

Unit 9 : Samoa: Falealupo Village

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Facts	
Capital	Apia
Most populated island	Upolu
Population	219, 998 inhabitants (July 2009 est.)
Languages	Samoan and English
Highest point	Mt Mauga Silisili
Independence	1 January 1962



Figure 9.1. Map of Samoa

This chapter is about the meaning of Fa'a Samoa and mythology in Samoa, and the village of Falealupo.

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

- Describe a cultural site in Samoa
- Describe the relationship between sites, events and people
- Discuss the impact of tourism on cultural sites
- List ways to protect cultural sites

Politics and culture

Samoa as is known today, was originally named Western Samoa when it first gained independence in 1962. It was the first nation in the Pacific to re-establish independence.

The traditions, custom and culture of the Samoans are still influenced by the *Fa'a-Samoa* or the Samoan way of life. The main influence is the *Aiga* or extended family. The head of the *Aiga* is the *Matai*, who is appointed by extended family. It is a position that is highly regarded and respected. In return the *Matai* is responsible for the well being of the *Aiga*.

Myths and legends

Legends and myths abound in the islands of Samoa. The passing of tradition and history from one generation to the next by word-of-mouth is very much a part of the *Fa'a-Samoa*.

There are stories which explain the origins of villages and districts, of chiefly titles, of place names, or arts and crafts and other aspects of Samoan culture. For each story there are many versions and each version has special meaning and importance to the people who tell it. One version of a particular story can contradict another.

Each *Aiga* uses a story to show the legitimacy of their title, land or descendants (Legitimate means to be accepted). Samoans use stories to describe their family line (genealogy) and to remind others of their ancestry. Samoans also tell stories, myths and legends about the past, as a form of entertainment, enjoyment and to demonstrate speaking skills.

Cultural sites

There are many cultural sites in Samoa associated with myths and legends. Some are well known and included in books and films. Their stories are known through "oral traditions". These cultural and historical sites and their associated legends are protected by elders and preserved by villages and districts. These oral traditions often contradict scientific, geological, biological or archaeological information. Listed below are some of the cultural sites on Savaii Islands associated with Legends.

- Moso's Footprint
- Rock House
- Star Mounds/Mounds
- Vaatausilis Cave
- Cove or Heaven for Spirits
- Dwarfs Cave
- Mataolealelo Springs
- Le Fale o le Fee (Octopus God)
- Malietoa Cave

There are also historical sites of great importance. They are associated with Samoa's modern political development. Some of these sites are as follows:

- Mau Headquarters: Vaimoso, Upolu.
- John Williams Monument: Mulinuu Point, Upolu.
- Church Buildings: Apia, Upolu.
- Burial Tombs: Mulinuu Point, Upolu.
- Robert Louis Stevenson (Museum/burial site): Vailima, Upolu.
- Bible Translation site: A'avao, Upolu.

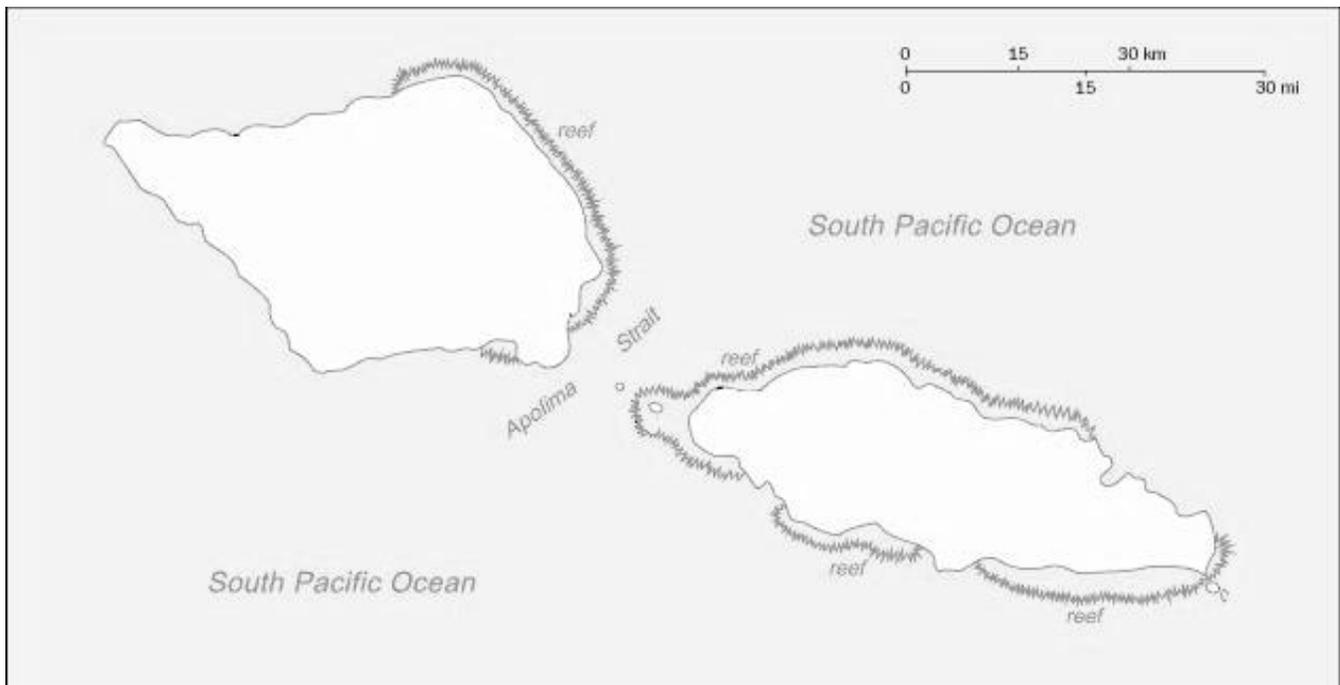


Figure 9. 2. Samoan Cultural Sites (see Question 1)

Questions and Activities

1. Using the map of Samoa (*Figure 9.2*), locate and name
 - the islands of Savaii and Upolu
 - the capital, Apia
 - the village of Fealealupo
2. Explain the statement: “the islands are volcanic in origin”.
3. What is the Samoan word for “a way of life”?
4. What does the Samoan term *Aiga* mean?
5. List three cultural sites in Samoa
6. List three historical sites in Samoa

Case study: the cultural site of Falealupo

Falealupo is a village on the northwest tip of Savaii on the Falealupo Peninsula. The origin of its name is derived from a story of a Tongan couple who settled there. They had a physically disabled son who could only sit on a rock and catch small fish called *lupo*.

They built a house for him which he could use for cooking his catch. The god Salevao and his travelling party, in passing there one day, admired the house and called it Falealupo or a house for Lupo; hence the name of the settlement.

The natural beauty of the settlement has been destroyed by the wrath of recent Cyclones Ofa and Val in 1990 and 1993 (*see Figure 9.3 and 9.4*). Ruins of these disasters remain as historical monuments for the villagers of Falealupo, which stands in the path of hurricane winds. Recently the village has been moved inland to Falealupo-uta (*uta* means inland). Only a few families remain in Falealupo-tai (*tai* means coast).

Cultural sites on Savai'i Island

The district of Falealupo holds a number of cultural sites which are of great significance to its people. They are also important for all Samoans. The language of all Samoan orators is filled with proverbs which relate to the myths and legends of Falealupo.

Falealupo is protected by village taboos and regulations regarding access, photographing and a code of behaviour. Some of the sites are regarded with fear due to their supernatural properties.

1. Inailau a Tamaitai – Sina's house

This house, according to local chiefs, was there some thousands of years past. It is a natural formation of volcanic rocks and has been a tourist attraction for many years now). Special knowledge is required before we can fully uncover the meaning of the house of Sina.

The 'house' is made of solidified molten rocks, usually the type of rocks ejected during a volcanic eruption. However, it is said that the house is a result of a house building competition between the men and women. At the end the women won. This made the men angry and they never completed their share of the tasks, as is evident in the site today.

2. Ana o Vaatausili's cave

The first thing that comes to mind when looking at the cave of Vaatausili is that this site is thousands of years old. The story is told that Fijians killed Tuisavalalo and then Vaea turned into a mountain – hence Mt Vaea (where Robert Louis Stevenson is buried).

Before Vaea's head turned into mountain, he managed to speak with his wife Apaula. He told her to get Vaatausili, his brother in Salelavalu, Savaii, to come to her aid. This she obeyed and found Vaatausili a weakling of a man. So they travelled together to the most western end of the island to Falealupo where Vaatausili went into this cave and slept there. After a while, the earth shook when Vaatausili came out a handsome, giant of a man.

The Samoan proverb – "*Ua atoa tino o Vaatausili*" = "Vaatausili is a complete person", is often used by orators in Samoa to this day.

3. Fafa o Saualii – cove or heaven for spirits

According to Samoan beliefs and legends this bottomless pit is where the spirits of the dead gathered. This is often referred to as the "*Tai 'ula'ula of Nafunua*" – 'the Scarlet tide of Nafunua'. The seawater swirls into the two pits –one for the nobilities, the other for the commoners – never to surface again.

The Samoan belief is that all spirits go to *Pulotu*, which is the equivalent of Heaven. Samoa had 'gods' of its own long before the missionaries' gods were brought into the islands, only about a hundred and sixty years ago! Fafa o Saualii is a very important historical/cultural site concerning religion in the Samoan oral tradition.

4. Tulaga Vae o Moso

To this day, the people of Samoa firmly believe Moso was a spirit. Landmarks like his Foot Print and tales by various villages of Moso's fearsome appearance still exist. Many writers and historians have told the Legend of Moso. He was known to have lived in many places, including Savaii, Upolu, and other islands of the Pacific, such as Fiji.

He may have grown from coral or from an aborted foetus that had been buried in the earth. Moso was surely a Spirit. His well-known footprint, in the bush of Fagalele near Falealupo, is an attraction to tourists (see *Figure 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9*).

The residents of Falealupo claim that Moso grew up in the village of Fagalele. As Moso became more fearsome, the people of Fagalele fled. Moso's appearance took on many different forms and he became known for his reign of terror.

According to the village matais, Moso was also known to have lived in Fiji, so whenever he was not in Fagalele, it was assumed he had gone to Fiji. His right foot stood in the bush of Falalele, Falealupo, and his left foot stepped onto Fiji land!

When he was in Fiji, Moso was known as *Moaoletaile* (stomach of a pig). His cruelty and fearsome nature became well known in Fiji. He was also referred to as *Nofoloa* (long tooth).

Moso was also known to be of great height and handsome looks. Hence, he was followed by some of the known women spirits, such as Saumaeafe or Saleimoa, Tuamasaga, and Pele of Hawaii, and others.

Stories abound of Moso's exploits. Whenever he was angered or disturbed, Moso would rend his wrath upon the people of the neighbouring village of Safee. Orators claimed that there was one festive occasion with such singing and dancing, that ended with Moso devouring all who were present in his anger.

On another occasion a visiting party whose actions broke the normal code of behaviour were completely annihilated by Moso. In the days of the legends, the spirits were not guided by men. Their actions were completely beyond the control of humans.

Questions and Activities

7. What place is named after the fish called *lupo*?

8. Name three local villages in your nation that are named after spirits, mythical character or ancient heroes.

9. Which site is mentioned in the saying “*Ua atoa tino o Vaatausil*”?
10. List two sites from your nation that are linked to a legend about women.
11. List two sites from your nation that are linked to a legend about men.



Figure 9.3. Denuded (stripped back) forest after cyclone Ofa (Photograph taken in 2000)



Figure 9.4. Ruins of a church after cyclone, Falealupo (Photograph taken in 2000)



Fig 9.5. Tourist sign for Mata-Ole Alelo (Photograph taken in 2000)



Fig 9.6. Signs to Falealupo tourist attractions and the coastal village of Falealupo-Ta



Fig 9.7. Moso's Footprint



Fig 9.8. Moso's Footprint



Fig 9.9. Tourist sign

Reflections

Cultural sites are of great importance to Samoans. They must be protected and reserved by village taboos or at the national level, by Acts of Parliament. However, developing nations often focus on tourism to improve their economies. They hope to generate income by making sites accessible. The preservation of cultural sites therefore becomes a priority.

Cultural tourism is a popular trend in the Tourist Industry. Tourists are eager to stay longer, explore a place and learn about its past and natural qualities. Others want a quick visit, to snap a few photographs and to enjoy the climate and sandy beaches.

The constant exposure of cultural sites to tourists will eventually damage the site. It will become popular, but probably lose its cultural significance and qualities. Will the strength of the *Fa'a-Samoa* prevail? Can Samoans preserve their cultural sites? Can Samoa resist the offer of the tourist dollar?

Questions and Activities

12. List the three islands that have legends linked to Moso.
13. Why is the site of Moso's footprint worth protecting today?
14. List one thing villagers could do to protect the site of Moso's footprint.
15. List one thing the National Parliament could do to protect the site of Moso's footprint.
16. In about 50 words say why tourism is a danger to cultural sites.

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