

Koa Tokelau – Tokelau Treasures

By Reverend Iutana Pue



Illustration by Cecelia Faumuina

Author



Photo credit: Tāmaki Paenga Hira
– Auckland War Memorial
Museum PCAP Facebook page

Reverend Iutana Pue

Reverend Iutana Pue is a Church Minister for Tokelau Congregational Christian Church Auckland. He has been serving and living in Ōtara, South Auckland, with his wife Matālele Pue and their four children: Timena, Hinalagi, Kuata and Savaka, for the past 11 years.

He is very passionate about the Tokelau language, and advocating for the language to be maintained and encouraged to be learnt.

Reverend Pue holds a BA, majoring in Linguistics and Education from Victoria University of Wellington, and a Bachelor of Divinity, majoring in Theology, from Malua Theological College in Sāmoa. In 2017, he received a Graduate Certificate in Interpreting from Auckland University of Technology.

He is currently part of a group working on proofreading the Tokelau Old Testament and they are in the final stages before printing the Tokelau Bible.

Front image caption & credit



Name: Kupega Ta O (Fishing net).

Place: Fakaofu, Tokelau Islands.

Description: This Kupega Ta O is hand knotted and made of coconut fibre. It is the last known fishing net of this type and used to catch 'O', a species of small fish. [Pandora Fulimalo Pereira](#) (Curator, Pacific) explains that "the kupega (owned by the community) was exchanged for a large nylon fishing net. It is a very heavy kupega and when wet even more so. So the toeina (male elders) thought to exchange it for a much lighter net of synthetic material." This Kupega Ta O is part of a collection of koa Tokelau (Tokelau treasures) that Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum had commissioned the late Professor Antony Hooper to purchase while he was undertaking research in Tokelau.

Credit: Illustration by Cecelia Faumuina, based on the following Kupega Ta O (Fishing net) – [Collection of Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, 1973.36, 46017](#)



Image Credit L-R: Pandora Fulimalo Pereira (Curator, Pacific at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum), Mrs Sefulu Kalolo (Tokelau holder of knowledge), Reverend Iutana Pue (Tokelau community lead) looking over the last known Tokelau Kupega Ta O, fishing net used to catch 'O', a species of small fish. This Kupega Ta O is part of a collection of koa Tokelau, Tokelau treasures, donated to Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum by the late Professor Antony Hooper.

Koa Tokelau

By Reverend Iutana Pue

What is art from a Tokelau Lens:

'Arts' to the Tokelau is an expression of who I am, and what defines me as a Tokelauan. It is about expressing my emotions, expressing my ideas, through my actions, like the wording put into this song.

Tokelau Song

Ko te loto fenua e tu muamua
Ki te tupulaga nei ka olo ki mua
Ko te maopoopo ko te lima malohi
Ki te tauamoga o te atufenua
Tokelau e pele I te loto

Translation of Song

Patriotism must be foremost
To young people who are pursuing forth
Unity is the key
In lifting our nation
Tokelau is precious in the heart.

From a Tokelau lens, there are various mediums used by artists to voice one's feelings about their culture; as in gafa [genealogy], nofonofoga [communal living], faifaiva [fishing], galuega taulima [weaving], tala kakai [myths and legends], fatele [singing and dancing], faugāvaka [skills in canoe building], and the list goes on. Basically, art is what relates with and reflects our island Tokelau.



While preparing for this presentation, I asked an Elder, Aliko Faipule Kelihiano Kalolo, Ulu o Tokelau [Head of Tokelau Government] on his thoughts on the topic of 'What is 'arts' in Tokelau?'¹ His response was that there is no collective term for 'arts' in Tokelauan. **Koa Tokelau** [literally meaning Tokelau treasures] was suggested even though it does not encompass the diversity of our Tokelau 'arts'. But it is more fitting here to name them as our 'Tokelau treasures'. All of these treasures and arts, either artefacts or concepts, have their own deeper meaning in our Tokelau culture.

¹ Personal communication with Aliko Faipule Kelihiano Kalolo, Ulu o Tokelau [Head of Tokelau Government] April 2021.