

Fiji Muslim League

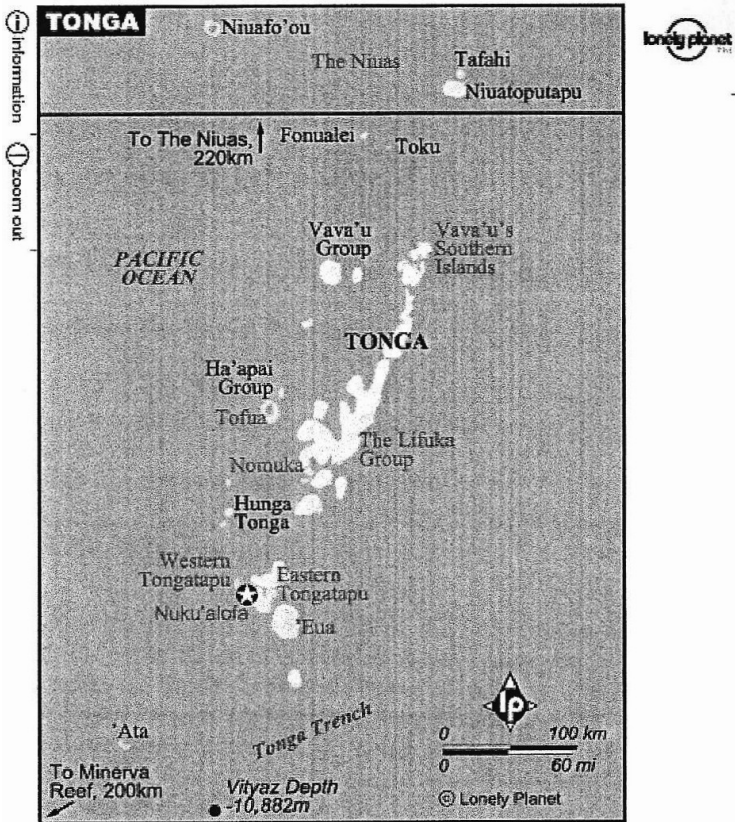


Situation Report Tonga & Samoa

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Lonely Planet - Tonga Map

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/pacific/tonga/tonga.htm>



KINGDOM OF TONGA

The South Pacific island kingdom of Tonga is located in Western Polynesia. Its nearest neighbour is Fiji to the west and Samoa to the north. Western Polynesia includes the islands of Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Tuvalu and Tokelau.

Tonga is one of the world's few remaining constitutional monarchies. It is the only South Pacific country never to have been colonized by a foreign power.

Tonga is ruled by His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The country preserves its ancient traditions alongside modern policies designed to stimulate economic development.

Where is Tonga?

Tonga on the South Pacific map is just west of the International Date Line where it meets the Tropic of Cancer. From the island of Niuafu'ou in the Tonga stretches nearly 1000 kilometres to the Minerva Reef in the South. Tonga consists of 171 islands, spread over

700,000 square kilometres of the South Pacific. The country's total land area is 290 square miles (750 square kilometres) located between latitude 15 to 23 South and longitude 173 to 177 West.

Only 45 of its islands of the 171 islands are inhabited. The country's population is about 100,000; and about two thirds of its inhabitants live on the island of Tongatapu.

Tonga lies about two-thirds of the way from Hawaii to New Zealand. The largest island, Tongatapu, is approximately 1,245 miles (2,000 kilometres) northeast of Auckland, New Zealand.

Visa Requirements

Tourists and business persons may enter Tonga for a period not exceeding 30 days providing that the visitor holds a valid passport, an onward air or sea ticket and proof of adequate funds. If visitors wish to extend their stay, permission must be requested from the Principal Immigration Officer.

History of Islam in Tonga

The history of Islam begins in Tonga in 1983 when Faiyaz Manu and his family accepted Islam. In 1984 Br. Bashir and Umar who were very young reverted to Islam. In 1984 Bashir, Umar and Elyas son of Faiyaz Manu were sponsored by the Fiji Muslim League to attend Suva Muslim College and at the same time attended the Madressa at Toorak Mosque. Br. Bashir came to Fiji as a teenager and acquired his Islamic knowledge and learned to practice Islam. Br. Bashir also completed his high school here in Fiji. He returned to Tonga in 1988 and today he holds a high position in the Tongan navy. He remains a practising Muslim to date.

[Page 4]

These people were the pioneers of Islam in Tonga and later a number of individuals accepted Islam.

In the initial years a lot of converts' first contact with Muslims outside of Tonga was through their participation in seminars, workshops and youth camps organised by the Fiji Muslim League, Fiji Muslim Youth

Movement, RISEAP and World Assembly of Muslim Youth.

In the past there was a lot of exaggeration in reports regarding the number of converts to Islam in Tonga that led to a lot of money being granted to Tonga Muslim League by Libya, Saudi Arabia and RISEAP. Unfortunately most of the money that was given by the Muslim organisations was being abused, mismanaged and unaccounted for.

Muslim Population

Presently there are about 25 families residing in Tonga. The total population is about 100 of which around 70 of them are Tongan nationals. Similar to Western Samoa situation there are individuals who accepted Islam but later lost interest due to the pressure of their families and lack of support and follow-up from Tongan Muslims and Muslim organisations from the outside world.

Islamic Activities

The Tonga Muslim Society continues to operate but is currently not registered with the Tongan government, the reason being more of fulfilling the registration requirements than being opposed by the Tongan government. So far the Tongan Government has shown no objection to the Tonga Muslim Society.

Previously Muslims used a house inside the King's Palace as their *musallâ* which was offered by the King. For the past two years one non-Muslim Tongan lady offered the Muslim community a very big hall to be used as an Islamic centre free of charge. The premises continue to be utilised by the Muslims and [they] continue to benefit from this generosity. May Allah bless this lady give her *hidâyat*. There is a need to have a proper Islamic centre to cater for the needs of this new Muslim community.

The service of the *imâmat* is provided by Br. Elyas Manu who studied in Libya and he continues to receive monthly allowance from the Muslim World League office in Melbourne. Br. Elyas Manu unfortunately lacks commitment and dedication to carry out his duties as an imâm.

Islamic Publications and Literature

There is none available in the Tongan language. The only publications available to them are through RISEAP, FML and other Muslim organisations. These are all in English.

[Page 5]

Halâl Restaurant

There is none available and according to some brothers some of the supermarkets are offering halâl meat from New Zealand.

One of our Muslim brothers from Fiji operates Hot Bread Kitchen and he provides halâl bread and cakes, which is a good sign.

Obstacles and Threats

The budding Muslim community in Tonga is facing some difficulties which prevent them from progressing in *da'wah* work and this is due to:

- 1) In the past a lot of money came from Islamic countries but unfortunately all of it was abused. Money was the cause of a lot of the Tongans accepting Islam. It was difficult to

isolate genuine converts from non genuine ones. Did they accept Islam for the sake of financial benefits or for the sake of Allâh?

- 2) Absence of an educated, qualified and experienced imâm led to a vacuum in the relationship between the local converts and the immigrant Muslims.
- 3) The social culture of Tongans put great pressure on the converts against practising Islam.
- 4) The Qâdyânîs remain a great threat for this community by presenting their false message as a true religion of Islam.

Conclusions and Suggestions

In conclusion I would like to suggest the following:

- 1) Scholarships should be made available for capable Muslim youths to undertake advanced courses and training at the Islamic Institute of the South Pacific and institutes in other Muslims countries.
- 2) Establishment of training institution in Fiji to which capable youth from around the Pacific are sent for intensive training by qualified

teachers to train them as imâms and *da'wah* workers. Secular and Sacred knowledge should be imparted to them simultaneously.

- 3) Organising leadership training to ensure proper management of the organisation and funds.

[Page 6]

- 4) There is a need to identify Tongan sisters who can be awarded scholarship to undergo kindergarten teacher training in Fiji and be attached to one of the Muslim schools. Once qualified, she can return to Tonga and establish the first Muslim kindergarten.
- 5) Regular visits by *'âlims* and *da'wah* workers.
- 6) The need for a proper Islamic centre/masjid is all too important for this new Muslim community.

Address

The official postal address and telephone contacts will be made available to us in due course.

The official organisation is:

Tonga Muslim Society, and the officials are:

PRESIDENT

Br. Imran who is an Australian convert and he is the General Manager of Bank of Tonga.

SECRETARY

Br. Alitasi

TREASURER

Sr. Zakiya

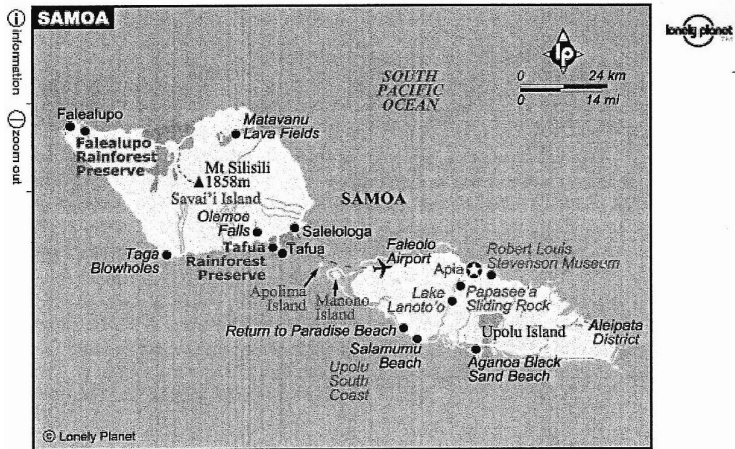
Although Br. Faiyaz Manu still remains an ordinary member of the Tonga Muslim Society, he continues to correspond with Islamic organisations using the names of Tonga Muslim

League and Tonga Welfare Relief. His son Elias is trying to register Tonga Convert Association and Tonga Muslim Women...etc.

[Page 7]

Lonely Planet - Samoa Map

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/pacific/samoa/samoa.htm>



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SAMOA

Samoa is located east of the International Date Line between longitudes 171 and 172 degrees west and latitudes 13 and 14 degrees south of the equator. It is about 2890 km from Auckland, 1200 km from Suva, 4400 from Sydney and 8400 from Los Angeles.

Geography

Samoa is comprised of two relatively large islands, Upolu and Savaii (which account for approximately 96% of the total land area) and eight smaller islands. The capital Apia and Faleolo International Airport are located on the island of Upolu. Total land area is 2934 sq. km. The islands are volcanic and dominated by rugged mountain ranges with a fringe of coral reefs and lagoons, which surround the islands.

Apia

Samoa's capital city is located on Upolu Island and has a population of 35,000. Apia is

the government base, business commercial centre and main port for the nation, with a variety of shops, restaurant, services and other amenities available.

History and Culture

Samoans are believed to have migrated from the west (the East Indies, the Malay Peninsula or the Philippines). The oldest known site of human occupation in Samoa is Mulifanua on Upolu dating back to about 1000 BC (about 3000 years ago). By far the most important agents of change in Samoa were the Western Missionaries. The Missionary influence on Samoan life was so strong; they are now a devoutly religious people with much time devoted to church activities. After the outbreak of World War I, New Zealand took administrative control of Samoa from 1914 up to the day of independence in January 1962.

People

Samoa's population is approximately 164,000 and Samoans are the most populous full-blooded Polynesian race in the world.

Customs

Samoa is a traditional society with a distinctive Polynesian cultural heritage. Traditional authority is vested in the Matai, or chief of the village. There are over 362 villages in Samoa with a total of 18,000 Matais.

[Page 9]

Visa and Entry Requirements

Visitors to Samoa do not require an entry visa for stays of up to 30 days. However, you must have an onward or return ticket and valid passport.

History of Islam in Samoa

Before 1985, the only Muslims in the country consisted of expatriate workers either working for the government or for one of the United Nations programmes.

In mid 1985, Ilias Vole accepted Islam through efforts of the WAMY Director Br. A.R. Rasheed of New Zealand but later he went back to Christianity.

In 1987 Ahmed Schuster and his family accepted Islam in 1989. They are now a family of 9 Muslims including his children and grandchildren. In 1992 Allâh (SWT) blessed Br. Ahmed Schuster and his wife to perform haj.

In 1990, Br. Mohammed Daniel Stanley and his family accepted Islam. Through the help of RISEAP and A.R. Rasheed, a number of Mohammed Stanley's close relatives became Muslims. A number of Br. Stanley's families including his grandchildren have now accepted Islam. In total, 24 Muslims from his family have accepted Islam.

Muslim Population

There are currently less than 40 Muslims in Western Samoa. All are Samoan nationals except three. There is a decline in Muslims' numbers in Samoa due to migration and lack of support which caused some of these reverts to slowly neglect Islam and [they] went back to their old religion or are no longer members of any religion at all. There is a need for great efforts to invite these (lost Muslims).

Islamic Activities

The Samoan Muslims registered their organization Western Samoa Muslim League in 1986 and currently the President is Br. Mohammed Daniel Stanley.

There is no masjid but Br. Stanley offered one room of his house as an Islamic centre, which is located at Vaiusu Village about 3 ½ kilometres from the city. Friday prayers are led by Br. Stanley or his son Anis. The Islamic activities involve general teaching of Islam and nightly Qur'ânic classes. Currently around 15 men and women could read the Qur'ân in Arabic.

In the past around six students were provided scholarships by Fiji Muslim League to study in Muslim colleges in Fiji and one of them graduated with a certificate in Electronic Engineering from Islamic Institute of the South Pacific, but currently there are no students from Samoa in Fiji.

Islamic Publications and Literature

Until recently, the President Br. Stanley was advertising in the leading newspaper under the heading “The Message of Islam” every week. Occasionally Br. A.R. Rasheed of WAMY sends some money to help in *da‘wah*. There is a newsmagazine *The Dawn of Islam* but due to financial constrain this work stopped.

Br. Stanley has translated the booklet “Muhammad in the Bible” by Dr. Jamal Badawi, into the Samoan language. Three papers of the WAMY series on Islam have also been translated and these are printed by RISEAP. There is a plan to translate the rest of these papers by WAMY especially that they receive a grant from WAMY director in Australia, Br. Mustafa Omari, money to buy a computer and printer for this work.

Halâl Restaurants

There is none available and there is difficulty in finding halâl meat but recently one shop is selling halâl chicken brought from Fiji.

Obstacles and Threats

- 1) The Qâdiânîs and Shi‘a remain a great threat to this budding Muslim community.
- 2) The social life and the family ties put great pressure on the new young converts. They have to follow the custom and norms of the society.
- 3) When the young Muslims attain the age of marriage they find it difficult to get a Muslim partner and this result in marrying a non-Muslim. This results in he or she may abandoning Islam.

Conclusions and Suggestions

In conclusion I would like to suggest the following:

- 1) Providing scholarship through Islamic Institute of the South Pacific and other Islamic institutions.
- 2) Arrangement for training of imâms and *da‘wah* workers.
- 3) Leadership training for management of the organization to ensure the smooth running of the organization.

- 4) Regular visit by *'alims* and *da'wah* workers especially during the school holidays.
- 5) Arrangement for a kindergarten teacher to be trained in to one of the Muslim schools in Fiji and later to be posted to Samoa to establish the first Muslim kindergarten.
- 6) And finally the most important suggestion is purchasing a piece of land and building a Mosque, which will become the centre for Islamic activities and *da'wah* work.

[Page 11]

Address

The official organisation which represents the Muslims of Samoa is:

SAMOA MUSLIM LEAGUE

P.O.BOX 19

APIA

SAMOA

Telephone: 685 20611

And the President is Br. Mohammed Daniel Stanley.

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