Introduction

Many older people in Britain may have had the same first experience of Tonga as I did: seeing Queen Salote in an open carriage as the rain poured down on the coronation procession of Queen Elizabeth II in London in 1953, beaming with joy. Others, more recently, may have come to know of Tonga through the Tongans’ great performance in the 2007 Rugby World Cup. ‘Where in the world is Tonga?’, many have asked. It was a question asked so forcefully by her classmates in the United States that Samantha Fisk, going to Tonga with her anthropologist mother, wrote a delightful book for them under that very title (item 32).

The Kingdom of Tonga, about 1,800 km north of New Zealand and about 800 km east of Fiji, consists of three main groups of islands, with three outliers to the north and one to the south, spread over approximately 900 km, between 15° and 22° south and 173° and 175° west. While Tonga is just to the east of the 180° meridian, the International Date Line was adjusted so that Tonga is to its west, and thus within the same day as New Zealand and Fiji. However Samoa, although almost due north, is to the east of the line and thus twenty-four hours behind Tonga. Tonga time is Greenwich Mean Time plus thirteen hours, one hour ahead of New Zealand and Fiji, thus Tonga had the best claim, despite some creative claims by others, to be the first country in the world to see in the new millennium. From such cartographic quirks does fame come.

Tonga consists of about 150 islands. Of these, about forty are currently inhabited, though some with no resident population are farmed for their produce from neighbouring islands. The 2006 census (item 545) gives the total area of the inhabited islands as 648.78 sq. km and the total population as 101,134. The main island of the southern group, Tongatapu, on which is situated the capital and seat of government, Nuku’alofa, and the main ports of entry by sea and air, contains seventy percent of the population (71,260), a figure that has been growing steadily as people have moved there from outer islands. A short distance to the south is ‘Eua (population 5,165). The seventeen islands of the central Ha’apai group have a population of 7,572, showing a steady decrease over thirty years. The thirteen islands of the Vavau’
group to the north have 15,485 people, showing only a very small decrease over ten years. The populations for the three northern outliers are Niuafo‘ou 650, Niuatoputapu 934 and Tafahi 68. These are steadily decreasing.

Many people visiting Tonga for the first time have been captivated by the country and its people. Captain Cook, writing in his journal on his second voyage when he visited Tonga in October 1773, noted, ‘Benevolent Nature has certainly been very bountiful to these isles . . . No one wants the common necessities of life, joy and contentment is painted on every face; indeed how can it be otherwise, here an easy freedom prevails among all ranks of people, they enjoy every blessing of life and live in a climate where the extremes of heat and cold is unknown.’ So impressed was he by the people, misleadingly as it turned out, that he called their country the Friendly Islands. Some people, on the other hand, found a picture of depravity and wickedness in the description of Tonga and the other Pacific islands given by Cook, and felt and responded to an evangelical call not to accept and enjoy but to change and convert.

Today’s traveller or visitor will find Tonga a fascinating and subtle combination of a traditional Polynesian kingdom—the only one to survive the impact of colonization in the 19th century and remain independent—and a thoroughly Christian country of a curiously 19th-century variety. It might be said that what the imperial powers could not achieve, the missionaries did. They did their work well. The Christian faith pervades the country, largely Methodist but with many churches and denominations represented and with a strong Mormon presence. All meals start and finish with a grace, which is not just a formal phrase or two but a long, all-encompassing, extempore prayer. Prayers will be just as naturally offered at the opening of a commercial building or a petrol station.

Older guidebooks and travellers’ accounts describe arrival by ship, the line of trees gradually coming into view along the Nuku‘alo‘a waterfront, then the low buildings, white wood with red tin roofs; or the journey up the spectacular channel to Neiafu in Vava‘u, which has been described as the finest natural harbour in the world. Sadly there are no regular passenger shipping services to Tonga today, though some cruise ships do call. A few visitors arrive on their own yachts, but most arrive by air, flying to Fua‘amotu airport on Tongatapu, noting what also struck Captain Cook, the neatness of the plantations on this largely agricultural island and the vivid blues and greens of the waters around the coast. The degree of shabbiness in Nuku‘alo‘a, however, is also striking. With no facilities for disposal, abandoned cars lie rusting.

‘The Kingdom of Tonga, ancient Polynesia’ is the slogan on the tourist literature, and it is the survival of a Polynesian kingdom, whose regime still affects many aspects of daily life, that is so remarkable about Tonga and that makes it unique, even if the amalgam of traditional and modern is some-
times uneasy. A ‘compromise culture’ it has been called, containing some of the best of both, and some of the less than best as well. Tonga is not paradise. No one’s best interests are served by ignoring the problems—demographic, political, social, economic and environmental—that face Tonga as they do other small isolated countries lacking significant natural resources other than their land, their seas and their people; some of these problems have become seemingly more intractable rather than less in the past ten years. But it is sad that some journalists seem to go to Tonga determined in advance not to like, or at least not to try to understand, what they find.

The islands

Given the small spread of the islands forming the Kingdom of Tonga, the differences in their geological structure and appearance are remarkable. Starting at the southern end, ‘Eua is a series of raised limestone terraces on a volcanic base, a high island with dramatic cliffs and some of the last remaining native forest in Tonga, where parrots may be seen. Tongatapu, the main island, an area of raised reef limestone on a volcanic base, is largely flat, rising gently from northwest to south and east, with rich and fertile soil. The Ha’apai group consists of two parallel chains. To the east is a line of low coral atolls, with poor, sandy soil. To the west is a line of volcanic islands, of which the cone of Kao is the highest point in Tonga (1,109 m) and Tofua is still active. The islands of the Vava’u group have a volcanic base and present a more varied aspect. To the north again, Niuafo’ou is an active volcano, a ring of land around a crater lake. The volcano last erupted in 1946 (item 220). Niutuputapu is the eroded remnant of a large volcano, while Tafahi, a few kilometres to the north, is an extinct volcano cone. All three have rugged shores on which landing is difficult. To the east of the whole chain is the Tonga Trench, with depths of more than 10,000 m—some of the deepest ocean in the world.

Tonga’s climate is subtropical rather than tropical, with winter temperatures never less than about 17°C and summer temperatures never warmer than about 33°C. Vava’u is noticeably warmer than Tongatapu. High humidity can make the months of December to March rather uncomfortable. These are the months of highest rainfall and also of cyclones. The last major cyclone, Isaac, was in 1982, but there have been other destructive cyclones since, for instance Cora in December 1998, which caused damage assessed at T$19.6 million to crops and buildings in Ha’apai, Tongatapu and ‘Eua.

History

Historians of the Pacific used to place the settlement of the islands of Polynesia by their present peoples within the first millennium AD. But the
current view, based on the most recent excavations, is that Tongatapu was first settled by the Lapita peoples around 900 BC (items 110, 125). Discoveries in the last thirty years of distinctive pottery made by the Lapita peoples (named after a site in New Caledonia where it was first found) have established this much earlier date for the movement of a people from Southeast Asia, through Melanesia and into Polynesia. A comprehensive treatment of the whole topic, with a bibliography of all published references to date, is in P. V. Kirch’s *The Lapita peoples* (item 111), supplemented by the later references noted above. From the archaeological record it seems that these people were largely shore-dwellers, living on fish and shellfish. Why the making of their distinctive pottery died out remains unclear.

The evidence, both archaeological and linguistic, indicates quite clearly that the Polynesian peoples, the Tongans among them, came from Southeast Asia, and the efforts of Thor Heyerdahl to prove that they came from South America must be discounted, though there is some recent evidence that Polynesians may have reached South America. This is not to deny that there are many unanswered questions as to the relationship between the Polynesians and the Melanesians of Fiji, the Solomon Islands and other groups to the west and north and as to the order in which the Lapita peoples settled the island groups of Polynesia and thus became the Polynesians that we know today. But the basic direction of the movement and its approximate dating are now well established.

Because the word Tonga means ‘south’ it is suggested that they may have come from Samoa to the north, but the Tongan legends tell of no migration, only of creation by the gods, among whom Maui fished up the islands from the bed of the sea. Radiocarbon dates for Lapita pottery indicate that Tongatapu was settled first, before Ha’apai to the north.

The first phase of Tongan history of which oral records tell is the emergence of ‘Aho’eitu as the first Tu’i Tonga about 950 AD. He was born, so legend tells, from the union between the sun god Tangaloa and a beautiful Tongan girl. The origin myth makes it clear that the Tu’i Tonga was a sacred king, as much priest as ruler, possessed of *mana* (presence, authority). He was head of a society based on *tapu* (prohibition, hence probably the one Tongan word taken into English, taboo), which governed all behaviour and relationships within a highly structured society.

From ‘Aho’eitu there is a record of a continuous line, oral until the coming of the Europeans and then written, until the thirty-ninth, Laufilitonga, who died in 1865. Long before then, however, in the early 15th century, a second royal line developed, the Tu’i Ha’atakalaua, taking on the temporal authority of the Tu’i Tonga and leaving him with only his sacred role. Early in the 17th century a third line developed, the Tu’i Kanokupolu, also a temporal line whose power had, by the time of European contact, become greater than that of the other two. The Tu’i Tonga title was absorbed
by King George Tupou I on the death of Laulfilitonga, and the three lines were brought together by successive royal marriages, so that all are embodied in the person of the present King George Tupou V.

Tonga was not a peaceful place during the reigns of the early Tu’i Tongas, some of whom met violent deaths. The earliest recorded stories tell of the tenth, in the 12th century. The eleventh, Tu’itātūi, built the Ha’amonga trilithon, one of the most remarkable sights in Tonga today, made of three huge stones each weighing forty tons and five metres high that, whatever its other purposes, served as an astronomical marker for the passing of the seasons. This was also the period of the building of the langi, massive stone terraced tombs which may be seen around the old capital of Mu’a.

The first sighting of Tonga by Europeans was in 1616 when the Dutch explorers Schouten and Le Maire visited briefly the far northern islands of Niuaotuputapu and Taftahi. The first visit to Tongatapu was by Abel Tasman in 1643. The first significant visit, however, had to wait for over a century, when Captain Cook visited ‘Eua, Tongatapu and Nomuka on his second voyage in 1773–74 and, for a much longer period on his third voyage in 1777, Nomuka, Ha’apai, Tongatapu and ‘Eua. Cook’s virtues as a captain, a navigator, a cartographer and an observer, a man of humanity and learning, have been written about often and need no repetition here. Suffice it to say that his journals, and the printed accounts of his voyages, which had enormous circulation and influence and were rapidly translated into many other European languages, offer a sympathetic, comprehensive and informed account of the islands that he visited, the Tongans whom he met, and their way of life. Even if in some respects he misunderstood what was happening, all serious study of Tonga must begin with him. I have been navigated around Nuku’alofa harbour by a sailor using Cook’s chart, which he said had never been bettered.

However, for some the picture of the Pacific islands presented by Cook and other explorers was not one of paradise but of depravity. For Protestants, inspired by the evangelical revival of the 18th century, and later for Catholics, Tonga was a mission field. In 1796 the London Missionary Society equipped the ship Duff to place missionaries in Tonga and other islands. Ten were left in Tonga, but the mission was a disaster. They were all men of great zeal but little formal education, and their strategy of reaching Tongans for the Christian faith by teaching them their trades was quite impractical. Some missionaries were killed, and within a few years all those left were withdrawn.

They had arrived at a time of increasing unrest within Tonga, a time of rivalries between chiefs in the three island groups that was to culminate in a long period of civil war. In the meantime the Christian presence was reestablished, this time by the Wesleyan Missionary Society that first sent
Walter Lawry, from 1822–23, and then John Thomas and John Hutchinson and their wives, who arrived in 1826. In 1831 the young chief Taufa‘ahau was baptized, taking the Christian name of George. He gained authority in Vava‘u, and on the death of the Tu‘i Kanokupolu in 1845 he assumed that title and became the ruler of a united Tonga as King George Tupou I.

The achievements of his long reign (he died in 1893, aged ninety-six) were without parallel in the Pacific, although some opposition and disaffection continued until about 1860. Whether he called upon and used the expertise of his missionary advisers, and in particular his prime minister for many years, Shirley Baker, to work to his own ends, or whether Baker directed him, is a matter of debate, with Rutherford (item 209) and Lātu‘ukefu (item 190) presenting different aspects of the question. However by the end of his reign King George I had united the kingdom, given Tonga a code of laws, culminating in the Constitution of 1875 that established personal freedoms and transformed the old chiefs into new nobles, and ensured that land remained vested in Tonga forever and could never be alienated to foreigners. Above all he kept Tonga independent by playing one European power against another by a series of treaties that ensured that Tonga never became a colony. Baker imported for the king from New Zealand the royal palace, which still dominates the waterfront of Nuku‘alofa today, and devised a flag and coat of arms. However it seems that it was King George himself who devised the Tongan motto. ‘God and Tonga are my inheritance’, a country united under the Christian monarchy of the house of Tupou.

There were many European residents and traders who mocked what they saw as the pretensions of the king and Baker. Baker eventually had to be expelled after an attempt was made to assassinate him following unrest over the establishment of a national Wesleyan church independent of Australia. Attempts to enforce this led to the violent persecution of those who wished to retain the status quo and to the exile of some. It was after this, and the king’s death, that in 1900 Britain imposed a Treaty of Protection and Friendship by which a British agent and consul was appointed, who was not to interfere in internal affairs but was to advise the king on foreign affairs and on local and financial policy as requested.

The achievements and status of King George Tupou I are summed up by Rutherford in his Friendly Islands: a history of Tonga (item 143): ‘The Kingdom of Tonga was his own creation and the independence, prosperity and well being of his people his lifetime care. He was the greatest Tongan of his own and probably any other century’. Yet Tonga was not as well-founded as it might seem, and the reign of his great-grandson King George Tupou II was less happy. Since 1890 government had fallen into administrative and financial chaos. Rivalries emerged. The king alienated many by vacillating between two possible wives, and his choice made him so unpopular that for
a time he could not leave the palace without an armed guard. His government had to borrow money from traders, and king and Parliament were set against each other. Such was the concern of both foreign residents in Tonga and the British government that Britain imposed a supplementary treaty in 1905 further restricting Tonga’s independence and enforcing a change of ministers. And yet the affair of the Tonga ma’a Tonga kautaha (items 230, 231) showed that the power of the British consul was limited and could not totally override the king and his government. The rest of the reign saw a greater degree of unity and some economic progress.

Even so, the early years of the reign of his daughter, Queen Sālote Tupou III, who succeeded at the age of eighteen in 1918, were far from easy. From a later perspective her long reign, ending in 1965, was a golden age of stability, with the recovery of important elements of Tongan tradition that had been unnecessarily lost: a pride in being Tongan together with a careful acceptance of that which was best and most appropriate from the West, and quiet progress in the economy, health and education. The definitive account of the reign is Dr. Wood-Ellem’s biography (item 223). The early years of Queen Sālote’s reign were distinctly unsettled, but her attempt to bring together the divided churches (item 285), her presence in the villages, her work during the Second World War when many American troops were stationed in Tonga, exposing it for the first time to Western culture on a large scale, and much else, including her presence in London in 1953, gave her people a new self-confidence in the value of their own Tongan identity, while ensuring that Tonga was a stable unit within the region and the British Commonwealth. An important part of this was her concern, with the help of Western scholars such as Elizabeth Bott (items 340, 356) working with her and with other Tongans, for recording Tongan tradition and history. Her death in 1965 prompted the deepest grief in Tonga.

For sixteen years Queen Sālote was assisted as prime minister by her elder son, who succeeded her as King Taufa’āhau Tupou IV. A law graduate from the University of Sydney, he saw that Tonga could not remain protected from the larger world, that it needed investment in health and education, in transport and communications and an economy based less on subsistence agriculture than on industry and commerce. All of this, he knew, would need external funding through development aid and loans. Early in his reign, in 1970, Tonga achieved full independence from Britain, within the British Commonwealth. Earlier, in 1968, surface oil seepages raised hope of commercially exploitable oil that could fund Tonga’s development, but after much exploration no oil was found. However, much was done in the early years of the reign. A hotel was built, a radio station and newspaper started, and a bank established. But, with a population growing because of improved health care, pressure on the limited land resources increased. No longer could every young man receive the tax allotment to which he had
been entitled. Many, encouraged by the government, emigrated to New Zealand, Australia and the United States, seeing that as the only answer to economic problems; considerable literature on the interrelated themes of population, migration and remittances and their impact on the Tongan economy (items 514–53) demonstrates their crucial importance to Tonga today. At the same time it is perhaps both ironic and inevitable that Tonga has not been able to establish an export-led economy based on small-scale industry and on tourism. The success of vanilla and squash (though in the last few years declining as other countries enter the market) and the potential for kava and for fish, suggest that the resources of land and sea remain Tonga’s best hope.

The king was indefatigable in his efforts to improve his kingdom and the lot of his people, taking initiatives and pursuing opportunities wherever they presented themselves. Some were more successful than others. Attempts to create an international airline, to give Tonga greater control over transport both for passengers and for freight, ultimately failed. Unscrupulous entrepreneurs from overseas did Tonga no favours, losing Tongan funds in an American insurance scam and establishing a ship registry that was misused and produced no income. However the extraordinary national celebrations for the king’s eightieth birthday in July 1998, the days of feasting and dancing, of church services, concerts and displays, the decorated archways erected over every main road in Nuku’alofa, the presence of distinguished visitors from around the Pacific, all served to demonstrate that the monarchy is still at the heart of the Tongan polity.

His death in September 2006 saw an outpouring of national grief reminiscent of that at his mother’s death forty-two years earlier. In a statement issued after the king’s death the prime minister set out what he saw as the five major achievements of the reign: his drive to give all Tongans access to both basic and higher education, his endeavours to improve his people’s wealth and standard of living, his tireless efforts to facilitate his people’s emigration, his refusal to assent to legislation that would have dispossessed Tongans living abroad of their land allotments, and, perhaps most significant, his decision to set a precedent on the appointment of cabinet ministers ‘based on the recommendations of a prime minister elected by the people’. He was succeeded by his eldest son, as King George Tupou V, who, for twenty-five years, until 1998, had been Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Political system

Only two months after the death of the king, with the country still in mourning, Nuku’alofa erupted into an orgy of rioting, arson and looting on 16 November 2006 that saw much of the central business district
destroyed and burnt to the ground. First estimates put the cost of the damage at T$123 million. The minister of finance estimated that twenty percent of gross domestic product was lost on that day. It was estimated that rebuilding might cost around T$90 million. The coronation of King George Tupou V was postponed from August 2007 to August 2008.

To try to understand why this happened, the culmination of a period of approximately twenty years of dissatisfaction by some in Tonga at the political system and of calls for reform, it is first necessary to describe the present constitutional position. Tonga is a monarchy, the only Polynesian monarchy to survive, and the monarch not only reigns but also rules. The role of the monarch is set within the parliamentary system established by the Constitution of 1875, but this does not give sovereignty to a democratically elected parliament in the Western style, and it is over this that significant tensions have appeared.

The Constitution provides for a sovereign and Privy Council. The monarch is both head of state and head of government, and appoints a prime minister and all members of the cabinet. (The monarch with the cabinet forms the Privy Council.) Tonga has had only five prime ministers in the past sixty years: from 1949 to 1965 the crown prince, later King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV, during the latter part of the reign of his mother Queen Sālote; from 1965 to 1991 the king’s brother Prince Fatafehi Tu’ipelehake; from 1991 Baron Vaea, from 2000 the king’s youngest son Prince ‘Ulukalala-Lavaka-Ata and since 2006 Dr. Feleti Sevele, the first commoner to hold the post. All members of the cabinet sit in the single-chamber legislature, along with nine Nobles’ Representatives elected by the nobles from among the thirty-three of them, and nine People’s Representatives elected by universal suffrage. There are no political parties as such. A group, loosely formed, calling itself the Tonga Pro-d竟ocracy Movement, emerged in the late 1980s, and recorded a strong vote in the general election of 1987, with a number of People’s Representatives with large majorities, committed to a programme of political reform. The 1990 election saw this group strengthened, with popular concerns about the accountability of ministers, the sale of passports and other matters, and the group continued to do well in subsequent elections in the 1990s. In October 1998 they chose as their new name the Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement, calling for greater ministerial accountability and suggesting that cabinet ministers should be drawn from among elected representatives rather than appointed by the king. They were, however, bound by no common ideology or specific programme of reform and at times fell out among themselves. There was little apparent feeling that the monarchy should become subservient to Parliament, let alone that it should be replaced by a republic. Most calls for reform were set within the limits of the existing system.
Through the 1990s voter support for pro-democracy candidates rose: 1990 58.1 percent, 1993 65.2 percent, 1996 65.5 percent, but in the 1999 election (item 433), though democracy and accountability were the main issues, support fell to 39.6 percent. In the 2002 election (item 443) pro-democracy candidates again won most seats, but turnout was below 50 percent. There seemed no programme for change: voters again seemed to be seeking transparency and accountability in government, rather than radical reform. The 2005 election (item 440) followed a difficult period for the government, with dissatisfaction over the pace of democratic reform, the loss of government investments through fraud in the USA, unsuccessful attempts to control the media, which the government saw as irresponsible and inaccurate in some of its reporting, and the failure of the Tongan airline with considerable losses. Pressure for greater democracy had already led the king to agree that two elected representatives each of the people and the nobles should be appointed to the cabinet as ministers. Pro-democracy candidates were again largely successful, and the promised changes to the cabinet were implemented. However the civil service then began a damaging general strike in support of salary increases ranging between sixty and eighty percent, to which the government ultimately had no option but to concede, at a cost of T$35 million. Subsequently members of Parliament voted themselves a salary increase of sixty percent, backdated to July 2005.

A National Committee for Political Reform was established in November 2005, led by H.R.H. Prince Tuʻipelehake, to consult the public on the type of political reform that should take place. From January 2006 it held consultations throughout all the islands of Tonga and also among Tongans living overseas. Tuʻipelehake and his wife were tragically killed in a car crash in California in July 2006 while discussing plans with Tongans residing in the USA. Nevertheless the final report was presented to the king shortly before his death in September 2006. It recommended one model for a fully elected parliament. The government and the People’s Representatives each recommended their own separate models, and the government proposed that these models should be considered by a parliamentary committee.

A week of inflammatory speeches in a public space in Nukuʻalofa, widely reported by the local media, exacerbated feelings that were already strong, and incited the explosion of violence and destruction on 16 November, which initially the Tonga Defence Force and the police could not control. Eight people were killed. Troops and police from Australia and New Zealand were brought in to maintain order. More than 700 people, including five People’s Representatives, were arrested on charges of incitement, arson and robbery, and, trials are at the time of writing, making their way through the courts. Two factors may have contributed to the violence.
One was the presence in Tonga of youths formerly residing in the USA and New Zealand but deported back to Tonga for criminal offences. The other was xenophobia: Chinese stores and businesses seem to have been particular targets. Tonga still lives under a state of emergency, renewed monthly, while plans are made and finances raised (through a soft loan of T$118 million from China to the government, which will be passed on to private businesses) for the reconstruction of central Nukuʻalofa.

In a speech closing the parliamentary session on 23 November 2006 King George Tupou V pledged to move ahead with democratic change, affirming that the differences between the three models could be resolved through dialogue, and a select committee of the legislative assembly was created to review the different models and address other issues relevant to political reform. The committee recommended that there should be nine Nobles’ Representatives and seventeen People’s Representatives and that these twenty-six elected members elect the prime minister, who would then advise the king of those he has selected to be cabinet ministers, for his approval. It was also recommended that the king should independently select four representatives, either from those already elected but not selected by the prime minister for cabinet posts or from outside the legislative assembly, at his pleasure. This proposal was approved by the legislative assembly in September 2007, to be implemented in 2010. The elections planned for April 2008 will have been conducted according to the then existing structure.

In his address at the opening of Parliament in May 2007 the king was able to report good progress in planning and financing the reconstruction of Nukuʻalofa and an economy more robust than at first expected. Main areas of focus were to be tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure. Diplomatic missions were to be set up in Australia and New Zealand, and the education system was to be expanded, with the starting age lowered from six to five and the leaving age raised to eighteen, with 90 percent of school leavers to be accepted into institutes of higher education or technical training within five years. These are ambitious and impressive targets. In a statement following the first meeting of the Privy Council with the new king in September 2007 the prime minister said that the government supported change that is controlled and not too rapid, ‘Changes which Tonga can manage properly, peacefully and with stability and I have no doubt that changes will continue. I have no doubt the unifying force that the monarchy has on Tonga will continue’.

(For a detailed account and assessment of events from the beginning of 2005 until the death of King Taufaʻahau Tupou IV in September 2006, see the article by Heather Young Leslie on Tonga in the Political Reviews section of *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2007) pp. 262–75. I. C.)
Campbell covers the riots of November 2006 and the events leading up to them in his most recent paper in *The Journal of Pacific History*, added at item 740.

**Foreign relations**

Although Tonga signed its first treaties of friendship with France (1855) and with Germany (1876) it was Britain from which came the first significant explorer, Cook, and the first missionaries through whom Tonga became a Christian country, united under a Christian king, George Tupou I. There were advocates of full colonization, particularly from the British in New Zealand, but Tonga retained its independence even after it became a protected state of Britain with the treaties of 1900 and 1905. There was a significant German trading community, but Britain gave up rights in Samoa in return for Germany giving up rights in Tonga by a treaty in 1899. French Marists had a leading position in the Roman Catholic Church, which they had established. However Britain had ultimate control over Tonga’s foreign policy, exercised through the British consul.

When Tonga became fully independent in 1970 it remained within the British Commonwealth. The British Consulate in Tonga became a high commission and resident diplomatic missions were established by Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan. A number of other countries, including France and Germany, had honorary consuls. Tonga for its part established a high commission in London, covering many of the countries of Europe and also the European Union in Brussels, in order to play its full part in the important negotiations between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) group of former dependent territories over trade and aid. Aid that formerly came from Britain is increasingly channelled through the EU. Britain recently closed its high commission in Tonga, as in several other small Pacific states, centralizing its presence in Fiji. Many regretted the end of this long and significant presence in Tonga. During this period Tonga often followed a resolutely independent path of friendship with all, for instance with France even when most of the Pacific island countries were united in their opposition to the continuing French colonial presence in the Pacific, and in particular to their nuclear tests.

In 1998, there was a major development—the transfer of diplomatic relations from Taiwan to the People’s Republic of China (item 473). Subsequently Tonga established an embassy in Beijing. Whatever the long-term motives of the PRC in developing alliances with small states of the South Pacific (perhaps fishing rights, satellite slots, or simply general strategic support for the Chinese position), this has been accompanied by an increasing presence of Chinese in Tonga in the business sector. The main hotel in Nuku’alofa, the Dateline, is now owned by the Chinese, who have
invested considerable sums in its development and expansion. Many of the small village shops are also run by Chinese. Some members of the Tonga Defence Force have been trained in Chinese military academies, and Tongans study at Chinese universities. The PRC has been generous with aid, and negotiations are under way for it to supply a large loan for the rebuilding of Nuku’alofa after the riots and destruction of November 2006.

In 1999 Tonga, which was already a member of some of the subsidiary agencies of the United Nations, became a full member of the UN. Tonga has also maintained close and warm relations with the United States, remembering with gratitude the US presence in Tonga during the Second World War when Japanese invasion was a real threat. Tonga supported the US invasion of Iraq, and currently a small contingent from the Tonga Defence Force is serving in Iraq.

**The economy**

For economists accustomed to near-balanced national accounts, the Tongan economy must appear alarming. Tonga has what is classified by economists as a MIRAB economy, in which the main elements are migration, remittances and bureaucracy. It is only the large volume of remittances from Tongans now living overseas together with overseas aid that has funded the value of imports fuelled by a rising standard of living. Table 1 shows the statistics from the National Reserve Bank of Tonga for the last four financial years.

Some of the money received has been spent on social obligations to family and church, but much received by families from their kin overseas has been spent on the construction of houses, on cars and on other imported consumer durables, as well as on food, much of which is imported. There are concerns that not much has been invested in local businesses. There are many signs of apparent prosperity, at least in Nuku’alofa where the number of vehicles has increased so much in recent years that there are

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*Note:* Table numbers are in millions of T$.
*Source:* National Reserve Bank of Tonga.
now traffic jams at busy periods. Many Tongans now have mobile phones, served by one of two networks, and televisions, with several channels available. A report by the Asian Development Bank in 2004 identified the difficulties of households in meeting subsistence costs and the real hardship facing some Tongans, not least because the traditional safety net of the family is no longer as effective as it used to be. Yet standards of living are rising, and a recent United Nations Development Program human development index survey ranked Tonga 54th in the world, ahead of all its Pacific island neighbours.

Nevertheless the position is challenging, and foreign currency reserves have at times fallen to low levels (T$36.9 million in 2002–03 but recovering to T$83.2 in 2005–06). Tonga faces all the problems of a small group of islands nearly 2,000 km from its nearest potential major market, New Zealand, with high shipping costs and services that are not always reliable. Tonga is a primarily agricultural country that before European contact produced more than enough staple foods for all (albeit with a population of probably no more than 20,000) with surpluses the size of which amazed early explorers when presented on ceremonial occasions such as the ‘inasi (first fruits) for the Tu’i Tonga. Indeed the volume of food, whether presented for ceremonies or for feasts, can still amaze the visitor today. On the whole Tongan dietary problems are more of being overweight than of malnutrition, though diet may not always be well-balanced. A recent survey suggested that 68 percent of Tongans are clinically obese, the third highest figure in the world. Cheap but fatty mutton flaps, imported from New Zealand, form a major part of the diet, and contribute to very high levels of high blood pressure and diabetes.

Coconut oil and copra, the flesh of the coconut, used in the production of soap and margarine, were in the 19th century and remained for long the main export crops. Attempts to diversify and develop new export crops (coffee, cotton and sugar) were made in the 19th century but never became significant, though a little coffee is still grown today. By the 1970s the world price of copra had fallen so low that the trade became unremunerative, and efforts, financed by overseas aid, to develop the export of both copra and bananas came to nothing. In recent years two significant new export crops have been developed. The first, vanilla, grown largely in Vava’u, commands a good price in the world market if of good quality. However other producing countries have now entered this market and the price fluctuates. More recently has come squash (pumpkin) for the Japanese market, which Tonga has been able to supply for a short period at the end of the year when there are no other suppliers. Much land has been turned over to squash production, sometimes to the detriment of the production of staple foods for domestic consumption, and some people have grown very rich through this trade. However in recent years, with increasing competition from other
sources and declining yields, perhaps because of overexploitation of the soil, the price has been low, and growers have not been able to produce their full quota. There is some export of traditional Tongan root crops, yam and sweet potato, to New Zealand for the large Tongan community there. There might be new export markets for tropical fruit and maize, and a coconut-replanting scheme is planned. In all about 90 percent of Tonga’s exports are of agricultural produce.

Another factor affecting all agricultural production, domestic or export, is the weather. Tonga is prone to hurricanes, which can devastate crops for many years, and also to drought, which can greatly reduce yields. Yet there are hopes for agricultural exports. The price of copra did recover from the low levels of the 1970s. It was hoped that there might be a significant market for kava in the United States and Europe for the production of a natural tranquilizer, but its use has not yet been approved for medicinal purposes, and the main export market for kava is other Pacific countries for traditional use. At one time it seemed that there might be a good market in Japan for a seaweed, but this has not yet developed. Many growers produce in the short term and take profits for immediate consumption. There is too little capital investment in agriculture, and supplies are not consistent enough to meet regular demand from export markets.

There have been attempts to start small businesses producing for export, and a Small Industries Centre, developed outside Nuku’alofa, was hailed as a model for small Pacific island countries. However, the distances over which raw materials (largely wool for knitwear and leather for coats) had to be imported and finished goods then exported militated against success, and it seems unlikely that small-scale manufacturing or assembly can be a significant part of the answer to Tonga’s problems. Commercial fishing has yet to produce significant exports, while Tonga imports considerable quantities of tinned fish.

Tourism, as in many such countries, has been seen as a generator of employment as well as an earner of foreign currency, but it has not developed in Tonga to the extent hoped. Tonga could never be a large-scale tourist destination such as Fiji or Hawai‘i: there are neither the facilities nor the transport links, and standards have not always been what today’s tourists expect. Tonga’s hope for tourism has to rest on smaller groups with particular specialist interests such as yacht cruising, which is developing in Vava‘u, along with diving and deep-sea fishing, and most recently whale watching. The hunting of whales, which was only for local consumption, was banned by royal decree in 1978. Humpback whales migrate from Antarctic waters to Tonga between July and November to give birth and mate, and since the late 1990s a whale-watching industry has been established in Vava‘u that, it has been estimated brings in over T$1 million a year in tourist expenditure on local services. Yet there are Tongans who would like to
substitute whale meat for imported mutton, and there is a difficult balance to be held.

Yet overall the Tongan domestic economy seems in reasonable shape, and the review by the minister of finance of the economy in 2007 (item 507) is very positive, even after the double impact of the cost of damage caused by the November 2006 riots and the large salary increase for civil servants, as a result of which over half of government revenue goes to salaries, leaving little for public utilities and services and a heavy dependence on foreign aid and remittances. The domestic business sector has been remarkably resilient. Gross domestic product has increased in the last four financial years by 3.2 percent, 1.4 percent, 2.3 percent and 1.9 percent, with 1.6 percent forecast for 2006–07, and the prime minister, in a statement in September 2007, said that he hoped for around 2.5 percent in the next two years, with growth particularly in tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

Society

Traditional Tongan society is highly stratified and its interrelationships often complex. The extensive literature on rank and status and on social relationships as they have been observed (items 290–370) bears witness to the fascination of the subject over the 230 years since Captain Cook recorded his observations.

At its simplest, below royalty is a clear and sharp distinction, based on birth and thus on inherited rank, between tu’u (commoners) and ‘eiki (chiefs). This extends to three levels of language for monarch, nobles and commoners. In pre-European times the distinction was absolute. Not only did tu’u have no rights in this life, only ‘eiki could reach the afterlife in Pulotu. While King George Tupou I’s Code of Laws of 1862 removed from the chiefs the right to demand exactions from commoners, and the Constitution of 1875 transformed the chief into a parliamentary noble, those did nothing to affect social relationships and ranking, and the stratification remains. Rank (acquired by birth) and status (acquired by achievement) are not always identical, and the literature on the relationship between one and the other, and on how rank is acquired and transmitted, is highly technical. Every Tongan seeks to know where he or she stands in the social order, and for a child part of the process of growing up is becoming poto (skilled) in knowing one’s place in society and operating within it, as demonstrated by Helen Morton in her book Becoming Tongan (item 294).

The picture now, however, is not as clear as it once was. There is a growing number of commoners, better educated than some nobles, holding senior positions in government and business, including now the prime minister. Some writers have seen the development of what they call a middle class. The reciprocal relationship of nobles and commoners, each with
both obligations and responsibilities, has on occasions been a one-way process. Concepts of democracy and of equal political rights, as noted above, are seen by some to be valid elsewhere but not in Tonga. Rank still remains central, and it is necessary to be aware of this in any attempt to understand Tongan society today.

**Kava**

Kava occupies such an important place in Tongan society, and in life generally, that it merits its own section (items 371–79). Kava is a drink made from the pounded root of the kava plant (*Piper methysticum*), mixed with water. The taste is slightly peppery and muddy, and for most non-Tongans it is an acquired taste. Its chemical composition is alkaloid; it is an anaesthetic and analgesic, and its effect is generally soporific. It is not, as is sometimes stated, alcoholic, nor does it have the same effect. As noted above in the section on agriculture, it is in demand in the United States and Europe as the basis of a natural tranquilizer, though some countries do not approve its use.

The social drinking of kava, without any ceremony, in informal groups or in kava clubs in every village, is central to the daily life of most Tongan men (not usually women). Here information is shared and matters of common concern are discussed long into the night. However, a formal kava ceremony, where kava is ceremonially mixed and shared on major occasions such as the conferring of a title on a noble, is also a deeply significant social ritual. The strict arrangement of seating in the circle, the gifts that accompany the kava, and the order of precedence signified by the sequence in which the kava is distributed to each person present, all ratify and affirm the hierarchies of Tongan society. As Urbanowicz writes in his paper on kava (item 372), kava is ‘a seal on all occasions... a model of Tongan society’. Others have interpreted the kava ceremony at a deeper level, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint (item 374), seeing it as resolving some of the tensions inherent in Tongan society from its mythic beginning. Others still, as Christians, have seen it as a powerful prefiguring of Holy Communion. The altar in the Roman Catholic cathedral at Nuku’alofa is in the form of a giant kava bowl. However, at whatever level it is interpreted, or simply observed and experienced, to witness a major kava ceremony is to see the traditional Tongan society made visible.

**The essence of Tonga**

How, then, can one sum up the essence of this complex society? What can be identified as its governing principles as they can be seen by observers from outside?
The ability to adopt and absorb without losing its essential character seems to be a continuing thread running through Tongan society. For all the Western influences that have deeply affected it, Tonga, 230 years after the first significant European contact, is still remarkably distinct. A former deputy prime minister and minister of education, Dr. Langi Kavaliku, identifies ‘ofa (love) as the principal characteristic feature of Tongan society (item 334). All aspects of life in Tonga, at its ideal best, are governed by ‘ofa. Of course not all relationships in Tonga reach this ideal. Yet the very fact that, writing towards the end of the cynical 20th century, this could even be recognized as an ideal is significant. Tongans may disagree strongly about almost everything—politics, religion, the family or business. They are, it has been observed, highly litigious, often ready to go to court against each other. Yet, as Marcus records in investigating litigation and succession disputes (item 461), the use of lawyers to avoid direct confrontation allows harmonious relations to resume after a case, whichever way the verdict may go.

The proliferation of churches of different denominations is very apparent. Even a small village may have two or three. But they all work together when necessary, for instance if labour is required for a new building. Western and traditional medicine coexist, and indeed Claire Parsons, writing about this (item 418), sees the maintenance of harmony in relationships as central not just to health but to life generally. Christianity and concepts of evil spirits coexist too. Both the causes of and the remedies for illness are seen as complementary rather than exclusively the domain of only one system of belief and knowledge. Tongan graves are decorated with all sorts of Western material such as bottles and fabrics (item 658) that might be thought incongruous to Western eyes. Yet why should they be? At a celebration both the police silver band or one of the many school brass bands may appear, and also traditional dance and music troupes performing in very much the way observed by Captain Cook. Tonga has learnt and taken much from the West, not all for the good. In some ways Tonga is now a very materialistic society. But the West has not yet swamped or transformed Tonga. Perhaps it is because Tonga is largely a homogeneous society, with no alienation of land and no significant immigration, that it has been able both to adopt and to retain, and to become a truly ‘compromise culture’.

Alongside this ability to adopt and absorb is the fact that traditionally no Tongan stands alone, living a purely private, individual life. Life is lived as part of a wider network of extended family and kin. It has been stated that ‘we’ is more important than ‘I’ in Tonga. Thus, you do not save money for yourself first, but for the needs of your kin, your village or your church. There is no social security in Tonga. The care of the elderly is the welcomed responsibility of those who can support them. It can be more difficult where the owner of a small shop is expected to give goods or credit to his kin, or
where a businessman or farmer is trying to accumulate capital to develop his business. For the non-Tongan the fact that a Tongan is seldom alone can be difficult to appreciate. To go for a walk or read a book on your own is simply not usual. Some younger Tongans, particularly if brought up overseas, may find it less easy to live in this way. But to anyone spending any time in Tonga the sense of the communal is palpable. This is ‘o fa in practice.

How far this may all survive in the 21st century must remain an open question. A younger generation increasingly exposed to the values of Western individualism may find it less easy to maintain the balance. Many of the writers whose works are featured in this bibliography are concerned with one aspect or another of this situation. The system may seem to some, both inside and outside, to be something of an anachronism. Others may feel that, without characteristics such as these, Tonga would no longer be Tonga.

Knowledge of the best that is Tongan is one way to ensure that the best survives. Social change is inevitable. Societies are dynamic, not static, and no society can isolate itself from the rest of the world. F. O. Kolo, in his paper on the myth of indigenous authenticity (item 144), notes, ‘After all the years of teaching that we are primitive and have an inferior culture to that of the Europeans, all of a sudden we are told that our culture is beautiful and, that we should go back and live by it’. He calls for scholars to list all available Tongan articles of historical significance, to collect all written materials produced by non-Tongans such as early descriptions by traders, voyagers and others, and to collect articles by scholars on all Tongan subjects. Sadly there is as yet no national library in Tonga in which such material could be deposited. However it is hoped that this bibliography may contribute to this process, and thus to the well-being of Tonga within a wider world.

**Scope and arrangement of the bibliography**

It would be almost impossible to do now what Philip Snow set out to do forty years ago in his *A bibliography of Fiji, Tonga and Rotuma* (item 719): to provide a complete listing of all material, not only books and academic papers but also newspaper articles. Far too much has been published since for this to be even conveniently listed, let alone annotated. However that is not the aim of this bibliography. I have attempted as far as possible to follow the brief given to me by the publisher of the series in which this bibliography first appeared, and to give preference to material more recently published and more generally available, though including older and more specialist material where useful. However in the case of Tonga, in many subject areas few books are published and the bulk of the literature is contained within papers in academic journals. For example, reasonably recent general works...
of synthesis have been published on the Lapita people (item 111), on the reign of Queen Sālote Tupou III (item 223) and on the art of Tonga (item 636). On the other hand, virtually all of the large literature on the complex matter of Tongan social structure, status and rank is to be found in papers in academic journals or collected volumes, and it has thus been necessary to cover these more fully. The same applies to the subjects of migration and population. At the same time standard monographs on some subjects, though now old, have not been superseded. The standard work on the plants of Tonga was published in 1959 (item 96), that on the canoes of Oceania in 1936 (item 640), and the standard grammar of Tongan in 1953 (item 260).

Thus it must be stressed that this bibliography is selective and makes no claim to completeness. I have done my best to cover all significant works that I have been able to locate. However I am aware of some works that I have not been able to find in any of the libraries available to me, and I have therefore not been able to include them. I have no doubt that I have missed works that others would have included, and that my judgment as to what should be included and what not may not be that of others. There are many books on the Pacific islands generally, or on regions within it, which have brief sections on Tonga. These I have excluded unless it has been necessary to include them for want of anything more specialized.

I should also make it clear that I am not a professional scholar or bibliographer in the field of Pacific studies. My annotations attempt not to evaluate the validity of an argument but to offer a factual summary of what the author has written, with brief comments of my own only where I hope they may be helpful or relevant.

Any attempt to review the whole literature on Tonga reveals one sad fact, that so little about Tonga is written by Tongans themselves. For example, few of the PhD theses listed here are by Tongans. First explorers and visitors such as Cook and Mariner, then missionaries and teachers such as Collocott and Wood, and in more recent times scholars from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand have made substantial contributions to the study of Tonga. Tongans will tell you that some of these authors have misunderstood aspects of their subjects, in some cases perhaps because they did not know the language themselves and had to work through interpreters, or because their informants had a partial view. For a small country of limited resources, it is not easy to train young scholars through to PhD standard with the prospect of an academic career and the opportunity to research, write and publish. The University of the South Pacific in Fiji, the university for the region, has done much, through the work of the Institute of Pacific Studies, to encourage writing and make possible the publication of work by Pacific islanders, but much of this necessarily consists of brief papers in collected volumes. The Tonga Research Association, through its
conferences and subsequent published volumes of papers, also encourages Tongan scholarship. It is to be hoped that more Tongans in the future will be encouraged and trained to interpret their country to the wider world.

**A note on names and spelling**

Tongan lacks some of the letters of the European alphabet. It has no j, r or b, using s, l and p. Further, every syllable concludes with a vowel. Once this is understood, many names and words that seem unfamiliar become clear. Thus, Sālote is Charlotte, Semisi is James, Sione is John, *Kalonikali* is *Chronicle*, *kolisi* is college, *siupeli* is jubilee.