

**A HISTORY OF THE PAHINA  
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
TOKELAU IN PORIRUA, WELLINGTON,  
NEW ZEALAND (1978-PRESENT):  
ESTABLISHMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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by  
Ken Titi  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis attempts to write a history of the Congregational Christian Church Pahina of Tokelau (herein referred to as CCCT Pahina) in New Zealand from 1978 until present. It will become the first written historical record of the church. It mainly focuses on early establishments, achievements and challenges the church faces on its progress. The thesis begins with a brief historical account of the Tokelauan Island towards the establishment of a religious centre for the Tokelauan community in Wellington, New Zealand, to set a context with which the CCCT Pahina originates from. The study draws upon archival sources as early as 1978, and interviews performed in 2019 and early 2020 from members of the Tokelauan Christian Community. It also gives particular attention to the Tokelauan community adapting to a diasporic world to generate a cultural and hybrid identity. The immense role of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (herein referred to as CCCS) also plays in this history through missionary and leadership influence from Malua Theological College trainings, the educational ground for the CCCS and Tokelauans' pastors and wives. Indeed, this paper serves purposefully as, firstly, a reservation for the modern Tokelauan generation to identify who they are, secondly, to acknowledge the struggle of those who established the CCCT Pahina, and lastly to recognize the colossal contributions of the Samoans therein.

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, which is 8050 words in length, excluding the footnotes and bibliography, has been written by me, that it is the result of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous written work for an academic award at this or any other academic institution.

I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Congregational Christian Church of Tokelau Pahina, Porirua, New Zealand, my wife Temiha Titi and our lovely daughter Saifaanee Quantinilla Titi, my Samoan and Tokelau families, and all those who have supported me in this journey.*

*In memory of the pioneer members who founded the CCCT Pahina in New Zealand.*

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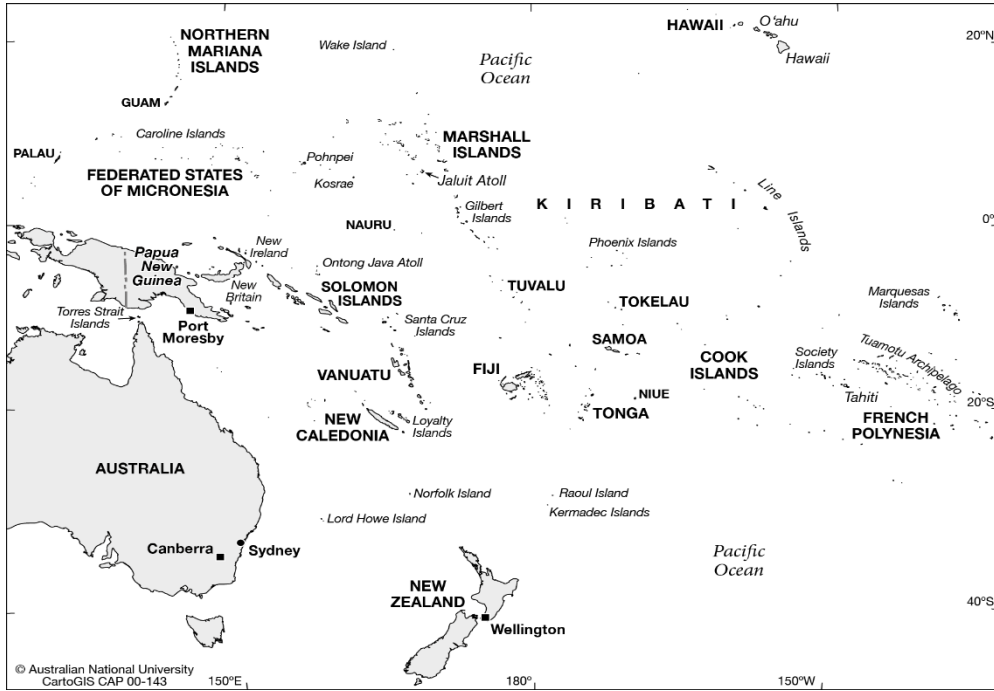
I would also like to thank the Faculty of History at Malua Theological College for your time and guidance you bestowed upon me in assisting this Thesis to further its development: Rev Dr Latu Latai. *Aloha te Atua fakamanuia i na taumafaiga uma kae maihe te akoakoina fanau talohia o te Ekalehia i loto te Laumua.*

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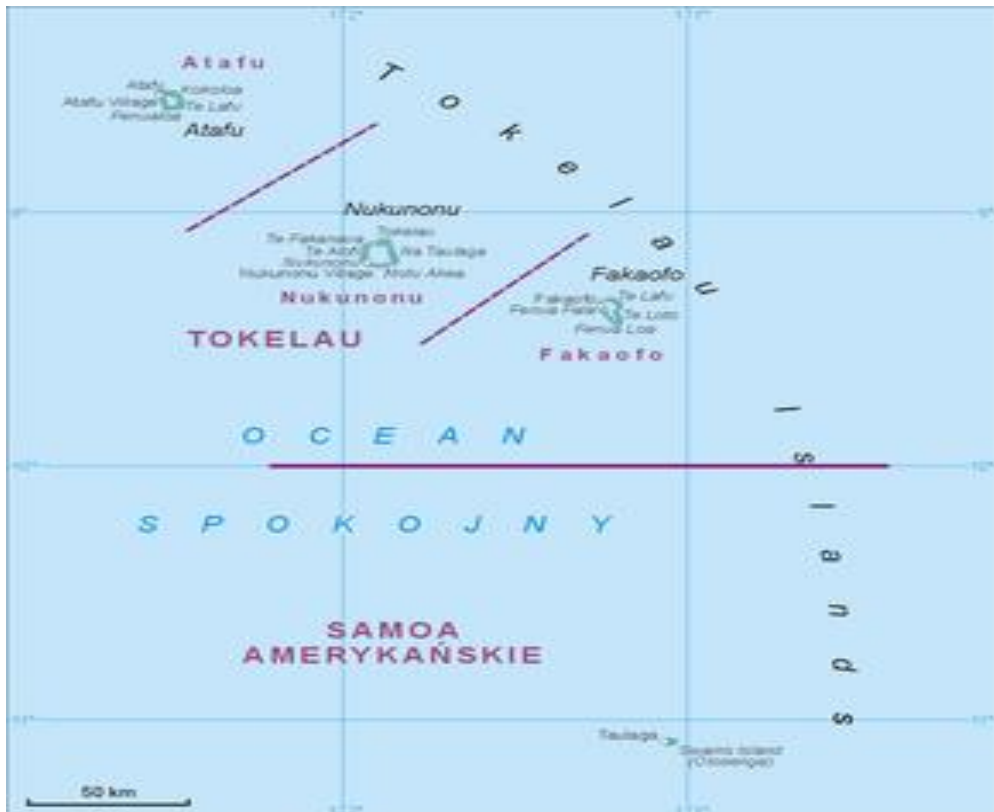
My deepest thanks is to my *kaiga* and friends for your endless support over the past four years. It has not been an easy road, but your love and support for me never failed. Thank you to my mother who is the strength, courage and gold in my life. Temiha's parents, our brothers and sisters, aunties and uncles, cousins, and families.

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# Map of the Pacific



## Tokelau Island





## **Abbreviations**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| CCCT  | Congregational Christian Church of Tokelau       |
| CCCS  | Congregational Christian Church of Samoa         |
| CCCAS | Congregational Christian of American Samoa       |
| LMS   | London Missionary Society                        |
| EFKT  | Ekalehia Fakalapotopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau      |
| EFKS  | Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa         |
| EFKAS | Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Amerika Samoa |
| PIPC  | Pacific Islands' Presbyterian Church             |
| PIC   | Pacific Island Churches                          |

## Introduction

The CCCT Pahina is one of the successful Tokelauan Christian Community in Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand, flourishing for 42 years since 1978 without a written historical record. There is an existing secondary source, but it is a history of the arrival of the first London Missionary Society's (herein referred to as LMS) missionaries in Tokelau in 1861.<sup>1</sup> This is written by Reverend Oka Fauolo<sup>2</sup> of the CCCS. The CCCS, through her Malua Theological College houses this source and make it available for theological studies. Others like Raeburn Lange (2005) offers a profound account of Christianity in Tokelau excluding the CCCT Pahina. It does not say that there is a huge scarcity of historical material in academia, but rather these are some of the materials the author of this paper can obtain.

Indeed, as a Samoan man married to a Tokelauan woman who is a Pahina church member, joining the CCCT Pahina more than 10 years, and known to be a Tokelauan hybrid<sup>3</sup>, I have found that it is unlikely for a church to exist without a written history. In fact, history is a re-telling of things of the past to formulate the present and the future. Many stories and images of the church appear on social media, but, according to Reverend Elder Tui Sopoaga in an interview<sup>4</sup>, a proper written history in particular is not yet in place. It is this scarcity of a written history that sparked me to write this paper. Hence this paper is by no means exhaustive, but aims to place a historical data available for the present and future generation of the CCCT Pahina. Also it turns out to be a resourceful

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<sup>1</sup> The list of the Samoan Missionaries and their wives in Tokelau is found in Latu Latai. "Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1978", (PhD thesis, The Australia National University, 2016), 318.

<sup>2</sup> Oka Fauolo. *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Fapopototoga Kerisiano Samoa* (Apia, Samoa: Malua Printing Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 for a short discussion of Hybridity in relation to this study.

<sup>4</sup> Teao, Ioane., Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga. "Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapototoga Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila." Interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020.

arena to acknowledge the strife of the elders, and the Tokelauans, who established the CCCT Pahina in a diasporic context. These people are laid to rest without proper recognition.

This paper is guided by several questions. How did they start the church and who were the families behind the founding and the establishing of the church? What were the main reasons for the Church being established at Porirua and when was it formed? What were the key events from its formation in 1978 until today, and the challenges faced by the Tokelauans in developing their church in a foreign country? Did they regret establishing their church enduring difficulties and hardships or was it all that easy for them to establish it?

Additionally, the thesis will discuss issues and challenges encountered by the Pahina Church in its 42 years of existence, in order to generate a way forward in the next 30 years. One of which is the translation of the English Bible into the Tokelauan language. It is through this activity that the issue of living as a hybrid in a diasporic context<sup>5</sup> is emerged, which this paper likes to visit because it has an effect for the next 30 years. Moreover, the CCCT's liturgy is based and founded on the CCCS' way of worship; from the hymns they use, the way the service is conducted, and different roles within the church. The only difference is that the CCCT now conduct their services in the Tokelauan language. Significantly, this paper does not intent to marginalize the contributions of the Samoans in the Tokelauan Christian journey. Rather, some of them, though not all, are mentioned and yet acknowledged in various parts.

The paper lies in the boundaries of primary sources such as interviews, church hand-written records, and/or newspaper. The interviewees were all Tokelauans who are

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3 for a brief study of Hybridity related to this history.

presently resided in New Zealand and in Tokelau. The interviewer is the writer of this paper. Secondary sources and online materials are considered as last resorts. There are also pictures loaded in the Appendix as evidences of the existence and the success of the CCCT Pahina. These were obtained via the internet. Thus, the shortage of primary sources is highly considered by the writer as one limitation to this study.

This paper has three chapters. Chapter 1 expresses the establishment of the CCCT in New Zealand. It is divided into three major parts. The first part is a brief description of the Tokelau Island and its geographical landscape. This sets an original context for the establishment of the CCCT Pahina in New Zealand. Secondly, it is an early migration of Tokelauans to New Zealand, and lastly, it focuses of the early development of the Tokelauan Church in New Zealand upon firm settlement. Chapter 2 emphasizes the establishment of the CCCT Pahina Church in 1978 in Porirua Wellington. Chapter 3 defines the progress of the Church development and future outlook since early establishment. One of the underpinning issue here is hybridity and this Chapter likes to visit in accordance to cultural identity. Lastly, the paper concludes with an analysis of important issues this written history able to discover.

## CHAPTER 1

# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOKELAUAN CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into 3 main parts. The first part is a brief historical account of the Tokelau Island highlighting its geographical landscape and religious belief – both traditional and Christian. This intends to set a wider context for the history of the CCCT Pahina. The second part explains the Tokelauan migration to New Zealand as the beginning of their overseas journey prior to the founding of the CCCT Pahina. More important herewith is the fact that overcapacity and climate crises created an opportunity to migrate. The last part portrays the establishments of the Tokelauan community mainly in Taupo and Rotorua, Wellington, New Zealand. This establishment lights a way to the commencement of the CCCT Pahina.

### 1.1 A brief history of Tokelau

As a most remote country with rich marine life and a clear lagoon, Tokelau is widely known as a sprinkling of atolls lying midway between New Zealand and Hawaii. It has three populated atolls called Atafu, Fakaofu and Nukunonu, each house approximately 1000 inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> In 1877, Tokelau became a British protectorate but was formalized in 1889. The British government annexed the group and renamed it “The Union Islands”. However, the British removed it and placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor-General of New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Since 1925, Tokelau was administered by New Zealand and until now, it becomes one of New Zealand’s territory. As a territory,

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<sup>6</sup> Tangata o le Moana: The Story of Pacific People and New Zealand (Te Papa exhibition 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, *Matagi Tokelau: History and Traditions of Tokelau*, (Suva, Fiji: University South Pacific, 1991).

Tokelauans migrate freely to and from New Zealand. Hence this chapter will not cover the sociological effects of migrations on the Tokelauan way of life, but rather focuses on how migration originates the success of the CCCT Pahina Tokelauan community in New Zealand.

### **1.1a Religious Belief and the Arrival of Christianity**

Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, Christianity was central in the lives of the Tokelauan people.<sup>8</sup> The gods and spirits of the past are either unidentified or unknown. Yet, few remarks echoed orally by the elders claiming that Tui Tokelau was preeminent, had no visible being, and was represented by a huge mat-wrapped pillar in front of his shrine in Fakaofu. Annually, rites were held for appealing the gods for abundance and fertility. Other gods or spirits, though orally transmitted through generations, are believed to be associated with particular places or kin groups.<sup>9</sup>

Christianity landed in Tokelau from Catholic and Protestant proselytisers who competed for Tokelauan souls in the 1850 to 1860.<sup>10</sup> Their successes were initially in Atafu, which became and remained wholly Protestant, and Nukunonu, which became and remained wholly Catholic. Fakaofu ended up with adherents of both denominations and decades of veiled antagonism, if not open hostility, between them. However, a true ecumenical spirit came to prevail there and has become part of general Tokelau morality.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Macgregor, *Ethnology of Tokelauan Islands*, (Wellington, New Zealand: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1937).

<sup>10</sup> Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*, (University of Canterbury, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2005), 196-199. The first evangelists were local Tokelauans who were exposed to Catholicism from nearby Wallis. The first “missionary” to the island of Nukunonu was Takua who brought with him the teachings of Catholicism. On the other island groups, a native named Lea who was trained at Malua brought with him the LMS mission but in Samoan in the year 1858. The success of Christianity in Tokelau was by the works of the Samoans. Lange (2005) is evident of this. This paper will not cover that account due to the scope of the thesis. Yet I have mentioned some, but not all, in some areas for the sake of this writing. I do not intend to disregard the involvement of the Samoans as they are highly considered in writings like Lange (2005).

Whether Protestant or Catholic, Tokelau Christianity is of a fundamentalist, puritanical bent. Christian morality is preached in support of Tokelau precepts: respect for elders, obedience to parents, unity of community, equality of all, that spirit and momentum drives the people of Tokelau so where ever they go, they carry with them. Religion is their first priority in the heat of migration to New Zealand.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Initial Migration to New Zealand

Migration into New Zealand is not by chance nor by interest, but a relocation due to extreme weather change and sea rising levels that impact the lives of the Tokelauans on the island. One elder remarked that the potential issues mentioned above take place over a century.<sup>12</sup> Their status as a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand prompts an opportunity to relocate; but despite the open-door policy, their people would rather fight to adapt than migrate. In this way, others preferred migration while many insisted to maintain their pure identity, their rights and traditions unique to them by staying in the island. The New Zealand Government concerned that the population was too high for the assumed carrying capacity of the island as their population grew rapidly.<sup>13</sup> Relocation was taken seriously.

In 1948, migration seemed possible.<sup>14</sup> A few Tokelauans left for New Zealand in the beginning while most felt uncertain of leaving their families and the Island behind. Thoughts charged their minds about moving to a different country due to the fear of losing

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<sup>11</sup> Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, *Matagi Tokelau: History and Traditions of Tokelau*, (Suva, Fiji: University South Pacific, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Ioane Teao, "History of the Tokelauan Church in Porirua", interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, December 4, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> A. F. Wessen, A. Hooper, J. Huntsman, I. Prior, and C. Salmond, *Migration and Health in a Small Society: T Case of Tokelau*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 90–103.

<sup>14</sup> K. Mahina-Tuai, *A Land of Milk and Honey? Education and Employment Migration Schemes in the Post War Era*, (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Press, 2012).

their culture.<sup>15</sup> That same year, New Zealand offered the Tokelauan people citizenship. In this regard, the two nations created an Act for migration purposes. Hence New Zealand annexed Tokelau. Even though citizenship and all the help New Zealand government offered, migration was inconvenient to the majority of Tokelauans. In mid-1960, the NZ government observed overpopulation for a small island, then widened its scope of passage in family groups.<sup>16</sup> In 1963, the government's assisted scheme helped the Tokelauans, especially the unmarried, to move to New Zealand to work as domestics in hospitals and hotels.<sup>17</sup> In 1966, a hurricane struck and destroyed the island causing most Tokelauans to reconsider migration, as the severity of the destruction left the island indisposed.<sup>18</sup>

Thus far, reconsidering migration to New Zealand became a new chapter and new beginning for the Tokelauans. Sakaio states that culture and lifestyle in New Zealand are totally different and coping them would not be easy.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the New Zealand government offered jobs and schools and other opportunities to adapt and live. Significantly, relocation through migration is the advocate of potential planning, possibility of compensation, and assurance of protection. Wessen, Hopper and Salmon (1992) assert that relocation retains sovereignty and their (Tokelau) Exclusive Economic Zone.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> K. Mahina-Tuai and D. Salesa, *Tangata o le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> It seems that the offer in "family groups" suggest a relocation method due to rapid overpopulation of the island.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Lafitaga Sakaio, "History of the Tokelauan Community in the Porirua-Wellington Region", interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, December 13, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> A. F. Wessen, A. Hooper, J. Huntsman, I. Prior, and C. Salmond, *Migration and Health in a Small Society: The Case of Tokelau*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 90–103.



### **1.2a Resettlement Scheme: Adapting to foreign lifestyle**

From 1966 to 1967, the New Zealand government formalized its policy to assist Tokelauan immigration under the Tokelau Islands Resettlement Scheme. Seventy migrants arrived first and worked for two years at nominated jobs, repaying government resettlement grants. Women worked in hospitals as live-in domestics, while men joined the timber industry. Between 1966 and 1974, sixty families resettled in Taupō and Rotorua where workers were needed in the forest industry.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the largest Tokelauan population resided around Auckland, Taupo, Rotorua and Wellington Porirua. As they are communal people, migration in groups intended to embrace their indigenous beliefs and practices while settling in foreign lands. This was further supported by the establishment of churches not only as centres for spirituality but places to revive their cultural heritage. Adapting to a different life was difficult and complex.<sup>22</sup> The Tokelauans had to learn a new culture and way of life unfamiliar to them. Residing in a multicultural context and adhering to a strange lifestyle were complicated, but they had to learn to become New Zealanders. Coping with the New Zealand's colder climate to experiencing telephones and televisions for the first time was a shock. Newspaper, stoves, washers and hot water systems were new to them.<sup>23</sup>

It was not, but the Tokelauan working-age men began to cause difficulties and problems in their early stages of settlement. Freedom in New Zealand and earnings they received from work were other few causes. As a result, culture and self-respect appeared to abandon. These influences affected almost all the Tokelauan youths bothering the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> A. F. Wessen, A. Hooper, J. Huntsman, I. Prior, and C. Salmond, *Migration and Health in a Small Society: The Case of Tokelau*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 90–103.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Lotoaso, Telesia Sakaio, and Ioane Teao, "The Beginning of the Pahina Community", interview by Ken Titi. Wellington, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

elders<sup>24</sup> of the church to worry about the future of the Tokelauan Christians. The future of the Church seemed bothersome. In addition, remittances sent home from New Zealand workers created further inequality hence bred resentment among Tokelauan households. This agitated traditional kinship and social patterns.<sup>25</sup> After 1976, immigration decreased due to uprising social problems of that time. However, the subsequent growth of the Tokelauan population in 2006, due to a high birth rate did not cease the Tokelauan Community to strive for betterment.

### **1.3 Tokelauan Community in Taupo and Porirua**

As mentioned earlier, resettlement through migration paved the way for the Tokelauans to reside in New Zealand. Taupo and Rotorua were the main areas the Tokelauans were migrating to, as opportunities for jobs were significantly large. As the population began to rise and jobs decreased, the Tokelauan people began moving to the capital in Wellington and Porirua where more jobs were offered. Also, others desired to live an independent life and to experience the new world instead. After a few years, the Tokelauan community in Porirua began to grow. Since 1976, the population increased in New Zealand than Tokelau Island. According to Lafitaga Sakaio, an elder of the Tokelauan community, Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji were the first to move to New Zealand. At the time, approximately 500 Tokelauans resided in Porirua.<sup>26</sup> Others arrived without government assistance and as a result, the resettlement scheme was suspended but around 528 people had been resettled. In 1979, the programme/scheme was formalized as the Tokelau Islands Resettlement Scheme which increased their intake in NZ.

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<sup>24</sup> Some of the elders referred here are namely, Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga, Rev Iutana Pue, Rev Palau Siaosi, Siliga Sakaio, Arthur Lotoaso, Ioane Teao, Siliga Tinilau, Ane Sopoaga, and many others whose names could not all be retrieved.

<sup>25</sup> *Tokelauan People in New Zealand*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Lafitaga Sakaio, "History of the Tokelauan Community in the Porirua-Wellington Region", interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, December 13, 2019. See Appendix 1 for the first Tokelauan migrants in Porirua.

## Summary

The movement of Tokelau throughout history, as an independent and indigenous Island nation to under British and New Zealand control in the late 1800s, has greatly impacted the lives of the Tokelauans as they move freely to and from Tokelau and New Zealand in search of a better way of life. Although, they left behind their Tokelauan country and culture, their sense of identity and fidelity to culture is seen in how they moved in clusters and established churches.<sup>27</sup> The four largest populations of Tokelauans in New Zealand are found in Auckland, Taupo, Rotorua, and Wellington-Porirua. The focus on Porirua follows the history of the development of the Tokelauan church to maintain their cultural connection to their Island as they settled on foreign soil. This will be further discussed in the next chapter. Beginning with the cultural changes by way of transitioning and the remembrance of culture by way of the Pahina Church in Porirua.

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<sup>27</sup> This is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CCCT PAHINA, PORIRUA<sup>28</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

The establishment of the first Tokelauan church in New Zealand is not a coincidence, but originates from Tokelauans migrating to New Zealand. These Tokelauans are more important in founding a church named the CCCT Pahina. Hence, this chapter is a transition of the first Tokelauan church in New Zealand to the establishment of the CCCT Pahina in Porirua. It is divided into three parts identifying an early history of the Porirua Tokelauan Church, accounting on the early establishment of the CCCT Pahina, and emphasizing how the founders of the Pahina church came into a decision to build a church. The chapter also acquires few challenges and hiccups experienced during the early days of CCCT Pahina. The founding members and the struggle they faced are also visited.

#### **2.1 Early History of the Porirua Tokelauan Church**

As discussed in Chapter One, the Tokelauan Island is divided between the Protestant and Catholic churches; however, their ecumenical understanding of living as Tokelauans eased tensions between the two churches and reunited as one. Since arriving in Porirua, most Tokelauans predominantly attended the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church (herein referred to as PIPC).<sup>29</sup> This church was their only place of worship, yet the only place intended to gather as Tokelauans at the time. In this course of time, they thought it was appropriate to find a place, owned by them, to associate and connect

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<sup>28</sup> According to Reverend Tui Sopoaga, Tokelau was known as the “adopted son” of the CCCS. Hence, in 1996, they requested independence from the CCCS in which the CCCS and its Elders approved of it believing their “adopted son” has matured and capable of moving forward. Thus, forming the CCCT; an independent Tokelauan Church, yet still honouring their origins from the CCCS.

<sup>29</sup> Ioane Teao, Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga, “Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapotopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila”, interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020.

themselves. The idea emerged from Teao when he envisaged the next Tokelauan generation in a context different from the island. Teao recalls that “their traditional belief and Christian faith are the two most important things that keep them going strong and to face any challenges coming their way, especially the new generation.”<sup>30</sup> They considered the church as the more apposite place for all Tokelauans to connect and raise awareness of their identity.

In 1978, unexpected circumstances emerged within the church. The Samoan Reverend Setu Masina tried to unify the Tokelauans in Porirua in the beginning of the resettlement.<sup>31</sup> Later in that year, the collaboration between the church and its Tokelauan members encountered some rough patches. Contradictions and differences arose between Reverend Masina and the Tokelauans as he exchanged words with the Tokelauans, calling the Tokelauans “stupid” in a church meeting. Asomua, who was a Tokelauan lay preacher in the PIPC at the time, felt offended by such comments. He resorted to the elders of Atafu, who were with him in the PIPC church, for a meeting to discuss the issue. The meeting agreed to establish their own Tokelauan Church in Porirua in 1978. This caused the split with the PIPC church and initiated the establishment of a Tokelauan Church.

## **2.2 Establishment of the Tokelauan Church, Pahina**

In 1978, the establishment of the church marked the hard work of several figures, namely, Asomua and Pupaia Iafeta, Sami and Uaina Elekana, Kave and Sina Ioapo, Tinilau and Telesia Ioapo, Save and Puaga Evo, Iafeta Teilo, Lameko and Pusi, Viliamu and Olive Apete, Milo and Talosaga Viliamu, Teilo and Kailua Sini.<sup>32</sup> They began with

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Lotoaso, Telesia Sakaio, and Ioane Teao, “The Beginning of the Pahina Community”, interview by Ken Titi. Wellington, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> “Api o te Galuega”, interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, January 3, 2020. Furthermore, Pupaia Iafeta, Telesia, and Afa Lotoaso (Treasurer), were all of Samoan descent. It is intended to mention hereunder these important figures to acknowledge their immense contribution in the establishment of Christianity in Tokelau and the CCCT Pahina, New Zealand.

conducting Sunday services in available halls around Porirua. There, they started to fundraise and plan to build a Tokelauan church. From 42 Kokiri Crescent to Natone Park School, the Tokelauans did not hesitate to stop their activities and devotions. The residences of the lay preachers (*Akoako Fehoahoani*)<sup>33</sup> were inconsequential to accommodate them. To resolve such issue at hand, they decided to build a church.

## **2.2a Internal organization and church locations**

The goal of building a church, eventually took the locals in Porirua to join. Ioane Teao was selected as the first secretary of the church and Iafeta Teilo to be his assistant. Moreover, Asomua, Lameko, Iafeta Teilo and Amosa as lay preachers, were chosen to conduct Sunday services weekly, and secure venues for everyday undertakings. Natone Park, the church hall at Waitangirua, and Maraeroa were often used considerably. Others included the Pasefika Culture Hall and the Waitangirua Intermediate Hall. In addition, they used the Scouts Hall for their fundraising activities and other significant occasions despite the shortage of furniture. For this reason, the early church members collected pallets to make chairs and tables for them. Later in 1980 to 1981, the church was in a stable state, expanded, and grew tremendously in spirit and faith. They began to acquire assets as they developed financially. The church became not only a centre to nurture spirituality but a place of social association to strengthen cultural heritage and secure traditional identity.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Almost similar to the Samoan *a'oa'o fesoasoani*.

<sup>34</sup> The importance of this element in the establishment of a church is discussed in Chapter 3.

## **2.2b Stability, friction, split and a call for a pastor**

As the church became stable, socially and financially, a retired church minister from American Samoa named Reverend Fereti Kisiona, who was also a Tokelauan, joined the church. He became the leading preacher intending to look after the church. However, it did not last because he began to lean towards the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (CCCAS) intending the Porirua Tokelauan Church to fall under them.<sup>35</sup> In 1982, the early days of Kisiona's leadership, he asserted that the Tokelauan language was deficient to worship God. He said the Samoan language was abundant to worship God<sup>36</sup>. This offended the Tokelauan community the second time causing great friction within the church and eventually ended in the split between the CCCAS and the Porirua Tokelauan Church.

In 1982, the split affected the Tokelauan people. The original members kept the founding church while others left and started another one, called the Papalaulelei. As a result, Reverend Kisiona eventually left the church but it did not stop the original plans of the first Porirua Tokelauan Church's founding members. They continued to fundraise and built up until succeeded in gaining new members. Meanwhile, they realized it was time to call their own church minister to lead and guide them.

In 1989, the Porirua Tokelauan Church called Tui and Ane Sopoaga<sup>37</sup> to be their pastor, while they ministered a parish in Fakaofu, Tokelau. Without hesitation, Tui and Ane accepted the call and prepared to serve. In due course, they farewelled Fakaofu and commenced a new journey in Porirua. Before arrival, the Porirua Tokelauan Church

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<sup>35</sup> "Api o te Galuega", interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Teao, Ioane., Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga. "Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapotopota Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila." Interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020. Also interview with Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 4 for a portrait of Reverend Elder Tui Sopoaga.

bought a house and a car for their new church minister and his family, and deposited NZ\$120,000.00 into its church building fund, they planned for their new church building. Upon arrival, the new church minister and his family were welcomed in a welcoming ceremony held at a Maori hall called Maraeroa Hall. This occasion gathered many Tokelauans from around New Zealand. New Tokelauan faces were seen and new members were registered. In turn, fundraising activities for the new church building, as planned since the establishment of the church, boosted. In fact, the influx of people into this special occasion made them realized how important unity was for all the Tokelauans in New Zealand. The ecumenical belief hovered in the beginning is now fulfilled.

### **2.2c Initial challenge of the ministry**

As Reverend Sopoaga and wife settled in and began to get acquainted with the members of the Porirua Tokelauan Church, they identified few problems within the community. One of which was a conflict between the Atafu and Fakaofu members.<sup>38</sup> Members were competing within the church activities on which group was superior than the other. It was a challenging thing for a new church minister to manage; however, Tui and Ane able to control and figure out useful and productive ideals to cater for such difficulty.

In addition, changing places for services became another complication. People were fatigued of changing places every-week and having services throughout the town without consistency. Hence demoralization became a factor of not participating in church activities, especially devotions. On that note, the minister and leaders of the church

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<sup>38</sup> According to Reverend Tui Sopoaga, when he arrived in New Zealand, there were people from Atafu and Fakaofu in the church. Because of their different islands of origin, it caused tension between the groups eventually, leading the people from Atafu to move to the PIPC Church and form their own community and identity there. There, they owned their own lands, and have regular gatherings at their hall, Matauala in Porirua, Wellington.



comprehended to quicken the fundraising activities, otherwise, they would not accomplish what they planned for. As time passed, the church resolved to raise money quickly, adding to the money already gathered. Consequently, the minister suggested to purchase a land and begin to build the church they had longed for.

### **2.3 Establishment of the CCCT, Pahina: Land and the Pahina Church**

Time and tide wait for no man, as Tui, the leaders and members of the Christian community raised concerns of what land to purchase and how to finance it. In striving to achieve a good purpose, loaning was their only option. Hence the minister and leaders of the church consulted the real estate agent and arranged a three-quarter (3/4) acre piece of land to purchase. This land is located at 13 Kevil Street, Ranui, Porirua, Wellington, and closer to the city centre. It now becomes a Tokelauan Church property. Nevertheless, the land was secured but money was vitally needed to construct the church. The only option was a loan, depending solely on the land as a guarantor. Fascinatingly, in 1990, the church secured a \$500,000.00 NZD loan to begin the work.<sup>39</sup> It appears that their prayers were answered. This was a symbol of success and yet realized the truth about persevering in faith and works.

Perseverance proved determination and determination made things promising, regardless of how limited they were and how impoverished they became in the early establishment of the church. In 1990, everyone was eager to start building. The entire community worked tirelessly day and night taking a year to complete their church and hall. In 1991, they opened the new church and the church minister named it *Te Malu o Tokelau*, meaning, The Shade of Tokelau.<sup>40</sup> However, most church members dissatisfied

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<sup>39</sup> The loan borrowed by the church was with the Westpac Bank in New Zealand.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Lotoaso, Telesia Sakaio, and Ioane Teao. "The Beginning of the Pahina Community", interview by Ken Titi. Wellington, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

and decided to rename it to *Pahina o Tokelau*.<sup>41</sup> Joy and happiness lingering over the place and hard work had finally rewarded. Furthermore, this accomplishment made them to believe that God was in their midst from the beginning of the journey until now. This sense of journeying together with God, solidified the fact that the Tokelauans can establish themselves in foreign lands.

As stated earlier, these islander's faith had brought strength and kept them pushing through in their Christian journey. The completion of the church building brought another issue of paying \$400,000 NZD loan,<sup>42</sup> but it was not bothersome to the Tokelauan Christian community. The belief in hard work did not cease them to strive until after four years, the loan was paid off. Paying the debt was not an obstruction to their faith and belief but a grasp of how a Tokelauan should be.

In accomplishing such a great work and their ceaseless effort to endeavour, the confidence and the courage to become independent came to the forefront in every discussion of church matter. After achieving a milestone struggle, the Tokelauan churches united and requested to the EFKS General Assembly in Tokelau for independence in the name EFKT.<sup>43</sup> The General Assembly supported and officially declared independence from the EFKS in 1996. Therefore, the Tokelauan Church of Pahina was officially recognized around the world and in the Pacific as the Congregational Christian Church of Tokelau, Pahina.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The meaning of Pahina is quite uncertain during an interview with Tui Sopoaga. Reverend Elder Sopoaga defines Pahina as “a fishing hook” and the Tokelauans people called it *tifa*.

<sup>42</sup> “Api o te Galuega”, interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, January 3, 2020

<sup>43</sup> This issue with the EFKS and EFKT will not be addressed here, but is mentioned in passing to illustrate the momentum gained and the heights achieved by the Pahina Church in moving forward. However, there is a long history that needs to be made known about the Samoan influence-positive and negative to the evangelism of the Tokelauan Islands which has been addressed by other authors. This needs to be further studied.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix 3 for the CCCT Pahina Community in 2019-2020.

## **Summary**

From church planting in Porirua in 1978 by connecting with the PIPC, then finding its independence by way of reconnecting through the CCCAS in early 1980s, then starting over by returning under the CCCS umbrella and calling their minister in 1989, which led to the purchase of land, the building of the church, and the establishment of the Congregational Christian Church Tokelau, Pahina in 1996, provides a glimpse of the struggles of a people to fulfil their dreams on foreign land and through unexpected obstacles. But their perseverance and faith in God never wavered and this new found spiritual realization has emboldened them to go even further. One might reckon on how are they going to face the challenges of today and how to reaffirm the truthfulness of their mission of a Gospel of Jesus for the Tokelauans, by the Tokelauans. The next chapter tries to see few challenges facing the CCCT Pahina in this new century.

## CHAPTER 3

### MOVING FORWARD AND CHALLENGES

#### Introduction

A stable and well-organized Tokelauan church in Porirua opened on an optimistic note; but moving forward could be either challenging or troublesome. Moving forward seeks to explain how stability proves endurance and how the church encounters religious, social, political and psychological challenges. This chapter begins with the translation of the Bible in Tokelauan, as an event to determine a church moving forward. The Tokelauan Bible serves as a convincing material of identity, not only for the founders of the Pahina Church, but their sons and daughters of the ‘now and then’.<sup>45</sup> These sons and daughter are not entirely Tokelauans but are hybrids – New Zealand-born Tokelauans. This chapter seeks the importance of the translation of the Bible in relation to the identity of hybrid Tokelauans. Further, elements such as achievements, dependency, and bond are associated with that forward movement. Lastly, is a modern outlook of the Pahina church.

#### 3.1 A Moving Forward Church

##### 3.1a The Translation of the Bible into Tokelauan

The translation of the Bible into the Tokelauan language provides a rich history of how many of the Pahina members, including its church minister Tui Sopoaga, spearheaded and guided this venture.<sup>46</sup> In 1991, Tokelau completed the first translation of the four gospels in the New Testament. It took five years of consultation with the Tokelauan community in New Zealand, Australia and Tokelau, concerning the project.

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<sup>45</sup> My own description of this phrase refers to the Tokelauan generations who are New Zealand born. They speak English and Tokelauan. For example, my wife is a Tokelauan who was born in New Zealand. She speaks in three languages – English, Tokelauan, and Samoan. The Tokelauan language identifies her a Tokelauan.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 5 for a picture of the translation process.

Issues and challenging opinions aroused where some people insisted on the Samoan Bible but others were uncertain of leading and handling the translation project. After five years of consultation, they finally agreed to translate the Bible in Tokelauan with the assistance from the Bible Society. This became a fulfilment of Sopoaga's vision earlier in his theological studies in Malua, hoping to have a mother tongue translation of the Bible. He recalled the Samoan Bible and the Samoan language as adequate and abundant in worship, as a fact of being conventional to translate the Bible in Tokelauan. Without toleration, Sopoaga encouraged the Tokelauans to take the translation as another step for the church.

As a Malua graduate, Sopoaga<sup>47</sup> understood that churches in the Tokelauan Island performed services in the Samoan language because church ministers were initially from Samoa. The hopes for his island drove him to undertake studies in Malua. In 1982, Sopoaga graduated. His struggles and hard work had finally been rewarded. He returned to his motherland with assurance that his hopes pounded into fulfilment. After Malua, the Fakaofu village called Sopoaga to be their church minister. As proud of his Tokelauan identity, he preferred his mother tongue in worship. Interestingly, at the time, communication through own language was free; yet more useful and self-respecting. Hence Sopoaga tried to abide with it. This motivated every Tokelauan and the whole church to start the project. The Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Tokelau (EFKT) and the Catholic Church, as the only Christian denominations in Tokelau at the time also accepted it.<sup>48</sup> The translation of the New Testament in Tokelauan language began and

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<sup>47</sup> Sopoaga was among the first Tokelauan students to undertake studies in Malua Theological College in the nineteenth century, from 1979 to 1982. Mentioned in interview with Tui Sopoaga, with Takua Lau being the first to receive training from Malua in 1858. In, Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*, (University of Canterbury, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2005), 197.

<sup>48</sup> In an interview with Tui Sopoaga, it was mentioned that the translating team was mostly those in the church administration.

well satisfying. Nevertheless, the support of the Tokelauan community in New Zealand and abroad was satisfactorily a unifying factor of church moving forward.

### **3.1b The Tokelauan Society for the Translation of the Bible: New Testament and Old Testament**

In essence, traditional inheritance, especially mother-tongue, is crucial to the Tokelauans in foreign lands. The Tokelauans speak their own language; yet, the translation of the Bible into Tokelauan was worth beneficial accordingly. For them, the translation could be a way of preserving their language and culture. Another, it is a way of nurturing their children to know the importance of their own inheritance. Pushing through this project to be a successful mission invited everyone - the locals and the migrated ones - without ceasing but with delight. In fact, the Tokelauan community approached the New Zealand Bible Society for support and was granted,<sup>49</sup> even though they were at handy positions of becoming foreigners in the Land of the Long White Cloud. Consequently, an inter-church committee, comprising principally the CCCT, the PIC, and few Catholics created what is called the “Tokelauan Society for the Translation of the Bible”.

In 1996, the inter-church committee appointed the first translators<sup>50</sup> for the project, including the current translators named Ioane Teao and Loimata Iupati. Teao became the leading figure. In addition, the Bible Society and its director, Stephen Pattermore, provided training and technical support.<sup>51</sup> The trainings helped the translators

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<sup>49</sup> Teao, Ioane., Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga. ”Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila.” Interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> The plural noun *translators* mentioned here involved a range of people including EFKT Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga, Rev Elder Mose Telehoma, Rev Elder Peletisala, Rev Iutana Pue, Rev Elder Koro Sinapati, Fr Penehe Patalalio, Loimata Iupate, and the late PIPC Rev Perema Leasi were the only names this paper could obtain.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix 5 for the picture of the two – Ioane Teao and Stephen Pattermore.

to broaden their knowledge in translation activities. In June 2009, the New Testament in the Tokelauan language completed and launched.<sup>52</sup> Such a completion was a relief to those who yearned for success.

Relentlessly, the hard work did not stop, as the Old Testament was on the verge of becoming a traditional language. After some time, the Old Testament books of the Protestant Canon and books of the Catholic Deuterocanonical almost came into completion. However, incongruity between the CCCT and the Catholic translators stirred the flow of the translation activity. That is, for instance, the Catholic insisted on the “wh” while the CCCT preferred the EFKT existing “f” in words like whaka or Faka. This was problematic and triggered frictions between the translators causing the Catholics to depart from the project. These confutations added to complications of the translation process. However, the effort to accomplish it was remarkable. In the meantime, they are working on both community-level checking and consultant-checking to have the Old Testament finalized for publication, hopefully, in 2021.

### **3.1c Translation’s Implications**

Moreover, the evangelization of Tokelau by missionaries from Samoa over 150 years ago was a factor concerning the usage of the Samoan language; in fact, the Samoan Bible was their only source of the Scripture and literacy. Pattermore claimed that “This was going to be a new Tokelauan translation which found its way starting from an English base rather than constantly referring to the Samoan”.<sup>53</sup> There are 1,400 Tokelauans in Tokelau but more than 7,000 Tokelauans in New Zealand with 50% of that quantity

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<sup>52</sup> Be mindful that the Tokelauans used the Samoan Bible. Through the Bible Society under the guidance of Pattermore, the Tokelauan Bible was translated from the English Bible. This is mentioned in section 3.2.

<sup>53</sup> “Api o te Galuega”, interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

resides in Wellington.<sup>54</sup> There are also communities in Auckland, Taupō and Rotorua and the Tokelauan Bible would provide them a sense of having a traditional heritage. According to the New Zealand Bible Society,<sup>55</sup> the first ever Bible in Tokelauan will be a major benchmark not only for Tokelauan Christians, but also for the Tokelauan language. They believe is a valuable Tokelauan material serving the people’s spirituality and for sustaining their indigenous inheritance. To be certain, Christianity, culture and language were essentials to the translation project pushing the Tokelauans to conform to their true identity while on adapting foreign life. Observantly at this point, the Tokelauan youths adapted more frequently to these foreign lifestyles which appeared absurd in the eyes of the elders. The elders believed that the Bible was, and still is, the backbone of their traditional language and the foundation of everything; politically, socially, religiously, economically, and psychologically.

The translation activity is yet to complete and the launching of the first Tokelauan Bible is scheduled to take place in 2021. The completion of this project marks the first Tokelauan Bible in the context of Christianity in Tokelau, and commemorates 23 years of perspiration and struggle of the Tokelauan elders. The well-known figures were Ioane Teao, the New Zealand Bible Society, and the Director, Dr Stephen Pattemore. It was not the merit of the work done by these remarkable figures, but it was their perseverance in faith in God, in all forms and every way possible, that made this project a success. This moving forward characteristic of the Pahina church brings about an interest in the issue of identity when considering the ‘now and then’ Tokelauan generation rising in New Zealand.

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<sup>54</sup> “Api o te Galuega”, interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand, January 3, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Tiniiau, Siliga. “Interviews with current members at the EFKT Pahina Parish.” Interview by Ken Titi, Porirua, New Zealand, May 20, 2020.



### 3.2 The Tokelauan Bible and Identity: Hybridity<sup>56</sup>

The Tokelauan Bible is one associating factor of identity because it houses the Tokelauan language which is the most obvious, though important, part of any national credentials. In worship, it is a useful tool; but the elders zealously stimulated it as a place to preserve language; yet a reservation to locate cultural identity. Such stimulation prompts the ‘now and then’ Tokelauan generations, whom this paper stresses as hybrid Tokelauans living in the diaspora,<sup>57</sup> to reconsider their sense of belonging to and/or becoming of. On the one hand, it is important for the ‘now and then’ Tokelauan generation to use traditional language to determine that they become New Zealand citizens but they belong to Tokelau. Using language as identity is one way to negotiate identity in the New Zealand context. On the other hand, using language as identity is conducive to the fact that they belong to Tokelau instead of becoming Tokelauans.<sup>58</sup>

In fact, those who migrated and established the Tokelauan Church in New Zealand were fluent and immersed in the Tokelauan language and culture. However, those who were born and raised in New Zealand lived a hybrid lifestyle – that being of Tokelauan decent but adapting to a “Kiwi”<sup>59</sup> lifestyle. These generations, excluding the founders of the Pahina Church, face a clash of two cultures – the foreign and indigenous cultures. One might wonder how these generations identify themselves in the faces of a multicultural

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<sup>56</sup> The use of hybridity in this chapter is to focus on the cultural and identity crisis the children of the first-generation Tokelauans who arrived in New Zealand are facing. Due to the scope of this writing, this academic element is too broad to discuss in the paper. The intention herewith is to highlight the importance of this element in relation to Identity as Tokelauans in the diasporic world. I am mindful of this limitation but I hope to further this in future studies.

<sup>57</sup> Hybridity usually refers to two things combined to make up something new or as in this context, a person of mixed identity, race, nationality, and ethnicity. Diaspora refers to people who have been spread out from their native homeland and living abroad. This paper uses diaspora to define the essence of migration.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Belong to’ here means “at the right place” but ‘becoming to’ is defined as trying to fit in that place.

<sup>59</sup> A slang or colloquial term used to refer to someone who was born and lives in New Zealand.

context. This suggests that the completion of the Tokelauan Bible tends to be a positive way forward for the Pahina Church, uplifting the importance of language as identity.

Recent studies portray the problem with identity facing by Pacific people living in New Zealand. According to Paula Kele-Faiva, there were several language classes (Ofaga ote Gagana Tokelau i Niu Hila). These were set up in concerns of their language being lost and forgotten.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Akiemi Glenn also focusses on this issue with younger generations living in the diaspora where they struggle with an identity crisis; keeping their Tokelauan heritage while adapting to a new country and environment.<sup>61</sup> Reverend Dr Terry Pouono in his “Coconut Water in a Coca Cola Bottle” stresses the struggle of the third Samoan generation in New Zealand with identity because of language disabilities.<sup>62</sup> Also, Ioka indicates the same issue with the CCCS church in Grey Lynn, New Zealand.<sup>63</sup> Thus, this is the same difficulty in the entire Tokelauan community in New Zealand especially the third (or the hybrid) generations. It can be deduced that the Tokelauan Bible reserves the Tokelauan language, a source where hybrid Tokelauans use language to identify them in their diasporic context.

### **3.3 Achievements, Support, and Bond.**

In March 2020, the CCCT Pahina celebrated 42 years since establishment. The celebration included other completions such as the renovation of the church, hall, and the church minister’s house. These Tokelauan people continue to hold in confidence and

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<sup>60</sup> Paula Kele-Faiva, “The Voices of Tokelauan Youth in New Zealand: Na Mafialeo onā Tupulaga Tokelau i Niu Hila”, (MTh thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Akiemi Glenn, “Wayfinding in Pacific Linguascapes: Negotiating Tokelau Linguistic Identities in Hawaii”, (PhD Thesis, University of Hawaii, 2012), 11-12.

<sup>62</sup> Terry Pouono, “Coconut Water in a Coca Cola Bottle” In Search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World”, (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2016), 100-107.

<sup>63</sup> The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa was founded in New Zealand in the suburb of Grey Lynn in 1962 by Fuimaono Taala and some Samoans who left the PIPC Church in hope to set up a Samoan church run by Samoans, just like that of their church back in Samoa; the CCCS. In, Danny Ioka, “Origins and Beginnings of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand”, (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2010), 171-172

faith, that without doubt, they can handle any emerging difficulties. Meanwhile, recognition of the sons and daughters of the church accentuates the importance of a stable Christian community. Sons and daughters shape the church youth.<sup>64</sup> They married and continued to uplift the church in every means. They are recognized in the community by their immense knowledge and skill attained from New Zealand education. These are essential elements that reasonably describe a church moving forward. Indeed, hiring contractors to do any job related to the Pahina Church was not preferable. The future of the church seems to rely on their own hands.

Moreover, dependency creates a bond between two different characters – the Tokelauans in New Zealand and in the Island. The Tokelauans in New Zealand began to sense the importance of their indigenous inheritance. That is, they live and work in New Zealand while sending help, rebuilding homes and revisit their families in the island. Some Tokelauans work in the mines, earn sufficiently and sent monies to the island. Many, with the help of the church, take part-time employment in Australia and return. The church ministers and the church leaders intend to stay in Pahina and secure the land and the church. These varieties of responsibilities warrant a church moving forward in a way that migration to New Zealand to the establishment of the Pahina church, was and is a way for the Tokelauans in the island to depend on the Tokelauans in New Zealand for family support. When this turns to be a continual habit within the two different characters, the bond between the two would become stronger. This moving forward verifies what the elders envisioned in the establishment of the church. They have now died knowing that their sons and daughters will continue to retain such bond.

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<sup>64</sup> See Appendix 2 for a picture showing the modern CCCT Pahina youth.

Furthermore, Pahina, is now one of the largest Tokelauan Community today. There are sixty to seventy families serving the church. Over time, many have sought out new places to live such as Australia for work purposes, but also to seek a better living for them and their families. However, regardless of those who have moved on, the Pahina church still remains active and unchanged. Sopoaga mentioned in an interview<sup>65</sup> that despite members moving on to find new beginnings, it is not a problem for the progression of the Pahina church nor would it cause any changes to the community and have negative thoughts to those who have moved on. He believed that wherever the people would go in their search for new beginnings, Pahina would always be there if they ever return.

### **3.4 Spiritual Growth**

The growth of spirituality among members of the Pahina church, though the Tokelauan Christian community too, has been observed as one of the major impact of the Pahina Church in its emergence. Reverend Sopoaga insisted in an interview that approximately sixty to seventy Tokelauan families attended the Pahina church.<sup>66</sup> He stated further that people travelled and left the church due to their obligations to work and family commitments. In fact, the purpose of leaving the Motherland (Tokelau Island) was, and still is, to seek better future to support families and Tokelau Island.<sup>67</sup> Among arrival to these new places, the people had to adapt to change and blend in with their new homes.<sup>68</sup> This meant they had to make many sacrifices such as learning a new language, culture, and forget what they were used to back in their homes.

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<sup>65</sup> Teao, Ioane., Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga. "Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila." Interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga.

<sup>67</sup> Lesley K Iaukea, "Ke Mau Ki Pale o Tokelau: Hold Fast to the Treasures of Tokelau; Navigating Tokelauan Agency in the Homeland and Diaspora", (MTh thesis, University of Hawai'i, 2014), 47.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 19.

As for the Church, especially the Pahina church in New Zealand, it contributed a lot to give support to the people living in the diaspora. With the establishment of a Tokelauan community (or church) away from their Motherland, it not only helped the Tokelauans living abroad to maintain their culture, send support back home to their families in the Motherland, but also build on their spiritual lives. Mentioned in an interview with Reverend Elder Sopoaga, this was the intent of their elders who first arrived in New Zealand; to have a community to keep their people together and where they could practice their culture and faith.<sup>69</sup>

## Summary

It is without doubt that the call for Tokelauan translation of the Bible was crucial for the church moving forward and consolidating its identity. The Bible would be used as the material for maintaining and preserving identity only to be strongly reinforced by the Tokelauan community's choice to unite as one. The setting up of the Tokelauan society for the translation of the bible was an indication of seriousness in their need to accomplishing such a task, and such a drive allowed the completion of the New Testament into the Tokelauan language, with the Old Testament scheduled to be completed around 2021. Also, the issue of hybridity presents an issue in the Tokelauan identity concerning the Tokelauans born and raised overseas and being exposed to multicultural contexts like New Zealand. The Tokelauan Bible aptly serves to identify them that they are Tokelauans belonging to a specific culture and they are not people who tries to become Tokelauan.

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<sup>69</sup> Teao, Ioane., Afa Lotoaso, and Rev Elder Tui Sopoaga. "Tala o te Galuega Kamata o te Ekalehia Fakalapopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau i Niu Hila." Interview by Ken Titi. Porirua, New Zealand. January 9, 2020.

Nevertheless, the success of the translation activity reveals also further achievements in the CCCT Pahina. These signal a church moving forward in the right direction.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout its 42-year long history, the CCCT Pahina is one of the most successful Tokelauan churches in Porirua, Wellington and around New Zealand. Despite the scarcity written materials and few existing accounts in the form of Reverend Oka Fauolo's book about the history of the LMS missionaries into Tokelau, it is hoped that this written account, being the first extensive one of its kind, will be worth the read for interested parties and for the Tokelauan youth of tomorrow. For such committed people to come from the Tokelauan islands, whose humble beginnings reflect a lifestyle completely different to the luxuries of the developed countries, moving to New Zealand for a better life and opportunities to provide for their families, were enough reasons to move overseas. It initially was not an easy place to adapt to, because the lifestyle, culture, and environment were all too different from the warmth of their island home. And as they eventually adapted overtime, increasing problems mounted as they found their Tokelauan way of life and culture being challenged by the Western influences and language of New Zealand. However, along with their Christian faith, pride in their Tokelauan culture and ways were the only things that kept their identity strong throughout time. This was motivation enough to move overseas and be a part of the diaspora with a common purpose, to obtain a better life and opportunities but also to hold on to, and deeply treasure, their Tokelauan customs and traditions. This combination of faith and culture should provide encouragement and pride into the workings of God in the Tokelauan community. The beginnings and founders of the church's establishment for communal and spiritual reasons also needs to be recognised. There is also the need to acknowledge the past events and the influences of what it has become in the present day especially in relation to current issues to be aware of, such as the development of the New Testament translation of the Bible which is to come within the near future. To understand where the

CCCT Pahina is heading, it must understand its beginnings and where it came from. It is the hope of this thesis that this has been accomplished with contemplation for a better future.



## Appendix 1

The first Tokelauan migrants to New Zealand in 1964.



## Appendix 2

This is the CCCT Pahina Youth 2020 with the CCCT Pahina Church's interior view.



EFKT NZ Pahina o Tokelau. Uploaded by: legittokes, Aug 22, 2013



### Appendix 3

The Pahina o Tokelau Church and its Christian Community (Elders and Parents)  
2019-2020.



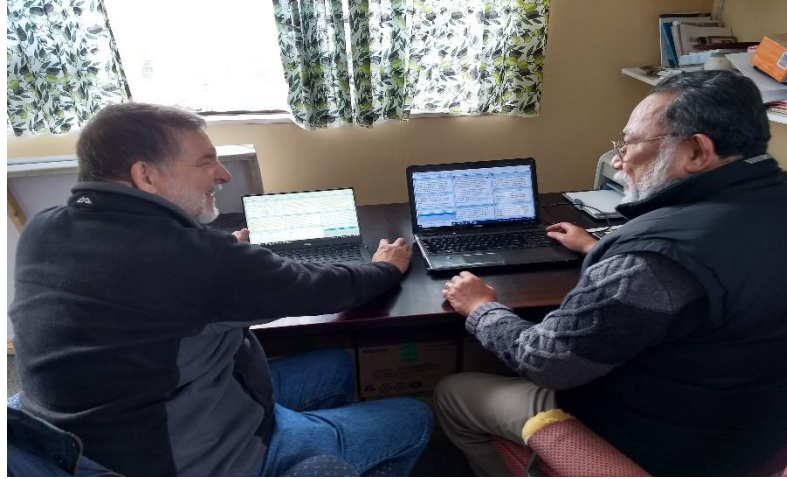
### Appendix 4

Reverend Elder Tui Sopoaga



## Appendix 5

The Translation Activity. Picture obtained from the New Zealand Christian Network. This is Ioane Teao (right) and Dr Stephen Pattermore (left).  
<https://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/major-milestone-achieved-in-first-ever-tokelauan-bible-translation/>



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