

The two heavens of the tufuga: Creative expressions of tufuga Niue

A commentary by

Nuhisifa Seve-Williams & Ioane Aleke Fa'avae



Nuhisifa Seve-Williams was born in the village of Avatele, Niue Island but raised in the urban village of Ponsonby in Auckland New Zealand. Nuhi has a strong interest in Pacific cultures and histories and completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees majoring in Social and Cultural Anthropology. She went on to complete a PhD in Sociology of Education at the University of Auckland in 2009. Nuhi continues to reflect and write on the theory that she used in her PhD thesis – Tā-Vā that was created by Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Professor 'Ōkusitino Māhina.



Ioane Aleke Fa'avae was born in Niue and migrated to New Zealand at a very young age. He hails from the village of Mutalau. Ioane is a very skillful and master of Niue oratory and traditions, a choreographer, composer, educator, actor, author, and playwright. As a tufuga and an accomplished heritage artist, his expertise and skills in vagahau Niue and culture are often sourced for various projects both at national and international level. He is a recipient of Creative New Zealand Arts Council 2014 Pacific Heritage Arts Award for his excellent contribution towards New Zealand arts. In recognition of his work in vagahau Niue language and culture at international capacity he received The University of Auckland Blue's Arts and Cultural Award (Culture and Language) - highest accolade attained at university level in 2010 and 2011. It was the first time in the history of the awards, that culture and language was created as a section to honour his achievements. Ioane Aleke Fa'avae is a former broadcaster, journalist, and news reader for New Zealand's largest Pacific media outlet PMN (*Radio 531pi, Niu FM, PMN News*). He was also a tutor of vagahau Niue to adults at Pasifika Education Centre in the past. He has led, choreographed, and composed songs which were showcased at ASB Polyfest, Pasifika Festival and Pacific Arts Festivals. He currently sits on Pacific Dance New Zealand Board and was recently appointed as a Peer Assessor for Creative NZ. Ioane is currently working as an Academic Development Lecturer at Unitec Institute of Technology.

Peer Reviewers

Birtha Lisimoni Togahai is the Director of Education Niue. Birtha is a member of the Niue Language Commission and is a tufuga Lagi-tua-ua in Niue. Birtha has researched and published several books on Niue.

Zora Feilo is a well-known tufuga Lagi-tua-taha in New Zealand. She is the president of the Tupumaiaga Trust and with other tufuga hold workshops to teach young people knowledge and skills in the creative tāoga of Niue. Zora and her daughter are in the forefront of creating and recreating hiapo motifs for block printing.

Leki Jackson-Bourke is a multi-disciplinary, multi-award-winning creative/performing artist of Niuean, Tongan, and Samoan descent. Leki has worked freelance in the arts industry for over 10 years and has toured NZ, Australia, USA, Europe, and the Pacific through multiple Pacific Theatre productions.

Inangaro Vakaafi was born, educated, and raised in Niue Island. Ina is of Niuean and Cook Island heritage but was predominantly raised with a strong connection to her Niuean culture. Ina went on to work in the broadcasting field as a reporter, journalist, producer, and news anchor with the Broadcasting Corporation of Niue. Ina is a former Niue Youth Council President (NYC) and a former Vice President of Pacific Youth Council. Ina now works as a radio producer for the Pacific Media Network in New Zealand with the hope of contributing to the revitalisation of vagahau Niue and tāoga Niue with tagata Niue in the diaspora.