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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
PhD in Anthropology, University of Auckland

1998

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).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is an outcome of ethnographic studies undertaken between 1984 and 1989. During the long course of the enterprise, I have incurred many debts to people, institutions and organisations and it is my pleasure to acknowledge these contributions.

The primary study focused on *tūpulaga* Tokelau ‘the Tokelau younger generation’ in New Zealand was initially funded by the former University Grants Committee through a Post-graduate Scholarship, with a supplementary grant from the University of Auckland Research Committee and support from the Department of Anthropology. A contributory study, concerned with *tūpulaga* who “detached” from the social networks and lived in various population centres away from the Tokelau communities, was substantially funded by the Social Sciences Research Fund Committee before the responsibilities of that agency were transferred to the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The South Pacific Medical Research Committee of the former New Zealand Medical Research Council provided a timely equipment grant and accreditation to the multi-disciplinary Tokelau Islands Migrant Study, the Wellington Hospital Board offered accommodation until its dissolution in the restructuring of health services, and the Department of Community Health in the Wellington Clinical School allowed me to have intermittent access to office space and amenities.

Both the fieldwork for the ethnographic studies and the preparation of this thesis have been delayed or suspended at different times when the management of serious health problems disrupted plans and processes. I especially appreciate and acknowledge the research guidance and the perseverance of my supervisor, Judith Huntsman, and her willingness to share her understanding of Tokelau culture and atoll life. My indebtedness to her comprehensive ethnography of social relationships in Tokelau, and to publications co-authored with other researchers, is evident in the text. In the planning stages I also had the benefit of Antony Hooper’s contributions to the research designs. During the final stages of thesis preparation Mark Mosko offered additional perspectives.

I also take this opportunity to express my warmest appreciation of the unwavering encouragement of my husband Roger Green who invariably asked challenging questions as he provided support and practical help with fieldwork and background research.

A number of people employed in the longitudinal Tokelau Islands Migrant Study (TIMS) assisted me at different times. In particular, I would like to thank Ian Prior, Founding Director of the Wellington Hospital Epidemiology Unit and of TIMS, and Albert Wessen (Brown University) for their collegial support during the periods I spent

in Wellington. Sadly, this is a posthumous acknowledgment of all the help I received from the late Rosemary Rees during archive research.

Over the years, other members of the University of Auckland staff have made professional contributions to the studies and my thanks are extended to John Pemberton and Grant Cowie for data-processing, Hamish Macdonald for photography, Joan Lawrence for the preparation of maps and diagrams, and Dorothy Brown for help with references. I am grateful also for the skilled assistance of Simon Bickler who cheerfully and patiently resolved a range of technical problems to produce the thesis.

During periods of fieldwork, many Tokelauans in New Zealand have been interested participants in the research and have given uncounted hours of their time to different projects. Although it is not possible to name everyone, I do wish to acknowledge the numerous Tokelau women who quietly accomplished many of the tasks associated with the census of households and worked tirelessly to facilitate activities within the New Zealand communities. I have been fortunate also in receiving invaluable help from Ineleo Tuia, the former Liaison Officer for TIMS and the late Ropati Simona, lexicographer of the Tokelau Dictionary, who was a Research Associate at the University of Auckland.

Throughout the fieldwork phases the ethnographic studies were immeasurably enhanced by the support and contributions of *tūpulaga* leaders in the urban communities. I owe particular thanks to two Tokelau migrants who were elected officials of national and community organisations. Aleki Silao, the National President who provided skilled leadership during the early years of the *Māfutaga Tūpulaga Tokelau i Niu Hila*, was a perceptive observer of social interaction in Tokelau communities as well as the changing context of New Zealand society and insightful commentator during discussions. Tui Pou Poasa, President of the Māfutaga affiliate known as Tūtolu and President of the formal Tokelau community association in Rotorua, shows an enduring commitment to the community in which he has lived for three decades and has given generously of his time and cultural knowledge to assist me over many years.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the cooperation and contributions of *tūpulaga Tokelau* in New Zealand. The younger generation Tokelauans who live within the urban communities and those who moved to other regions remain anonymous because confidentiality was the basis of our encounters. However, their willingness to participate allowed the research to be undertaken and I am especially grateful to them for sharing time in their homes and family activities, including me in various gatherings, and helping me to reach an understanding of *māopoopo* and 'the Tokelau ways in New Zealand'.

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