

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

CLOTHING THE UN-CLOTHED: THE EVOLUTION OF DANCE COSTUMES IN
TAHITI AND RAROTONGA

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, with emphasis in Theatre and Art Education

By

RIKA TRAXLER

December 2011

© 2011

Rika Traxler

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all those who have supported and inspired me:

Dr. Edie Pistolessi – Words cannot express how thankful I am for all of your energy, dedication as a teacher, mentor and friend during all three years I have been a student at CSUN. You have always supported me through thick and thin, and I will always remember that about you. I respect your courage as a person, and your creative insight.

Thank you for all of the support in the thesis performance that was a great success.

Dr. Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen – Thank you for all of your support and expertise in guiding my thesis and always answering any questions I would have on Cook Islands’ and Tahitian cultures. Knowing that you are thousands of miles away and still dedicated your time to help with my thesis, shows what kind of person you are, and I truly appreciate it very much. I honor and respect you as a person and great contributor to South Pacific writing and music.

Dr. Ah-Jeong Kim – I want to express great gratitude to you, and a huge thank you for all of your genuine support, mentorship and friendship. You have been there for me throughout the entire process, and I cannot thank you enough for everything. You are a true inspiration for me. Thank you for helping me with my writing on so many occasions. I have learned a great deal from you, and thank you for always believing in me.

To my friends – I owe a great debt to my friends who helped me tremendously in my thesis performance. All of you took the time out of your own busy schedules to come to rehearsal two times a week for two months, and on top of that help make costumes. I

cannot thank you enough for all of your love, support and creative energy to make it all happen. Thank you, Sid Liufau, for your support and creative contributions to the performance. I have great respect for your expertise as a professional actor, Polynesian dancer, musician and choreographer. Your energy helped make it successful. Thank you, Hedy Yudaw, for your friendship and all of your help with the video and pictures. Thank you, Jeff Fletcher, for helping me tremendously on the costumes, and always being open to jump in when we needed you. A special thanks to the cast Linda Traxler, Sonia Calzada, Ayanna Floyd, Niken Sekar Dewani, Hina Curtice, Steve Ramirez, Neil Wicks, Jeffery Miner, Jeff Fletcher, and Joey Puerta for dancing, acting, singing, playing music and doing whatever it takes to create the performance. Thank you, to the band “Te Mau Marite” for your wonderful music. I also want to give a great thanks to Sara Eaglewoman and her husband Benny Urquidez “Benny the Jet” for the beautiful blessing at the beginning of the performance. All of your love, support and friendship will always be remembered and stay in my heart and soul forever.

I also want to give a special thanks to all of my friends in Tahiti and the Cook Islands for inspiring me. Some of the most beautiful times of my life were spent in the islands with all of you who have shared your culture and knowledge with me. A special thanks to Maeva at Tiki Village in Moorea for always welcoming me to her home. Thank you Teava and Matareva magazine for letting me tag along at the Heiva in 2010 and allowing me to use some of your amazing photos.

Last but not least, I would like to give a very special thanks to my family--my loving mother, Sue, who has always been there for me. Her giving heart is the most precious and beautiful in the world. Thank you to my sister Linda for all that you are, and for being the

best sister someone could ever have. I have always admired your strength and determination, your honesty, creativity, and free spirit. Thank you, Uncle Doug, for being such a great uncle. Your love and support has been tremendous. I want to also thank those loved ones who have passed on.

I wrote this thesis in honor of all the strong and beautiful indigenous people of the world who have inspired me and shared their beautiful knowledge about their passions and love for their people and cultures. I send their message to the world to respect, love, take care of each other and listen to the heart.

Thank you to all those who have enlightened me. - Rika

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved father, Don, (Poppie). He was an artist and traveler, who passed away many years ago and always inspired me to truly live life freely and joyfully.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright.....	ii
Signature Page.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication.....	vii
List of Figures.....	xi
Abstract.....	xv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Locating Polynesia.....	5
Cook Islands background: Location and Settlement.....	5
Government.....	6
Population.....	6
Origins.....	6
French Polynesia’s Background: Location.....	7
Government.....	8
Population.....	8
Origins.....	8
CHAPTER 1: ANCIENT SOCIETY.....	10
Idols and Faith.....	11
Dancing for the Gods.....	13
Cannibalism and Human Sacrifice.....	14

Ancient Dress in Tahiti.....	16
The <i>Arioi</i> of the Society Islands.....	18
The <i>Hura</i> Dance.....	22
Headdresses.....	23
Ancient Clothing in Rarotonga.....	27
Costumes of the Ariki.....	30
CHAPTER 2: MISSIONARY INFLUENCE AND CHANGE.....	34
Prohibitions in Tahiti.....	37
Missionary Influence of Costumes in Rarotonga.....	40
Pāreu Replaced Tapa.....	42
CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL REVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION OF DANCE	
COSTUMES.....	46
Contemporary Rarotongan Costumes and Dance.....	46
Change after Missionary Suppression in Rarotonga.....	49
Tradition and Authenticity.....	51
Materials and Dance Costumes in Tahiti.....	54
Meaning in Dance Costumes.....	59
Heiva Tahiti.....	61
Tahitian Dance Groups and Performance.....	61
Te Maire Maeva Nui of Rarotonga.....	65
Rarotongan Dance Groups and Performance.....	66
Rarotongan Island Nights.....	68
CHAPTER 4: NOTES ON GLOBALIZATION.....	70

Conclusion.....	74
WORKS CONSULTED.....	77
Appendix A: List of Figures with Pictures.....	82
Appendix B: Flyer for Thesis Performance.....	101
Appendix C: Abstract of Performance.....	102
Appendix D: Photos of Costumes made by Rika in Performance.....	103
Appendix E: Script and Layout for Performance.....	118
Appendix F: Documentary Video.....	121
Appendix G: My Background and Notes on Culture.....	122

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1. Etching by John Webber. (Moulin, 7)
- Fig. 2. Re-enactment of a *Hura* dance by O Tahiti E in Tahiti during a 2010 performance called Vaka Arioi. Photo by Matareva©, 2010.
- Fig. 3. Depiction of a King in the 2010 show Vaka Arioi, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.
- Fig. 4. Example of what a *ti* leaf turban may have looked liked to protect the face from the sun. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2011©.
- Fig. 5. *Tiare* Tahiti (*Gardenia, taitensis*). Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©
- Fig. 6. Photo of *ariki* in ancient costumes, National Library and Museum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
- Fig. 7. Example of a *ahu purotu*, *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.
- Fig. 8. Church clothing in Rarotonga, early 1900s, National Library and Museum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
- Fig. 9. The Betela Youth Club dancers performing in *pāreu kiri'au*, 1965, Rarotonga.
- Fig. 10. Dancers from the *Orama* dance troupe wearing *pāreu kiri'au* dyed in synthetic dyes with *hātua* around the hips, Rarotonga. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©
- Fig. 11. Betela dancers performing for the French military aircraft in Aitutaki after winning the *Heiva* competition in Tahiti, 1964, Cook Islands. Postcard.
- Fig. 12. The *ō'tea* costume worn by Nonahere during the *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti, 2011. Photo by Matareva©2011.
- Fig. 13. *Tāupo'o* in the *ō'tea* costume worn by Ahutoru Nui dancer, *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti, 2011. Photo by Matareva©.

Fig. 14. *Tane* dancer from Tahiti Ora directed by Tumata Robinson, wears a white *ō'tea* costume designed by Freddie Fagu. This team won best professional group in 2011, Heiva, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.

Fig. 15. *Hei 'arapo 'a* and *hei upo 'o* made of *tiare* Tahiti (*Gardenia tahitensis*), as a welcome gift from Moorea , 2003. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2003©.

Fig. 16. Headdress made from coconut leaves and *auti* sewn on to pandanus worn by dancer in Fare Ihi No Huahine dance troupe, Heiva Nui, Tahiti, 2011. Photo courtesy of Matareva.

Fig. 17. *Ahu Purotu* worn by Tahitian woman, Tahiti, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.

Fig. 18. Dancers from Tiki Village wear two different *pāreus* wrapped around waist and extended to look like wings, Moorea, 2004. Photo by Rika Traxler©.

Fig. 19. Dancers from Hanatika dance troupe wear *auti* of three different colors, Heiva Nui, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva, 2011©.

Figure 20: Dancers from Toakura dance troupe, won best *ō'tea* costume at the Heiva Nui 2011, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©, 2011.

Fig. 21. Dancers from Tahiti Ora wearing headdresses designed by Freddie Fagu, which won for best vegetable costume in Heiva 2011, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.

Fig. 22. Fare ihi no huahine dance troupe in the Heiva 2011 performing at the Toata center in Papeete, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©, 2011.

Fig. 23. Hiti Reva dancers performing at the Intercontinental Hotel in Tahiti after winning in the Heiva, 2010, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.

- Fig. 24. Vaka Arioi spectacle by O Tahiti E at the *marae* in Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva, 2010©.
- Fig. 25. The high priest with food offering to the gods in the 2010 Vaka Arioi show at the *marae* in Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.
- Fig. 26. Vaka Arioi spectacle in 2010, Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.
- Fig. 27. Vaka Arioi show portrays the king in this re-enactment of ancient Tahitian society, Paea, Tahiti, 2010. Photo by Matareva©.
- Fig. 28. Cook Islands dancers perform a *kapa rima* in Te Maire Maeva Nui, 2008, Rarotonga.
- Fig. 29. Cook Island dancers performing ‘*Ura pa’u* during Te Maeva Nui 2008, Rarotonga.
- Fig. 30. Rarotongan male dancers performing ‘*Ura pa’u* in Te Maeva Nui, 2008, Rarotonga.
- Fig. 31. Cook Island dancers performing ‘*Ura pa’u* in Te Maeva Nui 2008, Rarotonga.
- Fig. 32. Pukapuka dancers performing at the craft market in 2010, Rarotonga. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.
- Fig. 33. Pukapuka tane dancers performing at the craft market, Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.
- Fig. 34. Cook Island male dancers perform a *pe’e* in the Te Maeva Nui, Rarotonga, 2008.
- Fig. 35. *Korero Maori* dancers perform at the “Staircase,” Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.
- Fig. 36. *Korero Maori* perform at the “Staircase,” Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.

Fig. 37. Youth dancers from *Korero Maori* dance troupe perform at the Saturday craft and food market, Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010.

ABSTRACT

CLOTHING THE UN-CLOTHED: THE EVOLUTION OF DANCE COSTUMES IN TAHITI AND RAROTONGA

MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, WITH EMPHASIS IN THEATRE AND ART EDUCATION

There are two parts to this thesis. The first part consists of the writing section which was research done for a live performance, while the other part consists of a performance based on the subject of the paper, which includes a documentary video of the performance on DVD along with photographs. The thesis traces the evolution of dance costumes of Tahiti located in French Polynesia, Rarotonga located in the Cook Islands and the evolution of costumes and clothing due to Protestant Christian missionary influence from 1797-1823, specifically by the LMS (London Missionary Society), and later the revival due to tourism and globalization.

There are four parts to the paper. Chapter 1: Ancient Society covers ancient societal beliefs and practices pertaining to the performance of costumed dancers and the hierarchical influences in costumes and adornment along with material culture. Chapter 2: Missionary Influence and Change discusses banning and minimization of dance costumes and clothing by missionaries. Chapter 3: Cultural Revival and Transformation of Dance Costumes is about the revival and transformation of costumes and expressive culture due to tourism. Chapter 4 speaks about how Tahitian and Rarotongan dance costumes have been affected by globalization. The changes that have affected the cultures can be witnessed in contemporary costumes through creative innovation and adaptations, while still holding on to traditional ancestral roots and indigenous knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Dance costumes in Tahiti, located in French Polynesia or Society Islands, and Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, have evolved dramatically since the beginning of the 1800s. Earlier recordings from Captain James Cook, his crew, whalers and missionaries starting as early as the late 1700s, have witnessed and recorded some accounts of the dance costumes and material culture. Although what we really know and understand about the costumes prior to missionary influence is limited and somewhat misinterpreted by outsiders, specifically by euro-centric viewpoints. Outsiders or *popa'a*¹ have always been intrigued by the natural materials used, and the symbols behind the costumes, along with its connection in dance and ritual performance throughout history and in most recent times.

Most of the influences on dance costumes throughout history have been appropriated from both nature, and in some cases influenced by the hierarchical society that both cultures came from. Class systems were apparent by the way costumes were adorned in their use of materials, and dance performances were grand in their displays to entertain their guests. Certain dances and costumes were only worn and performed by certain people of status and rank during pre-missionary times.

Both Rarotonga and Tahiti share some similar customs, but there are also many differences, which will be discussed in this thesis. The main difference was that in Tahiti, all expressive culture like dance and costumes was banned completely by 1819, while in Rarotonga only minimized, yet changed drastically by the missionaries in 1823. The missionary impact on clothing and costumes was dramatic and changed history in these

¹ *Popa'a* means foreigner in Tahitian and *Papa'a* in Cook Islands *Maori*.

regions forever. The London Missionary Society (LMS) is responsible for converting the Tahitians and Cook Islanders to Christianity by way of coercion and violence at times. The indigenous people either accepted Christianity with open arms or rebelled against it, and those who rebelled were considered heathens and eventually forced to convert. In 1797, Christianity was introduced to Tahiti, and in “1823 to Rarotonga by the Tahitian missionary Papeiha. Maretu and his father, Tuaivi, were among the first converts” (Crocombe, *Cannibals and Converts*, 3). Performance has always played a very important role in both Cook Island and Tahitian cultures, and once Christianity was introduced, dancing was replaced with hymn singing for over 100 years. However, what remained evolved into a new cultural form by blending indigenous expressive culture with Christian belief and practices.

The constitution celebrations also played a major role in the changes of costumes and cross-cultural influences between Tahiti and Rarotonga, and to a lesser degree, other outer islands in the Cook Island region and Society Islands. In Rarotonga, the annual *Te Maire Maeva Nui*, and in Tahiti the *Heiva Nui* are annual events held to compete, and showcase the cultural dance, storytelling, music and costumes. Dance and music of the islands are shared with visitors and locals, to represent Cook Islands expressive culture.

In the 1950s in Tahiti, Madeline Mou’a started the first professional Tahitian dance troupe called “Heiva Tahiti.” She is known as the woman who re-introduced Tahitian dance after expressive culture was banned for over 100 years. Moua’s work through her dance troupe revived interests in Tahitian dance and costumes, which had been obscured by overly romanticized written accounts by Europeans and disappearing cultural memory and oral traditions. The building of the Fa’aa international airport in

1962 brought tourists from all over the world, and tourism was a major factor in the revival of Tahitian dance, music and costumes. Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen stated, “Performance played a major role in showing appreciation to hosts and visitors, and an overwhelming majority of performances were impromptu.” The building of the international airports created easier movement between the islands. Easier access between islands did not mean that culture between the three groups were being shared or given away, rather that each group represented their own unique styles of dance, costumes and music and may have had some influence on each other. (e.g., When Hawaiian artists like Kumu Kawaikapuokalani K. Hewett taught Tahitians Hawaiian hula dance in the 1970s in Tahiti), I will argue that there could easily have been some influence in the graceful hand motions of the modern style *hula awana*. The Hawaiian style in dance motions, music and costumes influenced Tahitian dance to some extent and still does to this day, as did Cook Islands dance, music, and costumes influenced Tahiti. Jonassen made a point that, “Teaching was not intended to be a realignment of cultural representation.” This is a very important point, and I would argue that teaching can re-structure cultural identities by transferring one’s own cultural knowledge to another. This should not in any way represent one’s own cultural identity or “cultural representation,” as Jonassen stated, since outside influences can misrepresent and even misinterpret one’s true and unique culture. In Rarotonga, Johny Frisbee and her sisters Elaine and Nga were a major influence in Hawaiian dance. “Together they formed the core of Pukapuka Otea in Waikiki, the predecessor of both Tavana and Tihati shows,” stated Jonassen. I will discuss more about this later.

Costumes went through changes when Cook Islanders in the 1980s visited Tahiti and wore hip belts made of *kiri'au* (stripped tree bark) woven to create more movement around the hips. Georgina Keenan in an interview claims to have developed the *kiriau* hip belt, which was an idea based on the *ti* leaf or *rauti* woven belt, that is made of a sacred leaf found on the island. The missionary influenced dress *ahu purotu* (in Tahiti) or *mu'umu'u* (in Rarotonga) was, and still is, a very popular dress that is used in most performances and worn everyday for many occasions. The infusion of Christianity influenced clothing practice that covers the body and traditional vegetable fiber costumes make up what contemporary costumes look like today, and for purposes mainly to entertain both visitors and locals.

In Rarotonga, the international airport was built in 1974, which brought tourists from all over the world. This changed the dancing and costumes dramatically because money and profit were involved. The dance troupe “Betela” was a major factor in the change when the Jonassen sisters “dropped their skirts below the naval,” as explained by Jon Jonassen. Revealing the naval shocked the entire island of Rarotonga, and this event affected the way Cook Island dance was presented in public from this time on. Tourism has been a major factor that emphasized the sensuous style in dance, and revealed the body in costumes.

Missionary influence and tourism are major factors in the change of costumes and all expressive culture in both Rarotonga and Tahiti. Both regions share a close connection historically yet contrast with some major differences. In most recent times, costumes reveal what is both clothed and un-clothed, symbolizing the changing belief system and

expressive culture that reflects its art form historically and creatively, adapting to modern times based on movement, technology and globalization.

LOCATING POLYNESIA

Polynesia is located in the South Pacific and is made up of many islands including Tahiti and the Society Islands, New Zealand, Cook Islands, etc. “The Pacific Ocean was called *Te-moana-nui-o-kiwa* by the *Maoris* and shortened by the Cook Islands *Maori* people to *Te-moana-o-kiwa*,” (Henry, Ancient Tahiti, 117). Polynesia comes from the Greek language and translates to “many islands.” According to Jonassen, “The word Polynesian is pro-contact and did not exist before. The more appropriate word would be *Ma’ohi* or *Maoli*.” Jonassen also pointed out that, “The migration of people to the Cook Islands is not the same for all of the islands. Some islands like Mangaia and Pukapuka do not have a migration tradition.”

COOK ISLANDS BACKGROUND: LOCATION AND SETTLEMENT

“The ancestors of all Cook Islanders were Polynesian, but there were significant differences within Polynesian cultures. Most derive from Eastern Polynesian cultures (especially of Tahiti and the neighboring islands of the Society Group) with a probability of some early ancestors from the Marquesas, and to a lesser extent the Tuamotu and Austral Islands” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 11).

Rarotonga is located in the Cook Islands in the Polynesian triangle. “Linguistic and archaeological research suggests that the northern Cook Islands were settled from Samoa and the southern islands from the Society Islands” (qtd. in Craig and King 1981; Bellwood 1979). The Northern group of islands include Nassau, Pukapuka, Manihiki, Tongareva, Palmerston, Rakahanga and Suvarrow, which are low-lying coral atolls,

while the Southern group Atiu, Aitutaki, Manuae, Mau'uke, Mangaia, Miti'aro, Takutea and Rarotonga are mostly made up of upraised coral and volcanic formations. "The islands are dispersed over two million square kilometers of sea – an area about the size of Western Europe; their total landmass is 241 square kilometers" (Alexeyeff, 7).

GOVERNMENT

Rarotonga is a self-governing parliamentary democracy and has been in free association with New Zealand since August 4, 1965. The government is run by a constitutional monarchy. Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state, and the current Prime Minister is Henry Puna (as of 2010). The Queen's representative is Sir Frederick Goodwin. The Cook Islands were named after "Captain James Cook, who charted the southern islands in 1773 and 1777" (Alexeyeff, 7).

POPULATION

Rarotonga is both the administrative and economic capital of the group and according to the Cook Islands Statistics Office as of June 2010, there is a total estimated population of 22,970 with a slight increase of 1.6% compared to June of 2009. This increase is due to the tourist population. There are currently 11,700 people residing in the Cook Islands as of June 2010. (Cook Islands Statistics office, <http://www.stats.gov.ck/>) A number of the Cook Islands are unpopulated. "There is a much larger population of Cook Islanders living in New Zealand and in the 2006 census, 58,008 self-identified as being of ethnic Cook Island Maori descent." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands)

ORIGINS

"The ancestors of all Cook Islanders were considered *Maori*. Today, their indigenous language is called Cook Islands Maori. Most Cook Islanders derive from what

is considered today, Eastern Polynesian cultures (especially of Tahiti and the neighboring islands of the Society Group) with a probability of some early ancestors from the Marquesas, and to a lesser extent the Tuamotu and Austral Islands”, (Crocombe, Cook Island Culture, 11). ‘*Avaiki* was a region where the Tahitians and Cook Islanders came from which was not considered Polynesia. There is a continuous debate over the location of ‘*Avaiki* but it is not considered part of Polynesia. Most historians and anthropologists claim that Polynesian ancestors originated from Taiwan, South East Asia, moved eastwards to Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Tahiti, Cook Islands, Hawai’i and south to Aotearoa (New Zealand).

FRENCH POLYNESIA’S BACKGROUND: LOCATION

Tahiti is located in the many islands of French Polynesia that lie in the deep blue sea extending from southeast to northwest Polynesia. French Polynesia is made up of 118 islands in five archipelagos, which is scattered over an area of about 5.5 million km. The society archipelago where Tahiti is located has 14 islands, divided into Windward and Leeward Islands. “It is composed of nine high islands and five atolls and owes its name to Captain James Cook who christened it “Society Islands” in tribute to the Royal Society of London that financed his voyage” (Tahiti Tourism Magazine). The Windward include Tahiti, Mehetia, Moorea, Maiao, and one atoll, Tetiaroa. Their total area is 1197 km² including 1042 km for the island of Tahiti. The Leeward Islands are located on the western part of the archipelago with a total of nine islands. The six main islands are Huahine, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Tahaa, Tupai and Maupiti, and to the west are three atolls: Mopelia, Scilly and Bellinghausen. The name of this group comes from its position in relation to the trade winds.

GOVERNMENT

According to the [Pacific Islands Governance Portal](#), “French Polynesia is a dependent territory of France. It is a parliamentary representative democratic French overseas collective, whereby the president of French Polynesia is the head of the government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the assembly of French Polynesia,” (Pacific Islands Governance Portal, see citations page). Papeete is the capital of Tahiti of the Society Islands group. French Polynesia became a French constitution on October 4, 1958 and Oscar Temaru is the current president and head of state with the Vice-President who is currently Anthony Geros as of 2010.

POPULATION

The population in Tahiti is 178,133 as of the 2007 census. 68.6% of French Polynesians live in Tahiti making it the most populated island of all.

ORIGINS

Tahitians are considered *Maohi*. (Ma) meaning people and (ohi) meaning root, (Ma-ohi). (Ma) also represents mother. Marina Tepoe, a singer at Tiki Village shared with me a story about her people. She said that when a baby is born, traditionally the umbilical cord of a baby is buried into the earth, because the mother of the baby is the first mother, and the second mother is “mother earth.” The umbilical cord is the root to life. There is a lot of symbolism behind the word *Maohi*.

Tahitians were settled from peoples of the ‘*Avaiki* region between AD 300 and 800, long before European discovery. The first Polynesians are believed by most anthropologists and historians to have originated from Taiwan over 3000 years ago due to

remnants of Lapita pottery, which have been found throughout Polynesia and also through DNA samples that connect Polynesians with indigenous peoples of Taiwan. Though there is much debate on the subject of discovery by Europeans, as Teuira Henry discusses in his book “Ancient Tahiti.” There are two navigators who may have first discovered Tahiti which include “the famous Spanish navigator, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, in 1606, and the English navigator, Wallis, who visited the island in 1767, but young Tahitians are taught that the discoverer was the English Wallis” (Henry, 6). Although the Polynesians were the original discoverers way before Europeans ever set foot on the land.

CHAPTER 1: ANCIENT SOCIETY

The ancient Polynesians believed in many gods, which included *Tangaroa*, *Rangi*, *Rongo*, *Tane* and many others. *'Io* was a self-created world soul whose name was too *tapu* (sacred) to utter, and whose identity could never be revealed to human eyes or ears. *'Io* could be understood only through the priests, who made it a strict sacred law never to give away religious secrets and those who did would surely die” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 110). *'Io* was considered The Self-Created Supreme Being – unseen and unknowable who lived in the highest heaven in the center and heart of creation. One could compare him to the Christian God. The creation story is also similar to the Christian version in Genesis 1: 1-4 in the following:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. (qtd. in Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 111)

Here is a Polynesian version of the creation story provided by Te'atamira Makirere in an essay found in the book Cook Islands Culture:

Some of the better-known Polynesian gods were *Tangaroa*, *Rongo* or *Oro*, *Tu* and *Tiki*. Chants trace the account of creating and evolution through total darkness until *'Io* spoke and told the darkness to become light, and light to contain darkness. *'Io* separated the waters from the heavens, and then created the earth. Then the moon and the sun ‘the chiefs eyes of heaven’ were born. The heavens became the sky, which floats above the earth. *'Io* dwelt with *Hawaiki* (Earth) and

several lands or islands of this world were born. Then, gods and men appeared followed by papa (rocks), then land, roots, and finally the things that grow on the land. All this took many eras of thousands of years.” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 111)

Jonassen stated, “This particular story is not shared by all of the Cook Islands, but much earlier writings by William Wyatt Gill in the late 1800s highlight totally different creation versions.” There are definitely similarities in both of the above stories if one would compare the two, as there are connections amongst most all religions of the world. It is an unseen mystery. Polynesians are very spiritual people, because they come from a belief system that everything is sacred. They would perform rituals for every occasion including birth, death, marriages, war, building a canoe, travel, and tending to their land. Ancestors and spirits are guides in the process of life, so there is great respect for life and all living things. The material world is closely connected and inseparable with the spiritual realm, and this is believed by most Polynesians even today. Ceremonies are still performed for various occasions.

IDOLS AND FAITH

Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen explains in his essay titled as “Tu Tangata (Personality and Culture)” on the subject of faith or the *Maori* term *irinaki*; “In Cook Islands’ Maori terms, *irinaki* (faith or trust in a higher power) is a significant part of personality and culture. One early missionary to the Cook Islands noted a local phrase that conceived faith as the outrigger of the soul. It implies that faith stabilizes the *Maori* just as the outrigger stabilizes the hull of a canoe. The concept of faith prior to European contact played a major role in the open sea voyages and daily fishing, agricultural and social

activities of the *Maori*” (Crocombe, Cook Island Culture, 130). Jonassen also speaks about *Tu Tangata*, a “personal and public awareness, which includes *ara o te mate*, a distinction that is in mythology. But more importantly it is the spirit of a person who has passed to the west travelling back to the ancient homeland ‘*Avaiki*” (Crocombe, Cook Island Culture, 131).

On the subject of Idols, the word “idol” is a name coined by Europeans to describe an object or statue that is worshiped. An idol is a vessel for the spirit to enter, and once it is used for this purpose, the idol does not serve the same purpose. The object is no longer sacred. So the Polynesians do not claim to have worshipped idols but only use them as vessels for the gods to enter. Mahiriki Tangaroa explains in her essay titled as “Visual arts at home and abroad,” “Carved wooden gods were created mainly to embody a form of spiritual power referred to as *mana*. Worship was centered around such carved figures. Sometimes decorative materials were attached, such as feathers, fine sennet, pearl shells and bark cloth binding” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 47). In Rarotonga, carved figures of the god *Tangaroa* (the son of *'Io*) show up everywhere in shops and buildings today. *Tangaroa*’s symbol has changed due to commercialization. It is a national symbol of Cook Islands and is a popular souvenir by tourists today.

Tangaroa is the son of *'Io*, the supreme god in Cook Island mythology. Traditionally *Tangaroa* is the god of the sea and fertility but was banished by the missionaries. “Some Cook Islanders regard it as a symbol of heathenism.” (Crocombe, Cook Island Culture, 57)

When I was in Rarotonga for the first time in 2010, I was invited to watch a speaker talk about essential oils and its health benefits. It was to be held at a local church.

I was given a ride back to my hostel where I was staying, and we were in a conversation about religion. She made it a point to say, “We don’t worship idols and statues; we worship only one god.” I just shook my head and smiled but did not reply, because I respect what choices people make concerning their own faith.

“Up to 1823 idolatry was practiced by the people of Rarotonga. When the Gospel was introduced to Rarotonga, the missionaries took steps in wiping out idol worship” (Rere, 36). Idols were burned or thrown into the ocean. The old religion was destroyed by the missionaries and replaced by a new set of beliefs, which was Christianity.

DANCING FOR THE GODS

Dancing was a vehicle of communication with gods and people prior to the introduction of Christian faith. It was a way to educate people and to pay tribute to the gods at the same time. Fruits of the land and sea were given as offerings to the gods to thank them for life. There are still places in the world where they still practice this. One particular place is in Bali, Indonesia, where food and flower offerings to the gods are common daily rituals. Sacred dances are offered to the gods during Hindu temple ceremonies along with the sacrifice of certain animals like pigs, geese, and ducks. These offerings are believed to bring abundance, luck, and protection from evil.

In the following, Makirere explains how dancing was associated with pro-creation during religious festivals during pre-missionary times in the Cook Islands:

Dynamic action and words were believed to affect nature. Dancing at religious festivals was closely related to the offerings and feasts in honor of the gods.

Dancers were believed to rouse and stimulate the gods, for *mana* also meant procreative power. Dancing was a form of worship, designed to bring into action

the *mana* of the gods who were believed to be animated by the same emotions as men and on whose procreative activities depended on the continuation of life. The dancing roused the passions of the gods who would get satisfaction from female mates so that there would be plenty of breadfruit, kumara, taro, bananas, yams and fish. For men and women at these festivals, the end was a sexual orgy, which produced human children. Because the procreative power in the human fathers was released and freely spent, the nature of father was aroused to impregnate the mothers in nature.” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 114)

Dance embodied *mana* and procreative powers, and the connection of dance to the gods was evident in both Tahiti and Rarotonga. Sexual freedom was also associated with both cultures. Dance was a sacred act for the purpose of procreation and abundance in some rituals. “There may have been some connections with Rarotongan rituals and the *arioi* society from *Avaiki Runga* (Tahiti, Raiatea), but other rituals were more reflective of influences from Western Oceania (mostly Samoa, Tonga and Kiribati),” stated Jonassen.

CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICE

Human sacrifice and cannibalism were practiced in both Rarotonga and Tahiti and not associated with being hungry but mainly for reasons of revenge. In the book Cannibals and Converts by Maretu and translated by Crocombe, gives an explanation of Maretu, a Christian convert from Rarotonga and how there was a hunger for human flesh, but that high chiefs did not partake in this activity, only warriors. During battles, when an opponent was killed, the body was eaten and believed to acquire the *mana* (power) of that person through the process of consumption. This was considered a highly spiritual ritual

but regarded as heathen by the missionaries upon their arrival. Human sacrifice was also practiced for offerings to the gods.

Ta'unga who was converted into Christianity and became a teacher of the gospel in Rarotonga speaks about the subject of warfare and cannibalism in his book edited and translated by Crocombe entitled, The Works of Ta'unga. Ta'unga states:

The first subject to be discussed is warfare. They never stop fighting, day and night, month in and month out. The reason they fight so frequently is to satisfy their hunger for human flesh. This is the cause—it is their vindictiveness. Their squabbles are distinguished by their persistence and the ease with which people will engage in a fight. Relatively few people are taken in open warfare. A much greater number are obtained in fighting by stealth, like kidnapping. (Crocombe, The works of Ta'unga, 86)

Ta'unga further discusses the details of cannibalism in this book and how all of the islands practiced it. The way he describes it does not seem so sacred, but he describes the appetite for human flesh that existed and fighting that seemed like an endless battle. Ta'unga wanted to put a stop to war and cannibalism. Here is part of a letter that Ta'unga wrote to missionary William Pitman:

About war; I am writing to you Pitman about all the things I have seen in these islands. This is the first topic—war. They never stop fighting, in the daytime and at night. . . . this story. What is the point of my writing this account for you. It is so you will understand the nature of it, then cast it aside. By Ta'unga at Nengone (Mare). (Crocombe, The Works of Ta'unga, 89)

Ta'unga discusses in graphic detail what happens to the body once it is killed in battle and how it is cooked, etc. It seems that the missionaries' view on cannibalism was a great reason to convert all heathens to Christianity during those times.

ANCIENT DRESS IN TAHITI

There are limited resources on the subject of ancient clothing in the Society Islands, but Teuira Henry explains in great detail his description of what men and women wore during those times in the following:

The ancient dress for men consisted of the *maro* (loin girdle), their undress or working apparel; the *pa-u* (waist cloth), a piece of cloth about two yards long, which was drawn round the waist and fastened jauntily on one side, falling like a petticoat to the calf of the leg (which was beautifully tattooed); and the *tiputa* (poncho), plain or ornamented. The *maro* and the *pareu*, differing only in material—now of modern cloth—are still worn, the *maro* by fishermen and other working men in the country; the *pareu*, most of the population, in undress. Their best clothes were *ahu-puupuu*, made from bark of the breadfruit tree, and were beautifully white. Common clothes were brown and were made from the bark of the banyan and paper-mulberry trees. Such clothes are no longer in the Society Islands. Fancy capes were braided from *purau* bark, and they are still sometimes made on festival occasions. The children, often nude, were dressed the same as grown people. The women wore a *pareu* and an over-covering of *tapa*, called *'ahu-pu*, which they would round the body, leaving the arms bare, and fastened over one shoulder—a mode of dressing admired and described by Europeans who first visited these shores. The cotton *pareu* they still wear in place of a petticoat

under the Mother Hubbard dress, called *'ahu-tua* (dress with a yoke). (Henry, 285)

The Mother Hubbard dress today is called *ahu-purotu* in Tahiti and *mu'umu'u* in Rarotonga. One can look at this dress as a symbol of major change in both regions, which replaced the traditional bark_cloth dress. Women had to cover their bodies from the neck down after 1819, when the missionaries banned traditional adornment and set strict rules based on the Pomare code in Tahiti, which I will discuss in more detail later. Teuira Henry explains what royalty wore during public festivities in the following paragraph:

During public festivities, the king and other men of rank wore as *pareu* fine flexible mats, called *vane*, interwoven with light patterns and edged with a fringe. Their *tiputa* were of red, black, and yellow feathers, or of white *tapa*, plain or fringed, bordered with *'ura* feathers (as ermine is used upon robes for European nobility); and they were decorated round the neck with rosettes, some of the bright red and black seeds of the *pipitio* (black-eyed Susan), connected with rows of the same; and others of feathers of bright or somber hue, according to taste. They also wore capes of *revareva* made from the young coconut leaf, and headdresses to match—decorations still occasionally manufactured and worn on festive occasions. Queen Pomare gave one to Prince Alfred when he visited Tahiti, and some French admirals have been presented with them. The king's councilors of high or obscure birth wore *vane* with rich black feather capes. (Henry, 285)

Early writers wrote about the elaborate costume of the *hura* dancers, but there was not much spoken about other forms of dress for other types of dances. “We do know, that

in 1769 a large headdress of four feet, eight inches in height formed part of a costume worn on the island of Ra'iatea" (qtd. in Moulin, 107; Banks 1962:324). Moulin also mentions how ancient dancers' bras with feathers and shells and that their head wreaths were made of yards of braided hair wrapped in circles with flowers inserted.

THE *ARIOI* OF THE SOCIETY ISLANDS

Oral tradition and expressive traditional culture has been a part of Tahiti and her islands for a very long time. Writers and researchers are unsure about how far back these practices have taken place, since there was no written language prior to European arrival. The Tahitians are natural performers, and it is written in their ancestral genealogy. Prior to Christian missionization, the *Arioi* was a society of comedians, singers, musicians, dancers and actors who put on grand performances for all classes of people throughout the Society Islands. "Their performances were connected with mysteries which they attributed to the god 'Oro, to whom they gave the special title of 'Oro-i-te-tea-moe ('Oro-of-the-spear-laid-down), the emblem of which was a triangle, somewhat masonic² in appearance, made of spears, thus ∇, meaning that 'Oro was then a god of peace" (Henry, 230). "Moulin describes the god 'Oro as the god of rain and fertility, dancing, and singing" (Moulin, 8). According to the legend, "King Tamatoa I, as 'Oro's incarnation, was the first *arioi* on this earth, and he organized the first *arioi* society at *Te-pori-a-tai* (The-fullness-of-the-sea), a place near his residence at *Opoa*," (Henry, 232). *Opoa* is located in Raiatea, which is 'Oro's native land. In the book Ancient Tahiti, Teuira Henry, explains how the *arioi* was unique in that there was no other society quite like it in the Pacific, and how the society appeared not to have extended as far as the Marquesas or

² Edward Tregear, Wellington, has named them Polynesian freemasons (Henry, 230).

Hawaii, according to Ellis. Though Ellis does mention how “the Jesuit missionaries found an institution very much like it among the inhabitants of the Caroline and Ladrone islands, which they called *uritoy*. This name probably sprang from the same root as *arioi*, which without the *t* it closely resembles,” (Henry, 230)

The *arioi* traveled by canoe in large displays. Captain Cook witnessed approximately 70 canoes on a departure from Huahine during one of his voyages. Their costumes were also magnificent, their canoes filled with “capoes, waist cloths, girdles, and feather ornaments for the head and neck” (233, Henry). “George Forster saw one such expedition in 1774 which consisted of 60 to 70 canoe loads carrying some 700 persons” (McLean, 21). McLean does not describe where George Forster³ witnessed this expedition but it may have been the same one witnessed by Captain Cook, since Forster accompanied Cook during his second voyage to the Pacific.

Henry describes in his book *Ancient Tahiti*, how the *arioi* sound of drums, flutes and accompanied dancing attracted much attention and curiosity among the crowds of people who went to meet them. They eventually gained numerous adherents, and made general their society over Tahiti and Moorea. “Only well-developed persons of comely appearance, qualified as *feia purotu* (handsome people), were admitted into the society, and both sexes enjoyed the same ranks and privileges” (Henry, 234). Most professional modern dance groups today still hold on to the tradition of admitting men and women of handsome appearance, which will later be discussed. This can be witnessed in the spectacle in 2010 “*Vaka Arioi*,” which was a re-enactment of the *arioi* as recorded and written by early writers and ethnologists. I will later discuss this particular performance

³ George Forster was a German naturalist, journalist, travel writer, and revolutionary who joined Captain James Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific. *A Voyage Around the World* was his report on that journey and greatly contributed to the ethnology of the Polynesian people.

created by the well known group *O Tahiti E*, directed by Marguerite Lye and co-created by Tavana Salmon who re-introduced *tatau*⁴ to Tahiti.

The *arioi* consisted of eight orders for those who were initiated into the society and were distinguished by dress and tattooing, also called *tatau* or *naonao*. *Tohu* was considered the god of tattooing. “He was supposed to have painted the fishes in beautiful colors and patterns, which human beings imitated upon themselves, and men who made tattooing their profession invoked *Tohu* to aid them in their work. They were called *ta-tatau* (tattoo-adepts)” (Henry, 234).

The highest order was called *arioi maro 'ura* (comedians of the red loin girdle). They were tattooed completely black from their feet up to their groins. Both sexes wore a red girdle made of paper mulberry and sprayed with yellow and red to resemble the royal feather girdle. “Other clothing used in acting was also in burlesque imitation of royal apparel. They anointed themselves with sweet oil and wore flowers and leaves of sweet odor” (Henry, 234).

The second order was called *harotea* (light-print), and “had filigree bars crosswise on both sides of the body from the armpits downwards towards the front” (Henry, 234). The men wore a girdle of shredded *ti* leaves over their cloth girdle, or *fa'aio*. Both men and women also wore shredded *ti* leaves over their shoulders and crowned on their heads.

The third order called *taputu* or *haaputu* (pile-together), “had diversified curves and lines radiating upwards towards the sides from the lower end of the dorsal column to the middle of the back” (Henry, 234). Instead of wearing *ti* leaves, they wore *opuhi*, which are sweet-scented ginger leaves. The fourth order called *otiore* (unfinished) “had

⁴ *Tatau* meaning tattoo.

light prints upon their knuckles and wrists and heavier ones upon their arms and shoulders” (Henry, 234). They wore *tainoa* to adorn themselves with which was a soft yellow creeper. The fifth order was called *hua* (small) who had two or three small points upon each shoulder. “Over their cloth girdle the men wore another of the *a’a ha’ari* (fibrous covering of the young coconut leaf) and girdle headdresses of yellow coconut leaves. The women dispensed with the *a’a ha’ari* and wore waist girdles and headdresses also of yellow coconut leaves” (Henry, 235).

Teuira Henry describes the remaining orders in his book *Ancient Tahiti* in the following:

The sixth order, *atoro* (stripe), “had one small stripe down the left side, and they decked themselves in bright-yellow *fei* (mountain plantain) leaves. The seventh order, *ohe-mara* (seasoned-bamboo), had a circle round the ankle, and their decorations were of *maiuu tafai* (club moss). The eighth order, *tara-tutu* (pointed-thorn), had small marks in the hollow of the knees and wore bright flowers and a cap of red and yellow *Barringtonia* leaves.

This is an example of an ancient society that imitated the hierarchical system with the emphasis on materials used for bodily adornment, appearance, and aesthetics. This system clearly identified each rank of performers, which could be compared to the royal hierarchical system of Tahiti. The only difference is that the *arioi* were not born of royal blood, yet they mimicked some of the costumes of royalty during their performances.

“Before acting, the chief comedians dyed their faces red with the sap of *mati* (*Ficus tinctoria*) and *tou* (*Cordia subcordata*) leaves. So also did all the other orders, in addition blackening themselves with soot from burnt *tutui* (candlenut), which some of the men, to

create laughter in their plays, used for painting grotesque figures over their bare bodies and limbs” (Henry, 235).

Members of the society according to Williamson, were “venerated as a superior order of beings.” As such, they had many privileges, including the right to seize property at will and to lampoon prominent persons without reprisal. In the literature at large, the most publicized feature of the *Arioi* society has been their uninhibited sex life and rule of compulsory infanticide, which was enjoined upon their women. In this context, Cook, for example, wrote of a dance called the *Timorodee*‘ as an incitement to desires which, it is said, are frequently gratified upon the spot’ and he goes on to speak of children smothered at the moment of birth. From Cook onwards, numerous writers painted the conduct of the *Arioi* in lurid colours. Missionaries, in particular, targeted the *Arioi* and, as a result of their influence, the society was suppressed in 1820. With the demise of the *Arioi*, most of the indigenous music and dance they performed evidently disappeared as well. As the latter are practiced today, there is little resemblance to the descriptions in the few early accounts. (Mclean, 22)

It is important to note that missionary influence was how the *Arioi* met its demise. Whether the *arioi* societal rituals and practices were acceptable or not, was decided and future determined by missionaries after being suppressed by them in 1820, which changed Tahiti’s expressive cultural traditions and values forever.

THE *HURA* DANCE

The earliest reports of voyagers Samuel Wallis (1767), Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1768), and James Cook (1769) document a history of elaborate

dress for dancers in presentational dances that entertained both the chiefs and the general population. A famous drawing by John Webber, artist on Captain James Cook's third voyage to the Pacific (1776-1780), depicts female dancers in yards of finely beaten white *tapa* (bark cloth), gathered around the waist with long pleats extending to the upper back and shoulders of the performers. Feathers cover the breasts and hang in tassels from the waist, while a crown of finely braided human hair that Cook described as "near a mile long...(and) without a single knot" (Cook 1968, 126) adorns the head, the most sacred part of the body. Admired makers were those who skillfully incorporated fresh flowers in this elegant headwear. In a remarkable contrast, the male dancers have no head adornment at all and wear an undecorated bark cloth wrap tied at the waist. (Moulin, Dance Costumes of French Polynesia, 419). (See fig. 1 and 2 in appendix)

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate current costumes today depicting historical references of ancient costumes. Reflecting and understanding the past is very important, for the Tahitians' need to embrace traditional customs.

HEADDRESSES

The headdress was very important in ancient times. The head is believed by Polynesians to be the most sacred part of the body. The headdress is probably the most important aspect of a Tahitian costume in both ancient society and even in contemporary costumes. The difference compared to ancient society is that headdresses today are made for the purpose of entertainment whereas in ancient Tahitian society in most cases, was

made and worn to symbolize one's status and power. The tall headdress was re-introduced by Madeline Mou'a in the 1950s. Henry describes headdresses in Tahiti:

People of rank had headdresses called *taupo'o* (cap or hat), *hei* (wreath), and *taumi-upo'o* (turban). The sovereign's royal dress was a toque exquisitely made of *'ura* feathers to match the special blendings of the dress of the kingdom represented. It was called *te-ata-o-tū* (the-cloud-of-tū), being emblematical of the cloud in which the god *Tū* found the babe *Ro'o-te-ro'oro'o*.

The most spectacular headdress worn in ancient Tahiti was called the *Taumi*, which is described below:

The most showy headdress worn officially by the king and princess and high chiefs was the *taumi*, a superb helmet made of clusters of crimson feathers of the *moora'ura* (red-feathered duck), set upon a light framework and covering the head like a bird, with glossy terminal behind of out-spreading red, black, and white feathers tastily mixed together. This helmet, standing out from a closely fitting band round the head and towering high above, seeming to yield or bend with every movement, man held in high esteem by his countrymen for valuable services, a king wearing a *taumi* would pass it on to his head as a mark of appreciation. After courteously receiving it the hero would return it to the king amid admiring acclamations. (Henry, 286)

The following picture is a depiction of a current costume in 2010 during the spectacle in *Paea*, Tahiti called "*Vaka Arioi*" by O Tahiti E dance troupe. This gives viewers a visual of what the large headdress worn for the king may have looked like (*See fig.3 in appendix*). But since there is little historical evidence, it is difficult to know

exactly what they used to look like in ancient times. The above description by Henry does give us some idea.

Red, black and white feathers as described above were very important colors adorned by people of high rank in Tahiti. Red feathers were considered the most sacred and rare. Red symbolized power. Here is an example of the use of red feathers for a chief in Rarotonga; “The inauguration of an *ariki* included girding him with a *maro* decorated with red feathers. The rite elevated the wearer to the rank of the gods” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 115). Still today, red is a symbol of power around the world—even in politics. Red is the color of the element fire by nature, which can be associated to both creation and destruction. It is no wonder that red has always been associated with power and prestige throughout history.

Henry continues with the importance of headdresses in the following:

The counselor’s coronet, which was worn officially in the presence of the king, was called a *hei-’oro’oro* (wreath-of-feather-clusters) and was made of glossy black feathers set upright, and standing high around the head. This with his black cape well befitted the office of the wearer. One time at a celebration of the French emperor’s birthday, at the request of Commandant de Bousset, the native chiefs and dignitaries presented themselves in capes and headgear. The women of rank set off their dainty wrappers with beautiful wreaths of *’ura* feathers, yellow, red, and alternate red, green, or yellow, or otherwise diversified, tied around a cord in the same manner as threaded beads; around these were sometimes entwined strings of pearls. They also wore eardrops of jet-black hair tightly braided, called *tipua*, which were sometimes ornamented with pearls. Women of the people made

wreaths and garlands as they chose, but not of *'ura* feathers. They also wore pearls and eardrops. (Henry, 287)

The last paragraph is an example of how women of rank also wore feathers and it looks like red was used by every person of high rank and not just by men. The following speaks about Turbans for its more practical use:

Turbans, called *ta'amu'upo'o*, were of two kinds and were made of *tapa*. One was worn by the warrior to screen his head from spears and was very bulky, the cloth being closely bound together with cords. The other was light and was tastefully or plainly made, being worn as a hat to protect the head from the sun or in place of a wig in case of baldness. Leaves of the *ti* and other plants were cool substitutes for the turban. (Henry, 287) (*See fig. 4 in appendix*)

The most popular flower called *Tiare Tahiti* (in Tahiti), is worn behind the ear by both men and women. In Rarotonga and the Cook Islands, the flower is known as *Tiare Maori*. The same flower is also called *Siale Tonga* in Tonga and *Pua Samoa* in Samoa. Jonassen stated, “The movement of the flower across Polynesia certainly occurred but the direction is an open question.” There are endless songs written about the *Tiare* usually symbolizing the beauty of a woman and the sweetest fragrance of all flowers. Wearing flowers in the ears has always been a common practice. If one’s ears were not pierced, then the stem of the flower was held behind the ear. Hiroa explains how, “Cook was right about the flower *Gardenia, taitensis* (*Tiare Tahiti* or *Tiare Maori*) had been carried to the various islands of the Cook group by ancestral voyagers, and it is still the favorite flower for wearing in the ear” (Hiroa, Arts and crafts, 106). Wearing flowers in the ear is also a

signifier of being single or married. If worn on the right side, you are single and on the left, meaning you are married or “taken.” (See fig. 5 in appendix)

The following passage speaks about head wreaths, which are very popular today in both Tahiti and Rarotonga. In Rarotonga, they are called *ei katu*, where as in Tahiti, they are called *hei upo 'o*:

Garlands and wreaths of sweet odor were then as now much worn by both sexes of all classes, and flower set over the ear or in place of an eardrop in the ear was characteristic. The *tiare* (single-petal Gardenia), which in former days only decked the maiden's brow, has become the chief agent of flirtation. Rich is the language of flowers with those happy children of nature. (Henry, 287)

ANCIENT CLOTHING IN RAROTONGA

There are some accounts on record of ancient clothing in Rarotonga. In particular, the missionary William Wyatt Gill, Makirere, and Te Rangi Hiroa are a few examples of people who did ethnographic research and writing on this subject.

Traditionally and historically, costumes incorporated the natural flora and fauna of the land from the information passed down orally by their forefathers. Though it is hard to determine exactly how costumes looked, due to the limited resources on the subject during pre-missionary times. Some costumes have been preserved and are now in museums around the world. Most would agree that costumes were made from natural plants and flowers, since that is what surrounded the people and from research gathered by various writers. Most writers speak about the hierarchical symbolism in costumes in ancient society, similar to ancient Tahitian society.

The book The Material Culture of the Cook Islands by Te Rangi Hiroa, explains in some detail about materials used for traditional clothing and dance costumes in the Cook Islands. The clothing and costumes he writes about are some of the following listed here; the *tatua* (belt), *tiputa* (poncho), *pareu kilt*, *pareu* (wrapped around waist like a skirt), *pareu rau ti* (ti leaf kilt), *rau ti* (*Dracaena terminalis*), *pareu nikau* (coconut leaf kilt), *pareu kiri hau* (hibiscus bark kilt), *rakei* (ornamentation for kilts), *pare* (head-dresses), *pare rauti* (leaves of the *Dracaena* worn at dances), *pare tainoka* (made of the *tainoka* creeper/yellowish), *pare huka rau* or *pare ariki* (head-dress of high chief), *pare kura* (head-dress of a chief), and *tamaka* (sandals).

The *tatua* or belt was used in a three piece ceremonial ensemble and included the *tiputa*, which was a long piece of material with a hole in the center and went over the shoulders, and looked similar to a poncho. The *pareu* kilt was worn to cover the bottom half of a person and wrapped around the waist. The entire outfit was normally used for ceremonial purposes. Traditionally the material used for this clothing was made of bark cloth, which was bark softened in water then pounded until it was very thin. Bark cloth could be dyed with natural colors from various plants and roots. White bark cloth was made from the fine inner bark of the tree. “Bark cloth furnished the every-day clothing, but for rough work or for dances, kilts were made from the leaves of the *Dracaena terminalis* (*ti*) and the coconut, and from the inner bark of the *hau*. They all come under the name of *pāreu*” (Hiroa, 85). Today, *pāreu* are made of cotton or rayon and have many functions.

Rau'ti are the leaves of the *Dracaena Terminalis* and was used to make the *pāreu rau'ti* or *ti* leaf kilt. It was made into a three-ply braided waistband and is explained in

full detail in Hiroa's book The Material Culture of the Cook Islands. This kilt or skirt was used temporarily and made quickly. "The golden color of the partly dried leaves gives a pleasing effect in the dances in which they are mostly used" (Hiroa, 86). *Titi* is the old name used for this particular kilt. *Pareu nikau* or coconut leaf kilt was another skirt made similar to the technique of the *pareu rau ti*.

The *pareu kiri hau* or hibiscus bast kilt is made from the *hibiscus tiliaceus*, *hau*. The fine inner bark of the wild hibiscus tree is stripped, then soaked in the ocean for at least two weeks. This softens the bark so that it turns into long strips of fiber and is then cleaned and laid out to dry. In Tahiti, this skirt is called *more*. It is a popular skirt worn by dancers in both the Cook Islands and Society Islands today. Tourists and the general public call this skirt, "grass skirt", which is an incorrect term to describe the *pareu kiri hau* or *more*. It appeared to be made of grass; however it is made of the fine inner bark of the hibiscus tree. Due to tourism and commercialization, "grass skirt" is the general incorrect term that has been used for many years by most people. In most recent times, this skirt was (and is still) worn during drum dances of both Rarotonga and Tahiti. (In Tahiti a drum dance is called the *ote'a* and in Rarotonga is called '*Ura pa'u*.)

Ornamentation or *rakei* for dance kilts was made of various materials like pandanus strips at the waist that were sewn on with an *au* needle made of ironwood. Other materials used were strung colored seeds or shells that were attached to the *pareu kiri hau*. Both Aitutaki and Rarotonga had similar ways of making this kilt and ornamentation.

Pare were a generic term for headdress. A *pare* "varied from a garland of leaves to the elaborate head-dresses of the *ariki* class, which were built up on an actual skull cap

made of *sinnet*”, (Hiroa, 90). *Pare* were used as a sunscreen when people worked in the farms and also worn for decoration made of leaves or flowers. “*Pare rauti*, braided with the leaves of the *dracaena*, were worn at dances” (Hiroa, 90). These types of *pare* were suitable for festivals, feasts and dances. *Pare* were also made of the *ngatoro* plant and used for sunscreen. The *maire* fern was also used for sunscreen and adornment.

“Wreaths made of flowers, the drupes of the pandanus and the red berries of the *porohiti* interspersed with scented herbs were also worn at feasts, *umu kai*. These are purely decorative” (Hiroa, 91).

COSTUMES OF THE *ARIKI*

Pare huka rau is a headdress of a high chief or *pare ariki*. Here is a great example of how important the *pare* functioned as a signifier of one’s status:

In Rarotonga, the *pare ariki* of the Makea family was formed of a very old *pare kaha*⁵ to the outside of which a wooden framework carrying feathers was attached. In the historical story of the famous Marouna, some *pare* of this kind must have figured. In order that he might speedily go from Rarotonga to Aitutaki to the aid of his grandfather, *Maeva-i-te-rangi*, he is said to have bought the canoe “*Te mata-koviriviri*” from Angainui with a part of his head-dress, *tetahi manga I te pare*. It seems likely that he gave some part of the wooden framework carrying the feathers to indicate the transmission of some of his power or authority over land, or other material benefit. (Hiroa, 91)

The headdress of a chief was called *pare kura*. *Kura* meaning red. Although this does not mean that the *pare kura* was always red. Hiroa explains that, “They were

⁵ *Kaha* is a cord of sinnet fibre.

probably red in the period and place when and where the name was first applied,” (Hiroa, 91). Jonassen argues in a statement he made that, “While *kura* is red, Hiroa misses the important point that in Rarotonga and other Cook Islands, “*kura*’ also referred to “sacred”, and often specifically alluded to a sacred message. ‘*Kave ite kura*’ referred to ‘an important message being delivered.’ This was not the same for Tahiti.” The feathers were attached to the *pare kaha* and were obtained from a small island called Manuae. Red feathers became difficult to obtain due to migrations, and other feathers replaced the red feathers over time; however the name was still retained. This is why red feathers have always been a symbol of high status due to its rarity and difficulty in obtaining them. The only surviving headdress in Rarotonga is of the chief *Makea Ariki*. “The feathers are of cock’s plumage and the long red tail feathers of the tropic-bird, *Phaeton rubricauda*. The cap had been in the Makea family for several generations” (Hiroa, 93).

On the subject of the *ariki*, writer Makirere explains in the following the important role and title that they hold:

The *ariki* (high chief) was a unique intermediary between the gods and men. As the first-born male he held the highest rank in the tribe – a direct descendant of the gods by virtue of the first human coming from the gods. He was therefore a central figure in tribal worship, a point of contact between the spiritual realm and the physical. As the first-born of the gods, he was their representative in human form when they were worshipped by the people. But in addition to being distinguished by birth, he had to be consecrated in all the appropriate rites, educated in knowledge and practice related to the hidden mysteries.” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 114)

The photo in figure 6 in the appendix sits in the National museum inside the library in Rarotonga, Cook Islands and shows an image of *Ariki* and their ancient form of dress. The material is made of bark cloth (*tapa*) and other traditional fiber materials. (See *fig. 6 in appendix*)

As explained above, the *ariki* were of great importance. Since they were imbued with *mana* (power), their adornment was also imbued with *mana*. The *ariki* were clothed in sacred clothing of certain colors, which identified the chiefs' rank and importance. Here is an example of an *ariki* being adorned as written by Makirere; "The inauguration of an *ariki* included girding him with a *maro* decorated with red feathers. The rite elevated the wearer to the rank of the gods" (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 115). This was an initiation into the title of becoming an *ariki* and also symbolized the generative power of man and the "significance attributed to the human organs of generation" as stated by Craighill Handy, (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 115). Handy states on the importance of the loins (*maro*):

...for a people who made generation operative through sexual union a universal principal of their natural philosophy, it was inevitable that especial significance should be attributed to the human organs of generation. The belief in the sacred and psychically potent nature of the loins and genitals may be illustrated from all parts of Polynesia...the loins of the male, recognized as the seat of human generation, were quite reasonably regarded by the native as the focus of such generative power as was embodied in him, and many beliefs and practices arose out of this idea. These aspects of the nature worship are not to be regarded as indications of degeneracy, but rather as evidence of highly dignified philosophic

sense of the true meaning of one of the fundamental and essential bodily activities of man. (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 115)

There is a common theme of procreative powers in both Tahiti and Cook Islands history. Earlier, I talked about Tahitian dance and its procreative powers in ancient Tahitian society, and here it talks about Rarotongan adornment and the generative power that the loin cloths were imbued with. I would suggest that the sexual organs were believed to have the most sacred power of all since it is how pro-creation exists and that all of life revolves around this idea. Everything people do in life is for a purpose, and the ultimate goal always comes down to procreation and spiritual connection in all of nature. I am also suggesting that adornment played a major role in the power of man and his union with woman. It is not only an identifier of one's status, but of one's *mana* (power) associated with the gods leading to acts of procreation and the interlinking between the earth and spiritual realms as conduits from the gods. This is all associated to ancestral beliefs, that go back to the belief that *ariki* were the descendents of the gods.

CHAPTER 2: MISSIONARY INFLUENCE AND CHANGE

Many changes occurred due to missionary influences. Te'atamira Makirere wrote an essay 'Irinaki'anga (Changing Beliefs and Practices) in the book he co-authored called Cook Islands Culture (Akono' Anga Maori), and brought up some important points. In one sentence he said, “The missionaries, in their eagerness to “enlighten” the “heathen,” destroyed many religious elements in the culture by imposing puritanical English ways, and forcing on them beliefs that were hardly Christian” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 117). Makirere explains how reverend John Williams said some good things about native customs and habits. “Our people were all heathen, needing salvation, and salvation to him meant not only giving up idols and heathen obscenities, but also adopting western clothing and copying, as far as possible, the customs of this respectable bourgeois tradesman” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 117). Before the arrival of missionaries, natives were always highly spiritual and had a set pattern of worship set by their ancestors based on everyday chores like fishing, planting, building houses and canoes. They believed in the invisible gods before Christianity came around.

“Christianity was introduced to Rarotonga in 1823 by Tahitian missionary Pepeiha, Maretu and his father, Tuaivi, were among the first converts” (Crocombe, Cannibals and Converts, 3). In Tahiti, Christianity was introduced in 1797. Missionaries played a major role in the change of clothing, costumes and all expressive culture, but most importantly a change in the belief system of Tahiti and Rarotonga. This paradigm shift changed everything. In order to understand how Christianity was spread from Tahiti to Rarotonga, one has to understand the roots and intentions of this change. The Native Agency was a group of missionaries sent from London, England to spread the Christian

gospel to the regions of the Society Islands and the Cook Islands. It is interesting to note that it took the missionaries 20 years to convert Tahitians, where as it took only 3 years in Rarotonga. The big difference was that the Cook Islanders were introduced to Christianity by Tahitian missionaries, first in Aitutaki then in Rarotonga. The missionaries sent to Aitutaki, Cook Islands from Tahiti were Papehia and Arapata. Jonassen stated, “from 1821 in Aitutaki (1823 in Rarotonga) to 1839, the Tahitian bible was used in Rarotonga. Much influence during this period would have been a mixture of Christianity, English culture and Tahitian interpretations.”

“The Missionary Society (later called the London Missionary Society or LMS) was formed in London as a result of public meetings held in September 1795 (Lovett 1899:24-41). A group of 18 English missionaries, including five wives, sailed on the mission ship Duff to introduce Christianity to Tahiti and other islands of the Pacific. They reached Tahiti in March 1797. One of the missionaries landed in Tahiti.” (qtd. in Maretu/ Crocombe,18)

In the book The Works of Ta’unga by R.G. and Majorie Crocombe, the following passage best describes the beginnings of the LMS (London Missionary Society) and the connections of Tahiti and Rarotonga:

In August 1796 the mission ship Duff sailed from London and travelled more than half way round the globe until she reached Tahiti. There her passengers, members of the Missionary Society (afterwards known as the London Missionary Society or LMS), established the first permanent centre of Christian teaching in Polynesia. After nearly two decades of slow progress with its evangelistic work, the mission was suddenly given a new impetus when Christianity was adopted as a national

religion by the Tahitian ruler. Churches were soon formed and the energies of the younger converts were channeled into opening new mission areas. The church at Raiatea, under the direction of the missionaries L. E. Threlkeld and John Williams, played an enthusiastic role in this expansion and after initial success at Rurutu set aside two teachers, Papeiha and Vahapata, for Aitutaki in 1821. When Williams and his colleague Robert Bourne from Tahaa ‘discovered’ Rarotonga in 1823, Papeiha of Raiatea was left there and joined several months later by Rio. They established their headquarters in Avarua on the north coast of the island, and set up mission village there. (Crocombe, The works of Ta’unga, 4)

The first step was for the missionaries to learn the Tahitian and Rarotongan languages in order to spread the gospel in these regions. “In 1827 the Reverend John Williams commenced translating the Bible into the Rarotongan Maori language and was assisted by the Reverend Charles Pitman” (Rere, 7). “John Williams knew the Tahitian language and Charles Pitman had spent some months in Raiatea learning Tahitian, so it would not take them long to learn Rarotongan” (Rere, 6). In 1828, Reverend Aaron Buzacott joined Pitman and Williams a few weeks before Williams left to Raiatea. The New Testament was first translated and printed as single books. “In 1835 John Williams took these books to England and it was there that they were printed as one whole book – the New Testament only. When John Williams arrived at Rarotonga in February, 1839 he had with him on the “Camden” 5,000 copies of the New Testament in Māori” (Rere, 8). The translation of the bible into the indigenous language was a major step into converting people into Christianity.

PROHIBITIONS IN TAHITI

The banning of most expressive culture lasted up until the mid twentieth century when tourism started to flourish in both regions. Dance costumes were minimized to the missionary style “mother hubbard dress” which today is called, *ahu purotu* (See fig. 7 in appendix) in Tahitian, and *mu’umu’u* in the Cook Islands. Missionaries wanted the islanders to cover up and claimed that it was heathen to reveal the body. The *mu’umu’u* was made of imported cotton brought from the missionaries.

After 1815, the missionaries were horrified by the erotic nature of the Tahitian dances and the sexual liberty. In 1819, The Pōmare Code prohibited all forms of expressive culture, which included music, dance and tattooing. The Mamaia movement which was started by the Tahitian chiefs was fought to “return to ancient values: sexual liberty, ancient prayers and dances” (Gautheier, 15). This movement quickly declined. In 1842, Pōmare IV prohibited any dancing with her new and harsh code. “Dance—connected in their eyes to pre-Christian practices, drunkenness, debauchery, and prostitution—was prohibited by law in 1845” (Moulin, Dance Costumes of French Polynesia, 420). In 1845, Bruat under the French Protectorate authorized dances and the renowned *‘upa ‘upa*, which was associated with heavy alcohol consumption, then they caused a breach of public order. “First they were regulated (certain days, certain hours, certain locations: *‘Orovini* in Pape’ete...), then again prohibited in 1847 and reserved for <<days of public festivities, but without indecent gestures>>” (Gauthier, 15). Governor Page in 1853 authorizes dances to take place before 8pm only on Saturdays, and the music instruments to be kept by the chief. “In 1895, Tahitian dances *orira’a Tahiti* reappear in the 14th of July festival. Each year they become more and more important in

these events” (Gauthier, 15). 1956 marked the time of Madeleine Mou’a and her group Heiva Tahiti, which included the most beautiful female dancers in Tahiti who came from honorable families. Many dance groups were created from her group and July events called *Tiurai* then eventually *Heiva*, manifested into huge dance competitions held every year starting on June 29th. Today *Heiva* is a very popular attraction to tourists from around the world who can witness Tahitian traditional games, dance, music, chant and beautiful costumes.

Crocombe in The Works of Ta’unga footnoted, “In Tahiti there were several priests among the earlier converts and Ellis (1881, vol. 1, p. 233) remarked that converts from the *Arioi* society made the best teachers. One of the most notable was the former priest Aura. –N.G.,” (Crocombe, 5). It’s not surprising to learn that the *ariori* made the best teachers, since they were already natural performers in a sense.

There were other very strict codes of dress implemented by the LMS in 1819 in Tahiti and then in 1823 in Rarotonga. Cutting hair short for men in the Cook Islands was influenced by the LMS. Usually men had long hair that was displayed loosely or tied up on top of the head. “The prevailing style of short hair for men started with the missionaries. Williams (81, p. 247), speaking of the Cook Islanders, says: “The heathen wear very long hair: and as the Christians cut theirs short, to cut the hair had become a kind of first step in renouncing heathenism; and when speaking of any person having renounced idolatry, the current expression was, ‘Such as one has cut his hair’” (Hiroa, Arts and crafts, 104).

The following statement by Mclean in the book Weavers of Song speaks about the ordinances, which prohibited expressive culture in Tahiti:

The abandonment of traditional songs referred to by Ellis, and their replacement by hymn singing and European music, seems to have taken place quite swiftly. As early as 1820 there were ordinances, by decree of King Pomare II, prohibiting ‘all songs, games or wanton amusements’ Bellingshausen, who stayed for a few days in Tahiti in 1820, was entertained not by dancing but by young girls who sang psalms and hymns. And even a hundred years later the early prohibitions were still being enforced by Tahitians themselves with the chief native missionary at Papeete forbidding the singing of *ūtē* and weekly village dancing. (McLean, 32)

Hymn singing in the Cook Islands replaced traditional song, dance and costumes. These three forms of expressive culture met the end of its time. Taira Rere of Rarotonga explains how hymn singing or *imene* was developed in the following paragraph:

The Maori word *imene*, meaning song, has been coined from the English word hymn. A hymn, however, is different from an ordinary song in that a hymn is a song intended for worship. Before the advent of Christianity, there was no such word as *imene* in Maori. The idea of singing hymns was introduced by the missionaries. The main source of hymns in Maori is the Cook Islands Christian Church Maori hymn book. There are many editions of this book, the last one containing over 300 hymns. Most of these hymns are over 100 years old. (Rere, 12)

Most of the hymns in the Cook Islands Christian Church Maori hymn book were composed by English missionaries. Reverend Aaron Buzacott is noted as the greatest composer of Maori hymns and who composed most of the 300 hymns in the book. His work is described as poetic by Taira Rere who also noted his use of rhyme in some of his

compositions. Rere describes two works entitled, *Ko Au Nei Rai* and *E Aere Rekareka Mai* as two well-known hymns. Even though Buzacott may have been noted as one of the greatest composers of Maori Hymns, he did not recognize nor give credit to the local islanders who contributed in translations and missionary work. “Buzacott certainly ignored the contribution of the locals whose song patterns and language he was utilizing,” quoted Jonassen.

MISSIONARY INFLUENCE ON COSTUMES IN RAROTONGA

On the subject of costumes of Rarotonga in the book *Cannibals and Converts*, Marjorie Crocombe states that, “Dancing may have been associated, or thought to be associated, with sexual practices of which the missionaries did not approve” (Crocombe Maretu, 86). In 1819-1823 the LMS (London Missionary Society) banned all expressive culture of Tahiti and Rarotonga, which included tattooing, dance, and costumes. *Tapu* or bark cloth was replaced by cotton material brought from the missionaries. *Tapu* is made from the young bark of the breadfruit or banyan tree and pounded by wooden mallets, while the bark is wet until it is flat, flexible and thin like cloth. *Tapu* is used for clothing and decoration and given as gifts throughout the South Pacific Islands. Women no longer labored themselves with bark cloth, which was difficult to wash and disintegrated in water and had a stiff feel to the material that cotton did not have. Cotton was light and easy to wear, so the natives favored wearing cotton like the Europeans. Historically *Tapu* signified many uses and meaning to both cultures of Tahiti and Rarotonga, which included gifts for weddings, funerals, and was worn by high status people.

The LMS introduced laws that were aimed at the “transformation of Cook Islander social organization, political and economic relations, and belief systems called

the ‘blue laws’” (Alexeyeff, 37). The “blue laws” were aimed at setting moral standards and Christian values. This affected houses, gardens, bodies, hair, movements and dress.

Kalissa Alexeyeff speaks about dress codes in her book Dancing with the Heart in the following paragraph:

Dress codes and changes in personal adornment were viewed by missionaries as visible evidence of interior conversion and civilized Christian behavior. Before European invasion, women and men of the southern Cooks wore items made out of worked *tapa* (bark cloth). Men wore *tapa* around their waists, and women wore it like a “petticoat” that covered their chests: “an unmarried girl wore her petticoat nearly to the knee; when married it was brought down just below the knee” (Gill [1892] 1979, 12; Hiroa 1927). Women’s native dress was replaced by Mother Hubbards’ long gowns reaching from neck to ankle that are now called *mu’umu’u*. Trousers, shirts, and coats were introduced to men. Along with the introduction of European clothes, men’s hair came to be tied back in buns (Hiroa 1932b, 144). Wearing flowers as adornment and oil on the skin were banned, because “when they do, it is almost always found to be for the worst of purposes” (Pitman, 1833). Tattoos were also prohibited. According to Major Walter Gudgeon, an early resident commissioner on the islands, “Pa [a Rarotongan chief] told me that two men had their legs tattooed in the old style and he saw them tied to a tree and the marks holystoned out so that the skin was entirely torn away.” (qtd. in Alexeyeff, 38)

The photo in figure 8 is an example of Cook Islanders dressed to go to church in the early 1900s. One could see the dramatic changes in clothing during

those times in Rarotonga. Introduction of cotton material replaced the traditional bark cloth. This is a great example because it shows women, men and children dressed in the European clothing. (See fig. 8 in appendix)

PĀREU REPLACED TAPA

In Rarotonga during mass baptisms, “ways were devised to make people wear *pāreu*⁶ (a length of cloth worn like a sarong from the waist to the knees or the ankles), but they refused because the men considered this shameful as it would make them look like women” (Crocombe, 67). One could say that this de-masculinized men since clothing played an important role in the identity of a person and culture. D’Alleva states in her book she co-authored called The Art of Clothing that, “Clothing can reveal and conceal; it can declare alliance or independence; it can homogenize and it can distinguish human agents in society” (Kuchler, Were, 48). The role of clothing and adornment is very important in the identity of an individual and nation. Forcing men to wear a *pāreu* by missionaries affected the masculine identity of the native men. The banning of traditional clothing and dance costumes and all expressive culture meant the loss of their traditional culture and values with the replacement of missionization or Christian beliefs and practices. This paradigm shift took place drastically and within a very short period of time.

Along with the changes in clothing also came the burning and destruction of idols.⁷ Those who retaliated against Christian conversion were forced in different ways usually by instilling fear into the people, brainwashing, and destruction of anything that symbolized indigenous beliefs. In Rarotonga a devout Christian missionary wrote about

⁶ “Cotton cloth, ‘white and printed,’ was a popular trade item as early as 1769. There is early evidence that this cloth was converted into *pareu* and other traditional garments.” (qtd. in Dark, Rose, 85)

⁷ Idols; term coined by Europeans to describe statues of non-Christian gods.

his observations. Majorie Tuainekore Crocombe in her book Cannibals and Converts explains Māretu's observations. "For those who became Christian, he shows how much fear, intimidation even, was used to keep people believing and behaving according to the kind of Christianity taught by the early English and Tahitian and later Cook Islands missionaries" (Crocombe, Cannibals and Converts, 12). In a book Crocombe edited, translated and annotated, titled Cannibals and Converts, explains some of Māretu's observations.

The two missionaries and the students climbed the mountains and ambushed the heathens and threw them into a stream at *Vaerua*, but the heathens fled into the mountains. The property of the heathens, including pigs and all the idols, were looted. Not one article escaped their hands. Everything was plundered and taken by the Christian party. Those who were captured were led down from the mountains . . ." and they accepted Christianity. It seems they had little option." (Crocombe, 12)

Māretu also wrote about how Tahitian missionaries and followers captured heathens and tied them up with rope then carried them to the village, but Māretu didn't approve of this force. He also explains how in Manihiki, he was preaching the new faith and introduced the technique of building in coral lime by burning coral rocks in the following:

On the first occasion, a huge fire was lit, probably the biggest the islanders had ever seen, and as five heathens tended it during the night one of them said to Māretu, "I suppose the fire of the god of darkness down below (Satan) is something like this," to which Māretu, replied, "Tomorrow this fire will die, but

the one you speak of will never die. It burns for ever. Even if you poured fresh water or sea-water on it, it wouldn't die." The heathen asked what kind of firewood it was that burned forever, to which Maretu replied, "Those who refuse to believe in Jesus are the firewood." "And what's the fire?" "That's the anger of God." . . . "If all the people believe in Jesus Christ, then the fire will die." By next morning all five heathens had decided to become Christian! (qtd. in Crocombe, Cannibals and Converts, 13)

Disease that was brought in from colonial ships spread rampant almost wiping out the entire population of indigenous islanders. Maretu explains in the following what exactly happened:

A dreadful epidemic occurred in Rarotonga and hundreds died. The disease had very probably been introduced by the missionaries as there were few other ships, but they would not have been aware of it: "One thousand people were buried at Rangititi and six hundred at Araungaunga It was sin that caused the death to spread. The people were frightened . . . that is why they lived in fear, and it was for this reason that they decided to join the (religious) classes and the Ekalesia (church). (qtd. in Crocombe, Cannibals and Converts, 13)

Christians claimed that disease was brought to the people because they were sinful heathens. This was one tactic used towards indigenous people by instilling fear if they did not convert into Christianity, and they would die of disease like the others, and labeled heathens. Those who did not convert were forced in other ways as explained above.

The paradigm shift created radical change in both Tahiti and Rarotonga. A belief system was altered and forced upon by missionaries. Fear was the ultimate tactic to make changes to convert into Christianity. As stated in the writings by Maretu who was a devout Christian, he spoke of the truth and disagreed with some of the forceful tactics that the LMS and its followers enacted. Despite the consequences due to Christianity, the island people learned to adapt to the new belief system, or had no choice.

Today, many indigenous people claim to have welcomed and embraced the new religion into their lives. When people were living in fear to be the next victim for human sacrifice before the arrival of missionaries, most people would rather choose life over death. People feared to fetch fish in their own lagoons, for death may come to them. Sometimes it is not the religion that is to blame, but the people who take the wrong actions that intentionally lead to suffering of others. Most people want freedom—which leads to unity, joy, and love. As long as humans have existed on this earth, there has always been power, control and human suffering and people adapt to change because they have to sometimes. This paper speaks about major transformation, control, suffering and adaptation and how change affects one's culture. Tahiti and Rarotonga have endured a lot, but have adapted to major changes in order to move forward in life.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL REVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION OF DANCE COSTUMES

“A language that does not change is a dead language” – Kauraka Kauraka

Costumes have changed in many ways since pre-missionary times but simultaneously, there is a popular need to preserve what was from the past and embrace cultural and national identities due to such loss over a long period of time. The need to regain what is theirs has been a focus since the 1950s in both regions. The following chapter will examine the transformation of the changes that occurred in costumes due to tourism and the building of the international airports.

Contemporary costumes today combine tradition with modernity both reflecting the past and present times. Missionary influences that had been assimilated are still used today, but not for reasons to cover up, but to beautify and express through dance language and cultural identity. Ancient societal costuming has also been a great influence on contemporary dance costumes with re-enactments of mythological stories, ancient religious, and everyday life themes. Since pre-missionary times, costumes have changed from the limited resources known about the history of adornment prior to 1797. Since expressive culture was repressed for over 100 years, revival of dance, music, and costumes made a come back and change starting in the 1950s in Tahiti and 1960s in Rarotonga.

CONTEMPORARY RAROTONGAN COSTUMES AND DANCE

The different body parts of males and females are accentuated through costumes. In Rarotonga, adornment of the head is of great importance even today. The head area of the body is considered the most sacred and what is worn in most cases may signify one's

status. Traditionally, commoners would never be physically above a person of higher status, thus the Cook Islands headdresses follow this tradition by never being above their chief or leader. In an interview with Danny Mataroa of Rarotonga, a popular entertainer, said in an interview in 2010, “No one wears tall head-dresses; only high chiefs (*ariki*), and no one is allowed to be taller than the chiefs. Only the *ariki* is allowed to wear tall hats.”

Cook island dancers traditionally wear flower crowns called *ei katu* and in most recent cases are seen wearing short feather headdresses sometimes made with *kiri'au*, which is from the wild hibiscus tree⁸ that is soaked in the ocean for two weeks to one month before it is cleaned, stripped, weaved, dyed and then worn by a dancer. The *kiri'au* is the same material as the Tahitian more. If the *kiri'au* bark turns white and the longer it is left in the salt water, the lighter it will get. If the *kiri'au* is soaked in lemon juice, it gets even whiter. Aitutaki, located in the Cook Islands, is traditionally known for its very white *kiri'au* costumes. If the *kiri'au* is soaked in the river, then it stays its natural bark color. If the *kiri'au* is soaked in the mud of the *taro* patch, it turns brown. There are also natural dyes used for the *kiri'au* made from various plants and seeds similar to what you would find in Tahiti. The *pāreu kiri'au* is the skirt made from the *kiri'au*. Figure 9 in the appendix is an image of an old postcard provided by Jon Jonassen that shows the *kiri'au* skirts. (See fig. 9 in appendix)

Hip belts (*hātua*), in Rarotonga are usually made either of the *kiri'au*, *ti* leaf or other natural fibers and vegetable material. In Tahiti *ti* leaf is called *auti*. *Ti* leaf is believed by the Polynesians to bring protection from evil spirits and imbued with *mana*

⁸ The wild hibiscus tree is also called *hibiscus tiliaceus* in scientific terms or *purau* in Tahitian.

(sacred power). In pre-missionary times, costumes worn for specific high status persons were so sacred and imbued with so much *mana* that they were *tapu* (tabu) to be touched. Today, these beliefs do not always apply to costumes since times have changed. Though great time and respect are given to costumes and believed to sometimes hold sacred meaning depending on what the performance or ritual is about. Hip belts (*hātua*) accentuate the hip movements especially during the drum dances. Dancers today wear very lavish hip belts decorated with feathers, weaved *more/kiri'au* or *ti* leaves, *niau* (young coconut rib), and other materials that move well. Georgina Keenan-Williams from Rarotonga and co-director of the “Orama” dance group claims to have been an influence on contemporary hip belts in Rarotonga and Tahiti in the 1980s. In an interview, she mentioned how she decided to use *kiri'au* fiber that is normally used for the skirt (*pāreu kiri'au*), to use for the hip in order to create more movement, rather than use *ti* leaf. When her group danced in Tahiti at the *Heiva* in the 1980s, she remembers when Tahitians wore tassel hip belts and then started wearing fully woven *kiri'au* hip belts after seeing the Cook Island dancers wear them. Today, most Tahitian and Cook Island dancers wear this style of hip belt. It is now very popular all over the world where numerous Polynesian dance groups exist, especially in Japan, Mexico, America and Europe who have appropriated Tahitian and Cook Islands dance, music and costumes. (See fig. 10 in appendix)

When a line of dancers perform in hip belts, one could see the hips move to the beat of the drums in perfect sync from side to side (signature movement in Cook Island dance) or around in circles (called *fa'arapu* in Tahiti). The Cook Islanders describe Tahitian dance (*ori*) hip movements like a “washing machine.” The complex lines that

are performed in the *ote'a* (Tahitian) or *ura pa'u* (Cook Islands) are influenced by military soldier lines and a lot of the rhythms in the drum beats represent military drums. This synchronization has to be exact during these dances and the costumes are also usually the same.

In costumes and material culture the art of weaving, dying, stamping, carving, sewing, and braiding are all a part of an ancient tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation, and these same skills and techniques are still used today in costume making. The techniques may be the same, but the innovation in the creative process has evolved tremendously, and adornment have become a lot more intricate over time. Costumes have become an art form that has gained great respect and recognition by both locals and outsiders.

CHANGE AFTER MISSIONARY SUPPRESSION IN RAROTONGA

Prior to the early 1960s, it was *tapu*⁹ for dancers' costumes to reveal the naval in Rarotonga due to conservative Christian ideals. Johny Frisbee from Rarotonga, originally from Pukapuka in the Cook Islands, moved to Hawaii in the 1950s, tried to convince the Pukapuka Club dancers before a performance at the Victory Theatre in 1962 to, “wear the ‘hula’ skirt low on the hips (to enhance lower body dance movement), but they were too shy. In the mid 1950s, Frisbee and her sisters Elaine and Nga had parts as hula dancers in a Hollywood movie called Mitzi goes to Hawai'i, where they were ordered to tape their navals and painted over to match their skin” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 28). Frisbee also introduced Hawaiian dance styles to the Pukapuka club among other dance

⁹ *Tapu* translates to *tabu*, meaning forbidden.

groups in Rarotonga during this time. Frisbee was the mother of Haumea who married the Hawaiian singer Don Ho, most famous for the song “Tiny Bubbles.”

The Betela Dance Troupe and the Jonassen sisters were the first to “drop the skirt below the naval.” Anne Jonassen, who directed the Betela group was the first to initiate this, and it shocked the entire island of Rarotonga tremendously. This was a huge deal, especially after Cook Islanders just spent the last 130 years of suppression, by being forced to wear conservative clothing that covered the entire body from the neck down to the ankles. So one could only imagine how shocking this change was during that time. Betela went to Tahiti in 1964 where they won the dance competition at the *Heiva* (Bastille Day celebrations). “Dropping the skirt below the naval” started after their return when they performed at the Aitutaki airport to welcome the Aitutaki team dancers who arrived from Tahiti’s Bastille celebration. The Aitutaki team arrived on the same French military aircraft as the Betela dancers. (*See fig. 11 in appendix*)

In an essay “The Performing Arts” by Jean Tekura'i'imoana Mason and Sonny Williams in the book Cook Islands Culture, the following paragraph describes how costumes used to be worn over European dress from photographs found in the National Archives. The following states:

Women wore hula skirts over Mother Hubbard dresses in the late 1800s and later, in the 1920s, over flapper dresses. Men wore their costumes over trousers and shirt. By the 1930s women had bared shoulders but still covered their navals. Women wore *pareu* (a length of fabric wrapped around the body), over which they wore their ‘hula’ skirts. By the 1940s, bras were worn and exposure of some of the female mid-riff became acceptable. However, the naval remained covered

by the hula skirt, which was pulled over the belly. (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 28)

The international airport in Rarotonga was built in 1975, which was almost 10 years after the costume changes started. Tourism boomed after this. Since the 1970s, it became common to wear the skirt below the naval, and all dance groups in Rarotonga did this. Everyone agreed that it did enhance the movement when the skirt was lowered. Many older women stopped dancing due to this change and younger, slimmer girls became dancers due to the revealing costumes. “This may in part be attributed to tourism, with its expectations that only the ‘beautiful face’ of the destination is presented to tourists” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 29).

TRADITION AND AUTHENTICITY

The 1970s became a time of search for authenticity. The Constitution Celebrations organizing committee (Te Maire Maeva Nui), “Banned the use of imported, artificial fibres and dyes in costumes. Dance teams were encouraged to use natural fibres and dyes obtained from local plants and trees. By the mid-1980s artificial fibres and dyes were permitted as was the use of *mu’umu’u* (Mother Hubbard style dresses) in dancing.” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 29) This statement is clear evidence in the revival of “authenticity” in Rarotonga. Reasons for the revival of authenticity is not certain, but I would guess that the natives wanted a sense of identity that other nations could recognize as Cook Islander, and this sense of national identity symbolized the truth in Cook Islands heritage and traditions.

The coconut bra (a non-traditional costume) was introduced by Mii Quarter and her husband Rouru, who lead a Cook Islands dance team based in Australia in the late

1970s. Coconut bras became widely used in the Cook Islands and eventually Tahiti after that because it was easier to make. Although in most recent times, Rarotongans are seen mainly wearing decorated bras with sewn on shells rather than coconut bras in most cases. They also wear “leafy girdles (*rautī titi*)”, (Alexeyeff, 23). They take time in the detail and creativity of their bra tops, and rarely did I see many coconut bras during my visits to Rarotonga in 2009 and 2010. The coconut bra is still popular in Tahiti, as is the simple cloth material wrapped around a strapless bra. In recent times, there are many variations of bras in both Tahiti and the Cook Islands.

The notion of authenticity has become an important subject to Cook Islanders and any sign of European influence is viewed as corruption from outside forces. In 1976, there was a feature story that Alexeyeff mentions in her published dissertation, “Dancing from the Heart,” that appeared in the Cook Islands News, with an article entitled “What a Pity”:

What a pity that the dance group which presented the floor show at the Rarotongan Hotel last Saturday night did so in Western clothes. The men wore neckties with white shirts and long black trousers while the women wore... long bright green dresses. Their grass skirts (men and women) were worn over that.... When tourists come to the islands they want to see how islanders “do their own thing” and that means costumes and all.... But perhaps it should be borne in mind especially by visitors to Rarotonga that the group that performed did wear a similar dress throughout our own Constitution Celebrations and that the group belongs to a very religious community. And apparently this is the first year they have come to the bright lights of Rarotonga and they were reported to be surprised

at the sight of other groups with women performers wearing grass skirts below the navel. (qtd. in Alexeyeff, 74)

Who determines what is “traditional” and “authentic”? Most information about traditional costumes came from oral tradition spoken by the elders or Eurocentric views and writings. Claims on what is traditional are always argued by different sides. A spectator in most cases would not be able to discern what is authentic or in-authentic if they have nothing to compare with what they are seeing, and if they do not know or understand the history of what they are witnessing. Tourists come from all over the world to watch Rarotongan dancers, usually a highlight to their travels, but in most cases would not know what would be considered authentic or an inauthentic replica of a traditional costume. Most tourists just want to be entertained and most dancers and musicians want to please the audience while still staying true to their culture, even if it means to enhance a costume to make aesthetically pleasing by the use of bright colors and/or some colorful beads and feathers. The preservation of culture is dealt with differently depending on the individual. Some group leaders like to focus more on entertainment and flashiness, while others focus more on traditions. In my viewpoint and experiences, I would simply argue that dance schools focus more on culture and tradition, while professional dance groups focus on entertainment and pleasing the audience. Although there are different levels of authenticity, and many arguments can be made to describe what is authentic or in-authentic.

I will argue that what is “traditional” would be closely related to what is more authentic to the indigenous culture of one’s land and people with little or no change. Of course there are always changes, but there are cultures in the world that hold on to

traditions for very long periods of time. For example, in Bali, the classic *Legong* dance has been the same for almost 100 years or even more. Young virgin girls around the age of 10 perform the sacred *Legong* dance during temple ceremonies to honor the Hindu gods and goddesses. The costume is as important as the dance itself, and the same costume and colors are always worn together for specific parts of the *Legong* dance drama. This is an example of what would be considered “traditional” because it has not changed at all, nor have they appropriated any elements from other cultures.

Traditionally, the purpose of Balinese dances were to entertain royal courts, and for sacred temple dances specifically for the gods. The music, choreography and costumes are the same as they were almost 100 years ago and still serve the same purposes today.

As we know, many pre-missionary Polynesian historical records are viewed as highly romanticized by Europeans, and possibly misinterpreted. The language on record is in petro glyphs, tattooing, and oral traditions that were passed down and also recorded by missionaries, artists and European voyagers. An audience has no way of knowing the difference of what is authentic or inauthentic if they have nothing to compare the costumes and dance to. This is a major problem in the representation and accuracy of one’s culture, since expressive culture like dance and costumes has been geared toward tourism and entertainment in the last 50 years.

MATERIALS AND DANCE COSTUMES IN TAHITI

There is a great deal of time and creativity required in making a costume. Most of the time, the creation of a costume is inspired by the song and dance. This can determine the color, style and material in most cases in order to fit with the theme of a song. Songs and chants speak about the island life, nature, love, loss, and mythological themes. In

2003 while I was dancing, the Tiki Village dancers in Moorea, French Polynesia wore blue *pāreu* with real fish-nets and shells as their costume to tell the story about fishing. The blue represented the ocean, and they danced with small fishing sticks to represent fishing poles. There was another dance that told the story of building a *fare* (house) where the dancers wore leaves from the “pandanus (*fara*) tree (*Pandanus odoratissimu L.f.*)” (Moulin, 100), around the hips and had coconut leaves tied together to make it look like they were building a house in the dance. The traditional Tahitian house is made of coconut leaves for the thatched roof and inside walls made of weaved pandanus. Bamboo is used for the framing of the house.

There are also dances that speak about husking coconut, which is a common daily activity in the islands. The themes and creativity in costumes is endless. Maeva at Tiki Village in Moorea is the costume designer who mentioned in 2003, that an average *ō'tea* costume might cost around \$750 US. It takes a lot of time and work to create a costume and normally the director of a group designs the costumes while the dancers make their own. But in Maeva's case, she made all the costumes with some help from dancers who know how to sew. Sometimes a group of ladies (mamas) will make the *ō'tea* (drum dance) costume since there is a certain craftsmanship and skill involved in the creation of a costume. The *ō'tea* costume includes a *more* made from the fine inner bark of the *pūrau* tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceous*). Most people know the *more* as the “grass skirt,” though it is not made of grass and therefore, an erroneous designation. The *ō'tea* costume also includes the *hātua* (hip belt) that can be made of small tassels called the *puapua* or *'i'i*. Although this form of hip belt was popular prior to the 1980s when dancers started wearing the braided *more* hip belts introduced by Georgina Keenan from Rarotonga. This

created even more movement in the hip area, which is the emphasis of the *ō'tea* dance for the women (*vahine*). The *hātua* can also be made from beads and seeds, pandanus leaves (*paore*), flowers, leaves, shells, or any other available material. (See fig. 12 in appendix)

The *ō'tea* costume also includes the large headdress (*tāupo'o*) elaborately decorated with shells, seeds, beads, feathers, pandanus, *niau*, among other materials. The headdress can be made of woven pandanus or cardboard with material sewn or glued to the outside for the base, then decorated after the structure is made. Madeline Mou'a introduced the very large head-dresses in 1956 when she opened up her dance group Heiva Tahiti, which was the first professional dance group in Tahiti. *I'i'* are tassels that are held in the hands which are made of the *more* fiber. This creates more movement in the dance for the hands area. The men (*tane*) sometimes wear a *tāhei*, which is an abbreviated shawl that covers the chest area. The *more* for men are short up to the knees normally, while women usually wear it long. But today, women wear it long and short and even cut in creative ways mixed with the *pāreu* underneath. Sometimes dancers wear 3 different shades of dyed *more* that are overlapped and cut into a certain pattern. The *ō'tea* costume is among one of the most beautiful of all costumes, especially when you see a hundred dancers in the same costumes performing at the *Heiva*. (See figures 13 and 14 in appendix)

The *more* skirt is either dyed or bleached using either synthetic imported dyes or traditional dyes. “A local tree called *mati* (*Ficus tinctoria* Forst.), provides the red coloring, and yellow is obtained by grinding the root of the Tahitian ginger *re'a* (*Curcuma domestica* Valet.)” (Moulin, 100). *More* is naturally a beige or off-white color but can be bleached in the sun or in lemon juice. The *more* is soaked in the ocean for two

weeks-one month to make the fibers soft, or it can be soaked in the river to create a light brown shade. Dark brown color can be achieved by soaking it in the taro patch mud. Or an array of colors can be achieved by synthetic dyes like pink, purple, greens, fushia, red, yellow, orange, blues, etc.

Dancers usually make their own *hei 'arapo'a* or fresh flower leis, *hei upo'o* (head wreath) for the head, and fresh hip belt (*hātua*). A lot of times *ti* leaf (*auti*) is used for this purpose. The *hātua* can also be made of the red ginger (*'ōpuhi 'ute'ute*) or even “mango and *riri* leaves (*Hymenocallis littoralis* [Jacq.] Salisb.),” (Moulin, 100), which take quite a bit of time to make. “*Tīpaniē* (Frangipani, *Plumeria acuminata* Ait. or *Plumeria rubra* L.),” (Moulin, 100), is a popular flower worn on most occasions and the *tiare tahiti* (*Gardenia tahitensis* D.C.). In Moorea, the *hei upo'o* made with *tiare* flowers half opened is very beautiful (*See fig. 15 in appendix*). The Tahitians believe in using anything and everything that surrounds them for costume making. It is a community activity to make costumes as it is to dance together.

The coconut tree fibers are used prolifically in costumes, especially the *niau*, which is the young coconut rib found in the center of the leaf. It is bleached white and used in headdresses (*tāupo'o*) in both Rarotonga and Tahiti. The coconut husk (*kere*) is also used quite a bit for headdresses, bras, hip belts and skirts. This material is found on the tree where the coconuts grow at the top of the trunk. It looks like nature's weaving and makes amazing costumes. Usually shells can make beautiful accents by sewing them over the top of the husk. The coconut leaves are also used for costumes to wear around the head or hips, (*See figure 16 in appendix*). Coconut leaves are the same materials that are used in making the thatched roof for a hut or house (*fare*). The coconut can be made

into a bra by husking and cleaning it, then cutting it into two halves — and is a modern element to the dance costume introduced in the 1980s by Mi'i Quarter from Rarotonga. The bra top is called the *tāpe 'a tītī*, which can be made of the two coconut halves, *tapa*, *ti* leaves, shells, cotton material or just a plain bikini top. Sometimes dancers may tape leaves to the breast only and put their hair in front of their chest. There is an ancient dance called the *tapa* dance where the girl unravels herself out of yards of *tapa* cloth and does not wear any bra top. Personally, I have not found any record of this information, but seems to be common knowledge by local Tahitians. When I was touring with Tiki Village Theatre to France, one of the dancers performed this on the show “*Le Sauvage Blanc*” (The White Savage).

A costume that is still used today and is the clothing that the Europeans introduced is the *purotu* (Tahitian), or *mu'umu'u* (Cook Island and Hawaiian), (*see figure 17 in appendix*). The *mu'umu'u* was used to cover women up historically, but today it is adorned for the purpose to beautify. *Mu'umu'us* are worn everyday and during dance performances. Specifically, for the Tahitian *'aparima*, or Cook Island *kaparima* (action song). The *'aparima* tells the stories of life, loss and nature with its gentle and expressive hand motions and soft swaying hips similar to the *hula 'auana* of Hawaii.

In Tahiti, costumes worn during the *'aparima* are usually always either long flowing *ahu purotu* dresses or a tied *pāreu* with local flowers and/or greenery. The *pāreu*, which is a long piece of cloth, is worn prolifically in many ways usually to dance the *'aparima/kaparima*, (See figure 18). Most people today know the word *pāreu* as *pareo* (which is an incorrect term) that has changed over time. It is a very versatile garment worn everyday by most islanders and originated from its original version of the plant

fiber known as “*tapa* (bark cloth) or ‘*ofe* (*Bambusa arundinacea Wild.*), the bleached and woven strips of very thin bamboo skin” (Moulin, Dance of Tahiti, 102). Europeans introduced the cotton version and now *pāreus* are made from either 100% cotton, or 100% rayon imported from Indonesia. They are hand-painted with beautiful and bright batik patterns and designs of islands flowers, fauna, tattoo (*tatau*), and sea life. The cotton version of the *pāreu* is usually not imported but hand painted, dyed, stamped, stenciled or silk-screened locally. *Maohi* design is one company who have their own factory in French Polynesia. *Pāreus* are important aspects of the dance costume worn by women, men and children. It is not only used for performance, but for practice also. It can be tied in almost 100 different ways for men and women clothing. The simplicity of the rectangle shaped cloth is a functional and creative wearable art that can be adorned for most any occasion. Hip belts are usually worn around the waist over the *pāreu* to enhance movement in the hip area or accentuate the soft melodic motions of the ‘*aparima* dances.

MEANING IN DANCE COSTUMES

Colors in the costumes can symbolize or express meaning in costumes today. For example during the Heiva in 2011, dancers from Hanatika dance troupe wore *auti* of three different colors. Red represented the district of *Papara* in Tahiti Nui, and the green and yellow represented Tahiti Iti (*Tevaiuta*), which is a smaller island connected to Tahiti Nui. This dance symbolized a battle against each other and the costumes signified the two sides, (See figure 19 in appendix). Certain colors like red, white and black were considered sacred traditionally and these traditions have made a come back to try and embrace what was lost. Most of the time, colors are just a choice depending on a song and its meaning. For instance, blue could represent the ocean, green for land and brown

for earth, or white for spirituality (*See figure 20 in appendix*). Or colors can just be expressive ways to show off the beautiful dancers and be esthetically pleasing for the audience.

What is most important is how costumes make people feel when they dance. In Tahiti, many people mention the term *varua*, which means spirit within the heart. Many Tahitians speak a lot about the importance of *varua*, which is very sacred and meaningful to their people. Without *varua*, there is no spirit thus there is no meaning behind a dance or any other action. *Varua* is the life force energy that inspires dance, music, and everything that brings joy to life. To have *varua*, one must embody the spirit that inspires all creative expression and purpose to life.

Tahitian dances today are more focused on technique and the infusion of new moves inspired by modern dance, jazz, salsa, belly dance, and other styles. A dance director (*ra'atira*), Makau Foster of *Poerani Tamariki* from Tahiti said in an interview how, "Tahitian dance is becoming lost. Where is our own culture? Tahitian dance has been replaced by outside influences and pretty soon, there will be no more traditional Tahitian dance." She said that, "The new generation wants to be more progressive but that eventually their entire culture will be lost and replaced by another culture." She explained it with a lot of passion and sorrow. Culture is very important to indigenous people and is what connects them to their ancestors and roots.

The main difference in Tahitian and Rarotongan costumes I would like to point out is the height of the headdresses. Tahitian headdresses are usually very tall (up to 2 or 3 feet), while the Rarotongan headdresses are shorter (no larger than 1 foot) most of the time. This has to do with the hierarchical traditions that Rarotonga has held on to by not

being higher than the king or chief. This is a form of respect. In Tahiti, very tall headdresses became popular to wear in the *ō'tea* costume in the 1950s because of its aesthetic beauty, rather than hierarchical traditions. In addition, Cook Island hip belts usually have no weaving in the front, and Tahitians normally weave all the way around. But today, anything goes and there are no set rules. Traditions are constantly changing.

HEIVA TAHITI

Tahiti celebrates their annual Constitution week, *Bastille Day*, or *Tiurai*, which was the name of the celebration in earlier times, and later evolved into annual dance competitions called *Heiva*. During these celebrations there were music and some dance but only what was acceptable by the colonizers. Otherwise, expressive culture like dance was sometimes practiced far enough away so that it would not be seen or heard by missionaries. *Heiva* is a celebration that includes dance, music and *hīmene* competitions, traditional games like coconut tree climbing contests, spear throwing, coconut husking, and fruit carrying races. *Heiva* also includes canoe (*waka*) races. But the most spectacular are the dance competitions that sometimes include over 100 dancers at the same time. It is a very special time for dance groups as they prepare months in advance by practicing the dances and making costumes. People come from all over the world to witness the *Heiva* celebrations held every year in July. (See fig. 21 and 22 in appendix)

TAHITIAN DANCE GROUPS AND PERFORMANCE

Ra'atira (teacher or director) Madeline Mou'a of Pape'ete, Tahiti, started her group named *Heiva* of twenty-four dancers and made her first appearance in 1956. Mou'a is recognized as the woman who re-introduced *'ori Tahiti* (Tahitian dance) after it was banned for over one hundred years. Jane Freeman Moulin in her book *The Dance of*

Tahiti speaks about various groups that were organized after Mou'a started her group. She influenced a generation of future dancers and teachers including and, "most notably Coco and Paulina, who went on to organize their own groups in later years. Other established groups that were formed are Feti'a—directed by Teupoo, Maeva Tahiti—created by Joel, Polyneta—directed by Julien, Tahiti Nui—managed by Paulette Vieunot, Tamari'I Mahina—formed by Betty Taputuarai, Te Maeva—created by Coco, Tiare Tahiti—directed by Paulina, and, of course, Heiva", (Moulin, 16). Today, Janine Maru-Ara is one of the dancers still alive today who teaches various groups in Tahiti, Moorea, and New Caledonia and who still has the knowledge of the dances of the 1950s era. In 2010, she retired after 50 years of dancing and teaching, and started teaching the classic dances from Mou'a's group Heiva to various schools around Tahiti. Janine was the lead judge in the Heiva Nui 2010 and is recognized for her dedication in Tahitian dance and its cultural preservation.

Today there are an abundant amount of both professional groups and dance schools. Some of the most popular and well known groups today are O Tahiti E, Les Grand Ballets de Tahiti, Tamariki Poerani, Hiti Reva, among many others. (*See figure 23 in appendix*)

The most contemporary, progressive and popular group today is Les Grand Ballets de Tahiti, co-directed by Lorenzo Schmidt. During an interview with him in 2010, Lorenzo spoke humbly about Tahitian dance and costumes. He said that their group does not compete in the Heiva since their style of dance is not traditional. They combine a fusion of ballet, hip hop, jazz, modern, middle-eastern, salsa and Tahitian dance. He did not put a label on the style but said simply, "Dance is to free the body; Traditional

Tahitian dance and what they do are two different things.” So he made it a point not to claim that he was representing traditional Tahitian dance. I asked him about the costumes, and how I noticed that in some of the costumes there are belly dance hip belts mixed with the Tahitian hip belts. He claimed to put no restrictions on dance and costumes, but emphasized the use of creativity in dance choreography, music and costumes.

Les Grand Ballets de Tahiti used to be a part of O Tahiti E, who does emphasize more tradition. O Tahiti E is directed by Marguerite Lye. In a conversation with Marguerite back in 2002, at the Captain Bligh restaurant in Tahiti, she mentioned to me that she speaks to her students in Tahitian and avoids speaking French to them most of the time because she does not want them to lose their original language, and for those who have lost it, can learn the Tahitian language while learning about traditional Tahitian dance. The Tahitian language has been almost replaced entirely by the French language in Tahiti.

In 2010 during the Heiva in a historical pageant Vaka Arioi held at the Arahurahu marae¹⁰ in Paee¹¹, Marguerite and Tavana Hare Salmon put together a closing show for the Heiva Nui¹² celebration. Tavana helped revive *tatau* (tattooing) in Tahiti and originally lived in Hawaii where he directed a famous professional dance group for 20 years. Earlier on, Tavana was a member of the Frisbie sisters’ Pukapuka Otea in Waikiki (the predecessor of both Tavana and Tihati shows). The group Tihati has evolved and has

¹⁰ A *marae* is a sacred area surrounded by short-stacked rock walls where traditional Tahitian/Polynesian rituals and ceremonies took place historically and still take place today. Marriages, births, funerals, and even human sacrifice took place on *marae*.

¹¹ *Paee* is a village or district located in the island of Tahiti Nui.

¹² Heiva Nui is a dance competition held every year in Tahiti to showcase various professional and non-professional groups. It also includes traditional games and *waka* (canoe) races.

professional groups throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Tavana left Hawaii many years ago to live in Tahiti where he now resides.

Tavana and Marguerite directed and produced the *Vaka Arioi* spectacle (see figure 24 in appendix), which incorporated over 100 dancers, singers and musicians and created the costumes. Moana'ura Tehei'ura and Marguerite both choreographed the show. The performance was based on historical settings of the brotherhood meeting of the *Arioi*, who were entertainers that traveled by canoes from island to island within the Society Islands. The *Arioi* of *Taputapuatea* (a sacred *marae*) in Raiatea came to "Tahiti to pay tribute to the *Ari'i Nui* (High Chief) of Tahiti and present him with the red feathers from the *Vini Ura* (red parakeet), for adorning the *Maro Ura* (red belt) symbol reserved for the highest authority" (Alain Babadzan, 2010).

"Vaka Arioi" demonstrated the ritual of food offerings, and 'ava roots preparation during *himene tarava* (polyphonic chant), all for the dignitaries as a form of utmost respect. After the brotherhood ritual of offerings and the calling of the gods by the *Tahua Nui* (high priest) (see figure 25 in appendix), came the theatrical dance of the *ariori* to celebrate the meeting. The ancient *hura* dance was presented in the show, and the costumes resembled what Captain Cook described in his journals. This spectacle was a great example of historical reference used in contemporary performance today. Repeating history while adapting to current times was shared with the locals and *popa'a*¹³. Costumes resembled the hierarchical system as explained in chapter one about the *ariori*.¹⁴ The *ariori* had an organized ranking system based on status, and certain costumes and

¹³ *Popa'a* translates to 'foreigners' in English.

¹⁴ Images of *Vaka Arioi* can also be viewed on my thesis DVD documentary video.

tattooing identified one's rank in the association. O Tahiti E did an amazing job with the details in the costumes to re-enact history in Tahiti. (See figures 26 and 27 in appendix)

TE MAIRE MAEVA NUI OF RAROTONGA

Te Maire Maeva Nui (changed to Te Maeva Nui from 2001), was started in 1968 and is an annual event to celebrate the attainment of self-government from New Zealand. For over 100 years 'eva (festivals) had disappeared, which “had been a vehicle for building solidarity within the communities of Rarotonga. The Constitution Celebrations were seen as a revival of the 'eva in a different form,” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 26). Outer island groups attend this event and dance troupes compete. The categories of the competition are *Kapa rima* (action song), *'Ura pa'u* (drum dance), *Ute* (joyous song chant dance), *Pe'e* (dance with chanting), and *Rutu pa'u* (drumming) meaning “beating the drums.” (See figure 28 in appendix)

When I attended Te Maire Maeva Nui in 2010, there were no outer island groups who attended the competition due to government budget cuts. Only local groups performed. Te Maire Maeva Nui is a dance and music competition held in Avarua, Rarotonga every year. Similar to Tahiti, there are restrictions with what kind of dance and costumes are displayed during these events. Categories for costumes, dance, music and chanting are judged accordingly, and winners are chosen. These annual dance competitions have created a revival of both traditional costuming and the allowance of modern innovations. “Competitions are considered to make people try harder (*'akamāro 'iro 'i*) and incite them to display their village, family, or themselves in the best light, through physical or aesthetic prowess and the provision of food and money,” (Alexeyeff, 16). (See figures 29-31 in appendix)

RAROTONGAN DANCE GROUPS AND PERFORMANCE

The *Pukapuka dance troupe* directed by *Makirere*, won most of the prizes in 2010 *Te Maeva Nui*. I interviewed their costume designer Shemaiah, only 19 years of age, who did not dance anymore due to health reasons, so she was put to the job as the costume designer. (See thesis DVD for pictures and video of *Pukapuka*). Their display of costumes and dance were among the most popular out of all the dance groups in the competition it seems by the way the audience reacted with their loud applause. I was told by many locals that this was the first time the *Pukapuka* group won anything, because in the past, they were not as recognized; though their style of dance seemed to be the most traditional. They had a unique sound that stood out from the rest, so no wonder why they won so many awards. Their style of dance and music was the most traditional from what I gathered by local conversations, meaning that their style has not changed as much as the other island groups have over the years. (See figures 32-33 in appendix)

In Rarotonga the *'imene tuki* (Māori hymns) and the similar yet formal *ute* are presented differently than the Tahitian *hīmene*. They do not sit down the whole time, but women get up spontaneously to dance with great joy and happiness. They sit in a semi-circle with younger girls in the front center, and older women behind the younger ones, while the men are on the sides dancing together in a rhythmic fashion. The women and girls sit down swaying side to side, and the young girls spontaneously get up to dance in the front when the spirit moves them with great joy. Audience members will donate money to their favorite group in a bowl on the side of the stage and sometimes dance in front of the performing group to show their joy and excitement. Costumes that are worn are of various colors from solid to floral prints, *ei katu* for the head and young girls in the

front can wear two piece outfits with *pāreu* and bikini top, while the older women wear *mu'umu'u*, and the men usually wear pants with shirts that match the same material as the women.

Pe'e is a dance with chanting and consists of one person or a group. In Rarotonga there are different kinds of *pe'e*, each with a specific purpose and a unique way of incantation. A dance drama or pageant is called a *nuku*. The difference today is that the plays have been shortened in order to fit into the modern times. The current *pe'e* would traditionally last for hours sometimes, whereas now it may only last around 10-20 minutes with a focus on chant and dance only. It reminds me of being in Bali and watching the dance dramas and operas for hours and into the morning at times. Some of these were performed for sacred temple ceremonies. I can imagine how *nuku* was performed long ago, but has now been adapted into modern times. (See figure 34 in appendix)

“The actions, which accompany the story of the chant, may involve some or all of the actions associated with the whole gamut of Cook Islands dance. It may be performed with or without lower body movement and there are always hand actions in the *pe'e*,” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 25). Musical instruments and drums accompany the *pe'e* like the *pate*¹⁵ and *ukelelei*. In Tahiti, the *tō'ere* (same as the *pate*) is never used during *hīmene* and only voices are performed. In the Tahitian *hīmene*, the singers usually wear *auti hei upo'o* (*ti* leaf head crown) most of the time. They also wear the *ahu purotu*, which is the same as the Rarotongan *mu'umu'u*.

¹⁵ *Pate* is a hollowed out log drum that vary with different types of sounds and pitches depending on the size and shape of the drum. The *pate* was introduced to Tahiti and is called the *toere* in Tahiti.

RAROTONGAN ISLAND NIGHTS

“Culture is entertainment” – Danny Mataroa.

In Rarotonga, I attended some of the most popular shows on the island, which are referred to as “Island Nights”. There were many to choose from, and they were all very good. Some of the shows that I attended were at the “Edgewater” where I saw *Orama* (meaning vision), directed by Georgina Keenan-Williams and Sonny Williams with their Manihikian styles of dance and drums. I also witnessed *Ta’akoka* dance troupe directed by Vai’ne Clark, which was a group started by the well known composer Turepu Turepu, the uncle of Georgina Keenan of *Orama*, who was dance champion for many consecutive years during the 1990s. *Korero Maori*’ performed at the “Staircase” restaurant and bar. There were many other groups, but these groups stood out to be the most popular. *Korero Maori*’ also performed at the craft and food market held every Saturday morning and showcased many of their cute little children (*tamariki*) dancers. Costumes were very colorful and somewhat flashy. (*See figures 35-37 in appendix*)

Danny Mataroa was the emcee for all of these shows. He was also the emcee for The Highland Paradise show in *Arorangi*, which was not only a show based on the history of Rarotonga, but a tour around the grounds, up in the mountains where the natives used to live and also made war with other tribes. What I liked most about this particular show was the accuracy in historical depictions of the dance and costumes, and the introduction of the missionaries who banned cannibalism and minimized costumes and dance in Rarotonga. Another show on the island, was a cultural village called “*Te Vara Nui*” located on *Muri* beach. This show includes a village tour that teaches about history, medicines, navigation, fishing, costume making, legends, beliefs and more. It

also included an *umu* buffet. Out of all the shows that I witnessed, I saw a need to preserve traditional culture and educate visitors. The Cook Islanders love to share their culture, speak and dance about it. It is a way of life for them. Most costumes that I saw in the performances were either bright colorful and flashy, or contrasted with natural looking plant fibers. The infusion and adaptation demonstrates both the need to revive traditional culture and please tourists at the same time. (*See thesis DVD for photos and video*)

CHAPTER 4: NOTES ON GLOBALIZATION

There have been plenty of outside influences in both Tahiti and in Rarotonga due to tourism and globalization. As we know, tourism has been a major factor in the transformation of expressive culture in both Rarotonga and Tahiti. Globalization refers to, “A movement of goods, ideas, information, services, cultural and economic activities (production, distribution and consumption, trade and investment) across political boundaries of states” (Crocombe, Cook Islands Culture, 146). Globalization is cultural interconnections on a mass market that creates overseas jobs for the purpose to export goods into other overseas countries. This benefits larger corporations the most. Globalization covers many areas of debate that are both positive and negative. Some may say that Globalization is another form of Capitalism, and others would argue that it creates more jobs and benefits other under-developed countries around the world. Though some may say that more developed Western countries are stripping under-developed countries from their own natural resources that are being commodified to a large extent for the benefit of money and power for large corporations. Tourism falls into this category. The main reason for tourism is to create economic growth and stability. So how does this affect culture? It affects culture tremendously, as this thesis is proof of the effects due to tourism.

The importation of foreign goods has affected costumes drastically, from colorful dyed feathers, plastic and wooden beads, fake flowers, fake pearls, glitter, glitzy sequins, and the many varieties of imported cloth material. One may think of Las Vegas when they see flashy costumes with these types of materials. Les Grand Ballets de Tahiti is usually described as the “Las Vegas style show of Tahiti” by locals, with all the lights,

flashy costumes and dramatic dance movements. But, the tourists and locals love them, because they know how to entertain. They are a very popular group, because they are different and stand out from the rest; they tour all over the world. But does this bastardize tradition? Also when people see them perform, do they consider or think what they are seeing is authentic Tahitian dance? Co-director Lorenzo Schmidt said in an interview when I asked this question answered, “No, because what we are doing is not traditional Tahitian dance. Our style is infused with many different styles of dance, and even the costumes are infused with different cultures. We work towards progression, to keep the young people interested, to be creative, and to free the body and mind.” This statement speaks about change. Of course some people want to hold on to tradition, because they feel they are losing something of their past. But the truth is that life is changing constantly, it is not static. Culture is a moving entity, and humanity will always work towards progression.

There will always be arguments about preserving the past, embracing traditions, so not to bastardize and disrespect what the ancestors did before. One can visualize culture as having certain ingredients like cooking. If the ingredients are disrupted by another ingredient, then it becomes contaminated. One may say that culture can become contaminated by outside influences and makes it difficult to distinguish one culture to the next, due to the infusion of many cultures beliefs and practices. This can create confusion in one’s identity, or national identity.

Judith Raiskin wrote about Vilsoni Hereniko, a contemporary Pacific writer, teacher and filmmaker who speaks about the notion of “indigenous knowledge” in his works. In an essay, Raiskin said that there is “a recent movement of Pacific Island

educators and cultural leaders is attempting to determine what indigenous cultural values or “original knowledge” can be taught in school to counter the western values of individualism and capitalism. There is a growing literature defining indigenous epistemologies, comparing these “ways of knowing” across Pacific Island cultures, and countering inaccurate western anthropological descriptions of local knowledge and cultural meanings” (Ferguson, 25). The notion of “Original knowledge” is about re-remembering what was lost due to colonial suppression and ideals. This recent movement of relearning and reeducating cultural heritage and practices is happening all over the world right now in most all indigenous cultures that have been affected by colonialism.

From June 9, 2011-September 9, 2011, I spent three months in four different countries including Indonesia, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand, and noticed the cultural revival of “original knowledge” in these regions. Not so much in Bali, Indonesia, where they have not been affected by colonialism in their expressive culture since they fled Java long ago to avoid the Muslim regime, but have been affected by tourism in many ways. Bali is also one of the largest exporters of arts and crafts in Indonesia, including dyed feathers, masks, woodcarvings, furniture, clothing, and the colorful batik sarongs that are found in Tahiti, Cook Islands and other parts of the world. While visiting Taiwan in August, I was surprised to find out that only in recent times have they been recognized by the government as having 14 indigenous tribes, that all speak different languages, each with their own traditional practices. The *Hahn* people from China entered Taiwan long ago and suppressed indigenous tribes, knowledge, language and practices. They were even given new Chinese names by the colonizers. Now indigenous Taiwan only makes up 3% of the total population. New Zealand’s *Maori* indigenous

people have a long history of suppression by the British, but there has been cultural revival to help preserve their language and traditions in schools by teaching the younger generation. In Australia, the aboriginal people stay isolated from Western civilized, more developed cities and prefer to live inland where they were forced to live by colonizers long ago. Like many other indigenous cultures around the world, sadly, many aboriginals suffer from alcoholism and domestic violence. Both Australian and New Zealanders have experienced genocide and this has affected them to this day. There is a sense of loss of identity, and a need to revive the spirit of indigenous people around the world. There is now a need to re-educate the public about indigenous people and their cultures due to the demand from tourism and current trends in the revival of traditions. I would argue that tourism is a fact of life, with both positive and negative aspects.

Costume designers in Tahiti and Rarotonga have made an effort in preserving the past and find innovative ways of adapting to changing times. The effect of tourism and missionization is obvious, and always challenging. Influences from the internet, Facebook and You-Tube are making communication easier and more accessible. Performances are being recorded on I-phones and sent to “You-Tube” instantly. Pictures are being taken and published on “Facebook” within seconds and usually without permission. People can communicate using “Skype” by making video calls. Dancers and performing artists look at these sites to find inspiration, steal choreography, or learn about one’s culture and activities. It is a form of communication that is all about instant payoffs. Western influences are on a global level now, even in the most remote regions of the world, where children carry cell phones with internet access in the smallest of villages. When I was in a remote part of Lombok, Indonesia in July 2011, I witnessed

Muslim teenagers carrying cell phones and sporting American clothing while trying to practice their English with me. This is where our world is now, and this gives us a basic understanding of some of the effects of globalization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, costumes have evolved drastically due to missionary influence and tourism after over 100 years of suppression by the LMS in both Tahiti and Rarotonga in the late 1700s to early 1800s. Ways were revised and laws established to change costumes among many other aspects of ancient culture. The revival of costumes and dance came about due to the rise in tourism, movement and globalization.

Costumes are a very important aspect in dance performance, movement of dance and in the identity of dancers. Costumes are also a signifier of symbolic meaning in the portrayal of stories expressed connected to oral traditions. Stories of everyday life, loss, love, belief system, status, power and mythology are portrayed behind the costumes through colors, materials and designs. Costumes are signifiers of national identity symbolizing national pride. With huge attempts in the revival of cultural preservation, efforts have been made for “indigenous knowledge” that Vilsoni Vereniko speaks about, for the revival of cultural traditions, like dance costumes. Dance costumes of Tahiti and Rarotonga are constantly evolving in each of their unique ways. They have also gained more popularity throughout the world due to technology and mass communication (e.g. You-Tube, importation of foreign materials and through the movement of culture.)

Both Tahitians and Rarotongans are highly spiritual people and very connected to their land and people. They believe in *mana* (power) and *varua* (spirit in the heart). They believe that *mana* is in all things and that *varua* is within each person guiding them on

their path connecting them to their ancestors and divine knowledge. These are traditional beliefs that have always existed prior to missionary arrival. The reality is that cultural traditions always change over time and are never static. Culture is a living entity. This is also true in life, which is in constant motion. These two particular cultures are an example of how people have the adaptability to change while still staying true to the very essence of their heritage. These cultures are very unique in the way that they have held on to the root of their traditions to some extent, while at the same time accepted the changes through their own creative capacities and adaptations.

There are both negative and positive aspects to the changes in costumes that can be argued. Some could argue that the cultures have been tainted by the negative aspects of globalization, modernization, bastardization, commodification and from the appropriation of outside materials and influences; while others could argue how globalization and religious influences are positive aspects to the cultures, because Christianity ended human sacrifice and cannibalism in these regions. Many islanders have admitted to embracing the changes, yet others have voiced against the changes. Some very religious people are in denial about the true history of what really happened in order to protect the reputation of their church. There is much debate when it comes to religion, and stories change depending on who is telling it. There are always two sides to the coin, or duality working against one other. In this case, traditionalism versus innovation has found a way to work together harmoniously by its indigenous people, moving forward towards innovation and creativity in dance costumes, hence adapting towards change. Their adaptabilities to change whether good or bad have evolved into something beyond traditionalism, which make Rarotonga and Tahiti two very unique

cultures. They may be small islands, but the spirit and passion of the people are huge and bigger than life.

I was once told by a very special woman named Maeva from Tiki Village in Moorea that, “ The Tahitians love to laugh and make jokes...this keeps our spirits alive.” If laughing is the healer to live a happy life, then people can get through anything, and just need to laugh about it sometimes. Passion comes from the heart, and happiness is the key to life. Life is meant for change, and the only way we can adapt is to be that change and make the best out of it.

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” - Gandhi

WORKS CONSULTED

- Adams, Henry. Tahiti. New York: Scholars' facsimiles and reprints, 1947.
- Alexeyeff, Kalissa. "Traditionalism and Modernity in the music and dance of Oceania: Essays in honour of Barbara B. Smith." Australian journal of Anthropology 105 (2003): 428-430.
- . Dancing from the heart: Movement, Gender and Cook Islands Globalization. Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- Alleva, D' Anne. "Shaping the body politic: Gender, status, and power in the art of eighteenth-century Tahiti and the Society Islands, 109-150." Diss. Columbia U, 1997.
- . Arts of the Pacific Islands. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998.
- Arnell, David and Lisette Wolk. Visions of the Pacific. Comp. Ed. David Arnell and Lisette Wolk. Rarotonga: Ministry of Cultural Development Cook Islands Government, 1993.
- Balme, Christopher B. Pacific Performances: Theatricality and Cross-Cultural Encounter in the South Seas. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Barrow, Terence. The Art of Tahiti; and the neighboring Society, Austral and Cook Islands. UK: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1979.
- Benchley, Peter. "French Polynesia." *National Geographic*. 191.6:1997: 2-29.
- Colchester, Chloe. Clothing of the Pacific. Ed. Chloe Colchester. New York: Berg, 2003.
- Crocombe, Ron and Marjorie Tua'inekore Crocombe. Cook Islands Culture: Akono'anga Maori. Ed. and Comp. Ron and Marjorie Crocombe. Rarotonga: University of the

- South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development, 2003.
- , trans. The Works of Ta'unga: Records of a Polynesian Traveller in the South Seas, 1833-1896. Trans., Ed. by R.G. and Marjori Crocombe. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968.
- , Dousset, Roselene and Etienne Taillemite. The Great book of the Pacific. Secaucus: Chartwell Books Inc., 1979.
- Fayn, Marion. 'Ori Tahiti; La Danse A Tahiti. Pirae, Tahiti. Editions Au vent des iles, 2007.
- Ferguson, E. Kathy and Monique Mironesco. Gender and Globalization in Asia and the Pacific: Method, Practice, Theory. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.
- Finnegan, Ruth and Margaret Orbell. South Pacific Oral Traditions. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Gauthier, L. E 'ori i tō iho tupu: Costumes de Danse et Instruments de Musique Contemporains. Ed. L. Gauthier. Papeete: Musee de Tahiti et des iles, Te fare lamanaha 2002.
- Grey, Sir George. Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the New Zealanders; As furnished by their priests and chiefs. London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1906.
- Henry, Teuira. Ancient Tahiti. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1985.
- Hiroa, Te Rangi. The Material Culture of the Cook Islands. New Plymouth:1927.
- Howarth, David. TAHITI, A Paradise Lost. New York: The Viking Press, 1984.

- Jonassen, Jon Tikivanotau M. Verses of Wisdom; Kama'atu. Rarotonga: University of the South Pacific, 2005.
- . Cook Islands Drums. Rarotonga: Ministry of Cultural Development, 1991.
- Kauraka, Kauraka. Return to Havaiki. Suva: The Institute of Pacific Studies, 1985.
- Kuchler, Susanne and Graeme Were. The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience. Comp., Ed. Kuchler and Were. Portland: Cavendish publishing, 2005.
- . Pacific Pattern. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2005.
- Lansdown, Richard. Strangers in the South Seas; The Idea of the Pacific in Western Thought. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.
- Levy, Robert I. Tahitians. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- Linnekin, Jocelyn and Lin Poyer. Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.
- Magyari, Teava. "Mataveva magazine". Heiva Nui, 2010.
- Mageo, Marie Jeannette. Cultural Memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Postcolonial Pacific. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001.
- McLean, Mervyn. Weavers of Song: Polynesian Music and Dance. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.
- Moulin, Jane Freeman. The Dance of Tahiti. Japan: Christian Gleizal/les editions du pacifique, 1979.
- . "Dance Costumes in French Polynesia."
<http://www.bergfashionlibrary.com/staticfiles/Encyclopedia/Dance-Costumes-Dress-French-Polynesia.pdf>

- Moyle, Richard. Polynesian Music and Dance. Auckland, New Zealand: The Centre for Pacific Studies, 1991.
- Neich, Roger and Fuli Pereira. Pacific Jewelry and Adornment. Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2004.
- Newbury, Colin. TAHITI NUI, Change and Survival of French Polynesia 1767-1945. Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980.
- Oliver, L. Douglas. Ancient Tahitian Society. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1947.
- OCEANIA: The native cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands. Vol. 2: Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.
- Two Tahitian Villages. Honolulu: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1981
- Palmer, Bruce and Beth Dean. South Pacific: Pacific Islands Art and Dance. Suva: Fiji Times & Herald Limited, 1972.
- Price, A. Grenfell. The Explorations of Captain James Cook in the Pacific; As told by selections of his own journals 1768-1779. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971.
- Riley, Murdoch. Know your Maori Weaving. Paraparaumu: Viking Sevenses NZ Ltd, 2005.
- Rose, G. Roger. "Art and Life in Polynesia by Terry Barrow." *American Anthropologist* 79 (1977): 693-695.
- . Rose, G. Roger and Phillip J.C. Dark. Artistic Heritage in a Changing Pacific. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.
- Stevenson, Karen Maureen. "Dispelling the myth: Tahitian adornment and the

maintenance of a traditional culture, 1767-1819.” Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

Teuira, Henry. Ancient Tahiti. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1971

Tongia, Na Makiuti. Learning Rarotonga Maori. Rarotonga: Ministry of Cultural Development, 1991 revised; 1999 reprinted.

Toyama, Jean Yamasaki, Henri Hiro and Rai a Mai. “The Source: An Interview with Henri Hiro.” Project Muse: 17:2(2005): 72-81.

Thomas, Nicholas. “The Inversion of Tradition.” American Ethnologist 19 (1992): 213-232.

Vaka Arioi. By Marguerite Lye and Tavana Salmon. Arahurahu Marae, Paea PK 22,5, Tahiti. 4 July 2010.

---. Alain Babadzan. *Vaka Arioi* advertisement. Brochure with sources Tahiti aux temps anciens, Teuira Henry and Les depouilles des dieux: June, 2010.

Vananga, Tauranga. Clothing of the Chiefs (Te Kakau Rangatira). Rarotonga: Ministry of Culture, no date.

Wikipedia. 24 November 2008<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_Islands

Wikipedia. Cook Islands Population> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands.

Pacific Islands Governance Portal>[http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-](http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=10&cHash=42d0894cf8)

[29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-](http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=10&cHash=42d0894cf8)

[199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&t](http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=10&cHash=42d0894cf8)

[x_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=1](http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=10&cHash=42d0894cf8)

[0&cHash=42d0894cf8](http://www.governance.usp.ac.fj/top-menu-29/countries-and-territories-175/tahiti-france-199/?no_cache=1&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Baction%5D=getviewdetailsforlink&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Buid%5D=252&tx_ablinklist_pi1%5Bcategory_uid%5D=10&cHash=42d0894cf8).

APPENDIX A: LIST OF FIGURES AND PICTURES



Fig. 1. Etching by John Webber. (Moulin, 7)



Fig. 2. Re-enactment of a *Hura* dance by O Tahiti E in Tahiti during a 2010 performance called Vaka Arioi. Photo by Matareva©, 2010.



Fig. 3. Depiction of a King in the 2010 show Vaka Arioi, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 4. Example of what a *ti* leaf turban may have looked liked to protect the face from the sun. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2011©



Fig. 5. *Tiare* Tahiti (*Gardenia, taitensis*). Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©



Fig. 6. Photo of *ariki* in ancient costumes, National Library and Museum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.



Fig. 7. Example of a *ahu purotu*, *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 8. Church clothing in Rarotonga, early 1900s, National Library and Museum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.



Fig. 9. The Betela Youth Club dancers performing in *pāreu kiri'au*, 1965, Rarotonga.



Fig. 10. Dancers from the *Orama* dance troupe wearing *pāreu kiri'au* dyed in synthetic dyes with *hātua* around the hips, Rarotonga. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©



Fig. 11. Betela dancers performing for the French military aircraft in Aitutaki after winning the *Heiva* competition in Tahiti, 1964, Cook Islands.



Fig. 12. The *ō'tea* costume worn by *Nonahere* during the *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti, 2011. Photo by Matareva©2011.



Fig. 13. *Tāupo* 'o in the *ō'tea* costume worn by Ahutoru Nui dancer, *Heiva Nui*, Tahiti, 2011. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 14. *Tane* dancer from Tahiti Ora directed by Tumata Robinson, wears a white *ō'tea* costume designed by Freddie Fagu. This team won best professional group in 2011, Heiva, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 15. *Hei 'arapo'a* and *hei upo'o* made of *tiare* Tahiti (*Gardenia tahitensis*), as a welcome gift from Moorea , 2003. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2003©.



Fig. 16. Headdress made from coconut leaves and *auti* sewn on to pandanus worn by dancer in Fare Ihi No Huahine dance troupe, Heiva Nui, Tahiti, 2011. Photo courtesy of Matareva.



Fig. 17. *Ahu Purotu* worn by Tahitian woman, Tahiti, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 18. Dancers from Tiki Village wear two different *pāreus* wrapped around waist and extended to look like wings, Moorea, 2004. Photo by Rika Traxler©.



Fig. 19. Dancers from *Hanatika* dance troupe wear *auti* of three different colors, Heiva Nui, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva, 2011©.



Figure 20: Dancers from *Toakura* dance troupe, won best *ō'tea* costume at the Heiva Nui 2011, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©, 2011.



Fig. 21. Dancers from *Tahiti Ora* wearing headdresses designed by Freddie Fagu, which won for best vegetable costume in Heiva 2011, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 22. *Fare ihi no huahine* dance troupe in the Heiva 2011 performing at the Toata center in Papeete, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©, 2011.



Fig. 23. *Hiti Reva* dancers performing at the Intercontinental Hotel in Tahiti after winning in the Heiva, 2010, Tahiti. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 24. Vaka Arioi spectacle by O Tahiti E at the *marae* in Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva, 2010©.



Fig. 25. The high priest with food offering to the gods in the 2010 Vaka Arioi show at the *marae* in Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 26. Vaka Arioi spectacle in 2010, Paea, Tahiti. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 27. Vaka Arioi show portrays the king in this re-enactment of ancient Tahitian society, Paea, Tahiti, 2010. Photo by Matareva©.



Fig. 28. Cook Islands dancers perform a *kapa rima* in Te Maire Maeva Nui, 2008, Rarotonga.



Fig. 29. Cook Island dancers performing *'Ura pa'u* during Te Maeva Nui 2008, Rarotonga.



Fig. 30. Rarotongan male dancers performing *'Ura pa'u* in Te Maeva Nui, 2008, Rarotonga.



Fig. 31. Cook Island dancers performing 'Ura pa'u in Te Maeva Nui 2008, Rarotonga.



Fig. 32. Pukapuka dancers performing at the craft market in 2010, Rarotonga. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 33. Pukapuka tane dancers performing at the craft market, Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 34. Cook Island male dancers perform a *pe'e* in the Te Maeva Nui, Rarotonga, 2008.



Fig. 35. *Korero Maori* dancers perform at the "Staircase", Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 36. *Korero Maori* perform at the “Staircase,” Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010©.



Fig. 37. Youth dancers from *Korero Maori* dance troupe perform at the Saturday craft and food market, Rarotonga, 2010. Photo by Rika Traxler, 2010.

APPENDIX B: FLYER AND POSTER CREATED FOR THESIS PERFORMANCE

**Located at: California State University Northridge
Art and Design Building, room 300 (purple room)
On Plummer Street off of Receda Blvd.**

CLOTHING THE UN-CLOTHED

*Thesis performance by
Rika Traxler*

*Masters in Theatre and Art Education
with
live Tahitian dancers and musicians*



Date: Sunday, April 17th, 2011. Time: 4pm
*Dress tropical!
Mumu's and aloha shirts are encouraged!*

APPENDIX C: ABSTRACT FOR THESIS PERFORMANCE

The thesis performance was based on the research paper in order to create something that people could connect to. I wanted to give people a basic idea about my research in a live performance, to showcase the evolution of dance costumes in Tahiti and Rarotonga from the late 1700s to now. The changes in costume, belief system and dance evolved, and I wanted to demonstrate these changes through the power of performance.

By designing and creating the costumes myself with the help and collaboration of dancers, actors and musicians, the show manifested into its own creative entity, that provided historical reference and connections on the subject of dance costumes in Tahiti and Rarotonga. My goal was to give a basic understanding of the costumes and clothing as they evolved from pre-missionary contact, to missionary influence and to the revival of dance costumes after over 100 years of suppression.

APPENDIX D: PHOTOS OF COSTUMES CREATED BY RIKA TRAXLER



Ex. 1. Worn over the shoulders by the male dancers in the *ō'tea* dance. Made with white *tapa*, turkey feathers, mother of pearl shells, and other various shells and seeds. By Rika Traxler, 2011.



Ex. 2. Worn by the chief in the performance over the shoulders. Made of mother of pearl shell, turkey and chicken feathers. By Rika Traxler, 2011.



Ex. 3. Headdress made of dyed feathers with Rarotongan fan (made from bleached young coconut rib with mother of pearl shells) and woven pandanus. By Rika Traxler, 2011.



Ex. 4. Headdress made with dyed feathers, shells, niau (young coconut rib), and sequins. Worn during aparima in thesis performance. By Rika Traxler, 2011.





Ex. 5. *O'tea* costume (left), *aparima* costume (center), chief costume (right). By Rika Traxler, 2011.



Ex. 6. Dress rehearsal during the canoe scene coming from 'Avaiki. Photo by Edie Pistolessi, 2011.



Ex. 7. Dress rehearsal during the “Tahiti Tahiti” dance. Photo by Edie Pistolessi, 2011.



Ex. 8. Opening canoe scene performers dressed in what is to look like *tapa* (barkcloth). Photo by Edie Pistolessi, 2011.



Ex. 9. Tahitian chief (Sid on left), and LMS missionary (Steve on right) during the introduction of Christianity. Photo by Edie Pistolessi, 2011.



Ex. 10. Rika plays as Tahitian missionary convert during performance after the natives rejected the new dress codes. Photo by Edie Pistolesi, 2011.



Ex. 11. Rika singing a chant during missionary scene. Photo by Edie Pistolesi, 2011.



Ex. 12. Preliminary sketch of *ō'iea* costume. By Rika Traxler, 2011.



Ex. 13. Dancing to the song “Bora Bora Nui” during performance. Photo by Edie Pistolessi, 2011.



Ex. 14. Dressed in *ō'tea* costumes during thesis performance. Photo by Hedy Yudaw, 2011.



Ex. 15. Dancers and musicians posing after the show. Photo by Hedy Yudaw, 2011.



Ex. 16. Dancers waiting to perform contemporary dance “Tahiti Tahiti.” Photo by Edie Pistolesi, 2011.



Ex. 17. Performers getting introduced by Rika. Photo by Hedy Yudaw, 2011.



Ex. 18. Audience participation during the last scene. Photo by Hedy Yudaw, 2011.

APPENDIX E: SCRIPT AND LAYOUT FOR PERFORMANCE

CLOTHING THE UN-CLOTHED: THE EVOLUTION OF DANCE COSTUMES IN TAHITI AND RAROTONGA”

For the partial fulfillment of a Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, with emphasis in Theatre and Art Education

BY: RIKA TRAXLER

TITLE OF THESIS PERFORMANCE: CLOTHING THE UN-CLOTHED©2011

Performance time approx. 1 hour

Date of performance: April 17, 2011

Location: California State University Northridge (outside purple room) in Art and Design building

Time: Tech rehearsal 12-2pm, 5:00pm showtime

Writer, Co-choreographer, Costume designer and Co-director: Rika Traxler

Thesis committee: Dr. Ah-Jeong Kim (chair), Dr. Edie Pistolessi, Dr. Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen

CAST-----

Tahitian chief and co-director: Sid Liufau

Chiefs daughter: Ayanna Floyd

LMS Missionary: Steve Ramirez

Other missionaries: Joey Puerta, Linda Traxler, Rika Traxler

Musicians: Te mau marite (chorus, uke, singers), Sid Liufau

Dancers: Rika Traxler, Hina Curtice, Sonia Calzada, Linda Traxler, Ayanna Floyd, Niken, Neil, Jeff Fletcher, and Jeff Diaz Miner.

Narrators: Sid Liufau, Rika Traxler

Filmed by Hedy Yudaw

SCENE 1: 'AVAIKI-THE JOURNEY

Dancers come out with canoe paddles in their journey across the treacherous seas...

Men are paddling. Two dancers represent the ocean. One represents the storm and the other as the deep ocean. Movement of the sea, actors are struggling in the ocean trying to find land.

SCENE 2: MISSIONARY SCENE

Chief meets with the LMS (London Missionary Society). The missionary gives the bible to the chief, then the missionary converts start to dress the natives in the mother Hubbard dress (mu'umu'u). The daughter approaches her father (the chief) with frustration as he tries to calm her down. She throws the dress at him and runs away. The chief then turns to the missionary and throws the dress at him and says "aita" ('no' in Tahitian). It falls to the ground. The chief yells to his people, "Heide Mai" (lets go), and they all get up and follow him, as the men throw their shirts on the ground in a pile in front of the missionaries.

The missionaries look surprised and frustrated. Everyone leaves, but one missionary convert (Rika). She falls to the ground on top of the pile of clothes and holds one piece as she examines it with sadness. She then starts to cry and sing a religious hymn. She takes off her missionary dress and puts in the pile of clothes. She looks to be naked underneath, but is wearing a nude colored body suit. She starts to do a modern dance about her struggles as a missionary convert and living in two worlds (use religious song). One side, she wants and misses her freedom as she dances freely, and on the other side she has no choice but to follow the new religious order. After dancing, she puts her dress back on and picks up the pile of clothes. She looks up into the sky and says, "God, please help us." She turns and walks away slowly with the sound of church bells in the background. This is the end of scene 2.

(This is a time of death and disease that spread. Fear was instilled into the people that forced them to convert.)

SCENE 3: 1950's REVIVAL OF DANCE COSTUMES

Introduction by Rika (narrator): Explain about the history during this time and how the revival came about.

TAHITI-LOCATION

Dance *Ō'tea* (4-6 dancers) with live drums. (Choreographed by Rika and Sid)

Aparima (Bora Bora). (Choreographed by Queena Coursen)

Narrator—tells the story of the 1970s in Raro—the dropping of the skirt below the navel.

RAROTONGAN dance—pareu dance demo

SCENE 4: GLOBALIZATION/CONTEMPORARY COSTUMES

Dance to “Tahiti Tahiti” choreographed by Hina

Symbolizing the welcoming of profit and tourism. Globalization, sharing/exchange, appropriation, capitalism, etc. (wear bright, flashy costumes! Vegas style!)

Interact with audience by dancing with them and giving them fake flower leis (symbol of plastic culture today).

An old woman or chief says last message... in one or two sentences. She walks out in the middle of everyone and says...(OR a voice in the sky...ancestor spirit) says...

“Our culture has been replaced, don't forget your roots...don't forget your roots...”

or “Remember.....Don't forget your VARUA....your spirit” (touches her heart with her hand)

(Note: Old woman is a symbol of listening to our elders who hold the knowledge and oral traditions. If we don't listen, the new generation will forget who they are and where they came from.)

All dancers surround and embrace her in the middle with heads faced down at a slight tilt.

Narrator: (Rika) gives last words that conclude the show.

APPENDIX F: DOCUMENTARY DVD OF THESIS PERFORMANCE AND
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

See CSUN library online scholarly archives for thesis and dissertations.

APPENDIX G: MY BACKGROUND

The reason why I am studying this area of research is mani-fold. This subject speaks deeply to me through life long experience and living a dream. I have been practicing and performing Tahitian dance since I was twelve years old (over 20 years). My mom got my sister and I involved in Polynesian dance to keep us busy on the weekends, since she was a single widowed mother who wanted to keep us away from boys and trouble. My father died in 1987 when I was eleven. He was an artist and traveler during his life, and a great inspiration. As an adult I realized that my involvement in dance was my way of healing after a great loss. My mom made a great choice to sign us up for classes, because I would never of imagined how far it would take me. Dance will always be a way of life for me.

I started dancing with Kilisitina Vainuku who is the leader of “Tinas Ports of Paradise” from 1988-1994 in Oxnard California. Kilisitina (Tina) was originally from Samoa and danced for the Polynesian Cultural Center in Oahu, Hawaii. Throughout the six years I danced for Tina, we performed for various venues in California. This was my introduction to Polynesian dance. I assisted her in making costumes and eventually started to design and create my own costumes at home with my sister Linda. In 1995, I danced with Hanahpo in Carpenteria, California. Hanahpo is originally from *Tubuai*, an island in French Polynesia. This was my first real introduction to Tahitian dance, and she was the one who influenced me to dance in Tahiti years later.

In 1998, when I graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute with a major in painting, my friend Queena and I started to practice dance together in front of the T.V., where we could see our reflection. Eventually we started to choreograph our own dances

and started teaching other dancers at a local gym in Ventura, California. After about one year, we developed a dance group, which we called “Hula Girl Dance Productions” with the help of Randy Martinez, and opened up a studio on Main Street in Ventura called “Hula Girl Dance Studio” in 2000. I directed and ran both the studio and performing group for three years, then decided to travel to Tahiti. In 2003, I attended a dance and vivo nose flute workshop at the San Jose Tahiti Fete¹⁶ with the musical group *Fenua*¹⁷ from Tahiti.

I was 27 when I first went to Tahiti in July 2003. I went again a second time later that year in September 2003 with my sister, where I was hired to dance for *Tiki Village Theatre* in Moorea, French Polynesia. I returned in October 2003, where I trained and performed Tahitian and fire dance. I was asked by a fellow fire dancer at Tiki Village to dance with him for *Cirque du Soleil* but decided to go on tour with Tiki Village instead. We toured to France from the beginning of November to December 22nd, 2003 in a musical called *Le Sauvage Blanc* directed by Olivier Briac and choreographed by Janine Maru-Ara who was a student of Madeline Mou’a (a pioneer in the re-birth of Tahitian dance in 1956). I returned back to California in December 2003 and continued to run my dance company, but decided in 2004 to close the studio. I went back to Tahiti in February 2004 for two months. I consolidated my dance group from around ten dancers to four or five. From 2004-2009, I ran the group and continued to perform all over the country for corporate and private luaus (parties) making this my main source of income during these years. We danced for the simplest backyard luaus to the most extravagant corporate

¹⁶ San Jose Tahiti Fete is an annual dance competition held in San Jose, California.

¹⁷ *Fenua* is a Tahitian musical group who incorporates both ancient and modern synthesized sounds. The main singer is Guy Laurens. *Fenua* incorporates many musicians, singers and dancers in its productions and are very popular throughout Polynesia.

parties, and for celebrities including Barbara Streisand, James Broland, Josh Broland, Jody Foster and Tia Carrera to name a few. Two other dancers Adele, Melinda and I performed on a FOX network show (national T.V.) called “30 Seconds to Fame,” where we were the top three finalists in a variety show contest out of 26 other contestants. In 2008, We also had the pleasure to work with Adam Sandler in the feature film “Bedtime Stories,” where I played a principle role as a fire poi dancer. In December 2006-January 2008, I danced on Celebrity Cruises (owned by Royal Caribbean) with Magic of Polynesia directed by Paki Allen and his father Henry Allen (a well known Hawaiian composer) from Maui, Hawaii. We traveled through out the Hawaiian Islands, Society Islands and New Zealand, and were responsible in perpetuating Hawaiian and Polynesian cultures through performance, lectures and teaching. Aside from being a dancer, I was also in charge of designing and making costumes for Paki’s group “Magic of Polynesia” from Maui. I decided to go back to school in the Fall of 2008 when I decided to quit working for the cruise ships and focus on graduate school. In November 2009, I spent six weeks in Rarotonga, where I took Cook Islands dance lessons from the group *Orama* with Georgina Keenan and Sonny Williams. This gave me a great introduction to Cook Islands culture and dance.

Through my experiences in Polynesian dance and culture, I developed a deep fondness for the Polynesian people and their pure honesty, spirituality, compassion, humor and gentleness, which has inspired me to speak their story while looking at different perspectives, which is a combination of indigenous view points, personal experiences, ethnographic study and research. My goal in this thesis was to have an objective study on the subject, with cultural sensitivity and accuracy. There are some

limitations on historical accuracy since most research done during pre-missionary times come from Eurocentric view-points by early writings. Some examples of pre-missionary writing can be noted in the works by Captain James Cook in his journals, LMS missionary William Wyatt Gil, along with other missionaries, explorers and whalers. There was no written language by indigenous people prior to the introduction of missionaries in the late 1700s. Records were based on oral traditions through song, chant, wood carving, and tattoo motifs.

One's culture when appropriated or commodified, changes and adapts to another cultures belief system and ideals. The emphasis on pleasing the public and the tourist industry has always intrigued me. I used to be a participant in the promotion of tourism, since I have been a Polynesian dancer for most of my life that toured with both Tahitian and Hawaiian dance companies. In 2003-2004, I found myself in Tahiti living a dream, but as I spent more time, I saw hostility towards the colonizers who they have been oppressed by at the expense of their own culture and traditions. The Tahitians are dependent on the French system, which provides health care and many other benefits. Many Tahitians live in what could be considered poverty by some, while educated foreigners mainly from France are offered the highest paying jobs. The current generation of Tahitians would be considered modern, and no longer live solely off the land like their ancestors used to, unless they live in some of the outer less inhabited islands.

In 2008, I ran into a traditional tattoo (*tatau*)¹⁸ artist named Ronui from Moorea while I was in Tahiti, and asked him how he was doing. He replied, "I am good but moving to Canada." I asked him why he was moving, and he replied, "I sold my land and

¹⁸ *Tatau* means tattoo in Tahiti. Traditional motifs are tattooed on people that symbolize one's family genealogy and/or status and elements in nature, which connect to the tattooed person.

tattoo shop and will be moving because I am tired of the way things are run here in Tahiti.” It is difficult for Tahitians to make a living and everything is too expensive now. Things have changed and Tahitians have a harder time finding work now.” Ronui is a well-known tattoo artist in French Polynesia. I felt saddened to hear the news that he was leaving his homeland like so many other islanders who seek for work abroad. It does not make sense for people whose ancestors took care of their land for centuries to have to leave for a better life because they cannot find work, and because educated foreigners have taken local jobs.

When I visited Rarotonga in November 2009 and August 2010, I noticed some of the same problems existed, and most Cook Islanders lived abroad and worked in places like New Zealand and Australia since jobs were scarce in the Cook Islands. Everything is very expensive in both Tahiti and Rarotonga. It is not an easy life for indigenous people and some do not have a choice to leave because they cannot afford to move and it is difficult to leave family and friends behind. Although, expressive traditional culture like dance, music and costumes seem to benefit both the economy and the people, and both cultures are very proud of their traditions and love to share and entertain. Jon Tikivanotau M. Jonassen shared, “Cook Islands culture, dance and music and such things as hair cutting ceremony, are even more active in parts of New Zealand and Australia. In fact most outstanding performers, composers, singers, oral historians live outside the Cook Islands.”

Part of the reason for this study is my passion for Polynesian culture, and my question of why traditional culture is practiced and how costumes evolved over time. I was also curious about the missionary influences, which have been the largest impact on

dance costumes and all expressive culture. To cover the entire body with very large dresses (*mu'umu'u*) for women and long black pants with white shirts for men was one of the major results in the change of clothing by missionaries. To a foreigner, this may not make sense, so I wanted to give a basic yet thorough understanding of the history and evolution of costumes. This study will hopefully benefit other curious dancers, teachers, researchers and everyday people who are interested in the subject. This thesis is for educational purposes.