

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Tonga, Tongan, Austronesian

1.2 ISO code: ton

1.3 Location:

Mainly spoken in the island of Tonga (20° 00'S, 175° 00'W)

Also present in American Samoa, Fiji, and New Zealand.

1.4 Brief history:

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Tonga islands have been settled since at least 500 B.C, they are believed to have originally come from Samoa. Dutch navigators in 1616 were the first Europeans to sight the Tongan archipelago. However, they did not have continual contact with Europeans until Captain James Cook visited the islands in 1773 and 1777. He gave the archipelago the name "the Friendly Islands" because of the gentle nature of the people he encountered. Tonga became a constitutional monarchy in 1875. In 1900 it came under British protection. Tonga became fully independent on June 4th, 1970. "Tonga" means south in several Polynesian languages.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

The first missionaries arrived in Tonga in 1747. Christianity spread with the conversion of the King. Many Western influences.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

171 islands, mainly raised coral but some volcanic; only 48 are inhabited. Tropical climate, modified by trade winds. Warm season is December to May, cool season is May to December.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

Population: 105,916. More than two-thirds of the population live on the main island, Tongatapu. An increasing number of Tongans have moved into Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital and only urban center.

Population density: 144.53 people per square km

33% of Tongans live in an extended family situation.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Imported: flour for bread

Domestic: taro, yams, squash, bananas, coconuts

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Fish, shellfish, chicken, and pigs (only on special occasions)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns:

Before European explorers came to Tonga, they were very warlike. They fought with mainly clubs and spears, some sharp, some blunt. Nowadays, Tongans have guns, but they rarely use them. They are mainly peaceful, one exception is during WWII, there were roughly 2,000 Tongans fighting for New Zealand in the Pacific.

2.4 Food storage:

In former times, there was only one main meal, a midday meal cooked in an earth oven. The remains of this meal would be placed in a basket suspended from a tree. This food then served as an end-of-the-day snack as well as the next day's breakfast. Food past its prime was given to the pigs.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

There was equilibrium between genders that lasted until western-style wage labor was introduced and men were favored. In contemporary offices, shops, and banks, working women are prominent. In villages, most men take care of the land or tend animals. Women take care of the home.

2.6 Land tenure:

The constitution says that every man, when he turns 16, is allocated an 8.25-acre lot that he may rent out for the rest of his life. However, nowadays, the population is expanding too rapidly for this to continue.

2.7 Ceramics:

Tongans do not make pottery, but they are very skilled at making bark cloth. These cloths can get up to 50 feet long and are usually decorated in geometric patterns. Tongans also weave baskets and carve wood jewelry.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft:

Large outrigger canoes can carry up to 200 people.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

Female: 5ft 7in

Male: 5ft 10in

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

Female: 196.2 lbs

Male: 206.6 lbs

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

No information as to age, but up until the 1930s, a girl's first menstruation was celebrated with a ceremony and feast.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

Females: 24

Males: N/A

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

Tongan women have an average of 4.5 children in their lifetime, making the families 6-7 people large on average.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Males: 28

Females: 25

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

1.08 out of every 1,000 people gets divorced each year.

This means 114 people get divorced every year, or 57 couples.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Most Tongans were polygamists until European missionaries converted them to Christianity.

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry:

During a Tongan wedding, the bride and groom exchange mats, bark cloth, and food.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Inheritance goes to males, from oldest to youngest.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Both parents contribute to child-rearing equally

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

The Fakaleiti, in western terms, are cross-dressers or transvestites. Traditionally, if a woman had many sons and no daughters she would need one of the children to assist with 'women's work' - cooking, cleaning etc - so would bring up one of the boys as a girl. These days it can be a lifestyle choice. Fakaleiti means like a lady and those who take that path refer to themselves as leities (ladies). Homosexuality is illegal in Tonga, but it is ok if a man has sex with a fakaleiti because she is considered a woman even though she is biologically male.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

They do not have a preference. In rural areas, people tend to marry within their village. In more urban settings, people do not care either way.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

Tonga has adopted western beliefs when it comes to conception. They know exactly how the reproductive cycle works; students are even required to take a sex education class in school.

- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
Rape is a crime. Only 2 out of every 1,000 people are raped each year.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
Tongans do not allow marriages within immediate or extended family.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
Both males and females are expected only to have sex once they are married. Women and men thought to have slept around are rejected by society. As western influence increases, however, this seems to be less of an issue. The rise of STIs in adolescents suggests more people are having sex before marriage.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
Extramarital affairs are not allowed in Tongan culture.
- 4.20 If mother dies, who raises children?
The father will raise the children, with the help of extended family. If both parents die, relatives oftentimes adopt the children. In some cases, the children will be adopted by couples of an upper class that cannot have their own children.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
102 males for every 100 females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
Kin is crucial. The two major kin groups are famili (family) and kainga (extended family). A famili consists of a married couple and their children living in the same house. The 'ulumotu'a (head of the family, usually the father) presides over this group. A kainga consists of relatives living in different households in the same village or in several villages. Membership in kin groups is restricted to fewer and closer relatives than it was in the past.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
Grandparents often joke, tease, and playfully fight with their grandchildren. This also happens between villages. When Tongans joke with each other, it is a sign of friendship.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
Both lines are important. Fathers are in charge of authority, mothers are in charge of keeping culture alive. The oldest daughter, or "mehekitanga", is the most honored member of a family.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
Brothers and sisters are not allowed to sleep under the same roof. In some villages, this rule starts when the oldest child reaches 10 years old, in others it starts when a girl begins menstruating. IN olden times, it was taboo for a brother and sister to be in the same room alone, even as adults.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
Weddings are the largest celebration in Tongan culture. Depending on social class, feasts could last days. The most important tradition is the exchanging and wearing of traditional mats. These have often been passed down for generations and represent the wealth of the families.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
The Tongan Supreme Court allows almost anybody to change his or her name. The only exception is that you may not change your last name if you are a landowner.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
They do not have a preference. In rural areas, people tend to marry within their village. In more urban settings, people do not care either way.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
Marriages are not arranged, people can choose whom and when they want to marry. However, marring between the classes is frowned upon.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
There is not much conflict when it comes to marriage. They have adopted the Western system of courting. Then the man asks the head of the household for permission to marry the daughter. If they say yes, the

man now proposes to the woman. She may still decline him, but oftentimes she says yes and then they start planning the wedding.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

1 out of every 1,000 people

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

Tonga has many international relationships; it is even a member of the UN. Their main relations are with China, Fiji, United Kingdom, United States, Russia, and New Zealand.

4.18 Cannibalism:

There used to be many Tongan tribes that practiced cannibalism but they gave it up after converting to Christianity.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

Many young Tongans decide to migrate to Australia or the US in search of a better job and lifestyle. These people oftentimes keep ties in Tonga with their families and may plan to return one day.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy. The king shares executive power with the Prime Minister, whom he elects. Descendants of old chiefs are nobles, they are the only ones allowed to own land besides the king. A middle class recently emerged, but they are not considered to rank much higher than commoners socially. Peasants are the ones who still live in poor, rural areas.

5.4 Post-marital residence:

In villages, the couple moves in with extended family. They usually live with the parents who have the most land or room in their house. In more urban settings, Tongans like to stay close to family, but they do not always live under the same roof.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

It is taboo for boys and girls who are not related or married to sleep under the same roof. After a certain age, sisters and brothers may not even sleep under the same roof.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

Grandparents often joke, tease, and playfully fight with their grandchildren. This also happens between villages. When Tongans joke with each other, it is a sign of friendship.

5.8 Village and house organization:

Houses consist of a grouping of various huts. There is a separate hut for the bathroom, and a separate hut for the kitchen. In the city, they have adapted western styles of houses and apartments.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

Most houses have a different hut where boys sleep once they are over the age of 10.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

Many Tongans have mattresses, but if not they sleep on piles of mats or bark.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

Social hierarchy is very important to Tongan culture. First there is the king, then nobles (chiefs), then the middle-class, then commoners. There are three different dialects Tongans use, one for each class (middle-class is the same as commoners). "Talking chiefs" are traditionally used when addressing someone of a higher class than you.

5.12 Trade:

Tonga trades mainly with Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, US, and China. They import machinery, oil, and food. Their main exports are squash, fish, and vanilla beans.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies

See questions 5.3 and 5.11

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

Churches exist even in the most remote Tongan villages. Forty-four percent of Tongans belong to the Free Wesleyan Church. Wesleyanism is also the official religion of the state and the monarchy. Among the other major churches are the Roman Catholic Church (16.3 percent), the Church of Latter Day Saints (12.3 percent), the Free Church of Tonga (11.4 percent), the Church of Tonga (7.5 percent), Seventh-Day Adventist Church (2.3 percent), and Anglican Church (0.6 percent). Most Tongans believe in a mixture of Christian beliefs and ancient Tongan myths or superstitions.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Illness is attributed to the anger of ancestral spirits, sorcery, the misuse of medicines acquired for success, the use of a tabooed substance, or spirit invasion. Minor illnesses are considered normal. Herbalists supplement the widespread knowledge of home remedies. Medicines are infused and drunk, rubbed into cuts, or used in fumigation. People also use Western medicine, dispensed by hospitals, local health centers, private doctors, and herbalists.

6.2 Stimulants:

Kava is a traditional sedative drink similar to alcohol that is very important in Tongan culture. Men gather at kava clubs to drink. Women are not allowed to drink kava. An unmarried woman serves the kava to the men, but if she is related to someone in the room he must leave. Traditional Kava ceremonies are performed at formal events, like a coronation.

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Death – Funerals are elaborate and prepare for the return of ancestral spirits. Burial is immediate, and usually close to the dwelling of the deceased; some villages have established cemeteries. Formerly, bodies were buried in the fetal position; today they are laid at full length and, if possible, in a coffin.

Puberty – In some villages, there is a celebration when girls begin menstruating.

6.4 Other rituals:

Christians attend church services, and Christmas and Easter are now days of feasting. Mediums are consulted by neighborhood delegations to learn why communal spirits are angry and how to renegotiate relationships with them. The spirits may demand an offering of beer or the sacrifice of a chicken, goat, or cow, followed by a traditional dance. It is a law in Tonga that all businesses close starting at midnight on Sundays. Many things are prohibited, such as swimming, fishing, dancing, etc. Most Tongans go to church, eat, and sleep on this day.

6.5 Myths (Creation):

The Tongan creation myth describes how the islands were fished from the ocean by Maui, one of the three major gods. Another myth explains how 'Aho'eitu became the first Tu'i Tonga (king). He was the son of a human female and the god Tangaloa. Human and divine at the same time, the Tu'i Tonga was the embodiment of the Tongan people, and this is still a powerful metaphor.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Choral singing is done in churches and kava clubs. Tongans also pride themselves on their drum teams, which they pair with ukuleles, flute, and rattles to create traditional songs that people dance to. Art mainly consists of decorating mats or making jewelry.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women are not allowed to participate in kava ceremonies or drink kava.

6.8 Missionary effect:

Throughout the 19th century, Christian missionaries traveled to Tonga. The result is that most Tongans were converted to Christianity and adopted many Western practices.

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Infants and small children are believed to return to the mother's womb after death to be reborn. Tongans believe adults become ancestral spirits.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

Believe in the Western style of Christianity, mixed with traditional Tongan beliefs about spirits. They believe there are bad ghosts who try to harm us, and it is the spirits of their ancestors that protect them. The most powerful spirits are those of the mother and father.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Early on, Tongans developed a method of tattooing called *tatatau*. It disappeared with the spread of Christianity, as they believed tattoos were sinful. Within the last 10 years, however, *tatatau* has experienced resurgence. The old method of tattooing is lost, but modern tattoo artists are popularizing ancient styles again. For men, this usually consists of intricate tribal patterns that wrap around the buttocks and legs and usually extend down to the knees, resembling shorts.

7.2 Piercings:

Nowadays, some women choose to pierce their ears, but it has never been a part of traditional culture.

7.3 Haircut:

Most Tongan men and women wear their hair long. The only tradition associated with hair is after the death of a king. After a 10-day mourning period, all of the king's surviving females relatives cut off their hair to show respect. Before Christianity, people would cut off their pinkies as well, but now it is limited to only hair.

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

Women have adopted the Western tradition of wearing hats to church. Only women who are esteemed members of the congregation are allowed to wear hats, it is a right that has to be earned. On special occasions, men and women sometimes wear necklaces made from flowers or other plants. Women can also wear flowers in their hair. This is more of a personal choice though, not a cultural tradition.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

See question 7.5

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Traditionally, men and women wore similar mats and cloths. Now, however, many men are choosing to wear pants instead. Women still mainly wear dresses. It is against the law in most villages for a woman to see a man who is not her husband without a shirt.

7.8 Missionary effect:

Missionaries greatly affected the culture in Tonga. Christianity made their dress more conservative and created the many social rules between men and women. See also questions 1.5 and 6.8.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

The oldest daughter, or "mehekitanga", is the most honored member of a family. Other than that, all siblings are equal. Daughters are considered more important than sons based on the chores they perform. If a family does not have enough daughters, they designate a son to do women's work, but there is no reversal if they are lacking sons.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

If a wife dies, it is illegal for her husband to remarry anyone that is related to her.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

Tongans do not allow first cousins or siblings to marry, but I do not know about more distant relatives. It seems difficult to prevent this from occurring on small islands.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

1. Tonga is notable for its high obesity rates with over 90% of the population being overweight.

Consequently, many Tongan islanders have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and other obesity

related diseases, which place the nation's health service under considerable strain. Much of this is related to the nation's cultural love of food and eating as well as the modern influx of cheap and high-fat content meat. Despite being a highly obese population, there is little stigma attached to being overweight as one might find in many Western civilizations. Like a great number of South Pacific cultures, large bodies are often revered, though there is growing acknowledgment of the health risks involved.

2. The literacy in Tonga is 99%. This is attributed to the fact that education is compulsory for all children until high school. Even in remote villages, there are teachers sent there by the government. There is no difference between education for males and females. Many Tongans go to New Zealand, Australia, or the US to go to college, and return after they have earned their degree.

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