

Tafoe O!

BY HIO KELEMETE



LEARNING THE TAFOE

First, the group has to learn the song that goes with the dance. Dalsia and Vaha are the teachers. They get the group to practise the words. Then they go over the tune. After that, it's time to learn the actions.

Dalsia and Vaha teach the actions one line at a time. They make sure the group knows each action well, before they move on to the next line.

The words of the tafoe are very old. Mouanaki's dad, Paulino Tuwhala, was the one who took these traditional words and set them to music. Then he added the actions.

"I think your dad has made up an awesome tafoe," says Kewa. "Dalsia and Vaha are great dance teachers, too!"



It's Sunday morning, and Kewa, Rosa, Mouanaki, and their friends are learning a dance. The dance is called "Te Tafoe". A **tafoe** is a traditional dance from Tokelau. The dance is performed using **foe** (paddles).



Learning about Aganuku Faka-Tokelau (Tokelau Culture)

Kewa, Rosa, and Mouanaki are part of a **kaulotu** (church group) that meets every Sunday. The group from the local Tokelau community has been meeting for over thirty years. They come together to share **fakatuatua** (faith), **aganuku** (culture), and **lotokaiga** (a sense of belonging).

Some of the adults were part of the group in the 1980s. They were children then. Now they are teaching their own children the language, dances, and songs they learnt when they were young. They are continuing the great work of their own mums, dads, nanas, and papas.



TE TAFOE

*Kaufao ke mau ai
Kaufao ke mau to malo
Ke mau! Ke mau!
Kua maua, kua taia
Si! Si!
E hulu te foe ki oku mua
E hulu te foe ki oku tua
E fakapatato
Eo ea ia
Tafoe o!*



The words of this song are taken from a traditional Tokelau war cry. They tell the warrior Kaufao to be alert and stand his ground in battle, to be brave, and to fight for victory.



MAKING THE FOE

Paulino Tuwhala is a master carver and artist. He learnt the art of **talatalai** (carving) by watching his grandad, uncles, and dad in Nukunonu, Tokelau. Later, he studied at Leulumoega Fou (The School of Fine Arts in Sāmoa) for three years. When he finished studying, he wanted to pass on his skills to others.

Paulino Tuwhala is teaching some of the parents, grandparents, and young people how to make the foe. First, he shows them the right way to use a **toki** (a tool used for carving). Then they begin to make the foe.



TO MAKE A FOE:

Cut out the general shape of the foe with a circular saw. (An adult wearing safety gear does this.)

1.



2.

Use the toki to give the foe its exact form. (This step takes a lot of slow, careful work.)



3.

Use sandpaper to make the foe smooth.



4.

Paint each foe with koru-shaped designs. The designs represent waves.



5.

Varnish the foe.



"The key to beautiful carving is finding your own style," says Paulino Tuwhala. "Then you have to let the carving tell its own story. My carving helps me show my Tokelau culture and identity."

PERFORMING THE TAFOE

The children have practised the words, the tune, and the actions for their foe dance. Now it's time to share it with the kaulotu. Kewa, Rosa, and Mouanaki wait excitedly for their group's turn to perform.

"We need to concentrate," says Kewa.

"Yes," agrees Mouanaki. "Singing and dancing at the same time is quite tricky!"

"I really hope I can remember the actions," says Rosa.

They listen for the drum beat. Then they begin to sing and move their foe to the rhythm. As the song speeds up, their feet move faster and faster. The foe move faster, too, spinning and flowing with the music.

"Malo te hiva! Malo te lagi! Kai te gali! Malo ni, tamaiti!
Great dancing! Great singing! How beautiful! Well done, kids!"



TOKELAU VOCABULARY

aganuku: culture

fakatuatua: faith

foe: paddles

kaulotu: church group

lotokaiga: a sense of belonging

tafoe: a type of traditional dance from Tokelau

talatalai: carving

toki: a tool used for carving

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