Refereed papers from
THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL SMALL ISLAND CULTURES CONFERENCE

Held at Kagoshima University Centre for the Pacific Islands, February 7th-10th 2005 and organised as the inaugural conference of SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative)

Edited by Dr Mike Evans
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(Okanagan University College, Canada)

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Eve Klein
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**SICRI**  
2005
INTRODUCTION

This online publication comprises a selection of peer-refereed versions of papers presented at the first international Small Island Cultures Conference, held at Kagoshima University Centre for the Pacific Islands, February 7th-10th 2005 and organised as the inaugural conference of SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative)

The conference provided an interdisciplinary forum for island culture specialists to present their research, to gain a perspective on work in other fields and to begin to form the SICRI network. Reflecting this, the papers published here comprise material on approaches to research and interaction with island communities and case studies of individual cultures. The range of Asian, Australian, European and Oceanic research featured here indicates both the diversity of cultures explored by SICRI researchers and common aspects of research philosophy and analysis.

Discussion of these papers via the SICRI group mailing list is welcome and any discussion ‘strings’ that arise will be archived online. (See www.sicri.org for contact details.)

Dr Mike Evans (editor) for the SICRI Steering Committee
RETURNING BORROWED GOODS

The Motive for Establishing a Rapanui Music Archive

Dan Bendrups

(University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand)

Introduction

Since the 1880s, a series of social research expeditions have sought to uncover the perceived mysteries of pre-contact Rapanui (Easter Island) archaeology and culture. This small island, located far to the east of other Polynesian island groups, continues to attract researchers, enthusiasts, tourists, and other visitors in numbers disproportionate to its size (166 square kilometres) and population (exceeding 4,000 in 2004). For the most part, their interests are directed towards Rapanui prehistory and ancient culture, but their appreciation of contemporary Rapanui is usually embellished during their stay by performances of traditional and contemporary songs and dances, many of which are available locally for purchase on CD.

Where Rapanui music research is concerned, the majority of published descriptions and field recordings available internationally have been undertaken by private commercial producers and musicians who have visited the island since the intensification of tourism in the 1970s. Their early interactions with local Rapanui musicians greatly influenced the manner in which subsequent music researchers, enthusiasts and musicians have been received on Rapanui. Recently, in conjunction with a growing social awareness of past mistreatment at the hands of colonial authorities and opportunistic outsiders, Rapanui musicians have come to view many early recording projects in a negative light. The root of this perception is the manner in which recordings were obtained by outsiders for little or no reciprocal benefit. As a consequence, new recording projects are entered into with care and consideration by Rapanui musicians, who now strongly advocate reciprocal relationships in which some sort of personal or community gain is clearly apparent.

This paper presents a case study of Rapanui music research where the question of reciprocity was central to the development of a socially responsible research method. It reports on a period of my own Rapanui fieldwork, conducted in three stages between 2002 and 2004, in which the concept, planning and establishment of a local sound archive became one of my main research responsibilities. The following report does not seek to present an argumentative appraisal of the wider implications of research ethics for ethnomusicologists or anthropologists. Such concerns are addressed widely in existing...
literature pertaining to ethnographic research methods (Foster [et al], 1979; Whyte, 1984; Ife, 1995; Barz and Cooley, 1997), and must be negotiated by researchers on an individual basis. Rather, in keeping with the mission statement of the newly established Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI), this paper provides a clear example of a tangible community outcome, achieved through the application of socially responsible research methods. The following discussion highlights some of the key concepts that led to this project-based approach to music research, and describes the logistical process by which the sound archive was established. In doing so, it demonstrates the centrality of reciprocity and community consultation to the enduring success of ethnographic research.

Reciprocity and the Rapanui Research Context

The theme of reciprocity is a common concern underpinning SICRI research activities, as the organisation’s mission statement articulates:

Key to SICRI’s activities is the principle that external researchers should develop their projects in consultation with island communities and should reciprocate such cooperation with appropriate assistance and facilitation of local cultural initiatives (www.sicri.org/).

In this context, the conceptualisations of reciprocity and facilitation encompass all manner of researcher activities ranging from consultative approaches to community concerns, to advocacy and activism.

The nature of researcher participation in small island community activities is a long-standing issue throughout Oceania, and in some cases, island authorities have established protocols for mediating the activities and influence of outsider researchers (Lawrence, 1989: 111-12; Zemp, 1996: 37-38). While the Rapanui municipal government has now instituted a formal procedure for archaeological research, a means of monitoring other social research has yet to be devised. Indeed, social researchers are often indistinguishable from other tourists, and many prominent portrayals of Rapanui performance culture (including Mazière, 1968; Hacker, 1968; Linkels, 2000; and Sierra, 2002) have been produced by private individuals without academic affiliation.

The regulation of social research is an emotive issue for many Rapanui. A history of predatory exploitation of the Rapanui people and their material culture at the hands of outsiders and colonial authorities has left behind a strong sense of inequity, which must be acknowledged and negotiated by contemporary social researchers. Even those not concerned with ethnography must still negotiate daily life in the small island community, and their presence is noted by the people around them. Visitors are universally welcomed on Rapanui, but the matter of unregulated research leaves many islanders with a sense of disempowerment, as they know that they ultimately have little control over where researchers go, what researchers do, and how research findings are presented. Such
concerns betray a degree of scepticism towards the good intentions of outsiders, which is reflective of hard lessons learned from past experience.

Between 1862 and 1877, a combination of factors including involuntary transportation and enslavement, increased mortality from introduced disease, and missionary-sponsored migration to Tahiti, resulted in the decrease of the Rapanui population from approximately 4,000 to little more than 100 people (Fischer, 2001: 82; Maude, 1981). Nevertheless, this small community preserved songs and chants that form the basis of the island’s music traditions. Rapanui became a Chilean colony in 1888, but administrative arrangements with a private farming company led to the entire island population becoming the captive workforce for a sheering ranch in 1896, and this situation continued into the first half of the 20th century. Despite a significant loss of social and cultural autonomy, a great variety of traditional music practices were preserved, later to be documented by Alfred Métraux (1940), Eugenio Pereira Salas (1945), and Jorge Urrutia Blondel (1958). Carlotta Hacker, a member of the 1964 Canadian medical research expedition to Rapanui, observed the continuing prominence of music in Rapanui daily life: “Rapa Nui [sic] has its own night noises. There is always music, just a throb of it in the distance. There are voices and laughter rising above the pounding surf” (1968: 181). Dedicated studies of traditional Rapanui music were undertaken in the 1960s by Chilean musicologist Ramón Campbell (1971; 1988) and folklorist Margot Loyola (1988).

Where sound recordings are concerned, most commercially available Rapanui music has been recorded and disseminated by independent producers and ‘world music’ enthusiasts. As demonstrated in the high profile examples of musical appropriation critiqued by Louise Meintjes (1990) and Stephen Feld (1996), the ‘world music’ market is a strong international commercial force. Like many other traditional cultures, the music of isolated Rapanui became an object of commercial desire in the late 20th century.

In the 1970s, when passenger flights to Rapanui were only recently established, visitors who sought to record Rapanui musicians were usually well received, gaining their collaboration with little difficulty. At this time, many Rapanui musicians did not have a sophisticated idea of what to expect from a recording project, and gave willingly of their time, expertise, and intellectual property. On few occasions was this generosity reciprocated by commercial producers. Of the numerous Rapanui music recordings produced between 1974 and 1999[1], only one producer has sought to return a portion of the sales profit directly to the musicians involved.

In too many cases, visitors have promised to return copies of their field recordings and then failed to do so. In one example, a prominent Rapanui musician only became aware that his voice featured on a commercial recording produced in Tahiti when he saw the CD for sale in a souvenir shop on his own island. This particular recording was accompanied by liner notes proclaiming that the greatness of Polynesian culture was “To Meet And To

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Share [sic]” (Le Calvez, 1999a). The producer clearly failed to adhere to this principle in his own sharing of information with the Rapanui musicians he recorded.

In the 1990s, a series of collaborations between Rapanui musicians and international film and television projects (including Warner’s 1994 Hollywood blockbuster *Rapa Nui*) imparted many Rapanui musicians with a greater awareness of the international recording industry. As a consequence, contemporary performance ensembles have learned to produce their own recordings and have developed working relationships with independent Chilean record producers. Furthermore, they are aware that sound recordings have the potential to turn into valuable commodities, and can therefore be wary of outsiders with blatantly commercial intentions.

My own engagement with Rapanui music began with a series of negotiations over permission to undertake field recordings. As a new arrival on Rapanui, I was an unknown character, yet my relatively sophisticated recording equipment differentiated me from other tourists. I arrived on Rapanui with the intention of conducting comprehensive music ethnography, in the ethnomusicological tradition of participant observation, complete with extensive field recordings. I was confident of finding helpful research collaborators who would facilitate my entry into Rapanui music culture, just as described by established ethnomusicologists whose writings influenced my early planning (Rice, 1994; Feld, 1990; Keil, 1979).

In the process of explaining my non-commercial recording intentions to sceptical Rapanui musicians, I found that the shadows of past music ‘researchers’ (not all of whom behaved in a manner demonstrative of academic rigour) were more prevalent than I had expected. The influence of past interactions between Rapanui musicians and outsiders led me to reconsider my research method. To this end, I sought to justify my collection of field recordings by indicating (to the contributors and others) that my collection would ultimately remain on Rapanui as a public resource for all islanders. This negotiation of commitment, responsibility and access resulted in the creation of a community-based sound archive, the Depósito de Música Rapanui (Rapanui Music Deposit, or DMR), which was established on Rapanui in December 2004.

Socially Responsible Music Research

My entry into Rapanui music research as a PhD student was fuelled with an existing knowledge of theories relating to the role of the researcher in ethnomusicology. Like many other contemporary ethnomusicologists, I began my research with an appreciation of Steve Feld’s efforts in including and validating local reactions to his writings about Kaluli music in the second edition of *Sound and Sentiment* (1990). Furthermore, I drew guidance from the reflective accounts of fieldwork presented in Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley’s *Shadows in the Field* (1997) – a text that specifically addresses the role of the researcher in fieldwork.
Research literature relating to Oceania as a region and anthropology in general provided additional emphasis on social responsibility, and contributions in these fields have a long history. In 1975, Epeli Hau’ofa called for greater participation from local researchers in Pacific island anthropology. In 1983, Mervyn McLean implored that the researcher’s ethical responsibility was twofold: pertaining as much to the community being researched as the academy. In 1996, the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* dedicated an entire volume to the ethics of ethnomusicological research and recording.

Such observations are continuously reinforced in anthropological literature. As John Perry more recently remarked: “The era in which a fieldworker simply decamped from a steamer, pitched a tent near ‘the natives’ and unproblematically got on with filling notebooks is finished and, indeed, may never really have existed” (2002: 5). This archetype, which James Clifford called the “myth of fieldwork” (1983: 198), reveals its shortcomings in the inability to encompass a local perspective. As a solution to precisely this problem, Yoshihiko Tokumaru (1977) provided an early indication of the value of gaining feedback from fieldwork experiences. He termed this process ‘fieldback’, and insisted that it was a necessary part of the ethnographic research process.

The Department of Contemporary Music Studies (DCMS) at Macquarie University provided me with supervisors who maintained a commitment to reciprocal relationships with research collaborators, and engendered this in my own fieldwork. DCMS chair Philip Hayward has repeatedly called for music researchers to go beyond mere participation in a music culture and undertake cultural facilitation by sharing musical knowledge and access to academic and professional networks, assisting with local productions, with music education initiatives, or any other matter that may arise in the fieldwork process. As Hayward argues, “…you get better, more detailed and more multiple input when your enterprise is being assisted (rather than merely tolerated) by a community” (2004).

I envisioned that my collaboration-facilitation process would entail some standard (and widely practiced) acts of reciprocity. These included making fieldwork recordings available to the musicians who contributed them, contributing personally to the various kinds of jobs that surround music making and festival preparation, and making sure that all research collaborators were aware of my research aims and objectives as prescribed by the Macquarie University Human Ethics Committee. In practice, I found that this was only the starting point for a range of other initiatives, including the establishment of the DMR, various attempts at seeking out past recordings, and a cultural exchange in which an indigenous Rapanui musician travelled to Sydney for basic training in digital audio editing.

**Negotiating Researcher Responsibility**

While Hau’ofa (1975), McLean (1983) and others have called for researchers to demonstrate a better commitment to local concerns in Pacific island research, the manner
in which this is to be achieved is rarely explained. In other fields, however, accountability and reciprocity are conceptualised at a grassroots level. In Australian community development literature, Yoland Wadsworth presented a straightforward model for socially responsible research some time ago. Wadsworth (1997) advocates a ‘social action’ research method in which the researcher aims to provide tangible and specific outcomes to the community being researched. This approach resonates strongly with Hayward’s call for researchers see themselves as ‘Culturally Engaged Researchers and Facilitators’ (or CERFs), and also with the mission statement of the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (as stated earlier).

Wadsworth identifies four conceptual parties to any research project: “Those who it is for; those who it is ultimately for; those who are the researchers; and those who are the researched” (1997: 17). She indicates that the same person or group of people may occupy any or all of these positions. In most music ethnography, it is assumed that the research is for other musicologists, and ultimately for the academic community at large. However, to take this stance removes the research collaborators from a key part of the research process, relegating them simply to the fourth category of ‘those being researched’. In doing so, they cease to be true collaborators because they are excluded from the benefits of the research. Such exclusion can take numerous forms. It may be seen in the failure of researchers to translate or summarise the research findings in a locally understood language. It may also take the form of jargon or specialist writing that only a fellow academic may fully understand, or in the simple reluctance of a researcher to share research findings with collaborators for fear of rejection, criticism, or even plagiarism.

Therefore, the most significant aspect of Wadsworth’s ‘conceptual parties’ model is the facility with which research collaborators can be conceptually transferred from mere participants to beneficiaries in the research process. Not only does this approach acknowledge the changeable relationship between ‘researchers’ and ‘researched’, it also recognises that the research findings will ultimately matter more to the local community than the academic community. Both of these matters are especially significant in the small island context, where small community size erases any notion of researcher objectivity, and where local musicians are likely to occupy multiple posts and positions in the community.

As an initial step in approaching social accountability in my own research, I redefined my method according to Wadsworth’s conceptual parties and situated the Rapanui music community as members of the first two categories she describes: as end users and ultimate beneficiaries of the research product. Secondly, I invited research collaborators to suggest ways in which I might be able to demonstrate my accountability. Some asked for large sums of money or university scholarships, which I was powerless to provide and therefore politely declined. A key aspect of this process was stating clearly the scope and limitations of what I was able to offer.
One collaborator asked for funding to undertake a cultural exchange with my university, which was ultimately achieved through a Chilean government grant. With the support of the Chilean indigenous funding body CONADI (Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena [National Corporation of Indigenous Development]), the Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), and the DCMS, Rapanui musician Tote Tepano was able to travel to Sydney in mid 2004 to digitise a large portion of his private collection of Rapanui music. This collection was later added to the DMR.

A significant number of Rapanui musicians declared that they would like to see past recordings of Rapanui music returned to the local community, if only in duplicate form. I approached this concern in two ways: firstly, by seeking out recordings archived in other places, and secondly, by finding a means of repatriating these recordings to a secure and stable environment on Rapanui.

Envisioning a Community Music Archive

The idea of establishing a sound archive had been considered by numerous Rapanui musicians in recent years, and some (unsuccessful) attempts have been made in the past to secure funding for this purpose. The library (Biblioteca William Mulloy, or BWM) of the Rapanui museum, Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastian Englert (MAPSE), had already purchased database software for audio in 2001, but lacked sufficient staff expertise to establish a sound archive independently. The aforementioned Rapanui musician, Tote Tepano, was also in the process of establishing his own private sound archive, though without access to suitable storage facilities, his cassettes were in danger of perishing in the island’s subtropical heat and humidity.

While the DMR received in-principle support from many sectors of the Rapanui community, my facilitation of an agreement between Tote Tepano and the curators of the BWM was a key part of the success of the DMR initiative. On the one hand, the BWM offered secure and stable housing for a music collection in a new library facility (constructed in 2003). On the other hand, Tepano possessed a large collection of recordings in need of suitable housing. Towards the middle of 2003, during my second period of fieldwork on Rapanui, these parties agreed to work together towards the establishment of the DMR.

The new BWM facility offered many convenient services for a music archive. Firstly, the library had a climate controlled storage room, where tape recordings could be stored away from corrosive elements in the island’s natural environment. Secondly, the BWM administered a non-lending collection, so recordings (on CD media) could be inserted into this collection without risk of them being lost or privately duplicated by library patrons. This countered the main concern expressed by Rapanui musicians who were uneasy about contributing to a public collection where their songs might be easily copied.
Recordings could be added to the library catalogue, and the library’s existing computer facilities provided both Internet access and the possibility of setting up an audio browser on a public access computer terminal. In addition to Tepano’s recordings, I added the first of my own field recordings to this collection, together with the donations of audio material that I had already secured from overseas sources. In December 2004, I returned to Rapanui to deposit a range of recordings into the DMR, to devise a catalogue system for the audio collection, and to transfer a portion of this collection to a computer terminal for public access.

Negotiating Practical Considerations

The greatest difficulty for the DMR initiative was finding a way of setting up the archive without direct financial support of any kind. The housing of the collection at BWM/MAPSE solved the immediate problems of storage, collection administration, and maintenance. The BWM was, furthermore, an institution that Tote Tepano trusted, thereby making him feel more comfortable about placing his own recordings on public access within this context, and ensuring his continued participation in the archive’s development. The DMR contents were classified numerically and incorporated into the library catalogue database, the MAPSE website was expanded to include information about the audio collection (currently under formation), and I reconfigured disused audio equipment purchased by MAPSE in the past to support two listening stations for public use of the DMR collection.

For ease of maintenance, the DMR was created as a digital archive comprising two complete sets of CDs for public access. A further set of CDs was held in storage as backup, and medium quality (44.1Khz/16bit) WAV files of all audio contents were stored on hard drive and DVD. As a further mechanism for public access, part of the collection was duplicated as mp3 files and installed on a computer interface within the BWM. This collection is supported by Apple Computer’s free software interface iTunes™, which makes the mp3 collection searchable. Another freely available audio editing software program, Sourceforge’s Audacity, has been used to digitise many of the recordings in the DMR collection, and has been retained for future digitisation efforts.

The DCMS and PARADISEC both provided valuable assistance in the establishment of the DMR’s digital collection. These organisations donated recording studio time, expert staff guidance, digitisation facilities, backup storage, and CD hardcopies of recordings that are now part of the DMR, without incurring any direct cost to BWM/MAPSE. Alongside my own field recordings, the catalogue now includes field recordings by Tepano as well as donations of recordings dating back to 1958 from archives in Chilean tertiary institutions (particularly the Universidad de Chile and the Fondo Margot Loyola of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso). It is hoped that the establishment of the DMR will encourage future donations from institutions and individuals who possess recordings of Rapanui music.
Outcomes of the Archive Establishment Process

The DMR was opened in late December 2004, and at this early stage, it is difficult to predict what the specific outcomes of the project will be. Superficially, the DMR stands as evidence of a commitment to Rapanui music culture on the part of institutions and individuals, both local and foreign. For myself, the DMR represents a tangible and quantifiable justification for the methodological changes undertaken in my own research, and hopefully, it is a resource that will benefit local musicians in years to come. The DMR contains old and new recordings ranging from the 1950s to the present day, and at the very least, the assembly of these resources under the one roof provides a forum for comparisons to be made and for notions of music tradition and continuity to be explored. The repatriation of recorded materials to Rapanui allows local musicians to instigate and participate in such discussions, rather than being dependent on the ‘expert’ analyses of non-Rapanui outsiders.

The DMR provides a permanent location for the ongoing repatriation of recordings of Rapanui music to the Rapanui community. In the future, researchers (and others) who undertake field recordings on Rapanui can be informed of the DMR’s function and invited to contribute their recordings directly, while they are still on the island. Likewise, Rapanui musicians and ensembles that undertake their own recording projects can view the DMR as a repository for their creative output, and have already contributed to the community’s understanding of Rapanui music culture by donating copies of their own recordings to the archive. At the very least, the DMR demonstrates that cultural preservation initiatives can be undertaken even in the absence of dedicated funding, provided that sufficient logistic support can be obtained.

The DMR provided me with a means of justifying my Rapanui music research to Rapanui musicians on the one hand, and owners/producers of Rapanui recordings on the other. By obtaining and repatriating recordings held off the island, I was able to demonstrate a commitment to local concerns, and thereby gain the trust, collaboration, and approval of numerous Rapanui musicians. Extensive feedback was a key component of this process, and for that matter, a significant contribution to the methodological justification for my approach to fieldwork on Rapanui.

As a result of the feedback process, I was able to reassess my research aims in order to include the DMR as a methodological outcome, thereby situating Rapanui musicians as end-users of the research findings, rather than just participants in the research process. This was achieved, without direct financial support, through the goodwill, advice and assistance of international institutions and numerous individuals. The DMR currently contains 60 hours of digitised audio, and while the collection is expected to grow in the future, it already represents a tangible outcome for the Rapanui music community and reflects the appropriateness of applying socially responsible methods to music research.
Acknowledgements

Thanks to Tote Tepano, Lili González, Francisco Torres, and the MAPSE staff for providing the energy and initiative to make the DMR possible. In Australia, Dave Hackett, Linda Barwick, and other DCMS and PARADISEC affiliates provided vital institutional support. Important contributions to the DMR collection have been donated by Margot Loyola, the Kon Tiki Museum, the Departamento de Musicología of the Universidad de Chile, and the Fondo Margot Loyola of the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso.

Further Information

For further information on the DMR or other matters relating to Rapanui music research, see: http://www.mapse.cl, or contact: dan.bendrups@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Endnotes

[1] The discography provided below lists some of the more prominent Rapanui music recordings that are available internationally.


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INFORMATION ON EVERYDAY LIFE FROM HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Richard Burg

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Introduction

Philip Van Buskirk, a drummer on board the USS Plymouth, first visited the Bonin Islands in 1853. His ship, after having been detached from the small fleet that made a first visit to Japan under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, sailed into Port Futami (then Port Lloyd) in October of that year to claim the Bonins for the United States. His initial visit was brief, and allowed him little time ashore for observation or to become acquainted with any of the settlers. Decades later, after service as an officer in the United States Navy, he returned to the Bonins, where he resided for an extended period, built a house, fraternised with the islanders, recorded much about his life and his interactions with the local residents, and compiled genealogical records for several families with whom he became friendly.

He was an ardent diarist. The three-dozen surviving volumes he compiled between 1851 and his death in 1903 hold a vast trove of information. They contain entries dealing not only with his own life, but they are filled with detailed observations on the many lands he visited during his decades of military service and afterward. As far as can be ascertained, Van Buskirk was a careful and accurate observer. On matters mentioned in his diaries that can be checked against official records (including the copious volumes published on the Perry expeditions), the correspondence is near perfect. When he copied articles from newspapers or magazines into his diary pages, he did so with hardly a comma or apostrophe added or subtracted from the original.

The observations recorded by Van Buskirk on his two visits to the Bonins are especially useful for historians and others interested in the islands’ past. His lack of official standing -indeed his total disinterest in matters of government and administration - kept him from duplicating information that normally survives in standard archival holdings. Instead he wrote of ordinary people and ordinary things not from the standpoint of a detached observer but with the advantage of being an active and ardent participant in the events he penned into his diary. He wrote of individuals by name, chronicled families and relationships, and registered his insights into their interactions, habits, and character. His sampling of ordinary island life came while he lived it: the details of building a house, hiring helpers, commissioning the digging of a privy, seeking companionship, etc. were the sorts of subjects that comprised his entries. In short, his is an account from the ground up, erratic, sporadic, uncontrived, and unassuming. It is exactly the type of data once
ignored by scholars, but now prized by social historians, museum professionals, classroom teachers, custodians of local traditions, and especially by people hoping to install a sense of the past in children, adolescents, and in the general population of any country, province, geographical area, or ethnic group.

Introduction

Several years ago, in the fall of 2001, I received an e-mail from Professor Daniel Long of Tokyo Metropolitan University. He was inquiring after information on Philip C. Van Buskirk, a 19th-century United States Marine and a Civil War deserter from the Confederate Army. I was surprised to be getting any correspondence on the subject at all. Although I had written a book on Van Buskirk (1994), it had been out a good while by then and attracted only the usual reviews that customarily come with academic monographs. The little correspondence I had earlier received on the study had long been buried in my inactive file. What surprised me most, however, was the subject that interested Professor Long. He inquired about visits Van Buskirk made to the Bonin Islands in 1891 and 1898. His information on the visits came from an 1915 book by Lionel B. Cholmondeley entitled The History of the Bonin Islands from the Year 1827 to the Year 1876.[1] I responded by explaining that while I knew Van Buskirk had been to the islands late in the century, the only visit I had dealt with at any length came in 1853. He was at that time a drummer onboard the USS Plymouth when the ship sailed into Port Lloyd to lay claim to the Bonins for the United States. The few events he found noteworthy in that stumbling effort at imperialism were the dropping off a plaque letting anyone who bothered to read it know of the American claim and the loss of over a dozen of the ships’ crew when a squall swept across the harbour carrying away a boat they were using for a fishing excursion. In all, Van Buskirk’s first sojourn in the Bonin Islands occupied only two short paragraphs on a single page in my book, and since the book ended in 1870, I had not dealt with his later visits.

Although I did not work with material past 1870 when I researched and wrote my biography of Philip Van Buskirk’s early life, I knew not only about his 1853 visit to the Bonins as part of Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s first expedition to Japan that year but about his return to the islands many years later. I was aware of these small events because as part of my research I had read all thirty-six volumes of Van Buskirk’s diary, of one of the most unique compilations ever kept by an American seafarer, and perhaps one of the most unique autobiographical records ever kept by an American. Philip Van Buskirk’s diary, or at least the earliest surviving portion of it, was begun around 1850, during his first years of service as a boy drummer in the United States Marine Corps, and continued on with only slight interruptions until his death in 1903. Not all of the volumes are available. The first is irretrievably lost, probably tossed overboard in the late 1840s by his some of his crewmates unhappy about having their activities chronicled. Neither is his record of the Perry expedition at hand. It is not with the other portions of the diary at the Allen Library of the University of Washington. It disappeared in recent years, although not before one of the librarians, the late Robert Moore, made a partial transcript of it.
Another missing portion contains the entries for the first year of Van Buskirk’s civil war service. It was confiscated by Union soldiers when they captured him in 1862 and sent him to a military prison in Ohio, ending his short stint as a Confederate infantryman. While I have inquired repeatedly, asking the manuscript division of the library whether the absent volume for the 1853 voyage to Loo Choo, Japan, and the Bonins had ever been located, I have not received any response to my queries. Fifteen years ago I expended considerable effort looking for the confiscated segment, but could find no trace of it in any repository holding material on either Union or Confederate soldiers. Other than these three gaps, a missing first volume, the account of his participation in the Perry expedition, and the lost 1861-1862 section, the diary spanning a half century is virtually complete. It is easily to read, printed as it is in sharp, clear letters for the most part rather than written in cursive. Since Van Buskirk was obsessive both about making regular entries and about the physical well-being of his creation, it has survived in excellent condition. The paper is untattered, few if any pages are missing, each volume of those completed in later years was professionally bound, carpenters were commissioned to build strong, water-tight boxes-within-boxes to safeguard the diary in commercial storage facilities when the author was at sea, and, with the excision of one particular passage, it appears no editing was ever done on completed volumes. Since 1905, the diary has been carefully preserved in various libraries at the University of Washington, in Seattle, where it was well cared for and little used over the last one hundred years.

Van Buskirk made navigating his journals a simple matter, for the most part. Every month’s entries are preceded by a calendar page or two, listing the days, and laying out in columnar form, often with his own abbreviations, where he was each day, what he did, the state of his health, and suchlike information. Pages carry running headings with dates and ship names, the author carefully lined the blank pages before making entries, and drawings, maps, and graphs carry precise descriptive labels. He also concluded his monthly chapters with numbered notes and observations, and from time to time he wrote out extensive itineraries of where he was and where he spent the night. To discover when he was in the Bonin Islands, for example, one need not read through the entire thirty-six volumes. A check of the monthly introductory pages and the lengthy itineraries provides the information. The researcher need only turn to the proper dates.

So, when Professor Long contacted me, I could fill him in easily on Van Buskirk’s first visit to the Bonins, since the stay was short and the diary entries few and abbreviated. I also discovered that in addition to his 1853, 1881, and 1898 visits, he made a short stop at Port Lloyd in 1880. It is the latter visits that are most useful. On those two occasions for he stayed longer, wrote much, and recorded more of significance for later researchers on Bonin Island history.

Van Buskirk and the Bonin Islands

When the Plymouth dropped anchor at Port Lloyd in 1853, it was perhaps the first
warship of the United States Navy ever to visit the Bonins, but the islands had been known to mariners at least since the sixteenth century. The Spanish in all likelihood visited their coasts as early as the 1580s, and by 1674 the Japanese had surveyed and mapped them. Japanese cartographers named the archipelago, some five hundred miles due south of Tokyo, Ogasawara-Jima. Of the approximately twenty islands in the group only ten are of appreciable land area. The name, Bonin, is a corruption of the sounds for the three ideographs *bu nin to*, indicating an absence of inhabitants. Drummer Van Buskirk first came ashore on Chichi-jima, called Peel Island by Westerners. The craggy, volcanic outcropping, the second largest in the archipelago, contained less than a dozen square miles of wooded hills, but the warm climate enabled the few inhabitants to produce fruit, vegetables, and meat sufficient for both their own needs and for trading with ships that anchored in their harbour (Robertson, 2005).

Van Buskirk’s circumstances differed widely each time he came to the Bonins. In 1853 he was a teen-age drummer boy. Almost three decades later, he came ashore as a mature adult, an officer in the United States Navy. He was an old man on his last visit, retired, relaxed, financially comfortable, and having interests different than those he pursued on his second visit.

The obvious questions, then, concern what in the way of data compiled during Van Buskirk’s three widely spaced visits provides material that is useful to modern scholarship or to Bonin Island residents interested in their history:

1. Most of Van Buskirk’s 1853 observations at Port Lloyd concerned his official duties. He wrote brief commentaries about the ceremonies and the seventeen-gun salute and the copper plate made by the Plymouth’s armorer informing all and sundry that the islands belonged to the United States. The incident that most concerned him during his stay was the loss of his ship’s cutter with its dozen men, including a Lieutenant Matthews, one of his favorite officers. The wording of the plaque and low-grade pomp attendant to its erection have antiquarian interest, to be sure, but his observations of the island residents is certainly of more interest. He had little contact with them, but what he saw did not impress him favorably. The population of the newly established American pseudo-colony, he wrote, consisted of two male settlers, their wives, three male children, two female children, one prostitute, and one deserter from the Plymouth. Van Buskirk’s short stay on land was spent largely looking for survivors from the lost boat rather than meeting local residents, and he undercounted the population. He also erred in classifying one of the men he met as a deserter. The man had been released from the Plymouth by order of the captain.

2. His next stints in the Bonins consisted of a series of stays in and around Port Lloyd during the month of June in 1880 and the following spring, in April, May, and June of 1881. His official duties at the time were three in number, to look after “coal moorings” and other US government property when his ship, the USS Alert, sailed on one of its various cruises, to make weather and tidal observations, and to scout out the islands’

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agricultural prospects. When not looking after his assigned tasks, he moved about Port Lloyd and the surrounding countryside, recording his comments on this and that, with no particular systematisation. Whatever judgments he made about agriculture did not get into the diary, but he did write of a type of crystal rock at Bull Reach that existed nowhere else, at least according to islander Moses Webb. He also wrote that considerable amounts of pyrite could be found at Gold Mine Cove, not a comment likely to attract the attention of anyone looking for Pacific mineral wealth.\(^5\) Cholmondeley notes in his *History* the presence of a “Mr. von Buskirk” who took seven children back to Japan with him on board the *Alert* in 1881. The diary confirms Cholmondeley’s record, and adds a few small details. Upon arriving in Japan, Van Buskirk put his charges along with their baggage on a train to Tokyo, but not before sending a telegram to a Mr. Shaw (not additionally identified), presumably to tell him the children were coming. He also told of buying dinner for the two older boys, and recorded all of his expenses for the telegram, jinrikshaw travel, seven fares to Tokyo, and the meals. In his July 22, 1881 diary entry he included a brief glimpse of the attitudes of the *Alert*’s officers on the enterprise. They supported the endeavour strongly. The children received top-end accommodations on board the ship, and were quartered and fed by the captain’s mess and the wardroom mess. Further down the status ladder, there was less enthusiasm. Having the children in with the ship’s officers was a relief to the midshipmen of the steerage mess, who, Van Buskirk recorded, didn’t want to have to worry about doing anything for the “little nigs.”\(^4\)

By 1880 the Japanese presence was highly visible in the Bonins, and Van Buskirk noted their village on the eastern side of Port Lloyd harbour during his June stay. The twenty-five houses arranged around the single, short street were in the Japanese style, he wrote, with thatched roofs. The stores carried a variety of European and Japanese goods, and there was a “roomy and comfortable” Japanese hotel. The settlement also had a sake shop that took in borders at ¥10 per month, and there were prostitutes—two of them. One was kept by “a sleek-looking scoundrel,” but there was no further description of him. The other, a freelance lady, had no permanent abode, but spoke “tolerable English.” There was also a Japanese settler named Ito who was a scholar of both the Japanese and English languages, and “much respected” by the foreigners. Of the Japanese settlement, he wrote, “It is as if a suburb—a low quarter of Yokohama were bodily transplanted to this place.” “Alas for the Bonins!” he concluded.\(^4\) His other comments on the Japanese were more positive. He observed that a Mr. Takeda, a representative of the governor, carefully attended his duties only in the morning. He worked on his farm in the afternoon. Then there was his visit on May 12, 1880 to Dr. K. Ozi, presumably a Japanese settler. The doctor prescribed medicine for Van Buskirk’s constipation. He wrote in the next day’s diary entry that it worked on schedule.\(^6\) One of the features of Bonin life that Van Buskirk noticed was an island way of getting married. In 1880 he recorded that a man and his wife were wed simply by “passing their word . . . [which was] just as good as a marriage ceremony.” That evidently seemed too informal for Van Buskirk, who almost a year later asked local resident George Bravo for the hand of his kinswoman, Lydia Webb, in marriage. He added he would wait several days for the decision. Either the answer never came or it was a “no.” Van Buskirk did not mention the matter again, and neither
did he marry Lydia Webb. Probably the most frustrating diary entries from the 1880 and 1881 periods are two comments dealing with historical documents. On June 30, 1880, Van Buskirk wrote:

*I had a good overhauling of old papers and letters from Commodore Perry's time down to the occupation of the Japanese. Alas! Such hopes as the Savory's built upon the words of the great Commodore have come to nought. The course of the Japanese government towards them has been one of simple robbery.*

Almost a year later, on May 8, 1881, he recorded, “I was all day today setting to rights the letters and papers of Nathanial Savory.” There is nothing of the extent of the materials, their content, or of the nature of what he did. The numbers of questions these and similar comments made later on raise are almost limitless, and, to use one of Van Buskirk’s favorite words, “Alas” it is very unlikely they can ever be answered.

3. In 1898, Van Buskirk returned, and stayed several days short of three and one-half months. There were few disruptions in his life during this period. As a retired naval officer he had no official duties, and that left ample time for journal keeping. He made entries for almost every day, and produced several dozen numbered notes dealing with an assortment of matters. In all, the hand-written record for his 1898 stay when transcribed runs to approximately twenty typed pages. As is typical in all three dozen of the diary volumes, the preponderance of the material deals with Philip C. Van Buskirk, his meals, his amusements, his peregrinations, the state of his bowels, records of his nocturnal emissions, and his disputes with local businessmen. When not writing of himself, he filled blank pages with miscellaneous information: notes on minor earth tremors, weather observations, bird sightings, descriptions of the scenery, his sense of wonder at towering coconut palms, and on one January day he recorded wandering near what he called an *old* [my italics] Japanese cemetery. In addition, he penned occasional commentary on the island's architecture, geography, poor roads, and good mail delivery service. The latter positive evaluation came on the morning April 20th when he received six issues of the *Army and Navy Register*. That afternoon the letter carrier returned with another copy of the *Register* and eight postcards for him. Sandwiched between such entries, he included the names of people he met, did business with, accompanied him to dinner, and become his friends. Then, too, he commented at length on the islanders’ habits, reading preferences, and interactions. As, always over the course of his adult live he expended considerably energy befriending children. By the time of his final sojourn to the Bonins, the interest in youngsters appears to have been largely avuncular, his unseemly concern for young people in earlier years having diminished almost to the vanishing point. He commented on childrens’ amusements, in one case their torturing of captured seagulls. There was also a game they played that he found distasteful. They often gathered in small groups when a foreigner approached, then, when he came very close, they scattered in mock fright. In a particularly moving observation he wrote of four Japanese girls on board his ship destined for employment on Hillsborough Island, where males in the population of 2,577 outnumbered females by a three-to-two margin:
Two were professional courtesans—one could see that in their faces and deportment; but not so the other two; little creatures they were, young, delicate and gentle, with the air of innocence about them unmistakable. . . . They were weeping bitterly: one could see that. . . . When the landing of the girls was effected, each of the little ones held the hand of one of the others, and staggered along the wharf, as if ready to fall at every step, and their faces were pictures of shame, terror, and grief. I feel sorry, too—very sorry.⁹

It is unlikely Van Buskirk assessed the two girls’ predicament incorrectly. As a naval officer with twenty-five years service in the Far East, he had long experience with Asian prostitutes, both adult and juvenile. His diaries are filled with narratives of illicit encounters he engaged in on solitary forays to brothels or when accompanied by mess companions (Burg, 2002).⁹

On other local employments of a more respectable sort, there were superficial notes. He commented on the sugar plantations that covered the hillsides and the proliferation of sugar camps. Some of the men he met engaged in fishing and turtling. In addition to sugar, exports included preserved turtle, and preserved pineapple. Locally manufactured handicrafts might also have figured in the island’s trade. He wrote of baskets made from leaves of the lawala tree, and when he departed in May, the gifts he received included a small platter carved from ax-handle wood and a woven basket cigar holder. The only indication of island imports in Van Buskirk’s diary came in the wish expressed by one of his women-friends that when he returned from Yokohama he would bring her “flower seeds, toy tea cups, marbles, and a portmonnaie.”⁹ Work away from the islands also provided a boost for the economy. Van Buskirk recorded the departure of eight men for Yokohama to join seal hunting expeditions.

On the basis of his shipping observations, there seems to have been only limited trans-oceanic commerce with the Bonins. He wrote of one and sometimes two vessels in the Port Lloyd harbour. Never more than that. Occasionally there were no ships present. Some idea can be gleaned of price levels in 1898. Van Buskirk rented a cabin at ¥5 per month. After waiting for fourteen days for a Japanese carpenter to come by and install five glass windows, he gladly paid the man ¥3.5 to have the job completed. Both of the skilled craftsmen whose services he hired during his stay were Japanese. The islanders, he implied at one point, were not particularly industrious.

In a letter of May 25, 1865, Shanghai pilot E. Bramel wrote to Nathaniel Savory of the quiet homes and peaceful lives lived by the Bonin Islanders. Van Buskirk’s record of considerable of strife among the residents indicated otherwise. His view is confirmed in both volume and detail by Cholmondeley. The alcoholism, mayhem, family feuding, suicide, suspected poisoning, divorce, and a murder to which Van Buskirk alluded also appeared The History of the Bonin Islands, although Cholmondeley was more circumspect than Van Buskirk’s in his observations in at least two instances. As a cleric writing for publication, discretion was more important for him than for Van Buskirk, who only penned observations in a private diary. Cholmondeley, at one point, merely
suggested rather than affirmed that a case of accidental drowning might be infanticide. Later in his book, he deleted what was probably the sexual assault of a woman (Cholmondeley, 1915: 140, 141, 155). Van Buskirk wrote on April 25th of “Heat, mosquitoes, piss-mires, and sand flies [that] take away all comfort,” adding that the proliferation of disagreeable insects combined with infectious germs lessen the Edenic nature of life in the Bonins considerably. He wrote also of a small epidemic of “chills and fever” and of one case of diarrhea.

Van Buskirk had no nostrums to offer for either the chills or the fever, but as an old navy veteran, he could assist with the loose bowels. He had one of his acquaintances whip up a hot eggnog to give to “Old Charlie” Vier for his diarrhea. In case that failed to halt the exodus, he also sent him a bottle of wine. The islanders took Davis’ Pain Killer, with which Van Buskirk was quite familiar from his time in the navy, and they customarily used a hot needles to cure toothaches. Mental illness, too, existed among the residents. The diary contains a tantalising note on a mad woman who lived in a cave, but provided no details of her condition. The locals also managed to amplify the miseries inflicted by nature by manufacturing disagreements of their own, Van Buskirk reported. Relationships between women were sometimes suffused with back-biting, gossip, and recrimination. “The women here worry each other a great deal with inventions of this kind,” he mused. There were even a few crimes of violence to upset affairs in the islands. A woman named Caroline told Van Buskirk of an assault upon her father and of the murder of a man known as “English Bob.” Unfortunately, he provided no more information on either crime.

In most cases the material Van Buskirk recorded is so fragmentary and detached that it is difficult to draw generalisations from it. On matters of religion, his observations were more complete, and they do provide a picture of the progress of Christianity, or more accurately, its lack of progress, among the several thousand island residents. Reverend A. F. King, an Anglican cleric, came to Japan in 1888 as a missionary from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and called at the Bonins on occasion to assist in the work of converting the inhabitants to the brand of religion he learned at Keble College, Oxford. Those present at the services King conducted on his 1898 tour included Van Buskirk, who noted that the number of congregants never reached forty, and that was to hear a distinguished visiting minister preach. At a service conducted on March 2 by Joseph Gonzales, after King’s return to Japan, only twenty-three attended, two of who were “squalling babies.”

King became a sort of a guide and companion for Van Buskirk during his stay. He accompanied him on a visit to the governor and provided the retired American officer with conversation and companionship. King also allowed Van Buskirk to make an abstract of some notes he had accumulated. The abstract, preserved with the three-dozen diary volumes, is, in terms of Bonin history and genealogy, probably the most significant piece of data preserved by Philip C. Van Buskirk. It contains the names of over six dozen early residents of the islands, some information on their origins and histories, and
considerable material on their marriages and on their descendants.

In mid-April, as his stay drew to a close, Van Buskirk got involved in another historical project. He began what he called an “overhaul” of the Savory family papers. The work took him approximately three days, and unfortunately he did not set down any information on the nature of the family papers, why the family involved him in the project, or what he did with them, except to note that he made an abstract. Another of his comments on the project concerned a letter he discovered among the documents. It was addressed to him and dated November 7, 1880. He did not record who sent the letter, what it contained, or why (or if) the Savorys had had it in their possession for the preceding eighteen years.

Van Buskirk’s Bonin Island diary also provides occasional clues to the use and dispersal of languages he encountered. It seems from his entries that the indigenous islanders not only spoke English, but that they spoke it very well. He did not comment on their competency levels or accents, but his failure to do so suggests that he found nothing noteworthy in the many meetings and conversations he had in his three-month visit. His contacts with Japanese officials were not nearly so easy. Time and time again, as he met with them for courtesy calls or to take care of official business relating to his residence, passport information, or similar administrative matters. He made clear his frustration at their deficient English. On at least one occasion Van Buskirk took an islander with him to one of these meetings to serve as an interpreter. How the high level of English language competency came to be and was maintained by the islanders poses a raft of interesting questions for which the diary might be able to provide some assistance in answering. At least six local boys were sent to Kobe to be schooled by a Mr. Foss, he wrote. Their course of study evidently included both Christianity and English.

Van Buskirk’s abstract of King’s notes reveals that the minister was interested primarily in collecting genealogical material, but he also included in the process nodules of peripheral information embedded scatter-shot fashion amid the lists of residents, records of marriages, and rosters of offspring. There is considerable data on the ethnic roots, racial composition, and national origins of Bonin islanders. Foreign-born residents came from around the world, from places as diverse as Japan, Mauritius, England, Spain, Portugal, the United States, France, perhaps Sweden and Italy, Germany, Bermuda, Saipan, Hawai’i, and several other Pacific islands. When they emigrated, they went to places somewhat less diverse, places in the Pacific or on the Pacific rim: Japan, Guam, Saipan, Hawai’i, California, and Peru. Then, too, there is information on migrations within the Bonins, but it is not sufficient to reveal patterns or trends, or indicate why residents went from one island to another.

As is the case with the diary, there are in King’s genealogical notes enough random nuggets to indicate the Bonin Islands provided no tropical paradise for their inhabitants. The various plagues that bedevil civilised society everywhere were present there as well. Alcoholism, suicide, suspected poisoning, divorce, and murder can all be found threaded

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through the family data. There was even a feud among the residents, and while it appears from available evidence that no blood was shed, it was serious enough to cause four members of one family to flee into the bush and remain there for eleven months. As might be expected in any source containing a profusion of disassociated factoids, there are nubbins of charming trivia. In King’s notes there is the information that one George Washington, who hailed from Mauritius, killed the one snake ever found in the Bonins, at least up until 1880. The abstract also confirms what the crew of the Plymouth learned in 1853 when they lost a number of men to a squall while anchored in what they thought was the safety of in Port Lloyd harbour - Bonin Island weather can be treacherous. The notes contain several references to people lost in canoes or small boats while traveling along the coasts or sailing from island to island.

In assessing the value of Philip Van Buskirk’s diary for the history of the Bonins, and, incidentally, another diary from Commodore Perry’s day kept by seaman John Glendy Sproston, a key element is the context provided by the accumulation of data from the various sources. Virtually everything in Sproston’s brief commentary on the Bonin Islands can be found in Perry’s compendious account of the expeditions to Japan. In any case, Sproston’s journal is familiar to all of those dealing with the islands, having been published by Sophia University in 1940 and reprinted in 1968.

Van Buskirk’s material is far different qualitatively from Sproston’s, not only for having spent the last century in file cabinets and shelves at the University of Washington libraries almost entirely untouched by researchers, but because it contains much that can be found nowhere else. To be sure, there is information in Van Buskirk’s diary than can be confirmed in Lionel B. Cholmondeley’s 1915 history, which is all well and good, but the difficulty is that both documents, the unpublished diary and the obscure book, leave much to be desired for anyone inquiring into the Bonin Island’s past. They are fragmentary, idiosyncratic, impressionistic, and lacking in systematisation, to mention only a few of their defects. Yet despite their imperfections they are about all we have that preserves the memory of the westerners and Pacific islanders who lived in the Bonins before the arrival of the Japanese and during the earliest years of their presence. Though the data consist for the most part of mere tid-bits, snippets, dribbles and dabs, the only course is to make do. The emphasis on the failings of Cholmondeley and Van Buskirk as historians is not to disparage their work, but only to express of frustration that there is not more, that fire, war, and tsunami had not destroyed so much of the record, and that they had preserved greater segments of what they saw and heard. Perhaps the few Savory letters included in Cholmondeley’s book will give modern researchers cause for at least a modicum of perverse cheer. They indicate that if any lost letters were like those preserved in print, they would not have revealed much anyway. The published letters came mostly from Savorys in New England. Much of their contents consisted of family news and neighborhood gossip. In one of these Nathaniel was chided for his failure to write home – a bad sign for anyone hoping that somehow, someway, some day a trove of his correspondence might be discovered. Other letters involve business dealings with various sea captains, traders, and scoundrels, and might be quite useful in a wider context.

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encompassing seaborne commerce in the Pacific during the period. Unfortunately, they
shed only the faintest glow over Bonin history.

On one aspect of island life, the work of Van Buskirk and Cholmondeley is mutually
reinforcing. Both testified to the weakness of the hold religion had on the citizenry. Van
Buskirk’s figures on church attendance, Cholmondeley’s notes on the casual nature of
Maria Savory’s two marriages, and the fact that Ann Burbank Savory Gonzales never
received baptism all indicate the halting progress of evangelisation (Cholmondeley 1915:
155-156, 158). Still, there existed at least among some on the islands certain rituals or
expected behavior surrounding betrothal and marriage. As mentioned earlier, Van
Buskirk requested a woman’s hand from a male relative, and Cholmondeley told how C.
H. Richards went to Nathaniel Savory to ask to marry his daughter. Neither man went
directly to the woman he hoped would be his future wife, although, admittedly, at the
time Richards pursued her, Agnes Savory was only a girl of thirteen (Cholmondeley
1915: 133-134).\[7]

On the material that cannot be checked against any other sources, Van Buskirk is the final
authority, and what he wrote is probably a good depiction of what he saw, despite his
undercount of the population and an erroneous reference to a navy deserter in 1853.
Where his work can be checked it is accurate, and in a diary kept for his own purposes he
had little motive to fabricate or enlarge. Again, some of what his diary preserves from the
Bonin Islands is scarce and scattered, but is available nowhere else. If it is inadequate by
itself or even with all other available sources to produce a solid history of the islands in
the 19th century it is nonetheless important as a large piece of a very small pie. In a line
Reverend Cholmondeley would recognise from the Bible’s Ephesians (5:20), historians
dealing with the Bonin’s in the 19th century should be “Giving thanks always for all
things.”

Similarly, Bonin Islanders with an interest in their past should also be thankful for such
scrap, not because they are part of all things, but because they are the only things, the
only scrap left. The genealogy that Van Buskirk copied from Reverend A. F. King
provides them with at least some family background, particularly if King’s original is
lost. One Bonin family has already learned from the list that an ancestor came from the
Maritius. This is not only of interest to them, but it provides a basis for further
investigation. Mauritius has some of the best genealogical records found anywhere in the
world. They have been well cared-for in a wonderful, modern research library, they are in
beautiful condition, and the government encourages research in them. Who knows what
else the family might find in their past if they decide to investigate further. Of other
domestic matters, the diary records the usual strife found anywhere: fights, divorces,
maries, and children, many children. And Van Buskirk recorded youngsters’ ages
when he met them, so from his records their birth dates can be recovered. Moreover, in
the future there may be even more to be thankful for. Professor Long informed me in
March 2003 that a German geneticist had worked in the Bonins in the 1930s or
thereabout, and boxes of his field notes and photographs survive. Given the nature of

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what is available, his work is almost certain to expand the current state of knowledge dramatically.

As might be expected with something like Van Buskirk’s diary, it not only provides information, but offers up a few puzzles as well. Commodore Perry hoped to plant a coaling station at Port Lloyd, and purchased land with money from his own funds for that purpose from Nathaniel Savory, but there is no indication the United States Navy ever established the station. The diary, on the contrary, indicates that in the early 1880s such a station existed. This puzzle could probably be worked out with a little time in Record Group 45 at the United States National Archives and Records Administration. My next research trip is to the Public Records Office in London this summer. Maybe in 2006 or 2007, when I hope to be working in Washington again, I will check it out.

Another intriguing mystery is what Van Buskirk did when he “overhauled” Savory family papers on two occasions. Unfortunately he wrote nothing about what he actually did. Professor Long asked me some time back if, hopefully, there might be copies of some Savory materials in the diary. I responded that I did not think so. I have read all thirty-six volumes in their entirety, and I don’t recall seeing anything that fit the description. On the other hand, my trek through the diary was two decades ago, and I was not looking specifically for Bonin Island or Savory family material at the time. In responding to Professor Long over the past several years, I have sought out information from Van Buskirk’s itineraries, his monthly summaries, and his yearly compilations of events rather than by going through the volumes page by page. So, there might be more material, but I am quite certain that if it is there, the quantity would be very limited.

Most surviving documents indicate that when Bonin Island youths went to Japan, they went to Kobe for their education. Van Buskirk writes of sending seven children to Tokyo, where presumably they were taken in tow by a Mr. Shaw. What do we know of Shaw? Did he run a school or a mission, or what? I suspect he and his activities can be tracked through Japanese records, but that is only a suspicion since I know nothing of the nature of archival holdings on any governmental level in Japan. Certainly though, it seems to me in my utter ignorance, that Shaw could not be operating some manner of school without coming to the notice of officials and being entered into one sort of record or another.

The trio of Cholmondeley, Van Buskirk and a Miss. Black (mentioned by Cholmondeley but otherwise unidentified) pose what might be a problem for historical linguistics. Neither the reverend nor the naval officer comment on the use of English by the descendants of western immigrants they met and interacted with in the Bonin Islands. The assumption made from this lack of any notice of speech patterns or peculiarities was that none existed. In contrast, Miss. Black, who visited the islands with a Mrs. Black (maybe a mother or sister-in-law, or some other relation) from December 1894 to April 1895, wrote down a tale told her by Nathaniel Savory’s oldest son that indicates
something different. The subject is parental discipline. Running only about a page, it is clearly written in dialect:

*The ole man mos’ allus let us off if we spoke up and didn’t try to hide what we done.* . . . *We used to get our drinking-water in a demi-john, them bottles what have got like a basket outside o’ r.m. . . . Well, one day Jane, she goes to get water from the river and somehow lets the demi-john slip out of her hands so that, of course it got all broke up. “Never yer say noding,” ses she, “I hand’t say who done it,” she ses, and she tooken it home and put it in the middle of the table same as allers* (Cholmondeley, 1915: 159-160).

The passage represents about one fifth of the story told by the son, but it is clear that Black is trying to capture the way he spoke. It is difficult to tell how accurately she replicated his speech patterns on the page, and knowing nothing about her, her background, or her educational level probably makes it impossible to go very far with any type of analysis. Even then, without deciphering the details of Miss Black’s dialect transcription, it suggests that at least one Englishwoman or American (in all likelihood she was one or the other), thought young Savory’s speech sufficiently divergent to take written notice. My perspective on this, of course, is limited by my own training as a historian. Perhaps there is more in this piece of material for linguists.

**Conclusion**

In summary, then, what does Philip Van Buskirk tell us about the Bonin Islands in the late 19th century? He offers no coherent panorama of society, culture, customs, or the economics of local life. A good deal of what he observed is also available in Commodore Perry’s volumes, Sproston’s commentaries, and Cholmondeley’s history, fragmentary and irregular as it is. I am not sure, as I said before, whether the genealogical notes copied from Reverend King have been published or are otherwise available. Perhaps someone here could fill me in on that. If the original notes are lost, then Van Buskirk’s transcription and preservation of their contents is a truly fortunate event. As vague as they are, they hold some very basic and valuable information for Bonin Islanders who descended from the earliest settlers. Van Buskirk’s observations of Japanese settlement number less than a handful, and he is frank, although not specific, about his dislike of what he saw. Still, there is little else in western accounts of their presence. Cholmondeley writes much of his history of the islands almost as if the Japanese did not exist. Whatever else survives of their early residence will probably come from records in Japan since anything been kept in the islands would have been destroyed by war and weather.

Van Buskirk’s notes on daily life, then, provide a picture of some aspects of the routines, practices, and predilections of the residents he knew. Again, they are not comprehensive, but concern only his own activities. Still, some are interesting, others fascinating, a few hilarious, and a number certain to offend. But such is his contribution, limited to be sure,
but in the absence of a larger corpus of historical record, his jottings assume particular importance.

Endnotes


[8] VBD, February 8, 1898.

[9] The two smaller girls were later redeemed when a group took up a collection to pay the "debt" that consigned them to prostitution. They were returned to Yokohama with "happy faces" (VBD, February 15, 1898).


[13] VBD, March 29, April 1, 14, 17, 21, 23, 25, May 1, 1898.


[16] VBD, March 13, 1898.


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TOURISM - A CATALYST FOR ATTITUENTIAL CHANGES IN AITUTAKI, COOK ISLANDS

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Introduction

The focus of the discussion in this paper is the intensification of feelings of unease and concern among many of the adult population of Aitutaki, an atoll in the Southern Cook Islands, regarding the accelerated expansion of accommodation for tourists on the island. This acceleration is due both to the Cook Island government’s desire to increase locally-generated revenue and partly due to the wish of some local and foreign entrepreneurs to become involved in tourism ventures. Concerns include the removal of areas of the island from public access and the anticipated on-going effects of increased tourism on the island environment.

Three linked socio-economic ‘worlds’ located in the island setting are discussed. Firstly, a number of families and individuals directly provide services to tourists. Secondly, there is the continuum of the everyday social and economic lives of the remainder of the population. Thirdly, there is the rather insulated world of the tourists who choose just how much contact they wish to have with the local population beyond those providing services and goods. The lives of the members of these worlds are linked and mesh or overlap in various social and economic areas of daily life. Meetings between the visitors and most local residents are short and superficial, mainly confined to the occasions when aspects of their lives and culture are put on display for the entertainment of tourists.

A lack of autonomy in regard to Government decision-making about the further development of tourist facilities on Aitutaki, including the projected building of a third luxury hotel, has caused many local people to feel upset. Local concerns relate to the alienation of land and lagoon shore sites from the public domain; despoliation of the lagoon environment; and the rationing of piped water to households due to what they believed to be increased demand caused by tourist enterprises using the government-managed, free water supply. Additionally, the assumed high incomes of the proprietors of tourist accommodation (although most can be classed as ‘small’ business owners) and other services, has generated some envy and resentment. The purported ‘greed’ of some members of this group, because of their role in land alienation, particularly on lagoon-
side sites, is the subject of everyday conversation but there are few opportunities for concerns and resentments to be expressed in public forums.

GLOSSARY

Aro’a       Love

‘Ariki       Chiefly title holder

‘ariki       Welcome, receive, accommodate (guests;) also “caring”, “giving” particularly by lavishly entertaining guests.

‘arikianga   Hospitality.

‘ei          Floral garland worn on the head or around the neck.

‘enua        The land

Tere         A local or overseas Cook Islanders’ travelling party. The guests are given a feast (umukai) of locally produced foods as well as gifts. There is eventual reciprocation.

Mana         Spiritual and social power; feelings of self-esteem.

Note:
The Cook Islands are located between Tahiti and Tonga, about 4,500 km south of Hawaii. The people of the Cook Islands are Polynesian, descendants of groups who gradually settled the islands c1000-800 CE, probably from Tahiti. The language is closely related to New Zealand Maori. (The island of Rarotonga is believed to be source of one major migratory move of Maori to New Zealand in c800 CE). Today, the dominant religion is Christianity, introduced in 1821 by converts from Tahiti, supported by the London Missionary Society, a Protestant group. The worship services and other rituals of the Christian community have their sources in historic Presbyterianism.

General Background

High level Pacific island bureaucrats who direct tourism policy or manage the entry of foreign investments, members of local elites, foreign entrepreneurs and international

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airlines are all engaged in promoting South Pacific island nations such as Fiji, Vanuatu, Tahiti and the Cook Islands as very desirable holiday destinations. The descriptions in the brochures and other advertisements are extravagant and hint at the stereotypical sexual allure of island women: “Quench your desire with the ultimate South Pacific Getaway”; “Move to the rhythmic songs and chants, sway with our dancers and feel your heart pound to the sounds of our Polynesian drums”. (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, 2005).

During the past forty years and in the first years of the 21st century, Cook Island Government development plans have given prominence to tourism as the most important income and employment generator, as opposed to agricultural production. The Cook Islands are classed by the United Nations as a Small Islands Developing State (SIDS) and has a total population of 14,000 people. The country has had close links with New Zealand since 1901, when it was annexed by that nation. The Cook Islands became self-governing in 1965, and Cook Islanders have free entry into New Zealand. This has enabled steady out-migration to New Zealand since the late 1940s. Emigration accelerated in 1995, after government restructuring including the reduction by fifty per cent of Public Service employees. Migration has therefore been an important agent of change for Cook Islanders.

A history of boom and bust cropping for export has left a bitter taste in the mouths of many older Cook Island primary producers. Decades ago economic development hopes were focussed on the production and export of oranges, pineapples and bananas. Bitter feelings are still expressed by Cook Islanders about the failure of this trade that they ascribe to the way in which New Zealand importers mismanaged the trade, paying low prices to the producers. Another factor was the irregular nature of shipping between New Zealand and the Cook Islands.

The total number of visitors to the Cook Islands in 2003 was 78,328, an increase of almost 6000 from the previous year (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, 2005). In December 2003 the Cook Islands Government reported that:

**The tourism industry has led the growth of the Cook Islands economy for the past 20 years with an average growth in visitor arrivals for the period 1987 to 2000 of 6.3% and contribution to GDP for the same period increasing from 27% to 51%. Tourism revenues have grown in nominal terms from $20 million in 1997 to over $81 million in 2000. (Government of the Cook Islands, 2003: 31).**

Aitutaki is the most popular destination for tourists in the Cook Islands after the main island of Rarotonga. The beautiful lagoon, covering a reef-bound area of approximately 90 km, is the main reason for this popularity. A large number of the tourists are day-trippers, flown over from Rarotonga to cruise on the lagoon. The cruise boats briefly visit several of the ten motu [islets] and during these voyages the visitors have the opportunity to snorkel over coral heads located at a number of sites in the lagoon.
While tourism has been an important contributor to the Aitutaki economy for some time, the meeting of the needs of the visitors and their activities are managed by a small proportion of the population and do not greatly impinge on the rest of the local community. The people of Aitutaki do not function as a corporation of ‘hosts’ but are the owners and custodians of the island and the islets in the lagoon. However, specific ownership of pieces of land is assigned in law to members of extended families who can prove historical and genealogical links to them. They see their custodianship being eroded by decisions made off-island.

In 2004 the choice of accommodation for tourists on Aitutaki ranged from what is termed ‘mature’ accommodation, comprising two five-star hotels and a four-star resort. One of the two hotels had been in existence for over twenty years, while the other had been established for five years. There is a variety, in terms of size and quality, of locally-owned, self-catering accommodation. The prices for the self-catering accommodation in 2004 ranged from NZ$30-$200 per night, while the price per night of the eight over-water bungalows of one of the hotels was NZ$1295. The resort and all but two of the self-catering accommodation complexes are owned and managed by Cook Island people, mostly Aitutakians, but some owners were originally from Rarotonga.

In 2003 and in 2004 approval was given by the Island Council for the construction of a number of new accommodation complexes, variously termed ‘lodges’, ‘villas’ or ‘resorts’. In 2003 the Island Council (supported by Dr. Robert Woonton, the then Prime Minister and Geoffrey Henry, the then leader of the Opposition) approved plans for another luxury hotel to be built on Aitutaki. These men persuasively argued that large hotels would provide jobs for numerous island residents. It was proposed that most of the accommodation at the new hotel project will be on (and in) a wetland area on the southern end of the island and close to the airport. The original plan was for most of the individual fare [bungalows] to be built in the waters of an inlet of the lagoon. The lagoon waters in this area are not suitable for swimming and are part of a currently protected area where fish breed.

The newest accommodation complexes on the island comprise clusters of up to twelve small, detached rectangular buildings, fronted by a veranda. The design has been mostly conceived by the owners and many do not have great aesthetic appeal, in the sense that the units do not make much reference to the South Pacific setting, although this lack is somewhat remedied by the surrounding gardens. Some of the units already in existence have roofing of palm thatch laid over galvanised iron to give a more authentic Pacific look. This style has now gone out of favour as it hampers the collection of rainwater. Most of the newer units have fans and solar water heaters, and the more expensive units have air-conditioning.

The builders of the new complexes have invested large amounts of money because of their belief, encouraged by Government tourist board, that there will be a continuous
increase in the number of tourists visiting Aitutaki. While there are day trips for tourists who are flown over from Rarotonga to cruise and snorkel in the lagoon, there is also a steady flow of visitors who stay for five to seven days. However, this flow is seasonal and there is local speculation that many of the new developments may often be empty. Also, the new units, although fairly highly priced, do not really fit with the often stated wish by Government officials that any new building should be at the ‘top end’/’high end’ of the tourist market.

During his incumbency Prime Minister Robert Woonton frequently advocated the building of more ‘top’/’high’ end accommodation. This is not a new idea. Milne (1985: np) summarising Cook Island development strategies in relation to tourism in the mid-1980s, stated that the then Government's emphasis was on:

... the need to attract higher spending tourists [and] the concomitant requirement for high-class facilities to be built to attract these tourists. These strategies must be reconciled with current Government objective of revenue maximisation and the maximisation of local participation in the industry.

This view was bolstered by the suggestion made by Woonton, at the opening of the Aitutaki airport runway extension in late 2003, that Boeing 767s would soon be landing there to unload large numbers of tourists travelling direct from the USA and Canada. Although the airport signage states that it is an international airport it only has basic facilities.

The population of the island was virtually halved following the economic restructuring of the public service by the Cook Island Government in 1995. This period is known locally by the term ‘transition’. The scheme was to encourage many of the public servants who had been made redundant to become active in the private sector. A few on Aitutaki did become proprietors of small businesses, including the provision of tourist accommodation (Manarangi Tutai Ariki, 2003:2). One began a land transfer and land tour business with two second-hand vans. However, many former Government employees, including skilled workers and their families emigrated to New Zealand and Australia. Apart from loss of population and income, the restructuring has had a further deleterious effect on outer island communities. Important knowledge, for example, of aspects of the history of the construction of key parts of the island infrastructure, and information on the maintenance of mechanical equipment has been lost.

The entrepreneur planning to build the new luxury hotel on Aitutaki has been reported as saying that the building of these hotels might lessen the emigration of Cook Island people overseas, to New Zealand or Australia. This idea, together with the view that there would be a useful increase in employment possibilities, is debatable. In the 2001 Cook Islands Census the Aitutaki population numbered 1,826. Almost half of the total population was under 19 years of age. 491 people were aged between 20 and 39. Members of this group could be seen as potentially employable as grounds keepers (both men and women) and...
cleaners (women). More skilled workers are likely to be poached from existing businesses. It is likely that chefs, maitre ds and housekeeping supervisors would have to be recruited either from Rarotonga or from overseas. However, the proposed wage level for workers is NZS7.00 per hour and not likely to attract people from other countries. Currently the hotels and smaller tourist accommodation suppliers, plus the cruise boat proprietors employ a total (approximate) of 120 people.

The local economy

Agriculture is an important contributor to the local economy, but crop growing is small-scale, mainly for family subsistence. Small quantities of surplus production are sold in the Orongo market in Aratunga, the administrative centre of Aitutaki, or sent to Rarotonga, but are more commonly shared locally with relatives and friends. Much to the disappointment of those tourists who had hoped to buy fruits and vegetables, such as papaya/pawpaw, bananas, starfruit [carambola], avocados, capsicums and salad vegetables, the quantity of produce offered for sale each day in the Orongo market, located in the old fruit packing shed near the wharf at Aratunga, is very small.

Male smallholders tend to cultivate small areas of land (usually termed ‘plantations’), which are part of a fragmented family holding. For example, a farmer may have the use of quarter of an acre located in one district and half-an-acre in another, plus a piece of swampland for growing wet taro. Smallholders are also likely to have an area on which only coconut trees are grown. The areas used for growing dry taro, kumara [sweet potato], nono [Morinda citrifolia], maniota [cassava], watermelons and vegetables such as tomatoes, are often flanked by uncultivated areas of land covered with tall grasses, weeds and African acacia trees. Most of these uncultivated areas are owned by families, with the majority of the members currently living in New Zealand, Australia or in the USA. Many of these family landowners do occasionally visit the island for a holiday and some hope eventually to return. Long-abandoned coffee and orange plantations can also be seen. Some farmers on Aitutaki are growing and sending nono fruit to Rarotonga for processing into juice for local sales and for export.\[3\]

Little or no crop cultivation is done on Aitutaki from November to March as this is the cyclone season. This lack of cultivation has a significant effect on the overall appearance of the island in terms of attractiveness to visitors, although the Environment Officer does employ men to regularly mow and trim the roadside verges. Plantations and family farm lots are overgrown, quantities of felled trees and tree loppings are left to dry out where they lie in what are ultimately to become plantation areas. Some of this wood is eventually taken away and used to fire the large oven in the local bakery, while a considerable quantity is left to be burned – a relic of the earlier practice of slash and burn cultivation.

The end of the five month non-farming period is celebrated on the first Sunday in April by women in village church interchanges known as tere. By late March some of the farm
land as well as household yards near the major island roads begin to have a neater appearance as people prepare for the grounds for cropping and the house lots for the annual inspections by health department officials. [3] Men celebrate a successful planting and continuance of the growing season in a similar fashion to the women in June of each year.

The informal sector on Aitutaki is small but important in terms of household economies and for women. There are no roadside stalls selling fruit and vegetables or handicrafts. There is a small informal rental market (see note on Appendix 1). There is a locally managed but irregular trade (in terms of availability of supply) of rito (finely-woven bleached young coconut frond) hats. One or two women make ‘ei [floral garlands] each day for sale (NZ$2 each) to the hotels for the staff to give to their incoming guests. The flowers are gathered from the women's own gardens as well as those of neighbours. Flowers such as tipani [frangipani] bougainvillea and the indigenous tīare Maori [gardenia] are used to make the ‘ei. The latter flower is so important in the local culture that women aim to grow as many of these shrubs as possible in their home gardens so that the flowers are available for members of dance group to make floral head garlands.

An area within the informal sector that is not linked to supplying tourists with goods and services is the sale of cooked food by several women to primary and high school pupils at 10 a.m. and at 12 noon each school day. These foods include round doughnuts (some cream-filled), slabs of chocolate cake and hot dogs (sausages encased in batter and sold on a stick) sold at 10 a.m. and slices of pizza and lasagna which are sold at 12 noon. Some women also sell plates of cooked food at the market on Saturday mornings. Another economic activity that is also not offered to tourists are the ‘Housie’ [Bingo] games, which are an important cash earner for several village committees. Money is won and lost, mainly by women, in these games that operate four nights a week, each night in a different village hall. The profits are banked and used to improve the facilities in village halls and to buy equipment such as motor mowers and weed cutters that can be hired by villagers.

Parallel lives in ‘Paradise’

The needs of the tourists and their activities are met by a small proportion of the population. The total adult population of the people of Aitutaki do not function as a corporation of ‘hosts’ although they are the owners and custodians of the island and the islets in the lagoon. Specific ownership of pieces of land is assigned in law to members of extended families who can prove historical and genealogical links to them. They see their custodianship being eroded by decisions made off-island.

The construction of the Pacific Resort on an area adjacent to the lagoon at Rapae, in 1998, generated some local resentment because the company was able to lease Cook Islands’ Government land. This area was fronted by a favourite picnic and swimming area. Since the hotel was built, access to the beach has been denied to locals unless they
are paying customers of the hotel. The recent acceleration of building in Aitutaki, particularly of the small clusters of stand-alone units, has revived the feelings of resentment about the taking over of land (particularly of a motu) and generated a number of concerns.

These concerns permeate the three parallel socio-economic worlds/situations on Aitutaki. There are those whose livelihood is directly derived from their everyday contact with tourists, the local employees of the two hotels and resorts, and the small business owner-managers and their employees (mainly women). As local residents some members of this group (mainly the employees) participate in the social life of the wider community.

All but two of the twenty Cook Island-born owner/operators were returned migrants. The first of the self-catering establishments began operation in 1990, having previously been a family home used when the New Zealand based family returned to Aitutaki for holidays. The returnees had lived and worked overseas for a considerable number of years, either in New Zealand or in Australia. The returned emigrants had invested their overseas savings in their business, but in most cases had also taken out bank loans to expand or improve their properties. Their previous work experiences tended to be in the manufacturing and service sector. Only two couples had experienced paying for accommodation overseas. When these people had travelled within Australia, New Zealand or in the USA, it was for the purpose of visiting relatives, rather than as sightseers.

The second group, the majority of the population, make a living as small-scale farmers or fishermen, or as previously outlined earn money in the informal economic sector. Some have an indirect connection with tourists, by supplying goods and services (including entertainment, see below) to the tourist enterprises, but their social energies are directed within and to the local community. A small group of individuals are employed in various central government offices and agencies and by the local island council. There are also local people who have little interest in or reason to make a connection with tourists. Finally, there are the tourists, the manu’iri, the ‘foreign birds’, who briefly visit the island.

Entertainment provided for tourists is a source of casual earnings for some men, women, teenagers and children. Six local dance groups, supported by a large group of drummers and singers, perform at the two luxury hotels and two bars, following a buffet evening meal. These dance groups take it in turns to perform at the two hotels and at three bars. The women, who comprise the chorus and help with costume changes, are mostly housewives, but the men are likely to be wage earners. In 2004 the dance groups earned NZ$150 a night (P. and T. Mose pc) These payments are banked by the organisers of the groups and then shared among the drummers and dancers, after costs for transport etc. is deducted. An individual dancer is likely to receive cNZ$150 at the end of the year. The dance presentations are seen as an important aspect of cultural maintenance and are therefore taken very seriously. The emphasis among the participants was not so much on
the earnings, but on the pride and pleasure in performing an aspect of their culture to the best of their abilities.

The hotels also use the services of four string bands (three or four male ukelele and guitar players) and of three other music groups (which usually comprise a guitarist and an electronic keyboard player) several nights a week. The string bands and music groups earn NZ$70 to NZ$150 per night depending on the venue (P. Mose Jr., pers. comm.). The string bands usually only play for an hour or so while guests at the hotel restaurants are eating dinner. Music groups play for longer. Most of the younger members of the string bands and the members of the music groups have day jobs. A ‘bush beer’ drinking club, once only patronised by local men, is now one of the places visited during a Friday night bar crawl organised by one of the local transport providers. The tourists pay a fee to become temporary club members.

The people of Aitutaki maintain their interpretation of the classic Polynesian-style daily gifting and exchange of foods and labour services between kin and between friends who operate as quasi-kin. This exchange process, linked to the traditional values of aro’a [love, loving kindness, and generosity expressed in a number of ways] and mana. Mana encapsulates concepts of cultural identity, self-respect and social prestige. The floral neck garlands (‘ei) with which Cook Islanders greet and farewell visiting friends, relatives and groups, such as members of church groups from other islands and from abroad, are a prime symbol and expression of aro’a as well of local identity.[6] Aro’a and mana are particularly exemplified in the hosting of feasts for tere [travelling party] groups, whether in church-generated village interchanges or the hosting and feeding of church and family groups temporarily visiting from overseas for say a conference, wedding or funeral, but also in the inter-village visitations of migrants and locals during the Christmas holiday period.

An important form of Cook Island internal tourism is the hospitality is frequently extended to Cook Island visitors, either from other islands or expatriate families home for a visit. In recent years there has been a notable increase in visitors from the other southern Cook Islands to Aitutaki for special occasions such as the Easter volleyball tournaments. In 2004 sixty teams of volley ball players visited Aitutaki for tournament. These visits were facilitated by Air Rarotonga which advertises special fares for the Easter inter-island visits. Most of the visitors were hosted by local families. Church youth groups regularly visit the different southern islands and well fed and cared for.

The Cook Island Christian Church (CICC), with pastors resident in each of the villages, are another important focus of people's interest, providing spiritual nurture and social activities as well as requiring financial and labour contributions.[7] The CICC, in particular, has a strong emphasis on Sabbath keeping. This emphasis has caused some conflict in the past between locals and tour providers such as Air Rarotonga who wished to offer flights and tours seven days a week. The churches are also an important generator of funds for the local economy through the solicitation of money for building
improvement projects from Cook Island migrants in countries such as New Zealand and Australia.

The community of people living on Aitutaki, as with people living on other islands in the nations of the South Pacific, take pride in their ethnic identity, history and surviving traditions. However, they are also global citizens, particularly attuned to life in New Zealand and, more recently, in Australia. Most households have relatives living in New Zealand or Australia or, to a lesser extent, in the United States of America, mainly Hawaii. Many families have holidayed in New Zealand or have gone there for special family occasions. Their air travel is funded from their local earnings sometimes supplemented by bank loans, but their living expenses are covered by their host families. The visiting family groups and members of church, dance and sporting groups usually take presents of local foods and artefacts with them as gifts to their hosts. At the end of these visits people return with household goods, including domestic and electronic appliances, with CDs and DVDs, and, particularly in the case of young people, new clothing. These trips are not seen as tourism as the people do not specifically go to New Zealand or Australia to view scenery or built attractions.

As in all countries that foster a tourist industry, the visitors are members of a distinct class or set whose lives briefly intersect with some local residents. Numerous contributors to the academic literature on tourism have emphasised and deployed an assumed greater impact on people’s social lives in small-scale communities than on those of say, city-dwellers in New Zealand or Australia. However, because of their experience of colonisation and of emigration, the presence of papa’a (European) tourists is not novel or strange.

The limited amount of interaction between most locals and tourists was also noted by Tracey Berno during her field research in the Cook Islands in the early 1990s. She has stated:

*Inexpensive holiday packages have primarily attracted tourists whose main interests have been “sun, sand, and surf”. Many do not seek intimate contact with Cook Islanders, nor do they need to venture from the more popular tourist locales. (1996: 96)*:

From time to time there is a regular and significant meshing and overlap of the three categories or groups of people on Aitutaki. However, on the whole, for the majority of local residents, the contact with tourists is restricted to a friendly smile as they pass visitors on the main road, each riding mopeds. They are inadvertent and otherwise passive ‘hosts’, part of the local colour, on display because the island is their place of residence. The tourists are short-term visitors whose presence, eccentricities and gushing praise of the island’s beauty are noted and accepted but not likely to be emulated.

One occasion during which locals and small groups of tourists briefly and superficially interact is during the Sunday morning service of the Cook Islands Christian Church in...
Arutanga, the administrative centre of Aitutaki. Since the congregation had a new hall erected in 2002 (the costs of which were mostly met by Aitukai people living in New Zealand and Australia) they have made tourists welcome to their morning service each Sunday. Groups of women from different villages on the island take it in turns to serve a lavish morning tea following the service. The language used is the church service is predominantly Cook Island Maori, but the visitors who have been collected from hotels and other accommodation are welcomed in English.

The church elders who take it in turns to read the church notices to the congregation, offer the welcome, usually explain the meaning of the local greeting, *Kia Orana*, as ‘May you have long life’. The visitors are then encouraged to ‘enjoy their stay on Aitutaki’ and they are encouraged to publicise Aitutaki: ‘When you go home please tell other people about Aitutaki’. In spite of the fact that no copies of the church hymnal or an order of service are made available to enable the visitors to participate, most stay in the church for the duration of the service. Services usually take an average of an hour and a half and the visitors particularly comment on their enjoyment of the congregation’s singing of Cook Island composed hymns known as *imene tuki*. (This style of part-singing, with sopranos shrilly dominating, accompanied by the basso singing of men plus bangs or thumps (*tuki*) or grunts made by the men, is unique to the Cook Islands). The food items served at morning tea are those valued as special by local people. These include home-baked scones [known as ‘biscuits’ in the USA], pancakes, and banana and chocolate cakes. Platters of local fruit are usually provided. While the visitors are eating and drinking tea, coffee or bottled fruit cordial, some aspects of Aitutaki missionary history may be explained to them. Some of the more sophisticated members of the congregation may chat to the tourists, but generally any conversations are initiated by a visitor rather than by a local.

Changes in attitudes to tourism

The recent increase in the number of accommodation units and projected plans for future construction, have had a noticeable effect on local opinions on the value and usefulness of tourism. There had been no public meeting of Aitutaki people in 2003 to enable them to discuss the implications of the accelerated building program or the possibility of at least one more luxury hotel being constructed in the future. A meeting was finally held with a New Zealand-based tourism consultant in late May 2004. This meeting was one in the series of consultations held on ten islands. The conclusion that emerged from these consultations was that “… there is no clear vision for the future of tourism [in the Cook Islands]” (Burnford 2004:1).

The consultant recommended a differentiation of the Cook Islands from other Pacific islands tourist destinations. He suggested a new marketing approach could emphasise and encourage ‘geo-tourism’ (a combination of ‘ethnic’ tourism and eco-tourism). While this is an estimable concept the questions have to be asked: ‘What distinctive aspects of traditional culture can be readily observed, apart from the wearing of garlands (‘ei’); and
‘What distinctive aspects of the local environment are in their natural state (apart from the lagoon and some of the islets in the lagoon). As with most other contemporary Pacific island communities, what is on display is a way of life in which many familiar aspects of modernity such as styles of clothing worn by the local people, the forms of transport, the house and public building designs are evident, but in a modified tropical landscape.

Much of the traditional artefact production by men has disappeared due to a lack of transmission of skills by members of previous generations. This has been replaced by the work of some local artists and carvers who produce works of variable authenticity and quality. In addition, during 19th century when Cook Islanders converted to Christianity, many artefacts, such as statues of divinities, were collected by the missionaries. Many of these were destroyed but some were sent to London and sold to museums in Great Britain. The Museum in Rarotonga, managed by the Ministry of Culture and Development, has displays of reproductions of some of these artefacts.

Feelings of dissent and discontent about development plans for Aitutaki tended to be expressed in conversations among like-minded people. Another significant outlet has been ‘Letters to the Editor’ published in the three newspapers produced in Rarotonga and circulated throughout the islands. The concerns expressed were not about the social and cultural impacts of tourism. The numbers of tourists who visit Aitutaki for one or more days are not great, compared to say the numbers who visit Rarotonga. The behaviour of tourists or the styles of clothing worn by tourists were also not seen as being of great interest or concern or as likely influences on local youth. The concerns of many people on Aitutaki are more personal. Individuals express a range of feelings from peevishness to helplessness, and even feelings of betrayal on the part of some members of the community.

The continuing imposition on Aitutaki of central government ideas linked to the view that tourism-led economic development as being good for the whole nation is strongly resented by many on Aitutaki. The Government and the members of the Island Council, who have a duty of care for the island and its people, are seen as not having fulfilled their responsibilities for the communal good. There was a concern that local rights of ‘ownership’ of the land and the island environment are being eroded. There were also concerns about the ability of the infrastructure of the island to cope with extra people, and particularly the on-going supply of adequate quantities of piped water to households.

There were also concerns about the likely deleterious effects on the lagoon environment if the planned hotel was constructed; of the possibility of the limitation of access of local people to popular beaches and picnic spots; and the possible inflationary effects on land values. The quality and aesthetic appeal of the new resort constructions is varied. Additionally, as in Rarotonga, ribbon development is beginning to block public access to beaches and generally offer an unappealing vista from the lagoon waters. The piecemeal
development of accommodation seemed to be occurring with little reference to environmental issues and the protection of the coastal landscape.

There is also cynicism about the likely profitability of any new or future accommodation. Additionally, most of the proprietors of existing businesses who were interviewed expressed concern about the competition when few were experiencing high occupancy rates. There was concern about how leaseholds were being purchased and sometimes sold on to investors, both Cook Island and foreign. Officially and traditionally, land cannot be sold. Pieces of land, ranging in size from half-an-acre to several acres can be leased to a family or non-family member for sixty years, provided a majority of the members of an extended family [kainga] who live on the island agree. The acceleration of building has caused a concomitant acceleration in land registrations by Aitutaki residents. The registration process begins with a meeting of extended family members. This meeting is conducted under the supervision of the local Registrar of Land.

Prior to the meeting the Registrar checks the public records of the Cook Islands Land Court, to confirm that the names of the leaseholders had been recorded. The Registrar is responsible for keeping succession claims up to date. That is, as families increase in size, the parents register the children as potential landholders. A person fostered by a family (known as a ‘feeding child’) may also lodge an application for a lease, although the leasing of land to non-cognatic kin is not a practice approved by everyone. The Registrar keeps minutes of the landholders’ meeting and will accept the vote of the majority to transfer the land. However, if some members strongly dissent from this the case will go to be judged in sittings of the Cook Island Land Court in Aitutaki.

The would-be lessee has to state whether the intended use of the land is for building a family home or for agricultural or commercial purposes. The former is the most common form of land transfer. The lease can be reviewed within five or fifteen years. Originally, the payment by a resident of Aitutaki for such a lease was NZ$1.00 per annum, but it customarily understood that outsiders would pay more. It is very difficult to find out the truth about just how much money has changed hands for some pieces of land or whether payment has been in cash and in kind – eg a car or motor bicycle. There is a great deal of local speculation and gossip regarding payments that have been made for leases by non-resident Cook Islanders and foreigners. For example, it has been publicly suggested that one lessee obtained half-acre for NZ$20,000; another obtained a half-acre for NZ$40,000. The lease may then be sold on for a higher amount.

Whether the business people involved in the new tourism ventures have built on family land or have obtained land by lease or through sub rosa purchases, they are seen as causing changes to the island environment for their personal benefit. There is also cynicism about the likely profitability of any new or future accommodation. Additionally, most of the proprietors of existing businesses who were interviewed expressed concern about the competition when few were experiencing high occupancy rates.
A recent disturbing development is the writing of new legislation titled the Unit Titles Bill, which is shortly to be heard by the Cook Islands Parliament. The Bill would permit the entrepreneur who wishes to build the third hotel on Aitutaki (and to rebuild a defunct hotel on Rarotonga) to sell each accommodation unit or bungalow in each of the hotels to individuals or to groups of overseas investors. Technically, the owners of the units would not own the piece of land (or the piece of water) on which their unit would stand but the air space above the land. The traditional landowner would be compensated for the lease of the land. The unit owners would be sub-lessees. However, it is unlikely that the traditional landowner would be eventually able to regain the piece of leased land after the period of sixty years because of the capital improvements on it that would be owned by the investor. This proposed legislation elicited a spate of angry letters from people living overseas as well as in the Cook Islands. The entrepreneur seems to be confident that the legislation will go through.

The local feelings of resentment about Government plans for the island's development are not new. In 1995 a large section of the island population expressed their hostility to central government plans to permit flights in and out of Aitutaki on Sundays. The airstrip was occupied by large numbers of individuals and vehicles for days. During the demonstration threats were made to dig up the strip. Ironically, during their school years many of the demonstrators would have been involved in maintaining the airstrip when they had participated in fortnightly sessions to remove weeds from it.

Whether the local business people involved in the new tourism ventures have built on family land or have obtained land by lease or through sub rosa sales for the new complexes, they are seen as causing changes to the island environment for their personal benefit. They have attracted feelings of jealousy [vare’ae] because of their personal prosperity. This jealousy stems in part from a levelling tendency in Cook Island society. Sometimes the success of some of the entrepreneurs is attributed to the fact that they have had European forebears and therefore have less sentimental concerns about any changes to the island.

**Aro’a and mana**

In her writing (1995, 1996) on tourism in four Cook Islands, including Aitutaki, based on an extensive collection of local opinions, Tracy Berno emphasised the fact that tourism had not, at the time of her field studies, noticeably impacted on the maintenance of Cook Island, post-Christian, modified ‘traditional’ values. As previously noted two of the most important social values when Berno did her fieldwork, and today, are those of aro’a and mana. Berno (1995, 1996) examined the importance of these values and their expression in the management by locals of their relationships with tourists. She reported that tourism was viewed as an area where the traditional values relating to hospitality to visitors could be demonstrated.
However, it is clear that in the decade since Berno did her fieldwork the way these values are acted upon has, in the thoughts and actions of the general population of Aitutaki, little application to the hosting of tourists. The shock of the restructuring of the Cook Islands’ Government public service in the mid-1990s still resonates. Many families who felt secure in their reliance on a regular salary from the Government (which may have been supplemented by some subsistence farming), have had to re-assess their way of living. They were not among those who had sufficient capital from savings or redundancy payouts to start up a business nor did they or could they choose to emigrate. Several of the men who still have public service jobs supplement their wages with part-time work as entertainers. There are a considerable number of female-headed households with women of marriageable age who have two or more children. Aro’a becomes even more important as a family- and friendship-sustaining and survival value for those households. None of the long-term proprietors of accommodation for tourists responded to prompts regarding these values, but like business people elsewhere, emphasised they tried to provide a good service that might mean their business would be recommended to others.

Some of the local owners of the small-scale accommodation complexes are less concerned, about the possible construction of a new hotel, than about the increase in their competition. The quality and aesthetic appeal of these new resort constructions, mostly by local entrepreneurs, is varied. Additionally, as in Rarotonga, ribbon development is beginning to block public access to beaches and generally offer an unappealing vista from the lagoon waters. The piecemeal development of accommodation seems to be occurring with little reference to environmental issues and the protection of the coastal landscape.

Two of the four Ariki (hereditary chiefs) of Aitutaki are quite vehement in their opposition to the building of the new hotel. One of these Ariki has written a useful evaluation of a report on the current state of tourism on the island (see Manarangi Tutai Ariki, 2003). She is the owner/manager of a small tourist complex and of accommodation on one of the motu in the lagoon. She is not only concerned about the building of more accommodation, but also about the despoliation of the island environment. She with another, more recently elevated Ariki (male), has voiced her opposition to the members of the Island Council. The inputs of these two people have been heard but ignored. The highest status and therefore mana is assigned to the Ariki whose lineages are linked to notable events in the history of an island, including the early period of missionisation. While the position of Ariki is hereditary it is also an elected one, and the election of any new Ariki has to be approved by the whole House of Ariki, which meets in Rarotonga. It is possible for disaffected members of an Ariki’s lineage to challenge the assignment of a title via the legal system. A titleholder may also be deposed by the fiat of other members of the extended family if that person does not seem to be fulfilling their responsibilities. The mana (spiritual and social power) of Ariki was diminished during the period of New Zealand’s colonial rule and perhaps is less acknowledged these days when the incumbent was simply a member of the community, working as a teacher or as a general store manager. The general community's mana has...
been diminished by the imposition of development plans, whether by the members of the Aitutaki Island Council or by the central government.

Strangely, few people seemed to consider that their chance to change matters might be through the ballot box. A much postponed Parliamentary election was delayed until late in 2004. Two of the Aitutaki candidates were members of the Island Council and had initially approved the plans to build the third luxury hotel. One, already a member of Parliament and a much-respected local business man, was planning to stand as an independent, due to disagreement with the policies of his party. The second candidate who was also an Island Council member was also the Mayor. Both these men were also partners in tourism cruise businesses. The third candidate operates a tourist accommodation complex.

Conclusion

"Ko te ngaru kara ona akau, ka tino te 'enua"
"The wave that meets no reef will damage the land” (Jonassen, 2002:197).

This Cook Island proverb can be interpreted as: ‘If there is no control of our resources (human and natural) our culture will be diminished’. It might be concluded from this discussion that the majority of the people of Aitutaki are not forward-thinking and are simply indulging in envious thoughts about other, more successful people. That is not the case. They have already witnessed and have accepted the erosion of Cook Island identity and culture due to the effects of colonisation and emigration. As the Douglas’s have noted:

Tourism does not occur within a vacuum. Its effects upon a community must be considered within a complex web of political, economic, environmental and historical factors, many of which have been agents of change … Christianity, colonisation, education, urbanisation and the … adoption of cash economies have been affecting Pacific communities … for some 200 years. (Douglas and Douglas, 1996: 49).

Those individuals who discussed the present situation strongly felt the loss of local social power. They felt that their views were not respected. Nevertheless, rather than engaging in social activism most of the people of Aitutaki are focussed on surviving economically while maintaining a facsimile of what they see as the Cook Island way of life. There has been a consolidation of local people’s commitment to maintain and demonstrate aro’a and ariki in their extended families and community as well as to visitors from other islands. There has a concomitant withdrawal of a commitment to extend aro’a to non-Cook Islanders and to non-Aitutakians.

More employment opportunities would be welcome to enable younger people to remain on the island instead of emigrating to Rarotonga or overseas. Whether this would cause
the community to accept the changes that have occurred and will continue to occur is unknown.

Table 1: AITUTAKI – ENTERPRISES UTILISED BY TOURISTS [a]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motel-style</td>
<td>20  [b]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottages</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Rentals</td>
<td>4 (est.) [c]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Restaurants              | 4   [d] |
| Snack Bars/ Fast Foods   | 3   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour Operators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>2   [e]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fishing Trips            | 5   |
| Scuba Diving             | 1   |
| Land Transport           | 2   |
| Car Rentals              | 1   |
| Moped Rentals            | 6   |
| Petrol Stations          | 2   |
| Souvenir Shops           | 2   |
| Apparel (eg Pareu),      |     |
| Clothing, Manchester     | 4   |
| Grocery Stores           | 4   [f] |
| Mixed Business           | 1   [g] |

| E-mail Providers         | 2   |

Other Services Used By Tourists
Aitutaki International Airport
Air Rarotonga office
Post Office
Produce Market (managed by a woman for the Island Council)

Notes:
[a]. The figures given were correct in April, the final month during which data was collected.

[b]. All the motel-style accommodation was self-catering.
[c]. The number of houses available for rent to tourists varies is dependent on whether families have moved overseas for a time and relatives are caring for their property and have permission to use it in this way. There are at least 12 to 20 empty houses on Aitutaki at any one time.

[d]. Excluding those at the hotels. Two of the four also trade as bars.

[e]. One of these, a family-owned business, does transfers of tourists to functions and to Sunday church services.

[f]. Two are in villages some distance from Aratunga and therefore less patronised by tourists than the other two.

[g]. Although this shop is close to the Post Office and other services in the centre of Aratunga township, its operation supplying hamburgers, stationery and some clothing, is not obvious or well advertised.

Endnotes

[1] In 2004 the local perception was that there had been a decrease in the subsequent three years to c.1400 people.

[2] *Nono* (Morinda citrifolia), known elsewhere in the South Pacific as *noni* or *nonu*), is a quick-growing tree which produces a bitter-tasting soft fruit about the size of an apple. The tree originated in India, but was probably one of the plants taken by the ancestors of the Polynesian people to the Pacific islands for it appears to have been part of the traditional *pharmacopoeia* of Polynesia since the first settlements. The history of the expansion of the production of this crop in the Cook Islands and elsewhere in the South Pacific (eg Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga) may also be a boom and bust experience for the growers. Many dramatic claims have been made by locals regarding the healing properties of the fermented and clarified juice and by retailers abroad. Currently quite a lot of *nono* juice is bottled in Rarotonga and sold at the market and in stores on that island. One company in Rarotonga has developed a lucrative export trade in the unbottled juice to Japan where a litre can retail for as much as US$70.

[3] The purpose of the inspection, a relic of the colonial period, is to check whether the house lots are well kept, with all rubbish removed and grassed areas mown, so that there is little opportunity for mosquitoes to breed.

[4] Locals, provided they can pay, are accepted as customers at the hotels. End of year celebrations by women's groups may involve them taking a lagoon cruise or having a lunch at one of the hotels. The women pay a discounted 'local price'. From time to time visiting migrants also go on one of the cruises, eat at one of the hotels or drink at the bars.

[5] My interest in Aitutaki began in New Zealand, when former residents of the island, shared their concerns about what they felt were the radical changes which were likely to occur with the increase in tourism on the island. Their concerns included fears of exclusion from decision-making about the leasing of lands owned by members of their extended families; an assumption that when visiting the island they would be denied access to areas formerly available to all for picnics, swimming and camping; and the possible corruption of local morals by tourists.

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[6] This custom is also part of the welcome which is extended to tourists on their arrival by staff of the hotels and some resorts and by families hosting visiting papa’a [European] friends. Floral garlands that are worn on the head as well as neck garlands are also given to church ministers and to members of visiting church groups on special festive occasions. A head garland is worn by many women and some men every day.

[7] Christianity in the Cook Islands was adopted and adapted. During the 19th century some aspects of cultural life were suppressed but emerged in modified form. Christian doctrines and related concepts, such as ideas about moral behaviours, are embedded in the people’s social and cultural life. Some aspects of morality (eg in relation to sex before marriage) sit more lightly than others on many of the population.

In addition to the CICC other Christian denominations which have a place of worship on Aitutaki, include the Free Congregational Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and an independent Pentecostal group. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), and the Jehovah’s Witnesses also have churches on the island. The latter group does not permit their members to take part in ‘worldly activities’ such as sporting contests or dance performances.

[8] Aitutakian visitors to New Zealand and Australia are likely to take fresh taro, frozen chestnuts [‘i’i], and cooked, frozen pipi [small clams] as gifts for relatives and friends nostalgic for a taste of ‘home’. These foods can be carried into New Zealand and Australia if a certificate is obtained from the Agriculture Department. In contrast, island food tastes are very influenced by migration experiences and visits to New Zealand and Australia. Most of the local grocery shops stock goods predominantly linked to local tastes and needs. One particularly caters for the tastes of tourists, stocking imported fruit and vegetables, and breakfast cereals.

[9] Until their elevation most Cook Island Ariki are not particularly distinguishable in status from other members of the population. Manarangi Tutai Ariki o Vaipaepae-o-Pau, together with her English husband, managed a trade store for many years and now owns and operates a small tourist complex. Another Aitutaki Ariki (male) worked in New Zealand for many years as an unskilled labourer.

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WHALE-WATCHING AND THE COMPROMISE OF TONGAN INTERESTS THROUGH TOURISM

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Introduction

Recent developments in whale-watching tourism in the Pacific and elsewhere have been widely touted as effective mechanisms for economic growth and replacements for the resumption of the consumptive use of whales in the region (Duffus, 1988; Hoyt, 1995, 2000; Orams, 1999, 2002). Indeed, whale-watching tourism is frequently presented as the economic and moral antithesis of whaling, and thus whale-watching advocates systematically preclude development options that include the consumptive use of whales. An anti-whaling, pro-whale-watching stance is also official policy of both Australian and New Zealand governments, the major aid donors in the region. The result is the suppression of discussions about the resumption of whaling in spite of regional food insecurity, balance of payment problems, and nutrition deficits that might be addressed via the resumption of whale consumption. While there is insufficient data to determine if a sustainable harvest of any whale stock is supportable, there is little or no interest among anti-whaling proponents in collecting such data because for many, whaling is a moral, not economic or ecological issue. In this paper I outline the argument for the evaluation of the resumption of whaling as a development option, and suggest that the suppression of any serious debate of this issue is a product of western ethnocentrism and a contemporary form of cultural imperialism.

The Context of Current Conditions

The context of the whaling v whale-watching debate is a history of over-exploitation of the resource. By the time that Kingdom of Tonga joined the moratorium on whaling through a royal decree in the 1970s, the humpback stocks that indigenous whalers relied on were so dangerously depleted this was the only responsible resource management alternative. Indigenous Tongan whaling was not, however, a significant contributor to the catastrophic collapse of the resource. Large international commercial fleets were more directly responsible (Ruhen, 1966). Nonetheless, and regardless of who was responsible, the loss of the whale meat produced for internal consumption by indigenous whalers has had significant consequences for the health of the Tongan economy and the health of...
individual Tongans. Over the last four decades there has been a steady and consistent erosion of Tongan food security, which has in turn contributed to balance of trade problems (Evans et. al., 2001) and an alarming rise in rates of non-communicable disease - especially diet related disease like obesity and adult onset diabetes (Collins et al., 1990; Hodge et. al., 1996; Scragg, 1997). Though not exclusively the result of the end of whaling, there is no question that the loss of whale resources have contributed to these problems, and significantly limited the range of viable responses to these problems that are available to Tongan authorities. In the following section of this paper I provide background data to give a sense of the scope of the situation facing Tongans today.

The Scope of Current Challenges

The contemporary Tongan economy is consistent with a model proposed by Bertram and Watters (1985). In this model the significantly monetised aspects of the economy are derived from labour migration and associated remittances from migrants to their remaining kin, overseas aid donors, and the internal government bureaucracy supported, largely, through these donors. This economic structure is typical of most of the central Pacific region, although Tonga is a particularly extreme example (Evans, 2001). Migration from Tonga into Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America has occurred at such a rate that population levels in Tonga have not changed significantly in the last 20 years. These migrants have shown a remarkable willingness to maintain long-term linkages to friends and family in Tonga as demonstrated through their remittance behaviour (see Evans, 1999; Brown, 1998). This flow of resources back in to Tonga has allowed consumption levels of imported foods to increase without an accompanying level of change in the productivity of the domestic economy. Remittances and aid (but in particular remittances) are underwriting the situation.

Trade in health compromising high-fat imported meats is a significant part of this trade imbalance (just over 10 million pa'anga[1] or 10% of the total value). In 1989 almost 3400 metric tonnes of sausage, mutton flaps, chicken parts, and corned beef were imported and consumed in Tonga. By 1999 this number increased to just under 5600 metric tonnes, amounting to some 56 kilos per person (Evans et. al., 2001). The health consequences of this increase, and a corresponding increase in consumption of simple carbohydrates like refined sugar and flour, have been profound.

The linkage between the cessation of whaling and these developments is not definitive, and certainly the absence of whale meat as a viable alternative source of food is not exclusively responsible for the deteriorating health and economic situation, but it is a contributing factor. This becomes clear when the individual decision-making processes responsible for the macro-level consumption patterns are analyzed. A brief synopsis of a series of papers (Evans et al, 2001, 2002, 2003) produced from a large survey of Tongan consumers will elucidate.
In 1999 over 400 Tongans between the ages of 15 and 80 were surveyed about their attitudes to 35 foods (some traditional and some imported) along 4 axes: preference, perception on nutritional value, frequency of consumption, and perception of availability were measured on 5 point likert scales for each food. Subsequent analyses of this data showed that in spite of the fact that people generally preferred traditional (and healthier) foods and correctly assessed most imported foods as of low nutritional value, they consumed the health compromising foods at relatively high rates. Indigenous foods like fish, taro, and chicken (whole local chicken) were consumed relatively infrequently (about once a week), had a very high preference rating, and a very high (and correct) rating for perception of nutritional value. One the other hand, imported foods like mutton flaps, chicken parts, and bread had half the preference rating and half the perception of nutritional value rating, but where consumed more frequently than their traditional counter parts (see Evans et al, 2001: Fig 2). This pattern held both for these individual foods, and for clusters of traditional and imported foods more generally – indeed, the evidence for this general pattern is definitive. The underlying reason for these dietary practices was availability, both in the sense of having the ability to buy the imported foods at local stores, and in the sense of having the money to do so. Indeed, further analyses of the data showed that people of high socio-economic status tended to consume imported foods more frequently that people of low socio-economic status, and that this was unrelated to preference or perception of nutrition value (Evans et al, 2002).

Possible Policy Responses

Given that people are well aware of the choices they are making in regards to the nutritional values of the foods they are consuming, further nutrition education is not likely to have a significant impact on the situation. It seems likely that the only effective interventions are those that impact availability and price. Following the lead of Fiji, the Tongan authorities have imposed and outright ban on the importation of mutton flaps. While this intervention may run counter to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) managed through the World Trade Organization, it has yet to attract a challenge. The ban only applied to mutton flaps however, and a flood of chicken parts has occurred. Again, a wider ban or tariff might have an effect, but these solutions are contrary to GATT. An alternative solution is to encourage the production of indigenous alternatives. In Tonga, as in most of the small island states of the Pacific, the best sustainable source of high-quality protein is the sea. Marine proteins in the form of fish and marine mammals have the added benefit of being rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, which have well established beneficial effects (see O’Keefe et. al., 2000).

Given Tonga’s history of whaling, the resumption of indigenous whaling seems a logical alternative, but this option has been rejected by Australia and New Zealand, the region’s most important aid donors. The anti-whaling stance of these governments is well known, and reflected in their support of whale-watching as a mutually exclusive alternative economic activity. This position is logically flawed. It has been demonstrated elsewhere
(Moyle and Evans, 2001) that even though whale-watching might, for the purposes of ensuring the sighting of a whale on any given trip, require a larger number of whales than the number required to ensure the health of the stock, there is nonetheless as point at which additional whales have no impact on the chances of a successful whale-watching trip. Leaving aside some of the questionable calculations used by some analysts assessing the value of whale-watching (see Moyle and Evans, 2001), the idea that whale-watching tourism is sustainable and without its own problems in terms of an economic development strategy is also somewhat problematic – or at least there are some challenges. First, as a draw for tourists, whale-watching may be susceptible to competition from operations closer to the source of whale-watching tourism. For example, New Zealand is developing its own whale-watching industry and, as it does so, the draw of whale-watching tourism in small island states like Tonga is diminished. The cost of travel to Tonga relative to whale-watching sites closer to the Australians, New Zealanders, and Americans who form a significant part of the market is problematic.

As a development option for the small island Pacific any form of tourism also suffers from two additional problems. First, tourism generally has a high degree of economic leakage. Money spent by tourists is often for items and services that in turn require imported materials. Secondly, and perhaps more urgently, tourism is an industry highly prone to economic shocks arising from geopolitical disruptions. A coup in Fiji, the attack on the World Trade towers, instability in the airline industry (for example the collapse of Royal Tongan Air in 2004), and a host of other factors and events can seriously impact tourism based economic activity. These are not reasons to cease tourism related development, but they do suggest that a more balanced and diversified strategy is a more sustainable one. If whaling is not allowable on moral grounds, then it is removed from the development mix regardless of ecological conditions. Is this defensible?

Assuming a sufficiently large whale population (which is contentious)[4] there is no particular reason that whaling and whale-watching should be exclusive of one another. Positions around whaling are highly charged and culturally bound as one might well expect. In New Zealand and Australia, whaling and whale-watching are perhaps mutual exclusive, but they are so because of the arguments and campaigns of protectionist minded conservationists have been successful. There is nothing whatever wrong with this position, except when it is applied to or imposed on other peoples. If, as is suggested by continuing efforts to have a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary declared at the International Whaling Commission, an absolute anti-whaling stance is to be adopted in the Pacific (New Zealand, 2001), the question must then be asked – who will bear the lost opportunity costs, and who will bear the continuing burden of diet related disease?

Conclusion

Nature tourism is sometimes proposed as non-destructive/non-consumptive alternative form of development. While this may sometimes be the case, the promotion of whale-
whaling in Tonga has been accompanied the vilification of whaling (an activity which has a long and productive history in Tonga). The current epidemic of non-communicable disease among Tongans is directly attributable to transformations in diet, which are themselves related to globalisation and the substitution of traditional Tongan foods for low-cost, high-fat, low-quality, health compromising foods. The import of these foods is a major contributor to a number of adverse population health trends, and some significant national economic ills as well. Whaling, an activity that has been made almost unthinkable by whale-watching tourism development and NGO and Australian and New Zealand government opposition, could contribute to solutions to the health and economic ailments of contemporary Tonga. As economically valuable as whale-watching may be, the calculation of the costs of not whaling should be added to the discussion if western regional powers like Australia and New Zealand insist on imposing their own moral values on Tongan economic development options.

Endnotes:

[1] One Tongan pa’anaga is currently (April 8 2005) worth $.52 US - it has been falling steadily for the past decade. April 8 1996 it was worth $.81 US.


[3] In the sense that there is no evidence to suggest that the current humpback whale stocks are sufficient to allow a sustainable harvest of any size. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that the population is recovering, but an adequate population assessment is yet to be done.

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CULTURALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH & FACILITATION

Active Development Projects with Small Island Cultures

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Abstract

This paper outlines an approach to community-based research that I have developed along with my colleague Denis Crowdy and various postgraduate students at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. We have named this approach Culturally Engaged Research and Facilitation – initialised as CERF[1]. We developed and deployed CERF in our interaction with communities on Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, the Whitsunday Islands[2] and – as Dan Bendorps’s paper elsewhere in this volume discusses – Rapa Nui (Easter Island). While we have based CERF on interactions with small island cultures (hence my presentation at this conference) we also contend that, with modifications, it is more widely applicable. While we do not claim that there is anything particularly novel about individual elements of CERF, we would argue that our advocacy of it as a coherent approach is distinctive.

From its outset, CERF was consciously conceived as an activist project. One of the more welcome developments in anthropology, ethnomusicology (and linguistics) over the last two decades has been the combination of traditional forms of scholarly research with community-orientated and/or community-beneficial outcomes. CERF locates itself within an essentially similar frame of reference but borrows its political inflection from a different context. One foundational point is the application of a Green politics to culture. CERF is premised on the assertion that just as it is important to maintain biodiversity in (and through) diverse local habitats, it is important to maintain cultural diversity and distinct local heritages. This is not simply a restatement of 1970s’ pre-occupations with media-imperialism, nor more recent concern with the impact of globalism (although it is congruent with these); it is also a more local-regional reading that recognises micro-differences as important.

Having established a Green paradigm as a basic referent, it should be made clear that CERF acknowledges that forms of culture are far more fluid and volatile than biological species and that heritage is far less fixed and able to be ‘restored’ than local biological
habits. Here CERF takes a cue from the founding principles of the quadrennial Festivals of Pacific Arts (http://www.festival-pacific-arts.org/hisuk.htm). The FPAs were established to preserve and promote traditional cultures simultaneously with their development. The emphasis here is not so much on a purist ‘freezing’ and protection of traditional cultures as a maintenance of the old along with the new.

CERF retains a major element of traditional academic research in that scholarly documentation and analysis of culture is regarded as a primary and essential part of its project. In common with more progressive developments of other disciplines it also advocates a shift to thinking of members of local cultures as collaborators rather than research subjects. As other researchers have found, this approach has major benefits all round. Collaborative research is a reciprocal, engaged and interactive form that can prove far more productive than passive observation. Yet it also raises an immediate question. It is clearly not enough for the researcher to ask someone to collaborate with them in undertaking their research. The collaborative aspect requires consideration of what the collaborator wants. In this regard, CERF aims to be enabled by (and is reflective of) the needs, desires (and sometimes unintended stimuli) provided by collaborators. These are not simply those that exist fully formed and ready to be asked of the CERF researcher - they are also ones that can be stimulated and formed through discussion of what the CERF researcher can realistically offer.

In the case of our work with small island communities, academic articles, books and PhDs formed one component of a series of collaborative activities. With these texts as one of our identified initial areas of interest we have also undertaken community requested activities including:

a) a wide range of field and studio recordings
b) recording format transfers and re-masterings
c) research and re-location of lost recordings
d) packaging and release of recordings
e) funding and organisational help with song contests & concerts
f) promotion of local performers overseas

and
g) provision of various professional advice and advocacy services.

While we are not claiming any originality in contributing these (as researchers from various fields have provided similar ‘extended services’ to other communities) it is
pertinent to note that the various activities I have just outlined go beyond those usually expected of a researcher and occupy a niche more usually filled by a community arts worker. This is not simply incidental, it merits consideration of the ethics involved. Specifically, to what (if any) extent is it legitimate to ‘interfere’ in local culture - that is, to encourage and/or facilitate developments that may not have occurred without external intervention?

As will be apparent, CERF workers are intrusive. But it is pertinent to consider the string of cultural outsiders who have exercised a powerful influence on the small island communities we have worked with. Outsiders such as settlers, whalers, whalers’ wives, missionaries, educators, visiting artists etc. (not to mention various external media forms) have all played an important role in developing the music and dance culture of island communities. From this perspective, such island communities are not isolated, pristine environments. Rather, they are localities within a global matrix that experience and engage with cultural change as part of their dynamic. Heritage is here seen within the framework of the UNESCO 2002 Year for Cultural Heritage formation, as something that “can develop new objects and put forward new meanings as it reflects living culture rather than an ossified image of the past” (UNESCO, 2002: online). To state this is not however to embrace all change and stimulus. The project of the Pacific Arts Festivals can be seen to embrace development but also to adopt a simultaneous politics of protection and preservation.

Along with the earlier introduction of Christianity and the imposition of colonial power, late 20th and early 21st Century globalism (and its regional fractals) has had a highly significant impact on local Pacific cultures. It can be seen to have spread as a dual form, as both specific industrial imperialism (through conscious attempts to destabilise and penetrate local markets to its advantage) and through the indiscriminate ‘collateral’ impact of internationalisation in general (GATT, the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs being a prime example).

Compared to these massive forces, CERF workers are minor players. Their influence is dependent on various factors, chief amongst which is the degree to which they establish relationships of trust with communities and find collaborators. Assessment of the CERF worker’s success and/or the appropriateness of their actions and outcomes is – of course – highly complex. Whereas there is no requirement for globalism to be anything but indiscriminate in its impact; the CERF worker is accountable on several levels. Most importantly, they are responsible and answerable to the community. This characterisation only gets us so far though, since communities are inevitably diverse, with various factions, and various concepts of cultural purity, integrity (and micro-personal perceptions of these). In these regards, CERF is far more risky and problematic than conventional research, whose confessed distance and non-disruption of its object of study gives it distinct (if often dubious) rhetorical armour.

Given this, CERF requires a broad agenda to orientate its workers and their projects. As
identified and formulated by us in the regional interactions I have referred to, these comprise:

1) Methodological, contextual and precedential study – This is the familiar territory of academic training, the literature study and consideration of methodologies.

2) Possession of relevant skills/access to relevant resources and expertise – Intellectual training is not on its own sufficient to ensure the effectiveness of CERF enterprises, other skills and access to equipment and facilities are also essential.

3) Project design – This involves being able to formulate and modify project design with regard to the perceptions and suggestions of the communities involved. It also depends on:

4) The ability to acquit project design and/or to sustain continuing project development – These require the CERF worker to ensure that they can acquit the project they design and agree to undertake.

5) Returning produced materials/ensuring circulation of materials – There are various levels to this. At its most basic, this involves the provision of scholarly publications to individuals and community resource centres but more importantly, it involves the provision of what might be considered ‘byproduct’ by the researcher - word processed copies of various accounts, transcribed cultural texts, audio/visual recordings etc. to various members of communities.

6) Producing locally accessible and useful materials – In addition to written and/or audio-visual material aimed at a scholarly audience, the CERF worker should also aim to present their research to communities in various appropriate formats, through talks, accessibly written papers, locally-orientated publications etc. presented in appropriate style(s) (and/or language[s]).

7) Assistance with the publication/presentation of cultural work by local producers – In parallel with 6), the CERF worker should assist the public presentation and circulation of cultural work in a manner that is advantageous for the cultural producers concerned.

8) Access to funding/funding knowledge networks capable of acquitting the above – Aspects 4-7 all require funding and resource assistance and it is a pre-requisite of any CERF activity that the worker should have access to either (and ideally both) designated funding schemes and/or institutional funding assistance for CERF activities. Such provision should be a pre-requisite for any CERF project (not something that a CERF worker should be expected to conjure as a test of ingenuity or undertake as part of a research rite-of-passage).

9) Commitment and ability to impart skills and facilitate autonomous production and
development – The essential corollary of the CERF worker’s involvement as an external agent is that they communicate and convey as many of their skills and knowledges to the local community as possible to ensure that local, self-initiated projects can develop along with those the CERF worker has been involved in.

CERF work is essentially interventionary in that it involves itself in stimulating and facilitating cultural activity. But one of its central aims is to empower the community to develop autonomously (rather than slip into a relation of dependence on the worker). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that CERF is not simply a package that can be delivered, it is one that requires servicing (in both senses of the word); periodic upgrades (of technology, knowledge and training); and also benefits from being informed by the experiences of communities and initiatives in other regions. In these regards, geographically isolated small island cultures are no differently placed than any geographically located community elsewhere. The ideal is a mixture of as much locally accessible and autonomously used facilities as possible with as much access to external facilities and equipment as is necessary. Rather than dependency, we need to imagine a global grid of resources and communications that communities can access, share and dialogue within.

For more politically progressive researchers, many of the arguments contained in this paper will be part of an increasingly assumed ‘common sense’ ethical framework for practical research. Few researchers would be prepared to admit to simply latching on to informants and communities primarily in order to extract knowledge and then use that nutrition to further academic careers - far fewer still would publicly defend such a position (even within terms of a rhetoric of the virtues of knowledge gathering and theorisation as worthwhile things-in-themselves).

What is still prevalent however, is an assumption that the CERF components I’ve identified should be something that emerge as a ‘gift’ – a form of beneficence – from the committed researcher to a deserving (ie ‘compliant’ and [ideally] grateful) community. The model here is of the religious missionary or altruist doing ‘good works’. As should be immediately apparent, such a model is so untenable as to be offensive. Conventional researchers and CERF workers alike are involved in remunerated or grant assisted professional activities that require the input and assistance of the communities they target. In this regard, a further category needs to be added to the CERF agenda:

10) The ability to communicate the nature of CERF activity is in such a manner as to demystify and enable it.

In terms of all of the above, my colleagues and I would argue that it is a fundamental ethical responsibility of universities and research and arts funding organisations to affirm and support CERF’s model of engaging with and facilitating cultural communities.

As should be apparent, CERF is a radical idealistic project in the current intellectual,
educational and cultural climate of most developed capitalist countries. In the early 21st Century, ‘economically rationalist’ notions developed in the 1980s have come to dominate research policy and funding, particularly in the West, to the extent that any alternative approaches are openly denigrated and disadvantaged by national, regional and institutional bureaucracies – choked as ‘deviant’, dismissed as ‘naïve’ and disparaged at every turn. With a few exceptions, CERF activities continue to be largely dependent on its workers’ successful exploitation of niches within institutional and research bureaucracies - and an extension of their research work into collaborative activities at one remove from their principal professional activities. Commendable as this might be, it must also be fundamental to CERF’s broader project for it to seek and obtain firmer and more facilitated institutional bases. Hopefully forums such as the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative – which identifies CERF-type activities as core to its project (www.sicri.org) and the contacts and networks that will emerge from it can begin to facilitate this.

Thanks to the communities of Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island and the Whitsunday Islands; and to Jonas Baes, Rebecca Coyle, Dan Bendrups, Denis Crowdy, Junko Konishi, Danny Long and Don Niles for their various assistances in developing the concept of CERF and the manner in which it is summarised in this paper.

End Notes:

[1] Which, using some pronunciation licence, we usually orally express as “SURF”.

[2] Details of CERF work on Norfolk Island are detailed in various sections of Hayward (2006); on Lord Howe Island in Hayward (2002: 117-121); and in the Whitsundays in Hayward (2001: 167-188).

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WHAT LEAVES A MARK SHOULD NO LONGER STAIN

Progressive erasure and reversing language shift activities in the Ryukyu Islands

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1. Introduction

Language as a resource is always quick at hand for the formation of national identities. Japan is a case in point (Lee, 1996; Oguma, 1998; Osa, 1998; Tanaka et al., 1997; Yasuda, 2000). However, unlike Anderson’s (1991) view that language lay ready as a resource to establish nations as imagined communities, national languages do not come into existence by themselves. Japanese as a national language (kokugo) was not ‘out there’, waiting to be used for the definition of the Japanese nation. National languages are in the same way as the nation ideological constructs. The relationship between the two is dialectic. In creating a national language, language modernisers have to respond to various requirements modernisation processes bring along. Language ideology plays a pivotal role thereby. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1991), Eagleton (1991) and Thompson (1984; 1990) the study of language ideology is conceived here as an investigation into origin and effect of beliefs about language structure and use as well as the way in which these beliefs are promoted and spread beyond the social groups whose interests they serve. Since language is a commodity shared among all members of a speech community, it becomes the prime medium of ideological conflict and province of power struggles. The study of language ideology has therefore to account for (1) the processes in which ideology is created from dominant groups and (2) for the effects it takes on those whose interests are not recognised in these processes. This paper discusses aspects of the latter point, ie effects of Japanese language modernisation on the linguistic situation in the Ryukyu Islands.

The Ryukyu Islands are located between Japan's most southern main island Kyushu to the north and Taiwan to the south. Based on the criteria of mutual intelligibility, five language varieties can be ascertained, from north to south: Amami Oshima, Okinawa, Miyako, Yaeyama and Yonaguni. Ryukyuan and Japanese originate from the same parent language but split at some point between the 3rd and the 7th century (Hattori, 1954). The common genealogy led Japanese scholars of national linguistics (kokugogaku) to claim that Ryukyuan was a greater dialect (dai-hogen) of the national language (kokugo), the other greater dialect being Japanese (Tojo, 1927; 1938). Classification of Ryukyuan as a
greater dialect reflects attempts to provide Japan with one unifying language in order to define the nation via language (Koyama, 2003). This serves as a reminder that 'dialect' is an emic category. It relies on various criteria such as ethnicity, language genealogy, language typology, unshared linguistic innovations, orthography and mutual intelligibility. The gap between Ryukyuan and Japanese is considerable. None of the varieties of Ryukyuan allows for mutual intelligibility with any variety of Japanese. Therefore the present paper follows the convention set forth in indexes of world languages (e.g. Grimes, 2000; Herbermann, 1997; Klose, 1987; Ruhlen, 1987; Voegelin, 1997) where Ryukyuan is treated as a group of languages rather than a greater dialect. A unitary language such as the term Ryukyuan might suggest does not exist since we are dealing with unroofed vernacular languages. The term 'Ryukyuan' is merely used for the sake of brevity here.

The Ryukyu Islands formed a unified kingdom from the 15th century onwards until they were forcibly assimilated into the Japanese nation state in the aftermath of the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Between 1872 and 1879, various measures referred to as the Ryukyu dispensation (Ryukyu shobun) were taken by the Japanese central government in order to enforce assimilation to the Japanese mainland (hondo). The opinion of Ryukyuan leadership was never consulted in this process. Before the Ryukyu dispensation, Ryukyuans had not developed a consciousness of being Japanese. This was due to cultural and linguistic differences, the formal existence of an independent kingdom, the vast Chinese influences on various fields and the fact that the islands had been exploited in a colony-like way by the Japanese Satsuma Domain (today Kagoshima Prefecture) from the early 17th century onwards (Kerr, 1958). With the inclusion of the Ryukyu Islands into the Japanese nation state, culturally and linguistically different people were incorporated into the Japanese nation.

The Japanese assimilation policy which was launched from the 1880s onwards changed the linguistic situation on the islands. It led to a decline of the local languages. As an effect, their future is endangered today (Grimes, 2000) and active attempts to reverse language shift are necessary to secure their survival. The present paper discusses language shift and attempts of reversing language shift. It is argued that a full understanding of language shift is necessary for the development of successful measures to reverse language shift.

2. Progressive erasure

Tsitsipis (1998; 2003) has proposed an approach for treating language shift which places emphasis on the fact that the consequences of ideologically driven language change are permanently reinterpreted as evidence of the ideology's validity. His approach of progressive erasure is helpful in demonstrating how declining languages are exposed to an ever increasing extent to pressures from the dominating language, in our case Standard Japanese. The progressive erasure of a language involves four stages: fragmentation, marginalisation, sublimation and subordination.
(1) Fragmentation processes are characterised by a narrowing of a language or language variety to restricted functions. In the course of a language's fragmentation, cultural and linguistic coherence is swept away, or in the words of Tsitsipis (2003:550): "The indexical totality [...] between linguistic and extralinguistic order is fragmented."

(2) Marginalisation refers to processes in which the subordinate status brought about as a result of fragmentation is reproduced. Tsitsipis (2003:552) analyses the switch from Arvanitika10 to Greek in Arvanitika-Greek contact situations as an instance of Arvanitika marginalisation. It is naturally assumed that Arvanitika speakers have to provide for language accommodation of Greek monolinguals. As we will see below, marginalisation processes are not restricted to matters of language choices in contact situations alone but can be observed on all levels of linguistic description.

(3) Sublimation refers to phenomena in which a language or language variety is decontextualised from its unmarked functions. As an effect, specific language behaviour ceases to be regarded as normal and inevitably foregrounds specific connotations. In short, the language becomes marked. The concept of markedness is here understood in its most general sense. That is to say, language structure and use which regarded as neutral and is therefore expected is unmarked while everything which deviates from such expectations is marked.

(4) Subordination is the final phase in the progressive erasure process. It refers to the stage at which dominated communities find themselves in a position where they can no longer question the hegemonic imposition of the dominating culture. Subordination is the point of no return.

To summarise, the approach of progressive erasure emphasises two points: (1) erasure processes must be assessed as multilayered and reciprocal, and (2) the ideological views accompanying the erasure processes are validated by the effects of progressive erasure. In other words, ideology turns into reality which confirms, to come back full circle, ideology.

2.1. Evidences of fragmentation

Fragmentation in Ryukyuan was caused by three developments closely linked to modernisation: administrative reforms, the emergence of news reporting and modern literature, and the start of compulsory school education. After the Ryukyu dispensation, Japanese became the sole and undisputed language of administration in the Ryukyu Islands. 1879 saw a complete reorganisation of administration, education and executive organisations. In none of these institutions was the use of Ryukyuan ever considered. As an effect, Japanese came to serve as the acknowledged resource for written language, starting from official publications, stretching over to newspapers, books, periodicals and public signs (Matsumori, 1995:40). What is more, Japanese came to be used for modern functions while Ryukyuan was restricted to matters considered less important, if not irrelevant.
The establishment of local newspapers such as the Ryukyu Shinpu in 1893, the Okinawa Shinbun 1905 and the Okinawa Mainichi Shinbun in 1908 further advanced the schism in the functional allocation of Ryukyuan and Japanese. Local newspapers in the Ryukyu archipelago were exclusively written in Japanese. Through their publication, Japanese became the language of news coverage, and, by extension, the language of political and economical debate. Fragmentation was furthermore caused by the emergence of modern Ryukyuan literature. Okinawa literature before 1945 was predominantly devoted to the subject of depicting Ryukyuan life and identity. Local newspapers printed these novels as sequels, as it was commonly done at the time throughout Japan. One of the first Ryukyuan works which reached a broader readership was Kushi Fusako's 1932 novella *Horobiyuku Rykyu onna no shuki* ('Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman'). While 'Memoirs' depicted genuine Ryukyuan perspectives and experiences, it could only reach a broader readership because it was written in Japanese. To write on modern issues was to write in Japanese.

By far the most influential factor contributing to the fragmentation of Ryukyuan was the establishment of compulsory school education in 1880. Since the gap between Ryukyuan and Japanese did not allow for the use of monolingual teaching materials, the bilingual textbook *Okinawa taiwa* (*Okinawa Conversation*) was compiled. The practice of using bilingual textbooks only ended in 1905 (Motonaga, 1994:131-132). Choice of Japanese in school education impacted on Ryukyuan to a considerable extent since the language was detached from fields of learning. To talk about learned things, not to mention writing about them, was to use Japanese.

While Ryukyuan continued to be used in the private domain for many decades to come, the fragmentation process was to affect language structure and language use of Ryukyuan enduringly. Fragmentation led to processes of marginalisation.

2.2. Evidences of marginalisation

Marginalisation impacts all levels of linguistic description. Only some of them can be briefly discussed here in order to exemplify the range and the effects of marginalisation. Marginalisation is most evident on the lexical level. Partly as an effect of fragmentation, the Ryukyuan lexicon is smaller than that of Japanese. A process of constant borrowing from Japanese is the effect (Hokama, 2001:97; Matsumori, 1995:35; Nagata, 2001[1983]:450). Marginalisation can also be observed on the level of phonology. A study conducted by Nagata (2001[1983]) on Yonaguni Island reveals a penetration of Standard Japanese phonology into the Yonaguni variety. The result is a new Yonaguni phonemic system which consists of a Yonaguni substratum and a Standard Japanese superstratum. In addition to morphology and syntax (Nagata, 2000[1983]), marginalisation manifests in language attitudes. After the implementation of an assimilationist policy in the Ryukyu Islands, a view emerged which perceived Ryukyuan proficiency as a burden rather than an asset (see Kurai, 1987; Kuwae, 1954; Nakamoto, 1886; Narita, 2001a[1960] for instances of such views). The principle rationale for this
unbecoming view of Ryukyuan is that proficiency in Ryukyuan causes interferences with Standard Japanese. Marginalisation also affects the use of Ryukyuan to a great extent. Nagata (1996) reports about language shift in contexts where honorific style (keitai) is required, and points out that Standard Japanese has come to be exclusively used in formal situations were honorific style is obligatory (e.g. wedding receptions). Nagata's study (1996:157) reveals that language shift in casual speech is preceded by the loss of the Ryukyuan honorific language.

According to Nagata, the step from stage one to stage two has been completed. Stage three currently applies to elderly and some middle aged speakers. Younger speakers, however, have moved on to stage four. Language shift in formal contexts is an instance of Ryukyuan marginalisation, and, at the same time, yet another instance of Ryukyuan fragmentation.

No citizen of a modern nation state can solely rely on a fragmented and marginalised language. Accordingly, there is no monolingual speaker of Ryukyuan alive anymore. Ryukyuans are either Ryukyuan-Japanese bilinguals or Japanese monolinguals.

Fragmentation and marginalisation lead to a loss of Ryukyuan proficiency. This is crucial as Ryukyuan increasingly often ceases to be used as a neutral or normal medium of communication. In other words, it is exposed to sublimation processes.

2.3. Evidences of sublimation

Loss of proficiency among speakers born after 1950, the time when natural language transmission was interrupted, led to processes of sublimation. Several field studies based on questionnaires reveal the decontextualisation of Ryukyuan from unmarked functions (e.g. Narita, 2001b[1964]; Teruya, 2001[1976]; Motonaga, 1994). Such studies demonstrate that Ryukyuan serves primarily as a resource of emphasising emotion and familiarity. Motonaga (1994:256), for instance, investigated the contexts in which Ryukyuan is used among school students. His results document Ryukyuan sublimation.

Figure 2: When do you use Ryukyuan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When telling jokes</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When talking casually to good friends</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When speaking ill of someone/something</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When having an argument  26.8%
When being physically hurt  25.6%
When making fun of a person  23.7%
When being surprised  19.2%
When expressing joy  9.3%
When discussing important matters in class  2.4%
On other occasions  1.7%

As we can recognise from these figures, Ryukyuan does not serve as a medium to discuss important matters, but jokes are apparently best when told in Ryukyuan. Sublimated as it is, Ryukyuan can be used in unmarked function only in the most casual of situations among speakers born before 1950. As a result of sublimation, Ryukyuan merely serves as a commodity of a restricted nature. Using Ryukyuan departs from the neutral. Although Ryukyuan language and customs have recently become incorporated in school education in Okinawa Prefecture, it is important to recognise that the Ryukyuan language which now returns to school education after more than 100 years absence is fragmented, marginalised and sublimated. It returns in the form of songs, poetry and tales and not as a language of instruction.

2.4. Subordination

Speakers of Ryukyuan still find themselves in a position where they can successfully question the hegemonic imposition of Japanese language and culture. At present, there are no evidences of Ryukyuan subordination. Whether this remains so is less sure. Therefore, a few remarks about the lingering dangers of Ryukyuan subordination are in place. The danger of Ryukyuan language loss poses a threat to claims of Ryukyuan culture and identity. Ryukyu identity with or without Ryukyuan is not the same thing. What is more, language loss would constrain the possibilities of developing discourses of resistance against Ryukyuan subordination. Once language proficiency has dropped to an extent as it has done among Ryukyuan born after 1950, it becomes difficult to reverse language shift. Since the child bearing generation does not speak Ryukyuan anymore, they cannot pass it on to their children. It is therefore not unlikely that once those born before 1950 will be gone, Ryukyuan will go with them. Through the loss of Ryukyuan, however, a symbolic link to ancestors, history and culture would be lost. In such a case Ryukyuan would be subordinated. Hence, conscious efforts of reversing language shift are necessary to avoid language loss and subordination processes.

3. Language revitalisation efforts

Numerous attempts of reversing language shift can be found in the Ryukyu Islands. These consist of grass-roots level activities aiming mainly at cultural revitalisation. Hara (2005) provides for a detailed discussion thereof.

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3.1. Reversing language shift activities

Reversing language shift activities can be ascertained since the time the first Ryukyuans graduated from mainland universities (see Iha, 1969[1916] and Kinjo, 1944 for early instances). However, such efforts proved to be ineffective. The attempts of countering language attrition were interrupted for several decades after 1945 when Ryukyu reacted with heightened Japanese (language) nationalism to the American occupation of the Ryukyu Islands which ended only in 1972 (Heinrich, 2004). From the 1980s onwards cultural associations (bunka kyokai) in local communities have emerged in an ever growing number throughout the Ryukyu Islands. Today more than half of the local communities have such a cultural association. The year 1995 marks a decisive break in Ryukyuan attempts of cultural revitalisation as it saw the establishment of the Okinawa Cultural Association (Okinawa bunka kyukai) which serves as a platform to all local cultural associations in Okinawa Prefecture. In 2000, revitalisation efforts were furthermore advanced by the establishment of the Council for the Promotion of the Okinawa Dialect (Okinawa hogen fukyu kyogikai). The Council aims at spreading Ryukyuan, and at establishing service centres at elementary and high schools where elderly speakers of Ryukyuan can teach the language. It has also developed a Ryukyuan orthography and publishes the quarterly Okinawa Dialect Newspaper (Okinawa hogen shinbun). Since 1996, the council organises the annual Island’s Speech Contest Meeting (Shima nu kutuba sani katayabira taikai).

The activities of the Council for the Promotion of the Okinawa Dialect complement already existing efforts of language revitalisation. Other speech contests exist, the oldest being that on Amami Oshima, which goes back to 1980. On Okinawa Island, the Society for Ryukyuan (Unchinaguchi-kaï) organises monthly discussion circles in which every participant gives a ten minute speech. There are competitions of local poetry (ryuka) and folk songs (min’yo). Furthermore, the radio dialect news (hogen nyusu) is broadcast twice a week. Textbooks of Ryukyuan such as Yoshiaki Funatsu’s ‘Beautiful Dialect of Okinawa’ (Utsukushii Okinawa no hogen) have been published and Saburo Kitamura has translated the modern Japanese classic ‘I am a Cat’ (Wagahai wa neko de aru) by Šoseki Natsume into Ryukyuan.

The efforts of language revitalisation discussed above represent ambitious endeavours to repair language loyalty and to revitalise the language. Nonetheless, it is obvious that these efforts are not sufficient. The main problem is that these measures themselves display traces of progressive erasure process. To start with, Ryukyu continues to be fragmented in that it does not serve, for instance, as a language of school instruction. Usually, however, reversing language shift measures directly aim at challenging the fragmentation of Ryukyu in that the language is used in domains and contexts where Japanese would be the expected choice. Such language use has consequences. Using Ryukyuan in contexts in which it has fallen out of use (e.g. literature) or where it has never been used (e.g. news coverage) creates noticeable language problems (see Hokama, 1991:63-69 for a discussion). These problems have their basis in the fragmentation, marginalisation and
sublimation of Ryukyuan. In the framework of progressive erasure these language revitalisation measures display features of marginalisation and sublimation in absence of fragmentation.

Figure 3: Reversing language shift activities and progressive erasure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>fragmentation</th>
<th>marginalisation</th>
<th>sublimation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speech contests</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialect newspaper</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>dialect radio news</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>translations of Japanese classics</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the above mentioned efforts aim at revitalising Ryukyuan, they also shed light on the decline of the language through the problems that emerge in the process. Let us briefly consider these.

In the first case of figure 3, Ryukyuan serves as the medium of public speeches. Ryukyuan speech events thus counter the usual practice of using Japanese in public speeches. However, effects of Ryukyuan marginalisation in Ryukyuan speech contests become evident by the fact that extensive preparations are necessary for Ryukyuan presentations, in spite of the fact that everyday matters are the subject of most speeches. Furthermore, comprehension on the side of the listeners is often inhibited to an extent that translation into Japanese is necessary. Sublimation is already perceptible because a speech on everyday issues is thought to be something worthwhile being presented to a larger audience – if only the language used is Ryukyuan. In short, the language in itself is the message, and it is only so because the language is marked.

Publication of the dialect newspaper, too, challenges the existing allocation of functions between Japanese and Ryukyuan in that Ryukyuan serves as a medium of writing, above that, the prestigious text-type of news coverage. The news in Ryukyuan is primarily published because of the prestige of journalistic writing. Nevertheless, the dialect news displays features of marginalisation in the way that it is only published quarterly and is distributed for free. Obviously, the Ryukyuan newspaper does not serve the same functions its Japanese counterparts do. Furthermore, writing newspaper articles in Ryukyuan is not an easy endeavour, since Ryukyuan lacks much vocabulary necessary for coverage of fields such as politics or economy (Hokama, 2001:97). While the news is now written in Ryukyuan the language is not used for less prestigious text-types such as, for instance, billboards. Fragmentation, marginalisation and sublimation is the reason why.

Broadcast of radio news basically runs into the same problems which were depicted above. Although Ryukyuan is spoken in this case, language problems remain prominent and result in extensive borrowing from Japanese. The overall pattern by now is clear, Ryukyuan reversing language shift activities focus on the use of the language in contexts.
where Japanese is the expected and normal choice. The result is language problems which reveal the erasure processes that Ryukyuan has undergone in the past 120 years. We encounter the same phenomena again with translations from Japanese into Ryukyuan. Few, if any, reader would choose Saburo Kitamura's Ryukyuan translation of the classic novel 'I am a Cat' for the sake of accommodativeness. Neither the translation (the book includes long discussions about Japanese modernisation) nor the reading of the Ryukyuan version can be an easy endeavour. There is thus no reason to presuppose that anybody in the Ryukyu Islands would find the Ryukyuan translation more convenient than the Japanese original. Again, the translation does not follow functional prerequisites such as the lack of proficiency in Japanese. Translations into Ryukyuan only make sense if the original work is already known. The use of Ryukyuan is first and foremost symbolic - hence, the translation of the modern Japanese classic novel. Anything less would simply not do for a symbolic act. Progressive erasure also takes to the effect that we should not expect all those who own a copy to have actually read it. As a matter of fact, Kitamura's translation serves as a popular souvenir among mainland visitors who, as a rule, lack any proficiency of Ryukyuan.

3.2. An assessment of and outlook on reversing language shift activities

Language revitalisation is an ambitious goal. It is a difficult and lengthy project. Reversing language shift is usually an endeavour of the few against the many and the poor against the rich (Fishman, 2001:6). This being so, scholarly insights into language shift and efforts at reversing language shift in other speech communities are pivotal for the development of effective and successful measures.

Several lessons can be learned from existing sociolinguistic studies for the case the Ryukyu Islands. In order to assess the degree a language has receded, Fishman (1991) has developed a Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale which ranges from 0 (no evidence of decline) to 8 (seriously endangered). Ryukyuan places at scale 7 in most contexts. The criteria formulated by Fishman (1991:89) for stage 7 apply to most speakers of Ryukyuan, in that they "are socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but […] beyond child-bearing age." Fishman's (1991:91) description of reversing language shift activities which can frequently be found at stage 7 also reflects the situation in the Ryukyu Islands, in that (1) symbolic use of the language prevails (e.g. in speech contests, arts, entertainment etc.), (2) activities often focus on the interests of older speakers, and (3) the means of reversing language shift (e.g. speech contests) are frequently taken to be the end of language revitalisation. Reversing language shift activities which display such characteristics are insufficient, in the Ryukyu Islands as anywhere else. It is therefore likely that Ryukyuan will further regress unless new reversing language shift measures are implemented in addition.

There are also lessons to be learned from an analysis along the lines of the progressive erasure approach. It demonstrates that symbolic use of Ryukyuan displays features of progressive erasure itself. Rather than providing for yet more instances of symbolic
language use, reversing language shift activities have to focus on the private domain, that is to say on language use in families and neighbourhoods. More than anything else, reversing language shift activities have to create a basis for intergenerational language transmission. As an effect, reversing language shift schemes must change their focus from older speakers towards younger people not (sufficiently) proficient in Ryukyuan. At the present stage, Ryukyuan reversing language shift activities cannot tackle processes of marginalisation and fragmentation. Existing activities aiming at challenging fragmentation processes must thus be perceived as what they are, efforts to attract interest into the language and its revitalisation efforts. However important these activities might be, it should be clear that they constitute merely means, not ends, of language revitalisation. There is no alternative to wide-spread intergenerational oral proficiency in the private domain if the language is to be revitalised. Wide-spread intergenerational oral proficiency in the private domain is characteristic of the next-lower stage (stage 6) in Fishman’s (1991) model. The general message is thus that reversing language shift has to return along the same path through which language attrition has evolved.

To conclude, no symbolic language use can substitute the necessity to spread Ryukyuan at home and in the neighbourhood as the language of choice in informal spoken communication. If Ryukyuan is to be revitalised, speakers of Ryukyuan have to spread the language in their families and neighbourhoods. Nobody else can do it and nothing else will do. Diglossic bilingualism must be sought first before more ambitious planning goals can be targeted.

Endnotes:

[1] Arvanitika is a variety of Albanian spoken in northern Greece.

[2] Nagata's study aside, linguistic research of Ryukyuan has neglected the study of language change in Ryukyuan under the influence of Standard Japanese. In that way, the linguistic research agenda itself provides for an instance of marginalisation. While interferences of Ryukyuan on Japanese are studied in much detail, interferences of Japanese on Ryukyuan are left unnoticed. The language ideological notion behind the unbalanced research agenda is clear: Ryukyuan cannot be corrupted by Japanese. Needless to say, in that way Ryukyuan linguistics is part and parcel of the marginalisation process.

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MAINTAINING AND CREATING HERITAGE

Music and Language on Jersey

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Introduction

This research explores the use of the Jersey language (Jèrriais, or Jersey Norman-French) in folk song on the island of Jersey in the Channel Islands. The study is concerned primarily with two groups of songs: (1) those that are perceived as traditional Jersey folk songs in that they use a distinct local language; and (2) a wider repertoire of appropriated songs and their subsequent transformation through the adoption of lyrics in Jèrriais. Of particular significance for this study is the use of Jèrriais in contemporary society as a vehicle for maintaining and creating heritage. As a relatively small island of approximately 15 km by 8 km, but with a population of around 87,000, Jèrriais is today spoken by relatively few people on Jersey (estimated at about 3.2% of the population). While folk songs using Jèrriais might be understood by just a small percentage of islanders, their significance in contemporary island life is that they not only represent a traditional part of the island’s culture, but songs using Jèrriais are also used as a way of maintaining and creating culture through the celebration of a minority language. This research provides an overview of Jersey folk songs, while examining the performance contexts and wider social meaning of songs in contemporary island life. The study focuses on the use of language as the main way in which some songs are maintained as traditional, as well as providing a commentary on the ongoing contribution of such folk songs to the contemporary heritage industry.

General background

The Bailiwick of Jersey is located within the Bay of Mont Saint Michel to the north of France and is the largest and most southerly of the Channel Islands, the other main islands being Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm (Appendix 1). Located about 135 km south of England and 22 km from France, the island measures around 15 km by 8 km. In the 10th century, Jersey was an annex of the Duchy of Normandy and became part of the Anglo-Norman kingdom when William the Conqueror became the English ruler in 1066. Even when Normandy was lost to the King of France, Philip Auguste (1180-1223) in 1204, Jersey and the other Channel Islands remained loyal to the English crown. From

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that time, Jersey gained special status as a Crown Dependency, not being subject to the British Parliament, only to the monarch in council. The island has its own government of 53 elected members and complete autonomy over domestic affairs. It is divided into twelve parishes and, as of 2001, had a population of 87,186. The island is well known for its agriculture, tourism and finance industry, each of which has attracted permanent and temporary residents.

Jersey has a complex cultural makeup. Life in Jersey changed considerably in the 20th century, especially after World War II with the influx of tourism and more recently with the development of its offshore finance industry. A perceived traditional lifestyle was soon superseded by a changing ethnoscape of permanent residents, seasonal workers, especially from the UK, France and Portugal (including Madeira), and temporary visitors. In the 2001 census, for example, 51% of islanders identified as being Jersey, 34.7% British, 6.63% as Irish or French, and 6.36% as Portuguese or Madeiran.

Multicultural Jersey also has its own language, Jèrriais (sometimes referred to as Jersey Norman-French),[2] even though most islanders do not speak it.[3] While the precise number of Jèrriais speakers is difficult to ascertain due to varying degrees of proficiency or confidence in speaking the language, in the mid 1980s it was estimated that between 7,000 to 10,000 residents spoke the language (Birt, 1985:1), and by 1989, when the local census requested linguistic information, the figure was 5,720 people (cf. Sullabank, 2003). The last census of 2001 reported that 2,874 people, or just 3.2% of the population, spoke Jèrriais (Statistics Unit, 2002). Of those who do speak Jèrriais today, they use it not as their everyday language, but usually as a second language, in educational contexts, or in settings that are constructed to celebrate the language and its culture. Part of the survival of the Jersey language, as this paper explores, is through song and its celebration during public display (cf. Kuehl, 1997).[4] and through its connection to maintaining and creating heritage. As an ethnography of this process, this paper looks specifically at how some islanders and non-islanders encourage, sustain and facilitate local culture. The study gives emphasis to a contemporary festival, or fête, that celebrates Norman heritage, and the transformation of one poem into three contrasting pieces of music is used as an example that helps in understanding some of the complexities associated to identity construction on the island.

Maintaining and Creating Heritage

There are various contexts in which Jèrriais is promoted through song (eg, language classes, carol singing, hymns, nursery rhymes,[5] competitions,[6] fêtes, etc.). One that stands out is a recently established fête that celebrates the Norman language in its various forms across the Norman region (ie, the Channel Islands and Normandy). What is apparent with songs in Jèrriais and the performance practice of those who sing the songs, whatever the genre, is a desire to maintain and create cultural heritage.[7] That is, in this context it is the performers themselves who are the main facilitators of their cultural traditions.
Many songs currently performed in contexts that promote Jèrriais are translations of
English songs or ones of Norman-French or French origin, although some – very few –
have a recognised local origin. Kennedy (1975b:246-92), for example, provides one of
the most comprehensive accounts of Jersey folk songs.\(^8\) Covering Jersey, Guernsey,
Alderney and Sark, he spent just a few weeks collecting songs in the islands in 1957 and
1960. The songs from Jersey in his book are sung in French, Norman-French (or
Norman) and Jèrriais, with some mixing words from several of these languages.\(^9\) Even
though Kennedy was an outsider researcher, his work has been endorsed locally with the
reproduction in Jersey of the section on the Channel Islands in booklet form (see
Kennedy, 1980). However, while Kennedy’s work might be seen to occupy a contested
space in local music making with its emphasis on a variety of languages and limited
number of performers, it does offer a glimpse into some aspects of music making on the
island in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It has also become a resource for the
contemporary discovery and celebration of aspects of Jersey heritage.

In connection with Jersey folk songs, tradition is being maintained, transformed and
created in several ways. While the local societies and organisations in which Jersey songs
often find a performance context are particularly conspicuous in terms of their role in
promoting local culture, there are also events that take place that include local and non-
local performers, each of whom has a place in helping construct a contemporary idea of
Jersey heritage, whether it is based on traditional songs or transformations of those songs
and others.\(^10\) One of the most visible performance events to be staged in recent years that
promotes Jersey’s Norman heritage is La Fête Nouormande, which is shared between
different Norman centres, usually on an annual basis.\(^11\) The Fête is a site of display of
Norman heritage. It is a context that helps produce locality, one that is now enmeshed in
cultural flows of complex forms of identity construction. That is, while aspects of island
identity are constructed from the local, the local itself is constructed through multiple
locations and identities.

In 2002, for example, when La Fête Nouormande was last held in Jersey, the main music
events were Jèrriais singers in costume, the Holmchase Choir singing in Jèrriais, bachîn
ringing (pan ringing), La Sagesse Nouormande (a UK-based group consisting of such
instruments as voice, hurdy-gurdy and bagpipes), and Magène (a French folk/jazz group
playing modern songs from Jersey, Guernsey and Normandy).\(^12\) There were also some
performances from Guernsey musicians.

The first event was the Jèrriais Singers, who performed in costume for the BBC Music
Live programme. The choir included several Beatles’ numbers such as *All you need is
love* and *Yesterday*, which were sung in Jèrriais, as part of a massed performance of
the song around Britain. This borrowing of well-known songs and translating the lyrics into
Jèrriais has become a popular way of promoting the local language, which helps illustrate
the foregrounding of language in some local music making contexts. The Fête even
witnessed the revival of an old tradition of pan ringing. Bachîn ringing consists of using
an old preserving pan and making it sound to announce mid-summer in order to scare evil demons away. A piece of cord is tied across the pan and to make a sound wet fingers are drawn across it.\textsuperscript{[3]} This reinvention or rediscovering of tradition (cf. Hobshawn and Ranger, 1983) helps add a sense of local uniqueness or identity to the celebrations. While challenging notions of music and non-music, the ringing is also a highly audible and visible attraction that indexes the context of farming, one of the island’s traditional industries.

In connection with the two folk groups that performed, Magène and La Sagesse Nouormande, what is especially interesting about them is that they are not Jersey based, but were present in order to represent Norman culture through their renditions of Norman songs, some from the Channel Islands.

Magène are a Norman-French group and play various pieces that have a Norman origin, but they place the music in a contemporary musical context. The group note that they “use old and contemporary Norman lyrics written by local authors from Normandy and the Channel Islands. We write original music for them.” (Magène, 2004) As well as adapting several verses of Jersey writers Augustus Asplet Le Gros (1840-77) and Frank Le Maistre (1910-2002), one of the songs they play has been composed from an anonymous 19th-century Jersey text, \textit{Ma Chifournie} (or \textit{La Chifournie}: My Hurdy-Gurdy or The Hurdy-Gurdy). There are three known musical settings, each of which is not based on a traditional local melody, but on a poem published in 1871 (fig. 2).\textsuperscript{[4]}

The first musical setting of \textit{Ma Chifournie} is published as part of the ten classical songs scored for voice and piano by Alfred Amy (1867-1936) (see Amy, 1888), where it is given the title \textit{La Chifournie}.\textsuperscript{[5]} The left-hand piano drone provides a characteristic hurdy-gurdy sound, with a folk song-like melody given to the vocal line. It is the right-hand piano part that gives the piece its classical sound, especially with its sometimes quite chromatic harmonic movement. The setting by Magène (2001), the original music of which was written by Daniel Bourdélès, is played on acoustic guitar with voice. The arpeggio guitar playing provides a typical contemporary folk style accompaniment. Magène’s version retains the Jersey text, although it has been modified to accommodate Norman-French and has an alternating verse-chorus structure. La Sagesse Nouormande’s musical setting is by Dominic Allan (he is not a member of the group), who wrote a tune in 2002 as a hurdy-gurdy piece with voice (Appendices 2-3). From the UK, La Sagesse Nouormande, whose name translates into English as “Norman Wisdom,” perform contemporary renditions of traditional music from France and the Channel Islands played on such instruments as hurdy-gurdy, mandola, recorders, saxophone and rauschpfeife. Their melody of \textit{Ma Chifournie} is a punchy hurdy-gurdy tune, quite different to the melody of Amy or Magène. The vocal line has been adapted to repeat the first two phrases of each verse, with the first verse also being repeated at the very end of the piece.

The transformation of a 19th-century Jersey text into classical and contemporary folk settings helps illustrate the ways that locals (ie, Amy) and nonlocals (ie, Magène and La...
Sagesse Nouormande) help facilitate local culture. Amy placed the text in a classical context as a way of promoting the Jersey language in London at the Annual Dinners of The Jersey Society, which was founded in 1896; Magène have used the text as a source for promoting a broader notion of a somewhat fragmented Norman culture; and La Sagesse Nouormande have recontextualised the text for a modern and original setting. But what each has in common is that they have encouraged local culture. While Amy’s work was published in 1988 as part of a rediscovery of Jèrriais, Magène and La Sagesse Nouormande have been important in giving local culture back to the locals through the medium of performance and public display. Each has helped facilitate local heritage in local and non-local contexts.

Closing Thoughts

Even though Jersey is a small island, it has a complex cultural make-up. Jèrriais is only spoken by a small percentage of islanders, yet it is recognised as an important part of Jersey heritage. Performance using Jèrriais through song is one way that some islanders, as well as the local heritage industry, self-identify in order to celebrate the island’s Norman history. The performance of a minority language through a range of song styles puts into the public sphere a small yet highly significant part of Jersey heritage.

The performance of Jèrriais through song is made more complex by the borrowing of Jersey songs by non-islanders who have then been invited to perform as representatives of a broader Norman culture to which the island identifies. While some of the performers are from Normandy, others have come from the United Kingdom, and have been given key parts to play in the celebration of Jersey’s Norman heritage. In this sense, islands can also be found outside islands; through cultural flows island music can become a marker of identity in the lives of diaspora and other communities (cf. Allen and Wilcken, 1998). What is evident with these flows is that present-day Jersey is paying particular attention to its Norman past; it is celebrating its Norman heritage through public performance; and it is using song as a vehicle to perform identity through a range of music genres and performers.

The emphasis of language in the celebration of island identity is especially evident in the wide range of music styles that have been orally transmitted, learned from music notation or appropriated. But what is significant here is that many of them have a recognised origin from outside the island. There are pieces borrowed from other Channel Islands, pieces from France and Normandy, and, more recently, there are the well-known popular songs that have perhaps been appropriated because they serve as a useful way of promoting Jèrriais through music and song.

Jersey, therefore, is not an insular culture, and even though it has a long Norman heritage, that aspect of its identity is still evolving through increased local, regional and other cultural flows. Jersey has a minority language, but it is given prominence in public displays as a way of representing tradition, maintaining culture and building an island
identity. While tradition is being (re)discovered and (re)invented, cultural difference is constructed through the performance of songs in Jèrriais. In such contexts, local identity is negotiated and contested by locals and non.locals alike, and appropriated songs adapted to Jèrriais texts help create culture, which is even endorsed and promoted by the local heritage industry. Moreover, songs are particularly made meaningful when they are performed in Jèrriais, even though most islanders do not understand the language.

Endnotes

[1] I am grateful to the Asian Studies Research Centre, Otago University, for helping to fund attendance at the SICRI (Small Island Cultures Research Initiative) conference in Kagoshima, Japan, where this research was first presented. I am indebted to several key informants and organisations who made much of this research possible, Joyce and Brian Gilbert, Amelia and Garnet Perchard, Joan Tapley, L’Assemblée D’Jèrriais and La Société Jersiaise. Also, Geraint Jennings and Roland Scales have been very helpful in providing valuable information and sources that have helped this research, for which I am extremely grateful. Data for this research has been collected over many years, although interviews with key informants took place in 1988-89.


[3] For official purposes (ie, laws, contracts, documents, oaths etc.), Jersey also uses official French, which is referred to as Jersey Legal French.


[5] See, for example, Tapley (nd).

[6] The Eisteddfod is the main competition that includes Jersey evenings, which were introduced for Jèrriais speakers in 1912 (the first Eisteddfod in Jersey was held in 1908).

[7] The idea of preserving traditional culture in this context might be compared to the folk song collectors (eg, Sharp, 1954 [1907]) who aimed to preserve what they saw as dying traditions.

[8] Kennedy has also released several recordings from his field collections (Kennedy, nda, b, c, 1975a, c). Kennedy’s research was made in conjunction with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (Kennedy and the BBC, 1957a, b, c, 1960a, b).

[9] See also, for example, the collections of Le Maitre (1979).

[10] A committee of Société Jersiaise (founded in 1873), La Section dé la Lange Jèrriaise, is particularly active in promoting Jèrriais.

[11] Since being established, the Fête has been held each year since 1998 except in 2003. It is rotated among the Norman centres, including the Channel Islands and mainland France. It will be held in Jersey again in 2005.

[12] In France there are also such groups as Marée de Paradis, who from 1991 have been including Norman songs in their repertoire. Their blend of modern folk music, which includes singing, accordion, concertina, violin, guitar, flute and percussion, has even included some Jersey pieces. The group has used some of Michel Colleu’s collected songs of the Channel Islands, including the ballad La Chanson de Peirson (it has
not been recorded by them) which Scales forwarded to him (Scales, 2004). It was collected by Geraint Jennings – see www.societe-jersiaise.org/geraint/jerriais.html.


[14] As noted by Geraint Jennings (2005), the first known published version is in the local annual literary magazine La Nouvelle Année of 1871 (fig. 2). The annual was edited by A. A. Le Gros and islanders strongly suspect that the poem was one of his, although some dialectal features suggest that the writer was from the east of the island. The poem is written according to French syllabic convention by someone well-trained in composing verse in French.

[15] On British classical music being inspired by the Channel Islands (including Jersey) see, for example, Richards (2004).

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   ____ (ndb) Tra-Di-Ra-Di-Ra. Folkmusic & Customs of Jersey, FTX-244
   ____ (ndc) Vive La Vie. Song, Dance & Customs of Jersey, FTX-214
   ____ (1975a) Au Logis de Mon Père, Folktracks FSB-60-012
   ____ (1975c) La Collection Jériaise, Folktracks FSC-60-614
Kennedy, P and the BBC (1957a) Field Tapes of Jersey, BBC Record 23838
   ____ (1957b) Field Tapes of Jersey, BBC Record 23840
   ____ (1957c) Field Tapes of Jersey, BBC Record 23841
   ____ (1960a) Field Tapes of Jersey, BBC Record 26235
   ____ (1960b) Field Tapes of Jersey, BBC Record 26236
Magène (2001) Magène en Concert 0601MA02

### Appendix 2. Comparison of Texts to “La Chifournie” / ”Ma Chifournie.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“La Chifournie”</th>
<th>“La Chifournie”</th>
<th>“Ma Chifournie”</th>
<th>“Ma Chifournie”</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Source</strong></td>
<td>Le Gros</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Sagesse Nouormandie</td>
<td>Scales</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Jèrriais</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jèrriais</strong></th>
<th><strong>Norman-French (Norman)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jèrriais</strong></th>
<th><strong>English Translation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Deux p'tits sous, si vouos pllaït; Ch'est pour gagnir ma vie Que tous les jours je vais Auve ma chifournie, Ma chifournie, Ma vie, Ma chifournie!</td>
<td>1. Deux p'tits sous, si vouos pllaït Ch'est pour gagnir ma vie Que tous les jours je vais Auve ma chifournie Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie Ma vie</td>
<td>(Refrain) 2, 4. Deux p'tits sous si vous pllaït Ch'est pour gagnir ma vie Que tous les jours je vais D'aveu ma chifournie Ma chifournie ma vie</td>
<td>1, 5. Deux p'tits sous si vouos pllaït Ch'est pour gagnir ma vie (repeat) Que tous les jours je vais Auve ma chifournie (repeat) Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie!</td>
<td>Two little pence, please To earn my living For every day I go [out] With my hurdy-gurdy My hurdy-gurdy My life [My hurdy-gurdy (My life)]</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Jèrriais</strong></th>
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<th><strong>English Translation</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. J'is v'nu pars monts par vaux, Pilaudant dans la baue, Ma chifournie sus l'dos; Si vouos pllaït, un d'gout d'iaue, Ma chifournie, Ma vie, Ma chifournie!</td>
<td>2. J'is v'nu pars monts par vaux Pilaudant dans la baue Ma chifournie sus l'dos Si vouos pllaït, un d'gout d'iaue Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie Ma vie</td>
<td>1. J'is venu par monts par vâos Pilaudant dauns la boe Ma chifournie sus l'dos S'il vous pllaït eune goutte d'aiâo</td>
<td>J'is v'nu pars monts par vaux Pilaudant dans la baue (repeat) Ma chifournie sus l'dos Si vouos pllaït, un d'gout d'iaue (repeat) Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie!</td>
<td>I have come over hill and dale Stumbling through the mud With my hurdy-gurdy on my back If you please, a glass of water [My hurdy-gurdy My life]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Je vous vignonnerai De petites sornettes, Et je vous chanterai De belles chansonnêtes. Ma chifournie, Ma vie. Ma chifournie!</td>
<td>3. Je vous vignonnerai De p’tites sornettes Et je vous chanterai De belles chansonnêtes Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie Ma vie</td>
<td>Je vous vignonnerai De petites sornettes Et je vous chanterai De belles caunchounettes</td>
<td>My hurdy-gurdy ([My life])</td>
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</table>
| 4. Et quand je s'rai sièz-nous Auv' men père et ma mère, Souvenanche de vous J'érai dans ma prière. Ma chifournie, Ma vie. Ma chifournie! Ma vie | 4. Et quand je s'rai sièz-nous Auv' men père et ma mère Souvenanche de vous J'érai dans ma prière Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie Ma vie | Et quand je s'rai sièz-nous Auv' men père et ma mère Souvenanche de vous J'érai dans ma prière (repeat) Souvenanche de vous J'érai dans ma prière (repeat) Ma chifournie Ma vie Ma chifournie! | When I get home To my mother and father I shall remember you In my prayers [My hurdy-gurdy My life My hurdy-gurdy ([My life])]

**Ending**

*Magènë*: I shall remember you
In my prayers My hurdy-gurdy My life I shall remember you My hurdy-

![Musical notation](image-url)
“QUITE A DILEMMA!”

Musical Performance and Debate Concerning the Usefulness of the Maltese Language in Australia

Eve Klein

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Introduction

Academic considerations of identity in migrant and marginalised communities often highlight language as a key cultural nexus. Anne-Marie Fortier has argued that the loss of “mother-tongues” in emigrant cultures can “signal the loss of some originary self” (Fortier, 2000: 84). The archipelago of Malta has a long history of occupation and colonialisation and up until 1934 Italian and English were both recognised as the official languages rather than Maltese. Malta’s history, then, reflects the systematic shaping of national identity via language. This shaping continued through government sponsored migration programs in the decades following World War II which sought to address Malta’s socio-economic disparities. Fifty years on, the impact of broadly based displacement is being negotiated in migrant communities and realised through cultural performances such as folk music known as ghana which requires the use of ‘pure’ and ‘archaic’ Maltese. However performance of ghana in Australian Maltese communities highlights the dwindling of the Maltese language in second and subsequent generations.

In July 2004 the Maltese Historical Association held an evening entitled a ‘History of the Maltese Language and its Role in Contemporary Australia’ with the aim of providing a space to discuss my initial research into the use of language in ghana performance (see Klein, 2003; Klein, 2005). Polarised opinions emerged, some that valorised the continuation of the Maltese language, and others that deemed the task “futile” (Maltese Historical Association, 2004: 13). Following this discussion, The Maltese Herald, an Australian publication, reported the talk and finished with the opinion that: “The solution to this problem falls back to the use of English. Quite a dilemma!”(ibid). Building from the experiences of the Maltese Community in Melbourne, Australia, this article seeks to analyse the “dilemma” that expatriate communities face at the loss of language as a distinct marker of culture and identity, with particular emphasis on the re-location of identity and class conflicts through language.[2]
**Ghana: Performing Maltese Community**

*Ghana*, the cultural performance of Maltese folk music, is used in combination with other activities such as social, political or religious gatherings, sports, cookery, dance, music and theatre performance to encourage a physical connection to and an inclusive sense of Maltese community in Australia. *Ghana*, as a pervasive cultural form, is regularly performed in community centres, as part of cultural festivals, in designated clubs and in home environments. *Ghana* is a generic term for ‘singing’, referencing a range of genres, though it is primarily associated with *spirito pront*, a masculine ‘song duel’ style of performance. All types of *ghana* feature sophisticated structures emphasising the interplay and placement of words. Sung in Maltese, a verse will usually consist of four lines with an A-B-C-B rhyme scheme (varying slightly between genres), with each line using a total of eight syllables (Fsadni, 1993: online).

Rainier Fsadni believes that themes of social origin played upon in *ghana* performance establish identities: “by focusing on difference and the ‘essence’ of Malteseness” (ibid). The thematic link between ‘Malteseness’ and language is particularly resonant in a migrant context because it is something tangible that can be genealogically traced back to the Malta of memory, remaining distinct from the dominant mainstream of their new homelands. Yet because identity can be established by language “in the sense of both ‘tongue’ and ‘rhetoric’” (ibid), or rather by both the language as sound and grammar, and language as a common expression of encoded values, it is possible for a community to create through its use a changeable cultural space “outside” or “inside” (ibid) other dominant cultures and social stratifications. Maltese Australian communities are concerned about the deterioration of traditional practices and this general concern can become focused on language as a signifier of tradition because its rate of decline within the second and third generations of Australian-born is measurable.

The 1991 Australian “Malta Born” census profile found that only 19% of second generation Maltese Australians spoke any Maltese at home. Comparatively, this figure is low for European migrants to Australia, the same census revealing that 48% of second generation Italian Australians and 74% of second generation Greek Australians spoke their ancestral language in the home. The decline in the usage of Maltese at home between 1996 and 2001 was 8.5%[3], while the usage of Italian and Greek shrank by 5.9% and 2.2% respectively (CRC, The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW: [http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/statistics/Sect1/Table1p04Aust.pdf](http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/statistics/Sect1/Table1p04Aust.pdf)). Because Maltese is a Semitic language of Arabic origin, Clyne has compared results of its usage in the 1996 Australian census to Arabic (Lebanese), noting language shifts in the first generation correspond to 36.5% and 5.5% (2003: 25). These comparisons all reveal the Maltese Australian community as having a relatively poor rate of language retention. This realisation has caused the community to question the continued viability and place of Maltese culture in Australia, particularly to subsequent generations.
The impact of contemporary culture on Maltese Australian youth was significant enough for the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Victorian Ministry of Education to fund a report entitled To Learn More Than I Have: The Educational aspirations and experiences of the Maltese in Melbourne (Terry, Borland and Adams, 1993). Compiled by the Victorian University of Technology, the report aimed to uncover reasons for low school retention and participation rates of Maltese background Australian students in Victoria and also to determine some of the causes of the second and third generations’ seeming loss of interest in the Maltese language and culture. The report concluded that these areas of concern were exacerbated by the education system itself, which generally took no action to address and rectify the problems. It specifically highlighted the “almost total absence” of Maltese language programs in Victoria; a lack of recognition that many Maltese Australian students acquire English as a second language; and an obviously inadequate relationship between schools and Maltese background parents (ibid: 66). The report's recommendations suggested that these problems could be alleviated by providing students with opportunities to “explore issues to do with ethnicity and culture in a way that moves beyond stereotypes”, allowing for “a broader and more critical examination of the way in which Australian society has developed” (ibid).

Dynamic Tensions: English, Maltese and Italian

The use of ghana to promote the Maltese language is wrought with conflicts, though many originally stem from the use and position of the language within Maltese society. The subordination of Maltese to English and Italian has a long history, which problematises any attempt to define Maltese culture via language in a diasporic context. Under British rule in the 19th century, English was made the official language of Malta, replacing Italian. Italian had long been instituted as the language of government during Malta’s rule by the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (known as the Knights of St John) who governed Malta from 1530-1798. Dugan records that the British practice was merely to substitute English for Italian when they took control of Malta's administration, but the transition was difficult, and for a considerable time Maltese affairs “at the higher levels” were “conducted in a mixture of Italian and English” (Dugan, 1988: 43). It wasn’t until 1934 that Maltese was also recognised as an official language of the islands. Joseph Brincat argues that the right time to raise Maltese to official status, which was afforded “at the height of preparations for World War II which pitted Britain against Italy” allowing Italian to be dropped from official status in 1936 (Brincat, 2005: online). The contention between languages informs Maltese Australian cultural performance like ghana as the following excerpt highlights:

Excerpt from a conversation with R. Farugia (RF); Re. Farugia (REF); G. Aylwin (GA) and E. Klein (EK). This is taken from a section of dialogue as they are translating a comic, fictional song known as a fatt:
REF: He had a woman going into his shop, right. So this woman she was very like, you know, show off, whatever. She was licking the ice cream and she speaks English. She was a show off, you know what I mean? She said, “don’t speak to me in Maltese”. She’s not from Malta and she ask him for one of those long…
RF: Marrows.
REF: Marrows, you know and that.
RF: You know what the long marrows are called?
REF: Marrows, you know like what do we call them, the marrows. Not watermelons, the marrows, the long ones?
EK: I think I know.
REF: Marrows, you grow them in the… They’re like …
RF: They grow on a vine.
REF: They grow on a vine. You know what I mean? Europeans have them a lot you know.
RF: The key is with all this he’s singing, you gotta know exactly the words
REF: The words…
RF: Because the words gonna finish up like you thinking he’s saying dirty things…
REF: Oh it’s very funny this one…
RF: Alright.
REF: Yeah…
RF: I mean …
REF: But you’ve got to listen.
RF: He’s talking [untranslatable comment in Maltese] for a long marrow.
RF: Ah what you do? Stopped it?
RF: [Untranslatable comment in Maltese] … for a long marrow. You can imagine from now on with this long marrow, what she’s gonna do with it, alright?
REF: [laughs] [pause]
RF: Listen to this…
GA: WOOH!
(Aylwin, Farugia and Farugia, interview with author, 15/3/02).

This is a transcribed excerpt of an afternoon I spent with my great aunt and uncle R. and Re. Farugia, Maltese migrants to Australia. The story being translated is a comic derivative of ghana tal-fatt. Ghana tal-fatt is a tradition of sung ballads that illustrate Maltese historical narratives and important cultural values. In this fatt a female English-speaking foreigner has walked up to a masculine fruit and vegetable vendor and flirtatiously asks for a long marrow. The hyperbole of the fatt dually emphasises the seductive danger of foreigners (as foreign influence) and feminine sexuality (as temptation). As the story continues the woman successfully seduces the hard working (male) vendor, but turns out to be an escaped criminal from Sicily who wants to shoot the vendor if he doesn’t consent to marry her. This danger is compounded and transformed when she asks the vendor not to speak Maltese, but English. The gender-roles played out in this fatt fall within standard comic stereotypes and are anticipated by ghana audiences. The obvious reference to English defines for the audience what constitutes a significant...
threat to the continuation of traditional Maltese culture, and the cultures of diasporic Maltese communities around the world.

The “Codeswitching” Problem

Currently in Malta, English is taught from the beginning of formal education in varying degrees: from tuition either entirely in English (generally the private school sector), to having classes taught alternatively in English and Maltese, to classes primarily taught in Maltese with supplementary English as a Second Language lessons (now the practice in Maltese public schools) (Zammit, 1978). According to sources such as Xuereb, segments of Maltese society particularly within the higher economic social stratifications, attempt to teach their children English as their native language to denote this status (Xuereb, nd: online). This is achieved with varying degrees of success and the result is sometimes a pidgin tongue generally referred to as Maltese English or English Maltese, depending upon where the emphasis lies.

The contemporary signification of English as ‘high’ and Maltese as ‘low’ draws upon what Chetcuti describes as the historical descriptions of spoken Maltese as the language of the “idiot” and the “ruffian” and a “dialect of the kitchen” (Chetcuti cited in Terry, Borland and Adams, 1993: 27). Sciriha studied the way that English and Maltese are used in Malta and found results that suggested parallels to migrant community experiences of the Maltese language in both Canada and Australia (being the most numerically significant). The study found that:

*In particular areas... where the density of the Maltese population is very high, Maltese language retention is surprisingly low in the second and subsequent generations... the shift towards English, the dominant language, starts precisely at home when parents, whose English proficiency is low, decide to interact in ‘English’ with their children so that their offspring would not experience a linguistic shock when they go to school. These two contexts (the Maltese and the Migrant context in either Canada or Australia) are however not identical. An important difference exists since in both Canada and Australia, English is reinforced at school by native English speakers and the negative effects of the Maltese children’s home background, which generally provided them with a large dose of degraded input in English are neutralised. Instead, in Malta, exposure to English is limited and the quality is not even, with the result that the levels of code-switching increase. It is only too understandable in consequence, that Maltese children do not feel comfortable interacting in either Maltese or in English and thus resort to the easy habit of code-switching. (Sciriha with reference to Cauchi and Sciriha, 1997: 87-88)*

To use, to not use, or to use only a little English in everyday speech is complex and carries with it different signifiers of power and status. Fsadni notes of this situation that English has “hierarchical connotations and Maltese egalitarian ones” and that often it is necessary, or appropriate to switch forms of usage to suit a situation (Fsadni, 1993). To
not do so is also a choice, and this will have social consequences pertaining to ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’. This kind of language switching which has encoded “H(igh) and “L(ow)” status is referred to by Winford as diglossia (2003: 112). However Winford describes this situation as a “complementary distribution across different domains”, the H language being used in the public sphere, and the L language being used in the private sphere. However the diglossic relationship between English and Maltese is awkward due to the transgression of English into the private sphere which Sciriha highlights. It is important to note that Sciriha’s study is relying upon two relatively old definitions of codeswitching. She cites Di Pietro’s 1977 definition “the use of more than one language by communicants in the exclusion of a speech act” and Grosjean’s 1982 definition “alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation” (Sciriha, 1997: 71). These definitions are fairly generalised, and more recent considerations of codeswitching usually emphasise linguistic competency, rather than discomfort. Winford addresses this distinction saying:

*there is a tendency to restrict the definition of codeswitching only to those kinds of language mixture practised by skilled bilinguals. Hence those kinds of mixing that characterize the interlanguage of learners acquiring a second language tend to be treated as a distinct phenomena.* (2003: 124-125)

Definitions aside, Sciriha’s study is relevant to considerations of this paper because it forms part of the Maltese Australian community’s understanding of language usage in the Maltese archipelago. Entitled ‘One Country, Two Languages?’, it was published in an Australian volume entitled *Malta: A Siege and a Journey* (2003) alongside papers on Maltese history and migration to Australia from prominent community figures like Barry York. Additionally, Sciriha has become involved in the Maltese Australian community during her time as a visiting lecturer at the Victorian University of Technology.

Brincat argues that while “switching between languages is condemned by everyone” with at least one third of the population practising it regularly, the situation isn’t grave because “at present this danger seems remote because most speakers do not consider mixing as a permanent structure” (2005). Despite this, he argues “conditions are different” to previously imposed or borrowed words because today:

*Everybody learns both English and Maltese, so that virtually all the English words (said to be a million) can be used when switching between languages. This shows how necessary it is to protect the Maltese language, not by old-fashioned censorship but by strengthening the standard variety.* (ibid)

With Maltese being accepted as an official European Union language in 2005, it seems likely that this will happen.

**Ghana Spirtu Pront: Maltese Fighting Back**

Refereed papers from

The 1st International Small Island Cultures Conference
Kagoshima University Centre for the Pacific Islands, February 7th-10th 2005

http://www.sicri.org

SICRI 90 2005
The most recognisable genre of *ghana* performance is the song duel, categorised by Marcia Herndon as the “wounding song” (Herndon, 1971). Called *ghana spiritu pront*, it is an intricate and highly politicised exchange of sung rhetoric (ibid: 21). This is because the purpose of competing, or performing in a song duel is to “best the other in argument” (Fsadni, 1993). Each sung argument is improvised on either a pre-determined topic, or a topic that is loosely decided by the *ghannejja* (singers) during the first stages of performance. In *ghana* performance, it is highly inappropriate to use an English word to make a rhyme scheme function correctly. The use of English is restricted to the most limited occasions, usually when a large impact is required, and often in *spirtu pront* it can be used to denote ‘outsider’ status onto an opponent (Fsadni, 1993). Fsadni believes that this precipice between English and Maltese that the *ghannejja* walk in each performance is a tangible example of the language tension experienced by “the majority of the Maltese in their everyday life” (Fsadni, 1993). One particularly resonant example of this anxiety is from a *spirtu pront* performance in 1996 on the topic of ‘The Maltese Immigrants in Australia’. This performance was a commemoration marking the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the Rangatiki, the first ship carrying Maltese migrants to Australia after the Second World War.

**Text**

*FS: U gejna minn gżira Maltija*
*Biex fi-Australja nagħmlu success*
*U Kuzzu nahišeb li qed tigdeb*
*Malta u Ghawdex għadhom l-istess.*
*Translator’s parenthesis*

*LD: Din il-kelma li għidti lissa*
*Nitolbok t’għidlu dan l-ghaliex*
*Imma l-lingwa li għandhom huma*
*U s’issa għadhom ma tilfuhiex.*
*Translator’s parenthesis*

**Translation**

And we came from the island of Malta
So in Australia we will make success
And Kuzzu I think you are fibbing (that)*
Malta and Gozo are still the same.

This word that you said to me now
I pray that you tell him because
That the language they have (in Malta)*
Up to now they have not lost it.

**FS: U hbieb tieghi din l-aħħar ghanja**
*Ser ninfidu minn xulxin;*
*Miż-Australja għall-gżira tagħna,*
*Hbieb, kemm ahna mbeqhdin!*

And my friends this last song
We are about to become separated;
From Australia to our island,
Friends, how far we are apart.

(Zammit cited in Klein, 2005: 71; Except for Maltese text in verse 3, Zammit cited in Klein, 2003: 51)

This exchange between Leli Debricant (LD) and Frank Saliba (FS) illustrates the threat to and loss of the Maltese language as felt by the Maltese Australian community in Debrincat’s response to his opponent’s use of the English word ‘success’. Similarly,
Saliba reveals the tensions of displacement in an earlier remark: “We came from Malta to Australia/ And in our time we had unrest/ But you are mostly enjoying that/ When you sing you get applause” (Klein: 70). Saliba is commenting on the unrest that both performers have felt as migrants to Australia, but rebuking his opponents enjoyment of this feeling of unrest when he performs ghana (and gains approval from his peers and audience). This exchange ends on a call to “never forget” Malta (ibid: 71), the performers setting an example for the audience via their sophisticated use of the Maltese language.

“From Australia to our island/ Friends, how far we are apart” (ibid) highlights the distances between the ghannejja as individuals and the distance of the Maltese Australian community from their homeland and possibly from Australian mainstream culture.

The precise and targeted switching or borrowing in ghana spiritu pront can be viewed as a deliberate reaction against the linguistic stress and divisions that English has caused throughout all levels of Maltese society. All forms of ghana (both in Malta and Australia) use only Maltese except in those instances of switching, thereby affirming its worth, which has historically been degraded. However this is not a simple affirmation of culture through language.

A Dilemma of Dialects?

During one performance of ghana tal-fatt I attended in 2002, I was included in a conversation where a table of first generation Maltese Australians were discussing the difficulties of coming to watch ghana performances. Despite all of them being native speakers of Maltese it had taken each of them several years of regular attendance at ghana performances before they could begin to discern the story. Two women admitted that they were often unable to understand portions of what was being said. At the time I didn’t consider the significance of this, and brought the tapes of the performance back to Sydney. After several attempts at translation I had to conclude that for the moment it was, for me, an unachievable task. After the Farugias unsuccessfully attempted to translate the tapes, they remarked that they were unable to do so because it was a dialect of Maltese that was “very difficult to understand” and as such they couldn’t “quite catch the words” (Aylwin, Farugia and Farugia, interview with author, 15/3/02). Aylwin, who also attempted to translate the tapes, said that it sounded like people from the countryside speaking and that it made no sense to her (ibid). I questioned Aylwin as to what part of Malta she was from, and she said that her family was from St Paul’s Bay, as were several other people in attendance at the fatt performance night. This warranted greater exploration but what surfaced was even more perplexing.

The Maltese language has altered many times due to the island’s long history of occupation by a variety of different regimes, each time with a different language being introduced into general usage. The most lasting influence has come from the Arabic language, which the ‘wailing’ quality of ghana melodies seems to invoke. These influences, along with local linguistic and cultural variation, have generated regional
dialects within Malta. What has emerged through urban centres is Standard Maltese, which Borg theorises was at one time “perceived as being a model by the rest of the inhabitants of the islands” and copied (Borg cited by Xuereb, online). In some areas where regional dialects exist, Standard Maltese is also used in certain situations, and depending on context, “one variety is superposed on the rest of the varieties” (Borg cited by Xuereb). Considering that people from all areas of Malta have migrated to Australia, it seems unlikely that a single regional dialect would dominate ghana performance. Fsadni comments that the language used in ghana “is not one that is used in ordinary social intercourse: it is high-flown, using elaborate metaphors and formalistic phrases, as well as (depending on the ghannej) occasionally out-rightly self-righteous” (Fsadni, 1993). “High-flown” and “elaborate metaphors” could make it difficult for someone new to ghana to understand what was being insinuated, but it is problematic that the Farugias were unable to translate the tapes. R. Farugia has been collecting audio and video recordings of ghana performance since the 1970s and, prior to his retirement and some health problems, would attend ghana performances in both Sydney and Malta. The use of “formalistic phrases” suggests that Standard Maltese could be used, but this again is problematic if referenced against claims that ghana originated as a “village” song form. Manuel Casha, a Maltese Australian ghana guitarist and scholar mentioned to me in June 2003 that only ‘pure’ Maltese could be used to sing ghana, which again would suggest the use of the dominant, and socially ‘acceptable’ Standard Maltese.

In 2002 I developed a theory to explain why the ghana from Melbourne could not be translated in Sydney. I hypothesised that a new variation of Maltese had emerged since the establishment of densely populated Maltese areas in Melbourne, created from several of the dialects blending together with Standard Maltese over the course of social interaction. On returning to Melbourne in 2003, I asked those at a spirtu pront session what their experiences were of the differences between Maltese spoken in Sydney and Maltese spoken in Melbourne. There was a general consensus that there were differences in the way Maltese was used in Melbourne and Sydney, based upon contact with relatives who had been living in Sydney. While these observations, in themselves, were far too subjective and anecdotal to draw conclusions from, they are supported by linguist Roderick Bvingdon’s studies of the Maltese language in Australia - in his monograph The Maltese language of Australia: Maltrajan (2001), a co-paper of a similar title ‘Maltrajan: The Maltese Language in Australia’ with A. Dalli (2003) and a conference paper entitled ‘From Langage to Ethnolocet: Maltese to Maltrajan – a case study in Cross Continental Lexicography’ (2004). Bvington coined the word ‘Maltrajan’ to describe the deviation and adaptation of Maltese language into an Australian ethnolect.

Bvingdon traces Maltrajan back to a surprisingly early point, citing a Sydney-based magazine begun in1929 by George Parnis as the first written documentation of Maltese-Australian terminology (2004: 10). The magazine, printed in English and Maltese for Maltese Australian migrants, contained lists of words and conversation sketches (ibid). Bvingdon considers this venture as noteworthy given that it was produced so soon after Maltese migrants began arriving in New South Wales in the early 1920s, stating: “the
first Maltraljan lexemes had already become sufficiently widespread and accepted into the local “Maltese-Australian” idiom in 1929 as to feature prominently in the print form” (ibid: 10-11).

After the Second World War, Maltese who came to Australia on assisted passage migration schemes arrived in a period when the Australian government had institutionalised a strategy of migrant assimilation. Barry York records that Maltese migrants were encouraged to define themselves as “British Subjects” on arrival, exacerbating tensions of language and identity already experienced in Malta (York cited in Dugan, 1988: 113-14). Approximately 50,000 Maltese migrated to Australia under assisted passage agreements between 1948 and 1971 (Bureau of Immigration & Population Research 1994: 4 - see Endnote 1). Clyne asserts that Maltese migrants from this period “maintained a low profile” until the 1970s when community representatives began establishing “a welfare umbrella organization” (Clyne, 2003: 14). He notes that Maltese Australian community activity began in the wake of Maltese independence in 1964 that saw the “development of Maltese, previously the L language of a diglossic relationship with English… into an H language (Clyne with reference to Fishman and Ferguson, ibid.).

The dramatic influx of native Maltese speakers conceivably introduced more modern forms of Maltese language to Australia, but given that significant migration from Malta to Australia ended in the early 1970s, the renewal of Maltese linguistic change in Australia has not been ongoing. Bovingdon has commented that in settling into an Australian ambience, the Maltese Language has “deviated considerably from the Standard Maltese spoken in the Maltese Islands” (Bovingdon, 2004: 11). He describes this phenomenon as a “norm”, occurring “in all migrant communities where significant numbers of persons of the same ethnic origins have congregated” (ibid). Bovingdon outlines the current dynamic of Maltese as Maltraljan in Australia, arguing:

As Maltraljan is not a fully developed dialect or language in that a complete syntactic construction is not possible in its present stage of development, it is unable to sustain itself in isolation from Standard Maltese. While Maltraljan is used universally throughout Australia wherever large groups of Maltese have settled, each region has in turn developed segments of its own vocabulary and adopted other language subtleties and nuances in keeping with their own individual exigencies. For this reason it is always used in a code-switching manner, interspersed with Standard Maltese, or more accurately, with that form of Standard Maltese which the settlers imported with them upon their arrival to Australia. (Bovingdon, 2004: 11-12)

While Bovingdon’s study is the first significant step to documenting the linguistic diversity of the Maltese Australian community, its focus only sheds light onto sections of the community which continue to interact in a Maltese language variant. Some native Maltese or Maltraljan speakers choose not to speak the language, and others who wish to, do not always have access to the structures to learn or practise these tongues. York
describes the obstacle to Maltese language in Australia as “the reality that Maltese is not a useful language to the Australian-born” in terms of economic and career prospects (York, 1997: 98). These factors, he argues, can surmount the individual relevance of the Maltese language in an Australian context (ibid). So the “dilemma for ‘the future generation’” in York’s eyes, rests on the segments of the Maltese Australian community “who want to keep alive some kind of Malteseness in Australia” (York: 1997, 95, 96).

Beyond

This paper arrives at the point of its origin: the “dilemma!” as seen by participants at the Maltese Historical Association’s July, 2004 evening on the place of Maltese language in Australia. The society asked me to present an informal lecture for an hour, which would be followed with question time. I presented my observations, some of which are included in this paper, and afterwards question time turned into a lengthy community discussion. After several minutes, participants stopped addressing their questions to me and began addressing each other. While community members present that evening generally agreed that there were significant linguistic differences between the Maltese language as it is spoken in Australia and Malta, they did not think of these Australian differences as interrelated, like the unifying term “Maltraljan” suggests. Rather they seem to think of language in terms of their contact with Maltese spoken in Malta. Because of the significant changes between Maltese and Maltese Australian language usage, the community appears to be bitterly divided over the role that language as a bearer of culture continues to play, especially within the second and emerging third generation. Three speakers commented about return trips to Malta, saying that sections of their conversations were incomprehensible for Maltese locals. Some community members expressed a strong belief that the language was already lost, or so different in an Australian context that it is no longer a workable marker of Maltese identity. These speakers, in the face of Maltese language decline in Australia, considered that the community’s efforts should focus on promoting other aspects of Maltese culture in Australia. Other community members are frustrated by the attitude, viewing Maltese language, whatever its Australian deviation, as a vital component of Maltese identity that should be fought for.

The evening at the Maltese Historical Association was fruitful because it provided a forum to discuss the Melbourne community’s understanding of Maltese language decline in Australia. Similar to the Terry, Borland and Adams study, the community highlighted a lack of government recognition and funding as a hindrance to the building of accessible and sustainable Maltese language programs in Australia. Frances Bonnici, president of the Maltese Historical Association and a qualified Maltese language teacher, stated that the community’s efforts to teach Maltese in Australia was being hampered by a shortage of trained Maltese teachers. The result of this situation in Bonnici’s eyes was a quality of language tuition that was often below the standard that the community would hope for. Bonnici stressed the efforts of Melbourne community organisations to entice qualified language teachers to Australia from Malta but, without financial assistance, this was not
seen as a viable solution for the community. As a result, new international input into language tuition is only occasionally possible through assistance from visiting language teachers from Malta, who give classes to Australian children during their stay.

Another key issue affecting Maltese language education is the scarcity of government or institutionally directed studies on the Maltese community in Australia, most of which have focused on Melbourne. Some of these studies, such as Terry, Borland and Adams’s 1993 report have been questioned because of limited geographical focus and problematic methodology. I mentioned the Terry, Borland and Adams report during my lecture to the Association and it was raised in the subsequent discussion. There was a feeling in the Melbourne community (notably, the location of the study) that the results were somewhat misleading because it only focused on four schools within Melbourne’s western region. Terry, Borland and Adams discussed problems they encountered while developing their methodology, including the community response to the project design in the final publication (see ibid: 14-18) and it appears that the researchers made a sincere effort to conduct a fair and meaningful study. However its usefulness to the community itself (as opposed to other researchers) is difficult to ascertain because of the lingering doubt over its validity. This is problematic given that it is one of the few studies in existence that has delved into the perceptions of Maltese language and culture in second and third generation Maltese Australians.

It is difficult to reconcile the community’s varied and impassioned responses to the Maltese language in Australia with the rate of its decline. Bovindon’s work to build a “mini-lexicon” (2004: 31) of Maltrajan will hopefully help to maintain its use, but the likelihood of “expansion” (ibid: 13) that Bovindon foresees in linguistic terms, is perhaps contentious in terms of the lived cultural experience. Research into these issues, of which this paper cannot be exempt, needs to take seriously its role within Maltese Australian community’s understanding of and efforts towards cultural renewal and sustainability.

Endnotes

[1] In 1947, prior to the assisted passage agreement, there were 3238 Malta-born Australians (Bureau of Immigration & Population Research, 1994: 4). Between 1948 and 1971 the Malta-born population increased by approximately fifty thousand (ibid). As the number of Maltese born Australians has decreased between 1971 and 1996 (McDonald, 2000: 5), it can be surmised that this constitutes the most significant period of Maltese migration to Australia. This period coincides with Australian government policies of immigrant cultural assimilation. Maltese migration during this period was primarily economic-based, fuelled by a post-war population boom and a severe economic decline. As such the majority of Maltese who came to Australia were working class and migrated with the hope of providing a better life for their families. When encouraged by Australian government institutions Maltese migrants often used their status as ‘British subjects’ as a means of easing their transition into Australian society and encouraged migrants to speak only English at home.
[2] NB While this article involves linguistic considerations, it is not a linguistic study per se and should not be read in that light.


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OGASAWARAN DANCERS’ ENCOUNTERS WITH PACIFIC DANCES

A Report from the 9th Pacific Festival of Arts in Palau

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Introduction

The Ogasawara (Bonin) islands are located 1,000km south-southeast of Tokyo and include two main inhabited islands, Chichijima and Hahajima, with a combined population of 2,500. Since 1968 they have been administered as part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area. After the first settlement from Hawai’i in 1830, the settlers and their descendants, from various cultural backgrounds, including Japanese, have assimilated and live together. Between 1914 and the 1950s, Ogasawara and Micronesia were part of a common political entity under first Japanese and later US administration, and this facilitated exchanges of culture between the two areas. In this paper, I outline Ogasawaran dancers’ encounters with Pacific dance, especially Micronesian marching dance, at the 9th Pacific Festival of Arts held in Palau in 2004, and discuss its impact as a case study to consider how a small islands’ music researcher can encourage cultural development through collaboration with local people.

(NB: Information or quotations from interviews conducted by the author are indicated by the reference ‘interview, a person’s name, date/month/year’.)

A brief history of dance exchange between Ogasawarans and Micronesians

Marching dances are generally performed by a line of male and/or female dancers who kick the respective leg forward and upward as the leader calls ‘Left, right’. Although the origin of the dance is unknown, fragmentary information available in Palau, Yap, Chuuk and Pohnpei suggests that it may have been introduced into the western area of Micronesia from the eastern region (Pohnpei or the Marshall Islands) in the 1920s. In the
eastern region, the marching dance is called *leep* (Marshallese), *lehp* (Pohnpeian) or *lep* (Mwoakilloa) and all of the Mwoakillese and some of Pohnpeian songs for it have Marshallese lyrics.

![Image of dancers](image)

Figure 1 Pohnpeian *lehp*
Photo by Junko Konishi (6/8/2003)

A similar form of dance is called *maas* in the central and (part of) the western Caroline Islands and by Carolineans in Saipan. The western centre of its dissemination was Angaur island in Palau, where Micronesians forced to mine phosphorus held dance competitions or exchanges as entertainment [1].

During the period of Japanese administration, when Japanese popular songs were introduced by Japanese private citizens and Micronesian children were educated in Japanese schools, marching dances performed to Japanised songs flourished in the western Caroline Islands and in Saipan. This seems to have been encouraged (directly and/or indirectly) by the Japanese government through their providing performance opportunities for it while restricting the staging of indigenous dance. Opportunities for cultural exchange between Micronesians also increased at this time. Songs with typical Japanese melodies and with lyrics written in Japanese became a tool for communication between Micronesians whose mother tongues were different from island to island.

By the 1930s, Ogasawara developed as a staging port between mainland Japan and Micronesia. Under the Japanese administration, some parts of Micronesia provided employment opportunities for Ogasawaranis. One Ogasawaran who exploited this was Joseph Gonzales, who visited Saipan, learnt marching dance and its accompanying songs and taught them to Ogasawaranis upon his return to Chichijima in the early 1930s[2]. The dance was performed to a series of songs with lyrics that used central Carolinean words. In addition to a song named *Yoakema*, the lyrics of which were in ‘incomplete’, fragmentary Japanese, to make the dance easily identifiable to islanders, the Ogasawaranis later developed the songs *Urane, Uwadoro, Gidai* and *Aftairan* (Danki, 1982:148-149) for dances that are collectively called *Nanyo odori* (South Pacific dance). In 1987
Ogasawarans established the Nanyo odori hozonkai (the association for preserving Nanyo odori) to maintain the dance, and the song materials were classified as an intangible cultural asset of Tokyo Metropolitan area. In 1999, Nanyo odori as a whole became classified as a performing arts form, reflecting the Micronesian-influenced history and culture of the region (Tokyo, 1999:95). Since then, the dance has been maintained with minor changes.

Although Ogasawaran-Micronesian communication continued under the US administration after World War Two (prior to Ogasawara’s restoration to Japan in 1968), the rapid Americanisation of both areas resulted in music and dance exchange between them being lost. Each Micronesian island developed a local form of marching dance, adopting foreign and contemporary elements of music and dance, while Ogasawarans continued to perform song materials in unknown words without knowing the origin and history of their transmission.

Summary of the Festival of Pacific Arts

The Festival of Pacific Arts[4] has been organised by and directed to people of the Pacific for the purpose of recognising themselves “as members of a single identity” of “Pacific Islanders” by bringing together their divergent cultural inheritances (Betham, 1972: 5). The idea of the Pacific Festival of Arts was first proposed in 1965 by the South Pacific Commission (SPC)[5], which was founded by Australia, France, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in 1947 under the Canberra Agreement (SPC, 2000).

In 1972, the first Festival, named the ‘South Pacific Festival of Arts’, was realised in Suva, Fiji. This has been followed by Festivals held in different countries/regions every four years, that is, New Zealand (1976), Papua New Guinea (1980), Tahiti (1985; which replaced New Caledonia formerly scheduled for 1984), Australia (1988), the Cook Islands (1992), Western Samoa (1996), New Caledonia (2000) and Palau (2004).

Following the third Festival in Port Moresby, the southerly limitation specified in the event’s name was dropped, reflecting the organisers’ notion that in the context of the Festivals “South Pacific” has a cultural rather than a geographical meaning (Wari 1980:10) and participation was extended to Micronesia, whose islands lie north of the equator. As a result, the number of participating countries/regions increased from 18 at the first Festival to 27 at the eighth. However, lack of financial support and the geographical distance to the host countries has often prevented Micronesian dancers from participating.

At the ninth Festival, of the 30 countries/regions attending, 27 were Pacific countries/regions (whose delegations included more than three hundred Micronesian
dancers from Palau, Yap, Kosrae, the Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Marshall Islands and Kiribati; and 3 were special guest countries - Indonesia, Japan and Taiwan. Programs of the Festival showcased various aspects of Pacific culture, such as performing art shows, demonstrations and/or displays of wood/stone carving, navigation and canoe racing, tattooing, visual arts, literary arts, healing arts and culinary arts.

![Figure 2 Audience at the Opening Ceremony of the Festival](image)

Invitations were extended to countries outside those usually considered as Pacific Island nations for the first time in the history of the Festival. As a special guest country, Japan was mainly expected to contribute financial support and it was not envisaged that any Japanese performers would participate. It was unsurprising that the Festival Committee, which mostly consisted of relatively young members, did not know about the dance connection between Micronesia and Ogasawara during the period of Japanese administration of the region. Even the Japanese government and most Japanese do not know the past culture and history of Ogasawara.

Encounter

In the mid-1990s, the *Nanyo odori hozonkai* opened its membership to newcomers and temporary residents of the Ogasawara islands to compensate for the withdrawal of those older-aged inhabitants who had become involved in local culture prior to World War Two. Some of the new members seeking an identity as Ogasawarans were eager to search for the origin and meaning of the dance song materials. As a Micronesian music researcher, I offered information on the present status of marching dance in Palau, Yap, Chuuk and Pohnpei, which inspired some Ogasawarans to visit Micronesia to watch them. In 1991, Akiko Yonemitsu (1970-), a newcomer and the former secretary of *Nanyo odori hozonkai* (until 2001), visited Palau and Yap to make a video of their dance performances and screened this on her return. This personal access as a tourist did not however result in further communication between Ogasawarans and Micronesians about the dances.
As a researcher, I perceived that the 9th Pacific Festival of Arts, where Palauans and Micronesians would gather, would provide an excellent opportunity to present Ogasawaran Nanyo odori and marching dance to a wider Pacific community. Even if Ogasawarans could not perform in public, their observation of other performances at the Festival could stimulate them to develop their own dances. Soon after the 8th Festival held in New Caledonia in 2000, I called Tsuneyoshi Kodaka, a member of Nanyo odori hozonkai, to tell him about the 9th Festival and, when I visited him on February 21st 2003, nine dancers planned their participation[6]. On January 7th 2004, at the business meeting of the Study Group on the Music of Oceania at the 37th International Council for Traditional Music held in Fuzhou and Quanzhou, China, I became a Committee member of the informal gathering in Palau planned subsequent to the 9th Festival. In this role I proposed a dance exchange between Ogasawarans and Palauans, which would be of benefit not only to dancers from both areas but also to ethnomusicologists specialising in Pacific music and dance.

While I arranged for the Ogasawarans to perform for the scholars, one Ogasawaran dancer, Midori Yokoya, negotiated with Santos Olikong (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Palau Embassy in Tokyo) for them to be officially invited to perform at the Festival. Olikong, who spent his high school days in Guam with Ogasawaran friends in the 1960s, was delighted to see pictures of Ogasawara which revealed that both the natural environment and the Nanyo odori practice were similar to those of Palau. He was also interested to learn of the past dance connection between Ogasawara and Micronesia. On June 24th he wrote a letter to the Committee proposing an Ogasawaran performance at the Festival that would allow them to appear on two stages for their “special” performances (interview, Yokoya Midori 11/9/2004).

During the Ogasawarans’ preparations and practice sessions in Palau, a Paluan Festival volunteer, Ricky Spis, introduced himself to the performers. Spis had finished 3 years’ kogakko (Japanese school for islanders) and 2 years’ hoshuka (extra class) and had learnt

Figure 3 Nanyo odori performance at the Festival
Photo by by Shinya Idani (28/7/2004)
to sing Ogasawaran songs while sailing between the Micronesian islands in 1952-1966 (interview, Ricky Spis, 30/7/2004). He soon became close to the Ogasawaran and offered to perform with them as a guest singer. He also invited some Ogasawarans to his home to view a video copy of a Japanese documentary, *Umi no seisaisei: waga Nanyo gunto* (‘Our marine life line, South Sea Islands [Micronesia]’). The film had been made in 1933, with the support of the Japanese Naval Ministry, as a propaganda item about Japan’s southern territories, and was broadcast by NHK TV after the discovery of an archive copy. Palauan audiences enthusiastically responded to the Ogasawarans’ performance of the Nanyo odori, especially when dancers began the second part of the dance song, *Yoakemae*, whistling and humming along together. This was not only because the incomplete Japanese song texts were familiar to Micronesians prior to World War Two, but also since the song is still used for a part of Palauan marching dance. The Micronesian audience responded to the dance gestures of *Uwadoro* with laughter, interpreting their ‘original’ meaning, which Ogasawarans did not understand.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 4** Palauan audience at the farewell party  
Photo by Junko Konishi (2/8/2004)

**Communications**

The *Nanyo odori* performance became the talk of Palau during the Festival not only among audiences at the site but also those who watched them on cable TV broadcasts. When Midori Yokoya dropped in at a supermarket, a young clerk told her that she enjoyed watching the dance along with her mother, who was familiar with the dance songs and Japanese popular culture (interview, Yokoya Midori, 11/9/2004). A rumour that *Nanyo odori* may have been taken to Ogasawara by Palauan boat people spread among Palauans, who were interested in the dance which was so familiar to them (interview, Kempis Mad 1/8/2004).

On 1 August 2004, at a session of the ICTM Study Group on the Music of Oceania meeting entitled ‘Special workshop for Palauan-Ogasawaran dance communication’ Palauan dance leaders/instructors, ethnomusicologists and Ogasawaran dancers...
enthusiastically discussed the differences and similarities in dance movements and song tunes between the Ogasawaran and Palauan versions. Palauan dance instructor Kathy Kesolei and a composer/musician Roland Tangelbad’s comparative discussions and demonstrations were, in particular, observed with much interest (Flores, 2004: 37).

During the Festival, the visiting Palauan ambassador to Japan, Olikong, arranged a meeting between Ogasawaran dancers and locals attending the Senior Citizens Centre. Three of the eight dancers who remained in Palau after the festival showed performed dances for the old Palauans and the Palauans taught them the lost verse of Parao no 5 chome, a common Micronesian-Ogasawaran song, and sang a Japanese song, Aogeba totoshi, for them (which impressed the Ogasawarans). In this way, Ogasawaran-Palauan dance exchange, which I planned with Ogasawaran dancers, also provoked Palauan interest in Ogasawaran culture.

After the Ogasawarans’ return to their home islands, I suggested that they hold a meeting for Ogasawaran villagers to report the events and to share what happened in Palau. The dancers readily accept this and arranged a meeting room, advertised it to villagers and prepared their presentations. Ogasawarans who participated at the meeting discussed the future development of their dance and culture. Thus, members of Nanyo odori hozonkai were encouraged to continue the dance exchange with Palauans[8].

Summary

The issue of the vexed relationship between the researcher and the informant is still under discussion in ethnomusicology. This case study profiles a cooperative relationship between a researcher and cultural bearers that proves that we can develop each subject through a relationship beyond our reciprocity. A researcher’s professional information and support were helpful for the performers involved not only to realise the dance exchanges but also to avoid problems with Micronesian audiences who recalled their
experience of Japanese administration. Dancers were encouraged by the Festival audiences’ responses then took back their experiences and spread the friendship further. This provided me with an invaluable research opportunity to record the processes. In addition, I learned aspects of the process of staging dance, by being an emcee for the performance, while dancers learned how to present their experiences in Palau. Also, I learned computer techniques from Toshio Watanabe, an Ogasawaran dancer, and learnt how to display goods at a meeting from Midori Yokoya and Momoyo Odamaki. Through sharing knowledge and skills, we broke the ‘researcher/cultural bearer’ distinction and built a real cooperative relationship. In other words, a ‘fieldwork experience’ with a researcher and dancers awoke us to what we could do together.

Endnotes

[1] Palauans call marching dance matamaton. The term seems to have originated from the progressive form of the Pohnpeian word mwadong (mwadonnwadong), meaning “to play; to take recreation” (Rehg and Sohl, 1979: 63) and dancing (interview, Nagaoka, 5/8/2004)

[2] Kitaguni refers to an interview with Sueka Kikuchi (1913-2001), the widow of Trahiko Kikuchi, in which she states that she remembered Joseph, his younger brother Christfer and his brother-in-law Torahiko Kikuchi teaching the dance to young villagers between 1923 and 1925 (Kitaguni, 2002: 135). It was possible that Joseph introduced the dance during his period back on the island; however, there is no further evidence to substantiate this. (Joseph died in 1935 one year after his return to Chichijima) (ibid: 134).

[3] In 1994, Kyoko Ohira (1922-) carefully produced a coherent version to show the Emperor on his visit to Ogasawara. The Aftairan dance was not subsequently performed however, due to problematic aspects, until it was revived in 2003 after locals watched a past video recording.

[4] After the word “South” was removed in 1985, the name of this Festival, as written in English, varies among festival organisers and writers, and includes “the Festival of Pacific Arts”, “the Pacific Festival of Arts”, “the Pacific Arts Festival”. In this article, “the Pacific Festival of Arts” or simply “the Festival” is used.

[5] The name changed to Secretariat of Pacific Community in 1998, however, both of them are commonly called the SPC (Yamamoto 2001:3).


[7] The film was broadcast in the early 1990s, Spis obtained a copy of the video sent by an elementary teacher from Mie Prefecture who visited Ailai village for a cultural exchange with his students in 2002.

[8] The Nanyo odori hozonkai applied to the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Foundation for a dance exchange program in 2005 and were successful in securing 500,000 yen in April, 2005.

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THE ABANDONMENT OF YABOB ISLAND 1942-1975 AND THE MEMORY OF CULTURAL CONTINUITY

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Abstract

Settlement patterns have been one of the key issues with regard to the inhabitation of small island environments. For the indigenous people of the coastal islands of the Madang Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG), socio-cultural changes in the post-contact era have made settlement an issue again, specifically, whether they choose to live on the mainland or to maintain their way of life on the islands. For the people of the coastal islands, most of who speak Austronesian languages, there is a renewed awareness of a ‘Them/Us’ dichotomy between themselves and coast dwellers, and this plays a role in the creation of the cultural landscape of their settlements.

The inhabitants of Yabob Island abandoned their homeland as a result of the Japanese occupation during the Second World War and resettlement did not commence until after PNG independence in 1975. This paper summarises the resettlement process in order to discuss the reenactment of a historical consciousness of a communal past or, more specifically, what might be termed “the memory of cultural continuity” which creates a particular time-space of a “subjunctive past” (Schechner, 1985) in this contemporary PNG community. The data used for this paper was collected during fieldwork between 1997 and 1998 on Yabob Island.

The Islands

Yabob Island is the homeland of the Yabob people, an Austronesian-speaking group now living south of Madang town, a port on the northern coast of New Guinea that serves as the administrative centre of Madang Province. After the construction of Madang town in the late 19th century, communities were divided into villages north and south of the town. The northern villages are locally known as ilon (bay) villages, since they are inside Madang Bay, protected by lagoons and mangroves, while the southern ones are called murin (rough sea) villages because the area is constantly washed by the waves of the Bismarck Sea. Currently, about a dozen islands, most of which are raised coral reefs, are inhabited. Yabob belongs to one of the two murin villages[1]. which comprises the

[1]
mainland strip (known as *bikples* in Tok Pisin) and three islands, Urembu, Mareg and Yabob. Urembu is uninhabited, the farthest from the shore and the smallest; Mareg is only five minutes away from the mainland by canoe and is the most populated (although it is smaller in size than Yabob).

Yabob Island is the largest of the three islands but is still relatively small, with a coastline of less than one kilometre. There is a small beach where canoes are kept but the rest of the coastline is surrounded by a small cliff of between one and two meters in height. Travel from the mainland to Yabob Island takes about 15 minutes by canoe and there is no regular ferry service. Between May and August, there are many days of *rai*, a dangerous wind that capsizes canoes. In 1997, Yabob Island had barely ten households, with less than four persons per house. The Yabob Islanders formed the smallest community cluster of an (extended) village whose total population numbers c1,000. Between 1997 and 1998, no Yabob islanders had a regular job - all lived from a combination of subsistence agriculture and fishing, remittances, and part-time jobs. Most children over 10 years old were usually able to paddle a canoe to go to school. However, unlike on the mainland, basic infrastructure remained unsatisfactory: there was no electricity and lamps were used; rainwater was collected in tanks made from old refrigerators; and firewood had to be collected on the beach.

Before western colonisation, the Austronesian-speaking people in the Madang area lived on the islands only; using areas of the coastal strip for hunting grounds, taro gardens, lumbering, and to collect clay for pottery. As a part of a vast trade network spread from the Siassi Islands of Morobe Province to Karkar Island in the north, they traded clay pots produced by the women of Yabob and Bilbil villages. These clay pots were a currency used in exchange for various goods - most importantly obsidian. The Austronesian-speaking groups of coastal New Guinea were the seafarers. They proudly told stories about how they sailed the ocean for a long distances using large masted canoes; at this historical consciousness and collective memory has been the basis of their identity as the ‘people of the coast’. This self-identification with the maritime geography reflects a differentiation from the non-Austronesian groups of the hinterlands, who are often thought to mark ‘the line of the bush’. These non-Austronesian groups were subsistence hunters and farmers. Groups living close to the coast inevitably encountered the island people; some encounters were hostile and violent. The Yabob people are said to have wiped out an entire group called Sivo, who lived in today’s mainland Yabob village settlement. Annoyed by repeated harassment of their women while they were collecting clay on the mainland, the Yabob, together with their non-Austronesian ally the Gum, raided the Sivo, killed the villagers, and buried them in a hole[22].

The Germans arrived in the region in the 1890s to build their headquarters at Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, which was later renamed Madang and taken over by the Australians after WWI. Christianity was introduced, with the Ten Commandments – and colonial law - prohibiting murder. Even after inter-group conflict ceased, due to strong discouragement by the administrators, the Austronesians kept living on the islands. The introduction of
Christianity changed the pre-contact culture well before World War Two by prohibiting most of the native practices and belief systems. The collection of head tax and other integration into the colonial administration stimulated local cultural imagination, which expressed itself through outbreaks of ‘cargo cults’ (Inselman, 1996: Lawrence, 1989). Despite these drastic changes, the Austronesians around the Madang area still remained on an islands landscape sprinkled with the traditionally thatched roofs and canoes.

The History of Abandonment

Madang fell under Japanese attack in 1942. Because of its location, Yabob Island was one of the first points of the Japanese landings and the Japanese 18th Army took control of the tiny island within an hour. The people, seeing the fully armed soldiers, surrendered; as an old man said to me: “Well, we gave them what they wanted. As it goes, we had no power”. Although there were four clans on Yabob at the time of invasion, the community had given up long distance navigation and the associated traditions played a declining role in the community (although Mareg Island, the legendary landing site of the ancestors of the Madib and Madib Raro clans, was still believed to be the home of demons). After the landings, the Japanese built a military hospital in the middle of a cliff on the mainland and; thereafter, Yabob village became an important strategic point. Some islanders remained on the island until American air raids intensified to the extent that most houses were completely demolished and the men were recruited to serve the Japanese, constructing roads and bridges. New settlements were built on the mainland and the evacuated villagers dug a well and built huts there and Yabob Island was abandoned altogether by the end of the Pacific War. When the Japanese left and the Australians recovered control over New Guinea; the villagers were kept on the mainland. The villagers recalled that the administrators made the decision for this permanent relocation from all the small islands off the Madang coast believing that there was overpopulation and ineffective sanitation on the islands. Until PNG independence the former island people lived exclusively on the mainland.

This decision to relocate the Yabob community had a greater impact than the simple change of dwelling patterns: the villagers also gave up commuting with canoes. Since all the settlements moved to the mainland, access to Madang town became exclusively land-based. In the local language, wag originally denoted a canoe but now has been extended to signify modern public transport, such as buses. As this linguistic adjustment shows, the Yabob people became accustomed to life on the mainland: roads to the compounds were paved, a school system was prepared, and some found employment in the hospitals, the radio station, government facilities, the police office, and private enterprises (including branches of banks and Air Niugini). Even the chief of Yabob’s oldest Kakon clan became a medical orderly.

The Resettlement and the Rebuilding of Landscape

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Resettlement became possible in 1975 after PNG independence, when the restriction of residence was lifted. However, most villagers chose to stay on the mainland, probably because the life on the island, which had been forsaken for more than three decades, was regarded as too inconvenient in terms of a contemporary way of life. Only the members of Kakon clan decided to build their home on the island by claiming customary land ownership (there were no competitors in this). When they landed, the beach had receded and the water in the well tasted salty, but nothing else seemed to have changed from the time when the people left, including the old Protestant graveyard. The men built their houses with help from their relatives on the mainland. They cut down trees, cleared the space, planted palms, and gradually rebuilt the landscape. As of 1997 there were about ten households and two men’s houses for young boys, and although people moved on and off the island there were generally about 30 people living there at any one time.

Although to a visitor’s eye the landscape of the island looks timeless, with the quiet beach, the green foliage, the traditionally thatched stilt houses, and so forth, the landscape is a reinvention that only began after independence. Even the use of canoes is a renewed practice given that people had to learn how to paddle and steer them at the time of the first resettlement: Moreover, there have been some important changes to the structure of the village. First, although the graveyard was resurrected, there is no church on the island today (and churchgoers on the island canoes have to the mainland for services[32]). Second, and more importantly, the islanders have reconstructed haus boi (darem in the Yabob language) - the men’s houses that were burned down by the mission (along with their sacred objects and musical instruments) because they were the place to conduct rituals that were denounced as idol worship.

In rebuilding the darems of the two sub-clans of Kakon, the Yabob Islanders reactivated aspects of their former practices. Women’s access to the darems is prohibited and young boys are encouraged to live together and to learn camaraderie and various life skills before they marry. The once obsolete mulung (initiation) ritual was also refashioned and resumed. Not very much is known about the mulung ritual in the pre-colonial era, but certainly it involved the performance of ‘the voice of spirits’ by various sound-producing instruments in order to awe the initiates, and circumcision rituals (Hannemann 1996[n.d.]). Today, no villagers seem to remember these aspects of the ritual, or at least they choose not to mention them.

The mulung ritual of Yabob takes place as follows. Every two years the initiation ritual is hosted on Yabob Island, with boys from both Yabob and the co-hosting Bibil village. Participation frequently extends to any villagers’ relatives who might live in distant places and neighbors who live in the mainland housing areas. Bibil and Yabob take turns hosting mulung for each other. Although the ritual is held in the both villages, there are now no residents on Bibil Island. The contemporary ritual manifests itself as educational camp in which the initiates learn traditional handicrafts, the art of group activity, ethics, traditional values, and the like. The initiates’ appearance is strictly hidden from the rest of
the village: even for bathing and laundry on the beach, and times are carefully selected in order to avoid the eyes of women and visitors. The event’s finale is a public performance of a traditional dance learned during the mulung. Despite its emphasis on things traditional, the summer-camp style event is a recent innovation. Some changes may also have happened after the darems on Yabob Island became the target of police raid in the 1980s. Under suspicion of hiding juvenile suspects and possession of illegal firearms; the clan leader, a man in his sixties at that time, was investigated to determine whether the darem system was an undercover gang society.

Despite all these changes and differences, islanders tend to inform visitors that: “nothing really changed because we kept our tradition intact”. An old man from an ilon village who revisited Yabob Island for the first time since the Japanese campaign, remarked: “I see some of the old trees still standing there”, for instance. In fact, many of ilon islands have their natural bush replaced by mangoes and coconut palms, and their gardens covered with turf. On Yabob Island the sacred names and location of the micro landscape such as certain bushy mounds, grassy dents, or rocks are kept by the male successor of the clan so that they do not lose knowledge of supernatural power; mythical sites regarding the tale of the origin of the clay pot are still remembered, too.

Historicity of Yabob Island: Beyond the Displacement

Answering the question of why only the Kakon clan returned to their island, the clan leader answered: “because it is our land inherited from the ancestors”. One can identify a number of reasons for the resettlement of Yabob Island: the population pressure on the mainland settlement as a result of scarcity of land; a move to claim the customary land tenure of the island; a deliberate choice of the more secure, quieter land in preference to the mainland; and so forth. However, these explanations do not account for the sense of tradition, or the sense of ‘home’. Over the years since colonisation, the centre of clan solidarity shifted from being the men’s secret society (due to the removal of the men’s house which institutionalised a complex kinship structure), to extended families (that gained more mobility as peace was extended regionally). What is observed today as the existing kinship network is not an old institution at all. Networks of extended family living in distant towns and provinces have gained importance; child rearing and schooling have become shared work among households of siblings and in-laws. The new function of the men’s house has been restricted to serving as a place for the male bonding of the youth whose social space in the school has become the centre of their activity.

Resettlement has not taken place on all the islands. For instance, Bilbil Island continues to be uninhabited (despite the increased population of the mainland Bilbil village), although the Bilbil community has also maintained a sense of tradition, as the resumption of mulung with Yabob indicates. Some of the traditional geographical names even appear in the lyrics of pop music and denote the identity of the local people. Nen a, composed by
Yabob performer Sandie Gabirel (and recorded on Kale Gadags’ 1992 album *Kales*), includes the last words of an old dying Bilbil man addressed to his daughter:

*Nen nene Panu Domon me hinan / Nen a e so uruti mon / Nane hinan tibun.*
(My daughter, I am a man of Panu Domon / My daughter, do not cry / I am a tumbuna for this.)

Panu Domon, literally ‘the point’ in the local tongue, is the name of a harbour on Bilbil Island, after which the dying man’s clan was named. The protagonist, sick in his bed, is depicting his painless ending with the metaphor of the fair weather. The last phrase ‘I am tumbuna for this (fair weather)”signifies the magic of his clan as the controller of the weather for long distance navigation. Since the canoe is a common metaphor for the dead, the old man’s reference to tumbuna (the sorcerer) as the seafarer vividly describes his departure. The fact that a popular artist reproduced the old man’s word to compose a song indicates that symbolism relating to the ancient way of life is still able to produce compelling images. Consequently, the resettlement on the abandoned islands inevitably produces cultural images regarding their roots, and the time of tumbuna, among the Austronesians. There is no doubt that the actual relocation is at least symbolically connected with this realm of cultural images, whether the actors would like it or not, or regardless of direct cause and motivation. Furthermore, there is an entangled articulation of roots among the Yabob Islanders; the garments, headdresses, and music for the singsing dance, for instance, are in fact a recent invention after the prohibition of indigenous dance and music by the mission in the 1920s. They were forgotten for a long time, and then finally resurrected and refashioned in the 1970s by recalling and re-editing the fragmented memories of the original. As the repertoire, choreography and the costume of the dance changed, so did the initial function of dance in the pre-contact era as the tool of inter-group communication. Dances today consist of modern cultural contents such as heritage and spectacle; the dancing at the end of mulung has become a subject of spectatorship, something to show to the audience. The signification of *singsing* as something ‘traditional’, with identification of ethnic groups itself, is a recent cultural invention which started only after colonisation.

The Yabob Islanders’ reenactment of tradition is hardly an exact replica of its past. Their act of reconstruction of the past is an invention. In addition, choosing the periphery, and moving away from the urban centre to an isolated island, seems an “anti-modern” reaction to the post-Independent PNG. The resumption of canoeing and old practices related to daren and mulung are another indication of such anti-modernity rather than simple duplication of the pre-contact way of life. Interestingly, the homecoming of Kakon clan itself is a part of a reenactment of history, for the Kakons are the oldest clan and the first residents of Yabob Island. In this regard, the actions of Yabob Islanders in terms of how they often characterise as ‘tradition’, are not a resistance against modern and post-colonial institutions. Rather, this reenacting of a pre-colonial past based on cultural memory that has become a resource of historicity that produces a cultural grid to create a new centre of activity. The resettlement of Yabob Island is a reenactment of
cultural history and a remaking of a socio-cultural centre that used to be the nucleus of the wag-going people. Since Madang town has become the modern administrative and economic centre for the mainland neighborhood, the resettlement of Yabob Island is an invention of a new centre for another world of meaning.

Furthermore, what appears as anti-modern is actually a product of modernity; the contention that Yabob Island is an undeveloped and under-serviced periphery, inadequate in the age of motor vehicle wags is a modern construct. On the surface, life on Yabob Island with no electricity or tap water might appear a representation of anti-modernity; however, the resettlement project has a particular historicity and cultural memory. This cultural memory is a source for reconstructing the past and reviving village life on the island. In this, it is ideological, in creating a social space that represents the authenticity of ‘things traditional’. When the landscape of the resettled island becomes a representation of cultural memory, and when the resurrection of wag as Kakon clan sea-going canoe evokes the cultural past of the people, then it becomes the source of imagination that visualises the idea of a pre-colonial neighborhood. This whole sequence, therefore, is a reworking of the pre-colonial in post-colonial time.

This type of entangled historicity might be characterised as a ‘displacement’, since something not continuously practised now bears the name of ‘tradition’ as if it existed without hiatus. However, the word ‘displacement’ suggests a judgement from an infallible camera eye, so it is more appropriate that this notion be replaced with another, that of a ‘subjunctive past’ that expresses a particular kind of continuity. The subjunctive past is a reenactment of an historical past in the present time. It is a “restored behavior”, to use Richard Schechner’s term from his discussion of the anthropology of theater. While the Yabob Islanders’ social space was not necessarily a theatrical one (in the sense of Schechner’s original formation), Yabob Islanders invented their past by means of restoration in order to live in today’s post-independent PNG; positioning them in a historical mode of the cultural narrative of ‘the people of the coast’.

Conclusion: The Reality of Social Space in Papua New Guinean Modernity

Just as the canoes called wag are travelling back and forth in the quiet deep blue sea, what appears as traditional is not a substance but a modus operandi of reality; it is how historicity is incorporated in a contemporary way of life, or the ‘subjunctive past’ of historicity. Yabob Islanders re-enacted and re-inculcated their historical continuity by reinventing men’s houses and dances and resurrecting mythological knowledge and canoes. Despite this historical discontinuity of the settlement on the island and its abandonment, the source of such an imagination of cultural continuity is reproduced with the memory of the seafarers, the memory of the micro landscape of the island, old practices, and the native image of the canoe. This reenactment of history could take place nowhere else but on the island.
Yabob villagers today identify the distinction between Austronesian and non-Austronesian groups in terms of the ‘line of the beach’ against the ‘line of the bush’, referring to the historical location of the homelands of the two groups. Such a distinction has become the source of their identity as mangi Madang tru (Tok Pisin for ‘truly Madang people’); it is also used to describe their identity in contrast to newcomers from the Sepik or Highlands in the semi-urban squatter settlements. The reenactment of the subjunctive past is a making of distinction as well; the feeling of the seasonal wind on the sea and the very scenery of the islands are restored in order to create a distinct social space that has been achieved through the reinvention of historicity and a reenactment of the way of life on the island from the pre-colonial time. It is a subjunctive mode of the past, a particular revisiting of the past and, at the same time, the product of action and a reinvention.

Yabob Islanders today are likely to send their relatives to an Australian university, become pop artists, own grocery stores, join tuna fishing boats from Korea and drink heavily in Pusan, work for oil multinationals, become born-again evangelists, and have ceased to speak their indigenous tongue for the creolised Tok Pisin. In other words, their sense of the here-and-now is quickly merging into the capitalist mode of production, the market economy, and the system of the nation-state of PNG with its post-modern cultural grid. Yet still they resist by forming their locality intact through reinvention, which might be partially due to the fact that they still rely on a subsistence way of living because of their limited command of English. Urbanisation, institutionalisation, post-colonisation, post-industrialisation, globalisation, etc., have formed the social environment of the people who restored their native sense of centre and periphery; they reinvented historicity through cultural inventions by means of reactivating their cultural memory. In this sense, what appears as a traditional way of life is a production of modernity that always objectifies the historical past, but in ‘restoring’ their past in a subjunctive manner, Yabob Islanders are creating a new centre, in order to ensure their cultural survival today.

Endnotes

[1] The other is Bilbil village.


[3] Missionaries conducted their service in the small church or haus lotu in the Pacific style. The Protestants built one on Yabob, while the Catholics built theirs on Mareig Island.

[4] These are the places where Hon Pain, the daughter of the celestial place, washed her young boy’s body, and the site where she made her final clay pots, the invention that she brought to the Yabob women. These events occurred before going back to her place with her son because her mother-in-law divulged her true origin to him as she scolded him, breaking the initial condition of her marriage not to tell anybody about her true identity.
Schechner writes: “Restored behavior is symbolic and flexible: not empty but loaded behavior multivocally broadcasting significances. These difficult terms express a single principle: The self can act in/as another; the social or transindividual self is a role or set of roles. Symbolic and reflexive behavior is the hardening into theater of social, religious, aesthetic, medical, and educational process. Performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the nth time. Performance is “twice-behaved behavior” (Schechner 1985:36).

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TE MWAIE

Traditional Dance in Kiribati

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Introduction

This paper explores the role of traditional dance in Kiribati, arguing that it provides a vital opportunity for the individual and group to establish and maintain boundaries essential for self-definition and self-recognition within contemporary society. The three inter-related aspects of place, preparation and performance of I-Kiribati dance provide sites for discussion. These areas make a chronological sense in relation to the dance process as well as being significant sites within which to analyse ethnographic material of photo-documentation and transcribed tape-recorded interviews.

(NB All quotations from I-Kiribati reproduced below are taken from interviews recorded on Kiribati in 1999).

Place

The central chain of sixteen atolls that form the core of Kiribati straddle the equator a little west of the international dateline. These atolls are remote, diminutive and physically very similar. They rise a mere two metres above sea level, forming narrow ribbons of land that entrap a shallow lagoon from the depths of the encircling Pacific Ocean. Coral dominates the land. There is little soil, and only the hardiest of plants survive – the coconut and pandanus trees being the most significant. There are no hills, no streams and little change in annual temperature or climate. The view from every reef, for every I-Kiribati, is the uninterrupted immensity of the Pacific Ocean. Such a view led Austin Coates to write:

You have only to stand on that beach, with the other just a few yards behind you, think of where you are – is it the end of the world or the beginning? – and look at the empty enormity in which your existence as an individual is placed; and everything from every angle in the view says ‘Why?’ (1970: 36)
The physical similarities of the atolls are echoed in their consistencies of social existence. Traditional skills, practices and values are common to all living generations. *Te mwaneaba* (the meeting house) is still a vital and central part of village life.

Figure 1 *Te mwaneaba* (the village meeting-house) is traditionally the focus of the social life of the community.

Photo by Tony Whincup (1999)

There are no dramatic changes in buildings, dress or forms of social behaviour, and the I-Kiribati language is spoken throughout the islands. The dynamics and structure of village life ensure transparency of activities and behaviour. Buildings are open in construction, and social restrictions, rather than physical barriers, provide basic privacy. Appropriate patterns of behaviour are clearly understood and maintained, and there has been limited integration with those of other nationalities. Extended families own all the land, which is divided up into thin strips running from lagoon to ocean, and marked by large coral slabs. Land may be ‘loaned’ but cannot easily be sold. The physical isolation, limited resources and little political significance, ensure a homogenous and stable culture. This isolation from diversity has meant that change has come slowly to Kiribati, particularly on the ‘outer islands’. If, as Bourdieu suggests, “the struggle for recognition is a fundamental dimension of social life” (1987:33), the material limitations and controlled forms of
social expression could be seen to form a site of tension in the individual agency necessary to establish a sense of self.

This paper suggests that the continuing significance of dance in contemporary I-Kiribati society is in providing a vehicle that encourages uniqueness for small groups and individuals, within socially acceptable practices and behaviours.

Preparation

The preparation for dance comprises aspects of material culture and the physical development and rehearsal of the dance movements. The activities involved in the preparation for dance pervade virtually every part of I-Kiribati existence. Preparation draws together contemporary and historical orientations to the spiritual, skills and practices in the use of the atoll's natural resources, family values, and the inter-generational connectedness of social existence. Importantly, dance not only engages skills and underpinning spiritual associations associated with the production of material culture, but also provides a stimulus for the maintenance of these productions.

The limited resources on the islands directly impact upon the materials available for costumes and decorations. These materials are used with great ingenuity and creativity. Plants such as the coconut palm and its fruit, the pandanus tree, and a range of local flowers, are drawn into the complex and ancient methods of costume preparation. Skirts, dancing mats, belts, head and arm decorations are all produced from the atolls’ few natural resources. Even the hair from female members of a dancer’s family is used to make the symbolically important te nuota, or man’s dancing belt. The preparation of the original raw materials – pandanus, coconut husks, shells, and so on - takes not only individual time, but a community or family commitment to garner sufficient of these hard won materials for the members of a village dance team. On the one hand these activities support and identify individual skills and status, and on other, they perpetuate communal activity.
Figure 2 *Te nuota* is a belt made of hair. The hair, specially cut from female members of the dancer’s family, is woven into lengths long enough to wrap two or three times around the man’s dancing mat.
Photo by Tony Whincup (1999)

The production of costumes and adornments involves not only skill and time but also a sense of commitment and care. Csikszentmihalyi has an interesting theory of “attendance” in which “it is convenient to think of attention as psychic energy because through its allocation ordered patterns of information and action are created” (1991: 5). It is argued that the energy given from a commitment of time and effort is transferred to the person, object or place of attendance. The costumes, *te mwaneaba* and the dancers themselves all receive ‘attendance’. The intensity of the final performance could be argued to arise, in part, from it.

In all aspects of I-Kiribati life individuals are noted for their skills, such as the octopus catcher, the canoe or *mwaneaba* builder, and some are expert in the preparation of the dance costume. To maintain this recognition of a specific skill or knowledge, their methods are often kept secret from all but a limited circle of family members. The skills needed for the production of dance costumes are also the skills of survival – material gathering and preparation, social systems of magic, communal commitment and the practice of oral histories. In the specific is the maintenance of the general and vice versa.
Recently, contemporary look-alike materials have been introduced, for example, rubber brake piping replacing coconut ring belts, or strips of videotape being substituted for the black shiny palm fronds of dancing skirts, each directly reflecting changes in general social patterns:

*You can see the changes now – using modern music, trying to put it in traditional dance – that’s one. Two, the costume – plastic is being used very often… But one interesting thing is since the introduction of videotapes. We’ve found that the worn out ones are used for skirts – instead of using blackened coconut. It’s a good size you know – just exactly as the more normal one and you don’t have to go to all the process of blackening the thing because its already black and shiny.* (Bwere Eritaia)

Preparation for dance also includes music, words and movements. Each is the domain of a recognised and revered expert. The numerous different skills that comprise dance each have their associated procedures and magical associations. Each expert will have followed long and rigorous initiation procedures. From an awareness of this training, Toom Taninga believes that:

*… the dancers do respect me… Whatever advice I give them, they just obey it. This of course… happened as a result of traditional ritual that was performed for me when I was first commissioned to this. I still can feel that spiritual inspiration every time I stand up to lead the group. Sometimes when relaxing I could feel on my body something like a wind blowing slowly and penetrating into my skin. When this happens I know that I am possessed with the spirit of dance. I get up and put on my costume.*

The secrets and magic associated with the successful performance of dance training, and musical composition, are passionately guarded. Sometimes the rehearsals of a particular dance technique will take place in the secrecy of a hidden location in the early hours of the morning. Within the tightly organised I-Kiribati community, these skills provide an opportunity to establish difference and, therefore, a sense of self. Such skills can be regarded as a symbolic capital that provides recognisable status and difference within the community.
Performance

Figure 3 “Akekeia!” – the word is echoed from side to side of the meeting-house. Again the arm is raised and the call “Akekeia!” brings the dancers to attention. Photo by Tony Whincup (1999)

Dance is performed by both men and women, young and old. Its performance is the intense focal point of the skills, preparation and practice for the dancers and their families. The vigorous clapping and chanting of the chorus, and the stately controlled movements of the dancers, embody centuries of history in the minutiae of their movements and the words of the ancient songs. The songs speak of great battles, the legends of creation and migration, and of the ebb and flow of I-Kiribati life. Bewbwe Kanitio Tearo emphasises the significance of body movements in these tellings:

...the arm, head and eye movements should always follow the rhythm of the song and illustrate the meaning of the words. For example, the arm that stretched sideways with the forearm moving up and down, it illustrates the bird that flies up in the air. The arm horizontally moves forward or inward or outward in an up and down fast movement illustrates the movement of fish.

There are numerous forms of dance from the ancient and beautiful seated te bino to the dramatic standing dance te buki, in which a voluminous and heavy skirt is flicked from side to side. Each dance has its own particular meaning, costume, sequence and song.
Competing dance teams sit at opposing ends of the mwaneaba. Villagers and visitors crowd the sides of the meeting-house, sitting cross-legged on woven mats. To start, dancers move toward the centre of the mwaneaba and a chorus of men and women gather behind them. On one side of the team a male dancer will raise his arm, index finger pointing upward, and call “Akekeia!”, which brings the dancers to attention, and sets the pitch for the chant. The call “Akekeia” is echoed from side to side until the dancers are ready. A sense of timelessness pervades and yet the charged atmosphere is intensely of the present.

The traditions and history of the culture are maintained within these performances:

Most of the compositions refer to the history and legends of the country. Some are more recent than the others such as Nei Kimoauea and the King of Tarawa. Yes, and some of them like ‘kamei’ compositions tell information of important people and events in the past like the Second World War story. There is a well-known bino that tells about an aeroplane dropping bombs on an island. They are used as historical record. (Bewbwe Kanitio Tearo)

Dance is the distillation of virtually all forms of expression – poetry, song, history, movement and body adornment. Although there are suitable materials available, I am unaware of any traditional forms of carving or painting in Kiribati. The significance of the dance performance must be seen against its social context. In Kiribati, overtly demonstrative behaviour is frowned upon. Except within controlled situations, one does not ‘stand above others’, either in a conceptual sense of self-promotion, or on a physical level. Dance demands that people that present themselves as individuals or as a small group. During the dance they become the focal point of attention. This is in itself unusual, and the intensity of the moment is heightened by the lengthy preparations and the social significance of the venue.
Figure 4 Dressing in the traditional dance costume is no mere point of decoration. For many, a significant emotional shift occurs as they move from their day to day lives into the soul and history of an I-Kiribati dancer. Photo by Tony Whincup (1999)

Dance, then, provides a rare, socially acceptable opportunity to publicly express emotion. The uniqueness and intensity of the moment combine to induce extreme emotions. Dancers will wail and cry, fall on the floor or have to be helped away in an uncontrollable state:

When I dance I feel great pleasure. In fact, there is a kind of emotion which is hard to define … I always cry and my whole body shakes on its own accord. … When the dance is finished, most would come back feeling drained and exhausted, some even fall shaking (Taua Tiito)

… you often see people burst into tears or scream in dancing ….. It happens to me just when I’m watching too, because I’m singing along – there’s just that energy that builds up and up in your body and you just cannot contain it. (Gretchen Hughes)

The dancers and the chorus are structured as two strongly contrasting parts of the one performance. The dancers remain seemingly aloof, as they time and again retrace their
precise and controlled movements, in contrast to the mounting energy and passion of the chorus. The performance can be seen as the site of struggle between the opposing forces of static and dynamic values. The dancers embody the static values of control, historical patterns and established expectations, whereas the chorus responds creatively and interacts spontaneously. The tension between the two is exquisite for both the performers and audience.

You will feel the hair of your skin stand especially when there is a strong stimulus sound of the song you dance to, and moreover when you start moving your head, arms and lift your leg or beat your chest, yes there is a feeling of great excitement. (Roota Mauri)

Figure 5 The ancient and beautiful sitting dance te bino deals with lyric poetry and particularly songs of love.
Photo by Tony Whincup (1999)

In recent years there have been shifts in the nature of the dance performance. Dance has always been competitive, but historically it was individual – for a man or woman to show themselves as the best within the group dancing. With the advent of greater emphasis upon village and inter-ministry competitions, the orientation has swung to rewarding group, rather than individual, excellence. The criteria in some cases are the accuracy and
unity of movement as a group. Some I-Kiribati feel this emphasis denies the quality of the exceptional individual performance that could not be attained by a group:

Dance itself is not a group competition, no, traditional dance is an individual dance competition – you compete with the one beside you – now it is changing to a group competition, a team competition. .. You can look at the thing from two perspectives – the old one, the individual competition – how good the body movement is, all those things. That’s why the ladies, the young girls, they’re not allowed to wear anything, they were topless … you see this (navel) shaking with the breasts, that’s a fail – it needs good control. So when you move your hips, the body is still - no movement.

Now the competition is as a group, they go for uniformity of movement… that’s the major criteria … They also judge the costume decoration… (Bwere Eritaia)

In contrast to the thinking of early missionaries, dance is now recognised by the Catholic Church. Traditional costumes and gestures of the dance are now integrated into many parts of the Catholic mass:

We are trying to encourage our youth, because the future of the church depends on that - the youth – and the more they participate in the mass and understand it, they can also know how to translate it into their lives, and very often, those who are participating (in the dancing) are the youths. (Bishop Paul Mea)

Overview

In traditional dance, the society of Kiribati has developed a vehicle that holds in balance the dialectical forces of difference and individuality (agency) in contrast with the social order (structure) and understood symbolic references. The cultural stability arising from agreed symbolic systems is under threat in post-modern societies as ambiguity arises from a lack of consensus of construction and interpretation of expressions. To maintain strongly held beliefs and personally appropriate ways of expression, the group and individual are forced to clarify and vigilantly maintain their personal boundaries through a cohesiveness of group practice. As the ability for symbolic systems to function depends to a large extent upon agreement as to their value and interpretation, the orientation of a society towards its social structures will be very much a determining factor in the effectiveness for group or self-definition to function as a part of these systems. It is not experiences that are at the heart of social differences, but rather the construction of the symbolic systems used in their expression. Yet expressions of experience equally well direct who we are as represent who we are. There is circularity in expression and experience. I would suggest that the constructors construct but are, in turn, constructed by their constructions. “Therefore it seems more correct to think of self-awareness as a process of self-control rather than a static moment of apperception” (Csikszentmihalyi,
As the practices of dance shift and adapt to ever more divergent external influences, so too will the ‘self’ mirrored in their performances.

If dance, indeed the I-Kiribati way of life, is to provide for self-definition and recognition, it has been argued that there need to be opportunities for establishing and maintaining difference. It is through difference that the ‘other’ can be recognised – boundaries of some sort are needed to establish an inner and an outer. I would argue that the development of an awareness of self is arrived at retrospectively, out of witnessing consistent patterns, revealed and maintained in the concrete expressions of our experiences. As Bourdieu suggests, it is in the recognition of “everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference” (Bourdieu, 1979: 172). The performance of I-Kiribati dance is the culmination of costume preparation, song compositions, dance choreography and rehearsal, magical practices and so on. In the controlled, stable and even pattern of Kiribati existence, the dance performance is made even more extra-ordinary through contrast.

Perhaps there is no one singular purpose for dance in Kiribati, but the numerous activities necessary for its production involve skills of material culture, maintenance of traditional beliefs in magic and the spiritual world, the oral histories embodied in the songs’ lyrics, and the psychological release provided by dance as public expression. Time and again, I-Kiribati said that involvement with dance provided them with a sense of recognition and a pride in their cultural identity.

[Dance] is the expression of joy and sorrow, maybe love, friendship being expressed through the dance in the highest way – so dancing in Kiribati, I think, is one of the highest forms of expression. It’s a way of bringing the community together, participating in certain celebrations, that’s why you develop this sense of unity in the community through dance – ummh – also beginning to appreciate your own culture. It gives joy to the people, they cannot celebrate without dance. Also the preparation of dance takes a long time, so in doing that they really develop their sense of unity towards the community - it’s a way of educating our young people, participating in their culture especially in dances – so dance is their centre of our life really ... this is the way of our highest point of expressing our emotions and feelings about life and relationship between one another and also the relationship with the invisible world, the spirit, all in the dance; so it’s a big wealth for us and a very rich expression of our life through the dances. (Bishop Paul Mea)

Through dance, the important aspects of culture are maintained inter-generationally, and a mode of social and psychological well-being is established in a recognition of self. As Roota Mauri so succinctly puts it, “this is our culture and identity, we are known as I-Kiribati from the way we dance ... That is why I love my traditional dance very very much. I love it because it is my identity”.

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Bibliography


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