



GENDER

WOMEN IN
TONGA

CURRENT ROLE OF WOMEN IN TONGAN SOCIETY

The certainty regarding the role of women in Tongan society may cause surprise, for all too evidently the role and rank of women in Tonga is unique in the world. However, it is under threat from modern Tongan women.

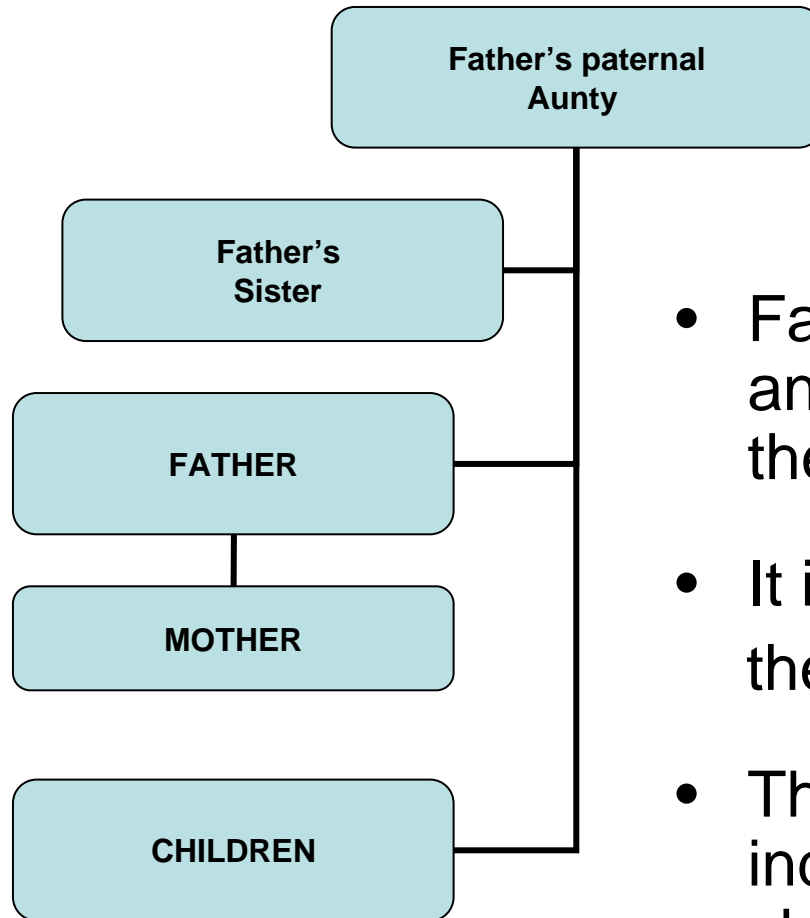
Role of women in the family

- Traditionally the place of women is “in the house” where they perform their roles.
- The first priority is to remain dignified in addition to preparation of food, nourishing and teaching Tongan values and other feminine values to the children, making tapa, weaving mats, making Tongan oil, and making dancing costume.

Values to uphold women's Roles

- Four 'golden values' that form the pillars of Tongan society:
 - respect (faka'apa'apa),
 - humility (lototo),
 - maintaining good relationship (tauhi va) and
 - loyalty (mamahi'i me'a).
- Most of these values are learned by observation and are taught in depth when a man actually performs his duty towards his paternal aunty and his sisters.

FAHU 'Dignified Rank' Structure IN TONGAN FAMILY



- Fahu is the dignified rank and is always the paternal aunty.
- It is sometimes the father's sister.
- The '**mother**' is indirectly connected for she has her own paternal aunty, Fahu.

The Role of Fahu in Social Events

- This rank is evident during social functions such as weddings, birthdays and funerals. It is also emerges on other social occasions as in entertainment.

Role of the Mother - Birthday

- The birthday child must have a sitting mat topped with tapa, and the birthday attire consists of tapa and fine mat.
- It is the role of the mother to prepare the mats and to announce and present to the superior person of the family, the paternal aunty of her husband.

Role of the Mother - Wedding

- Preparing wedding attire

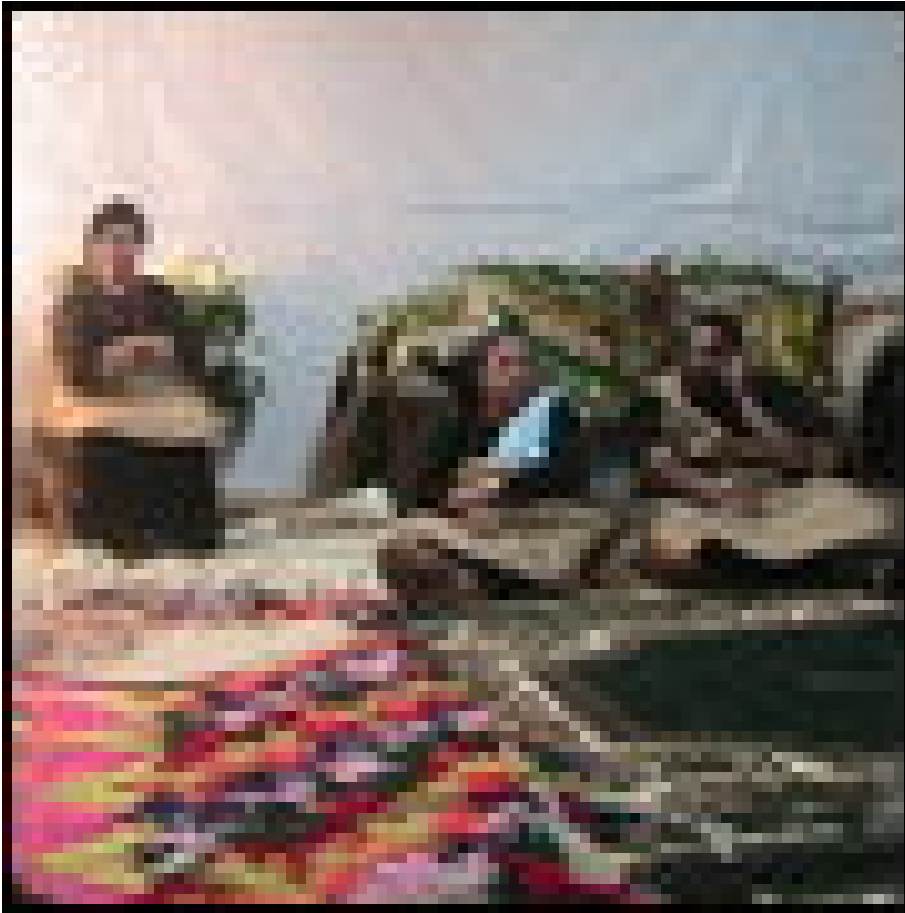




Role of the Mother - Wedding

- Preparing mats and tapa as a presentation to the paternal aunty of the groom.

Role of Women - Funeral



- Sits on the chair and on the floor also tells one's position in relation to the deceased.

Role of Women - Funeral



- The size of the mat wrapped around the waist tells the rank of the deceased.
- It is either a paternal aunty or the father.

FAHU APPROACHING TO TAKE THE GIFTS PRESENTED TO THE DANCER



DANCING COSTUME MADE BY WOMEN



The Core in the Role of Mothers

- Because mothers are ***loyal*** to their families, their roles as mothers are done with ***respect, humility*** and the purpose of ***maintaining good relationship*** within the family.
- In light of reciprocity this mother will be elevated to the dignified rank when the children of her brothers are having the same ceremony.

The Changes in the Roles of Women

- Nowadays it seems that some women are taking another view.
- With the influence of the western life style there is a birthday cake and the top tier is also part of the presentation to the paternal aunty.
- Another change with this custom is that in some families the father's sister or the sister's daughter is taking the place of the dignified rank instead.

The Changes in the Roles of Women

- There are currently frequent conflicts and disagreements about this rank, but as far as I know the clashes do not uphold the values of our Tongan society, but rather the attributes of power, worldly obsessions and selfishness.
- Looking back I notice that in some families the trend to uphold the extended family runs divergently to our Tongan values because of the growing economic orientation emerging in Tongan society.

The Changes in the Role of Women in Wedding

- Likewise the changes in the formal procedure and preparation of a Tongan wedding.
- It is somewhat contradictory and with new attitudes.
- The dignified rank has been taken over either by the father's sister or the sister's daughter.
- The mother decides who will occupy the dignified rank though the custom and public opinion disagree.
- Often it is the process used that has changed.
- The traditional procedures of a wedding involve the two families, excluding the bride and the groom.

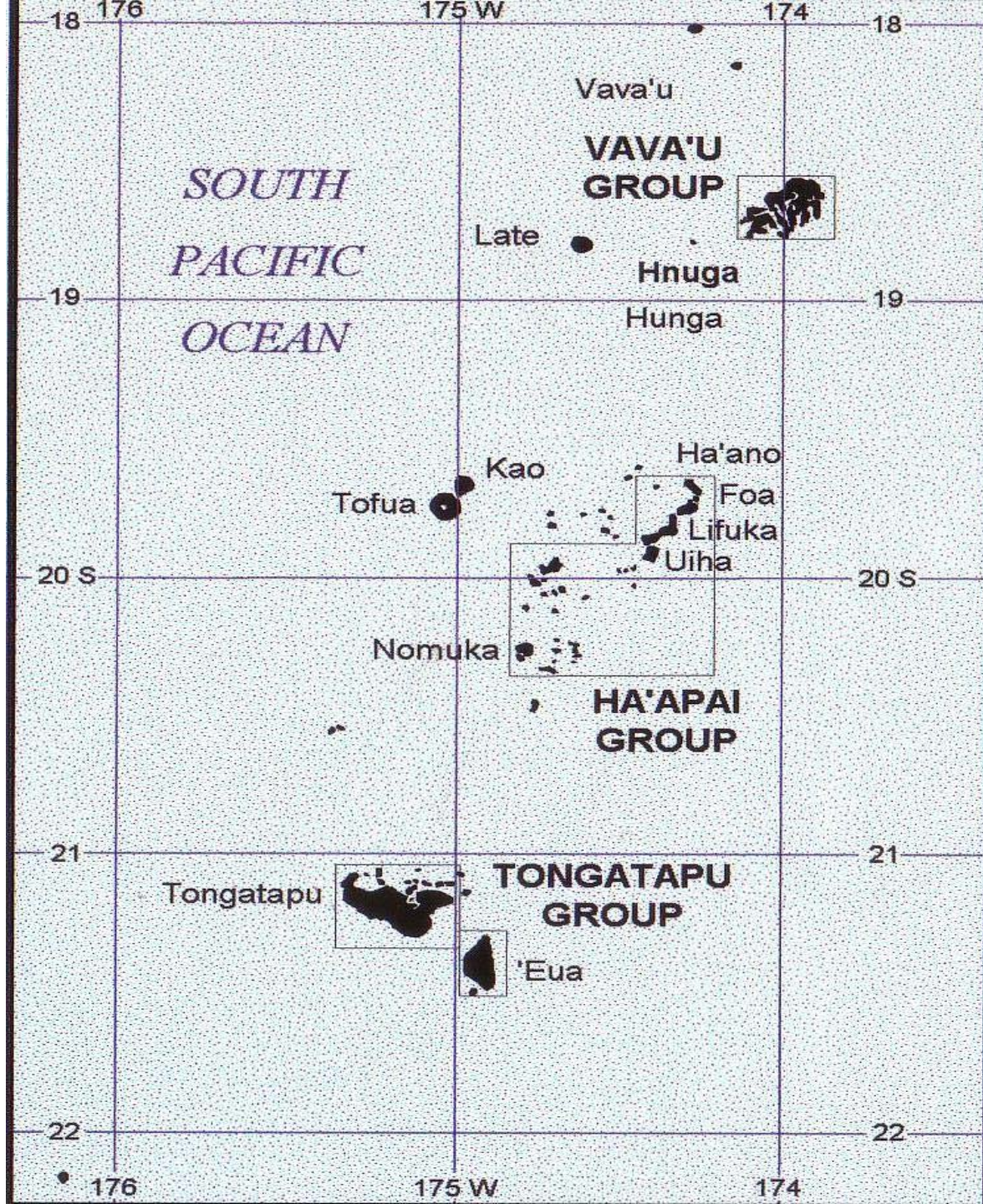
The Changes in the Role of Women in Wedding

- The two families, after agreeing to the couple marrying, will discuss how the ceremony goes, set the dates and start the preparation.
- The two mothers also have roles to play particularly with the traditional vows over the 'kava' ceremony and the presentation from both sides.
- The role of the groom's mother has changed significantly as it is shifting from custom to food preparation only.

IMPACT ON JUSTICE IN THE SERVICES OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY (RSM)

- **CARITAS TONGA**
- **CENTRE FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN**
- **SCHOOLS**
- **COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**
- **YOUTH**
- **PARISHES**
- **PRISON**

**SERVICE OF
SISTERS
OF MERCY
THROUGHOUT
TONGA**



SERVICES OF SISTERS OF MERCY ON JUSTICE

- **Social Justice**

There is concern over the poor understanding and knowledge among Catholic leaders and leaders of laity on the Social Teaching of the Church and the basis of the services of the Church to the poor

- **Family Break-downs**

There are more evils causing the increase break-downs of families. There seems to be a breakdown of communication and mechanisms for development of understandings.

- **Disaster Relief Services**

There are increases in both the incidences and severity of disasters, both natural and man-made

- **Abuse of Children and Women**

The Church is very much concerned with an increase in cases of abuse of children and women, including beatings.

- **Aged & Handicapped**

Social and economic reasons have changed attitudes and the very poor attention to the care of the aged and handicapped.

- **HIV/AIDS**

The arrival of HIV/AIDS and STD in Tonga cause great alarm. The victims are calling the church to provide a better response.

- **Conflicts and Grievances**

The conflicts and grievances in families and communities calls for improved methods of dealings with peace and reconciliation

- **Youth unemployment**

- Each year about 2000 young men and women leave school to look for work. Unfortunately, only about 500 or 20% can find employment in the formal sector.

- Opportunities offered through migration in previous years may be closing as some host countries have reviewed their policies on immigration. Others have to compete for a limited number of jobs available in the domestic economy.

- **Corruption**

- there are increases in corruption in families, churches, government and the community, causing great poverty

- **Family poverty**

- the increase in family poverty due to poor income, is causing various problems to the family in the education of children, housings, etc.

- **Bad effects of alcohol and drugs**

there is increasing alarm at the bad effects of alcohol and drugs. Drug smugglings into Tonga and trafficking among youths is increasing.

- **Schools**

the shortage of teachers in Tonga is still a priority problem and the service of the RSM is needed.

- **Prison**

RSM visiting the prison and especially working for the spouses of the prisoners is greatly appreciated

OTHER ASSISTANCE FROM RSM ON JUSTICE WORK



- PREPARATION OF CONFERENCE ROOM FOR CEPAC MEETING

- Seminar on 'Good Governance' in response to Accountability - Corruptions
- Responses to Natural and Man-made Disasters
- Diocesan Programme for the Aged and Disabilities
- Implement projects in response to family poverty, school leavers, especially those at the grassroots
- Promoting clean environment and planting tree hedges

Justice to Poverty in the Family: Culture and tradition in response



Making
Tapa



Planting mulberry trees,
rolling of mulberry strips, soaked and beaten by women

End Products of Making Tapa



Above: Women pasting tapa

Right: marked with dye for the outputs with different designs



Culture and Tradition Response

- Weaving Mats



Planting pandanus trees, cut, boiled, left in the sea for 2 weeks, rinse, dried then weave fine mats of different lengths

Environment Response

- Yard equipment



Employment for Youth
of Popua and Mataika

Environment Response



Planting Hedges



Pig Sty

Youth Activities in response to unemployment



- Sewing, formation and carving



Disaster Relief

- hurricane & relief activities



Water Tank in response to health, in swampy area

- Water tank in swampy area



RSM Coordinating Workshop on Care for the Aged & Handicapped

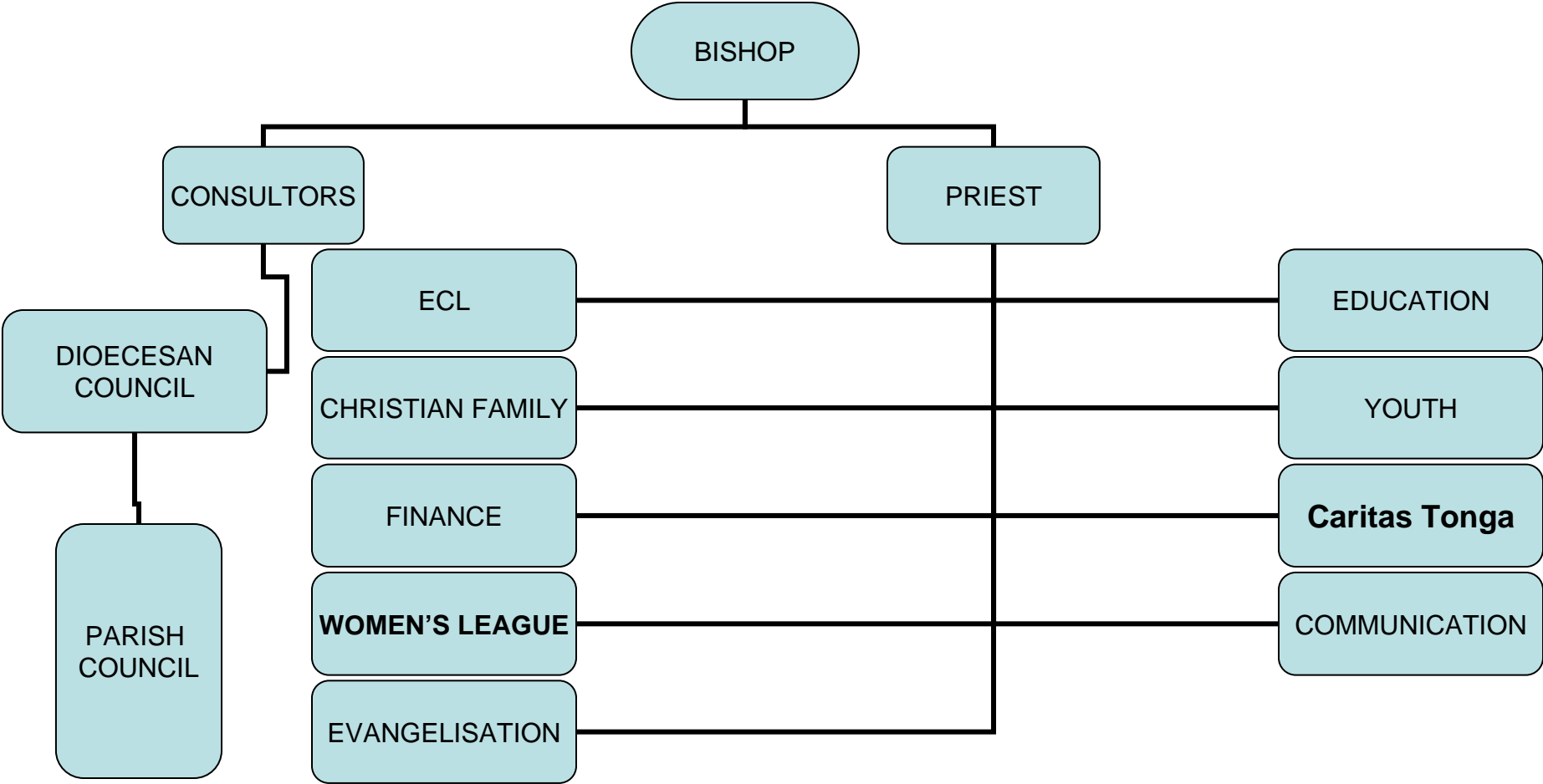
- Training on how to care for the aged and handicapped at home



INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH

- Women as Extraordinary Ministers
- Prison and hospital chaplaincy
- Women's Prayer Groups
- Participating in Church activities at different levels.

STRUCTURE OF THE DIOCESE OF TONGA



WOMEN IN THEOLOGY COURSE



WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN LITURGY



RETREATS AND MEETINGS OF VARIOUS GROUPS INCLUDING THE RELIGIOUS AND TONGAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS



WOMEN IN PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

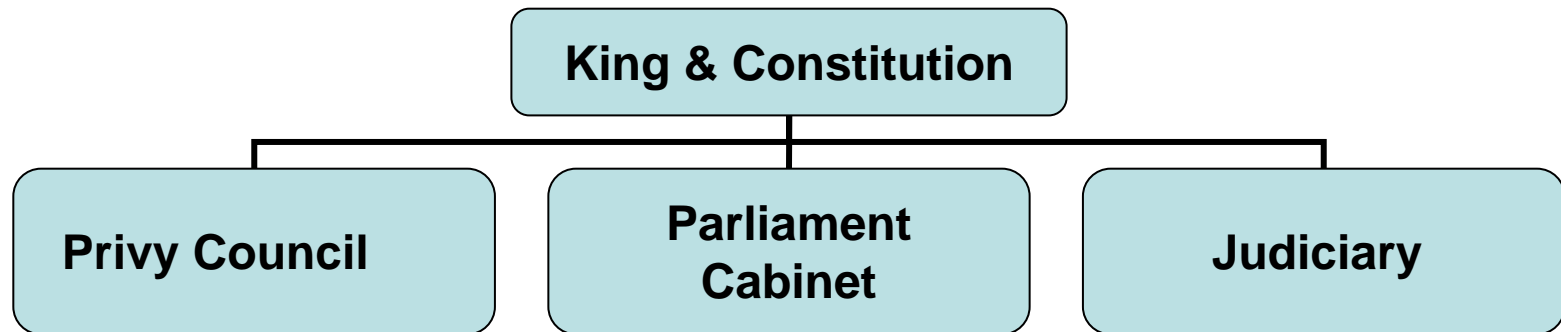
- Workshop on peace building and reconciliation.



POLITICAL HISTORY

System of Government is a 'Constitutional Monarchy with three ruling bodies:

Privy Council, Parliament & Judiciary



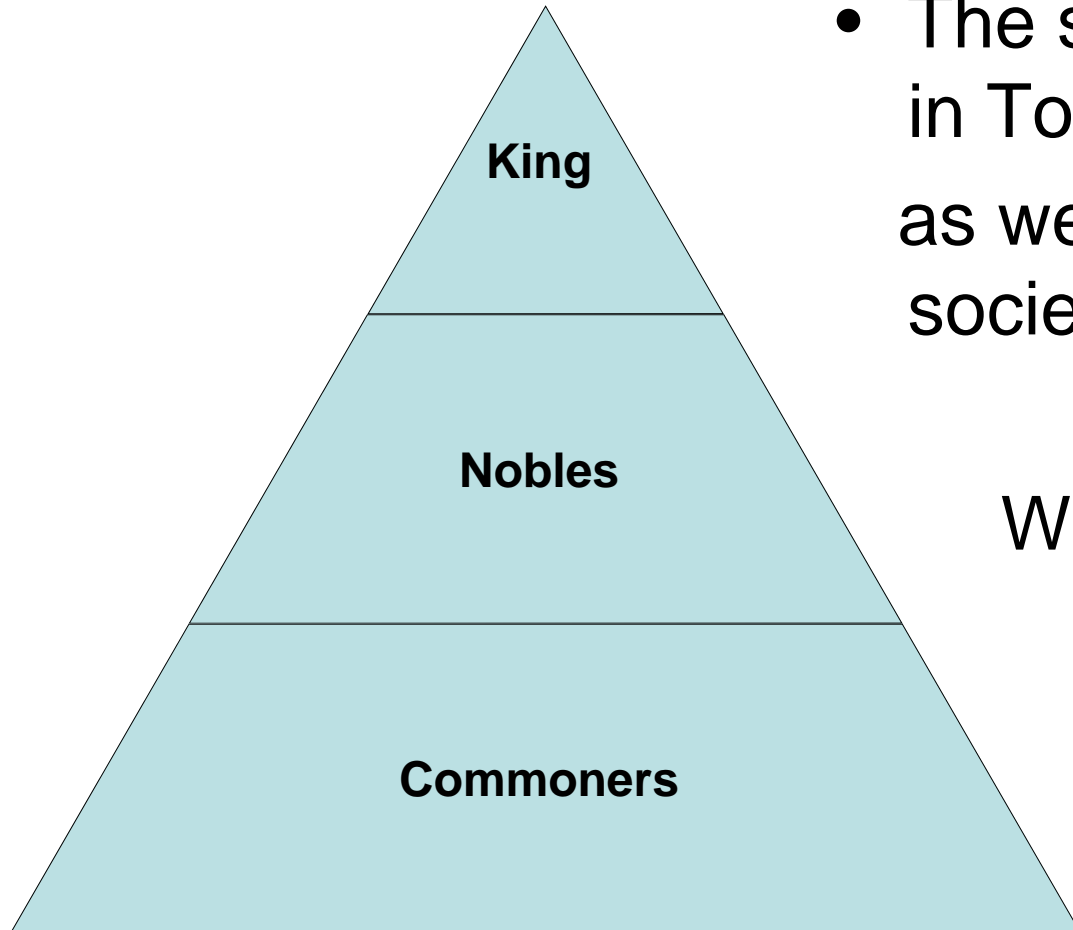
The Traditional Structure of Tonga

- The system of government in Tonga is hierarchical as well as its language, society and family.

Women lease land.

No women nobles.

Women Minister



Role of the Royals

- When Queen Salote was still alive she had a network of women in villages throughout the Kingdom.
- They reported on the happenings in the communities and she responded with compassion and helped those who were in need.
- She knew every family in the country.

The Court of the Queen

- A poet and songwriter - her court was full of musicians and performers.
- She was so loved that people presented their best from weaving, crafting and catches from the reef.
- She was aware of the untold suffering in the world as she lived through two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s.



- She strove for the rest of her life to shield her people from international influences.
- Still reigning – she was taking care of the cultural institutions while her son the Crown Prince, The Late Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, was responsible for the running of the country.
- THE CHANGE
- The Crown Prince then Prime Minister, the first and only degree holder at the time, was occupying himself with the demands of the time.

- Nanisi Helu, who is one of the Queen's small circle of night companions was saying that the Queen suggested for him to start a business and build something for the security of his children. His reply was "Your Majesty, my business is the welfare, security and happiness of our people. Their well-being will be the security of our family".
- There was no other objective and he lived up to that 'BUSINESS' for the rest of his life.

CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

- Since 1985 the democratic movement was introduced and people called for change in the system of government.
- The Late King agreed with TIME as the essence of change.
- However some of the people were impatient, THEN....

THE 2006 SUPPORTERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT



2005 CIVIL SERVANTS STRIKE ALONG WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS



PROTEST MARCH



PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES AND PM'S POLITICAL ADVISOR - NEGOTIATING



PEOPLE'S REPS & SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT HOUSE - AWAITING



RESOLUTION UNSATISFACTORY, STRIKERS AND SUPPORTERS LOOKING



STRIKERS & SUPPORTERS STRONGLY REACTED – READY TO RIOT, WOOD!!



NARROTAM'S



TUNGI ARCADE, PACIFIC ROYALE HOTEL & TWIN CINEMA



FROM THE BASILICA OF ST ANTHONY OF PADUA - AFTERNOON OF 16/11/06



FIRE HAS CONSUMED NUKU'ALOFA



LOOTING AND STEALING



CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TONGA

- CONFLICT IN THE 'FAHU' SYSTEM.
- ECONOMICALLY MORE ACTIVE THAN MEN.
- PARENTAL ROLES NEGLECTED THUS SIGNIFICANT CHANGE ON YOUTH: MORAL, ATTITUDE, TONGAN CUSTOMS, TEEN PREGNANCIES,
- DRINKING & SMOKING, NIGHT CLUBBING, INCREASE DIVORCE,
- LACK OF INTEREST IN VOCATION FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE.