vitiō ma ata pu'e, o le a mauaina lea e le tufuga sa'ili, ma e leai fo'i sa'u aia tatau ou te pulea ai vaega uma o lenei ata fa'atokumeniteri ma ata pu'e.
- Ua ou malie ou te auai i lenei tofā sa'ili

Saini a le sui auai: .....

Suafa o le sui auai: .....

Auala fa'afeso'ota'i ma le sui ai (pe a tusa ai):

Aso:

***Fa'amaonia e le komiti o Aga ma Ala Tausili o le Auckland University of Technology on: 4/4/2022.***

***Numera o mataupu fa'amaumauina a le AUTEK: 22/61.***

*Fa'aaliga: E tatau ona taofi le kopi o lenei pepa e le sui auai.*

---

Fritz Filisi

Auckland, New Zealand

fantangling@gmail.com

+64 27 223 1325

4 April 2022

Dear [name],

I am a postgraduate student at Auckland University of Technology and am making a documentary film and writing an exegesis on the concept and practice of *Fa'alavelave*, Samoan gift exchange for a Master of Philosophy degree.

I am writing to request permission for the following works, for which I believe you hold the copyright, to be included in my thesis:

[Cite work/s].

A digital copy of the documentary film and the exegesis will be made available online via the University's digital repository [Tuwhera](#). This is an open access research repository for scholarly work, intended to make research accessible to as wide an audience as possible. A small run of print copies will also be made.

I am seeking from you a non-exclusive licence to include these materials in my thesis. The materials will be fully and correctly referenced in the exegesis and I will acknowledge you as the owner of the photographs in the final credit roll of the documentary film and in the written report of an exegesis.

If you agree, I should be very grateful if you would reply to me via email, or alternatively sign the form below and return a copy to me. If you do not agree, or if you do not hold the copyright in this work, would you please let me know.

I can most quickly be reached by email at [fantangling@gmail.com](mailto:fantangling@gmail.com) or on my mobile phone at +64 27 223 1325. Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,  
Fritz Filisi

---

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to grant you a non-exclusive licence for an indefinite period to include the above materials, for which I am the copyright owner, in the print and digital copies of your thesis.

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