the General Fono of elected village representatives. Without safeguards, persons in elective offices could create a political elite with powers that transcend the basic principle of parliamentary equivalence—in short, a situation of “unbridled power.” Such a development would be contrary to the Green Paper statement that the “traditional villages are the locally recognized foundations for the maintenance of peace, order and good government,” which are also the legal roles associated with the role of the administrator of Tokelau (ssc 1999; Tokelau Act 1948).

The new model brings challenges and obstacles to its own achievement. One difficulty is that villages do not have the capacity to take over the new responsibilities, particularly in the management and delivery of social services. Structures to undertake the proposed services are absent in the organization of villages at present and, therefore, new ones must be created. Capacity building is then crucial before new responsibilities are handed over to the villages. Some elders have expressed their view that it is too early to “cut the rope that binds Tokelau to New Zealand,” but others believe that Tokelau should start looking after its own affairs. The first step proposed in the Green Paper is the establishment of the Tokelau Public Service Commission, followed by a process of capacity building for the villages, preparing them to take on new responsibilities. Some people predict that the villages and the core public service will vie for resources whose scarcity will be a future reality. The three Taupulega are currently deliberating on the proposed model.

The final decision whether to proceed or not is theirs, and, should they decide to proceed, the pace and timing is also for them to decide. The proposed Tokelau Public Service changes, therefore, will continue to be the main focus of dialogue between Tokelau and New Zealand come the new millennium.

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References


TONGA

The controversial prodemocracy movement (PDM) significantly lost ground in the general election held in March 1999. Its leaders had expected that its endorsed candidates would sweep the floor to gain at least seven, if not all nine, of the commoner parliamentary seats. Instead, four of the commoner seats went to newcomers who are involved in commerce, finance, church, and philanthropic community affairs. The results shocked the prodemocracy movement, which on 30 October 1998 had
changed its name to the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDML). Only a small minority of its leaders and supporters have ever fully understood or favored the concept of democracy, but most of them want greater popular representation and public accountability. As it turned out, only five of the nine commoners elected could be said to favor political change along the lines advocated by the movement. A rethinking of its strategy is clearly called for. The radical newspaper *Taimi 'o Tonga* concluded from the results, “Interesting political speeches are not enough. Accomplished hard work is what the public demands” (*TOT*, 16 Mar 1999, 3). The two are not incompatible. Several THRDML supporters were returned, acknowledging the respect gained in the community by their continued advocacy.

The reasons for the voter swing would seem to lie as much in what has not been happening within the political economy as what has. The private sector struggles vainly to reach the growth potential promised by the government in the face of the cabinet’s continued failure to encourage overseas investment or implement fiscal changes, despite the minister of finance’s attempts at tariff reform. The failure of the king to appoint a new prime minister following Baron Vaea’s resignation over a year ago has left the country still wondering who will be the next senior minister. This situation reinforces the sense of political stasis, particularly in view of the stalemate that is widely believed to exist between the king and the crown prince regarding the future basis of recruitment to cabinet. The prince concentrates on his business affairs while his younger brother, Lavaka-Ata-‘Ulukalala, has assumed the ministerial posts that he held. In such a situation, the people may have come to accept that changes in the government structure will not be forthcoming in the foreseeable future, certainly in the lifetime of the present monarch. Instead, as before the advent of the prodemocracy movement, they tend to look toward “big man” types of business figures who might be able to kickstart the sluggish economy and advance the cause of prosperity. Currently, the possibility of increased opportunities for jobs and income is to most people far more attractive than political rhetoric.

Despite the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement’s failure to gain the majority of seats, Akilisi Pohiva was returned once again as the number 1 people’s representative for Tongatapu, demonstrating the high regard his reformist stance has brought him. Though he polled a substantial 8,554 votes from a voter turnout of just over 14,000 in the main island group, his margin of victory was nevertheless not as large as in the previous election (in which he scored a landslide 9,149 votes); for, coming in strongly at his first appearance with 6,298 votes to take second place in Tongatapu, was Dr Fred Sevele, a highly respected and long-established entrepreneurial businessman. Close on his heels, with only 143 votes fewer, was a greater surprise: the return of another newcomer, ‘Esau Namoa, a younger and more recently successful businessman, as Tongatapu’s number 3 representative. The trend continued in the other island groups. In Vava’u, a long-time representative, the reformist lawyer
Paasi was displaced, and William Harris, who had just retired from senior government office as secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Commerce, and Industries, became number 1 people’s representative. A local businessman, Vaipulu, beat Koliniasi ‘Afuha-‘amonga, a sometime-professed THRD M supporter, by only 80 votes to become the number 2 representative. In Ha‘apai, first-time candidate Pita Vi, who has worked for a long time in the Tonga Development Bank, became the number 1 people’s representative, while ‘Ulii Uata, who runs a fleet of cargo vessels between the islands, was returned as number 2. Surprisingly, Teisino Fuko, who was the THRD M endorsed candidate, and has been in parliament as a Ha‘apai people’s representative since 1984, failed to gain a place. Sunia Fili and former Member of Parliament ‘Aisea Ta‘ofi, both of whom are THRD M supporters, were returned for ‘Eua and the Niuas respectively.

In sum, five of the nine, Pohiva, Sevele, Uata, Fili, and Ta‘ofi, are supporters of the movement for democracy, but the overall election results represent a turning away from it. For instance, Namoa, who is actively opposed to the movement, on first showing polled nearly as many votes as Sevele. Both of them, each with over 6,000 votes, were much closer to Pohiva’s total vote than were either of his previous number 2 and number 3 representatives, Tupouaniu and Fukofuka (each of whom had polled between 4,000 and 5,000 votes). In addition, very strong support was shown in Tongatapu for two candidates, longtime businessman Joe Mataele and Mateaki Heimuli, both of whom openly oppose the movement. Hence, Tongatapu’s number 1 and number 2 representatives are pro-democracy, but the number 3 and the next three down the ladder are not. Furthermore, the share of the vote gained by Mataele, who polled fourth, would alone outrank the total vote of three unsuccessful PDM candidates added together: namely, that of Sikuea, a leading member of the PDM Committee for many years, and two other THRD M candidates, ‘Isileli Pulu and ‘Uinisi Fuka, who all suffered massive defeats.

Several factors contributed to the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement’s results. First, its candidates did not use the medium of television to good advantage in the run-up to the elections, whereas several of its competitors, particularly Namoa, did. A more serious factor, however, was the Draft Constitution Convention—at which the former governor general of New Zealand, Sir Paul Reeves, was present—held by the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement in January 1999, just before the election. The draft constitution came to be seen widely, although perhaps unfairly, as an attempt to divest the monarch of his power and land. Any move that is perceived as an attack on the dignity of the king remains unacceptable to the majority of the people. The structure of the government indicates, rather, that constitutional reform rests securely with him. As a final drawback, the former PDM Committee, which tries still to control the political thrust of the pro-democracy movement, is itself widely believed not to be democratically elected or representative of all supporters. Despite its attempts to broaden its base, it is still seen as a
small clique of insiders who have run
the movement for twelve years (TOT,
2 Feb 1999, 17).

Preelection informal newspaper
surveys indicated that most can-
didates favored change. However,
many THRD M supporters still want
to change the structure of the govern-
ment, an ambitious project within the
present securely established hierarchy.
Most others want, more moderately,
only to refine aspects of the current
system in a lawful fashion. Supporters
outside the THRD M Committee, par-
ticularly Sevele, made a better show-
ing, especially when they showed their
commitment to the improvement of
the economy, fiscal reforms, and the
cutting of government costs. Sevele
scored an election point when he
called publicly for legal amendments
so that Tongans overseas could retain
their Tongan citizenship as well as
acquire overseas passports. In the pre-
sent economic situation, in which the
foreign reserves are dangerously low
(annual imports valued at T$100 mil-
lion far exceed exports valued at T$23
million), Tongans overseas remain the
greatest source of revenue, he said.
The value of their remittances, goods,
and gifts, with an estimated value of
over T$70 million during the year,
“sustain our current way of life” and
make up the shortfall between the
import and export ledgers (TOT, 5 Jan
1999, 1).

Sevele’s personal attributes make
him altogether a highly effective role
model in the current social and eco-
omic climate. Believed to be wealthy,
and having substantial capital assets
at home and overseas, his family is
modest and unassuming in its lifestyle.
Perceived as generous and successful,
he is well educated, is involved in
numerous sporting and community
activities, and has held senior govern-
ment and regional positions. More or
less the same can be claimed for the
other successful candidates. All five
new commoner parliamentarians are
known to help people, through their
business activities and their support of
public programs and charities. In sev-
eral cases, their wives are also known
for their hard work in development
projects and charitable activities.
Similarly, ‘Akilisi Pohiva, ‘Uliti Uata,
Samiu Vaipulu, and ‘Aisea Ta’o’ifi have
contributed to their respective com-
unities and to the nation as a whole.
As Fukofuka, a former reformist par-
lamentarian who did not stand in the
last election, remarked, people elected
representatives who would work for
the good of the community. The issue
in the election was largely one of,
“What good can this person do me?”
(TOT, 16 Mar 1999).

The degree of interest aroused by
the election may be gauged by the fact
that for the first time almost all the
nobles voted. Many times, they absent
themselves. The Tongatapu nobles
elected as their representatives the
Hons Tu‘ivakanō, Vaha‘i, and Fohe.
Nuku was returned for ‘Eua, Veikune
and Fulivai for Vava‘u, and Malupō,
Tu’iha‘āngano and Ma’atu for Ha’a-
pai and the Niuas. The conduct of
former Speaker the Hon Fusitu‘a,
came under increased scrutiny during
the year. After serving fifteen years in
parliament, on the toss of a coin he
was not reelected for the Niuas.

Finally, in October 1998, Minister
of Foreign Affairs and Defence HRH
Lavaka-Ata-‘Ulukālala, the younger
brother of his ministerial predecessor,
the crown prince, established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China. The next day a one-quarter-larger-than-life-size bronze statue of the king donated by China was unveiled outside the Nuku’alofa palace. Despite its aid in recent years, Taiwan was recognized only as a provincial government. The princess royal, HRH Pilolevu, denied that the move had to do with the furtherance of her commercial satellite orbit interests through her company, TongaSat. However, it is widely believed that it does and, further, reflects both the king’s disapproval of Taiwan’s democratic ideals and the disaffection between the princess and her elder brother, the crown prince, on whose seafront land the expensive Taiwanese Embassy was built. The vigorous pursuit of business interests by all senior members of the royal family undoubtedly also weighs on the commoner people’s most recent choice of several influential businessmen to represent them.

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Reference


WALLIS AND FUTUNA

The year 1998–99 was rich in political incidents and a wide variety of events occurred: the European elections, the replacement of an elected political figure who died during his term, and the local elections.

A decree of 24 July 1998 annulled the election of 11 of the 20 counselors. Elections were scheduled for 6 September 1998 at Hahake (4 seats), Hihifo (3 seats), and Alo (4 seats). Of the remaining 9 elected counselors, 1 was a member of the opposition, and the other 8 were members of the local majority party (Rassemblement Pour la République, RPR). Eighteen parties introduced sixty-seven candidates. The ballot involved a vote for one or more candidates on a list drawn up by a political party and left little chance for the second or third candidates to enter the assembly. Electors favoring their families or their villages had the effect of dividing the vote in a uniform manner. Three of the incumbents were defeated, the consequence of which was to decrease the conservative RPR majority. The daughter of the deceased senator, Bernadette Papilio (RPR), replaced Samino Taputai by a margin of eight votes. The ideological cleavage between the majority and the minority became more pronounced. The Union for Wallis and Futuna (UPWF), which espouses principles of the socialist party, won six seats at the expense of independent members.

As a result of the death of Senator M Papilio at the beginning of 1998, elections were scheduled for 28 September. Six official candidates had to share the 21 votes of the territorial counselors and the senator combined. The considerable right-wing majority was handicapped by the presence of 5 candidates facing only 1 left-wing candidate, an incumbent member of parliament, Kamilo Gata. In the first round, the right-wing candidates had 4, 4, 3, 2, and 1 vote respectively, although the only left-wing candidate won all of the 6 votes available to the