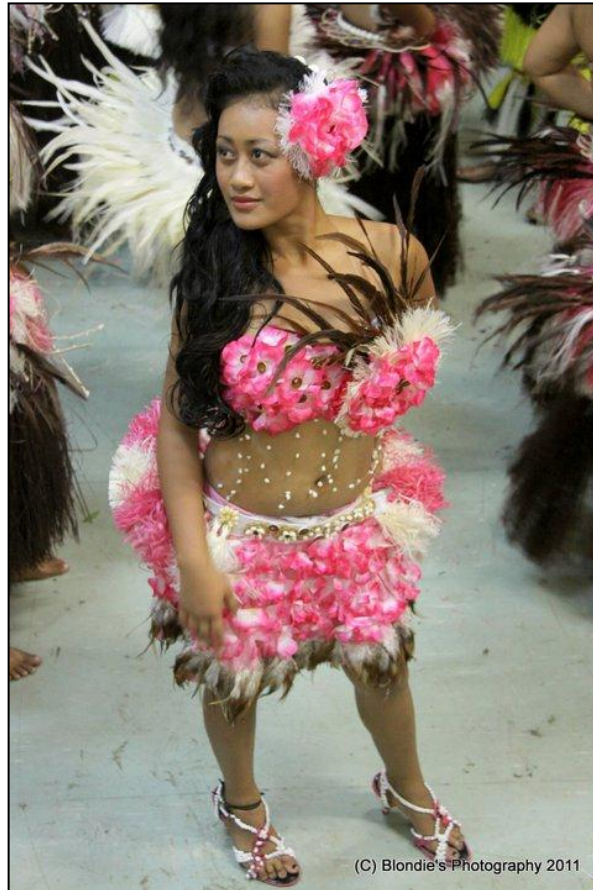


Dance encounters



Exploring Cook Islands identity through staged performances.



Camilla Aasmundsen Jensen

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the M.A. degree,
Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, December 2012

Cover photo: Blondie's Photography 2011, with the permission from Director and photographer, Regina Potini.

Contents

Acknowledgements	v
List of illustrations	vii
Prologue	1
Chapter one: ‘Dancing is who I am’ - an invitation	5
Theme	6
Contexts	8
Anthropology and dance.....	9
Understanding dance.....	11
Theoretical framework	14
An inexperienced anthropologist meets Rarotonga.....	19
How did I approach field?.....	22
Writing the thesis	27
Chapter outline	28
Chapter two: Approaching Cook Islands society and dance	30
Cook Islands - a background	30
Rarotonga.....	35
A history of ‘culture’	37
National identity	39
The National Constitution Celebrations	43
Chapter three: Dance as identities	47
Performing local distinctiveness.....	50
A Manihikian example: Ngarima.....	51
Group identities and competitions	53
Exaggerated perceptions of difference.....	54

...are really Disguised similarities	56
‘Island Nights’ and national identity	58
Concluding remarks: a comparison	61
Chapter four: Celebrating unity through diversity	63
A manifestation of the nation	64
Nation making	65
Te Puna Korero	67
Dance institutionalized	69
Articulations of culture under state governance	72
2 nd August, National Auditorium	73
Between the state and the nation	76
Concluding remarks: alternative nation making	80
Chapter five: Situating Cook Islands dance in a global space	81
Dancing for tourists, an economy of seduction	81
Modern and traditional	84
Experimenting with modernity	87
Young mediators.....	89
A global movement.....	91
Concluding remarks: An opportunity to leave	92
Chapter six: Looking towards the future.....	94
Glossary.....	97
Acronyms	99
APPENDIX 1	100
APPENDIX 2	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

Acknowledgements

First of all I want to acknowledge all the people I got to know on Rarotonga. Without you this thesis would not have been possible. You amazed me over and over again by your generosity and willingness to help me. I want to express my greatest gratitude to all of you. I find it difficult to express in words just how much I appreciated all of your help, your company and our conversations. A special appreciation goes to those who opened up their homes to me, and I especially want to thank mama and papa Nooana for your kindness, open-hearts and goodwill. I consider myself lucky and proud to have been included into your family. Thank you also Anjima for taking care of me as your sister, for opening up your home to me and for inviting me to come with you wherever you went. I think about all of you every day and I miss you.

I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all the skilled and kind dancers I talked to. I am grateful to all dancers in Te Hiva Nui Dance Troupe. Thank you Vaka Puaikura for allowing me to perform with you on the *imene* choir. I was very proud that day when we stood at the stage and sang. I want to thank everyone who was part of the Pipirima-crew, and especially the producers who allowed me to attend practice and eventually gave me a part in the musical. A warm thanks to Jean Mason for your uplifting spirit, for always helping me and for your help also after my return. A special thank you goes to Jon M. Tikivanotau Jonassen, for guidance, advice and good conversations. Thank you Regina Potini and Blondie's Photography, and thank you Cook Islands News for allowing me to use your photographs.

I owe my supervisor, Edvard Hviding, a big thank you. Thank you for believing in me, for supporting me and for always being encouraging. I always left our conversations with lots of new positive energy. Edvard included me into the Bergen Pacific Studies Research Group, of whom I am extremely proud to be part of and I wish to thank all the members for your kindness, your questions and thoughts of my research. Many friends have been helpful and read through parts of the thesis. For this I am ever grateful, so thank you all for reading carefully through my chapters and for all your comments. My fellow students have been very supportive, and without your smiles, laughter and encouragements I would not have enjoyed myself during the year I spent writing the thesis. Thank you all so much for being as wonderful as you are.

Lastly I wish to thank my family, especially my mother who has been fascinated and impressed by me and my stories from fieldwork. Thank you “mamma”, for being deeply committed to my thesis and helping me out whenever I called you in frustration. I will also like to express a deep sense of gratitude to my stepfather Erik who has also contributed. I appreciate, from the bottom of my heart, the help I have received from by both of you. I also appreciate my friends for being patient with me and for inviting me out so that I would not always sit inside and work. At the very last, my boyfriend Andreas Saksen deserves a big thank you: for being patience, supportive and not least for being my partner.

Kia Orana and Kia Manuia

Camilla Aasmundsen Jensen
Bergen, December 2012

List of illustrations

Photo 1: The Aitutaki drum dance	2
Photo 2: The Aitutaki drum dance	4
Photo 3: Me as a <i>mōmoke</i>	24
Photo 4: Vaka Puaikura, backstage waiting to perform <i>pe'e</i> (chant).....	26
Photo 5: Rarotonga from the air.	36
Photo 6: The Manihiki drum dance.....	51
Photo 7: ‘Enuamanu ‘ura pa’u.	56
Photo 8: Atiu Warrior T-shirt.....	60
Photo 9: Te Hiva Nui	84
Photo 10: The Aitutaki drum dance, the young couple kisses on the stage	86
Map 1: The Cook Islands.	viii
Map 2: The Polynesian Triangle	31
Map 3: The Cook Islands, The Southern and The Northern Group.....	34
Figure 1: Te Puna Korero. A family Vision of Culture Policy	65
Figure 2: My drawing of the inside of the National Auditorium	66
Figure 3: The official ceremony	77



Map 1: The Cook Islands.¹

¹ <http://www.wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/Cook+Islands/Map>

Prologue

I am seated in the National Auditorium, *Are Kari Oi Nui*, together with an excited audience of approximately 1800 people. It is the annual national Constitution Celebrations, *Te Maeva Nui*. *Te Maeva Nui* includes dance competitions between different islands dance team. People from the entire Cook archipelago are gathered to compete against each other with their dances and songs at the national stage on Rarotonga. Together with the rest of the audience I am waiting for tonight's last team to enter the stage, this Wednesday night in early August 2011. The Aitutaki island team, *Araura Enuu*, is soon ready to perform their drum dance (*'ura pa'u*). The team has some of Cook Islands' most prominent dancers, among them two young women holding the titles of "Dancer of the Year": in senior section, Uirangi Bishop and in intermediate section, Mary Taio. They have both held this prestigious title for several years.

Before the performance begins, the obligatory introduction is read, both in Maori and English.² While the Maori version is heard over the speakers, I look around to see who is here. A quick overview and I conclude that the audience consists of an even mix of locals and tourists. The locals are dressed up for the occasion: men are dressed in island-printed shirts or t-shirts, shorts or long trousers. Women wear beautiful dresses, skirts or islands gowns (*mu'umu'u*). Many wear a flower wreath (*'ei*) or an artificial flower behind the ear. I also see many of the women wearing black-pearl earrings and jewellery. My thoughts are interrupted by a voice reading the English version of the introduction:

These are some of the natural signs from nature as we near the seasons of celebrations. Flowers will be in full bloom. *Ara* and *Inano* will be in abundance.³ The air will be filled with the sweet smelling fragrance of flowers in bloom. With these flowers worn to the *Are Karioi*, how can one resist the temptations?⁴ This is when the rabbits are on heat. The girls wear brown skirts and are decorated in white and pink. The boys' skirts

² Each team is responsible for writing an introduction to all the items that are part of the competitions in *Te Maeva Nui*, which they hand over to the Ministry of Cultural Development. I was given a copy of all introductions by the Ministry of Cultural Development.

³ *Ara* and *Inano* are names of two types of flowers with a very special and rich smell. Uirangi told me that the flowers are associated with 'young beautiful women back in the days and they are very attractive to men as well'. The flowers are used to make *ei*, wore around the neck or head and their smells are recognizable from a far distance.

⁴ *Are Karioi* is the short version of *Are Kari Oi Nui*, which is the official name for the national auditorium.

are gold and they are decorated with the colours green and white. The meaning is: The *Are Karioi* is a place for all colours; the young and the old. Basically brown and green stands for mother earth and also the green vegetation of our island. Brown and green also represent our people of the old. Lastly pink and yellow represent modernisation of our modern generations. The flowery decorations such as *poepoe* beads cowry eyes and the sand pebbles represent the advanced knowledge of the present generation.⁵

At the end of the introduction the composers are presented; Caroline Bishop and Uirangi Bishop, with the assistance of Pumati Pumati. At this stage the audience applauds and waits: everyone is quiet and full of expectations. We are told to put our hands together for *Araura Enua* as they perform their '*ura pa'u*'.



Photo 1: The Aitutaki drum dance
The young couple doing their solo-part, notice the difference in costumes.

Eight girls enter from the right side of the stage, and eight boys from the left side. They walk towards opposite ends of the front, crossing each other by walking in-between each other: a girl, then a boy, then a girl etc. More dancers enter the stage, which is soon filled with

⁵ *Poepoe* is a type of grass which is used for decoration.

energetic, young dancers in beautiful costumes. They move around to the pace of the drums: fast and controlled. After four and a half minutes a girl and a boy enter the stage from different angles, and they move towards each other, ending up dancing together. Their costumes differ from the rest of the team, but the colours are the same. They dance as a couple in the middle of the stage, while the other dancers sit on their knees and clap their hands. The couple dance in what looks to me like Latino movements: he swinging her around while she follows his lead. She also does some tap dance steps to the pace of one of the drum beats, making additional sound with her shoes. To me it looks like they mix Cook Islands and Latino movements with some typical western inspired sensual movements. The audience cheers and claps their hands as this happens. As if their performance was not enough to make it spectacular, there is another surprise to come. Eight men carrying a box enter the stage. They move toward the middle of the stage, and Uirangi Bishop rises from the box with a head-costume that looks like it could make her lose her balance. It is the tallest and broadest head-costume I have seen, yet she moves apparently unaffected by its size and weight, her hips shaking fast to the beat of the drums. Uirangi dances her way up to a standing position while shaking her hips in a pace that obviously impresses the crowd, who respond ecstatically to her every move.



Photo 2: The Aitutaki drum dance

Uirangi Bishop rises from the box while the young couple is dancing in front.

As she turns around, facing the audience, I see her playful smile. She seems to express her satisfaction at her own accomplishment and control, as well as an air of playfulness. She is an excellent dancer and she knows it. After six and a half minute the performance is over. I am caught by the magic of the performance, it was outstanding. I sit in my chair with an energy that surprises me. I cannot stop smiling, and more than anything I just feel like watching the performance again and again. I am hungry for more.

1

‘Dancing is who I am’- an invitation

The performance described in the prologue occurred at the National Constitution Celebrations, Te Maeva Nui⁶ in 2011, and it serves to introduce the focus of the thesis. The subject of this thesis is the active and contested constructions of collective identities in the Cook Islands nation as mediated through dance encounters. In focusing on dance I seek to understand its social importance, as a means through which Cook Islanders explore and express who they are. Cook Islands dance is very complex and involves movements, music, song, drums, costumes and artefacts. When I use the term dance in the thesis I refer to all these aspects. Movement, on the other hand, signals the way a dancer move in a dance. This is not however, a structural analysis of dance movements per se, but concentrates on the contextual nature of dance. By choosing this focus I hope to show that the meaning of dance is contextual and emergent, not predetermined by structural forms. Here, I am influenced by Alexeyeff (2009) and her study of dance in the Cook Islands.

The Aitutaki team presented, in their introduction to the drum dance, their thoughts about Te Maeva Nui. According to them the annual celebration is a time when old people celebrate with young people and when ‘people of the old’ are brought back to people of the present generation though the stories a dance tell. Their performance incorporated movements, sounds, smells and costumes that transcend the past and present, and is directed towards the future. The performance raises issues of what it means to be a Cook Islander and an Aitutakian. This is an example of a performance that mediate between tradition and modernity and as an expression of collective identity, they make statements about their place in the world. Giving a glimpse into the spectacular aspects of dance performances, I aim to convey the energy that is present during Te Maeva Nui where dance encounters presents public images of the Cook Islands nation and the people living there. It was probably this very performance that created the loudest response from the audience – a true indicator that they enjoyed it.⁷

⁶ Te Maeva Nui translates the most important festival/celebration.

⁷ According to Alexeyeff (2009:16), who has written extensively on dance in the Cook Islands, in unofficial competitions without winners being announced, ‘winning status is often judged on the amount of money

In this introductory chapter I present my theme, research questions and main arguments. Following this I also present the two main empirical contexts used to analyse my data. Having presented some of my observations and analytical direction, I also include a section about how dance has been studied in the Cook Islands before formulating an approach to dance that will be used throughout the chapters. A theoretical framework, where I describe how I shall analyse identity formation at several levels, is also included. I discuss the methodological approaches used during fieldwork as well as when writing the thesis. Finally I include a chapter overview.

Theme

This is an anthropological study of contemporary Cook Islands dance, more specifically in the form of public performances on the capital island of Rarotonga. In particular, my analysis seeks to explore these questions: In what ways are dance used to express identity? How are the boundaries that distinguish between groups of people created and maintained? What is the role of dance in the production of collective identity, especially on the national level? How is dance a part of nation making processes in the Cook Islands? And, how is modernity mediated and reflected through dance performances?

Dance is prevalent in many forms on Rarotonga, mainly as entertainment for tourists by professional dance troupes. At most formal gatherings, such as welcoming dignitaries and other special guests to the country there will be dance performances, either by a dance troupe or by a solo-dancer.⁸ In addition, dance is part of many informal gatherings such as fundraising activities, family reunions and birthday parties. In school, children and youth can join dance groups and perform with them at certain occasions, such as during inter-school sports and dance competitions and on the 'parent's day'.⁹

'Dancing is who I am', was the reply of a young woman to my question, 'why do you dance?' When I asked her this question, she looked at me for a while, as if the question was of

received from a performance or the amount of laughter, dancing and applause a group was able to extract from the audience'. According to my own observations of official competitions where a winner is announced, such as in National Dancer of the Year, Composer of the Year as well as Te Maeva Nui, the response from the audience is also here an indicator of whom or what team are most likely to receive high scores.

⁸ When the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Murray McCully visited the Cook Islands for the Joint Ministerial Forum in May 2011, one of the dance troupes had been asked to perform in front of the Cook Islands Prime Minister and the visiting team from New Zealand.

⁹ Youth is a category that in the Cook Islands has been defined as those between the ages of 15 to 34. This definition was highly contested though, and most people I spoke to agreed that it was too wide; seeing that people over 30 should be defined as adults.

a rather silly character. Her reply indicates that she dances because she is, or, she is because she dances. Her identity is so imbued with dance that it is difficult to imagine the one without the other. A similar answer was the one Uirangi, a young dancer who composed the Aitutaki drum dance performance explained in the prologue, gave me. Uirangi and I discussed the function and role of dance in today's society when I asked her, 'is dancing a way of preserving culture?' Her answer, quoted below, illustrates an opinion held by most Cook Islanders I spoke to.

Yes, it's [dancing is] one of the biggest way of preserving culture, our culture. Without dancing uhm... It [dance] recognizes our identity, of being a Cook Islander. The way that we dance. I just think...we actually stand out with our culture. The drumming, the music, you know, everything that we have...that's why I love it.

Uirangi

Uirangi was the last dancer I interviewed, so my question was influenced by the experiences I had thus far gained. People seemed to agree that dance is a way of embodying Cook Islands norms and values as illustrated by Uirangi's comment that without dancing the identity of being a Cook Islander would be difficult to imagine. That dance is important as a medium through which Cook Islands-ness can be displayed is widely accepted. Cook Islands dance is becoming known worldwide due to its spectacular movements, rhythms, songs and costumes, and it keeps on spreading through various media, especially by young Cook Islanders who travel the world to represent their nation or to seek work (see chapter five). The dancers are part of a global movement, moving their bodies to choreographed songs and beats, moving also in time and space. Back home they are talked about as ambassadors, showcasing the finest of Cook Islands culture, that which makes them unique: their dance. Both comments quoted above indicate that Cook Islanders share a view of culture as something crucial to their way of life and part of identity both at an individual and group level.

Lastly, the two answers indicate that through dance they are able to communicate and convey who they are. By dancing they invite people to see who they are. In a way, they become visible through movements, not necessarily as individuals, but as part of the collective group of Cook Islanders. Amongst Cook Islanders there is a public discourse of dance that distinguishes between Northern and Southern Group style. This distinction includes variations in movements, drumbeats, type of drums used, what instruments are most

commonly used, differences in adornments and costumes.¹⁰ Eventually, I came to learn that the distinctions go further, to the point where people know who composed or choreographed a dance, song or a specific movement several generations back in time. Certain dances, movements or dance styles are then associated with a place and sometimes with a person. Through dance, a person can identify with a specific tribe, district or island, and furthermore to the Cook Islands as a nation-state.

Contexts

As mentioned above, Rarotonga is the overall empirical context where my data has been collected. I have chosen two dance contexts that I will use as a frame for the analysis and discussion of the data. Te Maeva Nui serves as a point of departure for exploring the processes involved in constructing, displaying and negotiating identity as well as in answering the above questions. Once a year, people from the entire far-flung archipelago are brought to the capital island Rarotonga to perform at the national stage. In late July early August, the Cook Islands people celebrate Te Maeva Nui, a week-long celebration filled with spectacular cultural events, including heated competitions in the part of the celebration called the ‘festival of dance’. The national celebration serves as a good context for analysing the subject of the thesis for several reasons. Te Maeva Nui is organized in a way that allows the people to participate in dance competitions as representatives of the islands that form the Cook Islands. As competing teams they emphasize local distinctiveness in their efforts of displaying who they are. The fact that representatives from the islands are gathered in one arena such as the National Auditorium, Are Kari Oi Nui, gives us a picture of the nation as a whole, of what “Cook Islands-ness” is. When the people is brought together to celebrate and compete against each other in various dance genre, there are constant processes of identification which involves constructing boundaries that reflect both local identities as well as a national identity.

I explore Te Maeva Nui as a site of active nation making, where teams on the one hand display their island distinctiveness and where on the other hand global flow is interpreted and incorporated into performances. In this sense festivals are contexts for processes of inclusion and exclusion of national symbols and places where assertions of collective identities are made (Stevenson 1990:256). Within this context, localized bodies are created, contested and framed. It is important to remember that the creative processes

¹⁰ When I use the word distinction or diversity, the two terms refer to variation in style (Foster 1995).

involved in articulating, presenting and performing collective identities does not take place in a free-for-all vacuum (Alexeyeff 2009).

I also explore how identity is constructed and mediated through dance at 'Island Night' at hotels and restaurants across Rarotonga. 'Island Night' is a dance show performed by professional dance troupes. These dance troupes are commercial i.e. they are paid for each performance. The dancers live on Rarotonga, but many were not born on this island. Dance troupes perform a range of dance numbers and represent the variety of Cook Islands dance as a national expression. I will use these two performance contexts to compare the ways identity is constructed and mediated through dance encounters. How then to analyze dance?

Anthropology and dance

Within anthropological research in Oceania, little focus has been given to the Cook Islands (2009).¹¹ With the exception of Alexeyeff's (2000; 2009; 2010) and Sissons' (1997, 1999) works, I have found no anthropological studies of Cook Islands dance. Sissons, in his book *Nation and destination: creating Cook Islands identity* from 1999, explores the ways nationhood developed in the Cook Islands after 1965. His book provides a historical overview of the ways a national identity has been formed and transformed in correspondence with shifting political goals and priorities. He argues that the national identity has been constructed around selected cultural forms, especially dance. Sissons problematizes issues of cultural production and the politics of tradition in relation to how the nation was built. He claims that the government has directed a two-sided promotion of culture and identity as national symbols: commodification and traditionalization. Processes of commodification were initiated when the Cook Islands nation was opened up to the global flow when the international airport opened in 1974. According to Sissons these two processes have been deeply contradictory, yet also related. While the processes of traditionalization were trying to oppose commodification of culture and identity the commodification processes required a 'revival of traditions'. The re-claiming of traditions of pre-colonial contact was a symbolic process of a cultural revival, where upon authenticity could be claimed and pride established. Dance was in many ways the ideal medium through which both these processes could be reached, as it was 'readily

¹¹ The exception is Pukapuka in the Northern Group (Alexeyeff 2009), see for instance Borofsky (1987), Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938) and Salisbury (1983). Other anthropological research in the Cook Islands is Ernest Beaglehole's (1957) publication on social change in the two Southern Group islands Rarotonga and Aitutaki, Siikala's (1991) work on myths and histories from the Southern Cook Islands and publications on material art and design, such as Bing (2011), Kuchler and Eimke (2009) and Kuchler (2003).

commodifiable' and grounded on tradition (Sissons 1999:57). Sissons' argument is grounded on the assumption that 'because the new nation was to be built with tourist dollars, cultivating a culture meant building a tourist destination' (1999:75). I mainly draw on Sissons in my attempt to situate dance as identity within a historical frame (see especially chapter two).

A recently published monograph on dance in the Cook Islands is *Dancing from the heart* by Kalissa Alexeyeff (2009). Her book demonstrates how globalisation is perceived and woven into debates and discussions surrounding contemporary dance practices. One of her arguments is that dance serves, in a fundamentally gendered way, to engage and explore important personal and social identities within larger global processes. Alexeyeff explores pre-colonial traditions, the periods of missionization and colonialization and shows that ideas about the past pervade discussions surrounding contemporary dance. Ideas about tradition and modernity are constantly contested, especially in relation to the performing arts. These debates, she shows, are expressed in oppositional terms, where local opposed global and tradition opposes modernity. The debates are further divided between generations and focus almost exclusively on female dance practice. Alexeyeff argues that women and female dance practices are seen as the paragon of Cook Islands traditions, where, on the ground of dance, norms about ideal gender-roles are contested. Her focus diverges from mine in that her primary focus in the book is to explore the relationship between femininity and Cook Islands expressive forms (2009:18), while I do not highlight gender categories. My thesis aligns with Alexeyeff in that we consider dance practices as being expressions of social changes and thus reflect as well as inform the ways Cook Islanders situate themselves in relation to one another and outsiders.

In analysing the ways in which change is negotiated by Cook Islanders, Alexeyeff states that the connections between past and present dance practices is best understood as a tradition that reflect a distinctive style of local response. She is inspired by Sahlins (1994:380) when she writes 'I consider tradition as the distinctive way in which change proceeds'(Alexeyeff 2009:31). Rather than claiming some traditions to be 'invented' or more or less authentic, she pays attention to the work that goes into crafting selves and societies, seeing it as 'practices that experiment with modernity' (2009:20).¹² Following Alexeyeff, I

¹² There exists a scholarly literature concerning 'the invention of tradition' debate that has been on-going in Oceania since the 1990s (Linnekin 1991; Trask 1991; Keesing 2000; Handler and Linnekin 1984). The debates circle around problems of representation: who has the right to claim ownership of certain histories and knowledge; who has the authority to claim certain people's right to ownership; and whether or not traditions are authentic, invented, revived, or something in between.

treat contemporary Cook Islands dance practice as an on-going creative project which involve on one hand responding to and incorporating outside cultural flow and that on the other hand reflect continuation with tradition. Neither of these processes excludes the other: the negotiation of cultural expressions is constant and complex.

Even though there are little anthropological research within the field of dance in the Cook Islands, there are a number of Cook Islanders that have published books and articles, especially within the areas of politics (Davis 1979; Jonassen 1982, 2011), and culture (Crocombe 2003; Jonassen 2005; Jonassen 1991). A collection of texts written by Cook Islanders, entitled *Cook Islands Culture* deals with a range of aspects of culture, such as dance, song, carving, tattooing, sports, personality and cultural aspects of food and language (Crocombe 2003). I find especially relevant the chapter written by Jean Mason and Sonny Williams, called 'Tāmataora: The Performing Arts'. According to Mason and Williams (2003), dance and music are the most prevalent and popular of the arts and they reinforce Maori values and help preserve and promote Maori language and culture. Through dance, Cook Islanders 'express nationalistic feelings and pride in their culture' (Mason and Williams 2003:23). These texts, which represent insider-perspectives on Cook Islands culture, tend to be descriptive and focus on the structural and formal features of culture.

Understanding dance

Like Alexeyeff (2009), I situate my study within those that examine dance as forms of practices and mediums of social action, not as mere reflections of outside forces or prior political, personal or social relations, but also constitutive of them. Taking dance as the means through where I explore the ways Cook Islanders construct their identity, I have found useful anthropological studies that focus on dance as lived experience. A special issue of The Australian Journal of Anthropology focuses on re-establishing the link between anthropology and dance, arguing for the importance of this relationship. The papers explore expressive cultural forms 'as an active, fraught and dynamic force in human social life' (Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000:253). The authors argue for the theoretical importance achieved by studying dance as lived experience and analyse 'movement as a performative moment of social interchange' (Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000:253). In encounters between people, meaning is created, interpreted and contested. That a practice is given meaning through interaction between people, where particular identities are formed across borders between those interacting, is in line with the situational theory on ethnicity as developed by Barth

(1969). Treating dance as a generative aspect of the productive human nature, rather than as static cultural expression, allow for the interpretation of the interplay between people and their surroundings, such as the presence of powerful states, political structures, economic factors, natural environment and global flow. This requires that dance ‘be viewed as historically embodied, contextual, discursive and interconnected domains of lived experience’ (Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000:253). According to the authors, within this ‘new and alternative space of performative encounter’ dance provides a medium for mediating and negotiating categorical identities, engage in political issues as well as exploring how movement is able to infuse space with meaning (Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000:254). It is within this analytical framework performative encounter that I see my analysis as contributing. Following them, I see my own study revolve around performative actions in spaces where political, discursive, economic and cultural forms are being produced, what they call a ‘dialectical space of performative action’ (Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000:253). Within this dialectical space, localized bodies are contested and framed as people seek to define their place in a world of constant changes.

The word *‘ura* is the general term for dance in the Cook Islands, but Cook Islanders normally refer to dance by their specific genre (Alexeyeff 2009:14).¹³ There are several genres of dance i.e. action song and drum dance. In general, men move their feet like scissors; with their knees slightly bent they knock them together in the pace of the drums. Women move their thighs backwards with bent knees, which will make the hips swing from side to side. They dance with flat feet, which make the swaying of the hips more difficult. Whereas men imitate activities considered masculine, such as fishing, rowing the canoe and husking coconut or move as warriors: strong, virile and dangerous, women’s movements often reflect the nature and femininity: their movements are soft, graceful and sensual. For both sexes, the upper-bodies are supposed to be still, while hands move to the song. Especially in action song (*kapa rima*) are hand movements important. The hands (*rima*) tell the story; they convey the message and feelings of the song together with the movements of the body. Dance is about creating enjoyment and happiness, both for dancers and audience. The two terms *tāmataora* and *tārekareka* are used to denote the performative aspects of enjoyment that is produced by

¹³ *‘Ura* is the Rarotongan word for dance, but it is known as *koni* in Aitutaki, *kosaki* in the Tongarevan dialect (Alexeyeff 2009:184) and *ori* in Ma’uke (Mason 2003:23).

i.e. dancing and indicate that effort is required to reach pleasurable states.¹⁴ These are important aspects about Cook Islands dance and they are reflected in the range of emotions portrayed by a dancer, such as by the smile on their faces. Another emotion that dance can produce is pride. Peka, a woman from Rakahanga answered my question, what do you feel when you dance: ‘when I dance it makes me feel proud. Proud to be a Cook Islander’.¹⁵ Her answer indicates that identity is grounded on practices of the body and connects the physical body with memory, emotions and pride.

Dance communicates using the physics of the immediate body as well as at emotional and cognitive levels. The identities thus mediated through dance are not stagnant, but rather emergent; people put a lot of work into creating identities. This is not to say that dance cannot express any particular identities. For Cook Islanders, dance make strong statements that evoke and affirm group identities (Alexeyeff 2009:13). In this regard, it is important to note that what people communicate through dance depend on more than the movements of bodies.¹⁶ I include in my analysis a variety of extra-performative aspects, such the talk that surround dance, rehearsals prior to performances and the influence of the physical stage, as integral to the analysis of dance performances. In my efforts towards understanding what dance meant for Cook Islanders, I asked several people the same questions.¹⁷ Having later compared the answers I noticed some similarities that I will elaborate on. One question was; why do you dance? Despite variations, the answers resembled each other, and I therefore chose one here that highlight some of the most common statements:

I love it, I can't stop. You hear those drums and your bum just wants to move, your body wants to move. I felt like that when I was growing up and I still feel like that. I remember the feeling, it's a feeling. Particularly the drums, the drums are the thing. Cause the sounds of the drums airs for miles.

Theodora

¹⁴ These two words are the most commonly used in relation to pleasurable emotions, with the causative prefix *tā* emphasizing the ‘performative characteristic of these states’ (Alexeyeff 2009:14). For instance, *rekareka* is defined in the *Cook Islands Maori Dictionary* as ‘(Be) pleased, glad, happy, grateful, cheerful, delighted; giving pleasure, pleasant, delightful; *rekareka* applies to people’s reactions’ (Buse 1995:389). *Tāmataora* is translated ‘give pleasure, entertain’ (Buse 1995:435).

¹⁵ Peka danced in CINAT, a national dance troupe that travelled overseas as ‘ambassadors’ for Cook Islands (see chapter two).

¹⁶ I also stress that not all aspects of dance can be translated into words.

¹⁷ I asked this question to boys and girls that are part of dance troupes, and older people who used to be part of dance troupes, or have been dedicated to dance and the performing arts.

The sound of the drums, which airs for miles, serves to herald people to come out and dance; to socialize and have fun. The sound, in Theodora's words, makes her body want to move.¹⁸ Dance is thus related to the uncontrollable nature of humans and reflects the perception of dance as a practice that is bound to their physical being. Theodora's answer points to an important aspect of learning culture when she says that she remembers a feeling from childhood. As children grow up, they learn to dance by watching and imitating dancers. 'It is in our blood to dance' was a very common statement, often continued by explaining how 'dance is a part of our culture that is just being done'. Such comments indicate an understanding of culture as something they live inside, and something that live inside them, they live inside it and it flows within their veins. This is especially so for dance, which is 'just drummed into you' as a woman told to me. The bodily continuation experienced when learning from 'watching and doing' is often reflected in the pride people experience when they dance and in the emotions that they convey through their movements. As most Cook Islanders learn to dance as kids they learn to dance a style that is typical of their island and district. Dance is thus a way of expressing membership, and a way of embodying knowledge about islands histories. It is an embodied characteristic of their identity where knowledge is transmitted through the body, it is internalized. The relationship between a person and the land he or she is from can be expressed through dance. Through various symbols, people can convey their identity, but every symbol must be involved in some kind of interaction in order for meaning to be ascribed. In dance, collective identity can be conveyed through i.e. symbols which connect a movement to a specific place or time. Dance is a resource for constructing and experimenting with the self-image. Dance is both an individual and collective experience. It is at its collective level that imaginings may create ideas of nationhood or of group-distinctiveness.

Theoretical framework

In this section I present relevant theory that I use in the thesis. I shall treat dance as a symbolic practice by which groups represent their identities in more or less self-consciously constructed ways (Harrison 1999a). Harrison extends Weiner's (1992) argument against the principle of reciprocity as the basis for social relations in gift-giving transactions in Oceania. Weiner argued that instead of understanding the exchange of objects as acts of reciprocity, in

¹⁸ Theodora used to dance in the Betela dance troupe. Together with CINAT, they represented the Cook Islands nation at international stages.

the way that the Trobriand Kula exchange circles have been described, they are much deeper strategies that aim at maintaining an identity. She called objects 'inalienable possessions' because of their capacity to express identities (Weiner 1992). These identity defining objects need to be protected from loss 'for only by such resistance can social actors construct identities that endure across time, particularly generational time' (Harrison 1999a:240). Harrison extends the argument to include social practices, focusing on ethnic practices that are used as identity symbols (Harrison 1999a). In my thesis I want to highlight the observation that Cook Islanders treat dance as an inalienable possession. Dance is treated as a possession that is bound to people's knowledge about a place, its history and its people.

My observations of how people organized themselves in groups by stressing cultural differences closely resemble Barth's (1969) theory of how ethnic groups organize themselves in accordance to each other. Ethnic identity as the social organization of cultural difference was revolutionizing, both in the fields of ethnic identity, but also more generally in terms of how identity and culture was treated in anthropology. Barth's theory emphasise that identity is formed at borders: when meeting others a person will become self-aware and one has to study these borders that separate "them" from "us". The processes of boundary maintenance 'showed that ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational, not primordial' (Barth 1994b:12). The premise that Barth's theory exists upon is two folded: first, the acknowledgement that groups are able to act collective; second, social groups exist in and through interactions with others. In order to understand what any kind of identity might mean to a person or a group of persons, one must therefore study the experiences from which identity is formed. It is not culture per se that forms a person, which was previously presumed, but the ways culture is given meaning, interpreted and incorporated into peoples understandings of who they are. We must therefore explain and analyse how some cultural features are emphasised to distinguish between various groups, and also have a deeper understanding of how discontinuity is formed and maintained. Discontinuity may be created if people embrace a few contrasting diacritica as a symbolism of their particular group.

Although Barth's framework address ethnic identity, his theory is applicable to other forms of collective identification as well (Jenkins 2004:95). Jenkins criticise Barth for focusing excessively on self-ascription, neglecting or ignoring other aspects which are part of the processes of identification (Jenkins 1994). For instance, Jenkins highlights the importance of external identification, what Barth referred to as ascription. Jenkins (1994:199)

distinguishes analytically between internal and external definitions of persons and groups. While internal and external definitions are treated as contrasting processes, in the real life, they are a two-ways process across boundaries, a point which Barth would have agreed on. Agreeing with Jenkins I treat all identities as social, as identification is a process that involves an outsider one identifies to or from. 'Identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation'(2004:4). Processes of identification need also be situated alongside power relations and social categorization. Categorization is the equivalent to group, corresponding to Barth's ascription and self-ascription respectively. Barth has partially modified his model, but most aspects from the original idea still stand. For instance, in his 1994 review he opens up for including the presence of states as well as the importance of history in processes of constructing identity (Barth 1994b:19). Barth and Jenkins agree on a number of points concerning the basis of how the processes of identification work. They agree that these processes are dialectic and on-going processes that involve ascription and self-ascription. A self-ascribed identity, what Jenkins refers to as a category when he analyses group identity, is an identity that is given by outsiders. A self-ascribed identity, what Jenkins calls a group, is a collective identity that is given by the members themselves. Every person has more than one identity and the different aspects and levels within each identity are highlighted in various situations. The complexity of the term identity is the thought about similarity and difference. Identity involves both. All identities are situational defined: they are produced social transactions which occur in or across boundaries. While Barth focused on the internal definitions, Jenkins argues for the need to include external definition as well. An identity, once established, must always be maintained. My aim is to show that collective identities formed around dance are situational and relational; they depend on the continuous identification by individuals and groups for its maintenance. The distinct island identities appear to depend on social interaction and dance encounters and the encounters create the conditions on which the island identities can persist.

However, island identities do not exist in a vacuum, and these identity symbols are also used by the government for state functions. This has especially been the case in the Cook Islands, where the government has promoted dance as a national identity. Foster (1995) makes the point that when the concept of nation making replaced the previous nation building concept, a new understanding of culture developed. Previous understandings of culture treated it as a continuation of traditions that influenced human behaviour in a restrictive sense: groups

were treated as “having” culture, acting in ways corresponding to that culture (Ortner 2006). Culture in this sense was a fixed and timeless entity, fragile to outside influence. What was largely overlooked by such an understanding of culture was human agency. The new understandings that grew out from critiques of a stagnant, *sui generis* view on culture came to treat culture as the changing outcomes of “practice” (Ortner 1974, 1989 in Foster 1995:5). Practice theory challenged the structure: agency dichotomy and the theories argued for the dialectical relationship ‘between the structural constraints of society and culture on the one hand and the “practices”- the new term was important- of social actors on the other’ (Ortner 2006:2). This perspective allows for recognition of human agency while also taking into account the existence of powerful states and including economic and political forces. Here, culture is constantly produced and reproduced and the making of culture came to be seen as problematic: ‘the site of often fierce contests among a plurality of agents and agencies with a plurality of intentions’ (Foster 1995:5). I follow Foster and treat culture, in its analytical form as integral to state-structures and situated in relation to political processes and wider transnational interactions.

There are different ways of analysing the nation in anthropology.¹⁹ For instance, one can focus on the active and contested making of the nation (Foster 1995), or on the narratives created by governments or various groups of people (Otto and Thomas 1997). Nations have been conceptualized as imagined (Anderson 1983) and as invented (Gellner 1983). Common for all these four approaches is treating “the nation” as a construction. According to Foster (1995:7) there is one area of agreement amongst otherwise disparate approaches to nations, namely that the spread of nation-states as a form of polity is bound up with the global expansion and development of capitalism. Thus, there is something modern about nation making, it ‘attributes a particular status to the individual’ (Rio and Hviding 2011:11). Foster (1995:5) describes the nation as ‘an imaginative construct that constitutes persons as legitimate subjects of and in a territorial state’. I shall similarly treat the nation as an imagined construction, but emphasize that the nation also is an embodied community experienced first and foremost through dance. Involved in constructions of the nation are ways that people participate in the construction as well as the ways that they represent the nation and themselves. For Foster (1995:2) ‘nation making refers both the individual constructions of “personhood” and the collective definition where upon this is based, that of “peoplehood”’.

¹⁹ “The nation” and “the state” along with the terms “tradition”, “culture”, “modern”, “local”, “non-local”, “global” and “Western” should all be read as if they were in quotation marks. These terms are problematic because they often stand in opposition to each other and henceforth appear binary.

When discussing nation making in the Cook Islands it is important to keep in mind that the country is a post-colonial case. The Cook Islands have a special relationship with New Zealand, with common citizenship, currency and a unique constitutional arrangement. The Cook Islands became a dependent territory of New Zealand in 1901 when it was annexed. In 1965 the Cook Islands adopted a Constitution enabling self-government in free association with New Zealand. Free association is a status distinct from that of full independence in that it allows the Cook Islands to maintain New Zealand citizenship, while administering its own affairs. Due to shared citizenship with New Zealand, the Cook Islands is not a member of the United Nations and the Joint Centenary Declaration from 2001 requires the Cook Islands and New Zealand to consult regularly on foreign affairs matters. New Zealand is also responsible for the defense of the Cook Islands under the terms of the 1965 Constitution.²⁰

Cultural heritage has played a crucial role in the formation of nation-states in Oceania. Rio and Hviding (2011) make the important point that throughout Oceania, constructions and imaginings of the nation and ideas of the global have been historically formulated with a potent space of cultural heritage mediated between the state and the people. Several anthropologists acknowledge a trend in Oceania where aspects of cultural heritage and tradition are becoming important sources of power in terms that are not just cultural, but also political and economic and where cultural heritage is used by grass-roots movements as a medium or way of communicating with states in Oceania (Stevenson 1990; Alexeyeff 2009; Rio and Hviding 2011). In the Cook Islands cultural heritage has been called upon to create collective experiences in search for a national identity and to guide political action and public relations. The Cook Islands government had to construct images and ideals of a unitary identity in the face of the strong island identities, expanding tourism and meetings with “others”, attempting to secure an internal market of a rich cultural heritage. The contemporary situation of massive flow of capital, ideas, images, objects and people; both emigration of Cook Islanders and the heavy tourist-flow, create conditions under which Cook Islanders evaluate themselves and their position. Dance is an important means through which people can participate in nation making processes.

Finally, I locate the production of identity formation within a space of global flow of ideas, images, objects and peoples. The massive flow of people creates a space for contestation for self-imagining; enabling people to imagine themselves as being part of a modern space or even as far removed from it, or only relate to parts of it (Appadurai 1996).

²⁰ Found on: <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Cook-Islands.php>. Captured: 07.11.2012.

The global flow can be reflected in local dance practices. I explore ways that dance incorporates elements that are considered modern, or inspired by *papa`ā* culture. The meaning of dance in today's Rarotonga, as an expression of collective identity needs to be situated within this global flow. Through the massive flow of people from all over the world, the global and the modern must appear as flip sides of the coin (Appadurai 1996:3). This is especially so on Rarotonga, where the global flow is part of everyday life under which Cook Islanders living on the main island evaluate themselves and their position in contrast to others. The global flow is understood by Cook Islanders as westernization – the spread of *papa`ā* ways (Alexeyeff 2009). *Papa`ā* is a term that translates a white man and European (Buse 1995:314). A person categorized as a *papa`ā* opposes the social category Cook Islands Maori. While the former tend to be individual-oriented, the latter is community-oriented. *Papa`ā* speak English and dress in a certain way. Being a *papa`ā*, or acting in ways typically characterized as *papa`ā*-ways is considered both unhealthy and unattractive. The term is often used to denote tourists, but I experienced that some older Cook Islanders accused young people of acting in a *papa`ā*-way. In these situations the term is used to critique behaviour and choices of people who tend to speak primarily English and dress in ways similar to tourists. While *papa`ā* can be seen in their bikinis in public, and in miniskirts and small tops at the nightclubs, locals hardly show their upper thigh and seeing them in bikinis belonged to the rare experiences of mine. That some of the tourists are considered sexually loose only helps feed the image of *papa`ā* as more sexually aggressive and less demure and graceful than locals. Deemed even more unhealthy are the western preferences of having some time alone, to prefer solitary behaviour and always think in terms of “I”. This latter point makes *papa`ā* act stingy with their money which is really looked down upon by the locals, whom instead promote generosity. Dance is an aspect of social life that is considered essential to a good life; it mediates ideals of a Cook Islands way. That westerners are considered stiff in their body, unable to move in the graceful manner a Cook Islands woman can, only reinforce their thoughts of a Western life as an unattractive way of life.

An inexperienced anthropologist meets Rarotonga

I conducted fieldwork from February 2nd until August 7th 2011. I was advised by Jon T. M. Jonassen to make sure I was on Rarotonga in July and August as this was the time Cook Islanders celebrated their annual Constitution Celebrations, Te Maeva Nui. With guidance from my supervisor we arranged my fieldwork to culminate around this event. During

fieldwork I was located on Rarotonga, living first in the village called Ngatangiia and from March on in the district of Arorangi. In Ngatangiia I was invited to live with two women in their early twenties. They are cousins and from one of the southern islands. They invited me to stay in a room in their three-room apartment which they rented from their uncle. It is not common that two young women live by themselves. When people come from the outer islands to Rarotonga they usually move in with relatives and eventually with their future partner. When they had first moved to Rarotonga, they lived with families they were related to, but because they are both working they could afford to rent a place on their own, which they preferred as they could control their own lives.

One of the girls in particular tried to teach me how to act and behave so I would not shame her, as she now considered me her sister. For instance, when I tried to style my hair in a similar fashion as I had noticed the young girls wore their hair; in a loose bun on top of the head, she looked at me and said ‘no Camilla, not like this’. She loosened my somewhat tight bun and showed me how to get the right look. She also attempted to construct me in ways to act in the public sphere, such as when riding the bike. When I was a passenger on her bike, I tended to hold around her, but she was quick to instruct me and explained that when I did so it made her look like a lousy driver. The proper way to be a passenger was to hold my hands in a relaxed position on my lap. She was, in other words, concerned with the way people saw her, and social credibility and positive evaluation seemed to be important for Cook Islanders, which made them behave in a way considered appropriate in public. In other occasions I embarrassed her by my questions and she explained that I sometimes was too direct in my questions, or crossed the line in terms of what was considered acceptable to speak about. Her ability to express our differences in a diplomatic manner resulted in very good and informative conversations between the two of us. These examples also illustrate how she perceived me and her attempts to locate me as a twenty-something, tourist-looking researcher that wanted to write about Cook Islanders and their dance. She often commented that I was not like the tourists; ‘you are like us, you don’t wear the bikini; you eat the food we do; you live with us Camilla, that is good’.

Similarly, when I followed Ngatangiia Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC), on their travelling party (*teretere*) to Nikao CICC, the reverend from Ngatangiia CICC explained to the people that I was his daughter from another marriage, and he also said he had never seen a white young woman in church before. His comment created a lot of laughter in the church. I see these comments as strategies to locate me. For instance, in the Nikao CICC, I

was the only white person. Why I had followed the Ngatangiia CICC, was allowed to attend this inter-church travel like their other members and perform a few lines like the rest of the youth, needed justification, or at least explanation.

In March the girls I lived with moved to Arorangi, and I moved with them. However, when they again decided to move I chose to stay and were invited to live with our neighbours, of whom we had rented the previous apartment. In this house I lived with two siblings and their husbands as well as the two children of one of the couple. We often had good conversations together on the porch, where we discussed a range of topics, but seldom did they encourage culture as a topic of interest. Rather, they preferred to speak about sports, news and update each other on news from their family's and community.

The headline of this section refers to a feeling and state-of-mind I sometimes experienced during fieldwork, especially in the beginning. Being on a first time fieldtrip, left to myself, I often felt 'small' and humble, even shy sometimes. However, I managed to overcome these states of mind, and towards the end of fieldwork I was able to enjoy situations that would previous have been awkward, such as walking into a room without knowing anybody, or asking question after question. My main methodological approach was participant observation with more active participation in contexts that allowed for it and a stricter 'researcher'-profile where expected, which for the most part was in interview settings. Many of the dancers that I interviewed used to work or still worked in government-departments. Through their jobs as well as their previous careers as dancers, they had experience in being interviewed. My impression is that these previous dancers were used to talk about dance and reflect about their relationship with dance. They often spoke in similar terms, which I have interpreted as a result of the rhetoric used by politicians in the years after self-governance. I had, prior to fieldwork prepared a list of questions I, but adapted the list after having spent some weeks on Rarotonga. I eventually chose 15 questions that I asked all the dancers I interviewed. During the fixed interviews I used a voice-recorder when I was allowed. All the following direct quotes are based on these recordings. Wherever I went though, I always brought a notepad, sometimes taking notes while speaking to people.

The headline also refers to my reflections of how people perceived me. Some of the people I spoke to preferred fixed-interview settings where I had a list of prepared questions they asked me to email them in advance of our meeting. I experienced this especially amongst those who accepted to see me in their work-time in their office, which made a more formal setting for the interview. It seemed that people thought of me, or compared me, to other

researchers they had met, which made me feel like I was new to the game: I did not know how to act, I was unsure what was expected of me and feared that people thought I had knowledge about their history that I did not know. I also felt inexperienced when explaining my research, as I was unable to formulate a clear research-agenda. However, as I gradually become more confident, I also had less problems describing my research and was not ashamed to speak about aspects of their culture I did not know everything about.

How did I approach field?

In the beginning of my fieldwork I walked around in the streets of Avarua, which is the main town on Rarotonga, searching for people to talk to. My first stop was at the tourism office, where I asked for ‘the youth division’.²¹ The friendly lady behind the counter in the small tourism office gave me a name and pointed me in the right direction. The man who I met, Mr. Vainerere, was very helpful and explained to me where the previous ‘youth division’ was situated now, at the Ministry of Internal Affairs building just two minutes away with a scooter. From this point onwards I experienced what may be called ‘the snowball effect’, where I accessed information and established new contacts based on a few people (Noy 2008). This was a repetitive process, where people spoke about me and my research to other people or told me to contact specific persons. So, having a few names that I could always refer back to was important for me gaining inside information and to access people. The importance of having a network on Rarotonga cannot be over-stated. However, I did establish new contacts based my on own initiative, sometimes completely unprepared. Paying petrol for my scooter at the nearest petrol-station I introduced myself and my research to the woman working there. It turned out she had studied anthropology herself and she wrote me a list of names of people I could contact. Again, the snowball effect reached me, and by contacting some of the names she had written down the ball started to roll.

I felt that it was necessary for me, as I wanted to study dance, to engage in dance-activities and to choose a method that allowed active participation in addition to observation. Hoping to grasp the non-verbal dimensions of dance, I started out by attending the only open dance-practice on Rarotonga. Every Tuesday the Orama Dance Troupe had open-practice in the National Auditorium. Eventually, from April onwards I was allowed to practice with Te

²¹ My plan, as formulated in the project outline approved prior to fieldwork, was to study dance by focusing on youth. I was already under the impression that Cook Islands dance was an arena for youth. Even though mainly young people perform in the public sphere on Rarotonga, I soon discovered that older people also dance, especially in more private functions. I shifted focus early on, deciding that I wanted a broad research scope.

Hiva Nui Dance Troupe. They practiced every Tuesday as well, and I chose to follow this group as the team consisted of fewer members than Orama and their practice gave me the opportunity to talk to the dancers. The methodological approach of ‘experiential ethnography’ is one where the anthropologist ‘intensely participates in the culture as one of its members’ (Sands 2002:124). My body became a medium for collecting information and gaining knowledge, opening up for issues that would have remained unfamiliar to had I not been involved in these dance encounters. My attendance was sometimes looked at with scepticism, maybe I was there to learn how to dance so that I could go back home and earn money by teaching others? As soon as they saw me dance though, the scepticism changed into laughter, as I was far from able to move my body like they could. I did not learn to dance like a Cook Islander, the technique were too advanced for me to master given the limited time frame. But, my interest opened up doors that otherwise would have been closed, and I was allowed to participate, observe, photograph and talk to dancers in contexts that are usually closed to outsiders. In the spirit of the experiential ethnography method, my own experiences may help me understand the experiences of my informants, but my personal experiences of dance are not the main focus of the ethnography.

I observed dance being performed, both spontaneous and rehearsed, in schools and at church travelling parties (*teretere*) and in less formal setting such as at nightclubs and parties. ‘Going clubbing’ was one strategy I used, especially in the first weeks of fieldwork, to meet and engage with youth. I also eventually got permission to do research at Tereora College²² where I observed drama, dance and visual arts classes over the course of seven weeks. Attending these classes provided me with insightful data on discourses relating to school-knowledge and dance. Dance is an optional course at Tereora and the participation in these classes were low. In the class called dance, year twelve and thirteen was merged, yet there was less than 10 students.

By being included in situations where Cook Islanders danced, I participated and took part of spheres usually not open to other visitors. In addition to attending practice with two professional dance troupes, I was invited to observe when more than forty youth as well as several adults practices for a musical. The musical was based on a local legend called Pipirima. It was performed in the National Auditorium and recorded on DVD for sale. The musical was called ‘Pipirima- Once Upon A Reef’. I became a member of the Pipirima- crew,

²² Tereora College is the national college of the Cook Islands, located on Rarotonga. Tereora College is one of five Colleges in the Cook Islands, but it is the only College that offers student education through Year 13.

and performed as a mystical creature (*mōmoke*) in the musical. *Mōmoke* has two meanings (Buse 1995:254). The first is a legendary inhabitant of the underworld, said to have very fair hair and skin, and quivering eyes. The second is albino. Of course, when I was asked to do this role, it caused a lot of laughter, as I was the ultimate embodiment of the two meanings of the word *mōmoke*.



Backstage area during the performance of ‘Once Upon A Reef’. Me as a *mōmoke* (mystical creature) and the girls with costumes for one of their dances. Photograph by Camilla Aa. Jensen

Photo 3: Me as a *mōmoke*.

Towards the end of fieldwork I was allowed to join a district team in the national Constitution Celebrations. From July 11th I attended practice with Vaka Puaikura, the district that I was currently living within. I was lucky to be invited to join the team by a middle-aged woman I had recently met. The team leaders approved of me being there, and they informed the rest of the team of my intentions for joining. I was given the permission to film them, take photographs and write my notes. I was even, eventually, accepted as part of the team, and was allowed to perform the choir (*imene choir*) song with them. Being involved in a team for Te Maeva Nui meant attending practice Monday to Friday two months prior to the celebration. We were often more than 70 people gathered in the community hall where we practiced from around 7 p.m. until 11 p.m. People invested much of their spare time preparing themselves and their teams for this event. I experienced so much passion for the expressive arts, so much pride and willingness amongst young as old. In experiencing what it meant to be part of a team I was often left thinking that practice was an open and positive place where the community can come together and cooperate. People worked together, trusted each other and there was an egalitarian atmosphere. There was some scepticism towards my involvements. A woman said she was unsure if the team would let me perform with them. ‘In some items they can’t use modern things and costumes. And since you are a *papa`ā* they might not let you join

the more traditional items, such as the *pe'e*' she explained to me.²³ As already mentioned, the two categories *papa`ā* and Maori, or local, stand in stark opposition to one another. Primarily in that *papa`ā* is associated with acting disaccording to the community-values that Cook Islanders hold dear. At another occasion she said 'some people are a bit racist towards white people you know, and they act all up whenever there is a *papa`ā* around'. Yet, I was encouraged to put on a *pāreu* (sarong) and practice with the girls.

Only once did I experience a comment that made me feel awkward. This was as my team was backstage in the auditorium just before they entered the stage for the *pe'e*. When I walked into the backstage room a girl said 'You shouldn't be here, we are heathens' and she made a severe face for a second before laughing. My own understanding of her comment relates to Christian moral and norms (which deemed local traditions heathen- and *pe'e* is considered an especially traditional item) as well as to the view held by some locals about *papa`ā*. It was almost like a warning, 'mind you, we are being heathen in here'. I also interpret her comment as a way of structuring interaction between me, as an "outsider" and the rest of them as "insiders", using humour as a way of tackling western hegemonization and the ambivalent feelings that is sometimes portrayed towards *papa`ā*. Alexeyeff deals in more detail about ways that humorous expressive forms are ways to 'express power imbalance resulting from incursions from *papa`ā*: missionary and colonial administrators and now tourists, as the embodiment of Western affluence and the inequities of global capitalism more generally' (Alexeyeff 2009:16).

²³ *Pe'e* (traditional chant) is part of the 'festival of dance' competitions in Te Maeva Nui. *Papa`ā* is a term synonymous with European and used in opposition to Maori. It is often used by Cook Islanders to describe a white person. The category is associated with acting disaccording to the community-values that Cook Islanders hold dear, to speak English and to dress in a certain way.



**Photo 4: Vaka Puaikura, backstage waiting to perform *pe'e* (chant)
Photograph by Camilla Aa. Jensen**

Learning to speak some Cook Islands Maori was one of my primary concerns during fieldwork. However, it proved to be a challenge I did not fully overcome. Many of the locals, especially young people, spoke English as their preferred everyday language. A man in his late twenties commented that he only spoke Maori when he was drunk. Similar comments were made from other young people that they didn't know how to speak Maori, but they understood it fluently. Debates relating to the fear of losing the distinct dialects on each island as well as the Cook Islands Maori language were common on Rarotonga. The situation today, where the only college for year thirteen is on Rarotonga, means that all outer island youth live for at least one year, on Rarotonga. As English is commonly spoken in the public sphere on Rarotonga and in school, these youth are blamed for either neglecting their island dialect or adapting to a 'Rarotongan-way'. Therefore, during cultural events, speaking Maori has become an important way of both transferring language and actually also to teach young people to speak their dialect. One important way of learning and remembering the island dialects is through songs. I should note that even though I was not able to maintain a conversation in Maori, I did learn quite a few songs. Through singing I was able to memorize words. I came to practice every night and managed to sing my way into the team as their songs found their way into my heart.

Writing the thesis

How do I present the data and the experiences I gained throughout fieldwork? This is, I think, an important question that I will elaborate on. I have been seeking to attain a reflexive mode and open mind when writing the thesis as well as throughout the research process. I have tried to provide a transparent presentation of the empirical data and the analysis and statements I have reached on the basis of empirical data. This I do with the intention to give the reader an opportunity to assess the quality of the thesis. As a participant observer I have been close to the field under research. This brings me to the challenges of proximity and distance in research. To be a part of the field, as a participant, provided me with a lot of information I would not have had access to without being an active participant. One example is the information I gained through my participation in the dance team Vaka Puaikura (see above). But participating also means you might lose the distance you need for analysing in an objective way; i.e. to generalize the results of the analysis. To raise the awareness of this research problem has been important for me during fieldwork and throughout the writing process. One example of how I have tried to raise my awareness is a note I wrote in my fieldwork diary on my second day on Rarotonga: ‘the researcher-Camilla, must step forward. Researcher-Camilla is here alone, she is curious, but also a little bit shy. She wants to learn, she is strong and she is focused. She is also always developing’. This has sometimes been an obstacle for me as I, living with Cook Islanders and participating in their daily lives also needed to adapt in some ways to their habits and actions, so that I could be accepted and gain the possibility to conduct the research. It is the cross-cultural encounters, dialogues and confrontations between fieldworker and the people one studies that produces the ethnography (Hastrup 1992). A way to ensure that statements and conclusions is something more than just a part of my particular ‘autobiography’ (Hastrup 1992:119) and own narrative, is to produce a transparent thesis and outline how the analysis has produced these statements and conclusions on the background of both empirical data and theory. I have no intention though to claim my arguments or statements as truths or neutral representations, and it is now up to the reader to determine the credibility of the results in this thesis.

The chapters that follow are based on my field notes, on recorded interviews and on my own reflections. Throughout the thesis I choose to present myself by the term “I”. With this, I seek to make my presence visible, stating here that my presence is of matter. For the most part, I write in past form, but there are some exceptions. When I present utterances by people I use the present-time and I use a single quote-mark to signify direct quotes. The

statements made by people in interviews, which are given a single quote-mark thought the thesis, have all been recorded and transcribed. When I copy directly from my field-diary I will use italic and placement.

All photographs used in the thesis are taken with permission. There are three types of photographs. The first are the once taken by Blondie's photography. The second are photographs taken by the Cook Islands Times (CIT). I have been given permission to use these photographs. The third type of photographs are the once I have taken myself.

Chapter outline

In this chapter, one, I have presented the central themes that I explore throughout the thesis. I have formulated a theoretical framework as well as an approach to dance that will be used in the further analysis.

In chapter two I introduce the context of my fieldwork. I seek to establish a general overview of the history since 1965, but will also include a small section of pre-colonial history and the period of missionization. I find the political as well as cultural history important because I understand history as affecting the present. Some statements people made in relation to culture and dance may be interpreted by looking at historical changes that has affected their society. Dance is a big part of the public sphere on Rarotonga. I discover Cook Islands dance as it is presented on Rarotonga, both by professional dance troupes and by island and district teams in Te Maeva Nui. I especially focus on statements people made in conversations about the meaning of dance and its value for them as Cook Islanders.

Chapter three explores aspects of collective identity and group maintenance. I focus on the ways that groups construct and maintain boundaries between themselves in ways of organizing cultural differences. By exploring, at a local level, the experiences that informs the collective groups that constitute peoples island identity, I seek to uncover some of the complexity of dance. The distinct island identities appear to depend on social interaction and dance encounters, the encounters create the conditions on which the island identities can persist. Throughout history the islands and the districts on Rarotonga have evolved rich visual and embodied symbolism for grounding their distinctiveness and for drawing the boundaries between themselves. By analysing how distinctiveness are being displayed I will try to capture how the distinctiveness can make statements that inform the nature of a 'Cook Islands identity'. My point is, that in order to establish an understanding of a national identity I must first understand the ways in which it is constructed from a strong focus on island

distinctiveness. I am arguing that the distinctiveness communicated through dance is significant components of Cook Islanders understanding of their identity, and thereby their place in a local, national and global space. The boundaries between the islands are also used by people in demarcating space in the national politics, as chapter four will illustrate.

In chapter four I explore Te Maeva Nui from different angles. First, I describe how the people from the outer islands live while they visit Rarotonga. Second, I explore various ways that the government is involved in the event. My third angle of exploring this event is to describe how dance has been institutionalized. Fourth, I trace the historical development the National Constitution Celebration. My fifth angle contributes to an analysis of what might be described as a political innovation. I examine two performances from Te Maeva Nui 2011 from how cultural heritage is being worked and articulated to communicate with state representatives that are watching the performances. This leads me into the sixth and last angle from where I explore Te Maeva Nui. The Prime Minister sang a song during the official ceremony that I analyse because the song captures the complexity about the Cook Islands nation and a national identity as building upon this complexity.

Chapter five takes us into the sphere of Cook Islands dance in a global space. Two performances will be used to illustrate ways that ideas about modernity are implemented and mediate through dance. I focus on how Cook Islanders imagine themselves as being part of the modern and global world at the same time as they are true to their traditions and keep their cultural heritage alive. Issues of what constitute tradition and modernity and what it means to be a Cook Islander versus non-Cook Islanders are highly political and are often framed in oppositional terms. My thesis explores the nexus between the local and global as it is expressed and performed through dance.

Finally, chapter six is an attempt to round off the thesis by placing dance in it contemporary, international context. The current period does not in any way represent one where the questions asked in this thesis can be easily answered. Instead of drawing conclusions which might suggest that the current period is a static one whereby one can discover a truth about Cook Islands identity, I rather bring forward some questions that might be interesting for further research.

2

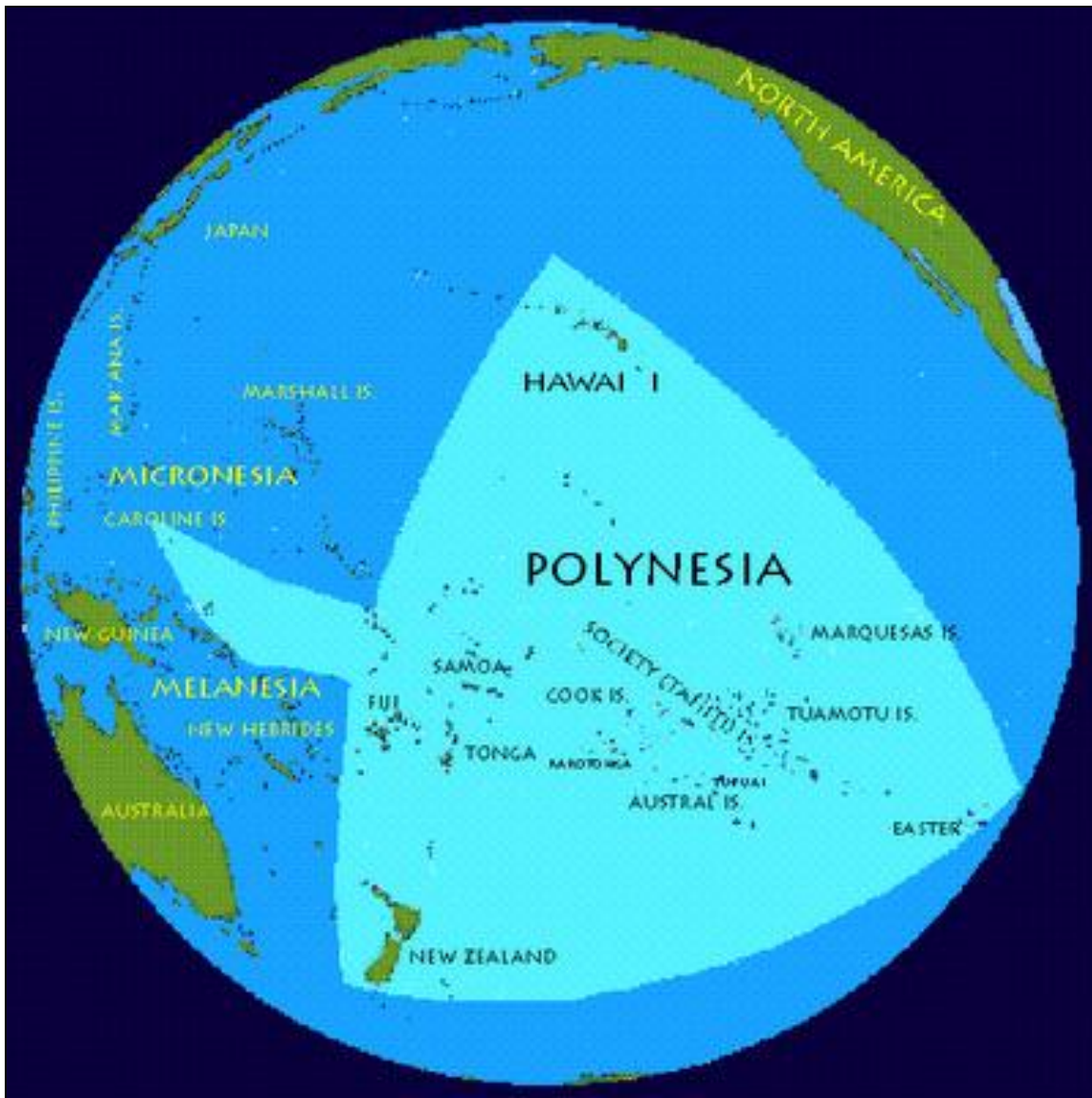
Approaching Cook Islands society and dance

In this chapter I will give an overview of the contextual frame for all aspects of this thesis. I start with a short presentation of the historical background of the Cook Islands as a frame for understanding the situation as it is on Rarotonga today. Both the historical background, the current economic situation as well as the global situation influences the production of dance and construction of identity. Cook Islanders were made aware by missionaries that they “had a culture” that differed greatly to that of the missionaries. They were somewhat stigmatized and presented to the thought that their culture was primitive and heathen. This thought was challenged and changed when the first Prime Minister, Albert Henry, re-invested culture with pride as he tried to unite the island people. In the years since self-governance, aspects of Cook Islands culture has been used as a resource by the government in creating a national identity on one hand and a tool to economic development on the other. Dance has probably been the main tool through which feelings of ‘togetherness’ and national unity has been forged. The competitions between the islands and districts on Rarotonga in Te Maeva Nui are described by many as the most important national event throughout the year. Here, teams produce outstanding performances that reinforce national pride. Te Maeva Nui represents the Cook Islands nation to the rest of the world as well as for Cook Islanders themselves. A brief description of Te Maeva Nui closes the chapter, but also brings us toward chapter three.

Cook Islands - a background

The Cook Islands is an archipelago comprising fifteen scattered islands and atolls, situated in the South Pacific Ocean at the centre of the Polynesian triangle (Map 2). The total land area is around 237 square kilometres and the islands are spread over an area of two million square kilometres.²⁴

²⁴ Found on: <http://www.stats.gov.ck/Resources/Publications/Quarterly/qrtlBul.htm>. Captured 24.11.2011



Map 2: The Polynesian Triangle²⁵

The name ‘Cook Islands’ was officially adopted in 1888²⁶ when the Southern Group were politically joined and made a British protectorate, known as the Federation of the Cook Islands (Numa 2003:52; Jonassen 1982).²⁷ In 1901, for the first time, the northern and southern islands were grouped together under the name Cook Islands and were annexed to New Zealand (Numa 2003). Prior to this arrangement, each island was an entity in itself. They remained a New Zealand protectorate until 1965, at which point they were granted independence (Sissons 1999; Alexeyeff 2009). The Cook Islands has enjoyed a special, post-

²⁵ <http://pacificarchaeology.blogspot.com/2006/10/maps-and-pictures-ii.html>

²⁶ 27 September 1888 (Jonassen 1982).

²⁷ Throughout the 1800s the Southern Group islands was also known as the Hervey Islands (Numa 2003:52; Gilson 1980)

colonial political status since August 4th 1965: ‘a United Nations experiment identified as self-governing in free association with New Zealand’ (Jonassen 2011: 2). The free association agreement implies that people born in the Cook Islands have a New Zealand citizenship and passport with free access to New Zealand and Australia (Government of the Cook Islands, 2007). The Cook Islands population is largely diasporic and emigration is a major challenge for the archipelago. Many migrate for education and for employment in New Zealand and Australia. As of 2006 there were 58,011 Cook Islanders living in New Zealand (Statistics 2007), while there is an estimated 25 000 living in Australia in 2011 (Jonassen 2011:15). In addition, there is a high rate of foreigners living in the Cook Islands, especially on Rarotonga.

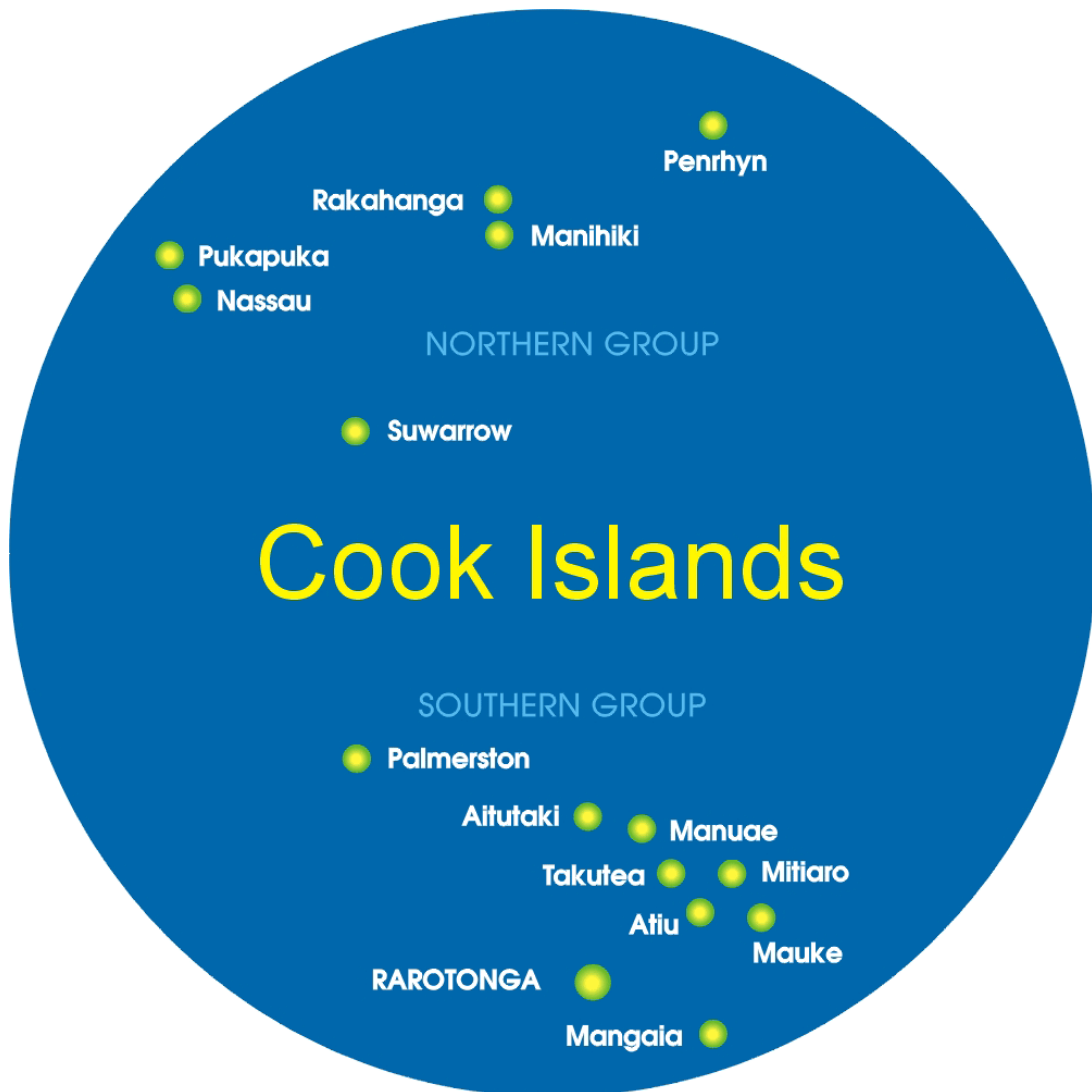
The archipelago is geographically divided into a Southern Group, of mostly volcanic islands, and a Northern Group of low lying coral atolls (Map 2). The larger Southern Group includes Mangāia, Rarotonga, Ma’uke, Atiu, Miti’aro, Aitutaki, Manuae and Takutea, of whom the latter two are uninhabited. The Northern Group comprises Palmerston, Suwarro (uninhabited), Nassau, Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Manihiki and Penrhyn. Rarotonga, the capital island and seat of government is also, with its 67.1 square kilometre, the largest and most populated with approximately 70 % of the archipelagos inhabitants (Office 2010a). After passing the *Te Reo Maori Act* (the Maori language act) in 2003, the country has two official languages, Cook Islands Maori and English (Reeves 2012). Cook Islands Maori refers to two distinct languages: Pukapukan and a collective of every island dialect from all the other islands. In addition, each island has one or more local Maori dialect which are invested with dignity and pride and reflected in popular Cook Island songs, where the different dialects are utilized in the lyrics. According to Alexeyeff (2009:10), the dialects reflect a connection to home islands that especially older people encourage younger generations born on Rarotonga to maintain.

The generic term ‘outer islands’ (*pa enua*) is used in everyday conversations and refers to all the islands except Rarotonga. This was one of the first words I learnt after arriving on Rarotonga. ‘Outer islands’ may be seen as a stigmatizing term as it indicates that Rarotonga is the centre, which all the other islands are removed from (Hau’ofa 1994). In similar ways, Rarotonga was often spoken about as ‘the main island’. My point here is that on Rarotonga today, people constantly construct boundaries between the islands, and especially between Rarotonga and the rest of the islands. These boundaries are, as I will show in the next chapter, reflected in dance and especially in *Te Maeva Nui*. People living on Rarotonga constantly compared Rarotongan expressive practices with those of the other islands (Alexeyeff 2009).

Rarotongans as well as outer islanders living on Rarotonga presented a view of the outer islanders, except Aitutaki, as less modern and more backwards, in the sense that they are living more 'like they used to back in those days'.²⁸ Often people told me, when I explained that I was there to study dance that if I wanted to see their true culture, I should pay a visit to the outer islands. Especially in Te Maeva Nui, where inhabitants of the islands meet and compete against each other, are these stereotypes and categorizations visible.

All Cook Islanders have Polynesian ancestors, but within the Polynesian cultures that came to influence the islands there were great differences (Crocombe 2003). History of origin and ancestry are usually divided between the Southern and Northern Group, but more often than not, Pukapuka was categorized as culturally very different. While the southern islands descends from Eastern Polynesian cultures, mainly from the Society Islands (especially Tahiti), linguistic and archaeological research determines Samoan and Western Polynesian settlements in the northern Cook Islands (Craig and King 1981; Bellwood 1979 in (Alexeyeff 2009:7; Crocombe 2003:11).

²⁸ In everyday conversations, Cook Islanders referred to the past with the somewhat unspecific phrase 'back in those days'. This phrase seemed to indicate the pre-colonial time and that which is today considered 'the traditional culture'.



Map 3: The Cook Islands, The Southern and The Northern Group²⁹

During World War Two, between 1944 and 1945, three airstrips were built in the Cook Islands. The New Zealand government built a coral airstrip on Rarotonga and the United States Army Corps constructed airstrips on Aitutaki and Penrhyn (Hall 1994). These airstrips have played an unforeseen part in ‘developing and changing the Island group, its infrastructure and its people’ (Hall 1994: 7). The new international airport at Rarotonga was officially opened January 29, 1974 and from 1977 tourism started to grow and became a profitable business, especially on Rarotonga (Hall 1994). The Cook Island economy is narrow and depends heavily on tourism, which contributes to about 40 % of GDP.³⁰ Tourism also

²⁹ Found on: <http://www.essencetours.com.au/images/cookislands/CookIslandsMap.gif> Captured 10.04.2012

³⁰ Found on: <http://www.essencetours.com.au/images/cookislands/CookIslandsMap.gif> Captured 10.04.2012

contributes to a number of other industries³¹, together generating an average of 80 % of the GDP.³² Other important contributors to GDP are black pearl and tuna fish exports together with offshore financial services.³³ The per capita income on Rarotonga is three times higher than average on the outer islands (Sissons 1999:92). The Cook Islands economy depends of foreign aid. Like other nations in Oceania, the Cook Islands economy is characterized as a MIRAB (migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy) economy (Alexeyeff 2009). In the case of Cook Islands the MIRAB economy has meant a chance for Cook Islanders to find employment in their home country (Ibid 2009). However, emigration is, and has been for many years, a huge challenge to the Cook Islands.³⁴ In 2006 the estimated number of people living in the Cook Islands was 14 900, a number reduced to 10 900 by 2011.³⁵ There are two related patterns here; decline in population on the outer islands, of whose people migrate to Rarotonga, and emigration from Rarotonga to, mainly New Zealand.

Rarotonga

Rarotonga is a beautiful Pacific island, with its clear, blue and turquoise water encircled by a coral reef. With its sharp and green volcanic mountains, ranging over 600 meter, it makes a grandiose impression, not only from the air, but from any point of the island. A humpy road circles the island and an old road, called the back road, covers most of the inland areas.

Rarotonga is divided into three traditional districts (*vaka*): Takitumu, Puaikura (Arorangi) and Te Au-o-Tonga. Associated with each district are one or more chiefly lines, and family descent groups are ranked according to their proximity to these title-holders. Each island, except Penrhyn, has a system of hereditary chieftainship (*ariki*) that determines land ownership and social obligations (Alexeyeff 2009). People's status is largely ascribed and measured on an individual's proximity to titleholders. Who your family is matters in this respect. Even though status largely is ascribed, there are alternatives for achieving status or prestige, such as by excelling at sports or in the performing arts or having achieved an educational accomplishment. Jonassen (2011:1) has beautifully described the world of Cook

³¹ For example retail trade, agricultural production for the domestic market and construction activity.

³² Found on: <http://www.cook-islands.gov.ck/cook-islands.php> Captured 13.09.12

³³ Found on: <http://www.essencetours.com.au/images/cookislands/CookIslandsMap.gif> Captured 10.04.2012

³⁴ Found on: <http://www.essencetours.com.au/images/cookislands/CookIslandsMap.gif> Captured 10.04.2012

³⁵ Found on: <http://www.stats.gov.ck/CurReleases/popnestVital/popestQ.pdf> Captured 15.12.2011

Islanders as one that is ‘primarily connected by genealogy and all that it entails’.³⁶ According to him, it is an interconnected world that stretches far beyond physical and non-physical barriers. Webs of connections draw islands and people together, most strongly by family and kin units.



Photo 5: Rarotonga from the air.³⁷

The main town, Avarua, is centred in Te Au-o-Tonga. Avarua is often crowded with people and offers a range of activities, shops, restaurants and bars. People from all over the world meet on Rarotonga, where Cook Islanders from the twelve inhabited islands live and work. Walking around in Avarua, listening to people talk Swedish, German, Australian and Maori while eating Chinese food followed by delicious Rarotongian-made fudge sometimes made me forget that I was living on an small island with only sea to be seen as far as the eye could reach. A regular transnational flow across borders has created a situation where Rarotonga especially, and to some degree some of the outer islands, is part of a global flow of people, goods and ideas.

³⁶ Professor Jon Tikivanotau Michael Jonassen was born on Rarotonga. He is known as one of Cook Islands best/top drummers and from his former positions in the Cook Islands Government, there amongst Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Development (1990-1993). He was one of the first cultural performers to promote Cook Islands dance, through the family-based performance group, the Betela Dance Troupe. Since 1993 he has been professor of political science at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He has written several articles and books on Cook Islands politics and culture. Additionally, he has composed more than 80 musical pieces, composed drum-sections and written poems.

³⁷ <http://tourplan.travel/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Air-Rarotonga2.jpeg>

There are direct flights to Rarotonga from Auckland (11 times a week), Sydney (once a week), Los Angeles (once a week) and Tahiti (once a week). National borders are crossed by Cook Islanders every day through family reunions, participation in ceremonies, work meetings, organizational seminars and travelling parties (*teretere*). Being part of a dance troupe or being a skilled dancer today implies a lot of travelling (see chapter five). Living on Rarotonga, being a Cook Islander, includes representing the nation for large amounts of visitors, regardless of whether one is in a dance troupe or not. Each month, between 6 500 and 15 000 people arrive at the international airport.³⁸ In July 2011 a total of 14 519 arrivals were registered on Rarotonga (Office 2012). Keeping in mind that the total resident population is less than 12 000 this means that at times there are more tourists on the island than locals. Wherever Cook Islanders move in the public sphere, they are on display and aware that ‘others’ view them, adding and subtracting what they categorize as ‘the Cook Islands people’. My understanding is that on Rarotonga, Cook Islanders are visible for “outsider” not first and foremost as individuals, but more or less as one people, displaying Cook Islands-ness and way of life. A big part of this public ‘way of life’ is dancing.

The social landscape of the island changes each day: tourists coming and going, new goods arriving every week, politicians travelling back and forth between the islands etc. Despite this constant flux and movement there are the more stable factors: the same people dance and perform every week and the same people are striving to maintain a sense of Cook Islands-ness and their locally distinct identities as i.e. Aitutakian or Pukapukan.

A history of ‘culture’

In today’s Oceania, people divide their history into (two or more) separate parts where the past is described as a time when people lived in ‘the dark’; they were ignorant and barbarian. The present time on the other hand is an age where people are knowledgeable and Christian, they have seen ‘the light’ (Hau’ofa 1994:149). They link the introduction of Christianity to an age of greater knowledge where people became wiser. At the same time the introduction of Christianity also represents ‘new ways’ and to some degree a removal from ‘the traditional way’. According to Jonassen (2011), Cook Islanders often divide their history in three separate historical eras: *Tuatau ta’ito* (ancient times), *Tuatau marama* (enlightened period)

³⁸ In January 2012 there were 7 554 arrivals, in February 2012 there were 6 657 and in March 2012 there were 9 454 people arriving on Rarotonga. Statistics found on: http://www.stats.gov.ck/Statistics/Tourism/Jul_total.pdf.

and *Tuatau 'ou* (modern times). The *Tuatau Ta'ito* was a 'mysterious period involving the emergence of the Maori' and a time when there were many gods and living spirits, with ocean voyaging canoes sailing from one island to another (Jonassen 2011:3). It was a world governed by *ariki* (high chief) and other traditional leaders. In this period, each island had different, individual names (Kloosterman 1976).³⁹ Prior to European arrivals, traditional leaders ruled and controlled each island and their districts, each with a 'dynamic and diverse approach to distinctive local culture' (Jonassen 2011:6).⁴⁰

Tuatau marama is the time when the Cook Islands was visited by seafaring people, among which the visits by James Cook in 1773 and 1777 and the Bounty mutineers in 1789 can be mentioned here (Jonassen 2011:3-4).⁴¹ Today, the archipelago bears the name of the great Pacific explorer, Captain James Cook. This is also the time when Christianity was introduced. The London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries first landed in Aitutaki in 1821 and on Rarotonga in 1823. The introduction of Christianity did bring about changes in the cultural sphere. Ever since the 1800s, different authorities have searched to control and manipulate culture, achieved most effectively through the establishment of the 'blue laws' on Rarotonga, drawn by missionaries and accepted by *ariki* from the 1820s and onwards. Through 'blue laws' LMS missionaries attempted to control social behaviour and cultural activities by introducing strict moral codes of Christian behaviour (Jonassen 2011; Sissons 1999; Alexeyeff 2009). 'For a time thereafter, the Blue laws became an integral part of the Cook Islands Maori culture' (Jonassen 2003: 131). Dancing, along with singing and drumming was banned during the height of the missionary period, but the abandonment of local culture was less successful in the outer islands and in the inland regions of Rarotonga (Alexeyeff 2009). The influence of European ideologies and values changed the attitude towards dance. Some Rarotongans refused to dance because it did not match their perception of modernity; dancing was an activity for the outer islanders, those not yet civilized (Alexeyeff 2009). Traditional performing arts became less valued, its status transformed from being part of everyday life to something performed only on certain occasions and by certain people. Towards the end of the colonial era a new appreciation for the traditional performing arts arose, and Alexeyeff (2009:49) presents two explanations for the reassessment of its

³⁹ See Appendix 2 for a list of traditional names and current names of the twelve inhabited islands.

⁴⁰ Variations were found in language/dialects, oral histories, performing arts, material works and protocol practices (Jonassen 2011:6).

⁴¹ Captain James Cook sighted Manuae, Palmerston, Takutea, Atiu and Mangaia in the 1770s (Goodwin 2003:94). HMS Bounty visited Aitutaki (Jonassen 2003:141).

value on Rarotonga. First, accompanied by decolonialism, independence movements began to develop in the 1940s.⁴² A second explanation is the revaluation of precolonial forms of performing arts, where dance came to play a key role when the tourist industry was introduced on Rarotonga. ‘A cultural revival’ appeared, and expressive forms, such as dance and song, became more visible and more appreciated following the declaration of self-governance. This leads us into the third historical epoch described by Jonassen, *Tuatau ‘ou*, which is the present, modern time.

Once the Cook Islands had been declared self-governing it became important to revive aspects of culture that had gone missing or had been abandoned, or simply just suppressed in the years prior to self-governing. According to Sissons (1999, 1997) national consciousness in the Cook Islands has come to symbolize a successfully reformulation of a subordinate political position from colonial times. The national narrative that was introduced to the Cook Islands people during the first years of self-government was highly influenced by the thought of an independent people, able to manage their own affairs. In order to understand the way a national identity has been formed and how a sense of nationhood is experienced for Cook Islanders, I shall in short recapture some of the main important parts of the political history since self-governance.

National identity

Sissons (1999) writes about the development of a national identity in the Cook Islands, with a special focus on the role dance played in constructing and displaying this identity. He distinguishes between four main periods in the formation of a national identity, each characterized by different approaches in the way the government tried to forge feelings of nationhood. The dividing lines are based on shifting political agendas and goal. In the following pages I will recapitulate some of his main arguments.

The two first periods covers the years from 1965- 1978, where Sir Albert Henry and his Cook Islands Party (CIP) governed. Pride in being a Cook Islander was implemented into the national narrative, formulated by Albert Henry. From 1965-1974 Henry’s rhetoric focused on ‘togetherness’ and ‘progress’ as key values of nationhood (Sissons 1999:71). He successfully made his people engaged in building the nation, through different public projects

⁴² Two such organisations were the Cook Islands progressive Association and the Cook Islands Industrial Union of Workers, generally working for higher wages, improved shipping and Cook Islands representation in New Zealand Parliament (Sissons 1999).

on both community -and national levels.⁴³ Some of the most important national project was the formation of Cook Islands National Arts Theatre (CINAT), the Constitution Celebrations and a Culture Division (later MOCD).

CINAT, a government funded national dance group, referred to as national ambassadors by the Prime Minister, represented the nation as young, energetic and well-organized. Many of my informants were former members of CINAT and memorized fondly about that time, when, according to many, Cook Islands dance was at its best. Thus, dancing youth were a means through which the government controlled cultural expressions and thereby national representation, and dancing youth ‘were used by government for state functions’ (Alexeyeff 2009:51). The National Constitution Celebrations was another important means through which national pride and a national image was formed. Dance performances during the celebrations were stage displays of ‘togetherness’, but they were also ‘occasions for a state-directed rationalization of dance forms and movements’ (Sissons 1997:186-187). Displays of nationhood were ‘associated with high levels of organizational integration, mass participation and, of course, government funding’ (Sissons 1999:25).

During Sir Henry’s first period it was important to make people of the different islands and tribes feel like one people. Culture, or “customs” as it was then understood as, was not the basis for unity, but rather understood as ‘a source of disunity, separating tribe from tribe, island from island’ (Sissons 1999:71). It was not until the 1970s that culture came to be promoted as forming a national identity and dance became ‘the supreme embodiment of nationhood’ (Sissons 1999:42). Sir Albert Henry recognized the significance of that which was considered ‘tradition’. ‘Traditional culture’ was a source where the people of the dispersed islands could form a sense of nationhood though. Tradition became important in national narrative throughout the South Pacific, used as a break from the negative colonial period of suppression and discrimination, and is seen as a reconstruction of a positive and proud history prior to colonial invasions (Lawson 1997; Otto and Thomas 1997:15). Thus, the past that was narrated in terms of ‘tradition’ was the pre-colonial history, and as such tradition was an important symbolic force in creating a non-colonial identity.

⁴³ Through the Ministry of Social Development, village committees were established on Rarotonga in 1966 (Sissons 1999:28). With village committees Henry created a bridge between the local and the national space. A local identity, through engagement and participation in village committees could expand into a nationhood of togetherness and progress. By participation in village committees, people also participated in the economic and political life of the nation.

In his second period as Prime Minister, Henry changed the rhetoric of nationhood and national identity was expressed in ethnic (Maori) terms. Coinciding with this shift in rhetoric was the opening of the international airport. The opening of the International Airport on Rarotonga in 1974 resulted in increased numbers of tourist arrivals, as well as opening Cook Islands up to the modern world. Social changes accelerated and especially for the older generation, this period represents the time when the performing arts were at its top and a time when dignity and pride was restored to music and dance (Mason and Williams 2003; Alexeyeff 2009). To facilitate tourist development, the Government encouraged a process of national ethnicization and dance came to symbolize a national identity with a rich Polynesian cultural heritage. The Cook Islands began to be promoted externally as an ethnically distinct Polynesian nation with a cultural heritage that needed to be preserved. Internally the nation was promoted as a cultural community with a unique and valued Maori heritage. With this deliberate shift from the government, the national identity was to be formed within a frame of traditionalization, but also one of commodification. Within this framework, dance has developed to be a vehicle through which Cook Islanders promote who they are. As a result, the locals came to view themselves in the eyes of visitors and government representatives and they became visible as a nation of one people celebrating the same values, such as keeping neat communities and entertaining guests with food and performances.

The cultural revival, reflected institutionally in CINAT, the Constitution Celebrations and the Cultural Division, was partially abandoned when CIP lost the next election. When the Democrats won the elections in 1978, financial support of cultural activities stopped (Sissons 1997:179). Culture was no longer seen as a governmental, but private concern. With the privatization of dance troupes a professionalization of dance encouraged to 'greater diversity in dance forms, staging and costumes so that dance now expresses less "togetherness" and order, but plurality and local distinctiveness' (Sissons 1997:187). The decentring of culture eventually resulted in emphasizing local cultural differences, particularly between the different islands (Sissons 1999:108). The Prime Minister, Thomas Davis, focused on developing a more productive economy. He created an 'economic community' (Sissons 1999:84) where participation in nationhood meant participation in the tourist industry. While the economy became more tourist-dependent, David also laid the foundation for the intensified commodification of culture that followed in the next period.

In 1989 the CIP returned to power and culture was again a governmental priority and put on the political agenda. The Culture Division was re-opened, but this time it was

“Maorified”; it was re-named Tauranga Vananga which translates ‘the nest of knowledge’. The objectives were established in an act and it was made into a new ministry, the Ministry of Cultural Development (MOCD), no longer under Internal Affairs.⁴⁴ The Constitution Celebrations also underwent different processes of *Maorification* and the festival was again to be spectacular and funded by the government.

A new mood of ethnic confidence was foreshadowed by the new Prime Minister, Geoffrey Henry, when, opening the 1989 Constitution Celebrations, he termed them ‘a time to be proud to be Maori.

(Sissons 1997:182)⁴⁵

The Cook Islands economy became heavily dependent on the tourism industry. This economic development corresponds with political changes laid during the Davis years. Within this context, national identity and economic development were brought together- bound first and foremost by tourism as a commodification that could be bought. There has been a two-sided promotion of that which is considered traditional culture in the Cook Islands. On the one hand it has served the function as a resource that attracts tourists- it has been commoditized and institutionalized. On the other hand it has served as a template through which claims of identities are made in terms of a traditionalization of culture. The former has demanded the latter, and the commodification of culture and identity has demanded projects of traditionalization; ‘the revival or reconstruction of beliefs and practices thought to belong to a pre-colonial or pre-European period’ (Sissons 1999:98). Culture came to represent on one hand a partly unconscious identity formation, and on the other hand a more conscious project of state formation (Sissons 1997). These two parallel processes are also reflected in dance and have contributed towards many disagreements about what Cook Islands dance is and what it should be.

Cultural institutions, such as a Cultural Development Ministry, a national museum and the national dance troupe CINAT were all attempts to codify and control cultural expressions in the favour of the government vision of creating a national, marketable, identity. In order to

⁴⁴ The Ministry of Cultural Development was an expansion of the previous Cultural Division, and it comprised seven main divisions: Performing Arts, National Archives, Anthropological Services, Material Arts, and a National Library, National Museum and Audio-visual Unit, and smaller units responsible for planning and organizing the Festival of Pacific Arts (1992), a Maori Language Committee and a Research Committee (Sissons 1997:182-183).

⁴⁵ This quote is reported in the Cook Islands News (CIN) 29.07.1989

unify the nation, the national identity needed to transcend the local variations as well as to create boundaries towards other Pacific nations. This was achieved through dance, where a Cook Islands Maori identity could be visualised and embodied through spectacles of a rich Maori heritage grounded on local distinctiveness. Music and dance are ‘the main vehicle used by Cook Islanders to express nationalistic feelings and pride in the culture’ (Mason and Williams 2003:23). Despite the many efforts made towards establishing a national identity, Jonassen argues that ‘Cook Islanders still prefer to be identified by their tribal island, and most have no emotional attachment toward being “Cook Islander”’ (Jonassen 2011: 10). Cook Islanders tend to think of themselves as belonging to an island, a districts and a family clan.

The National Constitution Celebrations

For about a month, starting in July, the atmosphere and topography on Rarotonga changes drastically as people from all corners of the archipelago and from around the world arrives in order to participate or watch Te Maeva Nui. Te Maeva Nui consists of an official ceremony on August 4th (marking the day in 1965 when the Cook Islands was declared self-governing in free association with New Zealand), multiple dance and song competitions and in 2011 a float parade. A float parade Friday 29th of July opened the festival. People and decorated vehicles paraded on the main road through town. Alongside the road, people were crowded up to get a glimpse of the parade. The parade included 41 groups who walked and drove through Avarua. The groups consisted of teams that participated in Te Maeva Nui, but also included businesses such as the Bank of the Cook Islands (BCI), as well as other groups such as the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning and Tereora College. Each group had different themes which was reflected in their outfits and the decoration of the vehicles used. Te Maeva Nui 2011 was a week-long celebration including competition in the seven different cultural items.

In the competitions people compete against each other as representatives of different islands, villages or districts with team names corresponding to the name of the island, village or district.⁴⁶ In 2011 there were 11 teams competing against each other. These teams were the islands teams of Tongareva (Tongareva henua), Rakahanga (Rakahanga henua), Pukapuka (Pukapuka enua), Manihiki (Manihiki henua), Atiu (Enua Manu), Aitutaki (Araura enua), Mangaia (Enua Mangaia), Ma’uke (Ma’uke enua) and Miti’aro.⁴⁷ Rarotonga was represented

⁴⁶ They change between using the traditional names of the islands and the contemporary names. For a list of current and traditional names for the twelve inhabited islands, see Appendix 2.

⁴⁷ *Enua* and *Henua* in this context mean land, or island.

by two teams: the village team of Avarua ('*Ōire* Avarua) and the district team of Puaikura (Vaka Puaikura).⁴⁸ The seven genres in the competitions were choir (*imene pupu*), traditional hymns (*imene tuki*), action song (*kapa rima*), drum dance ('*ura pa'u*), traditional chant (*pe'e*), traditional song (*ute*) and traditional drumming (*tangi ka'ara*).

The first competitions were arranged Sunday 31st of July, where the teams competed in *imene pupu* at one o'clock and *imene tuki* at seven p.m. Over the course of the next four consecutive evenings teams displayed dances in a part of Te Maeva Nui that is called the 'festival of dance', which includes competition in *kapa rima*, '*ura pa'u*, *pe'e* and *ute* (Alexeyeff 2009:4; Sissons 1999:25, 54).⁴⁹ The very last competition, the *tangi ka'ara*, where only six teams competed, was arranged just before the prize giving ceremony Saturday 6th of August. All the events mentioned, except the float parade was held at the National Auditorium which seats more than 1800 people and is run by the Ministry of Cultural Development (MOCD). Prior to each performance an introduction was read to the audience.⁵⁰ The introductions were written by the teams themselves, but read aloud by employees of MOCD. The introductions presented interpretations of the performance, with a special focus on explaining how it was related to the main theme of Te Maeva Nui. Each year Te Maeva Nui has a different theme. The 2011 theme was '*Te au Akairo o toku matakeinanga*, the signs of my homeland or community'.⁵¹ One woman translated it 'the sign of our place or village', but the women sitting next to her interjected, 'the *landmarks* of our village' and a third woman said 'the sign of where you belong. Belonging refers to who you are, [it is] all about you. It is a way of identifying; there is no correct English word for it [*matakeinanga*]'. Within this framework, all the performances had interpreted the theme in various ways. The signs they referred to included manmade signs, natural signs and super-natural signs. The theme encourages teams to distinguish from one another by emphasizing traits, happenings or traditions characteristic of the specific island. The songs, dances, costumes etc. that are being produced in the weeks and months prior to the event seek to reflect the overall theme of Te Maeva Nui as well as the performance they are made for. The songs tell stories about

⁴⁸ '*Ōire* means village while *Vaka* means district, as well as canoe.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 1 for further detail about these four genres.

⁵⁰ One of the reasons that they have an introduction to each performance during Te Maeva Nui is due to the different dialects used in performances. By reading the introduction in English and Maori, both the Cook Islands population and the tourists are able to follow each performance, without language being a barrier. Remember the note about Pukapuka above, where I stated that the Pukapukan language differs from the various dialects of Maori.

⁵¹ The word *akairo* means sign or landmarks, and *matakeinanga* refers to place, village and family. According to the *Cook Islands Maori Dictionary* (Buse 1995:236) the word *matakeinanga* also refer to a settlement, the inhabitants of a district or neighborhood, province.

historical event and persons, about landmarks that symbolize an island or district and they also focus upon topical events. As I will show throughout the thesis, people use this opportunity to communicate and convey values they hold close as well as whatever it is that they see as being on stake.

From its beginning, the National Constitution Celebrations has been a government responsibility and arrangement. In 2011 the MOCD rented a Samoan ship to bring the Northern Group people to Rarotonga and paid airfares for 40 individuals from each island in the Southern Group.⁵² All together the government spent 531 000 NZ Dollars in transporting about 450 outer islanders to Rarotonga for the National Celebrations (Cook Islands News, July 28, 2011).⁵³ Te Maeva Nui is a politically charged event, organized and funded by MOCD, yet it develops primarily outside of state institutions. Even though the performances are arranged on the national stage, the production of the performances, the making of the costumes and the work that goes into each performance, takes place outside of state institutions. For months the local population prepared themselves for this event. Each team depends on the active participation by a number of people. Most teams practice in a hall of some kind, usually a community-hall erected by fundraising. The villages on Rarotonga each has a village hall that is being used for a variety of community functions, such as our team practicing for Te Maeva Nui as well as housing visiting diaspora communities. Our hall, *Aro'a- Nui* Puaikura Community Centre, had recently been restored by money which the Puaikura team won in Te Maeva Nui 2008.⁵⁴

From a state-perspective, the intended idea was to use the National Constitution Celebrations to promote a unified Cook Island identity. The people, on the other hand have made it clear that they participate because it gives them an opportunity to broadcast their islands characteristics. They want to compete against each other, as representatives of islands and districts. In the words of Alexeyeff, 'the success of the Constitution Celebrations relies on the dance festival's being competitive; the tension between unity and competitiveness appears to be what makes the celebrations successful' (Alexeyeff 2009: 52). The tension between unity and diversity, between concerns of the state and the nation forms the core of my arguments. In the Cook Islands, family and genealogy, as well as connection to home island

⁵² This year more than 220 residents from Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka and Penrhyn came with Lady Naomi on July 28, and they headed back for the Northern Group on August 16.

⁵³ 400 000 NZD for the Northern Group islanders and 131 000 NZD for the Southern Group islanders (more than two million Norwegian kroners).

⁵⁴ *Aro'a Nui* can be translated 'main welcome' or 'plentiful greetings' or 'offer good wishes'. I was told the team donated 10 000 NZD of the prize they won in 2008 to renovate the community hall.

are values that are reflected in dance. Constituting subjects as “nationals” have received great competition with the strong island identities that people hold and which is the focus of the next chapter.

3

Dance as identities

‘Every island has their own way of dancing and singing’.

Peka

This chapter explores different ways dance is used to express identity through the use of symbols and distinction marks. Following Barth (1969) I treat these distinction marks as symbols that gain significance through interaction. In the first part of the chapter I explore ways that Cook Islanders mediate an island identity through dance. In dance, Cook Islanders have a repertoire of distinctions that are used to make visible and mark publicly distinction between people as belonging to and representing an island or district. I focus in this chapter on how dance gain importance as a symbol of distinct island, thus mediating island identity. In the latter part I focus on ways a national identity may be experienced when dancing, with a special focus on how encounters between Cook Islander and non-Cook Islanders can contribute in mediating a national identity. In relation to the questions posed in chapter one, I seek to explore the following in this chapter: In what ways are dance used to express identity? How are the boundaries that distinguish between groups of people created and maintained? And what is the role of dance in the production of collective identity, especially on a national level?

Symbols and distinction marks

During my stay on Rarotonga I experienced that people classified dance into Southern Group and Northern Group styles. Alexeyeff (2009: 24) also write about this phenomenon as says that ‘people I spoke to about dance always classified dances into Southern Group and Northern Group styles’. Ngarima, a middle-aged man that is a famous Cook Islands dancer⁵⁵ explained that ‘the Northern Group dance is more acrobatic, they jump a lot. In the south they have slow movements and use a low tone of the *pātē* drum. It [dancing] is totally different’.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ngarima used to dance in CINAT. He later formed Te Ivi Maori Dance Troupe.

⁵⁶ The *pātē* is a type of hollow wooden slit drum, used especially in drum dance.

I was told that Manihikians, which is part of the Northern Island Group, are known for their rapid movement and acrobatic skills in the dance of both sexes, which in the southern islands is unheard of for women. In the south ‘the emphasis in women’s dancing is on its gracefulness rather than its vigour, although the actions of the male can be, as in the northern islands, frenetic’ (Mason and Williams 2003:24). It seems that in the Cook Islands, cultural boundaries somewhat coincide with the geographical boundaries of each island. There are, however, a great deal of overlap and exchange across these borders.⁵⁷ Some islands share a common history, for example, the inhabitants of Rakahanga-Manihiki and Penrhyn claim ‘a common descent from a Rarotongan warrior’ (Kloosterman 1976:6). Also, *Ngaputoru*, the sister islands of Atiu, Miti’aro and Ma’uke are considered to be culturally similar. From rough categorization between the north and south, dance is further categorized into island styles. For example, in Pukapuka ‘the emphasis is more on epic chanting by groups of two or more people who take parts as in a play’, and in Rakahanga and Manihiki both sexes dance vigorously to the fast high pitched drum dance, using small wooden *tokere* and *koriro* drums (Mason and Williams 2003:24). Another example is Manihikians and Maukeans, who let the men carry hand decorations (*riri*) which is only used by women elsewhere.

The statement in the chapter opening was made by a middle-aged woman in one of our conversations about Te Maeva Nui. Her statement serves to illustrate how Cook Islanders recognize dance as representing distinct styles that “belong” to each island. The symbols reflect island histories, traditions and natural characteristics as well as stereotypes of the people who are raised on the islands. Often they reflect the nature of each island. For instance, the blue lagoon of Aitutaki, the white beaches of Rarotonga, the birds flying over Atiu and the black pearls of Manihiki and Penrhyn are commonly reflected in dance, both in costumes, objects, by certain movements and through songs and chants. Connections to land and the love people have for a place is often expressed in songs and dances.⁵⁸ When teams perform at Te Maeva Nui team members display strong pride in their team’s performances. Feelings of island commitment are together with the excitement of the competition, probably reinforced by the strong family and community bonds that exist in the Cook Islands. Kin and family ties

⁵⁷ For instance, a man from the northern island Manihiki said that five or six Manihikian men had settled in Aitutaki a long time ago. This is why, according to him, there are a lot of similarities in style and drum-beat between these two islands.

⁵⁸ For example, I learnt to dance to a song that is called ‘People of Rarotonga’, with Te Hiva Nui Dance Troupe. Another song I heard was ‘Manea Mangaia’, meaning beautiful Mangaia.

are the most reliable and enduring support -and social network.⁵⁹ Genealogy and land are inseparable, and connected to both are sets of commitments and rights. Connections to land and the love people have for a place is often expressed in songs. This feature is also common in other parts of Oceania, such as in the Hawaiian hula, where people's relationship to nature and land is also mediated through dance (Torgersen 2010). According to Torgersen (2010:83):

Hawaiian mele [song] and chants regularly refer to places or natural features such as flowers, trees, mountains and water. Through hula dance, these places and features are represented in movements and choreographies that accompany the chant or mele.

In Hawaii as well as in the Cook Islands, dance is an expression of people's identity, both at a personal and collective level. A question of interest is how does an object or practice gain social significance as symbol of a particular identity? According to Barth (1994b), the cultural elements people chose as are not necessarily the most original or characteristic for that group, but they are made important when people use them in order to separate themselves from others. A point which, according to Barth (1994b:12) has been too frequently overlooked is that the fact that 'people's choice of diacritica appeared arbitrary' does not exclude the condition of 'cultural standards used to evaluate and judge ethnic co-members'. In the Cook Islands some symbols are regarded by the actors as important markers of a particular identity and have been ascribed a social value as identity symbols. Groups organize their identities around these practices and objects, which is giving meaning through dance encounters between Cook Islanders as representatives of islands. By claiming the right to some practices and objects as symbolism of their particular group, meaning is invested in these symbols and dance encounters are one experience from which these island identities are being formed and maintained through.

At this stage I want to return to the fact that it is not given that people will understand or give recognition to these distinguishing marks as symbols of identity to one particular group. In order for that to happen, outsiders must associate the distinguishing marks as part of the group's identity. Members must self-ascribe to the identity implicit by the distinction marks, as well as be ascribed that identity by outsiders (Jenkins 2004). Only as such will the identity be of organizational relevance. This implies 'playing the same game' (Barth 1969:15,

⁵⁹ These bonds are upheld by regular visits, phone calls and attendance in special events by family members now living overseas.

17, 117-134). Distinguishing marks become significant as they are used to mark the boundary, and as such they are not neutral, but invested with significance given by the processes of ascription and self-ascription. For instance, black pearls are important as an identity symbol because the social actors organize their identities around this specific object, as I will show in the next section.

Performing local distinctiveness

The Manihikian team performed their drum dance on Tuesday August 2nd. They were the fifth team on stage that night, and the auditorium was packed. Nerves, excitement, pride and joy were emotions I felt present in the auditorium, as locals were waiting to see their relatives, friends and community on stage. The drum dance lasted for six and a half minutes and it was a spectacular performance, dedicated to the black pearl. The introduction stated the importance of the black pearl for the people of Manihiki, as the cultivated pearl is one of the major industries in the Cook Islands. The introduction shortly explained some of the movements to be seen in the performance: ‘The actions to the drum dance by Manihiki depict the signs to the growth of the black pearl and the sound of the drums depicts the original sound of the Manihiki island drums’. The stage was dark when the drumming began. The rhythm was simple, but catchy and I recognized the sound of the *tini* drum, which I had been told was a Manihikian drum. The *tini* drum is easily recognizable for its high pitched sound and small size. I saw a woman, standing with her back towards us, moving slowly at first, but soon shifted to a quick tempo while standing in the middle of a large shell that was part of the stage set. When she turned around I saw that she held a large black pearl in her hands. It was lifted towards the ceiling by an invisible thread. A spotlight followed the pearl and when it reached the ceiling, the dance began. The stage was filled with energetic young dancers. Their costumes reflected the colours of the black pearls. The girls wore costumes in yellow, purple and black, while the boys were dressed in purple and pink. The costumes were decorated with black pearls and shells. The girls danced with shells in their hands and around their neck. Even though there was applause and screaming through the performance, once it finished the applauding in the auditorium escalated and people started to whistle. The audience were obviously impressed, as was I.



Two girls performing in the National Auditorium.

Photo 6: The Manihiki drum dance

This Manihikian performance highlighted the black pearls that are recognized by Cook Islanders as unique to the Northern Group islands and especially for Manihiki. Black pearls are fundamental in sustaining the Manihikian economy and population. In their introduction the team stated that they would depict the original drums of Manihiki and ‘an empty *tini* (cabin bread tin) in the percussion ensemble is believed to have been part of Manihiki dance since the late 1800s’ (Mason and Williams 2003:24).

A Manihikian example: Ngarima

Whenever people spoke to me about differences between the islands and their dance-styles, Manihiki was always mentioned, with references made to the *tini* drum and acrobatic movements. Like people from other islands, Manihikians have a way of dancing that is unique to them. Thus, the *tini* drum, some acrobatic movements and the black pearl are examples of symbols used by Manihikians to make visible boundaries that distinguish “us” from “them”.

Manihikians define themselves as different from people of the other islands and display this through distinction marks which demarcate social boundaries. They use a few contrasting distinguishing marks, or diacritica as Barth would himself have called them, which are emphasised to create and maintain discontinuity between groups (Barth 1969). As Barth showed, people interacting with one another communicate distinctions as a way of structuring interactions. In this context the distinctions mark particular island identities. The group identities are produced through dance encounters, where the groups organize themselves by overemphasizing differences that exists in dance and thus form particular identities. In order to illustrate my point I shall present a statement made by one man, but which was formulated very similar to other peoples answer to my question, why do you dance?

I love it, it is part of my heritage and it identifies me as a Manihikian. If I don't dance I hide my true identity, in some way or another. [...] It is part of life, for me. Dance is very important as it identifies situations of who you are. If people see me dance they will say "oh, he's a Manihikian".

Ngarima

Ngarima explicitly point out that dance is part of his identity as a Manihikian and thus refer to an island. Highlighting his Manihikian identity is a way of structuring interaction, it is a way for him to state "who he is", but also who he is not. His Manihikian identity is part of a group identity he shares with other people. He self-ascribe to a collective identity that he expresses through his way of dancing, which he learnt growing up in Manihiki, by other Manihikians. The relationship between internal and external definition of a person or a group's identity implies that it is in the meeting between these two processes that identity is created. The continuing processes involved in reproducing an identity and its boundaries are defined when a self-ascribed identity is affirmed by others ascription. Put differently, a self-ascribed group, such as being a Manihikian, is valueless without others categorizing them as Manihikians. In dance encounters this may become visible by the fact that people seemed to agree that there are different ways of dancing on the different islands. Ngarima implies that this identity is situational. Only certain people will be able to state that he is a Manihikian when they watch him dance. Ngarima is well aware of this, as he later in the interview went into detail about dance knowledge. Being able to categorize him as a Manihikian, one must know that a particular dance style is typical of Manihiki. Ngarima has for several years represented the

Cook Islands through dance, being a former member of CINAT and Te Ivi Maori dance troupe. He explained that he never expected tourists to see him as a Manihikian, but the important part is that other Cook Islanders are able to ascribe such an identity to him. He was worried because in his opinion the young population today have no interest towards learning about their genealogy, the specific ways of dancing in each island, and henceforth in the future these distinction marks may be lost. This can be interpreted as a potential loss of identity. Because of this ever present risk of losing distinctions they keep on displaying them, investing in them with significance.

As mentioned in chapter two, people take a lot of pride in dancing, especially when they can reflect attachment to their genealogical heritage. In this sense dance is a way of displaying that they enjoy a life that is in harmony with their island and thus with whom they are. I might suggest that the embodied continuation that dance can represent is especially important for Ngarima, because he moved to Rarotonga when he was six years old, and has also lived in other countries for part of his life. Thus, by dancing he maintains a bond to an island and tradition that represents his genealogy.

Group identities and competitions

The situation I have just described, where people represent their island identities by referring to distinctions bear resemblance to Freud's 'Narcissism of minor differences' (Freud 1924). I use his term as a conceptual framework for understanding ways that claims to difference can arise. I interpret this tendency as attempts to maintain particular identities, by overemphasize some distinguishing marks, seeing that encounters with other groups may threaten their identity. The boundaries that separate groups are actively constructed and produced under certain circumstances. The ways they are constructed depend on the situation and who 'the other' is. In this section, "the other" are other Cook Islanders, and I focus on encounters in Te Maeva Nui. Harrison (2003) distinguishes between three ways that differences between groups are judged and evaluated in relation to how "the other" is configured. In Harrison's first configuration the cultural other is valorised as inferior, in the second as superior and in the third as equal to the self (Harrison 2003:357). In the further analysis I draw on his third configuration to understand how the apparent discontinuity between groups is formed. In his third configuration, "the Other" is conceived as essentially similar culturally to the Self, indeed in some respects far too much so', resulting in actors who define themselves contrastively from the others (2003:357).

Especially important are those encounters where all the islands are represented, such as in Te Maeva Nui. Here, people display their group identity and seek recognition by members of other island teams. Te Maeva Nui is important in maintaining island identities, and it might look like these identities own their continued existence on these very performances. Or, put differently the maintenance of island distinctiveness through dance depends on distinctions being displayed in situations of social encounters. In the ‘festival of dance’, teams are eager to display the different island dance styles, attempting to win the competitions and by so doing gain respect and fascination for their islands. The group identities are shaped by the very competitions, which enables the reproduction of distinctions and thus make publicly displays of enduring identities.

In his summarize on characteristics of the Aitutakians and Rarotongans, Beaglehole writes ‘sensitive to group judgments, group-bound in moral standards, extremely responsive to feelings of shame, [...]; concerned to a good degree with questions of prestige and status [...]’ (Beaglehole 1957:224). He further details each, stating for instance that an Aitutakian-way of acting is structured by fear of being ashamed, always acting to avoid such a state and rather to gain prestige and increase their status. Status is ideally ascribed Beaglehole further argues, but needs to be validated from time to time through competitions, especially group competition. This is so ‘because group competition makes possible an affirmation of both the values of group sociability and group membership as well as the values of the competitive justification of status’ (Beaglehole 1957:231).

Exaggerated perceptions of difference...

‘Narcissism of minor differences’ is a term first coined by Sigmund Freud in 1918 in his essay *The Taboo of Virginity* (Freud 1924).⁶⁰ Freud noted how small differences between groups of people were important for understanding conflicts, observing that that ‘it is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other, like the Spaniards and Portuguese, for instance [...]’ (Freud 1962:61). His recognition that groups who share many common features are likely to exaggerate distinctions between themselves is of significance for the further analysis. I do not wish to insinuate that the groups of people from different

⁶⁰ It has been difficult to find a printed version of his essay. I did find it published in a book called *Contributions to the Psychology of Love* (Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens) 1924. Here, the essay is published together with two other essays: ‘A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men’ (1910h) and ‘On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love’ (1912d).

islands are now in feuds with each other, even though they have long history of inter-island feuds, but note here that the relationship between them is ambivalent. In Te Maeva Nui, where the island and district teams, as I experienced it, continuously exhibited and overemphasized small differences between themselves, categorizing the nation into smaller fractions of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Teams act in a narcissistic way in that some symbols that mark boundaries between the groups are given primary significance. This way of acting, or behaving, appeared to be somewhat codified.

In his studies of totemic classifications, Lévi-Strauss also examines the importance of minor differences. For my purpose here the interesting point is that Lévi-Strauss shows that the basis of the phenomenon of totems lies in the similarities of differences between groups. It is the ways that teams categorize differences and the ways they articulate differences between each other, that bear resemblance to Lévi-Strauss’ totems. Lévi-Strauss shows how groups, who are closely related, use emblems found in nature, ‘to do away with their own resemblances’ by associating their group with i.e. an animal (Lévi-Strauss 1964). Animals here represent a shared aspect where contrasts can be drawn and compared. Groups articulate differences with the same underlying structure of categorizing, on which they can be compared and contrast each other. Propinquity is important for understanding ‘the narcissism of minor difference’, a point I will return to below. The black pearls are a natural treasure, used in this performance context to display group distinctiveness, by associating Manihiki with something found in the natural world which is unique to them (Lévi-Strauss 1964). In other words, the black pearls have been ascribed social significance as an identity symbol for a group of people, with the intention of highlighting differences and reveal resemblances. Other teams used other ‘totems’, such as the Tavake bird used by Atiuans.⁶¹ The traditional name of Atiu, ‘Enuamanu means the land of the birds and the Tavake symbolizes the spirit of independence and determination (Numa 2003). The Tavake bird was referred to in some of ‘Enuamanu (the Atiu team in Te Maeva Nui) performances, both by costume designs and movements.

⁶¹ Takutea, a small sandy cay, belongs to the people of Atiu. Takutea is the place where a bird called ‘Tavake’ lives. Atiuans collected the red tail feathers of this tropical bird as these were highly valued for use in chiefly regalia. Today, the bird is protected (Crocombe 2003:11).



This picture is downloaded from Cook Islands News, showing 'Enuamanu performing their 'ura pa'u (drum dance) in Te Maeva Nui 2011. The girls' actions mimic those of the birds, flapping their wings up and down, elegantly and soft.

Photo 7: 'Enuamanu 'ura pa'u.

What all my examples so far has highlighted is the ways people construct boundaries between themselves by displaying distinctions. But, I want to ask, how are they able to interpret these symbols in similar ways, and what lies behind claims of distinct island identities? I argue they share a framework of both exhibiting and interpreting distinctiveness, thereby enabling them all to understand and interpret the distinctiveness and in a similar manner. Only groups with much in common may develop the tendency I have described as 'the narcissism of minor differences'.

...are really Disguised similarities

'Representations of difference and alterity [...] always seem to be bound inextricably to perceptions of similarity'.

(Harrison 2003:356)

The ways that groups distinguish between themselves and the style in ordering and expressing distinctiveness through dance appeared quite similar. Harrison (2003:344) seeks to explain the puzzling observation that 'identities ostensibly "different" from one another are often remarkably similar'. He argues that it is 'the commonalities between groups that create the conditions that make distinctions available and necessary, indeed possible' (2003:345). Here he amends Freud's insight of 'the narcissism of minor differences' in one respect; the perception of resemblance, which in turn creates the condition of 'the narcissism of minor

differences' are socially constructed. To understand how such a condition may arise one must first, according to Harrison(2003:349), understand 'the discursive production of cultural claustrophobia, the stifling resemblances and excessively close commonalities, which the narcissism, as it were, attempts to deny and negate'. So far I have explained the ways that groups create and maintain difference between each other. The next step will be to examine the construction of resemblance which creates the condition of overemphasizing some distinguishing marks.

How then may such images of 'oversimilarity' have been produced, or created (Harrison 2003:349). The phenomenon of differentiating between themselves is not a recent one. These people were earlier regarded as members of distinct tribes and family clans, ruled by different *ariki*. People from the islands and districts have evolved rich visual and embodied symbolism for grounding their distinctiveness and for drawing the boundaries between themselves. The importance placed on differentiating between themselves crystallizes out of the earlier context where the boundaries between the islands were upheld by inter island fights and feuds. One day, as I was talking to an uncle of two sisters that I lived with, I was made aware of this history. He explained to me that 'back in those days they always fought each other'. He spoke about the people who lived in Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Atiu. Being an Atiuan himself, he emphasized that Atiuan warriors usually won the fights and therefore people from the other islands feared them. Beaglehole (1957:224)⁶² also describe these people as war-like, when he writes:

All observers of the people of Aitutaki and Rarotonga appear to agree on ascribing to them the following characteristic: the people were warlike and engaged in frequent tribal wars; [...].

It is only recently that the Cook Islanders have been regarded as, and needed to operate as members of the same national group. When the archipelago became a British protectorate operated as one unit, the people were socially constructed to resemble one another. Even though they were, of course, similar in many ways, the drawing of boundaries encapsulating

⁶² In his book *Social change in the South Pacific* he bases his statements historical accounts made by missionaries and observations made by anthropologists in addition to his own observations from two months fieldwork in Aitutaki. The book focuses only on Aitutaki and Rarotonga, and when he, in the above statement writes that all observers agree he refers to several missionary accounts as well as those written observations made by anthropologists. However, it should also be stated the islands each had their own variant of leadership and inter-island warfare was more frequent between some islands (for more see chapter 17, especially pages 199-201 in (Crocombe 2003). See also chapter two, page 53.

them all may have felt like a trespass of the traditional borders, and as a brake with traditional customs. First and foremost through national narratives (see chapter two), I argue. However, processes that started prior to self-governance have probably also reinforced images of common features, such as the British that organised the islands as one unit with a common name. As mentioned above, being portrayed as alike, or as sharing culture and identity may have felt as a threat considering the strong island identities that people held. Thus, the state imposed narrative of similarity may have been a contributing factor for the significance these distinguishing marks have gained. Despite the new arrangement of self-governance and newly restored pride in ‘traditional culture’, this pride ‘did not replace most people’s overriding preference for family, tribal and island distinctiveness over national identity’ (Jonassen 2011:4).

In other words, there is a long history of distinguishing between the islands, what is new here is the fact that today people and practices have become embodiments of the nation. Dance is not only a medium for drawing boundaries between islands, it is also today a symbol of a national culture and identity. Dance is a practice which has gained importance as a commodity sold to tourists. Through dancing, people can participate in the economic life of the nation, in nation making processes and in constructions of national identity.

‘Island Nights’ and national identity

When dance represented the national community to itself and outsiders the particular meanings of its gestures and choreography became generalized; the Cook Islands was invoked as gendered and visually appealing, traditional and welcoming.

(Sissons 1999:56)

On Rarotonga there are dance shows every night, performed by professional dance troupes. The dancers are exclusively young, usually between 12 and 25 years old. Most troupes are family and village oriented.⁶³ Being part of a professional dance troupe means performing at least once a week and also practicing once a week. However, most of these dancers are part of more than one troupe, i.e. this means that they dance almost every day. During my stay there

⁶³ For instance, a girl I got to know explained to me that her mum and little sister were members in the same dance troupe as herself. She considered this a good way to spend time with the family. While the two sisters danced, their mum sang and played the ukulele. I often met them while they drove to or from practice, the three of them (or more passengers) in their truck.

were nine professional dance troupes that performed regularly at venues around the island.⁶⁴ The hotel and restaurant shows are called ‘Island Night’ and include an island-food buffet and dance performances for between half an hour to an hour. Not every location has an elevated stage, but the largest resorts do. The space that is used for the performances were, as far as I experienced, the restaurant. Usually the performance started an hour or so after the island-buffet dinner had started. The tables were usually decorated in white tablecloths, flowers and candlelight. While one hotel had decorated their restaurant hall with canoes in the roof, another hotel had placed their restaurant just above the beach, without a wall separating between the beach and the restaurant. This made for an opportunity to watch the sunset while eating dinner, and the atmosphere at the ‘Island Nights’ were inviting, cosy and relaxing. But once the show started, the rooms were filled with energy.

Until June, most dance performances I had seen were by such professional troupes, and I noticed some patterns, their shows were structured in similar ways. Their repertoire includes a number of different genres and the shows focus on portraying different styles of dancing, showing the multitude of cultural expressions. Each troupe has an emcee that welcomes the audience, introduces each number and plays the role of a “cultural interpreter”. For instance, it was normal that the emcee said ‘this is a drum dance from Manihiki’, or ‘now, a beautiful maiden will perform a love song from Rarotonga’ or ‘the warriors will do a traditional welcome’. Further, the emcee sometimes translated the words being sung, or the chant made by a warrior. In between the performances, the emcee often tried to engage the audience, asking them questions such as ‘who has been to the Cook Islands before?’ ‘where are you from?’ and ‘up with your hands if you are here on honeymoon’. The majority of the audience at these ‘Island Nights’ are tourists, very often couples on their honeymoon. Sometimes, the emcee dedicated a romantic dance to ‘all the couples who have come here to celebrate their love’.

Only a selection of dance genres is normally performed by the dance troupes. For instance, action song is a popular genre, because here, one or more dancer is accompanied by

⁶⁴ These were Ta’akoka Dance Troupe (performing every Tuesdays at the Edgewater Resort), Akirata dance Troupe (performing every Tuesdays at the Manuia Beach Boutique Hotel), Tamariki Manuia (performing every Tuesday at the Rarotongan, and every Friday at The Pacific Resort), Orama Dance Troupe (performing every Wednesday at the Rarotongan and every Friday at the Edgewater Resort), Te Hiva Nui (performing every Friday at Staircase), Inave Dance Troupe (performing every Monday at the Crown Beach Resort and Spa and every Saturday at the Manuia Beach Boutique Hotel), Turama Dance Troupe (performing every Thursday at the Crown Beach Resort and Spa), Te Korero Maori Cultural Performing Arts Group (performing every Thursday at Staircase and every Saturday at Te Punanga Nui Cultural Marked) and E Matike Dance Troupe (performing twice a week at Highland Paradise).

an orchestra playing guitar, ukulele and drums as well as song. While women sing and play the ukulele and men drum, the young dancers move around on the stage and move their hands to the words that are sung. Drum dance was another popular genre at these ‘Island Nights’. Here, the emcee highlighted skills and technique and some dance troupes use the occasion to explain in more detail about the differences between the drums that are used. In addition, some dances reinforce the stereotypes of some islands. For instance, a common dance from Atiu is the warrior dance, as the island is known for its history of conquest.⁶⁵ A warrior dance is performed at most ‘Island Nights’, usually by men acting like warriors, sometimes accompanied by women. The warrior dance is often opened with a chant (*pe’e*) by one of the ‘warriors’. When the Orama dance troupe performed at The Rarotongan the emcee told the audience that the next dance was from Atiu and ‘it tells a dramatic history, a warrior will tell the story and illustrate’. Other dance troupes similarly performed a ‘warrior dance from the island that had the best warriors, Atiu’.



This is a T-shirt my ‘sister’ from Atiu had received as a gift. The t-shirt was designed by one of her friends. She was proud when she showed me this garment, making jokes about the body of this particular warrior. Photograph by Camilla Aa. Jensen.

Photo 8: Atiu Warrior T-shirt

Although some island distinctions are highlighted at these shows, they are not performed as part of any of the dancer’s identities, nor are they discussed or deliberated on. While at Te Maeva Nui these distinctions were emphasised and presented as part of the team’s identity, in dance troupe performances, the audience does not know what island a dancer is from, only that he and she are Cook Islanders. In other words, distinct island styles are performed, but only as part of the rich cultural heritage of the Cook Islands people.

⁶⁵ In the Southern Group islands Atiu ‘ruled parts of Miti’aro and Ma’uke prior to and just after missionary contact in 1821’ (Tongia 2003b:290).

The meaning of dance as identity symbol has gone from being considered as distinct style of each island (plural), to in some contexts signify “our Cook Islands dance” (singular). This happened as dance was being used as strategic tool by the government in uniting the people of the dispersed islands. A parallel can be drawn here to LiPuma’s (in Foster 1995) discussion on culture as an instruments for nation making. As LiPuma (1995:52) has put it ‘objects that were once exclusively plural and immediately functional- that is to say imbued with meaning and hence valued by virtue of their local cultural specificity- are now given a singular and “abstract” function as national symbols’. As a national symbol, dance is sold at a tourist marked, where dance styles and symbols are generalized and codified. The dancers learn to dance many styles, without necessarily identifying to any of the styles as more or less a symbol of their island identities. At the ‘Island Nights’, the focus is on entertaining tourists and displaying the variety and richness of Cook Island dance.

Concluding remarks: a comparison

The two different contexts I have described in this chapter presents two different forms of dance encounters which again represent different experiences that can contribute in the creation of identity. In the context of Te Maeva Nui I have focused on dance encounters between Cook Islanders, and at ‘Island Nights’ between Cook Islanders and non-Cook Islanders. Both contexts though, can be understood as contexts at a national level. Te Maeva Nui is a national festival that gathers people from the whole archipelago and thus serves as a space where people can participate in forming the nation. Even though both contexts can serve as frames for analysing the role of dance in the production of collective identity at a national level, Te Maeva Nui also serve as a context for mediating another level of identity, namely a local island identity. This level of identity is not so prominent in the dance shows at ‘Island nights’.

At Te Maeva Nui, the distinctive island identities are displayed through performances that connect the past and present, the different histories of the islands and the people’s genealogy. By highlighting some symbols that reflect the particular island in one way or another, team members remember history and embody the nature, events and smells that their forefathers have experienced. The most important “other” in these dance encounters are other Cook Islanders, and the ascription of island identity relies upon the common knowledge of the identity symbols used in the performance, and the affirmation of the symbols as belonging to a particular island or district. On this background one can say that Te Maeva Nui serves as a

base for the creation and maintenance of island identities, and for creation of boundaries between different island groups. These identities are further reinvested with pride and dignity. Te Maeva Nui also enables other experiences that contribute in the formation of identities, at a national scale. As mentioned above, the festival gathers people from all corners of the archipelago, people that normally reside on twelve different islands. Experiences of belonging to a nation and of being “one people” might be strongly felt during the week where they are all gathered in a small area in the main town (see chapter four). The experiences from participating in the national festival can form a national identity.

In contrast to situations of competitions between island and district teams are dance encounters between Cook Islanders and tourists at ‘Island Nights’. Here, dance is a symbol of the Cook Islands people and their cultural heritage. Its value as an identity symbols has changed: in the eyes of tourists meaning is generalized. The identity thus mediated through dance is that of a national identity. The audience categorize the dancers as Cook Islanders and most tourists will not be able to see beyond this category, so as to identify them as either a Manihikian or Atiuan. Even though an emcee explains that ‘this dance is from this island’ and ‘this is a dance typical of that island’, the tourist audience see dancers that display a united Cook Islands. The dancers represent not only their own history or genealogy, but also that of other Cook Islanders. In relation to this, dance encounters between dancers and tourists can be interpreted as important social encounters that enable Cook Islanders to explore who they are as representatives of a nation. The self-image that might be created in these encounters can contribute to create and maintain a national identity that do not contradict their island identity, but rather serves as a confirmation of aspects of island identities.

4

Celebrating unity through diversity

[...] the performance of cultural heritage often takes place in the particular circumstances of inherent conflict: with claims to be made and acknowledgments to be given, with indigenous rights, ethnic identities or at least group distinctiveness at stake.

(Rio and Hviding 2011:17)

In this chapter I argue that Te Maeva Nui is a context that enables a particular kind of dance encounters. The Cook Islands people can communicate with each other, perform in front of each other, live and socialize side by side during the weeks prior, during and after the National Celebrations. The ‘festival of dance’ is the highlight of Te Maeva Nui, where island and district teams compete against each other in four categories of dance. This gives people from the scattered islands a chance to showcase their particular dance styles, ornaments, costumes and to tell their stories in front of their fellow Cook Islanders. There is a lot of prestige involved in doing a good performance. A woman from the northern island of Penrhyn explained that ‘In the Constitution, you dance to win. For example, Penrhyn, they want to lift Penrhyn and show the people that we are good in what we are doing’. As the woman makes poignantly clear, dance is an opportunity to lift the reputation of each island or district, to display that ‘we are as good as any of you’. Teams may win peoples respect, but they also risk losing it. Much is at stake when the people are brought together to perform at the national stage. In the words of Alexeyeff, ‘the tension between unity and competitiveness appears to be what makes the celebration successful’ (2009:52). I would slightly amend her argument by adding that it might be the tension between unity and diversity, expressed through competitions, that makes the celebration successful.

When the island and district teams perform on the national stage, the Prime Minister as well as other government representatives watches from the first row. Within a national space, people perform island identities, but I argue that they also partake in processes of nation making (Foster 1995). While the government takes the economic responsibility for the

event, the people contribute with their active participation in displaying the nation as a nation-state with a rich cultural heritage that is still alive. The relationship between the state-represented by government-members, a state-owned cultural building and a set of formulated rules and criteria for participation, and the nation- represented by the Cook Islands people, is being defined, re-evaluated and contested during Te Maeva Nui. As a dialectical space of performative action, there is a bridging between the different island identities and a national identity. I shall argue that it is precisely the acts of performing diversity through dance that contributes towards establishing and constructing a national identity as it is display and experienced in Te Maeva Nui.⁶⁶ As the last part of this chapter shows, this sort of unity through diversity is affirmed and promoted by the Prime Minister.

A manifestation of the nation

I suggest that Te Maeva Nui is the most important event where the people from the archipelago experience a sense of nationhood. Once a year a small area in Avarua, the main town on Rarotonga, changes drastically. This is the area where the outer-islands hostels are located (see Figure 1). From being a quiet area in Avarua, it is suddenly filled people, smells, sounds and life. Families were re-united and new friendships established. The hostels are of varying size, but they all have a kitchen, bathrooms, and a large open space, used for socializing or sleeping. In these hostels, people from the same island live together during the weeks prior and after Te Maeva Nui. The people display their group identities with fierce pride and dignity and they also act as a group also when they are not on stage. When they watch other teams perform team members sit together and make comments about the performances. They wear t-shirts with similar island-prints or plain t-shirts printed with their team names. An interesting feature is the diversity of the nation that is manifested in this area, which reveals the internal structure of the nation. Sissons (1999:57) also noted how dance revealed the internal structure of the nation in that teams follow the same internal structure as the nation: division between islands and on Rarotonga the teams represent districts and villages. This structure is especially visible during Te Maeva Nui and in the island hostels.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Again, diversity refers to stylistic variation.

⁶⁷ I also suggest that this structure is a transformation of traditional ways of ordering and structuring the society.

The positioning of the hostels serves as a visual image of how the Cook Islands nation is represented: celebrating unity through diversity.⁶⁸

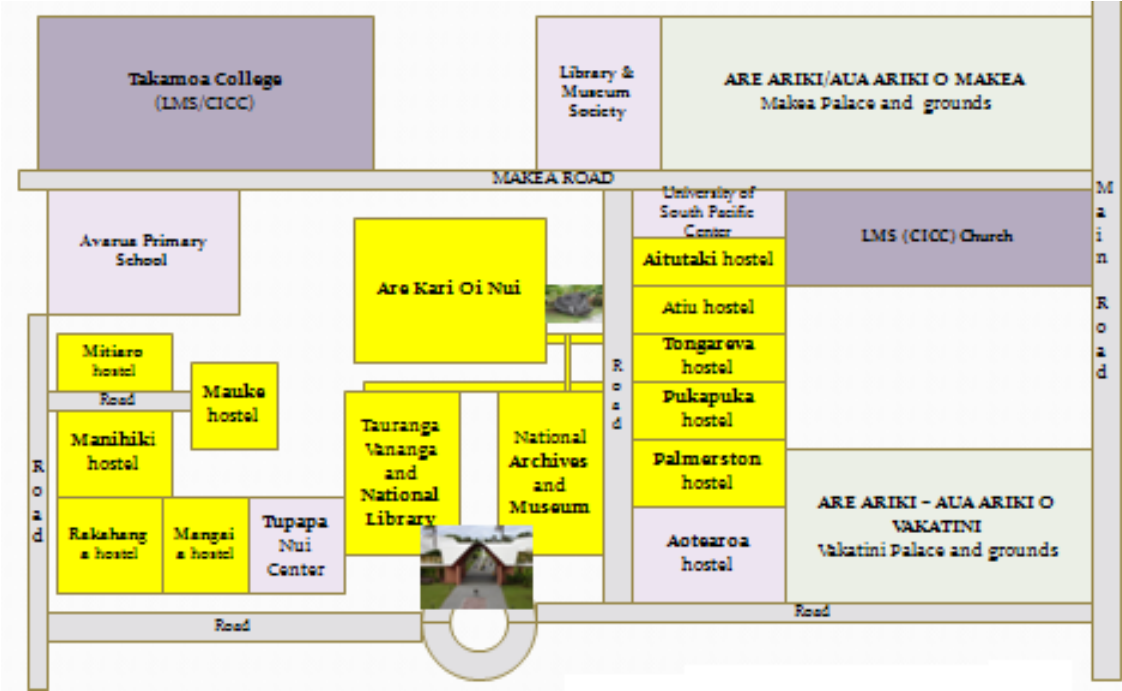


Figure 1: Te Puna Korero. A family Vision of Culture Policy⁶⁹
 On the right side from the National Auditorium, the hostels of Aitutaki, Atiu, Tongareva, Pukapuka and Palmerston is situated. On the left side are the hostels of Mauke, Mitiaro, Manihiki, Rakahanga and Mangaia.

Nation making

The government is involved in Te Maeva Nui in several ways. MOCD is responsible for pulling the event together, with all the planning and economic funding acquired. Every night before the competitions started, I saw the Prime Minister escorted into the auditorium. Employees of MOCD walked him and his wife in through a special VIP entrance, and they were seated in the very front. The first three rows of seats had special chairs covered in soft layer and were more spacious than the rest of the chairs. Alongside the floor in the auditorium plastic chairs had been put up in rows covering the entire floor, except an empty space in the middle of the rows for people to walk through (see Figure 2). In addition to the Prime

⁶⁸ This point should also be seen in light of the previously mentioned feature about dance where Cook Islanders categorize dance styles as different between the islands (chapter three) and the fact that the dance teams during Te Maeva Nui also correspond to the structure of the nation into island and village groups (chapter two).

⁶⁹ This figure is from Jonassen’s article (2011:19).

Minister, other state representatives and specially invited guests filled these rows. Being in the audience, I experienced the presence of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other more or less known personalities as indicators of the importance placed on culture in general and this particular event specifically by the government.

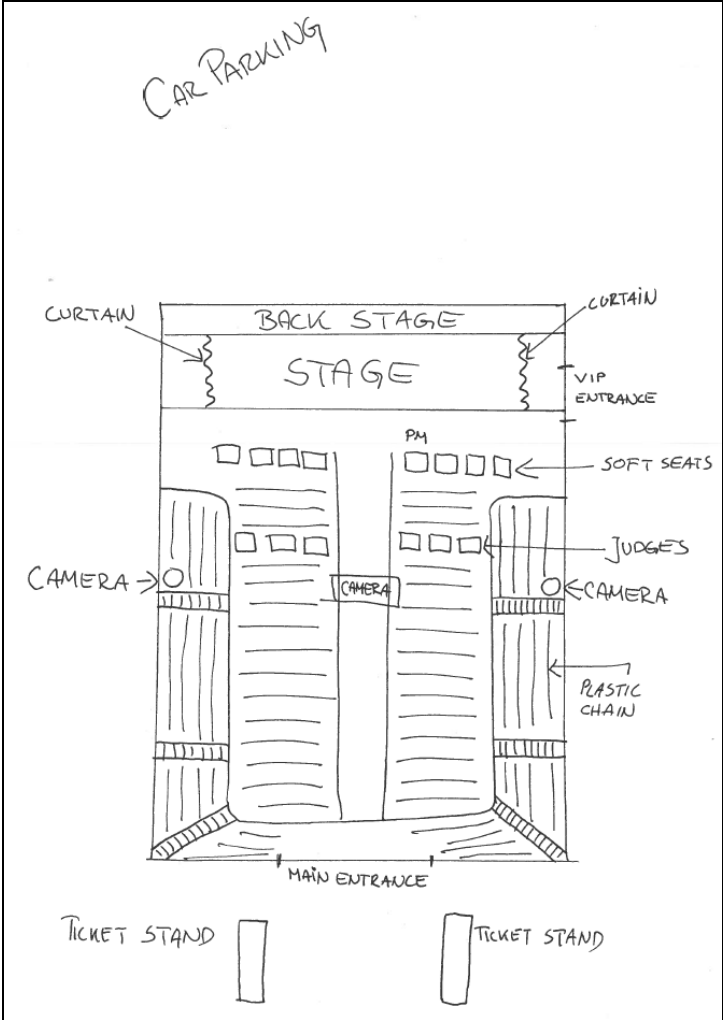


Figure 2: My drawing of the inside of the National Auditorium

From the figure above one can see that just behind the seats reserved for the Prime Minister and other specially invited guests, there is a row of desks and chairs for the judges. The number of judges varied, but for the ‘festival of dance’ there were seven judges evaluating performances according to standardized rules and criteria and a newly introduced grading-system. In 2010 a major change was made in announcing a winner. Previous years an overall winner was announced and the winning team received a cash prize and all the prestige included in being awarded the island with the best Cook Islands dance team. The other

participating teams did not receive any prizes. The newly introduced 'Category A', 'Category B' and 'Category C' system is a system where each team's score in each of the items, so that a team receive scores in each item. To make it to Category A, a team must achieve between 85-100 per cent based on the judging criteria sheet. The cash prize for all teams who make it to Category A in 2011 was 1000 NZD. Teams that achieve between 70 to 80 per cent for their performances will make it to Category B and win 750 NZD. The Category C was for teams who made between 50-69 per cent and the cash prize was 500 NZD. All the participants I spoke to agreed that this way of awarding the teams is 'more fair' than the previous 'overall winner'. The arguments for this were that the new system secured that each team is rewarded for their effort, and the money is spread amongst the archipelago without leaving anyone aside. One of the Aitutaki team-members used these words to explain how she felt about the new system:

Every team is rewarded with something. That's what I really like about this idea. Because you didn't waste any of your effort, regardless of what wrong you did or whatever. You will still get paid for it [participating], you will still get a reward.

The fact that people seemed to agree that the new system is a fair system may indicate that they perceive each other as belonging to one nation. It is the prestige and status gained from being awarded a winning team and not the money involved that makes people work hard and focused for months to prepare for Te Maeva Nui. Diversity is being awarded. However, this new award- system is a reaction to and an adjustment of previous ways of announcing a winning team. I return to this point below, under the section where the history of Te Maeva Nui is presented.

Te Puna Korero

The state is present not only through government representatives watching the performances, but also objectified in a large cultural complex, *Te Puna Korero*.⁷⁰ In 1992, the Prime Minister at that time, Sir Geoffrey Henry, opened the 'Sir Geoffrey Henry National Culture Centre', also called *Te Puna Korero*.⁷¹ The complex cost more than 12 million NZD and the spending was justified by Sir Henry with reference to the combined importance of economy and culture to the future of the nation (Alexeyeff 2009). In his opening speech, Sir Henry

⁷⁰ Te Puna Korero translates the nest of knowledge.

⁷¹ It was opened in October 14th 1992.

explicitly connected economic growth with the cultural heritage, saying that the former would not be possible without also sustaining and investing in their cultural heritage. *Te Puna Korero*, in Henry's vision, was a place where culture would flourish and facilitate the 'healthy beginnings of a cultural renaissance in the Cook Islands'.⁷² The complex is run by *Tauranga Vananga* (MOCD) and in addition to MOCD offices, the complex also houses *Are Vananga* (the national museum), *Are Puka* (the national library), *Are Akaivi Korero* (the national archives) and *Are Kari Oi Nui* (the National Auditorium). The National Auditorium is the only national stage in the Cook Islands and thus Rarotonga has become *the* place for performing the national identity and for participating in and experiencing nation making. The government funding allows outer islanders to experience a sense of nationhood and of being part of the Cook Islands nation.

Te Puna Korero complex stands as a symbol of the government's investment in nation making processes and the paragon of Cook Islands culture. Being a large infrastructural investment the complex signals that culture is an important concern for the government. *Te Puna Korero* is a complex where culture is maintained and developed. One might also question if the government is an active agent in preserving and maintaining Cook Islands culture. The heavy cost of building *Te Puna Korero* and of arranging *Te Maeva Nui* each year show public commitment and that the government consider culture as a national concern. Therefore one might propose, in line with Anderson (2006) that the Cook Islands government use dance as a means through which the nation can imagine a community. As much as it is useful to think of nations as a collective imagining, the active participation in the creation and maintenance of the Cook Islands nation should not be underestimated. Particularly on Rarotonga, and especially during the first ten years of self-government, "the nation" was for many people experienced as 'lived engagement', as Cook Islanders were involved in multiple nation-building projects (Sissons 1999:21). They still are, and *Te Maeva Nui* is one of the means where nation and the government meets and interacts, and where a sense of nation making is experienced and displayed. Notably, *Tauranga Vananga* (MOCD), together with *Te Puna Korero* and *Te Maeva Nui* are visible features of government activities and they represents the governments full commitment to cultural development (Jonassen 2011; 2003). People also commit to the cultural heritage, i.e. by all the time and effort invested in the preparation for *Te Maeva Nui*.

⁷² From the introduction to the commemorative program for the opening of the national culture center, 14 October 1992. Available at the national library, Cook Islands.

One woman pointed out that the whole event of Te Maeva Nui is a success because so many people come together and dedicate their spare time to practice and make costumes: to prepare the team for the performances, in other words. ‘The Prime Minister watches the performances, sitting in his comfortable chair in the shadow, while the mamas and kids have been up for several hours to prepare’ she said with a disheartened look on her face. We were talking about the float-parade that had opened Te Maeva Nui. ‘Some of them hadn’t even been eating for hours! Culture in this way is cruelty to the people’ she sighted. But she also made it clear that she recognized the hard work that the head of MOCD, Sonny Williams, and his employees put into arranging the event.⁷³ I understand her statements as a reaction to the social status hierarchy that events such as Te Maeva Nui maintain, and maybe even enhance. In such situations, she went on, ‘the government should take responsibility and maybe only arrange large events such as Te Maeva Nui every second year’. Her statements bring out some tensions that are part of the interplay between the people and the government in these processes of nation making. Te Maeva Nui remains a circumstance of conflict (Rio and Hviding 2011). The making of a nation is a contested construction by the simple fact that “the nation” never is singular: ‘multiple constructs invariably compete with each other for unquestioned and widespread acceptance’ (Foster 1995: 5). Team-members that attend Te Maeva Nui, which I understand as an active site of nation making, are joining in on producing images of the nation and collective constructions of themselves as national subjects. In Te Maeva Nui people compete against each other as collective groups with differing and multiple intentions, one being a search for acceptance: the acceptance of them all as constituting the nation. Only within such a definition of peoplehood can the individual construct his own individual identity. Implicit here is a struggle for power; being able to convey ones collective imaginings onto that of the nation.

Dance institutionalized

Local culture has been incorporated into the state through processes of institutionalization and culture policy. This is the case not only in the Cook Islands, but throughout Oceania where the control of culture and of cultural knowledge circles around political structures (Alévêque 2011; Henry 2011; Hviding 2011; Magowan 2000; Stevenson 1992). Throughout Oceania,

⁷³ Some people who reside on Rarotonga are asked to help arrange the event. They are employed by the MOCD for a period varying from some days up to several weeks. In the house I lived, one of the women, who usually worked at the Ministry of Justice, was asked to help out and in 2011 she helped out during the nights of competition by selling tickets.

festivals are part of a process that Stevenson calls the ‘institutionalization of culture’, a process where cultural and political identities are being created and contested. In the Cook Islands these processes started as early as in 1965. It increased throughout the 1970s and escalated with the building of the large cultural complex, Te Puna Korero. In this section I will examine some changes that dance has undergone after being implemented into nation making and state policy. With this I aim to show some of the tensions that underlie the processes of nation making. I note here that these processes are part of the government’s attempt to make their society legible; the pressing need for governments to map and organize the society (Scott 1998). As part of modern statecraft, complex local social practices have been standardized as governments tried to ‘map’ their societies. According to Scott, these maps, also referred to as ‘state maps of legibility’, provided states with a new way of seeing their society (Scott 1998:3). States attempt to govern their people by controlling, for instance, cultural expressions. One means of doing so is to create a space, or milieu, where culture is performed under state-governance. As I already explained in chapter two, the formation of CINAT, a Culture Division and the Constitution Celebrations are some examples of these processes.

When the first Constitution Celebrations was arranged, one of the main purposes for arranging such an event was to display nationhood, as imagined and initiated by the Premier: by celebrating the new self-governing nation in manners familiar to the local population, national sentiments could be formed (Sissons 1999; Alexeyeff 2009; Mason and Williams 2003). It was also, from the Prime Ministers view, a way of gathering the people and make them embody a unified cultural identity. The first Constitution Celebrations was held in 1965⁷⁴, but the first ‘festival of dance’ was arranged in 1968 in Avarua (Mason and Williams 2003; MOCD 2008; Sissons 1999).⁷⁵ Participants came from the outer island to celebrate on Rarotonga (Mason and Williams 2003): teams from Pukapuka, Aitutaki, Ma’uke, Atiu and Mangaia were transported by government funding’s (Sissons 1999:54). The festival was held at Makea Ariki’s⁷⁶ palace ground in Avarua, where 3000-4000 people attended, there amongst the Premier (Sissons 1999:54). Several items praised him, just like in 2011, a number of

⁷⁴ Found on: http://www.mocd.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33%3Ate-maeva-nui-43-2008&catid=14%3Aannouncements&Itemid=72. Captured 02.11.2011

⁷⁵ In an attempt to write the history of the national constitution celebrations, I have searched different sources, and discovered they deal with different dates and names (Alexeyeff 2009; Sissons 1997; Crocombe 2003; MOCD 2008). This is not to say that any of them are not correct, because the celebration has had many names, and has been organized differently over the years.

⁷⁶ Makea Ariki was one of six *ariki* on Rarotonga (Sissons 1999:54). She also held the next three celebrations on her ground (Taputapuatea), acting like a host to the nation (Sissons 1999:63).

performances praised important persons from the specific island or district. Oire Avarua had their reverend (CICC priest) and his wife enters the stage in their action song, so to praise him and the work he had done.

The celebration was acknowledged as important for the survival of their cultural heritage and it was seen as a revival of a traditional custom, '*eva* (festivals) (Mason and Williams 2003). Mason and Williams describe the original use of '*eva*, as a way of building solidarity within communities on Rarotonga. Originally, '*eva* 'had been a vehicle for building solidarity within the communities of Rarotonga' (2003:26). One way of being ascribed, or to gain social status, was to arrange large gatherings for festivals ('*eva*) as there was prestige involved in holding festivities (Alexeyeff 2009:32-33). Dancers, if they were good enough, could also embody this prestige and status. The concept of '*eva* has thus been transformed and in its new suit, Te Maeva Nui, it extends beyond communities on Rarotonga and includes the whole of Cook Islands. Today, the prestige of arranging the festival is given to government. Most people I spoke to were grateful and spoke fondly of MOCD for all the hard work put into arranging the events and bringing all the people to Rarotonga. For many, this is the only time of the year they meet their relatives; where they exchange food and other gifts, and update each other of news in their communities. It is a 'happy time', a chance to re-connect with family and community members and thus uphold bonds with relatives and friends. In this sense, Te Maeva Nui is still a way of building solidarity between people and create network between groups of people who rather seldom meet or interact, but are yet part of the same nation. The event serves to unite the more localized identities as parts of a whole, being displayed at the national stage in front of the Prime Minister, other state-representatives, tourists and not least to the rest of the nation (Sissons 1999:57). The event converts informal relationships into state-structures and can be seen as a 'nation-building exercise' and a 'political tool' (Mason and Williams 2003:26).

The celebration has had a troublesome life, with shifting elements and activities included and excluded. This is in part due to disagreements between 'the people' and 'the state': while the latter desired to display a proud (eventually Maori) nation-state being able to govern their own affairs, the former wanted to display their distinct ways of dancing that diverged between the islands. The government sought to control the cultural expressions and the framework of the celebration; they formulated rules and criteria for participation and to judge the teams. The fact that some features (technique, presentation, drumming, costume and music) allocate more points than others have caused frustration and conflicts amongst

participants given the high public value placed on ‘the minor differences’. Judges have also been accused of favouring the team from their island or district. Disputes over the judging resulted in the 1977 and 1978 Celebrations being arranged without competitions (MOCD 2008). The MOCD has, since its resurrection in 1989, had to work with, and not against, internal cultural diversity (Sissons 1997). The first time all the outer islands (*pa enua*) participated was in 1989 making it a true National Celebration. Only two years later, in 1991, there was no participation among *pa enua*. The teams that participated consisted of school teams and village groups from Rarotonga. The next year participation increased from *pa enua*, and in 1993 there was once again full participation. Since 2001 and onwards, the Constitution Celebrations has been called *Te Maeva Nui* (MOCD 2007). It was given the name by the Prime Minister of that time, Sir Geoffrey Henry, who wanted a name that reflected both the *maoriness* of the event and the joy. *Te Maeva Nui* translates the major or most important festival or celebration. In 2006 *Te Maeva Nui* increased in scale, including a team of Cook Islanders living in New Zealand as participants (MOCD 2008). Today, it is considered an international, spectacular cultural celebration of self-governance and the dance performances portrays ‘a multi-island nation whose boundaries extended well beyond the main island of Rarotonga’ (Sissons 1997:167).

Articulations of culture under state governance

In tourist brochures, local newspapers and by several people I spoke to, *Te Maeva Nui* was described as the most spectacular cultural event of the year. The Cook Islands News wrote about the event every day during the week-long celebration, while the Radio Cook Islands broadcasted live from the performances.⁷⁷ The performances during *Te Maeva Nui* stand as a chance of mediating a message. It is a way of communicating with the government, as the P.M. and other government representatives are present during the performances. On the national stage with the presence of political leaders, expressions and articulation of cultural heritage is to some degree controlled by the government, and the government observes what happens. A point which the social groups have taken into account and also exploit: they use the opportunity to express themselves and what they see as important for the state to be concerned about. In the performance I describe below, the Pukapuka Henua team expressed a message to the state leaders and other influential persons, i.e. government, in a very clear way. The

⁷⁷ It was only these radio programs that were broadcasted to the entire archipelago.

performance can be interpreted from a number of angles, but I choose to focus on the mediating force of the performance in the negotiations between two different levels of organizations.

2nd August, National Auditorium

Just before 7 p.m. I am seated in the National Auditorium, together with approximately 800 others. I am surprised at the lack of audience, but according to my experiences the auditorium will quickly fill up with locals once the show starts. Many of the locals stand outside and talk to their friends before the shows start and will go to their seats once they hear the 'welcome' from the speakers. It is dark, outside and inside, but I know that the stage soon will be fully lit and more and more people will enter the auditorium. At 7 p.m. Sonny Williams makes his entrance at the stage, picks up the microphone and says a few words in Maori before he switches to English and says; 'Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the National Auditorium!' Pukapuka is the first team on stage tonight, Sonny announces. A dark green curtain now covers the stage, and from the speakers we hear a man introducing the team. He speaks in Maori, but when he finishes a woman gives the introduction in English:

Within our community before an incident is to happen, some of the elders will see signs of this. They will then notify the people of what to happen, and when this happens the community is ready. However, in some of the incidents that are happening in our community, assistance is not arriving on time. For example, when there is food shortage it takes six to eight months for a boat to come to Pukapuka, and the people will be eating coconuts. My Government, a sign has been revealed that there will be no boat for the next six month. SOS – Save us in this time of trouble.

Because Pukapukans do not control the traffic of boats coming to their island with food and other supplies, they turn to those who control these recourses, the government.

The government provides some resources that are considered public goods, but which are regulated and allocated by the government alone. Resource competition often 'takes place in the context of powerfully organized states' (Barth 1994b:19). The state can be analysed as an actor which generate ways of creating and maintaining distinctions within culture and may help to shed light on the ways groups are constructed. 'In this way, modern states often generate categorical distinctions within the field of continuous cultural variation' (Barth 1994b:19). Modern states regulate people's lives and movements, leading groups of people to

organize themselves with claims of access and rights within the state. The people of Pukapuka were already a self-aware group, organized not first and foremost to approach the government, but to dance and celebrate the nation. Thus, state-processes reproduce discontinuities. The presence of the government has led, indirectly, to performances that approach the government, speaking to it directly and thus opening up a space of political interchange. I argue the performative qualities, such as mediate and bridge gaps between the nation and the state, and incorporating political messages in the form of etiquette, makes the performances exhibit diplomatic articulations, with the intention of avoiding conflict while at the same time making their demands.

In the book *Made in Oceania*, edited by Hviding and Rio (2011), various authors consider an important aspect of ‘social movements’ in Oceania; the power that they are able to exercise and their potential in creating alternative political spaces by working the cultural heritage. The book shows several examples of how social movements in Oceania explore ways of incorporating, manoeuvring or manipulating whatever it is that they see as carrying authority in situations of globalisation by using their cultural heritage. Here, I can draw parallel to, for instance, Henry’s chapter on how people approach the state by means of cultural heritage. She describes how Indigenous Australians ‘were able to claim priority in the right to authorize shared access to Australia’s resources’ (2011:187). In 2008, for the first time, at the opening of Australia’s parliament, an ancient Aboriginal tradition, a ‘welcome to country ceremony’ was arranged. This event therefore represent the first time the Indigenous Australians were able to act as a nation, welcoming people to their country. The ceremony could be interpreted as ‘an assertion by Indigenous Australians of their right to authorize the very functioning of the state itself’ (Henry 2011:189). Through a 45-minute dance performance, 16 performers from around indigenous communities in Australia entertained the Parliament, the Australian nation and the international community. Henry is mainly preoccupied with the meaning that can be conveyed through dance. She argues dance can be used to convey messages that become powerful because they remain unspoken and because of the subtleties of the language of dance. She treats dance as ‘a form of political strategy that can only be fully comprehended through symbolic analysis as well as aesthetic experience’ (Henry 2011:180). Thus in order to understand what dance communicates a combined consideration of its effects and symbolic value is needed. In some circumstances, interpretation is needed to enable the audience to understand and appreciate the language of dance. Some parts of the ceremony were interpreted to the audience, yet the choreography and

the significance of the dance was not subject to any interpretation. In engaging with ‘the state-as-institution’ (Rio and Hviding 2011:17), the Indigenous Australians employed the concept of heritage and expressed themselves through the ephemeral qualities of dance. Dance can convey messages and announce sentiments that become all the more powerful because the meaning and feelings remain partly unspoken and veiled. As such, Henry argues, dance may operate as a form of etiquette in diplomacy; participants announce their claims with the intention of avoiding open conflict (Henry 2011:179). I understand dance, as etiquette in diplomacy as a specific kind of behaviour, one that is considered appropriate in the given context and uses the language of dance and the performing context in appropriate ways.

Because of Pukapuka’s geographical distance from Rarotonga and the administrative seat⁷⁸, this is one of few occasions for Pukapukans to meet their fellow citizens and participate in political life at a national scale.⁷⁹ The people of Pukapuka made an appeal to the government for action on behalf of the Pukapuka people. The performance appeared to be constructed to communicate to those who carry authority, to those who control resources that are understood as essential for a respected way of living. Having formulated the introduction as a message, addressing the government in direct terms, they spoke in terms intelligible to a state-way-of-seeing (Scott 1998). This is a point that is very interesting considering that dance, in its own rights, do not carry such qualities. In fact, ‘cultural heritage does not itself carry a language of state-making or state-resistance, but expresses itself on a different level, evoking emotional responses of belonging’ (Rio and Hviding 2011:17). However, as this example illustrates, teams are able to express themselves in a way that create an alternative political space (Rio and Hviding 2011; Henry, Magowan, and Murray 2000) in addition to evoke emotional responses and attachment to place. In this alternative political space, dance provides a medium for claiming and negotiates their identity as outer islanders, as Pukapukans in relation to the nation-state. With this they engaged these identities with politically charged questions. In this case the questions concern resources and the right to live

⁷⁸ Approximately 4 hours by flight from Rarotonga (<http://www.airraro.com>). However, a ticket with Air Raro, from Rarotonga to Pukapuka is normally too expensive, and the flights are rare. Going by boat is more common, but the shipping between the outer islands tend to be irregularly and rare.

⁷⁹ While the Northern Group people were on Rarotonga for this occasion they were also invited to other political meetings. ‘Participating in the national constitution Celebration was, for outer-islands leaders participation in the political life of the nation, to a limited extent’ (Sissons 1999:27). I have found several newspaper articles of meetings that were arranged in the weeks just before and after Te Maeva Nui 2011, for the outer island people to join in. The Democratic Party had a conference on Rarotonga August 9 to discuss preparations for the next election in 2014, where most of the party’s members from the outer islands were present. The Cook Islands Pearl Authority with the Ministry of Marine resources also arranged a conference, on August 11, to take advantage of the many pearl farmers from Manihiki, Tongareva and Rakahanga that were on Rarotonga for their Te Maeva Nui dance groups. Participation in a team for Te Maeva Nui thus enables people to participate in the state.

a certain kind of life where they, as Pukapukans, are treated as equals to those living on i.e. Rarotonga.

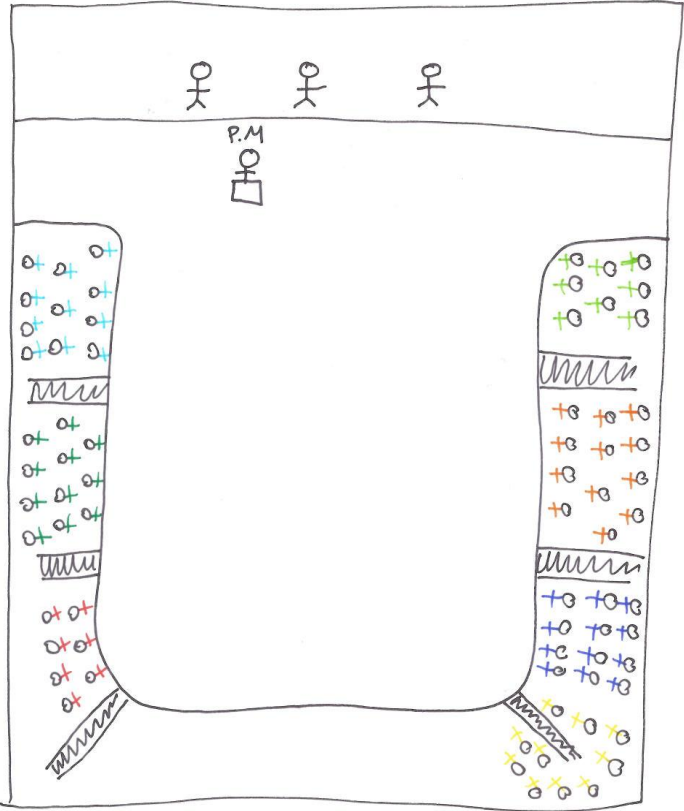
In their *imene tuki* (religious song) performance, Rakahanga approached the state in similar terms as the Pukapuka team. They used the opportunity to acknowledge the government for proving this gathering of the Cook Islands people that they enjoyed on Rarotonga. ‘This is the only time that the government assigns for our people to come together and celebrate as a nation’ the team announced. We see here some of the potential of articulations of cultural heritage. The teams used the concept of cultural heritage to express what is at stake by speaking directly to those in power. Like the Indigenous Australians, the Pukapukans and Rakahangans employed their cultural heritage to engage with state and to act as a nation. The teams approach the government, that they see controlling some resources they themselves are not allowed to control, in attempts to manipulate the access to these goods- in the case of Pukapuka, or simply give recognition to the government- as is the case for the Rakahanga performance. Yet in both these cases the groups have formulated a message that was understandable for the government. They do not allow the subtleties of the language of dance to risk their message not being understandable. They make sure their message is readable; they are just as important as the other island groups in forming the nation-state and henceforth to gain access to the resources that are available. Through performance they created an alternative way of engaging in nation making in that it develops not primarily through nation-state structures, but rather outside. This event is an example of a site where ‘state processes and practices are recognizable through their effects’ (Trouillot 2001: 126).

As I indicated in chapter three, teams resemble each other in the ways they construct dissimilarities between themselves and by the symbols they choose to claim these distinctions. As I have further showed in this chapter teams also resemble each other in the ways they approach the government and address issues of topical character. Another event will illustrate my point about celebrating unity through diversity.

Between the state and the nation

On July 4, the Prime Minister, Henry Puna held a speech during the official ceremony marking the Constitution Celebrations. It started at 10 a.m. in the auditorium. Compared to the previous nights of competition, this ceremony were made up of mostly British-influenced elements, such as the raising of the flag, wearing uniforms and marching, and playing

western instruments (such as the trumpet). All had dressed up for this official ceremony, woman wearing beautiful *mu'umu'u* (island gowns) and flowers in the hair, and men wearing suits with island-print (*pareu*) shirts. An interesting pattern in the structuring of the audience was that team members sat together, wearing the same 'uniform', mostly of island-print shirts (see Figure 3).



This is my drawing of the national auditorium. I have illustrated how the teams sat during the official ceremony, when the Prime Minister sang. I have left out the people sitting in the middle, included only the seats where team-members sat. I want to illustrate that the teams sat together, most of them in their team-t-shirts or 'uniforms'.

Figure 3: The official ceremony

After traditional welcomes to the head of the house of ariki, the Prime Minister and the Queens representative, an opening prayer, the raising of the Cook Islands flag and several songs, the Prime Minister held a speech. In his speech, Henry Puna announced that he was going to sing a popular song: '15 stars'.⁸⁰ A Cook Islander has composed the song and the title refers to the fifteen islands.⁸¹ One interesting feature about this song is that it is sung on

⁸⁰ '15 Stars' were played almost daily on the local radio-station, Radio Cook Islands Information about the radio-station can be found on the following page, accessed 16.10.2012: <http://www.radio.co.ck/>. The song can be found on the two following YouTube pages: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd2dJyGRIZg&feature=related> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMw6Bfi6mHY&feature=related> It is sung by Vainekiki Makakea's cousin, Puna Porio.

⁸¹ Composed by Vainekiki Makakea.

the various dialects; when an island is mentioned, one or more lines are sung about the island in their own dialect. These lines capture distinctiveness with each island, and every island is mentioned by their traditional Maori name. Henry Puna asked the people representing the different islands to wave at him as he sang their island's name. I offer the Maori version of the lyrics here, with an English translation.⁸²

15 stars

[.] Kuki airani, ie koko⁸³ (Cheers, Cook Islands!)

Kua rere o te manu o te reva (the birds of the air have flown)

Mei Takutea (from Takutea (oval sandy cay, close to Atiu)

Ki Enuamanu (to Enuamanu (Atiu)

Kapakapa na Nukuroa (fluttering by Nukuroa (Mitiaro)

Kakara mai te maire (the wafting fragrance of maire)

O Akatoka (of Akatoka (full name in oratory/poetry is Akatokamanava, ie Mauke)

Rarotonga to manea (Rarotonga, your beauty)

Ara'ura to tai roto, aka'ie'ie (Araura (Aitutaki) your beautiful lagoon)

Tangi ke, tangi ke, tangi ke (greetings, greetings, greetings)

A'ua'u (Mangaia)

Chorus

Kua rakei ia te moana (the sea is bedecked)

Ki te poe, poe parau (in pearls, black pearls)

Koe Manihiki e (you Manihiki)

Nassau o te Ulu o te Watu (Nassau belonging to Pukapuka)

Koe Rakahanga (You Rakahanga)

Tei tu, ki te tokerau e (standing in the northwest)

⁸² The lyrics are based on a version of the song that I found available on the internet. As far as I recall the lyrics are correct, but the length of the song and number of repetitions vary. However, I reproduce the lyrics here with the help of Jean Mason for the English translation. She is not responsible for any mistakes that may occur.

⁸³ *Ie koko* means many things - mostly positive - it's an exclamation used in moments of happiness, joy, success, such as hooray! eureka! I've got it!, etc

Hei au e, Tongareva (Welcome Penrhyn)
To sumaringa (your beauty)
Haruru o te ngaru (the waves rumble)
Mei Suwarrow (from Suwarrow)
Na runga i te one tea Pamati (over the white sands of Palmerston)
Kua tau o te manu o te reva (the birds of the air land)
Ki runga, iakoe, Manuae e (on you Manuae)

E Kuki Airani (Cook Islands)
Taku inangaro (My love)

One after another people stood up from their seats as the Prime Minister sang their islands names and pointed at them. Some of them danced a little, or waved their hands and cheered and clapped as Puna sang to them. It was a magnificent performance because of the response from the audience, which was truly fantastic. Once Puna finished, the cheering from the audience expanded and the noise increased. All looked like they had enjoyed his performance as their faces smiled and everyone was in a good mood.

On my return to Norway, I could not stop thinking about this performance. I saw the smiles on people's faces when I closed my eyes, I heard their cheers and laughter as the Prime Minister sang and I could not stop thinking that there was something deeper to this performance than what I was able to watch then and there. Having been able to distance myself from this performance, I realized that what the Prime Minister did by this act was to re-create the nation and give recognition to all the islands and their peoples. The fact that he sang this song implies that it is suitable for an official event such as this; the most important event for state legitimation. He honoured the representatives that were present while doing so by playing out the distinctiveness. Hence, the diversity of both the islands and their characteristics and their dialects were implemented into his re-creation of the nation. A nation that was physically there, right in front of him, responding with clapping, dance and cheering. He confirmed the distinctiveness of each island and reconstructed unity through diversity. The distinctiveness is not divisive, but rather unifying, they *are* the nation. It seems the Cook Islands nation is imagined as a conglomerate of smaller fractions, or units. The song is a symbolic action where the islands and the government are brought together, their relationship

harmoniously performed. The act of singing the song and the response from the audience are important because they are part of creating a Cook Islands identity. Maybe this particular song can be seen as an alternative national narrative? A narrative that tells the story about the islands and that highlights ‘the true strength of unity in diversity, that exists in the traditional Pacific’ (Jonassen 2011:12).

Concluding remarks: alternative nation making

The ways that teams represent themselves on the stage, the ways they employ the cultural heritage to formulate what’s at stake describes the group in one way or another. Both the Pukapuka and Rakahanga team used the opportunity to address concerns that apparently have nothing to do with dance. Yet, through their performative actions the team engaged in political issues thus infusing the National Auditorium with hopes, demands, greetings and appreciation towards their government and co-residents. Issues of topical character and political value are brought to the stage in the National Auditorium, where people communicate their concerns for the future. Their concerns connect both to the right to define collective identities, and also to the future of these collectivities. The claims they made relates both to their national identities and their group distinctiveness. They celebrate a nation where the real strength lies in the unity in diversity. The performances I have thus far mentioned are all performative actions where cultural forms are being produced and where political issues are brought to the centre stage of attention and part of social exchanges. Te Maeva Nui represents a forum for active nation making (Foster 1995) where constructions of collective identities at a national level revolve around a national identity visible through island identities. They use the locally distinctive to situate in a national space. The people are united in expressing diversity and in displaying their common national identity as diverse and unique.

Te Maeva Nui is not only an arena where different actors meet and negotiate about ‘what it means to be a Cook Islander’ and their place in the nation. It is also a space where people’s global images and expressions are articulated and performed.

5

Situating Cook Islands dance in a global space

Dance has for many years been the mascot of Cook Islands culture- its most visible symbol to the world and in recent years both a commercial enterprise and a marketing tool for its major industry, tourism.

(Mason 2003:187)

This chapter is an attempt to locate identity production within a space of global flow. I discuss how the global flow is assimilated into locale style, analysing these processes as experiments with modernity. I focus on the work that people put into crafting collective identities by treating dance as expressions that mediate between the past and the present with an eye on the future. It is important to note here that tradition and modernity are employed in oppositional ways. The fear of cultural loss and lack of authenticity found in the dialogue between local and foreign cultural elements is of great importance in this context and is a point I return to in chapter six. First, I contextualize dance within its contemporary economical frame, as a commercial enterprise.

Dancing for tourists, an economy of seduction

A great number of tourists visit Rarotonga each month, and this makes for an environment where dance is important for the country in economic terms.⁸⁴ Cook Islands dance is a commercial enterprise and the Cook Islands economy has been described as an ‘economy of seduction as much as of production’ (Sissons 1999:98). By this, Sissons refers to the tourist industry which depends on a marketing of the country and its people that attract tourist. The new nation was to be built on tourist dollars, a process which encouraged a clearly defined,

⁸⁴ In 2011, the total amount of arrivals were 124 963. 11 849 were Cook Islands residents while the remaining 113 114 were registered as visitors.

authentic and distinctive identity ready for sale (Sissons 1999:75). Culture, economy and politics were brought together, all with the aim to develop the country, under two contradictory processes: commodification and traditionalization of culture and identity (see chapter two). Today, these processes are reflected both in dance troupes and at Te Maeva Nui. In both contexts, dance is sold as a tourist experience, as a commodity that belongs to the Cook Islands people and that reflect tradition. According to Sissons (1999:98), the economy has become heavily dependent upon the effective marketing of images ‘which precede and give meaning to the “hyperreal” experiences of “visitors”’. His point is probably as true today as when he wrote this thirteen years ago. In chapter two I described how I, while living on Rarotonga, rarely thought about the life there as a life isolated from the outside world. Living on Rarotonga felt like, at times, living in a tourist stopover. There were always new people on the island and for many of my informants, ‘new people to be served and entertained’. While I heard tourist describing how they enjoyed the quietness of the island, the slow-pace life there, as I followed the locals I experienced life on Rarotonga as hectic and busy. The local people I spent time with was busy doing their everyday duties, they were extremely busy, and after just a few months on Rarotonga ‘the quite slow paced life’ description that I had gotten familiar with through tourist advertising, did not fit the reality I experienced at all. My point is that for many people, Rarotonga is a product that is being sold and experienced as a destination, yet for others it is “their” nation and their everyday life. For these people, nationhood is likely to be experienced as a commodity that is being sold and living on Rarotonga experienced as living in a ‘desti-nation’ (Sissons 1997:186). While dancers present aspects of culture and their identity, tourists purchase a ticket, watch performances, and return home with an experience of what the Cook Islands is. Nationhood thus looks like ‘a quality that can be acquired through the purchase and use of particular commodities, including money’ (Foster 1995:6).

The Cook Islands is being promoted as a tourist stop-over, a place to be seen and experienced, as a pause in the hustle of modern life. Cook Islanders are presented as welcoming, smiling and beautiful. They are great entertainers that are rooted in traditions and far removed from the modern world.⁸⁵ Their imaginings of the nation, which consists of

⁸⁵ ‘If you’ve ever fantasised about escaping to a remote desert island, far from the hustle and hum of the modern world, then look no further than these 15 fascinating islands, where you’ll find a thousand years of Polynesian culture sitting side by side with some of the most spectacular natural scenery in the South Pacific’. Found on: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/rarotonga-and-the-cook-islands#ixzz2EvTicVii>. Captured 10.09.2011. ‘It is the natural charm of the Cook Island people that lures visitors in. Friendly, high-spirited and welcoming – they are

attachment to land, history and genealogy, have, in a context of entertaining tourists, been generalized and transformed to a commodity. This transformation may lead to a change in the self-perception, and further to a change in the creation of identity. How may this transformation change the self-perception? For instance, during a dance class at Tereora, the teacher asked her student several questions about identity. The six students were supposed to choreograph a dance each. The dance should reflect the theme 'my identity' and so the teacher challenged her students to reflect about what in their opinion identity was. What do you like about dance? The teacher asked her students. They looked at each other and seemed insecure of what to answer. But one of the girls said 'I want to win the dance competitions. I want to win the attention of all [of the audience] and when I do I feel beautiful and sexy'. This girl has competed in the annual individual contest 'Dancer of the Year' intermediate section for several years, and she was part of two dance troupes. For her, dance is a way of gaining confidence and of showing of her skills. Dance also allows her to engage in the seduction economy and stimulate her image of herself as sexy.

At the 'Island Nights' I noticed, over and over again, that some of the young men in the audience almost had their eyes popping out of fascination for the female dancers. The girls are very attractive on stage: they wear bright red lipstick and their brown bodies shine from the coconut oil they rub their skin with. Their costumes are very revealing; sometimes they wear a very short *pareu* (sarong) and a coconut bra and move their bodies in sensual, slow motions that enhance their female figure. Other times they wore hula-skirts with an additional outward-standing-belt that enhances their lower-waist movements. They especially use this type of costume for the drum dance, where they shake their hips fast and controlled to the pace of the drums. Often, in drum dances the girls stand with their back towards the audience, so that their lower back is the focus of attention. Male dancers are also attractive on stage. Sometimes they only wear a piece of cloth at the size of a handkerchief, and their muscles are pumped. They dance in a masculine way which is also appealing to female tourists. They "prove" their manhood when they peel a coconut with their teeth, and crush it open by hitting it with the elbow. They play on the images of "the Polynesian warrior".

the great entertainers of the Pacific and regarded as the best dancers and drummers in Polynesia. Festivals are an important part of the annual calendar, where the competition between the islands to produce the most outstanding performers is part of the national pride'. Found on: <http://www.cookislands.travel/People>. Captured 10.09.2011



Photo 9: Te Hiva Nui

After every show, the dancers in Te Hiva Nui invited the audience to come on stage for a photograph with them

Dance as a commodity, exemplified by the ‘Island Nights’ shows, is a way to earn money and to attract tourists. Dance in an ‘economy of seduction’ will focus on what is perceived as a commodity of high demand. This may be advanced steps, “sexy” performances and a narrative of “authentic” dance. Economic forces will also influence the construction and mediation of identity expressed through dance. This is also the context where an image of Cook Islands dance as both traditional and modern is being shaped and contested.

Modern and traditional

The terms modern and traditional, as used here, are descriptive terms used by the locals and should not be regarded as conceptual terms in my analysis. The understanding of the terms that the local population hold correspond to previous use in anthropological analyses, where it was assumed that the formation of modern nations necessarily invoked a transition of societies from traditional to modern (Foster 1995). Such idealized descriptions of historical change and progress of societies does not enter discussions about nation making in anthropology today. This ‘analytical framework of “modernization” has been abandoned’

(Foster 1995:3).⁸⁶ From this perspective, modernity and tradition represent two distinct historical epochs that are referred to in oppositional terms (see chapter 2). They distinguish ‘the now’ from ‘back in those days’ and create a break between the past, represented as tradition, and the present modern age.

I interviewed one of the choreographers of the Aitutaki drum dance, Uirangi, just one day after their performance. She explained in more detail the meaning behind the performance: ‘We modernized it. It is the kind of dancing you see at Rehab for example’. Rehab is a nightclub in Avarua. There are several nightclubs on Rarotonga and most of them are situated in Avarua. My impression is that Rehab was one of the most popular nightclubs for youth. At Rehab there was a mixture of locals and tourists and the music they played were usually different kinds of western popular music: they played a lot of pop-music, Hip-hop, RnB, Latino and some Techno. The interesting remark related to Rehab is that this implies another way of dancing. A kind of dance practice that one usually “only” sees at nightclubs on Rarotonga. The kind of dancing I observed at Rehab was a mixture of local style, especially exaggerated hip movements for the females, and western style and hip-hop moves for the men.⁸⁷

The couple who danced together in the Aitutaki performance at Te Maeva Nui did some innovative movements where they mixed Cook Islands dance with movements known from Latino dances such as salsa and mambo. They danced in the middle of the stage, moving around as a couple would to Latino music. It was incredible to watch. At one point all the dancers sat down and watched them. She, Mary, also did some tap dance movements where she tapped with her toes so that her shoes made a sound that added volume to the drum beats she moved in pace with. I also noticed that the way Mary walked when on stage, moving away from and towards her partner, was similar to a type of ‘sexy walk’ I had seen girls do in the nightclubs: they walk with a straight back, the chest high and place their feet in a line so that the hips swing from side to side. Most important, they keep a confident look on their face which is reflected in the way they walk.

The two young dancers who danced as a couple were meant to be in love. ‘They are showing their love, but in a modernized way’, Uirangi further explained. She indicated that at nightclubs there is not only a special way of dancing, but also a distinct way of showing love between young people, where flirting and sensual dancing is important. This aspect of the

⁸⁶ See also Rio and Hviding (2011).

⁸⁷ See also Alexeyeff (2009:137-140).

performance remained somewhat hidden for the audience as it wasn't mentioned in the introduction. According to Alexeyeff (2009:140) dancing at nightclubs 'is about being sexy and also about evoking a range of more subtle sensual styles: feeling attractive, flirting, having fun, and being in good company'. I suggest the very same description is suitable for the Aitutaki drum dance performance.



Photo 10: The Aitutaki drum dance, the young couple kisses on the stage

The most spectacular and unusual part of the dance occurred at the very end. The young couple who had danced together kissed. This created an enormous response from the audience; there was laughter, whistling and cheering, and the audience loved it! I also felt waves of discomfort, or maybe it was just within me? The kiss made me somewhat embarrassed, shy. I had, thus far in fieldwork, never seen anyone kiss on stage, and inter-sexual interaction during dance as well as in the public sphere more general, was restrictive. I remembered very well that I had read in Alexeyeff's (2009) book that people do not kiss in public, and if they do they receive a lot of negative comments. She describes a one-off occasion where she saw a young couple kiss on a dance floor. The couple were interrupted by a woman who threw her juice over them while stating that they were disgusting (Alexeyeff 2009:134). While I was not sure how to react to the kiss, the local audience sitting in close proximity to me looked as though they were having the laugh of their lives. When I asked a middle-aged woman from Aitutaki what she thought about the performance she responded

that the Aitutaki performance yesterday gave a new meaning to the word dirty dancing. We agreed that we had the feeling that the dancers were playing with us, that they knew they were good and that they loved to surprise the audience. They were so confident when they danced and the smiles on their faces indicated that they were enjoying themselves. I told her that I thought the team appeared, in my eyes, confident in an almost arrogant way. She laughed and explained that this was part of the Aitutakian way. They are known as good entertainers, as a people who like to put on a good show. On a more general note she explained that in the drum dance genre people are allowed to be sexual, sensual and playful. I asked her what she felt when she danced. Her reply was ‘oh, really happy, playful, you know, just basically fun. Teasing, because drum dance is about that. You can see the way they’re teasing [...] And it’s allowed, we allow it. It’s what happens. It’s nature. It feels good. We’re not shy’.

Experimenting with modernity

In the Aitutaki performance, the two historical epochs of a traditional past and a modern present was brought together in a way that appeared to melt the two. As their introduction stated, a flower decoration symbolized that the people living today have an advanced knowledge compared to those who lived ‘back in those days’. The present generation can control and handle being both traditional and modern at the same time. A similar performance occurred in the Constitution Celebration in 2000 by the Pukapuka team. They ‘presented an unusual drum dance where the young men wore half-traditional and half-modern dress to emphasis their feelings about their condition in the world today’ (Mason and Williams 2003:29). In the Aitutaki performance of 2011 the costumes reflected both the old and the young, tradition and modernity. The costumes had symbols of the past and the present both by design and by colours. For instance, ‘the hula skirts for the boys are traditional while the tops are modern’ Uirangi Bishop explained. Whereas brown and green represented ‘the old days’, because these were colours found in the nature, pink and yellow represent the modern people living today. The young couple were also dressed in a modern way. For instance, Mary wore high heeled shoes, a fact that really caught my attention. I seldom saw people wear high heeled shoes on Rarotonga. The most common everyday footwear is sandals. However, I have seen young women wearing high heeled shoes when they are dressed up, i.e. at events in the national auditorium. But in every dance performance I had seen so far, they danced barefooted. The team further stated that they considered the national auditorium as a place

where the old and the new meet and where, as such, conceptions of modernity and tradition may be actively worked into or denied as part of their collective imaginings of themselves.

The nightclub-style of dancing and behaving was brought onto the national stage, performed as part of contemporary dancing. The Aitutakians can identify this with their specific island traditions as well as claiming to be “up to date” and modern. The Aitutaki performance is an example of ‘a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern’ (Appadurai 1996:4). It is a performance of who they imagine themselves to be. The Aitutaki performance illustrates how global cultural flow is actively assimilated into local styles, and how at the same time local forces are oriented outwards, toward global sites (Alexeyeff 2009:21). The use of “non-local” cultural forms has been integrated into local cultural expression in a way that bridged the difference between the two. They are used to situate the identity of Cook Islanders within a broader global context of transnational flow.

By linking the local with the global they position their imaginings of the nation within a larger, global space. However, as a statement made by Uirangi illustrate, she does not ascribe this modern identity to all Cook Islanders. We spoke about the awards which would be announced on the following day. I said I felt really sorry for one of the Northern Group team, Pukapuka, because I had heard that they usually got a low score. She said, probably trying to explain why this was so, or her opinion about their performances, ‘they are just too much of their old way, they need to wake up. Today it is modernized, everything is moving forward. It is not waiting for anybody’. Her comment suggests that to be modern stand as a contrast to be traditional. While she conceptualizes those living on Rarotonga as modern, she does not assume that those who live on the more isolated islands in the Northern Group understand what modernity is. Being modern implies living a certain way of life. Her next comment illustrates my point:

That’s just how their culture is, that’s just how they do it [...] that’s just how it is for them. But if they could let the ones living her help them out. Because in 2009 Pukapuka was at a good level, because it was the Pukapukans here [on Rarotonga] that did that and the ones from there [living on Pukapuka] just came and helped them. The ones here have more understanding of the world out there. That goes for the rest of the Northern Group as well.

Living on Pukapuka indicates a way of life that is isolated, compared to the life on Rarotonga. Uirangi assumes that people living on Rarotonga knows what happens outside of the island, they have knowledge about the rest of the world that especially the Northern Group people do not understand.⁸⁸ It is important to remember that people tend to view the life on Rarotongan as different, sometimes drastically so, from life on the outer islands.

Another example of local strategies of experimenting with modernity is a dance that Te Hiva Nui dance Troupe had in their routine. Te Hiva Nui dance troupe was the only one on Rarotonga that presented themselves as performing contemporary Cook Islands dance. Their emcee introduced the troupe as mixing traditional Cook Islands dance with Tahitian dance and incorporates movements they see as modern as well as use some western music. In their repertoire, the Te Hiva Nui dancers performed a dance to a song that was very famous in Europe in the early 2000s. This was music of different electronic drumbeats, and the team danced to a remix of the original version.⁸⁹ Te Hiva Nui was the only dance troupe on Rarotonga that did not have a live band of drummers, singers and musicians. Their music was played from a DJ installation and the troupe leader had burnt a CD with all the songs used in the routine. In this specific drum dance, three girls and three boys danced together as three couples. By this act of incorporating foreign music to accompany island dancing, the dance troupes adapted the global cultural flow into their own ways, and as such it is an example of 'localization strategies adapted by Cook Islanders' (Alexeyeff 2009:137). Both the Aitutaki drum dance and several of the dances performed by Te Hiva Nui are examples of local strategies of experimenting with modernity and traditions, positioned with a global frame.

Young mediators

Even though status is ascribed, some prestige and status can be gained by excelling at dance. Especially by winning in competitions such as Dancer of the year, young Cook Islanders gain a celebrity status. When dancing in front of an international audience, the possibility of fame extends beyond their island. The institutionalization of dance has eventually led to professionalization; youth learn specific choreographed dances and perform them weekly for tourists. For young Cook Islanders living on Rarotonga, being part of a dance troupe is a way

⁸⁸ Here, the distinction between the island groups reappear and give the phrase *pa enua* (outer islanders) an added dimension.

⁸⁹ The song they played was a remix of Safri-Duo 'Played-a-live (the bongo song)'. In the original version, this is a song of various drumbeats and rhythms as well as some underlying melody. In the remix that Te Hiva Nui danced to the first 30 seconds are copied from Played-a-live, while one clearly hears the Cook Islands drums after 30 seconds and the song shifts tempo several times.

of generating an income, travel the world as well as having a good time. It is also a way for young Cook Islanders to learn about history and to internalize a specific way of dancing. Cook Islands dance in public is a space for youth. Here, they can impress, gain social status and shape the politics of contemporary dance. However, they are also shaped by competing ideas about past traditions. Young dancer, some more than others, have embodied a position as mediators between the past, present and future. As mediators between the local and the global, tradition and modernity, these young people put a lot of work into crafting their selves as well as generalized images of Cook Islanders.

Like Mason and Williams (2003), in the opening of the chapter, described the relationship between dance and the nation as one in which dance is a symbol of the nation, I suggest that dancers are symbols, or mascots, of the Cook Islands nation. With this formulation, I want to direct the focus on the agency of the young dancers. And these dancers are truly engaged in their position as mediators of the past and the present, and well aware of the power imbued in “keeping traditions alive” while also striving to keep “up to date” performances and dance shows that is aligned with their understanding of themselves and their situation in today’s Rarotonga. I have treated dance as a means through which Cook Islanders can make themselves meaningful in the world and the world meaningful to them (Cohen 1993:196). In their experiments with modernity, these young and dedicated dancers are producing new meanings and images of what it means to be a Cook Islander in 2011.

There is an on-going evaluation, reflection and many strong opinions about the social value of dance. While older people tend to think about modernity and tradition in oppositional terms, where tradition is threatened by modernity, younger Cook Islanders seemed to be more experimental with these boundaries. One woman, a previous member of CINAT said something to me that might illustrate my point. However, I should also note here that she, as a previous dancer, is well aware of the creativity that is involved in choreographing a dance. While she does conceptualize modernity and tradition in oppositional terms, she also tries to bridge the two in her following comment about the changes she saw in dance:

[...], but now it is modernized so those who dance at hotel-shows must modernize their dances to entertain tourists. So they have to change. [...] They learn new things from watching TV, from other cultures and then they put it into Cook Islands dancing and create it to be more exiting. But they got to, ey? They [the tourists] have paid for it, to watch them dance.

The contradictions that face many young Cook Islanders today are nicely summarized in her comments. Her reflections of modernized dancing includes new ways of moving, and opens up a space for improvement. ‘This generation can create something new and better’ she further explained, before mentioning some examples of new movements: some girls dance on their toes whereas before they danced flat-footed, today the dancers rely on the band so they just dance, but before they needed to dance *and* sing. Here, she voices some concerns that face young dancers today. In her words, youth are expected to entertain tourists, which force them to implement new elements as well as make changes, but they are also expected to maintain traditional Cook Islands dance.

A global movement

The future of the Cook Islands economy seems to be dependent on tourism economy which forces Cook islanders to adapt dance to what they imagine the tourist-audience wants to see. From this perspective, the economic situation inflicts on the ways people construct their identities. As a national symbol and commercial product, Cook Islands dance is part of a global flow where Cook Islanders are drawn into new webs of connections. Young dancers travel the world and experience what life might be like outside of the archipelago. They seek a modern life, a lifestyle where they too can become tourists and enjoy themselves in good company while exploring what other nations have to offer. Being part of a professional dance troupe or employed by the Tourism Corporation, they travel the world. In May 2012 selected dancers from the Cook Islands travelled to London in order to perform at the Queens Diamond Jubilee.⁹⁰ Te Korero Maori Cultural Performing Arts Group travelled to Los Angeles, Las Vegas and France in July 2012. The Akirata Cultural Dance Troupe visited several European countries when they embarked on a European Cultural Exchange tour in August 2012. Another important part in situating Cook Islands dance in a global space includes looking outwards. For instance, diaspora Cook Islanders in New Zealand have formed dance troupes of various kinds. Some of these dance troupes consist of people who can trace genealogy to the same island, i.e. I was told that there was a large Pukapuka-group in Auckland. If we look in the other direction, towards east, we find Cook Islanders who dance in Hawaii and in Los Angeles. In London there is a dance group named Beats of

⁹⁰ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/N11/Newsroom/Features/DG_WP200687. They performed in the Diamond Jubilee Pageant at the ‘Around the world in 60 years and 90 minutes’ (<http://www.diamond-jubilee-pageant.com/programme.html>).

Polynesia.⁹¹The dancers are from several countries in Polynesia and they perform items from the Cook Islands, Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. On their web side they promote themselves as professional dancers that perform drum dance and action songs. They also reinforce stereotypes of Polynesian people as exciting, graceful, exotic and romantic. The performance group was formed both to uphold traditional forms of culture, to teach and share these aspects, while also incorporate modern dance and music, much like the Rarotongan based Te Hiva Nui.

Concluding remarks: An opportunity to leave

So far in the thesis, I have looked at Te Maeva Nui from a number of angles- all from the viewpoint that the event creates something larger: feelings of Cook Islands-ness, of belonging to a nation-state and the exchange and maintenance of community and family bonds. The event attracts large amounts of tourists, of expatriate Cook Islanders as well as gather people living on the dispersed islands. However, Te Maeva Nui also brings about patterns of emigration. In the aftermath of Te Maeva Nui, the Cook Islands News published a number of articles addressing the issue of the return of outer islanders to their islands. While one article reassured that the same amount of people that came to Rarotonga would return, another article estimated that about 20 out of the 63 people from Penrhyn's who came to participate in Te Maeva Nui is not returning. While some stay in Rarotonga, others leave the Cook Islands. One politician is quoted in the paper to have said 'You can't stop people from travelling but the irony is that the government is actually sponsoring them to leave' (Manins 2011). Whatever the real number might be the discussions surrounding Te Maeva Nui includes some less fortunate consequences and negative aspects. While young Cook Islanders seem to want to explore career opportunities in the world outside of Rarotonga, elderly people seek health and retirement benefits in New Zealand. While some young Cook Islanders cannot wait to finish college so that they can move to New Zealand, others expressed their desires to leave Rarotonga and go back to the island they were born.

Returning for the last time to the young dancer, Uirangi, I want to end the chapter by recapitulating the last minutes of my interview with her. Uirangi and I spoke about the future and I asked her 'do you wish you could live off performing culture?' Her instant reply was,

⁹¹ Found on: <http://www.beatsofpolynesia.co.uk/index.html>. Captured 22.04.2011.

‘oh yeah’. I had heard people talk about the lack of opportunities for youths to find employment on the outer islands and in Rarotonga. So I asked Uirangi, ‘is that not possible?’ Her next reply did not come as instant as the previous, but she said ‘It’s possible, it’s possible’. Since I had heard the opposite I continued by asking ‘So, are there anyone on this island who basically live off dancing, or by “doing” culture?’ She answered:

Well, we’ve got dancers that live in the States [USA]. That’s [dance is] all they do.

They live there and all they do is just perform at hotels. They get contracted to do that.

For me, I would love to do that, but I just don’t want to do it now.

I wondered if she preferred to go to the States as well, or if she wanted to go to New Zealand where I knew she had some family. So I asked her where she wanted to go. ‘Really, I don’t want to go. I want to stay here. I want to make it work here, happen here, not go anywhere else’ she said.

6

Looking towards the future

This chapter is an attempt to locate the current period within its international context. Today the Cook Islands is often described as a small country with few inhabitants. However, as Hau'ofa reminds us, such a description is of a 'very narrow kind' (1994:151). Following him I can say that the Cook Islands nation by no means is small in terms of cultural activities, history and the flow of people. The Cook Islands nation stretches far beyond the boundaries of the country, i.e. how it is lived and experienced through dance. In a true Pacific manner, Cook Islanders maintain strong bonds to their families, creating a world of 'enlargement' (Hau'ofa 1994.151). In Hau'ofa's words (1994:156-157), 'only when we focus on what ordinary people are actually doing, rather than on what they should be doing, can we see the broader picture of reality'. This is precisely what I hope I have conveyed through my descriptions and discussions throughout the thesis.

At this stage, I also aim at tracking a broader picture of the reality of Cook Islanders. There is an international dimension about Cook Islands dance and it is part of a global flow: dance troupes travel the world to represent the Cook Islands as a tourist destination; Cook Islanders living abroad form dance groups, some even make their living from performing; and dance on Rarotonga attracts large amounts of tourists every year. While national events such as Te Maeva Nui also bring a number of diaspora Cook Islanders back to their country, the same event contributes to, even if indirectly, loss of population, especially on the outer islands. Te Maeva Nui is a special opportunity for families to reunite, for people to communicate with each other, but also to communicate with the Government. The Prime Minister, Henry Puna also used the opportunity to announce his thoughts and reflections about the national event. According to the Cook Islands Times⁹² the Prime Minister, Henry Puna said:

⁹² Published in the *Cook Islands News*, 30 July 2011 was a short article named 'Time for reflection,celebration: PM' (Parnis 2011b).

The theme for this year was a timely reminder for Cook Islanders as they consider the country's role in the modern world. I believe that as we rediscover and regenerate our sense of national pride, this theme will prompt us to do some introspection, [...] think of what makes us special as a community.

The language he chose is of interest because it provides insight into the government's framework of the future for Cook Islanders as well as to how they are supposed to understand themselves in relation to outsiders. Henry Puna challenged Cook Islanders to re-think their past and imagine their national future in terms of what makes them special. Their past and their traditions may help to educate the people about their own history, i.e. to think about the past in terms of the future. Te Maeva Nui is to be a re-enactment of tradition as well as a display of who the Cook Islanders are in a modern world. His comments stressed that dance fosters modes of belonging. Henry Puna spoke of the differences individuals can make in communities, and he encouraged people to see their individual skills and contributions as 'contribution to the advancement of progress and the development of our country. This is a reflection of your heart and your soul and at the same time the reflection of the heart and soul of our nation' (Parnis 2011b). Henry Puna further spoke of Te Maeva Nui as an event that provides progress to the country by attracting tourists. He added that what were put on the stage was what 'the Cook Islands can offer in regard to culture, worship, dance, dress and singing as it searches for its place in the wider world'. Cook Islands dance is something Cook Islanders, as a united people, can offer others; it is their very unique richness.

I have tried to show that Cook Islanders tend to treat dance as an inalienable possession that might be lost. My analysis of dance as a practice and medium of social action, as part of lived experience has showed that dance is able to reflect persons and society, as well as inform them. In other words, I have studied social interactions through dance encounters and analyzed the interaction between people and their surroundings. The many social, political, economic and historical changes that have affected dance during the year since self-governance has been embodied through dancers as part of their lived experiences. Alexeyeff stated in her book that dance is part of the things 'you just do', of Cook Islanders' everyday nature (2009:5). When I, in chapter one, presented Cook Islanders' reflections about culture, I did so in similar terms as Alexeyeff. But I wonder if this is changing. Is dance becoming something that only a few Cook Islanders do? Or something that people "do" only when they have available time? One woman told me, 'dancing has become, although I love it,

is something I can only do, if I have the time to do it. Work and home takes priority'. Will someone, one day, be able to say that 'I dance, and that is my job'? Will Uirangi in the future be able to make a living by dancing?

The Cook Islands nation is something one can participate in through dance and especially in Te Maeva Nui. Te Maeva Nui is also a chance for outer islanders to display their unique style of dancing in front of a large amount of audience. However, there are some people that fear that dance, in its institutionalized form, threaten the island identities that people display at Te Maeva Nui. In the Te Maeva Nui the teams have to follow the same rules, they structure their performances according to the same theme and guidelines, and they display the cultural heritage of the Cook Islands people. 'I think there's been a lot of "bringing into line" of the variations of dance because of Te Maeva Nui and its rules; the variations in the dances are disappearing, and getting more boring in my opinion' a woman wrote to me after my return to Norway. When people spoke to me about island distinctiveness, there was a strong concern of losing the identifying symbols that separate one island from another, due to Te Maeva Nui and dance troupes. On another note, one possible future scenario might be that counter forces will occur to this pressure of similarities, forces that oppose equality by refusing to adapt to the rules in Te Maeva Nui or by making small differences even greater in the national event as well as in dance troupes.

It should be an academically interest to explore the intense debates that circulate cultural expressions in the Cook Islands. The fact that dance is an topic of heated discussions amongst Cook Islanders indicate that dance is important for Cook Islanders. I have shown that dance provide Cook Islanders a medium for mediating and negotiating categorical identities, engage in political issues and situate themselves in relation to the global flow across national borders. Dancers situate the local in the midst of the global and seek to explore new ways of being a Cook Islander.

Glossary

<i>akairo</i>	sign or landmarks
<i>Ara</i>	name of a flower
<i>Are Akaivi Korero</i>	the national archives
<i>Are Kari Oi Nui</i>	The National Auditorium
<i>Are Puka</i>	the national library
<i>Are Vananga</i>	the national museum
<i>ariki</i>	high chief of a <i>vaka</i> . This title is hereditary, where the standard is that the first born male inherits the title
<i>aro'a nui</i>	'main welcome' or 'plentiful greetings' or 'offer good wishes'
<i>au tree</i>	beach hibiscus
<i>'ei</i>	a wreath worn on the head or draped over the neck, made from either flowers, plants or shells
<i>enua</i>	land, or island
<i>'eva</i>	festival
<i>henua</i>	land, or island
<i>'imene</i>	song
<i>imene choir</i>	choir song
<i>imene tuki</i>	traditional hymns, religious song
<i>Inano</i>	name of a flower
<i>kapa rima</i>	action song
<i>korero</i>	oral tradition
<i>matakeinanga</i>	place, village and family

<i>mōmoke</i>	mystical creature, legendary inhabitant of the underworld, Albino
<i>mu'umu'u</i>	islands gown
<i>ōire</i>	village
<i>pa enua</i>	outer islands
<i>papa`ā</i>	European, white person
<i>pāreu</i>	cotton material cloth worn as a garment, sarong: dance costume made from cotton pareu, hibiscus (<i>pareu kiri'au</i>) or green leaves (<i>rautī</i>)
<i>pātē</i>	hollow wooden slit drum, used especially in drum dance
<i>pe'e'</i>	traditional chant
<i>poepoe</i>	type of grass which is used for decoration
<i>rima</i>	hands, five
<i>riri</i>	hand decorations, shakers
<i>rito</i>	coconut leaves
<i>tāmataora</i>	give pleasure, to entertain; to make joyful; to do things that will be a source of joy or pleasure
<i>tangi ka'ara</i>	traditional drumming
<i>tārekareka</i>	to entertain, to cause pleasure or merriment
<i>Tauranga Vananga</i>	the nest of knowledge' Ministry of Cultural Development
<i>Te Maeva Nui</i>	the major or most important festival or celebration
<i>Te puna korero</i>	the nest of knowledge
<i>teretere</i>	traveling parties
<i>tini</i>	cabin bread tin
<i>Tuatau marama</i>	enlightened period
<i>Tuatau 'ou</i>	modern times

<i>Tuatau ta'ito</i>	ancient times
<i>'ura</i>	dance
<i>'ura pa'u:</i>	drum dance
<i>ute</i>	traditional song
<i>vaka</i>	district; also means canoe

Acronyms

CICC	Cook Islands Christian Church
CIP	Cook Islands Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LMS	London Missionary Society
MIRAB	Migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy
MOCD	Ministry of Cultural development
NZ	New Zealand Dollar

APPENDIX 1

Cook Islands dance genres in Te Maeva Nui

‘Ura pa’u: Drum dance

The drum dance is a genre where high tempo is essential. It emphasizes lower body movements and, as a group performance, uniform movements are important (Mason and Williams 2003). Both men and women dance this genre. Drum-dance is part of the repertoire of all professional dance troupes. In Te Maeva Nui the dancers were exclusively young and it is the most spectacular category of competitions in Te Maeva Nui. Usually, the dancers move to the pace of the drums, and the full ensemble of drums are present. ‘The usual percussion ensemble consists of a *pa’u* or *tari parau* (a double-headed bass drum), a *pa’u mango* (a conga type drum with a tympanum which was traditionally made from sharkskin and was hand-beaten; today it is made from goatskin and is usually beaten with two light sticks), and *pate*, *tokere* and *kariro* (wooden slit gongs of varying sizes which provide a range of pitches)’ (Mason and Williams 2003:30). The fast tempo is kept throughout the performance. The Manihikian drum dance is called *hupahupa* and is ‘characterized by dynamism and high-pitched drumming’ (Mason and Williams 2003:24). It was within this genre that I experienced most creativity in costumes.

Kapa rima: Action song

In this genre, hand movements tell the story of the song, in other words, hand movements are emphasised. The song is accompanied by instruments, especially ukulele, guitar and light drumming. This genre may be performed by a solo dancer or a troupe and it is performed both in Te Maeva Nui and at ‘Island Nights’.

Pe’e: traditional chant

A *pe’e* is described as ‘a rhythmic chant, usually commemorating some historical event’ by the Cook Islands Maori Dictionary (Buse 1995:334). A *pe’e* consists of chanting made by one person or a group. Rehearsed actions accompany the chant, especially hand actions. There are many types of *pe’e*, the most commonly performed are called *turou*, or welcoming chants. Most ‘Island Nights’ open by a chant, usually performed by one male dancer. The audience

are being explained that the chant is a welcome-chant and it serves to introduce the dance troupe. These kinds of welcoming *pe'e* are not accompanied by music. In Te Maeva Nui *pe'e* is a group genre where men and women chant and sing. Here, *pe'e* is also accompanied by rehearsed dance.

‘Ūtē: traditional singing

The word ‘*ūtē* translates ‘a song with marked four-beat rhythm, often with narrative or love interest, or composed to commemorate some events’ (Buse 1995:548) . It is performed by ‘a tightly packet, swaying and singing group’ of both sexes (Mason and Williams 2003:25). This genre is not part of professional dance troupes’ repertoire, as there is a general opinion that non-Cook Islanders do not understand the words and messages that are being sung. I was also told that as an entertainment form for tourists, *ute* would be considered boring. In Te Maeva Nui, men stood behind the women in the form of a half-moon. Some women sat on chairs, others on the floor. Dancing during an ‘*ūtē* is not uniform. Women occasionally got up from their seats and danced in front on the stage, joined in by the men. Teams usually wore a similar island-print shirt, or for women *mu'umu'u* (island gown) and black pants or skirts.

APPENDIX 2

Traditional and current names of the twelve inhabited islands (Cook Islands)

Traditional name	Current name
Akatokamanava	Mauke
Araura Enea	Aitutaki
Avarau	Palmerston
Auau Enea	Mangaia
Enea Manu	Atiu
Nukuroa	Mitiaro
Tapuahua	Rakahanga
Te Fuinga O Niva	Manihiki
Te Nuku O Ngalewu	Nassau
Te Ulu Ote Watu	Pukapuka
Tongareva	Penrhyn
Tumu Te Varovaro	Rarotonga

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alévêque, Guillaume. 2011. The rise of the Pleiades. In *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific*, edited by E. a. R. Hviding, K. M.: Oxford: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Alexeyeff, Kalissa. 2000. Dragging Drag: The Performance of Gender and Sexuality in the Cook Islands. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11 (2):297-307.
- . 2010. Dancing Gender in the Cook Islands: Globalisation, Regional Flows and the Boundaries of the Nation. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* (23).
- Alexeyeff, Kalissa 2009. *Dancing from the Heart*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- . 2006 *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- . 1994b. Enduring and emerging issues in the analysis of ethnicity. In *The Anthropology of ethnicity: beyond "Ethnic groups and boundaries"*, edited by H. a. G. Vermeulen, Cora. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Beaglehole, Ernest. 1957. *Social change in the South Pacific*. Great Britain, London: Allen & Unwin.
- Beaglehole, Ernest, and Pearl Beaglehole. 1938. *Ethnology of Pukapuka*. New York: Klaus Reprint.
- Bing, Iselin C. . 2011. Tivaivai: en studie av tekstilers biografier og konstituering av identitet på Cookøyene, Institutt for sosialantropologi, University of Oslo, Oslo.
- Borofsky, Robert. 1987. *Making history : Pukapukan and anthropological constructions of knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buse, Jasper and Taringa, Raututi. 1995. Cook Islands Maori Dictionary. In *Cook Islands Maori Dictionary*, edited by B. a. M. a. Briggs, Rangi: The Ministry of Education, Government of the Cook Islands, The School of Oriental and African Studies, The University of London, The Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of Auckland, Pacific Linguistics, The Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University.
- Cohen, Anthony P. 1993. Culture as Identity: An Anthropologist's View. *New Literary History* 24 (1):195-209.
- Crocombe, Ron and Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore, ed. 2003. *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- Davis, Thomas, et al. 1979. *Cook Islands politics : The Inside Story* Auckland: Polynesian Press University of the South Pacific. Institute of Pacific, Studies

- Foster, Robert J. 1995. *Nation making: emergent identities in postcolonial Melanesia*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1924. *Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens [Contributions to the Psychology of Love]*.
- . 1962. *Civilization and its discontents*. Edited by J. Strachey. New York: Norton.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gilson, Richard. 1980. The Cook Islands 1820-1950. In *The Cook Islands 1820-1950*, edited by R. Crocombe. Wellington and Suva: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. .
- Goodwin, Maureen. 2003. Reo: "Aue tau e to tatou Reo"- Alas for our language! In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- Hall, Colin. 1994. *Coming in on a jet plane: a pictorial history of the Rarotonga International Airport*. Rarotonga, Cook Islands Airport Authority, Cook Islands.
- Handler, Richard, and Jocelyn Linnekin. 1984. Tradition, Genuine or Spurious. *The Journal of American Folklore* 97 (385):273-290.
- Harrison, Simon. 1999a. Identity as a scarce resource. *Social Anthropology* 7 (03):239-251.
- . 2003. Cultural Difference as Denied Resemblance: Reconsidering Nationalism and Ethnicity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (02):343-361.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 1992. Writing ethnography. State of the art. In *Anthropology and autobiography*, edited by J. Okely and H. Callaway. London: Academic Press.
- Hau'ofa, Epeli. 1994. Our sea of islands. *The Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1):148-161.
- Henry, Rosita. 2011. Dacing diplomacy. Performance and the politics of protocol in Australia. In *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific*, edited by E. a. R. Hviding, K. M. : Oxford: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Henry, Rosita, Fiona Magowan, and David Murray. 2000. Introduction. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11 (2):253-260.
- Hviding, Edvard and Rio, Knut M. 2011. *Made in Oceania: social movements, cultural heritage and the state in the Pacific*. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publ.
- Jenkins, R. 1994. Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization and power *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (2):197-223.
- Jenkins, Richard. 2004. *Social identity*. London: Routledge.
- Jonassen, Jon. 1991. *Cook Islands drums / by Jon Jonassen*. Edited by D. Cook Islands. Ministry of Cultural. Rarotonga, Cook Islands :: Ministry of Cultural Development, Government of the Cook Islands.
- Jonassen, Jon Tikivanotau M. 2003. Tu tangata: Personality and culture. In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- Jonassen, Jon Tikivanotau M. . 1982. The Cook Islands, the Development of an External Affairs Department in an Emerging Microstate, Master of Arts in Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawaii, Hawaii.
- . 2005. *Verses of Wisdom: Kama'atu*. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific Centre.
- . 2011. Free Association and "Cultural Development": The Cook Islands "Political Experiment".

- Keesing, Roger. 2000. Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific. In *Voyaging through the contemporary Pacific*, edited by G. M. White and D. L. Hanlon. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kloosterman, Alphons. M.J. 1976. *Discoveries of the Cook Islands and the Names they Gave*, *Cook Islands Library and Museum Bulletin Number 1*. Rarotonga, Cook Islands: Cook Islands Library and Museum.
- Kuchler, Susanne. 2003. The Poncho and the Quilt: Material Christianity in the Cook Islands. In *Clothing the Pacific*, edited by C. Colchester. Oxford: Berg.
- Kuchler, Susanne, and Andrea Eimke. 2009. *Tivaivai: The Social Fabric of the Cook Islands*. London British Museum Press.
- Lawson, Stephanie. 1997. The Tyranny of Tradition: Critical Reflections on Nationalist Narratives in the South Pacific. In *Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific*, edited by T. a. T. Otto, Nicholas. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publ.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1964. *Totemism*. London: Merlin Press.
- Linnekin, Jocelyn. 1991. Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity. *American Anthropologist* 93 (2):446-449.
- LiPuma, Edward. 1995. The Formation of Nation-States and National Cultures in Oceania. In *Nation making: emergent identities in postcolonial Melanesia*, edited by R. J. Foster. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Magowan, Fiona. 2000. Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle1. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11 (2):308-321.
- Manins, Rosie 2011. Depopulation sponsored. *Cook Islands News*, 13.08.2011.
- Mason, Jean T. and, and Sonny Williams. 2003. Tamataora: The Performing Arts. In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- Mason, Jean Tekura'i'imoana. 2003. Te Mana o te Moni: the Cultural Influence of Corporate Power. In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- MOCD. 2011. *Te Maeva Nui 43 - 2008* Ministry of Cultural Development 2007 [cited 02.11 2011]. Available from http://www.mocd.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33%3Ate-maeva-nui-43-2008&catid=14%3Aannouncements&Itemid=72.
- . *Te Maeva Nui* Ministry of Cultural Development 2008 [cited. Available from http://www.mocd.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59:maeva-nui&catid=14:announcements&Itemid=72.
- Noy, Chaim. 2008. Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11 (4):327-344.
- Numa, Patricia. 2003. Aite'anga: Symbols of National Identity. In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development

- Office, Statistics. 2010a. Cook Islands Annual Statistics Bulletin 2010. Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
- . 2012. Total Arrivals and Departures. Rarotonga, Cook Islands Cook Islands Statistics Office
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2006. *Anthropology and social theory: culture, power, and the acting subject*. Durham, Md.: Duke University Press.
- Otto, Ton, and Nicolas Thomas. 1997. *Narratives of nation in the South Pacific*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publ.
- Parnis, Eric. 2011b. Time for reflection, celebration: PM. *Cook Islands News*.
- Reeves, Rachel. 2012. Te Kopapa Reo re-formed. *Cook Islands News*, 23.02.2012.
- Rio, Knut M. , and Edvard Hviding. 2011. Pacific made. Social movements between cultural heritage and the state. In *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific*, edited by E. a. R. Hviding, Knut M. : Oxford: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1994. Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History. In *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, edited by R. Borofsky. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Salisbury, Kevin B. 1983. Pukapukan people and their music, University of Auckland
- Sands, R. Robert. 2002. *Sport ethnography*: Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Siikala, Jukka. 1991. '*Akatokamanāva: myth, history and society in the Southern Cook Islands, Transactions*. Helsinki: Suomen antropologinen seura.
- Sissons, Jeffrey. 1997. Nation or Desti- nation? Cook Islands Nationalism since 1965. In *Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific*, edited by T. Otto and N. Thomas. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publ.
- . 1999. *Nation and destination: creating Cook Islands identity*. Suva: Inst. of Pacific Studies, Univ. of the South Pacific.
- Statistics, New Zealand. 2007. *Cook Island Maori People in New Zealand: 2006*. Wellington, New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand.
- Stevenson, K. 1990. 'Heiva': continuity and change of a Tahitian celebration. *The Contemporary Pacific* 2 (2):255-278.
- Stevenson, Karen. 1992. Politicization of La Culture Ma'ohi: the Creation of a Tahitian Cultural Identity. *Pacific Studies* 15 (4):117-136.
- Tongia, Makiuti. 2003b. Te Neke'anga Maori i Porirua: Changing Values in Aotearoa. In *Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture*, edited by R. a. C. Crocombe, Marjorie Tua'inekore. Suva, Fiji; Rarotonga, Cook Islands Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development
- Torgersen, Eilin H. . 2010. The social meanings of hula. Hawaiian traditions and politicized identities in Hilo, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen Bergen
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. 1991. Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle. *The Contemporary Pacific* (Spring):159-167.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2001. CA Forum on Theory in Anthropology: The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind. *Current Anthropology* 42 (1):125-138.
- Weiner, Annette B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions : The Paradox of Keeping-while-giving*: University of California Press.

