

Chapter Three

Tongans

Background

More than 150 islands make up the Kingdom of Tonga, they range in size with the largest being the main island Tongatapu at 260 square kilometres. Niuatoputapu, Niuafu'ou are the most northern Islands, then Vava'u, Ha'apai and 'Eua which is situated southeast of Tongatapu. The rest of the islands are scattered around and between these main islands and only 36 of Tonga's 150 islands are inhabited. (Lay, 1996)

The first sightings of Tonga were by Dutch explorers in 1616 and Abel Tasman later chartered the southern Island in 1643 but it was James Cook that arrived in 1773 that had the most influence. Cook made two subsequent visits and due to the hospitality he and his crew received from the people, Cook named Tonga the Friendly Isles. In 1797, the London Missionary Society landed a small group of evangelists which was followed by other missionaries and so began the conversion and Christianisation of Tonga and its people. (ibid)

Society, Politics and Economics

Tongan society, politics and economics is complex and is a mixture of traditional hereditary rights and customs, Christian doctrines, western influences and local, regional and global relationships.

Tonga has a highly stratified and hierarchical society. There are three levels of Tongan society, which is often illustrated in a triangle representing the numbers of and location of the levels. At the top and most elite is the *Ha'a Tu'i*/monarchy, then the *hou'eiki*/nobles or chiefs with more but still with limited numbers as this level like the monarchy is only attained through hereditary. The last level which is resigned for the rest of the population is the *kau tu'a*/commoners.

This stratified hierarchy also came with powers of authority and principles of traditional distribution followed that hierarchical pattern faithfully. Therefore, chiefs had access to more

wealth and resources than commoners, although things have changed in some ways. (Helu, 1999a)

Influences such as education, ordination into clergy, business success, accumulation of wealth, inter level marriages has in recent times encouraged movement and interaction between the highly stratified levels. Although hereditary blood lineages remain central to personal and familial status and holds more power and rank than the external factors mentioned above.

The succession of King Taufa'ahau Tupou I (King George Tupou I) to the throne opened the door to a flow of western influences into Tonga. The constitution was developed together with a Wesleyan missionary Shirley Baker and accepted and signed in 1875. Tonga was the only Pacific Island nation never directly colonised, however it became a British protectorate in 1900 which meant Tonga retained its internal independence.

At present government is made up of a Privy Council, a Cabinet and a Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly consists of nine nobles voted in by the circle of thirty nobles and nine people's representatives voted in at a general election. The King appoints the Prime Minister, nine cabinet ministers and the governors for Ha'apai, Vava'u, Niutoputapu and Niufo'ou who are also members of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, twelve people are either directly appointed by the King or voted in by the nobles and nine people are voted in by general election. (Campbell, I.C 2001)

Politics in Tonga today is wrought with demands for change, calls for democracy and a more accountable and transparent government. In recent time the growth of the *Katoa*¹⁷ movement supports a faction of traditionalists and their promotion of maintaining the status quo. Along the continuum are a number of groups and people who would like to see a mixture of both the old and new systems in place.

Developments of these new systems have been long debated and solutions obscure, but politics in Tonga continues to change and reflects a population with changing values, principles and expectations. Helu (1999a) observes some of these changing values and expectations stating that:

“[Tongan]...peoples expectations have soared very high in recent years we find them increasingly dissatisfied with traditional affluence... and all are fascinated by the high consumption and physicality of modern lifestyles. People regard this traditional affluence with disdain and look at it as poverty. Everyone wants money and modern luxuries.”

¹⁷ Traditionalist political movement

Tonga still hugely operates at a subsistence level. Although land and sea provide crops and marine life in abundance the lack of industry and business investment means that there is a dependence on costly imported goods such as foods, vehicles, and fuel along with other consumer goods. Aid and remittances contributes to a significant portion of the Kingdom's overseas income and is dependent on the good will of expatriates and external government relationships and policies.

As Helu describes in the quote above, Tongans have become accustomed to the modern and desire some forms of a materialistic western lifestyle. Halapua (1997) comments on the negative effect of remittances for Tongans 'Tongans exploiting themselves'. Halapua refers to the continual dependence that Tongans cultivate on remittances from expatriates overseas. The dual effect of remittances is that Tongans in Tonga receiving the money remains dependent on these donations and Tongans overseas are often not in a financial position to be sending money to relatives in Tonga.

***Kainga*¹⁸ System**

The Tongan *kainga* system is as stratified as the larger society. Within the *kainga* system are hierarchies of people that hold rank and power due to their place of birth, such as first, last or middle child, gender, the place of birth, rank and powers of their parents, grandparents and so forth. As remarked by Helu (1999b) 'social Tongan make-up is based around *kainga* relationships and ties'.

Helu (1999a) believes that the *kainga* network is built and maintained as much for economic and wealth distribution as it is for kinship ties. Helu believes that the *kainga* network is a pivotal axis where societal and familial relationships form the basis for economic gain and distribution. Helu, states that the *kainga* system is about 'profit-sharing, re-distribution and discourages profiteering and capitalistic tendencies'. He adds:

“The one single social factor that has stood Tongans well in all ages and still does so is the extended family or clan. It is Tonga’s social security...the *kainga* welfare system”

At the International Gambling Conference¹⁹, 2004, Dr Charles Livingstone²⁰ in his presentation about gambling activity in Australia explains that the relationship between the community and

¹⁸ Extended family network

the gambling industry can be likened to a 'reverse Robin Hood' that is taking from the poor (and vulnerable) and giving to the rich.

In line with this notion Helu (1997)²¹ has explained '*kainga* as an institutionalised Robin Hood, taking from the haves and giving to the have-nots.' Equal or fair distribution of resources and wealth becomes an integral role within the *kainga* system.

In discussions with the Tongan advisory group, it was clear that one of the effects of migration is the fragmentation and break-down of close *kainga* networks and thus a less than adequate *kainga* system is being observed and practiced in New Zealand.

This observation is also commented on by Helu (1999b) when he says that the 'idea of the nuclear family is increasingly becoming more significant with the weakening of the *kainga*'. The changing roles of men and women, external factors such as inter-racial marriages, geographical distance, low-socio economic status and others result in the fragmentation of more traditional forms of *kainga* systems and practices.

Any efforts in trying to understand Tongans in a socio-cultural context needs to acknowledge and analyse the roles of the *kainga* network and how it has been transferred into New Zealand. External factors that contribute to any forms of social hazards or the determinants of health need to address *kainga* systems and its role in the life of Tongans in the Auckland community.

Religious Affiliations

Another area that needs direct attention is religious affiliations and the role of the church in many Tongan communities around Auckland.

The first London Missionary Society missionaries began the process of conversion and Christianisation of Tonga in 1797. Since then there have been a steady growth of churches established in Tonga, hence we witness a people proud of their Christian heritage and much of Tongan culture, custom and protocol today is a mixture of the traditional and Christian belief.

¹⁹ International Gambling Conference: Hosted by Gambling Research Centre, Auckland University of Technology and Gambling Problem Helpline, Auckland NZ May 13th -14th 2004.

²⁰ Australian Institute for Primary Care, La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia.

²¹ (Paper delivered at the conference of the Tongan History Association, Canberra, Jan. 1997 and reprinted from the collection of papers from the conference, D.Scarr, W.N.Gunson and J.Terrell (eds), *Echoes of Pacific War* (Canberra 1998)

In Tonga today we have congregations in:

1. The Free Wesleyan Church/Methodist
2. Free Church of Tonga (a break-away denomination from the Wesleyans)
3. Siasi Tau'atina Fakakonisitutone (a break-away from the Free Church of Tonga)
4. Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki
5. Roman Catholic
6. Anglican Church
7. Seventh Day Adventist
8. Salvation Army
9. Baptist
10. Pentecostal
11. Baha'i Faith
12. Siasi Tokaikolo (another break-away denomination from the Wesleyan church)
13. Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
14. Other charismatic churches

Within the scope of these small islands are all these churches and various denominations. Churches in Tonga hold a lot of power and ministers of the clergy become leaders to many of their captive audiences within the parishes and congregations. These churches have been well established in Tonga and Tongan people have grown up a member of a church from birth and claim Christianity as part of their heritage and culture.

Tongans who have migrated overseas take with them their Christian beliefs and build communities around their faith with other Tongan people. In Tonga the community one ultimately belonged to was based around the *kainga* system, next to that was the village and the church. Social practices were conducted in the correct and most appropriate way depending on the social context of the community.

In Auckland, commentators have noted the growth of multi-million dollar church complexes with its main funding mostly dependent on the local community/congregation itself.

Kumi Fonua: Tongan Migration

Migration is not a new phenomenon for Tongans. Traditional stories of the 'great Polynesian migration' have been documented through art, song, dance, poetry, oratory and genealogical claims to gods, mystical lands and great seafaring peoples and traditions. Many of the reasons for the 'great Polynesian migration' was due to famine, warfare and in some cases suffering under oppressive rule. (Helu, 1999a)

The difference in more recent migration can be seen in 'internal and external migration during and since WWII is the fact that people were enticed to travel and leave their home islands by what they believed to be easy access to resources and substantial *palangi*²² resources...[and] benefits and welfare for children such as access to education and efforts to financially assist families left behind in the home islands'. Helu (1985)

According to the 1996 census report the bulk of Tongan migration took place in the 1970's when there was a scheme between the two governments to allow Tongans into New Zealand on a restricted working permit. Employment was abundant in the then booming process industry and unskilled labourers were in demand. During this time Tongans also migrated to Australia and America and there are now significant pockets of Tongan communities throughout these countries.

The second major influx of Tongan migration to New Zealand occurred in 1987, when the New Zealand government permitted visa free entry into New Zealand for three months. Many of the people that came during this scheme like the earlier scheme never returned. The main characteristics of this lot of new migrants were similar to that of the first in that many came without qualifications, low educational achievement, limited communication/language and occupants of lowly paid factory or clerical jobs. (Tu'itahi-Tahaafe, 2003)

Most Tongans in New Zealand still practise their own customs and traditions while adapting and living in New Zealand. They donate money to their churches and send money back to their home Islands to fulfil family commitments and obligations. At the same time, they experience modern lifestyles including gambling. These influences are factors in the conscious and subconscious changes made within the Tongan family structure.

Asiasiga and Gray discuss '[Pacific] people moving to a new country often attempt to hold on to their familiar ways of being and doing but those ways are not always successful in the new environment. Perhaps one of the most significant points about migration for Pacific families is the break down of kinship ties and the loss of collective support.' (1998)

When migrants leave their home islands "new relationships are forged and others reshaped...the cultural identity of migrants is therefore judged by three significant groups: the host society, the members of their own migrant community, their families that remain in the islands" (Mitaera, 1997)

²² Palangi – pakeha or persons of European descent – white people

One of the re-occurring central themes or concepts in this research is the effects of migration in almost all parts of Tongan socio-cultural contexts. Migration by far has the most far reaching effects on Tongans today and is a vital consideration when discussing the various public health issues of Tongans in Auckland/New Zealand.

***'Apart from its economic benefits, migration has a very real educative effect on Tongans...some return to the Kingdom show themselves almost without exception to have become politically aware, sensitive to social issues and economically progressive.'* Helu (1985)**

The Tongan Profile in New Zealand / Auckland

In 2001, Tongan ethnic group was the third largest Pacific ethnic group living in New Zealand and has a fastest growth of population compared with other Pacific ethnic groups. Tongan people accounted for 18% (40,700) of the total New Zealand Pacific population in 2001.

Geographic Distribution

In 2001, Tongan people accounted for 18% (40,700) of the total New Zealand Pacific population. 94 percent of Tongan people in New Zealand lived in main urban areas (population of 30,000 or more). The Auckland region contained 78 percent of Tongan people in New Zealand: 35 percent (14,775) in South Auckland, 32 percent (13,173) in Central Auckland and 11 percent (4,656) in North and West Auckland.

Among the district areas, about half of Tongan population (45%) in the Auckland region resided in South Auckland area, 41 percent in Auckland City and 14 percent in West and North Auckland areas. (Table 16)

Among the territorial areas, Manukau City has the highest Tongan population (42 percent) which was followed by Auckland City (40 percent), Waitakere City (Nine percent), North Shore City (five percent), Franklin District (about two percent), Papakura District (more than one percent) and Rodney District (less than one percent). (Table 17)

Table 16: Distribution of Tongan Population in the Auckland Region and its Territories in 2001: by Number and Percentage of Total Pacific Population

| Area | Pacific Population | Tongan population | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|
| | | No. | % A | % B | % C |
| New Zealand | 231,801 | 40,716 | 17.6 | | |
| Auckland Region | 154,680 | 32,541 | 21.1 | 79.9 | 100 |
| Auckland Central | 47,616 | 13,173 | 27.7 | 32.4 | 40.5 |
| Manukau City | 72,381 | 13,848 | 19.1 | 34.0 | 42.5 |
| Franklin District | 1,449 | 519 | 35.8 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| Papakura District | 3,063 | 408 | 13.3 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| North Shore City | 5,907 | 1,569 | 26.6 | 3.9 | 4.8 |
| Waitakere City | 23,241 | 2,895 | 12.5 | 7.1 | 8.9 |
| Rodney District | 1,272 | 192 | 15.1 | 0.5 | 0.6 |

% A = Proportion of total Pacific population in the respective area.

% B = Proportion of total Tongan population in New Zealand.

% C = Proportion of total Tongan population in Auckland.

Table 17: Distribution of Tongan Population in New Zealand, Auckland Region and its Districts in 2001: by Number and Percentage of Total Pacific Population

| Area | Total Pacific Population | Tongan Population | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------|------|
| | | No. | % A | % B |
| New Zealand | 231,801 | 40,716 | 17.6 | |
| Auckland Region | 154,680 | 32,604 | 21.1 | |
| Auckland Central | 47,616 | 13,173 | 27.7 | 40.4 |
| South Auckland | 76,893 | 14,775 | 19.2 | 45.3 |
| North & West Auckland | 30,420 | 4,656 | 15.3 | 14.3 |

% A = Proportion of Pacific population of the respective area.

% B = Proportion of Tongan population in the Auckland Region.

Table 18: Distribution of Tongan Population in Auckland Region and its Territories: By Number and Percentage in 2001

| Area | No. | % A | % B |
|-------------------|--------|------|------|
| New Zealand | 40,716 | | |
| Auckland Region | 32,604 | 80.1 | |
| Auckland Central | 13,173 | 32.4 | 40.4 |
| Manukau City | 13,848 | 34.0 | 42.5 |
| Franklin District | 519 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| Papakura District | 408 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| North Shore City | 1,569 | 3.9 | 4.8 |
| Waitakere City | 2,895 | 7.1 | 8.9 |
| Rodney District | 192 | 0.5 | 0.6 |

% A = Proportion of Tongan population in New Zealand.

% B = Proportion of Tongan population in Auckland.

Thirty-six percent of Pacific population in Franklin District were Tongans, This was followed by Auckland City (28 percent), North Shore City (27 percent), Manukau City (19 percent), Rodney District (15 percent), Papakura District (13 percent), and Waitakere City (about 13 percent). (Table 18).

Age and Sex Distribution

The Tongan population is very youthful. 43 percent were under 15 years of age, compared with 23 percent of the New Zealand population and less than 40 percent of Pacific population. Only three percent of Tongan population were aged 65 years and over and 54 percent were age group – 15-64. The sexes were evenly distributed between males (20,400) and females (20,300).

Place of Birth

In 2001, New Zealand-born Tongan accounted for 53 percent and overseas-born Tongan accounted for 47 percent of the total Tongan population in New Zealand. Among the overseas-born Tongan in New Zealand, 94 percent gave Kingdom of Tonga as their birthplace. Between 1996 and 2001, the New Zealand-born Tongan population grew more quickly than the overseas-born Tongan population. (33 percent versus 27 percent). Forty-two percent of the total Tongan population in New Zealand who were born overseas and 15 percent of the Tongan population who were born in New Zealand were in age-group 15 years and over. Forty percent of the overseas-born Tongan had been living in New Zealand for between 10 and 20 years, whereas 22 percent had been resident for more than 20 years, and five percent had been in New Zealand for less than one year. (2001 Statistics New Zealand Census).

Duration of Residence in New Zealand

Forty percent of the overseas-born Tongan had been living in New Zealand for between 10 and 20 years at the time of the 2001 Census, whereas 22 percent had been resident for more than 20 years, and five percent had been in New Zealand for less than one year.

Language

In 2001, majority of Tongan (79 percent) were unable to speak English and were born overseas. Of those born overseas and unable to speak English, more than half (54 percent) had been in New Zealand for more than 10 years. And almost three-quarters (73 percent) of Tongan people who could not speak English were over 20 year of age.

This is important to note as service providers need to take language and communication mediums into account when planning strategies and interventions.

Family Composition

In 2001, 33 percent of Tongan people were living in extended family situation. The overseas-born population was more likely to live in households with two or more families than New Zealand-born Tongans (25 percent versus 19 percent).

Religion

In 2001, 92 percent of Tongan people reported an affiliation with a Christian religion. The most common religious affiliation were Methodist (45 percent of those with an affiliation) and Catholic (22 percent) followed by Latter-day Saints (11 percent), Pentecostal (4 percent) and Presbyterian (4 percent). Overseas-born Tongans were more likely to report a religious affiliation than New Zealand born Tongan. (98 percent versus 89 percent). Church affiliations play a major role in identifying Tongan individuals and families. It remains an important part of the locating and reaching the Tongan Auckland community.

Socio-economic Status

Pacific people in New Zealand are over-represented at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum compared with other New Zealanders. Among them, Tongan people stand at lower hierarchy in most socio-economic categories. (Table 19 shows socio-economic status of Tongan, Pacific people and New Zealanders; Statistics NZ, 2001).

Table 19: Shows Comparison of Socio-economic Indicators Between Tongan and Other Ethnic Groups.

| Population group | New Zealand | Pacific people | Tongan |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|
| SES Categories | | | |
| Unemployment | 07% | 16% | 17% |
| Median Annual Income | \$ 18,500 | \$ 14,800 | \$ 11,800 |
| House Ownership | 55% | 26% | 23% |
| Motor vehicle Access | 93% | 88% | 90% |
| Telephone Access | 95% | 87% | 86% |
| Internet Access | 43% | 20% | 17% |

% = Percentage of total ethnic specific population
(Adapted from Statistics New Zealand, 2001)

Tongan population distribution and Deprivation level

South Auckland district contain more areas of high deprivation level compared with Auckland Central and West & North Auckland. The Auckland Central and West & North Auckland had more areas of low to moderate deprivation level as shown in map 2²³

According to the information on the distribution of Tongan population based on Census Area Unit (CAU), there were more numbers of CAU with high population (> 800) resided in South Auckland district where more areas of high deprivation level, see map 2.

In contrast there were a few number of CAU with Tongan population (300-600) in Auckland Central and few CAU of total population of (200-300) in West and North Auckland.

As highlighted in Map 1²⁴, there were more gambling sites in areas with high and medium deprivation compared with areas with low deprivation .

Therefore it can be drawn a conclusion that most Tongan people resided in areas with high and medium deprivation where there were more availability and accessibility of gambling sites.

²³ Map 2 – see appendix 5

²⁴ Map 1 – see appendix 4

Gambling in Tonga; Traditional Forms of Gambling

In more recent times various forms of gambling has been accepted by the majority of Tongans as a means to fulfilling familial, social, cultural and religious obligations and duties. Increasingly, Tongan communities participate in gambling activities to fundraise for projects. These activities are seen as 'giving or fulfilling' social obligations.

Some of these activities are tote tickets, Lotto Bonus tickets, *Lulu* (raffles), housie/bingo, battons-up and to a lesser extent card games such as Kati or poker are used to fundraise to *fua fatongia*, *fua kavenga*. Much of these activities have not been sufficiently researched however, there is a general consensus in the Tongan community that these forms of gambling are acceptable and encouraged as a way to generate funds for various projects of goals. It is also commonly known that these events are global and extend to other Tongan communities in Australia, America and other parts of New Zealand where there are significant numbers of Tongan residents.

Traditional forms of gambling in Tonga was harder to pinpoint as there was very little research, however there were traditional children's games which could have possible links to gambling that were and are still popular in Tonga. Games such as marbles where you play risking losing your marbles against the other players through participation in the game or increasing your marbles by winning. There were other games for children such as *lipate* and *heu*.

Lipate literally means throwing the *pate*. *Pate* is the protective end of the sea-slug, '*elili*. Players compete by throwing their token *pate* at a circle drawn on the ground. The player whose *pate* lands closest to the centre of the circle is the winner. *Heu* is a game played with two sticks, one short approximately 30cms, the other long approximately 90cms. The short one is placed at various positions over or in a small hole in the ground – about 5cms deep. The player uses the long stick to swipe the short stick from the hole. The further a player flicks the short stick from the hole determines the accumulation of points. The distance is measured using the long stick. Another game played by both adults and children is the *kasivaki*, a sea game where a piece of rock is hidden in the sea bed by one of the participants and the rest the divers will compete as to who will find and bring it up to the surface.

However, to say that these games were forms of early or even primitive gambling is not entirely correct. Some of these games were designed to develop skill either in accurate throwing for fishing and hunting or strength in the parts of the body for the same reasons.

In a recent article in the *Taimi o Tonga* newspaper, it was noted that bingo was becoming a popular game in both the outer villages and in town. Although bingo has been played in church halls for fundraising around Tonga the difference with this particular outlet was that it was becoming a business for the people/family that were running the games.

They started in one of the outer villages, *Veitongo* and because it grew and people were coming from all over the Island to play bingo the organisers decided to run another game venue in *Nuku'alofa*²⁵ so that the central western side of Tonga could attend the town games and the central eastern side of Tonga continued going to *Veitongo*, which is located in central Tonga.

The organisers noted that because they didn't have much success in education and there was no other way of making money for their family they decided to venture into organising bingo events. They are pleased and surprised at the rapid success of their business venture and make a significant amount of money from the profits to continue the games as well as thinking further expansion.

Interview findings point to a number of social, cultural and spiritual reasons why Tongan people gamble but very little is understood about a Tongan worldview or understanding that helps shape or contributes to a gambling problem. Without any 'real' historical or traditional forms of gambling and practices in Tonga, the development of a definition or framework to help understand Tongan gambling in Auckland has been on-going and developed alongside the investigation with the identification of various themes, concepts and issues.

²⁵ Nuku'alofa – Capital city of Tonga