

Samoa

Polynesia, South Pacific Islands

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Geography - Samoa

Samoa

The islands of Samoa include the independent state of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa) with its main islands Upolu (capital Apia) and Savai'i, and the United States unincorporated territory of American Samoa, with Tutuila its main island (capital Pago Pago), three islands in the Manu'a Group, and uninhabited Rose Atoll and Swain's Island.



Samoa Islands

Savai'i

Upolu

Tutuila

Manu'a

Samoa

The main Samoan islands are volcanic, with Savai'i still active. They were settled about 3,500 years ago. The population is about 200,000 in Samoa and 46,000 in American Samoa. During colonisation, England and Germany fought for control of Western Samoa, so Eastern Samoa asked for American protection. Western Samoa was a German colony 1900-1914, and under New Zealand until independence in 1962.



Island of Upolu, Samoa



Apia, capital of Samoa 1970



Apia, capital of Samoa, 1978

Samoa

The famous Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), who wrote *Treasure Island*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Kidnapped* and other novels, spent his last years in Samoa and is buried on Mount Vaea behind Apia. His home, Vailima, is now the official residence of the Head of State.



Vailima, residence of the Head of State



Samoa village on Savai'i

Samoa

Traditional Samoan houses, or fales, have a raised stone platform with thatched roofs and no walls, only a ring of poles, with blinds that can be lowered to protect against wind or rain. Samoans sleep on woven mats. Tropical islands like Samoa are never really cold.

The main Samoan meal is sliced taro with coconut milk wrapped banana leaves and cooked in an underground oven of hot stones, with roasted pig or fish.



Samoa village on Savai'i



Tutuila, American Samoa



Tutuila, American Samoa



Rose Atoll, American Samoa

Samoa

The Samoans are Polynesian, descendants of the great navigators that populated the Pacific islands from Hawai'i to Aotearoa New Zealand. Their staple crops are taro, breadfruit and coconuts, and pigs are culturally important. The languages are Samoan and English.



Samoans are Polynesian



Samoans are Polynesian

Tablets of the Divine Plan

A party speaking their languages, severed, holy, sanctified and filled with the love of God, must turn their faces to and travel through the three great island groups of the Pacific Ocean—Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, and the islands attached to these groups, such as New Guinea, Borneo, Java, Sumatra, Philippine Islands, Solomon Islands, Fiji Islands, New Hebrides, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia, Bismarck Archipelago, Ceram, Celebes, Friendly Islands, **Samoa Islands**, Society Islands, Caroline Islands, Low Archipelago, Marquesas, Hawaiian Islands, Gilbert Islands, Moluccas, Marshall Islands, Timor and the other islands.

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Lilian Wyss

Australian Lilian Wyss (b. 1929) arrived in Apia on 14 January 1954 by ship and was rowed ashore. She soon married Suhayl Ala'i, whom she had met in New Zealand. The first local Bahá'í, Lotoa Lefiti, declared in February 1956, followed by Sa'ialala Tamasese, who taught actively until his passing in 1965. Lilian Ala'i stayed in Samoa until 2010, when she returned to Australia at 81 to live with her family after nearly 57 years in Samoa.



Knight of
Bahá'u'lláh
Lilian Wyss
Ala'i

1984 ->



Lilian Wyss Ala'i

"In Australia and New Zealand when we learned of the goals in the Pacific Islands we were rather stunned. At that time... the Pacific was like a vast unknown black space. We had no idea how to one got to any of the islands. We found out there was a boat once a month from Australia to Tahiti and one from USA to Australia and another one or two from New Zealand to some islands."

(Lilian Ala'i, quoted in Earl Redman. 2017. *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*. Oxford: George Ronald.)

Lilian Wyss Ala'i

"When you arrived by ship in Apia you were rowed ashore. Wherever you went in Samoa there were paopaos or outrigger canoes lined up on the shoreline. There was a partly sealed road that led to Apia and at night people often sat on the road and played their ukuleles and sang.... There was very little electricity, mainly in Apia. Most homes were Samoan fales. And there were two cargo/passenger vessels each month. The main income was from copra and cocoa."

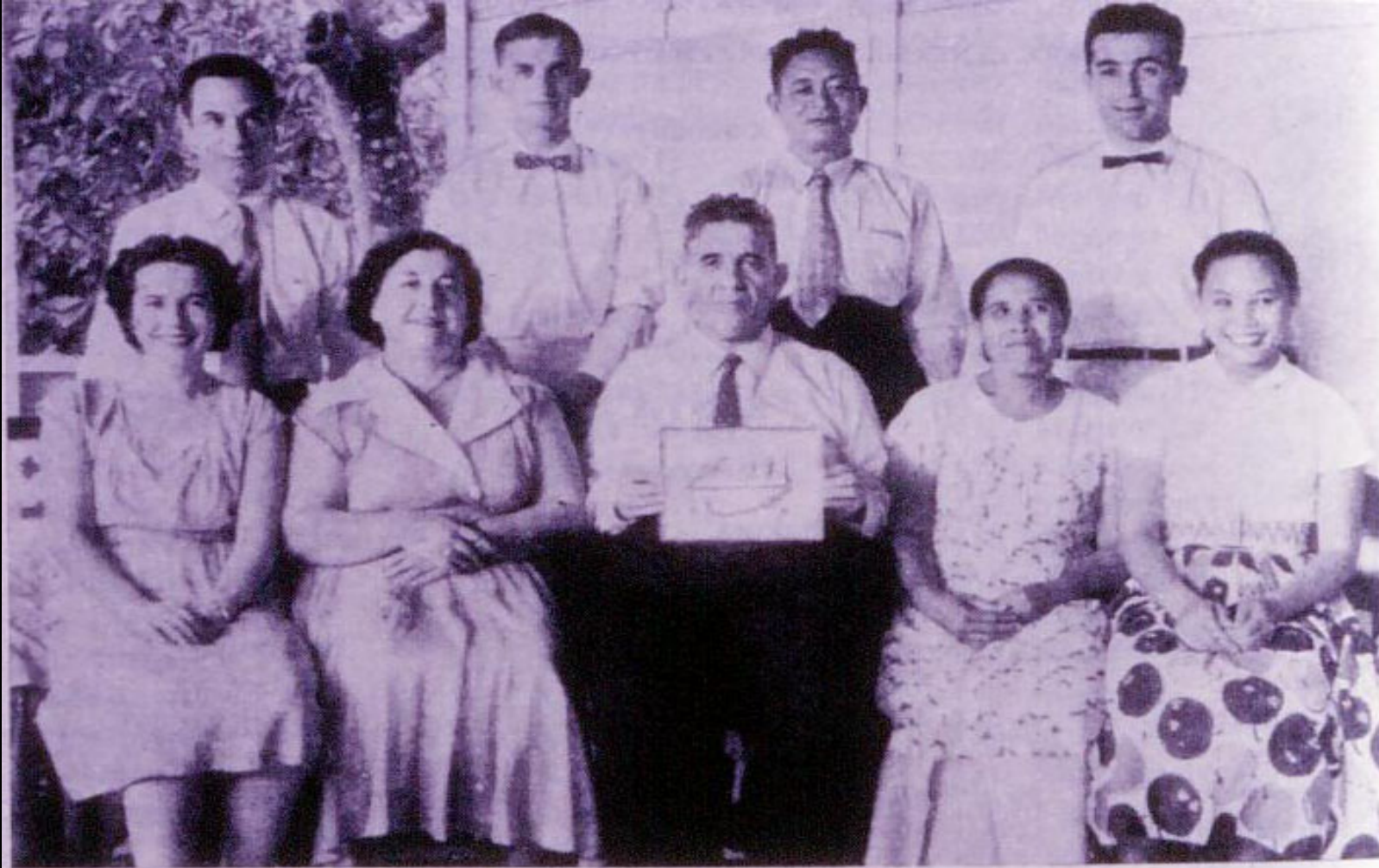
Lilian Wyss Ala'i

"You should see how these people have become ablaze. Before they heard of the beloved teachings they were as dead and now they are blazing beacons suddenly sprung alight.... How pure in heart they are and yet some of their questions indicate such depth that one is awed. It truly is an example of how even the comparatively uneducated are already educated spiritually by God."

(Lilian Ala'i, quoted in Earl Redman. 2017. *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*. Oxford: George Ronald.)

The Bahá'í community in Samoa

The first Local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Apia at Ridvan 1957, and held a summer school in December 1958. The Ala'is moved to American Samoa in 1959, and both served on the South Pacific Regional Spiritual Assembly established in 1959. The National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa was formed in 1970.



First Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Apia, Western Samoa, April 1957.

First Local Spiritual Assembly of Apia, Samoa 1957



National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the South Pacific Islands, 1962-1963.
(Two members not shown in the photograph.)

South Pacific National Spiritual Assembly 1962

International Youth Conference

An International Bahá'í Youth Conference was held in Apia in 1969 with Hand of the Cause Mr. Faizi attending. Youth came from all over the region.



International Bahá'í Youth Conference 1969

Hand of the Cause
Mr. Faizi
at the youth conference
1969



The first Bahá'í Head of State

His Highness Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II, Head of State of Samoa, was the first reigning monarch to become a Bahá'í in 1968, although only announced publicly in 1973. He laid the cornerstone of the Apia House of Worship in 1979 and participated in its dedication in 1984. He passed away in 2007.



The Head of State at the Dedication 1984

The Bahá'í community in Samoa

Samoa hosts the Bahá'í House of Worship for the Pacific Islands, dedicated in 1984, in the hills behind Apia.



Baha'i House of Worship in Apia, Samoa



Dedication of the Baha'i House of Worship 1984

Teaching

As regards the teachers, they must completely divest themselves from the old garments and be invested with a new garment.... They must disengage themselves from temptation and covetousness, and be filled with the spirit. Through the effect of their pure breath, they must change the stone into the brilliant ruby and the shell into pearl. Like unto the cloud of vernal shower, they must transform the black soil into the rose-garden and orchard. They must make the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the extinguished one enkindled and set aglow, and the dead quickened.