



# ECHOES AT FISHERMEN'S ROCK

**Traditional Tokelau fishing**

**By Elders from Atafu Atoll**

**Edited and translated by Antony Hooper and Iuta Tinielu**



*Knowledges of Nature 4*

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# Echoes at Fishermen's Rock: Traditional Tokelau fishing

By Elders from Atafu Atoll



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**By Elders from Atafu Atoll**

**Edited and translated from the Tokelauan original  
by Antony Hooper and Iuta Tinielu**

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Caption (front cover): A catch of yellowfin tuna from a deep-sea fishing expedition being divided into *inati* share-groups for distribution to the village. The *inati* share system involves equal shares for every man, woman and child. It is also used for the distribution of other resources and is a highly valued feature of Tokelau custom. The groups are in constant flux; hence the need for the person in charge to keep a running record of memberships in his notebook.

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# FOREWORD

## to the English edition

*I lie down but I do not sleep  
I cannot forget in my heart  
The Ahaga-o-Matalele  
Where the bonito canoes come wading in  
To the Fishermen's Rock  
How wonderful are the expert  
skills of the tautai.*

A Tokelau dance song

This book is translated from a volume originally written wholly in Tokelauan by a group of emigrant elders from the atoll of Atafu who met regularly over a period of years in their Community Hall near Wellington, New Zealand, to record the traditional fishing methods of their homeland. The volume was eventually published in 2008 as *'Hikuleo i te Papa o Tautai'* (Steele Roberts, Wellington. ISBN 978-1-877448-03-4) with assistance from Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, two government agencies concerned in part with the promotion of ethnic heritage. 'Echoes at Fishermen's Rock' is a translation of the Tokelauan *Hikuleo i te Papa o Tautai*.

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of 'fishermen's rocks' scattered throughout the world. The Atafu one referred to is a flattish coral slab alongside a shallow channel leading over the reef by the village. It has

long been the site of a lot of discussion about fishing. *Hikuleo* is a word embodying several interrelated meanings – 'voice', 'accent', 'tone' or 'echo'. 'Echo' is the one that most effectively conveys the authors' intentions – not a direct voice from the traditional past but one refracted by the effects of both time and distance.

Fishing communities throughout the Pacific have their own bodies of knowledge about their marine environments and their own techniques for exploiting them. Much of this traditional knowledge survives in numerous places, simply because it is both useful and efficient. But it is also changing and, with the introduction of paid employment and the encroachment of a money economy, being completely abandoned in some places.

The Atafu elders wrote mainly for the benefit of their children and grandchildren. Their work was done at their own initiative and carried through without payment of any kind; they regarded it simply as part of their traditional obligation to pass on what they knew to future generations. We know of no other community of fishermen in the Pacific that has taken the initiative to record their traditional knowledge and has had the persistence to carry their work through to publication. It is a unique enterprise.

*Antony Hooper*

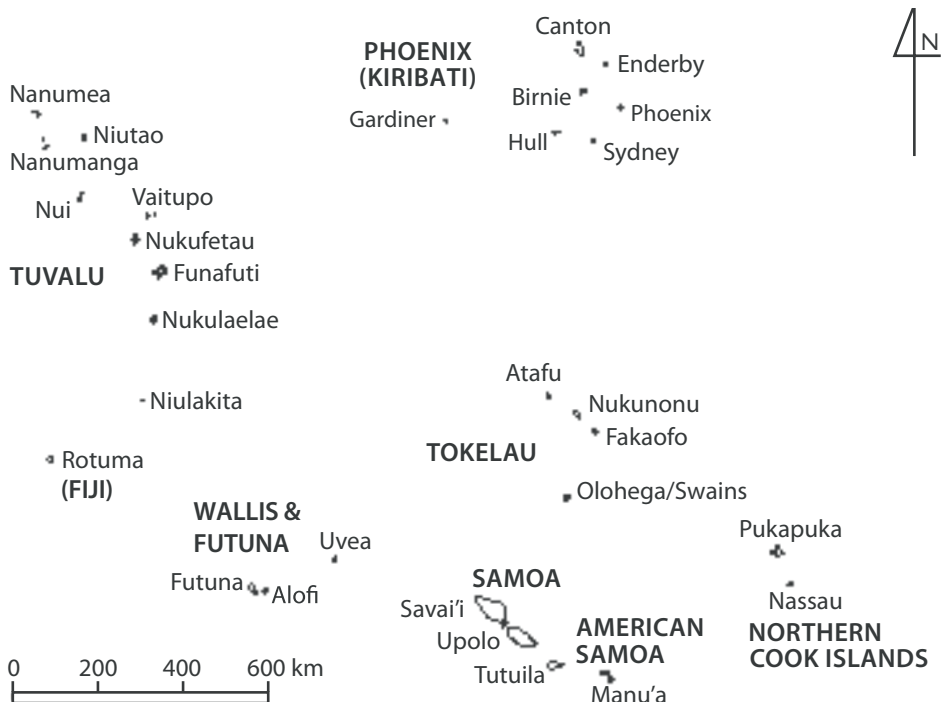
# TRANSLATORS' NOTE

**T**okelau is a group of three small atolls, called Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu, situated in the South Pacific about 500 km north of Samoa. A fourth atoll, called Olohega or Swains Island, which lies between Tokelau and Samoa, is also claimed as part of Tokelau but remains under United States control as part of the Territory of American Samoa. All three atolls are small and have a total land area of only about 12.2 square kilometres. The average mean annual temperature in the group is 28 degrees Celsius and the annual rainfall is 2,900 mm – most of it falling in the months between November and March when the weather is often unsettled with occasionally strong winds from the north and west. The atolls all have central lagoons completely encircled by barrier reefs and with no deepwater passages to the open sea. There is

no standing freshwater and only Fakaofu has an extensive freshwater lens. The main food crops are coconut, breadfruit and pandanus.

The people are Polynesian, speaking a language closely related to Samoan and Tuvaluan, and have been New Zealand citizens since 1949. In 2006, the population consisted of some 1,400 'usual residents', only 1,000 of whom were enumerated in the atolls; the rest were associated with the group's administrative centre in Samoa, visiting relatives overseas or away on education scholarships. The population has been steadily declining from a peak of 2,000 in 1961, due largely to the impetus given by a New Zealand government scheme for assisted migration that lasted from 1966 until 1975. There are now

## South Pacific islands



some 7,000 Tokelauans or part-Tokelauans living in New Zealand, with others in Hawaii and Australia.

Archaeological research shows that the atolls were first settled about 1,000 years ago, but there is also some evidence of cultural remains in Fakaofu dating back 1,600 years. Both local traditions and historical records indicate that the group was at one time a typical Polynesian kingdom under the hegemony of Fakaofu. European discovery of the atolls was piecemeal and spread over sixty years between 1765 and 1825, but it was not until the 1840s that the outside world began to impinge significantly on the local polity. Missionization by both Protestants and Roman Catholics began in the 1860s, accompanied by epidemics and ships engaged in the Peruvian slave trade, which reduced the population from about 530 to a mere 200 or so.

Declared as protectorates of Great Britain in 1889, the atolls were later incorporated into the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate in 1908. Disannexed in 1925, they became an administrative responsibility of New Zealand in 1926. The years between the 1860s and the 1920s saw a steady rise in population and the establishment of an effective neo-traditional social order, supported by a largely subsistence economy. The people were generally healthy, literate (in Samoan), peaceful and Christian. From then until after the Second World War, and particularly during the years of the 1930s Depression, the group was visited only a few times each year by a New Zealand administrator or trading ships collecting copra. Education was in the hands of the Missions and there were only very basic medical facilities.

From the 1950s onwards though, New Zealand began to improve communications and to develop both education and health. Following the UN's 'Declaration on the Independence of Colonial Peoples' in 1962 and the formation of the body commonly known as the 'Committee of Twenty-four', New Zealand took on the obligation of moving the group towards a greater

Atafu Atoll, Tokelau, Southern Pacific Ocean



degree of self-government, including complete independence or, alternatively, integration. This led to the development of a local public service, the steady improvement of many facilities, and devolution of many of New Zealand's political powers to newly established local political bodies. The final devolution of political power took place in 2004, making the group effectively self-governing. This created an anomaly, still not resolved, because Tokelau has refused, in two UN-inspired referendums in 2006 and 2008, to move to the alternative of formal self-government in free association with New Zealand.

All this has led to many changes in the atolls. Although it had some of the surface appearances of a traditional society, by the 1980s the Tokelau economy was essentially an aid-driven one, dominated by New Zealand budgetary and project assistance. It is now completely so, with New Zealand's annual contributions amounting to about NZ\$20 million.



Atafu has played its part in all these changes and has benefited from all the developments. But it remains the smallest of the three atolls in both land area and the size of its lagoon, and some features of life there are affected by its position and particular history. It is the most northerly island of the group and so furthest from the usual

track of hurricanes in the area and more subject to drought than its neighbours. In the past it was also the most isolated atoll, untouched by the land alienation or the squabbles between competing Missions, which at times disrupted affairs in the islands further to the south. The establishment of a small US Coast Guard LORAN station on the

Map of Atafu



village islet during the Second World War might have led to excitement and some disruption, but these outbreaks were not long lasting. In some ways, Atafu is also the most 'traditional' of the atolls. It has preserved a lot of its valuable *kānava* / cordia or sea trumpet hardwood trees (*Cordia subcordata*), and a lot of its *puka* (*Pisonia grandis* and *Hernandia nymphaeifolia*) forest for nesting seabirds, while its relatively small land and lagoon areas have undoubtedly led to the vigorous exploitation of the surrounding open seas.

Our translation has been guided by two main aims. The first has been to fulfil the Atafu elders' hopes that an English edition would make their work more accessible to younger generations whose knowledge of Tokelauan is slight or, in some cases, virtually non-existent. The second aim has been to make their detailed traditional knowledge relevant to a wider scientific and general readership.\*

Although not directly contradictory, these two aims have involved us in making a number of compromises in the presentation of the original text. That text was composed over a period of some thirty years by elders meeting together in their community hall. During this time, a few elders either died or returned to Tokelau, to be replaced in the group by others. They decided on the kinds of fishing to be included and discussed each kind. One of their number recorded the discussions and later passed the record on to a computer-literate person (generally a younger relative) to type up.

The text bears some of the marks of this process. As with meetings everywhere, the discussion was sometimes disjointed or repetitive, and even occasionally wandered right off topic. We have attempted to keep as much of the flavour of the original text as we could while at the same time sometimes altering the order of sentences and cutting other bits entirely to make tighter and more coherent statements.

\* The value of such traditional knowledge is now fairly well known, mainly through the work of R.E. Johannes (1981), particularly his 'Words of the Lagoon'.

A further difficulty has been the rendering of Tokelau names for fish, birds and plants. There are well over 150 such names scattered throughout the original text. In a few cases, such as 'octopus' or 'turtle', a translation was straightforward enough to deal with. But others such as *umu*, which according to some commentators 'has the common English name yellowhead triggerfish', present special difficulties. Both general readers and young Tokelauans in New Zealand would have no idea what a 'yellowhead triggerfish' might look like, nor would they be much enlightened by the scientific name of *Balistoides viridescens*, which it is sometimes (rightly or wrongly) graced with.

To cope with this, we have kept to the Tokelau names throughout the body of our text, but have compiled and added a new Glossary of fish names and the names of certain frequently mentioned trees, together with their common and scientific equivalents. However, readers should be aware that neither of us are ichthyologists and that in fact there have been no detailed taxonomic studies of the marine fauna of Tokelau waters. We have simply followed the common and scientific names given in the 'Tokelau Dictionary' (see p. 112 in this volume), which was compiled several years ago with some care using the colour illustrations in various popular and reasonably authoritative books on fishes of French Polynesia, Polynesia and the Great Barrier Reef.†

† Publisher's note: Identifying scientific and common name equivalents for Tokelauan terms for animals and plants is a challenging undertaking, rendered more complicated by revisions to scientific classification and nomenclature. Further to the work of the editors/translators, A. Meldau and D. Nakashima updated scientific and common names based on Internet-based resources: Fishbase ([www.fishbase.org](http://www.fishbase.org)), BirdLife International ([www.birdlife.org/datazone/home](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home)); Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants Edition 6 (<http://keys.trin.org.au/key-server/data/0e0f0504-0103-430d-8004-060d07080d04/media/html/acknow.htm>); as well as published works on Tokelau ethnecology by Ono and Addison (2009), on crab systematics by Yaldwyn and Wodzicki (1979) and on biodiversity in Samoa by Goldin (2002); in addition to the 'Tokelau Dictionary' (Simona 1986). Nevertheless, translations of Tokelau animal/plant names remain approximate in many instances, and require further ethnoscientific investigation in the field.

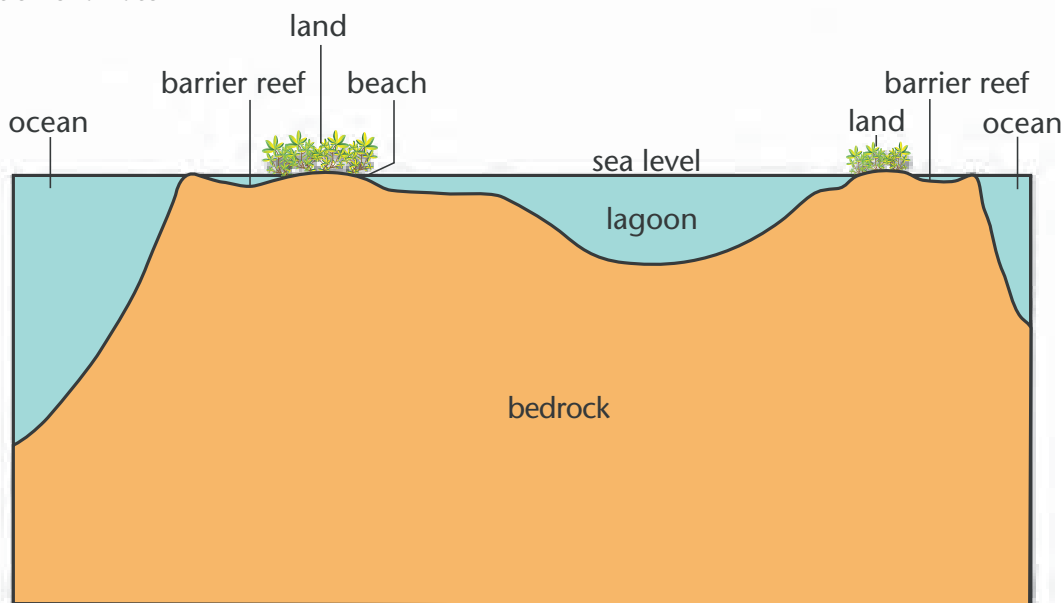
Readers may find it strange to have what we have translated as 'Dance Songs' accompanying each fishing method. In the Tokelau context the inclusion is not at all odd. The elders make reference to the songs in their Chapter 5 'Notes on Particular Customs and Items of Value', linking the practice to communal dance sessions during which two sides compete with one another. The dances are called *fātele* and are a kind of line dance (of uncertain origin) with gradually rising crescendos, usually chosen by the elders of a side and frequently led by them. Elderly men and women are the most expert performers, having a grace and restraint which younger people cannot match. There is clear historical evidence for the importance of singing in the records of the US Exploring Expedition dating from 1841, which found the people's propensity to burst into song most annoying. The Tokelauans of the time were of course not singing songs based on Biblical themes, and memory of whatever it was they were singing about was obliterated by the radical depopulation of the atolls in the 1860s and the subsequent missionization of the people. During the 1930s and 1940s, when many of the present-day elders were becoming active in village affairs, there were neither government schools nor broadcast radio available in the atolls. Biblical studies were

a prevalent intellectual discourse, providing a rich source of allusions which could be employed in the banter accompanying the dance sessions.<sup>‡</sup> However, some of the dance songs are of more recent origin, expressing a longing for friends and relatives who have emigrated to New Zealand.

Finally, a word on the pronunciation of Tokelau words for those who might be interested. The language is written with five vowels – **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**, which are pronounced as in NZ Maori and also in Italian. The vowels can be either 'long' or 'short', with long vowels distinguished by a macron above the letter. The difference between long and short vowels makes a difference to meaning. For instance *pala* means 'rot', 'decay' or 'soft mud', while *pāla* is the Tokelau name for wahoo, a fast and predatory ocean fish. The ten consonants are **f**, **g**, **k**, **l**, **m**, **n**, **p**, **h**, **t** and **v**. Three of the consonants represent sounds which are pronounced somewhat differently from English: **g** represents the **ng** sound of English, as in the words 'sing' and 'sang'; **f** is a labio-glottal fricative, which means that it has some of the qualities of both English **f** and **h**. The **h** quality is more noticeable before the vowels **a**, **o** and **u**.

<sup>‡</sup> References to Bible passages throughout this book are based on the King James version.

### Cross-section of an atoll



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# FOREWORD

## to the Tokelauan edition

This book is a collaborative effort of the 'Gathering of Elders' associated with Matauala Hall in Cannon's Creek, Porirua, New Zealand. Matauala is an Atafu enterprise operated by the Atafu Community Trust Inc., at 100–102 Bedford Street, Cannon's Creek, Porirua, New Zealand.

Some of these elders have worked on the book since its beginning and have continued right through to the end. Their names are as follows: Elia Tinielu, Amusia Patea, Erupi Gaulofa, Sila Taupe, Taula Atoni, Teliu Timoteo, Lua Kava Lepaio, Pio Kuresa, Teaku Petaia, Patuki Isaako, Tanielu Koro, Ioane Teao, Helemano Ioane, Lotomau Fao, Kalemelu Nouata, Lafoga Viliamu, Tenise I. Atoni, Koena Elia, Tito F. Kisona, Ioasa Iuni, Milo Vili, Talau Uluilelata, Toloa Lopa, Ielu Lopa, Iuliano Tinielu, Afa Setu Faavae, Iuta Elia Tinielu, Ualehi Patea, Pelo F. Iosia, Pale Nouata, Falani Tutu, Loimata Iupati and Iafeta Risati.

The elders also had advice from Tony Hooper, an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Auckland.

Other elders who worked on the book have either passed away or returned to Tokelau. They worked on the book at the beginning and it is appropriate to record their names here: Tulano Reuelu, Pou Viliamu, Taulaga Matetu, Pepine Nouata, Petaia Eli, Amosa Isaako, Temo Lopa, Sosene Galo, Metu Iupati, Ioane Toma, Logo Baker, Sami Elekana, Sero Pereira, Tepine Ariu, Teusu Natano, Vaina Nikitemo, Setu Faavae, Timo Reupena, Ioelu Ariu, Isaia Atoni and Fereti Lopa. Alas for all these energetic and able fellows who are no longer with us.



# INTRODUCTION

## to the Tokelauan edition

**W**ith humility we offer our respects to the four atolls of Tokelau – Olohega, Fakaofu, Nukunonu and Atafu; to the chiefs, the village councils and the servants of the Lord; to the master fishermen of all the atolls, and to all Tokelauans wherever they may be in the world. This work has been written to record the way that Tokelau fishing is done and to pass this on to future generations as part of their heritage.

Before we began our work, we advised the elders of the other Tokelau communities in Wellington of our intentions, in the hope that all the elders in Wellington might collaborate. Although this invitation was not taken up, the elders of the other communities gave the undertaking their blessings and this has been a great source of encouragement to us in our work.

These days, the younger people of Tokelau tend to be more interested in new equipment and technologies, and traditional methods which used to provide the livelihood of Tokelau are in danger of being forgotten. Nevertheless, these same younger people, many of them born in New Zealand, often ask their grandparents about the old ways. What sort of gear was used? What did people know about fish behaviours and habits? What is the meaning of phrases like ‘sacred fish’ and ‘deadly fishing’? What taboos used to be observed in the old days? And is it really true that a *pāla* / wahoo can be caught not with a hook but a noose?

This book is a response to all such questions. It describes the various techniques and gear, the seasons according to the Tokelau lunar calendar and the well-known stars, the taboos and customary practices and precautions

to be taken both at sea and on land. We have also attempted, as best we have been able, to place all these explanations in the context of the community’s traditional beliefs and expectations.

The book has been written for all future Tokelauan generations. May it also serve as a memorial to the efforts of all those elders, both living and dead, who have contributed to the book’s compilation. We give thanks to the Lord for his spiritual encouragement in bringing it all to fruition.

We have also taken the opportunity to include verses from a range of *fātele* ‘traditional dances’ and a few *mako* (usually sung and danced by elders). Only some of these dance songs relate to fishing, but we have included others, both old and new, simply to place them on record. Many of the older ones are still in use.

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### Elders of the Matauala Community

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**Front row:** Amusia Patea, Elia Tinielu, Sila Taupe, Taula Atoni, Lua Kava Lepaio

**Back row:** Malo Koena Elia, Erupi Gualofa, Patuki Isaako, Pio Kuresa, Teliu Timoteo, Lotomau Fao

---

**Elders not present here:** Loimata Iupati, Kalamelu Nouata, Teaku Petaia, Iuta Elia Tinielu, Afa Setu Faavae, Sakalia Tavita, Tausaga Apineru, Samuelu Sakalia



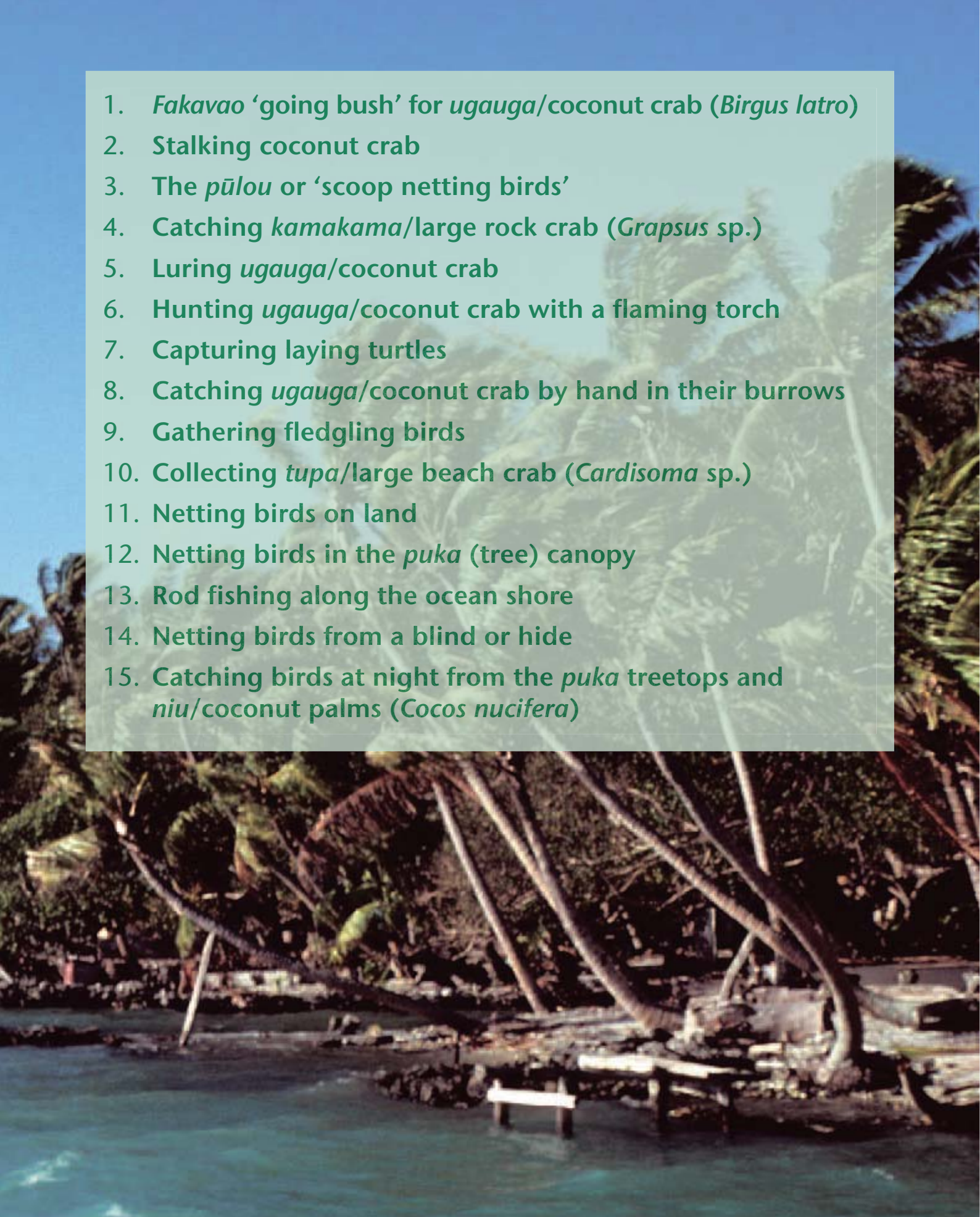
# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Food from the land, the ocean shores and the tree canopy**





1. *Fakavao* 'going bush' for *ugauga*/coconut crab (*Birgus latro*)
2. Stalking coconut crab
3. The *pūlou* or 'scoop netting birds'
4. Catching *kamakama*/large rock crab (*Grapsus* sp.)
5. Luring *ugauga*/coconut crab
6. Hunting *ugauga*/coconut crab with a flaming torch
7. Capturing laying turtles
8. Catching *ugauga*/coconut crab by hand in their burrows
9. Gathering fledgling birds
10. Collecting *tupa*/large beach crab (*Cardisoma* sp.)
11. Netting birds on land
12. Netting birds in the *puka* (tree) canopy
13. Rod fishing along the ocean shore
14. Netting birds from a blind or hide
15. Catching birds at night from the *puka* treetops and *niu*/coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*)





Attaching an outrigger to a canoe



Judith Huntsman

Canoe under construction



Judith Huntsman

Making a *tuluma*



Judith Huntsman

Carving a traditional wooden *palu* hook



Judith Huntsman

Family group returning with produce from across the lagoon



Judith Huntsman

## 1. Fakavao ‘going bush’ for ugauga/coconut crab (*Birgus latro*)

This involves simply walking into the bush and using your skills to locate food by the signs that you see. These may be things like little holes made by the coconut crab claws on coconut fronds or scratches on the trunks of *niu* / coconut palms. These are what tell you that there are coconut crabs up there. So you simply climb up the trunk and pull off the dead fronds, grabbing the crabs that are hiding there as you do so, then killing them and throwing them down on the ground.

Coconut crabs that live on the ground are called ‘burrowing coconut crabs’. They live in holes they have burrowed into the ground, a process which creates piles of sand known as *tānumaga*. The actual entrances to their burrows are covered with sand and only an experienced eye can detect them. When you seek to capture a burrowing coconut crab, look first for signs of the entrance to its burrow, which may be just a fresh disturbance on the surface of the sandy soil. Remember that the stronger front leg (not a pincer), that the crab uses when digging, is on its left side. To get an idea of just where the burrow winds underground, poke around the mound with a sharp stick made of *gagie* / *pemphis* (*Pemphis acidula*) in the same direction as the moon. For instance, if you are hunting for coconut crabs on the third day after the new moon, begin poking around the western side of a pile of freshly excavated sand and then gradually work around to the other side in a counter-clockwise movement. When the *huki* ‘stick’ you use to poke the sand with strikes empty space, dig down there, put your hand in and pull out the crab. You can also find coconut crabs in burrows under piles of small stones or decaying coconut husks.

*Matikega* is a term used to mean a ‘swarm’ or a large number of coconut crabs in the same place. This phenomenon can also be seen with other crabs such as *tupa* / large beach crab and *paikea* /

land crab (*Cardisoma* sp.). The first and second nights of the new moon and just after the full moon are the times of spring tides, and these are the times that the coconut crabs come out of their burrows. Also be aware that coconut crabs shed their shells from time to time, and are helpless in their burrows until a new shell grows. If you find such a helpless crab just wrap it up in a *laumea* leaf and put it in your basket.

Dance song:

*Lower into the pit, Jacob’s beloved  
He is a dreamer, He is Joseph.<sup>1</sup>*

## 2. Stalking coconut crab

It is easier to follow this account if you know the meaning of the special terms used to describe the techniques. Each technique has special words associated with it, for example:

<i>fātaga</i>	The name for the holes under tree stumps where coconut crabs live.
<i>ika fātaga</i>	A very large coconut crab, or simply one caught in its own <i>fātaga</i> .
<i>lala</i>	An undersized coconut crab, the sort that you simply release to allow it to grow further.
<i>katiga</i>	The term for the husk torn from a coconut shell by a coconut crab.
<i>vaetā</i>	The longest limb of the crab, the one that strikes against your hand as you put your hand into a tree hole above its dorsum to grab it. These limbs are not the <i>vaefua</i> ‘pinchers’.
<i>ota</i>	Grated coconut meat burned to chum coconut crabs out of their hiding places.
<i>kahalo</i>	A serrated tool for grating coconut meat.

<sup>1</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 37: 19–20 (references to Bible passages are based on the King James version).



To stalk coconut crabs, take with you a couple of stones, an empty sack and a torch. Stalking is best done on dark nights, especially in the rain, when the coconut crabs come out of their holes to search for their food. Experienced hunters know the places where plenty of coconut crabs and burrows can be found, since they know the kind of trees, such as *niu* / coconut palms, *kānava* / cordias or sea trumpets, *puka* and others, where the crabs live. Walk along quietly and stealthily and when you hear a coconut crab making a slight tapping noise, tap your two stones together. Don't rush this part. Just keep to the frequency of the coconut crab sounds and when you feel you are close to the crab, turn on your torch and grab it. Sometimes you may find that you are actually standing on a crab, while at other times all you will hear is a slight rustling noise. However, when you turn on your torch, there it is. Just calmly grab it.

Dance song:

*Ātafu, beloved, my heart  
You grew out of the coral of the ocean  
Your sandy bays, your bays of white pebbles  
Bays of Āhaga and Matalia.*

### 3. The *pūlou* or 'scoop netting birds'

The term *pūlou* (which has the literal meanings of 'hat', 'to turn over' or 'to cover') is the name for a kind of scoop net hunting used to catch birds at night. Hunters scoop the net over the birds in a sweeping movement.

While all scoop nets fall under the word *heu* (to catch by a scooping movement of the hands), each kind of scoop net has its own name and special use. For instance, the scoop net for catching *hahave*/flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.) is called *heu hahave*, while *heu manu* is the name for the net used for catching birds (*manu*). The descriptive term indicates the use. The *pūlou* scoop net is similar in shape to a conventional

*heu manu* used for catching birds on special places called *tia* on the beach, treetops and on the open sea. The *pūlou* scoop net has the same mesh sizes, but is much smaller in frame size than the conventional *heu manu*. When you finish weaving your net you have to mount it on a *gagie* / pemphis frame to maintain its scoop-like shape.

Although all *heu manu* look the same there are three main differences. The *pūlou* scoop net is smaller, about half the size of the *heu manu* scoop net. It is also deeper in the middle and has a much shorter handle, about 1 metre to 1.5 metres in length.

*Pūlou* scoop-netting is done from trees at night, either in complete darkness or in the half light. The bird mostly caught in the *pūlou* scoop net is the *gogo* / brown or common noddy (*Anous stolidus*). The net enables you to capture those birds that are beyond your reach. (Those that you can reach can just be grabbed with the hands.) When climbing for birds, tie a piece of cord to the handle and hang the net from the hand that is uppermost when you climb. Then when you reach the top of the *niu* / coconut palm, swipe the net along a coconut frond from the butt to the end of the frond, then shift to another frond and swipe from the end back to its butt. Ah! This used to be a favourite pastime of the elders and the method does net a good number of birds – more so if you combine *pūlou* scoop netting with *pokipoki* bird catching. But remember to hold on firmly with your hands to the tree!

Dance song:

*Sail, sail along with your beauty  
But take a glance behind you  
To your memory  
Standing here with me.*

**Ugauga/coconut crab**

Island Conservation



coconuts. The more bait you lay, the more crabs you will get. The bait can be prepared in one of two ways. The first is to barbecue the gratings by dropping a hot stone into them, and then spreading them in the bush you intend to visit. The second way is to squeeze the oil out of the heated gratings, and then rub this over rocks and tree trunks close to the crabs' burrows.

Before you lay the bait, however, be sure that you have already prepared torches made of dried coconut frond to illuminate the scene. If you

#### 4. Catching *kamakama*/large rock crab (*Grapsus* sp.)

This is carried out on coral outcrops along the ocean shore and is rarely done except for fun or to please somebody who particularly craves *kamakama*/large rock crab. Plait a coconut leaf basket, and take along a stick for support and to use in extracting the crabs hiding in crevices. This way of catching crabs is good for those who are agile and fast enough to catch crabs by hand. If you are fast, you will get plenty.

Dance song:

*This is Lot, he looked behind  
Your greed, Lot to Sodom takahi  
Takahi, takahi, takahi  
Hi! Hi! Hi!²*

#### 5. Luring *ugauga*/coconut crab

This is done by laying grated coconut as bait. The amount of bait is up to you, but use ten or more

<sup>2</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 19: 17–18.

delay by leaving to prepare these, you might return to find that the crabs have already eaten the bait and gone back to their burrows. This method of getting coconut crabs can be done by just one person, but it is better to have several helpers as once they smell the bait there are liable to be lots of monster crabs around. Coconut crabs taste best when they are cooked soon after being caught. If left too long they lose their flavour.

Dance song:

*Oh how good it is for brothers to meet  
It is like the dew that falls on Mount Hermon.<sup>3</sup>*

#### 6. Hunting *ugauga*/coconut crab with a flaming torch

This method doesn't call for a great deal of preparation. All that is needed is a basket and a torch of dry coconut fronds – unless of course you choose to lay bait as well (as in Section 5: Luring *ugauga*/coconut crab (*Birgus latro*)). It can be done on any night, but it is best done when it is very dark with no moonlight. You can't fail with this method. It is a quick way to

<sup>3</sup> Dance song based on Psalms 133: 2.

get coconut crab meat for an elderly person or a breastfeeding mother who craves it. Once you are ready to start, remember that coconut crabs come out of their holes to search for food just when the sun has set and it is beginning to get dark. This is the right time to catch them. Plait a coconut leaf basket and prepare a *kavei* with which to hang it over your shoulder. Then you will also need dry coconut fronds tied together to make a torch. Light the torch and walk through the undergrowth, catching and killing crabs and putting them in your basket as you go.

Dance song:

*Here below, here below in the ocean  
All the fishes, all the fishes of the sea  
Here above, here above in the sky  
Birds of the sky.*

**Turtle returning to the sea after having laid her eggs**



Pankaj Sekhsaria/Kalpraviksh

## 7. Capturing laying turtles

In Tokelau classification, turtles are *ika* 'fish' because they spend the greater of their lives at sea. They are grouped together with land creatures here because they have to come on to dry land to lay their eggs in sandy patches on the ocean shores. When a turtle comes ashore, it digs a hole in the sand, lays eggs in it and then covers the hole over with sand. The hole is called a *pū tuluma* 'storage pit' and the disturbed dug-over sand is called the *apiga*.

Once it has laid its eggs the turtle goes back to the sea, returning to lay more eggs only after the tenth successive night. Once a nest is located, an egg is examined to determine how long ago it has been laid. The count begins from the first night onwards. When there is lot of sand sticking to the egg you know that it has been laid only one or two days previously. On the third and fourth days, there is less sand on the eggs and you can determine just when the eggs were first laid. On the tenth night you should keep a vigil for the turtle's return to lay more eggs. You should first look for the path made by the turtle when it first came ashore, and notice which direction it took when it went to lay eggs. If it turned windward (to the southern end of the beach) you should concentrate your vigil in that direction; if it turned leeward (to the northern end), you must look for it in that direction. If the turtle doesn't return on the tenth night, keep up the vigil until the fourteenth night. If it doesn't return then, you will know that it is not going to lay any more eggs. A turtle usually lays eggs four times in a season, and no more.

There are certain specific rules to observe when keeping a vigil for turtles: no noise and no smoking. There are also a number of special terms, such as *kauala* for a turtle's track in the sand; *kapa* 'a path that turns to one side'; *akeholo*, said of a turtle that has changed its nesting site; *ika akeholo* 'a turtle that appears unexpectedly'; *fufuli* 'immobilizing a turtle by turning it over onto its back' and *huki* 'tracing a nest by prodding round in the sand with a stick'.



Dance song:

*The tax collector looks up to heaven  
The tax collector looks up to heaven  
Submissive! Submissive!  
Have mercy on me, a sinful man.*<sup>4</sup>

## 8. Catching *ugauga*/ coconut crab by hand in their burrows

Coconut crabs live in all sorts of different hideouts, but you don't need to worry about that because at night they come crawling out. To catch a coconut crab in its *fātaga* 'burrows', you have to move quickly to grab it before it raises its defense. When it is in its burrow, put your hand in along the ceiling of the burrow with the palm side downward and with the back of your hand hugging the upper surface of the burrow as you slide your hand in. When you feel the crab, drop your hand down over it and grab it tightly, then pull it out. If you can't find a crab inside the burrow, it is likely that it is somewhere close by, so look around its surroundings and you will find it. There are also times when you can find two or more crabs in one burrow.

Dance song:

*Farewell O David  
The arrows are beyond where you are  
Good-bye my good friend  
O the wrath of Saul.*<sup>5</sup>

## 9. Gathering fledgling birds

This can be done at any time during the day – morning, noon or afternoon. But don't spend too much time at it in the afternoon, because you have to pluck your birds before nightfall,

otherwise your evening meal will be late. The gathering generates a lot of fun and laughter. It is done at the tops of trees such as *puka*, *tauhunu* / tree heliotrope (*Tournefortia argentea*), *puapua* / sea randa or zebra wood and *kānava* / cordia or sea trumpet with perhaps two people climbing, each with a pole to knock the birds down, and two others below collecting the fallen birds in baskets. The birds are killed by biting their necks. When you hear a cracking sound you know the bird is dead. Instead of using baskets, the birds can be yoked together with a coconut frond bark stripped into four strands to pass through the birds' nostrils.

The poles for catching fledgling birds are best made from *kānava* saplings as these are straight without side branches, and easier to carry on top of the canopy. Their length should be between 2 and 2.5 metres. Between the top of the pole and 1.5 metres down, securely tie a piece of *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable strip from a coconut frond' with a small loop. You put the little finger of your right hand in that loop to help you carry the pole up to the tree top. Don't do things hastily but be patient and stay calm. First of all, look for a safe position on a bough on which to mount yourself. Be careful of your perch as some boughs are slippery and dangerous. Do not attempt this method of hunting on rainy days.

To prepare the bird for cooking, pluck the feathers, then gut the body, removing and discarding the offal. The cooking method is really up to you. You can choose boiling, but the best way is to barbecue them on hot stones, as the result is more aromatic. Alternatively, you can make a fire from *gagie* / pempphis, mount your bird on a branch of *puapua*, and hold it over the burning *gagie* charcoal until it is cooked to your satisfaction.

Dance song:

*I stand on the white sandy beach  
I look out to sea with tears  
Only the top of the sail I see  
I yearn for my loved one  
My sweet I love you.*

<sup>4</sup> Dance song based on Luke 18: 13.

<sup>5</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 20: 7.

## 10. Collecting *tupa*/large beach crab (*Cardisoma* sp.)

Collecting *tupa*/large beach crabs is done on the ocean sides of the land, rather than the lagoon, mainly by women. But anyone can join in the special trips that are made from the village to hunt around, and men often go along to accompany their women and families. Collecting is best done on rainy days, especially during the warm hurricane season when the wind turns toward the west. This is the time when access to the ocean through the usual reef passes is difficult because of strong winds. When a gathering is planned, the village mayor makes an announcement around the village. When such a call comes, get yourself a plaited basket, which has its mouth nearly closed with a *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable strip torn from the upper side of a coconut frond'. Leave an opening large enough to allow you to put a *tupa* or perhaps a coconut crab inside the basket.

The crabs can be found among *gagie*/pemphis or *kānava*/cordia or sea trumpet tree undergrowths, but the best places to look for them are in the swamps, where they dig their holes near the edge of the water in the pits where *pulaka*/elephant ear or giant swamp taro (*Cyrtosperma chammisonis* or *Alocasia macrorrhizos*) are cultivated. They are not difficult to find because they will be sitting on top of their burrows and will crawl back in when approached. You have to dig and slide your hand into the hole, palm side down, until you can grab the crab's back together with its legs, and squeeze it into your basket.

You can also catch *paikea*/land crabs at night by using a torch. In the old days, torches were made of dry coconut fronds and were used at sea and on the reef as well as in the bush on land. A skilled *tautai* 'deep-sea fisherman' shouldn't look down on this sort of crab gathering. You may catch fish, but then sometimes you can't because of bad weather or some other reason; but you can always get enough land crabs.

Dance song:

*He came in the dead of night  
He came, the Roman soldier  
To arrest the Lord  
To arrest the Lord  
In the Garden of Gethsemane.*<sup>6</sup>

## 11. Netting birds on land

The word *heutaka* is the name for a bird-hunting technique where you walk along a clearing in the bush and catch birds that fly directly towards you with a scoop net. This used to be commonly done by elderly men, using a scoop net about a metre in width, fixed to a pole made of *puka*, the tree from which canoe outriggers are made. The length of the pole should be about 6.5 metres with a diameter of 5 cm at the butt. The net frame is made of *gagie*/pemphis wood, about a metre in length and about 2 cm thick.

If you should decide to do this kind of hunting, always wear a *litua* 'sash' wound around your middle to support your back. A bird might appear suddenly in your sight so you would have to take quick action, twisting and turning to catch it with the net. A *litua* 'sash' tied snugly will help prevent back strain.

So when catching birds using this method you simply walk around the ocean shores and the edges of the land between islets, looking for birds perched up in trees. Your presence will disturb them and they will take off. When they do, they will choose a clear path into the open air. You must position yourself against the path, take careful aim and make a swipe with the net to capture a bird without disturbing the rest of them at the same time. You have to kill the birds when you catch them.

<sup>6</sup> Dance song based on Matthew 26: 36–46.



Dance song:

*The golden ring, place it on your heart  
The wedding ring that bound our love  
Keeping faithful before God  
My love for you, my gazelle.  
I weep for my love, my love  
My great love for you, my gazelle.<sup>7</sup>*

## 12. Netting birds in the *puka* (tree) canopy

There are certain *puka* trees which are well-known to be especially suitable for netting birds in. Again, don't forget to wear a waistband to support your back because the netting involves a lot of turning, bending and weaving around within a confined space. Once up in the tree it is easy to spot the well-used places where hunters can safely position themselves.

In some such places you have to sit on a bough, while in others you must stand. The positions have all been previously prepared for the safety of later climbers. It is possible to catch many kinds of birds this way – *talagogo*/sooty terns (*Sterna fuscata*), *gogo*/brown or common noddies, *lakia*/white-capped noddies (*Anous minutus*) as well as other birds.

Dance song:

*My heart is with you  
My heart is with you  
The lady of the Exile  
My heart is with you.<sup>8</sup>*

## 13. Rod fishing along the ocean shore

This calls for a rod made of a *puapua* sapling, a line with a breaking strain of 4 to 5 kilos, and a hook between sizes 12 and 14. Make a lure with a piece of white cloth or a bud from the end of a *tauahunu*/tree heliotrope branch. As the tide rises, walk along the ocean shore, trolling the lure as you go. When you catch a *malau*/squirrel- or soldierfish (Holocentridae), kill it and tear off the white skin underneath its lower jaw and use that for your lure so you can really get going. You may catch all kinds of snapper and other shore fish that feed along the shoreline.

An archaic dance song, sometimes performed by elders:

*Tipa tipa mai manini, kai lau ufi kai lau talo  
Na le umu ka huke, tipatipa mai manini.*

Dance song (this song refers to many Atafu place names and localities):

*The beautiful fringes of my land  
That sleep in my heart  
You are a pearl of the ocean  
You will not be forgotten  
The Ālofi and Fenualoa  
The long stretch of Tuahakea  
The wind of the Utua Lahi  
Fatufatuga and the Āhagaloa  
The Utua of Fale, I long for you  
You will not be forgotten.*

Gogo/brown or common noddy



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<sup>7</sup> Dance song based on Solomon 2: 17.

<sup>8</sup> Dance song based on Esther 2: 17.

## 14. Netting birds from a blind or hide

There is a special place called a *tia* at a cove on the lagoon side of Fenualoa, and another on the lagoon side of Fogālaki-i-lalo. These are where this type of bird catching is done. People go there in the season when *lakia* / white-capped noddies are building their nests and laying eggs. The equipment used is a bird net mounted on a pole and a plaited coconut leaf basket closed in the same way as the baskets used for *paikea* / land crabs. This is for keeping the live birds that are going to be used as decoys.

You must also have a *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable strip torn from a coconut frond'. This is then split into 80 to 100 thin strands. In addition, prepare some sticks about 6 to 8 cm long.

Tie a sash around your waist to support your back and go out with your net to catch some of the birds preoccupied with nest-building. Six to eight such birds should be enough to use as decoys to attract other birds within range of your net. Once at the *tia*, you drive three or four posts into the ground and cover them with coconut fronds. Then you can sit on a bucket or other object inside this blind. Attach strings of *kalava* to the tail feathers of the decoy birds, and then secure the other ends of the strings to little sticks set in the ground outside the blind. Cover the ground around the decoy birds with dead leaves, and then crawl into your blind with your net. From there you can net any birds that are attracted to the decoys. When you have caught one, turn the scoop net upside down to entangle the bird in the mesh.

Dance song:

*I hear the voice  
The voice of my beloved  
Now I hear the voice  
The voice of my beloved.*

## 15. Catching birds at night from the *puka* treetops and *niu*/coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*)

This way of hunting birds is well known for its danger, particularly that of an accidental fall from the canopy. Such fatalities have happened in our community in the past. According to our forebears, this method is reserved for a kinsman known as a *mate*, a sister's son who is in tradition loyal to you, while you are responsible for his wellbeing, his training and his safety. The literal meaning of *mate* is 'death', and the meaning of the kin term is said to connote a person who will support you to the death. The actual climbing is done by the skilled person, while the assistant collects the birds in the dark as they fall from the tree tops. *Puka* are both very tall and difficult to climb; the wood is brittle and corky, and slippery when wet.

Do not be too eager to catch all the birds you see when climbing up the tree. You must have good judgment and take only the birds you can safely reach and do not bother with those you cannot reach with safety.

The term *kaimanu* refers to a group of men from the village under instruction from the village leadership to gather birds in this way. It is a collective village activity but only skilled climbers will do the climbing, while the catch is equally shared among everyone in the community.

In some seasons, flocks of seabirds not normally living in the atolls are attracted to the waters nearby by schools of baitfish. These flocks of seabirds will congregate at nightfall on one islet canopy where there are lots of *puka* trees and perch for the night. When this happens the elders and men of the village will all go to the islet to catch some of the seabirds. This party is called a *kaimanu*. There would be one elder in charge of the group, and he would choose

Akiaki/white tern (*Gygis alba*)

AK Kepler

the most experienced and skilled men to do the climbing. These climbers know how to climb and catch birds in silence, how to choose the birds to catch, and how to use the *kaukini* 'baton' to kill with a single stroke without disturbing the rest of the birds. Such people are known as *manumanu o te ulupuka* 'fearless experts of the *puka* forest'. They are skilled and agile climbers who know their paths up each individual *puka* tree, and are much respected for this knowledge.

Each *puka* tree has its own special 'path' by which it is climbed. You must remember this path because you have to come down the tree by the same way. The climbers are sure-footed and safety-conscious men. Whenever the night is rainy and the trees are wet, climbers have to be especially careful.

Dance song:

*You wait for me, the birds are perching  
 Wait for me. Night comes and  
 the birds are coming in  
 Hardly a sound, wind begins to gently blow.  
 Are we following the ways of the white man?*<sup>9</sup>

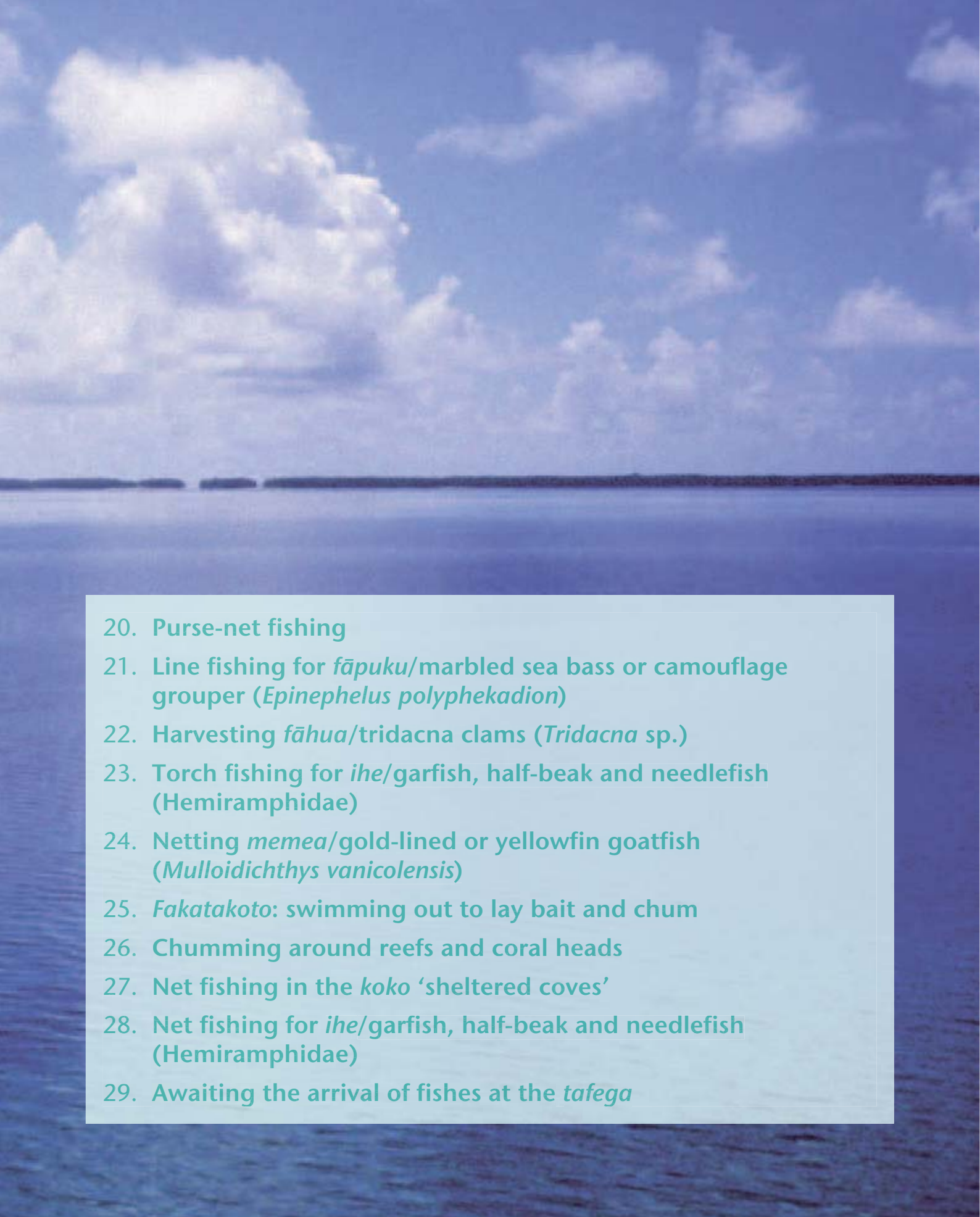
<sup>9</sup> The translators do not fully understand the meaning of this dance song, which appears to originate from Tuvalu. The last line seems unconnected to the theme set by the first three lines. The song is written in the Tuvalu language.

# CHAPTER 2

## The lagoon

1. Line fishing for *kiokio*/bonefish (*Albula vulpes*)
2. Line fishing for *mū*/tropical porgy or bigeye emperor (*Monotaxis grandoculis*)
3. Line fishing for *kulapo*/young yellow or candelamoa parrotfish (*Hipposcarus harid*)
4. Line fishing for *matu*/perhaps silver sand-eater (*Gerres* sp.)
5. Line fishing for *taotao*/cornetfish (*Fistularia* sp.)
6. Line fishing for *umu*/yellowhead triggerfish (*Balistoides viridescens*)
7. Line fishing for *talatala*/violet soldierfish (*Myripristus violacea*)
8. Line fishing for *papo*/scarlet-breasted Maori wrasse (*Cheilinus fasciatus*)
9. Line fishing for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper (*Epinephelus merra*)
10. Line fishing for *kanae*/mullet (perhaps *Valamugil* sp. or *Mugil* sp.)
11. Line fishing for *kafa*/diamond-scaled mullet (*Liza vaigiesis*)
12. Line fishing for *kalo*/bait goatfish (perhaps *Mulloidichthys* sp.)
13. Line fishing for *havane*/blue-lined sea perch (*Lutjanus kasmira*)
14. Line fishing for *ava*/milkfish (*Chanos chanos*)
15. Trolling for *alaala*/striped jack or barred trevally (*Carangoides ferdau*)
16. Setting up a fish trap
17. Aggregations of *laulaufau*/moorish idol (*Zanclus cornutus*)
18. 'Pounding' coral heads
19. Net fishing in lagoon shallows



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20. Purse-net fishing
  21. Line fishing for *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphekadion*)
  22. Harvesting *fāhua*/tridacna clams (*Tridacna* sp.)
  23. Torch fishing for *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae)
  24. Netting *memea*/gold-lined or yellowfin goatfish (*Mulloidichthys vanicolensis*)
  25. *Fakatakoto*: swimming out to lay bait and chum
  26. Chumming around reefs and coral heads
  27. Net fishing in the *koko* 'sheltered coves'
  28. Net fishing for *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae)
  29. Awaiting the arrival of fishes at the *tafega*



## 1. Line fishing for *kiokio*/ bonefish (*Albula vulpes*)

This method of fishing is done in the coves running from the lagoon side of an islet, or in reef pools. It is done during the day, either from a canoe or by standing on the shore and casting. The best days are the sixth and seventh days of the new moon and *Fakatutupu* and *Magafulu*, which correspond to the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth days after the new moon. On these four days the high and low tides occur at about the same times.

Use a line with a breaking strain of about 12 kilos attached to a casting rod, and number 12 or 13 hooks. The bait is *uga*/land hermit crab (*Coenobita* sp.) and you may use crushed hermit crab as chum to attract the fish. Most people have their specially favoured locations for this kind of fishing.

Dance song:

*Sailing away, impossible to forget you  
Ātafu, beloved in my heart  
A quiet peaceful land  
That allows the spirit to enter heaven.*

*My little birds about to fade from sight  
You are going, and I stay in Ātafu  
Not to be forgotten in the heart  
The happy life we lived in our land.*

## 2. Line fishing for *mū*/tropical porgy or bigeye emperor (*Monotaxis grandoculis*)

There are many spots in the lagoon where these fish congregate. The best bait is *fahua*/tridacna clams (*Tridacna* sp.) and crushed *uga*/land hermit crabs can also be used for chum. The equipment needed is goggles and a flat piece of metal about 2.5 cm wide and 12 cm long for opening the clams. Anchor your canoe and get into the water with your goggles. Spread the chum into the water.

Then, when the *mū*/tropical porgy or bigeye emperor have begun to gather, lower your line and watch carefully. If the fish are shy and slow in approaching the hook, lower it down to the sandy bottom. *Mū* will then take the bait and can be pulled up.

Dance song:

*Ātafu the island set on the currents  
I long for you  
How I wish I could be there  
Her canoe passage sheltered from  
the waves, so welcoming  
You can enjoy when you get there.*

## 3. Line fishing for *kulapo*/ young yellow or candelamoa parrotfish (*Hipposcarus harid*)

This type of fishing is done during the day, using a canoe in the lagoon deeps. Take a thin line of about 4 kilos breaking strain, size 16 hooks, goggles, anchor, and two small rocks to crush the *uga*/land hermit crabs to be used as chum.

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Parrotfish



Adam St. Gélais/Marine Photo Bank

Start off just before dawn so that it is still dark when you get to the fishing spot. Crush the hermit crabs, lay out the chum and lower your hook, baited with hermit crab. The best days are those when the tide begins to rise in the early morning, on the eighth and ninth days after the new moon and again on *Magafulu*, *Poiva* and *Povalu*, the twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second days after the new moon. Use your goggles and swim around. You will catch many varieties of fish.

Dance song:

*O Elisha your curse is bitter  
Alas, the poor children torn by bears  
Alas, how sad; Alas, come back.*<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Line fishing for *matu*/ perhaps silver sand-eater (*Gerres* sp.)

Again, this fishing method is done during the day, using a locally-made rod, goggles and *uga*/land hermit crabs, for use as both bait and chum. The most suitable tide is one that rises at mid-morning, or the receding tide in the afternoon. Walk along the lagoon shelf and when you come to a suitable place, jump in the water with your goggles on. When a group of *matu* come around, lay out the chum together with your baited hook. As soon as a fish takes the bait, pull it in. Remember that this type of fish doesn't take the bait and then run. It remains still, so you have to pull the line yourself.

Dance song:

*I am so happy to hear the beloved names  
The Fāmuli [remainders]  
We are separated because of  
the fighting in the war  
Farewell, farewell, farewell.*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Dance song based on 2 Kings 2: 24.

<sup>11</sup> When a unit of the US Coast Guard was stationed at Atafu during the Second World War, the village population would sometimes be divided into three groups, with one group (called famuli) remaining in the village, another (called tuafenua)

#### 5. Line fishing for *taotao*/ cornetfish (*Fistularia* sp.)

First, you need to catch some little baitfish – usually *tālau*/blenny or mudskipper (*Ecsenius* sp.) or *kalo*/bait goatfish. Prepare a torch made of two dry coconut fronds lashed together and go out at night to look for them. Take with you a spent *kaulōlō*, which is the tough stalk which once supported flowers and the subsequent bunch of coconuts. This can be used to beat the *kalo* on the rocks. You can also simply catch them with your hands.

Cornetfish are 60–100 cm long and only about 2.5 cm in diameter, so you use a line with a breaking strain of between 3 and 4 kilos and either a very small hook or one that you have fashioned yourself from thin wire in the same shape as that used to catch *humu*/triggerfish (Balistidae).

Walk in the lagoon along the edge of the deep water, and you will soon catch all that you need. *Taotao*/cornetfish are one of the groups of fishes known as *taupa*, which means that they are attracted to moving lures. Other fishes of this group are the various jacks, as well as *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or groupers (*Epinephelus merra*) and *tā*/armoured soldierfish (*Sargocentron spiniferum*).

Dance song:

*My island and my congregation  
Bind together with one heart  
The birthday of the King  
Speeches in the church  
Dances in the village hall.*

going to the windward land across the lagoon, and the third (called tua hakea) going to the islets to the southeast. This was a way of dispersing the people when an enemy ship or plane was near the atoll. When they met up again, they were formed into dancing groups under these names.

## 6. Line fishing for *umu*/ yellowhead triggerfish (*Balistoides viridescens*)

Use a line with a breaking strain of about 40 kilos and number 8 or 9 hooks. The bait used is *feke* / octopus (Octopoda), which is not only attractive to fish but also will not be destroyed by little fishes nibbling it off the hook. The best days are *Fano uluata* and *Fano lotoata*, the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth days after the new moon.

Use a canoe and take two anchors because the fishing may be done in the channel between two islets where the tide flows in and out. The anchors are used to steady the canoe so that it continues to face in the direction you want it to. That direction is the starboard side of the canoe, opposite to the outrigger. Once the canoe is anchored, chew up some octopus thoroughly and spit it out into the water to serve as chum. You can use two lines, one tied to the outrigger beam and the other held in your hand. Many types of fish besides *umu* / yellowhead triggerfish may be caught in this way – *āheu* / trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), *gutula* / emperorfish (*Lethrinus* sp.), *hāputu* / 'reddish pink' or blubberlip snapper (*Lutjanus rivulatus*), *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper, wrasses (Labridae) and other fish.

Dance song:

*Who planted the vine?  
The vine, the vine  
The vine of the Sorek valley.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Dance song based on Judges 16: 4.

### *Talatala*/violet soldierfish



Mr eNil

## 7. Line fishing for *talatala*/violet soldierfish (*Myripristus violacea*)

This method is done from a canoe in the lagoon on moonlit nights. There are coral heads in the lagoon near well-known gathering places for *talatala* / violet soldierfish, so go to one of these places. Fish is used as bait and also as chum. Chew up some fish and then spit the fragments into the water as chum, but don't include the bones because these will just sink to the bottom and distract the fishes away from your line.

Any moonlit nights are good but the best are *Fakatahi-o-namo* (the thirteenth day since new moon), full moon (the fourteenth day after the new moon) and *Fakatolu-mai-namo* (the day after full moon). Fish will be both plentiful and succulent on these days. When you reach your chosen spot, make no noise by banging the canoe sides but simply blow out the chewed-up chum from your mouth and start pulling up the *talatala* / violet soldierfish. As you catch them, bite each one behind the head and suck in the juice that comes out, then blow that juice into the water to add to the chum. *Talatala* are ferocious feeders and if you are quick in pulling them in, you will get lots.

This fishing method can also be done from coral heads near the edge of the lagoon during evenings when the tide is rising with the new moon, or on the sixth or seventh evening after the new moon. These are the times when *talatala* are gathering to cross the reef to the open sea.

Dance song:

*I lie down but I do not sleep  
I cannot forget in my heart  
The Ahaga-o-Matalele  
Where the bonito canoes come wading in  
To the Fishermen's Rock  
How wonderful are the expert skills of the tautai.*

## 8. Line fishing for *papo*/ scarlet-breasted Maori wrasse (*Cheilinus fasciatus*)

The bait used for this method is either hermit crab or, better still, small tridachna clams. The fishing is done in much the same way as other kinds of fishing in the lagoon, with line and hooks. If it is difficult to catch the fish from a canoe, get in the water with your goggles on and fish while floating on the surface.

Dance song:

*Jacob, what have you done with the shirt?  
The shirt of Esau  
Your plan to deceive Isaac  
Isaac, poor Esau hunting in the forest.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 29: 19.

### *Hi papo*



Samuel Sakaria from 'Hikuleo i te Papa o Tautai'



## 9. Line fishing for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper (*Epinephelus merra*)

This is one way of fishing for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper. You can do it either on the edge of the shelf bordering the deep lagoon or on shallow parts of the reef. It's up to you.

Use a fishing rod a bit over 2 metres in length, a line with a breaking strain of about 4 kilos, and number 14 hooks. Also take along a basket for your fish and to keep your goggles in. For bait, use a *tālau*/mudskipper or a small fillet of fish. Lots of different fish can be caught in this way.

Dance song:

*He takes hold of the sword  
He has pulled out the sword, the sword  
Goliath's sword, he died, he died, he died  
He died by his own sword in the valley of Elah.<sup>14</sup>*



Samuel Sakaaria from 'Hikuleo i Te Papa o Tautai'

## 10. Line fishing for *kanae*/mullet (perhaps *Valamugil* sp. or *Mugil* sp.)

This type of fishing is usually done during the day, but may also be done at night. Use a rod of *puapua* wood (*Guettarda* sp.) like the one used for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper, with a 4 kilo line and a number 16 hook. The line should be only 1 metre long and for bait use a piece of *hahave*/flying fish or *kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*).

<sup>14</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 17: 51.

The best days are those when it is spring tide in the early morning. Sit by the edge of the water and make up some chum. Mullet generally shoal together at the ebb tide. Cloudy days are not good since they seem to distract them. There are special channels between the islets known to be 'mullet channels'. When fishing for mullet at night, choose moonlit nights and use the same gear that you might use during the day. The best chum is fish chewed up with the meat of green coconut and then spat out into the water. The best nights are *Utua* (the thirteenth night after the new moon), *Malama* (the fourteenth night) and up to the days when the sun sets before the moon rises. In this way you can also catch *ava*/milkfish and *kafa*/diamond-scaled mullet.

Dance song:

*My pigeon perched on the gahu tree  
Will fly, will fly to the wide ocean  
O pigeon, pigeon, fly back to me  
Fly back to your perch in my island.<sup>15</sup>*

## 11. Line fishing for *kafa*/diamond-scaled mullet (*Liza vaigiesis*)

This fishing method can be used either on moonlit nights or during the day. Night fishing should be done from when the moon is in its sixth day up to the days when the moon is further to the east at sundown. Use a rod of *puapua* wood about 170 cm long, to which is attached about a metre of 4 kilo line and a number 16 hook.

The chum should be a mixture of green coconut meat and chewed-up *uga*/land hermit crab, which is spat into the water; the bait is a piece of green coconut meat. Begin spitting out the chum when the moon is slightly past the zenith

<sup>15</sup> A dance song to bid farewell to students going overseas for education.



at sundown and continue until the moon disappears behind the coconut canopy.<sup>16</sup>

*Kafa* / diamond-scale mullet can also be fished during the day near coral heads and shores of the lagoon where the fish gather. Use much the same gear as for night fishing, but with the line about 30 cm longer than the rod. The bait used is a piece of flying fish or tuna fillet, which can also be used as chum. Don't forget your basket. When the *kafa* are gathered and you are catching them, you can stop chumming and use the soft belly of a hermit crab as bait.

Dance song:

*I look out from my home  
I see the moon rising up  
Arousing many memories  
Lots of them, in my heart  
I laugh at your pleasant playful ways.*

## 12. Line fishing for *kalo*/ bait goatfish (perhaps *Mulloidichthys* sp.)

Children have a lot of fun doing this kind of fishing. The *kalo* /bait goatfish are the prey of many fish. They come in from the ocean to shelter near the beaches in the months from June up to the end of the year. Other such fishes are *malili* /goatfish slightly larger than a *kalo* (*Mulloidichthys* sp.), *tikava*, and young jacks of various kinds.

When the season comes around you should have a rod made of *gagie* /pemphis, about 2 metres long and as thin as those used to make the frames of bird nets. The line should be extremely fine, like that used for catching *uli* /mackerel

<sup>16</sup> The instructions here refer to a person fishing at the shore facing east and with niu/coconut palms behind him, so the moon is just beginning to go behind the coconut canopy when the sun has already set. That is about the sixth or seventh day after the new moon. Although the explanations all have to do with the position of the moon, their significance has to do with tidal variations, which follow the moon's progression.

scad (*Decapterus macarellus*) or like that used for lashing together the pearl shell lures for *atu* / skipjack or bonito fishing. You can make your own hook from a pin, shaped like the traditional circular hook or the more conventional modern hooks. The bait is *uga* /land hermit crab.

*Kalo* can be caught in many different places – the lagoon beaches or the beaches on the ocean side of islets across the lagoon, where they are particularly plentiful. They are mainly used as bait for other fishes out in the open sea.

Dance song:

*My garland of flowers sailing away from me  
The fragrance wafts out, the  
fragrance of puapua flowers  
Do not be bewitched by the scent  
Come and say goodbye, goodbye.*

## 13. Line fishing for *havane*/ blue-lined sea perch (*Lutjanus kasmira*)

*Havane* /blue-lined sea perch appear in many places in the lagoon at any state of the tide, and are liable to appear whenever you are laying out chum and trying to catch other species. Use the same gear as you use for *papo* /scarlet-breasted Maori wrasse. But be quick pulling them in because they are savage with the bait. Happy fishing!

Dance song:

*I was much overcome by happiness  
Forgetting that it is Hello and Goodbye  
I wish that love had wings  
So I could fly to you my love.  
Oh so difficult  
What bitter love  
Now that you must go  
You will not be forgotten.<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> This is a farewell song for friends and relatives leaving the islands.

Canoes returning from the open sea



Judith Huntsman

## 14. Line fishing for *ava/* milkfish (*Chanos chanos*)

This is done standing on the edge of the stone reclamation wall on the lagoon side of the village, either at the time of the new moon or between the fifteenth and twentieth nights after that.

You must have a rod 3 metres or more long, made of local wood, with its butt about 1.5 cm in diameter and tapering to a much smaller diameter at the tip. The line should be about 40 cm long, with a breaking strain of between 20 and 25 kilos, together with number 5 or 6 hooks.

Both the chum and the bait are the meat of green coconut. Don't wait for too long after sunset to lay out the chum and begin fishing. If you hook a big one, don't try and lift it out of the water. But instead drag it along the shore until you can lift it gently onto land. If you don't, you are liable to break the rod. Don't light a fire on the shore, or make a noise by dislodging small stones from the wall. A characteristic of the *ava/* milkfish is that if its scales come off, it will not move.

Dance song:

*Hope, hope, hope  
Hopes that are fulfilled  
Like a budding flower.*

## 15. Trolling for *alaala/* striped jack or barred trevally (*Carangoides ferdau*)

This is done in the lagoon from a canoe, using a line of about 4 kilos breaking strain and hooks sized between numbers 12 and 15. There are a range of baits to choose from – *tālau/* blenny or mudskipper, *kalo/* bait goatfish or a *katikati* 'a strip of thin skin from under the jaw of a soldierfish', *feko/* octopus or a home-made *fulu* 'lure', often of bird feathers.

There are no days which are especially favourable, but the best times of day are at early dawn and in the evening just before sunset. You simply paddle your canoe slowly to a preferred spot with a line trailing astern, feel a tug and pull in the fish. *Alaala/* striped jacks or barred trevallies are ferocious feeders.

Dance song:

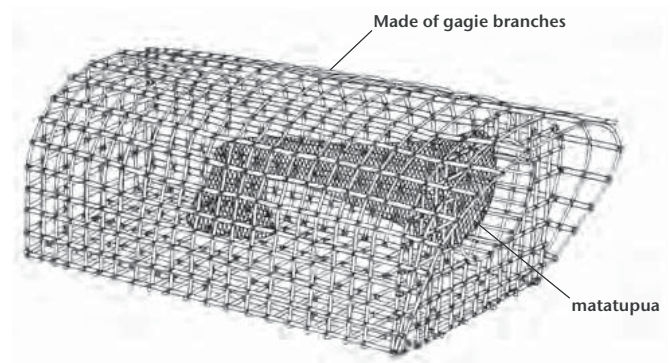
*I often think of Ātafu  
Its scents wafting mixed with puapua flowers  
Let the wind blow gently to carry  
This scent, while boys sing  
And girls are happy at the  
return of bonito canoes  
I often remember of Ātafu  
Its scents mixed with puapua flowers.*

## 16. Setting up a fish trap

A trap allows you to catch many different kinds of fish in the area in which it is laid. A trap is made of sennit or wire and a number of slender pieces of *gagie* / pemphis. You can make it any size you want.

Here is how it is made. Build a rectangular frame 60 cm wide and up to 100 cm long, as you wish. When you have made the frames, build the walls out of thin *gagie* branches spaced about 2 cm apart. There are two openings in the trap, one at each end. The larger opening allows fish to enter, and is called the *matatupua* 'fish passage', while the smaller one is for getting fish out of the trap. It is up to you whether to make the fish entrance round or square, but it should be between 4 and 6 cm wide. When that is done, begin building the *matatupua*, which is the passage that allows fish to enter the trap. It should be made of *gagie* branches and may be either round or rectangular, but should taper from the entrance to the outlet. When placed inside the trap, it should be tilted downwards to stop fish getting back out. Then take the trap to where fish are known to congregate, and sink it there.

Cover the trap with a sort of mat made of plaited coconut leaves and put some stones over that, making sure that the entrance is not obstructed. Visit the trap after two or three days and if there are fish in it, bring it ashore and remove them through the smaller entrance. This has a cover, made in the same way as the body of the trap and lashed to it. Just undo the knot of the lashing and take out the fish.



Dance song:

*Tuafenua<sup>18</sup> I will not be moved  
You say you are number one  
Only the plover (tuli)  
Flies around singing plover, plover,  
plover (tuli, tuli, tuli).*

## 17. Aggregations of *laulaufau*/moorish idol (*Zanclus cornutus*)

There is a special season for *laulaufau* / moorish idols when they aggregate in considerable numbers before making their crossing over the reef to the open sea. This is when they are fatty and delicious to eat. The months of the season are September, October and November. They move in schools in the lagoon at daylight. All that is needed is a net and a sapling about 2 metres long and 6 to 7 cm in diameter, which is used to guide the fish into the net.

There are certain known coral outcrops in the lagoon where these aggregations occur, and you should start visiting them in September. It is on the fourth day after the new moon that you can begin to expect them. Get on to the coral head (take a paddle to use as a seat) and simply watch. When you see a school, get into the water and guide the school into the net.

<sup>18</sup> *Tuafenua, Fale and Tuahakea were names of community dancing groups of the mid-1940s when a US Coast Guard unit was based in Ātafu (see section 4 above).*



Laulaufau/moorish idols



Michael Bok

Dance song:

*Longings in my heart enslave me  
When the yearning is not fulfilled  
I wish to embrace my sweetheart  
To return to me.*

## 18. 'Pounding' coral heads

This fishing is done at night from a canoe moored close to a coral head in the lagoon. Use a line with a breaking strain of 6 kilos and numbers 14 and 15 hooks, together with a sinker to take the line down, and an anchor to steady the canoe.

The preferred bait is a fish fillet so take with you a lure and troll for *atualo*/finny scad (*Megalaspis cordyla*) for your bait as you paddle out to a spot among the coral heads and reefs where *mū*/tropical porgies or bigeye emperors (*Monotaxis grandoculus*), are known to gather. It is in such spots that you can catch *tāea*/paddletail (*Lutjanus gibbus*), *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphekadion*), *tāiva*/black spot snapper (*Lutjanus monostigma*), *ta*/armoured

soldierfish (*Holocentrus spinifer*), *āheu*/trevally, *kōmulo*/perhaps horse-eye jack (*Caranx* sp.), *filoa*/long-nosed emperor (*Lethrinus miniatus*), *alaala*/striped jack or barred trevally (*Carangoides gilberti*), *havane*/blue-lined sea perch (*Lutjanus kasmira*), *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper (*Epinephelus merra*) and other kinds of fish.

Dance song:

*Tell me please  
Do you still love me?  
Do you still love me?  
For a future for Tokelau  
To be pursued.*

## 19. Net fishing in lagoon shallows

This is done near the lagoon beaches at high tide and involves two teams of men in canoes. The canoes are poled slowly until a school of fish is sighted ahead. The canoes then stop and the master fisherman calls out for the nets to be made ready and the first *lau* 'a line of men' to move ahead of the school while the rear *lau* moves behind in the opposite direction to meet the first group and encircle the school of fish.

If the school is close at hand, the net is laid out and the two lines of men move at the same time to encircle the fish. When they reach the ends of the net (which has been laid out in a V-shape or half circle), the master fisherman calls out for the two ends of the net to be closed together. To close the net and bring the lower sides (where the sinkers are mounted) together, each end of the net is pulled from the centre, thus bringing the lower sides together. While this is being done, the rest of the men ensure that the sinkers are dragged close to the bottom. When the two bottom sides of the net touch, they are held together and the whole net with the catch is lifted into the canoe.

When the school of fish is located at a distance, the whole party leaves the canoe and moves forward

stealthily with the net towards the school. When it is near enough, the net is laid and the *lau* spread out in opposite directions to encircle the school. The rest is the same as described in method 1.<sup>19</sup>

Dance song:

*The moon rising above Te Oki  
You stand and turn to go away  
The parting words, piercing the heart  
Here uttered to say goodbye to you sweetheart  
Return to the Lalofala  
Where we bound our hearts together  
Return to the Lalofala  
So that we can meet again.*

## 20. Purse-net fishing

This kind of fishing is done only in bad weather, with strong winds and the waves too high for canoes to get across the reef to the open sea. Crossing the lagoon in such weather can also be treacherous. Choose a spot which is sheltered from the waves and high winds.

The net must be round, closed at the bottom and open at the top, with a line passed loosely through the meshes at the top so that when the line is pulled, the top will close. You will need goggles and *kamakama* / large rock crabs for chum. Tear up the rock crabs and tie the bits to the wooden canoe bailer with string. Put a stone in the bailer to weigh it down, then take both net and bailer to the chosen spot. Take one end of the line that has been passed loosely through the top opening of the net, and when you see fish around the bailer, pull it to close the net.

Dance song:

*How tasty, O how tasty  
The red soup of Jacob*

<sup>19</sup> The word *lau* in this instance refers to the group of men who move up to encircle the school of fish, one *lau* goes forward and the other moves in the opposite direction. In general, the term *lau* refers to a sapling about two metres long used to guide a school of fish into a trap or net.

*A sorry state it is, a sorry state it is  
The heritage of Esau.*<sup>20</sup>

## 21. Line fishing for *fāpuku*/ marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphkadion*)

The term *malipuga* refers to areas of the deep lagoon or reefs extending from points out to the open sea, which have non-branching coral heads rising toward the surface. In Fakaofu and Nukunonu *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper are fished in both the lagoon and the open sea. In Atafu, they are fished only outside the reef.

*Fāpuku* are fished during daylight using a 25 kilo line and number 4 or 5 hooks, with *feke* / octopus for bait. Keep your line coiled around a small drum made of either wood or a piece of foam from a fishing buoy (anything that floats) into which you can stick spare hooks. You should also have your goggles and a strong strip torn from the top of a green coconut frond on which to string the fish.

The season is between May and June, and it is during those months that you will hear the phrase 'Let's go and visit the *mulipuga*'. The season ends in July, by which time the fish have spawned and come back into the lagoon. The best method is to swim around, and when you see *fāpuku* below, lower your line and they will almost always take the bait. However, while you are fishing, you should watch out for jellyfish, since this is just the time when they are plentiful.

Dance song:

*Goodbye to you, goodbye my beloved  
And I will sing a song for you  
To awaken you.*

<sup>20</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 25: 30–33



## 22. Harvesting *fāhua*/tridacna clams (*Tridacna* sp.)

The clams concerned are *fāhua* / tridacna clams (*Tridacna* sp.), which are found attached to coral throughout the lagoon. To gather them, you need an implement called a *nao*, which is a small rigid metal blade rather like a knife blade, and also a fishing knife. If you take a canoe, you can simply detach the clams from the reef and throw them into the canoe, to be scooped out later. Or you can simply swim out with goggles, a *nao* and a piece of *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable strip from a coconut frond' pry the clams from the reef and deshell them right there in the water and string them on your *kalava*.

This is how it is done. You dive underwater to coral outcrops where clams grow and you will see two 'eyes' of the clam, one of which is larger and rounder in shape and the other smaller and more oval. Pierce the larger 'eye' with a *nao* and move your hand forward and to the right, then back towards you, to detach the shell from its hold on the reef. The word for this action is *nao*. You can collect two or three in one dive. When you collect enough clams, the next step is to detach the meat from the shell. The word for this action is *hakalo*. It is easier to *hakalo* 'detach' the meat from its shell while you are in the water, when you can get rid of the dark blue bladder (which is considered toxic) leaving the meat whiter and cleaner.

Dance song (this is commonly sung by elderly women when they go out in a group to gather *fāhua* / tridacna clams):

*Make a call to the Tuafenua group  
Go to the lagoon, each with a nao  
Go get the fāhua.*

### *Ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish



NOAA

## 23. Torch fishing for *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (*Hemiramphidae*)

This fishing is done in deep parts of the lagoon from canoes. In the old days, the torches were made of dry coconut fronds lashed together, but now pressure lamps are used, fueled by either petrol or kerosene. The fish are caught in long-handled flying-fish nets, which are handled by the *tautai* standing in the bow of the canoe. The person standing behind him holds the torch while the rest of the crew paddle gently toward the fish, steered by the man at the stern, following the instructions of the *tautai*. This can be done on any night during any season. When the fish are abundant, you can have lots of fun swinging the net to catch them.

Dance song:

*Hermit crab takes a trip to the reef (when the wind blows)  
The crew begins to leave, one by one  
The plover flies, the white tern,  
the ruddy turnstone  
The mouse swims, poor hermit  
crab sinks to the reef.*

## 24. Netting *memea*/gold-lined or yellowfin goatfish (*Mulloidichthys vanicolensis*)

This calls for the following equipment: a fishing net, fishing goggles to keep track of a school and long poles to guide the fish into the net. The fishing is done during the day. When the fishing

party arrives at a spot where the fish are congregated, the net is spread out in a suitable place and men with poles gently guide the

school of fish toward it, encircling them. When this is done, the top of the net where the floats are is drawn and held together. Then the same is done with the lower part of the net where the sinkers are. The net is then lifted into the canoe – an action signified by the word *tō*.

Dance song:

*I sleep at night, wishing I am with you  
Then I dream all night about you  
My heart breaks with streams of memories  
And here am I wishing for you  
I'll take a trip to visit you  
I'll take a trip to meet you.*

## 25. *Fakatakoto*: swimming out to lay bait and chum

This term also means to 'lay down', as a baby is laid down to sleep. In this context, it refers to a type of fishing in which a baited hook is swum out from the shore and laid down together with chum, while the fisherman swims back to shore.

The gear needed is a line with a breaking strain of 12 kilos, number 8 or 9 hooks and goggles. The line should be wound around a float of some sort, called a *pokai*, which also has spare hooks stuck into it. You will also need a string made of a strip torn from the upper side of a green coconut frond, to string your caught fish on.

This is done from the beach or the shallow water in the lagoon. Walk in the water up to the point where you can no longer stand. Prepare both your *feke* / octopus bait and chum and swim out to drop them in deep water. Then swim back to where you can stand and use your goggles to watch for fish approaching the bait. The fish usually caught are *gutula* / emperorfish (*Lethrinus* sp.), *filoa* / long-nosed emperorfish (*Lethrinus miniatus*), *āheu* / trevally, *tāiva* / black-spot snapper (*Lutjanus monostigma*), *loi* / blue-spotted grouper (*Cephalopholis argus*) as well as other kinds.

Dance song:

*I sleep at night dreaming of you  
When the Milky Way slants across the sky  
Then I got up with floods of memories  
Tears streaming like raindrops  
My sweetheart good-bye to you  
Do not forget me my sweetheart, good-bye.*

## 26. Chumming around reefs and coral heads

This is done during daylight around coral outcrops close to the lagoon shores, and is best done when it is overcast or raining. Use a *puapua* rod similar to that used for *tāiva* / black spot snapper, rigged with an 8 kilo line and a number 8 hook. For bait, use fillets of either *hahave* / flying fish or tuna. To do this kind of fishing, you choose a favoured spot on the lagoon, one that receives the flow of water from the open sea when the tide rises. You have to move stealthily and crouch down, taking care not to scare the fish with your movements as this will stop them from taking the bait. *Tāiva* / black spot snappers are like *malau tea* / scarlet soldierfish (*Myripristis pralinia*) in this way, and when this happens, none will take the bait.

The fish caught this way are *gutula* / emperorfish, *filoa* / long-nosed emperorfish, *āheu* / trevally, *tāiva* / blackspot snapper, *loi* / blue-spotted grouper and other kinds.

Don't forget to take a basket with you, or else a *kalava* to string your fish on. A *kalava* is a string-like bark torn from the ventral side of a coconut frond.

Dance song:

*Lower to the pit  
Jacob's loved one  
He is the dreamer  
He is Joseph.<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>21</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 37: 19–20.

## 27. Net fishing in the *koko* 'sheltered coves'

*Koko* is the word used to mean a sheltered swampy area or cove opening from the lagoon. During low tide, these coves are mostly without water and are not joined to the lagoon. The coves may be either large or small. Small ones may be dry most of the time and covered with water only at high tide. During spring tides, there is a lot more seawater from the open sea flowing into the lagoon. It also brings shore fishes into these coves and this is when the fishing is done, by closing the entrance and trapping the fish inside the *koko* when the tide recedes.

This method can be used at spring tides at any time of the year. Spring tides occur when the moon has just set at sundown and again on the fourteenth and fifteenth days after the new moon, when it is full moon. These two days are called the

'nights of the lagoon'. During spring tides, mullet and similar fishes move into *koko* with the tide and will spend the whole night there. You need to know the best *koko*, the ones with an entrance that can be easily closed with a net. You can also do this fishing on the third or fourth days after the new moon when the seas at Hakea and Alofi (regions of the atoll easily swamped with ocean waters) are rough and big waves come over the reef bringing a lot of tidal water into these sheltered coves. This is termed a *pagafugafu* tide when fishes swarm into the coves along with the tide. During bad weather, waves come over the reef bringing a lot of tidal water into coves at Hakea and the Alofi, and then there are a lot of fish around.

Dance song:

*Auē Solomona taumata mai koutou*  
*Auē Solomona tauvilivili koutou*  
*Aloloko, Aloloko mai e*  
*Ko te poni kukula.*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A Tuvalu/Kiribati dance song.

Elders with their newly-made net



Judith Huntsman



## 28. Net fishing for *ihe/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae)*

This is a most enjoyable form of fishing, and everyone, young or old can join in so long as they can swim. The action takes place in the lagoon around coral heads close to the village. To begin with, young men are chosen by a master fisherman to swim out into the lagoon and chum needlefish with grated coconut to get them to congregate in one area. While this is being done a call goes out round the village for people free to join and swim with the crowd to muster in the fishes for netting.

Then the master fisherman divides the men into two groups, one swimming to the right and the other to the left to form a large circle. They then all swim to form a tighter circle round the fish and drive them toward the shore, and when they can stand on the bottom they close the circle of net, lift it and pour the fish into a canoe. They then repeat the whole process until there is enough fish for the whole village.

Dance song:

*Fakaofu, that is my show of love  
For your Zion church  
It was cut from Kokoloa  
And made ready in Kileva.*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Kokoloa and Kileva are names of places in Atafu where the gifts of kånava/cordia or sea trumpet wood for Fakaofu's new church were cut and prepared for transportation in the early 1960s.*

Watching for fish crossing the reef



Judith Huntsman

## 29. Awaiting the arrival of fishes at the *tafega*

The word *tafega* refers to natural passages used by fish as they move from lagoon to the reef or from the open sea to the lagoon across the reef with shifting and changing tides. There are three types of *tafega*, or recognized paths taken by schools of fish as they move from lagoon to the ocean, or from the ocean to the lagoon during certain seasons of the year. *Tali* means to await the passage of such schools with a net. There are three main kinds of *tali tafega*.

**1. The first** is done only during certain months and at certain phases of the tide. The months are between September and November, when the *tafega* are visited on the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth days after the



### Fish from a netting expedition



Judith Huntsman

new moon. The fish caught at this time are the various species of parrotfish (*Scarus* sp.) and *pone* / red spot surgeonfish (*Acanthurus achilles*) when they aggregate to spawn. The gear used is a net, goggles and a *lau* or a canoe paddle to guide the schools into the net. There is an old belief (still acted on today) that when there is thunder during these months, it is a signal for the *tafega* to be visited. When you get there, the first thing to be done is to close any outlets that the fish might be diverted into. Each *tafega* has well-known spots where the net should be placed and where you should stand to keep watch.

When a school is spotted, be patient and allow the fish to approach the net before carefully stepping behind them and guiding them all in. When the fishes are in this stage, they are more placid than usual. If it is a particularly large school, guide them gently into shallow water and signal back to the village for assistance. The signal for *ufu* / garnet red parrotfish (*Chlorurus sordidus*)

and *pone* / red spot surgeonfish is a fire on the beach. Other kinds of fish that you might get are *laulaufau* / moorish idols, *patupatupō* / a species of surgeonfish resembling a *pone*, and *alomea* / juvenile yellow or candelamoa parrotfish during its spawning season.

**2. The second *tali tafega*** can be done on certain passages between islets during the early morning rising tide. This can be done during any month of the year on the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth days after the new moon. On these days, the tide rises and flows in from the open sea in the early dawn, allowing schools of parrotfish to move onto the reef from the lagoon. All that is needed is a net and a pole to guide the fish into it. The net has to be set up early, before dawn, with the open side facing the lagoon. Once the fish are in the net, simply close the net and collect the trapped fish. This can be repeated as long as there are fish attempting to cross. At sunrise, you can lift your net and go home with plenty of fish for the family.

3. The third way of trapping fish while they move with the tide is best done from the fourth up to the eighth day after the new moon, in places well-known to fishermen as *tafega* 'path of fishes'. The gear to use is a *kālele* 'V-shaped scoop net' and a basket to put the fish in. Go out very early in the morning before the tidal inflow from the open sea and set your net facing toward the ocean side, where the fish will come from. You have to move quickly when the fish arrive, for they will come in lots of schools. It is probably quicker to lift the net and pour out the trapped fish into the basket before setting it back in position.

*Inati* 'division of netted fish'



Judith Huntsman

Dance song:

*It comes from above, it comes from below  
It comes from above, it comes from below  
A bunch of green nuts, a bunch of green nuts  
So many rats, so many rats.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> From a Tokelau folktale.

Children waiting for *inati* 'division of netted fish'



Judith Huntsman



# CHAPTER 3

## The reef

1. *Avatali*: netting the reef at low tide
2. *Feke*/octopus (Octopoda) fishing on the reef
3. Reef shark fishing
4. Catching *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*) from holes and under rocks
5. Groping for *ume*/unicornfish (*Naso* sp.)
6. Net fishing on the reef
7. Torch fishing on the reef
8. *Lauloa*: net fishing on the reef
9. Catching *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*)
10. Chumming coral channels
11. Netting *āheu*/trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and other *Caranx* species
12. Fishing with a *kālele* 'scoop net'
13. Net fishing on the fringing reef
14. Netting *tifitifi*/butterfly fish (Chaetodontidae)
15. Catching *āheu*/trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) in coral traps
16. Catching *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae) in coral traps
17. Catching *kāmutu*/green parrotfish (perhaps *Chlorurus* sp.) in coral traps
18. Netting *talatala*/violet soldierfish (*Myripristus violacea*)
19. Netting *maomao*/black or blackstreak surgeonfish (*Acanthurus nigricauda*)
20. Net fishing at night by 'beating'
21. Beating the water to drive fish into a net

22. Net fishing with a *kālele* 'scoop net' at night
23. Snaring *tālau*/blenny or mud-skipper (*Ecsenius* sp.) for bait
24. Chasing fish at low tide on the reef
25. Catching fish on their paths across the reef
26. Line fishing for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper (*Epinephelus merra*)
27. Line fishing for *pātuki*/stocky or marble hawkfish (*Cirrhitus pinnulatus*)
28. Line fishing for *humu*/triggerfish (Balistidae)
29. Line fishing for *tāiva*/black spot snapper (*Lutjanus monostigma*)
30. Line fishing for *hāfole*/fiveband flagtail (*Kuhlia mugil*)
31. Line fishing for *api*/whitespotted surgeonfish (*Acanthurus guttatus*)
32. Line fishing for *mutu*/banded sergeant or blackspot sergeant major (*Abudefduf sordidus* or *Abudefduf septemfasciatus*)
33. Line fishing for *aua*/'silvery' mullet (*Neomyxus chaptalii*)
34. Line fishing for *ulafi*/yellow or candelamoa parrotfish (*Hipposcarus harid*)
35. Line fishing for *gafugafu*/damsel fish and gregories (*Pomacentrus* sp.)
36. Line fishing for *kiokio*/bonefish (*Albula vulpes*)
37. Casting for *katakata*/sea bass (*Epinephelus melanostigma*)
38. Casting for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)
39. Casting for *eve*/orange sea bass (*Epinephelus hexagonatus*)
40. Surrounding *lōtala*/young rabbitfish (*Siganus* sp.)
41. Trapping *maeava*/spotted rabbitfish or streamlined spinefood (*Siganus argenteus*)
42. Catching *ula*/crayfish, lobster (*Palinurus* sp.)
43. Rocks and holes where *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*) hide
44. *Kāohi*: fishing into reef holes
45. Netting *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae)



## 1. *Avatali*: netting the reef at low tide

*Avatali* are certain natural channels on the ocean side of the fringing reef. When tides begin to rise in the afternoon, schools of parrotfishes and other reef species rise with the tide from the ocean side and feed on the fringing coral reef flats. As the tide continues to rise, these fishes access their passages into pools or lagoons on the reef between islets. At dusk, they remain in those pools and return to the ocean side on the following early morning tide. Any fish which happens to be in the reef at dusk will remain there overnight and return to the open sea on the early morning rising tide.

This kind of fishing is about trapping the fishes in fringing reef channels as they make their way back to the open sea in the early morning when the tide begins to rise. The word *tali* refers to the netting of these fish as they cross these natural passages. It can be done at any time of the year, but only on certain days of each lunar month, the best being the seventh and eighth days when the moon is still west of its zenith and at sundown and on the twenty-second and twenty-third days after the new moon. On these days, the tide begins to rise in the early dawn.

You can use a net, or in certain channels it is better to use a V-shaped *kālele* – a type of scoop net. Go out on the reef before dawn when the fish that have come up to spend the night, either on the reef or in the lagoon, are trying to get back to the open sea through the *avatali* where you have set your net. You have to move fast, for at that time the fishes are rising in schools to access the open sea, and when the tide rises higher the fishes will access the open sea through any channel.

Dance song:

*I dream of you my maid  
I dream of you, but alas only a dream  
She smiles, she smiles beautifully  
The beautiful smile of my friend.*

## 2. *Feke*/octopus (Octopoda) fishing on the reef

There are three ways of catching *feke*/octopus:

1. seeking them out on the reef;
2. getting them during the special season when they are prolific; and
3. trolling for them with a lure.

1. You must have a hardwood probe made of *gagie*/pemphis about a metre long and as thick as your thumb. This is used to force an octopus out of its hiding place. It is a natural defense reaction for the octopus to come out of its hole when probed. You have to be quick in grabbing it once out for it will squirt its dark ink in the water to make its escape. Take with you some meat from a mature coconut to chew up and spit out into the water. This will make the surface calm, allowing you to see through it more clearly from above on windy or overcast days. There are times when there are a great number of octopus about, and this is the best time to take a stroll along the reef. You will no doubt see either single octopus or pairs perching on the coral or just over their hiding holes, and it is just a matter of grabbing them and stringing them up together. An octopus hole is frequently camouflaged with white pebbles. To see if there is really an octopus hiding inside, try to remove the pebbles. You may find that they are mysteriously held back and that a stream of water comes

*Feke*/octopus



Danny Bergeron/Marine Photo Bank

### Children netting at the lagoon shore



Judith Huntsman

shooting out of the hole. Get rid of the pebbles and probe into the hole. The octopus will then come out and you kill it by biting it between its eyes.

2. During the 'octopus season', all you need by way of preparation is a home-made iron spear about 60 cm long, attached to a handle made of local wood. Pole your canoe along just off the beach or at the edge of deep water, and when you see an octopus, spear it and put it in the canoe. You must, however, either kill or immobilize it, or else it will crawl out of the canoe.

3. Trolling: This method is based on the belief that an octopus can be hooked. Use a pole like that used for poling a canoe along, to which is attached a piece of sinnet with a breaking strain of at least 6 kilos. The 'hooks' in this case are the barbed edges of a *fala* / pandanus (*Pandanus tectorius*) leaf and the lure is a kind of cowrie shell about 7 to 8 cm in length with smooth black and brown dots on the shell surface. Tear the edge of a pandanus leaf to which prickles are attached and arrange the prickles along the underside of

the shell. Bind them on securely with the sinnet. Make a 'tail' for the shell, about 26 cm long, and tie that to the shell through holes that have been drilled in the end of the shell.

When it comes to the octopus season, go out in a canoe at high tide with a crew of three. The person at the stern trolls the lure while the canoe is being either paddled or poled by the person at the bow. When an octopus sees the lure, it shoots up from below and grabs it with its tentacles because it thinks it looks like a rat or a lobster. The rat and the lobster are believed to be the enemies of octopus. When the octopus strikes the lure, it is lifted out by the person in the middle of the canoe and disentangled from the prickles. If it is the octopus season, there will undoubtedly be a lot of them caught.

Dance song:

*He is Lot, he turned to look back  
Your greed takahi, takahi, takahi, hi! Hi!*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 19: 16–17.

### 3. Reef shark fishing

This can be done on any rising tide, and not much preparation is needed. All you need is an attractive smelling bait to lure sharks and other fish in close to you.

The best such luring bait is the eel, which is common throughout the reef. When you have enough of them, take your bait to a suitable flat coral rock on the shore or a sandy beach and pound them so that their juices flow into the deep lagoon water as the tide rises from the open sea. Tie together what is left of the pounded eels and place them securely at the edge of the water. Ideally, choose a spot where you can stealthily approach a fish with your spear when it comes up attracted to the chum. This might be either a coral flat near the shore or a sandy beach.

#### Reef shark with surgeon fish



Gerick Bergsma/Marine Photo Bank

The technique of throwing the spear is different for high and low tides. When the tide is low, the hand holding the spear need not be raised above your shoulders. If it is high tide, hold the spear high up above your shoulders, take aim and throw a little beyond your mark. Don't miss your chance on your first throw. As soon as you see a shark approaching to the source, spear it just below its dorsal fin.

When the shark is speared, take hold of the spear while you maintain downward pressure. Apply a levering motion to the spear and when the shark tail fin thrashes upward, grab it and hold both spear and tail together with both hands and pull ashore.

Dance song:

*Keep singing Nukunonu of your eight islets  
Keep singing Fakaofu about being the capital  
Hi to the boys and girls of the Mulihelu  
Paddling along Kileva on your taiuli canoe.*

### 4. Catching *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*) from holes and under rocks

The rocks and pools where *manini*/convict tangs gather are close to the ocean edge of the fringing reef. Go to fish for them during the day at low tide. First, beat the water to disturb the *manini*/convict tangs which will go under rocks and in holes in the reef. That is where you will find them. Then, using goggles and a home-made spear gun, catch as many as you can and string them on a piece of *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable strip from a coconut frond'.

Dance song:

*Esau's anguished begging, Esau my father  
O my father, I ask for your blessing  
O my father, O my father.<sup>26</sup>*

<sup>26</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 27: 34.

## 5. Groping for *ume*/ unicornfish (*Naso* sp.)

This is done on the reef as the tide ebbs, and also when it begins to rise. There are special places where *ume*/unicornfish are plentiful, and where there are plenty of holes that they go into when they are disturbed.

Go to one of these special places, taking with you a stick about a metre long. Walk along the edge of the reef close to the open sea looking for schools of *ume*, and when you see one, run up to it beating the water surface to scare the fishes into their hiding places. Before you put your hand into one of these holes, tap the edge of the hole with your pole. The vibration will keep them stuck against the side wall of the hole. This is important because *ume* have two razor-sharp spines on their tail and since you have to put your hand into the hole, it is better to have the *ume* steady against the side of the hole rather than swimming freely, allowing it to wriggle when you put your hand in.

You can then start catching them. Don't forget to take a piece of cloth to wrap around your hand to guard against the sharp spines at the tails of the fish. Sometimes you can get two or three from the same hole. There are no eels or *vana*/spiky black sea urchins (*Diadema* sp.) in the holes where *ume* hide.

Dance song:

*Abraham, Abraham, do not harm  
Your son Isaac. Turn up your face  
To the sheep behind you  
Take hold of them and make your sacrifice  
Ha ha ha, he he he.*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 22: 2, 12–13. The words of the last line do not translate as 'laughter', but the beat of a box drum used.

## 6. Net fishing on the reef

This is done during daylight at high tide. When a 'sweep' is decided on, there will be a *tautai* 'master fisherman' appointed to control the operation and he will be known in this context simply as the *toeaina* 'Elder'. Nobody else has authority and everyone has to follow his instructions.

Each member of the fishing party has to have a green coconut frond and together these will form a *lau* 'line' which acts like a net to encircle schools of fish. The fishing party is divided into two groups by the Elder, with one group going windward and other leeward. Each *lau* will then make a semicircular line inwards to close the loop around the encircled schools of fish. There should be no sounds of any kind at the place where the fishing is to be done. The fishing party walking on the shore must be careful to avoid the noise made by the pebbles and rocks they walk on. This may cause *fakaataata* 'agitation' of the school of fish. The Elder can tell if the fish are not still or are agitated for some reasons, and it is only when they are calm and quietly moving up with the tide that he gives the order for each *lau* group to go for it. He does this entirely by signals, which all the fishing party must understand.

When the master fisherman sees that the school is moving quietly up toward the foreground, he gives the signal for the two *lau* to move quickly into positions that will eventually encircle the school. He then gives a signal for the two lines to cross and join at the forward ends, encircling the school, which consists mainly of yellow parrotfish and other varieties of reef fish. The *lau* encircling the school must not be distorted with some too far forward and some behind. The *lau* stay motionless in their positions and when the school is stable, the master fisherman gives a further signal for the *lau* to move inward and towards the shore.

If the master fisherman sees that the school is agitated and fish are moving in all directions,



he makes a signal for the *lau* to lift their coconut fronds up, the effect of which is to turn the school shoreward. Throughout the operation, everyone must keep an eye open for signals given by the master fisherman. The members of the fishing party must keep close to each other to avoid gaps between each other and carefully watch the school.

When the party is close to land, it is told to crouch down, roll their fronds together to join them and move even closer inland to a rocky slip or cove that the master fisherman has chosen for the fish to be guided into. If there is no suitable cove and the school is a large one, the men will build a makeshift *fota* 'stone wall' where the fish will be guided into, caught and taken on shore. They are then gutted, scaled and cleaned for the village.

All this is a collective village enterprise. No one is even allowed to eat raw fish then and there or take one for himself. This catch is for the whole community and will be taken to the

*malae* 'public ground' for distribution to *inati*, which is the term for a share of the catch for each individual in the village. The fish must be gutted and scaled and then taken to the village *malae* to be divided equitably.

Coconut fronds were often used in this way in the old days when it was difficult to get nets. Today, more nets are used but the *lau* component is still an essential part of this fishing technique, for without it the school of fish, which numbers hundreds, will escape the net. It is also part of the fun of doing this type of fishing.

Dance song:

*There! The ulafi school now rising!  
Windward lau: You Go!  
Leeward lau: You Go!  
Don't distort the net!  
Encircle! Encircle! Don't distort the net!  
Encircle! Encircle! Encircle!<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> This action song gives a vivid picture of the actions and movements of those performing this kind of fishing.

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#### Pieces of *kakahi*/yellowfin tuna laid out in *inati* portions for distribution



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## 7. Torch fishing on the reef

This is done at low tide on very dark nights, especially those between the twenty-eighth night after the new moon and the appearance of the next new moon. Prepare torches from dry coconut fronds. Just how many is up to you, but it will depend on the number in the fishing party. Also plait some baskets to put the fish in.

You are now on your way, with the torches, baskets and bush knives. The person carrying a lighted torch also carries the bush knife to strike the fishes with, while others with the baskets simply pick up the stunned fish. If you have two torches, one should be taken along the seaward edge of the reef and the other along the lagoon edge. In this way you can get a good catch of a variety of fish – such as *manini* / convict tang, *malau* / squirrel- and soldierfish, *talatala* / violet soldierfish, *anaoho* / blackfin squirrelfish (*Neoniphon opercularis*), *putalaloa* / blotched soldierfish or bloodspot squirrelfish (*Neoniphon sammara*), *katakata* / sea bass and so forth.

Dance song:

*The tax collector looks up  
A humble heart  
Mercy on me I am a sinner.*<sup>29</sup>

## 8. Lau loa: net fishing on the reef

This kind of fishing is done at night in the passages between the islets when the tides are high, as on the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth days after the new moon. When the fishing party gets to the chosen passage, they cut green coconut fronds, split them and fashion them to act as a net to block the passage on the lagoon side as well as the ocean side. These coconut fronds are brought down to the shore where the men await the signal from the master fisherman

to begin the *lau loa* ‘the line of men with coconut fronds’ that is going to close the channel.

When the signal is given, the *lau* chosen to close up the ocean side of the passage move into position at the edge of the ocean side channel and form a line from one edge of the passage to the other.

The *lau* on the lagoon side then awaits a signal, a whistle, from the ocean side *lau* for them to move up and close their side of the channel. Once in position they remain there until the dawn lights up. When the sun rises, the *lau* move closer and meet in a selected pool into which the school of fish is guided. You can get all sorts of fish this way – *nanue* / rudderfish (*Kyphosus cinerascens*), *ume lei* / orangespine unicornfish (*Naso lituratus*) and its other varieties, *kiokio* / bonefish (*Albula vulpes*), *kanae* / mullet (*Mugil curema*), *kafa* / diamond-scale mullet, *tāiva* / black spot snapper, and *aua* / ‘silvery’ mullet. Plaited coconut fronds were of course used to make nets in Tokelau in the old days.

Dance song:

*We walk together to the big saw  
O saw the tree  
We saw the tree for planks, we saw.*<sup>30</sup>

## 9. Catching *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*)

This is done at night on the reef, the best times being the twenty-third and twenty-fourth nights after the new moon. Walk along the side of the fringing reef close to the open water, keeping watch on the channels where schools of *manini* / convict tang escape to the open sea. Place your *kālele* ‘scoop net’ across the seaward end of the channel, then disturb the *manini* / convict tang so that they dash down the channel towards the net. Then your party with the *kālele* ‘scoop net’ run up and place the net in the path of the school of *manini* / convict tang that is disturbed

<sup>29</sup> Dance song based on Luke 18: 13.

<sup>30</sup> This song refers to the making of *kānava*/cordia or sea trumpet wood planks for the building of the Atafu church.

and is dashing down to the channel you have blocked with your net or scoop net.

This is best done at early dawn, when you can see the fish by the light of the moon, which on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth nights is up and above the horizon.

Dance song:

*How can you sing of your fragrant flowers?  
For you only have the nonu and the gagie  
The girl of Hakea mixes with blooms of the forest  
Her necklace of flowers will not be taken  
Will not be taken.*

## 10. Chumming coral channels

There are certain channels on the fringing reef which are well known to be suitable for this kind of fishing, because they are wide, free of obstructions and relatively sheltered from wave action. These are the channels you go to for this kind of fishing. It is done at low tide, either during the day or in the dark of night. When you decide to do this type of fishing, you need a good strong line and a large hook mounted on steel trace. You should also have a heavy piece of wood to stun any catch you make. The best bait for this fishing is the common reef eel.

Once you are at the preferred channel, you pound your eels near the edge of the channel so that the juice will be taken by the tide into the channel and out to the open sea. Fishes, usually big ones, are lured to the scent of the eels. Cut up a piece of eel, bait your hook with it and fix the hook to a clear spot below water level at the edge of the channel. Then you hold on to the line as you move on shore, keeping a tension on the line so you can feel if it is being disturbed by the waves.

If you prefer, you can just throw the baited hook out into the middle of the channel and let it lie there. When you do this at night, mount your hook and line on a stout pole, because it will

be mainly large fish that you catch. These will include *fagamea* / red snappers (*Lutjanus bohar*), *munua* / large groupers (*Epinephelus* sp.), *malatea* / Napoleon wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), sharks and other fishes.

Dance song:

*The spreading of the gospel  
Where our loved ones worked  
A path paved with blood  
Where young lives were lost.<sup>31</sup>*

## 11. Netting āheu/trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and other *Caranx* species

This is done during daylight when schools of jacks are crossing the reef at well-known reef channels between islets, during the months of August, September and October. The relevant phases of the moon are from the eleventh through to the fourteenth day after the new moon, when schools are crossing from the lagoon over the reef to the open sea; and again on the sixth, seventh and eighth days of the following new moon when schools are crossing from the open sea over the reef to lagoon.

The gear needed is a net and poles to help drive schools into the net. When your fishing party reaches a channel where a school of jacks might be expected to cross over the reef, the master fisherman gives instructions and sends an experienced person ahead over the reef to a strategic position from which to keep watch for the school as it works its way along the reef, trying to cross to the open sea. The school will attempt to cross the reef before the tide is too high for it to cross with ease at any point. The master fisherman then selects men to carry each length of the net, two on each side of the net, with the master fisherman at its base. When the net

<sup>31</sup> This dance song is probably about the Tokelau Christian teachers who went to work in what is now Papua New Guinea during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of them never returned.

is set in position, do not widen its angle or the school will rush in, strike at the net and return. If the net is set too wide, there is not enough time to bring the two ends together to encircle the school. When a school of jacks rises from the lagoon to begin the crossing, the men with the net begin their move stealthily, all the time keeping watch for the signal from the *mata* 'eye' of the group.

When he makes a hand signal that the school is in position (which means the school has moved on ahead but will turn back if disturbed), the men carrying the net rush to place the net in the fishes' path. The school can be disturbed by the *mata* 'eye' throwing rocks or standing to block its path thus turning the school back towards the waiting net. And when the school hits the net, the men quickly bring the two ends of the net to meet, making sure that there are no gaps between the *alili* 'bottom side of the net' and the coral bottom through which fish could escape. They do this by standing on the lower side of the net. The bottom ends of each side of the net are brought together and the same is done with the upper sides of the net. Once the opposite sides of the net meet, forming a tube with fishes in it, the whole net is lifted ashore or into the canoe.

Jacks are fast-moving fishes in shallow water. When they are disturbed, they dash, rather than simply swim, back into the deep lagoon or escape out to the open sea if the rising tide allows them to. It is all fast-moving action at this point both for the school and the men with the net. This is the reason why the angle of the net has to be narrower rather than wider.

Dance song:

*Ātafu, dear in my heart  
Grown out of the corals of the sea  
Its sandy bays, its bays  
covered with white pebbles  
Bays of Āhaga and Matālia.*

## 12. Fishing with a *kālele* 'scoop net'

For this type of fishing, in addition to the *kālele* 'scoop net', you will need a strip torn from the upper side of a green coconut frond to string your fish on, together with some poles between one and two metres long to drive fish into the net. The best tides to do this fishing are when it starts to ebb but before it is low, and again when it is starting to rise. You will need three assistants, two of whom will act as 'beaters' – one in front and another in the rear – while the third assistant carries the string of fish.

You and your party walk along the edge of the reef so that you will be strategically placed when a school of fish is sighted. Walk stealthily, keeping your eyes open for schools of *kāmutu* / green parrotfish, *api* / whitespotted surgeonfish, *manini* / convict tang and *ulafi* / yellow or candelamoa parrotfish feeding close to the shore. The best way to carry a *kālele* 'scoop net' is to pick it up with both hands, allowing the front of the net to hang free while the rear is tucked between the two sides of the frame, which are held close together. When that is done, pick up the *alili* 'front end of the net where the sinkers are placed' and hold it together with the frames.

*Āheu/trevally*



PhotoDisc



## Hulumaki

A *hulumaki* is a narrow reef channel that runs from the coral flat down to the open sea. When there are schools of fish in the immediate vicinity, the man with the scoop net calls out to the forward *lau* 'man driving the schools' from the opposite side of the channel to drive the school, which has started to escape, through the channel. The man with the scoop net jumps into the channel and sets up the scoop net (which has wooden frames) in the path of the escaping fishes. He then calls out to the rear *lau* or the beater at the other side of the channel to jump in and drive the fishes into the net. He does this by diving into the channel and swimming down to the scoop net and helping to lift and close the *alili* 'edge of the net where the sinkers are mounted'. By doing this, he closes the scoop net on the fish that have entered. By this time, the arms or the frames of the net have been closed by the man with the net. The net is then lifted out of the channel.

## Fakatafa

This technique is used when the channel is too wide for the scoop net. The opposite arm of the net is stashed against the coral on the opposite side of the channel while the other arm of the scoop net is held by the master fisherman who waits in the channel on the other side. The assistant next to him on his side of the channel stays close alongside to drive the fishes into the net as soon as they pass by.

## Fakafiti

This refers to the technique used when the channel ends before it reaches the open sea, either because it has no opening to the open sea or because there is a coral obstruction in the middle of the channel. If there is a school of fish in the area, the *kālele* 'scoop net' is set on the coral at the end of the channel towards the open sea. One assistant drives the fish into the channel, while another (closer to the net) drives the school downward in the direction of the open sea. The effect of this is to make the fishes

jump out of the channel to escape, but actually they jump into the waiting scoop net. Of course, while all this is going on, it is important to consider the waves and water flow on the reef.

## Fakahali

This technique is very similar to the one described above. When the tide is low, the water level in pools or channels that fishes normally escape to also becomes low, thus creating an interruption to their path. When this happens, the escaping fishes jump over the obstruction and into the net, which has been placed in the right position to receive them.

Dance song:

*Here! The young men of Mulihelu  
Here! The young women of Kāleva, Oh my!  
These are the generations from Tonuia, Oh my!  
Enjoying themselves at the  
community meeting house  
Kamatoatoa i te luoia e.*

## Net making



Judith Huntsman

## Net drying after use



Judith Huntsman

### 13. Net fishing on the fringing reef

This is done on the reef with a party walking along the outer edge of the reef towards the open sea. As they walk close to the edge, they keep watch for schools of *kamutu* / green parrotfish, *ulafi* / yellow or candelamoia parrotfishes, *api* / whitespotted surgeonfish and other fishes. The technique is about the same as that used for fishing with a *kālele* 'scoop net', with the same best days and tides.

As with all kinds of *kālele* 'scoop net' fishing on the reef, you should keep an eye on waves coming in from the open sea, and be aware that you must wait for the last wave of a set of waves before rushing out and setting the net. When that last wave comes, your party runs along with the net and places it in position so when the wave retreats, you have your net ready. The party for this fishing is made up of two men who each carry one end of the net, the front 'beater' who brings in the school, the rear 'beater' who makes sure the school enters the net, the leader of the party who holds the loop of the net, and finally the person bearing the string of fish. When the catch is big, it is not easy to carry. Therefore, from time to time the carrier will have to take the fishes down to the lagoon side of the reef to the waiting canoe, and get more fresh *kalava* 'bark from coconut frond' to string fishes with, or better still, fresh green coconut leaf baskets.

Dance song:

*The pāla come skimming along the surface  
Skimming gracefully near the  
surface, moving nearer, nearer.*

### 14. Netting *tifitifi*/butterfly fish (Chaetodontidae)

This can be done throughout the year, the best times being when the moon is toward the west at sundown on the seventh and eighth days after the new moon. Use either a *kālele* 'scoop net' like the one used for catching *hahave* / flying fish, and go out to suitable channels in the early dawn. The *tifitifi tapukulu* is the first variety of butterflyfish to attempt the crossing while it is still dark. When the sun appears on the horizon, you and your assistant have to move fast and be lively, as more and more schools rise up and attempt to cross to the open sea. *Tifitifi*/butterflyfish are not very choosy about which channels they use, but there are channels where they are known to be particularly abundant, and if you go there, you will catch more.

Dance song:

*My sliding stone, my red sliding stone for Paitoa  
Hit against the tatoo pattern for Tagaloa  
Hit against the pattern for Tagaloa  
The poepoe about to fly  
Go on the thousands and thousands.*

## 15. Catching *āheu*/trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) in coral traps

'Fish trap' is the common English term for the Tokelauan *fota*, which is made of low walls of coral slabs set upon the reef where fish are known to cross between lagoon and open sea (or vice versa). When you decide to visit a *fota*, take with you a container of fresh water, coconuts, a fishing knife and a pole (which is both useful and a good companion to help you with the fishes as you will be by yourself). You will need a scoop net (a *kālele* or a *heu hahave*) to help you scoop fishes from inside the trap, and a spear (in case you find a big fish in the trap).

If the *alaika* 'expected fish path' is to one side of the *fota*, move to that side and maintain a vigil for the school to rise from the lagoon, for it will rise from there. When a school approaches, crouch down so as to not disturb it. Don't stand up at this stage or the fish will scare back to the deep lagoon and won't attempt to make a crossing. When eventually a school comes in, keep still until the school has gone up to the *malae* 'field before the trap'. Once the school is in position, step into the path the fishes have just taken and throw two or three rocks over the school. You must throw the rocks over and beyond the school so that they will turn back to the lagoon side. When you see that the 'eye' or the leading fishes of the school have entered the *fakatogaika* 'area just outside the entrance to the trap', then it is your time to move in and disturb the water with your pole beating at the water. As soon as you get to the *fakatogaika*, roll in the coral stone to close it. At this time the school has entered the *fota* 'fish trap'.

To help you picture the shape of a *fota* 'fish trap': it is a V-shaped wall of coral rocks built on the reef to a height of about the level of high tide. The length of each side of the V is about 50 to 60 metres and they make an angle of about 40 to 45 degrees at the point they meet. Then there are two arms extending from the inside of the middle of each wall towards the centre of the V. These arms come

together, leaving a gap of about 50 cm. This gap is the *fakatogaika* 'fish entrance' and is closed with a coral rock when the school of fish enters the trap.

Dance song:

*Release the dove to check the flood  
To return to Noah with the olive branch.*<sup>32</sup>

## 16. Catching *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae) in coral traps

*Fota* fish traps were more common in the old days when there were fewer nets. The fish *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish do not remain in the same place all the time. Sometimes they cross the reef from the lagoon to the open sea, and at other times they return to the lagoon. Their crossings from the ocean to the lagoon are commonly made between the third and fifth days after the new moon. The equipment to use are a canoe and a *hahave*/flying fish scoop net.

So you are going out to catch *ihe*/garfish, half-beaks and needlefish. When you arrive, you anchor your canoe near the *fota* and await the flow in of the tide from the open sea. At the same time, you keep a watch on the ocean side of the reef for schools of *ihe* rising with the tide from the ocean side. The school of *ihe*, when it rises, swims upwind and you have to be clever in positioning the coral stones you throw to guide the *ihe* into the *fota* 'coral fish trap'. When the school of *ihe* enters the trap, use the scoop net to scoop them into your canoe.

Between the twentieth and twenty-second days after the new moon, the *ihe* cross the reef from the lagoon to the open sea. You should use the same gear and go early so you can keep watch for the gathering *ihe* at the *tete* 'edge of the reef towards the deep lagoon'. Watch the edge between the reef and the lagoon where the fish will gather for

<sup>32</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 7: 11.

the crossing, and then just leave them alone until they enter the open space of the trap. Once in position, throw stones to well beyond the school to turn it back toward the lagoon but this time guide them into the *fota* with your stones. Once the school is safe in the trap, you use the scoop net to collect the fish and put them in the canoe.

Dance song:

*Which fish will go, which fish will go  
To catch the Tropicbird  
Sina it is me, it is I  
Gagale, a fast swimmer!*

## 17. Catching *kāmutu*/green parrotfish (perhaps *Chlorurus* sp.) in coral traps

This fishing is done in daylight when the tide begins to rise towards evenings between the fifth and seventh days after a new moon. These are the days when the *kāmutu*/green parrotfish come in from the open sea to spend the night either on the reef or in the lagoon. For equipment you use either a *kālele* 'scoop net', a pole and a basket to put the fish in.

There are passages between certain islets that are well-known to be favoured by *kamutu*, so go there and set up your net in the spots known to be crossed by parrotfishes on their way into the pools in the reef. The net faces the ocean end of the passage. Keep watch for schools of parrotfishes and when they get up to a certain distance from the net, stampede them into it. Then you must empty the net and set it up again to wait for the next school. This fishing can be done all year round in the designated tides.

Dance song:

*The fragrance of wild flowers softens the heart  
And tempts the memory of the  
vaine, O my vaine.*

## 18. Netting *talatala*/violet soldierfish (*Myripristus violacea*)

These fish live mainly in the deep lagoon among the coral heads, where they come together and congregate during daylight hours. At night, they move up to the shallow reef and feed there. The best days to capture them are between the fifth and eighth days after the new moon.

There are well-known places – sheltered pools in the inter-islet passages and channels among rocks – where the *talatala*/violet soldierfish attempt to cross to the shallow reef, and this is where you take your net and watch for approaching schools. When one appears, wait until it has ascended far enough onto the reef, then set your net and make the fish retrace its passage into it. The ends of the net are then brought together and the two *alili* 'lower parts of the net where the sinkers are' are held together and the net lifted into the canoe.

If you wish, you can also do this fishing at early dawn when the fish are returning to the deep lagoon. Lay the net facing the ocean side of the reef. Although you won't be able to see the fish, you can feel the tug when they strike the net. All you have to do is untangle them and put them in your basket.

The places where the *talatala*/violet soldierfish are commonly caught in this way are called Ava o te Alofi, Kauafua o Laua and Vaiahaga i Hakea.

Dance song (this is a dance song from Tuvalu):

*Te lili o te fenua lomalomae  
Kale tau koe ia au e  
Te manao nei la e  
Te leva nei la te moana e  
Te atu fenua i lalo i te Tuvalu e.*



## 19. Netting *maomao*/black or blackstreak surgeonfish (*Acanthurus nigricauda*)

This is done at dawn on the edge between the lagoon and the reef. The best days are the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth days following the new moon. The equipment needed includes a net, goggles, poles for the 'beaters' and a canoe to carry the fish that are caught. The net is set facing the ocean side, with men holding the lengths of both arms of the net while keeping watch for fish movements. Often the location of this fishing is in the deep part of the reef, especially at high tides. When a school is sighted attempting to move into the lagoon, the leader holding the loop of the net calls out to the men to move in together and close the two ends of the net. They then dive to collect the upper and lower sides of the net and hold them together. The men then lift the net with fishes in it into the canoe.

A word of caution: keep a good lookout for jellyfish because these are just the days they are plentiful.

Dance song:

*The beautiful world,  
but with suffering  
Eden is happiness.*

## 20. Net fishing at night by 'beating'

This way of net fishing is generally done just outside the rocks on the edge of the shore, either at high tide or just when the tide begins to ebb. However, experienced fishermen know the best days when greater numbers of fishes will be around – days when the tide rises high after sunset. Fishing can be done at any time of the night, soon after sunset, the dead of night, or in the early dawn. In fact, it can be done at any tide, in the evening as well as late into the night, whether the moon is still in the west at sundown or has moved over to the east.

But you won't catch fish every night. Some nights are better than others, and when you strike it good, you won't feel the cold because you are on the move. You are happy because you are getting your fish for the day.

*Maomao*/black or blackstreak surgeonfish



John Starmer/Marine Photo Bank

The fishing party is made up of the men carrying the net and those in the *lau* who go forward and round up the fish. They all enter the water together, then the net is laid out with one arm touching the off-shore rock edges at its end and the other extending out to the reef. The *lau* need not go too far to the fringing reef but stay within the field of the net. When the leading fisherman feels the tug of fish against the net, he whistles to the *lau* as a signal for them to move in close to the net, encircle the school and then lift the net by holding together the lower edge of one arm against the lower edge of the other, and then lifting the whole net into the canoe. You then go through the same process again at different locations until you have enough fish. It is really all very easy and catches a great variety of fish, for instance, *malau* / squirrel- and soldierfish, *tagau* / yellow-margin seaperch (*Lutjanus fulvus*), *tāiva* / black spot snapper, *kanae* / mullet, *nanue* / rudderfish and many other species.

You can do this in many locations, either near the village islet or the outer islets, wherever there are rocks close to the shore or on the beach. Not much gear is needed. Just the net, a few poles and strings for the catch. A warning though: do not be late or you will be overtaken by daylight.

Dance song:

*As the journey continued  
A well is found  
A well, a well near the Samaritans  
If only you knew the free water  
I would give you the water of life.*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Dance song based on John 4: 10.

## 21. Beating the water to drive fish into a net

This is done during the day in the channels between islets on the reef. All that is needed is a net, some poles, a couple of baskets for the fish and of course a canoe to transport the party to the fishing ground.

When the leading fisherman sees that the fish are spread out on the lagoon end of the channel, he instructs the party to round them up to one spot near the edge of the reef where the coral rocks give shelter and then surround them with the net there and then.

If the fish are spread out over the channel, he instructs the beaters to go to the ocean end of the channel, beat the surface of the water or stomp with their poles to drive the fish toward the lagoon end of the channel where the net is laid. And if the fishes are scattered even further up the channel, the net is placed at a strategic spot on the lagoon side and instructions are given for the beaters to go further up beyond the school to beat and so stampede the fishes into the net.

But if the fish are located even further up the end of the channel (and so likely to escape to the open sea if disturbed), the leading fisherman takes the net out to the ocean end of the channel and lays it in a pool in the path the fishes will likely take to the open sea if stampeded. The school is then rounded up and stampeded into the net. You can catch most kind of fish that inhabit this part of the reef. The catch is then taken to the canoe, scaled, gutted, cleaned and put in the baskets.

Dance song:

*Turn the stone, turn to make way  
To the tomb. Shame is the grave.*<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Dance song based on Mark 16: 3.

## 22. Net fishing with a *kālele* 'scoop net' at night

This is done on moonlit nights near coral extensions from the shore and at small *tālafu* 'pools' on the fringing reef close to the open sea. *Tālafu* are depressions on the reef close to where the waves break over, which drain through elongated cracks or channels called *muliava* that lead to the open sea at the ocean tide. They are pools that do not dry up at low tides.

Walk with your men along the ocean edge of the reef so as not to disturb the fishes ahead, and when you locate some in a *tālafu* or *muliava* step quietly into it, lay your *kālele* 'scoop net', and get the men to stomp with their poles and drive the fishes to the scoop net.

Dance song:

*Too much pride, too much pride mm mm mm*  
*Better to kneel, better to kneel mm mm mm*  
*Retreat, better to retreat mm mm mm.*

## 23. Snaring *tālau*/blenny or mud-skipper (*Ecsenius* sp.) for bait

Mud-skipper are called *tālau* in Tokelauan and are 5 or 6 cm long. When fully grown, they are called *manoko* – although this is actually a different species altogether. They are good bait fish, and are often found in rocky pools near the shore.

They are caught by a loop fashioned from coconut fibre. This loop is lashed to the end of the spine of a single coconut leaf, the whole contraption being known as a *tipa* 'snare'. Pick a pool with mud-skipper in it and try and manoeuvre the loop over the fish's head and then pull it tight, swinging your little rod against the rocks to kill the fish. If the day is overcast or windy, you have to make the water

surface clearer by chewing up some mature coconut meat and spitting it out. You will then be able to see the mud-skipper more clearly. Mud-skipper are excellent bait fishes.

Dance song:

*The Jordan River, the Jordan River*  
*The river of miracles, the river*  
*of miracles that cleansed*  
*Cleansed the Syrian lad.*<sup>35</sup>

## 24. Chasing fish at low tide on the reef

This was doubtless more common in the old days when there weren't many nets of any sort, but young people still enjoy doing it today. You can catch the same sort of fish as one gets in a net. It is done during daylight at low tide. Take a pole or stick of some sort with you to poke into holes and under coral slabs.

Walk along the reef at low tide looking for schools of reef fish, and when you have found one, chase it into the shallows so that it runs aground or under stones where you can catch them. Then stun them with your stick and string up your catch.

Some fishes may escape into holes or under coral slabs. When this happens, poke your stick in to make sure that there are no eels or sea urchins there before putting your hand in to grab it and add it to your growing catch. You have to be fast, especially if the tide is starting to rise. It is parrotfish that are commonly caught in this way.

Dance song:

*I sing my song, I sing a song*  
*To the shepherd*  
*Hosannah, Hosannah the son of David.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Dance song based on 2 Kings 5: 13–14.

<sup>36</sup> Dance song based on Luke 12: 13.

## 25. Catching fish on their paths across the reef

The fishing described here is exactly the same as that described in section 29 of Chapter 2 on the Lagoon and will not be repeated here. The method deals with fish moving between lagoon and reef and so can be taken to belong both here and in Chapter 2.

Dance song:

*The canoe of Tokelau, sailing sailing  
The canoe of Tokelau  
Tokelau, Oh my!  
Ha ha ha.*

## 26. Line fishing for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper (*Epinephelus merra*)

You will need a rod made of *puapua*, your fishing basket and a *tipa-talau* 'snare' for getting *tālau* / mud-skippers to use as lures and for chumming. In the old days the line on your rod would have been made of *lau*, but nowadays

nylon line is much better. Use hooks of numbers 12 and 13.

The fishing is best done on either a rising or an ebbing tide, when the current over the shallow reef can carry along the fish juices and chum to a wider area of the reef. You have to keep chewing up fish and spitting the juices into the water, along with bits of chum. Do not make splashes or ripples on the water because if the *gatala* / honeycomb sea bass or grouper is disturbed, it will not take the bait.

The fishing is best done in the months of April, May and June, when sea bass or groupers congregate before crossing the reef to lay their eggs. These are also the months when they are fat and their bellies full of roe. Also, during these months there is no need for chumming, and you can simply use feather or pearl shell lures. But you have to keep moving and not remain in the same spot if you want to catch more fish. Male sea bass or groupers are larger and more delicious. They are found during the later months of the year, up to the beginning of the following year.

Dance song:

*The parting breaks the heart  
My people He left his advice  
Love one another.*

Canoe at the lagoon shore



Judith Huntsman



## 27. Line fishing for *pātuki*/ stocky or marble hawkfish (*Cirrhitus pinnulatus*)

This is done during daylight at low tide, along the seaward edge of the reef. You fish into the deep pools, cracks and channels. What you need is a basket for the fish and a *puapua* rod rigged with a fishing line of about 5 or 6 kilo breaking strain and a size 12 or 13 hook.

You must be careful not to stun a *pātuki*/stocky or marble hawkfish by biting its head with your teeth. There is a danger that it might flip out of your hand and in to your mouth. It is better to leave it on the hook and kill it by swinging it against a rock. By this method you can also catch many other kinds of fish – *āheu*/trevally, *alaala*/striped jack, *loi*/blue-spotted grouper, *uloulo*/fairy or fire wrasse (*Cirrhilabrus* sp.), *tāiva*/black spot snapper, *munua*/a large grouper, and still others that can also be caught outside the reef. There are two kinds of *pātuki*/stocky or marble hawkfish: the rock and the red spotted one. When they grow bigger they become *ulutuki*/giant groupers (*Epinephelus* sp.). You can get good catches even when the sea is rough, but you must keep up the chumming.

Dance song (a Tuvaluan dance song):

*Bunches of flowers, bunches of flowers  
Solomon you can see  
Bunches of flowers from Sheba.*<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Dance song based on 1 Kings 10: 2.

### Loi/blue-spotted grouper



David Armstrong/Marine Photo Bank

## 28. Line fishing for *humu*/ triggerfish (Balistidae)

These can be fished during the day in the months between about September through until April or May. The equipment needed is a rod with line of breaking strain of 5 kilos or so, and a fishing basket. The bait is *uga*/land hermit crab or a fillet of fish, which you also use to entice the fish by chewing it up and spitting into the water.

Choose a sheltered place on the outside of the fringing reef, and lay out chum until you see the triggerfish starting to gather. When there are plenty around, simply bait your hook and start catching them. If you are quick, you will quickly fill your basket before the tide moves in. That is the reason why this fishing for triggerfish is called 'Standing while triggerfish fishing'.

Normally, triggerfish fishing just for the family is done from canoes just over the fringing reef in the open sea by a minimum of three people (see Chapter 4). But this type of fishing is done by a single person standing on the fringing reef. Hence its special name.

Dance song:

*Raise the sail of the canoe  
Tie the guy rope securely  
Slowly release the mainsheet, the outrigger lifting  
Moved over to weigh it down.*

## 29. Line fishing for *tāiva*/ black spot snapper (*Lutjanus monostigma*)

This can be done either at night or during the day and in the lagoon or on the reef. There are four different methods:

- standing on a coral outcrop by the shore, on either a moonlit or moonless night;
- standing on the beach on either a moonlit or moonless night;
- standing on the edge of the fringing reef – only on moonlit nights; and
- standing on coral heads in the lagoon during the day when it is overcast or raining.

You will need a *puapua* rod (*Guettarda* sp.) 2.5 metres in length fitted with an 8 kilo breaking strain line and number 13 or 14 hooks. Also take a fishing basket and fish bait.

This fish doesn't swim about by itself but rather in schools. There are well known coral heads in the lagoon where they congregate in numbers, and also well-known channels in the fringing reef where they are found both day and night. When the tide rises at night, the fish move onto the reef to forage, returning to their places in the lagoon or on channels of the fringing reef at dawn. These well-known places where fish aggregate are called *taugataiva*.

Fishing from a coral outcrop near the shore is best done on the sixteenth and seventeenth nights following the new moon, when tides are very high. You begin by spitting out chewed-up pieces of fish, and when the fish have gathered, bait your hook and try the water. Once you have a strike, you will start pulling in enough to fill your basket.

If you fish from a beach on the ocean side, there are well-known spots to go to. When you arrive, you start spitting out the chum and once the fish are gathered, you can pull up enough of them to fill your basket.

Dance song:

*The way to the grave, no one can reject  
A way where you don't talk much  
A way one cannot escape from.*<sup>38</sup>

## 30. Line fishing for *hāfole*/ fiveband flagtail (*Kuhlia mugil*)

This is done at the edges of coral outcrops during high tide, on any day of the year. Use a *puapua* fishing rod (a tree of the *Guettarda* family) about 2 metres long, a 4 to 5 kilo line and number 17 or 18 hooks. The bait is red hermit crab and the meat from a couple of green coconuts is used for chum. Take a fishing basket for the catch.

First, gather your hermit crabs and pound their legs and bodies, leaving the soft abdomens to bait your hook with. Take a walk along the ocean-side beach and look for schools of flagtail. There are plenty of them near the rocks. As soon as you locate a school of banded flag-tail, do not waste time but start spewing out the chum. Soon you will see a lot of the fish. That is the time for you to bait your hook and try your line. You have to be quick moving or else you won't get enough. Other kinds of fish you can get with this fishing include *uloulo* / fairy or fire wrasse, *alaala* / striped jack or barred trevally, jacks, *mutu* / tropical ragfish and other species.

Dance song:

*Who took my bowl, my bowl?  
My bowl Joseph  
Joseph we do not know.*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Dance song based on Ecclesiastes 9: 9–10.

<sup>39</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 44: 12.

### 31. Line fishing for *api*/ whitespotted surgeonfish (*Acanthurus guttatus*)

This is done during daylight, along the ocean edge of the reef, on very calm days when there are no breaking waves. Use a *puapua* rod like the one used for *gatala*/honeycomb sea bass or grouper, a 4 kilo line and number 17 or 18 hooks. Take a fishing basket. The bait is *uga kafaila*/a red-coloured hermit crab, which is also laid as chum.

Choose a sheltered channel where there are neither currents nor turbulence. The fish you can catch are *moaga*/threebar or two-saddle goatfish (*Parupeneus trifasciatus*), *tuitā*/dash-and-dot goatfish (*Parupeneus barberinus*), *pone*/red spot surgeonfish, *alogo*/bristletooth (*Ctenochaetus striatus*), *manini*/convict tang and *ufu*/garnet red parrotfish, among others.

Dance song:

*The true freedom, we got from Galilee  
These nails in his hands  
And this spear in his left side.*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Dance song based on John 19: 34.

**Manini/convict tang**



NOAA

### 32. Line fishing for *mutu*/ banded sergeant or blackspot sergeant major (*Abudefduf sordidus* or *Abudefduf septemfasciatus*)

For this you need a 2 metre rod fitted with a 3 or 4 kilo line, number 17 or 18 hooks, and *uga*/land hermit crab for bait. The fishing is done at the edges of rocks near the shore during high tide.

First gather up to forty hermit crabs and pound them up, leaving only their bellies to bait your hook with. Wait for a rising tide and when it reaches the rocks near the shore, lay out your chum. When the rag fish begin to congregate, bait your hook and start filling your fishing basket. Other fish you might catch are *uloulo*/fairy or fire wrasse, *alaala*/striped jack or barred trevally and *hoke*/smallspotted dart or swallow-tailed fish (*Trachinotus baillonii*) among others.

Dance song:

*Bought with a lentil stew, bought with a  
lentil stew, bought with a lentil stew  
Poor Esau has been charmed into it.*<sup>41</sup>

### 33. Line fishing for *aua*/‘silvery’ mullet (*Neomyxus chaptalii*)

Use a *puapua* rod with 2 kilo line and number 18 to 20 hooks. The bait is meat from green coconuts, which is also used as chum.

The fishing is done at the edges of coral rocks on the reef when it is high tide. Once the tide recedes, you can confine your attention to the pools and ends of the well-known channels where the mullet congregate. Other fish can be caught here as well. Do not attempt this when the sea is rough because you might be rolled back to land by the waves.

<sup>41</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 25: 31–32.

Dance song:

*Judas you have no respect  
You betrayed the king  
With a kiss, a kiss of the money  
Materials of life vanish.*<sup>42</sup>

### 34. Line fishing for *ulafi*/yellow or candelamoa parrotfish (*Hipposcarus harid*)

This fishing is done during daytime out at the edge of the reef by the open sea, but only when the sea is calm and there are no big waves. Use a *puapua* fishing rod, a 6 kilo line and number 14 or 15 hooks. The bait is red or black hermit crabs. Pound up the legs and bodies and once you are at your fishing spot, throw the mass out as chum. The soft crab abdomens are used as bait for your hook.

There are well-known channels for this kind of fishing that are wide and free of obstructions. Once you start catching the fish, you will see that they can put up a tough fight and take time to land.

Dance song:

*Mae Kemilani the princess is full of sadness  
It was the start of a brawl  
In the liquor house.*<sup>43</sup>

### 35. Line fishing for *gafugafu*/damselfish and gregories (*Pomacentrus* sp.)

This is done in daylight at the edge of the reef bordering the open sea. Use a 3 metre *puapua* rod with a diameter of about 2.5 cm at the lower end, a 2.5 kilo line and number 16 hooks. Take a

<sup>42</sup> Dance song based on Matthew 26: 14–15.

<sup>43</sup> This song is based on a film shown by the US Coast Guard unit when it was based in Atafu during the 1940s.

fishing basket as well as green coconut meat to use as both bait and chum. You will also need a *litua* 'back support' made of a few strands of sennit rope wound around your waist.

The fishing is done on any day when the sea is calm and there are no big waves. That is the time to do this fishing. The fish are associated with big floating trees from the ocean, which are carried to the vicinity of the atoll by currents and eventually end up on shore. These can be seen around the reef and in the lagoon. You can stand on the beach or on rocks or even in knee-deep water and fish from there. You can also take a canoe to the open sea and fish from there. Better still, there are channels called *gafugafu* that you can fish in. When you start to chum, then you will pull in as many as you need to fill your basket.

Dance song:

*David chooses five stones,  
David chooses five stones  
Five stones from the stream  
David threw to kill.*<sup>44</sup>

### 36. Line fishing for *kiokio*/bonefish (*Albula vulpes*)

This type of fishing is done during the day, using a rod with a thin line. You can fish from the beach, sit on a rock outcrop or even wade out to knee deep water. Or if you prefer, you can take a canoe and fish from there.

The bait for this fishing is the *uga* *kafaila*/a red-coloured hermit crab. The best days are the sixth and seventh days after the new moon, and also the twenty-third and twenty-fourth days following the new moon when the moon has moved further east at sundown. *Kiokio*/Bonefishes frequent the shore edges and sheltered coves when the tides are at their highest, and this is when you fish from the beach with your rod or a hand line. When the tide becomes low, the fish

<sup>44</sup> Dance song based on Samuel 17: 40.



move on to sheltered sandy coves and congregate there. So then you use a canoe, and fish with a hand line. Don't forget to use a trace for your hook as there will certainly be *hue* / pufferfishes (*Arothron hispidus*) which can snap off your hook.

Dance song:

*This nation rose against me  
Saul, Oh Saul, Help, help, help  
Ahh, ahh, help, help  
Saul, check the end of your robe!<sup>45</sup>*

### 37. Casting for *katakata*/ sea bass (*Epinephelus melanostigma*)

In the past, this kind of fishing was a favourite of the elderly, and some still do it even today. The gear to use is a locally-made fishing rod about 2 metres long and about 3 cm in diameter at the base, together with a line of 25 kilo strain, some hooks at the 12 to 14 range, and a fishing basket. The bait is *feke* / octopus tentacles.

The days suitable for this fishing are moonlit nights (as in the best days for *avatali* net fishing and the 'womens' tide) – the twentieth and twenty-first days following the new moon. When you go out to do this fishing, walk along the edge of the fringing reef and troll your line. Also do this over *tālafu* 'pools' on the coral flats and cracks on the fringing reef. Don't forget to take with you a 30 cm long piece of wood to stun your fishes with or else you have to kill them by snapping their heads.

Dance song:

*One, two, three, four and five swinging stones  
David chose, David swings the slingshot  
It hits, it hits the forehead of the Philistine  
Oh poor Goliath, he has laid down in the stream.<sup>46</sup>*

<sup>45</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 24: 4.

<sup>46</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 17: 48–49.

### 38. Casting for *malau*/ squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)

This type of fishing is done on moonlit nights, when it is low tide. The gear is a fishing rod of *puapua* wood similar to the one you use for *gatala* / honeycomb sea bass or grouper, a line about 4 kilo strain, hooks numbered between 12 to 14, and a fishing basket. You take with you a strip of white cloth or a leaf bud from the *tauhunu* / tree heliotrope to use as the initial lure. Begin by hooking on the white cloth strip or the *tauhunu* leaf bud and start trolling into the channels out in the fringing reef. When you catch your first squirrelfish, tear off the *katikati* 'soft skin under the lower jaw' and mount that on your hook as your lure. As you fish along, now and then change the *katikati* lure to a fresh one.

When you are fishing into a channel, you have to stand at some distance from it, crouch down and troll your lure because this fish will not bite if disturbed. Even if there are a lot of squirrelfish in the channel, none will bite because they are aware of your presence. If it comes to this, you just have to leave the channel and try another one. And when you leave, you must not cross over this or any other channel. You have to walk up to the end of the channel and cross over from there. You also must not throw any fish bones into the channel. Such things will make squirrelfishes timid and they will not bite. These are the rules of this kind of fishing, because you are not the only person doing it. There are others fishing together

*Malau*/squirrel- or soldierfish



Samuel Sakaria from  
'Hikuleo i te Papa o Tautai'

with you. This fishing is done only on moonlit nights when the tide is at its lowest and when it starts to rise. Skilled people know the perfect positions to take to avoid detection.

Dance song:

*All the birds in the early morning  
They sleep but keep watch  
When they fly to land and to sea.*

### 39. Casting for *eve*/ orange sea bass (*Epinephelus hexagonatus*)

The best days for this fishing are when it is overcast, with rain in the morning and afternoon. Use a rod made of local wood, line, hooks and a fishing basket. The best bait is *tālau* / mud-skipper. You start fishing when the tide ebbs. Start trolling your line on rocks near shore, moving on to deeper pools until you reach the ends of the channels over the fringing reef. You can catch a variety of fishes, with most of them being *eve* / orange sea bass.

Dance song:

*Oh Amos you are a great prophet  
Oh Amos you are such a prophet  
The oak tree! The oak tree!*<sup>47</sup>

### 40. Surrounding *lōtala*/young rabbitfish (*Siganus* sp.)

*Lōtala* / young rabbitfish are somewhat like another fish, *ō* / damselfish, in that both swarm up from the ocean close to the reef.

The difference from the *ō* is that the *lōtala* / young rabbitfish has spiny dorsal fins. When they rise, they come in millions and millions. The

pools and channels on the reef are full of them; you can catch them at these places. Most of the *lōtala* / young rabbitfish or tiny juvenile rabbit fishes swarm into the deep lagoon where they grow into adult fishes.

Dance song:

*My sweet your heart roams a distance  
I wish dear you could remember me  
I am at my house not too far away.*

### 41. Trapping *maeava*/ spotted rabbitfish or streamlined spinefood (*Siganus argenteus*)

Rabbitfish have a habit of crossing the reef over to the open sea and back into the deep lagoon. They cross the reef from the open sea to the lagoon between the seventh and tenth days following the new moon. From the twenty-fourth to the twenty-eighth day after the new moon, they cross the reef from the lagoon back to the open sea. These are the days you go out looking for them.

These fish have no particular channel by which they cross the reef. They can cross at any convenient channel, although there are channels in which they cross in large numbers. It is at these places that you look for them. It is easy to trap them. Whichever spot you find them at, you encircle them right there. You can trap them in small secluded channels, or against a shoreline, a beach, or a in *fota* 'fish trap' made of coral stones. But you have to be careful with this fish because its spines give very painful pricks, which remain sore for some time.

Dance song (a Kiribati dance song):

*E nakonako mai tau au kinano e galegale  
Au i te lalo paei tiakapo koe i te ngapogi  
E matu au i te tangiliko.*

<sup>47</sup> Dance song based on Amos 2: 4.

## 42. Catching *ula*/crayfish, lobster (*Palinurus* sp.)

This is done on the reef near the breaking waves during high tides on moonlit nights. *Ula*/crayfish live in holes in the reef and only come out at night to search for food. You don't need much in the way of equipment for this type of fishing, not even a torch. All you have to take with you is a basket to put your crayfish into. As to how you catch the crayfish, you simply step on them with your foot, then you twist their heads to kill them. They will escape if you don't do this. That's how you catch crayfish.

Some people use a V-shaped stick to press down on the crayfish. Some use chum made of ripe *fala*/pandanus. You weave a small basket and fill it with ripe pandanus then tie the entrance securely with a string. When it is twilight, you take it to a location near the edges of channels or at the level where net fishing is done on the reef, and secure it with a rock. Then you go back and wait for the right time to visit the chum. When you return, you will find a lot of crayfish around the area and the basket of chum covered with crayfish. Then you get your own basket and fill it with crayfish and walk up happily to shore.

Dance song:

*The spider's web, the spider's web  
Was at the mouth of the cave  
It made Saul turn back, it made Saul turn back.*<sup>48</sup>

## 43. Rocks and holes where *manini*/convict tang (*Acanthurus triostegus*) hide

This fishing is done in the daytime when it is low tide. When they are disturbed, *manini*/convict tangs hide under rocks and in holes on the reef. These rocks and holes on the reef are quite near

<sup>48</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 24: 4.

the fringing reef. When you go there, you first disturb the reef water so all the convict tangs hide in holes and under rocks. Then you start collecting them from their hiding places. The gear you need is a pair of goggles, a small home-made spear gun, and a string of *kalava* 'chewed and thus pliable bark of a coconut frond' to string your fishes with. When there are a lot of fish in the area you can get a good amount.

Dance song:

*The skilled carpenter, he has a skill  
He has a skill to make measurements  
For he has to make it perfect for the people  
For the news of workmanship will be heard.*<sup>49</sup>

## 44. *Kāohi*: fishing into reef holes

This fishing is done during daytime on a tide that is low towards the afternoon. If you intend doing this fishing, the first thing you have to know is the phase of the moon, since this determines the most suitable time to begin. If you do that, you can arrive at the right time to begin your fishing. The best tides are the low tide that continues to recede, the very low tide, and the rising tide when the water is still low. The name of the fishing, *kāohi*, is the name given to the short *gagie*/pemphis fishing rod used for this technique. It's up to you what length of rod you use, but it is usually about a metre and a half. At the top end of the rod you tie a fishing line about 25 cm in length, set up with a hook in the range of numbers 12 to 14. The bait is a fillet of fish, which you also use for chumming.

How you do the fishing? Go down to the edges of the fringing reef, to the ends of channels, and in channels – even holes at the edges of channels. In fact, any crack on the fringing reef. You have to keep up with the chumming of holes and cracks. However, there are

<sup>49</sup> This dance song possibly originated from community work such as the building of a church, school or meeting house.

well-known holes called *taugaika* where fishes aggregate. If you do not know them, you can actually find them if you chum up most of the holes. Remember, you do not throw bones into channels or holes that you chum. When you come across a *taugaika*, you carefully mark it so you can recognize the next time you do this way of fishing. You can locate them if you keep chumming the holes. Do not stand too close to the holes you chum, and also be careful that your shadow does not fall on the hole for that will disturb the fishes and they won't bite. The best days for this fishing are overcast and rainy days. If you cannot follow the instructions given here, you just have to go out and try it, and learn for yourself.

Dance song (a Kiribati dance song):

*Kena kauika mai a nonda  
 Oi e tapogi te kaimakatokipau la  
 Te laga nei nao, oi kopulakeni kepenika  
 Kani e kao kaponi te vakālelena  
 Kao a poni te vakālelena  
 Kai a puseia o maluluga ma te lako ni  
 Malava to kote kai e pukale i e tao.*

## 45. Netting *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish (Hemiramphidae)

There are particular channels and rock passages in which schools of *ihe*/garfish, half-beak and needlefish cross the reef on their way from the open sea to the lagoon. The gear needed for this fishing is a net and a canoe. On the third, fourth and fifth days following the new moon, the men will go out in a fishing party to look for schools of needlefish. They have to go by canoe with their nets.

When they get to the chosen place, they prepare their nets, carefully rolling up together the length of the *taulu* net from its two ends to the centre so that when it is time to lay the net, it

can be done with ease and without a twist of the net. When a school of needlefish is seen approaching, the *lau* 'group of men rounding up the school' move into position. The net at this time is also laid in position. When the school of needlefish enters the net, ends of the net are brought together, thus enclosing the fishes. Next, the *alili* 'side of the net where the sinkers are mounted' are brought together to touch each other, then they are grabbed together by the men and the net is lifted into the canoe. As long as there are schools of needlefish rising from the open sea, the same action is repeated to surround them and bring them into the canoe. This is done until there is enough for the children of the village to come to the *malae* 'village distributing ground' to get their share.

When the schools of needlefish rise from the lagoon rather than the ocean, the actions and the way to catch them are similar to those described for schools rising from the open sea. The difference lies in the days of the month when schools of needlefishes rise from the lagoon to cross the reef for the open sea. These days fall on the twenty-second to twenty-fourth days after the new moon. A skilled fisherman can tell this simply by looking at the phase of the moon, usually at early dawn or late evening. On these days, the rising water from the open sea allows access across the reef to the lagoon in the morning at about 8 o'clock. It is at this time, when the rising tide from the open sea flows into the lagoon, that the needlefishes cross the reef. You lay your net in position and the *lau* will bring the school of needlefish into the net.

Dance song:

*I feel pity for you on your being unwell  
 For your sickness an injection  
 and Aspro didn't help  
 You hurry up to meet up with Naaman  
 You go bathe together with him in the river.<sup>50</sup>*

<sup>50</sup> This is a taunting victory song once performed at some game competition. Naaman was a general ordered to bathe in the Jordan River to be cleansed of leprosy. See Luke 4: 27.



# CHAPTER 4

## The open sea

1. *Ālo*: paddling for *atu*/skipjack or bonito (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)
2. *Takiulu*: noosing *pāla*/wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*)
3. Catching mating turtles at sea
4. *Uhu*: driving fish with coconut fronds
5. *Fakafolo*: line fishing for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)
6. Drift fishing on *utua* 'undersea reefs'
7. Line fishing on the *pula*
8. Line fishing with *uli*/mackerel scad (*Decapterus macarellus*) bait
9. Bottom fishing
10. Line fishing while swimming
11. Trolling from a sailing canoe
12. *Fakatafito*
13. Catching *humu*/triggerfish (Balistidae) underwater
14. *Fakalukuluku*: fishing in deep water
15. Torch fishing for *hahave*/flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.)
16. Line fishing for *kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)
17. Line fishing for *tafauli*/black jack (*Caranx lugubris*)
18. Long-lining for *kamai*/rainbow runner (*Elagatis bipinnulata*)
19. Communal fishing for *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphekadion*)
20. *Makomako*
21. Spearfishing for surgeon fish
22. Shark fishing outside the reef (Canoe drifting)

23. Shark fishing outside the reef (Canoe anchored)
24. Deep sea fishing from a canoe
25. Line fishing around coral rocks
26. *Talitali*: net fishing over the reef
27. Netting *ō*/damselfish (perhaps *Lepidozygus tapeinosoma*)
28. *Tuali*: spawning *hahave*/flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.)
29. Trolling for *palu vakaalo*/small-toothed jobfish (*Aphareus furca*)
30. Night fishing while anchored
31. Day fishing while anchored
32. *Tuku vaka*: fishing for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)
33. Trolling for *kata*/large jacks (*Caranx* sp.)
34. Spearing *eve*/orange sea bass (*Epinephelus hexagonatus*)
35. Fishing for *humu*/triggerfish (Balistidae) from a canoe
36. Fishing for *ono*/barracuda (*Sphyraena* sp.)
37. Drift fishing for *palu*
38. Fishing for *palu* while anchored
39. Line fishing for *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphkadion*)
40. Fishing for *hahave*/flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.) with baited hooks
41. Line fishing for *uli*/mackerel scad (*Decapterus macarellus*)
42. Line fishing for *loi*/blue-spotted grouper (*Cephalopholis argus*)
43. Line fishing for *tātifi*/unicornfish (*Naso* sp.)
44. Fishing for *puhi*/moray eel (*Gymnothorax* sp. and *Echidna* sp.)
45. Netting *talagogo*/sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*)
46. Trolling for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)
47. Trolling for *kōmulo*/perhaps horse-eye jack (*Caranx* sp.)

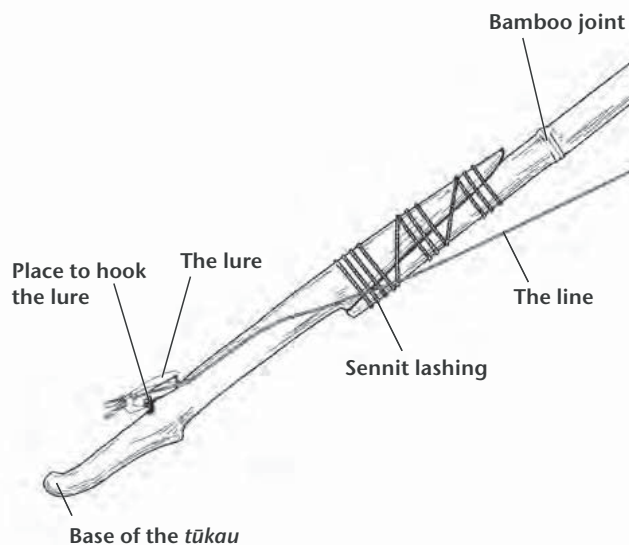


## 1. Alo: paddling for *atu*/skipjack or bonito (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)

This is done during the day from canoes in the open sea. It targets only the one fish, *atu* / skipjack or bonito. Skipjack move in large schools throughout the ocean but sometimes move close inshore following the *mafua* 'baitfish' that it favours. During some years the skipjack can appear almost every month, but during some years they don't appear at all. It all depends on the movement of baitfish. The most common months, known as 'skipjack months', are from September or October through to the first months of the following year.

The equipment used is a rod attached to which is a line (called an *afu*) and a pearlshell lure. Lashed to this is a hook and bird feathers. When flocks of birds are seen out to sea moving towards land, the master fishermen are assembled and preparations made for a fleet of canoes to go out to sea. There are, however, various taboos concerning the open sea that have to be observed by all involved. No other sort of deep sea fishing can be done during either day or night, and there is to be no torch-fishing on the reef. The only fishing to be done outside the reef is restricted to the waters close inshore.

### Butt of a *atu*/skipjack or bonito rod



*Atu*/skipjack or bonito



Specialist Stock

How to paddle for skipjack: each canoe has to have its full complement of paddlers because the master fisherman depends on their strength to keep up with the skipjack schools. Then the fleet goes to sea early in the morning, and waits until the crew can see their reflections in the bilge water of the canoe before approaching the *taumanu* 'general area where the flocks of birds are'. They keep a watch on the canoe of the eldest master fisherman, and it is only when he turns his canoe into the flock that the others can do the same.

When you are close to the flock of birds, you select the pearl shell lure that you want to use first, unhook it from the butt of the rod and troll

it out astern. When a skipjack strikes you signal to the crew that a strike has been made. They are then in a position to await further instructions. You then stand up, put down your paddle securely, and turn around to face the stern.

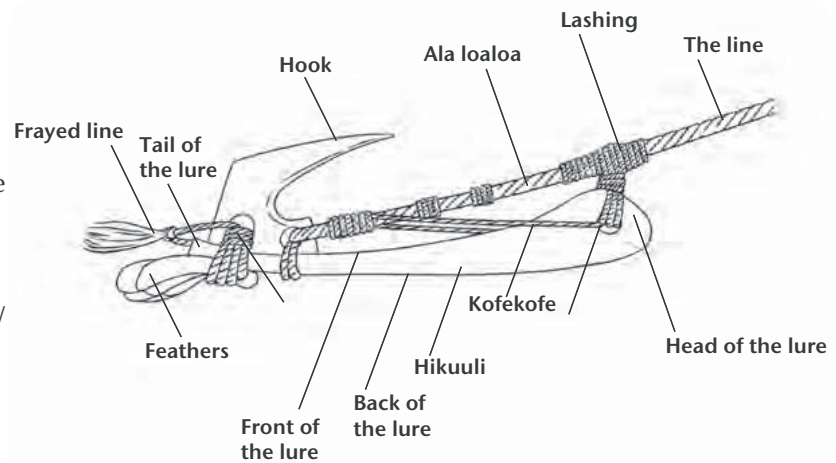
Place the palm of your left hand on the *pūkofe*, which holds the butt of the *tūkau* (that sheaths the bamboo rod butt), with your right hand extended upwards to grasp the upper part of the *tūkau*.

Then crank the rod upward, using the *pūkofe* as a fulcrum to lift the fish up to the surface of the water. Then lift the rod from the *pūkofe*, hold the butt end pressed against your body at the level of your groin, and lift the fish into the canoe, slapping it to dislodge the lure and skipjack tuna so they drop at your feet. Experienced fishermen are adept at performing this motion, and thus catch more *atu*/skipjack or bonito in a short period of time without causing a *maumau* among the school of skipjacks by inadvertently dropping fish from the pearlshell lure back into the water.

How to troll the pearlshell lure over the surface of the water: when the rod is in the *pūkofe*, you stand up, place your left hand on the cavity and press down, then extend your right hand to hold the *tūkau*, allowing a good distance between your two hands. It is no good if this distance is too long or too short. You just have to feel the best grip for you. When you lift the pole up, take a step backwards with your left leg so that it just touches the aft outrigger boom. Your right leg then becomes the 'strong post' that holds you against the outrigger side of the canoe while the left leg is the post that holds you against the port side. This stance will hold you steady. When gripping the rod, your left hand holds the end of the *tūkau* fast against the left side of your groin. Your right hand is uppermost and controls the tip of the rod, governing the path that you decide that the skipjack will take from the water into the canoe. When you are standing trolling the lure and skipjack are biting, don't tug the lure in. When a skipjack takes the lure, it will hang on. Don't lower your rod too far in case the fish drags the tip down into the water. This situation is called a *lōlō* and is a sign of weakness or inexperience, as any stirring of the sea can cause a *maumau* among the school of skipjack tuna.

There are three distinct 'paths' that the master fisherman can take when bringing a skipjack into the canoe:

#### *Atu*/skipjack or bonito lure



*Haetu*. When the fish strikes directly astern, it can be lifted and brought in against the *fatupuke* 'aft breakwater' and tilted straight into the canoe.

*Haulafalafa*. The fish strikes the lure while it is on the starboard side of the canoe. It is then dragged to the port side before being lifted aboard.

*Kofu*. The fish strikes on the starboard side and is pulled up from that side. In this case, your right hand helps lift it into the canoe and dislodges the lure at the same time.

The following taboos for the skipjack season exist to prevent the fish from being distracted:

- do not drop a hat or anything else into the water while the fish are taking lures;
- do not drop a fish back into the water, as this will scare the whole school. If this happens, you should leave the fishing ground and go directly back to the village.

You also need to know the following things before you go out on a skipjack fishing expedition.

**1. All fishermen** on the water follow the lead of the eldest master fisherman. It is he who enters the school first and the others follow.

**2. When the fish** are striking and master fishermen are trolling their lures, do not move



closely onto the port side of another canoe which has its lure out.

**3. When a fisherman** is pulling up a skipjack, don't cross his stern. Keep your distance. Be careful not to drop anything such as a paddle or a hat from the canoe into the sea. This scares the school and it just disappears and goes off elsewhere.

When you decide to go out for skipjack trolling, first check your canoe to make sure that everything is in order, because the fish will lead the canoes far away from land. You should also examine your rod and lures. When you arrive at the place where the skipjack are, watch the eldest fisherman and do not enter the school before he does. Take things easy so you don't drop a fish and scare the whole school off. You must also not forget the following things.

A master fisherman usually takes with him the fragrance of the forest. He has a necklace of *puapua* flowers. When the canoes come back, some will come with smiles on their faces while others will be wishing they had done better. *Te ika ko atu e mou laga, e kai ki lepu o taku kapuga.* 'This fish the skipjack shows up and then disappears. It eats the bubbles from my paddling.' The meaning is that if you want to catch skipjacks, you paddle hard.

Dance song:

*They speak, they know  
The coconut fronds, the coconut fronds  
They create, they create etiquette  
The master fisherman, the master fisherman  
His dexterous motion, his dexterous motion  
Catching noddies in the forest  
So experienced, very experienced.*

**Pāla/wahoo**



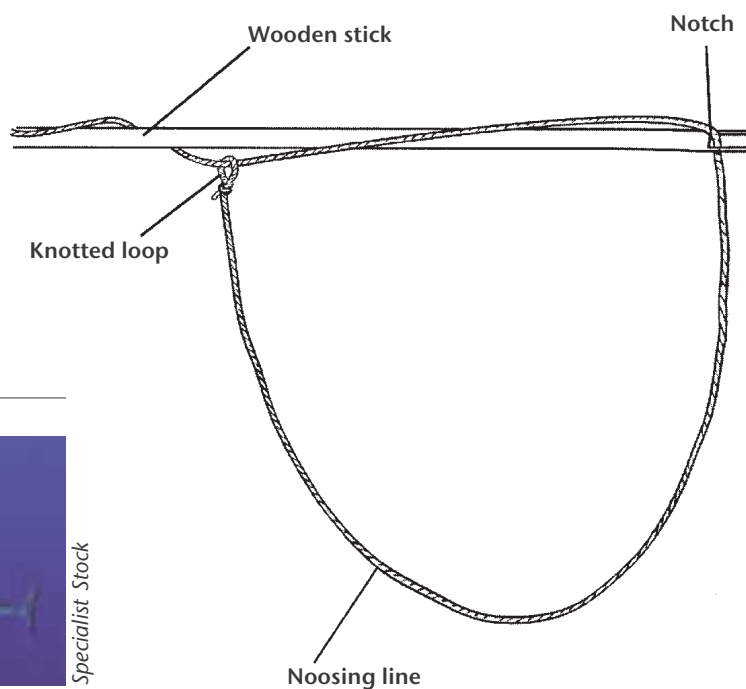
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## 2. *Takiulu: noosing pāla/wahoo (Acanthocybium solandri)*

This method is very important in Tokelau, being productive and fast as well as good to watch. It is done during daylight, on the open sea outside the reef. But it can also be dangerous, so you have to be alert.

The gear is as follows: a thick and strong fishing line about 3 mm in diameter with a noose made by passing the line through a loop at one end; a light line of about 3 kilo breaking strain called a *kinalolo*, on which is rigged the *ulu*, a large fillet of *kakahi* / yellow-fin tuna, which is used to attract the *pāla* / wahoo; a thin straight stick about 140 cm long with a V-shaped notch at one end to push the noose down into the water. This is known as a *kauhele*. Also needed are a fishing knife and a couple of mature coconuts whose meat will be chewed and spat out into the water so that the oil spreads over the surface making it clearer. No hooks are to be lowered into the water.

### Equipment for noosing *pāla/wahoo*



How the preparation is done: you go out the night before to catch *hahave* / flying fish for the *ulu* 'fillet' and the chumming bait, which is used to lead a *wahoo* through the noose. These things are laid out on the canoe before crossing to the open sea in the morning. When you get to the fishing ground, set the noose on the *kauhele* 'stick with a V-shaped notch' and lay it on the *papanaki*, which is a flat board lashed between the outrigger booms at the stern. Then prepare the *hahave* / flying fish, if you are going to use it as an *ulu*, by making a longitudinal cut at the belly from head to tail, removing the eyeballs. Thread the *kinalolo* 'line' through the hole where the eyes were and tie it securely over the top of the head. Skin several flying fish, fillet them and cut the fillets into smaller chunks and then place them on the *pukemuli* 'stern cover of the canoe' to be used as chum bait when attracting and guiding a *wahoo* to the noose.

When all that is done, you are ready to begin your *wahoo* noose fishing. Throw the *ulu* out astern with about 18 to 20 metres of line, and hold the *kinalolo* 'line' between your teeth while you paddle the canoe out to that part of the sea where the *fotugāika* 'pāla / wahoo school' is presumed to be. It is important to know which phase the moon is at. If the morning tide is only just beginning to rise, keep your canoe close to the reef; if it is already quite high, head further out to sea. Tow along your *ulu* and sing your *fakanau*, a song to call *wahoo* and to stimulate and amuse the crew.

*O wahoo  
Come slice the ulu  
The ulu about to escape  
A sharp sighted fish, eyes wide open.*

There are three different ways in which a *wahoo* rises to the *ulu*:

**1. It follows** directly behind the *ulu* with its back just breaking the water and making a ripple. Alert the crew, then stand and pull the *ulu* in quickly, telling the crew to turn the canoe into the wind. Then spit chewed-up coconut onto the surface of the water to allow the fisherman to see down into the depth of the water. Then throw out the *poa-*

*fakatau* (one of the chunks of bait prepared before you set out) to the right side of the canoe. Call to the crew to paddle the canoe forward, at the same time lowering the noose into the water with your right hand, using your left to place another chunk of bait right in the centre of it as you withdraw the *kauhele* 'stick with a V-shaped notch'. The *poa-fakatau* will make the *pāla* / *wahoo* turn so that it is heading directly toward the noose. Release some of the line as the canoe moves forward so that the noose is not tightened. Watch the *wahoo*, and when it enters the noose, pull the line tight so that the noose closes on it – and it is snared.

**2. Another wahoo** may suddenly take a clean bite of the *ulu* without breaking the surface of the water. Turn the canoe to the wind, spit out chewed-up coconut meat to clear the water surface, and pull the *ulu* (or what is left of it) in. Throw out chum bait to the right side of the canoe, as in the previous example. Watch for the fish and when you see it take the chunk of bait you have just thrown out, throw out the *poa-fakatau*, and tell the crew to paddle forward. As soon as they do this, lower the noose into the water with another chunk of bait set in the middle of it, pull up the *kauhele* 'stick with a V-shaped notch' and let out a bit of line. You will see the *wahoo* turn from the *poa-fakatau* and face the noose that is floating upright in the water with another chunk of bait in the middle. As soon as the *wahoo* enters the noose to a position just past its pectoral fins, pull the noose tight.

**3. A wahoo** may follow the *ulu* at a distance without breaking the surface of the water, so you don't know it's there. However, once you stop the canoe and the *ulu* begins to sink, you will see the *wahoo* lurking there, not aroused enough to attack. But when you throw the *ulu* out of the canoe again, you will see the *wahoo* change colour: it will seem to get darker and silvery lines will appear on its skin. Do this several times, throwing the *ulu* out at a distance of 30 or 40 metres and letting it sink. Bite the *kinalolo* 'line' with the *ulu* on it between your teeth and paddle gently forward, tugging the line sharply several times to entice the fish. Sooner or later the *wahoo* will bite, and when that happens,

have the crew turn the canoe into the wind, lay out some chewed up coconut to clear the surface, and throw out a chunk of bait to the right. Once you see the *pāla* / wahoo going for that, lay down the noose with another chunk of bait in the middle. Don't delay because if you are too slow, the fish will take the bait and disappear. But if you move fast, you will catch it.

Each wahoo has its own ways. One may appear and take the first chunk of bait thrown out. Then once the noose is laid, it enters it immediately. You can easily get that one. Another may turn up and simply slice the *ulu* in two, but not eat the bit it has sliced off. For this one you don't throw out chunks of bait. Simply set the noose with a remaining piece of the *ulu*. When doing this, throw out both the noose line and the *kinalolo* 'line' together, but be very careful because the fish will enter the noose in the wink of an eye. Be ready for this and start to close the noose when the fish is about 30 cm away from it.

Yet another wahoo may appear, take the chunk of bait thrown out to it, but once the noose is laid, will eat the *poa-fakatau* and then stop dead in the water about 6 metres from the noose. When this happens, you will know that it is going to dash in a sudden burst through the noose like a flash of lightning. Watch for its glittering underbelly as it turns, and pull the noose closed right away.

Dance song:

*The wahoo gliding along, gliding magnificently  
Move closer, closer  
Your light, your torch of burning frond  
Be steady! Be steady! Caught!*

### 3. Catching mating turtles at sea

This kind of 'fishing' is extremely dangerous, and is known as one of several *faiva mātea* 'fishing methods liable to put a life in danger'. Those who have been selected by the elders of the village to swim out to catch the *ulugāika* 'mating pair' are always warned of the danger before they set out. All the people involved should have had previous experience of holding a turtle in the water.

When mating turtles are spotted in the sea on the leeward side of the village from the northern to the southern end, the elders must always be notified. It is they who have to select the *kauhaga* 'party going out to the turtles'. (When mating turtles are spotted outside that area, it is up to the skilled fisherman present to make a decision on who goes out to catch them).

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#### Turtles mating



M Steel/Marine Photo Bank

When enough men have gathered, an elder of the village will allocate roles among the party: those who will go for the turtles, their assistants and so forth. Although all the men should be experienced, it was the norm that the person chosen to handle the female turtle has as his assistant his *ilāmutu* 'son of his sister'. Similarly, with the man chosen to handle the male turtle: his assistant should also be his sister's son. If there are no individuals in this *ilāmutu* category, the elders will simply pick the most experienced and trustworthy people. When the party swims off, the four men chosen to handle the turtle go ahead, while the others follow. All must approach the turtles from downwind. The one selected to handle the female turtle determines the right moment to go in. Before they reach the pair, they dive underwater and come up only when they are alongside the turtles.

The man assigned to the female approaches it from its front and slides his arms under its front flaps, holding these flaps close to his armpits. He then waits until the handlers of the male are in position and then directs them to separate the pair. The handler of the male approaches the turtle from behind, slides his arms under its front flaps to hold them back, and then brings his hands together behind the turtle's head. The two assistants then hold the turtles upright in the water. The handler of the female then positions himself behind his turtle, grabs the turtle's neck and pulls it back to tilt it upright.

There are two ways to hold the male turtle upright:

1. **Position yourself behind** the man holding the turtle, grab the turtle's neck and pull it backwards to keep it upright.
2. **Position yourself in front** of the turtle, push back on its neck and use the other hand to keep it steady in the water. The canoe is then quickly brought in and the turtles lifted into it and lashed down.

When the turtles are wild and unsettled, they will dive down deep when approached by the party. Whenever this happens, the leader quietly says

'*Fakamale*' and the party then goes to encircle a spot where they judge that the turtles will appear when they next come up for air. If this is successful, then the person in the best position to grab them simply does so, then the others rush in to support him.

Taboos for this fishing: 1. nobody should wear a *litua* 'belt of sennit fibre' around his waist, as this will increase the danger of being taken down by the turtles; and 2. a person whose wife is pregnant is not allowed to join the fishing party; this is considered to bring bad luck.

Dance song:

*Tautai, this fishing is dangerous*  
*Tautai, this fishing is dangerous*  
*Lash to the canoe Hi! Hi!*  
*Tie to the canoe Hi! Hi! Ha! Ha!*

## 4. *Uhu*: driving fish with coconut fronds

There are no special seasons for this type of fishing. The village elders may decide to put a call out for all able-bodied men to prepare an *uhu* whenever the tide is right and the sea is calm. An *uhu* is a coconut frond with all the leaves stripped from the butt end, leaving only a few at the tip of the frond. It is used to guide fish into a good spot where a scoop net can be placed in waiting. All the men in the group must also have a pair of goggles.

Once the fishing party is out on the reef, the master fisherman orders the men to divide into two parties, one going to the windward side and the other to the downwind. They then start guiding fish into a suitable reef channel. Some of the men on each side swim close to the reef with the *uhu* 'coconut frond' while others walk on the reef agitating the water to drive fish into the channel where a *kālele* 'scoop net' has been laid. The master fisherman and his assistants then use a scoop net to collect the fish – such as *pone* / red spot surgeonfish, *alogo* / bristletooth, *ufu* / garnet red parrotfish, *kāmutu* / green parrotfish and other fishes.



Dance song:

*The words of Cush the Benjamite  
With singing in Neginoth  
With music of flute and singing in Negimoth  
And singing with Sheminith.<sup>51</sup>*

## 5. *Fakafolo*: line fishing for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)

This fishing method is done during daylight in the open sea under the overhanging rocks and protuberances of the reef. The appropriate gear is a home-made fishing rod of *gagie*/pemphis shrub, about 1.5 metres long, and hooks number 15 or 16. The line is nylon with an 8 kilo breaking strain and should be about 60 cm in length, but with only about 30 cm of the line dangling from the tip of the rod. You have to have goggles and a fillet of fish to use as bait and chum.

Squirrelfish have special sanctuaries in which they congregate, and these are the places to go to. Once you get there, chew up some fish and insert this into a likely hole that may lead into a chamber. While doing this, keep yourself hidden to prevent the fish from being scared off so they won't bite. Sometimes you might get an unwanted visitor such as a shark. Don't panic, but instead sink down into the water and make a grunting noise. When the shark shies away, don't carry on with the fishing. Just get up on the reef and walk away. This fishing method is used only when the sea is calm, but the fishes caught in this way are not very succulent.

Dance song:

*Are you digging a hole, or a hangman's gallow?  
Are you digging a hole for you?  
The kiss of Judas.<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> The prefatory passage to Psalm 7 provides the meaning of this song.

<sup>52</sup> Dance song based on Esther 7: 9.

## 6. Drift fishing on *utua* 'undersea reefs'

This method is often used for *ono*/barracuda, on the *utua* 'underwater reefs' extending out from points of the island. It can be done either in the day or at night. A traditional canoe is better than other kinds of boats because it will not drift as much with the wind while the lines are in the water.

If you decide to fish at night, you should make all your preparations before sundown. Get your hooks ready, either locally made *matau* or store-bought hooks, two or three hardwood sticks to stun the fish with, some mature coconuts, a fishing knife, strings of sennit, a basket of coral stones, a basket of breadfruit leaves, an *atu*/skipjack or bonito rod and a noose for *pāla*/wahoo.

You may ask why you need to take all this gear when going fishing for *ono*/barracuda. This method of fishing is done in the early hours of the morning, often by a *tautai* 'master fisherman' and can go on till sunrise. The new day will bring its own surprises on the open sea, for instance, the appearance of a school of *pāla*/wahoo, a rising of skipjack or even mating turtles. The *tautai* has to be prepared to deal with a situation as it arises, thus the need for other gear on the canoe.

Other gear you will need is a scoop net and dry coconut fronds for making torches. These will be used to net *hahave*/flying fish for use as bait. Check the whole canoe, making sure that the outrigger is securely attached, because you will be out the whole night and perhaps part of the following morning as well.

Different fishermen have their own favourite times for putting to sea. Some go in the evening before dark (when the tide is not settled) and then wait out at sea until it is fully dark. Then they light their torches and start fishing for flying fish as they move out to their chosen spot. Others go out about midnight, and still others at three or four in the morning and do their bait fishing then.

When you arrive at the *utua* 'underwater reefs' extinguish the flares, set up your hooks and move to a position on one side of the *utua* 'underwater reefs' until you can determine what direction the current is moving you. Once you have landed an *ono* / barracuda, return to that side of the *utua* 'underwater reefs' and drift back down again. This is what many fishermen do. Whenever you move, trail a line in the water, and the place where you get a strike will show you the location of the school of barracuda. In other words, whenever you catch a fish, stop, move back to the spot where the fish struck and let down your lines again.

Whenever you feel a fish on the line, pull it up hard three or four times to make sure that the hook is properly lodged. Do this as hard as you can, and don't worry if you break the 200 kilo breaking strain line or straighten your number 2 or 3 hooks in the process. Some fish will simply bite at the bait and hold it there, then throw the hook. There is a proverbial saying for men preparing for this kind of fishing. 'Lucky you, for you are going tree-chopping', referring to the struggle that barracuda can give a fisherman.

Dance song:

*Elisha, Elisha, there is death in the pot  
Elisha, Elisha, there is death in the pot  
Elisha, please, please.*<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Dance song based on 2 Kings 4: 40.

#### Ono/barracuda



PhotoDisc

## 7. Line fishing on the *pula*

*Pula* is a term that refers to the area between the outer edge of the reef and the deep ocean, and is perhaps related to *pula* meaning 'phosphorescence'. The fishing is done at night with the canoe either anchored to the reef or, on calm nights, drifting gently. In either case, the methods are the same.

The gear required are lines of about 30 kg breaking strain, hooks, baskets of coral stones and *puka* leaves and dry flammable coconut fronds for torches. Light the fronds, and with this torch use a scoop net to collect *hahave* / flying fish as you move out to the spot where the fishing will be done. Once you are there, set the canoe facing into the wind and prepare your gear for fishing. Throw some chum out and let it sink slowly. Then wrap a baited hook together with some more chum in a bundle with *puka* leaves, tying it all together with part of the line and lowering it all into the sea. When the required depth is reached, give the line a sharp tug to release both hook and chum from the wrapped parcel, at the same time letting the stone sink down to the bottom. A wide variety of fish can be hooked this way, and you will enjoy pulling them up.

Dance song:

*Pugapugativai bring the child  
To perform the ceremony with  
Tarry a while until I return.*<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Possibly derived from a folktale.

## 8. Line fishing with *uli*/mackerel scad (*Decapterus macarellus*) bait

There are no special seasons for this fishing, which is done in daylight on the open sea from traditional canoes. Strong lines between 70 and 170 kilos are called for, together with hooks set on wire trace rigged with sinker and swivel. Take a fishing knife.

How the fishing is done: go out in the very early morning to catch *uli*/mackerel scad for bait, and then either return in your canoe to the village, or else stay in the canoe and have one of the crew fish for bait once you have reached a good fishing spot. When setting up an *uli*/mackerel scad on your hook, pass the point of the hook through the back of the fish behind its head, down under its spine, and then out through the head between the eyes. You lower your baited hook to a depth beginning at 40 metres and extending as deep as 200 metres, depending on what depth you make a strike. If a flock of birds passes overhead you should raise your hook closer to the surface as the school of *kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna may be at a shallower depth.

Bear in mind that whenever you go out into the open sea, you should carry a *atu*/skipjack or bonito rod and a noose for *pāla*/wahoo. These two items together are commonly referred to as the 'guardians of the canoe'. Once you have the bait, you can choose which fishing ground to go to. The best are the following: (1) from the channel by the village to the *Utua o Fale*, the undersea reef extending out from the north of the islet; (2) from *Alofi* islet to the south of the village to the *Utua o Fenualoa*, the undersea reef at the south east corner of the island; (3) the *Utua o te Ulopuka* extending seawards from the islet of that name; and (4) the best, the *Utua o Fao*, out from the eastern extremity of the island.

Dance song:

*The birds perching on the rocks  
Silhouetted against the rays of the morning sun  
Half awake, half awake, ready for the open sea.*

## 9. Bottom fishing

This is done during daylight from a canoe on the open sea above one of the undersea reefs. It can be done on any day of the year, though some fishermen prefer the days of the month when there are plenty of bait fishes around to attract the larger ocean fish.

You will need a canoe, lines of 140 to 240 kilos, hooks of size 1, 2 or 3, *pāla*/wahoo or *ono*/barracuda fillet for bait, a wooden club to stun the fish with and a basket of coral rocks. Once you have got your bait and have arrived at the chosen fishing spot, set things up. If the bait is wahoo or barracuda, first fillet it and cut each fillet in half, put it on the hook and lower it into the water. It is up to you whether you send it right to the bottom or raise it a little once it has hit bottom.

Because the bait is large, there will be no problem in feeling its weight or the bite of a fish. If the current is strong, send the bait down weighted with a coral rock sinker. When you feel a fish bite, gently pull on the line and when you feel resistance, pull with all your might to sink the hook in. Once that is done, pull up your catch at your own pace.

Dance song:

*Birds and land animals  
Flock on to Noah in the boat  
Hey Noah! Hey Noah! Noah in the boat.<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> Dance song based on Genesis 6: 20.

## 10. Line fishing while swimming

This involves swimming out in the open sea to where the reef slopes down to the deep blue. This is done during the day and calls for some special equipment. You will need goggles, a line of about 100 kilo breaking strain, number 4 hooks and a wooden float to which you tie the following items: a string to secure your catch with, a dried coconut husk with spare hooks dug into it, spare sinkers, pieces of *feke* / octopus bait, and a piece of hardwood to bludgeon fish with. You should also wind your line around this wooden float.

Bait your hook as you swim out to deep water from the reef, then dive down with your hook to leave it in a favourable spot together with some chum. Then swim back closer to the reef. When a fish takes the hook, pull it up, kill it and secure it. Then begin the whole process once again. You have to be alert to the possibility that a fish may take the hook while you are swimming back toward the reef. Be careful if a shark takes the hook because even if it is hooked, it can go straight for you. (Some skilled fishermen can kill small sharks while swimming, but it is better to get up on the reef and pull the shark up until it is in water no more than ankle deep.)

### View across the lagoon



Judith Huntsman

Dance song:

*The mount, the mount, the mount  
Of the Lord's farewell  
Mount Olive, the mount, the mount  
The mount where the Lord parted with his disciples.*<sup>56</sup>

## 11. Trolling from a sailing canoe

Besides a canoe, for this technique you will need a line with a breaking strain of between 70 and 100 kilos, number 3 hooks, a spear, a knife and a piece of hardwood to stun the catch with. The trolling is done during daylight hours and is best done with a cross wind so you can easily go back and forth across the fishing ground.

The fish that you troll could be *hahave* / flying fish, *atualo* / finny scad, needlefish or any one of the jack family. To prepare it for use, push steel trace from the anus toward the head and out through the mouth. Then the trace is pulled up so that the hook is snugly placed along the belly. Remove the eyeballs, pass a string through the cavities and tie the mouth closed securely.

Before you begin trolling, tie one end of the line to an outrigger boom and then give the line to the crewman sitting in the bow to hold. When a big fish bites, for instance, a *hakula* / marlin or swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) or other billfish, lower the sail to reduce speed, which will allow you to land your catch, bait the hook, and start again on the spot where you had the strike. There are rules propagated by the village elders that forbid this sort of trolling during the *pāla* / wahoo season when other men are out with their nooses. Any wahoo which takes your bait but missed being hooked will never enter a noose.

Other fish caught trolling include *pāla* / wahoo, *kakahi* / yellow-fin tuna, *ono* / barracuda, *hakula* / marlin or swordfish, *mahimahi* / dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) and an occasional shark.

<sup>56</sup> Dance song based on Luke 22: 39.



Dance song:

*My garland, my breath, my flower  
That you crave for  
Please do not undo  
It is Ātafu's necklace,  
Laumilo, hiku uli, pāhina<sup>57</sup>  
A red pearl shell of Apaitoa  
Please do not take it off  
It is Ātafu's necklace.*

## 12. Fakatafito

This is not really a distinct way of catching fish. Rather it describes a way of holding a flaring coconut frond and handling a scoop net for *hahave* / flying fish at the same time. This is a useful technique to know when there are only two men in the canoe.

The person at the stern paddles the canoe while the other person holds the base of the burning fronds with his right foot. In this position, his hands are free to use the scoop net. When most of the frond is burnt out, a paddle handle is pushed through what remains of the frond and pressed against the side of the canoe with one leg. This can be repeated several times until there are enough flying fish for use as bait.

Dance song:

*The migrating birds, my heart weeps  
My dear, love is so difficult  
Keep in mind our parting words  
My love we keep that to our hearts  
A time of happiness, a time of sorrow  
I will not forget you in my heart  
Once I dreamt that you were with me  
Alas, it is a dream of the night.*

*Flowers of the woods, blooming beautiful  
You picked and presented to me  
The wind is blowing from Vailua  
My love do not let drift with the current.*

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<sup>57</sup> Names of different colours of pearlshell.

## 13. Catching *humu*/triggerfish (Balistidae) underwater

This can be done at any time of day on the coral ledges on the outside of the fringing reef, where the water is fairly shallow. The only gear you need is goggles and string for threading the fish on. You won't catch any other kind of fish by this method, only *humu* / triggerfish.

Swim out from the reef, staying fairly close in, and look for *humu* / triggerfish. When you see a school, splash the water surface with your hands and the fish will scatter into holes in the coral. Simply dive down and pull them out. Sometimes you can find two or three in the same hole. Just drift along with the current doing this.

Dance song:

*My necklace of higan leaves I weaved  
I wove in the early dawn of the day  
I wove together with budding flowers  
Its charm allows my heart to reminisce  
On the country dear to me  
A pearl so beautiful  
Love and respect forever  
Such is your garland and flower.*

## 14. Fakalukuluku: fishing in deep water

This section is mainly about the equipment necessary for 'Line fishing while swimming', which is described more fully in section 10 above.

You need a line with a breaking strain of 20 kilos, number 14 or 15 hooks, goggles and a float about a metre long. Wind the line around this float and also tie to it a piece of dry coconut husk to stick spare hooks into. A hardwood club about 30 cm long is also handy to stun your catch with. Another way of killing them is to hold back the gills and then put your fingers

**Fonu/sea turtle (Cheloniidae)**

Roy Niswanger/ Marine PhotoBank

inside to pull out the heart. This way is much quicker. Don't forget to take a much bigger hook in case a larger fish comes your way.

Dance song:

*One saying from the Good Book  
Love is difficult to be broken  
I remember David's and Jonathan's love  
Tokelau I pray that we are one.*<sup>58</sup>

## 15. Torch fishing for *hahave*/ flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.)

This kind of fishing involves following several unwritten rules.

**1. When you go out** through the channel and find other canoes waiting there, if you wish to go

to a fishing ground further off, you must speak to the head fisherman who arrived first and ask his permission to move past him. If he says this is okay, move on to where you want to go but do not light your torch right away.

**2. If this is a village fishing** expedition and you are the first to go out to the open sea, you will have to go to the furthest fishing area because there will be many canoes coming in.

**3. The first canoe** to light its torch is the one at the furthest end and all the canoes paddle to that point and begin their fishing from there.

**4. When the canoes** are scoop netting for *hahave*/ flying fish, no canoe is allowed to pass the one in front. However, you may pair up with the canoe in front. Just ask permission and if it is given, you have to decide which canoe is going to be on the seaward side and which one on the landward side closer to the reef. With the fish

<sup>58</sup> Dance song based on 1 Samuel 20: 12.

rising from the seaward side, the seaward canoe has an advantage. But you can change positions from time to time.

During the months between May and August, it is difficult to get flying fish but you can still get enough to be used by a *tautai* 'master fisherman' going out for *pāla* / wahoo fishing with a noose.

The months between October and April of the following year are much better. The best days when there are plenty of flying fish are the sixth and seventh days after the new moon, when the moon is in the west at sundown. If you go out scoop net fishing during those times, don't wait until the moon is low on the horizon because at this time the fish swim at lower depths. It is better to do the fishing while the moon is still high. There will be plenty of fish and they will be nearer the surface.

If you are late in getting out to sea, wait until some time after the moon has set before lighting your torch and starting to fish. By this time, the fish will have resurfaced and will not be so timid. Also, by this time, your scoop net needs not thrash the water; simply scoop up the flying fish which come very close to the surface of the water. If the moon is still high in the sky, do not beat the surface but just lay the net on the surface of the water and the fish will dash into it. On the fifteenth and sixteenth days after the new moon, when the moon has shifted east of its zenith at sunset and is well overhead, the flying fish will jump up towards your net at the slightest touch of the surface. Whatever the state of the moon, scoop your net downwards until the lower frame dips so far in that the transverse strut of the frame reaches the water. The flying fish will dash upwards into the net, which you turn downwards then upwards to pick it up and then flick it back into the canoe.

Dance song:

*Tagirana Urigana I nano e akitoki*  
*Tagirana Urigana i nano i akitara*  
*Teni kananoaga talota mai darling tofa*  
(this song is in Kiribati).

## 16. Line fishing for *kakahi*/ yellow-fin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)

This can be done on the open sea on any day of the month. The gear you will need is a fishing line, home-made iron hooks called *matau*, a few large store-bought hooks, a fishing knife, a basket of coral rocks and another of leaves. Move the canoe into position, not too near the reef where small fish might nibble at the bait but not too far out either. Tuna feed fairly close to land. You simply have to estimate the best position by reference to the shore. The best bait is *hahave* / flying fish.

To prepare the bait, skin and cut off the fillets. You should remove even the rib bones from the fillets and give the fillets a bit of a chew to soften them up. Pierce a fillet with the hook and tie it to the hook with a bit of string (called a *lavahi*). Be careful not to tie the string too tightly or the point of the hook might not catch in the tuna's mouth and it will simply shuck the hook. The bones and head of the flying fish are used for chum. Wrap these bits up with the hook but make sure the bits are not too small. Place all this in a leaf together with a coral stone and lash them all together with the fishing line. Use a bow knot so that when the line is pulled, it releases the stone, the baited hook and the chum. Place all this in the water and throw loops of fishing line

*Kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna



Specialist Stock



Youths with a *kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna

Judith Huntsman

to ensure that the line will not be taut before the bundle reaches the required depth. The amount of line you throw out is equal to the depth you want to reach with your baited hook.

Between 100 and 120 metres is a common depth but if there is a flock of birds nearby, it means that the tuna are closer to the surface than that. When the hook reaches your chosen depth, lightly tug it upwards to release the knot that tied the bundle. Let the canoe drift gently with the wind and current so that your line can drop straight down and is not slanted by the current. When the feel of the line in your hand alters, you must pull up the line; when there is resistance

you *fakalalau* 'pull up hard quickly'. *Kakahi* / yellow-fin tuna have various different ways of taking a hook and you have to read these ways. Sometimes they only feel like the nibbling of small fishes on the bait but pull up nevertheless. When you feel real weight, pull up really hard to lodge the hook in the tuna's mouth.

Dance song:

*My tauanave flower, from Paradise  
With love  
Glad to pick one for you, made  
from my own hands  
You won't be bored  
You will be pleased with my hula dancing  
For I am so good at it.*

## 17. Line fishing for *tafauli*/ black jack (*Caranx lugubris*)

*Tafauli* /black jack fishing is done in much the same way as fishing for *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper – in the same locations and approximately the same depths. But if you get your canoe out to sea before dawn, you can begin the chumming and fishing even while it is still dark. Some of the chum is thrown directly into the sea from the canoe, while the rest is sent down in a bundle like that used in fishing for *kakahi* /yellow-fin tuna (see section 16 above).

The depth can be anywhere between 120 and 160 metres, and you can either anchor your canoe to the reef or allow it to drift with the wind and current. Other fish that you may get include *kakahi* / yellow-fin tuna, *palukata*, *palu malau* / ornate or big-eye snapper (*Pristipomoides argyrogrammicus*) and *palu ave* / pale or squirrelfish snapper (*Etelis radiosus*).

Dance song:

*You are so beautiful, your features  
Wish to touch, to kiss your face  
For I have missed you so much in my mind  
My sweetheart it started with love.*



## 18. Long-lining for *kamai*/ rainbow runner (*Elagatis bipinnulata*)

Again, this method is similar to that used for *kakahi*/yellow-fin tuna and marbled sea bass (see numbers 16 and 17 above). It is done in the open sea during daylight, from a traditional canoe. However, its use is not common, being done only when there are schools of *kamai*/rainbow runner around, generally above the undersea reefs extending out from points of the island. Use lines with a breaking strain of between 50 and 70 kilos and number 7 or 8 hooks. Catch *hahave*/flying fish during the previous night and go to the chosen fishing spot the next morning, taking with you a fishing knife, a basket of coral rocks to use as sinkers, and another basket of *puka* or breadfruit leaves to bundle everything up in. Cut up bait and chum, bait your hook and wrap it up together

with some chum and a coral rock sinker, wrapping the lower end of your line several times around the bundle and securing it with a bow knot. When the whole bundle has sunk to a depth of 60 or 70 metres, give the line a gentle tug to dislodge the sinker and free the hook and chum. Feel the tug of a *kamai*/rainbow runner. Good fishing!

## 19. Communal fishing for *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphkadion*)

The actual fishing is done in exactly the same way as fishing for *fāpuku*/marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper on an individual basis (see Chapter 2, section 21 above). The season and the gear used are the same. But communal

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Elder preparing floats for a net



Judith Huntsman

expeditions are great fun, involving the elders, able-bodied men and all the women. The elders of today all remember it being done in the days when they were young at heart, and recall it with great fondness.

The season for *fāpuku* is from *Toe Palolo* (January) through to *Utua Mua* (June), and the best days are when the moon is slightly to the east at sunset, on the fourteenth and fifteenth days after the new moon, extending right up to when the moon is full at sunset. It is also good on the twentieth and twenty-first days after the new moon when the water is clear and the currents settled.

The decision to hold an expedition is taken by the elders in the village council. Here is how it is done. The canoes are chosen for the fishing outside the reef and crews allocated to them. Others canoes are chosen to take the women and old ladies out to a camp on one of the islets. Once there, they gather green drinking coconuts, *uto* / germinating coconuts for cooking, breadfruit, firewood and sea birds. The women, both young and old, go out fishing for *feke* / octopus on the reef and these are later seared on hot stones to prevent them rotting, because they are going to be used for bait.

The elderly men, both those left in the village and those helping the women on the camp islet, get all the gear ready, fashioning the special iron *matau* hooks, weaving the sinnet used for traces and getting the stone sinkers ready. This is done by the night before. While the fishing parties rest themselves for the early morning expedition on the following day, another fishing party goes fishing outside the reef for the group's early morning breakfast.

Dance song:

*All the world may be noisy and arguing politics  
My heart is at peace in Ātafu close to my heart  
I may roam the world  
I will not forget you Kīleva, a source of my pride.*

## 20. Makomako<sup>59</sup>

*Makomako* fishing is done during daylight, using a traditional canoe. The technique is similar to the method used for catching *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper bass in that it calls for the use of home-made iron circular hooks from which it is almost impossible for a fish to dislodge itself.

<sup>59</sup> Although the Tokelau text makes no mention of it, it is worth noting that this kind of fishing is the only kind done at extreme depths, down to some 400 metres. At these depths, there are a number of different kinds of fish, mainly of the snapper family, which are distinguished by being called *palu* in addition to a name commonly given to a similar fish caught at lesser depths.



There is other special gear that is called for as well. The most important item is the *afo*, a string of hooks with sinnet traces of between 30 and 40 cm attached to a parent line which has a coral sinker at its lower end. Baits are tied on to the hooks with a thin line to ensure that they stay on. The hooks are separated from the parent line by small hardwood rods about 20 cm long. The hooks are fixed to one end of these rods while the other end is attached to the parent line. In this way, the hooks hang free of the parent line and do not get entangled with it, or with one another.

The home-made *matau* (iron hooks) are of slightly different shapes, which are generally distinguished as *tuki tahi*, *faka atiu* and *hakavae vaka*. These names refer to the different shaping of the hooks for *makomako* fishing. The distance between the hooks is between 30 and 40 cm. Canoes carry two *afo* 'string of hooks'. When one is baited and lowered into the water, the other one is baited and made ready to be lowered when the other is pulled up. Each *afo* 'string of hooks' has eight hooks attached, with the uppermost one being the largest.

Dance song:

*The gentle wind blowing  
Blowing to the bay  
And watch the flow of the current  
The birds of the early dawn, gliding on the open sea  
While they keep an eye on the sands of the island.*

## 21. Spearfishing for surgeon fish

This is done on the outer edge of the reef on calm days. Look for good locations among the little channels running up into the reef, and the little ledges which can be found protruding from it.

You will need goggles and a speargun. To make one, use a straight piece of *gagie* / *pemphis* about 2 metres long with a diameter of 2 to 3 cm. The

spear is a steel rod about 3.5 cm in diameter and 50 cm long. Sharpen one end and tie the other blunt end to the narrower end of the *gagie* rod with a fine rubber string. You can propel the spear with the push of your forearm; however, some spears use elastic rubber to propel them. When you go out fishing, tie around your waist a *kalava* 'length of bark torn from the upper surface of a green coconut frond'. This is to string your fish with. Look for a good spot and you will be able to spear a variety of fish, but mainly different kinds of surgeon fish.

Some words of warning. Keep an eye out for sharks, which may be attracted to your catch. If the sea is rough, remember that there will be other, calmer days. If you still insist, you might be thrown against the coral by the waves.

Dance song:

*As the years go by changes come  
To the way of life  
Let's work for good change  
Let's hope for the future.*

## 22. Shark fishing outside the reef (Canoe drifting)

This is done at night from a traditional canoe. The right days are from the third day after the new moon through till the twentieth day. Use a line of some 170 kilo breaking strain and numbers 1 or 2 hooks. The bait is eel of any kind. You will also need a float to keep the line near the surface. This also allows the line with the baited hook to drift away from the canoe to a distance of about 15 to 16 metres. The hook should be set about 4 metres down from the float.

Skin the eels, fillet them and then cut the fillets into 20 cm lengths. The hook should pierce the piece of bait just once. The eel skins, heads and backbones should be lashed together and hung from the aft outrigger beam. The fish that may be caught this way are large jacks as well as

sharks. It is important to be careful with this fishing technique. When a shark is hooked, it keeps its mouth wide open beside the canoe. Don't allow it to run with the line but pull it up right alongside and beat it to kill it.

The canoe is gently paddled along the strip of water between the reef and the deep ocean. If a whole school of sharks should appear, don't let the bundle of chum stay dangling in the water, but pull it into the canoe to prevent a shark taking it and damaging the canoe.

Dance song:

*The wind blowing gently and the ripples of the sea  
Throwing reflections of my  
pearshell lure in the ocean  
My pearl shell to grow for days to come  
To decorate with it the girls of Tokelau  
O girls of Tokelau, why do you tarry?  
Troll your pearlshell lure  
So we can have a prize  
To decorate the women of Tokelau.*

## 23. Shark fishing outside the reef (Canoe anchored)

This is done in much the same way as described in the previous example, and taking the same precautions. The main differences are that in this case the canoe is anchored to the reef and there are no bundles of chum hanging into the water from the canoe. Another difference is that the eels are not skinned but simply cut up into 20 cm lengths. Since the baited hook is to be taken down to a greater depth, you will need a rock sinker.

Anchor your canoe to the reef and let it drift into deep water. The first time you let down a hook, go to a depth of 180 metres, but if there are no bites there, let the canoe drift off the reef a bit further and try a depth of 300 metres. Tie a 20 cm piece of bait to your hook with a string about 1.5 metres long, and on the other end of

this string tie a sinker. Allow all this to sink and when you feel that it has touched the bottom, pull it up a little so that sinker and baited hook are suspended in the water. Hold the line in that position, and whenever you can no longer feel the weight of the sinker, you will know that a shark has taken the hook. Pull up a bit further until you feel the weight of the shark, then pull up strongly to set the hook.

## 24. Deep sea fishing from a canoe

This is done at night from a canoe at the point where the reef slopes steeply down to deep water. It calls for a scoop net for *havave* / flying fish, torches made of dry coconut fronds, a 150 kilo line, number 2 hooks and a hardwood club about 50 cm long to stun your catch. There is no special season for doing this, but the sea should be calm and you should have a crew of three or four.

How the fishing is done: paddle your canoe out from the reef a bit, and throw out a good deal of chum, together with a baited hook. Then paddle gently back toward the reef and when you are nearly there, stop and wait for a tug on the line. When this happens, pull in hard. Sometimes you may hook a fish while you are still paddling back toward the reef. You can get a good catch in a short time if there are indeed fish around the area.



## 25. Line fishing around coral rocks

This fishing method is done from a canoe on moonlit nights just outside the reef and in the reef channels. Take a *puapua* fishing rod about 2 metres long, number 13 and 14 hooks and a light fishing line. The bait is fish.

You must be careful. Don't go out in rough weather, but only if the sea is calm. When doing this fishing you need to have your canoe close to the reef, so there is the danger of a freak wave hitting your canoe. Take your canoe out close to the reef or inside some sheltered channels, chew up some chum and spit it into the water together with its juices. When there are soldierfish around, begin fishing with your line, but when lots of soldierfish come up to the surface, it is quicker to use the rod. You will have good fun doing this if you happen to strike a good fishing night – sometimes caused by the presence of a swarm of baitfish. Don't forget to keep an eye on the breaking waves.

Dance song:

*Send fast, be quick  
The letter by Jezebel  
For you want to seize the vineyard  
Of Naboth the Jezreelite  
Let's stone, throw stones at him.*<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Dance song based on 1 Kings 21: 8.

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**Scoop net suitable for capturing small fish**

## 26. *Talitali*: net fishing over the reef

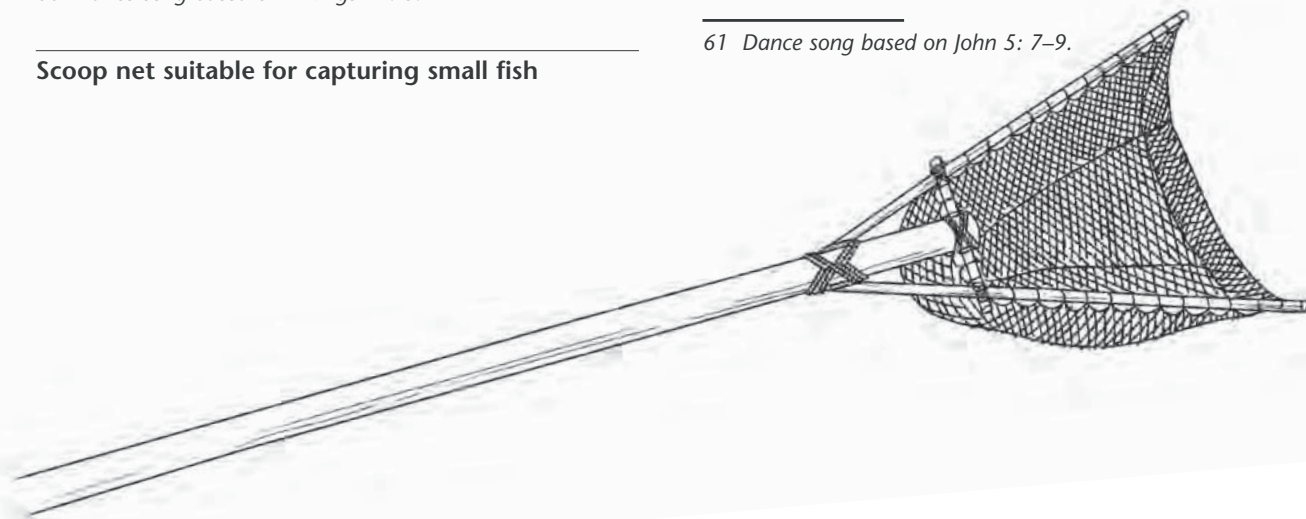
This is more or less exactly the same as the method described in section 4 of this chapter, and is governed by the same rules. The difference is that this time a net is used, and is laid just behind the outer edge of the reef in a place free of obstacles, which the master fisherman knows lies on the escape route that the fishes use.

First, a sack-like hollow is made at the centre of the net by folding the centre and stitching together both sides of the net where the floats are at a distance of about 2 metres. Likewise, the lower part of the net where the sinkers are mounted is stitched together to the same length to make a bag at the centre with arms going out to the left and right sides of the net. The bag is then held down by rocks to prevent it being thrown about by the waves. The men then go out and wade along the reef, driving fishes towards the net. You will catch much the same variety of fishes as are caught by other ways of net fishing. For this form of collective fishing there is a taboo against the fishing party eating the raw fish intended for village distribution.

Dance song:

*The pool of Bethesda near the sheep gate  
The Pool of Salvation.*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Dance song based on John 5: 7–9.



## 27. Netting *ō*/damselfish (perhaps *Lepidozygus tapeinosoma*)

*Ō* are tiny fish, recently identified as damselfish up to 2 cm long, which regularly rise in very dense schools on the ocean side of the barrier reef during the last quarter of the moon.

When fishermen notice this fish in the guts of fish they have caught, or see seabirds bringing them in, the elders arrange for one or more canoes to go out and *tafari te* 'seek out' any schools of *ō*. The canoes always carry the rods and other gear for *atu*/skipjack or bonito because skipjack are almost invariably associated with such schools. If any large schools of *ō* are located, this is the occasion for a large communal expedition with many canoes going out, one of them carrying the village *ō* net known as the *ola*.

When the canoes enter the open sea, one group goes toward *Ālofi* islet and the other goes northward to the *Tuafenua* 'north-eastern section of the island'. When a canoe locates a school of *ō*, a special signal is made to bring the other

canoes around. Signals have different meanings. The signal for a school of *ō* is the waving of a bailer or a hat, readily seen from the village. If the school is far from the village, at *Fenualoa*, the *Hakea* islets, the *Utua-o-Fāō* or the *Ahagaloa* to the *Oki*, the signal is passed on from canoe to canoe until it reaches right back to the village. All the canoes then gather where the signal has originated, and women gather *laumea*/bird's-nest fern, in which the *ō* will eventually be wrapped and cooked.

Once the canoes have gathered and the one carrying the *ola* 'village *ō* net' has arrived, the master fisherman calls for all the men to get into the water and surround the school. He then calls for them to move in and lower the net into the water. When he calls out '*Te Kalehi*', it is the signal for one of the men to dive down and open the mouth of the net by pulling it downward. The men on the *ola* 'village *ō* net' canoe hold the base of the net frame and paddle gently forward to help sink the net down, while the men in the water drive the school into the net.

When the school of *ō* is in the net, the men in the water gently slap the surface of water over the net to calm the fish down. To pour the school into the canoe, the men in the canoe grasp the frame of the net closest to them and lift it into the canoe. Then they pull up the body of the net and hold it with the help of their knees and drop the frame back into the water – a process that will eventually turn the net inside out into the canoe. The men in the water push up the net while those in the canoe keep the *ō* together and pour them into the canoe. Then this whole process is repeated until the master fisherman declares that they have enough *ō* for distribution to the whole village.

Dance song:

*Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar  
your punishment  
Separated from humans to eat grass  
To wet your body with the dew.*<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Dance song based on Daniel 4: 25.

### *Ō*/damselfish



Sarah Lardizabal/Marine Photo Bank

## 28. *Tuali*: spawning *hahave*/ flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.)

A *tuali* is a school of flying fish that has risen to the surface just outside the reef to spawn. It is not often that they are noticed, but they can be readily seen from the reef because they turn the sea a whitish colour. When a *tuali* 'school of flying fish' is spotted, a signal is given so that canoes can come out from the village.

All that you will need are goggles, a flying fish scoop net and a canoe. The scoop net is easy to handle, but you can also collect the fish by simply jumping into the water and picking them up with your hands. The fish appear to be dazed, swimming around aimlessly with no sense of direction. But beware of sharks, which will often appear to collect their share of the catch.

Dance song:

*Nebuchadnezzar, changed to an animal  
Ate the grass of the field  
Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar.*<sup>63</sup>

## 29. Trolling for *palu vakaalo*/ small-toothed jobfish (*Aphareus furca*)

For this method you will need a thin line of about 10 kilo breaking strain and either a white lure or a *tālau* / mud-skipper. Take your canoe across the reef to the open sea, set up your hook and line and troll it about 20 metres behind the canoe while you gently paddle close to the reef.

Once you reach a submerged reef extending from a point of the island, especially the *Utua-o-Fāō*, just traverse it several times from end to end. You will get a good catch, especially if there are a lot of small baitfish around. Other fish that you are liable to catch are *āheu* / trevally,

<sup>63</sup> Dance song based on Daniel 4: 16.

*alaala* / striped jack or barred trevally and *tafauli* / black jack. But don't stay too long catching fish. Cook them while they are still fresh or you will have wasted your effort.

Dance song:

*Take hold, take hold of the millstone  
Women of the Chaldeans  
Remove your veil  
Raise your skirt and cross the river.*<sup>64</sup>

## 30. Night fishing while anchored

This method is done from traditional canoes over the reef in the open sea, at night. You can choose for yourself whether to anchor or simply let the canoe drift. In either case the method is essentially the same.

Get everything together before nightfall – the fishing line, hooks, a basket of stones, a few *puka* leaves, dry coconut fronds to use as torches and a good-sized stone to anchor the canoe with. Cross the reef before sunset while there is still light and wait a while until it is dark. Then light a torch and start scoop-netting for *hahave* / flying fish as you move out to your chosen fishing ground. Anchor your canoe by throwing the anchor up on the reef and then drifting out to the edge of the *pula* 'area between the outer edge of the reef and the deep ocean', where fluorescent coral can be seen at night. Cut up the bait, saving the bones and bits of chum and sending them down together with a baited hook, all wrapped in *puka* leaves and weighted with a rock. You can catch a great variety of fish this way.

Dance song:

*Tonga be silent, do not whisper still  
So Faufau will reveal his sickness  
My! It is a sickness of the gods  
Not a sickness of man*

<sup>64</sup> Dance song based on Daniel 5: 26.

*A sickness of the heart, a desire for the Huhale Paea  
She wishes for a baby boy  
She wishes for a baby girl.*

### 31. Day fishing while anchored

This is done in exactly the same way as the previous example of fishing at night, even down to the same gear. The important thing is to have enough bait because you also use it as chum. The more bait and chum you have, the better will be your catch for the day. You should also have a good supply of coral rocks and leaves just in case you decide at dawn to catch some yellowfin tuna, even if you already have enough good fish. It is usual for the *tautai* 'master fisherman' who goes out fishing at dawn to take extra gear for another type of fishing, for instance *lūlū kakahi* or fishing for yellowfin tuna, when the sun rises, as he will have to wait for sunrise before attempting to cross the channel. He has to be ready for a surprise in the morning.

Dance song:

*Here am I standing and twirling  
Standing under the lipolipo  
Parents who are lost here am I crying  
I am crying for Mākoilagi.<sup>65</sup>*

### 32. Tuku vaka: fishing for malau/squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)

This is usually done on moonlit nights, although it can also be done when there is no moon. Use a light fishing line, hooks sized between 10 and 12 and a sinker especially prepared for this kind of fishing. The bait is a fillet of fish. The hooks need to have a light wire trace attached, and when you have put your hook on, tie the trace on 20 to 25 cm above it.

<sup>65</sup> From a folktales.

The fishing is done on the coral bottom just over the fringing reef up to the point where the bottom slopes steeply down to the deep. Let down your line until it has reached the bottom and then pull it up slightly so that it is suspended above the corals. Take care that you don't get it tangled with the coral. You can catch a good variety of fish this way, but keep an eye out for *malauloa* and *tā*/armoured soldierfish because their spines are poisonous and they can prick you badly.

This form of fishing can also be done on moonless nights usually when you intend to catch bait for an early morning fishing.<sup>66</sup> While you are fishing, hum your *fakanau*, a song used by many master fishermen to entice a good catch.

*Hey malau, take this offering  
Your crab is pounded  
Put away as a snack for you  
Sprinkled out, spat out.*

Dance song:

*Tuafenua, Yes you are number one at fishing  
Fāmuli, Yes you are number one at dancing  
For we are the peoples of the coral rock  
We have land on the reef.<sup>67</sup>*

### 33. Trolling for kata/large jacks (Caranx sp.)

This is done at night outside the reef, from traditional canoes. The best day for doing it is the twentieth day after the new moon. Use a very strong line, one with a breaking strain of between 150 and 200 kilos, because a big *kata* / large jack can be very powerful indeed and might snap a weaker line. The hooks to use are

<sup>66</sup> This statement means that a fisherman intends to do another type of fishing at sunrise, possibly *makomako* (see chapter 4.20) or *lūlū tafauli* (see chapter 4.17).

<sup>67</sup> During the Pacific War, groups of people were dispersed to different locations around the atoll when there were signs of danger. The two locations (out of four) mentioned in the song, *Tuafenua* and *Fāmuli*, or those who remained in the village, became names of groups that competed in fishing, dancing and cricket.



numbers 2 and 3, attached to steel wire traces. Other gear you will need is a fishing knife, twine of some sort and a hardwood baton for stunning the catch.

Once outside the reef, prepare your bait. Make a cut from the caudal fin up to the head of a *hahave* / flying fish and remove the whole upper part of the fish, leaving you with just the head and the lower part of the fish, with the pectoral fins still attached. Tie a twine to the trace and insert the free end into the head of the fish and out through its mouth. Then pull the trace so that the hook is level with the fish's anus. Remove the eyeballs and put the twine through the eyeholes, then tie the lower jaw together with the trace.

Throw the hook out and paddle gently forward. With about 10 metres of line out astern, tie the line firmly to the outrigger boom. When a fish strikes, get the crew to paddle hard ahead to sink the hook firmly. At the same time, you should steer the canoe away from the fringing coral reef to deeper water to prevent the line being caught up there. Once the fish is firmly hooked, you can pull it in at your leisure.

Dance song:

*The wind blowing, blowing from Mulihelu  
A versatile pearlshell lure decked  
with pandanus and kānava  
The bonitos' favourite, bonitos  
who roam Faga-o-Lakulu.*

### 34. Spearing *eve*/orange sea bass (*Epinephelus hexagonatus*)

This is done at any time during the day, morning or late afternoon, outside the reef. You will need a *gagie* / pemphis fishing rod about 3 metres long to which is attached a 10 kilo line of about 60 cm. The hooks to use are between

sizes 10 and 12. You will also need goggles and a string to carry your fish with. The bait is fish.

Once over the reef, swim out a bit to deeper water and if you should see an *eve* / orange sea bass or a *mataele* / flag-tailed rockcod (*Cephalopholis urodeta*), dive down with your baited hook and rod and haul it up. You can also get *loi* / blue-spotted grouper doing this. When there are a lot of *eve* / orange sea bass around, it is called a *mafua eve*.

Dance song:

*The customs of my land make me proud  
Ātafu is an able matau  
My heritage from the prince  
Small in size, but quenches my heart  
Mulihelu you are a dear, your beautiful sandy bays  
Give me protection from strong winds  
From the lagoon and from the sea  
I shelter at the cove of Avainia  
I paddle with confidence along the shoreline.*

### 35. Fishing for *humu* / triggerfish (Balistidae) from a canoe

It is essential to get all your gear ready before setting out. This will include rods and fishing line together with home-made iron hooks called *matau*. If you have to use store-bought hooks, they should be numbers 16 or 17 and the barbs must be either squashed in or filed off; otherwise you will waste too much time getting *humu* / triggerfish off the hooks. If you use home-made *matau* 'hooks' they must have, a fine linen trace called a *lavahi*, which is tied just below the angle of the hook and used to lash the bait onto the hook. The thin line you take out with the rest of the gear is to string live *humu* onto. The *humu* are tied by their tails and left in the water near the canoe to attract other *humu*. The best bait is fish fillet, but also take a couple of green coconuts with you and chew up

their meat together with the fish to make a good chum to spit out onto the water. The first five or six *humu* you catch should be tied by their tails onto the string, about 20 cm apart, and the string then tied to the canoe.

Be aware at all times of the current direction. It is not good for it to push you against the reef, so if this happens simply pull up the anchor and move to a more favourable spot. Keep in mind that the safety of the canoe and crew depends on the person who is holding the canoe steady with his paddle in the front seat of the canoe. He will be calling out 'Keep talking to me', meaning that those doing the fishing should continually tell him exactly where the canoe should be. Don't be too eager, keep watching the tide. And if the canoe needs to be baled out, move to deep water and do it there, because if you do it where the fishing is done, they will just disappear.

Dance song:

*The Pharisees, the Pharisees, they  
Are choked with a mosquito  
But can swallow a camel.*<sup>68</sup>

### 36. Fishing for *ono*/barracuda (*Sphyraena* sp.)

This method is the same as for section 6 on p.78.

Dance song:

*Throw seeds in the water  
In the waters of the Nile  
When days go by  
The reward eventually will come  
Throw your goods in the water.*<sup>69</sup>

### 37. Drift fishing for *palu*

For this type of fishing you have to decide what bait to use: parrotfish or *ono*/barracuda. If you happen to be already out at sea when you decide to fish for *palu*, you must troll for barracuda to use as bait when you paddle out to the fishing ground. But if you are getting bait from the reef, take a net with some men to catch one of the species of parrotfishes. It is really up to the fisherman just how he gets his bait. When you cross the reef to the open sea, wait until it is dark and then light your torch to catch *hahave*/flying fish for extra bait. You can do this while you paddle out to your chosen fishing ground.

How to prepare the bait: some people prefer to slice a flying fish from behind the head down to the tail then remove the backbone. Others simply slice the flying fish open before setting it up on the particularly large *kau* 'hook' used for catching *palu*. It used to be made from *gagie*/pemphis, but has been replaced by those made from steel rods about 1 to 1.5 cm in diameter and retaining the original triangular shape. The understanding is that once a *kau* 'hook' is hooked into the gills, it will remain there, allowing the fish to be pulled up at your leisure.)

To set the bait, lay the prepared flying fish flat on the long arm of the *kau* 'hook', with the head of the fish pulled through the point of the *kau* 'hook' from gills to mouth. The bait is then lashed to the *kau* 'hook' with a piece of sinnet called a *lavahi*. The bait must be firmly lashed on the arm of the hook because if it just hangs loose, no *palu* will be caught.

Before you start fishing, make sure that you are not too close to the reef because your hook might get caught up on the corals. But don't get too far out either. Just use your best judgement. Start with your *kau* 'hook' down about 180 metres, and then increase that depth down to 250 metres or more. You have to *fagota* your line there. (The term *fagota* means moving the hook up some distance and then lowering it again until you

<sup>68</sup> Dance song based on Matthew 23: 23.

<sup>69</sup> Some of the meaning intended here can perhaps be found in Proverbs 11: 24–25 and Luke 12: 33.

*Palu loa/oilfish (Ruvettus pretiosus)*



NOAA

find the depth at which the *palu* will strike.) At this point you can sing your *fakanau*, as follows:

*Hey palu, steady palu*  
*Come to the palu canoe*  
*Race up*  
*Chase the phosphorescence*  
*Pull down*  
*Hage palu*  
*Pandanus palu*  
*Red palu*  
*Long palu*  
*Nibbling palu, taste your hook.*

When you feel that a *palu* is on the line, gently pull the line up a bit, and once you are sure that it has taken the *kau* 'hook' and is hanging there, pull it up at your own pace. When it is almost daylight and the sun is about to rise, you change your *fakanau*:

*The light of the palu is about to set*  
*The phosphorescence has gone,*  
*unhappy, gone to the hook*  
*Oily fish, oily fish, take this snack.*

When fishing for *palu* you have to keep raising and lowering your line until you find the right

depth, where the fish are. Each *palu* has its own way of taking the bait. Some approach it from below and just tap it. But when you feel the line shaking, you know that a *palu* has taken the *kau* 'hook' and is hanging from it. Others take the hook and press down on it. In such cases, just hold the line steady and when it starts shaking or suddenly goes light, you know that a *palu* has been hooked. As you are fishing keep singing your song to the fish. 'Hey *palu*, turn upwards your eyes, chase upwards, chase the fluorescence of the bait.' If you feel that the line is being held fast, you know that a *palu* has hooked itself by just jumping at the bait, so pull it up.

On some nights when you are pulling up *palu*, others will rise with it and surface close to the canoe. No other *palu* will bite when this happens, and you will have to move to a different fishing ground. As is said, 'The school has moved'. Never forget to keep moving your *kau* 'hook' up and down. The elders say of a canoe that has not caught any *palu* that it is *kaukele*, a word that means 'laziness'.

When a number of *palu* surface after following one that has been hauled up, they just remain

still. You can grab them and lift them into the canoe, and only then will they begin to struggle. If you should go out without any bait at all, you can just lash green coconut husks to your *kau* 'hook' instead. If an oilfish has not taken the bait, you can use a technique called *fakaino*, which involves allowing the *kau* 'hook' to sink down so the *palu* will turn its head downwards to follow it. Hold the line firm and then pull up the fish.

Dance song:

*Palu, palu, move on, move on to the palu canoe*  
*Palu, palu, palu, chase up chase up*  
*Palu, palu palu, chase up*  
*Chase up, chase up.*

### 38. Fishing for *palu* while anchored

You may choose any night to go fishing for *palu*. Get the gear ready – either locally-made *matau* or store-bought hooks. Both must be fitted with wire traces. If you need a lead sinker, fix it to the line near the hook. In addition, take a rock to anchor your canoe to the reef. You can get some bait by trolling a fine line when you first get over the reef to catch a few *malau* / squirrel- and soldierfish. Watch the wind as you throw out your anchor. When you are sure it has caught, tie a float (a paddle will do) to the anchor line to keep it off the coral. Then when you have drifted off another 20 metres or so, tie another float, and yet another when you are 150 to 170 metres out.

Get hold of your hook, bait it and throw it into the water, singing your *fakanau* to attract the *palu*.

*Palu move up*  
*Jump on to your lunch*  
*And gently lower the line*  
*Not too long, you feel the fishes*  
*The *palu* and *maga**  
*Fighting on the hook.*

When you feel a fish on the hook, pull the line up, and when the fish comes to the surface, lead it in close to the side of the canoe – but not touching the canoe, in case it struggles. Grasp the *kau* 'hook' with your left hand and hold the fish at the side of the canoe, and then use your other hand to kill it with a hardwood club.

Dance song:

*Palm leaves are laid,*  
*Laid on the path*  
*The world sing Hosannah*  
*The youth from Nazareth.<sup>70</sup>*

### 39. Line fishing for *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper (*Epinephelus polyphekadion*)

This is done outside the reef from traditional canoes. The hooks called *matau* are fashioned from thick steel wires about 2–3 mm in diameter to retain their traditional shapes. They are attached to the main trace line, the *afo*, by sinnet traces. An *afo* 'trace line' holds about two *matau* 'hooks' and is about a metre in length. A sinker is attached to the end of the *afo* 'trace line' with a swivel. The sinker is a round oval coral rock with up-down grooves to house the sinnet or steel wire, which has a knot at one end to tie it to the lower end of the *afo* 'trace line'.

How the fishing is done: one way is to go out to sea at night and do torch-fishing for *hahave* / flying fish to be used to fish for *ono* / barracuda, which is to be used for bait, before moving on to the spot for catching *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper in the morning. Another way is to wait until morning, catch some *feke* / octopus, and then go on your way with all your gear, straight to the preferred fishing ground. There are two kinds of fishing grounds for *fāpuku*. (1) *Mulipuga*, which are spots around the

<sup>70</sup> Dance song based on Mark 11: 8.



island well-known to fishermen. (2) *Muli-utua* 'ends of an undersea reef ridge', which extend out from a point of the island. Once you have reached your chosen spot, cut off the tentacle of an octopus and chew it up a bit to soften it. Then use it to bait your hooks. For this type of fishing, there are only two *matau* 'hooks' attached to the *afo* 'trace line'. If you are fishing your line from the bow seat, throw your line out forward and to the right side of the canoe, then let it sink. When it touches the bottom, raise it a couple of metres and then let it sink again. Do this every time you throw a line out. This way you can maintain a good idea of the position of the hooks, and stop both the hooks and sinker from becoming entangled in the bottom corals and lost.

The bite of a *fāpuku* is not easy to distinguish from the nibbles of little fishes. Only with practice will you learn to know the difference. For your integrity as a fisherman, you know that it is not good to be seen by others on the open sea pulling up your line every time you feel the nibble of little fishes. It is a display of inexperience. People are liable to call out to you 'Don't smash the rocks!' A *fāpuku* / marbled sea bass or camouflage grouper will bite and turn, or will take the hook and then press down on the line or just tug. You have to learn by experience.

Dance song:

*Come, let's look around  
How marvelous the actions of the Utua  
Its waves from both sides meet  
For the pebbles of my land  
The kānava, puapua creep along  
The shores of the land  
Pink, white flowers, the plume of my land.*

Juvenile *uli*/mackerel scad



Edvard Hviding

## 40. Fishing for *hahave*/flying fish (*Cypselurus* sp.) with baited hooks

Normally, flying fish are caught using a scoop net at night; however, this method is done from a traditional canoe outside the reef during daylight hours. You will need a thin line of about 4 kilos breaking strain, number 16 hooks and a float about a metre long with a diameter of 8 cm. Rig up four lines about 30 cm long, with hooks on one end with the other ends tied to the float about 30 cm apart. The bait is fish meat.

When the hooks are baited and ready, let the float drift off the canoe to a distance of 20 metres. Keep an eye on it, and when you see *hahave* / flying fish jumping around it, you know that at least some of the bait has been taken, so you pull the contraption in.

Dance song:

*Fill up your bottle, the water is flowing  
In the desert of Africa  
Hey Joe, be careful with the water.<sup>71</sup>*

## 41. Line fishing for *uli*/mackerel scad (*Decapterus macarellus*)

*Uli* / mackerel scad are commonly found in the deep sea, and are a favourite food of many other bigger fish. They also come up close to the land, at the point where the reef slopes down to the deep, or over undersea reefs. They are a good eating fish, either cooked or raw.

They are fished for in the very early morning or late in the afternoon. When the men have finished their work for the day, they will go out to fish

<sup>71</sup> This is a dance song coined from a 1940s US Coast Guard film where some American soldiers found precious water in the desert.

*uli*/mackerel scad, taking with them a string or a sack for their catch. The necessary gear is a *gagie*/pemphis rod, about 1.5 metres long and slim like the frames of a scoop net for birds, and also goggles. The hooks are number 18, and the bait is either fish meat or the meat of a green coconut. The length of line attached to the rod is 20 cm.

Chew up a chum of fish and coconut meat and spit it out into the water to attract the fish. When a school of *uli*/mackerel scad appears you can fish for them right then and there – perhaps getting enough for an evening meal. But you must be careful about other bigger fish like *pāla*/wahoo or *ono*/barracuda coming in to feed on the *uli*/mackerel scad, especially when they are struggling on your hook. It is best to put your *uli*/mackerel scad into a sack where other fish can't see them.

Dance song:

*Small islands, big islands of the Pacific  
Ātafu here, chosen by scientists  
To observe the eclipse of the sun.*<sup>72</sup>

## 42. Line fishing for *loi*/ blue-spotted grouper (*Cephalopholis argus*)

*Loi*/blue-spotted grouper as well as other fish can be caught by this method while swimming outside the reef. You will need goggles, a 10 kilo line and suitable *loi*/blue-spotted grouper hooks, as well as a stronger line and some larger hooks in case other fish appear. Also, take a fishing rod for *mōtoa*/six-barred wrasse (*Thalassoma hardwicke*) for bait and a float to wind your line on. Other items tied onto the float are your rod, a string to load your catch on to, and a dry coconut husk with extra hooks stuck in it.

First, get some octopus bait and swim out to open water close to the reef. If the *loi*/blue-spotted

### *Loi*/blue-spotted grouper



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grouper are not attracted to your octopus bait, move in closer to the reef and catch a few *mōtoa*/six-barred wrasse to use as bait. Don't kill the *mōtoa* though. Make a sack at the end of your *lavalava* and keep them alive in there until you are ready to put them on a hook. When a big fish appears, use the heavier line and bigger hooks that you brought with you and you will get a good variety in your catch.

Dance song:

*The word speaks with faithfulness  
The word speaks with faithfulness  
It is love that they kissed.*<sup>73</sup>

## 43. Line fishing for *tātifi*/ unicornfish (*Naso* sp.)

This fishing is done from a canoe outside the reef. Use a 10 kilo fishing line and number 16 hooks, with a bait of *uga*/land hermit crab or fish meat. You should also have with you a rock to use as an anchor and a heavier line to attach it with. The best position to be in is a little inland from where you fish for *loi*/blue-spotted grouper.

<sup>72</sup> A British scientific expedition in the 1950s landed in Atafu to observe the total eclipse of the sun.

<sup>73</sup> The meaning possibly relates to Proverbs 3: 3.

Move in close to the reef to where you can see the corals below, and throw out the anchor there. Then drift down over the deep and lay out the chum. You can also use this method while swimming – in which case you will need goggles, a float and a string to put your catch on.

Dance song:

*Here are the boys of Mulihelu, Oi auē  
Here are the girls of Kīleva, Oi auē  
Here is the clan of Tonuia, Oi auē  
The seven houses of Ātafu  
Enjoying themselves in the community house.*

#### 44. Fishing for *puhi*/moray eel (*Gymnothorax* sp. and *Echidna* sp.)

This is not done very often because of the restrictions placed on it by the elders. The reason for the restriction is that it calls for the use of a chum composed of *pone* / red spot surgeonfish and other small fish, which are obtained by spearfishing. Spearfishing is liable to disturb the schools of *malau* / squirrel- and soldierfish and other favoured species. The prohibition was more strictly observed in the past.

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*Puhi*/moray eel



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The *puhi*/moray eel fishing is done in the open sea from traditional canoes manned by a crew of two or three men. The gear needed is a rope, a 60 kilo line and number 4 or 5 hooks, goggles and a light line to take the chum down to the bottom. It is important to have enough bait and chum, and is best done when the current is strong to spread the smell of the chum around.

The fish speared for bait and chum are crushed and the heads saved so that a string can be passed through them to tie them all together. Once the canoe is anchored so that it lies over the coral flats below, the string of crushed fishes to use as chum is lowered down to the depth of the water, and the hook is baited at the same time. The string of heads is lowered to a clear space below so that no eels can approach it undetected. One man will remain on the canoe while the other is in the water keeping an eye on the string. When he sees an eel approaching, he calls out to his companion on the canoe to lower the baited hook directly to the eel, and the string of chum is pulled up a little at the same time. When an eel is hooked, it is pulled up right away because if it manages to attach itself to anything, it will be very difficult to pull up.

Dance song:

*Ātafu listen to the voice of the Magi  
Your King is born today  
Present you gifts  
Myrrh, incense and gold for the King.*<sup>74</sup>

## 45. Netting *talagogo*/ sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*)

These migrating birds appear in Tokelau during the months of May and June, but most of them appear in the later months of the year from September to November. When people hear their calls on the lagoon, or above the village, they will anticipate a meal of delicious sea bird meat. The gear needed to do this is a

*Talagogo*/sooty terns



AK Kepler

special scoop net for birds, a fine fishing line to tie decoy birds to, and a rope and a rock to anchor the canoe with. When you go out to do this bird hunting, you have to be aware of the wind direction, because when they come in to land, the birds fly into the wind. So go to the part of the island that the wind is blowing from. It is best to have a crew of four or five, who can make the special kinds of shrieks that attract the birds. If the first bird you catch regurgitates some squid, you will know that the birds are 'tame'.

Here is how it is done: when a flock is seen out over the ocean and the bird sound is made, scoop in the first bird that you can, because if you miss it will stay well out of the reach of the net. The caught bird is made into a decoy by tying a light line to it and allowing it to fly out. Two or three other birds can be tied up separately and thrown out to float on the water to the right side of the canoe to entice other birds to come down and fly low. When there are lots of birds you do not need to move your scoop net from port to starboard, but keep it on the port side near the decoys. In that way you will catch more birds. It will also help you to catch more birds in a short time if their untangling from the

<sup>74</sup> Dance song based on Matthew 2: 11.



net can be expertly done. This way of catching *talagogo*/sooty terns can be done either in the lagoon or out on the open sea.

The word *toto* refers to the 'tame' nature of the birds. Their regurgitation of squid when caught is an indication of this condition.

Dance song:

*Taku pelesi e ke mau, ke mau, ke mau  
Taku pelesi e ke mau, ke mau, ke mau  
Taku pelesi e ke mau, ke mau, ke mau  
Tom, form, e tolu aku pelesi e.*<sup>75</sup>

## 46. Trolling for *malau*/ squirrel- and soldierfish (Holocentridae)

This way of fishing is dangerous to the canoe, since it is done very close to the outside of the fringing reef where the waves break in, at much the same place where *humu*/triggerfish are caught. Canoes have been wrecked over this way of fishing. Trolling for *malau*/squirrel- and soldierfish can be done on either moonlit or moonless nights, from traditional canoes. Don't think of doing it unless the sea is very calm.

The gear used for this fishing is a thin 5 kilo line and a strip of white cotton cloth. Once you are over the reef, tear off a strip of cloth, attach it to a hook, and use this lure to catch your first *malau*. Once you catch a *malau*, you tear off a *katikati* 'white strip of skin from under its jaw' and use this instead of the piece of cloth as your lure for trolling. Troll your line about 8 to 10 metres behind the canoe, paddling gently and occasionally giving a short tug on the line. You have to go close to the reef and its wider channels. Once you find a good spot where there are a lot of *malau*, use a rod so you can

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<sup>75</sup> This dance song may have come from Olohega, and the name Tom is possibly that of a foreman. It does not appear to have any clear meaning.

catch a lot in a short time. But always be careful of the waves, and whenever you hook a fish, turn the canoe seaward while you bring it in. The elders often advise those going out for *humu* or *malau* to 'be careful of the canoe', since it might get thrown upon the reef.

Dance song:

*Can you recognize the Halili O, the Halili O?  
The Halili O  
Oh why did Halili O have to Die?  
The Halili O, the Halili O  
You were too slow!*<sup>76</sup>

## 47. Trolling for *kōmulo*/ perhaps horse-eye jack (*Caranx* sp.)

This is done at night from a traditional canoe. The best nights are the sixth and seventh nights after the new moon, or after the moon has shifted to the east at sunset, on the twenty-second through to the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth days.

Use a 25 kilo line and number 8 or 9 hooks. The lure to use is a strip of white cloth. Move outside the reef, throw out the lure and paddle along the area where you can see the fluorescent corals. It is up to you how far the lure trails behind the canoe, but we would recommend between 10 and 15 metres. Once you have caught your first fish, tear off the *katikati* 'strip of soft skin from beneath its jaw' and use that as a lure instead of the white cloth.

Dance song:

*The offering done on Mount Carmel  
To find out which is the true God  
Good on you Elijah  
You were not afraid to speak the truth.*<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The origin is possibly from a folktale.

<sup>77</sup> Dance song based on 1 Kings 18: 18.

*Kōmulo*/perhaps horse-eye jack



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## **CHAPTER 5**

# **Omens, stars, singing and other valuable things**

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## CHAPTER 5

# Omens, stars, singing and other valuable things

### Notes on some signs that have special meanings for *tautai* 'master fishermen'

The word *kaumana* refers to particular natural conditions that some people interpret as having particular meanings, for instance, cloud formations, rings around the moon, or clouds at sunset and sunrise. These have meanings which only a few people can interpret. The interpretations have to do mainly with coming weather.

*Taufa* are signs which are not visible, but either heard or felt. The wind may be still at one moment, but then there are gusts followed by a further period of calm. It blows suddenly and then tapers off as if nothing has happened. There are some people who read meanings into such phenomena, recognizing them as either 'good' *taufa* or 'bad' *taufa*. A 'good' *taufa* may be a newborn baby, a school of fish entering the lagoon or good fortune for those coming in from the open sea.

**The progressive changes in the seasons and star formations:** From the very beginning until now information on all this has been passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. Nothing has changed. The sea may be stormy and the currents fierce, but things eventually get back to normal as usual.

**Predictions from animal behaviour:** It has been proven that the signs given by animal behaviour make sense. When the weather has been clear and sunny for a long time and without much rain, the whistle of a *kāleva* / a long-tailed New Zealand



Morquette

cuckoo (*Eudynamys* sp.) signals the arrival of rain. Other signs of coming rain are a *moko* / gecko (*Gekkota*) squeak, and cockroaches suddenly appearing and dashing about in a frenzy. Crabs can also give signs. If a *kaviki* / sand or ghost crab (*Ocypode* sp.) carries its pile of sand well away from its hole, this indicates fine, calm weather. But if it makes its pile of sand close to its hole, this signals strong winds and ocean currents.

**Predictions from bird behaviour:** When *katafa* / great frigatebirds (*Fregata minor*) fly low towards land, windy days are expected. When they fly in high, fine weather is coming. When *tavake* / tropicbird (*Phaethon* sp.) and *talagogo* / sooty tern (both migratory birds) appear, there is going to be plenty of sun. When a *tiafe* / bristle-thighed curlew

(*Numenius tahitiensis*) calls above the village, one can expect the birth of a baby; and when one calls only along the beach and seashore, it indicates that a flush of fish is on the way. *Gogofala* / brown or common noddy nesting in a *fala* (*Anous stolidus*) make an unpleasant piercing shriek, which is always taken to be a bad omen when heard above the village or some other particular place.

Fish can also be omens. Whenever a *lautiapua* / manta ray (*Manta birostris*) or a *fāfālua* / (spotted) eagle ray (*Aetobatus narinari*) leaps above the surface it always turns in the direction of the wind.

**Thunder and lightning:** When lightning is seen far off on the horizon but there is no accompanying thunder, this is an indication of fine days and calm winds. But if the lightning is fierce, wind and rain will soon follow, and some *tautai* 'master fisherman' also use it to predict the behaviour of *atu* / skipjack or bonito. When the season for spawning runs of *ufu* / garnet red parrotfish and *pone* / red spot surgeonfish is approaching and distant thunder is heard, the elders send out men to check the passages across the reef that these fish use. This never fails.

*Kupega-o-hakumau* is the name given to the brown coloured froth which sometimes appears on the sea and the lagoon. It is believed to be spawn of certain kinds of coral. If this froth is blown on shore it is an omen of high winds and strong currents and also an indication that there will be a scarcity of both reef and ocean fish.

**Bad omens:** *Ligoligo* / crickets (Gryllidae) have small bodies but large voices. When their voices are heard, people associate it with an impending death. You may hear the voice one evening out in the bush. Then the following evening the voice can be heard around the village, moving around until it stops at a certain house. This is a sure sign that there will be a death in that house. The voice of the *ligoligo* will not be heard the following night, or indeed on any night thereafter. *Tupakia* / click beetle (Elateridae) are also bad omens. Their only voice is a tapping or clicking sound, and when you hear it you must try to stop talking and



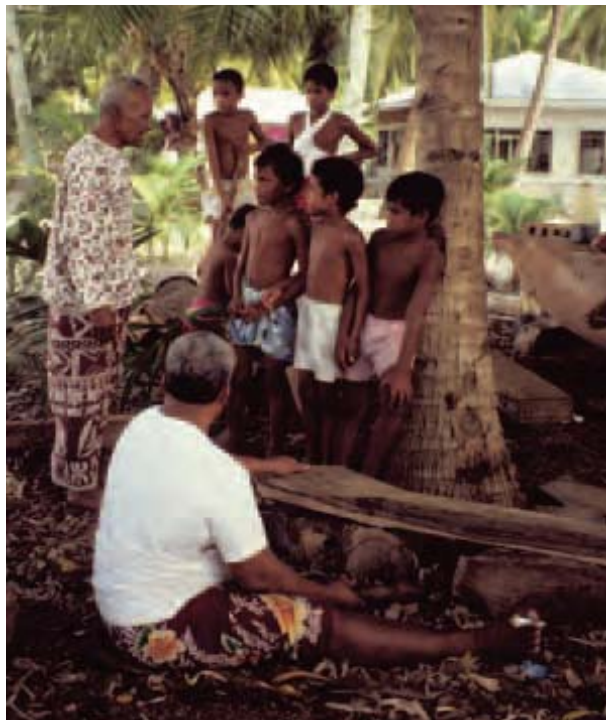
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remember what you were speaking about when the noise stops. Whatever you happened to be talking about, good or bad, easy or difficult, that is what is going to happen.

## Notes on particular customs and items of value

### 1. Singing

From the very beginning, singing has been a popular custom, beginning with the elderly – both men and women – and down through the able-bodied and indeed all who are gathered together for communal dances or work of one sort or another. When they are out fishing, elders and men will sing songs together that have to do with fishing skills, the position of the stars proclaiming the start of seasons, the fish associated with each season, and the special chants associated with particular fish of the ocean, the reef and the lagoon. There are also songs drawn from legendary events or Bible stories. The great majority of these songs are local, created by the singers themselves or by their forebears. This is



Judith Huntsman

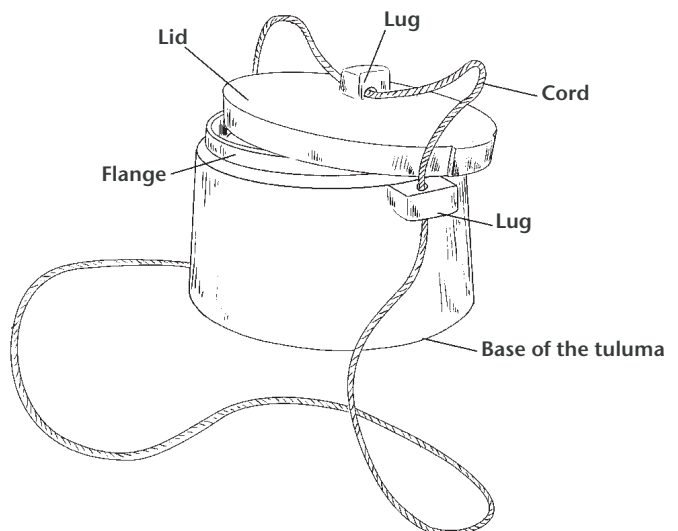
why they have been included in this book, so that they will not be forgotten.

### 2. Canoes and *tuluma*

A canoe is the life of every extended family. If a family doesn't have one for any reason (because it has been wrecked, perhaps), the family is looked upon as being destitute.

A *tuluma* is perhaps the next most valuable family possession. It is a water-proof wooden box of traditional design, carved out of a single log of *kānava* / cordias or sea trumpets. If it is a large one, it is left in the house and used as a family chest. A medium-sized one may be used exclusively by the *tautai* 'master fisherman' to store his deep-sea fishing gear and keep it all in order. It may also hold his supply of plug tobacco, the *fala* / pandanus leaves in which cigarettes are rolled and a lighter. In the old days, it was not easy to acquire good gear like pearl-shell lures (particularly those like *laumilo*, *hikuuli* and *pahina*) and other gear used by a *tautai* 'master fisherman' when he went out to sea. If a canoe should be overwhelmed at sea for some reason, the gear remains safe in the *tuluma* 'box'. It is watertight and floats upright in the water, with the lid being kept on by a sinnet cord.

*Tuluma* 'box'



## Seasonal stars and the months in which they appear in the early morning sky

Stars	English names	Western calendar	Tokelau month
<i>Na taki o Mataliki</i>	Leading stars of Pleiades	April–May	<i>Uluaki Hiliga</i>
<i>Mataliki</i>	Pleiades	May–June	<i>Toe Hiliga</i>
<i>Tolu</i>	Orion	June–July	<i>Uluaki Utua</i>
<i>Lefulefu</i>	Magellanic clouds	July–August	<i>Toe Utua</i>
<i>Mea Magamaga</i>	? in Virgo	Aug–Sept	<i>Vainoa</i>
<i>Te Manu</i>	? in Libra	Sept–Oct	<i>Fakaafu</i>
<i>Na Tanagata</i>	? in Scorpio	Oct–Nov	<i>Kaununu = Oloamanu</i>

## Tokelau months and their English equivalent

<i>Palolo Mua</i>	<i>December</i>
<i>Toe Palolo</i>	<i>January</i>
<i>Mulifa</i>	<i>February</i>
<i>Takaliga</i>	<i>March</i>
<i>Hiliga Mua</i>	<i>April</i>
<i>Toe Hiliga</i>	<i>May</i>
<i>Utua Mua</i>	<i>June</i>
<i>Toe Utua</i>	<i>July</i>
<i>Vainoa</i>	<i>August</i>
<i>Fakaafu</i>	<i>September</i>
<i>Kaununu</i>	<i>October</i>
<i>Oloamanu</i>	<i>November</i>

Dance song:

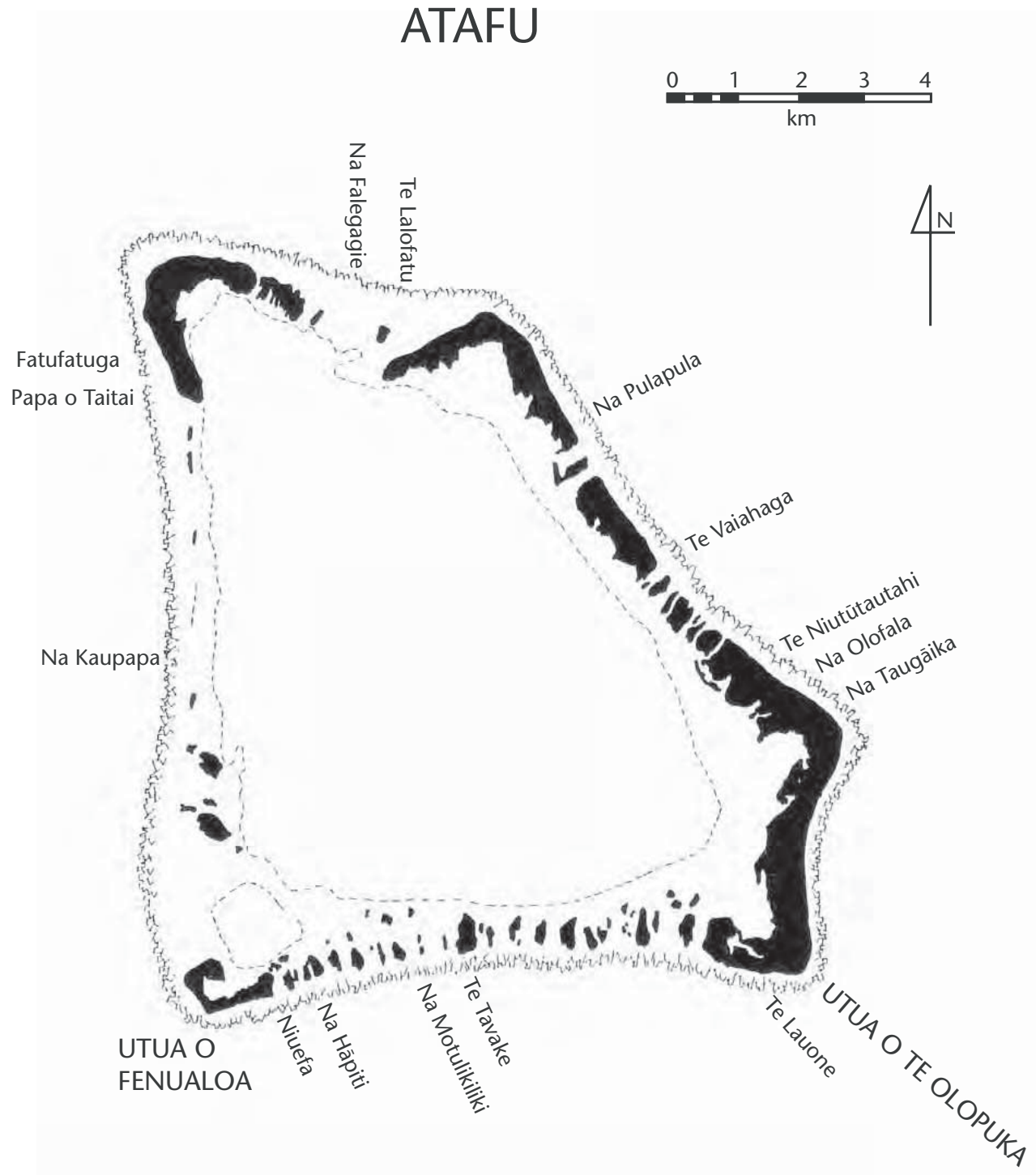
*What is the destination of our canoe?  
 What is the destination of our canoe?  
 Let's forget our differences  
 The world has moved ahead  
 Let's join them.*

Locations on Atafu where *humu*/triggerfish aggregate

<i>Utua o Fenualoa</i>
<i>Na Pulapula</i>
<i>Niuefa</i>
<i>Na Hapati</i>
<i>Te Tavake</i>
<i>Te Lauone</i>
<i>Te Utua o te Olopuka</i>
<i>Na Kaupapa</i>
<i>Na Taugaika</i>
<i>Na Olofala</i>
<i>Na Motulikiliki</i>
<i>Te Vaiahaga</i>
<i>Na Fatufatuga</i>
<i>Te Lalo Fatu</i>
<i>Na Falegagie</i>
<i>Te Niu Tu Tautahi</i>



Locations on Atafu where *humu* congregate



# FURTHER READING on Tokelau

## The natural world

'Traditional Tuna Fishing in Tokelau' (Gillet 1985) is an excellent study, based on over a month in Tokelau and extensive interviews with *toeaina* 'Elders' of Fakaofu.

'A Report of a Survey of the Marine Resources of Fakaofu Atoll, Tokelau' is a study conducted by Passfield (1988). He spent only twenty-one days on Fakaofu, but his survey includes information gained from dives in various sites in the lagoon, questionnaires given to senior school students, household interviews and material from both *toeaina* 'Elders' and the *aumaga* 'group comprising all the able-bodied men in the village'.

A more recent work on fishing in Tokelau is 'Ethnoecology and Tokelauan Fishing Lore from Atafu, Atoll, Tokelau' (Ono and Addison 2009). It was published by the Japanese fisheries scientist Ono and the American Samoa Community College archaeologist Addison after several months of work in Atafu where they observed and interviewed fishermen. It can be downloaded from [www.spc.int/coastfish/news/Trad/26/index.htm](http://www.spc.int/coastfish/news/Trad/26/index.htm).

The late Peato Tutu Perez was raised and worked for the church in both Fakaofu and Nukunonu before migrating to Wellington, where he died in 1980. He wrote two small booklets in Tokelauan on pearl shell and its uses. The first of these booklets appears to be a sort of trial run for the second, fuller version '*Ko te Koloa a Tokelau*' (Perez 1992).

A 70-page typescript written by Toloa for the Apia office of UNESCO's 'Vaka Moana' project, '*Ko te Poto Faka-te-Aganuku o Tokelau I na Faiva ma na Auala nae Tauhi ai e ki latou na Tamaokaiga*

*o te Natula*' deals with Fakaofu and is wholly in Tokelauan. (English translation of the title: Traditional Tokelau Knowledge of Fishing and the Conservation of Natural Resources).

Tokelau's birds and crabs have been studied by the late Kazimierz Wodzicki, who published a number of studies together with various collaborators in the 1960s and 1970s (Wodzicki and Laird 1970, Yaldwyn and Wodzicki 1979). Wodzicki worked for the former Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and made numerous trips to Tokelau in the 1970s, establishing rat control programmes. The Yaldwyn and Wodzicki article can be downloaded as a PDF file from [www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/atollresearchbulletin](http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/atollresearchbulletin).

An excellent, brief study on 'Sea Turtles and their Traditional Usage in Tokelau' was made in 1981 (Balasz 1983). It can be accessed online at [www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/atollresearchbulletin](http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/atollresearchbulletin) and downloaded as a PDF file.

## General works

'Ethnology of Tokelau Islands' (Macgregor 1937) is a good earlier account of Tokelau. Although it is based on only two months research in Atafu, it gives a good account of many aspects of material culture – fishhooks, canoes, houses, plaiting – and provides some details of society, history and customs.

The most comprehensive account of Tokelau history and culture is 'Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography' (Huntsman and Hooper 1996).

Available in many New Zealand public and university libraries, it is still in print, though expensive, and can be purchased from Auckland University Press.

'*Matagi Tokelau*' was written by various anonymous Tokelau authors under the direction of a specially formed Book Committee (1991) and covers traditions, history and aspects of life in the atolls during the 1980s. It includes a number of old photographs of the atolls, together with a chapter on 'Fishing, Birds and Crabs'. It is available from the Institute of Pacific Studies at USP.

Regarding the Tokelau language, the 'Tokelau Dictionary' (Simona 1986) is still the benchmark. It is a substantial book of about 500 pages, the work of the late Ropati Simona, and contains a detailed grammar of Tokelauan by Robin Hooper. It is available from the Polynesian Society in Auckland for NZ\$35. Order from the Secretary of the Polynesian Society, Department of Maori Studies, University of Auckland, PO Box 92912, Auckland, or contact [jps@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:jps@auckland.ac.nz). An online version is available under [www.thebookshelf.auckland.ac.nz/document.php?wid=1136&page=1&action=null](http://www.thebookshelf.auckland.ac.nz/document.php?wid=1136&page=1&action=null).

For a background to the 'Dance songs' given throughout this book (and to Tokelau music in general), you can refer to 'Songs and Stories of Tokelau' (Thomas, Tuia and Huntsman 1990) as an excellent source of information.



# GLOSSARY of Tokelau fish, bird and plant names

Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
<b>Ā</b> heu	Trevally	<i>Pseudocaranx dentex</i>
Akiaki	White Tern	<i>Gygis alba</i>
Alaala	Striped Jack or Barred Trevally	<i>Carangoides ferdau</i>
Ali	Left-Eye Flounder	Perhaps <i>Bothus mancus</i>
Alogo	Bristletooth	<i>Ctenochaetus striatus</i>
Alomea	Juvenile Yellow or Candelamoa Parrotfish during its spawning season	Perhaps <i>Hipposcarus harid</i>
Anaoho	Blackfin Squirrelfish	<i>Neoniphon opercularis</i>
Api	Whitespotted Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus guttatus</i>
Atu	Skipjack or Bonito	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>
Atualo	Finny Scad	<i>Megalaspis cordyla</i>
Atule	Silver Scad	<i>Selar crumenophthalmus</i>
Aua	'Silvery' Mullet	<i>Neomyxus chaptalii</i>
Ava	Milkfish	<i>Chanos chanos</i>
<b>E</b> ve	Orange Sea Bass	<i>Epinephelus hexagonatus</i>
<b>F</b> āfālua	(Spotted) Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>
Fagamea	Red Snapper	<i>Lutjanus bohar</i>
Fāhua	Tridacna Clam	<i>Tridacna</i> sp.
Fala	Pandanus Tree	<i>Pandanus tectorius</i>
Fāpuku	Marbled Sea Bass or Camouflage Grouper	<i>Epinephelus polyphekadion</i>
Feke	Octopus	Octopoda
Filoa	Long-Nosed Emperor	<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>
Fonu	Sea Turtle	Cheloniidae
Fuakō	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>



Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
<b>G</b> afugafu	Damsel fish and Gregories	<i>Pomacentrus</i> sp.
Gagale	Spinytooth Parrotfish	<i>Calotomus spinidens</i>
Gagie	Pemphis – a hardwood tree	<i>Pemphis acidula</i>
Gahu	Saltbush Shrub	<i>Scaevola taccada</i>
Gatala	Honeycomb Sea Bass or Grouper	<i>Epinephelus merra</i>
Gogo	Brown or Common Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Gogofala	Brown or Common Noddy nesting in a <i>fala</i>	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Gutula	Emperorfish	<i>Lethrinus</i> sp.
<b>H</b> āfole	Fiveband Flagtail	<i>Kuhlia mugil</i>
Hahave	Flying Fish	<i>Cypselurus</i> sp.
Hakula	Marlin or Swordfish	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>
Hāputu	'Reddish Pink' or Blubberlip Snapper	<i>Lutjanus rivulatus</i>
Havane	Blue-Lined Sea Perch	<i>Lutjanus kasmira</i>
Hoke	Smallspotted Dart or Swallow-Tailed Fish	<i>Trachinotus baillonii</i>
Hue	Pufferfish	<i>Arothron hispidus</i>
Humu	Triggerfish	Balistidae
Humu Tuakau	Black Triggerfish	<i>Melichthys niger</i>
Humu Fāgota	Picasso Triggerfish	<i>Rhinecanthus rectangulus</i>
Humu Kāleva	Figured or Scribbled Leatherjacket	<i>Aluterus scriptus</i>
Humu Lega	Orangestripe Triggerfish	<i>Balistapus undulatus</i>
Humu Moana	Triggerfish	<i>Rhinecanthus</i> sp.
Humu Tagitagi	Broom or Black Filefish	<i>Amanses scopas</i>
<b>I</b> he	Garfish, Half-Beak and Needlefish	Hemiramphidae
Ihe Fota	Needlefish	Perhaps <i>Tulosurus</i> sp.
Ihe Kakau	Needlefish	Perhaps <i>Platybelone</i> sp.
Ihe Mulo	Halfbeak	<i>Hyporhamphus acutus acutus</i>
Ika	Fish	
Ika fātaga	A large Coconut Crab, caught in its own <i>fātaga</i>	<i>Birgus latro</i>

Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
<b>K</b> afa	Diamond-Scale Mullet	<i>Liza vaigiensis</i>
Kakahi	Yellow-Fin Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>
Kāleva	A long-tailed New Zealand cuckoo	<i>Eudynamys</i> sp.
Kalo	Bait Goatfish	Perhaps <i>Mulloidichthys</i> sp.
Kamai	Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>
Kamakama	A large rock crab	<i>Grapsus</i> sp.
Kāmutu	Green Parrotfish	Perhaps <i>Chlorurus</i> sp.
Kanae	Mullet	Perhaps <i>Valamugil</i> sp. or <i>Mugil</i> sp.
Kānava	Cordia or Sea Trumpet – a hardwood tree	<i>Cordia subcordata</i>
Kapoa	Snake Macherel	<i>Promethichthys prometheus</i>
Kata	A large Jack	<i>Caranx</i> sp.
Katafa	Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>
Katakata	Sea Bass	<i>Epinephelus melanostigma</i>
Kaviki	Sand or Ghost Crab	<i>Ocypode</i> sp.
Kea	A young turtle	Perhaps <i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Kiokio	Bonefish	<i>Albula vulpes</i>
Kōmulo	Perhaps Horse-Eye Jack	<i>Caranx</i> sp.
Kulapo	Young Yellow or Candelamoa Parrotfish	<i>Hipposcarus harid</i>
<b>L</b> aea	Perhaps Tattooed Parrotfish	<i>Scarus</i> sp.
Lafilafi	Young Napoleon Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus undulatus</i>
Lai	Slender Leatherskin	<i>Scomberoides tol</i>
Lakia	White-Capped Noddy	<i>Anous minutus</i>
Lala	An undersized Coconut Crab	<i>Birgus latro</i>
Lālāvalu	Albacore	<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>
Laulaufau	Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>
Laumea	Bird's-Nest Fern – a broad-leafed fern	<i>Asplenium nidus</i>
Lautiapua	Manta Ray	<i>Manta birostris</i>
Ligoligo	A cricket	Gryllidae
Loi	Blue-Spotted Grouper	<i>Cephalopholis argus</i>

Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
Lōtala	Young Rabbitfish	<i>Siganus</i> sp.
Lupo	A juvenile Jack	<i>Caranx</i> sp.
<b>M</b> aeava	Spotted Rabbitfish or Streamlined Spinefoot	<i>Siganus argenteus</i>
Magō	Shark	Elasmobranchii
Mahimahi	Dolphinfish	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>
Malatea	Napoleon Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus undulatus</i>
Malau	Squirrel- and Soldierfish	Holocentridae
Malau Loa	Silverspot or Red Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron caudimaculatum</i>
Malau Tea	Scarlet Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis pralinia</i>
Malili	Goatfish slightly larger than a <i>kalo</i>	<i>Mulloidichthys</i> sp.
Manini	Convict Tang	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>
Manu	Birds	
Maomao	Black or Blackstreak Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus nigricauda</i>
Mataele	Flag-Tailed Rockcod	<i>Cephalopholis urodeta</i>
Matapula	Glasseye or Red Globe-Eye	<i>Heteropriacanthus cruentatus</i>
Mati	A Ficus shrub	<i>Ficus</i> sp.
Matu	Perhaps Silver Sand-Eater	<i>Gerres</i> sp.
Matuku	Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra</i>
Memea	Gold-Lined or Yellowfin Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys vanicolensis</i>
Moaga	Threebar or Two-Saddle Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus trifasciatus</i>
Moko	A gecko	Gekkota
Mōtoa	Six-Barred Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hardwicke</i>
Mū	Tropical Porgy or Bigeye Emperor	<i>Monotaxis grandoculis</i>
Munua	A large Grouper	<i>Epinephelus</i> sp.
Mutu	Banded Sergeant or Blackspot Sergeant Major	<i>Abudefduf sordidus</i> or <i>Abudefduf septemfasciatus</i>
<b>N</b> anue	Rudderfish	<i>Kyphosus cinearens</i>
Niu	Coconut Palm	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>

Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
<b>Ō</b>		
Ono	A Damselfish	Perhaps <i>Lepidozygus tapeinosoma</i>
Ono	Barracuda	<i>Sphyraena</i> sp.
Ono Namō	A lagoon Barracuda	<i>Sphyraena</i> sp.
<b>P</b>		
Paieka	A land crab	<i>Cardisoma</i> sp.
Pāla	Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>
Palu Ave	Pale or Squirrelfish Snapper	<i>Etelis radius</i>
Palu Hega	Oblique Banded or Flower Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides zonatus</i>
Palu Loa	Oilfish	<i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i>
Palu Malau	Ornate or Big-Eye Snapper	<i>Pristipomoides argyrogrammicus</i>
Palu Tupua	A large Oilfish	<i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i>
Palu Vakaalo	Small-Toothed Jobfish	<i>Aphareus furca</i>
Palupō	Oilfish	<i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i>
Pānanua	Great Barracuda	<i>Sphyraena barracuda</i>
Papo	Scarlet-Breasted Maori Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus fasciatus</i>
Pātuki	Stocky or Marble Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhitus pinnulatus</i>
Patupatupō	Species of surgeonfish resembling a <i>pone</i>	
Pone	Red Spot Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus achilles</i>
Puapua	Sea Randa or Zebra Wood – a tree	<i>Guettarda speciosa</i>
Puhi	Moray Eel	<i>Gymnothorax</i> sp. and <i>Echidna</i> sp.
Puka Kakai	Cabbage Tree	<i>Pisonia grandis</i>
Puka Vaka	Hernandia or Sea Hearse – a tree	<i>Hernandia nymphaeifolia</i>
Pulaka	Elephant Ear or Giant Swamp Taro	<i>Cyrtosperma chammisonis</i> or <i>Alocasia macrorrhizos</i>
Putalaloa	Blotched Soldierfish or Bloodspot Squirrelfish	<i>Neoniphon sammara</i>
<b>T</b>		
Tā	Armoured Soldierfish	<i>Sargocentron spiniferum</i>
Tāea	Paddletail	<i>Lutjanus gibbus</i>
Taufauli	Black Jack	<i>Caranx lugubris</i>
Tagau	Yellow-Margin Seaperch	<i>Lutjanus fulvus</i>



Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
Tāiva	Black Spot Snapper	<i>Lutjanus monostigma</i>
Takuo	Yellow-Fin Tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>
Takupu	Red Footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>
Talagogo	Sooty Tern	<i>Sterna fuscata</i>
Talatala	Violet Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis violacea</i>
Tālau	Blenny or Mud-Skipper	<i>Ecsenius</i> sp.
Tāmū	A kind of taro	<i>Alocasia</i> sp.
Taotao	Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia</i> sp.
Tātifi	Unicornfish	<i>Naso</i> sp.
Tauhunu	Tree Heliotrope	<i>Tournefortia argentea</i>
Tavake	Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon</i> sp.
Tavatava	A juvenile Dogtooth Tuna	<i>Gymnosarda unicolor</i>
Tiafe	Bristle-Thighed Curlew	<i>Numenius tahitiensis</i>
Tifitifi	Butterflyfish	Chaetodontidae
Tifitifi tapukulu	One variety of Butterflyfish	Chaetodontidae
Tōvīvī	Black-Naped Tern	<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>
Tuitā	Dash-and-Dot Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus barberinus</i>
Tuli	Pacific Golder Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica/fulva</i>
Tupa	A large beach crab	<i>Cardisoma</i> sp.
Tūpakia	Click Beetle	Elateridae
<b>U</b> fu	Garnet Red Parrotfish	<i>Chlorurus sordidus</i>
Ufu Loloa	Big Belly Parrotfish	<i>Scarus forsteni</i>
Ufu Tafega	Princess Parrotfish	<i>Scarus forsteni</i>
Uga	A land hermit crab	<i>Coenobita</i> sp.
Uga Kaifala	A red-coloured hermit crab	<i>Coenobita</i> sp.
Ugauga	Coconut Crab	<i>Birgus latro</i>
Ula	Crayfish, Lobster	<i>Palinurus</i> sp.
Ulafi	Yellow or Candelamoia Parrotfish	<i>Hipposcarus harid</i>
Uli	Mackerel Scad	<i>Decapterus macarellus</i>
Uloulo	Fairy or Fire Wrasse	<i>Cirrhilabrus</i> sp.

Tokelauan	English	Scientific name
Ulua Tafauli	Perhaps Big-Eye Jack	<i>Caranx</i> sp.
Uluakata	A full-grown Jack	<i>Caranx</i> sp.
Ulupuka	Puka forest	<i>Pisonia</i> sp. and <i>Hernandia</i> sp.
Ulutuki	A giant Grouper	<i>Epinephelus</i> sp.
Ume	Unicornfish	<i>Naso</i> sp.
Ume Ihu	Brown Unicornfish	<i>Naso unicornis</i>
Ume Lei	Orangespine Unicornfish	<i>Naso lituratus</i>
Umu	Yellowhead Triggerfish	<i>Balistoides viridescens</i>
Uto	A germinating Coconut	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
<b>V</b> <sub>ana</sub>	Spiky black Sea Urchin	<i>Diadema</i> sp.
Vete	Striped or Yellowstripe Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys flavolineatus</i>

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The original version of this work was written exclusively in Tokelauan. It was published in Wellington, New Zealand in 2008, and is dedicated to all succeeding generations of Tokelauans wherever they might be. This English translation follows the original closely. It is essentially a down-to earth, hands-on manual about the traditional techniques for the capture of crabs, birds and especially fish of both the lagoon and the open ocean. It pays detailed attention to traditional protocols, to fish behaviours, to the winds, currents, lunar cycles and the seasonal variations indicated by the annual rising of named stars and constellations.



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