

Research Summary

Creating nonfiction film in our mother tongue: Samoan, Tongan, Punjabi

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We are three postgraduates of Te Ara Poutama Faculty at Auckland University of Technology. We have written a collective piece as a distinct group who emigrated from villages, districts, and countries outside of Aotearoa. We are nonfiction filmmakers creating film in our mother tongue; Fritz in Samoan, Sylvester in Tongan, and Asim in Punjabi. Through our shared experiences we have become trusted friends and collegial support for one another. Consciously, we chose to take up practice-led research in a faculty of Māori students and staff for cultural and strategic reasons. That very same rationale has prompted us to co-author our paper as contributors to a small but growing number of Aotearoa language films made by practitioners who although are not Indigenous to the lands we are living on, are, however, descended from the original inhabitants in our countries of origin.

To impress upon readers the importance of why we create Samoan, Tongan, and Punjabi nonfiction film for, and with, our language communities, we have used this publication to make a point of authoring our individual stories in Samoan, Tongan, and Punjabi, with an accompanying English translation. The true sense behind the ideas we are conveying with words and images is therefore contained in the Samoan, Tongan, and Punjabi texts. By contrast, the English translation is our humble interpretation that we feel falls short of communicating the complexly woven fabric of meaning found in the original language. For this reason, the English translation is secondary to the mother tongue.

It is here that we unpack the culture-informed rationale for interlinking our whakaaro (thinking) in the introduction, and then disentangling our cultural identities by writing the remaining sections in our own languages. First, we acknowledge our Māori postgraduate peers who are te reo Māori speakers at varying levels of oral and written fluency. As tāngata whenua, the Indigenous tribes of this land – Aotearoa, the manaakitanga (hospitality) and mahi tiaki

(collective duty of care) they have given to three non-Māori postgraduates in their home faculty has been vital to ensuring we are in safe hands to learn and flourish during doctoral study. Because of their efforts to co-create a distinct and protected whānau-oriented space, we have also benefitted. This space we speak of is simultaneously located within, and independent of, a mainstream university whose function is to integrate Māori students and staff into the institutional architecture by using English-language-sensemaking and bureaucratic procedure to make decisions over and about the university's Indigenous cohort; decisions, which in effect, favour the dominant Pākehā culture. We are grateful to our Māori peers for protecting us from cultural politics, for sharing their cultural space – Ngā Wai o Horotiu Marae, and for inspiring us to be unapologetically Samoan, Tongan, and Punjabi under the marumaru (shelter) of Te Ara Poutama.

If there is a semblance of cultural safety in numbers, despite the small numbers of Pacific and South Asian migrants carrying their mother tongue across borders as the principal research method for data collection and sensemaking, then making ourselves safe (instead of being vulnerable) in a western university system requires a practicable strategy.

What worked for us was finding a supportive environment in the Māori faculty where Māori people accepted us for who we are, along with our people whom we bring with us in our community-oriented research. Hence, we did not see that our creative research, an assemblage and reflection of our people and language on-screen, would be highly valued and respected by faculties where the belief systems of the Indigenous tribes of Aotearoa were not central to how others – migrants, who are Native to their countries – are treated and taken care of.

By no means are we saying that postgraduates from Pacific and South Asian states and territories who do not have whakapapa Māori (Māori ancestry) should undertake practice-led research in a Māori faculty. We firmly believe that Māori faculties and schools in New Zealand's eight universities are designed for the researcher development and support needs of Māori postgraduates first and foremost and must remain true to this kaupapa (principle) according to Treaty of Waitangi obligations that the Tertiary Education Commission stipulates they must deliver in the *Kete Whiri* strategy (Tertiary Education Commission, 2023). What we are affirming is that our location in a Māori faculty has acted as a fortunate buffer to the institutional hierarchy applying deprivation theory over and about us; two migrants from sovereign Pacific states, Sāmoa and Tonga, and one South Asian migrant from west Punjab in Pakistan with a Muslim majority population (bearing in mind that east Punjab in India has a

Sikh majority population). As a result, we have personally and professionally grown and gained confidence from our genuine, warm interactions with Māori peers and staff.

A critique that Fritz and Sylvester want to put forward (and Asim stands with them) relates to a specific kind of cultural politics infiltrating the New Zealand university environment. That is, the decontextualised identity marker *Indigenous* in academic literature published by Samoan and Tongan researchers (Weaver, 2001). The intended meaning of the identity referent Indigenous when deployed by Samoan and Tongan researchers can be read as political and problematic in an Aotearoa context. Fritz and Sylvester see it is their academic responsibility to question research using an Indigenous orientation when firstly, researchers are not residing in, or researching about, Sāmoa and Tonga. And secondly, when some researchers were not born or raised in their ancestral nu'u (Samoan for village) and kolo (Tongan for village), and therefore might not be recognised by the village community as locals, but rather, overseas Samoans, overseas Tongans.

A significant factor omitted from the Indigenous framing is that Samoans and Tongans living in their countries do not identify as Indigenous peoples. Sāmoa and Tonga, according to their citizenries, are independent sovereign states where ethnic Samoans and Tongans make up the majority populations, national languages, and dominant cultures. In addition, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* informs their states and societies' knowledge of who is Indigenous in international relations, i.e. Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Australian Aboriginals, New Zealand Māori (United Nations, 2007; Brown Pulu, 2024¹).

Yet in less than thirty years, Samoan and Tongan scholarship in Aotearoa has taken an enormous leap of imagination from being Samoa-born or New Zealand-born Samoans, and Tonga-born or New Zealand-born Tongans to claiming to be Indigenous (Anae, 1997; Enari and Matapo, 2020; Fehoko, 2020; Matapo, 2021; Matapo and Enari, 2021; Matapo, Utumapu-McBride, and Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2023; Paea et al, 2023; Salesa, 2023; Stewart et al, 2023). How is this monumental shift conceived and validated in current academic research? Is Indigenous truly how generations of Samoans and Tongans born in Aotearoa blanketly self-

¹ We have expanded on a piece of writing that our primary supervisor, Teena Brown Pulu, contributed to an article by the Moanaroa Research Network at Auckland University of Technology, a forthcoming publication in 2024. Teena made the point that in Sāmoa and Tonga, the local populations see themselves as national identities, meaning they are Samoan and Tongan citizens of their sovereign countries. Building on this critical point of difference between Samoan and Tongan citizenries and Samoan and Tongan researchers in Aotearoa claiming to be Indigenous, we contend that the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is the international doctrine from which the Sāmoa and Tonga nation-states derive meaning of the term Indigenous.

identify? (Tevi, 2018). Or does Indigenous manifest itself as an aspirational identity? (Keepa and Manu'atu, 2006).

The obvious issue being ignored is how *tāngata whenua* – researchers belonging to Māori tribes of Aotearoa – and their people, are dislodged and made invisible by Samoan and Tongan research in Māori lands that calls itself Indigenous. Indigenous where and Indigenous how? Even more perplexing is the conflation of Māori and Pacific researchers in a homogeneous Indigenous category, insinuating that in Aotearoa these groups are identical. We believe that the very term Indigenous demands considered contextualisation on the part of Samoan and Tongan researchers (Brown Pulu and Filisi, 2024). Naming oneself and one's people Indigenous requires the researcher to explain what diasporic communities located outside of Sāmoa and Tonga mean by this, especially when they are living on Māori tribal lands. "Pacific Indigenous" and "Indigenous Ocean" are bold identity statements issued in research publications (Enari et al, 2024; Salesa, 2023). But without first acknowledging this Indigenous agenda is playing out on soil that one's people are not Indigenous to brings the agenda into question.

As creative practitioners who make Aotearoa language films, we have invested substantial time and thought into working through how our research converges with, and diverges from, Indigenous peoples' scholarship; in particular, the creative approaches of Māori filmmaker Barry Barclay and Native Canadian documentary filmmaker Dorothy Christian (Barclay, 2003, 2015; Christian, 2017, 2019). We have carefully reflected on our relationships with *tāngata whenua* in the university. In terms of social reciprocity, we genuinely respect one another's language and culture, and for us, we are mindful not to misappropriate the Indigenous rights and special status of *mana whenua*. Moreover, we practice reflexivity through self-awareness of how our identity as migrants from Sāmoa, Tonga, and Punjab is markedly different to the identity we grew up with in our lands of origin; the villages and districts where we learned place-based identities as sons of the soil.²

The one *taonga* (treasure) we have carried across ocean and kept alive in everyday life is not the village, in the physical sense. The villages we come from exist in their rightful place, Sāmoa, Tonga, and Punjab. Rather, it is our language, our mother tongue, which connects our free spirits to ancestors and homelands throughout the practice-led thesis journey.

² *Sons of the soil* is a Punjabi Jatt aphorism: Jatt is a tribe of the Punjab region. We have adapted this saying to emphasise that Fritz, Sylvester, and Asim, although from different countries, share similar childhood memories of learning the bond between their village people and the land, the geographic territory, where their ancestors have lived and farmed unbroken for centuries.

Si'umu, Sāmoa

Talofa o lo'u igoa o Fritz Filisi. Sa fa'afailele mai lo'u olaga ma ou ola a'e ma matua o lo'u tinā i totonu o Si'umu, o le nu'u o tua'a o lo'u tinā i le aiga o Tanuvasa-Tofaeono. O Si'umu o lo'o i ai i le ogatotonu o le itu i saute o Upolu i Samoa, e tusa ma le afe selau ma ona tupu ona tagata, e to'atele i tagata talavou i lalo o le tolusefulu tausaga ma tagata matutua. O tagatanu'u o la'u augatupulaga e ititi lona faitau aofa'i i totonu o le nu'u ona ua tele ona galulue i fafo i galuega fa'avaitaimi i Niu Sila ma Ausetalia. O nisi ua maua pepa nofomau i nei atunu'u.

O le to'atele o tagata femalagaa'i i galuega fa'alevā o malō fa'avaitaimi e le na'o Samoa e a'afia ai, ae o le ata lena o le a'afiaga o olaga i totonu o nu'u ona o feso'ota'iga tau tāmāoaiga o le kelope; ua mou ma leai ni tagata faigaluega i totonu o nu'u, ae ua atiina ai augatupulaga e fananau i fafo ma ola a'e ma lagona taumamao i fa'asinomaga i aiga, nu'u ma le gagana Samoa.

O lo'u auai i le AUT i lalo o Te Ara Poutama sa amataina ia Me i le 2021 ina ua taliaina ma maua lo'u avanoa i le Master of Philosophy e fa'atinoina ai i se ata i lalo o mea moni sa tutupu pe o lo'o tutupu ma ona fa'amatalaga auilili. E sili atu ma le lua tausaga sa taumafai ai fa'a part-time ma fa'auma ai lenei ata i le gagana Samoa, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, fa'atasi ai ma le Ekeseise po'o lona fa'amatalaina auilili i metotia o tu ma aganu'u o le ata filmed talanoa. E i ai sona ese'esega ma Timote Vaiioleti o le tagata a'oa'oina lelei o Tonga e tusa ai ma le talanoa, ona o lana ia fa'amatalaina, o le talanoa e leai ni ona tapusa e tutusa uma i le tagata sa'ili ma le tagata auai e leai ni fa'asologa po o le fa'atulagaina o le va nonofo ai (Vaiioleti, 2006; Hindley et al, 2020). O le filmed talanoa ia te a'u o le Samoa i le talanoaga ma le tuagane ma le uso o lo'u tinā e i ai ona tapusa (Filisi, 2023).

O lona uiga o le film talanoa sa fa'aaogaina le gagana o le vā fa'aaloalo, o le vā nonofo ai ma le faiā o le atali'i i le tuagane po o le uso o lona tinā. E ui e i ai o'u matai, ae o lo'o o'u talanoa i ta'ita'i po'o tagata matutua o lo'u aiga i luga o mea pu'e ata i mataupu – o si'i alofa i le vā o aiga Samoa i taimi o maliu – ona e fa'atāuāina io matou lagona fa'aleaiga. E i ai ni ta'iala e tāuā i le vā o fa'atalanoaga ona e tatau ona ou fa'alogolelei ae aua le tu'i fesili fa'asalavei pe fa'alavelave. O tagata matutua o lo'o ta'ita'iina le fa'asoa ma ta'imua i taiala i mea e tatau ona fa'atalanoaina ma mea e le tatau ona fa'asoaina.

I le taimi nei o lo'o o'u fa'asauni atu le talosaga mo le taliaina i le polokalame mo le tikeri fa'afoma'i fa'afilosofia ia Oketopa 2024. E mana'omia ai le tapenaina o ni ata pupu'u i ni mea

moni sa tutupu pe o lo'o tutupu i talanoaga a - tamali'i ma failauga - i le gagana Samoa i totonu o le alalafaga o Si'umu i le t'auā o le 'auala' i taimi o maliu. O lo'o fia sa'iliina fo'i le fa'aaogaina o le auala fa'aneionapo pe i ai ni suiga ona o femalaga'iga o tagata faigaluega i nisi atunu'u. E la'ititi lava ni tusitusiga ua fa'asalalauina e uiga i auala i totonu o nu'u i Samoa, ae le taumateina fo'i o se tasi o tu ma aganu'u t'auā tele ae le'i i ai ni feso'ota'iga mai fafo seia o'o mai i le taimi nei. O le auala o se tasi o tu e faia i taimi o maliu e o mai ai matai o le nu'u e taulagi se maliu i gafa, faiā, ma pa'ia fa'aleatunu'u ma tu'uina atu le tino maliu i Pulotu, o le nu'u o agaga.

Samoa to English

My name is Fritz Filisi and I was raised by my maternal grandparents in the ancestral village of our Tofaeono 'āiga, Si'umu. Situated on the southcentral coast of Upolu Island in Sāmoa, Si'umu has a population of eleven hundred-plus people who are mostly younger generations under thirty and the elderly. Si'umu people of my generation are the smaller share of the village population living at home because most are migrant workers on temporary visas to New Zealand and Australia, or permanent residents raising our families in these countries. The story of mass migration for the international labour market is not Sāmoa's alone, but an accurate reflection of how an interconnected global economy has impacted village life; emptied villages of the labour force; and created generations born overseas where every generation experiences more people feeling distant from their village roots and gagana Sāmoa (Samoan language) (Sagapolutele, 2018).



Figure 1. Filmed talanoa: a formal Samoan language conversation between Fritz Filisi (seated) and his maternal aunt outside the Consulate-General of Sāmoa in Mangere, South Auckland. Film crew: Rewi Amoamo (left), Asim Mukhtar (right).

My story of how I came to postgraduate study in Te Ara Poutama at AUT began in May of 2021 when I was admitted to the Master of Philosophy programme to undertake a practice-led thesis producing a short nonfiction film and exegesis. Over two years of part-time study, I completed my Samoan language film, *Fa'alavelave: Samoan Gift Exchange*, accompanied by an exegesis in English explaining the culture-specific methodology of filmed talanoa. Different to Tongan educator Timote Vaoiete's approach to talanoa being a free-flowing conversation on an equal playing field where the researcher and participants collapse social hierarchy (Vaoiete, 2006; Hindley et al, 2020), filmed talanoa for me as a Samoan researcher in conversation with my maternal uncle and aunt was the reverse scenario (Filisi, 2023).

I mean that filmed talanoa was in actual fact conversations conducted in formal Samoan language that were dictated by vā, the relational space between a nephew and his close kinfolk of an uncle and aunt. Irrespective of my matai titles, I was talking with my elders on camera about a topic – gift exchanges between Samoan families at funerals – which we felt as a family was an important discussion to be had. Certain rules of communication became imperative in the relational space in which my role was to listen carefully and not interrupt with pesky prods.

My elders led the dialogue and set parameters on what needed to be said about the topic of discussion, and what was irrelevant.

Currently, I am preparing my research proposal for admission to the doctoral programme at the October 2024 intake. I intend to create video sketches or short nonfiction films of Samoan language conversations with matai – orators and chiefs – from the villages of Si’umu district on the significance of the auala funerary ritual. Further to this, I want to find out how the contemporary practice of auala might have undergone change due to mass migration having relocated the adult working population to other countries.

Very little is published about the auala ceremony in Samoan villages, but quite possibly, it is the most important funerary tradition to have been maintained from pre-contact times up to the present day. Auala means pathway, and the funerary ritual involves village and district matai gathering to recite genealogies and oratories to send a deceased person safely on their journey from this mortal life to pulotu, the place of spirits.

Leimatu’a, Tonga

Ko hoku hingoa ko Sylvester Tonga pea na’e fanau’i au mou tupu hake ‘i Leimatu’a ‘i he motu lahi taha ‘o Vava’u, ko ‘Uta Vava’u, ‘i he fakatonga ‘o Tonga. ‘Oku fe’unga moe ‘otu motu kehekehe ‘e ono-taha ‘i Vava’u pea ‘oku ‘api ki ai ‘a e kakai ‘oku laka hake ‘i he toko taha mano fa-afe ‘a honau tokolahi. ‘Oku hau ‘a ‘eku fa’e mei he ki’i motu ko Lape, ‘aia ‘oku kilomita ‘e uanoa mei he fakatokelau ‘o Neiafu, koe kolomu’a ‘o Vava’u. ‘I Tisema 2023, na’a ku foki ki ‘api mo hoku famili keu hiki ‘a e filimi ki hoku Toketa ‘i Leimatu’a. ‘I he ‘aho ‘e taha, na’a mau folau ai he vaka kemau ‘eva ki Lape pea ‘e lava pe keke mamata ki he vitio koia ‘i [heni](#) pea malava keke fakafuofua ai ki he mahu’inga ‘o e fefolau’aki vaka ki he kakai ‘o Vava’u ‘aia ‘oku nau mama’o ‘aki e kilomita ‘e tolungeau mei he faka-tonga ‘o Nuku’alofa, koe kolomu’a ‘o Tonga. ‘I he taimi na’a ku tupu hake ai, na’e te’ekiai keu fakakaukau au ia ko Vava’u ko ha ki’i motu si’isi’i pea tokosi’i mo hono kakai. ‘I hotau mamani fakasosiale fakafelave’i kitautolu he kainga, moe ngaahi tauhi vaha’angatae, pea koe ngaahi talanoa ‘o e kolo ‘oku ne fakamatala’i ‘a e mahu’inga ‘o Vava’u ‘i he hisitolia ‘o Tonga. Pea neongo kuo ‘osi ta’u ‘e tolungofulu ‘a ‘eku nofo ‘i Aotearoa, ka ‘oku ou kei sio pe ki Vava’u koe kakai loto māfana, ‘o lahi ange ia he kakai ki he fakatonga ‘o Tonga.

‘I he ngaahi ta’u kuo hili, na’a ku ha’u ki AUT ‘i he taumu’a pe ‘e taha ‘i hoku ‘atamai: ‘aia keu ako malohi pea keu malava ‘o fakakakato ha’aku thesis ako toketa fekau’aki mo hoku kakai ‘i Leimatu’a. ‘I he level ‘o e ‘ako MA, na’a ku fononga mai mei he ‘eku ako public policy ki he

fakalakalaka he Pasifiki pea mei ai ki he tafa'aki ako he fetu'utaki pe faiongoongo. 'I Fepueli 2021, na'a ku foki mai ai ki he Te Ara Poutama 'o fakahu mei ai 'a 'eku polokalama ako toketa. 'Aia ko 'eku fa'u ha filimi talanoa mo'oni 'i he lea fakatonga miniti 'e ono-noa fekau'aki moe to'onga mo'ui 'i Vava'u pehe ki hano tohi 'a hono ngaahi fakamatala. 'Oku ou fakamatala'i 'a e founga 'oku malava ai e kau ngoue 'i Leimatu'a pehe ngaue 'a e kakai fefine kenau kei pukepuke 'enau to'onga mo'ui moe ngoue angamaheni 'o makatu'unga he tokoni 'a e kainga Leimatu'a 'i Aotearoa 'aia 'oku nau fakamaketi'i atu kiai e ngoue moe lalanga. Pea 'oku fakamatala'i leva e ngaahi 'element mahu'inga koia he filimi 'i hano tohi thesis e fa'unga fakakaukau moe anga hono ngaue'i fakatokolahi. 'I he fengue'aki koia moe ni'ihi 'oku kau he filimi ni, koe ngaue lahi 'eni tatua tefito ki he ngaahi teuteu koia ke hiki 'a e filimi pea fiema'u moe taimi lahi kiai, koe 'uhi ke ongo'i he kakai 'oku nau kau he filimi 'oku ngaue totonu 'aki honau le'o mo 'enau fakakaukau kene fakamatala mo fakafofonga'i lelei 'a e kolo kia kinautolu kotoa pe tenau mamata ai.

'Oku ou loto keu fakamalo'ia 'a hoku kakai mo fakaha heni kapau na'e ta'e'oua 'enau lotoma'ulalo pea mo fietokoni 'aki honau taimi, tokanga mo 'enau mahu'inga'ia, pehe ki he 'enau 'ilo moe taukei, na'e 'ikai ha'aku filimi pehe ni. 'Oku 'iai foki e ngaahi fekitoa fengau'e'aki 'oku ou fie fakama'ala'ala heni fekau'aki mo 'eku hoko koe tokotaha fa'u filimi ka koe memipa au 'o Leimatu'a, na'a ku folau mai ki Aotearoa pea 'oku fakataumu'a e filimi ni ki homau kakai. 'Uluaki, ko 'eku fakamatala a'usia 'oku fakaikiiki ia he ngaahi talanoa 'oku fakahoko 'ekinautolu he filimi ko hoku kainga moe famili. Koia ai, ko kimautolu pe mei he komiuniti Leimatu'a 'i he kolo pe mei tu'apule'anga 'i 'Aokalani, 'e malava kemau fakatalanoa mo ngaue'aki homau kakai mei he kolo he filimi 'aia 'oku malava kenau fakamatala homau ngaahi talanoa, pe fekau'aki mo kimautolu, koe kakai. 'Oku 'ikai 'uhinga ia ko Leimatu'a 'oku faingata'a 'a e fengau'e'aki mo kinautolu. He 'oku ou tui koe kakai loto lelei kimautolu mo fakafeohi ngofua 'i hono talitali lelei ha sola 'oku tu'uta mai ki homau kolo 'i Vava'u.

Ko 'eku poini, ko ha filimi 'oku fa'u 'e ha taha Leimatu'a fekau'aki mo kimautolu, pehe ki he makehe 'o 'emau to'onga mo'ui, 'oku fiema'u ha taha fa'u filimi 'o 'ikai ngata pe koe Leimatu'a ka ko ha taha 'oku 'ilo'i, maheni mo falalakiai e kakai.

Tongan to English

My name is Sylvester Tonga and I was born and raised in my paternal village Leimatu'a on the largest island of the Vava'u Group, 'Utu Vava'u, in northern Tonga. There are sixty-one islands of all shapes and sizes in Vava'u that are home to a population of just over fourteen thousand people. My mother comes from Lape island, which is twenty kilometres southward of Neiafu, the main town of Vava'u. In December of 2023, I journeyed home with my family to

film for my doctoral project based in Leimatu'a. We travelled by boat for a day visit to Lape and you can view a non-narrative video here to gain a visual impression of how important sea transport is to Vava'u people located more than three-hundred kilometres north of Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga (Tonga, 2024b). When I was growing up, I never thought of Vava'u as small islands of small village populations. Our social world was an expansive network of connections, relatives, and affectionate relationships, and our village stories spoke of the significance of Vava'u in Tongan history. Even after living in Aotearoa for thirty years, I still see Vava'u as *loto māfana*, the warm-hearted, larger-than-life people of northern Tonga.



Figure 2. Tālanga: Sylvester Tonga (front-right) taking part in an interactive social exchange between Leimatu'a migrant men at a kava club gathering.

I came to postgraduate study at AUT more than a decade ago with one goal in mind: that was, to work towards completing a doctoral thesis about my people in Leimatu'a. At master's level, my learning journey took me from studying public policy to Pacific development to communication studies (Tonga, 2020). In February of 2021, I returned to Te Ara Poutama and was admitted to the doctoral programme.

By undertaking a practice-led thesis producing a sixty-minute nonfiction film in the Vava'u dialect of Tongan (Taumoefolau, 2012), I am exploring how Leimatu'a farmers and women crafters maintain their traditional agricultural lifestyle with the support of Leimatu'a migrants in Aotearoa who are the overseas market (Tonga, 2024a). The film artefact is supplemented with an exegesis in English explaining the creative and collaborative process. Creative research has involved collaborative work between me – the researcher, and Leimatu'a participants. By this, the research project used a cooperative design. In partnership with the participants, the preparation stage before filming was thorough and time consuming, so that the Leimatu'a people featured in the film felt their voices and views were incorporated into the way the stories about our village were being crafted and conveyed to audiences.

I acknowledge that without my people's generous contributions of time, care, and knowledge I would not have a film (Helu-Thaman, 2008). There are interrelated factors I want to make clear about insider filmmaking as a Leimatu'a villager and migrant to Aotearoa whose people are the film subject. Firstly, my personal story is intricately woven into the stories presented on-screen by others who are my kith and kin. Relatedly, only an insider of the Leimatu'a communities at home in the village, and overseas in Auckland, could ever gain access to the participants who are telling the story of us, and by us, as a people. It is not that Leimatu'a is a closed society. I believe we are open-minded and kind-hearted about welcoming outsiders to our village territory in Vava'u. My point is, a screen production by Leimatu'a about ourselves, our distinct way of life, requires a filmmaker to not only be one of the people, but known and trusted by the people.

Māori, Tongan, Samoan film crew

فلمی عملے ماوری، ٹونگن، تے سامون ریوی آمومو تے نیکو میریڈیٹھ دا پنجابی زبان دی فلم سانجھا پنجاب نال کی تعلق ہو سکدا ہے (مختار، 2024)؟ جے تسی میرے کولوں پچھو تے بہت زیادہ۔

ان عاصم مختار ہے اور میں جنجوعہ ہاں، جو کہ پنجاب کے رہن والے پنجابی راجپوتوں دا اک قبیلہ ہے۔ پنجاب، جو کہ فارسی زبان دا لفظ ہے جدا مطلب پنج دریاواں دی زمین ہے، جو کہ شمال مغربی پاکستان تے شمال مشرقی ہندوستان دے علاقیاں تے مشتمل ہے۔ ۱۹۴۷ء جے برطانوی راج نے برطانوی ہندوستان دی ونڈ کر کے دو آزاد ملک، بھارت تے پاکستان بنا دتے سی۔ جدے نتیجے جے پنجاب دا علاقہ ان دواں آزاد ریاستاں دے درمیان تقسیم کردتا گیا سی۔ مسلمانان نوں اپنے پنڈ چھڈ کے پاکستان ول ہجرت کرنی پئی تے سیکھاں تے ہندواں نوں دوجے پاسے بھارت جانا پیا۔ ہندوستان تے پاکستان دی ونڈ دا ساڈے لوکاں اُتے تباہ کن نتیجہ نکلیا، ایس ہجرت دے دوران لکھاں لوک مارے گئے۔ اج وی ہندوستان تے پاکستان دے پنجابی ایس جبری تقسیم دا ماتم منان دے نے، نالے پنجابی لوکاں نوں اک دوجے نالوں تے انان دے مشترکہ ثقافتی ورثے تے زبان نالوں منقطع کرن لئی اک عسکری سرحد وی بنا دتی گئی سی۔ پنجابی بولی، پنجاب دے رہن والے لوکاں وانگوں ہی رنگا رنگ ہے، ایڈے ۱۸ مختلف لہجے نے جو کہ پنجاب جے رہن والے قبیلیاں، برادریاں تے اوہناں دے علاقیاں دے نال جڑے ہوئے نے۔

لوکان نوں ۸۰ سال توں انان دے آبائی علاقیاں توں دور کرن دی وجہ نال پنجاب دی ثقافت تے لہجیاں دی رنگا رنگی مردی جا رہی ہے۔

کہانی دے بارے زیادہ کچھ دسے بغیر میں تو انوے دسنا چاہنا ہاں کے میں پنجابی زبان جے اک نان فکشن فلم بنای ہے جوکے میرے پریکٹس لیڈ ڈاکٹرل پراجیکٹ لئی ہے۔ میری ڈاکٹریٹ ریسرچ دے امتحان دی تاریخ تیزی نال اپڑ رہی اے، جو ایس سال دے وسط جے ہے۔ ایس لئی، میں گزشتے چار سالوں توں وی ودھ، کووڈ-19 دیاں رکاوٹاں دی وجہ توں فلم بناؤن دے عمل تے غور کر رہا ہاں، نال ہی نال، ساؤتھ آکلینڈ جے رہن والی میری پنجابی کمیونٹی دے جذبے دا وی ذکر کرنا چاہندا ہاں، جنہاں نے ساڈی ایہ فلم مکمل کرن جے پورا پورا ساتھ دتا ہے۔ ایہ کہانی ساڈے ونڈ دی ہے جو کے نسلوں دے دکھ تے غم دی ہے۔ لیکن ایہ کہانی چھوٹی، شائستہ جت دی وی ہے، جو کے پاکستان تے ہندوستان توں ہجرت کرن والے لوک اکٹھے اوٹھیاں اوٹھیاں جے رہن والیاں دی ہے جنان نوں ایتھے آ کے اپنے رشتے تے یاریاں نوں نویں سرے توں جوڑن دا پورا موقع ملیا ہے۔ ایساں آزادانہ ماحول جے ملن جلول توں، بطور پنجابی ساڈے رشتے مضبوط ہوئے، تے ایہ گل ساڈی تنوع دے باوجود، سانوں اکٹھا کرن جے تے سانوں سانجھی ثقافتی اصولوں نوں ترجیح دین والے بہتر انسان بنان وچ مددگار ثابت ہوئی اے۔

س سوال دے بارے واپس آنے ہاں جو کے ماوری، ٹونگن تے سامون فلم دے عملے وارے جے کیتا گیا سی جنان نے میری ڈاکٹرل فلم سانجھا پنجاب دی شوٹنگ کیتی ہے، ریوی آمومو جو پوتا ہے تی فانو۔ آ-آپانوی تے ٹونگا دا تے نیکومیرڈیٹھ جو پوتا ہے ساموا تے ٹونگا دا دے نال کم کرنا میرے لئی اک اعزاز دی گل ہے۔ فلم بندی دیاں تکنیکی مہارت رکھن دے نال نال ایساں دونوں نے مینوں سماجی طور تے قبولیت دا سیہی مطلب سکھایا ہے، جس طرح انان دونوں نے عزت تے انکساری نال پنجابی کاسٹ دے نال فلم شوٹنگز دے دوران کام کیتا تے لوکان نوں عزت دتی۔ فلم بندی دے دوران، خاموشی نال کاسٹ دا حصہ بنن دے نال نال احتیاط نال ایہ دیکھنا کہ کنج کرداراں دے وچکار مکالمے دے بہاؤ وچ ممکنہ حد تک کم توں کم رکاوٹ پیدا کر کے اپنے کیمرے نال تصویر تے آواز دی ریکارڈنگ کیتی جائے، ایہناں دیاں ایس سنجیدہ کوششاں نے مینوں ایہ گل دکھائی کہ اوہ سچ مچ ساڈے لوکان نوں ساؤتھ اوکلینڈ دے ہم قوم دے طور تے قبول دے۔ ایساں نے میر لوکان نال جو کے پنجاب توں ہجرت کر کے آئے نے ویسا ہی سلوک کیتا جیسا اوہ اپنے لوکان نال کر دے۔

جنوبی آکلینڈ جے پنجابی مہاجر دے طور تے رہندے پچھلے دس سالوں جے، میں کئی واری اے محسوس کیتا ہے کہ میرے لوگ، تے عام طور تے برصغیر پاک و ہند دے جنوبی ایشیائی باشندے، اوٹھیاں وچے ناپسندیدہ اور ناچاہے نے۔ لیکن، میرے فلمی عملے نے جو ٹونگا اور ساموا دے تارکین وطن دے بچے نے، اوہناں نے مینوں ایہ امید دلائی ہے کہ میری آن والی نسل جو کے، اوٹھیاں وچے پرورش پا رہی ہے دے تجربات میرے تجربے نالوں مختلف ہون گے۔ وقت دے نال نال، جدوں اوہ ریوی تے نیکودی طرح جوانی وچ داخل ہون گے تاں مینوں یقین اے کہ اوہناں وچ وی تمام تارکین وطن، جنہاں نے بغیر کسی سرحد دے نویں زمیناں، نویں زندگیاں تے نویں کمیونٹی بنان دے طریقے سکھ لئی ہجرت کیتی ہے دے لئی ہمدردی تے رحم ہووے گا۔

Punjabi to English

What does a Māori, Tongan, Samoan film crew of Rewi Amoamo and Niko Meredith have to do with a Punjabi language film called *Sanjha Punjab* (Mukhtar, 2024)? Quite a lot, if you ask me.



Figure 3. Rewi Amoamo (Māori, Tongan), Asim Mukhtar (Janjua, Punjabi Rajput), Niko Meredith (Samoan, Tongan): film crew for *Sanjha Punjab* on the set at Takanini Gurdwara.

My name is Asim Mukhtar and I am Janjua, a clan of the Punjabi Rajput tribe from the Punjab region. Punjab, which is Farsi (Persian) for the land of five rivers, reaches across northwest Pakistan and northeast India. In 1947, the British administration exited their colony of British India by creating two independent states, India and Pakistan. The aftermath saw the Punjab region being divided up between these independent states. Muslims were forced to flee their villages and migrate to Pakistan, while Sikhs and Hindus fled in the opposite direction to India. The separation of our land and people had catastrophic consequences with more than a million people slain while scrambling across the India-Pakistan border.

Still, to this day, the Punjabis of India and Pakistan lament the divisions forced upon us in which a militarised border was erected to deliberately disconnect our people from one another, and our shared cultural heritage and language. The Punjabi language is as diverse as her people with eighteen different dialects belonging to tribes, clans, and their territories within the greater Punjab region. Nowadays, our cultural and dialect diversity is dying because people have been removed from their origin places of ancestry for almost eighty years.

Without giving away too much about the storyline, I have purposely created a seventy-minute nonfiction film in the Punjabi language for my practice-led doctoral project. My submission date for examination is fast approaching mid-year. Hence, I am conscientiously reflecting on the past four-plus years of Covid-19 disruptions to filming, along with the spirit of my South Auckland Punjabi community who have stood with me to see this film made by us come to fruition. The story about us is one of separation and inter-generational grief and trauma. But it also a story of small, humble wins in migrating to South Auckland, where most Punjabi migrants from India and Pakistan live in Aotearoa and having every opportunity to rekindle our kinships and friendships. Just being able to mix freely has strengthened our relationships as ethnic Punjabis and made us better human beings for valuing unity, and prioritising our shared cultural values, amidst our diversity.

Returning to the question I raised about a Māori, Tongan, Samoan film crew shooting my doctoral film, *Sanjha Punjab* (Mukhtar, 2024), it has been an honour to work with Rewi Amoamo, a grandson of Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Te Whakatōhea, and Tonga, and Niko Meredith, a grandson of Samoa and Tonga. Aside from their professional filming expertise, they taught me the true meaning of social acceptance in the way they both worked respectfully and humbly through film shoots with the Punjabi cast. Their conscientious efforts to fit in quietly with the cast and watch carefully for cues on how to operate their camera and sound recording equipment with the least possible interruption to the flow of dialogue between characters, allowed me to see that they genuinely accepted my people as a fellow community of South Auckland. They treated my people, migrants from the Punjab region, with similar amounts of respect they would give their own people.

In the past ten years of living as a Punjabi migrant in South Auckland, there have been times when I have felt that my people, and South Asians from the Indian subcontinent more generally, are unwelcome and unwanted in Aotearoa. However, my film crew who are the descendants of migrant grandparents from Tonga and Samoa have given me hope that my children growing up in Aotearoa will have different experiences to mine. In time, as they reach young adulthood like Rewi and Niko, I believe they too will have empathy and compassion for all migrants who have braved the journey to new lands, new lives, and a lifetime of learning how to form new communities without borders (Mukhtar, 2020).

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We thank our primary supervisor Teena Brown Pulu for teaching us to value our thinking. Her dedication to talanoa mo 'ekau kau ako (Tongan for talking with students) and reviewing and editing our work goes way beyond the average educator. She has a talent for decoding and making sense of Fritz's *Sāmlish* (Samoan-English), Sylvester's *Tonglish* (Tongan-English), and Asim's *Punjlish* (Punjabi-English). A joke we share among ourselves is that we have a clever reply for Teena when she pitches the pointed questions: "What language are you speaking? What language are you writing?" The correct answer is: (a) *Sāmlish*, (b) *Tonglish*, or (c) *Punjlish*, depending on which one of us is being interrogated.

Joking aside, words cannot express our indebtedness to Teena for standing by us and believing in the power of our people's stories assembled on-screen. We will remember her generous spirit and sharp intellect long after we have completed our doctoral projects.

The lesson we have learned from Teena's guidance is that a supervisor's role is not merely to transfer knowledge and skills. Rather, they assume responsibility for imparting their cultural values and line of reasoning for maintaining these values, especially under institutional pressure to concede to popular opinion. Having said that, we now appreciate that as Samoan, Tongan, and Punjabi creative researchers, we share an ethical duty of service to our peoples' education advancement, and the building of social and cultural capital for future generations.

Fa'afetai tele, mālō e ngāue lahi, shukria ji.

Biographies

Fritz Filisi is Si'umu. Si'umu is his ancestral village and people on the south-central coast of Upolu Island in Sāmoa. He is preparing a research proposal for admission to the AUT doctoral programme at the October 2024 intake. Fritz will undertake a practice-led doctorate, creating Samoan video sketches in Si'umu on the auala (pathway) funerary ritual. In a funerary context, the auala is enacted by matai (titled people) gathering to recite oratories for a deceased relative's safe passage to pulotu (the spirit world).

Sylvester Tonga is Leimatu'a. Leimatu'a is his ancestral village and people in the Vava'u islands of northern Tonga. He is in the third year of his practice-led doctorate. His project

creates a nonfiction film in Tongan about anga fakaleimatu'a (the Leimatu'a way) in relation to farming traditions. The filming takes place with Leimatu'a migrants in Auckland and Leimatu'a villagers back home in Vava'u.

Asim Mukhtar is Janjua. Janjua is a clan of the Punjabi Rajput tribe of the Punjab region. His village is Jodhay in Narowal district. He is preparing to submit his practice-led doctorate for examination. His research has produced a nonfiction film in Punjabi about Punjabi migrants from India and Pakistan living in South Auckland.

Expressly, the camera is focused on how the Punjabis are rekindling their kith and kin relationships after almost eighty years of being separated by a militarised border in their home countries.



Figure 4. Fritz Filisi, Sylvester Tonga, Asim Mukhtar in Te Pūrenge, Ngā Wai o Horotiu.

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