

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1.1 Aim of the study.**

This thesis examines the relationship between the media and the Tongan political system, and explores the role that the mass media play in Tongan politics, highlighting the 2008 Parliamentary election and other recent events. Although the relationships between media coverage, public opinion and politics have been well documented in the United States and other western countries, they remain a neglected area of research in Tonga. This research is concerned primarily with the relationship of the mass media and the political dynamics in Tonga, arguing that the media's influence is mediated by other factors. Existing knowledge about how the media influence certain aspects of Tongan society including politics is very limited, because of the lack of empirical research in the field of media studies. The scholarship and literature that are available on Tonga have focussed on events related to the struggle for control of the media (see Chapters 6 and 7) rather than the media's role and impact on these events and the wider society. The alleged power or influence of the mass media has led to extensive studies of media effects in western democracies but less in small island states including Tonga.

The study of Tonga is important because key historical events and political developments are closely linked to media influence. Interpersonal communication is also a strong part of Tonga's culture, taking into account its socio-political hierarchical structure (see Chapter 4). The interconnectedness of Tongan society and the networks within it influence how the media operate. In order to fully understand the influence of the media, therefore, other vital and important intervening variables including interpersonal communication and culture will have to be taken into account. The media however do exert

some direct and independent influence over some aspects of the Tongan politics. A former leading CBS researcher Joseph Klapper quoted in Weaver (1996) suggested that:

Mass Communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors and influences. (Weaver, 1996: 35)

Klapper joins others including Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gautet 1948, to name but a few, by arguing that the media are not the all powerful force that they were once thought to be, but that they intertwine with other forces or variables. Schmitt-Beck's "bandwagon effect" does not fully support Klapper's argument even though their views are similar in relation to the role of interpersonal communication. Schmitt-Beck's (2003) study of the first all-German election in December 1990 argues that interest in the media's political reporting influenced voters' perceptions of the election outcome, in addition to interpersonal political communication. Yang and Stone (2003: 57) also suggested that the mass media are not the only sources from which people obtain knowledge of issues or events directly. Information can be conveyed both directly and indirectly from the mass media. This is in line with Tonga's traditional culture, in which word of mouth through interpersonal communications is still influential. Weaver, Zhu and Willnat, (1992) argue that information is conveyed through direct personal experiences and through structured patterns of social interaction. In Tonga's case, the social interaction may not be structured but the influence and outcome can be similar to that of the media. Institutions such as the church, kinship (*kainga*), workplace, organisations etc, also influence how information is conveyed. The *nofo 'a kainga* (way of life in the kinship and extended family system) is one of the fundamental cornerstones of Tongan society and could be regarded as an institution in its own right. Through the kinship and extended family system, there are influential individuals

who can be referred to as “opinion leaders,” according to Katz and Lazarsfeld’s definition in their “two step flow” theory.

The study of the media in Tonga is problematic at the same time because a single concept or theory cannot capture the big picture of the influence of the media in Tongan politics. So in order to fully understand the relationship between media and politics and the influence that the media have on Tongan politics, this research makes use of a combination of theories dealing with media effects. These include the “agenda setting role” of the media, proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the “two step flow” (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), and the notion of “manufacturing consent” of Herman and Chomsky (2002), among others.

The Tongan media have been developing rapidly in the last 20 years. They have been an influential agent in the construction of a new and more open Tongan society, as well as in political developments. While the relationship between public opinion, mass media, and political elites in the United States and western countries are well documented, less is known about this topic in Tonga. The media have become the new space that politicians, government, citizens and other stakeholders use to spread their propaganda, voice their concerns, and strengthen their power. As Tonga moves from a traditional society that saw questioning the authorities as disrespectful to one that openly challenges the establishment, the development of the media has been a major sign of democracy in a previously aristocratic and monarchical system. Voicing concerns, criticizing the royal family, and questioning the authorities were unheard of in traditional Tongan society until the media were introduced into the country. The development of the media industry has also left its mark on the political life of the tiny island kingdom. The media’s influence has been both praised and criticized locally and abroad but these claims of influence have hitherto lacked empirical evidence. Historically the first newspaper was established by the government in 1869 (Barney, 1974, see also Chapter 4) to educate the people about the revised laws of Tonga introduced in 1862. From the

beginning, newspapers were used by the authorities as a political tool to spread their cause, and the same is still true (see Chapter 6 for the continuities).

The introduction of the new media is also starting to make its mark in Tonga but the high cost of the new technology such as internet connections and computers hinders this development. The population distribution within Tonga's scattered islands is another stumbling block. Newspapers take days to reach some islands and even radio signals are difficult to receive in some of them. This is a common problem throughout the small island nations of the Pacific. The impact of the new media is not as clear as it is in the United States or the developing mainland states but it cannot be ignored. The power of the new media was evident in the recent U.S. presidential election where it said to have had a powerful impact on Obama's election. Actor Jon Voight (Fox News, 2009) attributed Obama's success to the media when he stated, "The Press brought Obama to office." The aftermath of the Iran 2009 presidential election demonstrates the power of the internet and the new media. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube were used by ordinary Iranians to get their news to the outside world. However the impact of the new media in Tonga has yet to reach that magnitude. With the economic downturn and the limited market in Tonga for the media industry, the internet is becoming the alternative venue in which the media industry can survive.

### ***The Tongan Diaspora.***

The Tongan communities outside of Tonga, especially in New Zealand, Australia and the United States, are believed to number more than the resident Tongan population of just over a hundred thousand. The Tongan Diaspora provides an economic lifeline for not only their families back home, but Tonga's economy as well. Although some families emigrated over 20-40 years ago, their links to Tonga remain strong. The internet is the main medium that

provides them with news about Tonga. Second in importance to the internet are the newspapers, especially in New Zealand where the majority of the Tongan newspapers are printed. Despite their economic significance, the majority of the Tongans outside Tonga prefer not to get involved with Tongan local politics. These people can still vote in Tongan elections but they have to be in Tonga in order to vote. In research conducted in Auckland, New Zealand), Sydney, Australia, and San Francisco in the United States, more than 80 percent of those that took part in the survey did not want to vote in Tonga mainly because they lived in a different country. They would rather leave the local people in Tonga to decide their leaders because they are the ones living in the country and knows the candidates better than those abroad.

At the same time the Tongan communities outside Tonga are a lucrative market for the media industry, especially through the internet. The Matangitonga Online site (see Chapter 4) is an example of how local Tongan media can utilise the internet. However, despite their lack of interest in voting, the experiences of Tongans abroad in more democratic countries has certainly colored the view of the the electorate in Tonga in regard to local politics. The Tongan communities outside Tonga provide a base for activists to organize and publish when their activities in Tonga itself are banned (see chapter 6) Another example is the 2006 attack on the royal residence in Auckland New Zealand organised by pro-democracy supporters. When the Taimi 'o Tonga newspaper was banned from Tonga it was a New Zealand based activist who brought the banned newspaper to Tonga prompting the court cases which eventually led to the lifting of the ban (see chapter 4 and 6).

There is no doubt that voters and the general public receive information on candidates from the media. They also learn about the political situation of the country from the media, but the question of whether what is said in the media influences voters and changes their

attitudes needs further investigation, and is the focus of this study. The media affects some aspects of Tongan society, but how far, has yet to be tested.

The rule of the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV is vital to this study because during his reign Tonga opened up to the rest of the world. He was responsible for the introduction of radio and the other media to Tonga. It was towards the latter stages of his reign that controversial media legislation was introduced that led to the banning of Tonga's most popular newspaper, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* (see also Chapters 4 & 6). The first move towards a more democratic form of government was also initiated by the late king, with the appointment of the first commoner as Prime Minister in 2005.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This study examines the role played by the media in Tongan politics. As suggested above, there are other supporting factors or intervening variables that either reinforce or hinder the media's influence on their targeted audience. The speed and success of reformers' push for political reform has been attributed partially to the role played by the media. Although this role has not been empirically documented, anecdotal evidence from previous historical events (see Chapter 6 and 7) supports this argument to some extent.

The Tongan economy is unstable and relies heavily on foreign aid and remittances. This makes it hard for media operators to start and maintain operation due to the high costs. Tonga is also geographically disadvantaged due to the fact that the population is scattered around 36 of its 170 islands, which stretch over a distance of about 800 kilometres (500 miles) in a north-south line (Wikipedia). Communication and transportation between these islands are limited, and television is restricted to the main island of Tongatapu and the nearby island of Eua.

One of the intervening variables is the local Tongan traditional culture. Tonga's way of life as reflected in its form of government is not based on individualism as in a democratic system, but is rather pluralistic and communalistic. In Tonga's case, studying elections is problematic in the sense that Tonga is not a democratic country. Elections do not change governments but only change some of the lawmakers in the Legislative Assembly. The government is appointed separately by the King.

The main questions discussed in this thesis include the structure of the media in Tonga as a small island state, the problems they face, the patterns of control they give rise to, and how these are played out in local politics. More specifically:

- What effects have the new technologies and particularly the convergence of technologies in the internet, had on the ownership of the media and patterns of media control in Tonga?
- Does ownership have any influence over what is presented by the media?
- What role did interpersonal communication play in the 2008 Tongan election?
- What role did the media play in the political reform in Tonga and in events such as the Civil Servant's strike and the riots (described in Chapter 7)?
- What is the future for the media industry in Tonga? Is it moving from small family owned businesses to larger conglomerate businesses, and is the government losing its influence over the media by privatization?

This thesis also tests hypotheses such as, the more exposure a candidate has in the mass media the higher his chance of winning a seat; and it is the media in Tonga that sets the public agenda by making some issues more salient than others.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This thesis is significant in several ways. Firstly, it does not only contribute to the study of the media in Tonga but it can act as a base for future research on the topic. Tonga is small enough for such research and its geographical location and population distribution are also unique, as this study will show. Within one country, the importance of the various media varies from place to place: the mass media are effective only in the larger islands, but in the small islands, traditional word of mouth is more important, with additional help from new technologies such as mobile phones.

This thesis argues that the media's relationship with, and influence on, Tongan politics is not as strong as it is thought to be. In addition, there are other intervening variables which increase the influence and impact that the media have. The study of the effects of the media originated in the West, and most theories of media studies originated and were first tested in western countries, the majority of them in the United States. This thesis tests some of these theories in Tonga, to find whether or not they are applicable to small island nations.

The effects of the media in Tonga have yet to be determined and empirically investigated. Traditionally, the organization of the media industry has been based on local family businesses, mainly newspapers. Today, businessman like Kalafi Moala (see Chapters 4-6) now control the lion's share of the media industry, with interests in print, broadcasting (both radio and television) and the internet. The government has started to let go of its newspaper and their management, which raises the question of privatization and its likely impact on the media and its role. Tonga's small size and limited market have caused many newspapers to cease publication over the years. The internet has become a goldmine for some, reaching not only the Tongan diaspora but also people who are interested in Tonga elsewhere in the world. Matangitonga Online now receives about 20 million hits per month. It set up its website in 2003, when the company's monthly magazine ceased publication (see Chapter 4). This is one of the most cost effective means of disseminating information, and may be the



solution for the future of the media in Tonga. The internet has had its greatest impact on overseas Tongans by making news available to them instantly.

The introduction of the internet has also proven to be a major challenge to the government's control over the media. People can now criticize the government and write whatever they want without its interference. Bloggers and pro-democracy supporters have been using web sites to voice their concerns and, in the process, criticising the government (see Chapter 4). The government is impotent as it does not have the capability to block these web sites, even if it theoretically had the power.

What is the future role of the government in the media? Will self-censorship be exercised or will future governments try to control the media, now that a new system of government will be in place in 2010? Will government media ever be free from government censorship? These questions will be answered in the chapters to follow.

During the writing of this thesis, many changes have taken place in Tonga. The most notable was the King's decision to give up most of his powers and to have a fully elected government in 2010 (see Chapter 7). A Royal Commission for Political Reform has been established and one of its recommendations is for the King and his Privy Council to be no longer part of the executive body of government. This is one of the most revolutionary changes in Tonga's history. This thesis provides both historical and empirical evidence of the relationship between the media and Tongan politics, and also the recent political developments in Tonga.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the media literature and researches conducted on the effects of the media. It also looks at the available literature on

the media in the Pacific region. The review will also discuss the existing literature on the effects of media on politics, especially the studies conducted during elections. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 describes the social and political developments in Tonga and the history of the Tongan media. This chapter will also discuss the influence of media ownership and the new media in contemporary Tonga, the future of the media industry in Tonga in the wake of globalization, and the relationship between the media and the state. Chapter 5 analyzes the roles political actors play in contemporary Tonga and the relationships between them, in order to shed light on how they behave and why. Chapter 6 examines constitutional developments, focusing on Clause 7 of the Constitution, which deals with the freedom of the media. Clause 7 has been amended numerous times since 1875 and a media war erupted on two of these occasions. This chapter also looks at two cases where successive Tongan governments have taken powers to silence the opposition media by amending the Constitution. Chapter 7 discusses the role of the media in Tonga's political reforms with an emphasis on the events such as the Public Servants' strike of September 2005, and the November 2006 riot. It also discusses the attempts by the government, the Legislative Assembly, and the monarchy to formulate and implement political reform in 2010. Chapter 8 examines the role of the media in the 2008 parliamentary election, and whether they had any impact on the voters or not. The final chapter discusses the main finding of the thesis and suggests possibilities for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study of mass media is based on the basis and assumption that they have significant effects, though questions are still being asked about the circumstances of these effects. As Bernard Berelson's old dictum about communication states:

Some kinds of communications on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects. (Crotty 1991: 102)

The problem here is to differentiate the impact of the media from that of other factors. Crotty cited the case of the Chernobyl nuclear plant accident, when many foreigners left the Soviet Union. The issue was whether the media's coverage of the nuclear plant accident caused the panic, or something else caused the people to flee.

In the early stages of media study effects, according to Graber (1994: 6), researchers usually looked for changes in behaviour, and when this remained static, the argument was that there was no effect. However when research was broadened to include other possibilities such as changes in attitudes or knowledge, other kinds of effects came into view.

The available literature on the effects of the media is quite substantial, especially in western developed countries. Early research on the effectiveness of the media was conducted at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter reviews some of the existing literature and studies conducted on media effects, and some theoretical considerations. The first section will look at the relationship between the media and politics. This is a very critical and important aspect of this research. The second part will review some of the theories that will be used in the research, followed by a look at the literature on the media in small island states in the Pacific.

## 2.1 Media and Politics

The media and politics are inseparable. They depend on each other. When former United States president Lyndon Johnson was asked by a television reporter in 1969 about what had changed in American politics over the years, he is quoted as saying the following:

“You guys,” [Johnson replied], without even reflecting. “All you guys in the media. All of politics has changed because of you. You’ve broken all the [party] machines and the ties between us in the Congress and the city machines. You’ve given us a new kind of people.” A certain disdain passed over his face. “Teddy, Tunney.<sup>1</sup> they’re your creations, your puppets. No machine could ever create a Teddy Kennedy. Only you guys. They’re all yours. Your product.

(Zaller 1999: 1)

Johnson’s answer reflects the relationship and impact the media has had on American politics. The political issues that used to be discussed behind closed doors are now fought over and debated in the open through the media. The media according to Johnson had the power to create leaders by painting a good image of a person such as Ted Kennedy.

The relationship between the media and politics may be complex but yet simple, because they depend on each other. In one aspect of this relationship, politicians depend on the media to get their messages across to the public and the media rely on the politicians for news. To make the relationship more interesting, the public needs to be part of the equation because these factors interact on a daily basis. This relationship is well characterized by Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar also cited in Zaller (1992):

Today, political leaders communicate with the public primarily through news media that they do not control. The news media now stand between politicians and their

constituents. Politicians speak to the media; the media then speak to the voters.

(Zaller 1999: 12)

The interactions between these three elements have been the centre of investigation, especially during election campaigns. Page (1996) argues that the reason for investigating the media's relationship with politics and the public is because elections have a fixed structure and recur at regular intervals. This makes it possible to observe and test the theories and their applications in a variety of areas. Graber (1991) agrees, stating that the media's impact on elections has become a "bandwagon" for researchers to ride on because it is safe and close to the political science mainstream. Classic studies by scholars including Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954), Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948), and McCombs and Shaw (1972), to name but a few, have focussed on media effects.

During election campaigns, the media become a vital component for both the politicians (the candidates) and the public. The media act as the connector between the public and the politicians. According to Zaller (1999), politicians rely on the media to get their messages across to the public. This could be in the form of press releases, news conferences or other types of media event. The politicians, government or candidates alike always want the media to portray them in a positive light. The public on the other hand rely on the media for information on candidates, their policies and also their personalities. This is important because who they vote for will depend on the information they receive from the media. The media's role is to ensure that people get the information they deserve to get and at the same time play their expected democratic role. However the media's role is often affected by their economics. The media industry is a highly competitive market and some media rely on advertisers for survival. On the other hand government-owned media rely on funding from the government to operate while church-run media rely on the congregations' generosity in order to survive. Scholars including Herman and Chomsky (2002), Shoemaker and Reese

(1991), and Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) argue that media ownership and advertising affect media content. This denies the public access to the complete and truth behind some issues. In other words, some media organisations answer to their owners and advertisers, and politically some rely on government and other institutions to supply them with information or news sources. This affects the kind of information that is delivered to the public.

The media have been one of the main sources of information in people's everyday lives. People are bombarded and exposed daily to numerous messages from different media sources. The implication and consequences of these messages for the public has been the focus for a number of research projects throughout the years. Issues concerning media effects reappear as technology improves and new media continue to evolve. McQuail (1994) argues that even though researchers have managed to develop theories with regards to the effects of the media, there seems to be no consensus about the nature and size of media effects.

Some of the mainstream media researchers including Martin, Choukas, Mancini and Swanson have a tendency to assume that powerful messages act directly on a passive and powerless audience. This was the main assumption behind the "magic bullet" or the "hypodermic needle" theory. E. D. Martin (cited in Choukas, 1965: 15) described the magic bullet approach as follows: "Propaganda offers ready-made opinions for the unthinking herd." What Martin was referring to was the passiveness that is assumed by the magic bullet concept for the audience to digest and believe whatever is being thrown at them by the media. The mass media were perceived in the early years of media research up to the 1940's and 1950's as being powerful. The hypodermic needle model was associated with war propaganda, especially in Germany. As Professor Michael Choukas argued, propaganda was bad news for democracy:

But so long as propaganda is rampant, since its essence is the concealment or manipulation of the truth, and the coercion, not the enlightenment, of the

intelligence, the goals of democracy will be unattainable. “Propaganda and democracy do not mix; they are incompatible.” (Choukas, 1965: 299)

There were factors that contributed to this assumption with the introduction of new media, especially radio and television, during Choukas’ time. Others included studies conducted by various groups of scholars including the Frankfurt School which conducted research into the impact of media propaganda leading up to World War II, especially in Germany. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of the hypodermic needle effect was the 1938 radio program which created mass panic in America. The listeners did not know that what was broadcast on radio by Orson Welles was an episode of the “War of the Worlds” radio drama. Instead they thought that an actual invasion from Mars was in progress. The idea that the radio program had resulted in a panic was later challenged by Hadley Cantril, who argued that people’s reaction to the radio broadcast were in fact different and that it was largely determined by “situational and attitudinal attributes of the listeners” (Cantril et al 1940). The argument put forward by Cantril may have some validity but there was no doubt that people’s reaction to the radio broadcast was the main cause of the panic.

There is no shortage of evidence and literature on the relationship between the media, politics and the public, and scholars including Herman and Chomsky (2002), Shoemaker and Reese (1991), Gurevitch and Blumler (1990), Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, and Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948), to name just a few, all agree. However what researchers and scholars fail to agree on is the effectiveness of the media, or whether they have a powerful, moderate or limited effect on politics and the public.

## **2.2 The Propaganda Model: Manufacturing Consent**

The media have been praised for their service to the public acting as watchdogs and their devotion to the truth and to some extent for their independence. However in some

circumstances the media are criticized for their bias and going too far on some issues. Questions have been raised about the media's performance. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman examined the structure of media institutions and their day-to-day performance to find out how they perform. Their findings were published in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (2002), where they introduced their propaganda model of the media. The propaganda model according to Herman (1996) does not reflect media effects:

We never claimed that the propaganda model explains everything or that it shows media omnipotence and complete effectiveness in manufacturing consent. It is a model of media behaviour and performance, not media effects.

(Herman, 1996: 2)

What Herman and Chomsky are stating is that their model does not investigate effects but looks into the performance and behaviour of the media. The propaganda model argues that there are five types of filters in society which determines what news is. In other words they determine what gets printed in newspapers, or broadcast on radio and television, and in other media outlets. These filters included media ownership, advertising, and sources of media news, flak, and, the final one, anti-communism.

The ownership of the media in most western countries is in the hands of very few rich and powerful companies. Companies such as Time Warner, CBS, Rupert Murdoch's News International etc, own large shares not just in the media industry but in other business ventures. Herman and Chomsky (2002) used the General Electric and Westinghouse companies as an example. Both are diversified multinational companies heavily involved in areas of weapons production and nuclear power. They suggest that the media companies they own like CBS (as in the case of Westinghouse) will not carry any negative reports on Westinghouse's businesses or business associates. At the micro level, as in the case of Tonga,



the *Kele'a* newspaper for instance will not carry any negative reporting on 'Akilisi Pohiva (see Chapter 4 and 5) or the prodemocracy movement. On the other hand, the Tonga Broadcasting Commission's Radio and Television Tonga will never put the government in a position where they are seen to be negative. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) suggested that:

Media organisations with their own aims and rules that do not necessarily coincide with, and indeed often clash with, those of political communicators.

Because of the power of the media, political communicators are forced to respond to the media's rules, aims, production logics and constraints.

[Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) ]

They believe that contents of the news can be negotiated if politicians want their messages to be published or broadcast.

The Birmingham School's perspective, according to Hassan (2004: 40), supports the idea of media ownership influence. The Birmingham School argues that mass media technologies such as radio, television, newspapers etc. are controlled by a relatively small number of big businesses. By controlling the media industry, the practitioners who work for the media companies, such as editors and journalists according to Hassan, have "consciously or unconsciously internalized the dominant ideologies of the big businesses" (Ibid).

The second filter in the propaganda model is advertisement. Most media companies depend on advertisements for survival and often advertisers try to influence news that may taint or affect their businesses. Advertisers can influence the mass media through the finances that they provide to media organisation. In today's financial crisis and the fight for survival in the media markets, advertisers are becoming important as ever. Cromwell (2002) citing a study of 150 news editors in the United States, found that 90% percent said that advertisers tried to interfere with newspaper content, and 70% percent tried to stop news stories altogether. About 40% percent admitted that advertisers had in fact influenced a story.

The third filter is the news sources. The example cited by Herman and Chomsky (2002) included the dependence of news organisations on official news sources for confirmation. For example the White House or 10 Downing Street among others have spokespersons or “spin doctors” who provides news releases that the media cannot ignore, whether they like them or not. So news organisations do not have much choice but to use what has been provided because people regard these official spokespersons as reliable source. Fishman (1980) supports Chomsky and Herman by suggesting that official sources are thought of as reliable:

Newsworkers are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know....their job..... In particular, a newsworker will recognize an official's claim to knowledge not merely as claim but as competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to division of labour: officials have and give the facts, reporters merely get them. (Fishman, 1980: 1944-45).

The fourth filter is flak. Herman and Chomsky (2002) refer to negative responses to a media statement which also includes radio or television programs. This could be in the form of a letter to the editor, phone calls, law suits, or even bills before Congress in the US or, in Tonga's case, the Media Act Bill (see Chapter 7). Pressure groups taking action, such as making threats to boycott a media organization's newspapers unless the organization stops publishing negative stories about them, is one of the cases that often arises.

The final filter is anti communism which now involves references to “the enemy” or “evil dictators” (Chomsky & Herman, 2002). This filter simply refers to how the media demonizes other countries or their leaders in order to create fear among the population, and in

order to get support, for example, a military operation abroad. The best example is the Iraq war and the media painting negative images of Saddam Hussein.

One of the major critiques of the model is communications professor Robert Entman, who claims that the propaganda model is a conspiracy theory. He argued that Chomsky and Herman's coverage of the 1973 Paris accord on Vietnam

was consciously "designed by the loyal media to serve the needs of state power"...which comes close to endorsing a conspiracy theory, which the authors explicitly disavow early on. (Entman, 1990: 126)

Daniel Hallin on the other hand questioned the model's failure to take into account the level of professionalism and objectivity that journalists have. This argument is based on the fact that filters such as advertisers and ownership will undermine the journalists' professionalism and objectivity (Hallin 1994: 13). Herman (2003) countered by arguing that the media are in constant competition and so often the journalists have to adapt and adopt what owners, or the advertisers, or government sources want in order to survive.

The application of the propaganda model in this study of Tonga is important because some, but not all of the filters are applicable. To understand the other theories and concepts I used, it is important to firstly understand how the message is formed, what are the criteria that are involved in the news production, and the reasons why such issues are made salient. The propaganda model is useful to shed some light on the process behind the news or the message. If we have an understanding of this process then we can understand why such issues are given salience or importance as in the agenda setting function of the media. We will also understand why there is a need to promote such issues, and finally we can understand how the message is communicated to and among the audience, as in the two step flow of information model. Finally we can arrive at a conclusion in relation to one of the issues in this study, whether or not the public agenda influence the media agenda.

### **2.3. Agenda Setting**

The core assumption behind the idea of the “agenda setting” function of the mass media refers to the ability of the news media to focus the public’s attention on a few key issues. In other words the media filter and shape reality, and the importance they give to certain issues leads the public to perceive that some issues are more important than others. McCombs and Shaw (1972) tested their hypothesis concerning the “transfer of salience from the media to the public” during an election in Chapel Hill, NC in 1968. They concluded that the mass media had significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign. As Bernard Cohen famously stated, “The press may not be successful much of the time telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about” (1963: 13). In other words, even though the media may not be very successful in telling people what opinion to hold, they are often effective in telling people what to have opinions about, or what not to think about. This idea has led to various impressive empirical efforts to study media agendas, public agendas, and the relationships between them (for updated reviews of research on agenda setting see McCombs, Einsiedel & Weaver 1991; McCombs and Shaw 1993; Rogers & Dearing 1988; and Protess & McCombs, 1991). Rogers, Bregman and Dearing (1993) identify more than 200 articles about agenda setting in the social science literature since McComb and Shaw’s (1972) seminal work. Proponents of the theory including Chaffee & Berger (1997) argue that the Agenda Setting is a good theory because it has explanatory power and it explains why most people prioritize the same issues. It is also popular because it is not complex and easy to understand. This is why the media’s agenda setting role should not only be studied quantitatively but also qualitatively. This is one of the reasons why this study uses triangulation to study the media in Tonga, as statistics cannot provide exclusive and accurate explanation into the cause and impact of the media or

its influence. Sparks (2006: 178) argues that the agenda setting theory is recognised as a “tried-and-true theoretical contribution to the literature in mass communication.”

In Tonga, as previously mentioned, it is also important to take into account the environment where the media operate in order to understand how and why certain issues are made more important than others, and why. For example, the government owns the main AM radio station and television in Tonga, and Tonga is not a very democratic country. The agendas of these media will definitely reflect the government’s aspirations. On the other hand, the pro-democracy movement’s *Kele’a* newspaper will push their own agendas and this will be reflected in the issues they choose to be salient. The people at the end of the day will decide who to trust and believe. The ownership of various media in Tonga set their own agenda and the roles that the media are supposedly to perform, which is to inform, entertain and educate the public, are lost. The media instead bombards the voters with their own agendas, confusing the public.

Agenda setting according to McCombs and Estrada (1997: 240) has a second level which deals with the “transmission of attribute of salience.” This second level is very similar to Goffman’s (1974) “frame” concept:

I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principals of organization which govern events [...] and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. [Kendall 2005: 8 in Goffman, 1974]

Framing defines how certain parts of the media messages are put together, thus emphasizing it more than others to make it more salient. The similarity is very obvious, suggesting that second level agenda setting and framing are linked. Price and Tewksbury (1996: 121) suggests that framing deals with how the story or media message is presented and is the “ability of media reports to alter the kinds of considerations of people use in forming their

opinions.” This reemphasizes my argument that some media theories take very similar approach to media effects studies, but what sets them apart is methodology. Different media use different methods to emphasize the issues they regard as important: for example the press uses methods such as full front page pictures and large fonts.

### **2.3.1. Agenda setting in the Tongan context.**

The agenda setting role of the media could be challenged because the model implies that the communication flows in one direction. However, very little has been done on the impact of the public agenda on the media agenda. In Tonga’s case, sometimes the public sets the agenda for some of the media outlets, especially the private and independent newspapers. An example is the *Kele’a* newspaper. This newspaper is seen as a mouthpiece for the pro-democracy movement. In order to gain support, they have to report on the type of news that their supporters would want to read about but at the same time they still set their own agendas. The pro-democracy movement has been revealing government corruption over the years because that is what their supporters want to know. As mentioned above in relation to the propaganda model, the media as an institution cannot be isolated from society because the people who work there are part of society. These journalists, owners and other related officials are part of one social network or another.

One of the critics of the agenda setting theory is Scheufele (1999, 2000) who based his argument on the definition of the word “salience”. He argued that that the first part of the definition of salience corresponds to the idea of “perceived importance” while the second is closer to “accessibility.” The criticism may not be completely relevant because the authors Shaw and McCombs, according to Takeshita (2005), used salience as “perceived importance.” However looking at agenda setting in the Tongan context, accessibility is an important issue. In the outer islands, the majority of the small islands do not have access to

the internet, and newspapers takes days or up to a week to reach some of the islands. Because radio is the most accessible medium throughout Tonga, the public's agenda could vary from island to island. This does not mean that there is a flaw in the theory, but the problem lies within its application in Tonga. To test the theory in Tonga, accessibility has to be taken into account.

McQuail (1994) criticizes the agenda setting by arguing that the theory does not provide or allow any explanation of why they indicate such issues are important than others. This is why this research does not only rely on statistical quantitative analysis only but also takes a qualitative approach to try and nullify the weaknesses of agenda setting theory.

The media's agenda setting function, despite the criticisms, is still a very useful theory. However the media as an institution should not be isolated from society. The media and their sources of information are part of the public sphere, and both sides are intertwined. The media can set the public agenda, and at times the public influences the media's agenda.

#### **2.4. Two step flow and Interpersonal Communication.**

In 1948, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet published *People's Choice*, analyzing the voter's decision-making processes during the 1944 presidential election campaign. The study, which first introduced the two step flow theory, revealed evidence suggesting that the flow of mass communication is less direct than previously supposed. The theory states that information from the media moves in two separate stages. It suggested that communication from the mass media first reaches "opinion leaders" who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages. They filter the information they gather to their associates, with whom they are influential. The second stage is when the opinion leaders pass on the information with their own interpretation be it right or wrong to others who are less informed. The two step flow concept emphasizes the influential role of the opinion leaders in the

process. The opinion leaders are said to have influence in getting people to change their attitudes and sometimes their behaviour.

Weimann (1994) suggested that the problem with the two step flow lies with determining the opinion leaders. Others including Mill (2008) argue that the main problem with the two step flow lies in the methodology and data collection. Tongan culture and traditional values of communal and collective interconnectivity apply to both the two step flow and agenda setting models. This means that the flow of information is not restricted to just the two step flow theory as suggested by Lazarsfeld and others, but also other variables including the environment and the social networks within the society.

In the study Lazarfeld *et al.* put forward five characteristics of personal contact that support their theory. The first is “non-purposiveness” where conversations are open, not one-sided like listening to a radio campaign. The second is “flexibility to counter resistance,” like in any conversation where there is always an opportunity to counter and resist the other person’s argument. The third is “trust” which is very important in a person-to-person contact where trust can be easily established because both parties are visible and can observe each other’s character’s whilst deciding whether to trust the other person or not. The last is “persuasion without conviction.” In parliamentary campaigns, face to face meetings are more persuasive than media campaigning because of the human interaction that is involved. Again physically talking to a person will have more conviction than a person speaking from a radio. Both Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) rejected the view that the media have “direct effects” and argued that persuasion also required interpersonal communication: the famous two-step flow process of “media to conversation to opinion” .



#### 2.4.1. The two step flow in the Tongan context.

In a Tongan society the use of “opinion leaders” is part of the Tongan culture and society. The flow of information within and between different classes used to be carried out through intermediaries such as the *kau matapule*<sup>1</sup>, as in the passing of information to and fro between the aristocracy and the populace; in the case of the church, it is the *setuata*<sup>2</sup> mediating between the clergy and congregation; and for the *kainga*<sup>3</sup> and *ha`a*<sup>4</sup>, we have the *`ulumotu`a*<sup>5</sup> and *matu`a tauhifonua*<sup>6</sup> respectively. The modern media, starting with newspapers, were introduced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and after a lull for much of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century they re-emerged in the early 1960’s. Prior to the emergence of what we refer to as modern media, Tonga had its own traditional media. These worked mostly through word of mouth including *fanonongo tokoto*<sup>7</sup>, *fono*<sup>8</sup>, *fakataha*<sup>9</sup>, *talanoa*<sup>10</sup>, *faikava*<sup>11</sup>, and *telelouniu*<sup>12</sup> among others.

The five areas identified by Lazarsfeld and his associates of person contacts fits well within a Tongan paradigm especially the “trust and persuasion”. Because Tongan culture is collective and not individualistic, trust is an important component. During the election

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<sup>1</sup> Kau matapule are the talking chiefs. These talking chiefs have titles bestowed upon them either by the King or other superior chiefs. These matapules do not have estates like the superior chiefs; their main function is to act as intermediaries.

<sup>2</sup> Church Steward

<sup>3</sup> Kainga is the extended family. The term kainga often refers to both blood and non blood ties or relatives living in one village under a chief.

<sup>4</sup> Ha`a refers to the clan or tribe as in other cultures.

<sup>5</sup> The ‘Ulumotu`a is the head of the extended family.

<sup>6</sup> They are the caretakers of the land. They could either be *matapule* or minor chiefs.

<sup>7</sup> “Disseminating messages while lying down.” Traditionally Tongan homes in villages were built closely together. When a messenger announces a meeting, he usually calls on the first home, that person will call on the next home, while the next person relays the message to the next home and the process is repeated until it reaches the end of the village.

<sup>8</sup> Village meeting where chiefs relay the orders of the day or anything that is required to be done.

<sup>9</sup> Meeting where discussions are held.

<sup>10</sup> “Talking-critically-yet-harmoniously.”

<sup>11</sup> Informal discussions while drinking kava

<sup>12</sup> The Tongan equivalent of the grape vine.

campaign if a candidate turns up in a village and joins a *faiakava*<sup>13</sup>, his presence signifies his *toka'i* or show of respect to the people of the village and the trust naturally develops even before the candidate speaks. This in turn led to persuasion without conviction in the candidate's part as he has been accepted by the village elders and the people. The *faikava* is often referred to as *pukepuke fonua* or keeping to the tradition of the land and when the candidates partakes in the *faikava* they join the group keeping the tradition of the *fonua* or land.

The media have been thought to play a powerful role as intermediaries between political leaders and the public. The media's role becomes especially important in influencing voters' judgments about the candidates because most people rely on the media to get information on the candidates whom they do not know. The political knowledge that citizens gain from the media is essential to their ability to participate in government and shape the direction of the country's development. Although citizens in Tonga cannot shape or change this direction by voting in the election, it gives them at least the opportunity to exercise some form of democratic rights. So how the media act as intermediaries and how they cover political elections are always questions worth examining. In the Tongan context, the intermediaries do have influence, though it was not examined quantitatively, but a qualitative approach was instead used through participant observation and in-depth interviewing of subjects. Lindlof (1995) argues that a qualitative approach, including participant observation, allows a wider scope of naturalistic and ethnography inquiry.

There has also been a study conducted by Gabriel Weimann and Hans-Bernd Brosius (1996: 323-334) that has looked at the role of the two step flow in agenda setting. This study

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<sup>13</sup> *Faikava* is when a group of men gather together to talk about different issues in society and drink kava, which is a ceremonial beverage made from the kava plant (*Piper methysticum*). Part of the information collected during my fieldwork was through the *faikava* in both Tonga and the host countries.

examined the role of opinion leaders and their influence based on six national surveys in Germany in 1990. Weimann and Brosius (1996) used the Strength of Personality (SP) scale to measure the influence of the media. My own study did not use the SP scale but instead relied on qualitative in depth interviews and participant observation. The media's agenda setting function in Tonga cannot be understood unless the reasons why such issues are made salient and have priority over others are identified.

The theory itself like others has its critics. The major weakness according to critics lies again in the methodology and the data collection. One critic in particular is Gabriel Weimann (1994) who argued that much of the problem lies in determining the opinion leaders while studying the flow of information because there are too many factors to control. People who are opinion leaders cannot be experts in all fields. So opinion seekers may not consider others to be opinion leaders in politics if they do not know much about politics but they might be experts or opinion leaders in the economics field. Since the research was not designed to specifically test the flow of influence, it was decidedly lacking in explanations. The first problem concerning the findings of the study was that the data had to be collected from a random sample, but subjects in a random sample can only speak for themselves. For these reasons, each person could only say whether or not they considered his/herself an advice giver. Lazarsfeld and his associates in the 1940 election study were unable to determine the specific flow of influence.

## **2.5. The Two Step Flow of Agenda Setting.**

Media scholars including Brosius & Weimann (1996) suggested that there is a link between the two step flow and the media's agenda setting function. They argued that the agenda setting tradition is "mostly based on aggregate data (media coverage, public opinion

surveys),” and often overlooked “individual-and-personal-network level analysis” (Brosius & Weimann, 1996: 562). What they found was that there was a significant role played by interpersonal communication in the agenda setting process. Others including McLeod, Becker and Brynes (1974) suggested that interpersonal communication may play a greater role late in political campaigns, while others argued that interpersonal communication is an intervening variable between media and personal agendas. Other studies that have identified the influence of interpersonal communication on agenda setting include Wanta and Hu (1993). Their study suggested that interpersonal communication could enhance agenda setting effects but at the same time interpersonal communication can either reinforce or compete with the media agenda.

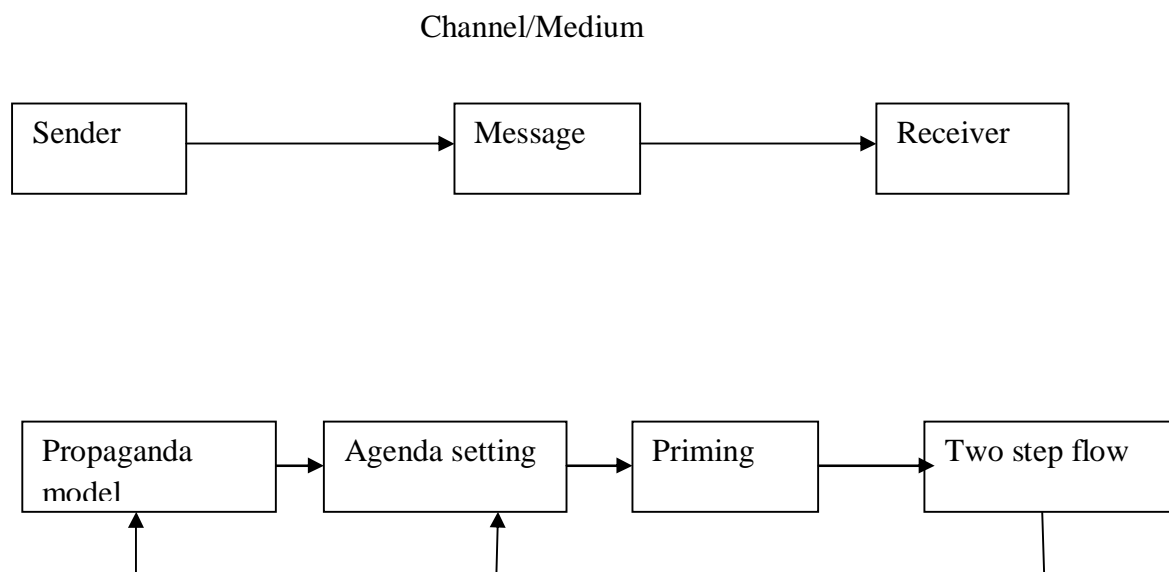
Brosius & Weimann (1996) tested four versions of the two step flow model to investigate the relationship between the media’s agenda setting function and the two step flow. The study highlighted the role played by certain individuals they referred to as “early recognizers” in mediating between the public and the media. They found that the flow of issues between the media and the public is more complex than they expected. However the findings suggest that the early recognizers “not only identify emerging issues in the media and diffuse them among the public but also those who affect the media agenda” (ibid: 561)

## **Summary**

The theories or concepts utilised in this study may be different in nature or methodologically but links amongst them can be created. Looking at the propaganda models as in *Manufacturing Consent*, the media’s agenda setting function, priming and the two step flow of information concepts, they each play a part in the communication process. Figure 1.1 below shows the basic communication model which suggests that the information travels from a source or sender to a receiver. In the case of media productions, they are the source of

messages that are received by an audience. The message is delivered through a channel or the media. Harold Lasswell's so-called five W's model could still be applied today in the mass media research. "Who says, What, to Whom, through Which channel, with What effects." "Who says, refers to the source, "What" is the message and "to Whom" is the intended audience or receiver "Which channel" is the medium and "What effects" refers to the message's effect on the receiver. ( Laswell, 1935)

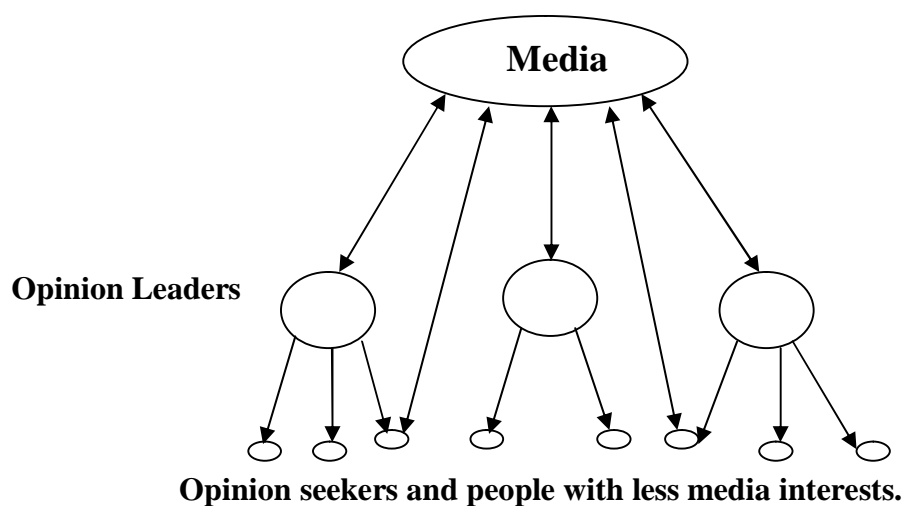
**Figure 1.1**



The model that I have adopted shows the links between the media theories used in this research. They are independent of each other but at the same time they may have influence on each other. As mentioned above, it is important to establish these links in order to understand how the media work in Tonga and also their relationship and likely impact on Tongan politics. Baoill (<http://funfereal.org/essay/polecon.htm>) argues that "no single model can accommodate all, or even many of the roles identified". He was referring the roles of the media. This supports the approach taken in this study to investigate the impact of the media using a

cluster of theories. Figure 1.2 is a refined model of the original two step flow which suggests that the flow of information is not one-directional but multi-directional. The role of the opinion leaders as influential people can also to some extent influence what is said in the media. Taking into account the filters used in the *Manufacturing Consent* research, flack is one way in which opinion leaders can influence the media. As suggested earlier, the media cannot be separated and isolated from the rest of society as if they are from outer space. The people who work there are part of society and their own networks will influence the media to some extent.

Figure 1.2      **Refined Model of the Two Step Flow of Information.**



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Based on the theoretical discussions in Chapter 2, this chapter will discuss the methodology employed in this research. There is no lack of literature on the study of the mass media, not to mention the methodologies employed by researchers. So this study employs methodologies used in previous studies, namely focusing on the agenda setting function of the media. Elizabeth Hahn (1992: 52) argues that mass media researchers operate in a highly inductive style, drawing upon the theory and specific methods of several social science disciplines when necessary.

This study was based on both primary and secondary data. Due to the lack of research on the media in Tonga, I relied heavily on relevant western media research literature for references. Official documents and statistical data were collected through visits to some of the government and non-government institutions in Tonga. Some of the resources on Tonga were found in libraries outside Tonga, namely the Australia National University Library, and the Auckland Library and Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand.

This research employed some of the original methods used by Shaw and McCombs in their 1968 Chapel Hill study, in an attempt to look at the correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda, or what the public thought were the important issues during the campaign. Halloran cited in Hansen *et al.* (1998: 18) argues that replicating a study tests the reliability of its methods. This meant that reliability is normally considered to be high if two or more researchers, investigating the same subject with the same methods, come up with the same or similar outcomes. This is why I used the same methods used by Shaw and McCombs in their Chapel Hill Study.

Having worked in the media industry for more than 10 years I was able to witness first hand not only the power of the media but how the media work in Tonga. I started out as a radio trainee reporter straight of high school in 1992 and worked my way up to become editor of both the government's Radio and Television Tonga in 2005, acting in the post for several years.

During my time in the government run media I was able to identify the problems faced by the media. These included media ownership, advertiser's demands and problems arising from our local traditional culture to name but a few. It was always difficult to avoid bias in the media especially working for the government owned media. The owner (government) is always right. Things that we as journalists took for granted as norms, like taking the government's side all the time, were not always the right thing to do.

Pro-democracy programs were scrutinised and banned at times from government owned media even some of their organised events were not even covered in the news. In every election year, radio was the most popular medium because of its wide coverage and newspapers were second. Despite the popularity of the radio and the newspapers, some candidates who hardly used the media still manage to win seats in parliament. This raised a question needed to be answered. I knew for a fact that the media does have influence on the public to some extend from experience but empirical evidence was needed.

This study examined the correlation between what the public thought were the important issues during the election and the media's agenda. This is part of my attempt to explain whether the media had any impact in the 2008 Tongan election. Respondents were randomly selected from eligible registered voters in the main island of Tongatapu. A questionnaire survey was also conducted in the islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai to compare the variations within the islanders' media consumption. Tongatapu was selected because it is the



only island where voters have access to all of the different media outlets. Candidates conducted daily media campaigns on both Radio and Television Tonga six days a week, which people on the main island had access to.

A questionnaire survey was conducted during the campaign period to investigate the agenda-setting function of the media. Voters were asked to rank the issues they saw were the most important issues at the time. The answers were coded into five categories which were later cut down to four because two of the issues overlapped. The four categories were political issues, economic, social and “others” which combined crime and health.

Data for radio and television news were not used in this study because they were not available. Radio and Television Tonga do not have news archives. Another reason was that Radio and Television Tonga were banned by their management from running political news and any news regarding candidates and the election. However the four weekly newspapers, *Kele’a*<sup>14</sup>, *Taimi ‘o Tonga*<sup>15</sup>, *Koe Kalonikali Tonga*<sup>16</sup> and *Talaki*<sup>17</sup> were collected and their content analyzed during the campaign period from 14<sup>th</sup> February to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008. They were also divided into major and minor issues. These issues were defined in terms of space allocated to each story and rated according to the number of paragraphs and position of the story, whether it was front page or second page or back page. Minor stories were stories with less than 10 paragraphs and not on the front page. These were compared using the Pearson’s correlation method.

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<sup>14</sup> *Kele’a* was first established by the pro-democracy movement and it is run and operated by the leader of the movement, ‘Akilisi Pohiva and his family.

<sup>15</sup> The *Taimi ‘o Tonga* was a supporter of the pro-democracy movement but later turned against them after the 2006 riot.

<sup>16</sup> *Kalonikali* is the government owned and run newspaper but it is now co-owned by Mr. Kalafi Moala who also owns the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*.

<sup>17</sup> *Talaki* is thought to be neutral but it is often attacked by the pro-democracy movement for being a supporter of the government. The newspaper is run and owned by a former editor of the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*.

### **3.1. Research Methodology and Type of Research**

In order to achieve the objectives and find answers to the research questions, I needed to find an appropriate research approach and methods. Halloran (1998, 18) suggests that there is a need for a more holistic approach when studying mass communication because it is not a discipline but a field of interest. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are both valid and one should complement the other. Lindlof (1995) on the other hand argues that there is no need for a holistic approach because qualitative research does not need to focus on a “fully interacting group with an enduring history” but instead focuses on a sample of the set of relationships. Qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known and it involves many forms of investigation, including participant observation, interviewing, surveying etc. Using qualitative methods will help the researcher gain new insights into the area of study.

Quantitative research on the other hand uses objective measurement and statistical analysis of numerical data to understand the phenomena. Lindlof (1995, 21) argues that qualitative research is distinct from quantitative methods, in that it does not rely on evidence from statistically analysis or numbers.

In order to investigate the impact of the media on Tongan politics, especially on the election, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Statistics cannot fully explain how the media work in Tonga because other variables have to be taken into account as mentioned in Chapter 2.

### **3.2. Triangulation**

Because of the importance of reliability and to confirm the validity of the study I also used triangulation. Triangulation involves a comparative assessment of more than one form of

evidence about an object of inquiry (Lindlof 1995). Even though triangulation is usually associated with qualitative research, this study used triangulation to confirm findings through both quantitative and qualitative research. According to the “Global Health Science” web site at the University of California:

Triangulation combines information from quantitative and qualitative studies, incorporates prevention and care program data, and makes use of expert judgment. [<http://www.igh.org/triangulation/>]

Danzin (1978) suggested four forms of triangulation. The fourth is methodological triangulation which refers to the use of more than one method. Methodological triangulation includes between-method triangulation, which involved contrasting methods, such as questionnaires and observation. According to Danzin, sometimes this form of triangulation includes a combined use of quantitative research and qualitative research. One of the most familiar kinds of triangulation according to Lindlof is the use of multiple methods which can be applied to the same problem. In the case of informants, multiple informants are vital to cross-check for validity and discard any bias and shortcomings.

### **3.3. Informants and sample size.**

An important component of this study was identifying reliable informants and where to collect the data from. The original sample picked for the questionnaire survey was 150 eligible voters but only 131 responded. This sample could be fairly small compared to about 30,000 registered voters, but according to Wimmer and Dominick (2006: 100) there is no exact sample size requirement for non-probability sampling. To avoid bias in the sample, voters were randomly selected from four villages in different districts of the main island of Tongatapu. These were Vahe Kolo (City District) Vahe Hahake (Western District) Vahe Hihifo (Eastern District) and Vahe Loto (Central District). The reason was to try and get as

wide a view as possible on election issues. The Vahe Kolo district in theory was thought to be anti pro-democracy movement, while Vahe Hihifo and Vahe Hahake were pro-democracy supporters, and *Vahe Loto* were thought to be neutral. Another set of questionnaires were distributed to voters in Vava'u and Ha'apai to compare people's media consumption and media choice between the three main islands.

Apart from those interviewed and those who took part in the questionnaire survey, other informants were specifically chosen based on their knowledge and skills related to the research. These included media owners, journalists, politicians, candidates who took part in the election, and government officials. People who were likely to be influential and opinion leaders were located and interviewed.

### **3.4. Data Collection**

#### **3.4.1. Observation:**

One of the most significant forms of data collection used in this study was through participant observation. This is a technique that is closely associated with naturalists and ethnographers. Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold (1998: 35) argue that participant observation can be one of the most challenging, exciting and rewarding of all mass communication research methods. They argue that a lot of studies have been conducted on news content but not many have been conducted in details on what happens inside the newsrooms. On the other hand Goffman (1989) quoted by Lindlof (1995:132) argue that with participant observation,

...you are in a position to note their gestural, visual, bodily response to what's going on around them and your empathetic enough because you've been taking the same crap they've taking—to sense what is that they're responding to. To

me, that's the core observation. (Goffman, 1998: 125-126, cited in Lindlof 1995: 132)

According to Hansen *et al* (1998), some of the advantages of participant observation are that it records and makes the invisible visible, improves upon other methods through triangulation, and qualifies or corrects speculative theoretical claims.

I could relate to Hansen *et al* and Goffman's arguments having worked as a journalist for 14 years, 3 of which were spent as editor of the government owned Radio and Television Tonga. My experience gave me an advantage, having been part of the news production and most importantly, making the final decisions on what news goes on air and in what order. In other words I was in the position of deciding the government media's agenda. Protecting the government and rebutting critics of the government was part of my job in the newsroom. It was taken for granted with no questions asked. I was at times in hot water when some of the stories we ran showed government in a bad light. Officials from the government would pay us a visit to voice their concerns. Self-censorship was the rule of the day in both Radio and Television Tonga, with staff often reminded daily by the general manager not to bite the hand that fed them, referring to the government. This could be interpreted as government interference, but at the same time the government is the owner. Staff could even lose their job if they disobey what they are often told are "decisions from above".<sup>18</sup>

### **3.4.2. Focus Group Interview:**

One of the methods used in this study was focus group interviewing. Lindlof (1995) suggests that focus groups offer a methodological response to these problems of individual interviewing.

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<sup>18</sup> Directions from government or someone from the Prime Minister's office.

Focus groups create a setting in which diverse perceptions, judgments and experiences concerning particular topics can surface. Persons in the focus group are stimulated by the experiences of other members of the group to articulate their own perspectives. (Lindlof, 1995: 174)

The way participants in a *faikava* support, debate, or resolve issues with each other can resemble the dynamics of everyday social discourse. The *faikava* session or campaigning resembles a focus group scenario. The discussions and the debate that goes on in the *faikava* are free and not controlled. The strength of the focus group according to Morgan (1988:12) is “the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.” Focus groups were used to collect data on how media ownership affects news content. After interviewing all of the media owners who were also chief editors of their various news organizations, I had to cross check their answers with those of their staff. A group of seven working journalists took part in the focus group interview. The journalists represented almost all of the media organizations except the *Kele’a* newspaper. A list of questions were used to guide the discussion while it was recorded on a tape recorder, and I was also taking notes on the discussion noting body language and other non-verbal forms of communication. Journalists freely discussed some of the issues saying things which were opposite to what their owners were saying, especially about government interference in government media. The same is true of some of the private media on the issue of ownership influence on the content of the media.

### **3.4.3. Questionnaire**

Different sets of questionnaires were prepared for each stage of the election. The first sets of questionnaires were administered before the election and the second one after the election. The reason was to investigate how voters choose their candidates, which media they used to

get information on candidates, and their media consumption. One of the questions asked was whether the media played any part in inciting the riot of 2006. Voters were also asked to rank the issues they considered the most important to them but not the candidate's issues. This was to test the media's "agenda setting" function. A different set of questionnaires were sent to the Hu'atolitoli prison where those accused of crimes committed during the riot were held. The reason for this was to investigate whether the media played any role in these criminals' activities during the riot. In the second set of questionnaires after the election, voters were again asked how they voted and why they voted for that particular candidate. They were also asked whether what they listened to on the radio, watched on TV or read in the papers affected their decision on who to vote for. In-depth interviews were also conducted as a follow up. All questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Tongan.

Qualitative interviews and personal observations were employed as the primary strategy for data collection. In in-depth interviewing, I utilized open-ended questions that allowed for individual variations. The three types of interviewing I used to get qualitative information were 1) informal, conversational interviews; 2) semi-structured interviews; and 3) standardized open-ended interviews (see Hoepfl 1987).

In relation to semi-structured open-ended interviews, some of the informants required the questions to be sent prior to the interview. This was useful as it gave informants time to prepare themselves, but during the interview unprepared questions were also raised as follow ups to the questions. In some of the interviews, I used interview guidelines to minimize time used for interviews but also to keep the interviewees from talking about unnecessary things and wasting time. Follow up interviews with informants who took part in the questionnaire survey were more informal and not structured. This was deliberate in order get their real reactions. The follow up was conducted a day after the election. For example: some people when they filled in the questionnaire chose their experience as the reason for voting for a

candidate. However, in the follow up I found that some voted because of other reasons such as relationships and party affiliation.

#### **3.4.4. Case Studies:**

One of the advantages of using cases studies according to Wimmer and Dominic (2006: 137) is that it gives the researcher the ability to deal with a wider spectrum of evidence. These include historical documents and direct observations among others which can be incorporated into the study. The media in Tonga have always been challenged by the authorities. It was important to investigate the issue by looking at two separate case studies almost a century apart. Both cases provide a wealth of information about the nature of government regulations, how the media can change government policy, the role of media ownership, and media biases among other issues. So using the case studies of the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspapers (see Chapter 6) was vital to answering some of the questions asked in this research.

#### **3.4.5. Content analysis:**

Another method employed in this study was content analysis. According to Bernard Berelson, content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systemic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communication” Berelson (1952: 74). Mike Palmquist described content analysis as a research tool which is “used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner” (cited in Busha and Harter 1980). As mentioned above, four of Tonga’s weekly newspaper, *Talaki*, *Taimi 'o Tonga*, *Kele’a* and *Koe Kalonikali*, were collected and the content analyzed. Stories were classified under a number of general categories. For example, stories that were related to politics, election, and political reform were classified under politics. Stories that were related to economics were



classified under economics. Stories that mentioned both economics and politics were assigned to both categories. The position of the stories within the newspaper (e.g. on the front page or not) was also important, as was the space in terms of paragraphs given to the stories. This determined whether the story was major or minor, with stories positioned on the front page and stories more than 10 paragraphs considered major. The minor category then refers to the stories of less than 10 paragraphs and positioned in later pages. To quantify these issues, they were coded as follows, Economics=1, Social=2, Political=3, Social and Crime were combined as “others”=4.

### **3.4.5 Variables:**

The dependent variable was success or candidates winning a seat.

The independent variables were as follows:

- The amount of time a candidate used for campaigning on radio and television and the space in newspapers.
- Gender: to see whether the candidate’s gender would have any effect on their chances of winning
- Party Affiliation: whether a candidate’s affiliation to a party would increase their chances of success.

The reason why gender and party affiliation were added was to see whether they had any influence on the candidate’s chance of winning a seat. Tonga’s parliament has always been dominated by men. The assumption here is that a candidate’s sex can influence their chance of winning a seat. On the other hand in past elections, candidates who affiliated themselves with the pro-democracy movement had more chance of being successful than others. In the

Tongatapu constituency, pro-democracy candidates have always dominated the top ten spots in the last four to five elections. These were the two underlying reasons why gender and party affiliation were used.

#### **3.4.6. Time Frame for Data Collection.**

This study was conducted from February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 for the election data. The candidate's names were officially published and announced by the government only on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. By law, all election campaigns should cease a day prior to the Election Day which was the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.

#### **3.5. Research Challenges:**

There were a number of challenges that I faced while conducting this research. Some were anticipated and some were not expected. Firstly the available literature on media studies on not only Tonga but the Pacific in general is limited. The only known previous piece of research conducted on the impact of the media was on the Tongan culture. The rest of the literature on the media dealt with specific events, for example "Island kingdom strike back [sic]" focused on the imprisonment of two journalists and a politician (see Chapters 4 and 6). The lack of previous studies on the media in Tonga meant that the data had to be collected from scratch and a comparative analysis of media use by candidates from previous elections could not be conducted. Content analysis is a vital research strategy in media studies and was employed in this study. However this proved difficult. As mentioned above, Radio and Television Tonga do not have a news archive where they keep scripts from previous years. This was not the only problem: neither of them even keeps a record of their news at all. Radio Tonga news files are automatically deleted every 6 to 12 months from the "News Boss"<sup>19</sup> program. Television Tonga on the other hand recycles their news tapes due to lack of tapes

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<sup>19</sup> Computer news program that is used by radio and television Tonga's newsroom.

for their daily news programs. This was a problem and it is the reason why radio and television news was not used in this study. Throughout the studied period Television and Radio Tonga were both banned from running any political news, even news that concerned the election of candidates. This according to the journalists was a direction from their management. Newspapers were the only news data available and some of the schools keep their own newspaper archives apart from the newspaper organizations themselves. Two of the independent newspapers, *Kele'a* and *Talaki*, lost their archives when their offices were destroyed during the 2006 riot.

Another challenge was conducting the interviews. Having worked in the government radio and television for 14 year, the majority of the population knew me. I was also the news presenter on television Tonga's evening news for over 6 years and I became a familiar face in most Tongan households. When conducting the survey and following it up with interviews, some people were reluctant to talk to me, especially some pro-democracy supporters and those who disagreed with the government. Even some of the pro-government supporters were reluctant because they feared that what they say might end up in the news. I had to first explain to these informants that I was no longer a journalist, secondly I was a student, and most importantly what they said was confidential. Establishing the trust between myself and the interviewees was paramount in order get unbiased answers. I also used other informants especially teachers to assist with the distribution and collection of questionnaires.

Culture was an obstacle in the research which created some challenges especially when interviewing members of the aristocracy and the nobles. Questions were carefully framed not to offend them or create tensions. To cite an example, on the issue of political reform, the issue of a fully elected Legislative Assembly is very sensitive especially among the nobles who elect their own representatives. Proposals to have them elected by the people were always met with strong opposition. Follow up questions could be interpreted in Tongan

culture as talking back or challenging the authority of the nobles. In Tongan society commoners are taught and expected not to challenge the chiefs and nobles but to abide with whatever has been said.

The geography of the country was one of the main challenges that prevented a thorough observation of traditional interpersonal communication within various islands within the Tonga group. The population is scattered over a vast space of ocean (see Chapter 4) and travelling between the islands is very costly. I had to rely on teachers in Vava'u and Ha'apai to collect the data but this prevented me from interacting and observing how people were communicating. Candidates were often hard to reach because the majority of those that ran for seats in the outer island constituencies were not in the main island. They were out in their own constituencies campaigning. The lack of funds for the research and the geography prevented me from obtaining representative data of media use among the small islands. This led me to concentrate in Tongatapu only.

Despite all the aforementioned challenges and limitations, sufficient information was collected to meet the objectives of this study. However, there is a need for further research on the media's impact in Tonga, especially during the 2010 election where the result of the election will determine who will be in government.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE MEDIA IN TONGA.**

In trying to understand the impact of the media in the political dynamics of Tonga and their influence on Tonga's ongoing political development, it is of great importance to examine closely some of the socio-political developments and the history of the media in Tonga. This will help shed some light on today's socio-political structure. This will also provide important historical background information on how Tonga's social political structure has evolved, and also the relationship between the media and the state. This will help answer some of the questions about the media as to why they were introduced and for what purpose. The Tongan social-cultural hierarchy should not be ignored as its influence is not restricted to the national level only but it is just as active in the *famili* or nuclear family. What is being practiced in the *famili* is also experienced in the wider Tongan socio-political structure. The interconnectivity of the kinship system and *nofo 'a kainga* (kinship community) in Tongan society is a vital element in investigating the impact that the media have on society.

This chapter consists of five sections in which I will discuss these matters in detail. The first section describes Tonga in brief, including its geographical location and its economy. This will help provide an indication of the economics of the media in a small island state such as Tonga and some of the difficulties and problems they encounter. The second part will focus on the traditional socio-political structure. The third section will discuss the traditional kinship system. The history of the media and how it developed throughout the years and the impact of the new media will also be discussed, and the final section will focus on media ownership in the Kingdom.

## **4.1 Tonga in Brief**

The Kingdom of Tonga is the last remaining Polynesian monarchy in the South Pacific. It consists of a group of 171 small islands spread out between latitude 15° and 23 ° south and longitude 173 ° and 177 ° west. Its 171 islands, 48 of them inhabited, are divided into three main groups, Vava'u, Ha'apai, and Tongatapu, with a total landmass of 747sq.km. The Ha'apai group lies between Vava'u and Tongatapu, and is around 100-101 km from each of them. And it is even further to the islands of Niuafo'ou and Niuatoputapu.

The 2006 census recorded the total population was 101,991. This compares with 97,784 people in 1996, and represents an increase of 4.3% or 4,207 people (Statistics Department). Tongatapu's population was 72,045, i.e. 71% of the total Tonga population. With Tongatapu as the centre for almost everything including trade, government, education and health, internal migration from the outer islands to Tongatapu increases every year. This is important when it comes to elections because seats for other constituencies such as Ha'apai, Vava'u, Niua and 'Eua may be decided by people living in the main island of Tongatapu. The population classified as urban was 23,658 people (23.2% of the total population) which encompass the villages of Kolofo'ou, Ma'ufanga, and Kolomotu'a. These are all part of Nuku'alofa, on Tongatapu.

### **4.1.1. Economy:**

Tonga's economy is similar to other Pacific Island economies which are heavily dependent on foreign aid, agriculture and remittances from Tongans working abroad. In 2005 – 2006, revenue from remittances exceeded 50% of all revenues (Tonga Parliament). Tonga receives an average of 200 million pa'anga per year (US\$106 million) in remittances (Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs). However an International Monetary Fund report released in early 2009 stated that the remittances dropped by about 15% for the 2008-

2009 financial years that ended in June (Matangi Tonga online). This was mainly due to the global financial crisis.

In 2008 Tonga's GDP was US\$258 million (IMF). Tonga's economic growth for the 2008-2009 financial years which ended in June 30 was a dismal 0.4%, a huge difference from the projected 3% in the 2008-2009 budgets. However the minister of finance, 'Afu'alo Matoto, delivering his budget statement to the Legislative Assembly projected an economic growth of 1.7% for Tonga which was the aim of the government's 225.4 million pa'anga budget for 2009-10 (Matangi Tonga Online, Tonga Parliament online). The IMF's projection for the 2008/2009 growth would be just under 1%

Agricultural crops provide a narrow export base, mainly squash, coconuts, bananas and vanilla beans. However the squash industry has suffered a lot in the last five to ten years with many growers leaving the industry due to a drop in prices, and especially mounting debts owed to commercial banks. The number of exporting companies has also decreased. Agricultural exports make up two-thirds of total exports (Asia Development Bank). Despite the availability of a second market for the squash from South Korea, the industry continues to decline. However the agricultural sector continues to be the highest contributor to GDP with 30% and 60% of total exports (Ministry of Finance).

Tourism has been expanding in recent years and is the second-largest source of hard currency following remittances from Tongan communities overseas. These hard currency sources are supplemented by external aid to offset the country's trade deficit, caused by the high proportion of food supplies that must be imported (Australia Government). The National Reserve Bank's 2008 annual report noted an improvement in the tourism sector with a 75 percent increase in tourist receipts. "Total visitor arrivals into the Kingdom including

returning nationals rose by 27 percent compared to the previous year as both air and cruise ship arrivals increased” (National Reserve Bank 2008)

**Table 1.1** **Tonga Main Economic Indicators:**

		2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
<b>Economic Activity</b> (1995/1996 base)					
Real GDP	% change	-0.3	2.9	-3.2	1.2
Tourist Arrivals	Thousands	51.9	53.3	52.8	67.1
<b>Money, Prices and Interest rates</b>					
CPI (average)	% change	9.9	7.2	5.1	9.3
CPI (year-end)	% change	8.7	6.4	5.7	9.6
Money Supply (M2-year-end)	\$m pa’anga	203.5	237.5	265.5	287.2
Domestic Credit (year-end)	\$m pa’anga	210.3	264.5	295.2	332.9
Weighted term deposit interest rate (year-end)	% per annum	6.0	6.8	6.6	6.4



Weighted lending rate (year-end)	% per annum	11.5	12.3	12.3	12.7
<b>External Sector</b>					
Merchandise exports fob (OET basis)	\$m pa'anga	82.1	83.2	91.6	89.1
Merchandise imports fob (OET basis)	\$m pa'anga	204.2	245.4	217.5	262.4
Official foreign reserves (year-end)	\$m pa'anga	82.1	83.2	91.6	89.1
Import coverage (year-end)	Months	4.4	4.3	4.5	3.6
Exchange rate (period end)	US\$/T\$	0.5204	0.4848	0.5131	0.5407

*Source: National Reserve Bank of Tonga (2008, Table2)*

Fisheries are also a growing export sector, with tuna, beche de mer, and seaweed being the major marine export products. However the 2008 budget statement revealed a decline in the industry: depletion of fish stocks, harsh weather, lack of new technology, lack of cargo space in airlines to export fish to markets and also lack of accessibility to credit were some of the reasons cited.

Tonga's export earnings in 2006/2007 fell by US\$0.7 million to \$18.8 million compared to \$19.2 million in the previous year. The decline was attributed to the lower receipts from agricultural exports, particularly squash (Ministry of Finance). Japan remains Tonga's largest

destination for exports, with 54.8% of the total, mainly fish and squash, followed by the United States (10.9%). Tonga's main sources of export income are squash, vanilla, coffee, root crops, kava, fish and seaweed (Ibid). Tonga's imports on the other hand rose by about US\$32.2 million to US\$126 million in the 2005/2006 financial year. In the first eight months of the 2006/2007 financial, the import payments were only \$138.8 million compared to \$158.2 million in the same period of the previous year. This was attributed to the imposition of credit ceilings on bank lending to the private sector, and also the impact of the 2006 riot as most businesses were destroyed. New Zealand continues to be Tonga's largest supplier of imports (35.0%) followed by Fiji (27.0%) (Ibid).

#### **4.1.2. Foreign Relations**

Tonga as a former British protectorate is a long standing member of the Commonwealth. Tonga's foreign policy remains "friendship to all" with the major focus on maintaining close development and co-operation links which also include trade. Tonga relies on foreign donors for most of the developmental assistance that it receives. Tonga has been a member of the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and also is a signatory to various United Nations conventions. Since 1999, Tonga has been a member of the United Nations with a permanent representative at the UN in New York. Tonga also has an Ambassador in Beijing and a resident High Commissioner in London. Tonga severed its ties with Taiwan after 26 years in favor of China in 1998, and China is now becoming one of the Tonga's major donor countries. In 2007, China granted Tonga a soft loan of US\$ 60 million for the reconstruction of the Nuku'alofa area and businesses that were destroyed during the 2006 riot. Recently, Tonga established High Commission offices in Canberra, Australia and also in Wellington, New Zealand. Tonga also maintains a Consulate General in San Francisco in the United States and also formalized its membership with the WTO in 2007 after years of negotiations.

#### **4.1.3. Education**

Tonga's Constitution assures that children aged between 6 and 14 years have free and compulsory education (Tonga Constitution Chapter 86). Education has been compulsory since 1876 and in 1974 the Education Act required every child between the ages of 6 to 14 years old to attend school. The administration of Tonga's education is highly centralized with most decisions related to education vested with the Minister of Education as stipulated under the Education Act 1974. The major objective of the Ministry of Education in Tonga is the provision of a balanced program of education for the full development of children, both as individuals and as productive members of society (Ministry of Education Online) There is still very little technical or vocational education in Tonga, with government, churches and the private sector moving to address this problem. The 'Unuaki 'o Tonga Royal University was established with the aim of providing technical skills for students in early 2002. The other non-government schools, mainly run by the Free Church of Tonga, the Anglican Church, the Free Wesleyan Church, the Catholics, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Mormon Church have incorporated more technical education at the secondary and tertiary levels. Churches and other private organizations play a vital role in providing education and are complementary to the government's role. Primary education between the ages of 6 and 14 is compulsory and free in state schools. Schools funded and run by the churches provide 8% of the primary schools and about 90% of the secondary level education, and the government makes up for the rest (Wikipedia). The literacy rate of the 15-25 year old population who can read and write in both Tongan and English in 2006 stood at 98.4% and 98.8% for males and females respectively (Tonga Statistics Department 2006 Census)

#### **4.1.4. Health**

Tonga is one of the few countries in the world that still provides a free health service to its people through hospitals, health centres and clinics. Tonga's bilateral relations with Japan have enabled the construction of hospitals in the four main islands of the Tonga group. Private medical clinics are also available throughout the main island of Tongatapu mostly operated by doctors who are currently employed by the government. Most of these private health clinics operate after hours especially in the evenings. Non-communicable diseases continue to be the most common fatal diseases that the majority of the population suffer from, which is attributed mainly to people's life style. Eighty-one percent of households in Tonga obtain their drinking water from water tanks followed by 15% who use piped water (Statistics Department Census 2006). Based on census data for the number of children ever born and still alive, the infant mortality rate (IMR) was estimated at 19–22 for males and 16 for females. This estimate is similar to levels estimated for 1996 (Statistics Department Census 2006).

#### **4.2 Traditional Socio-Political Stratification**

Before Tonga made contact with the West, it already had in place a highly organized socio-political system. Although some of the historical events that took place prior to the contact with the Europeans were not recorded, oral and anecdotal evidence provided the basis for the existence of such socio-political system. When the first navigators visited Tonga, its political structure which had existed for hundreds of years was still intact and functioning. This system was similar to that found in other Polynesia societies based on the rule of chiefs. According to Lātūkefu (1974) Tonga was unique in Polynesia and in the Pacific because it had a traditional monarchical system under the headship of the *Tu'i Tonga*. The role of the

*Tu'i Tonga* developed over the years into something similar to that of the Dalai Lama of Tibet or the ancient Mikado of Japan (Ibid).

'Aho'eitu, the first *Tu'i Tonga* according to Tonga's oral history and legend, was the son of Tangaloa, the God of the sky, and a mortal mother (Latukefu 1974:1, Campbell 2001:27). Because 'Aho'eitu was a descendant of a God, this belief gave this person supreme sanctity and his dynasty pre-eminence (Lātūkefu 1974:1). The *Tu'i Tonga* was considered *toputapu* (sacred) as he was both a temporal and spiritual ruler. In the words of Monfat quoted by Williamson in Latukefu (1974).

In them the civil and political power is exalted and sanctified by the divine power; wherefore their authority is boundless. They dispose of the goods, the bodies, and the consciences of their subjects, without ceremony and without rendering account to anyone. *Tu'i Tonga* appears, and all prostrate themselves and kiss his feet...The Tongans refuse him nothing, exceeding his desires. If he wishes to satisfy his anger or some cruel fancy, he sends a messenger to his victim who far from fleeing, goes to meet death. You will see fathers tie rope round necks of their children, whose death is demanded to prolong the life of this divinity; more than once you will see the child smile as it is being killed.

(Lātūkefu 1974: 2)

It was clear in Tongan culture that the prerogative of the *Tu'i Tonga* was unquestionable. This was further reinforced by the fact that there were certain rigid rules applied to any sort of contact with him and the *hou'eiki* (chiefs). There was a special language used by those of inferior rank when they addressed or talked about the *Tu'i Tonga*, and similarly a language of respect when talking about other chiefs (Ibid). The *tu'a* or commoners were called *kainangaefonua* (eaters of the soil) and they were told that they had no *laumalie* or souls and

that when they die they would turn to vermin. It was only the *Tu'i Tonga* and the chiefs who had *laumalie* and when they die they went to *Pulotu* (the Tongan Paradise), but not the commoners as they had no place in *Pulotu*. From the beginning of Tonga's known history until today, its political stratification still exists but with the introduction of Christianity, some modifications have been made. However, the social hierarchy still exists amongst the *Tu'i* (kings) *hou'eiki* (chiefs), *kakai* (commoners) and so as the language that is used for the monarch, chiefs and commoners still differs. According to Campbell (2001:29) the structure of traditional Tongan society was a work of a man called Lo'au during the period of the 10<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga*, Momo. The name Lo'au keeps emerging in Tonga's history in different times and the reigns of various kings, leading historians to state that it was a name given to advisers of the King. Lo'au is also important as he was responsible for some of the political reforms that took place during the period of the 10<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga* and again during the reign of the first *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua*. It is even suggested that the classic Tongan culture was the result of Lo'au's work. This included the introduction of the kava ceremony which according to Campbell (2001) was important as it "declared the ranks of various chiefs and reminded everyone of the absolute superiority of the *Tu'i Tonga*."

The increasing development in traditional politics between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (prior to contact with the outside world) and the resultant political upheavals caused the decentralization of the *Tu'i Tonga*'s socio-political power. Between the 18<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga* and the 24<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga*, three *Tu'i Tonga* were assassinated, which suggested political upheaval and a challenge to the rule of the *Tu'i Tonga* dynasty (see Campbell, 2001). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the twenty-fourth *Tu'i Tonga*, Kau'ulufonua Fekai, created the new office of *hau* (secular ruler) to take over the secular responsibilities, while he himself remained '*Eiki Toputapu* (sacred ruler). The new office was finally transformed into the new *Tu'i Ha'atakalau* (from *Ha'atakalaua* or Kingly Line) under the first *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua*,

Mo'ungamotu'a (see Lātūkefu, 1974). This marked a new era in Tonga's political transformation. According to Campbell (2001:39) Mo'ungamotu'a redistributed the land among the chiefs and appointed governors to the outer islands. This was seen as a move to assure that the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua's* rule would not be challenged from these islands. Another reform was the introduction of foreigners (Samoans and Fijians) into his organization. Campbell suggested the reason why Mo'ungamotu'a reorganized the *falefa*<sup>20</sup> (House of Four) using Samoans and Fijians was because the King did not trust his Tongan chiefs.

Tonga was politically stable during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Lātūkefu (1974:9) one of the reasons was the intermarriages between the *Tu'i Tonga* and *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* dynasties. The marriages were seen as political moves. Daughters or sisters of the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* would become *ma'itaki* or wives to the *Tu'i Tonga*. Their descendants would be superior to the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua*. (See Campbell, 2001: Lātūkefu, 1974, xv). Another reason is that during this time, Tongan society was organized in a form of a pyramid. This pyramid as Campbell (2001) argued was one of Lo'au's reforms but it was modified as time went by. According to Gifford (1929) the top of the social pyramid were the *ha'a Tu'i* or the ruling monarchs. Immediately below this stratum was that of the *hou'eiki* (chiefs or what are now known as nobles). In the next level were the *kau mu'a* (sons of a union between a chief and a *matapule*), then the *kau matapule* (chiefs' attendants) and below were the vast majority of Tongans whom were known as the *kau tu'a* (commoners) in descending order. At the bottom of the scale at the lowest level of society were the *kau popula* (slaves) and the outcasts. In pre-contact Tongan society, every person belonged to a particular social class and each class had certain *ngafa* (responsibilities) and *fatongia* (obligations) clearly defined, and bound by customs and traditions.

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<sup>20</sup> When 'Aho'eitu became the *Tu'i Tonga*, his four brothers become the *falefa*: two to guard the *Tu'i Tonga* and two to help him govern and to conduct his funeral (Bott 1982).

By the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* Mo'ungatonga in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, another political development took place similar to that in the time of the *Tu'i Tonga* Kau'ulufonuafekai. This time Mo'ungatonga established a new kingship line, the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*, and invested the title in his youngest son Ngata. Legends suggested that a rebellion took place in the west of Tongatapu and the move was seen to try and keep the western side of the country under control. The name Lo'au emerged again during this transition according to Campbell (2001:45) where political change again took place under his guidance. According to Campbell, this was the first time that talking chiefs were used, suggesting a Samoan influence as Ngata's mother was Samoan. Not only was that but the *Ha'a Havea* also established with four lines of chiefs: *Fohe*, *Tu'i vakano*, *Vaea*, *Lavaka* and *Fielakepa*. The *Ha'a Havea* still remains a powerful Ha'a today with most of them dominating the nobles' seats in parliament (see Chapter 6). At first, the appointment of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* was thought to be a temporary measure. However, the importance of the office of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* gradually grew, and the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* and the *Tu'i Tonga* were slowly but ultimately completely pushed out of the political process, paving the way for the triumphant rise of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* to political supremacy over the whole of Tonga.

#### **4.3. Social Relationships and Kin Groups**

Traditional kinship in Tongan society is still very important and still plays an important but vital role not only in the society but also in Tonga's political realm. The media and how it works can also be affected by the stratification of Tongan society.

Apart from the overall division of society in the ranks of *Tu'i*, *hou'eiki*, *matapule*, *mu'a*, and *kakai* according to Rutherford (1977), a person's rank in the family is also an important aspect of Tongan society.



The system of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *tauhi vaha'a* (maintaining a close relationship based on love and co-operation) and certain *tapu or veitapui* (taboos) were very significant within this system of kinship. The *veitapui*, *faka'apa'apa*, *tauhi vaha'a* are important in maintaining peace and stability within the family, the *kainga* and society.

According to Bott (1982) the principles of authority and rank are intrinsic in the kinship system, though their expression varies according to the context. Within Tonga, the *famili* or family and *kainga*<sup>21</sup> are considered the pillars of Tongan traditional society. Tongans' place in society was largely dictated by their positions within their *fa'ahinga* or extended families. Tongans have their own social obligation norms to their *kainga* or family that are observed as if they were written laws. For example, a brother and his children have their obligations to his *fahu* or father's eldest sister, among other social duties.

The *famili* is the nuclear family which may consist of a husband and wife with their children. The *fa'ahinga* on the other hand refers to the extended family and even those that do not have biological ties but treat each other as kinsmen can call each other *fa'ahinga* (Ibid). There are also differences in rank as well as authority within the *kainga*. Historians such as Campbell (2001) among others and academics use the term *fa'ahinga*<sup>22</sup> which also refers to the extended family but defined *kainga* in a wider context such as village circle. Bott (1982) argues that *kainga* is one feature that distinguishes the Tongan system of rank from a class system, in which very close relatives, especially members of the same immediate family, tend to belong to the same social class. The late Queen Salote Tupou III as quoted in Wood-Ellem (1999:97) stated that *kainga* rank is relative.

The Tongan kinship system has been labelled patrilineal, and this rule which governed the social relationships within the family was the basis of the rules governing the

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<sup>21</sup> Kinsman or extended family which can go as far as fifth or even tenth cousins.

wider social units. However, Taufe'ulungaki quoted in Langa'oi (2007) questions this in deference to the complexity of the situation and the numerous instances in history in which inherited titles and land have been acquired through women. In recognition of the real power women wielded in the social spheres, many anthropologists have preferred to describe the Tongan kinship system as cognatic, with patrilineal tendencies. This is true to some extent but the system remains patrilineal insofar as titles continue through the male line, and though on rare occasions that some titles go through the female line, they do not go to a female.

Traditionally, men have authority (*pule*) over their younger brothers and over their children and their wives. The father is also subordinate to his father and elder brothers. Land and titles are inherited by males only, but on rare occasions they go through the female line should there be no male heir. In traditional Tongan society, age and gender are of importance. People believe that when we were born to this earth, God put us in our rightful places and respect should be shown to the eldest as being the eldest was God's divine plan.

Sisters on the other hand have always enjoyed their superiority, being of higher rank than their brothers, even though the rule of primogeniture is common practice. Bott (1982) states that father's sisters have mystical ritual powers over their brother's children. Campbell (2001) argues that the most powerful person in a family is the father's eldest sister (*mehikitanga*). This is true in rank but the power remains with the eldest male (*'ulumotu'a*) of the *kainga*. However as Campbell pointed out, the *mehikitanga* or aunt and her children will always have higher rank and superiority over the brothers and their descendants, and this is called *fahu*. A *fahu* has been defined as a person (usually a woman) with "unlimited authority" (Lātūkefu, 1974:3) over others within her family of origin. The *fahu* status has been traditionally reserved for the eldest sister or father's sisters. Further generations down the line, the great aunt and her descendants are often referred to as the *fahu loa* or the

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<sup>22</sup> Fa'ahinga also refers to various or different types of things and in this case extended family.

traditional line of the *fahu* which can be traced two or three generations back. However, today the *fahu* status is usually reserved for the father's eldest sister and her children.

The *fahu* custom is also as important within the family and the *kainga*, as in the royal circle. This was evident in the arranged marriages during the *Tu'i Tonga* dynasty up to Queen Salote's reign. The *Tu'i Tonga* fearing the power of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* line would marry either a daughter or a sister of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*. This would always assure the *Tu'i Tonga* that those descendants of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* will always be inferior to them (Bott, 1982: 59). This is an example of how intermarriages serve to make higher status chiefly lines superior in kinship to lower status chiefly lines and support traditional political power structures. This practice is still ongoing, with the King's children and grand children marrying into noble families. Ten of the current noble titles are held by either the brother, first cousins, nieces or nephews of the current king. Gifford (1929:19 in Hahn 1992) argues that the "Tongan kinship system was and is simultaneously domestic and political."

As a *Tu'i Tonga* is '*eiki* (chief) to his younger brothers, so in every Tongan family the older brother is '*eiki* to his younger brothers. As the female *Tu'i Tonga* is superior to her brother the male *Tu'i Tonga*, so in every family in the land the oldest sister is superior to the oldest brother. A common man's sister's children are *fahu* to him and may respect what they wish; the *Tu'i Tonga* was often *fahu* to the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* [since the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* title is the younger brother of the *Tu'i Tonga* title] and the *Tamaha* [offspring of the female *Tu'i Tonga*, the sister's child,] the highest earthly dignitary, was always *fahu* to the *Tu'i Tonga* [which was the child's mother's brother] (Gifford 1929:19).

This literally means that in every Tongan household there is an '*Eiki* and the structure of the Tongan society is exercised there also. In the family, the father or *tamai* (father) is the '*eiki* of

the *'api* or household. In the community it is the *'eiki* or chief and at the national level, the King is the ultimate *'eiki* of the country. In other words the *famili* could be considered a microcosm of the society at large because the ranks within the *'api* mirrors the ranking system in the society and the relationships are governed by the same basic principles.

In the *famili* or nuclear family, children are taught to respect their elders. Talking back to the father and mother is considered cruel and it is forbidden. This is also practiced at the community level: children respect their elders and people with authority, and this respect is also expected to extend to the national level. Here is an example of how this will play out in the media. Sione works in newspapers and the chief of his village has been implicated in some corruption charges. Sione will face a lot of pressure as he decides whether to write the story or not. He will certainly have pressure from his family in fear of repercussions from villagers and from the chief himself. His editor will also put pressure on him to run the story. Usually Sione will not run the story as he fears more for his family's good name and standing in his village than his job. In some of the cases with government newspapers and radio in Tonga, things like this which involve the government or government officials or even nobles usually do not make it into print or onto the air. This reflects the influence that Tonga's kinship and social structure has, not only on individuals and families but also in institutions such as the media.

#### **4.4. Development of the Tongan media.**

The media in Tonga are coming of age and are not immune to the trend of globalization. The media have no borders and the flow of information now reaches all corners of the globe within seconds as any event occurs or major news breaks. Even a small and geographically isolated country like Tonga is no exception to the influence of the media. As history shows, the media do play a part in the small kingdom's political development. According to Castells (1997) the media are not holders of power but constitute by and large the space where power

is decided. The “space” which Castells refers to is the media. Politicians and governments use the media to influence people. Television and radio airtime, spaces in newspapers and internet is the space that Castells refers to.

The ownership of Tonga’s media is still something of a family business. All of the media owners and editors agree that media freedom in Tonga still prevails despite government intervention and interference in moving to control the media in Tonga. The introduction of two media laws which led to the banning of the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* newspaper in 2003 would be a good example.

Media freedom in Tonga is guaranteed under Clause 7 of the Tongan Constitution.

It shall be lawful for all people to speak, write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of defamation, official secrets or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Family. [Tongan Constitution]

Unlike neighbouring countries such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea where media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch share control of the local media, the ownership of most of the local media remains in the hands of locals, but for how long remains to be seen. With regards to media ownership, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) have attempted to refine and extend Altschull’s work (Altschull, 1984). Their theory of media ownership and news content points out that the owners of a media organization have ultimate power over the news content of the newspapers. This is absolutely true in Tonga: with the freedom of the press guaranteed under the Tongan Constitution and no media regulatory bodies to keep them in line, the influence of media owners can be seen in the articles and editorials of each medium. Tonga is also interesting because a majority of the private newspaper owners are involved in the daily

operation of their newspapers. This is also evident in the salience they give to stories or issues that reflect their own interests, as some of them try to influence the readers.

Although Tonga has yet to experience the full impact of globalization, its effects have already been experienced. Even though government control and influence over the media are becoming less and less, self censorship is still a common practice, especially within the government media. However, the introduction of the new media has indeed made its mark in Tonga.

The media from the beginning have been used as a propaganda vehicle by both government and media owners in Tonga. The most notable early case was that of Shirley Baker, the Wesleyan missionary who was appointed by Tonga's King George Tupou I as his premier and adviser. Baker was responsible for drafting Tonga's Constitution. He was also responsible for setting up various newspapers to help pursue his cause, and for suppressing alternative views and newspapers which were deemed critical of the government. More recently, government control and intervention have formally been restricted to the government's own media, Radio and Television Tonga, after it unsuccessfully tried to ban the *Times of Tonga* in 2004. During the 2008 Parliamentary election campaign, the government appointed officials to be part of a committee which censored political campaigns. Tonga Broadcasting Commission staff were not allowed to host political programs, on either radio or television.

Privately owned media have to compete for advertisements in order to survive and those that fail to attract advertisers are driven out of business. Many newspapers over the years in Tonga have ceased publication because of financial difficulties. The problem is not restricted to print only but also to broadcasting. Some have moved to the World Wide Web and have found success there. A good example is the *Matangi Tonga*, a monthly magazine

that ceased publication in 2003 and which became the first news organisation to utilise the web as an alternative.

There is also a government move to outsource the management of its newspaper, the *Tonga Chronicle*. The question that is raised here is whether government will be privatising its media, and thus losing control over the media industry. Together with the move from the traditional media to the new media, will regulating the media wither away? This section looks back at the history of the media in Tonga as it developed, and considers some of the politics that led to its development. It will also explore some of the challenges the media are facing in the age of the new media and what the future holds.

#### **4.4.1 The Past**

When the *Taimi 'o Tonga* (Times of Tonga) newspaper was first published on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1989 in Tonga, people and other foreign media were quick to label it as Tonga's "first independent newspaper." However, earlier in 1980, a Tongan businesswoman by the name of Papiloa Foliaki had also laid claim to publishing the first independent Tongan newspaper, with her newspaper the *Taimi Faka-Tonga* (Tongan Times), published in a newsletter format. According to Kalafi Moala who established the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper (personal communication), his own claim was simply because the *Taimi Faka-Tonga* and the *Kele'a*, which was set up in 1987, were both newsletters rather than real newspapers. But what Moala and Foliaki had overlooked was that more than a century ago the press was almost as active and effective in Tonga as it is today. Moreover this also refutes the claims of both Moala and Foliaki to have been the first in the field. An expatriate by the name of Robert Hanslip was actually the first to set up a Tongan language independent newspaper, the *Niuvakai* (literally "Look out Coconut Tree") in 1881. The newspaper was handwritten when it started, but was later printed by the missionary press (Barney, 1974). Historians such as Latukefu, Barney,

McMillan, Richstad and others refer to Hanslip's *Niuvakai* as a newspaper. This evidence surely lays to rest Moala and Foliaki's claims.

To understand how the media works in Tonga, it is vital to lay out all the media outlets in Tonga and their owners, as this reflects the positions each of the media takes. Media ownership in Tonga is unlike countries where the majority of the media are in the hands of a very few conglomerates such as Time Warner, News International and others. Instead the independent media in Tonga are mostly owned by private individuals and they rely on advertisers' money to survive. Media ownership in Tonga may be different but the problems they encounter are similar to any other media organizations in the world. Their influence is also similar to the media in any other country.

The media in Tonga, in this case the press, are almost as old as the written Tongan language. The missionaries were responsible for both the introduction of the press, and for introducing a written form of the Tongan language. Apart from early visitors and explorers such as Captain Cook and others, it was the missionaries who were responsible for documenting Tongan culture and history, as Tonga's history was passed down from earlier generations orally, by word of mouth. This is an effective form of communication that still works well even today, with today's new technologies.

In March 1831, a missionary by the name of William Woon arrived in Nuku'alofa from England with a printing press (Lingenfelter, 1967). It did not take long before the press was put to work. In April of the same year, a spelling book with four pages was printed and distributed. However, according to Barney (1974), a school was established in 1828 by the missionaries to teach the locals to read and write in their own language, and most likely this was the first time that Tongan natives were introduced to literacy in their language. The



missionaries printed other materials, mostly translations of the bible, hymns, and other church materials.

The *Fetu'u 'o Tonga* (Star of Tonga) is thought to have been the first Tongan newspaper, launched in 1869, 18 years after the arrival of the first printing press. According to Barney (ibid), the *Fetu'u 'o Tonga* was published quarterly and it was mainly set up as a means of discussing aspects of the reform laws of 1862. The content of the newspaper included listings of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. In one column entitled “Law of Tonga,” the emergency powers of the King were outlined, and the principle of limited monarchy was explained and compared favourably with the absolute monarchies of Europe. The desirability of the new (1862) Tongan laws was emphasized (Rutherford, 1971).

The second Tongan newspaper was *Boobooi*,<sup>23</sup> which was published in late 1874 by Shirley Baker when he was King Tupou I's secretary and adviser (Rutherford, 1971). According to Rutherford, the *Boobooi* was mainly used by Baker as a propaganda tool in his efforts to strengthen Tonga's position against foreign powers and prevent the islands being colonized. In 1875, Baker also used the *Boobooi* to enlighten the people about the Constitution. The newspaper provided a public forum for Baker's views on religious and political matters, and also included selected local and foreign news (*Boobooi*, 1875). Barney wrote that the *Boobooi* lasted at least seven years from 1875 to 1882 based on the copies that have been found. Rutherford on the other hand claimed that Baker started publishing the *Boobooi* in late 1874 and abandoned it in November 1877. However Richstad and McMillan (1978) agree that the *Boobooi* was first published in 1874, but leaves a question mark as to whether or not it ceased publication in 1882.

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<sup>23</sup> Professor Eric Shumway, Assistant Professor of English at the Church College of Hawaii, explained in a letter of October 4, 1974, that *Boobooi*, now in the “new” orthography spelled Po'opo'oi, is the name of a “famous old native Tongan pudding” (quoted in Barney, 1974)

While Shirley Baker maintained the publication of the *Boobooi*, in January, 1876 he set up an English language newspaper called the *Tonga Times*. “The *Tonga Times* became the government’s and Baker’s mouthpiece before the English-speaking world” (Barney, 1974: 352). However the fate of the English *Tonga Times* is unclear, as there is no mention of it in later years according to Barney.

During this period, according to Barney (1974), a row developed between Baker and the European settlers in Tonga. They complained to the British authorities in Fiji about Baker’s influence on the King, as reflected in the Constitution of 1875, and about how Europeans were being treated. The European settler’s resentment of Baker and the government led to the birth of another newspaper in 1881, Hanslip’s *Niuvakai*. The first edition covered the “Mu’a parliament,” a meeting of junior chiefs who opposed some of Baker’s laws but not the King, and also responded to criticisms made by Baker in his *Boobooi* in September 1881 (Rutherford 1971). This can be viewed as first press war in Tonga, while at the same time it showed the influence of the media on politics coming to the fore.

The *Niuvakai* became a public forum for expressing discontent against the ruling elite, government, and even the King. A similar case was to be repeated but more than a century later, 107 years to be exact, when the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* was established in 1989. It can be argued that the *Niuvakai* was indeed a political newspaper because Hanslip was associated with the Mu’a parliament, a movement that opposed Baker and sought his removal from Tonga. Hanslip was also an adviser to Tungi, a high chief and rival of King Tupou I. The content and actions of the *Niuvakai* were quite similar to those of the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* when it started. The *Taimi ‘o Tonga* became well known for exposing government irregularities (the royal family’s businesses among other things), and the push for democracy.

The popularity of the *Niuvakai* led to the introduction of another newspaper. In March 1882, the *Koa Taimi 'o Tonga* (Times of Tonga), a pro-government Tongan language paper, was established, perhaps to counter the *Niuvakai*. Prince Wellington Ngu was the editor and, according to Rutherford (1971), “this paper supplied Hanslip with material to criticize” the government and especially Baker. The *Koa Taimi 'o Tonga* was withdrawn from circulation by Baker in April of the same year as things were beginning to heat up (ibid).

In September 1882 Baker pushed two Acts through Parliament, *An Act relative to Newspapers* and *An Act Relative to Sedition* (see Barney 1974). Both Acts were directed at Hanslip’s *Niuvakai* newspaper. Hanslip was denied permission to attend sessions of parliament and in October 1882, the King signed the amendment to the Constitution’s free press provisions (see Chapter 6). As a result the law was ambiguous because while freedom of the press was granted, that freedom was only valid as long as it did not criticize the King or government officials:

....no blasphemous articles shall be printed or seditious libels, or libels on any of the chiefs of the land, or anything that shall produce hatred or contempt to the chiefs of the Government or Government of his Majesty, or anything that shall cause seditious against His Majesty. (Act to Regulate the Printing of Newspapers 1882)

The amendment to the Constitution was clearly seen by Hanslip and the expatriate community in Tonga as a move by Baker to protect him from being criticized, rather than to defend the King. However, the Rev J.E. Moulton, the headmaster of the Wesleyan school in Tonga, allowed the school’s press facility to print Hanslip’s copy in 1882. Moulton’s action and the *Niuvakai*’s continuous line of attack and criticism of Baker and the government were deemed libel and seditious. Charges against Moulton, a long time foe of Baker, were

contained in the *Government Blue Book* which was compiled to be presented to the General Church Conference to persuade the church to remove Moulton from Tonga (Barney 1974). The *Government Blue Book* was an official document where all the charges against both Dr. Moulton and Hanslip were published. The conflict that erupted in the press during Baker's time as Prime Minister of Tonga died out when he was fired by the King in 1889. Barney's conclusion to this whole period was that:

the British government assumed more of a paternal interest in Tonga and assisted in bringing order and solvency to the islands so that public debate became less necessary and the newspapers of the 1870's and 1880's, their usefulness gone, died as quickly as they were born (ibid)

Church publications took over. In 1882, according to Rutherford (1971), Moulton had his own paper, the *Local Preacher's Paper*. The title suggests that it was aimed at the church and also Tupou College which was run by the missionaries. No other feature of this newspaper was given by Rutherford, only that Moulton published statements and articles that supported the Mu'a parliament. The row between Baker and the General Conference of the Wesleyan Church in Sydney over their refusal to remove Rev. Moulton from Tonga led to the establishment of a new Independent Church of Tonga by Baker, while Moulton remained the leader of the Wesleyan Church. Another church owned newspaper, the *Tau'ataina* (Independent) newspaper was established in 1892 and ran through to 1896, and Rev. James Watkin, a former Wesleyan missionary who later became the president of the Free Church of Tonga, was its editor.

The Catholic Church had its own publication under the title *Fafangu*<sup>24</sup> (The Bell), which was also established in 1892, and ran until 1910. The Catholic Church did not have

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<sup>24</sup> Fafangu in direct translation refers to a bell, but in another translation it refers to waking someone up.

another publication until 1929, when they established the *Taumu'a Lelei* (literally “good purpose”). This publication still runs to date. The *Taumu'a Lelei* contains church news and news for the youth, in addition to births, death and wedding messages. The newspaper was often attacked by government officials as anti-government in some of its editorials and stories (*Pacific Magazine*, 2004). What is sad about some of the old publications is that they cannot be found in Tongan libraries or archives in Tonga. Church publications such as the *Fafangu*, *Taumu'alelei* and *Tohi Fanongonongo* can still be found, but others like the *Niuvakai*, and *Koa Taimi 'o Tonga* cannot be found in Tonga itself, but only survive in archives, libraries, or museums in foreign countries. These include the National Library of Australia, Canberra, the Mitchell Library in Sydney, the New Zealand National Archives in Wellington, and some archives in Fiji and various other institutions. Tonga's tropical weather does not help with the preservation of old newspapers. Copies of the *Tonga Chronicle* dating only from 1964 in schools and the government's archives have started to show signs of wear or damage.

The Wesleyan Church also produced its own publications, including *Tohi Fanongonongo* (literally “Book of Messages”). The newspapers contains all the Church's news, some sermons and its content are very similar to that of the *Taumu'a Lelei*. The *Tohi Fanongonongo* was first published in 1929 and continues to date. As for the division between the churches that Baker created, Queen Salote Tupou III reunited the Wesleyan and the Independent Church to become the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga in 1924 (Wood-Ellem, 1999). The *Tohi Fanongonongo* has restricted itself to church business, and has refrained from involvement in politics, although one of the presidents of the church, the late 'Amanaki Havea, was a supporter of the pro-democracy movement. *Tohi Fanongonongo* is funded through church donations and some advertising.

#### **4.4.2 Hele'uhila: The Movies**

The 1920's saw the introduction of *hele'uhila*,<sup>25</sup> starting with the silent movies. According to Hahn (1992:349) the cinemas were located within the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa. In the 1930's the talking movies arrived and by 1949, 16mm equipment became available in Tonga. This led to an increase in the number of screenings in Tonga, reaching the villages and outer islands. The cinema was very popular until the introduction of video cassette recorders (VCRs) in the early 1980s and television in the mid 1990s. In Nuku'alofa alone at its peak, there were four cinemas owned by businessmen, though since the riot of 2006, there has not been a single cinema in the capital. The last cinema was destroyed during the riot and has not been rebuilt. During World War II, the Americans had a station in Tonga. They were also screening wartime propaganda movies, much to the amazement of the Tongan youth (Wood-Ellem, 1999). During the 1940s, 1950s and well into the 1960s, the cinemas were also the primary source of world news, as contact between locals and the outside world was limited. The newsreels were supplied by the British High Commissioner sometimes from Great Britain and sometimes New Zealand. By the time the newsreels got to Tonga the news was usually very late. Takeuchi cited in Hahn 1992) stated that he saw Australian newsreels in Tongan cinemas during his visit to Nuku'alofa in 1976, and the newsreels were at least five years old at the time.

#### **4.4.3 The Rebirth of the Tongan Popular Press.**

For a long period of time, the Churches provided the general population with their main sources of news and information. It was not until the latter part of the reign of Queen Salote Tupou III that the government set up its own radio station and newspaper.

In 1961, the government set up Radio Tonga, and in 1963 it established a bilingual newspaper, *Tonga Chronicle* in English and *Koe Kalonikali* in Tongan. The establishment of

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<sup>25</sup> Movie cinemas or moving pictures

both Radio Tonga and the *Tonga Chronicle* were attributed to the Crown Prince, who was Prime Minister of Tonga at the time and who later became King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The reasons for the long absence of newspapers and radio during the time of Queen Salote have not been fully documented, but certain suggestions can be made. First, her reign included the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s. However the most important reason may have been the conservatism of the Tongan parliament and authorities. One Member of Parliament was quoted as saying that the newspaper was likely to stir up controversy and that the government funds would be better spent on the ongoing work of the Tongan Traditional Committee (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, August 1964:21, cited in Hahn 1992). The article was published after the *Tonga Chronicle* was established, but this clearly showed the attitude of the authorities towards setting up a newspaper.

When the *Chronicle* started a new column soliciting opinions from the wider public on various matters, it was deemed to be offending Tongan sensibilities towards hierarchy. According to Hanh (ibid) in a 1969 Parliamentary session one member, Noble Luani criticized the newspaper when he asked, "Why should they [the *Chronicle*] criticize the leaders in government? Why should a banana grower or fisherman say this should be this and so on? Are we going to obey them" (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1969: 47).

Parliament debated several times how to censor the *Chronicle*, for fear that its continued criticism of government could lead to anarchy and communist infiltration (ibid). It could be argued that the long lull in establishing the media was partly due to this fear, among other reasons.

Prior to the establishment of the *Tonga Chronicle*, the government printed a newssheet called the *Daily News*, and published it from Monday through to Friday, in both English and Tongan (Richstad and McMillan, 1978). This was where government would

publish public notices and court proceedings. The idea of a weekly newspaper developed in 1963, as noted in an article entitled “Tonga Plans its First Newspaper” (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, June, 1963) – a rather misleading title, given that this was not, in fact, the first newspaper.

The *Tonga Chronicle* was established in 1964, and was published in both English and Tongan. Even with the rise of competition for the supply of newsprint, the paper has managed to survive up to the present day with backing and funding from government. The *Chronicle* was an initiative of the late King Taufa’ahu Tupou IV, together with an expatriate, Jack Reichelmann who was an Assistant Secretary to the Government. As its first editor, Reichelmann recounted the *Chronicle*’s beginnings:

At that time His Majesty was Prime Minister, known as Prince Tungi. I was an assistant secretary. He called me to his office on one day and said he thought it was about time Tonga had a weekly newspaper. ‘That’s a good idea I agreed. Well, you run it’ Tungi said. (McClelland in Hahn 1992: 306).

The *Chronicle* and *Koe Kalonikali* started with just four pages each and sold for 3 pence. Records showed that of the first edition, 600 copies of the English version were sold within 20 minutes and 5,000 copies of the Tongan language version were sold in the first afternoon (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, July 1964:29). From the beginning, the *Tongan Chronicle* was under the Prime Minister’s office and most of its news was from government. It was not until a Peace Corps volunteer by the name of Richard Schwartz, a trained journalist, took over from 1968 to 1970 that the *Chronicle* was more professionally operated. Some of the changes he made did not go down well with the government, especially when he started printing articles critical of the government. In addition, the “Man on the Street” column was seen as offensive since it came from ordinary commoners, and it was very hard for the authorities to



take these criticisms. The late King Taufa'ahau IV, the founding patron of the *Chronicle*, defended the paper in an interview published in the newspaper 1969:

Such nervousness [by Parliament] is understandable. These views are only held because they are not used to newspapers making comments on public affairs. Had they experience in a country where a free press is the rule rather than the exception, they'd find government's in that country tend to develop a hide about as thick as a rhinoceros' hide. Newspaper, radio and television criticism simply bounces off. This attitude has not yet developed in Tonga. But I think it will come. The debate about citizen survey shows there are members of parliament who value comments of the public. In any case, I don't think criticism is necessarily bad. If there's truth in the people who are being criticized can only benefit from it Criticism that is false should be replied to and the truth made known (*Tonga Chronicle*, August 15, 1969)

The *Tonga Chronicle* under Schwartz was heavily censored by government and was sometimes denied access to files of the Prime Minister's Office, even though they were housed in the same building. Another expatriate editor for the *Tonga Chronicle* replaced Schwartz after his two year term ended. McClelland later noted that he had not been expected to last two years by the Chairman of the Volunteer Service Abroad (the New Zealand equivalent of the American Peace Corps) because he might quit out of frustration at trying to edit a newspaper which was a government mouthpiece (McClelland in Hahn, 1992). However, McClelland adapted well and tried to stay away from things that might anger the authorities. As a clear example, he did not report the secret marriage of the King's niece to a commoner, which was deemed an embarrassment to the royal family, even though the story was no secret in Tonga as it was already circulating in the "coconut wireless," the Tongan network of local gossip. Today the *Chronicle* is still considered as a government mouthpiece. In December,

2008 the government put up the management of the *Tonga Chronicle* for public tender, citing financial difficulties (Matangitonga Online). By February 2009, Kalafi Moala and the Taimi Media Network which also owns *Taimi 'o Tonga* won the bid for the management of the *Kalonikali* newspaper. To date, the *Kalonikali* was the only newspaper that was bilingual. However Moala (interview, 2009) stated that part of his vision was to set up the *Kalonikali* as Tonga's main English newspaper. He added that about five thousand non-Tongan speakers work in Tonga and also saw the youth as a possible market which also included the Tongan diaspora.

The *Tongan Chronicle* would monopolize the newspaper market in Tonga for another 25 years before it was challenged by the establishment of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* (Times of Tonga) in 1989. However there were few newspapers published in newsletter formats before the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. They include the *Taimi Faka-Tonga* ("Tongan Time") which was first published in 1980 by a businesswoman, Papiloa Foliaki. The publication was not regular, according to Mrs. Foliaki.

The return of Tongan scholars after studying overseas would mark a new chapter in the history of the Tongan press. For a country that has a population with 98% literacy rate to have only one weekly newspaper run by the government was quite unusual. These scholars' return to Tonga marked the start of a return migration which transformed Tonga's media industry forever.

In 1986, the *Kele'a* newsletter was published by a group of returning Tongan scholars. Dr. Viliami Fukofuka, who is now the Director of Education and his wife Salote were among the group. Founding members included 'Akilisi Pohiva, the leader of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga. The *Kele'a* was popular for exposing corruption in government from leaked documents supplied by "angels" from inside the government, according to Dr.

Fukofuka, referring to their sources and informants (Fukofuka, interview). The newsletter was published monthly until 2001, when Kalafi Moala, publisher of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, reformatted the *Kele'a* into a newspaper and printed it from the *Taimi 'o Tonga* office for three months, while the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was still banned in Tonga (Moala personal communication, see also chapter 5). The *Kele'a* newspaper is owned and run by pro-democracy leader 'Akilisi Pohiva and his children, and is seen by opponents as a propaganda newspaper for the pro-democracy movement. According to 'Akilisi Pohiva, the *Kele'a* is like an unofficial opposition to the government.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* or *Times of Tonga* is the flagship newspaper of Lali Media Group Ltd, published in Auckland, New Zealand. *Taimi 'o Tonga* started publishing in 1989 and it is now distributed throughout the Tongan communities in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Tonga. The establishment of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper was the first time any Tongan newspaper had taken advantage of the Tongan population based overseas. The *Tonga Chronicle* once tried to market the paper to the Tongan communities overseas, but sold few copies and was not as successful as the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. However the *Taimi 'o Tonga* took advantage of the opportunity, and its location and publication in New Zealand, with its large Tongan population, furthered its cause. The popularity of the newspaper was not restricted to local readers in Tonga, but also to the Tongan overseas communities whose number is said to be almost the same as the population currently living in Tonga. In Auckland New Zealand alone, there are 40,149 resident Tongans,<sup>26</sup> which make it a viable market for the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. At first the newspaper was published twice weekly on Mondays and Thursdays but since September 2008 the publication was reduced to once a week, with the pages increased from 32 to 60. Although the newspaper is printed in New Zealand, the main newsroom is in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. In an attempt to have more control over the media, the government

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<sup>26</sup> 2006 New Zealand census. Source, New Zealand Statistics Department.

introduced the Media Operators Act and the Newspaper Act in 2003. This led to the ban of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* from Tonga, firstly on the grounds that it was a foreign publication, and secondly under the Publications Act on the grounds of subversion. In all, the paper was banned three times, but the Tongan judiciary overturned the ban, declaring that the media acts were unconstitutional.

Tonga would see more newspapers entering the market, but they did not last. These included the *Tonga Star*, which was seen by many of the readers and also the foreign media as pro-monarchy and backed by the royal family. The newspaper was established and registered by Tonga's Ministry of Labor, Commerce and Industries on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2000. The *Tonga Star* was owned and published by Sangster Saulala and was seen as a mouthpiece for the "Kotoa Movement,"<sup>27</sup> which was pro-royal and pro-government. The newspaper was rumored to be financed by Princess Pilolevu Tuita, the current king's sister. Very often, the then Minister of Police, Clive Edwards, was featured prominently in editorials or articles in the newspaper. In 2004 after the Chief Justice ruled in favor of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, thus lifting the ban on the newspaper, the *Tonga Star* attacked and tried to impeach the Chief Justice by claiming that he had been paid illegally (Radio New Zealand online). The *Tonga Star* was granted a license under the controversial Media License Act, but financial difficulties forced the newspaper to cease publication

Another newspaper the *Taimi 'o Vava'u* or *Times of Vava'u* was set up in 2004 by a Member of Parliament, 'Etuata Lavulavu. The *Taimi 'o Vava'u* was published by students from Mr. Lavulavu's 'Unuaki 'o Tonga Royal University, an institution supported by the King and the royal family. As the students had no journalism background, the *Taimi 'o*

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<sup>27</sup> The *Kotoa Movement* is a movement organized by hard line conservatives in Tonga in 2001 to counter the Tonga Human Right and Democracy Movement (THRDM). The main objective of this movement is to defend the current system of aristocratic privilege.

*Vava'u* never got past the first edition. In this, Mr Lavulavu published a picture of his Doctor of Philosophy certificate from an unknown Eden Vale University, supposed to be in London

There were other newspapers that registered with the department of Labor and Industries but their fates were similar to the *Taimi 'o Vava'u* and others. These included the *Tonga Tau'ataina* or *Independent* newspaper, published by a former staff member of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, Kitekei'aho Tu'akalau. The newspaper was also published in New Zealand, but the small commercial market in Tonga was not enough for more than six newspapers, and was now overcrowded. However, the newspaper is still in circulation in New Zealand, but it is distributed free of charge. It has now become a community newspaper but at the same time advertisements are still featured in it. This is the first Tongan newspaper to follow the global trend which has been around for quite some time, with examples such as the *Metro* in London among others, which are distributed free of charge and are funded through advertisements.

The *Talaki* is the latest newspaper to enter the small but competitive market in Tonga. The paper was set up in 2004 by the former editor and manager of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, Filokalafi 'Akauola. What is interesting about this newspaper is that its first editor was Fr. Seluini 'Akauola, one of the founding members of the pro-democracy movement and editor of the Catholic Church newspaper, *Taumu'a Lelei*. The *Talaki* like the *Taimi* is printed in New Zealand and distributed both locally in Tonga and, in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. It is printed once a week and only in the Tongan language. The newspaper is often viewed as politically neutral by the readers but is often attacked by the *Kele'a* for not supporting the *Kele'a*'s line. Since its inception, the *Talaki* has printed over 191 issues.

There are also other church publications, apart from the long running Catholic *Taumu'a Lelei* and the Free Wesleyan's *Tohi Fanongonongo*. Most notable is the *'Ofa ki Tonga* (Love for Tonga), a publication of the Tokaikolo 'ia Kalaisi Fellowship, a breakaway

faction from the Free Wesleyan Church, which has been published monthly since the late 1980s. The Mormon Church has its own *Tuhulu*, a worldwide church magazine which is translated into the Tongan language and distributed to church members. The Mormon Church is one of the fastest growing churches in Tonga, which has a lot of influence from the United States.

#### **4.4.4. Magazines:**

The *Matangi Tonga* magazine was Tonga's first monthly magazine. It is owned and published by the Vava'u Press, which was registered in 1981, the first publishing company to be registered in Tonga. The introduction of the Media Operator's Act affected the magazine as it had more than 20 percent foreign shareholders. It ceased publication in 2003 after just four years in circulation. The *Matangi Tonga* has turned its attention to the more profitable online market with their website, [www.matangitonga.to](http://www.matangitonga.to). The website receives over 80 million hits per year from over 100 countries

The only other magazine to be published in Tonga was the *Moana Women's Magazine* published by the Lali Media Co., also the publisher of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper. The magazine was produced locally, covering issues regarding women in Tonga and also political issues. The magazine was co-owned by Kalafi Moala and Taina Kami Enoka. It released only one issue before ceasing publication in the same year.

#### **4.4.5. Television**

The television industry in Tonga is still in its infancy, but for a country with a population of just over one hundred thousand, it is already overcrowded with six television stations. The television coverage is mainly restricted to the main island of Tongatapu and the nearby island of 'Eua. The television signal cannot reach the other islands because of their geographical location, scattered over vast distances of ocean. In 2008, Television Tonga took

the initiative and set up another television station in the second largest island of the group, Vava'u. The island is home to 15,505 people living in 2,885 households. In the 2006 census, 12,512 households were reported to have a television set out of the total of 17,529 households in the whole of Tonga. Tongatapu had 9,941 television sets, Vava'u 1,284 and 'Eua 631. This is important as an indication of the possible size of television audience that Television Tonga reaches in Tongatapu, 'Eua, and Vava'u.

The Tupouniua brothers were the pioneers of the Television industry in Tonga in the early 1980s. They set up the ASTL TV3 station and broadcast from their home in Kolomotu'a, in the capital Nuku'alofa. They replayed pre-recorded television programs from America. These included children programs, movies, news and sports. It was so popular that in the late 1980's they tried to turn their free station into a pay TV operation, but the move failed and the station ceased broadcasting in 1996. After the departure of the Tupouniua brothers, from the industry, an American businessman with the blessing of the late king Taufa'ahu Tupou IV set up the Ocean Broadcasting Network or OBN TV.

OBN, another free station, was set up by Christopher Racine, an American businessman who set the station on one of the King's properties. The building that housed the Television station was once owned by the Mormon Church until their lease expired. The lease was between Racine and the King was free, but this later became an issue at the time of the riots of November 2006 (see Chapter 7). OBN started by broadcasting religious programs only and was also at first a non-commercial station. It later tried to produce local news, but this proved an expensive exercise. The station later turned commercial in order to stay on air, changing most of their programs to political discussions, and it became a propaganda vehicle, first for the pro-loyalist Kotoa Movement, and later for the pro-democracy movement. OBN played a huge role in major events such as the Civil Servant's Strike and the Riot of 2006.

During the civil servants' strike in 2005, the strikers would gather at *Pangai si'i*,<sup>28</sup> singing, dancing and praying. Strike leaders including politicians and civil servants made speeches and sometimes used foul language against government and the royal family to the delight of the crowd. OBN recorded all the events of the day and rebroadcast them in the evening unedited. In the lead up to the riot, OBN hosted various political programs criticizing the government and whoever was against the pro-democracy movement, and at the same time urging people to join the crowd at Pangai si'i.

In another twist, as mentioned above, the OBN building was located on part of the King's estate. The manager, Sangster Saulala announced from the OBN Television and also to the crowd at Pangai si'i that the government was behind an attempt to evict them from the land. It said an eviction letter was received from the landowner's lawyer stating that they must vacate the land, and he pleaded to the people to join a march on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November from the OBN station to show their opposition to the eviction. What Sangster did not tell the people was that the letter he had received was the second, after a warning letter received earlier. A crowd of over 300 people joined the march from the station on the day the riot took place.

Television Tonga is owned by the government, and was established in 2000 with news as its flagship, and it broadcasts in both English and Tongan. Television Tonga is also a free station with the majority of its programs produced locally. It pre-records local and national events, including sports, cultural or local village events, and re-broadcasts them. TV Tonga's programs also include discussions and programs hosted by government departments, churches and various other local groups. As a government enterprise, Television Tonga censors most of its political programs and tends to ban programs which do not favour the

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<sup>28</sup> An open piece of land used for public gatherings in front of the Legislative Assembly building.



government or which are seen as likely to disturb the peace and stability of the country, such as any pro-democracy programs.

In the early 2000s, the former Crown Prince Tupouto'a, who is now the current king George V, established Tonga's first pay TV station. The station broadcast overseas programs and sporting events. In 2006, Fiji's Sky Pacific, another pay channel, entered the Tongan market with Tonga Broadcasting Commission as its agent. Sky Pacific covers the whole of Tonga and broadcasts both live programs and programs from Fiji. China's CCTV is also broadcast live in Tonga from Television Tonga.

The latest entry to the Television market is the Taimi Media Network owned by Kalafi Moala who happens to be the owner of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, *Times of Tonga Online*, and various radio programs on FM 88.6 in Tonga. Mr. Moala is the first in Tonga to have a share in all media outlets, from print and broadcasting to the web. The TMN has leased six hours daily from Television Tonga's Channel 2 for three years. This is seen as a step closer to Mr. Moala buying the Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) which owns Television and Radio Tonga, should the government seek to privatise TBC. If this goes ahead, then it will be very difficult for the government to control the media because the media council in Tonga does not have any power to keep the media in line. People like Mr. Moala would indeed become more powerful as they would have the lion's share of the local media industry, but this still remains to be seen.

#### **4.4.6. Radio**

Radio Tonga was established in 1961 by the late Queen Salote Tupou III, the current King's grandmother. It was first known as ZCO before it changed to its current call sign A3Z. Even though Radio Tonga is government owned, it relies heavily on commercials to run its daily operations. Radio Tonga is the only station that covers the whole of the Tongan Island group.

Radio Tonga has often been criticized for being the mouthpiece of the government. Tonga Broadcasting Commission also operates a medium wave (AM) station, Radio Tonga 1 and Kool 90FM

The other five radio stations are all FM stations which focus mainly on pure entertainment with no political programs. These include Radio 2000, a private FM station; 93FM, a Christian station; Radio Nuku'alofa, a private FM station; and two other FM stations in the islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai.

#### **4.4.7. Online Media**

The turn of the century saw the arrival of the massive power of the World Wide Web and the introduction of online news sites. The introduction of online websites has opened up the information superhighway for Tongans with access to the Internet. It is not only Tongan websites based overseas that provide news on Tonga but also foreign media organizations such as Radio New Zealand International, Radio Australia, Television New Zealand, and the BBC. The online media have become a public forum where Tongans are able to voice their opinions publicly without the censorship of the government. When the pro-democracy movement was banned from local government owned media, they turned to foreign media websites to voice their concerns. Websites like the Tonga Star turned against the government and became dedicated to the pro-democracy movement's agenda and was critical of the government. Radio New Zealand International online is another website that often publishes views of the pro-democracy movement through its daily coverage of events in the Pacific. Whenever the pro-democracy movement is banned from the government radio and television, overseas news agencies carry their views. In some instances, Radio Tonga often cut overseas feed from Radio Australia or Radio New Zealand after the headlines if, for example, they mention news about Tonga from the pro-democracy movement's point of view. The new

media represent a move forward for Tonga and one that sees the government losing its control over media content and the media industry.

*Matangi Tonga Online* is one of the most successful websites in Tonga. The website is an offshoot of the *Matangi Tonga* magazine which ceased publication in 2003. The website covers local and regional news, and also world news. The site's "Letters to the Editor" is one of its most popular sections. It was once a battle ground between the current king of Tonga, when he was still Crown Prince, and the former Minister of Police, Clive Edwards who was sacked and now a proud supporter of the pro-democracy movement.

*Tonga Star* followed the footsteps of the *Matangi Tonga* after the weekly newspaper ceased publication. This was another website dedicated to the pro-democracy movement. At one point, the website published materials from the *Kele'a* newspaper and also texts of programs run by OBN television. However in late 2007, the *Tonga Star* website was taken off the web. According to Sangster Saulala, the publisher, the site's inactivity was due to financial difficulties and having no one to manage the site. However *Tonga Star* has set up another site under the same name but with a different web hosting company. They are currently using [tongastar.net](http://tongastar.net) instead of the [tongastar.com](http://tongastar.com).

The *Times of Tonga* newspaper has added [timesoftonga.com](http://timesoftonga.com) as part of its online services providing news on a weekly basis from the two weekly editions of its newspaper. ([www.timesoftonga.com](http://www.timesoftonga.com)). Tonga Broadcasting joined the race in 2006 ([www.tonga-broadcasting.com](http://www.tonga-broadcasting.com)), providing daily news updates, both text and video, from Television Tonga news. The Prime Minister's Office information unit has their own website covering mostly public announcements and rebutting any accusations against the government ([www.pmo.gov.to](http://www.pmo.gov.to)). The government's new Ministry of Information has its own website, as other government departments.

One of the more popular but now defunct websites was the Tonga-now website ([www.tonga-now.to](http://www.tonga-now.to)). The website was suppose to be an independent website covering economic reform in Tonga but later provided news on a daily basis. Some of the letters to the editor and news that they published were critical of the government, which led to government censorship and later to its demise. The government has now taken over the website.

One of the other popular Tongan websites which is based offshore is the Planet Tonga website ([www.planet-tonga.com](http://www.planet-tonga.com)). The website also acts as a public forum for Tonga and people often voice their approval or disapproval of government policies. The independent Planet Tonga is often used by pro-democracy movement leaders to voice some of their concerns to Tongans outside of Tonga. The web has allowed the dissemination of information faster and to a wider audience, thus keeping Tongans outside Tonga informed of what is happening in Tonga. It is not only the local news organizations and Tongan websites that run news about Tonga, but also foreign media organizations, including Radio New Zealand International, and Radio New Zealand.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The media in Tonga have grown since their early days in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There is no doubt that they have had some impact on Tonga's political development, but the question still remains, how much? The introduction of the new media, particularly the Internet, may well see the demise of the traditional media such as the press. With so many newspapers fighting to survive in a small market, the Internet is probably the way forward, as shown by the success of the Matangitonga online.

Some offline news organizations such as the Tonga Broadcasting Commission's Radio and Television Tonga have started to realize the importance and advantages that the Internet provides. Their website provides daily news five days a week, in both text and video.

The site has yet to be fully developed but it has now reached audiences worldwide. The Internet provides a global audience, and the once powerful government control and censorship will be history. Television as seen on the web could reach homes in the outer islands with no need of television receivers, just an Internet connection. The only thing that is slowing down the explosion of the Internet in Tonga is the high cost of the Internet services and computers. However, as Tonga moves forward, the Internet has started to reach the remotest of islands. People on the once “Tin Can Mail”<sup>29</sup> islands of Niua no longer swim to get their mail from ships and can now surf the web from the comfort of their living rooms.

The ownership of the media will still remain in the hands of relatively small businesses but it is slowly moving towards ownership in the hands of a few. The government’s move to outsource the management of the *Tonga Chronicle* could be seen as the beginning of government giving up control over the media. Television Tonga is moving towards the same solution, with Kalafi Moala’s Times Media Network leasing Television Tonga’s Channel Two. The move may be a financial decision, but the implications are that government will have no control over the media, giving greater power to the media owners. With power in the hands of the few, this will also be an obstacle to democracy, as people will have no choice but to receive limited range of views, depending on whose side the media owners support. For example should some people have the financial backing to buy up newspaper, radio, and television channels, and have their own websites, most people will be left with limited choices. Control and ownership will not be affected but control of sources of news will be the problem. It is also important to note that one of the biggest Internet providers in Tonga is partly owned by the Tongan government. So far, the government has not used its power to censor what websites the people should view but it is also important to

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<sup>29</sup> “Tin Can Mail,” is the nickname for the Niua’s former method of receiving mail. Ships would put the island’s mail in a can and throw it to the sea. One of the islanders would swim to get the mail because the island did not have a wharf at the time.

see what the future holds as Tonga moves to a fully elected government. A lot of questions still remain to be answered about the future of the media in Tonga. Would ownership remain within the current small group families with current practice, or will Kalafi Moala's move to amalgamate the media point the way for the future? The implications of Mr. Moala's move have yet to be felt. Competition between the private and government owned media is still evenly balanced, but the government owned media seem to be losing the fight, as was shown by Kalafi's takeover of the *Tonga Chronicle*. The internet remains the most financially viable option for the media to shift to, thus taking advantage of the Tongan diaspora. There is no doubt that the Internet's popularity has increased but the geographical location of Tongan's population on many scattered small islands remains an obstacle. The high cost of Internet connection is another, but the traditional media moving to the World Wide Web has proved financially viable as the local market shrinks with the increasing competition. The next chapter looks at some of the influential figures in Tonga's political scene.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **MAIN ACTORS IN CONTEMPORARY TONGAN POLITICS**

Tonga's socio-political structure has been shaped not just by individuals but groups also. The notable individual of all was the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. Tupou I during his reign was the founder of modern Tonga but it was Taufa'ahau who broke the barriers and revolutionized Tonga into a modern society. Scholars including Campbell argue that the consequence of Taufa'ahau's modernization was the formation of a new social class. This, I argue, was an unintended consequence, because Taufa'ahau was mainly working towards improving the lives of the people. Tupou I once said "*Oku 'auha hoku kakai he masiva 'ilo*" which means, "The demise of my people is caused by the lack of knowledge". Taufa'ahau introduced higher education and opened the door for Tongans to study and look for opportunities outside of Tonga. As a matter of fact, these people on their return challenged the status quo. People were more educated and saw the flaws in the system and started asking questions, in the process stirring discontent among the rest of the population. Some people opted to use the media in pursuit of their political aspirations while others used their money and business to influence others.

The so called "new middle class," even though it is not officially recognized nor socially classified, consists mainly of returning migrants who migrated overseas for further education, business or other reasons. In their fight for recognition and domination, these return migrants, mainly scholars or influential business people, form various groups and recruit supporters to fight their cause. On the other hand, the church continues to be a strong influence in Tongan society and one might argue that the hierarchy within the church is competing with the traditional hierarchy. This chapter will look at some of these political actors, groups and political parties that have an influence on Tonga's socio-political system.

The small population and close-knit kinship ties between Tongans is also an interesting factor when we try to analyze the roles of the main political actors which will be dealt with in the later part of this chapter. The social networks within Tonga society are an important element and can be catalysts for the ongoing changes that are taking place in Tonga.

As history has shown, King George Tupou I was hailed as the architect and creator of modern Tonga. He united Tonga through civil wars and was responsible, with the guidance of Shirley Baker among others, for the promulgation of the Tongan Constitution in 1875. The power during King George Tupou I's rule was clearly in the hands of the King and his premier, Shirley Baker. During Tupou I's reign, the main opposition came from chiefs and some members of the expatriate community, but most was directed at his premier and not the King himself (see also Chapter 4 and also Latukefu 1974). The reign of George Tupou II is remembered most for the mismanagement of public funds and the King ceding Tonga to become a British protectorate. Queen Salote's reign was mostly quiet although still heavily influenced by McOwan Islay, the British Consul in Tonga at the time (Wood-Ellem, 1999). Challenges to her rule came mostly from some of the chiefs who did not recognize her as the legitimate Queen. Queen Salote was very much loved and adored by the Tongans because of her charm and charisma. However, it would be her son, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, who would connect Tonga with the rest of world and open up opportunities for the people. Thus some of the changes he made enabled the lower end of the Tongan hierarchy to challenge the status quo and the authority of the monarchy.

### **5.1. Late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV**

Taufa'ahau Tupou IV ascended the throne in 1965 following the death of his mother, Queen Salote Tupou III. The impact of Taufa'ahau's reforms and modernization started to be felt while he was still premier. As king of Tonga, Taufa'ahau also inherited great powers



bestowed upon him by the Constitution. His vision for Tonga was eccentric and seen to be a breakaway from how previous monarchs had traditionally ruled Tonga. As one foreign diplomat in Tonga who was quoted in the Los Angeles Times (1991) referred to Taufa'ahau,

He is a benevolent dictator, if you like.... He is all powerful and he wants what's best for his people... (Bob Drogin, Los Angeles Times, 1991)

This perhaps sums up the kind of modernization that the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV was trying to achieve for Tonga. The Constitution gave him authoritative powers and he did not use them recklessly but for the good of his people most of the time. King George Tupou I was credited as the founder of modern Tonga when he gave the people of Tonga the 1875 Constitution, but it was his great grandson, the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, who led Tonga to modernity. Being the first Tongan to receive a university degree, Taufa'ahau Tupou IV expanded on his great grandfather's vision and wished to educate his people. While Taufa'ahau was still Prime Minister he made revolutionary reforms, mainly on the economic and social front.

Scholars including Langa'oi (2008) argue that when "King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV took to the throne in 1966, it marked the start of an era of modernization for Tonga". However, this claim could be contested on the grounds that the late king Taufa'ahau actually started the reforms while he was still Prime Minister. According to Taulahi (1979), as Crown Prince Tungi and premier of Tonga in 1949, he was responsible for most of the reforms that took place during this time. On his return from his studies, Taufa'ahau was appointed Minister of Education by his mother Queen Salote in 1943, Minister of Health in 1944 and Premier in 1949. One of the first moves he made started with education. He was behind the establishment of the Teacher's Training College in 1944 and also Tonga High School in 1947, and the "cream of the crop" throughout Tonga was selected to enter this top school.

On the economic front, Crown Prince Tungi tried to transform the Tongan economy from subsistence to a commercial and industrial economy. He was also behind the move to establish the Tonga Copra Board and its subsidiary, the Tonga Produce Board and Agricultural Council, to improve the marketing of Tongan produce. The King was very ambitious with some of his projects which were entirely aimed at helping his people. The King was at the forefront of all his projects. Every year when he opened the Legislative Assembly, he would reveal his visions and some of the projects he wanted for Tonga. Some of the projects did not produce any outcome and were rather unattainable dreams. These included oil exploration which started in the 1970s but did not find any oil. However, the King turned to an idea of establishing of vast bulk storage facilities that would serve central Pacific irrespective of Tongan oil or imported oil (Campbell 2001). There were other similar projects according to the Los Angeles Times:

There was the King's proposal to import 30 million tires from Seattle to burn for fuel. His endorsement of a 200-bed tourist hotel in a swamp. His plans to turn an atoll into an American toxic waste dump, to build an oil depot on an active volcano, to construct a nuclear power plant in a nation with no industry. None of the deals ever got past the talking stage. (Drogin, 1991)

The projects that the King was trying to set up were with the best of intentions and he was seeking new opportunities for Tonga, even though some of the abovementioned projects like the toxic waste dump and the burning of the tyres would have been disastrous for the country. However, these proposals did not really attract the attention of the population as much as the passport sales. In the mid-1980s, the King authorized the sale of Tongan passports to foreigners, especially people in Hong Kong and as far away as South Africa, for \$50,000. The most famous of them were the former first lady of the Philippines, Imelda

Marcos, and her two children. The money from the sale of the passports was deposited in a Tonga Trust Fund which was invested offshore. The King and the government entrusted the \$20 million fund to Mr. Jesse Bogdonoff, who was later appointed by the King as his official Court Jester (BBC Online October 1999). Later Mr. Bogdonoff somehow invested and lost all of the Trust Fund (BBC online 2002). This caused the forced resignation of the Minister of Justice, Tevita Tupou and Minister of Education, Tutoatasi Fakafanua, who were the ministers responsible for the Trust Fund.

On the Political front, Taufa'ahu Tupou IV was conscientious in his efforts for Tonga to attain full independence from Great Britain in 1970. However, he was very reluctant to make any changes to the Constitution and Tongan political system. As mentioned above, the Constitution gave the King almost absolute power. His power to appoint ministers and the government and the noble's domination of Parliament meant that the King always got what he wanted done. The former Finance Minister, the late Mahe'uli'uli Tupouniua, was forced to resign because he refused to provide money for the King's touring party on one of his trips. The King's appointment of ministers both had its advantage and disadvantages. The advantage was that the people appointed by the King most of the time had expertise and experience in their respective ministerial posts. The down side was that these ministers answered only to the King because the King had the power to appoint and dismiss them as he wished. So in reality, some of the King's failed projects were approved although some of the ministers may have opposed them, but could not say anything in fear of losing their jobs. An example of ministers answering to the King was the appointment of Clive Edwards as Minister of Police, Prison and Immigration in 1996. Edwards was one of the candidates in the 1996 election campaigning for democratic reforms. Before the election, he was appointed minister and soon became renowned for his hard line stand against the democratic movement and also the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper (see also Chapter 6). Edwards was the pro-

democracy's main enemy. However, when he was sacked in 2004, he made a 180 degree turn, and opposed his former masters, and after his election into the legislative assembly in 2005, he became the government and the royal family's main critic.

The late king was also responsible for the reintroduction of the media to Tonga especially the *Tonga Chronicle* and Radio Tonga (see Chapter 4). It was obvious from the beginning that the King while premier was a true supporter of the freedom of the press. When the Legislative Assembly accused the *Chronicle* of publishing letters to the editor criticizing the government, the premier (Taufa'ahau) would come to the *Chronicle's* defense (see Chapter 4). However, in 2003, the King signed into law the amendment to the Constitution which banned the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and infringed the freedom of the press, though this was really uncharacteristic of him. This raises the question of the war of words between the present King George V when he was Crown Prince, and Clive Edwards after he was sacked from government. Edwards accused the Crown Prince of pushing for the media law and the ban of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*; the prince, on the other hand, accused Clive of having a personal vendetta against Kalafi Moala, the owner of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. The King may not have initiated the ban on *Taimi 'o Tonga*, but when he signed the media bills into law, he was just as responsible as whoever drafted or initiated them.

Campbell (2001) argues that the consequences of Taufa'ahau Tupou IV's modernization were the formation of a new social class and also the emergence of the meritocrats, which in turn sowed the seeds of instability. Through education, people were able to travel overseas and at the same time experience the different forms of governments in the host countries they visited. On their return, some brought with them radical ideas of democracy and wanted to change Tonga's system of government to the ones that they had just experienced. The first person to bring up the idea was Dr. Langi Kavaliku, the first Tongan to hold a PhD, when he was Minister of Education in 1974. He proposed a

Constitutional reform but was defeated. This move was to be followed up by returning scholars such as 'Akilisi Pohiva, Viliami Fukofuka, and Finau Tutone to name but a few. They started to challenge the status quo and authorities upon their return, thus seeking a more transparent form of democratic government. Also through education, people like Dr. Kavaliku were appointed ministers of the crown and this also elevated their status in Tongan society. This may be the new social class that Campbell (2001) was suggesting. Language formerly used only for nobles was also used for the ministers but once they were forced to resign or were fired, they also lost that status.

As part of Taufa'ahau's modernization process, communication and contacts with the outside world were opened up to the people. The government in the 1970's negotiated a work scheme with the New Zealand government whereby Tongans would be allowed to travel and work in New Zealand. This led to hundreds of people overstaying in New Zealand and the termination of the scheme. Australia and the United States were the next destinations for Tongan migrants. The families who settled in these countries remitted money back home to their families, which then and still counts for about 30 to 40 percent of Tonga's GDP. Migrants have raised the standard of living in Tonga through education and wealth. This so called new social class emerged to challenge the authorities on what it judged to be unjust and corrupt practices in government. This further led to the push for a more democratic form of government.

### **5.1.2. Kings George Tupou V**

Like his father before him, King George Tupou V inherited the near absolute power of the monarchy afforded to him by the Constitution after the death of Taufa'ahau Tupou IV in 2006. As Crown Prince, King George V was always surrounded by controversies. His lifestyle always seemed to make the headlines both in the media and the *teletouniu* or the

grapevine. Unlike his father, the late king Taufa'ahau Tupou IV who was never involved in any business venture, George Tupou V was an entrepreneur. He co-owned Tonga's only beer brewery, Royal Beer; had his own airline, Peau Vava'u; and established the Shoreline group of companies which owned Tonfon, a mobile phone and pay digital television operator. He also owned the only company that produces and distributes electricity in the Kingdom. His involvement in the airline industry was controversial. While the national carrier, Royal Tongan Airlines, ceased operation due to bankruptcy, the lucrative domestic market was served by Fly Niu, a local company owned by former staff and pilots of the Royal Tongan Airlines and the Crown Prince's Peau Vava'u.

In July 2004 the government announced a one airline policy and both airlines applied for the right to operate the domestic market. According to Campbell (2006) the Crown Prince was Regent at the time when the one airline policy was announced. On the day of the announcement, the Crown Prince and his business partners were present at the office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and interestingly enough, the Prime Minister at the time was his younger brother, Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, who was also the Minister of Civil Aviation. The Prime Minister announced that domestic market could not support two airlines, so Peau Vava'u was given the license to operate domestically. Clive Edwards who was sacked from Cabinet attributed his sacking and that of other ministers to their opposition to the one airline policy and claimed they were bullied by the Crown Prince into endorsing his company. This showed the power that the King's children possessed when they acted as Regent or whenever the King was away.

When he was Crown Prince, King George V's business partners were also in the limelight just as much as the Crown Prince. Most of my informants agreed that the Prince had the "wrong people" around him and that made the people very angry. They were referring to

the Ramanlal brothers, Joseph and Joanne Ramanlal, second generation Indo-Tongans<sup>30</sup>. During the strike in 2005, one of the Ramanlal brother's homes was targeted. During the riot in 2006, a hotel that belonged to the Ramanlal family was destroyed and their homes were also attacked.

When the Crown Prince's company took over the distribution of electricity, they promised to lower the cost. Instead, the price went up when they took over, though the service improved and was more reliable than the former Electric Power Board. They also made huge investments and upgraded both the production and the distribution of electricity. The people recognized this but instead focused their attention on the higher price of electricity and the high wages of the directors, which were revealed by a whistle blower who was employed by Shorelines Company. Their wages were \$300,000 Tongan Pa'anga (about US\$150,000) (Matangi Tonga online 22 May 2006). The focus and attack on the former Crown Prince was so negative that the positive advantages that his business ventures had brought were brushed aside. Before Tonfon was established, the costs for local and international telephone calls were high. However, Tonfon was able to lower the costs of telephone calls and also the internet services. Again, this benefit was not recognized by the pro-reformists and their supporters, but instead they called on the Prince to cease all his business ventures because of the conflict of interests. He did so when he became King, as described below.

If political reform does take place and the King gives up his powers to appoint the Ministers and the Prime Minister, the King will still remain powerful indeed. He still have the right to appoint Privy Councilors and his Privy Council can still influence the Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly, apart from his power to dismiss parliament and call new elections. Just

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<sup>30</sup> Their father was of Indian origin who married a Tongan. This was one of the first Indian families to settle in Tonga.

how far the reform will go will also determine the King's powers. King George V vowed to complete the missing link in his father's modernization of Tonga, which was political reform. Ever since he came to the throne, the Prime Minister has been very much the person running the country. The King has allowed the Prime Minister to appoint his own ministers with approval by the King, which was unheard of in the past. King George V always believed in political reform when he was still the Crown Prince and most people anticipated that he would make changes to Tonga's feudal system. In 2000 when his younger brother, Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, was appointed Prime Minister, it was rumored that the Crown Prince had refused to be Prime Minister. Ibrahim Aoude, an associate professor of political science at the University of Hawaii was quoted by the Times Higher Education website (2000) as arguing that:

Prince Tupouto'a had declined to become Prime Minister unless he was allowed to appoint a new cabinet. The King could not agree as it would have meant surrendering some of his powers to the Prime Minister. (Jobbins, 2000 Times Higher Education online)

This indicates that King George V had always been open to changes and was willing to break away from the tradition according to which the country had been run for over 130 years. Since his accession to the throne, King George has disengaged himself from nearly all of his business interests. One company that has yet to be returned to the government is the ownership to Tonga's domain name, ".to," which he and his American associate co-owned.

### **5.1.3. Princess Salote Pilolevu Tuita.**

In Tonga, the King's children will probably at some stage act as Regent whenever the King travels outside of the country. This means the Regent is also entitled to some of the King's powers. As history has shown, Princess Salote Mafale'o Pilolevu Tuita, the late King's only



daughter, has exercised that power on many occasions. To most of the people, she is a pragmatic and successful businesswoman, but to her critics she has used her royal status to gain personal wealth and control over the country's assets. Princess Pilolevu controls a duty free franchise and an insurance company, and owns 60 percent of Tongasat, a satellite company. The satellite company leases out Tongan registered satellite slots in space. The move was initiated by the Princess and her business partners, but critics including 'Akilisi Pohiva contended that Tongasat should be state owned. Michael Field (1999) claimed that it was Princess Pilolevu's business interests that forced Tonga to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognize China.

Interestingly the major financial beneficiary out of the move is the Princess herself whose 60 percent ownership of the satellite company TongaSat has, according to US business magazine Forbes, given her a personal worth of US\$25 million She pushed for the change to enhance the business prospects of the Hong Kong arm of the company which was struggling because her kingdom, out of what proved shifting loyalty and dedicated anti-communism, preferred Taiwan (Field, 1999).

The statement might be odd but it showed the Princess's influence over the King and the country. During the civil servants' strike, Princess Pilolevu was the Regent and it was she who demanded that government grant the demands of the strikers to end the six week strike that crippled the country (see also Chapter 7). Now that her father is out of the picture, her influence on the new King is yet to be determined, but one thing is for sure: she will have the chance to be the Regent again when the King travels outside Tonga because the new Crown Prince is currently Tonga's High Commissioner to Australia.

#### 5.1.4. Nobles

The nobles were the most feared and respected group in Tonga prior to unification and the promulgation of the Constitution. Before the unification, there were no nobles but only chiefs, and their status varied depending on their connection to the high chiefs, the *Tu'i Tonga*, *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* or *Tu'i Kanokupolu*, and the land that they owned. They were ruthless and so powerful that commoners to them meant nothing. William Mariner recalled one incident in which Finau 'Ulukalala, a high chief, ordered a man shot because he was above him on the mast of a ship. The man was shot dead and when Mariner asked Finau why he ordered him to be shot, his answer was that the man was “only a low, vulgar fellow (a cook), and neither his life nor his death was any consequences to society” (Rutherford, 1977). Prior to the unification, Tupou I himself was one of the high chiefs in the island of Ha'apai. He then waged wars in Vava'u and Tongatapu to unify the country and declared himself King. When the Constitution was promulgated, the number of chiefs were cut to 20 and later increased to 33 and they were referred to as nobles, similar to British system.

The Constitution of 1875 deprived the nobles of most of their powers. Their only real power remained with the land that they owned. They used their land on their estates or *tofi'a* to maintain their power and still have influence over their people but they are losing that tight grip and their powers are decreasing. The majority of the nobles do not reside in their *tofi'a* or estates as they preferred to live on the main island of Tongatapu. Nobles whose estates are in the villages or suburbs of Tongatapu live in the capital Nuku'alofa and not with their people. This could be argued as one of the reasons for the demise of their influence over their people. The people in the villages do not feel close to their chiefs because they live elsewhere and have no direct contact with them. The *faka'apa'apa* or respect of the people for their chiefs is slowly eroding. This is when the church minister comes in as sort of a replacement of the chief. The nobles may be powerless but in the Legislative Assembly they could hold

the balance of power when it comes to voting. When the nobles stand together on any issue they will have the majority in the legislative assembly. They have nine elected representatives; the two governors are also appointed from the nobles' ranks and some of the government ministers are also nobles. In the current government line up four nobles are ministers. So in reality the current Legislative Assembly have 15 nobles who are members which is more than half of the current set up.

The noble's loyalty to the King is unquestionable but some in the past have also showed opposition to the King. This was led by King George V's first cousin, the late noble *Tu'i* Pelehake, who was named the "People's Prince" by the strikers when he led them in a protest march to Parliament. He was also the one who proposed the establishment of the NCPRC committee (see Chapter 7). The second noble to show opposition was Noble Lasike who led the pro-democracy people's representatives to challenge whether it was legal for the Princess Regent to open the 2006 Legislative Assembly session. Chief Justice Robin Webster ruled that it was legal for the Regent to act on behalf of the King (Radio New Zealand International Online, 2006). These are just two examples, but now nobles feel that they have to answer to the people because without them they are nothing and powerless. The *faka'apa'apa* and *toka'i* that they used to get from the people in the past is fading faster than they expected and with the new political reform on the horizon their future is also in doubt because the new emerging middle class might eventually replace them.

#### **5.1.5. Prime Minister: Dr. Fred Vaka'uta Sevele.**

Dr. Sevele was not part of the original group that set up the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy movement. He began his high school education at Apifo'ou College in Tonga, and then continued at St John's College and Marist Brothers High School in Suva, Fiji. After completing his high school education he entered the University of Canterbury in New

Zealand where he graduated with a BSc in Math, a BA, an MA and a PhD in Economic Geography (Wikipedia)

“Feleti” as he is known to most in Tonga started out as a part time farmer, raising pigs and variety of cash crops while working for the government after completing his PhD. He was employed by the government as the head of its Tonga Commodity Board which was in charge of Tonga’s exports. When the Commodity Board ceased operation, Feleti took up a post as an ADB (Asia Development Bank) senior economic adviser at the Planning Department. He was also an economic advisor for the South Pacific Commission in Noumea, New Caledonia for a number of years before returning to Tonga . On his return Dr. Sevele expanded his business interests and was heavily involved with the squash industry both as a grower and an exporter. In 1999 Dr. Sevele was elected into the Legislative Assembly as one of the pro-democracy candidates and again in 2002 and 2005. Sevele’s close alliance to Mr. Pohiva saw him elected. It was claimed that Dr. Sevele who by this time a well established businessman was providing financial support for the movement and their campaigns and also to Mr. Pohiva’s Kele’a newspaper. As a member of the business elite, Dr. Sevele was also a close friend of the then Crown Prince Tupouto’a who is now King George V.

#### **5.1.6. ‘Akilisi Pohiva**

Samiuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva has been the face and front man of the pro-democracy movement from its birth to the present. Mr. Pohiva started a radio program in 1981 called “*Matalafo Laukai*”<sup>31</sup> The aim of the program according to Mr. Pohiva was to enable himself and some of the leading and most respected people in Tonga to discuss issues that were political which the newspapers did not dare to publish. The type of issues included reviewing the

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<sup>31</sup> In the traditional Tongan game of Lafo. Matalafo Laukai refers to people watching and counting the scores without taking part in the game, but more like spectators. It could be a metaphor for people not included in the decision making of the country but who are actively involved by observing what decision makers are doing.

Constitution, and looking at the parliamentary work among others. Lavinia Vikilani, a former radio producer with Radio Tonga, said the issues raised during these programmes were totally new and never been publicly discussed (interview 2008). The government through the Board of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission, of which the Prime Minister was the Chairman, banned Pohiva's program in 1985. Mr. Pohiva was not only banned from airing his program but he was also dismissed from his post as a government school teacher. Pohiva sued the government for unfair dismissal and won.

Mr. Pohiva and some of his associates including Dr. Viliami Fukofuka and his wife Salote started the *Kele'a* newsletter after Mr. Pohiva was dismissed. The newsletter was first distributed for free revealing some of the corruption in the Legislative Assembly and also government. Later Mr. Pohiva and his children took over the *Kele'a* and registered it as a family business with Mr. Pohiva as the editor and publisher. Mr. Pohiva and the *Kele'a* newspaper have been convicted and fined over the years, mostly on defamation charges. According to Mr. Pohiva (*Kele'a*, April 2008) the *Kele'a* has faced over forty court cases and over T\$100,000 (about US\$50,000) paid in civil law suits. The highest was a defamation case filed against Pohiva and the *Kele'a* by the current King when he was Crown Prince where he was awarded over US\$20,000. The Prime Minister Dr. Sevele has also sued the *Kele'a* newspaper for defamation seeking millions of Tongan pa'anga in damages. Despite this series of court cases, Mr. Pohiva continues to be very popular and also so is his newspaper.

After the public servant's strike in 2005, Mr. Pohiva and other loose pro-democracy supporters' groups formed the People's Committee for Political Reform and Mr. Pohiva was elected as the chairman. Scholars including Dr. Taufe'ulungaki argue that Mr. Pohiva is a follower of the Marxist school of thoughts. "Akilisi, of course, was initiated into his political ideas in the, then, Marxist-dominated Sociology Department of the University of the South

Pacific” (Taufe’ulungaki, 2006). People who have worked with Mr. Pohiva over the years have parted company with him for various reasons but the most common was their disagreement with how Mr. Pohiva was running things. Some, including Dr. Fukofuka, have accused Mr. Pohiva of being a Marxist and hiding behind democracy. Fr. ‘Akauola the first general secretary of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, has distanced himself from the movement because according to his own words,

They [Pohiva and his supporters] have moved from the original roadmap that we started with....Pohiva is a type of person who likes to stir up things, he would always look to create friction and conflict. (Personal communication with Fr. ‘Akauola, 2008)

Dr. Fukofuka who started the *Kele’a* news letter with Mr. Pohiva did not agree with how Mr. Pohiva was running things, so he left and tried to set up his own party, the Christian Democratic Party. When Dr. Fukofuka left the THRDM, Mr. Pohiva campaigned against him in the following election, but Dr. Fukofuka ended up winning his seat. They also claim that the THRDM is now run according to the leader’s personal interests and agenda rather than the movement’s agenda. Pohiva is one of the longest serving Member of Parliament in Tonga.

#### **5.1.6. William Clive Edwards.**

Mr. Edwards is a qualified lawyer by profession and was educated in New Zealand. “Neti” as he is known in Tonga was one of the first students of Tonga High School that was established in 1947 by the Late King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV. His former classmates included Professor Futa Helu, a well known academic and outspoken supporter of the pro-democracy movement before he was sacked. Helu’s camaraderie with Mr. Edwards did not end after their high school years but they later, along with others, set up the Peoples’ Democratic Party. Helu was

instrumental in gathering support for Mr. Edwards during the 2005 by-election. Mr. Edwards has practiced law both in Tonga and New Zealand since the mid 1960's. Mr. Edwards was the outspoken Minister of Police after the King appointed him while he was campaigning for the 1996 election.

Lopeti Senituli the former director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement and current political adviser to the Prime Minister in his paper "The Attempted Coup of 16<sup>th</sup> November 2006" claimed that Mr. Edwards was only interested in the pro-democracy movement to get into parliament.

As the Minister of Police, Mr. Edwards was never endeared to the agenda of the "pro-democracy movement," though he had professed pro-democracy inclinations through his election campaign publicity material, prior to his appointment to the Cabinet, and which he revived in his by-election campaign in May 2005. (Senituli, Planet Tonga, Dec. 28, 2006)

Mr. Edwards was also accused of behind the move to ban the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the introduction of Media Operators Act. This was revealed by a letter to the editor of the Matangitonga online by the Crown Prince Tupouto'a who is now the current king. In his letter Tupouto'a claimed:

The truth is that Clive Edwards believed himself clever enough to harness the Constitution in his personal vendetta against the Taimi Tonga newspaper and its editor Kalafi Moala. He failed in this endeavor because of his ignorance of the law..... Floundering about like a beached whale looking for someone to blame for his public disgrace instead of glancing in the mirror is, after all, and provided he can tell the difference any more, degrading. (Tupouto'a, Matangitonga online, 2005)

Mr. Edwards denied the prince's accusation but admitted he was firmly behind the media bills. He took a number of pro-democracy movement supporters, sometimes including their leaders, to court over various charges while Minister of Police. For example, in 2002 he filed a civil suit against 'Ofa Simiki, a business woman and leading member of the Tonga Small Business Association, for defamation (*Taimi 'o Tonga*, 2002). Four years later Mr. Edwards represented Mrs. Simiki in her sedition court case in connection with the 2006 riot. He was ruthless in his fight against the pro-democracy movement. He was also a member of the "Tonga Kotoa Movement"<sup>32</sup> which used OBN Television to discredit the pro-democracy movement. His membership ended when he was forced to resign from his ministerial post.

Mr. Edwards was also the deputy Prime Minister and at times acting Prime Minister. As part of the Prime Minister's role, Mr. Edwards also took over as chairman of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission's Board of Directors.

Dismissed from this portfolio in 2004, Mr. Edwards ran in the March 2005 General Elections but just missed out on a seat, coming in fourth in the Tongatapu electoral district. However he got another opportunity after the appointments of the four new Ministers from the people's representatives. In a by-election, Mr. Edwards replaced Dr. Sevele who was one of the representatives to receive ministerial appointments. Mr. Edwards was responsible for redrafting the pro-democracy movement's political model that was submitted to the National Committee for Political Reform according to former director of the THDM, Lopeti Senituli (Interview with Senituli, 2008) and became the pro-democracy movement's legal adviser.

Despite the fact that Clive Edwards was disliked by many when he was Minister of Police, he was a respected man in his profession and around the region. After the riot, Clive

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<sup>32</sup> A pro-royalist movement set up to counter the pro-democracy movement. Princess Pilolevu was their patron. The movement included the OBN manager Sangster Saulala among others.



offered to represent the majority of those who were accused of taking part in the riot. He continues to be involved in politics and plans to run in the 2010 election.

#### **5.1.7. Father Seluini ‘Akauola**

Father ‘Akauola is one of the more subtle but very influential figures in Tonga. He was the first general secretary of the pro-democracy movement and one of the organizers of the first ever pro-democracy Convention on Constitution and Democracy in Tonga in 1992.

Fr. ‘Akauola’s status as a priest is also significant as he is respected not only within the Catholic Church but throughout Tonga. A priest in contemporary Tongan society has the same status of a chief, or is even more respected than a chief in some areas. Even a chief offers the priest the same respect accorded to his equals. Fr. ‘Akauola was also the editor of the Catholic newspaper, *Taumu’a Lelei* (see Chapter 4) which at times was accused of being anti-government. He was also the first editor of the *Talaki* newspaper which is run and owned by his brother, Filokalafi ‘Akauola. He has distanced himself from the pro-democracy movement, stating that the movement has moved away from its original agenda and that it is now run according to the leaders’ own personal agendas and interests. He argues that both the Catholic and Free Wesleyan church leaders, Arch Bishop Soane Finau and Dr. ‘Amanaki Havea, supported the movement; both wanted peace to be at the centre of whatever they did and they did not endorse violence.

During the civil servants strike of 2005, Fr. ‘Akauola was asked by the leaders of the strikers to act as their mentor and adviser (Interview with Fr. ‘Akauola 2008). Politicians and supporters of the pro-democracy movement wanted to include political reform as part of the striker’s demands, but Fr. ‘Akauola’s advice was against this. He believed that the riot took place because the leaders of the pro-democracy movement had lost their way.

#### **5.1.8. Kalafi Moala:**

Kalafi Moala is the eldest son a former government education officer and one of the authorities on the Tongan language. Mr. Moala did not enter the Tongan political frame until the establishment of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper in 1989 (see chapter 6). He is Tongan born but he later became a naturalized American citizen. His American citizenship was related to the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* ban in 2004 under the newly introduced Media Operators Act. It was considered a “foreign” newspaper because of Mr. Moala’s US citizenship. After the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* inception, Mr Moala became a household name, while at the same time his newspaper became the most widely read newspaper within the Tongan community in not only Tonga but in New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

Mr. Moala’s association with the pro-democracy movement drew criticism from government officials, conservatives and the royal family, but was very popular amongst the commoners. It was the *Taimi 'o Tonga* that fortified his influence in Tongan politics. Mr Moala became a very good friend of the now Prime Minister, Dr. Sevele who was a businessman at the time. This friendship did not come to the fore until the *Taimi 'o Tonga* parted company with Mr. Pohiva and the pro-democracy leaders. After the riot, Mr. Moala, who was once a thorn in the government’s eye and seen as a foe, was invited to train government communication officers including government journalists who worked for *Tonga Chronicle* and the Tonga Broadcasting Commission.

Mr. Moala by now has made his mark in the newspaper industry and added a news website, making him the only publisher to use both print and the internet. In 2008, Mr. Moala added television to his media business by first buying airtime and then leasing a channel from Television Tonga where he would broadcast news and other entertainment programs. During the election campaign in 2008, Mr. Moala bought airtime in one of the FM stations owned by

one of the current King's former business partners, Joseph Ramanlal. His main aim was to discredit the pro-democracy movement, a campaign that actually failed as more people voted for the three pro-democracy candidates. In his latest move, Mr. Moala now runs the government's *Kalonikali Tonga* or *Tonga Chronicle* newspaper. According to Mr. Moala, he wanted to turn the *Kalonikali Tonga* to an English newspaper targeting not only the English speaking portion of the population but locals as well. Mr. Moala now has the lion's share of Tonga's media industry. In 2009, Mr. Moala and former TBC staff set up Broadcom TMN 88.8 FM station. There was also speculation that Mr Moala had also applied for the management of the government's Tonga Broadcasting Commission which would give him the only AM radio station that covers the whole of the country and also Television Tonga. This will indeed make him a very powerful businessman but to whether he will use it to influence the people still remains to be seen.

## **5.2 Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement.**

The pro-democracy movement, according to Mr. Pohiva, was firstly initiated back in the late 1970s when he and other students were still at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. Even though people have credited Mr Pohiva as the founder of the movement, Mr Pohiva himself has dismissed this by suggesting that it was the late Dr. Hu'akavameiliku a former deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, who first initiated the move towards a democratic government. Back in 1975, Dr. Kavaliku proposed in a Privy Council meeting to set up a review commission to review the Constitution (Interview with Pohiva, 2008). The move was quashed in both Privy Council and Cabinet. A radio program called "Matalafo Laukai" (watching and keeping the score in a game of Lafo) which ran during the 1980's was thought by some including Langa'oi (2007) to be a pro-democracy program. However Dr. Fukofuka, one of the founding members of the movement, argued that the radio program was

Pohiva's own program not the movements'. Pohiva agreed that he conducted the program on his own with support from others.

Dr. Fukofuka, who is now the government's Director of Education, said Mr. Pohiva himself and other associates who were all male, formed an informal kava drinking group called the *Kalapu Moata'ane* or the rooster's club<sup>33</sup>. Members would drink kava while discussing political issues and critically reviewing the government's work and especially the work of the Legislative Assembly. The movement was still *ad hoc* at this stage, with the aim of recruiting more supporters. The result was the establishment of the *Kele'a* newsletter in 1986 by Dr. Fukofuka, his wife Salote, Havea Katoa (a former Member of Parliament), and Mr. Pohiva. The *Kele'a* was initially a group newsletter but has now become a family newspaper owned and run by Mr. Pohiva and his children. Mr. Pohiva was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1987 and has served as a member of parliament ever since. Mr. Pohiva was not the leader of the original movement but he was seen as the front man. One of the pro-democracy movement's first moves was to set up a formal body, and according to Dr. Fukofuka they came up with the name "People's Party." 'Ulitu Uata, a people's representative and businessman, was elected as president and Mr. Pohiva as the treasurer, but the People's Party did not last. According to Dr. Fukofuka it was Mr. Pohiva who was responsible for its demise because he had his own agenda and always wanted to take the limelight.

However Mr. Pohiva was seen by most as the leader because he was the most outspoken member dealing with the media, and through his *Kele'a* newspaper and the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. He gained a reputation of being fearless and the most vocal critic of government. But by August 1992 the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM) became the formal body for the movement. However, journalist and editor of *Matangi Tonga*, Pesi Fonua, attributed the

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<sup>33</sup> The members of the faikava meetings were all male and according to Dr. Fukofuka they decided to call themselves the Moata'ane or Rooster Club.

movement's name to Radio Australia's Pacific Chief Correspondent, Sean Dorney, who used to label the movement the "pro-democracy movement" during his reports about Tonga. Fr. Seluini 'Akauola was the PDM's first General Secretary and Rev. Simote Ve'a was the chairman.

In November 1992, the PDM hosted a major conference with the theme 'Tongan Constitution and Democracy' with the hope of engaging in a dialogue on the theme with not only stake holders but also overseas experts on the Constitution. The government agreed to take part in the Convention but later changed its mind and did not participate (Dr. Fukofuka personal communication). The Convention attracted about 400 participants both local and from abroad although some key speakers were banned from entering Tonga and taking part (Fr. 'Akauola Interview, 2008). Church leaders, especially the Free Wesleyan Church president, Dr 'Amanaki Havea, and Bishop Patelesio Finau of the Catholic church attended among others. The former outspoken Tupou College<sup>34</sup> headmaster, Rev. Siupeli Taliai,<sup>35</sup> as cited in Lawson (1996: 104), labeled the 1875 Tongan Constitution as "ethically, criminally, and theologically barbaric" suggesting that the power was still concentrated in the hands of a small minority, referring to the royal family, ministers, and the nobles. The PDM however during their discussions in the convention and also in the outcome wanted to retain the monarchy but reduce the monarch's political power (ibid). The Convention was hailed as a success despite the opposition; and according to Dr. Fukofuka (Interview, 2008), their success in his view was due to the amount of overseas media attention they received before, during and even after the convention. The government owned media did not run any stories nor cover the convention. According to Lavinia Vikilani, a former radio Tonga radio program producer (Interview in 2009), radio Tonga was paid by the pro-democracy movement to

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<sup>34</sup> The Free Wesleyan Church-run school. This was the first school established by the Rev. Dr. Moulton.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. Taliai was the first Tongan to become the headmaster or principal of the school. He was also educated in Australia.

record everything that was going on during the conference for their records only but nothing was ever broadcast. The 1993 parliamentary election result saw all three of Tongatapu's seats taken by the pro-democracy candidates.

In 2005, the THRDM changed their name to the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement (FIHEDMT) and for the first time registered under the Incorporated Societies Acts. However, most people still refer to the movement as the THRDM. According to Dr. Fukofuka (2008) the pro-democracy movement is misusing the words "Democracy and Human Rights":

The problem now is the misuse of the word Democracy and Human Rights.

This is a huge problem in Tonga; people do not understand what democracy is, not at all. What they know is democracy is accountability, transparency and that is only what they know. They do not know the meaning of democracy. Democracy is process it is not necessarily a structure. I think one of the main dangers is, bringing democracy to cover Marxism or hiding Marxism in the name of democracy and say it is democracy" (Interview with Fukofuka 2008).

Dr. Fukofuka like most of the founding members who have departed from the movement agreed that Pohiva and the current leaders have their own personal agendas hiding behind the notions of democracy and human rights. One of my informants who was a former pro-democracy movement member said that when the movement started, they wanted to educate people about democracy and human right issues. Now the leaders of the movement only travel to the villages to mobilize support, in the process making unfounded and false accusations about the government and the leaders. In an interview with an old lady in one of the villages about democracy, she happily said that "democracy is power to the people." But when asked for further explanation she replied:

People like me will get pension money from the government just like New Zealand and democratic countries (Interview in 2008)

Her answer was similar to 10 others, with power to the people being the most popular first answer. Despite the lack of knowledge, the majority of those interviewed still preferred a democratic form of government. One also has to question why the THRDM is very popular in Tonga despite being accused of behind the riot in November 2006. This will be looked at in more detail in chapter 7.

### **5.2.1. People's Committee for Political Reform.**

The People's Committee for Political Reform (PCPR) is a loose coalition of various factions and groups who were united in the call for democratic reform. Mr. Pohiva was elected as their chairman and veteran politician 'Ulitu Uata as his deputy. The members of the PCPR included the THRDM, PSA, Tonga National Business Association, People's Democratic Party, Sangster Saulala and the OBN TV, the *Kele'a* newspaper and pro-democracy supporters. The PCPR was formed after 'Akilisi Pohiva resigned from National Committee for Political Reform (NCPR). Although the PCPR seemed to have so many supporters and members, only a few made the decisions, including five sitting members of parliament: 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Ulitu Uata, Clive Edwards, 'Isileli Pulu, and Lepolo Taunisila who was not re-elected in the 2008-2010 parliamentary sessions. Other members included Sangster Saulala, manager of OBN TV; Dr. *Tu'i* Uata, son of 'Ulitu Uata and president of the Tonga National Business Association; 'Ofa Simiki from the National Business Association; Teisina Fuko, president of the People's Democratic Party; Finau Tutone, President of the Friendly Islands Teacher's Association; Mele 'Amanaki, Secretary of the PSA; and Po'oi Pohiva, 'Akilisi Pohiva's son and editor of the *Kele'a* newspaper. Po'oi Pohiva was the communication officer for the THRDM and is now the acting director for the movement.

They are the key people who make the decisions for the supporters and their members. What they were doing was seen by some as the opposite of the democracy they were preaching. Lopeti Senituli (2007) accused the PCPR of being the main instigator of the riot:

It is this People's Committee for Political Reform that was responsible for the violence of 16 November 2006. If it is necessary to be more specific about the main instigators and perpetrators from within the PCPR – they were the Peoples' Representatives to the Legislative Assembly (except Samiu Vaipulu from Vava'u and 'Osai Latu from Ha'apai); the Tonga National Business Association; the Tonga Democratic Party, the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement, the Public Servants Association and the Pangai Si'i Committee. (Senituli, 2007, Planet-Tonga.com).

Some of the Court cases are still pending during the writing of this thesis but so far, none of those alleged to be among the instigators have been found guilty. Most of them have been discharged by juries.

### **5.2.2. Sione Teisina Fuko and the People's Democratic Party.**

Teisina Fuko is the President of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In 2009, Mr. Fuko was appointed by the Prime Minister as the new Minister for Revenue and Tax Collection. For many years, Mr. Fuko was a strong supporter of the pro-democracy movement under the THRDM. He has been a Member of Parliament for the Ha'apai group on and off since 1984. In the 2008 election, Mr. Fuko was returned to the house after nine years. However, differences in opinion between him and the leaders of the THRDM including Mr. Pohiva led to the formation of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in April 2005. Some of the dissatisfied former pro-democracy movement members joined Fuko in the new PDP or what



some refer to as the *Paati* 'Atenisi'.<sup>36</sup> Most notably among these members were Clive Edwards, who was former Minister of Police; Professor Futa Helu, an influential academic who established Tonga's first private University ('Atenisi University'); and Semisi Tapueluelu, a former Prison Chief who was sacked by Edwards when he was the Minister of Police. It was a PDP ticket that saw Clive won a by-election to replace Dr. Fred Sevele who was elevated to a ministerial post in 2005. The PDP's political agenda was similar to the pro-democracy movement but they supported the idea of a party system instead of just increasing the number of people's representatives, and they proposed appointing ministers and the Prime Minister from these elected members. In the lead up to the riot, the PDP joined forces with the THMDM and other political factions under the banner of the People's Committee for Political Reform.

### **5.2.3. Public Servants Association.**

The Public Servants Association was established when civil servants decided to go on strike in 2005 (see also Chapter 7). While the nurses had the Tonga Nurses Association, the teachers the Friendly Islands Teachers Association, and the lawyers the Tonga Law Society, civil servants did not have a combined union or association but each Ministry established its own. The Public Servants Association is a major force because, as the strike demonstrated, the civil servants literally held the government hostage and crippled the whole country during the strike. After the strike, leading members of the PSA withdrew from the association because not only were they successful in getting what they wanted, but they did not like the influence the pro-democracy movement was having over the PSA. Senituli (2007) argued that leading members did not seek re-election due to this reason.

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<sup>36</sup> The Party was formed at the 'Atenisi University which is well known for producing critics of government and top academics. 'Atenisi is the Tongan transliteration of "Athens."

Of the key leaders of the PSA Interim Committee that led the strike, most were opposed to mixing the agenda of the “pro-democracy movement” with that of gaining a salary raise of 60–70-80% for their members. In this category were Dr. Pita Taufatofua, Dr. Viliami Fakava, and Maliu Takai and others. Their opposition was based on process rather than on principle and that was the main reason for most of them withdrawing their interest in being re-elected into the PSA Executive Committee at the end of the Strike. (Senituli, 2006, Planet-Tonga.com)

The PSA did not stop after the strike but continued their support for the pro-democracy movement. They also signed a petition which they delivered to the palace office demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, Dr. Fred Sevele. In one of the PSA’s meetings they even discussed a new Cabinet line-up by naming themselves (the PSA leaders) as Cabinet Ministers. A leaked agenda paper from the meeting was delivered by an informant to Radio and Television Tonga without their knowledge and was broadcast on radio. (Radio Tonga, 2006). The PSA denied the Cabinet list but this caused further division within the PSA members. ‘Akanesi Folau (interview with Folau 2008), a teacher who took part in the strike, agreed with many of the informants that they only took part in the strike to get the 60 %, 70%, or 80% increase, but did not agree with politicians interfering in their cause.

#### **5.2.4. Tonga National Business Association**

The Tonga National Business Association (TNBA) was formed with the aim of allowing Tongan small businesses, mainly retail stores, to compete with the growing number of Chinese-owned businesses. It was no secret that the TNBA was against the increasing influence of Chinese businesses in Tonga. In a move to compete with the Chinese businesses, the TNBA members imported their goods in bulk so that members could buy cheaply from the association. This practice was common among the Chinese businesses. This was one of

the reasons why they were so successful and their goods were cheaper. It was obvious from the services that the Chinese businesses provided that their cheap goods were never going to be matched or beaten by the TNBA. The main personalities in the Association included Dr. *Tu'i Uata*, 'Ofa Simiki, Peseti Ma'afu, Sangster Saulala and Semisi Sika.

The TNBA was not just a business interest association but also one with political interests. In September 2005, the TNBA was involved in the protest march in which they presented a petition to the Palace office calling for democratic reform. Peseti Ma'afu, the association's Vice President, was reported as saying that "It is hoped that a democratically elected parliament would implement changes to stop any of the royal family from entering the business arena" (Radio New Zealand International, 2005). During the strike, the TNBA donated food and some money to the strikers as the strike dragged on. One of my informants who is still a civil servant but took part in the strike agreed that the TNBA only supported them because they knew that the strikers had the upper hand over the government and that "their political agenda could be included in our agenda" (personal communication, 2008). Senituli (2006) argued that the TNBA emerged out of the strike. This is partly true as it was during the strike that they gained prominence but the TNBA was actually established before the strike as mentioned above. The burning and looting of the Chinese businesses was seen as evidence that the riot was not just politically driven. A report on the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (Sylff) website argues that the Chinese were targeted during the riot.

Rather, it was a small minority of Tongans, such as who's in the pro-democratic Pangai Sii movement and the xenophobic Tonga National Business Association, who had focused negatively on Chinese and urged targeting of their businesses. Thugs were hired by Tongan business owners to attack rival operators. Police intelligence confirmed these allegations. Commissioner Sinilau Kolokihakaufisi

commented, “There was a struggle against the Chinese presence. They were not wanted and that’s not democracy. Our investigations will include claims that there were other motives other than democracy behind the riot.”

[Sylff online, 2008, [www.tokyofoundation.org/en/series/sylff/the-overseas-chinese-in-tonga](http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/series/sylff/the-overseas-chinese-in-tonga)]

Allegations such as these cannot be substantiated, but evidence from the destruction clearly supports some of the accusations. Businesses that belonged to the TNBA were not harmed even though businesses besides them were looted and destroyed (see also Chapter 7). Mary Fonua, the co owner of Matangitonga Online, whose office and business were destroyed in the riot, also claimed that business interests were involved:

It’s business rivalry, involving people who are likely to be rival candidates in the next election and also between Tongan and Chinese businessmen. (Fonua, Taipei Times, 2006)

Key members of the TNBA are also members of the People’s National Committee for Political reform which is chaired by ‘Akilisi Pohiva. Dr. *Tu’i* Uata, ‘Ofa Simiki and Sangster Saulala are the leading members who are also members of the pro-democracy movement. So far, none of the members of the TNBA who have been charged in connection with the riot have been convicted, apart from Dr. *Tu’i* whose case is still pending in the Supreme Court. The crown withdrew the sedition charges against ‘Ofa Simiki citing insufficient evidence as the reason (Matangi Tonga, 2008).

#### **5.2.5. Sangster Saulala and OBN Television.**

Sangster Saulala did not come onto the political scene until the early 2000. OBN (see chapter 4) was established by an American businessman, Christopher Racine, as a Christian station.

The station later became the main media outlet for the Tonga Kotoa Movement which was a pro-government and pro-royalist movement. The aim of the movement was in direct opposition to the pro-democracy movement. Clive Edwards as Minister of Police was one of the Kotoa Movement's leading figures. When Mr Edwards was sacked from government, OBN was slowly seen to be distancing its support for the government and the royal family. During the strike in 2006, OBN discarded its support for the Kotoa Movement and provided daily coverage of what was going on at Pangai si'i during the strike (see also Chapters 4 & 7). OBN was a very powerful tool for the pro-democracy movement for mobilizing their supporters and it was used daily as the main medium for launching their attacks on the government and the royal family and those who did not support the pro-democracy movement. Ever since OBN's closure after the riot, they have been off the air, with their several attempts to apply for licenses to date being declined by government.

#### **5.1.6. The Churches**

The church and the state in Tonga since the introduction of Christianity have never really been far from each other. Taufa'ahau used the conversion of chiefs and their people to Christianity in his crusade to unite Tonga. Meanwhile, the missionaries saw this as an opportunity to spread the "Good News" throughout Tonga and make their work easier. Even though hundreds of lives were lost in this unification campaign, it was a marriage of convenience. The church and state may be two different institutions but the interaction between the two gives the impression that they are inseparable. This is indicated by one of the Free Wesleyan Church's Hymns, no. 391, verse 5 where it talks about "two olive branches on one olive tree," i.e. the "church" and the "state." This implies that there is no separation and if there is any split it will entail the downfall of the country.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Translation</u>
<i>Lau pe he palofisai,</i>	The Prophecy says
<i>Toki 'olive 'e ua</i>	Two Olive branches
<i>Pule'anga mo Siasi</i>	Church and State
<i>Kae malohi ha fonua</i>	For a country to be strong
<i>Ho ta monu 'eta ma'u ha hau kaukaua.</i> Our destiny for having such great leader	

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga is the largest denomination in Tonga and the King is the head of the church. As head of the Church, the general consensus and stands that the church takes is to support the King and his government. There is no state religion but the Free Wesleyan Church is seen by most as the state religion, maybe because the King is the head of church and the majority of the royal family and nobles are members. More than half of the cabinet ministers are also members of the Free Wesleyan. Reverend Dr. 'Ahio who is the President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga is also the Royal Chaplain who is appointed only by the King. He gets his salary from the Church as the President and from the government as Royal Chaplain. These can be cited as reasons why the church does not interfere in state affairs and prefers to accept the status quo. During the strike, most of the religious leaders joined the protest marches but the most notable absentee was the President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. The 2006, national census showed that the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga continues to be the dominant religious group with 37.3% of the total population followed by the Latter Day Saints with 16.8% overtaking the Roman Catholics with 15.6% and the Church of Tonga with 11.4%. For further detail, please refer to the Appendix.

The influences of the major churches, mainly the Free Wesleyan Church, Latter Day Saints, Catholics, Free Church of Tonga and the Church of Tonga, cannot be ignored. A majority of the youths that took part in the riot according to Taufe'ulungaki (2006, also see Chapter 7) were from the Latter Day Saints and the Catholics even though some from other denominations and church leaders denounced the violence that took place during the riot.

I argue that the church has more influence on the people than the state due to its close contact with the people and the impact of Christianity. In almost every village throughout Tonga, there are churches ranging from one to as many as 8 to 10 in a village. Members interact more with the church than the state through various programs and services. This interaction gives the church ministers an elite status in society. This is most notable in the cases of the Free Wesleyan Church, Catholics, Church of Tonga, Free Constitutional Church and the Tokaikolo Fellowship. Apart from the Catholic Church and the Mormons, the other churches were historically breakaway factions from the main Wesleyan Church.

The status of the church ministers could be traced back prior to missionary contact. The equivalent of a church minister in ancient Tonga was the *taula* or priest. These people were from chiefly families, and they were the mediators between the gods and the people. Whatever they said was supposedly a message from the gods and they received the utmost respect from the people, especially the commoners.

The priests and the priestess were usually drawn from chiefly rankings.

Thomas noted that some “gods” did not have priests and the chiefs were their “living representatives”, being themselves priests. The *Tu'i Tonga* was certainly regarded as the high priest and the mohefo, his principal wife, was the priestess of Hikule'o. (Rutherford quoted in Niumeitolu, 2007)

However when Christianity was introduced, the heathen gods were destroyed but some of these rituals survived. This included the *faka'apa'apa* or respect shown to the *taula* which

was later replaced and bestowed upon the missionaries and church ministers. The missionaries and church ministers were now referred to as *Taula'eiki* which means God's Priest or God's Minister. As more Tongans became church Ministers, their status in the society suddenly changed and they joined the elite group in society. In some respect, these church ministers or *faifekau* are treated in the same manner as the nobles. The language normally reserved for chiefs and nobles is now being used when addressing presidents of the churches. The same is true of catholic priests. Conan as quoted in Numeitolu 2007 elaborates on the status of the church minister:

On such occasion the visiting minister receives treatment appropriate to a noble.

Kava is prepared for him prior to the church service and a feast contributed to by most of the community is held after the service. His advice and comments on church affairs, politics, technology, and any other subjects are closely attended and almost always accepted as the best available" (Conan quoted in Numeitolu, 2007)

According to Numeitolu (ibid) the Ministers are often perceived as the most influential individuals, not only in the church but also in the community. Seti Finau who is a close friend of the *Kolofo'ou*<sup>37</sup> town officer said the town officer relies heavily on the *patele* or priest and *faifekau* or ministers to have any community or national service performed. Most of my informants agree that Catholic priests and church ministers have more influence on the community than the district officers or any government official.

When the Tongans migrate overseas or to any country, they take with them their religion and after several years of settling they seek to establish their own church. A majority of the churches in Tonga have their annual *misinale* or church offerings, which is one of the major sources of funding for churches. The families of those who have migrated abroad send

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<sup>37</sup> Kolofo'ou is the district where the capital city is located.



money home to their relatives especially for the *misinale*. Although figures for the money sent for the *misinale* through remittances is not recorded separately, it is thought to be in the millions. Some of the Tongan congregations overseas still send their *misinale* to the main churches in Tonga. The churches are also a source of financial revenue for the country. Not only that, but they are also facilitators. When individuals, groups, schools or even national sports teams seek financial support among the Tongan diaspora, be it in New Zealand, Australia or the United States, the churches there will be the facilitators. They organize *koniseti feinga panga* or fund raising concerts which are attended not only by the congregation members but the Tongan community within that area.

As mentioned above, the established church usually supports the status quo. With regards to politics, the church still refrains from taking part, even though members have come out in the past and at present to show their support for the pro-democracy movement or voice their concern against the government as individuals. In the 1990s when it was revealed that the government was selling Tongan passports to Chinese and other countries, the late Dr. ‘Amanaki Havea who was the president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the late Bishop Patelesio Finau, head of the Catholic Church, led a protest march to the King’s palace with thousands of people in protest at the selling of the Tongan passports. Both were also supporters of the pro-democracy movement. However, according to the late Sunia Vikilani (Interview in 2007), Dr. Havea’s presence in the protest march and his support for the pro-democracy movement did not represent the position of the church. He said when Dr. Havea was questioned during a church conference whether he represented the Church, Dr. Havea argued that he went as ‘Amanaki Havea and not as the President of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. It was different however with the Catholic Church because they were all behind their leader, Bishop Finau.

In 1992 the government initiated a move to influence the Church by forming a Christian Democratic Party. According to Lawson (1996), the former Prime Minister, the late Baron Vaea, and Cabinet Ministers met with church leaders prior to the PDM's 1992 Constitutional Convention. The Catholic bishop, Patelesio Finau, described the government's move as "devious and manipulative" (ibid). The government was actually trying to seek the support of the churches to foster ties between the church and the state. However, the government's bid to get the church on board was a complete failure.

### **5.3 Summary**

The reforms that the late king Taufa'ahau Tupou IV undertook fell short of an overhaul of the Tongan socio-political structure, yet he opened the door for the commoners to push for the political reform that he failed to conduct. It could be argued that it was not a failure on the King's part but that he was letting time take its course. It was in 2005 that the King initiated the reforms by appointing a commoner as Prime Minister. To some, this move was not enough to suggest that change was imminent. However, the King's reluctance to change the current system was seen by some as direct opposition to political reform.

The newly emerging social class in Tonga, which Campbell (1992) attributes to Taufa'ahau's modernization reforms, exists but is not as influential as the church. The hierarchy in the church is much stronger and their influence on the people is without doubt. The church has a President at the top of the pyramid followed by the *faifekau's* (church ministers) and then the *kainga lotu* (members of the congregation). In the Catholic system, the Bishop is at the top followed by the priests and then its members. The language formerly used for the nobles is now used for the *faifekau's* and priests but not for the rich and the educated, who according to Campbell are the new middle class.

The kinship system in Tonga also plays a vital role, especially among these political actors. It is well known how closely the members of the royal family are related to each other and the nobles. The King's nephews, together with his brother, hold 12 of the 33 noble titles. In addition, three of the King's nieces are married to heirs of noble titles, in addition to blood links between the royal family and the nobles. This in turn has strengthened the King's influence among the nobles.

The nexus between individuals and how they align themselves in groups and the way they act can easily be interpreted by looking at how they are connected. When Tupou I fought to unite Tonga under his rule, he used chiefs from Ha'apai and Vava'u to fight his wars. Tupou I himself was a Ha'apai high chief and most of his advisers were from Ha'apai. Thus the first wave of reformers in Tonga originated from Ha'apai. Today, a majority of the pro-democracy reformers are also from Ha'apai, including all of the Tongatapu people's representatives: 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Ulitu'Uata, Clive Edwards and 'Isileli Pulu. Teisina Fuko who is the chairman of the People's Democratic Party is also from Ha'apai, as is Finau Tutone, a top pro-democracy activist and president of the Friendly Island Teachers Association. Dr. *Tu'i* Uata who is the president of the Tonga National Business Association is the son of the Ha'apai people's representative. Professor Futa Helu, a renowned academic in the Pacific and founder of 'Atenisi 'University is also a native of Ha'apai. It could be argued that Tupou I united Tonga with the first wave of reformers, and now a second wave of reformers wants to change it into a democratic government. When people see these connections and how the Ha'apai people are trying to exert influence and take the lead, they often refer this as *faka-Ha'apai*, which means they do things in the Ha'apai way. In the wider context, most of these political actors belong to a Ha'a which can either be traced back to nobles or even to the royal family several generations back.

The majority of the supporters of the PDM are people from the grassroots level. These people have been supporting the idea of power to the people and charging the monarchy and the government with corruption. The educated elite are split into two camps, with some supporting the PDM, as shown by the PSA (Public Servants Association) and the Friendly Islands Teachers Association. The other camp supports the aristocrats. The key support for the monarchy still lies with the nobles. However, despite the criticism of the monarchy, the majority of the population still wants to keep the monarchy as head of state.

It is also important to note that the first to oppose the status quo were the educated, especially from the ranks of the commoners. In the Church as mentioned above, Dr. ‘Amanaki Havea and Rev. Siupeli Taliai were the first to come out and criticise the government. They were later joined by the Catholic Bishop and, more recently, others. In Tonga, all the people who were responsible for establishing political parties had their education overseas, as well as a majority of the leading politicians.

Reform is bound to happen and new and young political actors will emerge. A change in government will determine the fate of some of these actors and which side they take. The media and their owners will be tested on whether they will play the same roles or change sides. However, it will depend on who will be in government. If the pro-democracy candidates will dominate the government then, its media and associated groups will certainly change their stands. The *Taimi ‘o Tonga* will no doubt change its alliance with government. What will be interesting is how the government’s media will perform its duties. Will they be independent or continue to take the government’s side?

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **MEDIA AND STATE**

The case studies of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niuvakai* accentuate what Siebert et al. (1956) argued many years ago, that the press and other media in any country always take on the “form and environment of the social and political structures within which they operate.” They argue that in order to understand how the media works, one should have knowledge of the socio-political system of that country.

Siebert et al. (1956) examined what they called the four basic theories of the press, which also apply to other media. The first of these theories is the “authoritarian” theory which suggests that truth is regarded as the prerogative of the powerful elite. It is the press or the media’s duty to support the government in power and the elite. According to Siebert, the authoritarian state system requires direct government control of the mass media. This type of situation is especially easy to recognise in pre-democratic societies where the government consists of a very limited and small ruling class. The media in an authoritarian system are not allowed to print or broadcast anything offensive towards the government because the government will punish anyone who questions the state’s ideology.

Although the form of government in Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, the powers given to the King by the Constitution makes his rule rather more authoritarian, close to an absolute monarchy. It may seem extreme to apply the word “authoritarian” in Tonga’s case, but it is appropriate taking into account the form of government and its approach towards the media. This was true in the period analysed here, though recently government has improved the way it deals with the media. In Tonga, the government does not have direct control over the mass media except for its own media, Radio and Television Tonga, which are dominant throughout the country. As will be discussed below, the government in both the late 19<sup>th</sup> and

the late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries went as far as amending the Constitution to punish those that questioned its authority and its ideologies. The case of the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, although in different centuries, illustrated how the authorities used their power to crush opposition in broadly similar ways.

The second of Siebert's theories is the "libertarian" theory. Here the media are free, the government encourages criticism of itself, and everyone is free to voice their own opinions.

The third theory is the "Soviet" theory, where private ownership of the media is not really encouraged by the state, and where the media have a responsibility to the state and the people. This is based on the postulates of Marx and Engels.

The fourth theory is the "social responsibility" theory, where the journalist is responsible both to the society and the government.

Tonga's current situation could be said to fall somewhere between the social responsibility theory and the authoritarian theory, based on the current form of government. In the Constitution, the freedom of the press is guaranteed but in practice the authorities can do whatever they want, shifting Tonga towards the authoritarian paradigm. The timing of amendments made to the Freedom of the Press Clause in 2002 of the Constitution supports the argument proposed here. The first and the last amendments were made when the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* were beginning to gain popularity, and also when both were very critical of the government.

It is also important to notice that in almost all of the countries in the Pacific, like Tonga, the Constitution guarantees the freedom of the media. However interpretations of this freedom often cause tensions and conflicts between the media and the government. It is vital to look at the history of the Tongan Constitution first in this section to shed some light on the background of the two cases and also the amendments made, especially Clause 7.

## **6.1 Developing a Constitution.**

Tonga's Constitution was promulgated in 1875 and is deemed one of the longest surviving Constitutions in the world. It took the architect of modern Tonga, King George Tupou I, years of civil wars to unify Tonga under his rule before the promulgation of the Constitution. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Tonga was engaged in a bloody civil war between rival chiefs fighting for political control of the whole kingdom. King George was able to unify Tonga by the 1850s in a crusade which included both converting his people to Christianity and unifying the Tongan islands. With the assistance of the Wesleyan Missionaries, he introduced a series of legal codes which subsequently led to the promulgation of the Constitution in 1875. The first code of laws to be written in Tonga was the Vava'u Code in 1839, named after the island of Vava'u where it was drafted. One of the significant features of this set of laws was the limiting of the power of traditional chiefs. According to Latukefu (1975:20) "this was, to large extent, due to the advice of the missionaries who believed that all men were created equal in the sight of God." Not only that, but the missionaries were disturbed at how the chiefs mistreated the commoners.

The 1839 Vava'u Code was followed with a new code of laws in 1850. Latukefu (1974: 128-129) claimed that the 1850 code was seen as a revision and an extension of the 1839 Vava'u Code with a few additional provisions from the Huahine Code of Hawaii. Again the 1850 code bore the hallmark of the missionaries. The missionaries were against polygamy and they often preached that the native Tongans would only be accepted by the Lord if they put away their other wives and kept only one. This was reflected in Article VII: 3 which made it unlawful for anyone to have more than one spouse (Ibid). Another example was Clause XI which forbade dancing and heathen customs, which the missionaries deemed temptations for the natives to commit sin.

King George's continuing conviction of the need to establish a Tongan government whose independence would be respected by the civilised nations led to the promulgation of the 1862 Code of Laws (Latukeyu, 1975). The 1862 Code marked the beginning of a long friendship between King George Tupou I and the Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. Shirley Waldemar Baker.<sup>38</sup> It declared the emancipation of the people from chiefly and arbitrary rule. It also provided for a legislative assembly to be formed, to be comprised of both chiefs and people.

European settlers in Tonga questioned the international standing of the Tongan laws and they wished to be tried under British Common Law. This, together with his alarm at the foreign annexation of Pacific neighbours such as Fiji and Samoa, made King George's desire for international recognition of his government stronger than ever. To avoid being colonised by a foreign power, and also to be recognised as an independent sovereign nation, King George was convinced that Tonga needed a Constitution. With the help of Shirley Baker, the Constitution was drafted and was passed by the legislative assembly. The culmination of the earlier series of law codes was the promulgation of a modern Constitution by King George Tupou I on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1875.

The promulgation of the Constitution signalled the dawn of a new era in Tonga's history. Tonga was officially recognized by foreign colonial powers who were interested in the Pacific, including Great Britain, the United States, France and Germany. With this recognition Tonga was spared from being colonised, at a time when colonisation was spreading throughout the Oceania region. As a result, Tonga was never formally colonised but received the status of a British protectorate after the Treaty of Friendship was signed in 1900. A supplementary agreement or Protectorate Treaty was signed in 1905. Tonga was

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<sup>38</sup> Baker was a Wesleyan missionary who arrived in Tonga in 1860. He was involved in the drafting of the 1862 Code and later became the architect of the 1875 Constitution. He was the King's adviser and later became



under British protection until it gained complete independence within the Commonwealth in 1970 (Lawson 1996).

The influence of the missionaries cannot be ignored or downplayed because the role they, and especially Shirley Baker, played in drafting the 1875 Constitution was vital. As seen from earlier codes, their influence was evident in the composition of the laws which took into account the Christian doctrines. Clause 6 of the new Constitution showed the missionaries' continuing influence where it declared that the "Sabbath to be sacred forever." Latukefu (1975:40-41) claimed that Baker sought advice and assistance from the Premier of New South Wales, Sir Henry Parkes, who gave Baker a copy of the laws of the New South Wales government. He also gave Baker a copy of the Hawaiian 1852 Constitution (*ibid*).

The Tongan Constitution is divided into three main parts. The first part is entitled "Declaration of Rights," and was modelled on the Hawaiian Constitution, with some influence from missionary teachings. The second part deals with the form of government and the structure of the Executive, including the Privy Council, Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly as the law-making body. The Legislative Assembly consisted of 20 nobles appointed by the King and an equal number of people's representatives, together with the ministers (1875: 63). This was later amended to the current system, where the King appoints 14 ministers, the nobles elect nine representatives of their own, and the people also elect nine representatives. The inclusion of the people's representatives in the legislative assembly marked a stunning change, with commoners included in political discussions. After all, the commoners were formerly regarded as mere tools and possessions of the chiefs (Latukefu, 1975).

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premier.

The highest branch of the Executive is the Privy Council which is chaired by the monarch. The Privy Council consists of all the ministers of the crown including the Prime Minister and the two governors of Ha'apai and Vava'u, the two largest islands after Tongatapu, the main island. Second to the Privy Council is the Cabinet. The Prime Minister heads the cabinet which comprises all the ministers who are appointed by the King. The Legislative Assembly is the law making body and consists of all the ministers and the two governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai, in other words all the members of the Privy Council minus the King. The rest of the members are made up of nine representatives of the nobles and nine representatives of the people (see also Chapter 8). The final part of the Constitution deals with the "Land."

The Constitution of 1875, though deemed by many as old and outdated, still lays the foundations and framework for the current system of Government. Tonga's form of government is considered a Constitutional Monarchy but critics think otherwise. As mentioned above, the government consists of three main bodies, the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. The Privy Council and the cabinet serve as the Executive. The King appoints all members of the Privy Council which includes cabinet members and the two governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai and whoever the King sees fit to call to his Council (Clause 50(1) of the Constitution). Under the same section, the Privy Council is authorised to hear any appeals about decisions made in the Supreme Court, though they cannot re-try any criminal cases. The Privy Council also deals with land matters.

The Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, is also appointed by the King. The administration of government ministries and quasi-government bodies is under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister. In a move from tradition, it has been rumoured that the current Prime Minister has been allowed by the King to appoint ministers with the King's consent. In other words, although the Constitution has not been formally amended, political

changes are already taking place. The Legislative Assembly is unicameral and it is again composed of the cabinet and the two governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai, the Speaker (who is also appointed by the King), nine nobles elected by the 33 nobles of the realm, and 9 people's representatives elected by the people. General elections according to the current Constitution are held every three years. The Judiciary is made up of the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, the Magistrate's Court, and the Land Court (Clause 85: Constitution).

The Constitution may have provided Tonga with what was seen in the 19th century as a modern form of government, but the power still rests with the monarch. Even though the form of government was modelled on the Westminster system of the time, the two systems are now very different. It could be argued that the monarch in Tonga made sure that he alone would have power over the people, and this was legalized by putting it in the Constitution. In the earlier codes of laws the noble's powers were stripped while the King's were sustained. According to the current King's first cousin, Prince Tu'i Pelehake, the noble's powers were taken away from them when the Constitution came into force. Some scholars including Latu (2006) and Langa'oi (2007) have argued that the Constitution was devised to some extent to uphold Tongan tradition and to strengthen the authority of the ruling class according to tradition. To some extent, this is true with regards to the power of the ruling class, as the King's power extends from the Executive to the Legislature and even to the Judiciary. For example, the King appoints both the Privy Council and Cabinet and he may convoke the Legislative assembly at any time and may dissolve it at his pleasure and command that new representatives of the nobles and people be elected to enter the Assembly (Clause 38: Constitution). The Privy Council also hears appeals from the Supreme Court, and the King has the final say. In other words, the King in theory has near absolute powers.

However the creation of a constitutional monarchy in Tonga, according to Latukefu (1975), was a departure, both in its degree of centralisation and in the acceptance of the limits

of the King's authority in the rule of law. As mentioned above, this was not really the case under the Constitution. As argued earlier, the monarch has near absolute power under the Constitution. Apart from appointing all the members of the executive, the King has to agree to any legislation before it becomes law. (See also Clause 44 of Tongan Constitution).

The land under the Constitution was divided up between the King, the chiefs and the government. Noble titles now became hereditary, and also their estates. It was not until the first amendment to the Constitution in 1880 that the number of nobles increased from 20 to 30 and was later increased to 33. Commoners were given land to cultivate under the Constitution and the 1882 Hereditary Lands Act. It could be argued that perhaps this was intended by the King to lessen the powers of the nobles over the commoners but in reality the nobles still had some kind of influence. Commoners have been traditionally taught and told to respect and obey their chiefs because their land was given to them or leased from the nobles. Some out of respect still felt the obligation to give their *polopolo* or first fruits to the nobles.

A number of amendments have been made over the years to the Constitution. The late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV in his opening speech of the 1975 Parliament indicated a need for further amendments, particularly to the number of representatives in the Legislative Assembly, and in relation to land matters (Latukeyu 1975:84). Thirty three years after the King made that speech, his son, the current King George Tupou V, gave his consent to the Constitutional and Electoral Commission Act 2008 to set up a Commission to enquire into and report on proposals to amend the Constitutional and Electoral Laws. Before his coronation in 2008, the new King announced to the world that he was willing to give up some of his powers. These included the appointment of Cabinet and the Prime Minister (BBC online, 30 July 2008). As a statement from the Prime Minister's office explained,

His Majesty wishes to ensure that the Monarchy is fully prepared for elections in 2010 under a revised voting system granting the majority voice in Parliament to the people. He feels this can be done without sweeping amendments to a Constitution that he regards as the cornerstone of the Kingdom's peace and stability. Granted by King George Tupou 1st in 1875, it is one of the world's oldest written constitutions. (PMO online, 28 July 2008).

This is a clear indication that the Constitution will continue to be revised and amended to suit the challenges and changes of time.

## **6.2. Clause 7 and the Freedom of the Media.**

The protection of the freedom of speech and the press in the Tongan Constitution is perhaps the strongest statement of the principle of any of the Pacific Islands constitutions. This is achieved by the emphasis it receives in Clause 7(1) “....There shall be freedom of speech and of the press forever....”. This freedom is also reinforced by the constitutional amendment provision that makes it impossible to introduce amendments that restrict this principle. This will be dealt with in detail in the case studies.

Clause 7 of the Tongan Constitution is as follows:

It shall be lawful to speak, write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of slander or the laws for the protection for the King and the Royal Family.

But as history has shown, freedom of the media has always been challenged and the authorities always seem to have had a tendency to amend the Constitution to suit their purposes. Barney (1974) described how the former missionary Shirley Baker, who later

became Tonga's premier, made amendments to the Constitution to address threats posed by a publication, the *Niuvakai* ("The Look Out Coconut Tree") owned by an expatriate Robert Hanslip (Barney, 1974:356). Hanslip was critical of the government and especially Baker and his laws.

### **6.3. Amendment to the Constitution: Clause 7**

The inclusion of the freedom of the press in the Constitution was remarkable seeing the number of newspapers and other forms of media around during this time in Tonga. Clause 7 of the Constitution is seen as vital to the survival and freedom of today's media even though the Constitution is over 135 years old. Clause 7 of the Constitution has been amended at least three times over the years.

In 1882 Baker amended Clause 7 by passing two acts through Parliament with the consent of the King. The first was *An Act relative to Newspapers* and the second was *An Act Relative to Sedition* (Barney 1974). As it will be discussed in the case study, the acts were aimed at the *Niuvakai* newspaper and its editor who was an expatriate.

The freedom of the press clause of the Constitution remained for another century before it was amended again in 1990. The amendment in 1990 was just to replace the word "slander" with "defamation" and "official secrets". This did not cause any commotion because the amendment did not change anything but instead added official secrets and defamation. Interestingly the inclusion of defamation was not needed because there is a separate defamation act.

After the 1990 Amendment, the wording was as follows:

7. It shall be lawful for all people to speak write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom

of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of defamation, official secrets or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Family.

After the 2003 amendment the act now reads:

7. (1) It shall be lawful for all people to speak write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the press for ever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of slander or the laws for the protection of the King and the Royal Family.

(2) It shall be lawful, in addition to the exceptions set out in sub-clause (1), to enact such laws as are considered necessary or expedient in the public interest, national security, public order, morality, cultural traditions of the Kingdom, and privileges of the Legislative Assembly and to provide for contempt of Court and the commission of any offence.

(3) It shall be lawful to enact laws to regulate the operation of any media.

The addition of sub-section (3) in Clause 7 made way for the Media Operators' Act and also the Newspaper Act. Lopeti Senituli, the former director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement and now press secretary and political adviser to the Prime Minister, argued that there was no need for the amendment because the Government presently had at its disposal legislation to protect itself, the Royal Family, and the public in general from media abuse (Senituli, 2003, Planet Tonga Online). The amendment to the Constitution followed a previous attempt by government through the Privy Council in an Order of Ordinance to ban the *Taimi 'o Tonga* according to Senituli.

The Bill emerged in the wake of Chief Justice Gordon Ward's judgment on 26 May 2003 that the Ordinance passed by the King and the Privy Council on 4 April 2003 placing a further (fourth) ban on the Taimi 'o Tonga was void. Later the same day the Chief Justice added a ruling, delivered in Chambers, placing a temporary injunction on another Ordinance passed by the King and the Privy Council on 16 May that purported to invalidate Taimi 'o Tonga's license to trade (fifth ban). He further restrained the Government, its "servants or agents or otherwise howsoever" from revoking Taimi 'o Tonga's license until "further Order of this Court." (Senituli, 2003: Planet-Tonga online)

Though the amendment made in 2003 was judged to be unconstitutional, both amendments have yet to be repealed, which can only be done through the Legislative Assembly.

#### **6.4. Case Studies: The *Niuvakai* Newspaper and *Taimi 'o Tonga* Newspapers.**

Tonga may be a Constitutional Monarchy but in reality the power to rule rests mostly upon the King, as suggested earlier. Siebert, Patterson and Schramm argued:

The media in an authoritarian system are not allowed to print or broadcast anything which could undermine the established authority, and any offense to the existing political values is avoided. The authoritarian government may go to the step of punishing anyone who questions the state's ideology. (Siebert, Patterson and Schramm 1956)



This was the case with both the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspapers. The argument here is that, although Tonga may not be an authoritarian state, the environment and form of government and the country's socio-political structure does in some aspects reflect the authoritarian model.

The case study of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niuvakai* emphasises what Siebert et al. (1956) argued, that the press (or other media) in any country always takes on the “form and colouration of the social and political structures within which it operates....Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations understanding of these aspects is basic to any systematic understanding of the press” (Siebert et al., 1956: 2).

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper was Tonga's most persecuted newspaper in its modern history while the *Niuvakai* was the government's main opposition in the 19th century. Tonga's form of government certainly affects or has some sort of influence on the media as these case studies will show. This is all too common in the Pacific. Recently Fiji's military leader Frank Bainimarama and his government have been cracking down on the media that portrays them in a bad light.

Editors at Fiji's newspapers as well as its television and radio stations have been ordered not to publish or broadcast any material that shows the military in a bad light. Journalists must submit any sensitive stories to government officials for approval. Should these directives be ignored then media organizations could be shut down. (Mercer 2009).

In 2007, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, Fiji's military chief toppled the democratically elected government and made himself Prime Minister. This is just an example of how authoritarian regimes seek to control the media. However as the two case studies will show

there was no crackdown in Tonga, because everything was done by either introducing new legislation or amending the Constitution. This in fact is evidence that the media can have some influence on government policies in a relatively authoritarian state, at least in these two cases.

### **6.5. The *Niuvakai***

The *Niuvakai* newspaper was owned and published by a European, Robert Hanslip who was one of the traders living in Tonga in the 19th century. The newspaper was first produced by hand in October 1881, but was later printed by Rev. James Egan Moulton, the headmaster of Tupou College,<sup>39</sup> using the school's printing press. The *Niuvakai* was associated with a dissident movement of minor chiefs in the eastern district which was labeled by King George Tupou I and his Prime Minister (Baker) the "Mu'a Parliament." The movement was not an actual Parliament but was seen as a threat. This was due to the support they received from the nobles and traders, and also the expatriate community, especially Robert Hanslip, who, according to Campbell (2001:104), was Baker's long time enemy. Rutherford (1977) claimed that these minor chiefs were eliminated under the government's new Land Act and no longer recognized by law. Hanslip, an influential European trader at the time, saw the opportunity and advised the members of the Mu'a Parliament, assisting them with their petition to the King. It is thought that the *Niuvakai* was established out of this movement. Hanslip was writing about the dissatisfaction of the Mu'a Parliament and also voiced concern about some of the laws that Baker was imposing, not only on the Tongan people but also on the expatriate community who strongly disapproved of some of the laws which were seen as Baker's doing. *Tungi*, one of the high chiefs of Mu'a, was an opponent of the King and supporter of the Mu'a Parliament but he was also in line to the throne. Hanslip saw an even bigger opportunity: should *Tungi* become King, he (Hanslip) would become his adviser.

The first edition of the *Niuvakai* covered the grievances of the Mu'a Parliament and their petition to the King. The members of the Mu'a Parliament also gained support from the European community and the *Ha'a Havea* chiefs who were the King's traditional rivals.

Hanslip was also active in collecting 2,000 signatures for a petition to Queen Victoria to remove Baker from Tonga, which he forwarded to the British consul (Rutherford, 1977). The Mu'a Parliament members were arrested and charged. This gave Hanslip more to write about and he criticized the government with the support of letters to the editors not only in the *Niuvakai* but also the *Fiji Times*.

In March 1882, the government established a Tongan-language newspaper the *Tonga Times* or *Ko a Taimi 'o Tonga* to counter what was being printed in the *Niuvakai*. Prince Wellington Ngu was the editor but according to Rutherford (1966), the *Ko a Taimi 'o Tonga* was only providing Hanslip with more material to criticize.

In June 1882, Baker wrote to the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Sir Arthur Gordon, asking to issue a writ of prohibition against Hanslip that would have allowed for Hanslip's removal from Tonga (Barney 1974). This was based on five types of complaints, that Hanslip was inciting the natives against the King and his government, and this was all related to the articles published by the *Niuvakai* newspaper. However on a visit to Tonga in July 1882, Sir Arthur signed a judgment that refused to find Hanslip "to be dangerous to the peace and good order of the Western Pacific" (ibid).

Sir Arthur's decision was a blow to Baker and the government and it made them more determined to silence the *Niuvakai*. Hanslip was banned from parliamentary sessions which were one of the *Niuvakai's* major sources of information. According to Barney (1974:355) it was during these sessions that the new press restriction laws were passed.

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<sup>39</sup> A college established by the Wesleyan Missionaries in 1886

This was the first time that the free press provision of the 1875 Constitution was amended. This was approved by the Legislative Assembly and Privy Council and signed by King George Tupou I on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 1882. At the same time, King George approved three Acts in apparent contradiction to the spirit of the Constitution in relation to a free press and free speech, namely a Sedition Act, an Act to Regulate the Printing of Newspapers, and a libel law (Ibid).

**Table 1.      Passage and Publication Dates of Provisions relating to the Press in Tonga**

	<b>PASSED</b>	<b>PUBLISHED</b>
Sedition Act	Oct.23, 1882	Nov.22, 1882
Newspaper Printing	Oct.23, 1882	Nov.22, 1882
Constitution	Oct.23, 1882	April 16, 1883
Libel	Oct.23, 1882	March 14, 1888

Source: Barney (1974: 355)

These Acts were no doubt directed at the *Niuvakai* which was seen by Baker and the government as a threat. The Sedition Act provided for prison terms from 2 to 24 years for anyone who cursed or libeled the King, or who attempted to incite rebellion against the laws, or “for any person who shall do anything to produce hatred or contempt to Government or the King”. The law could be violated by speaking, writing or printing (ibid).

The Act to Regulate the Printing of Newspapers required a permit from the Minister of Police in order to print and distribute a newspaper. To get a permit, the publisher was also required finding two bondsmen with £500 each to act as guarantors.

Hanslip was deprived of his printing facilities. Barney (1974) suggested that this was because the *Niuvakai* was assisted by the principal of the Methodist School, Rev. Moulton, who was Baker's most vocal critic. Moulton was prosecuted on various charges related to the use of the printing press, including seditious actions towards the Tongan government and the King, and was later found guilty on some of them.

#### **6.6. *The Taimi 'o Tonga***

The newspaper was established in 1989 and it was to be the first independent newspaper in modern Tonga. It was first published in Tonga before being moved to Auckland, New Zealand, for financial reasons including access to the Tongan diaspora in New Zealand, Australia and United States. As mentioned previously, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was published by the Lali Media Group owned by Kalafi Moala, a Tongan who also had American citizenship.

From the beginning of the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, Mr Moala claimed that it was established as an alternative media outlet, to give the people access to the real news and views not provided by the established government media.

The newspaper covered news and issues that government-owned media would never have covered. These included the sale of Tongan passports, the activities of some of the King's business partners, and the overpayment of members of Parliament, among other things.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was seen as a menace to the government and the royal family, and especially the then minister of police, Clive Edwards. The newspaper was banned from government press conferences and government departments were told not to give information to it. According to Mr Moala, as more measures were taken against the paper, the more leaked information it received from people inside the government (Moala, 2002: 48).

The paper has historically presented views antagonistic to many government ministries and is a staunch supporter of the democratic movements in Tonga although it has not represented or directly endorsed any single candidate during elections. There was no doubt that the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was a strong supporter of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga.

In February 1996, the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* assistant news editor, Filokalafi 'Akauola, was arrested for publishing a letter to the editor criticizing the Minister of Police. Ironically, the charge was made under the libel law introduced by Shirley Baker back in 1882 when he amended the Constitution (Barney, 1974:355).

Also in the same year, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper had published an article on a motion tabled in Parliament to impeach the then Minister of Justice, the Hon. Tevita Tupou, for leaving for the Atlanta Olympics without permission from Parliament.

On his return, Tupou read about the impeachment in the *Taimi*, and called the Parliament office because he was unaware of the impeachment. He was told that the Legislative Assembly had not received any motion and that the article was inaccurate. Parliament officials checked who made the leak and 'Akilisi Pohiva voluntarily confessed to leaking the information. It was later found that the motion was still with the Acting Speaker of the House and was yet to be submitted or tabled.

The three defendants were summoned by Parliament where their fates were to be decided. The three defendants Kalafi Moala, Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and 'Akilisi Pohiva were charged under Clause 70 of the Constitution where it states:

....if anyone speaks disrespectfully or acts in a dishonourable way in Parliament, the Parliament is authorized to jail this person for 30 day. And while the house is in session, someone writes something, deceiving the House

or threatening a member .....the person will be allowed to be jailed for 30 days. [Clause 70 Tongan Constitution]

The legislative assembly voted 19 to 2 in favour of a guilty verdict and sentenced the defendants to 30 days in jail. The jailing made headlines throughout the Pacific and attracted huge media frenzy both in Tonga and abroad. International media organizations and human rights groups called for their release condemning the move as a threat to press freedom.

The three defendants were later released after being in prison for 26 days. In his ruling Chief Justice Hampton stated:

The conclusion I have reached therefore, is that the procedures adopted were unfair. They were not in accordance with the Constitution or with the Legislative Assembly's own Rule made under the Constitution....it follows that I determine that the detention of the applicants in these circumstances is not lawful and I make an order that each of them be released forthwith from detention [Supreme Court of Tonga *Moala & ors v Minister of Police (No 2)* [1996] Tonga LR 207.

This was hailed as a victory for the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and freedom of the press but in 2003 the newspaper was banned from Tonga again under Section 34 of the Customs and Excise Act The Chief Commissioner of Revenue issued a notice prohibiting the import of the newspaper citing three main reasons:

- *Taimi 'o Tonga* is a foreign paper, owned and published by a foreigner
- *Taimi 'o Tonga* is a foreign concern with a political agenda
- *Taimi 'o Tonga's* continuous standard of journalism is unacceptable

The “foreign ownership” that the ban was referring to was Mr. Moala’s American citizenship. At this time, the law allowing dual citizenship was not in place. It could be argued that the concern of the government over the Tongan media was partially genuine, meaning that the standard of journalism was very low, and there was no mechanism outside government to regulate and deal with grievances against the media. But the way the government went about doing this was seen as unlawful and as a rushed decision.

The *Taimi ‘o Tonga*, like most of the independent media outlets in Tonga, does not have qualified journalists with any formal media training. The majority of the journalists received their training on the job. In an interview on Radio Tonga, Mr Moala admitted to the fact that journalists working for the independent media do not have the qualifications that government journalists have, and this made their work more difficult. The way in which issues are covered at times in an unbalanced and one-sided way could be attributed to the lack of experience.

After the Supreme Court overturned the ban, declaring it unconstitutional, the government imposed another ban on the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* under the Publication Act. The Supreme Court again ruled that the ban that was illegal. However the government introduced the Media Operators Act, the Newspaper Act and an amendment to the Constitution in an apparent effort to tighten official control over the media. This was another blow for the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*, for its survival and also for the freedom of the press. The Newspaper Act required that all publications be licensed and the Media Operator’s Act stated that foreigners could not own more than a 20 per cent stake in a media company. The Media Operator’s Act was seen by many as a direct attempt by the government to have more control of the media and to silence the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*. Mr Moala the editor in chief of the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* newspapers, described the amendment as childishness. “And even though these legislations were directed



at the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, it ended up affecting other newspapers or print media that are sometimes critical of government policies and practice” (Moala, 2006).

The government set a 31 January 2004 deadline for license registration, and those who dared to violate the Acts were punishable by a fine of approximately US\$5,200 or up to one year's imprisonment. After the deadline, only church-owned publications, government-owned publications and a pro-government newsletter were granted licenses. All the independent newspapers, including the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, the quarterly news magazine *Matangi Tonga* and *Kele'a*, a newspaper owned by a pro-democracy Member of Parliament, were denied licenses. Tongan journalists and overseas media organization accused the government of denying licenses to publications they feared would report critically on state affairs.

The ban on the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was felt throughout the Tongan population both at home and abroad. People were starved of alternative news and views. During the ban, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was still in circulation in New Zealand, Australia and the United States. According to Moala (personal communication), the sales increased in New Zealand because people were sending copies to their families and friends in Tonga. The ban led to calls from media organizations, human rights organizations and politicians from New Zealand and Australia to lift it.

‘Alani Taione, a New Zealand resident, confronted the government's ban. He flew to Tonga for his father's funeral and on arrival he openly distributed copies of the banned newspaper at the airport, even giving some to customs officers and other people at the airport. He was quickly arrested by the police and charged with the importation and distribution of the banned newspaper. Thousands of people including religious leaders marched with a petition to the King demanding he lift the ban. The case was referred to the Supreme Court

and Taione along with the three other defendants challenged the legality of ban on the newspaper. The case also put into question the Amendment to Clause 7 of the Constitution, the Media Act and the Newspaper Operators Act.

The Supreme Court case was heard on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2004 and concluded on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2004. After hearing submissions from both the defendants and the plaintiffs, the Chief Justice, Robin Webster, delivered a very lengthy verdict. Prior to this particular court case there were other court cases between government and the Lali Media group which publishes the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. In his verdict Chief Justice Webster outlined in chronological order the events and how the legislation in question came into force. In his concluding remarks, he said:

I found that both Acts were inconsistent with Clause 7 ... and therefore void in terms of Clause 82 of the Constitution. I very much regret having to make such a finding in relation to legislation, which has had the approval of the Legislative Assembly, the Cabinet, the Privy Council and His Majesty the King, but it is the clear duty of this Court under the Constitution to do so and thus to uphold the Constitution.” [Supreme Court of Tonga, Taione vs. Kingdom of Tonga, 2003]

Chief Justice Webster painted a vivid picture of the essence of Freedom of Expression when he quoted Voltaire: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” (ibid.).

This was a blow to the government and a victory not only for the *Taimi 'o Tonga* but for media freedom. It was not long after the trial that Clive Edwards, the Minister of Police, who was accused by both Moala and the media of being the main instigator of the legislation, was forced to resign. As mentioned previously (Chapter 5), in an exchange of words on

*Matangi Tonga* Online, the then Crown Prince Tupouto'a (now King George V) accused Clive Edwards of being the one behind the move to introduce the new media law, after Mr. Edwards had first accused the crown of initiating the move.

Mr. Moala agreed with the Crown Prince and said that he knew that Mr. Edwards was after him (Moala) personally:

So we have always known that and I am quite thrilled, in fact, that the Crown Prince or someone from the Royal Family and high up in the Government is able to come up with that. (Radio New Zealand International Online, 26 January 2005)

Both the claims by the Crown Prince and Mr. Moala about Mr. Edward's personal vendetta against Mr. Moala appear to be supported by an earlier interview of Mr. Edwards on Radio Australia about the *Taimi 'o Tonga*.

If you have a rag that's scurrilous all the time and you have to try and correct it all the time, why should we put up with it? You tell me, why should we put up with a paper that has no standing here? (Bradford, 2003)

## **6.7 Summary.**

The cases of the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* have both suggested that little or nothing has changed in the attitude of the ruling elite towards the opposing media. In traditional Tongan culture, criticising authorities was unprecedented and was never heard of until the arrival of the media. It was probably a shock to Baker and his government that the *Niuvakai* was moving away from the tradition of *faka'apa'apa*<sup>40</sup> and voiced the chiefs and people's concern in his newspaper. However because Hanslip was a foreigner and was applying what

he observed and was used to in Europe, it could be understandable. In the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* case, though Kalafi Moala was born and raised in Tonga, he spend a lot of his time abroad and in very different countries. His Western educational background and his time in democratic countries including the United States where he received citizenship was enough to change his perception of the local current affairs and his approach to journalism. This western influence was evident in his newspaper's strong line of opposition to the authorities and the push for democracy.

Though a century apart, some elements of government rule in Tonga have not changed in more than a hundred years. One of the important points to note in both cases the Kings, King George Tupou I in the *Niuvakai's* case and Tupou IV in the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* were never at the forefront of the debate. Baker was the most vocal and opponent of the *Niuvakai* and the amendments made to the Constitution was attributed to him. Barney (1974) argued that it was evident that the amendment was done in Baker's favour.

.... to extend the protective umbrella to include criticism directed at either holders of high position or members of His Majesty's government. In either case it seems the laws were intended primarily to subdue criticism of the King's European premier (Baker). Barney (1974:357).

In the *Taimi 'o Tonga's* case it was the former Minister of Police Clive Edwards who was accused of being responsible for introduction of the Media Laws. This was revealed by the then Crown Prince Tupouto'a who is now King George V in a letter to the editor on the Matangitonga online, where he accused Clive of being the one behind the amendment.

I read in Clive Edwards's interview that he accused me of proposing the Media Operator's Act. This is wholly untrue but as Edwards is running for Parliament

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<sup>40</sup> Respect. In this context the commoners were expected to do they are told without questioning, so questioning

his wild accusations are, I suppose, understandable. I was opposed to the anti media laws on the grounds that they were not our style of doing things in this country. Tupouto'a (Matangitonga Online, 21 January 2005)

The Crown Prince in another letter accused Clive Edwards of having a personal vendetta against the *Taimi 'o Tonga* owner, Kalafi Moala. The irony here as Edwards later revealed, was that Crown Prince Tupouto'a was the Regent at time when the Acts were presented to the Privy Council. However Tupouto'a (2005) in reply suggested that the ministers were united in agreeing for the proposed Media Bill a day before Parliament voted on the Bill

However, the Privy Council presented me with a unanimous front in favour of the legislation; I felt it was not the place of the Regent to go against their wishes. Had the dissenting minister stuck to his guns, I might have felt confident in ordering the entire matter dropped and the legislation withdrawn.

(Tupouto'a in Matangitonga Online, 25 January 2005)

The power of the monarchy also poses an interesting question. The monarch in Tonga has often been referred to as a "dictator" or an "absolute monarch." However, these two cases suggest that the monarchy does not act on its own but on advice from his ministers and advisers. Tupou I was acting on Baker's advice and, as Tupouto'a (now King George V) suggests in his letter, despite his opposition to the media legislation, he had to act upon the minister's advice. Clive Edwards was the most vocal promoter of the Media Bill and was able to win support from the other ministers for the Bill which the Regent did not wish to vote against, even though he later revealed he was opposed to it. Because the monarchy is well protected by the Constitution, it could be argued that in both cases, those who were close to the monarch were also trying to either seek vengeance over their political critics or try to

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the authorities and voicing their concerns was unheard of.

protect themselves as well. Kings George Tupou I and Taufa'ahau Tupou IV never went public and criticised the media in either cases.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niuvakai* were both seen as mouthpieces for the opposition or dissident voices. A *Fiji Times* contributor cited in Barney (1974) describes the impact of the *Niuvakai* newspaper:

In Parliamentary parlance it was the mouth-piece of his Majesty's opposition in Tonga and a very remarkably warm opposition it constituted..... From a Tongan standpoint it was, however admirably calculated to attain its objective, and it became a weapon which its writer used to very considerable advantage.

(Barney, 1974: 355)

The similarity here is that both newspapers were deemed to be mouthpieces of the opposition to the King and his government. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was accused of fronting for the pro-democracy movement and their support was no secret, and nor was the *Niuvakai's* support for the discontented chiefs and their supporters. Both the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and the *Niuvakai* were taken to the highest court in the country where they were both freed. Sir Authur Gordon, who was sent from the Colonial office in Fiji, ruled against deporting Hanslip for allegedly inciting the natives against their King and government, a charge made by Baker. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* on the other hand was banned several times and the Supreme Court decision went in their favour when Justice Webster ruled that the media legislation was unconstitutional.

In the case of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* according to Robie (2003) the new Clause 7 effectively overturned the constitutional guarantee of a free press and the new Clause 56A was a direct attack on the existing constitutional position of the law courts. "The intended effect of Clause 56A is to nullify the role of the courts in constitutional rulings because there

would no longer be anybody with the power and authority under the Constitution to adjudicate. This would effectively ‘put an end to the rule of law in Tonga’” (Harrison, 2003: 4).

Both the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* newspapers were both supporting anti-government movements. The *Niuvakai* supported the Mu’a Parliament, which was seen at the time as a threat to government. The underlying cause was the fight between Hanslip of the *Niuvakai* and the premier, Shirley Baker. In the case of the *Taimi ‘o Tonga*, the newspaper supported the pro-democracy movement which was the greatest threat to the government. The then Minister of Police, Clive Edwards, was viewed by many as the man behind the ban on the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* and also the introduction of the Media Operators Act and the Newspaper Act. Edwards was accused by both Mr. Moala and the then Crown Prince of having a personal vendetta against Mr. Moala and the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* newspaper.

One of the charges made against the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* was about their standard of journalism which officials deemed unacceptable. This was clearly an excuse by the government because the *Taimi ‘o Tonga* was not alone. One of the greatest challenges to the media in Tonga is the lack of experience among the media industry staff. When Kalafi Moala was asked in an interview about some of the problems faced by the media, he mentioned their lack of experience. Pesi Fonua the editor of the *Matangi Tonga* Online and the President of the Media Council of Tonga went even further when he said:

The biggest threat to Media Freedom in Tonga at the moment is the Media itself, simply because it has not raised the standard of journalism in the country, and worst engaged in running down each other instead of presenting fair reporting on what is happening instead of campaigning and deliberately confusing the poor people. (Fonua, 2007)

As Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) argue, under the authoritarian model the government will take any steps possible to punish anyone that opposes it. The government stretched its muscles and tried every possible means to silence the *Taimi 'o Tonga*. However the *Taimi 'o Tonga* faced five different bans, one after the other. Not only that, but on the day the Supreme Court declared the ban on the newspaper illegal, the government through the Privy Council passed two special Ordinances which were later again declared illegal by the courts.

Apart from what happened in 2003, the media in Tonga have indeed been largely free from any government persecution. As we have seen in the case against the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, the judicial system has been the main defender of the freedom of the media. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* was not the only media outlet that suffered under the section of the Act dealing with foreign ownership. This also affected Tonga's only monthly magazine, the *Matangi Tonga*. The magazine was co-owned by Pesi Fonua and his British born wife Mary, with each having 50% ownership, but the law requires only 20% foreign ownership. This caused the magazine to cease publication and the owners turned it into an online news website.

Culture is often seen as a challenge the freedom of the media. This is not just the case in Tonga but throughout the Pacific. In Tongan society there is the King, then the nobles, and then the commoners below, including journalists. Journalists are often caught in the middle, wondering whether to report issues that are culturally sensitive. These include issues that involve the royal family or nobles. These are often not covered because of not only fear for repercussions but also because of *faka'apa'apa* (respect). An unpublished dissertation by Paul O'Connell at the University of Canterbury cited in Robie (2004) suggested that:



Whether culture is being misused to censor freedom of speech or whether it has tacit effect as self-censorship, it must nonetheless be acknowledged as a factor preventing democratic freedom of expression. (Robie, 2004: 30)

As mentioned above, both the *Niuvakai* and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* were attacked for their influence on local culture. In conflict situations, the authorities often use culture as a pretext when trying to silence anyone who dares to speak against the establishment.

These cases also highlight the impact that the media can have on government policy. This has often been challenged on the basis that the extent of the media's impact on government policy has not been tested fully. However it could be argued that the government's media policy and the amendment to the Constitution was directly a reply or attack on the opposing media critics.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **POLITICAL REFORM AND THE MEDIA**

*This growing enclosure of communication in the space of a flexible, interactive, electronic hypertext does not only concern culture. It has a fundamental effect on politics. In almost all countries, media have become the space of politics. To an overwhelming extent people receive their information, on the basis of which they form their political opinion and structure their behaviour, through the media and particularly television and radio. (Castells, 2000a)*

The media have now become, as Castells argues, a political space where various actors try to use it to their advantage and in the process bombarding people with all kinds of information. However the extent to which this information influences their target audience is still very much in question. The mass media in Tonga since the introduction of the first independent newspaper in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century have been used as a political tool. However as Cohen (1963) suggested, the media may not tell people what to think of but they are almost certainly telling people what to think about. In this chapter the focus will be on the ongoing political reform process in Tonga and the role of the media in this process. The argument here is that the media is not only being used as a political space but also a major driving force that help put pressure on authorities to pursue these reforms.

The political reform in Tonga can be traced back to the 24<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga* in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, but from a historical perspective a similar reform is taking place today in contemporary Tonga. The 24<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Tonga* Kau'ulufonua Fekai created a new line of Kings, the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* so that the *Tu'i Tonga* himself could withdraw from active rulership to a position of revered remoteness (Campbell, 1992 see also chapter 4). By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the 6<sup>th</sup> *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua*, Mo'unga'otonga created another line of kings, the *Tu'i*

*Kanokupolu*, to take over the daily operations while the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* himself took a place similar to that of the *Tu'i Tonga*. These changes were political reforms in their own right and time.

A similar position has been adopted by the current King George Tupou V as part of a modern political reform by announcing that he will give up most of his powers which includes the appointment of Cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister. The difference is that, the King is not creating a new line of kings but instead delegating his powers to the people in the form of an elected government. This is an unprecedented move which was never previously heard of in Tonga's history. The political reform process is still ongoing and how much the King is willing to give up remains to be seen. It is also important to note that the changes that occurred that led to the creation of the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* line included a series of assassinations of *Tu'i Tonga* kings. This stemmed from years of discontent and opposition from the people after suffering under their rule. The same happened with the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*: the line was set up to administer the unstable western districts of Tonga which were a threat to the rule of the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua*. The *Tu'i Kanokupolu* line was not spared the assassinations that the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* and *Tu'i Tonga* had suffered.

Today there are no assassinations to the extent of killing the King, but assassination continues in a different form: the media. Character assassination is the method widely used today by opponents of the King and the royal family. Some cases have often reached the courts. The battles are no longer fought in fortresses but in the media or what Castells refers to as the political space. The current King George Tupou V has had his share of criticism not only from the local media but foreign media also. He was often referred to as a “playboy prince” (New Internationalists, 2003) among other names. The royal family and government leaders have been put in the spotlight by the media scrutinizing their every move and as a result have encountered a lot of dissatisfaction among the Tongan people.

In contemporary Tonga, after years of petitions, protest marches, a national strike and a riot, the King and his government finally agreed to a time frame for the political reform to take place. The year 2005, it could be argued, was the turning point in the struggle for political reform and the media may have played a major role, as anecdotal evidence suggests and as this study attempts to investigate. The first section of this chapter will discuss the first known moves by the monarchy towards an elected government when some elected members of parliament were appointed cabinet ministers. The second section discusses the Civil Servant's strike followed by the riot, and also the role the media played in these two events. This chapter will end with a discussion of the various commissions that have been responsible for paving the way the political reform and also their recommendations.

### **7.1. First commoner as Prime Minister and elected member as Ministers.**

The calls for a more democratic form of government and political reform finally produced a response when the then Prime Minister, Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, announced on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2004 that King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV had accepted changes to be made to Tonga's political system. This referred to the appointment by the King of two elected noble's representatives and two people's representatives to become ministers. The announcement was widely accepted by the public although some were sceptical, questioning the appointed cabinet ministers' tenure of office. The announcement clearly stated that the appointed ministers' tenure would depend on them getting re-elected. However Clause 51 of the Constitution regarding the appointment of Ministers states:

It is the King's prerogative to appoint the ministers and they shall hold office during the King's pleasure or for such period as may be specified in their commissions and any one minister may hold two or more offices.

(Clause 51: Tonga Constitution)

This clause clearly explains that only the King decides the minister's term in office. This was from the beginning very problematic because firstly the elected members who were appointed ministers had to resign as people's representatives to become ministers. In the event of their resignation their appointment reverts back to the "King's pleasure" as allowed for by the Constitution. This issue was also raised in the final week of the 2005-2008 parliamentary sessions by the people's representatives. They argued that according to what had been announced in 2004, the appointed cabinet members, including the Prime Minister Dr. Sevele, should serve for one term and then had to stand for re-election. The clarification from government was that these ministers were appointed by the King according to the Constitution and the matter was settled, but the people's representatives were still not satisfied because the appointed elected members would have to stand for re-election.

The question that was raised by people at the time was whether the appointed cabinet ministers would be able to serve two masters, the people who elected them or the King who appointed them. In the end it was the latter because they had to resign in order to join the government. The appointment of the people's representative to the Cabinet posed many questions. Was this done to appease dissatisfied people and the ever-popular pro-democracy movement? Or was it really a step forward towards a more democratically elected government? If so, then why was the Constitution not amended to accommodate the alteration so it could be repeated in the following elections? The announcement did not specify any year but it only applied in the 2005 election and not in the 2008 election. The move could have been to appease the pro-democracy movement and for the outside world to see that Tonga was moving towards democratisation.

The next huge step in the political reform process and in Tongan history was the appointment of Dr. Feleti Vaka'uta Sevele as the first commoner to be Prime Minister in 2005. The appointment of Dr. Sevele was widely welcomed by all and especially the THDM

or the *Temo* because Dr. Sevele was a member of the movement. Some were unconvinced of the move because as a businessman long before he joined politics, Dr. Sevele had always been a good friend of the then Crown Prince Tupouto'a who was Regent at the time of his appointment. On the other hand some saw this as truly a move towards political reform and a step closer to having a democratically elected form of government. But in reality it was a something of a deception because the Prime Minister, though a commoner, did not have to answer to the people who elected him in the first place but to the King who had the power to keep or fire him at his pleasure.

In addition to the historical appointment of the first commoner to the position of Prime Minister, His Majesty gave the Prime Minister the privilege of nominating his own Cabinet, to form the Government of Tonga. This was a gigantic and historic move by the King to give the Prime Minister the power to nominate his own Cabinet, but still the King had to formally appoint them according to the Constitution. This led to the consequent nomination by Dr. Sevele and appointment by the King of five new ministers in 2006. They included 'Alisi Taumoepeau as the Attorney General and Minister of Justice and the first woman to hold a Cabinet ministerial position. Dr. Sevele also nominated two of his former colleagues and bankers, Afu'alo Matoto and Lisiate 'Akolo. Their appointment signalled the direction that the Prime Minister was taking in his economic reform. On the other hand the minister of Finance, the Hon. Siosiu 'Utoikamanu, was forced to resign on the Prime Minister's recommendation over differences between them (Television Tonga, Radio Tonga, 2008).

Again the appointment of Dr. Sevele could be interpreted as an experiment in what to expect when political reform finally takes place. But it could also be seen as giving people what they have been asking for, which is for the King to relinquish his powers to an elected government with an elected Prime Minister accountable to the people.

## 7.2 The Civil Servants Strike.

The year 2005 will go down in Tonga's history as a year when the government was held hostage by civil servants for six weeks over their demand for a pay rise. It was also a major turning point in the political struggle in Tonga. It would also be seen as the beginning of a working relationship between the media, especially OBN Television (see chapter 5), not only with the dissatisfied civil servants but also the pro-democracy movement that has changed the political space. OBN TV was once the pro-democracy movement's fierce opponent and critics.

Local and overseas media sympathised with the strike and a large number of supporters were mobilized by the strikers not only throughout Tonga but outside of Tonga through the media. The outcome of the strike was not only a victory for the civil servants but was also a platform for various individuals and groups to gain recognition as political actors. It started with a salary dispute and escalated into a national political fight, with politicians cashing in on the opportunity when the government was seen to be down and out. As will be argued in this section, the strike set the scene for the events which followed in the lead up to the riot in 2006 and the beginning of politicians taking advantage of the space provided by the media for their own political agenda.

The dissatisfaction among civil servants began when a salary revision structure was released in July 2005. This was like rubbing salt into an already deepened wound because a week earlier a 57% pay increase for cabinet ministers was announced (Matangitonga Online, 2005). It did not matter how hard government tried to keep salaries a secret but it never worked in Tonga because of the *faka-Tonga* or the Tongan way. Civil servants have *famili* or *kainga* in almost every government department and at various levels. This interconnectivity

led to sharing of information and civil servants comparing salaries, thus generating discontentment amongst the civil servants over the new salary structure.

The Public Servants Association (PSA) was born when about a thousand civil servants met on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2005 at the Queen Salote Memorial Hall to voice their concern over the salary revision structure. One of the motions brought up during the meeting was the call for a national strike but executives convinced the members to follow protocol and begin with a letter of grievance. By this time the local media picked up the story, especially the local independent newspapers, the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, *Kele'a* and *Talaki* and also *Matangitonga Online*. Meanwhile government media, the Tonga Chronicle and the Tonga Broadcasting Commission were awaiting confirmation from government about the civil servants' concern. A letter of grievance was sent to the Prime Minister's office on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July demanding a reply within three days. After receiving no reply, civil servants decided to march to Parliament to submit their protest letter and their demands.

The first response came from Acting Prime Minister Cecil Cocker. He advised the striking workers that the Cabinet could not accommodate them; they had to follow procedure and seek a resolution to their salary dispute from their heads of departments and the Public Service Commission. He also warned that if people did not return to work, they would be dealt with under the public service regulations. This did not deter the civil servants and the deputy Prime Minister's reply only added fuel to the anger that was already burning amongst the disgruntled civil servants. This time they demanded an 80 percent increase for the salaries of the lowest-level of employees, 70 percent for the mid-level and 60 percent for the upper ranks. The PSA estimated the cost of the rise to be around T\$20 million. The increase sounded really appealing to the mid-level officials and especially the lower end of the spectrum.



As the talks dragged on, the crowd at Pangai Si'i began to swell, not just civil servants but members of the public who were also sympathetic to the strikers. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, the Cabinet offered a raise of 12.5 percent, funded mostly by the money allocated to the proposed cabinet ministers pay rise given to them by the Higher Salary Review Committee. The PSA refused the offer and stuck with their demands for 60-80 percent increases.

During the strike, the government media including the *Tonga Chronicle* newspaper, and Radio and Television Tonga distanced themselves from the strikers. In order to mobilize the support of civil servants throughout the islands, the PSA needed the government radio because it was the only medium that could cover the whole of the Kingdom. The PSA were not allowed to air any messages or broadcast live any of their meetings even though they were willing to pay. The civil servants' committee used overseas media such as Radio Australia and Radio New Zealand International to criticise the government media and also get their messages through. The Tonga Broadcasting Commission's general manager, 'Elenoa 'Amanaki hit back at the strikers in a news release, criticizing the overseas media's coverage of the strike.

Ms 'Amanaki claims the international media is presenting only the strikers' side of the story. She contends that the Tongan government has worked hard to resolve the strike, but that its offers of pay levels much higher than the private sector have been rejected. Ms 'Amanaki says Tonga is going into recession because of the strike and accuses the strikers of being unfair and selfish. She says Tonga has too many unproductive public servants. (Radio Australia, 2005)

On the first day of the strike, Mrs. 'Amanaki was at Pangai Si'i showing her support for the strikers but turned against them the next day. This is understandable because Mrs. 'Amanaki's employer was the government. This showed the government influence on the

media which re-emphasizes the role of media ownership within the industry. Scholars including Dr. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, who was Pro-vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji at the time, argued that the media played a huge role in the national strike but a very one-sided and biased one.

Those of us who were overseas were indeed grateful to the media, especially the Matangi Tonga for keeping us informed of developments during the strike. That was the positive side and I am sure they also kept the nation informed of what went on. However, the downside was the “free” publicity it gave to one side only, that is the side of the strikers, which was presented in a positive light, whereas the Government side was presented in a negative light. The glare of publicity did not give either side time to sit and reflect on issues, but instead it fed the negative emotions of both sides and forced them to make decisions in the limelight - never a good idea if you are dealing with difficult and sensitive issues. The consequences of those decisions (economic, socially and politically) we are still suffering from and will do so for a long time. (Dr. Taufe'ulungaki, 2007).

From day one of the strike, Sangster Saulala the manager of OBN Television joined the strikers and recorded everything that went on during the meetings in Pangai Si'i. This was the first time that such a tactic was employed by any media in Tonga, and surprisingly it came from a television station that had been a loyal supporter of the royal family and the government. A large portion of the population were hooked to their television sets in the evenings watching OBN rebroadcast meetings held at Pangai Si'i. Mele Foukimoana a retired teacher felt sorry for the teachers and her anger was directed at the government after watching OBN's daily coverage of the strike. However, the speeches from Pangai Si'i were for other informants, as Dr. Taufe'ulungaki puts it, “unacceptable” for broadcast:

Further it allowed very bad behaviours (such as threats and outright lies and gossip about public figures) and very bad language (often swears), which would not normally pass the ethical standards and code of behaviours of media organisations to be aired and it was not just for one day, but the public were inundated with the same day after day after day. I believe it got to the stage where such behaviours came to be accepted among large sections of the community as the “norm.” The negative impact is particularly noticeable among young people and students. The disrespect and anti-social behaviour demonstrated by the adults were emulated by students and were applauded for them and in some cases were even rewarded. Violence, violent language, disrespect for authority, and character assassinations of individuals without substantiation, etc were accepted as legitimate means of protest. (Dr. Taufe’ulungaki interview)

The PSA was using the media to their advantage and as a political space for their own agenda. The overseas media also took on the striker’s side. The New Zealand Herald ran daily coverage of the event and also Television New Zealand, as Auckland is home to some 40,000 Tongans.

As the strike dragged on into its fourth week, more and more people joined the strikers, either observing or taking part in the daily dancing and kava drinking. The names of civil servants that were still at work were called out from a loud speaker and made fun of. The Tonga Small Business Association supported the strikers by providing food and other donations. By August 5<sup>th</sup>, doctors, nurses and health workers joined the strike. They had been working at the hospital on the advice of the PSA to cater for the health of the people. The local banks including the ANZ Bank, Tonga Development Bank and the Westpac Bank of Tonga supported the strikers by accepting to extend the repayment dates for civil servants’

loans until the situation was resolved after a request from the PSA (Matangi Tonga Online, 2005). The civil servants also received support from trade unions in New Zealand and also the Tongan community. PSA leaders travelled to New Zealand to rally support for the striking civil servants. In one incident, supporters attacked the King's residence in Auckland, New Zealand, demanding an audience with the King. Demonstrators burnt the Tongan flag and got into a punch up with staff of the royal residence in Auckland (Australia Associated Press, 2005). Kaveloni Vikilani, the chef at the King's residence, said protesters were demanding to see the King. When they were denied access, they started attacking the staff and tried to damage some of the buildings (personal communication, 2008). This happened while the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV was in New Zealand for his medical check up. All the events that took place in New Zealand got full coverage from the New Zealand media. This was unusual and unheard of in the past.

Acts of violence erupted on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August: first students from Tonga College<sup>41</sup> smashed computers, supposedly in retaliation for the removal of their principal and head tutor who had been relocated to the main office of the ministry. They also smashed the vehicle that belonged to an administrator sent by the Education Ministry to replace the principal. Two hundred students were arrested by the police (Matangi Tonga Online, 2005). Four vehicles belonging to the Revenue Department were destroyed by fire and police suspected arson. This followed a letter that written by a group called '*Ulu Tonga* ("mangroves") was read out at Pangi Si'i and aired on OBN, threatening to burn down government buildings (OBN TV). According to Newton (2006) violence is one of the ways that politicians use to attract not only media but also attention of the authorities.

The government announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2005 that a New Zealand retired judge Tom Goddard would be paid for by the New Zealand government to conduct the

arbitration process which was due to start on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2005. However the PSA pulled out from the arbitration process on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, based on their frustration in dealing with the government's negotiating team which insisted that the strikers' demands were too great (Matangi Tonga 25 August 2005).

By September 1<sup>st</sup> Princess Pilolevu Tuita who was acting as Princess Regent in the absence of her father, Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, proposed 60, 70 and 80 percent increases which met the demands of the PSA, but only over an interim period, starting when they returned to work. This was refused by the strikers. The government had a new negotiating team which included the Hon. Fielakepa the minister of Lands, the Hon Tu'a Taumoepeau the minister of Foreign Affairs, and former people's representative Dr. Fred Sevele, who was the Minister of Labour Commerce and Industries. At the same time, the director of the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East West Centre, Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, was appointed as the facilitator (Matangi Tonga Online, 2005). The PSA refused the offer but agreed to continue the negotiations with the new government team. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September Dr. Halapua announced that both parties had agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding but as of 8pm that evening, the PSA had not signed the agreement which they had agreed to. Halapua was still optimistic, stating that signing was just a formality but that the goal has been achieved by both parties agreeing (see Appendix.4 for the MOU)

The PSA finally signed the MOU on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2005. This included the call for the setting up of a Royal Commission to be established immediately to review the Constitution in order to allow the formation of a democratic government, and that the Commission should report back to the Interim Committee by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2005. The latest attachment saw the influence of the Politicians in what started only as a pay dispute. Dr. Taufe'ulungaki refers to this as "a coup within a coup process that the civil servant leaders

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<sup>41</sup> Tonga College is a government owned run secondary school

discovered too late in the process [sic].” One of my informants, Fr. Seluini ‘Akauola, who was the mentor to the PSA during the strike agreed with Dr. Taufē’ulungaki on the fact that the politicians were using the strike to push their own agenda (personal communication, 2008). In Parliament, the Prime Minister Prince ‘Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, the current King’s youngest brother, expressed his consternation with what Clive Edwards had said on OBN television. According to the Prince, Mr Edwards called on the strikers to do something about the public servants who were not on strike but were still working for government. He said that Mr Edwards was “inciting people to riot” (Matangi Tonga Online, 2005). This was foreshadowing what would happen in the near future.

The argument is precise and clear: the media played a huge role in the PSA’s victory and the support they got. The local media, mainly the OBN TV and local newspapers, failed to give a balanced view but instead were biased, and took the striker’s side only. They conveyed a message sympathising with the public servants and demonizing the government as the antagonist. The support that the strikers received in New Zealand, as shown by the number of people that took part in a protest march in Auckland city, could be attributed to the media. The unprecedented attack on the King’s residence by protesters is just an example of the power of the media. Where else could they have got the pictures and news of what was taking place in Tonga but through the media? In a search using Lexis Nexus of articles about the strike around the Pacific Rim, including Australia and New Zealand, 99 news articles were found and the majority were from New Zealand based news agencies. The government media on the other distanced themselves from reporting on the strike’s daily events. The government media were demonised by supporters of the strike.

The politicians on the other hand moved in and took advantage of the conflict, and got part of what they were pushing for, which was the formation of a Royal Commission. This also gave the politicians a very lethal weapon against the government as they now realised

just how vulnerable the government was when people in large numbers supported them and they had the media in their armoury

However, after the strike a number of political actors and individuals emerged onto the national scene. These included the Public Servants Association (PSA), the Tonga National Business Association consisting of small to medium businesses, and OBN Television. Within these associations emerged some who became regarded as leaders, for example, Mele ‘Amanaki from the PSA, Dr. Tu’i Uata and ‘Ofa Simiki from the Small Business Association and Sangster Saulala from the OBN TV (see Chapter 5). All of them except Dr. Tu’i Uata were candidates in the 2008 general election.

### **7.3. The National Committee for Political Reform**

Under the MOU signed between the government and the PSA (see Appendix 4), a Royal Commission was required to review the Constitution to allow the formation of a more democratic form of government and to report back to the Interim Committee by 31 December 2005. This did not fall through because the Legislative Assembly picked up on a motion proposed by the late Prince Tu’i Pelehake in 2004 for the formation of a Committee for Political Reform. The Legislature’s initiative was approved by Cabinet and the King and in October 2005, the establishment of the National Committee for Political Reform (NCPR) was approved for 2006. (See Appendix 5 for the committee’s term of reference).

The National Committee advertised for groups and people to submit their own proposals for political and constitutional reform. The committee also held consultations, and facilitated *talanoa*<sup>42</sup> throughout Tonga and also among Tongans in New Zealand, Australia and the United States where about over 80,000 Tongan’s reside. The NCPR was led by the late Prince Tu’i Pelehake who initiated the idea. It comprised of two representatives from the

nobles, two from the people's representative, two from government and three independent members. These were Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, Hawaii; Mr 'Aisea Taumoepeau, a former Minister of Law and currently a Barrister in New Zealand; and also Dr 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, Pro-vice Chancellor, University of the South Pacific, Fiji. The NCPR used the *Talanoa* methodology which scholars including Dr. 'Okusi Mahina argue is an indigenous Tongan approach to data collection. At the same time they referred to the use of *fala* as their framework: *fofola e fala kae alea e kainga* means "spread the mat and allow the community to engage in dialogue or share" (NCPR, 2006). *Talanoa*, according to the report, allowed the people within the communities to present their ideas freely and ask any questions they wanted, be they political or about the Constitution or anything else that concerned them. The main idea behind this was for the committee to gather all the information that was given by the people and not simply use its own ideas. The use of *Talanoa* was an approach different from the traditional mode of communication or *fono*<sup>43</sup> between chiefs and the people (Langa'oi 2007).

I argue that the use of the *Talanoa* was not the best method because some people would have been intimidated by the presence of a high chief during the meetings. The chairman of the committee, the late Prince Tu'i Pelehake, was a nephew of the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. He was a high chief and was also in line to the throne. His presence during these consultations would have made the people very uneasy and their true views and opinions would not have been expressed freely. In Tonga where culture and tradition are very strong, this could easily happen. Because of the media coverage, the majority of the meetings held in the villages did not attract a lot of people and the views expressed in those meetings

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<sup>42</sup> A methodology used by the NCPR committee to collect their information through dialogue and meetings.

<sup>43</sup> *Fono* is a compulsory meeting of people, be it village or district where the chief would tell his people what he wanted from them. There is no questioning or opinions from the people. But as a temporary measure, a *fono* could allow two way communication.



would not have accurately reflected public opinion. A structured questionnaire could have also assisted the committee's data gathering which would have made a fair representation.

Despite these arguments, the committee succeeded in gathering the views and opinion of Tongans in Tonga and abroad. After the death of the chairman, Prince Tu'i Pelehake and his wife Princess Kaimana in a road accident in the United States, Dr. Halapua took over as the chairman. Dr. Halapua presented the final report to the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV in August 2006 and to the Legislative Assembly on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The report advocated a system where all seats in parliament would be subject to election, canvassed different types of electoral systems, proposed ways of ensuring policy continuity, and examined how the interests of overseas Tongans might be expressed (New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade).

The NCPR report recommended that a new 26-member parliament be made up of 17 people's representatives to be elected by the people, and nine noble's representatives to be elected by the 33 nobles of the realm. The King would then appoint a Prime Minister from the 26 members of the House, whether from the people's or the noble's representatives. The Prime Minister would in turn appoint ministers from both sides. Under the proposal in the report, all of the constituencies would increase their number of representatives. There would be 7 representatives of the people for Tongatapu, 3 for Vava'u, 3 for Ha'apai, 2 for 'Eua and 2 for the two Niuas. The King would still have the power to appoint the governors for Ha'apai and Vava'u.

The report did not propose an overhaul to the Constitution or the political and social structure, but rather concentrated on some of the powers of the King, especially his appointment of government officials (Taufe'ulungaki, 2006). It also proposed a more democratic form of government where the people elected by the people would run the government. The composition of the Legislative Assembly has been a controversial issue and

one of the main sources of criticism from the pro-democracy movement. The pro-democracy movement has been arguing for years over the unbalanced numbers in the Legislative assembly where the people's representatives had always been a minority. Lopeti Senituli, former director of the THDM and current political adviser to the Prime Minister argued that NCPR's report proposed a total overhaul of the Constitution:

The changes that the NCPR recommended amounted to the total overhaul of the Constitution and of the country's political system and turning a uniquely Tongan, and a uniquely tripartite but unicameral Legislative Assembly into a bipartisan Westminster-type Parliament and in the process disenfranchising His Majesty the King. (Senituli, 2006)

I have to agree with Taufe'ulungaki, as the NCPR's proposal clearly states the constitutional clauses that would need to be amended, which included Clauses, 38 (the King's relations with Parliament) Clause 50 (appointment of the Privy Council), Clause 51 (the appointment of the Cabinet) and Clause 59 (the composition of the Legislative Assembly). The King would still have the power to dissolve and call the Legislative Assembly, veto laws and sign legislation.

The proposal also ensured that there would be a balance in the 26 member elected Parliament. This meant that 13 would be appointed to the cabinet, including the Prime Minister and 13 would be left as opposition. The idea was to have a balanced house. However I argue that the proposed model by the NCPR did not fix the problem of imbalance with regards to the numbers. The governors have been traditionally appointed from the noble's ranks, and with two extra nobles in the cabinet the nobles would have the majority, as they tend to always stand together on some issues that affect their power or the status of the royal family. If the whole cabinet is elected from among the people's representatives then it would also prove another obstacle to smooth government because the nobles would be left out. The

solution for Tonga would be either to keep the current system or have a party system, as some would argue, though whether it would work or not remains to be seen.

To keep the public updated on the committee's consultations, a media subcommittee within the committee was set up. Radio programs were also aired and press releases distributed among the media to disseminate the information. Records of the meeting were recorded not only on paper but also on both video and audio tape. It is also important to note that both 'Akilisi Pohiva and Clive Edwards were members of the NCPR but Mr. Pohiva left the committee due to various differences and set up there his own People's Committee for Political Reform together with other members of parliament. While the NCPR was holding their consultations, Mr. Pohiva and members of his committee travelled throughout the villages in Tongatapu holding their own meetings and advocating their own agenda for political reform. These meetings were recorded and broadcast on OBN Television. This was similar to what happened during the strike, where the pro-democracy leaders would make speeches in the villages and also invited people to talk and express their own views, which often resulted in false accusations and defamatory statements. These were also broadcast unedited. This is important because it played a major role in the lead up to the riot, because people were drawn in and encouraged to join the protest at Pangai Si'i during these meetings. The newly formed People's Committee for Political Reform was chaired by Pohiva (see also chapter 5). The village meetings and the nightly broadcast of these meetings helped mobilized support for the pro-democracy movement.

The government created tension within the Legislative assembly when it tabled its own so-called "roadmap," the government's own model for political reform. This was a sticking point, as the pro-democracy leaders wanted to table their own political model. In the government's model they suggested that the King should appoint four ministers to the

Cabinet. The government's model and timing of its presentation have been criticised and some even suggested that it was one of the many reasons that caused the riot in 2006.

#### **7.4. The 2006 Riot: Role of the Media.**

If there was any warning of things to come amid political tensions in Tonga, the events that took place during the strike in 2005 should have presaged what to expect or at least the consequences. Tonga and the rest of the world through the media witnessed the destruction of the Kingdom's capital Nuku'alofa on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2006. The event started with a peaceful gathering and a protest march, when all of a sudden the mood changed and a violent riot followed. The result was the destruction of the capital and the loss of eight lives. Who was to blame was the question asked subsequently after the riot. Those accused included the pro-democracy movement, members of the Public Servant's Association, the Tonga National Business Association, some members of the Mormon and Catholics youth, and youths deported from America, New Zealand and Australia, in addition to local youths. On the other side, the government was also blamed (Taufe'ulungaki, 2007 in Planet Tonga, Dec. 28). The media did not escape blame as they were singled out as among the culprits and instigators. This section will look at the 2006 riot and examine the role of the media in the lead up to and after these events. To understand the role of the media (or its alleged role) in instigating the riot, it is important to review the events prior to the riot and how the media covered these. In addition, what was being reported in the media during the weeks leading up to the riot and after the riot may also shed some light into the media's alleged role.

During the Civil Servant's strike, Pangai Si'i was used as the main rallying point for the strikers and their supporters to meet and conduct their daily activities. Prior to the riot Pangai Si'i was again used by supporters of the pro-democracy movement to meet and conduct activities similar to those held during the strike. According to Taufe'ulungaki (2006),

speakers, including some people's representatives to the Legislative Assembly, often made defamatory statements, using foul language, against government officials and the royal family to the amusement of the crowd during these meetings.

The use of disrespectful language and abusive behaviour from the strike in 2005 continued in the public meetings that the People's Committee for Political Reform started holding in the villages once Dr. Sitiveni Halapua began presenting the NCPR Report to the Legislative Assembly on 3 October 2006. (Dr. Taufe'ulungaki' 2006)

A similar view was echoed by Lopeti Senituli.

The abusive language, charges of corruption, and threats, targeting Government leaders and the Royal Family, continued unabated in these public meetings. Their members also continued to protest and occupy Pangai Si'i, and held panel discussions almost every night on OBNTV, which was more of the same kind of content as their public meetings around Tongatapu.... (Senituli, Planet Tonga 2006)

Campbell (2008) also agreed with both Taufe'ulungaki and Senituli on the tactics used by the pro-democracy supporters used during the strike.

In addition to the by now accustomed tactic of street march and petition, the strike introduced a new element into Tongan politics — the standing demonstration. Strikers and their sympathisers met daily at Pangai Si'i.....while soap-box orators addressed them and entertained them throughout the day. The proceedings became a popular spectacle, and as no repressive measures were taken, speakers became emboldened. The rhetoric became

colourful and hyperbolic, and eventually openly insulting and derogatory especially about members of the royal family and their commercial ventures which were widely condemned as exploiting both the public and the government. (Campbell 2008)

These speeches and all the daily activities at Pangai Si'i were broadcast unedited by OBN television. The pro-democracy leaders were also travelling throughout the villages in Tongatapu, holding meetings with the people. These meetings were to mobilize support for the movement and at the same time give people a chance to voice their opinions and concerns during the meetings. These opinions voiced often used disrespectful and at times abusive language towards the authorities and the royal family. Again these meetings were broadcast unedited which not only violated broadcasting ethics but undermined the *faka'apa'apa* (respect) that supposedly kept the peace in Tongan society. This was a very smart tactic employed by the pro-democracy movement as they utilized the media's persuasive appeal to mobilize public support.

The issues raised during these meetings were all negative towards the government and sometimes involved mounting personal attacks on government officials. For example, In one meeting in the village of Houma in Tongatapu, the MP 'Isileli Pulu told the meeting that the wind blew a piece of paper his way, and on it was a huge pay increase for government ministers (OBN 2006). What the MP did not tell the meeting was that the paper he was referring to was a recommendation from an independent expert hired by the government to look at the parliament's salaries. In the following months, the Legislative Assembly voted on a motion from the salary committee of the Legislative Assembly that included pro-democracy movement leaders 'Akilisi Pohiva and 'Ulitu Uata that members of the House should have a 60-80% salary increases, the same as the public civil servants received after the national strike. When the Legislative Assembly voted and passed the motion, which was opposed by

government, some people were angry. Mr. Uata and Pohiva felt the backlash from the people so they proposed cancelling the pay rise in the Legislative Assembly, but this was defeated. This is just an example of the kind of issues that were raised during the village meetings which caused resentment towards the government.

The information unit of the Prime Minister's office was broadcasting programs on Television Tonga to counter some of the accusations from OBN television. Government spokespersons were often made fun of by the pro-democracy newspaper, the *Kele'a*, which often referred to them as the *toko tolu fakaoli* (the funny three) in their cartoon section or the editorials (*Kele'a*, September 2006). According to one of the informants who took part in the meetings and the riot, whenever he saw a program from the Prime Ministers' office, he became very angry because what they were saying, according to him, was "all lies and they just wanted to make the government look good" (personal communication with informant). The informant was charged with taking part in the riot but a jury found him not guilty, along with six others. Another informant agreed that when the government tried to counter what was being said by OBN and the *Kele'a* newspaper, all they did was make people angrier. This example supports the "uses and gratification" model (Blumler and Katz, 1974) which suggests that people only use the media to satisfy their individual needs. In this case, my two informants used the media to fuel their anger towards government. The government and its media were not trying to find a solution to defuse the tension, but instead ignited more anger among the public, especially the pro-democracy supporters. While the government and the pro-democracy movement were exchanging verbal blows in the media, support for the pro-democracy at Pangai Si'i swelled and the number of people joining the protest increased.

Days before the riot erupted, Pangai Si'i was continuously filled with loud noise and music. One of the sessions of the Legislative Assembly had to be cancelled because of the noise across the road from Pangai Si'i. It was so unbearably loud that deliberations in

parliament were drowned out by the noise. The police could not do anything about it so the Speaker asked the pro-democracy members of parliament to disperse the crowd which they ignored. The pro-democracy MP's instead appeared on OBN TV and asked the people to continue their support by turning up at Pangai si'i. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, pro-democracy leader 'Akilisi Pohiva during a speech he made to the gathering at Pangai Si'i accused other non-prodemocracy media outlets of printing and broadcasting false information about their work and their demands. Pohiva also singled out media personalities within these media outlets by name and challenged them to show up at Pangai Si'i (OBN Television, 15 November 2006). Again, the speech was broadcast on OBN later that evening together with a plea for the people to turn up the next day to support their cause. On the same evening, Sangster Saulala, the manager of OBN television, also asked the audience to join a protest march against what he said was a move by the government to close down OBN. The land from which OBN was operating belonged to the King, and the station had already been sent an eviction notice. Instead of telling the people the whole truth about the eviction letter, Mr. Saulala instead announced that the government was trying to close down the television station and silence the people. OBN Television was the self-proclaimed "people's television." The eviction letter that Mr. Saulala was referring to was the second letter, which they had received a year later after the first warning letter.

What was said during the Pangai Si'i meetings and also in the villages held by the pro-democracy movement was not reported by the government owned media or by many of the other media. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* however highlighted speeches made by Mr. Pohiva on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 as a "call to war". He (Pohiva) said "We will assert our rights by force and snatch the power and authority" (Moala, 2009: 38). The front page of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November the day of the riot was "*Pole Tau 'Akilisi*" or "'Akilisi calls for war" (Ibid: 39).



On November 16<sup>th</sup> more people assembled at Pangai Si'i while another group who were pro-government supporters put up their own tent just across the road at Pangai Lahi<sup>44</sup> where they drank kava. The day started with two peaceful protest marches: one started from OBN premises and the other from Pangai Si'i, the pro-democracy supporters' main rallying point. The crowd at Pangai Si'i overwhelmingly outnumbered the pro-government supporters. Words were exchanged between the supporters of these two groups and a brawl broke out which was quickly broken up by police. I argue that the riot would have been prevented had police been able to disperse the crowd after the brawl. However people were later caught shown on camera drinking beer and alcohol which were distributed freely at Pangai Si'i prior to the first wave of destruction.

Lopeti Senituli described the riot as an "attempted coup." Senituli was in good position to make the accusation because he was present in all the meetings between the Prime Minister and the pro-democracy leaders prior to the riot and even on the day. However, the claim cannot be substantiated. The pro-democracy MP's and their supporters wanted the Legislative Assembly on 16<sup>th</sup> of November to vote on the time for the political reform to take place and also the new composition of the Legislative Assembly. According to Senituli (2006), the people's representatives knew they would be defeated and pushed for the vote anyway to find an excuse for the "attempted coup". Again Senituli's claim is dubious because history has shown in order to successfully take over a government, one needs either the support of the military or an armed group, which the pro-democracy movement did not have. In neighbouring Fiji, we have seen four coups, three with the support of the military and one without the support of the military but where arms were used. The pro-democracy movement fiercely denied Senituli's accusation.

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<sup>44</sup> The main area in town down Nuku'alofa where national events are conducted, it is bigger in size than Pangai Si'i (smaller or mini Pangai)

The Speaker of the Assembly, fearing for the members' safety, postponed the Parliament session on the 16th. Meanwhile the crowd at Pangai Si'i were becoming rowdy and scuffles broke out between ex-convicts who were in the crowd. At the same time, alcohol was distributed freely to groups within the protesters and supporters during the rally (Television Tonga, 2006). After the pro-democracy MP's announced that the Legislative Assembly would not be sitting that afternoon, a larger number of people started to march towards the Prime Minister's office. Other groups of people started smashing windows of the Treasury Department and also the Legislative Assembly Building. The group that marched to the Prime Minister's office started their destruction outside the building as the police watched helplessly from the side. The police were certainly outnumbered by the rioters and were ill prepared to handle any riot as this was the largest and most destructive in contemporary Tongan history. One of the police officers was heard telling rioters not to touch a store because it belonged to a Tonga businessman (Radio Tonga, 2006). Then there was the conspiracy theory of police taking the rioter's side. This was fuelled by the police commander taking a day off on the day of the riot and the police's advice to the Prime Minister that there was a low level of threat from the pro-democracy supporters.

The rioters then went on a rampage along the main Taufa'ahau Road starting with the Leiola Duty Free shop<sup>45</sup>, while another group broke into the Nuku'alofa Club<sup>46</sup> stealing beer and liquor. At the same time the majority of the rioters marched along Taufa'ahau Road looting and torching businesses and vehicles along the road. These included the Pacific Royale Hotel,<sup>47</sup> the Rainbow<sup>48</sup> store and the Tungi Arcade<sup>49</sup> which housed several businesses, including a book shop, the Tonga Broadcasting Commission's radio shop, and the Air New

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<sup>45</sup> Leiola Duty Free is owned by the late King's only daughter Princess Salote Pilolevu Tuita (see Chapter 5)

<sup>46</sup> An Elitist Bar where it is frequently visited by the King when he was Crown Prince.

<sup>47</sup> Pacific Royale Hotel is owned by the Ramanlal family who co-own the Shoreline Electric Company with the current King George Tupou IV (ibid).

<sup>48</sup> A Chinese owned business.

Zealand Travel Centre. The rioters then continued to the head offices of Tonfon<sup>50</sup> and the Shoreline Groups of Company,<sup>51</sup> ransacking the place before torching it. This was the building where eight lives were lost. Another group headed east to the Prime Minister's family owned businesses, Molisi Tonga, and the ANZ Bank building which they leased from the Sevele family business and started smashing the windows, looting and eventually torching the place while police were trying to guard it. The Commander of the Tonga Police Force, Sinilau Kolokihakaufisi, told Radio New Zealand International in an interview that "looking at the circumstance at the time, it looked that things were not planned but spontaneous" (Radio New Zealand 2006). However the commander's statement is questionable because the businesses that were destroyed belonged to the Prime Minister, the royal family and their business associates, and foreign-owned businesses including some owned by naturalized Tongans. Businesses owned by members of the pro-democracy movement were not touched while others beside them were looted and destroyed. This suggests that the riot was not spontaneous, and the presence of ex-convicts at Pangai Si'I and the distribution of alcohol to the crowd support the theory that the riot was planned. The destruction of the Chinese-owned businesses also suggests that it could have been linked to the Tonga National Business Association. It was no secret that the Tonga National Business Association was not happy with increasing influence of the Chinese businesses in Tonga. Lopeti Senituli in an interview with Planet Tonga also stated that

The Tonga National Business Association actively campaigned against the Government's clampdown on corruption in the Customs Department and two weeks before the violence had presented a Petition to His Majesty to dismiss the Hon Prime Minister. They also campaigned against the Chinese-owned

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<sup>49</sup> A Business complex building belonged to the Wesleyan Church.

<sup>50</sup> The telecommunication or phone company (Tonfon Ltd) is owned by the current King (ibid).

<sup>51</sup> Shoreline Electric Company Ltd is a monopoly and is owned by the current King.

stores, Indian-owned stores and Palangi-owned<sup>52</sup> stores, which is why these were specifically targeted during the riots. (Planet Tonga, 2006)

The majority of those that took part in the looting and the destruction of the businesses were youths and some of the ringleaders were alleged to be deportees from America, Australia and New Zealand. Taufe'ulungaki (2006) argued that majority of the youths were Catholics and Mormons. The reasons why they might have been involved cannot be substantiated, but the villages where these youths resided were predominantly Catholic and Mormon. But there were also youths from other denominations that took part in the riot. Perhaps the reason for the presence of Mormon youths could be linked to a speech made by Dr. Tu'i Uata about the building from which OBN TV was due to be evicted from. In an emotional speech on the 14<sup>th</sup> September which was broadcast on OBN TV (Court Document, OBN TV), Dr. Uata told the crowd that the OBN building used to be a Mormon Church before the lease expired and it was never renewed. This might have stirred anger among the Mormon youths but still it does not explain their involvement, or that of the Catholics.

While the riot and the destruction were going on, a meeting between some members of the people's representatives and the Prime Minister and some members of his cabinet took place at the cabinet room. The people's representatives wanted the Prime Minister to agree to their demand, which was for the people to elect 21 members and the nobles to elect 9. The Prime Minister agreed and signed a document so that the riot and destruction could end, but it was too late as more than half of the capital was already burning. Later the Prime Minister argued that he signed the document under duress and it was invalid. Meanwhile five of the people's representatives, 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Ulii Uata, Clive Edwards, 'Isileli Pulu and Lepolo Taunisila, made their way to the Tonga Broadcasting Commission to announce their victory. 'Akilisi Pohiva started by saying:

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<sup>52</sup> Palangi simply refers to foreigners.

This program is to inform the public that we have achieved what we asked for, and we are asking you, that there is already enough damage to our country, and we are asking you to stop and let's work together. Stay calm for we have achieved what we asked for, and unfortunately government and the rest of the country did not fully understand where we were going to end up at. I think there is a good reason, and that we have asked numerous times, but we will not talk about that, today it was accepted, but unfortunately, it was accepted but the damage has been done. (Matangi Tonga Online, Radio Tonga, see also Appendix 8 for full transcript)

All of the five people's representatives thanked the people for their support and appealed for calm but it was too late. They did not know that their recorded announcement that night would be used against them in court as evidence.

#### **7.4.1. After the Riot.**

Following the riot the government approved the "Emergency Maintenance of Public Order Regulations 2006" for the purpose of securing public safety. The riot left a scar in the capital and a black mark in Tonga's history tarnishing its image as the Friendly Islands. After the riot, OBN Television was closed down indefinitely. The *Kele'a* newspaper was still in operation but pro-democracy members were banned from using government media. In one incident, the military closed down the *Kele'a* office which was located inside the protected area on a Sunday night. The *Kele'a* editor Tavake Fusimalohi cried foul over the shutdown, claiming that the authorities were clamping down on pro-democracy media. Fusimalohi claimed that the move was unlawful and that "Kangaroo Justice has arrived in Tonga" (Scoop online, 2007). The reason why the paper was closed down was because they were breaking the law which prohibits working on Sunday, except for the services allowed by law.

Tonga Broadcasting Commission was guarded 24 hours by the members of the Tonga Defence Force. The station received numerous threatening phone calls and reporters were often abused while conducting their daily outside interviews. The threat was so serious that reporters were restricted within the city limits when they went out and they were escorted by military personnel with guns when conducting outside interviews. Government journalists feared for their lives but having armed military guards to escort them brought fear to the interviewees. The “Black Thursday” rioting in Tonga had immense significance in terms of social and political reform and realization of how the power of the media can influence a large number of people. Kalafi Moala in his article “Who is responsible for Black Thursday” noted that

Anyone with average intelligence could have predicted there would be some form of violence carried out as a result of the highly emotional and provocative meetings conducted by Pohiva and PNCPR throughout villages in Tongatapu a few weeks prior to “Black Thursday”. PNCPR and their supportive media, OBN TV and Pohiva’s own Kele’a newspaper, turned Tonga’s constitutional freedom of speech into a mockery as they lied, falsely accused government officials, especially the King and Prime Minister; ridiculed and threatened any individual or organization that believed differently from them.” (Moala, November, 2006, Taimi ‘o Tonga online)

Moala also argued that the media had to take some of the blame for the riot (Radio New Zealand International, 2006). Former Radio Tonga news editor, George Lavaka however defends the media by suggesting that they were used as a propaganda vehicle by interest groups and did not directly incite the people to take part in the riot. Moala’s view is supported by the former controller of news at the Tonga Broadcasting Commission, Laumanu Petelo and other leading journalists from the private sector. Moala (personal communication, 2008)

added that the unedited footage shown on OBN television was unbalanced and included language not normally used in Tongan culture and criticism of key figures who were not given a chance to respond (ibid).

Moala (2009) also accused the pro-democracy leaders with whom he had served and worked for so many years for the riot:

Here was a movement I had given years of my life to promote and yet they had done the unimaginable. In one stroke of stupidity, the movement had made itself odious to those who have any sense of morality. The pro-democracy leaders actually believed they could impose democratic reform by mob force – that the Government might collapse giving way for the King to call an election under a reform agenda. (Moala, 2009, 39)

The riot was the last straw which saw Moala turned against the pro-democracy leaders but not the movement's ideology (Maoala interview 2008). He believed the leaders had steered away from their original goal and were seeking personal glory by adopting their own personal agendas.

Australia and New Zealand sent 150 police and military personnel at the request of the Tongan government to prevent a repetition of the riot. About 80% of the CBD was destroyed and the cost was estimated to be around US\$75 millions. Government further set up a Reconstruction Committee chaired by the Minister of Finance to assess damage and produce plans for reconstruction. About 153 businesses were damaged, including 33 that were owned by Chinese. The number of job losses was estimated to be 700 (Radio New Zealand International). Eight people died during the riot: all were found at the burnt Shorelines building. Over 900 people were arrested and questioned by police with the help of

the Tonga military. Some were released without charges. Table 2 is a breakdown of the number of cases and the convictions and also those who were discharged.

**Table 2. Court Cases related to the 2006 riot.**

Acquitted	Discharged	Convicted by Trial	Pleaded Guilty Convicted	Adult Diversion Program.	Crown offered no evidence
24	4	14	100	118	29

Source: Crown Law Department

Table 2 represents the figures as of June 2009 and the trials are still ongoing. The Adult Diversion program was for lesser offences and an attempt to keep young people out of court (Taumoepeau, Powles, 2008). Those where the crown offered no evidence were also discharged. Four current people's representatives to the Legislative Assembly, including all three of the Tongatapu members of parliament, 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Isileli Pulu and Clive Edwards, and one from Ha'apai, 'Ulitu Uata and one former MP Lepolo Taunisila have all been charged with sedition and are still awaiting trial.

The tactic that the pro-democracy movement and its media outlets, especially OBN, used to mobilise their supporters was also used against them. All of the meetings in the villages and the speeches made at Pangai Si'i that were broadcast unedited were also recorded by authorities from OBN. These speeches were used as evidence in most of the trials according to one of my informants. During the riot, some people were using their mobile phones to take pictures and videos while some people were filming with their own video cameras. Most of this footage was handed to the authorities voluntarily and used as evidence against the alleged perpetrators of the riot. Television footage later shown by



Television Tonga showed looters and youths torching vehicles and smiling at the cameras while committing the crimes. Within minutes of the riot, pictures of the destruction were shown around the world sent via mobile phones, internet and community website such as YouTube among others.

The pro-democracy supporters were banned from using the government owned media and OBN Television was shut down indefinitely. The pro-democracy leaders could not get their voices out so, the foreign media were the only way to get their messages across, in addition to the internet. OBN TV reopened their Tonga Star website ([www.tongastar.com](http://www.tongastar.com)) where some of the programs from OBN were put on the net, but as text only. According to Sangster Saulala (personal communication, 2008), the website was closed down because there was no one to run it. The government's radio and television were banned from running political programs or even political news without the prior approval of the Prime Minister's office. This was often questioned by journalists working for the government who felt that the freedom of the press had been suppressed by the government. While the public were banned from conducting political programs, supporters of the government such as Kalafi Moala were allowed to broadcast their television programs which were also political in nature. The government's answer to the critics was that Radio and Television Tonga were a government owned enterprise and the government could do with it whatever they pleased.

Together with the pro-democracy movement and their supporters, the Tonga National Business Association was blamed by both local and foreign business owners for the riot. New Zealand businessman Mike Jones, whose business, EM Jones, was destroyed and looted, suggested that the riot was carefully orchestrated and commercially motivated with the rioters paid in beer and money (Radio New Zealand).

## **7.5. The Tripartite Committee.**

Before the end of the 2006 parliamentary session, the government had proposed the establishment of a tripartite committee to follow up the report and the proposals from the NCPR. It was later revealed in an article by Lopeti Senituli (“Tonga government did best to facilitate reform” 2007) that the Prime Minister Dr. Feleti Sevele had a private meeting with members of the people’s representatives ‘Akilisi Pohiva and ‘Ulitu Uata prior to November 16<sup>th</sup> 2006. In the meeting they agreed that the government would support a move by the people’s representative to move forward the discussion on the PCPR’s report to number one on the agenda; that the people’s representatives would present their own model for political reform; and that in return people’s representatives would support the government’s motion to set up the tripartite committee. However the people’s representatives did not deliver their end of the bargain which led to the events of 16<sup>th</sup> of November (Senituli, 2006).

In the aftermath of the riot, the government felt that the way to move forward was to set up the tripartite committee comprising of three members from each group: noble’s representatives, people’s representatives, and from government. Noble Luani was appointed chairman of the committee which included the popular people’s representative ‘Akilisi Pohiva. It is also important to note that Pohiva was appointed to the NPRC, but after two meetings he criticized the committee and instead set up the People’s Committee for Political Reform comprised loosely of pro-reform groups. The committee had the understanding the chairman would be their spokesperson when it came to the media. However ‘Akilisi leaked the information to his newspaper and to the public. Pohiva was the first to criticise the NCPR and while discussion was taking place on the report, Pohiva suddenly endorsed the report in response to the government’s proposal of its own roadmap.

The mandate given to the committee included deciding the composition and duration of the Legislative Assembly, the date for the implementation of political reform, the division

of the electorate, the voting system, the composition of the Cabinet, and the election of the Speaker.

The committee managed to agree on most of the issues except the time for the reform to take place which was referred back to the Legislative Assembly to be finalized. The Legislative Assembly voted for 2010 with 15 members in favour and 7, all of the pro-democracy members, opposing (Television Tonga, 2007). The tripartite committee also agreed on the composition of the house which was 17 members to be elected by the people, 9 nobles to be elected by the 33 nobles, and four appointed by the King including the governors of the islands of Ha'apai and Vava'u. Of the three motions, only the time for the reform to take place was actually passed by the Legislative Assembly. It could be argued that the tripartite committee was destined to fail from the beginning. The composition of the committee itself showed a conflict of interests because the members were not independent. How can members of parliament decide on the composition of the Legislative Assembly let alone discuss the voting system and duration of Legislative Assembly, which in their own interest they could alter according to what they considered their personal gain? The former Minister of Law who was also a member of the tripartite committee 'Alisi Taumoepeau, together with Guy Powles, wrote that the tripartite committee had

Considered specific proposals concerning the Assembly and Cabinet but was unable to finalise its deliberations, and it was clear that such a committee was not the best method of proceeding with major political reform (Powles and Taumoepeau 2008)

It is clear that not only there was conflict of interest but the committee members were ill equipped to deal with such matters. One of my informants argued that the nobles were not happy with the proposed composition of the parliament. He added that the nobles wanted to

also increase their numbers if the number of people's representatives increased. The inner conflict within the three groups in parliament was also dragged into the tripartite committee. When the committee could not reach a consensus on the composition of the house or the time for political reform, they voted to take the issues to the parliament. This again supports Taumoepeau and Powles, and also my argument that the committee was not suitable to handle the mandate given to them by the Legislative Assembly. Because this was a government initiative, it could also be interpreted as a tactic used by government to delay the political reform process because they (the ministers and Prime Minister) still wanted to hold on to their ministerial positions.

#### **7.6. The Constitution and the Electoral Commission**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2008, days before King George Tupou V's coronation, the Legislative Assembly worked overtime to pass the Constitution and Electoral Commission Act.<sup>53</sup> Under the new Act which was later signed into law by the Princess Regent, Salote Pilolevu Tuita, a five member commission were appointed – one by the cabinet, one each by the Nobles and People's Representatives, and two by the Judicial Services Commission. The new legislation (see Constitutional and Electoral Commission Act) specified that the Commissioners could be members of the Legislative Assembly or of the Cabinet. Two of the members of the Commission, Dr. Sitiveni Halapua and Dr. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, were both members of the NCPR committee. The King while he was still Crown Prince made no secret of his desire for political reform according to Taumoepeau and Powles:

From the outset, the King has publicly expressed his support for political reform, cautioning that it should move at a deliberate pace. He has declared himself willing to appoint as Prime Minister the person, who has the support of the majority of the Assembly, and to appoint Ministers and allocate portfolios on the advice of the Prime

Minister.<sup>54</sup> He has said that this is a “binding precedent” and that he “...is voluntarily surrendering his powers to meet the democratic aspirations of many of his people”. The King added that, with certain exceptions, “...he will be guided by the recommendations of the Prime Minister of the day in all matters of governance”. (Powles and Taumoepeau, 2008, p. 8)

It is rare these days that anyone who has power such as that of Tonga’s King would voluntarily surrender it to the people. In opening the 2009 Parliamentary session, King George Tupou V announced that two years would be enough for deliberations and the work to be done for the political reform (see Appendix 7 for full text). This announcement and the formation of the Commission gave people hope that change would finally take place.

The main task for the commission was to examine and inquire into the reforms that are needed for the executive, the legislature and their relationship and the electorate. (See Appendix 9)

The work conducted by the Commission was similar to that carried out in 2006 by the NCPR committee. It was required by law to submit an interim report within five months of its establishment, and the final report within 10 months. Many people argued that the time frame given to the commission was not enough given the enormous task assigned to them. The consultations held by the committee were not as popular as those held by the NCPR committee, according to my informants, because people were tired of not seeing results from previous consultations. Others argue that people were more concerned with their livelihood rather than the political reform.

The consultations did not include the Tongan diaspora but concentrated instead on the local population. When the Commission submitted their interim report to the King and the Legislative assembly, they did not conduct any consultations in the two Niuas, which clearly

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<sup>53</sup> The Bill may be seen online at: <http://legislation.to/cms/other/2008-bills/index.html>

reemphasizes the time constraints. The commission advertised through the media to not only groups inside Tonga but to the Tongan diaspora, for groups to submit their own proposals regarding the executives, legislature and also the electorate. The membership of groups had to be above 200. Only 29 submissions were received by the deadline, which included a submission by a women's group seeking a quota for women in parliament.

The Commission submitted their interim report on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2009. According to the report, the aspiration of many for a new system of government to be in place before a parliamentary election in 2010 is unrealistic. They pointed out that "The time frame allowed the Commission by the Act is surprisingly short" (Matangi Tonga Online, 2009).

The report also found that people lacked interest in political reform: "It was apparent that many ordinary Tongans have little interest in politics or the structure of government" (Constitutional and Electoral Commission report, 2009a). Instead of recommendations, the Commission's interim report was more of a discussion paper and they recommended that further submissions from the general public were needed. This time it could be any individual or groups.

The pressure that was put on the government and the Legislative Assembly to accept the recommendations made by the PCNR led to the riot of 2006, while the pressure put on the tripartite committee led to its dissolution and its failure. The Commission felt that the time between the publication of their final report and the next proposed election in 2010 under the new system would not be realistic. They instead suggested that Clause 77 should be amended in order for the Prime Minister to call the election between January and December, but under the current system. The recommendation was taken up by government, which submitted a motion that was passed by the Legislative Assembly to have the election in November 2010.

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<sup>54</sup> 'King Voluntarily Cedes Constitutional Authority', Media Release, Palace Office, October 2006.

The Commission also reported that people were very much concerned about their land after the reform, because control of it might be taken away from the chiefs.

#### **7.6.1. The Privy Council and the Executive.**

On November 5<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Commission delivered their final report to King George V. The report was widely welcomed by both members of the public and the pro-democracy movement. The report however shocked some people with its recommendation to cut the King and the Privy Council from the executive. The King would still have the Privy Council but acting as an advisory body only. The King's power to appoint ministers according to the report would shift to the Prime Minister of the day who would appoint the ministers from among the elected members.

#### **7.6.2. Minority Government**

The composition of the house would shrink from 30 to only 26 with the number of ministers reduced from 16 to only 10. Interestingly enough, this makes the government of the day a minority in the Legislative Assembly. According to former Minister of Law and Attorney General 'Alisi Taumoepeau, Tonga has always had a minority government (Matangitonga 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009). The same figures were also recommended by the NCPR in their report. The nobles would elect nine and the people's representative would elect 17. Tongatapu will have nine representatives, Ha'apai and Vava'u will have three each, while 'Eua and the two Niua's will have one each. An Electoral Commission was recommended by the Commission to be established so they could redraw the boundary lines in each constituency and also update the electoral roll.

According to the Commission's report, the King would still maintain most of his powers apart from the appointment of the Prime Minister and ministers. The King would still

have the power to withhold his assent to any laws, would be able to dissolve the Legislative Assembly at his pleasure, and would still appoint judges but on the advice of the Chief Justice. (For the final report see [matangitongaonline.com](http://matangitongaonline.com).) The Commission also voiced their reservation and scepticism over how the Legislative Assembly would debate the report.

Coupled with the all too apparent lack of understanding of the aims or even the actual content of the interim report by some of the members of the House, it gives cause for some pessimism about the passage of this report and other consequent legislation through the House...(Constitutional and Electoral Commission, 2009: 102)

The decision whether to accept the Commission's report is now in the hands of the Legislative Assembly. However the Commission was not so optimistic about the government's intention regarding the report.

We shall harbour that hope but the recent statement by the Government only a few weeks before our report is due suggests an intention to press ahead with previously held opinions before they have seen recommendations of the very Commission they established to make them. Regrettably, it is hard to view that intervention as anything but an intention to pre-empt any possibility our recommendations may be contrary to their chosen view. (ibid)

Prior to the reports submission, the government had already moved in the Legislative Assembly to have the election conducted under the "first past the post" system among other proposals. The government by the time of the report's submission had 16 members with the recent appointment of two people's representatives as government ministers. The only interpretation one could make is that the government would have their way because they had



the majority. For transparency, the Commission also suggested that the public and the media should have full access to the Journal of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

## **7.7 Summary**

The media have no doubt played a role Tonga's transformation into a new political system. The Constitution and Electoral Commission referred to the pressure for change which led to the formation of the Commission of other committees. I argue that the media are one of the driving forces behind this pressure.

The dreadful events of November, 2006 shook the very foundations of the peace and stability of the fonua. His Majesty's use of his prerogative power restored law and order in the immediate aftermath but the lack of any repetition owes much to the enduring strength of those same Tongan values. They caused people to step back from confrontation and encouraged, instead, reflection and an opportunity to reassess the pressures for change which had lead in the preceding year to the National Committee, the Tripartite Committee and, subsequently, to this Commission. Those pressures remain and cannot be ignored but we do not see them as a threat to the peace and stability of the fonua but as an opportunity to restore and develop it together with proper and sustainable relations between the King, his traditional chiefs and the people which form such an essential part. (Constitution and Electoral Commission interim report)

The media have been used by all parties as a political space to push their causes. The committees and commissions that were set up to conduct dialogue and make recommendations regarding political reform all lacked support from the people which led to their downfall. The division between the government and the pro-democracy camp continues

to widen and the solution for Tonga's political dilemma becomes ever more blurred. Everything that has been done so far has been done in a rush. The Constitutional and Electoral Commission Act was indeed rushed through Parliament. This could be seen as appeasement on the part of the government prior to the King's coronation. Pro-democracy leaders have been warning the government that if nothing was done before the coronation to assure the people that the political reform would take place, they would not rule out disrupting the coronation.

When the legislation was passed, the pro-democracy movement had a big feast to celebrate what they called their "victory." The people are beginning to lose interest and faith not only in the system but in those who are trying to change the system.

Some of the statements made by those accused of taking part in the 2006 riot were not permissible in court because the judges ruled that these statements were made under duress. In some of the statements the defendants claimed that speeches broadcast on TV provoked them to take part in the rallies and subsequently in the riot. In a survey conducted with prisoners convicted of crimes committed during the riot, the majority did not cite the media as having any influence on their decision to take part.

The pro-democracy leaders on the other hand have accused the Prime Minister and government of instigating the riot by allowing the pro-government group to set up camp opposite their rallying point. By this accusation, the pro-democracy movement is actually denying other voices (pro-government supporters) their democratic right to voice their concerns. However Kalafi Moala in his book *In Search of the Friendly Islands*, accuses the pro-democracy leaders of being arrogant,

The leaders began showing signs of arrogance and personal, selfish ambitions that were not consistent with the principles that had brought the movement into

being. “The oppressed had become the oppressor ... doing the very things that the Government had been criticized for. (Moala, 2009)

The strike was unexpected by the government especially when it became a national event. What the leaders of the PSA did not anticipate was the amount of support they received not only from the public but also from abroad. Had the strike dragged on for another week, more destruction could have taken place. The seeds of destruction were there as arson and destruction of government property were beginning and it could have been worse. The politicians took advantage of the strike to promote their cause and also had a free ride on the media attention that the strike was given. An example is the attack on the King’s residence in Auckland, New Zealand during the strike. It was a political move by a pro-democracy activist, ‘Alani Taione, who had nothing to do with the strike but seized the opportunity. The riot was something that the pro-democracy movement presaged because they were the ones fuelling the hatred and discontentment among their supporters. The regular meetings in the villages, gatherings at Pangai Si’i and the nightly Television programs were enough to fuel the fire that burst and destroyed 80 percent of Nuku’alofa. Had the pro-democracy movement called the people to protest and gather at Pangai Si’i on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, the riot would not have happened.

Neibury (1969) argues that riot is a popular form of political tool:

....riots are popular politics in the absence of other means of negotiation, a forceful kind of bargaining that reminded elites of their paternalist duties to the poor and the lowers class to inflict pain if they forgot.  
(Neiburg, in Potegal and Knuston, 1994:261)

Judging from Neiburg’s statement, it could be argued that the 2006 riot was intentionally staged by the pro-democracy movement to get the authorities’ attention. Whether the

destruction of Nuku'alofa was part of the plan is not known. On the other hand the discontentment and frustration among the pro-reformists and their supporters finally reached boiling point and the riot was the consequences. Campbell (2008) suggests that it was a conspiracy:

Suggestions have also been made that the demeanor of part of the crowd, its preparedness for direct action, the insistence of leaders that members of parliament meet in the very vulnerable legislative assembly building, and the contradictory security advice given by the police ("low risk") and the army ("moderate to high risk") point to a conspiracy to take parliament hostage. (Campbell, 2008)

The government's unresponsiveness dragged the strike to the point where they (the government) were held hostage by the strikers. Had they responded and dealt with the grievances of the public servants at the beginning, the problem would be easily solved. In the lead up to the riot, the government should bear some of the blame. The government failed to react to the accusations made on OBN TV instead of ignoring their continuous breaking of broadcasting ethics, not to mention the amount of defamation that was being broadcast. They did not deal with these until it was too late. The government's timing also seemed to be very poor at times. Prior to the Legislative's debate on the NCPR's report, the government came up with their roadmap for political reform and it was different from the NCPR's report. This prompted the pro-democracy movement's members of parliament to present their own roadmap, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November they demanded the Legislative Assembly vote on their proposal. This might seem as if the government was using a delaying tactic, but realistically it was a logical move by the government. The argument here is that the NCPR report was never meant to be a final recommendation to be debated. It was meant to be discussed and to allow

things to move forward from there, and the motion by the government to set up the tri-partite committee was in accordance with report. The government's roadmap, however bad the timing, was a way forward for Tonga because their proposal was similar to that of the NCPR except for the part where the King would still appoint four ministers as mentioned above.

I agree media will continue to be used as the political space by those who seek to exploit it for their own benefit. However the onus will be on the people to either choose to take what is being said or printed as the ultimate truth, or to ignore it. The media on the other hand should present the truth and not what they think is the truth. Whether these messages will have any impact or not on the targeted audience will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE 2008 ELECTION AND THE MEDIA**

Elections have been used in many media effect studies as foci of testing the effects and impact the mass media have on the voters. These include the propaganda theory of direct media effect, the “magic bullet effect” or the “hypodermic needle” of the 1920s, and the “limited effects” of the 1940s. The “limited effects” model suggests that media ordinarily do not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather function among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences. The Chapel Hill study by McCombs and Shaw (1972) suggested in their “agenda setting” theory that mass communication may have little or no direct effect on opinions and attitudes but a significant cumulative effect on *cognition*, especially on the agenda of topics that voters might have opinions about. The classical two-step flow by Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) emphasised the power of primary groups, and informal, interpersonal communication between opinion leaders and groups of people. In the original study the opinion leaders are influenced by the mass media and in turn influence others.

In recent years, both mass communication and personal communication have attracted increased interest as sources of persuasive information which have an influence on individual’s voting decisions. However, few efforts have so far been made to investigate how mass communication and personal communication interact with regard to electoral decisions, thus taking into account culture within a country. Katz and Lazarsfeld’s “filter hypothesis” maintains that personal communication mediates the influence of mass communications on individual voters, reinforcing or blocking the impact of media information, depending on the evaluative implications of that information and on the political composition of voters’ discussant networks (Schmitt-Beck, 2003).

In Tonga prior to contact with the outside world, word of mouth was the main form of communication. History was not written but was told in the form of oral stories from generation to generation until the missionaries and Europeans introduced the written text. The *fanongonongo tokoto*<sup>55</sup> was part of the daily form of communication in Tongan life. Another form of interpersonal communication that should be taken into account is the *tele louniu* or “grapevine.” However with the new technology, it is even faster when means such as telephones, internet and other forms of media help spread the *tele louniu* even faster and further than before. Even though *fanongonongo tokoto* may have vanished, the *tele louniu* is as active as the new technology. When people hear of a rumour or story they ask who or where the story originated from. If they know that person well, and as someone reliable, they believe the story.

Information in elections may not be entirely gossip and rumour but it may involve a two-step flow of interpersonal communication. Katz and Lazarsfeld’s “two step flow” combined with agenda setting theory will be used to analyse the extent of media influence in Tonga during the 2008 Parliamentary election. The reason behind the integration of these theories is that none of the main theories of media effects were designed for small countries such as Tonga with an influential culture. Interpersonal communication can be just as important as the media, taking into account the size of the country, the culture and the stratification of Tongan society, especially *nofo* ‘a *kainga* or communal kinship.

During election campaigns, a majority of candidates prefer to focus on opinion leaders through *faikava*<sup>56</sup> campaigns. Participants in the *faikava* will usually number around

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<sup>55</sup> Villages were small and houses were built close to each other. If the chief needed to hold a town meeting or *fono*, the messenger would call on the nearest house and the person there would call out to the next house relaying the message and the rest would follow.

<sup>56</sup> A *faikava* is when a group of men gather informally to drink kava, which is made from the root of the kava plant (*piper methysticum*). In a *faikava* campaign, candidates travel to villages not so much to drink kava but to try and win support. They may be asked to speak, but often a spokesperson will announce their presence and the

30 to 50 people at most, but those who partake in the *faikava* have their own networks within the society. Some of the participants fit the description of opinion leaders. These opinion leaders are not necessarily people of high status but rather influential peers. This is also associated with the social structure and kinship system in Tonga. Those who take part in some of the *faikava* campaigns are fathers who are heads of the *famili* (nuclear family), *'ulumotu'a* or heads of *kainga*, or even chiefs who are the heads of their communities, and their influence cannot be discounted. Various aspects of the theories mentioned above will be used to support the argument that the media does to some extent have effects on voters along with the influence of other factors.

The analysis also uses a technique similar to that used in the Chapel Hill agenda setting study of 1968 by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which examined the correlation between the media rankings of issues and voters' ranking of these issues. Four of Tonga's weekly newspapers were analyzed during a period of one month, from the day the candidates were announced to a day before the election. The four newspapers, *Taimi 'o Tonga*, *Kalonikali*, *Takali* and *Kele'a* were examined and analyzed for the number of paragraphs given to stories which were categorized according to various issues, including economic, political, social and health. These were then compared with the public agenda which was investigated through a survey of 131 eligible voters. They were asked to rank the issues they considered most important according to what they thought. This was in line with the original agenda setting study in determining the correlation between the public agenda and the media agenda.

The analysis also takes into account the *kainga* or kinship system as described in a study by Giovanni Bennardo and Charles Cappell et al (2008) entitled "Influence Structures

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informal conversation that takes place during the *faikava* is when candidates lay out their plans and the issues they are campaigning for.



in a Tongan Village: ‘Every Villager is not the Same!’ This was conducted in a village in Vava’u, the second largest island in Tonga. The study concluded that the *kainga* system plays an influential role in village life and its daily operation. Although the study was not conducted during an election, the influence of the *kainga* system in this study does shed some light on the influence of the *kainga* members as opinion leaders and intermediaries in the communication process. One of the findings of this study argues that “*Kainga* membership continues to be the most important explanation of voter influence even when income is included in the same model” (Bennardo and Cappell et al 2008: 25).

Parliamentary elections in the Kingdom of Tonga have been seen as the only form of democratic process in the Pacific’s last remaining monarchy. Some including Freedom House have criticized this, suggesting that the process is a mockery and that Tonga is not an electoral democracy. Elections may not change who is in government but the 2008 election was particularly significant because elected members, both nobles and people’s representatives, together with the government will determine the future form of government in Tonga.

Towards the end of the 2005-2008 parliamentary sessions, the Tongan Legislative Assembly agreed for the political reform to take place in 2010. Pro-democracy members who were in parliament opposed the motion insisting the reform should take place in 2008. Ironically political reform had already started in 2005, when two of the people’s representatives and two of the noble’s representatives were elevated and appointed ministers of the crown. Later in the same year, Dr. Fred Sevele, a commoner who was also elected as a people’s representative was appointed to the post of Prime Minister. All these changes took place without even amending let alone reforming the Constitution. However reformists failed to recognize this as reform but instead called for more.

The 2008 election saw 71 candidates vying for the nine people's representative's seats in the Legislative Assembly, the highest number of candidates in history. In the noble's case, all of the 29 title holders were possible candidates. The riot and the destruction of the capital's central business district were seen by many to be a deciding factor when people voted in the election. The destruction and the riot were blamed on the pro-democracy movement. The pro-democracy movement on the other hand blamed the government. Ten pro-democracy movement candidates including seven incumbent members had pending court cases ranging from unlawful assembly and sedition to murder in relation to the riot. Some people were optimistic that the riot would have an effect on the election results, and even the members of the pro-democracy movement themselves had reservations.

The 2008 parliamentary election also saw three parties fielding candidates under their party banners, even though by law candidates are not permitted to register as members of a party but instead as individuals only. The newest party that took part in the election was the PLT or *Paati Langafonua Tu'u'loa*.<sup>57</sup> The other two parties were the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDM) and the People's Democratic Party, a breakaway faction from the original pro-democracy movement.

The election would also be remembered for the government's involvement and censorship of parliamentary campaigns. The Tonga Broadcasting Commission which runs the only AM station that covers the whole of the Kingdom and is one of the only free television stations in the main island is run and owned by the government. Staff of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) were banned from hosting political campaigns or programs on either radio or television (Matangitonga). Instead the chief secretary to the cabinet and other senior members from the government, along with members of the TBC board of

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<sup>57</sup> It literally means Sustainable Nation-Building Party. The party was first established in New Zealand with Sione Fonua, a lawyer by profession, as its president.

directors, was tasked with editing and scrutinizing candidate's election campaigns on both radio and television. The impact of negative campaigning in the election was astonishing because it had a reverse effect.

### **8.1. Background to the 2008 Election:**

Political reform was the last major issue discussed towards the end of the 2005-2007 parliamentary sessions. The year for political reform to take place was the major campaigning issue for all 71 candidates. It was quite ironic because 'Akilisi Pohiva and the pro-democracy candidates who were incumbents were present when the Legislative Assembly passed the motion for the political reform to take place in 2010, yet they campaigned and insisted that the political reform should take place in 2008. They knew very well that this was not possible but they knew that their supporters wanted the reform to take place sooner rather than later. It was no longer an issue of whether political reform would take place as in previous parliamentary campaigns but the issue was when.

The burnt buildings and empty spaces in the central business district of the capital Nuku'alofa, where businesses destroyed during the 2006 riot used to stand, were a constant reminder to the country and voters of what pro-democracy supporters did. The riot was blamed on the pro-democracy movement and it was seen by many as the end of the pro-democracy leader 'Akilisi Pohiva and his movement. The outcome proved everyone, both supporters and critics of the movement alike, wrong after the election as the voters thought otherwise.

The Legislative Assembly also failed to prosecute some of the people's representatives who were accused of contempt of the Legislative Assembly<sup>58</sup>. This was in connection with the riot when some of the pro-democracy members of parliament allegedly

encouraged rioters to storm the parliament building. According to a top government official, the government was awaiting the decision of the Supreme Court as they did not want to be seen as interfering with the judiciary. According to the official, the Legislative Assembly still reserved the right to prosecute the people's representatives who were accused of contempt of parliament. One of the five MPs who were accused lost her seat in the 2008 election.

On the last day of the 2007 session, some people's representatives questioned whether ministers who were appointed by the King, including the Prime Minister, would also stand in the 2008 election. They argued that to their knowledge these ministers were only appointed as ministers until the end of the parliamentary term and would only continue if re-elected. The people's representatives had a point because in an announcement of 10 November 2004 it was stated clearly that the appointed ministers would only continue if re-elected<sup>59</sup>. The Justice Minister of the day, 'Alisi Taumoepeau, argued in the house that the ministers resign as people's representatives before taking the oath as ministers. Under the Tongan Constitution it is only the King who can appoint and dismiss any minister of the crown.<sup>60</sup> This twist silenced the people's representatives but because it was raised on the last day of the parliamentary session, they had no chance of taking it up further. The argument stands because there was no constitutional amendment and the ministers were appointed by the King under the authority granted by the Constitution, and he is the only one who can dismiss the ministers. The 2005-2007 parliamentary sessions left many issues unresolved, especially with the political reform. How the reform will take place and when, was the task for the government and the newly elected members of parliament to decide.

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<sup>58</sup> Radio Tonga news broadcast. See also the Tonga Constitution (<http://legislation.to/cms/legislation/3.html>) about clause.

<sup>59</sup> I.C Campbell, "Progress and Populism in Tongan Politics", *Journal of Pacific History*, volume XLI:1 June 2006

## 8.2. Candidates:

The number of candidates who registered for the 2008 election hit a record high of 71, an increase of 7 from those who registered for the 2005 election<sup>61</sup>. The candidates included 28 for Tongatapu, 22 for Vava'u, nine for Ha'apai, eight for 'Eua, and four from the remote islands of Niuatoputapu and Niuafo'ou. Eight of the 71 candidates were women. The three women candidates for Tongatapu were Mele 'Amanaki, the secretary of the Public Servants Association; 'Akanete Lauti, the former director of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, both under the banner of the pro-democracy movement; and 'Alisi Pone Fotu. The two women candidates for Vava'u were Temaleti Faka'osi and Tongovua Tae Appleton. There was one for 'Eua, Veisia Tupou Tu'i takau Kaho; and two for the two Niua, the incumbent Lepolo Taunisila and businesswoman 'Ofa Simiki both from the pro-democracy movement. Four out of the eight female candidates ran under the pro-democracy banner, Ms. 'Amanaki, Mrs. Lauti, Mrs. Simiki and Mrs. Taunisila. Temaleti Faka'osi ran for the PLT party and the remaining three were independent candidates.

All nine incumbent People's Representatives were standing for re-election and also the former minister of Agriculture, Peauafi Haukinima who was one of the elected people's representatives in the 2005 election. He later resigned in June 2007 over a drinking incident.<sup>62</sup>

The number of candidates who associated themselves with THRDM also increased, most notably in the Tongatapu constituency. Eight candidates registered in Tongatapu which was seen by many, including the movement itself, as too many and could ruin their chance of winning all three seats. 'Akilisi Pohiva the leader of the movement said that having many candidates would give the movement a chance to see where they stood in weighing their

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<sup>60</sup> '2008 election campaigns begin' An English translation from the Talaki newspaper on Matangitonga online, 08 November 2007

<sup>61</sup> Personal interview with the Election Commissioner, Pita Vuki, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008

<sup>62</sup> 'Hon. Peauafi resigned', Matangitonga 01 Jun 2007

chances against other candidates as they prepared for the 2010 election<sup>63</sup>. This was rather ironic as Mr. Pohiva had been publicly campaigning to have the reform in 2008 but was preparing the movement for 2010. This indicated that he knew that 2008 was not realistic but it was what people wanted to hear as they had been pushing for 2008 all along.

The leading contenders for the three seats in the Tongatapu constituency were the incumbent members, ‘Akilisi Pohiva, ‘Isileli Pulu and Clive Edwards. Two other pro-democracy candidates, Sangster Saulala, manager of the now off the air pro-democracy OBN Television, and Semisi Tapueluelu, former prison chief, were not far behind. Also joining the race were newcomers Sione Fonua, a New Zealand based lawyer, and an Australia based Tongan academic named ‘Inoke Hu’akau Fotu. ‘Mr. Hu’akau argued that the proposed political reform “fails and does not fulfill one single requirement of a democratically-structured government.”<sup>64</sup> Instead he supported the idea of setting up local governments and having an elected Privy Council so that the authority and power is not restricted to the hands of a few. Currently the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are also members of the Privy Council with the inclusion of the King and his two governors.

The emergence of these candidates put huge pressure on two incumbent members, Mr Edwards and Mr. Pulu, as Mr. Saulala was seen as a major threat and also Mr. Fonua and Mr. Hu’akau. ‘Akilisi admitted that it was also a danger having too many candidates but they would conduct a survey a month before the election in order to pick their three leading candidates, a move that the movement never executed. This was mainly due to the fear that it might create division within the pro-democracy camp as two of the pro-democracy women candidates had already expressed reservations about Pohiva’s proposal. It was also speculated

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<sup>63</sup> Personal interview with ‘Akilisi Pohiva, 16 March 2008.

<sup>64</sup> ‘No one stops to think that the proposed reform fails democratic principles, says ‘Inoke.’ Matangitonga online, 17 March 2008.

that Mr. Pohiva wanted to endorse Mr. Saulala to whom the movement owed a lot for his television station, and also Mr. Tapueluelu, for personal reasons.

One of the female candidates was the director of the pro-democracy movement, Mrs. ‘Akanete Lauti who resigned from her post to run for parliament. Upon resignation, which was in accordance with the THRDM’s Constitution, ‘Akanete was told that an assessment of her work would be carried out to determine whether she could come back to her job or not should she fail to win a seat. Akanete claimed the move was undemocratic and unfair. The local media also claimed the move was to discourage her from standing in the election. Crying foul over the decision, ‘Akanete told the local media that the movement was doing to her what they did to her predecessor, Lopeti Senituli who is now the Prime Minister’s political adviser<sup>65</sup>. Mr Senituli who also stood as a candidate in the 2005 election was quoted in Matangitonga online as saying “I was kicked out”<sup>66</sup> by the THRDM. He later stood as a moderate candidate during the election. As the movement’s most vocal spokesperson, Mr Senituli also disagreed with how the movement was being run. However the THRDM claimed that it was normal procedure to review her performance.

In the Niua constituency two pro-democracy movement women candidates including the incumbent Lepolo Taunisila were among the four candidates fighting for the one seat. They were also up against Peauafi Haukinima who was elevated after the 2005 election to a cabinet post. He later resigned in 2007 after a drinking incident when he was arrested and taken to the police station<sup>67</sup>. The fourth candidate was an unknown primary school teacher Sione ‘Iloa.

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<sup>65</sup> ‘Akanete protests against FIHRDM decision, Matangitonga online, 25 March 2008.

<sup>66</sup> Lopeti Senituli resigned from Tonga’s democracy movement, Matangitonga online, 2 March 2004

<sup>67</sup> Hon. Peauafi resigned’, Matangitonga 01 Jun 2007

The election for the nobles was different from that for the people's representatives. There are 33 noble titles but currently there are only 29 nobles who hold them. In some cases one noble can hold more than one title. An example is the present Crown Prince Tupouto'a Lavaka. He holds the title of Tupouto'a, which has estates in Ha'apai, and also Lavaka which also has estates in Tongatapu. Theoretically all title holders are possible candidates come elections day. Former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Veikune was stripped off his title when he was found guilty of bribing a customs officer in 2006. The King had yet to bestow the title on anyone before the election. There were also the two vacant titles: in the case of Ma'atu, the King's brother had passed away and the heir was still under the legal age, and so was the heir to the title 'Ahome'e. All in all there were 29 nobles who were eligible to vote and 28 were eligible to be candidates, excluding the King who holds right to the title of Tungi which was bestowed on his nephew later in 2008.

The calibre of candidates were also high, ranging from lawyers, political analysts, to school teachers and academics, and one candidate had a PhD.

### **8.3. Election Issues:**

When the Legislative assembly voted in favor of political reform to take place in 2010 at the end of the 2005-2007 sessions, political reform became the top election issue. Candidates were unequivocal in their campaigns, making political reform their central and most important issue.

Candidates were singing similar tunes proposing different versions of political reform, the main election issue. Almost every candidate using both radio and television highlighted political reform as their campaign platform. The pro-democracy candidates were pushing for reform to take place in 2008 along with all the necessary constitutional changes, and the election to be held in 2010. At the other end of the spectrum, conservative candidates were



proposing that the reform take place in 2010. Then in the middle there were the few independent candidates, and they campaigned to bring together the best elements of both democracy and the monarchical system to form a system that was best for Tonga.

The economy was another issue, with increasing inflation, and the hike in the price of oil came up in some of the candidates' televised campaign programs. In February 2008 the price of electricity increased by from 20.7% to 23%<sup>68</sup>, and candidates jumped at the chance of making it an issue to get elected. This was an election campaign issue in 2005 when former Police Minister Clive Edwards, running for the Tongatapu constituency, took Shoreline to court over the legality of the sale of the distribution and generation of electricity.

Education was also mentioned by some candidates, suggesting it as one of the answers to Tonga's economic problems. They suggested that the government should continue to develop and expand both academic and vocational studies so that students could find jobs, not only in Tonga but also working overseas to help the country's ailing economy<sup>69</sup> in the form of remittances.

#### **8.4. Pre-Election Politics.**

In the last ten years of parliamentary elections, not a single year has gone without any political drama prior to the election day. The 2008 election was no different. One of the most notable, mirroring the 2005 pre-election politics, was the split within the popular pro-democracy movement or THRDM. In the lead up to the 2005 election, Lopeti Senituli, the then director of the THRDM, left on bad terms between him and the movement. He stood for election but not as a THRDM candidate. In 2008 Mr. Senituli's successor Mrs. 'Akanete Lauti resigned under similar circumstances, citing unfair treatment and bullying by the THRDM, as mentioned above.

The THRDM also announced in the media that a month prior to the election they would hold a survey to determine their candidates because eight candidates running for three seats were just too many. This did not go down well within the movement. In a change from previous practice, Pohiva was refusing to name his running candidates as it would have created divisions within the movement. Speculation among pro-democracy candidates was that Clive Edwards has fallen out of favour with Pohiva and so had 'Isileli Pulu, the other incumbent. Instead, Sangster Saulala and Semisi Tapueluelu were the two candidates he favoured. The speculation was also fuelled by a publication by one of the local papers of an advertisement for Mr. Saulala, stating that Mr. Pohiva had in a way endorsed his candidacy. This was also aired on a television campaign program by Mr. Saulala himself on the government's Television Tonga.

It was a game of cat and mouse in the pro-democracy camp as Mr. Pohiva tried to maintain the leadership and keep the movement from breaking up. In his *Kele'a* newspaper, one page showed 'Akilisi endorsing Mr. Saulala, while letters to the editor accused Saulala of dirty politics. 'Akilisi on the other hand was always seen with Mr. Pulu and Clive Edwards meeting with people in villages. When asked who he wanted to join him in parliament he replied by saying he wanted Pulu and Edwards.

The Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Fineasi Funaki, also made headlines when a report by the CEO of the Ministry of Tourism to Cabinet accusing him of corruption and misappropriation of funds was leaked to the media. The minister was alleged to have deposited a cheque for 3000 pa'anga (about USD \$1470) which was donated by the Chinese Embassy for a tourism ministerial meeting, but instead of depositing it in the ministry's account he deposited it his personal account. Pro-democracy leaders called for his resignation

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<sup>68</sup> Tonga's electricity price hike, 20-23% tonight, Matangitonga online, 15 February 2008.

<sup>69</sup> The Television Tonga broadcast also can be found on [www.tonga-broadcasting.com](http://www.tonga-broadcasting.com) website.

but the matter was referred to the auditor general for investigation. The outcome of the investigation was sent to cabinet and the final decision was discussed between the Prime Minister and the King. The outcome was controversial as the minister was spared from being forced to resign and was instead punished by having to work without pay for three months. This created uproar in the media, except for the government owned media, as it was clear that the minister had broken the law. In another twist, the CEO was being investigated, along with four other senior officials at the Ministry of Tourism. The pro-democracy newspaper *Kele'a* speculated that the tourism minister was a very close ally of the Prime Minister.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper was once a supporter of the pro-democracy movement but now campaigned viciously against the movement. It ran a story of a generous donation made by the pro-democracy movement candidates to one of the fundraising *Kalapu Kava Tonga*<sup>70</sup> in the eastern district of Tongatapu. The newspaper reported that the MC on the night announced that a donation of 3000 pa'anga (about US\$1500) was made by incumbent Tongatapu representatives, namely 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Isileli Pulu and Clive Edwards. The *Kele'a* in their next issue denied the report, saying the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper fabricated the story. It later emerged that the money did not come from the representatives' own pockets, but from funds that were apportioned by the Legislative Assembly to each constituency<sup>71</sup>. The PLT party complained to the attorney generals' office alleging vote buying by the pro-democracy candidates. It is important to note the incident occurred before the registration dates for candidates which was the 14th of February.

The forced resignation of the Finance minister also signalled the power of the Prime Minister and just how willing the King was ready to give up his authority. There had been speculation for some time that the Prime Minister Dr. Fred Sevele and the Finance Minister,

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<sup>70</sup> Tongan kava club fund raising.

the Hon. Siosiu 'Utoikamanu, did not see things the same way. It started with a rumour that the 2007-2008 budget statement which was prepared by the minister was altered by the Prime Minister's economic adviser, Mr. Rob Solomons. The minister was also responsible for the country's economic reform program which he started in 2002, and he was instrumental in arranging a loan from the Chinese government to finance the reconstruction of the capital which was destroyed during the riot of 2006. The minister of information, the Hon. Afu'alo Matoto, later confirmed in an interview on Radio Tonga that the Prime Minister had forced the finance minister to resign amid disagreement on some issues.

### **8.5. The Election Campaign:**

Electioneering in Tonga is nothing like the American primaries campaigns or local government elections in developed countries. With a population of just over 100,000 and only five constituencies, parliamentary campaigning relies heavily mostly on two forms.

The first is the traditional *faikava* campaign which is usually held at night time in villages or church halls among others. This form of campaigning relies heavily on interpersonal communication and the opinion leaders. The effectiveness of this form of campaigning has not been tested or measured but results of previous elections and its continued practice suggest the effectiveness of the *faikava* campaign. Candidates visit villages within their constituencies to talk and try to persuade people to vote for them. This is mostly done by male candidates but not female candidates as *faikava* has been traditionally reserved for men, apart from the *tou'a*<sup>72</sup> who serves the kava. On some occasions, candidates offer gifts in the form of cigarettes and money. This is confusing as some in the democratic and developed countries would call this as vote buying or corruption. In Tongan culture this

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<sup>71</sup> 'Campaigning PRs reported giving money to kava club' Taimi 'o Tonga , 11 February 2008 as translated on the Matangitong online , 21 February 2008.

<sup>72</sup> An unmarried female who sits in front of the Kava bowl and serves the kava to the men.

is simply seen as presenting gifts but not vote buying. In some cases, candidates are invited to a *kalapu*<sup>73</sup> where they will give a campaign speech and are expected to donate money. Communities especially kava clubs, use the election campaign as an opportunity to extract money from the candidates. Vili Vailea of Leimatu'a attributed the downfall of his cousin Viliami Latu among the Vava'u electorate to his lack of *faikava* campaigning in the villages. According to Vailea, Viliami concentrated on the larger villages, neglecting the islands and smaller rural villages. Viliami lost out by 50 votes. Culture is the central point of the *faikava* campaign. When candidates travel in person to the villages, they are seen as people who show *toka'i* or respect and *faka'apa'apa* to the village elders and the people.

This form of campaigning may be old and does not have the exposure that the media have, but its effectiveness cannot be disregarded. The *faikava* can be linked to the effects of the two step flow where the main assumption is the ability of opinion leaders to influence others. The idea behind the *faikava* is that the people who are present will spread the message and try to influence others to vote for the candidate. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948: xiii) in their pioneering study *People's Choice* suggested that face-to-face contacts turned out to be the most important influences stimulating opinion change.

In a Tongan society context, *nofo 'a kainga*, or living in small villages where a chief is the head of the village, is the most important structural feature. In part of their findings on the influence of the *kainga* on voting Bernado and Cappell et al (2008) found that:

The analysis of out-closeness as a measure of the global Administrative Influence revealed the same pattern found in Voting Influence: namely the *kainga* is the characteristic of villagers with the greatest explanatory power .It

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<sup>73</sup> Kava club is usually for fund raising.

is likely that this effect is due to kainga size, as that effect is even more significant. (Bernado and Cappell et al 2008: 30)

The above mentioned study's results support the importance of the *faikava* campaign and the significance of interpersonal communications, and also the role that opinion leaders play as suggested by the two step flow theory.

The other form of campaigning using the media may be new in Tonga but in developed countries can now be referred to as traditional. Television continues to be the main medium used by the majority of the candidates. Television can only be received in the main island of Tongatapu and nearby 'Eua but due to inter-island migration a large portion of the population from the outer islands reside in Tongatapu. Radio on the other hand is still used for campaigning throughout Tonga, but is not as popular as television.

Newspapers were used but were insignificant apart from the pro-democracy newspaper *Kele'a* which devoted all its space leading up to the election to the pro-democracy candidates. For weeks leading up to the election, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* owner and publisher, Kalafi Moala, ran various negative campaigns on radio, television and in his own newspaper against the pro-democracy movement and their candidates. The newspaper in the past was very successful in campaigning for the pro-democracy movement but changed its stance after the riot, turning against the movement. On every radio phone in show on the private station Radio Nuku'alofa, Mr. Moala would remind the audience of the horror of 16/11 and the riot, pointing the finger at the pro-democracy movement. His bi-weekly paper, the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, put on its cover page blown-up pictures of candidates that it indirectly endorsed.

On the island of Vava'u, pro-democracy candidates complained that they were not allowed to broadcast their campaigns by the only FM station in the island. According to the station manager, it has been the station's policy not to allow pro-democracy candidates to use

the radio (*Taimi 'o Tonga*, 2008). The station is owned by a personal friend and former business associate of King George Tupou V.

With the introduction of the new technology, one candidate advertised on one of the most popular websites, the Matangitonga online. The website amazingly has around 400,000 hits from Tonga alone per month and over a million worldwide per month. Only one candidate used the internet in his campaign, former MP Mr. 'Etuete Lavulavu. Election to parliament cannot be interpreted as a successful use of the internet because in his constituency of Vava'u only about 2% of the population can access the internet. However, Vava'u people in the main island of Tongatapu also have access.

## **8.6. The Election Process**

Vote rigging and tampering with ballot papers have never been issues in Tongan parliamentary elections, though some minor discrepancies were found by an independent team of observers during the 2008 election. Tonga has five constituencies. Of the people's representatives, Tongatapu the main island elects three members, Ha'apai and Vava'u elect two each, with 'Eua and the two Niuas (Niufo'ou and Niuatoputapu) one each.<sup>74</sup> People can vote if they are 21 years of age and have registered, and they can vote for the constituencies they are registered for wherever they are in Tonga. Polling stations are spread across the whole of Tonga and in 2010 more stations will be used in order to attract more voters especially in the outer islands and remote villages.

Election officials in some areas also include the town officer, tally recorders and enumerators, and are watched over by a police officer. This ensures that there will be no tampering with the votes. Voting closes at 4pm and votes are counted in the polling stations then relayed to the electoral office at the Prime Minister's office where the results are

broadcast live on Radio Tonga. The ballot boxes are locked and returned to the electoral office.

The noble's election on the other hand is different. Because there are only 33 N

noble titles, candidates are not required by law to register. All of the 33 nobles are likely candidates. The constituency boundaries are the same but nobles holding estates can stand or vote in any constituency in which they have estates, and most of them have estates in more than one constituency. It has been a practice for nobles to decide beforehand who to elect before casting their votes. In one constituency there were only two title holders and because they could not vote for themselves, the result is always a draw and the winner has to be decided by tossing a coin.

From the beginning there were to be an equal number of noble representatives (NRs) and people's representatives (PRs) (Constitution, 64). At first, this meant that all twenty nobles and an equal number of PRs would meet with the King and his ministers who numbered only about six. By 1914, the number of nobles had increased to 32. The number of PRs, who were mostly chiefly people and their descendants, was also 32. There were relatively few ministers: six or eight. But the total number of men called to each parliamentary session in the capital, Nuku'alofa in the main southern island, had now risen to about 70 people. In the 1915 parliament, the number of NRs and PRs decreased to 7 each, and this remained the case until the 1980's when the number was increased to 9 each.

The 2008 election also marked another milestone when the number of voters registering to vote reached about 67,000,<sup>75</sup> an increase from 65,555 in 2005<sup>76</sup>. This figure was however unreliable and the true number of registered voters is not known up to this day. The

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<sup>74</sup> See map of Tonga.

<sup>75</sup> 67,000 Tongans registered to vote on April 24, Matangitonga online 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008



Chief Electoral officer Pita Vuki (Interview 2008) admitted that the current electoral roll includes names of people who are already dead and people who have migrated. He said it was difficult to know who in the list has passed away and those who have migrated as they are not notified. The dead voters can only be known when relatives register them as deceased especially when dealing their assets or land, but not all deaths are registered in the government's registry office.

The government also invited two experts on elections from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand and the Australia National University to observe the election process. The two experts were joined by Mr. 'Aminiasi from the Crown Law Office. They submitted a report and recommendations regarding the election process. One of the weaknesses of the current system according to the report was the electoral roll. There were also minor discrepancies and errors such as voters turning up to vote but finding their names were not on the roll. Others included fatigue among officials, meaning that mistakes could be made. Officials worked from the opening of voting to the end. The same people counted the ballots and this was often double checked.

### **8.7. Media Coverage**

The pre-election period saw government efforts to control election coverage on radio and television by the Tongan Broadcasting Commission (TBC). The government owned TBC was the most widely used medium for campaigning as it broadcasts daily, compared with the newspapers published weekly, and covers a large part of the Kingdom (see Figure.2). However during the campaign period, both avoided running any stories on the election campaigns. A reporter for Television Tonga who attended one of the press conferences held by one of the candidates was told by a senior staff member not to run the story on the press

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<sup>76</sup> I.C Campbell, Progress and Populism in Tongan Politics, *Journal of the Pacific History*, volume XLI: 1, June

conference as it was seen as supporting the candidate (Personal Communication, 2008). Whether this was a directive from the government or the management of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission, it was seen as both unethical and suppressing media freedom.

The government's decision to get involved in vetting and editing of political campaigning proved a turning point in the media coverage. The editing team included the Chief Secretary to the Cabinet, a senior government official, members of the TBC Board of directors, and senior staff from both Radio and Television Tonga. Whatever the reason for establishing the committee, it was interpreted and seen by most as government interference and trying to control election coverage. The pro-democracy movement saw this as a deliberate attempt by government to crush the movement and discredit their candidates.

The TBC general manager told foreign media that the committee's work was essential as her staff lacked experience in hosting and vetting political campaigning. She was talking about staff members who had been with TBC for over 20 years and had academic qualifications, and it could be argued that her defence was a cover up for the government. Pro-democracy leader, 'Akilisi Pohiva also accused the government owned Tonga Broadcasting Commission of restricting candidates' radio and television campaigns (Radio New Zealand International, 07 April 2008)

The independent media, on the other hand, in addition to advertisements, ran stories on the election campaigns and political issues in their weekly publications. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, a former advocate and supporter of the pro-democracy movement, ran a negative campaign against the movement and their candidates. The owner of the paper, Mr. Kalafi Moala, also ran four hours of programs on Television Tonga and also on one of the

FM stations, 88.8 FM. Many of the programs run on both radio and television were against the pro-democracy movement.

The *Takaki* newspaper on the other hand was seen as more independent as it devoted much of its coverage of the campaigns to developments and issues leading up to the election. The pro-democracy newspaper '*Kele'a*', however, devoted much of its editions for four weeks prior to the election to attacking the government and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, but at the same time promoting pro-democracy candidates. Because the paper is owned by the leader of the pro-democracy movement, it did not endorse any candidate until the last edition before the election. Four websites provided daily coverage of developments and election issues namely, Matangitonga online, Tongareview online, tonga-broadcasting.com and planet-tonga.com. Other international news websites including Radio New Zealand International, Radio Australia and Pacific Magazine were also covering the election.

The media coverage of the election was therefore free except for the government owned Tonga Broadcasting Commission which was controlled by government. The rest of the independent media had a wider range of coverage of election issues and political campaigning, whether negative or positive. Interestingly none of the media outlets directly endorsed any of the candidates. However it could be interpreted that a candidate's frequent appearance on a certain medium will mean that they are being supported by that medium. For example, the *Kele'a* newspaper featured 'Akilisi Pohiva more frequently than other candidates in news articles and editorials apart from the advertisements. The *Taimi 'o Tonga* featured independent candidates and the PLT members while Radio and Television Tonga on the other hand were told not to run any political news, including coverage of any candidates.

Candidates made use of any available medium to get the messages through. Out of the 71 candidates, only 23 candidates did not use Radio and Television Tonga for their political

campaigns (TBC, 2008, see also Appendix). Radio and Television Tonga only allowed candidates to run advertisements and campaign programs but it did not allow any news coverage of candidates or events that related to any of the candidates. Television has certainly overtaken the traditional media in terms of popularity with candidates. Television according to one of the candidates takes you into the living room of each family, something you would not be able to do in a *faikava* campaign or rally. It was also noted that candidates who used television also used radio. The reason was quite obvious: it was only Radio Tonga that could reach the whole of the Kingdom. On the other hand, Television Tonga was the only free television station that covers the main island of Tongatapu and nearby 'Eua. The pro-democracy OBN TV was still off the air without a license and their building was still occupied by the Tonga Defence Services.

### **8.8. Findings**

The candidates during the campaigning period utilized the mass media to convey their messages and to try and win votes. At the same time most of the candidates also used the traditional face-to-face campaigning through town meetings and the *faikava*. Because of internal migration, a large number of voters from other constituencies were residing in the Tongatapu constituency, where the majority of the candidates from the other islands also reside. Of the 71 candidates, more than 20 did not use radio, television, or newspapers for their campaign. Television again was the most widely-used medium during the election with a total of 97 hours or 5,830 minutes used by candidates during their campaigns, as shown in Table.1. The average mean of 82 minutes suggests that candidates preferred television to other media, with their usage ranging from zero to a maximum of 420 minutes. It is important to note that Television Tonga opens for only six hours every day with only about two to three hours a day allocated for election campaigns six days a week. There were 85 hours of radio campaigning or 5,090 minutes with ranges similar to those for television. Advertisements and

articles on candidates during the election period totalled 5,512 paragraphs, ranging from zero to 770 paragraphs.

### **Descriptive Statistics for the Time and Space (paragraphs) used by Candidates in the media.**

Table.1

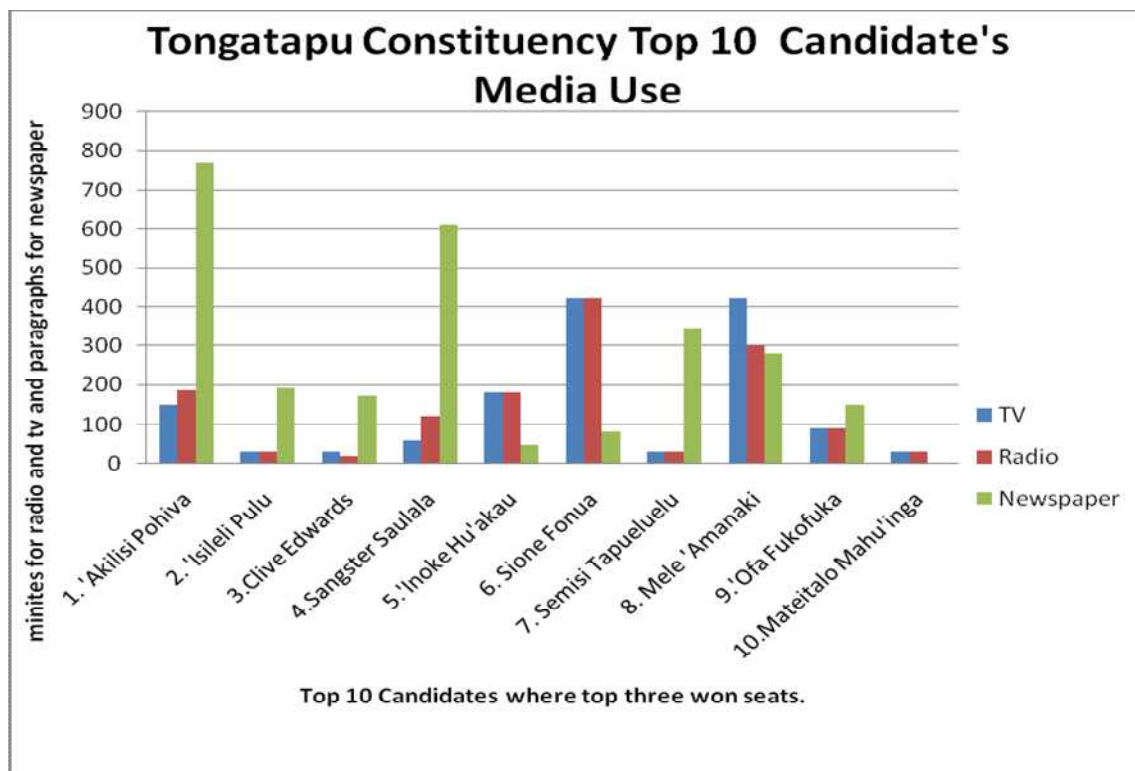
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Total time and space of media use</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<i>Television</i>	5830 minutes	82 mins.	104.18	0.	420mins.
<i>Radio</i>	5090 minutes	72 mins.	95.64	0	420mins.
<i>Newspaper</i>	5512 paragraphs	78 paragraphs.	149.69 paragraphs	0	770 paragraphs

[Sources: *Figures from Tonga Broadcasting Commission (Radio and Television Tonga), Author's content analysis of newspapers*]

Due to the difficulties faced by some of the candidates with transportation, especially from the outer island constituencies, the media were vital to their campaign. For example, the Ha'apai group's population is spread over more than 10 small islands. However one of the candidates who won one of the two seats for the islands managed to travel to almost all of the small islands by boat, meeting face-to-face with the people. Figure.1.1 shows the top ten candidates out of the total 28 who competed in the main island of Tongatapu and how they used the media. 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Isileli Pulu and Clive Edwards won the three seats allocated to the Tongatapu Constituency. The graph clearly shows that media exposure had little apparent effect on the voter's choices. Mr. Pohiva was the candidate who used the newspaper the most, which is quite understandable because he and his family own the *Kelea* newspaper.

It is also interesting because Pulu and Edwards are members of the pro-democracy movement, but they were not given the same or even half of the space given to Mr. Pohiva. The graphs also present a picture of what went on in the pro-democracy movement camp, because they fielded eight candidates for the three Tongatapu seats and six featured in the top ten. Other candidates had more media exposure than the winners, yet they fail to win a seat.

**Figure 1**



Another question that is raised here was how Pulu and Edwards managed to win their seats with minimal media exposure. This supports the argument that there were other factors contributing to a candidate's success and not just the media exposure. There could be a number of answers, so other possible explanatory variables, including gender (code, male=1, female=0) party affiliation (code, affiliation=2, no affiliation=1), and use of radio, TV and

newspapers were added to test their correlation with the dependent variable of success which was actually winning as seat.

**Table 2: Correlation between successes against other explanatory variables for the whole Sample as well as for the three Major Constituencies.**

Variables.	Whole Sample		Tongatapu Constituency		Vava'u Constituency		Ha'apai Constituency	
	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.
Television	0.191	0.122	0.443	0.030**	0.033	0.896	0.045	0.933
Radio	-0.237	0.054*	-0.464	0.023**	-0.058	0.820	-0.033	0.951
Party Affiliation	-0.325	0.007***	0.248	0.243	-0.048	0.851	0.390	0.445
Gender	0.044	0.722	0.256	0.227	0.045	0.859		
Newspaper	0.324	0.008***	0.488	0.019**	0.546	0.019**	-0.288	0.580
Number of observations	71		28		22		9	

\* Significant at 10% level, \*\* Significant at 5% level, and \*\*\* Significant at 1% level.

Table 2 shows the relationship between candidates' use of the media and their chances of being successful in winning a seat in the election. Looking at the television use, it was only the Tongatapu constituency that showed a positive correlation significant at the 5% level between candidate's use of TV and winning a seat. If we look at table 1 it shows that television was the medium that all candidates used. However in Tongatapu's case and in recent elections, television has overtaken other media when it comes to a parliamentary candidate's media preference. According to Pohiva (personal communication, 2008) television takes the candidate into the voter's living rooms. Radio is just a voice and newspapers provide only the text and a photograph and that is all. The appeal of television is that voters actually see the person and hear what they have to say. Tongatapu was the only island that had television apart from the newly established station in Vava'u. With radio, the results came as a surprise. For all of the three major constituencies and the whole sample, the relationship between use of radio and success was negative, significant at the 10% level in the whole sample and at the 5% level in the Tongatapu constituency. Radio is the only medium that covers the whole of the Tonga group and it is the only station that provides daily news coverage, but it is also closely associated with the government, as mentioned below.

Party affiliation was negatively correlated with the success for the whole sample and this was significant at the 1% level. This shows that being a member of any of the three parties that ran in the election generally militated against a candidate being elected. However looking at the Tongatapu constituency, the relationship was at least positive, even if not significant; suggesting that party affiliation there may have been more beneficial. It is also important to note that the top three candidates who won their seats were affiliated to a party but a majority of the candidate's stood as independent candidates. This was also the same with the Vava'u and Ha'apai constituencies.



Gender was not significant because there were only eight female candidates. Finally, there was a positive correlation between success and candidates using newspapers for their campaign, though this was only significant at the 10% level.

### **Model Specification and Regression Results**

The model for factors contributing to the success of candidates can be specified as follows:

$$s/f = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{TV}) + \beta_2 (\text{radio}) + \beta_3 (\text{newspaper}) + \beta_4 (\text{gender}) + \beta_5 (\text{party affiliation}) + u$$

Where *s/f* refers the success and failure of candidates; TV, radio, newspapers, gender and party affiliation are considered the main explanatory variables for the success or failure of candidate; and finally *u* refers the error term in the regression equation. Accordingly, the findings of the regression analysis have been presented in Table 3.1 below.

It is clear that candidates' use of television was a contributing factor to the candidates' success. In the overall sample, it was significant at the 10 % level where as in Tongatapu it was significant at the 5% level. Television was the medium that voters used when they seek information about a candidate or election issues as shown in Figure.2.1

At the same time, the use of radio was the opposite: it was negative and significant at the 5% level. Radio Tonga was seen by many people as the government's mouthpiece and it was unpopular with some of the voters. Not only that but during the campaign, the Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC), which runs both Radio Tonga and Television Tonga, censored all the news of the election campaigns. Government officials were also included in the censoring committee, which did not include any of the TBC's media trained personnel (Matangitonga, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2008). Schiller (1973: 79-80) argue that "the less the medium is trusted and the less it is believed, the less its influence". This could be true in the case of

Radio Tonga, but the candidates spoke for themselves during their radio campaigns. On the other hand the Prime Minister's office and the Ministry of Information were running programs during the election which were seen by people as against the pro-democracy movement and a negative campaign against the movement's candidates. A higher percentage of the candidates who did not win a seat used radio, compared to those that won.

**Table 3. Regression Analysis: Factors determining a candidate's success.**

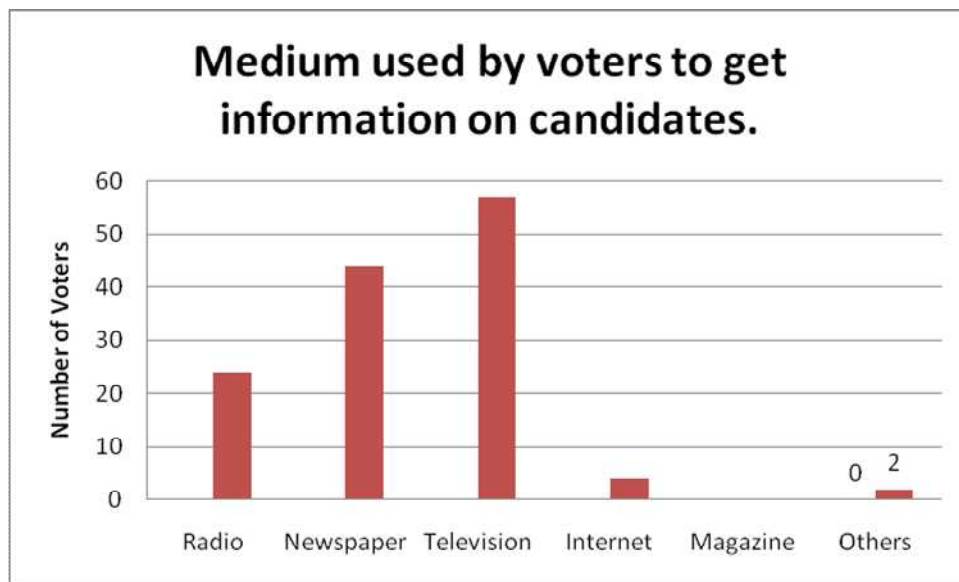
Variables.	Whole Sample	Tongatapu Constituency	Vava'u Constituency	Ha'apai Constituency
Television	0.001* (0.0006)	0.002** (0.007)	0.0003 (0.0009)	0.0005(coefficient) (0.003) (standard error)
Radio	-0.002** (0.0006)	-0.002*** ( 0.0006)	-0.0007 (0.0010)	-0.0004 (0.004)
Party Affiliation	-0.225** (0.103)	.132 (0.129)	-0.029 (0.0868)	0.346 (0.381)
Gender	0.0427 (0.132)	.197 (0.146)	0.0428 (0.0507)	dropped
Newspaper	0.001** (0.0003)	.0007* (0.0004)	0.0014* (0.0002)	-0.006 (0.008)
Constants.	0.428 (0.254)	-0.225 (0.142)	-0.012 (0.119)	0.191 (0.310)
Number of Observations	71	28	22	9

\* Significant at 10% level, \*\* Significant at 5% level, and \*\*\* Significant at 1% level.

Party affiliation was negative, significant at the 5% level. The majority of the candidates stood as independents. However, six out of the nine people's representative's who won their seats did have party affiliation. Candidates affiliated to the three parties had to stand as individuals, even though they identified with a party so at the end of the day it was a case of individual fights. In Tongatapu, the relationship between party affiliation and success in the election was positive but not significant, which suggests that a candidate's affiliation to a party may have increased his chance of winning a seat. In Vava'u, the relationship was negative because the island has been traditionally conservative and supported the monarch. None of the three parties that competed in the election would claim to have strong support in the island. Both candidates that won the Vava'u seats stood as independent candidates which could explain the negative regression. Ha'apai like Tongatapu was positive; both winners were affiliated members of parties.

Newspapers proved to be one of the contributing factors to a candidate's chance of a seat for the whole sample at the 5% significance level and for Vava'u and Tongatapu constituencies at the 10% significance level. A reason could be that although newspapers in Tonga are only published once a week, the public spend more time going through the newspapers than other media. They can always go back and refer to the newspaper on particular issues or stories. Radio and Television news only comes once, and if people miss that news bulletin, then they miss out totally on the news. This is one of the advantages of newspapers, even though they are considered old fashioned: people can still keep newspapers for future reference. In the Ha'apai group, the relationship between newspapers and success was not significant because the islands and the population are scattered and it is very difficult to distribute newspapers to these islands.

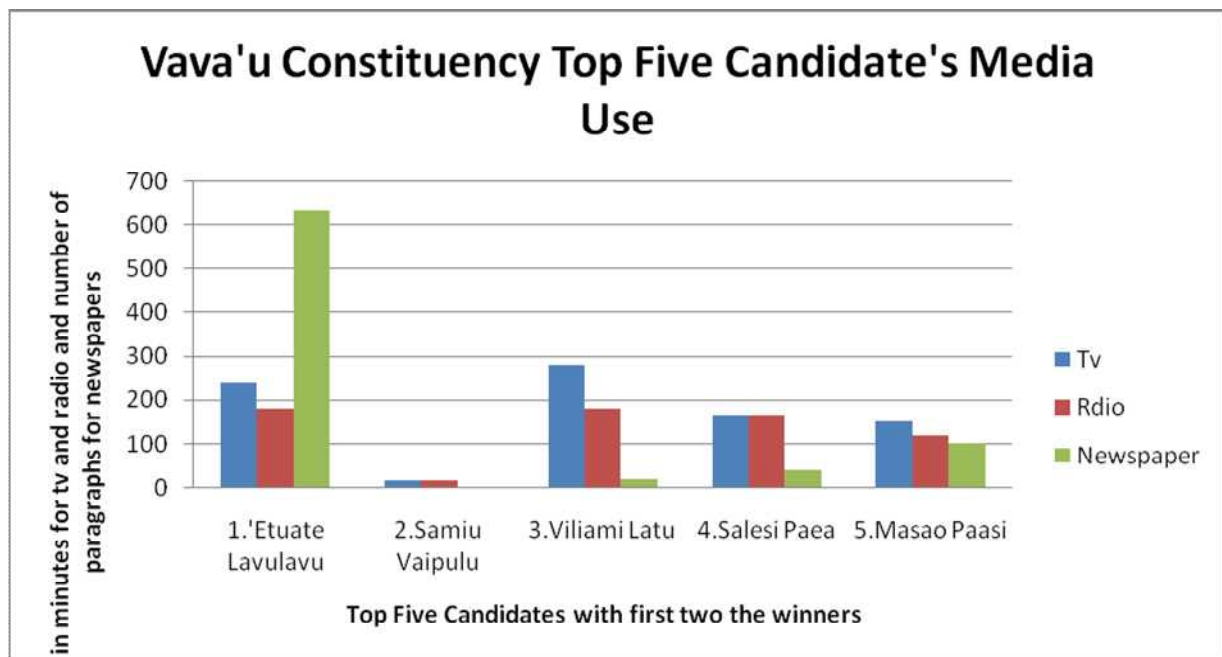
**Figure 2.**



If we look at Figure 3 and compare it to the figures for the Tongatapu constituency in Figure 1, a similar trend is shown. The media exposure is not strong enough to suggest that the candidates' success was due to the amount of time they were using the media for their campaigns. Vava'u which is the second largest island in the Tonga group has a large portion of its population residing in Tongatapu. Candidates on the island used television for their campaigns for the first time when the government's Tonga Broadcasting Commission set up a branch in the island. Candidates used both the television stations in Vava'u and the main island Tongatapu to persuade voters to vote for them. The second candidate, Mr. Samiu Vaipulu, who won the second allocated seat, used the media less than the others. In an interview, he told me he travelled to most of the villages using the *faikava* campaigning method. He felt that voters would feel obligated to vote for him if he met them in person. The difference between Mr. Vaipulu and Viliami Latu who came third was only 59 votes. Viliami Latu won the majority of the Vava'u votes in Tongatapu but failed to gather enough votes in Vava'u itself. Vili Vailea also of Leimatu'a where Viliami originally comes from suggested

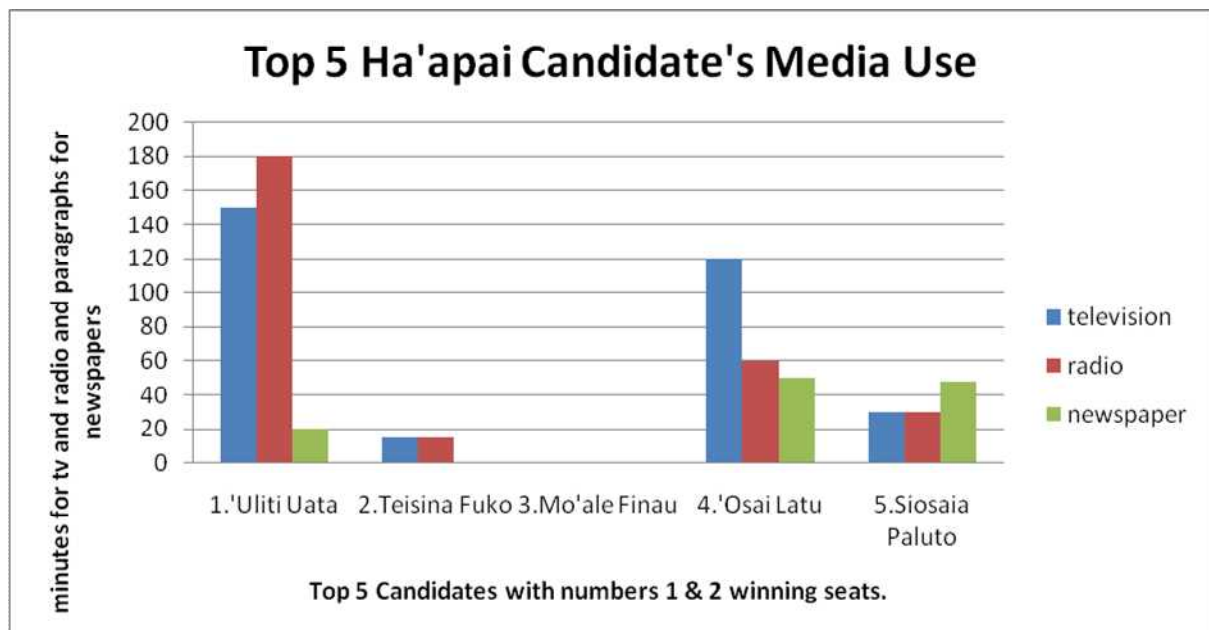
that Viliami did not visit enough village *faikava* in order to meet, as he said, “influential people” of the villages. This suggests that these people could be opinion leaders.

**Figure.3.**



The Ha'apai constituency shown in Figure 4 again showed a similar trend to the Vava'u constituency. The runner up, Mr. Teisina Fuko used the media to a minimal extent, yet he still won a seat. The runner up did not use the media at all yet he was very close to winning a seat. The Ha'apai candidates also relied on the Ha'apai voters who resided in the main island of Tongatapu. It is estimated that half of the registered voters for the Ha'apai group reside in Tongatapu. An in-depth interview was conducted with Mr. Fuko to find out the method he used for his campaign and how the media were used. Mr. Uata who won the number one seat was one of the five former people's representatives who were charged with sedition among other things in connection with the 2006 riot. Because of this, his high level of media use could be interpreted as an attempt to secure his seat because of a fear that being accused of sedition and causing the riot would harm his chances.

**Figure.4.**



Mr. Fuko on the other hand did not rely on the media but instead chose to meet the people himself. The Ha'apai voters are scattered in more than 10 small islands. He made sure to visit every island and attended the village *faikava*. During the *faiakava* he would look for the most influential people present and tried to convince them to agree with the issues that he was standing for and try to get their vote. Fuko said these people were then expected to convince others to vote for him when he left that island. The people that Fuko tried to convince included people who regularly attended *faikava*, be it daily or weekly. The priest or *faifekau* is an influential person in small island life. Teachers are also influential people because in almost every inhabited island has a school and the people of that island look to these teachers as people with knowledge. The people that Fuko was trying to convince fall into Lazarsfeld's category of opinion leaders. Fuko knew that from what he observed that these influential people that he was trying to win over had some knowledge of what was said in the media and what other candidate's had said and their support for him was vital in his quest for a parliamentary seat. Newspapers take almost a week to reach the small islands of Ha'apai and radio was the only source of information available, but not to all. The people who partake in

the *faikava* were also influential in their own right. These people included *tamai* or fathers who head the *famili* or family, *'ulumotu'a* who head the *kainga* or extended family, and the *'eiki* or chief of the village or island. When a candidate, like Fuko in this case, personally visits the village and partakes in the *faikava*, he is showing his *toka'i* or respect towards the voters and in return the gathering returns the favour in *feveitokai'aki*, i.e. showing appreciation by respecting him and pledging their support for him. The *faikava* were not the only group meetings that Fuko attended. He also participated in church meetings, town meeting and even Parents' and Teachers' Association meetings making his voice heard. Fuko was not the only candidate using the *faikava* campaigning method. Almost all of the male candidates did so, because *faikavas* are for males only except for the *tou'a*. On the final day of campaigning, Mr. Fuko made a 15 minute radio and television broadcast where he thanked the Ha'apai people. He named all of the chiefs and influential people in all of the islands he visited, community leaders among others. His message was simple, thanking them and asking them to remember him come Election Day.

After looking at the correlation between media exposure and candidate's media use and other variables, the study examined the relationship between the media's agenda setting role and its influence on the public agenda. The media's agenda setting role was also tested to look at the correlation between the media's agenda and what people thought were important issues during the campaigning period. The voters were not asked about the candidates' issues but only what they thought were the most important issues at the time. This was the same approach taken by McCombs and Shaw in their Chapel Hill study of 1968. These issues were ranked according to the voters' preferences, with 1 the most important and 5 the least. These issues were politics and political reform, economics, social, education and courts. After gathering the data, the issues were cut down to four issues only by combining the courts and education as "others" due to the small size of the data.

Table .4.2 shows the issues and the number of stories each of the four weekly newspapers covered during the campaigning period and also how the 131 voters ranked these issues. The issues were further divided into major and minor to show the importance each newspaper attached to each issue. The *Kele'a* newspaper made political news their priority and had more political stories than the rest of the newspapers. This is because the *Kele'a* is a political propaganda newspaper for the pro-democracy movement and they were trying to promote not only their agenda but their candidates. Apart from the political news, almost all of the newspapers showed similar preferences to the number of stories devoted to other issues.

**Table 4.2: The issues as ranked by voters and issues as covered by the four major newspapers.**

Issues	Voters Agenda	Talaki Newspaper		Taimi 'o Tonga Newspaper		Kele'a Newspaper		Kalonikali Newspaper	
		Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
Politics	48	30	21	45	18	42	22	35	15
Economics	30	13	20	30	7	14	5	28	15
Social	9	13	14	7	17	10	5	25	22
Others	44	18	8	29	19	18	17	14	28

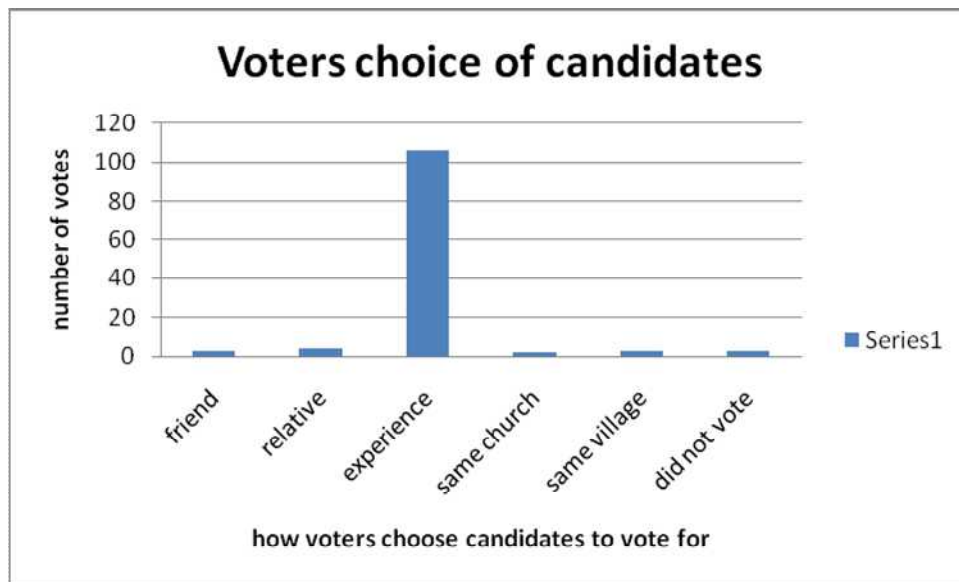
The correlation between the major items that the media emphasised during the campaign and the voter's independent judgements of what were the important issues was +.805 Between minor item emphasis and voters' judgments, the correlation was +.644. The data suggest a strong relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media



and the judgments of voters as to the salience and importance of various campaign topics. The correlation between the media agenda and the voter's choice and judgment was +.842 which is also suggests a very strong correlation. However, as one of the critics of agenda setting theory argues, the methodology in the theory does not establish a credible cause and effect relationship between the media and the public agenda (Perry 1996). This is the reason why this study does not rely on quantitative data only, but also includes qualitative in-depth interviews and participant observation to examine and analyse the impact of the media. The correlation in itself is not a sufficient reason to explain whether the media's agenda did have an impact on how the voter voted.

A second survey and in-depth interviews were conducted after the election to see whether people made any changes to their choice of candidates because of what they heard, read, or watched on the mass media. Out of the 131 in the sample, 56% said that the media did not affect their choice of candidates and 44% said that what they received from the media played a part in their choice of candidates. A further interview with the voters found that some voters used the media to reinforce what they already believed in and the candidates they had already decided to vote for. Voters were also asked on what they based their decision on who to vote for in the election. Because Tonga is a small country, the *faka-kainga* or extended family plays a very strong role in society and also at the national level. In a village, people know almost everybody and the same is true in an island. Sometimes candidates rely on that relationship (*faka-kainga*) to assist them in their campaigns. Figure 4 shows how voter's choices of candidates were based on the candidate's experience. This does shed some light on why all of the Tongatapu incumbents were re-elected. They were the only candidates in the Tongatapu electorate who had been in Parliament, not to mention more than two terms of service in the Legislative Assembly.

***Figure 4. How voters chose who to vote for.***



However it is still evident that voters did vote not based on the candidate's ability and experience alone, but for other reasons, such as the fact that they were friends, relations, fellow-villagers and fellow church members. A well known scholar in the Pacific and former Pro-vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, (personal communication 2008) was very clear on her choice of candidates. First she voted for a colleague, a candidate who worked with her at the University of the South Pacific, Kisione Fifita. Her second vote went to 'Alisi Pone Fotu because she is a woman and her final vote was for Sione Fonua, a New Zealand-based lawyer, because she believed Mr. Fonua had the credibility and experience to perform in the Legislative Assembly.

## Summary

The study has found that the media to some extent had an impact or influence on the success of the candidates during the 2008 parliamentary election. Although there was a very high correlation between the media's agenda and the public agenda, the study provides little evidence that this relationship had any impact on the voter's choice of candidate. However on the other hand it may show that the media does have some influence on what people think about. It could also show that the media reflect well what people are thinking.

The result of the 2008 election was a surprise to many, especially with the election of the incumbents who had been charged with crimes related to the 2006 riot. These included the three Tongatapu people's representatives, 'Akilisi Pohiva, 'Isileli Pulu and Clive Edwards and the number one people's representative for Ha'apai Mr. 'Ulitu Uata. During the campaign, TMN ran negative campaigns against the pro-democracy movement and their leaders. These included radio talkback or interactive radio shows on one of the private FM station where TMN bought airtime for up to four hours a day leading up to the election. People were reminded of the riot and the people who were responsible, indicating the pro-democracy movement. The government media were used by the candidates but the government's heavy handed censorship of political programs made both Radio and Television Tonga unpopular, especially with the pro-democracy supporters. Accusations and character assassination took place not between the candidates but between the government and the pro-democracy leaders and vice versa. It was also apparent between Kalafi Moala who owns TMN and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and Mr. 'Akilisi Pohiva and the pro-democracy *Kele'a* newspaper. It was clear that the pro-democracy candidates overpowered government media and TMN. Most people thought that because in the past the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper had always supported the pro-democracy candidates and they were always successful, it may be the pro-democracy candidates would not win at all. The media onslaught on the pro-democracy movement backfired with five of the pro-democracy candidates re-elected. This is just one of the reasons that suggest that the media might not be that powerful after all.

Voters in the sample were also asked about the popularity of the Prime Minister and the government. The reason why this question was asked was because history suggested that pro-democracy candidate's had been successful in previous elections due to the unpopularity of the previous government, and voters turned to the pro-democracy candidates in the hope that they would be able to make a difference. About 79% of those interviewed responded that

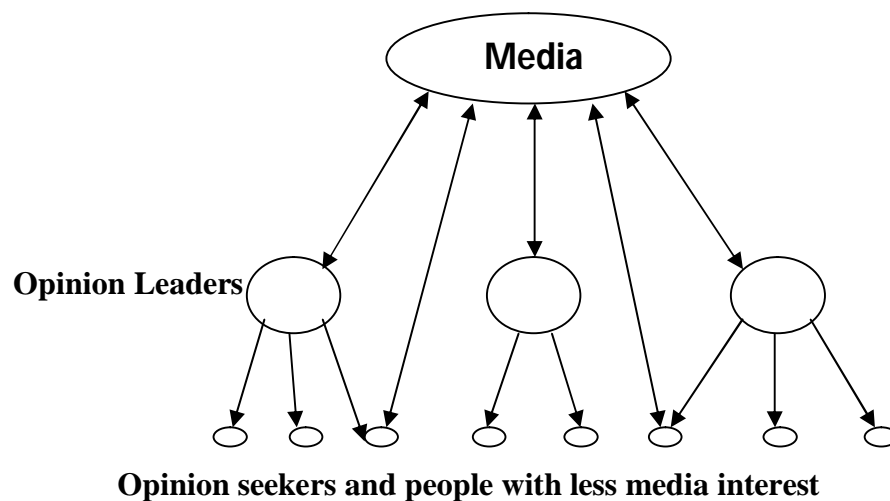
the government and the Prime Minister were unpopular, 11% said the Prime Minister was popular and 10% were undecided. It was evident that the Prime Minister's popularity among the voters was very low. Two of the reasons mentioned by the voters were his handling of a case involving the tourism minister, where it was clear the minister deposited money donated to the ministry into his personal account. The minister was just reprimanded but in a similar case, a senior government official who was also a candidate was punished and demoted but this did not involve money. Another reason was the sacking by the Prime Minister of the finance minister who very popular not only with the people but with the politicians.

Again the positive correlation and existence of the media's agenda setting function as shown in this study revealed only limited evidence that the media had an impact on the election. However the result does support the agenda setting hypothesis while at the same time showing through the descriptive data and the observations and interviews that there are other contributing factors.

The two step flow concept is very useful for studying the media in the Tongan context because of the powerful role that the local culture and tradition play in the communication process. However, the concept relies on communication flow from source to the audience, but the reality in Tonga is that communication also travels the other way back to the source. The concept should be refined in order to fit with the Tongan context. In the original two step flow of information, the media are separated from opinion leaders and the population. But this is problematic because people who work in the media industry such as the gatekeepers, journalists, and media owners can also be part of the model, either as opinion leaders or opinion seekers. The media as an institution cannot be separated from society. This indeed shows that the flow of information is not one way. Journalists in their villages will be seen as opinion leaders and the feedback they get from the people may influence how they present some of the issues. On the other hand a chief or noble can influence media owners who will

in turn influence what the media puts out so the whole process is affected. Figure 5 below illustrates the flow of information in a Tongan context. The model is a refined model of the original two step flow of information.

**Figure.5. Refined Model of the Two Step Flow of Information.**



This study has found that the communication process and how the media work in Tonga are more complex than in developed countries. This could be the same in most of the Pacific countries where traditional local culture is still very strong. In Tonga, part of the reason points to the social structure of the country and especially the *nofo 'a Kainga* or kinship system. The media did play a role as an intermediary between not only candidates and the public but also between the political leaders and the public. Voters turn to the media not only to find information on candidates but also for information which reinforces what they already know or believe in. Others seek people with authority and knowledge on political issues, or seek information to confirm their convictions on such issues. The role of culture in the

communication process should not be ignored as the findings suggest that the kinship system of *faka-kainga* is one of the major factors that influence the flow of communication.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter sums up the relationship between the media and politics in Tonga and the likely impact of the media. The effects of mass media in Tonga, as this thesis has argued throughout, are not as strong and direct as the hypodermic needle theory and the general assumption that the media are all powerful. The effectiveness of the media is diluted and mediated by other factors. This does not mean that they do not have any effect on Tongan politics because they do, but with other intervening variables involved. This study aims to contribute to the literature on media studies and the media in Tonga. The history of the media in Tonga has not been formally documented and this study has aimed to contribute in terms of collecting both historical and empirical data. The thesis has also compared historical events in the relationship between the media and politics in Tonga and how regulations have been used by authorities to silence the media. This sheds light on why the authorities, as shown by the past and present, cannot accept criticism from the common people or the media. Lastly, a further contribution of this study is the analysis of the role of the media in the 2008 Parliamentary election in Tonga. The media as in the western democracies have been seen as one of the most powerful and deciding factors in elections. Millions of dollars are spent on media campaigns and advertisements.

The research has found very compelling evidence through interviews and election results that even though there was significant a correlation between the media's agenda and the public agenda it did not cause or change how people voted.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

*What is the structure of the media in Tonga as a small island state and given the problems it faces, what patterns of control does this give rise to, and how are these played out in local politics?*

The structure of the media and the problems they face throughout the Pacific are analogous. The missionaries were the early pioneers who brought the printing press to the Pacific and Tonga was among the first to have the printed materials in 1831. This led to various missions and churches setting up their own newspapers most of which are still in operation. These so called church newspapers are still mostly funded through church donations which was the original method used by the missionaries. The number of expatriates throughout the Pacific also created problems in some countries, most notably Robert Hanslip in Tonga. His *Niuvakai* newspaper introduced a form of journalism that challenged the authorities and the very heart of the Tongan society which was the *faka'apa'apa* or respect. His form of reporting was deemed disrespectful at the time though it is acceptable as watchdog journalism today.

Media ownership throughout the Pacific still very much remains in the hands of the government, churches, local businesses and very few international media corporations. Government influence in most countries has often led to censorship and regulations to silence critics. In Fiji, the military government put military personnel in media organisations to make sure that these media fall in line according to the government's charter. Two of the *Fiji Times* newspaper editors were deported by the military regime. In Tonga, regulations were introduced to ban the popular *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper from being sold and distributed in Tonga.



Despite the authorities clamp down on the media in some countries, the mass media in the Pacific have played a major role in local politics. People continue to rely on the media for information while the media try to keep the politicians and governments in check through their watchdog role. One of the major problems faced by the media industry in the Pacific is finance due to the size of the markets within these countries. A small population scattered throughout the vast ocean has proved not only an obstacle technically but also financially. Scholars and experts in the media industry in the Pacific including Robbie (2006), Fonua (2007), and Moala (2006) to name a few argue that lack of training and professionalism in the industry is one of the most common problems throughout the Pacific. Ill trained journalists often contribute to the current problems in the Pacific (Cass, 2004).

***Does ownership have any influence over what is being presented by the media?***

The cases of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* and the *Niuvakai* provide evidence of how media ownership influences what is being said in the media. The *Niuvakai's* expatriate owner (Robert Hanslip) used his newspaper not only to criticise the authorities but to express his own personal agenda. His aspiration to become the political adviser to Tungi if he succeeded Tupou I as king prompted him to backup the Mu'a Parliament. Moala on the other hand supported the pro-democracy movement and the *Taimi 'o Tonga* was at the forefront of criticizing the government and at the same time pushing for democratic reform.

The government owned and directed media on the other hand have been loyal and uncompromising in their attack on the pro-democracy movement and their supporters. The censorship of political campaigns and the ban on political reporting on both Radio and Television Tonga showed just how far government can go to silence opposition. During the election campaigns, there was no character assassination between candidates but there was between media organisations and owners. Moala and his *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper, TMN

Channel Two television and FM 88.6 radio program devoted their time to attacking ‘Akilisi Pohiva and the pro-democracy movement. Pohiva’s newspaper, the *Kele’a* fired back at Moala and the government, often citing the Prime Minister in the verbal war of words. It was a matter of fighting within the media organisations rather than among candidates.

The *Kele’a* newspaper has been a long time critic of the government and the establishment. As a pro-democracy newspaper, its content has reflected the movement’s agenda and the party line. The *Taimi ‘o Tonga* was once a diehard supporter of the pro-democracy movement but when its owner, Mr. Kalafi Moala clashed with Mr. Pohiva and the movement’s ideologies it was evident in the newspaper’s content. The *Taimi ‘o Tonga* newspaper turned around and criticized the prodemocracy movement and their supporters, especially after the 2006 riot.

Reporters from most sectors of the media industry who took part in a focus group discussion agreed ownership does influence what is printed or broadcast. One of the reporters stated that they were always reminded not to bite the hand that feeds them, referring to the government. Another said that they are told by their chief editor, who is also the owner, which angle to take when writing stories. This is understandable in a small country and small market, where each media organisation has to cater for their targeted audience and at the same time follow their own guidelines.

***What effects have the new technologies and particularly the convergence of technologies in the internet, had on the ownership of the media and patterns of media control in Tonga?***

The impact of globalization is starting to change the face of the media industry in Tonga in more ways than one. Today people have access 24 hours to news from around the world which was never heard of in the 1980’s and even the 1990’s. Satellite television has also penetrated the local market enabling people to have access to images and news that

authorities have no control over. The power of the internet is undeniable but its full force has yet to be fully utilized in Tongan local politics. The impact of the internet is without a doubt enormous. Tonga's geographical isolation from the rest of the world has been bridged by the World Wide Web. Despite the advances of the technology and the availability of the internet, media ownership has not been affected. Small family businesses continue to own the private newspapers and small FM radio stations and the government continues to have the lion's share of the media market. Government is moving towards privatizing its media but how far remains unknown. At the moment they are allowing the management of its newspaper and one of its channels to be operated by TMN. The next government might have a different approach and this move might be revoked should the pro-democracy movement come to dominate the government.

***What role did interpersonal communication play in the 2008 Tongan election?***

The role that interpersonal communication played in the 2008 election cannot be ignored or disparaged. Interpersonal communication is part of Tonga's everyday life. Information is shared through word of mouth more regularly and faster now with the help of the new technology than through the media. The use of *faikava* campaigning is an uncompromising proof of how important the role played by interpersonal communication was in the 2008 election. Interpersonal communication as in the "two step flow of information" played an intermediate role. This may seem minor, but taking into account Tonga's local traditional culture, interpersonal communication is one of its vital components. A candidate who prefers to meet people face to face instead of just using the media is regarded as one with respect. Teisina Fuko proved this when he preferred to travel to all the islands in the Ha'apai group to meet with people face to face, and he was successful.

It is fair to say that interpersonal communication played an important role in the 2008 election taking into account that kinship is still a strong force in society.

***What role did the media play in the political reform in Tonga and in events such as the Civil Servant's strike and the riots (described in Chapter 7)?***

The role that the media played in Tonga's political transformation and reforms that followed cannot be ignored despite the lack of empirical research. However as this study has presented, there is enough historical, anecdotal and empirical evidence to justify the view that the media did play a role in Tonga's political reform.

During the Civil Servant's strike and the prior to the riot, the media were used as a propaganda vehicle. The media's persuasive appeal was fully utilised by both the civil servants and the pro-democracy movement to mobilize supporters. The daily coverage of the functions held at Pangai Si'i was not only broadcast locally but it was also broadcast outside Tonga, especially in New Zealand and Australia. The internet and other social networks spread it to the rest of the world. This assisted the strikers spreading their message as far as they could and at the same time attracted supporters. The media portrayed the strikers as oppressed civil servants demanding fair pay and painted the government as the antagonist denying the civil servants their demands. While the government media shunned the strikers, local independent media and overseas news organisations ran daily coverage of the strike.

On the other hand the media were accused of inciting the violence in the lead up to the riot. The government blamed the pro-democracy media, namely the OBN TV and the *Kele'a* newspaper for inciting the violence. The pro-democracy movement blamed the government and its media for causing dissatisfaction and anger among the people with their denial of accusations from the pro-democracy movement. OBN's daily coverage of meetings and rallies held at Pangai Si'i and in the villages prior to the riot did not only mobilize their

supporters but it also fuelled anger and hatred towards the government. This was caused by the information that the pro-democracy movement was distributing to the people. Whether the information was true or not, at the end of the day it was effective. When the pro-democracy leaders pleaded with the people to turn up to Pangai Si'i to support their cause, hundreds turned up. The same happened when the OBN manager Sangster Saulala asked viewers to join a march in protest at the TV's eviction. This was undeniably evidence of how the persuasive power of the media was utilised by the pro-democracy movement and also the media's effectiveness.

***What is the future for the media industry in Tonga? Is it moving from small family owned businesses to larger conglomerate businesses, and is the government losing its influence over the media by privatization?***

The era of government control over content is beginning to wither away. The government can no longer deny opposition voices because of the new media. Government critics take to the internet and overseas media to voice their concerns and opposition, with the authorities having no power to stop them. The Tongan government has now realised that it cannot compete with popular independent media so it has started to outsource the management of its media, starting with the *Tonga Chronicle*. On the other hand, the government knows that holding on to its radio and television service will still give it some power because radio remains the only medium to cover the entire kingdom. A question mark however remains over the future of government control of the media industry in Tonga. Tonga's political transformation will see elected officials replacing the old political system where government was once appointed by the monarchy. It will be interesting to see how the media will be controlled under the new leadership. One thing is certain, the media will be more critical than ever, because the ballot box will now determine who will be in government. The government control of the media is expected to change once the new system of

government is in place: as in any other democracy, whoever is in the government of the day will make the decisions.

Small family businesses are now realising that the internet is the way of the future, cheaper than the traditional newspaper businesses. Taking to the internet also enables these small businesses to tap into a wider audience and market. The success of the Matangitonga online website is a testimony to the power of the internet. However, there were several websites that tried but failed, namely Tonganow, Tongastar and Kele'a. The government's tonga-broadcasting.com news website, despite its advantage of having access to both audio and video, has yet to make any money.

The control and ownership of the media industry is slowly moving away from small family business to a conglomerate, but local corporations only. Kalafi Moala and his *Taimi Media Network* are leading the way in this business venture. Today, Moala owns his own newspaper the *Taimi 'o Tonga*, manages the government newspaper *Kalonikali Tonga*, runs Television Tonga's Channel Two, runs Taimiotonga Online, and co-partners with the BroadCom Media company running an FM radio station.

***This thesis also tests the hypotheses such as, the more exposure candidates have in the mass media the higher their chances of winning a seat; and it is the media in Tonga that sets the public agenda by making some issues more salient than others.***

The hypothesis was partially supported. This study has shown that media exposure was not the sole determining factor for a candidate's chance of success. Candidates who used the media more than others did not win, while some who spent minimal time on both TV and radio managed to win their seats. In the overall sample, candidates' use of television had a positive correlation with success, while radio interestingly had a negative correlation. Newspapers were the only medium that had a significant correlation when judged against

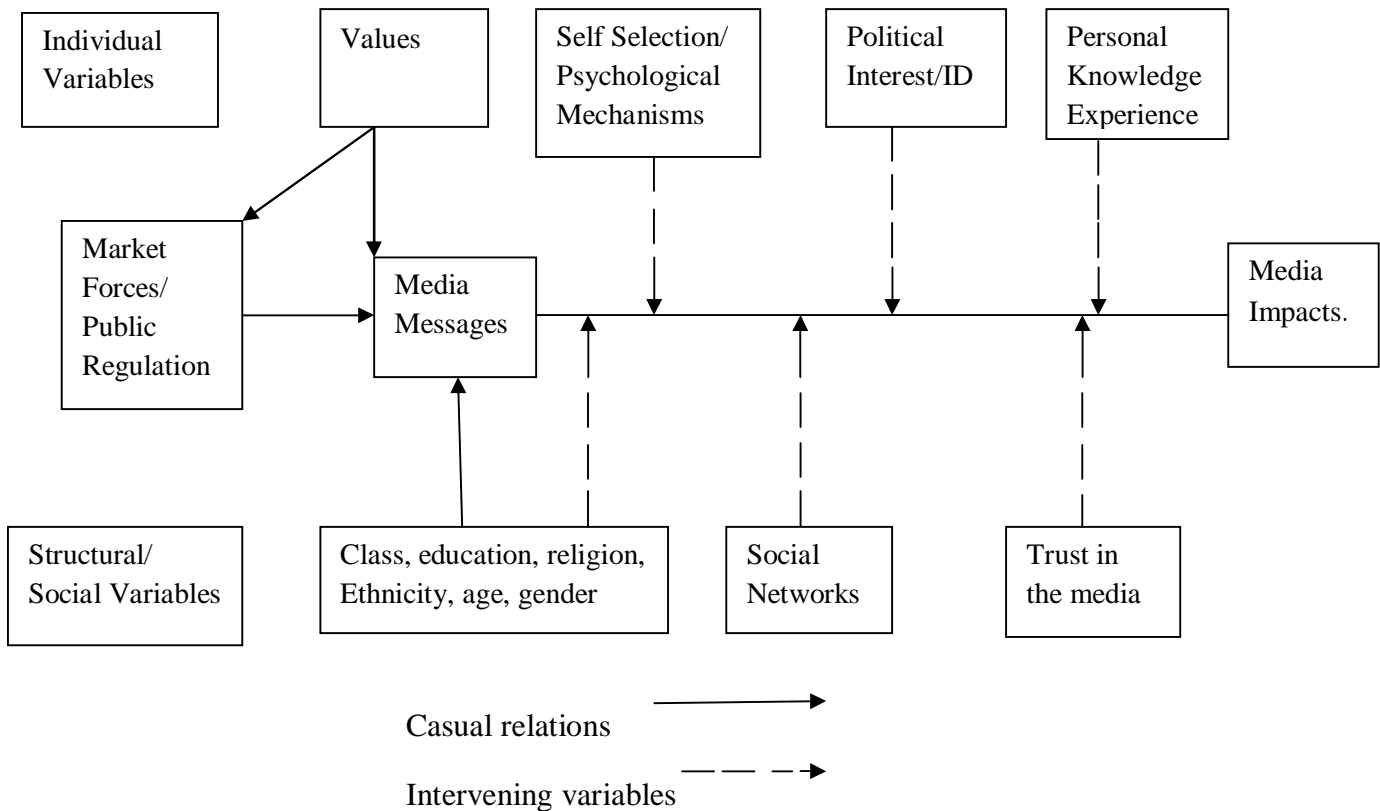
success. If we look at each of the candidates that won seats in the election (see Appendix) not all used the maximum time available in the media. The candidate that maximized use of the media did not win and there were similar cases. In the Vava'u constituency, the candidate that won the number one seat used all the media available, even the internet. His success could partially be attributed to his media exposure. It is also important to note that media use within the islands of the Tonga group varies due to the availability of each medium in different parts of the Kingdom.

On the other hand the correlation between the media and the public agenda was  $+0.842$  which suggests a very strong correlation. However, this positive correlation does not establish a credible cause and effect relationship between the media and the public agenda. It does however suggest that the media agenda may have some influence over the public agenda, through making certain issues more salient than others.

Perhaps another model that supports this study's argument is Newton's Weak Force model in figure 6. This shows that the media's impact is mediated by other factors such as social networks as in the kinship in Tonga's case, including values and political interests among others. As this study has argued, the media does play a role in Tongan politics but there are also other factors that should be taken into account. The media are not as powerful as they are often assumed to be. Their impact is filtered by a nexus of other intervening variables.

**Figure 6.**

**MAY THE WEAK FORCE BE WITH YOU MODEL**



Source: Kenneth Newton; May the Weak Force be with you: The power of mass media in modern politics.

**9.2. Concluding Remarks**

The relationship between the media and politics in Tonga is set to continue and it will be more vigorous than ever. Now that the people will finally decide who will be in the government, the role of the media will vital. The mass media in Tonga will have to be take sides in order to have a well informed public. There will certainly be changes to how the media operate and which sides they take once the new government is established. The question is whether the pro-democracy newspaper *Kele'a* will still take a hard-line against government should the pro-democracy dominate the government. On the other hand, would



Mr. Moala and his *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper be supporting the government if the pro-democracy movement dominates the government? Will the government media have more freedom from government to operate? These are the questions that will be answered once the new system of government is in place.

The 2010 election will provide a better opportunity to study the media's impact. As mentioned above, this will be the first time people will vote to change who will be in the government. The government media are expected to have more freedom and provide a level playing field for all candidates. The study will also need to look at individual islands' media consumption and the role of interpersonal communication in order to understand how the media work in the Kingdom as a whole.

I have addressed the role played by the media and its effects on Tongan politics. The study of media in Tonga has to take into account the traditional culture as it has an influence on every aspect of Tongan society.

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Fakafeta'i 'Eiki

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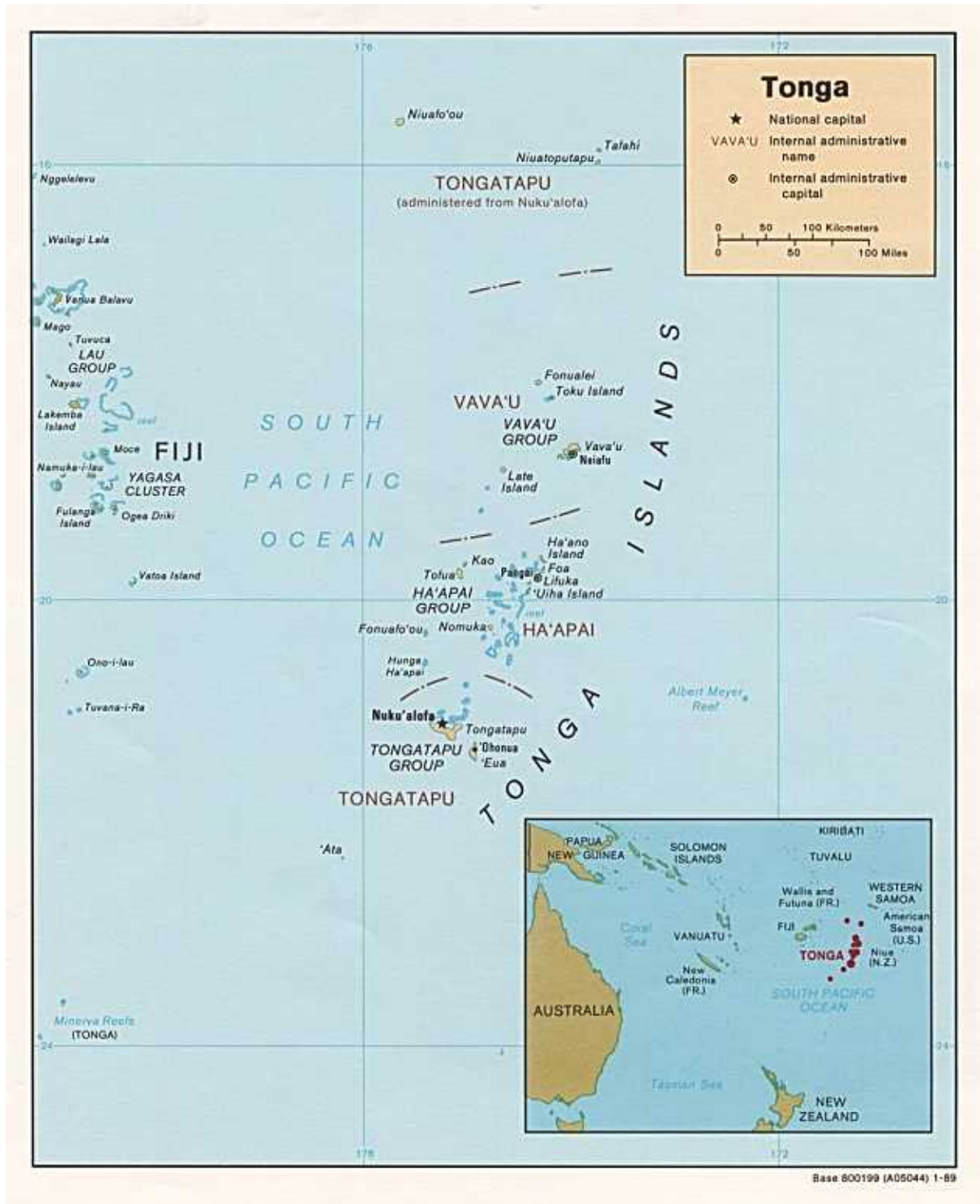
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ABC News Online:                          | <a href="http://www.abc.net.au">http://www.abc.net.au</a>   |
| Australia Bureau of Statistics:           | <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/">http://www.abs.gov.au/</a>   |
| BBC News:                                 | <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk">http://www.bbc.co.uk</a>   |
| CIA World Fact Book                       |   |
|   | <a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-</a> |
| Fiji Times:                               | <a href="http://www.fjtimes.com">http://www.fjtimes.com</a>   |
| Government of Australia,                  |   |
| Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:  | <a href="http://www.dfat.gov.au">http://www.dfat.gov.au</a>   |
| Government of Tonga Online:               | <a href="http://www.pmo.gov.to">http://www.pmo.gov.to</a>   |
| Human Rights and Democracy Movement Tonga | <a href="http://www.planet-tonga.com/HRDMT">http:// www.planet-tonga.com/HRDMT</a>                        |
| Matangitonga Online:                      | <a href="http://www.matangitonga.to">http://www.matangitonga.to</a>                                       |
| New Zealand Herald:                       | <a href="http://www.nzherald.co.nz">http://www.nzherald.co.nz</a>   |
| Planet Tonga                              | <a href="http://www.planet-tonga.com/radio">http://www.planet-tonga.com/radio</a>                         |
| Radio Australia:                          | <a href="http://www.abc.net.au">http://www.abc.net.au</a>   |
| Radio New Zealand International:          | <a href="http://www.rnzi.com">http://www.rnzi.com</a>   |

Scoop Interview:	<a href="http://www.scoop.co">http://www.scoop.co</a>
Taipei Times	<a href="http://www.taipeitimes.com">http:// www.taipeitimes.com</a>
Times of Tonga:	<a href="http://www.taimiotonga.com">http://www.taimiotonga.com</a>
Times Higher Education	<a href="http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk">http:// www.timeshighereducation.co.uk</a>
Tonga Broadcasting Commission:	<a href="http://www.tonga-broadcasting.com">http://www.tonga-broadcasting.com</a>
Tonga Ministry of Education:	<a href="http://www.minoe.gov.to">http://www.minoe.gov.to</a>
Tonga Now Online:	<a href="http://www.tonga-now.to">http://www.tonga-now.to</a>
Tonga Palace Office:	<a href="http://www.palaceoffice.gov.to">http://www.palaceoffice.gov.to</a>
Tonga Star:	<a href="http://www.tongastar.com">http://www.tongastar.com</a>
Wikipedia Online:	<a href="http://www.en.wikipedia.org">http://www.en.wikipedia.org</a>

## APPENDICIES

- Appendix 1: Maps of Tonga
- Appendix 2: Questionnaires.
- Appendix 3: South Pacific Literacy, Demographic and GDP indicators.
- Appendix 4: Religious Denominations in Tonga
- Appendix 4: Civil Servants Strike- Memorandum of Understanding 3 September 2005
- Appendix 5: National Committee for Political Reform Terms of Reference.
- Appendix 6: King George Tupou V Speech on the closing of the 2006 Tonga Legislative Assembly.
- Appendix 7: King George Tupou V Speech on the Opening of the 2009 Tonga Legislative Assembly.
- Appendix 8: Speech by Five People's representatives after the riot.
- Appendix 9: Constitutional and Electoral Commission matter of Enquiry and Report.
- Appendix 10. *Tu'i* Kanokupolu Dynasty and the Royal Family Tree.

## Map of Tonga and the Pacific



## Map of Tonga





## **QUESTIONNAIRES**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE 1 – (Voters in Tongatapu prior to the election)**

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Place of residence:

Occupation:

1. What type of media do you use to get your information from?
2. Which type of media outlet provides you with the best political news and news in general?
3. If your answer is newspaper. Name the newspaper you would use?
  - b) Could you rank the newspaper according to your preference and how often you use it?
4. How many newspaper do you read?
5. If your answer is radio, which radio station?
6. How many days do you listen to the radio and how many hours of radio do you listen to in a day?
  - b) How many hours in a week?
7. If your answer is Television, how many days do you watch television and how many hours in a day?
  - b) How many hours in a week?
8. Do you use the internet to get your information on candidates and the news?
  - b) If yes, how many hours do you spend on the internet and how often you log in?
9. Which website do you use to get your news and information on candidates?
10. How do you choose the candidate that you will vote for come Election Day?

11. What is the most important issue candidates should fight for when you choose your candidates?
12. What do you think are the most important issues that you consider to be of vital importance? Could you also rank the issues with 1 the most important to 10 the less important.
13. What do you think are the issues that candidates emphasise in their campaigns?
14. What are the issues that are important to the country?
15. Do you use the media to get information on the candidates to help you decide when candidates to select?
16. Do you already have your preferred candidates in mind or you are still undecided.
17. Does what you read on newspapers, hear on radio and watch on Television affect your decision on which candidates to choose?  
  
If yes which type of media and how?
18. In past elections what did you base your decision on who to vote for?
19. When candidates use the media for their campaign? Does it alter or affect who you vote for and why?
20. Do you prefer the current political system or do you want an overhaul of the system for a more democratic form of government.
21. How would you rate the popularity of the current government?
22. Would the riot affect your decision on who to vote for?
23. Do you think that overseas Tongan should be allowed to vote in the election and why?
24. The pro-democracy candidates are campaigning for the reform to take place in 2008 when do you think the political reform should take place.

## Questionnaire 2. (Voters in Tongatapu after the election)

Name:

Sex:

Age:

Place of residence:

Occupation:

1. Which media did you use to get the information the candidates in the lead up to the election?

2. Which type of media outlet provides you with the best political news and news in general?

3. If your answer is newspaper. Name the newspaper you used?

b) Could you rank the newspaper according to your preference and how often you used it?

4. How many newspapers did you read?

5. If your answer is radio, which radio did you listen to most?

6. How many days did you listen to the radio and how many hours of radio did you listen to in a day?

6. How many days do you listen to the radio and how many hours of radio do you listen to in a day?

b) How many hours in a week?

7. If your answer is Television, how many days did you watched television and how many hours in a day?

b) How many hours in a week?

8. Did you use the internet to get your information on candidates and the news?

b) If yes, how many hours did you spend on the internet and how often did you logged in?

9. Which website did you use to get your news and information on candidates?

10. How did you choose the candidate that you voted for in the Election Day?

11. Did what you received from the media help you with your decision on whom to vote for?

12. Did the media changed who you intended to vote for and whom you actually voted for

13. How did you pick who to vote for?

A) Family b) Friends c) Same Church d) Based on issues e) Candidates experience  
f) Party Affiliation g) others.

14. Was the media coverage of candidates and the election campaigns fair?

15. What did you think about how the government interfered with the media?

16. How would you rate the Prime Minister's popularity in the lead up to the election 1 being very to 10 very popular?

17. Did the candidate you voted for won any seat?

18. What is the most important thing you would not want to change under the new political system and why?

19. Do you think faikava campaigning is still effective and why?

20. Did any of your friends or relatives persuade or affect how you voted?

b) If yes why?

22. Did any of your relatives overseas try to alter your choice of candidates?

23. Did the 'Ulumotu'a or the chief of your village try to change who you intended to vote for?

### **Questionnaire 3. (Informants abroad)**

Do you think that Tongan living abroad should be able to vote in the Election?

1. Will it be the best interest if Tongans abroad elect their own representative to the Legislative Assembly?
2. How do you get your news from Tonga?
3. How often do you get your news from Tonga?
4. How do you rank the news you get from Tonga based on which media you get it from?
5. When do you think the Political reform should take place and why?
6. Do we still need the monarch in Tonga or not and why?

### APPENDIX 3.

#### RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN TONGA.

<i>Religion</i>	<i>1986</i>		<i>1996</i>		<i>2006</i>	
	<i>Persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Free Wesleyan Church</i>	40,371	43.4	39,703	41.3	38,052	37.3
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	14,921	16.0	15,309	15.9	15,922	15.6
<b>Latter Day Saint</b>	11,270	12.1	13,225	13.8	17,109	16.8
<b>Free church of Tonga</b>	10,413	11.2	11,226	11.7	11,599	11.4
<b>Church of Tonga</b>	6,882	7.4	7,016	7.3	7,295	7.1
<b>Tokaikolo</b>	3,047	3.3	2,919	3.0	2,597	2.5
<b>Anglican Church</b>	563	0.6	720	0.8	765	0.8
<b>Seventh Day Adventist</b>	2,143	2.3	2,381	2.5	2,282	2.2
<b>Assembly of God</b>	565	0.6	1,082	1.1	2,350	2.3
<b>Constitutional Church of Tonga</b>					941	0.9
<b>Gospel</b>					243	0.2
<b>Baha'i Faith</b>					686	0.7
<b>Hindus</b>					104	0.1
<b>Islam</b>					47	0.0

<b>Buddhist</b>					71	0.1
<b>Other</b>	2,874	3.1	2,368	2.5	202	0.2
<b>No Religious affiliation</b>	n.a		61	0.1	28	0.0
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	n.a		10	0.0	1,509	1.5
<b>Not stated</b>	n.a				189	0.2
Total	93,049	100.0	96,020	100.0	101,991	100.0

Source: Tonga Statistics Department

## **APPENDIX 4.**

### **CIVIL SERVANTS STRIKE**

#### **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 3 SEPTEMBER 2005**

The text of the new Memorandum of Understanding is as follows:

The Cabinet negotiation sub-committee on behalf of the Government of Tonga and the Negotiation Team for the Interim Committee for Dissatisfied Civil Servants on strike

AND

the Negotiation Team for the Interim Committee for Dissatisfied Civil Servants on Strike  
That the strike action by Government of Tonga Civil Servants in relation to the demand for new salary scale will end on Friday 2 September 2005 on the conditions that:

1. All civil servants will resume duties at their respective work places at 8:30am on Monday 5 September 2005.
2. The approved salary scale as at 30 June 2005 is to be implemented by Government, effective from 1 July 2005, in the following manner;
  - (a) Levels 2-5 60% increase
  - (b) Levels 6-10 70% increase
  - (c) Levels 11-14 80% increase
3. That the new salary scale will be paid in two (2) tranches as follows:
  - (a) 60% effective as from July 1 2005; and



(b) 40% effective as from July 1 2006 and backdated to July 1 2005.

4. The salary of all civil servants on strike will be paid for the period of the strike on the salary scale agreed to in Clause 2.
5. Civil servants who are on strike will not be disciplined.
6. Students enrolled at government schools who supported the strike will not be disciplined, with the exception of students who are subject to court proceedings;
7. The implementation of the Public Service Salary Review that was approved by Government on June 30 2005 as effective on July 1 2005 will be deferred for two years;
8. That aside from the ongoing and proposed taxation reforms currently under the Economic Reform Programme, there would be no increase of any taxes because of the salary increase;

**CONFIRMATION OF UNDERTAKING GIVEN BY CABINET NEGOTIATION** Sub Committee to Negotiation Team of the Interim Committee for Dis-satisfied Civil Servants on Strike on Friday 3 September 2005:

In furtherance of the MOU signed on 3 September 2005 between the Cabinet negotiation sub-committee on behalf of the Government of Tonga and the Negotiation Team for the Interim Committee for Dissatisfied civil servants on strike, IT IS AGREED THAT:

### **SALARY ADJUSTMENT:**

1. Notwithstanding the salary scale agreed to in clause 2 of the Memorandum of Understanding, each Head of Department will be sanctioned to adjust the salary of a civil servant who has been disadvantaged by clause 2, subject to consultations with the respective Minister and the PSC and other staff concerned.

### **DISCIPLINE OF TONGA COLLEGE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:**

2. The Hon. Minister of Education has verbally endorsed the undertaking by the Cabinet Negotiations Sub Committee not to transfer teachers from Tonga College of the Ministry of Education Administrative Office as a result of the civil servants strike action. Assurance was given by the Hon. Minister of Education to the Hon. Minister of Labour at the Cabinet meeting on Friday 2 September 2005. This was duly approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 September 2005.
3. In the spirit of reconciliation, the Hon. Minister of Education will be requested to give due consideration to the students who were involved in the strike

### **RESUMPTION OF DUTY FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS FORM THE OUTER ISLANDS**

4. In the spirit of clause 1 of the MOU satisfactory administrative arrangements will be made with the respective Heads of Department for a reasonable date for resumption of duty.

### **SERIOUS CONCERNS**

5. The Cabinet Negotiation Sub-Committee undertake that the following serious concerns raised by the Interim Committee for civil servants will be submitted to Cabinet for due consideration:
  - (a) the demand for the resignation of the Secretary for the Public Service Commission, and the Director and the three Deputy Directors of the Ministry of Education as per Petition dated 30 August 2005 and;
  - (b) that a Royal Commission be established immediately to review the Constitution to allow a more democratic Government to be established and for the **Royal Commission** to report back to Government and the interim committee on the 31 December 2005.

## **APPENDIX 5.**

### **NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR POLITICAL REFORM - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The National Committee shall receive and consider submissions, hold consultations, and facilitate *talanoa* relating to political and constitutional reforms and recommend legislation and/or other changes with a view to building national unity and promoting the social and economic advancement of the people of Tonga.

#### **Functions and Processes**

To realize the purpose and achieve the objectives as set out above, the National Committee shall:

1. Hold public meetings and consultations and facilitate *talanoa* throughout Tonga and, at the committee's discretion, overseas with the Tongan people of New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.
2. Prepare papers in Tongan and English on the purpose and objectives of the Committee and publicize such paper in such a manner so as to fully inform and assist the public with respect to meetings, consultation, *talanoa*, and in making submissions to the Committee.
3. Conduct an opinion poll, or delegate some such exercise to an independent institution or persons, if deemed necessary for the completeness of the final report and recommendations.
4. Seek funding for this project from local or international organizations, parties or individuals as may be able to assist.
5. Prepare and publish recommendations on its findings in Tongan and English.
6. Submit the report of its findings, together with appropriate recommendations, to His Majesty the King in Privy Council at the end of May 2006 (or on such extended date as may be requested by the National Committee and approved by the Legislative Assembly; but in no event shall the final date for reporting extend beyond August 1, 2006).
7. Report its findings together with appropriate recommendations, as submitted to His Majesty the King in Privy Council, to the Legislative National Assembly after one month from the end of May 2006 (or on such extended date as may be requested by the National Committee and approved by the Legislative Assembly; but in no event shall the final date for reporting extend beyond September 1, 2006).

In order to better enable the Committee to carry these functions and processes in effect, its members shall not at anytime publicly or otherwise disclose, except by the Committee's direction, the contents of any report so made or to be made by the Committee, or any evidence or information received by the Committee except such evidence of information as is received in any process open to the public.

A media sub-committee, comprising of the Chairman, One People's Representative Samiu Vaipulu and Dr Sitiveni Halapua, has been appointed to keep the public informed and to issue any press releases.

**Members of the Committee**

1. HRH Prince *Tu'i* pelehake (Chairman), Noble Representative.
2. Hon. S. Tu'a Taumoepeau Tupou, Representative from Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Defense and Acting Governor of Vava'u.
3. Kovana Ha'apai Hon. Malupo, Representative from Government.
4. Hon, Tangipa, Noble Representative.
5. Mr. Samiu Vaipulu, people's representative
6. Mr. Vili Kaufusi, Peoples Representative.
7. Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, Director Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, Hawaii.
8. Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, Barrister, Wellington, New Zealand.
9. Dr 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, Pro-vice Chancellor, University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

## APPENDIX 6.

### **KING GEORGE TUPOU V SPEECH ON THE CLOSING OF THE 2006 TONGA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

The Hon Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, The Hon prime minister and Hon Ministers of the Crown, The Hon nobles of the realm, The Hon representatives of the people, Members of the diplomatic corps, Chief justice, Church leaders, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker sir,

We give thanks to god almighty for his blessings and guidance that has enabled us to meet this morning in order to officially close this year's sessions of parliament.

We are indeed grateful that as we gather here this morning, your honour is in good health and spirit, as is the Hon prime minister, Hon ministers, Hon representatives of the nobles and those of our relatives who have been elected to represent the people. We are also grateful that the Hon high commissioner of New Zealand is in good health and spirit, as well as is the Hon ambassador of the people's republic of china, the Hon high commissioner of Australia, and diplomatic representatives of other countries who are here with us today.

We are grateful that the leaders of the various churches are also in good health and spirit, as well as the numerous public figures that are here with us this morning. I am especially grateful that our people all over the country and overseas are also in good health and spirit and I hope that they are able to share in this the closing ceremony of the 2006 sessions of parliament.

Today we meet to close this session of parliament in sombre mood. A few meters away, buildings lie burned, bodies have been retrieved from the ashes and our capital is silent as it has never before.

We lost HRH Prince *Tu'i* pelehake and princess Kaimana in July. We also lost our beloved king Taufa'ahau Tupou IV in September, and we are still in mourning. We have lost much, especially the long-cherished care-free happy life and freedom to move about as we wish. We have now become prisoners in our home. A very different mood faced this parliament when it opened in June. The key themes confronting government then were set by the economic challenges that had dominated the previous twelve months.

## **ECONOMIC PROGRESS**

Good progress had been made with economic stabilization and maintenance of essential services. Education was to be a key priority, as we looked with enthusiasm to the future of our young people in an economy that would need their skill and learning. A close relationship with donors was being consolidated.

In addition to stabilizing the economic crisis, government had committed itself to public sector reform, economic sector reform and to political reform. Those challenges were big enough. And government was progressing forward – gradually yet steadfastly.

We managed to maintain the relative strength of the Tongan currency and we have also managed to conserve our foreign exchange reserve levels at over four months' worth of imports. We doubled our contributions to non-government schools. We were able to pay out over T\$30 million in redundancy payments and in civil servants salary adjustments from our own internal resources. An ambitious economic reform and road programmes are on the drawing board, with the emphasis on the productive sectors especially tourism, agriculture, fisheries and construction.

Tourist numbers have increased over the past 12 months, and things were looking up in the tourism industry. Plans are being finalized by a reputable chain of international hotels to build a 5-star resort in Vava'u. Let us hope the events of last week do not derail this exciting development. And policy measures on law and order and anti-corruption have been identified and soon to be implemented. So we can take some comfort from the fact that up until last week, solid progress was being made – against the expectations of many – to revive our economy. Government had begun to win over its critics and doubters by an open, fair and reasoned response to last year's potential economic crisis. It now knows that it must face the future with those same qualities.

United we must be, to rebuild

As this session of parliament closes, government, and indeed, our whole country, must now prepare for dramatically greater challenges. As government faces those challenges, it will reach out to all Tongans in Tonga and overseas. As a people, we need now to re-gather our strength. We have to rebuild. We have to rebuild trust. We have to rebuild hope. We have to rebuild our sense of mutual responsibility to each other, so that never again will we see violence, arson, looting, death – and such shame.

We have also, to rebuild our capital city of Nuku'alofa. Preliminary estimates indicate that the costs of reconstruction and of redevelopment of Nuku'alofa will be at least T\$200 million. There are also the thousands of people throughout the Kingdom who have lost their jobs and sources of livelihood. As we ready ourselves for these challenges, all our people must stand together. We thank our young men and women in the defence and police services for their tireless efforts in restoring order quickly in these difficult times.

Fortunately they do not stand alone. They are joined by our friends from abroad - we have military and police personnel from Australia and New Zealand we thank them for their ready and willing support. We also thank those thousands of people out there who came to the assistance of these forces, of government and of the victims of the riots.

Government will shortly announce progress and plans that emerge from the reconstruction committee chaired by the minister of finance. Our humble city of Nuku'alofa will not be rebuilt in a day. But it will be rebuilt. Rebuilding trust and mutual responsibility will also take time but government will begin immediately.

The justice system will do its work and distinguish between lawful protest and unlawful activities, and to deal with them firmly and speedily according to law. Instigators of violence and crime must be dealt with firmly.

Law and order must be restored immediately so that the people can feel safe and secure once again in their own homes, at work and wherever they want to go.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL REFORMS**

The events of the last few days have shaken our constitutional foundations. But our cultural and constitutional roots are innately strong. And we have been prepared by more than a century of constitutional government to be able to face the political tasks that lie ahead. His late majesty was concerned that the Kingdom's political development was not keeping abreast with its economic development and the aspirations of his people.

This led him to set a precedent, momentous in Tonga, of appointments to cabinet based on the recommendations of a prime minister elected by the people. This was the beginning of a new convention of the sovereign voluntarily choosing to exercise his constitutional powers on advice of a prime minister from those elected to the house.

We are grateful to the late prince *Tu'i pelehake* and the members of the national committee for political reform for the careful report that has been laid before the legislative assembly. The government subsequently tabled in parliament the broad outline of the constitutional changes that it believed should be considered in conjunction with the *Tu'i pelehake* report as there is much in common in the two proposals.

The people's representatives also submitted their own proposals to the assembly two weeks ago. All the proposals that are now in the public arena have the same ultimate aim - a more democratic form of parliament and government but appropriate for Tonga. The differences among these various proposals are not irreconcilable, and can be resolved through dialogue. In 1875, the constitution was a gift from King George Tupou I to the people of Tonga.

Today, the constitution is owned by all the people, and Tongan culture, Tongan traditions, Tongan strength, Tongan singing, Tongan voices, Tongan prayer and Tongan dignity must find new expression and new strength.

We would urge all parliamentarians to continue discussion, and table their consensus at the next sitting of parliament, including a timeframe for implementation. Government needs all our support

We now have a prime minister and government, all appointed by his late majesty under his constitutional powers. They did not want to be prime minister nor ministers. They were asked to serve our country and they faithfully answered that call.

As such, they are the legitimate government and they need all of our support. We must allow them time to get on with the task of managing the economy and the country. Let us all help them to achieve and complete the mission to which they have been called.

In conclusion, let us focus on the immediate tasks ahead. Last week, Tonga made news in a way that we hope we will never repeat. As we look ahead, we have the opportunity to make history in another way. Let us pick up our challenges, each one of us. Let us rebuild a new capital and new Tonga. Let us make a history that we will remember with pride after another 131 years of constitutional government based on freedom, the rule of law, and the dignity of our people. As we close the parliament of 2006 and prepare for the great tasks ahead, I thank you Mr. Speaker sir, and the honourable members of the house for all the work that you have accomplished.

To all of you and to all the people of Tonga please receive my personal best wishes.

May god bless us all!

**KING GEORGE TUPOU V**

(Source: Government of Tonga Online, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006)



## **Appendix 7.**

### **KING GEORGE TUPOU V SPEECH ON THE OPENING OF THE 2009 TONGA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**28 May, 2009**

Hon Speaker,

Hon Representatives of the Nobles, Hon Ministers of the Crown, and  
Representatives of the People .

This year we welcome the commissioning of the Japanese Embassy, which marks an important milestone in the development of our close and supportive relations between our two countries.

The global financial crisis of the past 12 months has resulted in the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Our economy has been affected, but, fortunately, we have avoided the worst of this recession. In fact our economy has achieved positive growth, although at a rate lower than that projected in last year's budget. Following on from a surplus for the 2007/08 fiscal year, despite the decline in revenue as a result of the global economic crisis, Government has been able to repeat a fiscal surplus in 2008/09 through its prudent management of expenditure.

Government has been able to deliver the necessary services to the people over the past year, especially in education and health. The new initiative of establishing a national emergency fund was achieved, with an initial amount of \$15 million, and the plan is to build up this fund to \$75 million over the next 10 years, signalling to our development partners of our desire to help ourselves whenever we can. Foreign reserves have been maintained throughout the year at acceptable levels of more than the equivalent of 5 months of import cover.

Adopting a 2009/2010 budget based around a fiscal stimulus package would be the more appropriate approach to follow in order to mitigate the impact of the global financial crisis and to continue to grow the economy. The strategy for achieving this consists of:

- a) Maintaining current expenditure at the present levels; and
- b) significantly increasing investment in infrastructure and the productive sectors in order to create jobs and increase output, which investment will be funded from our own funds, Asian Development Bank and other donor grants, and concessionary loans from the People's Republic of China.

Establishment of the Nuku'alofa Town Council, through appropriate legislation, planning and provisions, will be a priority task of Government over the next two years. Safety of life and property of residents and businesses will be paramount.

To ensure that our people in the Niuas are able to share in the benefits of development, a special budgetary provision of \$1 million for infrastructural works is made in the forthcoming 2009/2010 budget.

Technical and vocational training is given particular consideration in the budget - through the provision of grants totalling \$1 million to government - approved courses at approved non-government training institutions.

Hon Speaker, on the Political Front, We are all committed to the continuation of the ongoing political reform process. Among the major reforms shall be the appointment of a Prime Minister nominated by the House from among the elected members, and the devolution of the executive powers of Privy Council to the elected Cabinet.

The Constitutional and Electoral Commission will soon submit their Report to the House. There is ample time over the next two parliamentary sessions for your deliberation on the political reforms. The objectives of these reforms are the welfare of the people and protection of their rights.

We are indeed blessedly grateful and proud that ours is an ancient and mature nation, and that the roadmap to guide our deliberation had been chartered from the nineteenth century by the Chiefs who framed our Constitution. By reason of this, it is critically important that the reforms are clearly understood and peacefully arrived at. These our hopes can only be realized if there is a spirit of cooperation, and mutual understanding and respect.

In commending you, Hon Speaker, to the care of Almighty God, We wish to reassure you of the support of Government in your difficult task of guiding the deliberations of the House and preserving its dignity.

HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V

28 May 2009

## Appendix 8

### SPEECH BY FIVE PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES AFTER THE RIOT

**‘Akilisi Pohiva** - “Today there was an agreement between the nobles, Cabinet Ministers and us, the representatives of the people in a meeting that was chaired by the Prime Minister to accept our proposal, and that government will implement it in the 2008 election. The agreement was for the people to elect 21 representatives and for the nobles to elect nine representatives, making up a total 30-member parliament, and no more. Because government has accepted our proposal, we are hereby appealing to you to stop.

“I am here with Clive Edwards, ‘Isileli Pulu, ‘Ulitu Uata and Lepolo Taunisila to broadcast this program. We apologise to the people about where we have got to, we have nothing else to say about it, we have reached this stage and what has happened has happened. To rebuild this country is what we will get into next together with the government, may be tomorrow or Monday, and onward.

“This program is to inform the public that we have achieved what we asked for, and we are asking you, that there is already enough damage to our country, and we are asking you to stop and let’s work together. Stay calm for we have achieved what we asked for, and unfortunately government and the rest of the country did not fully understand where we were going to end up at. I think there is a good reason, and that we have asked numerous times, but we will not talk about that, today it was accepted, but unfortunately, it was accepted but the damage has been done. We are asking for the people of Tonga to forgive us for what has taken place, we will deal with it tomorrow and next week, together with the government and

the nobles. I will now hand over to ‘Uliti Uata.”

**“Accept the hardship”**

**‘Uliti Uata** - “I would like to thank the people for their participation in completing our obligation at Pangai Si’i, and that we have achieved what we strived for, like what ‘Akilisi has explained. We have achieved what we wanted, and that is to elect all the members of parliament. That was something that we have been striving for, for a number of years. But something has happened, and a lot of damage has taken place at the end of the island, houses and properties have been damaged, and houses have been burned down. We are asking you that what has happened is enough, government has heard our voice and we are asking you to stop. Stop the damaging of properties for we have achieved our aim.

“I am asking the people of Tonga not to be angry with us because what we have done, we have talked about it numerous times, but no one could hear it. Therefore, that was the cause of the damage that occurred this evening and today, and we are asking you to accept all the hardship so that we can rebuild our country, and I tell you it will be fast to rebuild our country.

“Please forgive us if there is damage because of how we carried out our duties, but we have achieved what we [PRs] could do, before we left it for you, the people of Tonga, to assist, and with your help it made it possible for us to achieve our objective. We ask you, the people who came to Pangai Si’i and all the people who supported us to achieve our objective, it is enough, and stop any further damaging of properties. We will continue tomorrow with a program at Pangai Si’i with a fund-raising program to finance our working program.”

### **“Got the message”**

**Lepolo Taunisila**, Niuas People’s Representative -I would like to thank the public who are listening to this program, I would like to convey my heart-felt thank for your support and your bravery in helping us to gain victory on this very day. I would like to convey to the government that I don’t think there is time to look to the side and backward, and blame each other. What has happened was something that we all hoped would not happen. I am pleading with you mothers, and you have my trust that what has happened, (was the work of our children) they are our children, and I believe that our children will only listen to us. We have won, and thank you for your support which enabled us to gain victory, something that we have been hoping for, for a number of years, and we have got what we wanted, but I ask you, the women folk to control your children who are doing a lot of damage in Nuku’alofa and throughout the country, we need your help to stop our children. I think government leaders have got the message and what is needed for us to come together and rebuild our government and our country. I am looking forward for all of us to meet tomorrow and to make plan on how to rebuild our country. Thank you.”

### **“Enough”**

**Clive Edwards** - I am Kalaivi ‘Etuate, the Tongatapu No. 3 People’s Representative, and I am pleased to be here together with the other People’s Representatives this evening.

“I am appealing here to the people of Tonga, men and women of Tonga, don’t allow your children and drunks to burn the country. Stop them, what they have done is enough because there will be damages that we will later try to restore, and it will affect us all, not only those

whose houses have been damaged and burned, but we will be all affected by these actions. Please stop and we should all support those who try to stop the destruction. It is enough and let's minimise the damage. That is all I am asking for."

**"It has been done"**

**'Isileli Pulu**, Tongatapu no. 2 People's Representative - "I am very thankful for a job well done today, it has been done, and my request, similar to that of the others, if you think you can help in any ways to stop what is happening then we are asking you to please help. At the same time, there are drunks, and we are asking you to be thoughtful, because after tonight. Our main concern is tonight, it is getting darker, and there are already damages to the country. So please try and stop it. The rest we will be talking about it tomorrow, but we are asking you all to be thoughtful and stop setting fires to properties, cars and private homes.

"We have just came straight from the meeting, and instead of going home to rest we are here appealing to you to stop the damage."

(Source Matangitonga online and Court transcript and audio tape)

## **Appendix 9.**

### Constitutional and Electoral Commission

#### “SCHEDULE 2 SPECIFIC MATTERS OF ENQUIRY AND REPORT

##### **1. The Executive**

The roles, functions, powers, duties of, and relationships between the Monarch, the Privy Council, Prime Minister and Cabinet.

- The size and composition of Cabinet.
- Delegation of certain authority by the King to the Prime Minister.
- The principle of collective responsibility of Cabinet.

##### **2. The Legislature**

- The composition and method of selection of members of the Legislative Assembly.
- The term of the Legislative Assembly.

##### **3. Relationships between the Executive and the Legislature**

- The roles of the King, the Prime Minister and Cabinet, including accountability measures.
- King’s function in the law-making process.
- The appointment of the Prime Minister from the Assembly.
- The appointment of Ministers to Cabinet and the consequences.
- The term of office of Cabinet Ministers.
- Motions of “no confidence”.

##### **The Electorate.**

- The electoral system.
- Definition of constituencies and distribution of seats”
- (Constitution and Electoral Commission Act 2008)

## Appendix 10

# Tu'i Kanokupolu Dynasty

