

People and Places

Dancing and Singing in Tonga



Earlier this year, many special events were held to celebrate the first 50 years of the Bahá'í Community in Tonga, in the Pacific Islands. One of these events was a dance that was performed in the palace of the King.

The dancers had been practising for months, and eventually the day of the performance arrived. 400 Bahá'ís

formed a long procession and set off for the palace. The local police band led the way, playing their drums and trumpets, and people came out of their houses to watch. The Bahá'ís wore traditional colourful clothes, and they carried flags and banners proclaiming the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about the oneness of religion and the unity of mankind.



When they arrived at the palace, the King's eldest son welcomed them.

The Bahá'ís gave him handmade gifts and presents of roast pigs, root



vegetables, fine woven mats, and tapa cloth (made from the bark of mulberry trees). He was very pleased, as all these things were highly respected in the culture of Tonga.

Then the Bahá'í performers began to dance. The dance was called Lakalaka. A native American dancer called Kevin Locke was also at the celebration and he performed a hoop dance. People liked it so much it was even shown on TV on the national television news.

As well as the dancers' performance, there was a ball, which was attended by 600 people; a devotional meeting, where 500 people came; and a meal, where 800

people, including the second son of the King, enjoyed a wonderful feast. One evening seven choirs sang songs based on the Bahá'í holy Writings. The celebrations lasted for five days and ended with a picnic and a dance.

Fifty years ago, three Bahá'ís pioneered to Tonga. Now there are many Bahá'ís throughout the islands and they have their own National Spiritual Assembly.

