

2 May 2013 Transcript of the Speech that was delivered by HRH Princess Mele Siu'ilikutapu at the Public Administration in Very Small States Conference in London, United Kingdom 24 April 2013.



I bring a very warm and sincere greeting from HM King Tupou VI of the Kingdom of Tonga and the people of the Kingdom, as well as their prayers for the ongoing success of our missions to uplift the quality of our national administrative services, through the adaptation of our traditional modes and objectives of governance to our contemporary challenges.

May I begin by noting that the time frame for most of Tonga's historical governance modernisation, wherein the traditional ideology, structure and operation of government to be modernised was actually in the nineteenth century and not in more contemporary times.

This makes the examination of our subject in Tonga far more interesting and challenging.

Very briefly, Tonga is a Constitutional Monarchy in the South Pacific, consisting of 150 islands, about 30 of which are inhabited.

Our population is approximately 100,000, with large communities overseas, especially in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.

We are primarily an agricultural, fishing and tourism economy, with free government primary education, health and dental care.

Like all Nations today, we are greatly affected by the difficult world economy, but due to our age-old strong family based concepts of governance, most Tongans have free land from their Government, the Monarch, or traditional leaders, where they live and grow their food.

This is why there is relatively very few homelessness or starvation in Tonga..

Tonga is firstly a kinship nation state. It is made up of a population who, by their common ancestry from antiquity, are related to one another, and thus constitute the national kinship unit that is Tonga.

With this basis, Tonga's governance ideology, structure and objectives, are fundamentally those of the family.

Thus, to put it simply, Tonga's kinship leaders, hierarchy and structure, were also their political hierarchy.

Similarly, Tonga's national political ideology, are also basically those of the kinship system, namely to love, care and protect the socio-political nation that is the Kingdom of Tonga.

Very briefly, Tonga's core kinship group is the extended family, consisting of the parents, and their children and other relatives. □ This unit is headed by the father and he is responsible for their livelihood, welfare and governance.

Secondly, related extended families form the next larger kinship group namely the kainga, which are headed by their hereditary elders or 'ulumotua.

Thirdly, related kainga combine to form the clans which are also headed by their senior hereditary chiefs or nobles.

Finally, all of Tonga's clans and chiefs, all of whom are in fact descended from common royal ancestors. □ The national royal kinship head of Tonga, namely the Hau, is the head or king.□ T his

is the kinship nation of Tonga.

When we turn to the traditional political structure, hierarchy, and the roles of the Government of Tonga, we find that they are none other than the same kinship structure and system. That is, the 'ulumotua , chiefs , nobles and the Hau forming the Government of Tonga, and their basic roles and authority, as well as their ideology of governance, were those of the kinship system . It is this unique combination of the kinship-political formula, structure and ideology, which has given Tonga her unique historical cohesion, stability and strengths. This is the political nation of Tonga.

One of the fundamental features of old governance in the world, regardless of whether they were kinship societies or not, was their centuries old ideology that all men were not equal, and that the rulers were the owners and masters of the ruled.

Indeed, the central theme of modern governance ideology and practice, is the replacement of this doctrine with the opposite tenet, that all men are equal.

Accordingly, we value the ongoing promotion of the best and most ethical governance, which ensures the fulfilment of this most valuable doctrine.



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