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PUBLIC HISTORY EDUCATION (PEER REVIEWED)

## Niue Fakahoamotu Nukutuluea Motutefua Nukututaha: Critical Discussions of Niue History in and Beyond Aotearoa New Zealand

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### Introduction

Niue Fakahoamotu Nukutuluea Motutefua Nukututaha. These are the names of our homeland, given by our ancestors, marking the journey made and work done to make this place a home for our people. In naming this article, we honour and acknowledge ancestral history. This particular telling was shared by Ioane Aleke Fa'avae, who received it from Matafetu Smith, Harry Jackson and Vaiole Apeu.

Our creation stories believed that the origins of tagata Niue *Niue people* belonged to three realms or heavens. Fonuagalo *Underworld* was where the first tau tupua *demigods* came from to Lagi tua taha *First heavens/Upperworld* and Lagi tua ua *skies and endless light*. They were Fāo and Huanaki, then followed by Talimainuku or Fakahoko, Lageiki and Lagiata. They were chased out of Fonuagalo because they were unwilling to contribute to any tasks or ceremonies. Fāo was the first to come up to Lagi tua taha and decided to create Niue, but his work was incomplete. Huanaki followed Fāo and saw that the motu *island* was not finished so he completed the task. Once completed, Huanaki and Fāo named the newly formed land: Nukututaha *land that stands on its own*, Nukutuluea or Nukutukulea *land that was pushed up by earthquake*, Fakahoamotu *co-created land*, and Motutefua *land with no offspring*. These are the narratives of Niue Nukututaha Nukutuluea Fakahoamotu Motutefua. These are the names that we use proudly as descendants of these ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

Each of us has been engaging in a range of historical work relating to Niue. What has found its way into this article are some of the critical discussions we have had from our two tagata Niue roundtables at the 2021 New Zealand Historical Association Conference, a Niue History Panel that was held as part of Vagahau Niue Language Week 2021, and several fono (meetings) over the last couple of years. This article has been formatted to keep the conversational nature of our discussions and to emphasise the distinction of each person's experiences and expertise. Working collectively upholds important cultural values that have been practiced in the work of tagata Niue who have come before us, and reflects our hopes and expectations for future tagata Niue to collaborate in this space.<sup>2</sup>

The stories of Niue history cannot be told without tagata Niue. While an exhaustive list of relevant Niue texts is beyond the scope of this article, there are some key texts by tagata Niue that have influenced our work. Often, access to these texts requires more than a cursory search on an online database and may only come into view from conversations with elders or knowledge holders who have their own archives. It is important to get names on the page in the bodies of articles, and to create citable spaces for future Niue generations to continue engaging in this work. We work to expand our academic sight by including family and community contributions that are at the foundation of Niue ways of thinking, knowing and being. We seek to think creatively and critically about how we can honour the complexity of Niue knowledge and knowledge forms.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a number of Niue knowledge holders contributed to missionary publications such as *Talahau Niue*, with occasional articles on Niue history. Some of these articles would later be republished in the *Tobi Tala*, a bilingual periodical that came out of the Community Development Office of the resident commissioner from New Zealand to Niue in the early 1950s. For Jess Pasisi and Toliain Makaola, working with these texts inevitably raises questions of who is doing the writing and how they are connected in a larger network of Niue thinkers. In 1901, Pulekula, a teacher at Tamahaleleka, Liku and Mohelagi of Alofi, made significant contributions to a text on Niue history and culture. Mohelagi's part was titled 'Ko e Tala Ki Niue-Fekai' – this history of Niue-Fekai and Pulekula's section was titled 'Ko e Tohi He Tau Tala i Niue-Fekai' – the traditions of Niue-Fekai. This work was ultimately published as an appendix in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, though it only references Pulekula.<sup>3</sup>

In thinking about Niue history, origins, knowledge and political relationships it is difficult to go past the 1982 book *Niue: A History of the Island*, which was co-authored by 12 tagata Niue authors: Terry Chapman, Ikinepule Etuata, Maihetoe Hekau, Vilisoni Kumitau, Leslie Rex, Ofa Tafatu, Fifita Talagi, Tahafa Pope Talagi, Pitasoni Tanaki, Ianeta Joylyn Tukuitoga, Hafe Vilitama and Young Vivian.<sup>4</sup> The book came out in the decade following Niue's move to independent government and in the blurb the authors wrote that the text had been 'written by leading citizens of the country itself'. Terry Chapman's earlier text *The Decolonisation of Niue* gave some background on Niue's history as part of the context of how and why Niue gained national independence in free association with the State of New Zealand in 1974.<sup>5</sup> Three years later, *Land Tenure in Niue* was published by tagata Niue authors Solomona Kalauni, Lagi Tuhega, Nora Ofaligi Douglas, and Tongia Pihigia, alongside two non-Niue contributors, Ron Crocombe and Gary Leonard.<sup>6</sup> This book reflected on the land tenure system in Niue. As Rennie Atfield-Douglas explores in his own research of Niue sovereignty and political independence, there are always connections to and issues with the ownership and use of land.

There are, of course, many more texts in these spaces, and a particular archive which has had limited consideration in scholarly conversations are housed in Niue's Department of Education.<sup>7</sup> Birtha Lisimoni Togahai's many and varied roles as a lecturer and convenor for graduate and postgraduate courses on Niue language, and as a Director for Education in the Government of Niue, have seen her engage with and publish on many Niue topics. These sources influence Birtha's work, which explores important questions of Niue history, identity, positionality and genealogy, while maintaining connections with community-led interests. Ioane's work has engaged with *Ko e Fonoaga he Tau Aga Fakamotu*, which was developed

from a fono (meeting) on Niue history and heritage that occurred in 1977.<sup>8</sup> The formidable list of Niue contributors to this particular document includes: Robert Rex, Young Vivian, Tukutama Togalea, Iki Etuata, Terry Chapman, Ofa Tafatu, Solomona Kalauni, Hafe Vilitama, Folituki Talima, Heleni Tamatoa, Tuliki Ikinepule, Margret Folau, Sala Papani, Lagavalu Haioti, Pokotoa Sipeli, Ataloma Misihepi, Makaola Hukui, Ahetoa Aue, Frey Head, Maihetoe Hekau, Tahafa Talagi, Togia Viviani, Frank Rex, Pitasoni Tanaki, R. R. Rex, Malua Jackson, Tiva Togatule, Malaetolu Salatielu and Fifita Talagi.

It makes sense to have an abundance of Niue scholars and thinkers at a New Zealand history conference, in part to highlight the complete lack of Niue and Pacific academics in the History discipline, but also to promote history as told by tau tagata Niue (Niue people). Zoë Catherine Lavatangaloa Henry, with a Master of Arts in History, is the only one in our group with academic ties and formal training in History. In thinking about her shift to Pacific Studies for her doctoral thesis, she has contended with the tensions of her history training that does not move far from its traditions. Despite Niue's lengthy colonial ties to the New Zealand state, there is an embarrassing void in literature or curricula that recognises the place of Niue in New Zealand history.

While conventional archives carry some Niue texts, Zora Feilo's work on vaka (canoe) histories considers how these archives may meet tufuga (expert knowledge holder, craftspeople, makers) in the past, present and future and who owns this knowledge. Importantly, this kind of work challenges what is considered to be historical evidence, shifting the colonial tendency to prioritise written texts. This work also bridges different forms of knowledge and how it may be made accessible to future generations of tau tagata Niue. For instance, *Hiapo: A Collection of Patterns and Motifs* by Cora-Allan Lafaiki Twiss (formerly Wickcliffe) carries Niue knowledge in another way, by presenting memories and stories from her grandmother, Fotia Lafaiki, alongside images of printed hiapo (bark cloth) patterns.<sup>9</sup> Niue artist John Puhiaata Pule has also engaged with hiapo in contemporary artforms that reflect the sensory experiences of this Niue tāoga in museums and other colonial institutions.<sup>10</sup> These are just a few valid examples of the diverse forms of Niue knowledge. There is a need to develop spaces that attend to the diversity of our knowledge forms and knowledge holders, including, but not limited to, an urgent re-thinking of current referencing practices within History and the wider academic sphere.

In this article our diversity in position, gender, village affiliation/s, age and expertise reflect the nuance and specificity we each bring as tagata Niue with vested interests in the progression and success of Niue knowledge and futures. We come from different backgrounds, the amount of time we have spent in Niue differs; some of us have never been to the island and most of us predominantly reside in Aotearoa. Asetoa Sam Pilisi further grapples with this by using takalo (war-cry, challenge, pre-war dance) and connecting with Niue-based tufuga as a way of deconstructing the ideas of masculinity and the imagery of 'savage island'.

Presenting this article in the same way we presented at the conference is an intentional act in decolonising the academic spaces we all work in and centring Niue ways of building and sharing knowledge and stories. Further to this, we often provide an approximate meaning of vagahau Niue (Niue language) in English. The meaning of words shifts with different contexts, but not all tau kupu (words, phrases) are translatable. Some kupu also have variations in spelling and, while consistency can be important, we seek to acknowledge those differences that exist even in the words we use. There are a few cases in this article where kupu are deliberately left untranslated. The intention is not to exclude readers, but rather to encourage those who understand both languages to draw deeper meaning and understanding.

## Roundtable Discussion

As a collective, we describe our connections, processes and tensions as tagata Niue doing Niue research within the academic sphere. We begin by establishing our connections to Niue and the stories that have

inspired our work, and we comment on the spaces that we work in as well as our hopes for the future as tagata Niue. One of the key questions we have thought about in this group is: How do we reflect our positionality in relation to our topics – who are we to our research?

Jess Pasisi: My connections to Niue are through my father, Ben Pasisi, my grandmother, Lela Sialeмата, from the village of Mutalau, and my grandfather, Matagi Patiti/Pasisi, from the villages of Hikutavake and Makefu. Some of my family now reside in Alofi; the Pasisi family of my late uncle Uhotau and his wife, my Auntie Noline. While uncle Uhotau returned to Niue, my Dad and the rest of his siblings moved to Aotearoa, mainly residing in the Waikato. My current research is a Health Research Council of New Zealand-funded project on Niue health and wellbeing through the lens of happiness. It's part of a wider focus for me as an academic to bring different perspectives of tagata Niue into scholarly conversations. In my doctoral research looking at Niue women's perspectives and experiences of climate change, I moved through the phases of despair at not being able to find much Niue literature, then to excitement as I started to find Niue texts hidden away obscurely in different archives, and then to anger at the treatment of Niue literature and tāoga, as if it was less than other knowledges. I guess I'm at a state of resolve now, to change the academy so that Niue voices may be made more visible. I continue to be drawn to Niue texts, often because even our own people think that we have not published anything. But I'm also interested in the stories these texts tell about the lives and futures that those before us experienced and imagined. Growing up in the Niue diaspora means a lot of different things in the kinds of research that I do; from the questions that I ask to the methodology that I developed that reflects my position, which has a lot of similarities to other tagata Niue in my generation – born in Aotearoa, working class and low-income family, large family, Western education, limited vagahau. None of these are detrimental to the quality of academic I am, nor does being born outside of Niue make me less of a tagata Niue. Academia provides a space for me to ask basic questions about what experiences tagata Niue have. It is important to know this, because our experiences are so often full of the knowledge that has been passed down and shared across generations. Early on in my PhD, I was advised to imagine that there were lots of tagata Niue researchers I could be in conversation with – while they might not show up in simple database search engines, they are there. From 1954–56 there was a recurring theme of Niue origin stories by tagata Niue in the *Tohi Tala*, a bilingual newspaper on the island. Niue contributors writing to this topic included Patutau, Talagi, Tohovaka, Ikinepule and Tauehetagaloa.<sup>11</sup> But even in 1956, there were still calls from Niue teachers, such as Malama Head, asking for Niue elders to write about Niue histories and stories of old, so that students would get to learn about their heritage.<sup>12</sup> Niue knowledge is complex, vast, and enduring, and there are so many questions that we are only just beginning to ask. But it's important to remember that we come from generations of writers, thinkers and educators who have also wanted to know, learn and share this kind of information.

Toliain Makaola: Fakaalofa lahi atu kia mutolu oti, ko Toliain Makaola e higoa haaku. Fanau au i Alofi, Niue ti ko au e tama fakahiku he tau mamatua ha mautolu, ko laua ko Luavasa mo Luisapati. O mai a mautolu he maaga ko Mutalau Ululauta Matahefonua. Ko e maaga ne tutupu hake ai au mo e haaku a tau lafu to fenoga mai ki Okalana, Niu Silani. Fakaau lahi au he tupu hake he motu ti moua monuina e au e aga fakamotu. Ko e mena ia ne fiafia au mo e mauloto e au ke hoko mai ke he aho nei. My passion for Niue comes from my upbringing and my mother's fakaako (teaching and learning). Although our family has lived in New Zealand for most of my life, my mother's experiences of boarding school in New Zealand gave her a strong sense of the importance of aga fakamotu (culture, traditions, customs) of our homeland, and she passed those on to us. Vagahau Niue was predominantly spoken in the home, which contrasted to the English and te reo Māori I was used to at school. The balance of maintaining the aga fakamotu was difficult with the lack of community relations like on the motu. My mother reinforced this fakaako with our travels home to visit the magafaoa (family), who live the aga fakamotu 24/7. The sharing of our knowledge

as tagata Niue was through verbal communication with people at home: tutala ke he taha mo e taha (conversations person to person), ai mahani e tagata ke totou e pepa ke moua e aga fakamotu he tau tagata ha Niue. There has been very little literature written and published by tagata Niue on our cultural practices, which makes some of our knowledge hard to share with future generations. The New Zealand secondary school curriculum, which is also taught in Niue, often relies on published texts but this is not the only way we understand or express knowledge. Oral knowledge sharing was and is still prevalent for our people. I still call or visit my mother to find out about particular people, she will invariably tell me about their family, what background that family has, their village, and how they are connected through other people we know. My mother also guides me to the best people to talk to about certain topics.

In working for Dr Jess Pasisi, I have been drawn towards all the visual and audio archives of interviews or speeches from prominent tagata Niue in history, as well as family home movies. The words spoken hold a greater meaning to me. I can see the people of our motu; I see the change of our traditional culture from native wear to colonial dress. The lack of accessibility for much of the archived history of our people in foreign institutions saddens me. I hope with this work that we can create a place for tau tagata Niue to find and share their knowledge, just as my mother does with our magafaoa.

Ioane Aleke Fa'avae: Fakamonū atu ke he lilifu he aho. Ko e higoa haaku ko Ioane Aleke Fa'avae. Hau au he maaga ko Mutalau Ululauta Matahefonua. I am currently an Academic Development Lecturer at Unitec, and a Lecturer of vagahau Niue at Manukau Institute of Technology. As a tufuga of oratory and a choreographer, it is vital to understand mataohiaga/matohiaga (genealogical sources). Mataohiaga is sacred knowledge of lived experiences in time and space that connects tagata Niue to their cosmological origins. By acquiring that knowledge, one is better able to approach and express underlying narratives within the mataohiaga. It is the epitome of tagata Niue. The sacred knowledge of mataohiaga is shared only by those of significant status in a magafaoa. Mataohiaga is the core narrative of Niue history that speaks to magafaoa (family), maaga (village) and motu (land). It is often recited during the passing of loved ones or at family celebrations and is utilised as evidence in Niue land courts.

Zora Feilo: Ko e higoa haaku ko Zora Felola Osikai Feilo, hau au i tau maaga ko Alofi, Avatele mo Tamakautoga. I am the mother of three children, Kirsten, Zethan and Allexander, whose partner Candice has also become part of the family. I have two grandchildren, Eva and Rosa. My parents are Leotau Vitamini Osikai and Elsa Manatagaloa Feilo. My grandparents are Masini and Silofa Tukuniu and Joe Feiloakihetau Osikai and Evalina Mohemata Puleoti. I work with Niue youth and families through Tupumaia Niue Trust, and I also work in Auckland Council. My current research is about the history of vaka in Niue. I have three generations of men who were tufuga in vaka making and in fishing. I grew up with my grandfather, Masini Tukuniu from Tamakautoga. I also had a grandfather and great grandfather from Alofi central and Alofi north, Joe Feilo and Havilimotu Pokitoa Osikai, who were both master vaka makers. When I was small, I would watch my grandfather Masini make model vaka. As I got older, I saw him make a very large vaka that was displayed in a museum in Wellington. He would take his model vaka to the Western Springs Pasifika festivals and sell them.

Another vaka memory I have is when I went up to the Hakupu house in Grey Lynn and I saw one of my grandfather's vaka displayed on the wall. Different people make different styles of vaka, and I could tell his style. I asked one of the ladies whose vaka it was, but she was not sure. I didn't want to take it; I just knew it was my grandfather's work. But the immediate response was that I could not take it. Knowing the stories of Niue tāoga is important, even when we cannot take them back to Niue or bring them to our family homes.

I did not just choose this topic, it presented itself to me and was something I have always been interested in. There is not a whole lot of written work about the Niue vaka. However, there is a lot of knowledge about vaka in the wider Pacific and I am excited to contribute writing in this space for Niue.

Asetoa Sam Pisisi: My name is Sam, based here in Auckland, I have been in education for a long time, tertiary education that is, and have just moved into health research. I am currently completing a PhD with the University of Auckland. My topic is two-fold, it is looking at Niue masculinity and at 'savage island' or savage imagery as evoked by Captain Cook's encounter with Niue. Specifically, I am looking at Niue masculinity in takalo; I see these areas as interrelated. I am New Zealand born but I was one of those 'well-behaved' kids whose parents sent them on 'scholarship' to the islands. I think it is called corrective behaviour techniques. I could have been traumatised, but I came out alive, so I guess it turned out well. Now, that is some of my privilege, it was a big cultural experience when I went as a seven-year-old for around a year. I went many, many times after that, but it wasn't the same for my siblings or my first cousins. In fact, I took my Sāmoan father and my brothers only a few years ago for their first time.

I am a Polyfest kid, which is big for a lot of our Pacific youth here in Auckland, and particularly for Niue youth, considering that we do not have many other platforms for cultural expression. I went to an all-boys school, and looking at the interconnections of takalo, the story of Captain Cook and savage imagery, some people carry this expression of culture with a lot of pride. I find myself now as an accidental takalo practitioner alongside Ioane, although Ioane has been working in that space for a very long time. We are quite active in a project at the moment to uplift Niue men with cultural narratives. I am keen to bring Niue voices to the forefront – tagata Niue who are strong in oral history, tagata Niue who are also tufuga around takalo – and asking how Niue takalo is shared and how this practice may be seen as a manifestation of what it means to be a Niue man.

Zoë Henry: Ko e higoa haaku ko Zoë Catherine Lavatangaloa Henry. Ko au koe tagata Niue, hau au he maaga ko Makefu. Ko Ngāpuhi me ko Ngāti Kahu ngā iwi. Ko Pakanae te marae. Ko Mangonui te maunga. I am currently a PhD candidate in Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, researching and storying Indigenous conceptions of punishment and how these were interrupted by Christianity and colonisation in the Pacific. The way I came into my topic and making the move from History to Pacific Studies was really a result of conversations with my Dad. My mum is Māori/Pakeha, and my Dad is tagata Niue from Makefu. I've never been to Niue; I didn't grow up as much around my Niue side, so I'm really behind on the vagahau Niue journey. But in conversations with my Dad, in between finishing my master's and starting my PhD, he would tell me stories about my grandparents and about his grandparents. I have my Dad's grandma's name, Lavatangaloa. He would tell me stories about her, and about my nana, and about Hector Larsen, a New Zealand Resident Commissioner to Niue from 1943 until his murder in 1953. In one of these stories, I found out that one of the men who murdered Larsen was Latoatama, who is my nana's brother. As you can imagine, this was a bit of a brain explosion for me to know that my history, my whakapapa, included a defining point in New Zealand's relationship with Niue.

This also taught me and defined for me how I wanted to research and do history differently. I wanted my topic and research to be connected to who I am and to my communities. I moved to Pacific Studies after doing my master's in History. As part of my master's research, I explored mātauranga Māori in relation to Christianity and Medieval Studies and when I finished, I felt I had reached my limit. I knew that I could keep going in History and Medieval Studies, and I could keep doing the research that I was doing. But I felt a calling to learn about my Niue side and I thought, since I was pretty good at research and working through complex stories and relationships, this could be my way to connect to my Niue culture and knowledge. This gave me the chance to story with my Dad and for him to pass on the knowledge and stories he grew up with, which really drives my work.

Rennie Atfield-Douglas: As a mature student, I have had to balance the day-to-day priorities of working full time with working on my academic journey part time. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I did not see myself in an academic career. However, over the last four years, I have felt compelled to contribute

toward Niue research. One of the things that really interests me is the concept of sovereignty for Niue people, in relation to Niue's association with New Zealand. I want to explore Niue perspectives leading up to the signing of the Niue Constitution Act 1974. This document solidified the ongoing relationship between New Zealand and Niue, yet many questions can be raised around why Niue people chose free-association and what people think of it today. Government in free association irrevocably tied Niue to the New Zealand state and is what ultimately led to my family moving to Aotearoa. I am a Niue person born and raised outside of Niue. My understanding of Niue ontology is from the context of someone who has grown up in the Niue diaspora. This leaves me with questions about what would have happened if Niue had chosen full independence. Would my family have ended up in New Zealand? There are limited recordings of Niue perspectives from this period. There are some recordings from Sir Robert Rex, the first Premier of Niue from 1974-1992, and from Terry Chapman, a Niue administrator and Secretary to the Government of Niue from 1974 until his retirement, but not many others. What did the people in Niue think during this period? What was the rationale behind them choosing to head down the path of free association with New Zealand rather than full sovereignty and independence, especially when there were other alternatives?

A contribution that I make is bridging the space between academic and Indigenous knowledge. Not all Indigenous knowledge is academic, but Indigenous knowledge seems to have to do more to become 'legitimate' in Western dominated academic systems and spaces. Writing into this space as tagata Niue contributes to wrestling the colonial hangover that purports to already know our history, whilst simultaneously obscuring our voices from it.

Birtha Lisimoni Togahai: As an educator living and working in Niue, I am passionate about many topics relating to Niue peoples, language, culture, identity, genealogies, entrepreneurship and history. Growing up in Niue you learn vagahau Niue, etiquette, customs, cultural protocols, nuances and so forth, and this cultural knowledge determines who you are in relation to your family, village, motu and the wider Niue diaspora. When you meet people older than you and they do not know you, their first question will be 'ko hai e tau mamatua/tupuna haa?' (Who are your parents/grandparents?) That is how you are identified as a Niue person by and through your ancestors. That is one of the reasons why all children must learn and be familiar with their own matohiaga (genealogy). Many people know the matohiaga of their extended families to their grandparents only. Most recently, I have met a few third and fourth generation tagata Niue returning home to search for their roots. This is very reassuring, because these are the generations who will have a vested interest in learning about their extended families back to their main tupuna. In addition, Niue fonua/kelekele (land) is magafaoa owned and once you decide to title your family land, the whole extended tribe must be informed so you do not have difficulties when you go to the Land Court. In the past, many families adopted children, especially those who had all girls who would adopt a boy from another family to be a brother for their daughters. That was an honourable system of Niue customary adoption. However, once adoption became a legal process, adopted children were granted the same rights to the land as biological children. That fact is a real area of contention for many families because they resent adopted children having the same land rights. Land laws also need to be reviewed to suit the times and Niue's development context.

Vagahau Niue is also strongly tied to the land, especially traditional conservation methods, protection of the environment, and people's right to enter particular areas. There is so much to learn in terms of having a deeper understanding of vagahau Niue and how customs and cultural protocols are changing overtime. Many generations left Niue taking with them much of the cultural knowledge of practices like canoe building, carving, weaving, hunting, and so forth. As we are all aware, we have an oral culture where the communication of protocols, tofofa and hataki (discipline) are sustained by the elderly of the village. As they sit around the pine *Delonix regia* in the village green, the elderly will debate issues relating to the livelihood and wellbeing of the village, ensuring that everyone is fed and happy. The limited population of 1700

currently residing in Niue is too small to sustain the vagahau, cultural knowledge and customs. There is an urgent need to strengthen ties with the Niue diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and beyond.

Ioane Aleke Fa'avae: My knowledge of mataohiaga has been acquired from my magafaoa (family) through different forms and shared sacred spaces. These sacred spaces include tasks, celebrations, and ceremonies that connect to the fonua (land), moana (sea) and lagi (sky/heaven). These knowledge spaces also extend to tufuga and different secondary sources from archives stored at the Auckland City Library, oral traditions recorded by tagata Niue authors in vagahau, and Niue informants for outside writers during the mission era and colonial period. The knowledge shared in these spaces is sacred, and it belongs to different authorities or realms of knowledge holders. Collectively, this knowledge belongs to either a specific group of magafaoa, maaga (village), motu (nation), tribes, or a combination of all four. As materials are often recorded in vagahau Niue, some archives require specific knowledge and understanding of the language to access and unpack what is recorded. As the number of fluent language speakers declines, there is an ever-increasing urgency for people to engage with these archives and share these stories.

It is crucial that our narratives and worldviews as tagata Niue living in the diaspora are heard and discussed in platforms such as the New Zealand Historical Association Conference. It is an opportunity for emerging and established academics, knowledge holders and artists to share their expertise with one another. We can mentor each other and contribute towards building researching and teaching capacity when we share through tūtala (conversation). By collaborating and partnering with tangata whenua, we empower ourselves to share and tell our stories through Indigenous lenses.

Zora Feilo: In terms of the tufuga for my vaka topic, the knowledge belongs to them because they are the ones who are making those vaka. I'm the same as everyone here, interested in where things belong. When I go to Niue, they have vaka races and competitions that include women. But in terms of women going out to fish using vaka, I've not seen that. It's a traditional area that remains the domain of men, but there are some changes. Taumafai Fuhiniu is a vaka master in Niue, but he doesn't have any sons. He has four daughters so he will have to pass his knowledge onto them, unless he has a son-in-law who he trusts with that knowledge. When I was researching this topic, I got information from Carmen Fuhiniu, Taumafai's wife. She was the one communicating with me about it. I've talked to Taumafai face-to-face in Niue, but with emails I was communicating with her. And then when I was asking more questions, I was communicating with his daughter, Bella. So, for me, the people holding particular knowledge shifts as circumstances change.

Jess Pasisi: I'm interested in how we recognise Niue knowledge, the people who put forth that knowledge, and how it is presented in various archives. I'm based in Pacific Studies and Health with my current research on concepts and understanding of Niue happiness, but of course it has elements of history, as nearly all our work does. One thing I'm finding important is to see and acknowledge the different spaces we are working from and to reflect that into the work we do. I think even though we might be tied to a discipline or creative space, our knowledge works a little like a smorgasbord in that we get bits and pieces from the places that make sense to the work we are doing. But through working in transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary ways, there are collective movements we can make that set precedents for how Niue writing and Niue people are treated in particular academic spaces.

In the 1860s, a Pālagi reverend wrote in his diary about a Niue woman who was being held captive by a Pālagi captain whose ship had recently docked in New Zealand. The entry gives no details about the woman's name but includes reference to her having been likely kidnapped against her will and used as sex slave by the Pālagi captain. The reverend wrote that in conversation with the captain he found this particular woman would soon be sold. No horror or sorrow is recorded by the reverend; an event that warrants a

diary entry but invites no further consideration or reflection. One might be tempted to reflect that this was common for the time or not outside the norm. But who defines what is common and what is the norm? As a tagata Niue scholar, I think it's possible to do more. I think there is space for us to establish vagahau kupu that provides this Niue woman, who has been written about but given no agency, no name, no recognition of her family and connection to our motu, with the ties inherent in all Niue people and tāoga. While history may record her only by the reverend's words, there is both a responsibility and opportunity to use the power of Niue language to reflect the values we have always afforded our people. In doing so, this woman's story is not only marked by some Pālagi writing about her, but also by people who are writing for her, people who can see her as someone with family, connected to an island that will always be her home. This type of action doesn't distort history. Instead, as Sam suggests, it provides more perspectives. It is a reminder that there is not a singular view of history, there are many. The process of developing appropriate kupu requires time, it requires having the right tagata Niue in the room, and it requires patience, respect, and resourcing from disciplines that for too long have been complicit in maintaining myopic views of what history is, particularly in relation to the New Zealand Realm.

Asetoa Sam Pilisi: The ownership of what it means to be a Niue man and to present takalo or other narratives, first belongs to Niue men, Niue toa (warriors). For Niue men to hold the pen, so to speak, and write down this knowledge and embed it into the form of takalo lyrics is a history in itself. In reference to what Rennie and Toliain said, I think it's important to acknowledge that lived experiences in Niue are different to those in New Zealand. I'm keen to bring forward the voices of Niue-based tufuga (cultural experts), because to date, little to nothing has been documented regarding how they see takalo as a living artform and a vehicle for representing Niue masculinity. I'm mindful that there is, particularly amongst our Niue youth born in New Zealand, some strong attachments to savage imagery. It's important to think about who owns knowledge around takalo, about what it means to be a Niue man, to bring forward New Zealand-born perspectives, and to weave those in with the perspectives of people from the island; we need to ask these questions widely.

Zoë Henry: In planning my project, it was really important for me to create a history project that was different from a project I would have done in History. My supervisor, Dr. Marcia Leenen-Young, who is Rennie's supervisor as well, pushed me to do history differently. The way I've designed my project is that there are archives in it, but there's also the element of storying with our knowledge holders. When I'm learning and when I'm trying to connect with vagahau Niue, our Niue histories, I am leaning towards our oral traditions. I rely quite a lot on the community here in our Niue Academic Network to connect and to understand. My first point of call is what I can learn from our communities, from our people, and from my Dad when he tells me I've learnt things the wrong way.

One of the things I'm most excited about when I'm working on this project is trying to connect these stories and figure out these complexities; what is said about us in the archives, how we're presented in the archives, and what we say about ourselves and how we've viewed things in the past. There's a distance between them and trying to negotiate that space is difficult. But I feel that my positioning in trying to negotiate that space and negotiate my identities, makes me that person to sit in the middle of the complexities. It's a beautiful place to be, between our stories and between the archives, but it is really emotionally laborious, too.

When working with our knowledge holders, and particularly in terms of how I'm presenting their knowledge in my thesis, the way that they're going to be cited is as knowledge holders – as valid forms of knowledge and history, in the exact same way I'd reference a book, because our stories are just as valid as written history. Our current speed bump is thinking about how to present those stories in the thesis. I know when we have oral traditions in a thesis, it's usually referred to or referenced as 'personal communication'

within the footnote, and that's something I really would like to move away from. Thinking about some of the recent articles that have also grappled with this issue, the footnoting practice doesn't really capture the entirety of our oral tradition. How would we cite the place and space in which we're having the conversation? How do we describe the relational spaces that exist between me and a knowledge holder? All these things are incredibly important and unique to us as Pacific researchers, yet the academy's obsession with footnotes and references further marginalises the way that we build and hold knowledge. But now that we are doing this work and trying to find new ways of bringing our communities with us, how can we do this differently? How do we indigenise footnotes? At the end of the day, the knowledge that is shared by knowledge holders belongs to them and to their community. The second part of my project, once I get past the thesis, is thinking about the archive of stories from our knowledge holders and working with them to decide what we're going to do with it, and where the information is going to sit. Is it going to go back to the community or to the National Archives? Ultimately, this is knowledge I get access to but doesn't belong to me, it belongs to the people who share it. And so, I need to do the work to make sure that this knowledge is stored correctly as the tāoga (treasure) that it is and as valid forms of history.

Rennie Atfield-Douglas: This is a challenge that we as a collective could work together on. The Niue contribution could be front footing this conversation. We know that this conversation is already happening in other Indigenous communities – for example, in Te Ao Māori – in terms of legitimising the knowledge that is held. There is scope to be inclusive with other Indigenous groups to work out the way forward, so we can record this information in a way that has academic rigour but can also be seen alongside or in relation with the stories and the narratives of other Indigenous peoples.

Asetoa Sam Pilisi: To echo what Rennie and Zoë have been saying, in trying to frame and put some pillars into how Niue men have understood who they are from the historical accounts, everyone is referencing white authors. But all these authors had Niue informants – Niue people who shared their knowledge. In line with what has been said, we need to find ways to put mana back with these Niue people, because text wouldn't be on the page if it weren't for them. It's nice to have these resources and texts for our tau fuata Niue (Niue youth) to look at and read, but I think it's a bit of a job half done when we are left to just reference these white names. There are Niue names like Pulekula, Mohelagi and Uea who have been key knowledge holders identifiable in texts that are ultimately claimed by a Pālagi author.

Jess Pasisi: I think as a group we are all working towards and building a space where we might not come up with things that are perfect the first time, but we contribute something that others can add to and refine. We are fortunate to have had BIRTHA and Sonny Liuvaie guiding us throughout this process as two people with expertise and knowledge in Niue history, culture, language, and practice. Great care is necessary in the work that we are doing. Often what might seem like an easy fix or simple contribution has to go through many layers of cultural scrutiny and feedback. But the time and energy to do this work cannot always be reflected in the published outcomes or in well-defined processes. The nature of our people is dynamic and diverse, of course our knowledge is the same.

## Conclusion

Niue history is more than books, more than a roundtable discussion, more than eight people; it is embedded in the stories our ancestors tell, the ways they have chosen to tell them, and the ways we, as their descendants, interpret and engage with those stories today. We endeavour to create spaces where we see ourselves and where our knowledge, in all its vastness, can thrive. It is crucial that our knowledge building is collaborative, critical, and accessible to a wider audience of tagata Niue. We are both arguing for and

dreaming about more than what the current systems allows for or could possibly even imagine. We will continue working in and with Niue communities, naming and acknowledging the abundant network of tufuga, knowledge holders, experts, people, and family who have and continue to influence our work. As academics and writers, we push ourselves to ensure that our work brings our communities with us so that generations of tagata Niue – whether they are in Niue, Aotearoa or further afield – may find new questions and pathways forward. No matter what field, discipline, or workspace we find ourselves in, it is clear that the stories of Niue history cannot be told without tagata Niue.

## Endnotes

- 1 Ioane Aleke Fa'avae, 'Niue Fakahoamotu Nukutuluea Motutefua Nukututaha Roundtable' at the New Zealand Historical Association Conference, 2021.
- 2 See Terry Magaoa Chapman et al, *Niue: A History of the Island*, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1982; Atepana Siakimotu (ed), *Tau Tala Tuai*, Faahi Gahua Fakaako, Niue, 1993; Maru Talagi (ed), *Tau Tala Tu Fakaholo Ha Niue*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 2001.
- 3 Pulekula, 'Appendix: The Traditions of Niue-Fekai/Ko e Tohi he tau Tala i Niue-Fekai', in *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol 12, no 1, 1903, pp22-31.
- 4 Terry Magaoa Chapman et al, op cit.
- 5 Terry Magaoa Chapman, *The Decolonisation of Niue*, Victoria University Press, Wellington and New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1976.
- 6 Solomona Kalauni, Lagi Tuhega, Nora Ofaligi Douglas, Tongia Pihigia, Ron Crocombe and Gary Leonard, *Land Tenure in Niue*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1977.
- 7 Atapana Siakimotu, Snow Touna, Iris Lui and Niu Togakilo, *Vagahau Niue ma e Aoga Tokoluga: Tohi Fakatokatoka Gahue mo e Lagomatai Faiaoga*, Faahi Gahua Fakaako, Department of Education, Niue, 1991.
- 8 Ahetoa Aue et al, *Ko e Fonoaga he Tau Aga Fakamotu*, Niue: Faahi Fakaako, Halamahaga, 1977.
- 9 Cora-Allan Wickcliffe, *Hiapo: A Collection of Patterns and Motifs*, Little Island Press, Auckland, 2020.
- 10 John Puhiaatu Pule and Nicholas Thomas, *Hiapo: Past and Present in Niuean Barkcloth*, University of Otago, Dunedin, 2005.
- 11 Patutaue, 'Fisigaulu of Niue', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 4, no 17, 1956, p1; P. Talagi, 'The Origin of the Name "Niue"', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 2, no 39, 1954 p5; P.L. Tohovaka, 'Local interest', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 2, no 5, 1954, p4; Ikinepule, 'Hair Cutting', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 2, no 5, 1954, p6; Tauhetagaloa, 'An Old Story', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 2, no 32, 1954, p4.
- 12 Vaiola Kerisome Malama Head, 'Traditions of Niue', in *Tohi Tala Niue*, vol 2, no 23, 1956, p3.