



CEDAW IN TONGA

An analysis of the complex interplay of actors, ideas and interests in the policy-making process to achieve gender equality

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OUTLINE

- CEDAW: brief background
- Tonga: in context
- Women in Tonga
- Mixed framework to analyse the policy process
 - Relevant actors and the motivations (Dolowitz and Marsh)
 - Ideational process (Beland)
 - Epistemic communities (Stone)
 - Obstacles (Evans)
- Recommendations
- Conclusion

CEDAW

- The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the UN in 1979
- Requires signatory states to make necessary reforms to eliminate discrimination against women
- Links to goals 5 and 10 of the SDGs
- Tonga is one of 6 countries that has not signed to the Convention

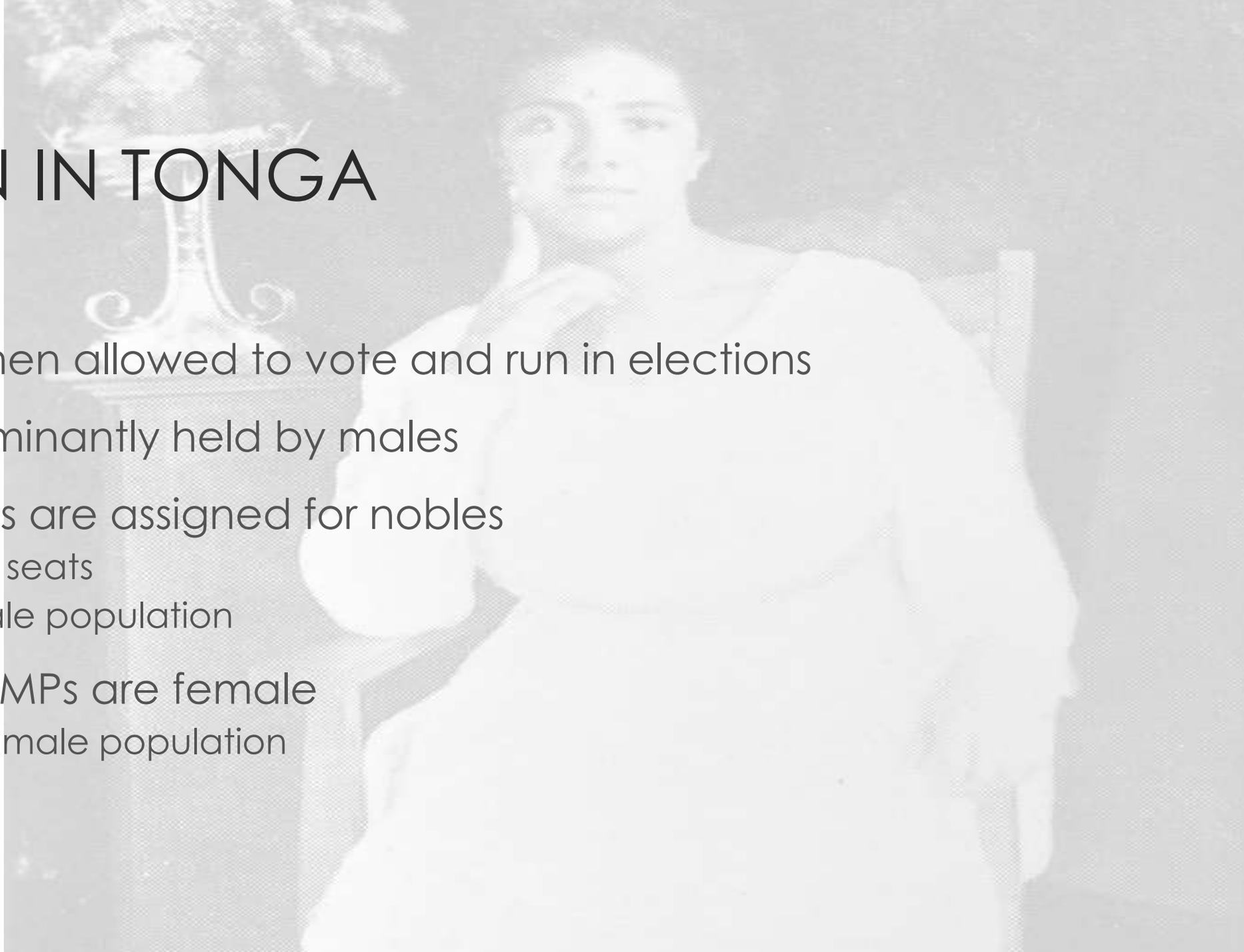
TONGA

- Population of 103, 252; roughly 50% are female
- Constitutional Monarchy headed by a monarch and an elected PM as head of government
- 169 islands of which 36 are inhabited scattered over 700,000 square kilometres
- Tongans is the largest ethnic group with a unique social culture and strong Christian faith

WOMEN IN TONGA

Political

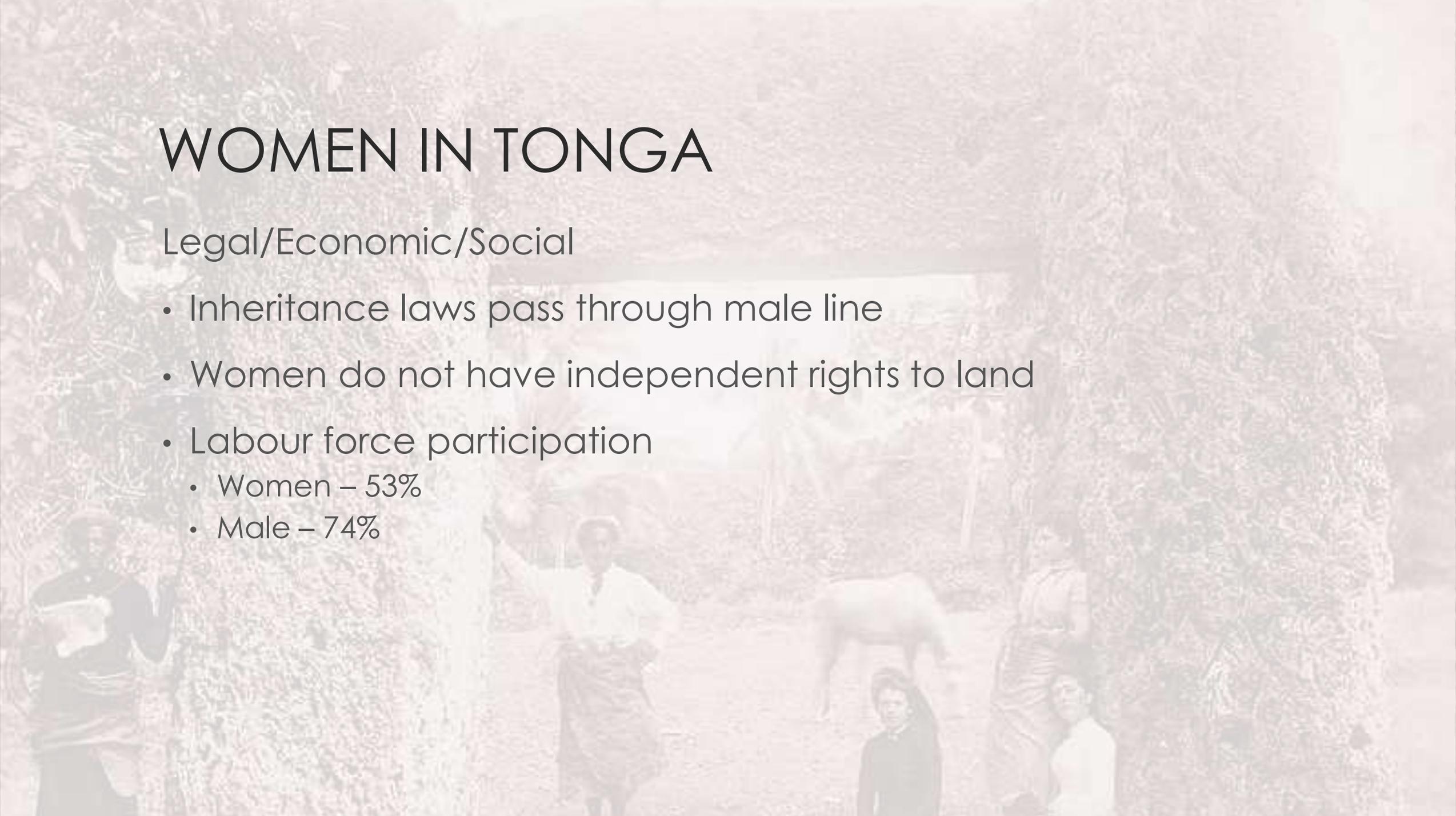
- 1951 – women allowed to vote and run in elections
- MPs predominantly held by males
- 9 of 26 seats are assigned for nobles
 - 36% of total seats
 - 0.02% of male population
- Currently 2 MPs are female
 - 0.004% of female population



WOMEN IN TONGA

Legal/Economic/Social

- Inheritance laws pass through male line
- Women do not have independent rights to land
- Labour force participation
 - Women – 53%
 - Male – 74%



ONGOING DEBATES

- Gendered roles
- Inheritance laws
- Land rights
- Abortion
- Same sex marriage
- LGBTQI rights



ANALYSING THE POLICY PROCESS

- Different actors involved throughout the policy process (Dolowitz and Marsh model)
- Actor-context interaction
 - Who matters?
 - And in what context of Tonga's polity?
- Ideational approach in providing policy alternatives (Beland)
 - Agenda-setting theory: understanding the factors that shape policy agenda e.g. electoral results, international and local pressure, public opinion
 - Framing ideas to advance interests
 - Policy entrepreneurs as key individuals in the policy-making process
 - Policy legacies shape contemporary issues

EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES

- Process of sharing ideas and knowledge contributes to the growing strength of international advocacy
- Developing countries are vulnerable to external pressures
- ‘transfer of ideas and ideologies’ targets the inputs to policy development using tools such as global social movements and coalitions (Stone’s ‘soft’ form of transfer)
- ‘epistemic communities’ reinforces the role of global social movements and coalitions
 - Legitimacy
 - Authority

EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES

- Tongan Women in Leadership Coalition was formed comprising of 13 NGOs to petition the government to ratify the convention.
- Reinforces the role of global social movements and coalitions where experts on an issue come together as a network and legitimise their agency through the production of their knowledge.
- The motivation behind epistemic communities differ from other transnational actors because they rely on their expert knowledge which legitimises their approach to translate that knowledge to power.

OBSTACLES

- The question of whether the community's production of knowledge is reflecting their own values and interest rather than expertise
- Gender equality as a foreign idea that challenges national context
- Bargaining vs. Persuasion
- Factors inhibiting policy processes involve 'cognitive' obstacles in the pre-decision phase, 'environmental' obstacles in the implementation phase and domestic public opinion (Evans)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Change the perception of the Convention and the norms around gendered roles in Tonga
- Think and working politically for a successful coalition and re-enforcement of the epistemic communities' agency in its production of knowledge
- Process-centred approach to policy learning emphasising on agency rather than structure
- Framing policy alternatives where preventative elements shield it from criticism.

CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, studies have shown that policy transfer has shifted from a hierarchical, multi-level form of transfer to a multi-sphered, transnational network involving many actors
- Know your influential actors/partners that are influential in policy making
- Framing alternative policies to garner favourable responses
- Understanding national and political context, policy legacies and the authority of the church and degree of democracy



THANK YOU