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# ***TŪPULAGA TOKELAU IN NEW ZEALAND***

**(The Tokelau Younger Generation in New Zealand)**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Tokelauans initiated a contemporary migration from their relatively remote Pacific atolls to New Zealand around 1960 and this population movement was assisted by government resettlement schemes. The broad objectives of the ethnographic research contributing to this thesis were to study the historical context of this small-scale voluntary migration, the establishment and social organisation of culturally distinguished urban communities in North Island centres, and post-resettlement outcomes experienced by migrant and descent populations. Each of the two studies incorporated in the thesis is primarily concerned with *tūpulaga* ‘the younger generation’ in the New Zealand Tokelau population. One is community-based and focused on the social interactions of generation cohorts of *tūpulaga* and *tupuna* ‘elders’, the formal community associations and the national association of affiliated *tūpulaga* groups. The other is concerned with bunches of “detached” *tūpulaga*, geographically scattered throughout the country, the people without voices when research includes only the migrants in urban enclaves. Background considerations include overviews of theoretical approaches to studying the population phenomenon of migration; relevant aspects of Tokelau history and the movement of Pacific peoples; New Zealand as the receiving country and continuously changing social context for Tokelau communities, and a conceptual framework derived from features of complex adaptive systems theories that was helpful in considering aspects of the contemporary migration and its outcomes.

*Tūpulaga* leaders, through the association of affiliated groups known as the Mafutaga, revived the pre-eminent cultural principle *māopoopo* ‘gathered together and unified’, promoted a vision of ‘Tokelau ways in New Zealand’ and supported *tūpulaga* “becoming Tokelau in New Zealand” as residents of urban communities. Over a number of years, Mafutaga officials led the expansion of *tūpulaga* inter-community sports meetings into a four-day national gathering of Tokelauans now celebrated as an unequivocal expression of Tokelau culture in New Zealand, and guided the established urban communities through a transition from migrant to cultural communities without usurping the political roles of esteemed elders.

The second study shows that intergenerational issues were pivotal or contributory in most *tūpulaga* decisions to “detach” from community networks and activities. “Detachment” is categorised as transient (a provisional, not necessarily long-term status), tacit (a restorative withdrawal, with subsequent reattachment) or diuturnal (a considered choice and enduring status).

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