

Dedication

In memory of my loving father the late Sunia Vahenga Vikilani and to my dearest mother Lavinia Vikilani with deep gratitude and sincere admiration for the love and dedication that you have endlessly shown me throughout my life. To my wife Tavai Maleifua Vikilani and my daughters Vika Tupou Feletoa, Lavinia Tupou Laulata and Mele Tonga Moana ki Feletoa Vikilani.

Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is the results of my own work.

Sione Fatanitavake Vikilani.

Abstract

This thesis examines the relationships between the media, politics and the state in Tonga. The research from the onset tries to incorporate historical events in Tonga's history, thus taking into account the local traditions in order to understand these relationships and their implications. The relationships between the media, politics and the state in Tonga became inseparable early, once the media were introduced in the mid 1800's by the missionaries. There is also an underlying assumption in the media literature that the media are so powerful that they can determine election results. This may have been true in developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain, but it is not the case in Tonga as this research suggests that there are other factors that mediate their effects. These include the local culture, party affiliation, the geography of the country, the kinship or *kainga* system, and media ownership, among other factors. Tonga's political environment is also one of these factors, given that Tonga is a Constitutional Monarchy with a strong monarch.

This study applies a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to examine and understand how the media interacted with other variables during the 2008 Tongan Parliamentary election and their likely impact. The research makes use of the concepts of "agenda setting" and "two step flow" of information, adapted to fit the Tongan context. The results provide surprising conclusions. Candidates' media exposure was not a factor contributing to their success in most cases, though in some constituencies exposure on television showed a significant positive correlation with success. More surprisingly, the use of radio was significantly negatively correlated with success. Candidates who used newspapers for their campaigns were generally more successful, despite the difficulty people in the outer islands faced in gaining access to newspapers.

This thesis concludes that despite the media's influence in Tongan politics, it was not the deciding factor as there were other contributing factors. Although the correlation between what the public thought and what the media were saying at the time was very high, this was not reflected in the pattern of voting. Generally, however the candidate's media exposure and their chances of winning were negatively correlated. This emphasises the argument in this thesis that, in small island states like Tonga, there may be other significant intervening variables apart from the media that should be taken into consideration in explaining the dynamics of politics, such as the traditional kinship system and culture.

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Glossary of Tongan Terms

anga fakatonga	Tongan way of life or Tongan culture
‘eiki	chief
‘eiki toputapu	sacred ruler
fa’ahinga	extended family
fahu	institutionalized sister’s/female’s social and economic interests in which the sister is of superior rank to that of the brother.
faifekau	church minister
faka’apa’apa	respect
fala	mat
fatongia	obligation
fono	village meeting/council
fonua	country/land
ha’a	class or lineage; the largest socio-political unit in Tonga -- a loose confederation of genealogically related chiefs and their peoples.
ha’a me’avale	commoners
hau	temporary ruler
hopoate	slaves
hou’eiki	chiefly class
kainanga-e-fonua	eaters of the soil
kāinga	people of a Tongan village or localities headed by a ruling title chief
kalapu	club

kava	ceremonial beverage made from kava plant (piper methysticum)
kolo	village
lotu	religion
mafai	power or authority
matāpule	chief's spoke person
minisitā	government minister
nōpele	noble
pālangi	foreigner
polopolo	offering the best output from land to the chiefs
po'opo'o'i	government newspaper
pōpula	slaves
pule	authority
pule'anga	government
pule'anga moe siasi kae mālohi ha fonua	ATongan slogan which advocates that alliance of church and state makes a nation strong ('two pillars').
tamai	father
tapu	taboos
tu'a	commoner
Temo	pro-democracy movement
tu'i	monarch/King
tofi'a	estate
'ulumotu'a	head of the extended family

Abbreviations

ADB	Asia Development Bank
CEC	Constitution and Electoral Commission
FIHEDMT	Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement
OBN	Oceania Broadcasting Network
PCPR	Peoples' Committee for <i>Political Reform</i>
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PSA	Public Servants Association
TBC	Tonga Broadcasting Commission
THRDM	Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement
TMN	Taimi Media Network
TNBA	Tonga National Business Association

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