

## Questionnaire: Tuvalu

### 1. Description

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

Tuvalu, Tuvaluan, Tuvalu is in the Austronesian language family (1)

#### 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

TVL (1)

#### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

The latitude and longitude for Tuvalu are 8° 00'S 178° 00'E (2)

#### 1.4 Brief history:

“The first settlers were from Samoa and probably arrived in the 14th century ad. Niulakita, the smallest and southernmost island, was uninhabited before European contact; the other islands were settled by the 18th century, giving rise to the name Tuvalu, or “Cluster of Eight.” Europeans first discovered the islands in the 16th century through the voyages of Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira, but it was only from the 1820s, with visits by whalers and traders, that they were reliably placed on European charts. In 1863 labor recruiters from Peru kidnapped some 400 people, mostly from Nukulaelae and Funafuti, reducing the population of the group to less than 2,500. Concern over labor recruiting and a desire for protection helps to explain the enthusiastic response to Samoan pastors of the London Missionary Society who arrived in the 1860s. By 1900, Protestant Christianity was firmly established. With imperial expansion the group, then known as the Ellice Islands, became British protectorate in 1892 and part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1916. There was a gradual expansion of government services, but most administration was through island governments supervised by a single district officer based in Funafuti. Ellice Islanders sought education and employment at the colonial capital in the Gilbert group or in the phosphate industry at Banaba or Nauru. During World War II U.S. forces were based on Nanumea, Nukufetau, and Funafuti, but hostilities did not reach the group. From the 1960s, racial tension and rivalries over employment emerged between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders. Ellice Islanders’ demands for secession resulted in a referendum in 1974, transition to separate colonial status between October 1975 and January 1976, and independence as Tuvalu in 1978. After independence the main priorities were to establish the infrastructure for a separate, if small, nation, and to seek foreign assistance to match political independence with economic viability.” (3)

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

Missionaries had various affects on the local people. First by 1900 Protestant Christianity was firmly established on the island country. Next, missionaries lead to a more organized structure of villages as opposed to small spread out hamlets. Missionaries also brought new technologies and goods to the islands and set up the use of money. Finally, missionaries were associated with the rise of schools and increased literacy among the natives. (4) (5)

#### 1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

“The group includes both atolls and reef islands. The atolls—Nanumea, Nui, Nukufetau, Funafuti, and Nukulaelae—have islets encircling a shallow lagoon; the reef islands—Nanumanga, Niutao, Vaitupu, and Niulakita—are compact with a fringing reef. The islands are low-lying, most being 13 to 16 feet (4 to 5 metres) above sea level. There are no rivers; rain catchment and wells provide the only fresh water. Rainfall averages 100 inches (2,500 millimetres) in the north and 125 inches in the south. The prevailing winds are southeast trades; westerly storms occur from November to February. Daytime temperatures range from 80 to 85 °F (27 to 29 °C). Because the soils are porous, agriculture is limited. Coconut palms thrive, and breadfruit trees, pandanus, taro, and bananas are grown. Pigs and chickens are raised, and seabirds, fish, and shellfish are caught for food. The islands increasingly depend on imported food.” (3)

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

The population estimate for 2012 was 10,619 on 26km<sup>2</sup>, which gives a density of around 409 people per km<sup>2</sup>. (2) Early estimates for population before contact was around 2,500 people which butts the density at 96 people per km<sup>2</sup>. (3) In 1969 there were 644 people living in 90 households on Nukufetau and 585 people in 80 households. (9)

## 2. Economy

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

“The most important cultivated plant is *pulaka* (swamp taro), grown in large pits dug into the top layer of a freshwater lens, and valued for its resistance to drought and high salinity. Also of importance to the daily diet are coconut palms (used for the collection of *kaleve* "toddy" as well as for the nuts), pandanus, bananas, and breadfruit.” Now with the use of trade rice and flour are also consumed in the daily diet. (5)

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Traditionally the main source of protein was from fish but with the expansion of trade other canned and frozen meat have been made available. (5)

### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Multiple weapons were used by the native Tuvaluans including a long spear for thrusting, a short spear for throwing, and a sword made out of tying shark's teeth to a wooden stick. (6)

### 2.4 Food storage:

### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

There is little specialization of labor in Tuvalu with men and women both doing the work they can. However, there is clear sexual division of labor. Men were known to be fishers and gathers while the women would take care of children, prepare food, weave, and some food collection. (5)

### 2.6 Land tenure:

“The original form of tenure may have been communal, as this arrangement still exists and is accorded symbolic priority. From a system in which chiefs probably allocated land rights for use rather than ownership, more complex forms of title have evolved. Land may now be held privately, either by individuals or by groups, although this distinction is blurred by the fact that individuals are always members of groups that wax and wane as the individuals that constitute them are born, reproduce, and die.” (5)

### 2.7 Ceramics:

Although no specific ceramics were described the people were known to make decorative mats, dancing skirts, and fans with dyed fibers. (5)

### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

“ Household members share property, pool their labor according to established domestic work roles, eat from a common heath and otherwise co-operate with each other in meeting both the short-tern and the long-run requirements for collective endurance.” (9)

### 2.9 Food taboos:

During pregnancy raw fish, chewing pandanus fruit, hot food, and eating while walking are all avoided because they believe they can cause birth defects. (10)

### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

The Tuvaluans were skilled boat makers and were known to build larger outrigger canoes and smaller one-man canoes. The canoes were used for travel and to fish. (4) (6)

## 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

#### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

The average women has 2.8 kids and the women 15-64 make up roughly 64% of all the women in the country so age of first birth would likely be somewhere in the 20s. (7)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

The average woman has 2.8 kids so the completed family size is roughly 5. (7)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

Divorce due to the strong Christian ties was and still is rare but is increasing. (5)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Polygamy was almost entirely suppressed by the Christian missionaries making it virtually extinct. (5)

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

“Within this framework, the local kin groups of the bride and groom compete with each other for prestige through public display of *koloa* “wealth”, consisting of foodstuffs and durables. Each side attempts to outgive the other in a series of exchanges that begin on the day of the wedding and continue for about a week.” (9)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Inheritance has a male bias and often the eldest son inherits the most. (5)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Mothers are the primary care takers with other kin helping when necessary and young children often girls help in raising their younger siblings. (5)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

There is no evidence for homosexual activities and with the strong missionary backing homosexuality has been made illegal. Currently homosexual activities are punishable under law and those found guilty can face up to seven years in prison. (8)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Both exogamy and endogamy are observed in Tuvalu depending on the island. (5)

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)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

Marriage is personal choice but marriage of relatives is avoided up to third cousins. (5)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

Women enjoy sexual freedoms as they are allowed to marry freely. (5)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

The sex ration for the total population in 2012 is .97 males/females and for people 15-64 its .95males/females however at birth it is 1.05 males/females (2)

4.22 Evidence for couvades

No evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

Within the family, the most constrained type of interaction is between cross-sex first, second, and sometimes third cousins, who were traditionally expected to avoid each other's presence completely. Today, such pairs must avoid talking to one another beyond the absolutely necessary and should strive to orient themselves away from one another. Joking and speaking about bodies and bodily functions in the presence of such cousins is considered a serious faux pas. More relaxed patterns of avoidance characterize interactions between in-laws. At the same time, avoidance can contextually become the subject of jokes. (5)

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

Patterns of descent are noted to be cognatic or bilateral where offspring take from both parents. (5)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

To avoid incest limited cross-sex interaction is used for first, second, and even third cousins. (5)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

Marriage is one of the most important rights of passage and has a ceremony. (5) Also see 4.8 for description of exchange of goods between families near a wedding.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriage is known to happen both inside and outside a community depending on the island. (5)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

Marriages are based on personal choice. (5)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Marriage between cousins is looked down on and is often avoided. (5)

## **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

#### 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

Mainly outgroup fighting was the cause of death. (6)

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

Reports of out-group fighting occurred between the people of Tuvalu and Tonga. Another set of out-group fighting occurred between the different islands that now make up Tuvalu and each of their different people. (6)

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

#### 4.18 Cannibalism?

No reported cases of cannibalism

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

#### 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Most Tuvaluans live in a village of a few hundred people. (3)

#### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

No mobility patterns were noted likely due to the small size of the islands with similar climates all year around making it impractical to move from season to season.

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

Early on Tuvalu was ruled by chiefs but after missionaries and westerners arrived at the island the government was set up to be a constitutional monarchy with a single house of parliament. (3)

#### 5.4 Post marital residence:

After marriage the family usually lives with the husband's parents. (5)

#### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

Each village is divided into *potu* or parts that are combined to make *feituu* which are like neighborhoods. Most people tend to associate most closely to those in their neighborhood and have a high number of kinsmen in them. The neighborhoods also work together to produce goods and support each other. (9)

#### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

Women would often care for the children, prepare food, and do some gathering of crops. Men often fished and gathered a majority of crops. Young children especially girls helped their mothers care for their siblings and younger men often the heavier work while older generations did sedentary work. (5)

#### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

“Strong affective ties may be predicated in a formal way on close genealogical proximity, or they may derive from some extraneous factor such as common occupation among persons not related by kinship ties at all. Affective ties are most prominent as the source of solidarity in *soa* “friendship” bonds.” (9)

#### 5.8 Village and house organization:

“Before Christianity, island communities probably consisted of dispersed hamlets. Under missionary influence, each island population became concentrated in one or two villages, spatially and socially divided into two or four "sides" (*feituu*). Membership in these is largely symbolic but serves as a way of organizing gift

exchanges, games, fund-raising, and some fishing and communal projects. In the neutral village center are located the church building, the *maneapa* or meetinghouse, and the village green ( *malae* ). Government buildings (e.g., island office, school, first-aid station, rest house) are generally built on the outskirts. Until the 1970s, houses throughout the group were open rectangular structures supported by pandanus posts and roofed with pandanus thatch. Meeting houses were similar in design but larger, while churches and government buildings were and are built with imported materials. After a devastating hurricane on Funafuti in 1972, dwellings were rebuilt with imported materials (timber, wood-chip board, cement, and corrugated iron). Other islands gradually followed suit, and by the mid-1980s the only structures made of local material were small peripheral buildings such as cooking huts.” (5)

#### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

In each village there are certain important structures. Including the *maneapa* or meeting house, *malae* the village green and the division of villages into *feituu*. (See 5.5) (9)

#### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

The most basic unit is the *fale* or household. See 2.8 for household sharing practices. The household is run by a *Matai* or manager of the group's resources. The next social group is the *puikaainga* “landholding group” which can be a single household or two to three households. This group will work together for socioeconomic benefits. Next group is the *kaainga* “bilateral kindred” which is an occasional group that will come together for celebrations like a wedding. Finally the village is divided into four *potu* and they combine into the *feituu* or sides of a village. (9)

#### 5.12 Trade:

“Trade before Western contact was confined to occasional interisland voyages, which may have been accompanied by exchanges, marriages, and political tribute. Foreign traders became interested in coconut oil and then in copra (dried coconut flesh for the food and cosmetics industries). Copra is still exported but has greatly declined in importance, owing to inefficiencies of scale and fluctuating prices on the world market. Tuvalu's current principal export is its manual labor: since the 1980s, international shipping corporations have employed Tuvaluan seamen, whose remittances make an important contribution to the economy.” (5)

#### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

In society men and women were often regarded as equal but most islands had chiefs who were in charge with one or two men below them who also ruled. (5) Social hierarchies in traditional society went Chiefs, Assistant chiefs, elders, men and women, new settlers, and at the bottom slaves. (10).

### **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

#### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

#### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Tuvaluan men often became pastors of the Protestant faith. (5) For the ancient religion men of great importance were *vaka-alua* or priests. They were the people who represented the gods to the people and vice-versa. (10) Traditional healers were known as *tufuga o masaki* they learned the trade through previous generations and used plants to try and heal people. (10)

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

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

Mainly rituals that are found in Protestantism. (5) Some ancient rituals include after a beloved family member dies the head is removed after three days and cleaned and becomes a object of worship in a temple. (10). At

death a funeral is held in which relatives pay tribute by donating goods to the family and at the end of mourning a feast is held. (10)

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

*Alofa* ceremonies are when ranking visitors come to the island they are presented with *meallofa* or gifts that include mats, fans, foodstuff, and possibly a fowl. Another ceremony is the *nafa* which is when non-kinsmen within the community exchange gifts. The thought is gifts make friends and friends make gifts. The ceremony is used to build relationships and possibly end rivalries. (9)

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

Western Christianity for modern day. One ancient belief was in a god named Foilape who was known on multiple islands. He was one of the principal gods who was a king and famous warrior. (10).

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“The major artistic traditions are performance-oriented. Action songs known as *faatele* reign supreme. Seated vocalists sing the repeated verses of a song faster and faster until they reach a climax and stop abruptly, while standing dancers act out the lyrics. *Faatele* may involve competition between different sides, be an adjunct to other festivities, or be an end in themselves, and may be composed and choreographed by anyone with the inspiration to do so. Tuvaluans also enjoy other kinds of musical activity, including hymn singing, Western-style dancing, and pop music. The verbal arts are confined to oratorical performances, which are the exclusive domain of older men” (5) Tuvalu had some unique musical instruments including a small slit-drum made out of wood and shells that were used as trumpets. (6) Tuvaluans had a wide variety of games including swimming and canoe competitions, wrestling, circle games, unique ball games, stick and spear throwing, cock fighting, and rat catching. (6) See (6) *The Material Culture of Tuvalu* for greater detail on each game.

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Early on when missionaries came to the island men were predominantly pastors. (5)

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

Missionaries had a huge impact on the culture. Missionaries modernized the community with education, money, and technology. The biggest impact would be the wide spread adoption of Christianity. The missionaries really established this around 1900 and now 98.4% of Tuvaluans are Protestant. (2)

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

No revival in religion because Christianity has been prominent for over a thousand years.

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Western Christianity with heaven and hell (5) Traditional belief is that death is caused by witchcraft. (10)

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

None reported

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

The religion is the western religion of Protestantism. They believe in God, Jesus, and heaven and hell like the rest of the Protestants around the world. (5) Before Christianity the Tuvaluans believed in their own spirits and gods that varied from island to island. (10) “They worshipped the spirits of their ancestors; mostly those who originally peopled the islands, but some of the later generations have been deified in some of the islands. They have shrines in some places where they offer their devotions and where the gods come to hear their prayers and accept their offerings” (10)

## 7. Adornment

### 7.1 Body paint:

### 7.2 Piercings:

“They all had the lower rim of the ear pierced, and the aperture distended to the size of an inch in diameter. Around the rim thus separated, they had half a dozen little rings of tortoise-shell, so neatly made it that it was difficult to discern the point of juncture where the ring was opened when taken from the ear” (10)

### 7.3 Haircut:

Long black hair in locks that had some dye in it that brought out a reddish hue. (10)

### 7.4 Scarification:

*Lafa* circular marks which they burn into the skin. (10)

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

Considerable amount of tattooing (10) “For dress, the men wore three kinds of mats, all braided from slips of the pandanus-left. The mats were dyed on the outside, in red, yellow and black colours, disposed in squares, diamonds and other figures, so as to have a very pretty effect.”(10) Some had mother-of-pearl and other shells suspended from the neck. (10)

### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

### 7.8 Missionary effect:

### 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## 8. Kinship systems

### 8.1 Sibling classification system:

### 8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

## 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Tuvalu is at the forefront of fighting global warming due to the fact it could be entirely underwater in the near future: <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/tuvalu-global-warming-fear-678310.html>

<http://motherjones.com/environment/2009/11/tuvalu-climate-refugees>

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