

TAKALO PROTOCOL

Takalo is a traditional war dance of Niue. *Takalo* in this context means, to evade blows, to position oneself with a weapon. Oral tradition records that the *Takalo* was performed by warriors before going to battle. In another form it was used as a border security control where warriors guarding the entry to a settlement challenged those approaching to ascertain whether they come in peace or with some other purpose in mind.

Through time and as peace descended upon the land, the *Takalo* has taken on a new meaning. *Tau Tupuna* (the ancestors) decreed that the *Takalo* is to be embedded in the traditions of Niue where it will remain until the end of time.

It has become the traditional and a customary part of the welcome ritual reserved only for visiting members of Royalty, Heads of States, Prime Ministers, Presidents and those of Chiefly titles.

The performers can range from a mass participation of a whole village of men, women and children or just a selected group of young men. Their bodies are adorned with fresh or dried leaves, covering their faces and to their feet and smeared with black charcoal.

In its present traditional form, the *Takalo* challenges the visitors to ascertain whether their mission is one of peace or hostility. Where the *takalo* is performed by young warriors, there is much stalking, posturing, intimidating and threatening behaviour towards the visitors, all in an attempt to gauge the purpose of the visit. During this part of the *Takalo*, the visitors must remain silent and when there is no reaction from them, the leading warrior will resort to voicing the challenge loudly thus; “*ko e fenoga hā e fenoga?*” (What purpose is thy visit?). A member of the visiting party must reply in appropriate manner; “*Ko e fenoga he Mafola*” (Our visit is of Peace).

When the leader is satisfied that the visitors come in peace, (a green coconut will be pierced and offered to the highest ranking member of the party ¹). After the drink being accepted the lead warrior will signal the troops to allow the party to enter the settlement and to be greeted by the people of the land.

¹ The practice follows the custom of partaking of coconut water which Tihamau (the then Chief of Niue) gave to Mutalau at Niufela.