Refereed papers from

THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL SMALL ISLAND CULTURES CONFERENCE

Held at the Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, Kingston, February 9th–13th 2006

Edited by Henry Johnson
Refereed Papers From

THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL SMALL ISLAND CULTURES CONFERENCE

Held at the Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, Kingston, Norfolk Island, 9–13 February 2006

Edited by Henry Johnson
(University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand)

All papers published on this site are copyright the authors, are freely available as downloads and have been refereed by peer researchers under the supervision of the editor. Unauthorised republication without prior consent is prohibited.

ISBN (web version) 0 9758246 2 7
ISBN (printed version) 0 9758246 3 5

Published by SICRI, the Small Islands Cultures Research Initiative, August 2006.
Refereed papers from The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference, Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, Norfolk Island, 9-13 February 2006 are published by SICRI: The Small Island Cultures Research Initiative.

All papers published on this site are copyright the authors, are freely available as downloads and have been refereed by peer researchers under the supervision of the editor. Unauthorised republication without prior consent is prohibited.

ISBN (web version) 0 9758246 2 7
ISBN (printed version) 0 9758246 3 5

Published by SICRI, the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative, Sydney, 2006.

This publication is available from: http://www.sicri.org/publications.html and can also be found at The Small Island Cultures Reference Resource: http://www.sicref.org

Administration & Editorial Contact Information

Editor: Henry Johnson
Email: henry.johnson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Assistant editor: Susan MacRae

SICRI Postal Address:

Small Island Cultures Research Initiative
c/o Administrative Office
Department of Contemporary Music Studies
Division of Humanities
Macquarie University
Sydney
NSW 2109
Australia

SICRI Network Facilitator: Philip Hayward
Email: Phil.Hayward@humn.mq.edu.au

SICRI Web Resource Coordinator: Alex Mesker
Email: Alex.Mesker@humn.mq.edu.au

Further information about the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative can be obtained from the SICRI website: http://www.sicri.org

Cover Image

Courtesy of Tony Whincup
Email: A.N.Whincup@massey.ac.nz
(used by kind permission)
CONTENTS

Introduction  
*Henry Johnson*  
v
*Sere ni cumu* and the contemporary construction of place and identity in Taveuni, Fiji  
*Jennifer Cattermole*  
1

Relational Knowledge and Marine Conservation: The Case of the *Pasua Rahui*, Tongareva, Cook Islands  
*Charlotte Chambers*  
16

Once you saw them, now you don’t: The disappearance of Cook Island traditional craft production  
*Wendy E Cowling*  
26

Radio Norfolk: Community and communication on Norfolk Island  
*Rebecca Coyle*  
36

The silent echoes of Chatham Island  
*Mark Evans*  
46

*The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*: Guernsey and the Channel Islands in the 20th Century  
*Peter Goodall*  
54

Localisation and local song repertoire on Norfolk Island  
*Philip Hayward*  
61

Performing Okinawa: Eisâ, identity construction and the recontextualisation of traditional performing arts  
*Henry Johnson*  
68

Waiting for the tide, tuning in the world: Traditional knowledge, environmental ethics and community  
*Kumi Kato*  
76

Island dreams and the cultural politics of small island cuisine  
*Susie Khamis*  
85

Commanding perspectives on the Isles of Scilly: Robert Maybee’s ballad of *Sir Cloudesley Shovel*  
*Marea Mitchell*  
93

The Norf’k language as a memory of Norfolk’s cultural and natural environment  
*Peter Mühlhäusler*  
104
Treasured islands
Eleanor Rimoldi 112

Culture, environment and the tourist gaze: The Falkland Islands
Stephen A Royle 119

“Synchronicity happened”: Dance and music as a social force in the Furneaux Group, 1954-2004
Robin Ryan 129

Traversing the waves: Bridging cultures through music
Rachel Shave 142

Visualising social change: A case study of the traditional I-Kiribati canoe
Tony Whincup 151

Notes on Contributors 159
INTRODUCTION

This publication contains seventeen of the papers presented at *The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference*, which was held at the Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, Norfolk Island, 9-13 February 2006. Each of the papers published herein has undergone blind peer-review by two or more anonymous readers.

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 consolidate the SICRI (Small Island Cultures Research Initiative) network. Norfolk Island was selected as a venue for the second conference due to its cultural vitality and commitment to preserving local island heritage, aspects that local activists presented on at the conference.

Many thanks to the Norfolk Island Museum, the Community Arts Society of Norfolk Island, The Office of the Administrator, Norfolk Island and Meridian Research and Training for their support for the conference, and to the Department of Contemporary Music Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, for producing the SICRI website <www.sicri.org>.

Henry Johnson (Editor) for the SICRI Steering Committee (August 2006)
SERE NI CUMU AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF PLACE AND IDENTITY IN TAVEUNI, FIJI

Jennifer Cattermole

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Introduction

This paper examines a Fijian popular music genre known as sere ni cumu (‘bumping songs’). My research investigates how and why Fijians have used this genre to express and construct their sense of place and identity (that is, who they are and where they are from). It explores how Fijians have adopted and localised contemporary, globally disseminated popular music styles to create sere ni cumu; it also describes the way musicians use this music to articulate their real and imagined relationships to specific places (both natural and supernatural) and groups of people (see Anderson, 1983; Soja, 1996).

While sere ni cumu is performed throughout Fiji, the information presented here pertains to Taveuni, the third largest island in the Fijian archipelago. This island is used as a case study in which to examine global cultural flows and the dynamics of music adoption and localisation. This paper is the result of a six-month period of field research on the island of Taveuni, which I undertook from March to September 2005, as well as a subsequent fieldwork trip from mid December 2005 to February 2006. This paper presents a preliminary analysis of a portion of the data collected during this fieldwork, as well as addresses the theoretical background underlying my research.

Context

Viti\(^{(1)}\) (Fiji) is an archipelago consisting of over 300 islands (only approximately 100 of which are permanently inhabited) located in the south western Pacific Ocean. Its total landmass of 18,272 square kilometres (of which the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, comprise 87 percent) is scattered over 650,000 square kilometres of ocean. Fiji is situated between latitude 15 degrees and 22 degrees south, longitude 177 degrees west and 178 degrees east, at the confluence of Melanesia and Polynesia. Geographically, the islands form part of Melanesia, but the indigenous population includes people of both Melanesian and Polynesian descent.\(^{(2)}\) While the relative influence of Polynesian and Melanesian elements found in the indigenous culture and
language varies enormously, Polynesian features generally dominate in the East and Melanesian in the West.\(^3\)

Out of an estimated total population of over 880,000 people, a substantial proportion is comprised of non-indigenous peoples.\(^4\) Around half of the current population are the descendents of Indian indentured labourers imported to Fiji to cultivate sugarcane from 1897 to 1916, following Fiji’s cession to Britain in 1874.\(^5\) Tensions between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians have resulted in three military coups (two in 1987 and another in 2000). Other immigrants include Chinese, Europeans and other Pacific islanders. This cultural diversity has resulted in a wide range of musical styles being performed in Fiji today. Many of Fiji’s musical styles and genres—particularly contemporary popular music, and the music of non-indigenous Fijians—are yet to be documented by academic research. *Sere ni cumu* is one of these under-documented genres.

While *sere ni cumu* appears throughout Fiji, my research is primarily concerned with its performance on the island of Taveuni. Choosing to focus on one island enabled me to discover the differences between *sere ni cumu* ensembles both within and between villages in a limited geographical area. The main disadvantage was that it left me unable to fully describe broader stylistic differences between different regions in Fiji. I chose Taveuni because it afforded the opportunity to compare bands from village, semi-urban and resort environments. In addition, commercially available recordings of bands from the island, recordings contained in the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited (FBCL) archives, as well as the unpublished findings of David Goldsworthy and Meli Tuqota’s fieldwork in Taveuni (January-February 1986),\(^6\) provided the grounds for comparison between past and present performance practice and repertoire. In practical terms, Taveuni is also accessible via public transportation, and has banking and healthcare facilities.\(^7\)

Taveuni is known as the ‘garden island’ of Fiji due to its lush vegetation and fertile soil. It lies seven kilometres off the south-east coast of Vanua Levu, is 42 kilometres long and averages around 11 kilometres wide. Taveuni’s total landmass is 84,307 acres. The highest mountain (Mount Uluiqalau) rises 4072 metres above sea level, making it the third largest mountain in Fiji. Northern Taveuni is mountainous with many creeks and rivers which flow year-round. Southern Taveuni only rises to around 100 metres, and there are fewer creeks or rivers (which only run after substantial rain). The island is part of the province of Cakaudrove, and is divided into three tikina (districts): Vuna, Cakaudrove and Wainikeli. Taveuni is home to numerous rare species of fauna and flora (including the *tagimaucia* flower which grows almost exclusively on this island), which are protected in the Bouma National Heritage Park and Waitabu Marine Reserve. Taveuni’s approximately 12,000 human inhabitants live in fourteen registered villages, as well as a number of settlements and freehold estates/plantations. Most people living on Taveuni are subsistence farmers, although some are self-employed or earn wages as civil servants or hotel workers. The majority are Catholic, Methodist or Hindu, although other faiths are also practiced on the island.\(^8\)
Theoretical Approach

The study of popular musics, particularly in non-Western countries such as Fiji, is aided by drawing on a theoretical and methodological lattice that connects a number of related fields—particularly those of ethnomusicology and popular music studies. Ethnomusicology can be defined as the study of people making music, or the study of music ‘in’ or ‘as’ culture (see Blacking, 1976; Nettl, 1983; Seeger, 1987). It utilises the analytical tools for transcribing and analysing sound found in musicology, as well as an ethnographic approach to data collection through fieldwork with an emphasis on participant-observation (see Malinowski, 1961) found in social/cultural anthropology. Ethnomusicology thereby provides the essential tools with which to situate specific musical practices in their social contexts. In recognising the “intersecting contexts and networks” (Cohen, 1993:135) of popular music, the field (or multiple fields) of cultural studies provides a broader sweep, taking into account the mass mediation of cultural practices such as music, and the complex relationships between performers, producers, listeners, consumers and the society in which they live. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of ‘scapes’, particularly that of ethnoscapes, which describes the increasingly complicated and intersecting relationships in “the changing social, territorial and cultural reproduction of group identity” (Appadurai, 1991:191) is also useful.

The ways in which non-Western countries have incorporated the music of Western cultures in the development of contemporary indigenous styles has been a significant area for discussion in ethnomusicology (see, for example, Feld, 1988; Keil and Feld, 1994; Slobin, 1992, 1993; Erlmann, 1993; Guilbaut, 1993). In attempting to define processes and explanations for musical practices in which imported musical styles have been adopted and localised, a number of terms (such as acculturation, syncretism, musical borrowing, transculturation, hybridisation and indigenisation) have been suggested and debated as part of a wider scholarly discourse on the effect of mass media in global and local contexts (see Kartomi, 1981; Lull, 1995; Manuel, 1995; Mitchell, 1993; Slobin, 1993). Such attempts at definition are further complicated by notions of authenticity and inauthenticity in Pacific Island cultures (see Jolly, 1992; Linnekin, 1992).

As the pace of the process of globalisation continues to accelerate, people have begun to re-think and reflect upon place in different ways. The dynamics within the multiple relationships between identity and place continue to change as people become increasingly aware of human interconnectedness around the globe. Postmodernist scholars have argued that globalisation has resulted in an identity crisis, a sense of placelessness, cultural deterritorialisation and homogeneity. Anthony Giddens (1990), for example, argues that globalisation has altered the way in which people experience space and time, involving a loss of historical continuity and memory, and a preoccupation with instantaneity and with surfaces disconnected from the meanings behind them. Giddens asserts that one consequence of modernity has been “the phantasmagoric separation of space from place, as places become thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them” (Giddens, 1990:18). Similarly, Jody Berland states that “situated in many places at the same time, tuned in, hooked up, wired into, we know how to see ourselves as part of a global
village and to see its boundarylessness as the essence of who we are” (Berland, 1988:343). Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) also asserts that electronic media have blurred traditional distinctions between individuals and groups, social situations and physical places, and that this has contributed towards the homogenisation of places and group identities and experiences and to the lack of a sense of place.

I would argue instead that, in a world that is historically, socially and spatially interconnected, place continues to matter. Although Fijian bands tended to initially copy overseas songs, the music scene diversified as new songs were composed and local styles appeared. Moreover, with the increasing mobility of music (as contemporary global entertainment industries disseminate musical styles more extensively and rapidly than has been possible in the past, making an increasingly wide range of musical resources available to a growing number of people), music plays an increasingly important role in expressing and constructing peoples’ sense of belonging to (or alienation from) particular places and groups of people which may (or may not) be geographically distant from their own. As Frith states, music plays a crucial role in the on-going construction (not merely the expression or representation) of multi-layered identities: “the question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about the people who play and use it, but how does it create them as a people, as a web of identities?” (Frith, 1996:121).

An emerging body of work in cultural geography has provoked new ways of thinking about music’s role in locating culture, and constructing place, space and cultural identity (see Carney, 1998; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Howes, 1991; Kong, 1995; Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998; Nash and Carney, 1996; Pocock, 1989; Smith, 1997). Rather than treating place as simply an inert geographical setting for social and cultural activity, such research has recognised music’s spatial dimensions, the mutually generative relations between music and place, and music’s role in the politics of place, the struggle for identity and belonging, power and prestige.

In any examination of the ways in which Fijians think about place and identity, it is crucial to discuss the term *vanua*. According to Enele Ravuvu:

*The term vanua has physical, social and cultural dimensions interrelated.... Vanua literally means land, but also refers to the social and cultural aspects of the environment. There is... a very strong triad which links living people, the physical areas upon which they thrive, and the spirit world of dead ancestors and other cosmological entities.* (Ravuvu, 1988:6-7)

This multifaceted concept thus embodies a series of relationships that Fijians have with each other, with other living creatures, with their physical environment, as well as the supernatural realm. Wendy Ratawa conducted research in Labasa, Vanua Levu in 1991, investigating the relationship between vocal music and the concept of *vanua*. Ratawa found that:

*Within the performance context and musical structure, traditional chants are closely related to kinship, and there is a close relationship with a geographical place—they...*
correspond, enhance and embody the vanua in a specifically located place and social group [whereas] newer Fijian songs reflect the vanua but not in a parochial sense, as there is now a shift of interpretation from the concept of vanua from an emphasis on kinship to a holistic Fijian ethnicity. (Ratawa, 1991:1).

I agree that ‘newer Fijian songs’ such as sere ni cumu have broadened Fijian’s sense of place and identity, but would go further by suggesting that this music still enables Fijians to articulate and construct their sense of ‘rootedness’ to particular places where they (or other members of their culture) currently live or have resided in the past. As well, sere ni cumu enables Fijians to identify themselves in imaginative and sometimes cosmopolitan ways with people who occupy (or wish to occupy in the future) places that are similar or different to their own. A preliminary analysis suggesting some of the ways in which Fijians use sere ni cumu to construct and express ‘roots’ as well as ‘routes’ (see Clifford, 1997) is discussed in the following section.

Sere ni cumu

Fijians broadly divide music into two categories: meke (a traditional art form incorporating dance, costume and music, and performed mainly on formal occasions) and sere (songs, including popular songs performed on informal occasions as well as those sung in church) (see Lee, 1998:776; Ratawa, 1998:780). My research concentrates on sere ni cumu (‘bumping songs’),[11] a genre of popular[12] music which is widespread throughout Fiji today, and is performed in villages as well as at local resorts and hotels. These songs are covers of, or influenced by, styles from Europe and America (for example, rock, pop and country and western), other Pacific Islands or the Caribbean (particularly reggae). They are often performed at informal yaqona[13] drinking sessions, and are also associated with informal dance types broadly termed tauratale or danisi (from the English ‘dance’).

The exact origin of the genre is obscure. Goldsworthy (1998) states that sere ni cumu were associated with the first legally allowed sales of beer to indigenous Fijians in the 1920s in Suva, and suggests that this genre originated at parties where men bumped their drinking glasses together. This is supported by Paul Geraghty, a linguist who lectures at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, who explained to me that the term for this music was originally sere ni cumu saqa (saqa meaning barrel or tankard), and that it referred to the practice of Fijian men sitting in a circle at a table, resting their heads against their tankards of beer (personal communication 29/10/04). Many sere ni cumu songs still performed today date from World War II—an intense period of creativity for this genre—when soldiers from the US, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia interacted extensively with Fijians.

Currently, musicians distinguish two main styles of sere ni cumu: trio and sere bass (also called sere ni ma’awa or ‘old songs’, even though they may only be fifteen or more years old). Sere bass performance features a large group of bass vocalists (bass/besi) in addition to three solo voice parts: tatabani/tatabana, domo tolu/va’ababa, and laga/lagalaga in descending order in terms of their vocal range. Only the three solo parts are heard in trio. The types and roles of the instruments, their tuning and playing
techniques have also changed over time.\cite{47} The technique of vadivadi (plucking) which characterised sere bass guitar performance in the past has been replaced by various ways of scrumming (strumming) for the rhythm guitar, and a range of left and right hand techniques for the lead guitarist. A variety of different tunings (for example, Open ki (key), Hawaiian ki, Spanish ki, and Island ki for the guitar; Spanish ki and English ki for the ukulele) are now remembered by few of the older players.\cite{46} The only chords used in sere bass were dua (tonic), rua (subdominant) and tolu (dominant), whereas trio also featured warning (seventh), minus (minor) and flat (supertonic) chords. Standard Western tuning (that is, E, A, D, G, B, E) was used for every performance I witnessed, and Western chord positions are being used increasingly in sere ni cumu performance.\cite{16} Anyone can participate in sere bass performance, which makes it ideal for use at large social gatherings. Trio performers are expected to perform to a high standard, and are usually heard at small social functions such as yagona drinking sessions. The tempo tends to be slower, and the overall pitch lower in sere bass when compared to trio.

Sere bass, being closer stylistically to meke,\cite{17} tends to be preferred by older people (those in their 40s and above), and provides them with a means to connect with and celebrate their cultural roots. Trio, which tends to be most popular with those in their 20s and 30s, exhibits a greater degree of Westernisation than sere bass, but is still regarded as being part of the sere ni cumu oral tradition which has been passed down through the generations and which continues to change as new songs are continually added to the repertoire and old ones fall into disuse. For teenagers and those in their early 20s, ‘programme music’ bands\cite{18} as well as popular overseas groups/artists\cite{19} are most popular. This music is a route which links them to Western societies, and to a modern, Westernised Fiji.

Factors other than stylistic change can also tell us a lot about how Fijians use sere ni cumu to articulate and construct their sense of place and identity. The song Koi ra na vuda tells of the geographical origins of the Fijian people and their migration to Fiji. According to Ilaitia Tuwere (2002:22), the story of the Kaunitoni migration was unknown before the 1890s. Since its publication by Basil Thompson (1892:143-146), it has become widely accepted among indigenous Fijians, and has become the basis for a sense of national identity—an identity based upon the belief of common descent and common geographical point of origin.\cite{20} Numerous songs mention an individual’s yavu (ancestral house site), koro ni vasu (mother’s village) or koro (village). Some songs reflect the importance of significant local landmarks,\cite{21} while others indicate in a more general way how Fijians perceive their landscape.\cite{22} The band names chosen by some groups\cite{23} the personal interactions that occur during music performances, as well as song lyrics, provide a wealth of information regarding Fijian social relationships. Information can also be found in the lyrics about how Fijians relate to the supernatural world, with references both to pre-Christian and Christian themes. A sense of a Fijian national identity, or a ‘holistic Fijian ethnicity’ (Ratawa, 1991:1), is evident in patriotic songs (sere ni vanua).\cite{24} The predominant use of standard Fijian dialect (va’abau) in sere ni cumu performance also points towards the fostering of a sense of national identity. Older sere ni cumu in particular were sung in the local dialect (Gato), indicating a greater degree of localisation. Some participants also asserted that regional
styles of *sere ni cumu* exist, which would contribute towards the formation of regional identities. Indo-Fijian songs were performed using aspects of Indian vocal technique along with the *sere ni cumu* instrumental accompaniment, perhaps indicating greater acceptance of Indo-Fijian culture. While there seems to be a measure of acceptance for Indo-Fijians, there is a song about the exclusion of Solomon islanders. Where Pacific Islander songs (such as Tongan, Samoan, Māori, Gilbertese and Solomon islander) are performed, this may contribute towards the formation of a broader Pacific Island identity.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I must emphasise that this analysis is a preliminary one, and that a more detailed study is the next step in my research. This paper merely outlines the theoretical background of this research and suggests some ways in which it might be useful in explaining how *sere ni cumu* is used by Fijians to construct, experience and imagine *vanua*. Future research will aim to show how this music shapes their conceptualisations and perceptions of past and present homelands, their social relationships and their relationship with the supernatural world. *Sere ni cumu* (a localised version of globally disseminated musical styles) has also enabled Fijians to form broader geographical and social identifications (for example, as a nation which includes certain social groups and excludes others, as a Pacific Island or Oceanic community, or as a modern/Western Fiji).

**Endnotes**

[1] The name ‘Viti’ refers to the action of the early ancestors of breaking small branches as they made their way to Nakauvadra so that they might trace their way back should they get lost. It became adopted as the name for the whole island group. The name ‘Fiji’, as the archipelago is more widely known by, is Tongan (Tuwere, 2002:15; see also Roth, 1953:54). Nakauvadra, the symbolic home of the ancestral Fijians, is in the north eastern part of Viti Levu.

[2] ‘Indigenous’ is a politically charged term, with emotional/psychological implications regarding a person’s sense of legitimacy of belonging to the land. Indigeneity involves the autochthonous claims of Fiji’s Melanesian and Polynesian population, who call themselves *i taukei*. Following the wave of immigration that followed Fiji’s colonisation by Britain, the descendents of subsequent immigrants to Fiji (including those from other islands in the Pacific, as well as those from Europe and Asia—some of whom can trace their family’s history back generations in Fiji) are excluded from being categorised as *i taukei*.


[6] This survey of music genres, including *sere ni cumu*—took place in eight villages on Taveuni (Dreketi, Naqara, Lamini, Waica, Navakawai, Vuna, Lavena and Naselesele), as well as the village of Dreketi on Qamea island. The recordings (fifteen audio tapes and two videotapes) from this fieldwork are held in the Archive of Māori and Pacific Music, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

[7] From Viti Levu, there are regular flights from Nausori, as well as regular ferry services to the island (which also travel to Koro island and Savusavu, Vanua Levu). In addition to the larger ferries, two companies provide a combined ferry-bus service between Taveuni and Savusavu. The only bank on Taveuni is the Colonial bank. Although I could cash traveler’s cheques, I was not permitted to open an account as I did not own land and was not married in Fiji. ANZ permitted me to open a local account, and I was able to withdraw money from agents Morris Hestrom and Kaba’s Supermarket. There is a hospital at Waiyevo, as well as health clinics at Vuna, Waimaqera and Bouma.

[8] Personal communication from A Rasaciva 12/1/06. The Cakaudrove Provincial Council Office, Somosomo, Taveuni.


[10] Sara Cohen (1993) outlines the most significant reasons for a dialogue between ethnomusicology and popular music studies.

[11] *Sere ni cumu* is also known by a number of other terms: *sigidrigi* (from the English ‘sing-drink’) or *silidrigi* (a recent term deriving from *sigidrigi*), *sere ni verada* (veranda songs), or *sere ni va’avuravura* (songs about the surrounding environment).

[12] I should note that my use of the term popular music in relation to this *sere* or non-*meke* does not reflect a dichotomy between popular/unpopular or commercial/non-commercial types of music. Both *meke* and *sere* have been influenced by foreign musical styles; both are well-liked by indigenous Fijians; both live and recorded examples can be found; and there are aspects of formality and informality attached to both. I have used this term because *sere ni cumu* approximates Western popular music in its performance style; it is performed more frequently than *meke*, and because (although there are types of *sere* which pre-date the time of European arrival) *sere* is nowadays regarded as being more contemporary (or less traditional) than *meke*.

[13] The plant Piper Methisticum, known as *kava* throughout Polynesia. The roots and stems of this plant are dried and then pounded (masticated in the past), made into an infusion and then drunk.
[14] The steel guitar and *sepuni* (spoons) have fallen into disuse; the function of the *wa dua* or *kisi ni ti* (one-string, tea-chest basses) has been taken over by that of the bass guitar, and that of the mandolin by the lead guitar; where ukuleles were once home-made they are now bought; and groups such as the Garden Island Resort band use amplified as well as acoustic instruments in addition to a microphone.

[15] Spanish *ki* (for both the guitar and ukulele) and English *ki* have now fallen into complete disuse. They were remembered in name only, and could not be reproduced from memory.

[16] This is largely due to the Charismatic Music Ministry which has been established in the last five years or so. Musicians are taught Western chords, and this is carried through from sacred into secular performance. The strained, loud voice with slurring between pitches used in *sere ni cumu* is actively discouraged in sacred music performances, and this aesthetic also carried back to *sere ni cumu*.

[17] In terms of the inclusiveness of performance with the involvement of many people, vocal texture and vocal style of performance, lower overall pitch when compared to more recent forms of music et cetera.

[18] It is known as ‘programme music’ because it is characterised programmed keyboard and drum tracks instead of acoustic instrumental accompaniment. Examples include Voqa ni Delai Dokidoki, Delai Sea, Nautosolo and Kabu ni Delai Kade.

[19] Artists such as Shania Twain, Lucky Dube, Bob Marley, Mokoma, Abba, the Backstreet boys, Michael learns to rock, Boyzone and Celine Dion.


[21] Such as *Uluiqalau na delana cere dina* which is about Taveuni’s highest mountain.

[22] Islands are always described as ‘ciri yawa yani’ (floating far away), often shrouded in mist. The numerous references to white sandy beaches and swaying palm trees suggests that the tourist aesthetic of Fiji may have had some influence on indigenous Fijians.

[23] Such as the Vuanimaba trio from Qeleni village, named after their *mataqali* (sub-clan).

[24] Such as *Viti noqu Viti* (Fiji, my Fiji).

[25] The song *Melanesia* (see Appendix) is for the Solomon Islanders and their descendents resident in Fiji. Like the Indo-Fijians, the Solomon Islanders were brought to Fiji by the colonial administration to provide a labour force. In the past, these people were highly regarded and valued within Fijian society. This position changed after the military coups of 1987. Rotumans and their descendants began to occupy the position of high esteem previously reserved for the Solomon Islanders. Government policy with
regard to Fiji’s Solomon islander population changed. Despite a considerable degree of intermarriage with indigenous Fijians, they are not considered to be Fijian. They do not have access to mataqali (sub-clan) owned land. They are also no longer recognised as being Solomon islanders by their country of origin. As outcasts, they have no political voice. In 1984, tension between indigenous Fijians and Solomon Islander students resulted in physical conflict at the University of the South Pacific.

Bibliography


Anon. ‘Koi ra na vuda’, in The Maravu Band Boys Songbook. Unpublished manuscript, copied with the band’s permission 26-28/4/05. Originally performed by Voqa ni Delai Setura

Anon. ‘Melanesia’, in The Maravu Band Boys Songbook. Unpublished manuscript, copied with the band’s permission 26-28/4/05. Originally performed by Jale Mareau

Anon. Uluiqalau na delana cere dina. Dictated by Marieta from Wairiki, Taveuni (7/1/06). Composer unknown. Personal communication


Goldsworthy, D (1986) Music on Taveuni, unpublished manuscript


Rasaciva, A (12/1/06) Requested Information, The Cakaudrove Provincial Council Office, Somosomo, Taveuni. Personal communication


Ravuvu, A (1988) Fijians at War, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific


Rokowaqa, E (1929) Ai tukutuku kei Viti, National Archives of Fiji
Roth, G (1953) *Fijian Way of Life*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press


Thomson, B (1892) ‘The Land of our Origin’, *Journal of the Polynesian Society*


Appendix

*Koi ra na vuda*

Verse 1

*Koi ra na vuda, meu tukuni ira*  Our ancestors, let me tell you

*E na nodra lako mai Sauca Aferika*  How they travelled from South Africa

*Isa ko Verata nodra koro dina*  Verata their true village

*E na batini drano levu mai taqani ika*  From one side of the lake in Tanganika

Verse 2

*Lutunasobasoba e liutaki ira*  Lutunasobasoba their leader

*E na nodra lako mai Sauca Aferika*  In their journey from South Africa

*Vata kei naqori a watina*  With his wife

*Marama ni ceva dina mai Ijipita*  Lady from Egypt (ie inferring that the beauty of Lutunasobasoba’s wife equals the Queen of Sheba’s)
Verse 3
Lutunasobasoba e lima na luvena  
Era kawa turaga tu vei keda  
Dua wale ga na luvena yalewa  
Obui Savulu e tiko mai Bureta

Lutunasobasoba has five children  
They are our chiefs  
Only one daughter  
Obui Savulu staying in Bureta (Ovalau)

Verse 4
O Roko Moutu e tiko mai Verata  
O Vela Siga mai Burebasaga  
Otui Nayavu mai batiki raraba  
O Dau ni Sai e tiko ma kabara

Roko Moutu staying in Verata  
Vela Siga is in Burebasiga  
Tui Nayavu in Batiki  
Dau ni Sai is in Kabara

Verse 5
Vuni nodra lako mai taqani ika  
E na mate lila levu e tauvi ira  
Ra soko sivita na wasa talani tika  
Ra qara vanua e na wasa Pasifika

The reason they came away  
Because of a wasting illness (starvation?)  
They crossed the Atlantic Ocean  
Looking for a land in the Pacific

Verse 6
Sa labati ira e dua na cagi laba  
Era tiko legaleqa e loma ni waqa  
Na Kaunitoni vata kei na Duibana  
Na Kaunitera na yac nodra waqa

A hurricane hit them  
They felt unsafe in their canoe  
In the Kaunitoni and the Duibana  
The Kaunitera is the name of their canoe

Verse 7
Tagi mate o Lutunasobasoba  
Isa noqu kawa ra sana vakaloloma  
Noqu kato vatu dina sa mai tasova  
Ni rau lutu vata kei na kenai vola

Lutunasobasoba was wailing  
Oh my descendents, I feel sorry for you  
My stone chest has been emptied  
And it goes with my book [which contained the accumulated lore of the people, such as knowledge of medicine, weather forecasting, fishing, handicrafts and fortune-telling.]

Melanesia

Verse 1
Noqu bula au solia  
Meu na colata voli ga  
Colacola koa vakataqara  
Yacamu au na valataka

I give my life  
For me to carry  
The responsibility that you allocate  
Your name, I will fight for it

Verse 2
Tubutubu era ogataka  
Gaunisala me cara wavu me caka  
Viti ko sa tiko vinaka  
O qai biliga lesu noqu waqa

The parents were occupied  
For the roads and the bridges to be made  
Fiji, your well-being  
And you push away my boat
Chorus
Melanisia soqosoqo au lewena
Melanesia is my group
Au vaqaqara vanua voli
I was looking for land
Turaga ni lomani au mai
God, grant me mercy
Kerea meu dei eke
Please let me stay forever

Verse 3
Loma ni lekatu au taubale voli
I walk through the jungle
Tacage au lutu au na taubale ga
I trip/tumble over and I keep on walking
Ni sa noqu i to ko Jisu
When Jesus is my guide
Sa sega vei au na taqaya
I am not scared
RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND MARINE CONSERVATION

The Case of the Pasua Rahui, Tongareva, Cook Islands

Charlotte Chambers

(University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland)

Introduction

I sit in the eaves of Papa Tom’s house, listening to the sound of waves lapping the edge of Tongareva lagoon. The wind is strong and I strain to pick up Tom’s quavering voice as he talks about his memories of Tongareva. Our conversation turns to the subject of a recent harvest of Pasua, a species of giant clam (Tridacna maxima) much favoured throughout the Cook Islands for their good eating. According to Tom, large quantities of Pasua are being removed from Tongareva lagoon by local people to take to Rarotonga for forthcoming Constitution celebrations. Tom is not impressed: “I don’t know why we do that. They could just take one drum or two, not ten. The people don’t care eh. When we are out of Pasua, what about our children eh? It’s not good”. Tom’s sentiments are echoed in comments from other islanders I speak to, and by the time of my departure, it is rumoured that the Island Council are planning to place a rahui (harvest restriction) on the Pasua.

This situation concerning Pasua appears, at first glance, to be a classic resource management problem; an important food species is being depleted and the local authority, the Island Council, is taking action by considering a traditional management strategy to remedy the situation at hand. However, two questions arise: what is ‘local’ about this problem, and about the rahui enacted to reverse it? What are the peculiarities of Tongareva that have led to both the development of this practice and the knowledge that supports it? In other words, how have the epistemological structures and formulations related to the particular locality of Tongareva shaped this particular social and ecological outcome?

My research seeks to understand these questions by exploring the relationships, practices and knowledge systems that are invoked in the context of these efforts to arrest the decline in Pasua numbers. Accordingly, I have tried to understand how circulations of knowledge shape particular social and ecological outcomes and with what consequences. In the course of my research, I aim to question the distinction between local and (Western) scientific knowledge, explore the embedded nature of...
knowledge, as well as explore the embedded nature of knowledge in spatialised social relations. I also wish to identify the influence of different actors, including the non-human and their biophysical environments on such circulations of knowledge. It is hoped that indirectly this work will shed light on the role of knowledge in conservation practice and discourse, while also challenging both the dominance of scientific discourses in marine conservation, and the recognition afforded traditional or local knowledges therein.

In this paper, I specifically focus on the importance of researching knowledge systems without relying on the misleading categorisations of either traditional or scientific which is prevalent in the literature I am engaging. I contend that a relational understanding of knowledge demands a far more nuanced portrayal: one that reveals overlaps and disjunctures, historical and contemporary forces at play in how knowledge systems work, and discusses consequences for the management of different marine environments. It is important to note that the literature review in this paper is by no means comprehensive. Rather, it is intended to give a foundational overview of the issues concerning knowledge, place and conservation, from which more specific questions and critiques will be generated in the future.

Categorising Knowledge

Traditional Marine Knowledge (TMK), according to Sabetian (2002), is a term that refers to the customary knowledge of marine life within indigenous communities. TMK forms an integral part of Customary Marine Tenure (CMT) systems, and the importance of this knowledge is increasingly being recognised by fisheries managers and integrated into scientifically based fisheries management programmes. This recent emphasis on TMK and CMT serves as a backdrop to conservation oriented activities performed under the rubric of improved natural resource management in the South Pacific. Johannes (1995), for example, advocates recording and integrating local knowledge with modern scientific knowledge to generate more comprehensive understanding of local fisheries. According to Johannes (2002), the goal of such programmes is to assist indigenous peoples to more effectively manage their marine resources, and further to help encourage such people to live in ‘better balance’ with their natural resources.

There are numerous examples of marine conservation programmes in the South Pacific that have, and continue, to build upon indigenous knowledge and management practices (see, for example, Aswani, 1999, 2002; Aswani and Hamilton, 2004). In current fisheries management more broadly, there is increasing attention to indigenous management techniques and the value of local knowledge of marine environments (see, for example, Hunn, 1993; Adams, 1998; Salomon et al., 2001; Peuhkuri, 2002; Sabetian, 2002; Wiber et al., 2004). This emphasis is justified by connections posited between fostering indigenous knowledge and improved fisheries management (Johannes, Freeman and Hamilton, 2000), accurate fish stock assessments (Aswani and Hamilton, 2004) and preventing the overexploitation of fisheries (Ruddle, 1998).

This focus on indigenous and local knowledge is long overdue in terms of the acknowledgement of non-Western scientific ways of knowing and has done much to
improve the standing of TMK and CMT governance systems in marine conservation initiatives more generally. Nevertheless, such knowledge is frequently viewed as subordinate and indeed, often as counterpole to scientific knowledge, particularly if and when conflicts arise (Peuhkuri, 2002). Furthermore, this emphasis leaves unchallenged the power-laden act of knowledge separation into either indigenous or scientific categories, or what can be understood as the politics of conservation. Questions regarding whose knowledge are deemed authoritative in debates concern the status of the marine environment, and by whom, and at what cost must be examined.

As a consequence, many academics have written detailed critiques arguing that categorisation is ultimately misleading because it relies upon, and serves to reinforce, a dichotomy between knowledge systems. In actuality, however, the boundaries are seldom so easily demarcated. Timo Peuhkuri (2002), writing on fish farming in Finland, asserts that there is seldom a clear-cut distinction to be drawn between scientific and what he terms ‘lay knowledge’. Peuhkuri draws upon his analysis of fishermen’s knowledge which suggests a mixture of traditional knowledge, knowledge based on local observations and popularised science. Similarly, in the case of my research on Tongareva, it was not possible to determine any overt distinguishable distinction between indigenous and scientific knowledge, nor did it appear useful to attempt to do so. Some people on Tongareva clearly had a particularly detailed knowledge about certain species, such as Pasua. More broadly, their knowledge can be described as coming from an amalgamation of first-hand observation, some scientific knowledge and information passed in the form of tradition.

Perhaps most trenchant, however, is the work of Arun Agrawal (1995, 2002) who focuses his criticisms regarding the categorisation of knowledge on the creation of databases, a common strategy for those advocating for the preservation of indigenous knowledges. According to Agrawal, if indigenous knowledge derives its potency from the many ways in which it is practiced, efforts to classify such knowledge, for example, in the form of a database, work to separate that knowledge from practice, and therefore, from its power. Thus, foregrounding knowledge is done so at the expense of ignoring the social, political and biophysical context in which it is situated. Moreover, in the process of such an act, only the forms of knowledge that are deemed potentially relevant or ‘useful’ are documented, which further advances the view of indigenous knowledge as a “resource to be used” (Agrawal, 2002:290).

The emphasis placed on distinguishing and categorising knowledge therefore fails to attend to the processes by which knowledge is constructed and validated. In this regard, the work of Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, 2002) is significant. They assert that much existing research into indigenous knowledges only focuses on the knowledge used in everyday use and practice. They suggest that what is needed is an examination of how different indigenous peoples construct knowledge, which they differentiate as “indigenous epistemology” (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2002:381). This insight is important as it encourages attention to the role of process in shaping thought and behaviour, while also drawing attention to the embeddedness of social practice in relations of power.
Here, the work of Hugh Raffles (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005) is notable. He uses the concept of ‘intimate knowledge’ in order to emphasise the affective practices through which knowledge is produced and the relational nature of such intimacies. In the context of Tongareva, for example, it is through embodied practice that people form relationships with other islanders, with visitors such as me, with the biophysical environment in which they live, and with the species such as *Pasua* that they utilise for food. The trope of intimacy draws attention to the places and spaces of encounter but, unlike local knowledge, avoids reifying “the taxonomy through which knowledges are hierarchised” (Raffles, 2002b:332). Also useful in this regard is David Turnbull’s concept of ‘knowledge spaces’ (Turnbull, 1997). As with Raffles, Turnbull’s work seeks to draw attention to the power laden conditions through which knowledge is created and the spaces in which certain knowledges become possible (for an extension of Turnbull’s conception of knowledge spaces see Wright, 2005).

While Raffles recognises the importance of locality in the production of knowledge, his work makes the vital distinction between locality and location. As he states:

*Locality . . . should not be confused with location. It is rather a set of relations, an ongoing politics, a density, in which places are discursively and imaginatively materialized and enacted through the practices of variously-positioned people and political economies.* (Raffles, 2004:2).

Thus, while emphasising the importance of place and its role in the production of knowledge, Raffles avoids suggesting a knowledge born of ‘rooted experience’. Here, it is important to note that while scientific knowledge is often portrayed to be ostensibly ‘place-less’, critics such as Donna Haraway (1991, 1997) and Bruno Latour (1993, 2004) have revealed that despite claims to neutrality, transcendence and universal applicability, scientific knowledge is also firmly situated.

I turn now to the significance of the ‘place’ of my research: the island of Tongareva located 1365 kilometres north east of Rarotonga.

**Placing Knowledge**

Tongareva, also known as Penrhyn and Hararanga, is the northern-most island in the Cook Islands group, and comprises a reef rim 77 kilometres long enclosing a massive, deep lagoon. In July 2005, I managed to attain a flight to this island during a reconnaissance visit to the Cook Islands for my PhD research. I initially wanted to visit Tongareva because of its portrayal as a ‘remote island’ seldom visited by tourists. This popular conception of the Pacific islands as insulated and isolated places has been critiqued by Edvard Hviding among others. He notes that Pacific islands “have always . . . been culturally complex with everyday connections far beyond the home island” (Hviding, 2003:47). While the geographic isolation and relative independence of Tongareva does mean that residents have a high degree of institutional autonomy in their decision making processes regarding the marine environment, Tongareva is by no means a self-contained or unchanging place. The 1991 population census estimated the population of Tongareva at 391 with the majority of people resident on the island of
Omoka. Current anecdotal estimates place the number far lower, with high numbers of people leaving to work in Rarotonga or New Zealand (Mataora Marsters, personal communication July 2005). So, the extensive out-migration means that the people of Tongareva are in regular contact with other people and places. The linkages which are maintained constantly reaffirm and redefine their valuation of their location and the systems and knowledge practices in relation to what Raffles (2002b:329) terms the “innumerable elsewhere in which people participate physically, imaginatively, culturally and through the expansive networks of translocal political and cultural economy”.

These demographic shifts reflect and influence current socio-economic and ecological changes on the island. The recent increase in the harvesting of Pasua is but one consequence of the growing commoditisation and monetisation of marine species and the consequence of creating such links with external markets (Ruddle, 1998). The lack of job prospects for people living on Tongareva means many families depend on Pasua for home consumption and have recently started sending dried or frozen Pasua to Rarotonga as a source of extra income (Koroa Raumea, personal communication April 2006). This is in addition to the well established practice of food gifting prevalent in the Cook Islands, where Pasua has high symbolic value (Papa Takake, personal communication May 2006). (For further information on the culture of food in the Cook Islands see Crocombe and Crocombe, 2003.) As a consequence, traditional management systems now exist under very different circumstances to how they existed in the past, and are increasingly affected by the processes of “national modernisation” (Ruddle, 1998:108).

Tongareva, therefore, like many other islands in the South Pacific, is a place that both reflects and continues to be constituted by past events and current changes in the movement of people and the flow of ideas. Doreen Massey’s (1994) understanding of places as particular moments in intersecting spatialised social relations is useful in this regard. It is clear that while local knowledge can be particularistic, it is constantly negotiated with and by a wide range of interlocutors, which stretch beyond the place in question. These theoretical perspectives, therefore, promote the exploration of the interrelationship between locality and knowledge in a manner that attends to the importance of embodied, situated encounter; in this case the encounter between both humans and non-humans and the embeddedness of such social practices in relations of power. In the context of a relational understanding of both place and knowledge, this encourages attention to the idea of place and knowledge as simultaneously “moment, product and negotiation” (Massey, 2005:354), and the important role that the non-human has in shaping these relationships.

Political ecology researchers assert that the physical state of resources and particular environments has considerable influence on how environmental problems are conceptualised and acted upon (for example Nightingale, 2005; Walker, 2005). Due to their isolation and small, relatively infertile landmass, Tongarevans depend greatly on the sea. Kai moana (food from the sea) is of critical importance, particularly given the high costs and difficulties associated with importing food. Tongareva lagoon is the largest in the Cooks group and has an abundance of a wide variety of fish. This unique marine environment has resulted in the development of unusual fishing techniques.
Fishing according to seasonal and moon based variations is common. Cultural songs and dances performed for the annual Constitution celebrations are also based on different fishing/shell fish harvesting techniques. My future research will be directed to furthering my understanding of the influence of the biophysical environment of Tongareva lagoon by gathering oral accounts of biophysical change; for example the perceived changes in Pasua numbers, as well as obtaining information by utilising ecological research techniques such as Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) methodology (eg Grant and Miller, 2004). This is not meant to bring about, however, a reification of the scientific knowledge that tends to form the backbone of institutionalised ecological science; rather, it is to see the story behind the different methodologies in relation to Pasua.

Furthermore, in explicitly attending to the non-human and biophysical dimension, and in particular the historical trajectory of this dimension, I hope to gain a sense of how the non-human has played an active role in shaping circulations of knowledge. As Massey (2005:355) asserts, negotiations “between human and nonhuman both varies dramatically between places… and is as ‘political’ and as contestable as is that which is . . . between humans alone”. Research into conservation, therefore, should recognise agency in species and their biophysical environment. Accordingly, organisms and their environments are not simply regarded as objects, but as active subjects, capable of affecting their biophysical environments (Lewontin, cited in Harvey, 1996:472). Such an approach also recognises that the non-human and their biophysical environments have their own lives and circumstances that no amount of familiarity can contain (Raffles, 2002b).

Conclusions

This paper began by questioning the value of distinguishing between local and scientific knowledges, and suggested a relational understanding of knowledge as a more useful way of conceptualising knowledge systems. Such an approach necessitates attending to what knowledge systems exist on places such as Tongareva without referring to labels such as indigenous vs. Western, or traditional vs. scientific. A ‘relational’ approach should enable the development of nuanced descriptions of how knowledge systems work, and with what consequences for the management of different marine environments and the particular species located within them. In addition, a relational understanding of knowledge also entails a relational understanding of place. In the context of islands such as Tongareva, this relational understanding necessitates considering the ‘localness’ of particular knowledges, practices and issues. However, the relational understanding must go beyond a mere recognition of locality and instead attend to the situated, embodied context of the social production of knowledge.

Researchers must also consider the importance of the effect and the influence of the non-human elements, their biophysical environments and the role that non-humans play in how knowledge is generated and circulated in particular environments. Recognising agency in such species as Pasua and Tongareva lagoon is an important conceptual step for conservation theory and practice, because in part it unsettles the uneasy boundary so frequently constructed between the ‘social’ and the ‘natural’. Attempts to articulate the
different practices and knowledge systems involved in marine conservation must also
recognise the fundamentally relational nature of knowledges and practices and deal
symmetrically with the different actors involved.

Endnotes

[1] I have disguised the names of individuals.

[2] Rahui is the Tongarevan spelling of Ra’ui, a Cook Island Maori term to describe
placing harvest restrictions on either a particular area of the lagoon or on a particular
species for a set period of time (for further information on Ra’ui see Ama, 2003).

[3] Throughout this paper, I will use terms such as indigenous, local, lay, traditional,
Western, scientific, objective and modern without the use of quotation marks. This is
not to dismiss their problematic nature but rather to enable ease of reading. In some
instances I have chosen to specify science as (Western) science following Harding
(1986:28) who discusses the ‘objective’, rationally based mode of scientific enquiry
based upon “culturally specific notions of the powers and existence of reason, science
and language”.

Bibliography

Management in the Pacific Islands’, Ocean and Coastal Management v40

Knowledge’, Development and Change v26n3

Social Science Journal n173

Suva: University of the South Pacific

Aswani, S (1999) ‘Common Property Models of Sea Tenure: A Case Study from the
Roviana and Vonavona Lagoons, New Georgia, Solomon Islands’, Human Ecology
v27n3

Patterns on Sea Tenure Regimes in the Roviana Lagoon, Solomon Islands’, Ambio
v31n4


Johannes, R E, Freeman, M R and Hamilton, R J (2000) ‘Ignore Fishers’ Knowledge and Miss the Boat’, Fish and Fisheries v1


Massey, D (1994) Space, Place and Gender, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

_____ (2005) ‘Negotiating Nonhuman/Human Place’, Antipode v37n2

Nightingale, A J (2005) ‘‘The Experts Taught us all we Know’’: Professionalisation and Knowledge in Nepalese Community Forestry’, Antipode v37n3


ONCE YOU SAW THEM, NOW YOU DON’T

The Disappearance of Cook Island Traditional Craft Production

Wendy E Cowling

(University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand)

Introduction

The introduction of Christianity in the third decade of the 19th Century, plus the effects of the colonial administrations of Great Britain and New Zealand, had a dire effect on the maintenance of many traditional practices in the Cook Islands. In the 1820s, numerous residents of the southern group of islands, after converting to Christianity became iconoclasts. They destroyed carved representations of their local divinities or handed them over to Tahitian evangelists and to the missionary John Williams. The production of tapa[1] cloth for religious purposes by priests also ended in the 1820s. Later, by the mid 1920s, the making of tapa by women for household use, for dance costumes and for ritual exchanges, had almost disappeared, and by the 1950s, the production of decorated pandanus straw mats had virtually ceased. These later disappearances were partly due to the availability of modern, manufactured goods, including imported cloth, but were also due to the diminishing of a formalised gifting and exchange system comparable to that which is still in existence in Tonga, in the western South Pacific.

An Appropriation History

The repatriation of at least some historical artefacts from overseas museum collections is greatly desired by curators of national museums of formerly colonised nations in the South Pacific. So far, the repatriation of artefacts has not occurred in the Cook Islands. The display in the National Museum in Rarotonga (opened in 1992) largely consists of reproductions of statues of gods (akua) and other items from the past. The originals of many of the religious artefacts were collected by Protestant missionaries in the 1820s and sent to Great Britain in order to be put on display to show the fallacious beliefs of the ‘heathen’ to the supporters of the London Missionary Society. Local people destroyed other artefacts as a demonstration of their repudiation of their ancestral beliefs.
In a bowdlerised version of the story of the disappearance of the artefacts, the art historian Anthony Meyer terms the people’s religious conversion and consequent iconoclasm as “one of humanity’s greatest cultural catastrophes” (1995:521). He does not ascribe agency to the Cook Islanders at all, but depicts them as iconoclastic puppets of the missionary John Williams. However, as elsewhere in the Pacific, not all indigenous artefacts had been captured or destroyed by the representatives of Christian churches. Many had been obtained as gifts or through trade by people such as Captain James Cook when he made landfall at the southern Cook Islands of Mangaia and Atiu during his first exploratory voyage in March, 1777 (Kaeppler, 1997, 1978; Phelps, 1976).

Cook Islanders, and other Pacific peoples, continued to give away or sell artefacts made in pre-contact times to foreign visitors, including sailors in the 19th and 20th Centuries. The result was the scattering of such artefacts throughout Europe in public and private collections (Kaeppler, 1975, Phelps, 1976). The precise provenance and the name of the maker of these artefacts are not usually known.

In the 20th Century, many of the artefacts ended up in second-hand shops in Great Britain following the breaking up of peoples’ personal collections, or when the curators of provincial museums decided that exotic artefacts were not essential to their collections. Phelps (1976:13) reported that his grandfather, James Hooper, was able to add to his extensive collection in 1967 when there was a sale in Torquay of artefacts “brought back by Captain Cook”.

From the 1920s through to the 1940s, the New Zealand anthropologist, Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter H Buck) recorded the final home of many Cook Island artefacts.[2] In addition to the material in the British Museum, he located representations of gods in museums in Cambridge, Oxford, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Brest, Dunedin, Auckland and in his own institution, the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. He also recorded the location of many domestic vessels and tools, as well as pandanus, straw mats and items of clothing made from tapa.

During the past 180 years, the carved representations of the gods of the Cook Islanders, as with the religious artefacts of many other indigenous peoples, have ceased to be designated as ‘idols’ or as ‘fetishes’. Instead, they have been fetishised by collectors and by academic writers on art. Such artefacts, first classified as ‘Curiosities’ then gradually became elevated by Western connoisseurs as ‘art’, initially as ‘primitive art’, then ‘Oceanic’ or ‘Pacific Art’ (see Kaeppler, 1997). Their classification as ‘art’ in Western terms is the subject of an ongoing debate (Errington, 1998). However, it was not just the religious images and examples of pre-contact artefacts that were lost to the people of the islands. In the case of the Cook Islands, the skills of making some crafts using natural products and which are still seen elsewhere in the Pacific, were also lost.

The Making of a Missionary Collection

In 1825, the English missionary John Williams briefly visited the island of Aitutaki in the southern Cook Islands. He had left two Tahitian ‘teachers’/evangelists, Papeiha and
Vahapata, on the island two years previously. Initially, Papeiha and Vahapata’s mission had not been very successful. However, prior to Williams’ visit there had been a notable breakthrough in the resistance of the local people to the acceptance of a new set of deities. That year, a high chief (ariki) of the island, became angry when he decided that his family’s tutelary deities had failed him. He had asked the deities to heal a daughter who was seriously ill. His prayers had apparently gone unheard and the girl died (Williams, 1837:69-70). The ariki then asked his son to burn the wooden building which housed the images of the gods and which was located on the family marae. But the son was prevented from doing so by other worshippers. Nevertheless, the lack of response from the chief’s gods influenced many people to bring their district’s god images to the evangelists and declare their commitment to the new religion ‘of Jehovah’ (Williams, 1837:72). Papeiha, one of the Tahitian teacher-evangelists convened a meeting and proposed:

First, That all the maraes in the island should be burned, and that all the remaining idols should be brought to him, in order that he might forward them to us [Williams] at Raiatea [in the Society Islands, the Pacific headquarters of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.)] that we, with our people, might also rejoice in the triumphs of the word. (Williams, 1837:73)

The ‘idols’ collected by Williams were a total of 31 small wooden statues and “god staffs” (Hiroa, 1939:68). In exchange, the people were given “a few copies of the gospels and elementary books” (Williams, 1837:73). The impulsive abandonment and the gifting of the images subsequently occurred in the mid 1820s on the southern Cook Islands of Mangaia, Atiu and Rarotonga.

William Gill, who was a missionary in the Cook Islands for 33 years, described how the thirteen gods revered by the people on Mangaia lost their authority and powers. The century-old carved wooden images of these gods, which had been made by an artisan named Rori, were kept in a “god house” (Gill 1894:172). Having converted to Christianity through the teachings of two Tahitian missionaries, Davida and Tiare, who had been left on Mangaia in 1824, a senior chief, Numangatini, decided it was inconsistent to maintain Christian beliefs while permitting the continued existence of the god house and the images. He and some other senior men ordered the images of the gods to be taken to Davida:

To the horror of the heathen, but to the great joy of the Christian party, the whole thirteen were carried in triumphal procession to the house of Davida, by the sea. The wrappings [made of white tapa cloth] were thrown away, and for the first time since they were carved by Rori they were exposed to the vulgar gaze. (Gill, 1894:333-334)

According to Kaeppler (1997:84), what Williams and other missionaries did not realise was that the stripping of the tapa wrappings from the god images desanctified them. Their divine power was kept contained in the image by the regularly renewed dressing of the images by priests who made the particularly thick tapa cloth. What the chiefs did not realise was that the stripping and demystifying of the gods also meant the loss of not
only their own spiritual powers, but also some loss of their social powers: that is, their mana was considerably diminished.

The Mangaian images, together with the images from Aitutaki collected by John Williams, were taken to Williams’ ship which had fortuitously (in the view of the missionary) recently arrived at the island. These artefacts were not destroyed but were taken in triumph to Raiatea in the Society Islands. The artefacts were then shipped to London to be displayed in the London Missionary Society Museum. The LMS collection of Cook Island artefacts was eventually transferred to the British Museum in 1890 (Hiroa, 1944:310). However, a number of the god images collected by Williams do not seem to have still been in the collection when it was moved to the British Museum.

The Acceptance of Christianity

The remarkable aspect of the introduction of Christianity to the island groups of Polynesia was the apparent alacrity with which the new religion was accepted, after brief periods of resistance. There have been a variety of explanations for this. Certainly, the influence and commands of chiefs caused people to ‘follow the leader’ and adopt the new religion. A similar pattern occurred in Tonga under the leadership of the then high chief (later the first King), Taufa’ahau, in the 1850s (Williams, 1837:317).

One possibility as to why the conversion to Christianity was so swift was due to the somewhat distant relationship of people to most of the local deities. There was a pantheon of deities who were linked to aspects of nature and the seasons, and who were revered to lesser or greater extents, in Western and in Eastern Polynesia. In most island groups, these deities were known by their particular qualities and natures, as well as by their myths of origin, rather than by regular exposure of their iconic representations. Many of the lesser divinities were chiefly ancestors who had been elevated to god status (Hiroa, 1939:64). Polynesians took a pragmatic view of the usefulness of some of the divinities who were not members of the original creative pantheons. Ancestral gods were discarded if they seemed to the devotees to have lost their effectiveness:

The Polynesian families created their household gods and then under the guidance of the priesthood, the gods created the Polynesians. . . . The priests composed a theology [and a cosmology], but the textile was so interwoven with the threads of society that it was doomed to decay on contact with Western civilisation. (Hiroa, 1939:63)

The experience of meeting people with ideas, practices and goods from places beyond the islands was also a strong influence. The schools set up by the missionaries gave many individuals access to a Western-style education and therefore new job opportunities and consequently some local social advancement.

While regretting the effects of missionisation on local creativity, and “the wrecking of the native arts and crafts” (1939:92), Te Rangi Hiroa took a somewhat cynical view of the conversion story in the Cook Islands, and in Polynesia generally. He declared that as
“material benefit was associated with the new religion and, if such benefits could be obtained more readily by adopting that religion, why not adopt it?” (1939:64). Forced occupational changes occurred because of the defeat of the old religion. The production by the priests of Mangaia (and elsewhere) of tapa for the wrapping of the images also became redundant, even though women continued to make a lighter form of tapa for clothing and for other household uses.

The speedy introduction by the proprietors of trade stores of Western manufactured goods, such as iron axe heads, iron nails and manufactured cotton cloth, seems to have largely completed what the missionaries began (cf. Hiroa, 1944:493ff). Williams (1837:582-583) proudly pointed out the linkage between missionisation and the expansion of British commercial interests. He had earlier discussed the way in which women in the Cook Islands, once they had become Christians, began to wear European-style clothing (and therefore had to buy imported cloth). Williams then says: “Thus, wherever the missionary goes, new channels are cut for the streams of commerce” (1837:583).

Tapa and Mat Manufacture

As in Tonga and Fiji, lengths of plain and of decorated tapa cloth were exchanged on important occasions in the Cook Islands (Hammond, 1986). However, the production of tapa was quickly displaced by the introduction in the 19th Century of the arts of embroidery and appliqué on imported cloth by women missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic (cf. Hiroa, 1939:92; Hammond, 1986; Rongokea, 2001:9). This art, used in the production of quilts (tivaevae), is now seen as a ‘traditional’ women’s craft. The items are most usually produced by individual women or groups of women for gifting to their family members, church pastors or other dignitaries, but are also produced in small numbers for sale.

The loss of a religious rationale for the production of tapa, and the eventual elimination of tapa as clothing and as gift items, does not entirely explain the loss of tapa production, and the almost disappearance of mat production by Cook Island women. The making of large quantities of the base materials, and then their development into the end products, requires sustained labour. Cook Island women appear to have preferred to use the time and creativity in the production of tivaevae. Te Rangi Hiroa (1927:80) found that in the mid 1920s some women on Aitutaki knew how tapa (known locally as pahoa) was manufactured, but “little” was still being made (1927:76). What tapa was made, was “used as a bedspread after childbirth” (1927:76).

Further, Te Rangi Hiroa reports that “though the women knew a good deal about cloth-beating, the finer points about dye patterns had evidently not been passed on to the present generation of old women” (1927:79). Plaited pandanus straw mats were still being made at the time of his visit. Today, the production of decorated pandanus straw mats has virtually disappeared in the Cook Islands, although a few women still produce undecorated plaited floor mats. This is in significant contrast to the manufacture of these items in Tonga, and to a lesser extent in Samoa. In both of those island groups, mats are used everyday in households as floor coverings, and are also an important part

Refereed Papers From
The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference,
Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, 9-13 February 2006. Edited by Henry Johnson
30
of gifting and exchange. Finely woven mats edged with red feathers (‘ie Toga in Samoa, kie Tonga in Tonga) are highly prized. They are worn as long overskirts by Tongans on special occasions. Shorter versions, known as ta’ovala, are worn daily in Tonga by many men and women, and are mandatory for schoolchildren. In Samoa, ‘ie Toga are important gift items at weddings and funerals.

The making, exchanging and gifting of ngatu and of mats is intrinsically linked to Tongan identity (Cowling, 1990; Small, 1997), whether at home or in migrant communities. Mats and decorated tapa cloth (ngatu) are used in Tonga to decorate pavilions at feasts for the King and other members of the Tongan royal family. Ngatu is used to wrap the bodies of the dead prior to their interment. Great lengths of the cloth are worn by the bride and group during wedding rituals. The migrant communities in Australia, New Zealand and the US, depend on the availability of women in Tonga to produce both ngatu and of mats to use in celebrations and on other occasions.

The first King of Tonga, Tupou I, banned the making of tapa in 1877. This ban was rescinded almost immediately following the intervention of a Wesleyan missionary (Campbell, 2001:122). The substitution of imported cloth for tapa in gift exchanges would have been neither symbolically or economically satisfactory. Chiefly women owned the kupesi, the pattern boards used to decorate the tapa which was made by commoner women at the instruction of the chiefly women. The chiefly women lost their design monopoly when the late Queen Salote encouraged instruction in kupesi and tapa making in schools in the 1940s. Queen Salote also founded the Langa Fonua ae Fefine Tonga, a women’s development group, with branches in the villages. The members were encouraged to produce traditional crafts, both for exchanges and for sale to tourists.

A major reason for the survival of traditional women’s crafts in Tonga today compared to the Cook Islands is related to the status of the chiefs. In both island groups, the religious role of the chiefs (and of the priests of the old religion) was superseded. In the Cook Islands, the British, and later New Zealand, colonial rulers formally recognised the status of the Cook Island hereditary chiefs (ariki), both male and female. However, the chief’s role in governance was limited, due to the deliberate policy by the New Zealand administration of undermining their role in relation to land distribution and local rule-making (Thompson, 1994:73-74). Mostly, the chiefs were sidelined into an officially constituted House of Chiefs.

Tonga was not formally colonised by a European power, and under the Constitution of 1875 the titles of over thirty chiefs (hou ‘eiki, ‘nobles’), including the highest chief, the King, were formalised. Almost three-quarters of the members of the nobility automatically (or by election among themselves) are members of the Tongan Parliament. Elaborate public rituals which formally acknowledge the right of accession to a noble title are still maintained. The wearing and gifting of decorated tapa and of family mats are an important element of these title-taking ceremonies.

The forms of education in each island group were also important. The Tongan language was used in schools in the 19th and 20th Centuries, while the speaking of Cook Island
Maori in schools was discouraged by colonial government fiat in the 20th Century. As I have previously noted, Tongan women’s crafts were taught in schools, particularly that of tapa and mat-making. Both crafts are still intrinsically linked to the maintenance of cultural traditions. Many of these traditions have increased in content, rather than diminished, as the people took on what were originally chiefly, rather than commoner, traditions.

Another important aspect is that the populations were (and are) much smaller in the Cook Islands than in Tonga. From the 1950s onwards, Cook Islanders have emigrated in significant numbers to New Zealand and, more recently, to Australia and to the US. Young women were recruited to work in New Zealand factories, particularly in clothing manufacturing. This means that many of the members of two generations of women were not even exposed to, or trained in, mat-making or quilt-making.

Although there has been significant out-migration from Tonga, the population still numbers over 100,000, while the total resident population of the Cook Islands is about 14,000. In Tonga, the local economy is substantially subsidised by remittances from migrants and so many women are able to be solely engaged in craft work. Others produce and sell the raw materials, beaten tapa and dyes, enabling women who are working outside the home to still get together with others on Saturdays and produce lengths of ngatu.

Conclusion

Christianity is a vitally important aspect of Cook Islander and Tongan identity. This is reflected in a vigorous church life and in musical performance traditions, including church music. In both societies, dance is important, although the form of dance seen in the Cook Islands today would have had the Reverends Williams and Gill fulminating.

What of the god images? Tonga has very few examples of pre-contact artefacts to display in the small museum in the National Centre on Tongatapu (built with Japanese Government aid). Like those of the Cook Islands, Tongan artefacts are scattered around the world, in museums in Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand. It is doubtful whether most of the local Cook Islander population would agitate for the return of the god images to the museum on Rarotonga. That history and tradition has been superseded in so many ways. The artefacts are now part of the history of European exploration, when ‘curiosities’ beguiled gentlemen in past centuries. Today, the artefacts’ main value, in the view of Cook Islanders, would be for teaching local histories and as tourist attractions.

What happened in Polynesia, if we are to believe the missionaries, and the accounts of some early believers, was the result of a spontaneous rejection by people of the commemoration of deities in wood and stone. Romantic Europeans, and academic art specialists, such as Meyer, deplore the effects of the incursions of Europeans into the Pacific, not least the introduction of Christianity. But those incursions, some violent, some not, are now part of our mutual histories. We must recognise too that local people had minds of their own, and exercised agency. They made life-changing choices and,
like all human beings, did not have much idea of what kind of effect those choices would have. How island people will maintain aspects of their cultures in the 21st Century will depend on so many factors, including the impact of modernisation, local education emphases, increased tourism, the Greenhouse effect, the continuation of both out-migration, as well as the return of some people to the islands.

Endnotes

[1] Tapa is the generic name used in the Pacific for the cloth made from bast (ie the inner bark) of saplings of the paper mulberry (Broussanetia papyrifera), a tree taken from Southeast Asia by the ancestors of the Polynesian peoples several thousands of years ago. In some Pacific islands cloth was also made from the inner bark of the breadfruit (Artocarpus incisus), the banyan (Ficus Indica) and coastal hibiscus trees (Hibiscus tiliaceus). The narrow bark strips are soaked and then beaten for many hours until they are approximately 18 inches wide. The strips are then felted together to make cloth of varying thicknesses. This craft is still practiced in parts of Papua New Guinea, in Vanuatu and in Samoa, but the largest decorated pieces are made in Fiji (masi) and in Tonga (ngatu).

[2] Peter Buck (1880-1951) was a New Zealand Maori anthropologist who used both his European father’s family name and his Maori name on the title pages of his many published writings. Both names appear in library catalogue listings worldwide. The Maori ‘renaissance’ of culture, with a concurrent emphasis on the importance of Maori names in relation to identity, had not occurred when he was writing in the first five decades of the 20th Century. I have used the full Maori name in my discussion of his work, following the usage of other scholars in contemporary New Zealand and the preference of members of his iwi (tribe) in Taranaki.

[3] Small wooden buildings to house images were located on a stone platform at one end of a pebble-covered area (known as a marae). Marae were fenced with slabs of stone.

[4] Gill (1894:315) reported that each of the chiefs on Mangaia had the responsibility of preventing the influence of malevolent spirits as well as being “ex-officio high priests of Rongo”.

[5] Mana (spiritual power) is a Polynesia-wide concept. Chiefs received their mana, and the consequent state of tapu through primogeniture. It was believed that these qualities were passed down because of the divine origin of their lineage’s founding ancestor.

[6] Kirch (1984:38) notes that in all of the Polynesian island groups:

The harvest had to be offered to the gods to ensure the necessary seasonal winds and rain. In many cases the chief was seen as responsible for the maintenance of this fertility. He was expected to fulfil certain ritual duties to ensure success in fishing, victory in war and rain and winds to assist the growing of crops.

---

Bibliography


Gill, W W (1894) From Darkness to Light in Polynesia, with Illustrative Clan Songs, London: Religious Tract Society


Hiroa, Te Rangi (P H Buck) (1927) The Material Culture of the Cook Islands (Aitutaki), Memoirs of the Bureau of Maori Ethnological Research, v1

_____ (1939) Anthropology and Religion, New Haven: Yale University Press

_____ (1944) Arts and Crafts of the Cook Islands, Honolulu: Bernice P Bishop Museum

Kaeppler, A L (1975) The Fabrics of Hawaii (Bark Cloth), Leigh on Sea: F Lewis


RADIO NORFOLK

Community and Communication on Norfolk Island

Rebecca Coyle

(Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia)

Introduction

My interest and research into the radio service on Norfolk Island commenced with a three-month residency in 1999. Both my research and my experiences on the island brought to mind the contradictions and tensions between public and private, as well as between global and local, which seemed significant then and still affect island identities today. These aspects pertain to the radio service on the island insofar as Radio Norfolk is both a highly localised service while at the same time a conduit for broadcasts from elsewhere, some of which represent Norfolk Island back to itself through news coverage of island events.

These issues relate to the terms ‘communication’ and ‘community’ in the title of my paper. Regardless of which theoretical frame of reference is employed, ‘communication’ suggests the fundamental factors of initiator, recipient, mode or vehicle, message and effect. The conduit metaphor of communication seems to inform some functions of the radio service on Norfolk Island, where the medium is used to transmit basic information. However, such information is produced and broadcast in the context of cooperative constructions of meaning, and so the radio service represents a shared arrangement—a common or mutual process—amongst broadcasters and listeners on a small island. Jason Loviglio (2005) discusses “radio’s intimate public” where radio voices move with impunity between, and challenge, constructed realms of public and private. In a local context, the public ‘voice’ adopted by the radio station in terms of its station policies and announcer language style can be loaded with intimate knowledges about island life. This is where the ‘community’ term comes into my discussion, which I will draw upon in relation to the notion of ‘communities of interest’. I will show how Radio Norfolk serves the interests of the island Administration, while also addressing various audience groups and participating in island life. Focusing largely on talk programme elements, my approach attempts to address what Jackie Cook argues is a failing of much radio talk research, that is:

It has too often failed to deal with that talk as ‘text’, specifically situated within complex layers of radio production and listener reception, as well as socially and culturally
embedded within established discourses. (Cook, 2000:60)

Without taking into account the various ways by which talk broadcasts on Radio Norfolk communicate, the station’s functions and uses within the island community cannot be fully comprehended.

Norfolk Island Media Services

As a brief introduction to Norfolk Island media, there are two main categories. First, media services from outside sources, including radio broadcasts (initially on shortwave) from the 1920s, then newspaper deliveries from Australia, and only recently television broadcasts from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Australian commercial Channel 7, Imparja (controlled by the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association) and Australian multilingual Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). The second media category is Norfolk Island media services. The earliest formalised communication form was public notices displayed on the ‘tree of knowledge’ in a main road (Pine Avenue) and, later on, various newsletter style newspapers were introduced. Radio has taken on this role of providing news and information but tailored to local audiences and within Administration requirements. There are now regular newspaper, radio, television, telecommunications, internet web sites and email services produced by islanders for islanders.\(^4\)

Three crucial factors inform the media services on Norfolk Island: population, governance and language. Today, the stable population of the island—now about 2000—comprises about 40 percent Pitcairn Island descendants (although this designation is debated) and the remainder made up of Australians, New Zealanders and other international residents. About 30,000 tourists visit the island every year. Tourism became the key island industry, beginning in the 1960s, and brought different demands for media services.

Australia was given governance over Norfolk Island by the British in 1913 and the island became an Australian external territory. This is a contentious point with many islanders who feel a closer affinity with Britain, and who also resent any intervention on the part of the Australian government in terms of laws and regulations. In 1979, the island was given self-governance over many of its operations and now works with an Australian Administration and locally appointed Legislative Assembly and public servants (see Hoare, 1999; O’Collins, 2002). One area of local governance is broadcasting and this has complex implications for local controls of copyright, content regulation and media business.\(^5\)

Although the main language now spoken on the island is English, Pitcairn descendants originally came to the island with a language formed from the English spoken by the mutineers (based on regional variations), together with Tahitian words and phrases, as detailed in the work of Alice Buffett (1999) and Peter Mühlhäusler (2006). Today, Norfolk language (Norf’k) is mainly habitually spoken by older residents. From 1913 until the 1960s, the language was banned from use at school, and only relatively recently have intermittent language classes been introduced to the curriculum. Norf’k is
spoken in some form by some younger people (many of whom have been educated abroad and later married non-Norf’k speakers). The radio service uses some Norf’k in its programming, although such usage attracts controversy amongst islanders and even amongst presenters themselves. One reason is that, like many Pacific languages, Norf’k is an oral language that has only recently been written down (see Buffett 1999) and officially adopted.\[6\] Subsequently, there is disagreement about who speaks the authentic, correct form and, in fact, whether there is or should be such a thing. This has significance for the radio service.

The Radio Service

The first radio service was established in the airport in 1952, although this was limited to five or ten minute daily broadcasts giving basic information about ship and aircraft movements and vital notices. It was not until the 1960s that it was expanded to resemble a radio service with music, local notices and ABC programmes sent over for re-broadcast. This station—then called VL2NI and now Radio Norfolk—is still significantly controlled by officers of the island Administration and this has an effect on everything, from local notices to what music is played, and the style of sponsorship announcements. But the Administration has only recently formalised its relationship to the radio station by establishing a Broadcasting Authority.\[7\] A Broadcasting Act was passed in 2003, and the station adopted its first ever Code of Practice shortly after. While Radio Norfolk is funded to a limited extent by the Administration,\[8\] the station also raises money through sponsorship and other commercial ventures. So, in terms of Australian radio station designations, the station resides between a community, public and commercial operation.\[9\]

The station includes programmes by the ABC and Radio New Zealand, mixed in with local programmes and mostly UK/US/Australian music of a middle-of-the-road style. Programme content is largely music-based, featuring a mix of country, mainstream popular and light classical musical items. Once, music was shipped to the station, but in the last two years much of the music is downloaded as MP3 files at minimal cost from online music distributor, Music Point. Breakfast and morning programmes are presented by paid staff employed on a casual basis.\[10\] The programmes feature news from the ABC and Radio New Zealand, local notices, weather and sports reports, and either a live studio interview or the first-run of a pre-recorded interview. Other locally produced shows are ‘drive time’ (4.30pm to early evening) and evening programmes that are presented by volunteers. Although originally it was established as a kind of ‘public address’ medium for the island Administration, more recently entertainment based on specific local interests as well as information and ‘education’ from a variety of global sources have dominated programming.\[11\]

Programme content on Radio Norfolk is affected by the relationship of the station to various audiences and stakeholders. For example, programme content affects the style of radio talk used on-air, the musical choices and genres, as well as news programming. Announcements and notices are often formally worded in vocabulary and language style. In the early days of radio broadcasts, the personal on-air style of announcers was criticised by the current Administrator, and subsequent announcers were required to

---

Coyle (2006:36-45) Radio Norfolk

Refereed Papers From
The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference,
Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, 9-13 February 2006. Edited by Henry Johnson

38
type scripts (rather than make impromptu remarks) and abide by strict protocols and procedures. These formally worded elements offer a point of contrast with other talk content which oscillates between inconsequential chat (a standard form of radio talk content), item segues, and the occasional local interview or pre-recorded (and sometimes edited) item, to tightly scripted imported material from international radio services.

The Administration (Broadcasting Minister and public servants) also intervenes in musical choices including music genres. Grunge and heavy metal musics are only programmed in specialist timeslots and specific songs with risqué lyrics have been disallowed. Indeed, music programming has been determined by availability of material as much as agreed formatting, and listener complaints or requests rather than a formalised station policy or programming approach.

News programming was once entirely provided by international services, and a disjuncture between global news services and highly localised notices and information is still apparent in the current service. Local radio news tends to avoid controversial issues such as critical or investigative journalism about the local Administration or contentious island activities.[12] Instead, radio programmes have featured interviews with Assembly ministers about their activities, and Assembly proceedings are broadcast as ‘live’ recordings rather than reported and analysed. However, it is not just the Administration that affects radio content and approach. Local people have strong views about radio operations and attitudes, and announcers are aware of living in close proximity to both their critics and their fans.

Various elements of the programming on Radio Norfolk are important in conveying a sense of community. One of these is the use of humour. Listener anecdotes, jokes and pre-recorded comedy items broadcast on Radio Norfolk vary depending on what the speaker considers the role of the radio announcer to be (e.g. ‘voice of authority’ or friendly entertainer), as well as his or her particular sense of humour. Jesting and teasing are integral parts of life on Norfolk Island, although announcers are wary of reflecting these in radio commentary when it is felt that there may be personal ramifications or problems for the station that impact at an official level. However, music tracks with pertinent lyrics are often used in request timeslots by island residents to make comments to and about each other. In the absence of phone-in (‘talkback’) or other listener participation programmes, these items and humorous asides serve multiple purposes. They address a specific Norfolk Island communication style and offer a way of commenting on social situations without directly criticising or taking issue.

Norf’k Broadcasts

One of the most distinct elements of the radio services is its use of Norf’k. From the earliest days, radio broadcasts were only made in English and it is only relatively recently that radio broadcasts have been made in Norf’k. Some announcers from the 1980s became aware of policies in Australia concerning multiculturalism and consciously chose to speak Norf’k on their shows. In 1983, Josie Gillett won an award as host of the ‘Young Mood’ afternoon programme presented in Norf’k. Later, David
(also known as Diddles) Evans hosted evening programmes in which he made announcements in Norf’k, picturing his relative (Bubby) and other Pitcairn descendants as his listeners. Also, in a programme broadcast after school, Diddles ran quizzes for young listeners to guess the meaning of a Norf’k word or phrase, aiming to stimulate interest in Norf’k language and its connection with lifestyle and customs.

Currently, Tracey Yager uses Norf’k occasionally (for example, in an interview with an older Norf’k speaker), but Darlene Buffett is the only announcer to use Norf’k consistently in her programmes. Darlene presents in a form that mixes English and Norf’k, often in the same sentence. Since 1992, when she commenced as a radio announcer, she has increased the proportion of Norf’k used in her shows. Her mixture of English and Norf’k languages has met with some criticism. Older Islanders have commented on what they perceive to be her poor rendition of Norf’k and a misuse of it when mixed with English. Such criticisms do not acknowledge on-going debates about a definitive ‘authentic’ form of Norf’k or, indeed, Darlene’s purpose in using the language in this manner on a radio service aiming to meet the needs of various communities of interest. These debates also highlight the ways in which language confidence can occur. The intimate mode of address used in the radio announcements and the familiar contexts in which the language is heard (often as a ‘tertiary’ activity, that is, while the listener is engaged in another task such as housework, commuting or in the workplace) can serve as a conscious form of language revitalisation. In relation to the strategies of language revitalisation discussed by Patrick Heinrich (2005), the radio broadcasts incorporating Norf’k represent both the language itself as ‘the message’ as well as a form that speaks to language users with different levels of proficiency.

While the printed word cannot adequately convey radio flow and vocal timbre, some indicator of the points above can be seen in a transcript of a radio programme. The following quotation is excerpted from a Breakfast show broadcast in 2004 (16 November) in which Darlene provides the opening menu and reads the local news and notices:

Well, a very guud morni’ all yorlyi and welcome back to Radio Norfuk and we broadcastin’ from our studio in New Cascade Road. 89.9 in the FM band and 1566 in the AM band. Darlene with yorlyi fillin’ in fer Tracey fer enother Tyuusdi—I keepin’ yorlyi company until 9 o’clock this mornin’. Very guud morning to all the other early birds up and doin’ on dey Tyuusdi morning the sixteenth of Nowemba 2004. Any walkers and swimmers, bakers, butchahs, café workers, restaurant workers, hotel staff. So’d how’s yorlyi. And special greetings to the patients up der in Norfuk Island hospital. I hope yorlyi feelin’ a whole lot bettah dis day. And a special guud mornin’ to the staff up there as well. And if anybody home no’ feelin’ one hundred per cent dis day, I hope yorlyi feel heaps better real soon. An’ no forgettin’ fo tellun very good morning to the visitors on our island. Hope you’re having a lovely time and if you’re leaving us today, we hope you’ll come back and see us again real soon. And for all the other sponsors who’ll be bringing timecalls throughout the day, very good morning to yorlyi. So 7 o’clock, breakfast time on Radio Norfuk, thanks to our brekky session sponsors, Max’s department store, and time for the news.

[Pre-recorded Sting music and voice-over ‘Radio Norfolk—news and information’.]
And good morning to the Captain and crew of the Norfolk Guardian. Work on the unloading of the Guardian is currently underway at Cascade. Spectators are welcome and are asked to stay clear of all work operations and to park in the car park area. [Pause.] The restored house at number 9 Quality Row will be open today from 10am to 3pm. An admittance charge applies. [Pause.] There will be an organ recital today at St Barnabas chapel between 2.30 and 3.30 and all are welcome. [Pause.] A craft session will be held in the SDA Church Hall this afternoon between the hours of 2 and 4.30. [Pause.] The monthly meeting of the Hospital Auxiliary will be held today in the Mawson units at 2 o’clock. Apologies to Joan please and her phone number is 22767.\[13]

This extract is followed by four lengthier notices, then by lost and found items (“firstly lost: kids shoes and things, and found, a black crown bag containing money and stamps”), then sports activities information, service trading hours (“for our visitors on the island”), airport flight arrivals and departures, a detailed weather report including forecasts for major cities in Australia and New Zealand, and concluding with the programme ‘menu’:

And da’s it fer notices for now. I’ll repeat it fer yorlyi at 8 o’clock this morning. And also in the program we’ll take some 7.30 ABC news this morning, look at the weather in brief. I got a few request for play at around about 20 to 8.

In her opening, Darlene is consciously addressing both local and visitor listeners, being as inclusive as possible by limiting the Norf’k language elements to non-essential or readily grasped grammar and vocabulary. For the formal news and scripted announcements, Darlene uses the English that has been previously prepared for the written announcements. Tourists are addressed using colloquial English rather than Norf’k. An aspect that is worth noting about this extract—bearing in mind that this is a daily occurring breakfast show—is the almost ceremonial greeting ritual Darlene engages in. It is at once intimate to Norfolk Island in content and address, plus identifying for Darlene herself, while also being inclusive of various listeners. Yet, this intimacy is achieved without the usual employment of specific radio scripting techniques. In formal Western radio training since about the 1970s, announcers have been instructed not to use general terms to describe the audience or to address more than one listener, as this breaks the listener’s sense of the intimate address between announcer and individual listener. Yet, here the various ‘groups’ addressed by Darlene are clearly identified as such, but the intimacy is retained by a kind of self-knowledge of the specific features of the island and the culture of island life. This is conveyed in the detail of the notices and people named as contact points (including sponsors of various segments in this opening being specifically addressed by their nicknames, such as Les Quintal Farm Tours greeted as ‘Lettuce’). The configuration of audiences making up the island community is communicated in large part by the use of specific language features.

I mentioned the criticism such language use has attracted, although criticism of Norf’k language broadcasts are not unique to Darlene’s approach. The late Toon Buffett recalled in the 1980s carefully scripting a programme entirely in (his version of) Norf’k so that the language was supposedly ‘correct’. The programme met with mixed
responses, with some listeners greatly enjoying it while others argued that he didn’t know what he was talking about. Following this experience, he questioned the use of mixed English/Norf’k presentation, arguing that the mix of languages may well upset listeners’ engagement with the broadcasts as well as break the momentum and flow of the programme and overall station programming. In addition, former Radio Norfolk manager Margaret Meadows recalled that shop assistants working in businesses playing Radio Norfolk broadcasts reported incidents of tourists who, upon hearing the mixed language broadcasts, mistakenly understood the radio service to be a useful vehicle for training islanders ‘how to speak English’, not realising that for almost all islanders English is the predominant, rather than a second language. Indeed, many young islanders deliberately use a language form culled from modified versions of Norf’k words and phrases together with slang, surfi jargon and other linguistic appropriations (an approach not uncommon in youth and subcultural groups in general). In contrast, among many older Islanders, a particularly formal pronunciation and speech mode is cultivated, possibly modeled on the kind of educated Australian, pakeha or British English heard on ABC, BBC and Radio New Zealand radio services.

Debates around the station’s use of Norf’k reflect dissenting views that are apparent in all communities, but also perhaps the lack of an agreed station identity for Radio Norfolk. Since the influx of tourists to the island and issues around self-identification that markedly expanded in the 1970s, debates have arisen over whether and how broadcasts should be directed to tourists as well as islanders, and to which group(s) of islanders—that is, Pitcairn descendants or Australians and New Zealanders. Beyond these issues, though, the insertion of Norf’k seems aesthetically appealing with its specific lyricism and intonation patterns, and it gives the station a unique profile that seems appropriate to such a local service. The broadcasts represent a particular type of information (including lost shoes, birthday calls and the like) delivered in a specially localised form. It is both the content and the delivery that are identifying elements.

Conclusion

A study of Norfolk Island radio service raises methodological issues for a media researcher. The discussion above provides detail of the radio service on a specific island. To what extent aspects of Radio Norfolk can be seen to be particular to this location and community (or communities) is worth exploring in a broader research project in which a thorough comparative analysis of contemporary island-based radio services can be undertaken.

The model offered by Radio Norfolk and its relation to community do not neatly fit into existing paradigms for the study of radio looking at regulation, programming and finance. Likewise, its role is not necessarily duplicated in the similar sized or formatted stations serving Pacific Island communities, media services that were widely studied in the 1970s and 1980s. In many ways, these issues relate to self-identity for Radio Norfolk. It may not identify as a community broadcaster in terms of its specific licence arrangement or code of practice. Nevertheless, given that it broadcasts by the community (with local voices, language and music), for the community (providing local news, information and entertainment) and with the community (participating in and
being integral to community life), Radio Norfolk communicates as a community radio station. In the era of podcasts and online radio services, to what extent this continues is yet to be explored. Furthermore, it is possible that the tensions between micro-local and Australian/global that operate in language uses, news policy and official scrutiny are a microcosm of Norfolk Island culture in general. As a single radio service responding to a multiplicity of needs and expectations, Radio Norfolk adopts a range of ‘voices’ and modes of address consistent with its island communities of interest.

Endnotes

[1] The field research resulted in my report to the Norfolk Island Administration (Coyle, 2000).

[2] Such news coverage was observed at the time of the 2006 International Small Island Cultures Conference with the court appearance of the accused murderer of Janelle Patton. Television, radio and print journalists came to the island, and overseas based media services contacted islanders (especially radio and newspaper services) for information and comment.


[4] The categorisation of media services as exogenous and endogenous can be shown to be porous in relation to media content insofar as local media are informed by and include media from outside sources, and off-island media also draw on local media for information about island affairs, attitudes and opinions.


[6] Peter Mühlhäusler notes: “There are significant differences in pronunciation and vocabulary between different families. At this point, there is no official standard spelling, lexicon and grammar” (email to the author 11/4/06).


[8] The Administration funds the salary of the Broadcasting Officer (station manager) and a modest budget for expenses, including payments to some of the on-air presenters.

[9] ‘Community’ broadcasting stations in Australia are usually largely volunteer-operated with income from a variety of sources, but not from direct advertising (see Forde et al., 2003). The major part of the income to public broadcasters comes directly through Treasury.
[10] Since 2003, programme slots have been decreased from four-hourly shifts to two hours. See programme guide available at <http://www.norfolk.gov.nf/What’s%20On%20radio.htm>. See also Ricquish (1989) for more detail of radio operations in the 1980s.

[11] The station once included a considerable amount of programming from overseas sources such as the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) and Deutsch Welle, although with more programming available online, these subscriptions have been cut and outside programme material (such as from Radio Australia-Pacific) considerably reduced.

[12] This is not unique to the radio services: island newspapers tend to avoid confrontational or contentious items and issues. Peter Mühlhäusler argues that Norfolk Island features particular “rules of interaction, that discourage direct intervention” (email to the author 11/4/06).

[13] I have indicated approximate pronunciation of several words using generalised sound indicators rather than formalised diacritics or phonetics. Several words are also pronounced with a specific vowel sound but are not indicated here. I have followed the spelling in Buffett (1999) for commonly used words. Where visitors are addressed, Darlene uses a generalised Australian-accented pronunciation that is distinct from the pronunciation of Norfolk styled words.

[14] See seminal radio training manuals such as McLeish (1974), which was later published as Radio Production in 1994.

[15] Such studies were effectively summarised in Wurm, Mühlhäusler and Tryon (1996). See also Seward (1999).

Bibliography


Papers from the 1st International Small Island Cultures Conference, Sydney: Small Islands Cultures Research Initiative


Mühlhäusler, P (2006) ‘The Norf’k Language as a Memory of Norfolk’s Cultural and Natural Environment’, this volume


Wurm, S A, Mühlhäusler, P and Tryon, D T (eds) Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas (Trends in Linguistics Documentation 13), Berlin: de Gruyter

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Darlene Buffett, Philip Hayward, Peter Mühlhäusler and George Smith for their comments and research input to this paper.
THE SILENT ECHOES OF CHATHAM ISLAND

Mark Evans

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Introduction

The fieldwork for this paper was originally designed to uncover the church music practices and trends on Chatham Island. As work progressed it became clear that the research net needed to be cast more widely. Thus, the current musical culture of Chatham Island in general came into focus. Before reporting on my research on Chatham Island, I will provide some background to the current culture that can be found there.

The Chatham Islands are part of New Zealand, yet are situated some 768 kilometres east from Wellington and 749 kilometres from Napier. The Chatham Islands (44°S 176°W) consist of two main inhabited islands: Pitt Island (population c50) and Chatham Island (population c650). Pitt Island lies 23 kilometres south east of Chatham Island. There are a further 23 islands contained within a radius of 50 kilometres, also considered to be part of the Chatham Islands.

The original inhabitants of the Chatham Islands were the Moriori people, who are thought to have landed on the islands from New Zealand between 700 and 1000 years ago. The Moriori people named the island Rekohu, which means ‘misty island’, and although there is a growing body of research on the history and culture of the Moriori, much remains to be discovered about their musical practices (see especially King, 2000). Accounts such as the following inform our piecemeal understanding of this musical culture:

For amusements, the [Moriori] people had high-jumping . . . and skipping with a rope . . . but no musical instruments, although they knew traditionally of the Koauau, or flute of the Maoris, the use of which, however, was neglected. They had also Kapa, a kind of dance, somewhat similar to the Maori haka, in which the people were arranged in two parallel rows one behind the other . . . and it was accompanied by a song. (Shand, 1911:11)

Awareness of the Chatham Islands among Europeans occurred with Lieutenant William Robert Broughton, commander of the ship the HMS Chatham, in 1791. Broughton named Chatham after his ship, and Pitt Island after William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham.
Yet, rather than European colonisation, it was Maori invasion in 1835 that would change the life of the Moriori forever. Official records report that the Maori killed 226 Moriori—most of these cannibalised as well—although this number is probably over 300, when children are taken into account as well (King, 2000:63). The death toll amounted to about one fifth of the Moriori population. Over one thousand further Moriori subsequently died as a result of Maori aggression. The effects on Moriori culture were catastrophic.

Early Christian Contact

The Chathams had their first exposure to Western Christianity in the mid 19th Century. In 1840, a ship carrying three Anglican Maori students from a mission near Otaki arrived. They taught Maori people on the island to read and write. One of the Maori, Wiremu Tamahana, preached at Waitangi for 25 years. Also, a Wesleyan minister, John Aldred, sailed from Wellington with three Maori Wesleyan students in 1842. They brought with them portions of the Bible written in Maori, which proved enormously popular with local people (Holmes, 1993:148).

However, without doubt the most famous Christian contact came via the deployment of German Lutheran missionaries to the island. Island historian David Holmes wrote:

*The five German missionaries to the Chathams were Johannes Engst, Johann Baucke, Johann Muller, Franz Schiermeister and Oskar Beyer. They were all members of the Lutheran Gossener Mission in Berlin and belonged to the Moravian Brethen sect. . . . [They arrived in 1843 and moved around a little before] they all ended up at Te Whakaru, where they acquired a section and built two or three houses of schist stone using burnt pipi shells for mortar . . . the missionaries tried to preach to the Maori people but with little success. . . . In 1845 the Berlin mission sent three women to be wives for the missionaries. There were originally five women but two pulled out before leaving Berlin [they arrived in 1846 and were married to 3 of the missionaries 8 days later] . . . The missionaries and their wives all lived at Te Whakaru for a number of years, after which events began to divide them . . . Schiermeister went to Pitt Island to teach Frederick Hunt’s children. He became very ill and was taken to Wellington by Bishop Selwyn about 1855. Later he went to Brisbane as a Lutheran pastor. . . . Two families on the Chathams today are descended from the Bauckes—the Seymours and the Prendevilles.* (Holmes, 1993:148-150)

For all their ascetic fortitude, the German missionaries are most remembered today for their farming. It is popularly accepted on the island that not one soul was saved through their evangelistic efforts. The circumstances of their mission remain most curious. What pictures of their exceptionally constructed house do not reveal is that it was built in the farthest north-west corner of the island. Furthermore, the house is hidden on the ocean side of the steepest rise on the island. This is not a setting that would have attracted any passing traffic at all. In fact, the walk into Waitangi in the 1850s would have taken a full day, the best part of which would have been devoid of human contact.
Sounds of the Past

Interviews with long-term residents of the island, along with photographs from the island’s museum, reveal that the musical culture on the Chathams used to be very different to that present today. Resident George Hough recalled playing in a band during the 1950s and early 1960s, which featured saxophone, two guitars, accordion and harmonica. He played accordion and harp, but could also play violin and guitar. The band played for dances, or “for anyone who wanted to have a sing” (interview with the author 6/12/05). During that time, there were many functions held in the community hall, most of which would feature the band. In the 1950s, it was common to have square dances in the community hall. These dances featured the local band and a dance caller who was a resident and had learnt the various square dancing calls mainly through listening to records.

Various permutations of the band played with touring artists, often representing a vast realm of styles, including opera, swing and country. These tours most often occurred around the time of the annual races days, usually held at the end of December. Hough recalled that the New Brighton Silver Band from Christchurch toured the island twice with a 26-piece band. This, he noted, was the biggest, most exciting musical tour ever to come to Chatham. Today, photos of the tour still feature in the museum. As well as such musical encounters, various minor singers have appeared too, but not many, and most were related to someone on the island. Several musicians interviewed regretted that more artists did not tour the island. A major factor in the lack of touring is the sheer cost of getting to the island. Airfares are relatively expensive for internal domestic flights, and the sea journey option is charged out according to space rather than weight, meaning that a touring band would be a most expensive enterprise. In addition, both air and sea travel to the Chathams can be risky due to weather, with passages often delayed or cancelled.

The Air Chathams Christmas party that was to occur the weekend after I left the island best reflects the contemporary culture of musical visitors to the island. The party was being touted as one of the biggest social events on the Chatham calendar, with many staff and ex-staff flying in for it. The airline was flying in a band called Luck for the event from the mainland. As it turns out, Luck is made up of members from the successful 1980s New Zealand rock band, the Exponents. No only does this speak to current musical preferences—an old rock band well past their use-by date being preferred over younger musicians, or even locals—it also highlights the vast absence of performance opportunities for local artists.

“What songs do you know?”: Church Music on Chatham

For a lowly populated island, the Chathams have a history of supporting numerous religious organisations and churches. During the first part of the 20th Century, there were no less than three operational Anglican churches on the island and two functioning ‘home churches’, a number necessitated in part due to the inaccessibility of various sections of the island. The island also supported a Catholic church, a strong Ratana following and, in more recent times, a Christian Fellowship church.[1] Pitt Island has
always been almost exclusively Catholic, due to the heritage of Gregory Hunt, who saw to the initial Catholic education of the islanders. Upon my visit in December 2005, there remained but two churches: the Anglican Church at Te One, and the Catholic Church in Waitangi.

By the time of the first Sunday of my visit, most locals on the island knew why I was there—to research the religious music culture of the island. This purpose was always met with shocked, or in hindsight, moderately amused looks. It was Sunday before I realised why.

I arrived at the Anglican Church ready for the one Sunday service. Suspecting that I might be true to my word, the Minister informed me that he had powered up the generator and turned the organ on in the hope I might play. Including myself and the island’s other tourist that day, whom I had dragged along, the congregation totalled just six. All concerned felt this was a most excellent result. The minister then asked me to “just play something” to start the service off. I obliged. The selection of hymns for the morning’s service then took place. This was done by someone yelling out a title and a show of hands indicating how many people knew the melody. This process continued as they scurried through word books and printed words sheets, which appeared to be the most popular source of songs. This process was repeated every time a hymn was called for in the service outline. While Amazing Grace and What A Friend We Have In Jesus were recognisable and enjoyed by those present, other selections were best left a capella—in view of my randomly improvised organ part and the fact that few appeared to know the melody.

On attending the Catholic church later that same day, I was somewhat more prepared for the congregation size of three—and this while the locum priest was visiting the island. The Catholic church is in possession of an old harmonium, and the priest was most keen to see if it still worked, given that the organist had “died about 20 years ago”. Once again, Amazing Grace echoed through the old building, the constant pedalling required on the harmonium making this a slightly less enjoyable experience for the organist.

But there is more than a humorous story here. Certainly, the decline in religious music, in terms of repertoire knowledge, facilities, communal opportunities and leadership is sobering. However, there was one unexplainable aspect to the worship at the Anglican church. As I mentioned, the primary source for song words were photocopied sheets (about eight in all) that contained the typed words to various songs. These were the songs they most often sang, or most often wanted to. While the sheets contained classic hymns such as Holy Holy Holy, How Great Thou Art, What a Friend We Have in Jesus and Abide in Me, there were some other surprising inclusions. Curiously, other early choruses such as Give Thanks, When I Look Into Your Holiness, There is a Redeemer and Jesus is Lord were also included. But the last few songs in the collection were even more puzzling. Songs from early releases by Australian Pentecostal church Hillsong were printed there. Songs included Thank You, Lord and The Heaven’s Shall Declare, Shout to the Lord, and Power of Your Love. When quizzed about these songs, Reverend Preece was suitably vague about their source, or even where the sheets came from. One
congregation member said they would love to sing the newer songs, but no one knew how the melody went. One possible source of this ‘newness’ is that Sky TV is beamed into the island, and indeed to the home of the Reverend, who confessed to watching a Christian TV programme on the Sunday morning as “preparation” for the service. This discovery proves that, at some point within the last 10 to 13 years (based on the age of the songs listed), someone has been knowledgeable enough of new developments in congregational song, and enthused enough to type out all the words and have them collated into song sheets, to attempt to introduce a new song repertoire to the Anglican church. The fact that the small (predominantly elderly) congregation had no idea how these songs went, but liked “the look of the lyrics”, suggests this repertoire change was attempted many years ago, by people no longer involved in the church. I would hypothesise that this development was initiated by a short-term worker to the island, most likely a teacher given that Te One School is directly across the road from the church, and a big importer of service employment. The possibly three-year term of our modern worshipper simply was not enough time to plant new songs successfully into the liturgy of the church.

Island Identity: The Chatham Island Song

Most alarming about the music culture of Chathams was the near complete lack of songs about, influenced by, or generally representative of, the islands themselves. While residents returning home on the flight into the island mentioned the Chatham Island Song to me, the fact that no one I spoke with, until I visited the Te One School, could sing or relay the song to me, was indicative of the apathy towards promotion of island ideals through music. There are no obvious island influences or sounds that resound; in fact, the Chatham Island Song music is fairly standard folk/pop.

Nehu Tewiata, who wrote the song, must have written it before 1936 as George Hough could remember singing it at school and at home. The original version has been changed somewhat lyrically, but remains largely the same. Tewiata was known for writing parodies of other songs (i.e., he would take the lyrics and change them, but keep the original melody intact). His willingness to borrow even extended to the Chatham Island Song, which was originally sung to music of Candy Kisses. Eventually, the music was rewritten by George Day and a teacher from the Te One School.

While there was vigour and enthusiasm for the song at the school, there were not many thoughts offered on the history of it, or what it meant to people—I think might just have been nerves and politeness from a large group of primary school children. Many of the teachers are imported (like much service labour) from the mainland, so their enthusiasm was commendable, but perhaps again not indicative of island attitudes. That said, at least they knew the song.

Eva (Gregory-Hunt) from Pitt Island is largely regarded as the best musical talent on the island. She plays guitar in the (Catholic) congregation on Pitt, making it more modern than other congregations on the island. As with many residents of the Chathams, most of Eva’s CDs come from her children buying them while at school on the mainland, or else she makes a list of tracks she likes (from radio and television) and then relatives on
the mainland burn them to CD for her. Her preference is for country music (a preference stated by many on Chatham). There are no official venues at which to play, but if someone is having a party then invariably someone will “pull out a guitar and start playing and singing. It’s amazing, you can have lived with people all your life and not known they were musical until they suddenly begin to play” (Eva Gregory-Hunt, telephone interview with the author 7/12/06). That aspect of ‘hidden’ culture seems quite apparent on Chatham as well.

Eva mentioned that a Pitt Island Song was in existence, akin to Chatham Island Song, but confessed she had never heard it, “by all accounts it is very beautiful, but no one has sung it here for a long time” (ibid). Given Eva is the island’s most regarded musician, it might appear that the song has been lost forever.

George Hough could not recall anyone involved in composing their own songs, especially those dealing with island themes. However, the island’s souvenir shop did contain a CD by former resident Hemi Tauroa entitled Jahziah (named after his son). Tauroa now lives in Australia and, unfortunately, could not be interviewed for this project. The CD is most readily identified as reggae-styled, acoustic rock. It features strong off-beat vamping acoustic guitars, a ‘do-it-yourself’ production aesthetic that works well with the generic sound created, and lyrics predominantly concerned with love relationships. Only one song on the album acknowledges Tauroa’s island heritage, but it does so very eagerly. Entitled Chatham Island Song (Rekohu), it bares no resemblance to the ‘official’ Chatham song, but does feature key references to life on the island. Unlike the rest of the album, a strong Chatham accent is present, particularly in spoken vocal interjections. It is the spoken, rather than the sung or the musical elements that tie the piece most intrinsically to Chatham Island.

The Bigger Picture

Although there seems to be a good quantity of musicians on the island, and certainly some respectable musical ability, there are few avenues for public performance. Further hampering this is the fact that musicians are poorly organised, often remotely located and largely unmotivated to group themselves into performative clusters. Indeed, much of the population is scattered around the island, with only a relatively small settlement at Waitangi. A few roads have been sealed in recent times, but most remain fairly rudimentary, with darkness, weather and inadequate grading all posing hazards to transport across the island. Solo performance efforts would require much more effort and perseverance, as well as ultimate relocation in order to record and promote music.

It would appear that music had its most powerful presence on the islands from the 1950s to the 1970s. Many older members of the island lamented the disappearance of live music, and were often quick to point towards SKY TV and home stereos as the cause. Despite the tough living and expensive amenities of island life, most homes own a satellite television dish, and beam in all manner of programming from mainland New Zealand and beyond. As a result, people are happier to stay at home and choose their entertainment, rather than venturing out into the elements for an unknown result.
As noted earlier, the lack of live performance venues on the island is a startling hurdle for musicians. This was not always the case, however. After fairly brief public debate, it was decided by the island’s council that a public hall would be built, despite not all the funds being available for the construction. The Waitangi Centennial Hall was completed in 1940, “as there was still a small funding shortfall [for the building of the hall], dances, concerts and card evenings were run. In time the hall was paid for and furnished, and the island had a good public hall that was much used” (Holmes, 1993:28).

The transformation of the community hall into a Maori marae has severely altered the community engagement with live music. The public venue available to performers is now the island’s one pub, situated at the Hotel Chathams. The pub is quite small, especially given the number of people who like to frequent it, although the Hotel’s adjoining restaurant would also provide a suitable venue for live performance. In the time I spent at the pub—across all times of day—there was never music to be heard. The entertainment in the pub is dominated by one SKY TV set, which in the time I was there never moved off the SKY Racing channel. Whether greyhounds or races, or one of the three poker machines there, gambling is an intrinsic characteristic of island life. Any form of musical performance would have to strive hard just to compete with that, let alone overcome it.

Re-establishing a live music culture on the island would take some resolve. Increased tours from respected, famous and/or gifted musicians may contribute to energising younger people to pursue musical desires. With the high school children off the island (except in their holidays), there is a strange absence, which is filled by those returning from holidays who have experienced the full gamut of teenage urban life (in Christchurch). They may well return with cultural sensibilities and skills that have no outlet in the Chathams, or are unvalued by their contemporaries. The relative toughness of life on Chatham is reflected in the hobbies and leisure time of the residents. But more than others, these are people with stories to tell, struggles to relate, and a relative distance from the Western world that might avail the production of powerful music.

Endnotes

[1] The Ratana congregation formed around 1924 after a lengthy letter was sent to the Chathams by the self-proclaimed prophet Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana. Ratana: 

*Had been trained as Catholic but became more Pentecostal in orientation, and the Catholic Church was not delighted about that. He formed a new ‘denomination’ which was strictly Maori in membership. While they were very powerful politically, they tended to be more political than theological.* (Father Golding, interview with the author 7/12/06)

[2] Chatham Island cannot sustain a full-time priest. One comes out from the mainland for stays of between six weeks and three months. A lot of that time is usually spent on the more religiously minded, and Catholic, Pitt Island.
Bibliography


Shand, A (1911) *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands: Their History and Traditions*, Christchurch: Kiwi Publishers
THE BOOK OF EBENEZER LE PAGE

Guernsey and the Channel Islands in the 20th Century

Peter Goodall

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

I

The Book of Ebenezer Le Page, a fictional autobiography written by Gerald Basil Edwards, was published in 1981. The novel is set entirely on the small island of Guernsey, one of the British Channel Islands, and presents the life of its first-person narrator, Ebenezer Le Page, against the background of great changes in almost all aspects of Guernsey life during the period from about 1890 to the 1960s.

Near the beginning of the narrative, as Ebenezer outlines the lives of his parents and grandparents, he remembers the Biblical counsel to “look unto the rock whence ye are hewn” (Isaiah 51:1). The usual commentary on this verse is that it emphasises the importance of understanding origins and context. It is surprisingly difficult, however, to establish the context of Edwards’ novel, or to pursue the metaphor, ‘the rock whence it was hewn’. The usual strategies for contextualising novels—the details of the author’s life, other works in the author’s oeuvre, affiliations of genre—shed little light in the case of The Book of Ebenezer Le Page.

II

We know almost nothing about G B Edwards himself beyond a few details: he was born on Guernsey in 1899; he left the island as a young man after World War I to study at Bristol University, and returned only a few times; he mixed in London literary circles in the late 1920s and 1930s; he married and had children, but was estranged from them for most of his life; he worked as a minor official in the public service during World War II; and after the war, he lived in monk-like retirement. Edwards finished his days lodged in a small room in a house in Weymouth, the closest point on the mainland of Britain to Guernsey, where he died in 1976. Edwards seems to have destroyed most of his earlier writings. He began The Book of Ebenezer Le Page when he was in his late 60s, and made only a few attempts to publish it when he was in his early 70s. Eventually, the novel was published posthumously.
There are a number of biographical allusions to Edwards’ life in the story itself, but they are seldom straightforward, and are frequently ironic or misleading. For example, Ebenezer’s father works for Tom Mauger (pronounced ‘Major’), an amalgam of the first name of Edwards’ father and his mother’s maiden name. Edwards was born in Braye Road, St Sampson’s, but in the novel this address is given to Ebenezer’s cousins, Horace and Raymond Martel, rather than to Ebenezer himself. Edwards’ self-reliance and his dislike of contemporary culture, especially in the way it had affected Guernsey itself since World War II, echo Ebenezer’s attitudes. However, we should be wary of seeing Ebenezer as Edwards’ ‘alter ego’, as John Fowles does in his introduction to the novel (Fowles, 1982:8). Although it is tempting to confl ate a colourful narrator with a strong-minded author, this is always a naïve strategy for reading fictional first-person narratives, and it is particularly misleading here. Unlike Edwards himself, Ebenezer has been poorly educated, and his limited understanding is epitomised in the insularity, in all senses of the term, of his life. He has never been outside the islands; indeed, he has only even visited Jersey on one occasion, for a day-trip to watch a football match. A better case for Edwards’ alter ego (if we need one) is Ebenezer’s cousin, Raymond Martel. Raymond Martel is a tormented soul, driven out by his father and mother, struggling to come to terms with his own sexuality, separated from his wife and children, a man of intellectual promise who spends his working life as a minor official in the public service of the island, and a man of deep religious insight and conviction, albeit heretical enough to bring about his resignation from the Methodist ministry after preaching just one sermon. Ebenezer says at one point that it is hard to imagine the sheer amount of religion there was on the island in the early 20th Century. Despite Ebenezer’s name, which evokes the dissenting religious culture of the island, with its Ebenezer chapels, our guide here is not Ebenezer, but Raymond, whose struggle with belief and with the culture of the Church provides some of the profoundest moments of the story, and whose mysticism underpins its grand climax.

III

There are similar problems in establishing the ‘literary’ context of the novel. As this is the only novel by Edwards that is extant, it is not possible to situate it in the context of the author’s other work. There are some directions offered in the novel itself, but these are often used ironically. Ebenezer’s own reading is confined largely to the Guernsey Evening Press, although his head is full of Biblical quotations remembered from his pious mother. The only novel that he ever seems to have read is Robinson Crusoe, which he acquires as a memento of his great friend, Jim Mahy, killed in World War I. Defoe’s story (also a fictional autobiography) of a solitary life on a desert island for 28 years has obvious relevance, as it does at a deeper level in its exploration of the myth of homo faber, or man the builder and victor in the struggle against the forces of nature. But physical solitude is not Ebenezer’s problem, and Robinson’s restlessness as a young man, running away to sea for a life of adventure that takes him around the world before he is shipwrecked off the coast of South America, is quite the antithesis of Ebenezer’s settled life. Indeed, Ebenezer amazes Raymond when he tells him that the moral of Robinson Crusoe is that it is foolish to go gallivanting around the world when you could stay at home leading a quiet life.
Raymond is much more bookish than Ebenezer, although Ebenezer comments on Raymond’s mixed-up life that “I am not sure all that reading do a fellow much good” (Edwards, 1982:54). Some of the authors Raymond has read—for example, John Oxenham, who wrote a number of historical romances of Channel Island life, most notably Carette of Sark, and, most important of all, Victor Hugo—are very appropriate to the novel’s themes. Raymond has read all four volumes of Hugo’s Les Misérables in French, and it is surprising how few people know that Hugo spent eighteen years in exile in the Channel Islands in the 1850s and 1860s, fifteen of them on Guernsey, and that Les Misérables was mostly written there. Hugo was fascinated from first to last by the islands. The last book published during his lifetime was a study of L’Archipel de la Manche, based on notes he had made soon after his arrival there.

It is the novel of Hugo’s that is not mentioned that is the most significant analogue, however. Hugo’s Les Travailleurs de la mer, published in 1866, is the profoundest fictional study of Guernsey life. Its central section is an extraordinary narrative of the salvage of the engine and funnel of a steam shipwrecked on the treacherous Roches Douvres, performed single-handed by the novel’s hero, Gilliatt, who endures hurricanes, and fights off giant octopuses. It clearly recalls Robinson Crusoe on more than one level. Edwards seems, however, to have wanted to deal ironically with the ‘toilers of the sea’ motif that is powerful in Channel Island literature generally. Gilliatt’s fight to the death with the octopus seems to be echoed in Ebenezer’s struggle to land the conger eel that he has caught by accident and is desperate to take, so close is he to starvation at the end of the German occupation in World War II. Ebenezer is a part-time fisherman and lover of the orfi, or garfish as it is called in Australia, but (like most real-life Channel Island fishermen of his time) he cannot swim and has never done more than paddle up to his knees in the water. Ebenezer’s inability to swim contrasts markedly with the prodigious feats of swimming and boatmanship in Hugo’s novel.

IV

Biography and literary affiliations offer us only limited help in understanding the context of Edwards’ novel. The true rock from which it is hewn is the history and culture of Guernsey itself, and a sustained meditation on the fate of the island in the 20th Century is at the core of the novel. There are several aspects to this, but for reasons of space I have limited myself here to the consideration of two: Guernsey’s relationship with France and changes in the economy of the island. I have left those questions of belief and of religion, although in many ways the most important aspects of change in the history of Guernsey, to one side in this paper because they are too complex to deal with in a short space.

Guernsey was not the only place in Britain to experience more change in the first 50 years of the 20th Century than it had in the previous five hundred. The same could be said of many places in the south of England, for example. But the nature of the changes on Guernsey (and Jersey for that matter) was the product of unique factors and circumstances. At the heart of this lies a paradox: although the islands pledged loyalty to the English crown more or less continuously from the early Middle Ages, in most respects, their culture was French. Guernsey is only 50 kilometres from the coast of
France, yet nearly 130 kilometres from the closest point on the English mainland. Alderney, part of the bailiwick of Guernsey and the closest of all the islands to France, lies only 16 kilometres from the French coast. Any map will reveal how intimately the islands are cradled in the Golfe de St-Malo, with Normandy on one side and Brittany on the other. Despite this, ‘Frenchmen’, who were always present in considerable numbers on the islands, were widely disliked. As Ebenezer says à propos the unveiling of the statue to Victor Hugo, a man he describes as a “famous Frenchman” rather than a famous Guernseyman, notwithstanding Hugo’s long residence on Guernsey:

*I didn’t like the French, and I think most Guernsey people felt the same. I thought they were dirty. Certainly Fountain Street and Rosemary Steps and round there, where it was mostly French people lived, nobody could say was a clean part of the town.* (Edwards, 1982:123)

But then Ebenezer has little good to say about the English or the Americans either, and Jersey people are considered the worst of all.

Historically, the Channel Islands were part of the Duchy of Normandy, and thus became linked to England after the Norman Conquest. Ebenezer still speaks of that event as when “we” conquered England. In a comic touch, Ebenezer’s best friend spends his honeymoon at Hastings. After a visit to nearby Battle with his wife, he comments that King Harold of England was such “a slippery sod . . . it’s a wonder we ever got him at all” (Edwards, 1982:117). When King John lost the Norman lands in France to the King of France in 1204, the Islands chose, however, to remain loyal to England. They have never been subsequently part of the United Kingdom, but enjoy (with the Isle of Man) a peculiar status as a dependency of the British Crown. Therefore, constitutional links with Britain are maintained through the Privy Council, not through the government at Westminster. Citizens of the Islands are not represented at Westminster and the laws of the United Kingdom are only binding in the Islands if passed by the local governments in the two bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey—the ‘States’. The English monarch is received in the Islands as the heir of the Duke of Normandy.

Despite this relationship to England, one of the profoundest changes in Guernsey life was the loss of the patois, the distinctive dialect of Norman French spoken universally on the island until the beginning of the 20th Century and surviving in widespread use until World War II. This is Ebenezer’s native tongue, spoken within his family and to all the friends and acquaintances of his generation. At the end of the novel, when Ebenezer is an old man in the 1960s, he still speaks patois to the love of his life, Liza Quéripel, at the end of the novel. To put this into historical perspective, Ebenezer’s mother, born we can suppose in the 1860s, spoke a little English but read the Bible in English. (This is significant because although patois was the common discourse of the Le Page family, scraps of the King James Bible resonate in Ebenezer’s mind from his daily contact with his mother and are found throughout the text of the novel.) Ebenezer’s grandmother, born in the 1840s, spoke only French and read only the French Bible. The most recent statistics from the 2001 census conclude that approximately two percent of the population of Guernsey can speak patois fluently and up to fourteen percent can understand words and phrases.\(^3\)
The other profound change in Guernsey life in the 20th Century was economic. For most of its history, the island was poor, under-populated and culturally backward. Its economy was based on agriculture and fishing, and from the late Middle Ages a local domestic industry produced high-quality knitwear. A popular story survives that Mary Queen of Scots went to the block wearing a pair of stockings made in Guernsey. Many men were employed in fishing and in seamanship generally. Ebenezer’s ancestors on his father’s side had all been sailors, and Ebenezer himself considered going to sea when he was a child. The great economic change came with the quarrying of granite, in the north of Guernsey especially, in the 19th Century. Rock is important, not just as the literal foundation of Guernsey’s economy and modernity, but as a symbol of the perpetuity of Guernsey culture, echoed in the biblical idea of the rock from which one is hewn. Hugo describes Guernsey in the preface to *Les Travailleurs de la mer* as a “rock” of hospitality and liberty. Although Ebenezer’s father works in the quarry, Ebenezer himself is prevented from joining him when his father steps in after a young man is killed in an accident. Ebenezer’s own house, ‘Les Moulins’, is built entirely from the blue granite of the island and will “last for ever”. But, most of the granite quarried was exported, and destined particularly for the pavements of the industrial cities of England, while a large amount of it was crushed and used for aggregate in concrete. The exploitative and colonialist aspects of this trade are obvious. Hugo’s novel is set in the 1820s, but he comments on the destructive aspects of the stone trade that are to come: almost all the locations and house sites mentioned in Hugo’s novel were eventually to be obliterated—or literally, the land was taken away and put somewhere else.

After World War I, the industry declined, and both agriculture and stone-quarrying were superseded by ‘growing’. Ebenezer’s life is a microcosm of this change. His father finds him a job in the ‘vineries’ of Mr Dorey. Eventually, Ebenezer rises to be foreman before he leaves to set up on his own. Glasshouses were first introduced at the end of the 18th Century to grow grapes and pineapples, and also flowers from the 1820s, but it was the growing of tomatoes under glass that became the staple of the island’s export economy in the years after World War I. The huge acreage of greenhouses became one of Guernsey’s characteristic sights, and by 1900, growers outnumbered arable and pastoral farmers by four to one. But there is something decidedly unromantic about the life of the ‘grower’. It is honest work, but cannot compare in glamour with the ‘privateering’ of Oxenham’s novels or the heroic seamanship of Gilliatt in *Les Travailleurs de la mer*. This is another instance of the ironic stance Edwards’ novel takes in relation to other stories of Guernsey life.

But for all its lack of romance, growing is an honest business, unlike the tourism that succeeded it. Although the origins of tourism in the islands lie in the years after Waterloo, the spectacular growth occurred after World War II, at the same time as ‘growing’ began to decline. By the time of the novel’s publication in the early 1980s, over 300,000 tourists arrived each year (Marr, 1982:221). (This can be compared with the 30,000 tourists that arrive annually on Norfolk Island.) For Ebenezer, who typically is not above making a little bit of profit out of tourism when it suits him, the problem is that the islanders are too good at it. Tourism has become a holy word; Guernsey has sold out and became a whore of a place (Edwards, 1982:382). Edwards’
novel, however, was published before tourism itself became prey to a new competitor: the off-shore finance industry of merchant banks and investment houses, and before a new wave of migrants, the super-rich, arrived, who were attracted by low income tax, the absence of supertax, value-added tax, capital gains or transfer tax.

It is not hard to imagine what Ebenezer would have made of that development, but we should not read the novel simplistically. Ebenezer is not a poor man; his earliest memory is putting a penny into his money-box. The last third of the narrative is dominated by Ebenezer’s search for an heir for his substantial wealth, someone to whom he can leave his house, land and money (including the cache of gold sovereigns buried in the garden and the stocking full of five-pound notes stuffed up the laundry-chimney). This theme of ‘property’ can only be appreciated in the context of the peculiarly complex property and inheritance laws of Guernsey. Edwards had himself been a victim of this, and there are a couple of sub-plots in the novel that revolve around the problematic nature of inheritance.

‘Property’, of course, becomes a metaphor for the transfer and inheritance of other, less tangible, possessions: a feeling for the history of Guernsey, attachment to the land and sea of the island itself, and knowledge of the patois and culture. Ebenezer begins to write his book in old age (not unlike Edwards himself), and in it he attempts to find comfort in the memory of family, friends and lovers set against the history of the island in the 20th Century that he finds so alienating. Ebenezer keeps his writing a secret, but he is eventually found out by Neville Falla, the rebellious young artist whom Ebenezer has selected (unbeknownst to Neville himself) as his heir. Neville wants to read the book, but Ebenezer will not allow him to. All he will do is promise that Neville will inherit the book after Ebenezer’s death. To ensure Neville’s inheritance of the novel, Ebenezer inscribes the manuscript in capitals with the words that stand as the epigraph to the novel, “THE PROPERTY OF NEVILLE FALLA”.

Although the story ends for Ebenezer with reconciliation, religious vision and blessing, it seems unlikely that Edwards himself felt unequivocally hopeful about Guernsey’s future. It is hard to imagine an uncomplicated optimism founded on Ebenezer. Etymologically, the name ‘Ebenezer’ is a Hebrew word meaning ‘stone of hope’, and refers to the monument that Samuel erected after the Israelites had inflicted a great military defeat on the Philistines. Ebenezer may be a ‘stone of hope’, but he is also the oldest man on the island. Can hope be founded on a figure that belongs so completely to the past? Neville will inherit Ebenezer’s property after his death—both the book itself and the house and money at Les Moulins—but from what Edwards said to his friends we can infer that he was planning an early death for Neville in the novel that he sketched out as a sequel (Edwards, 1982:11). Despite Ebenezer’s simplicity and candour, it is clear that Edwards himself did not know of any easy solutions to Guernsey’s problems as a small island culture in the modern world.
Endnotes

[1] The specific context alluded to is Abraham and Sarah, the father and mother of the Jewish people.

[2] The publishing history and some biographical details can be found in the introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel by John Fowles.

[3] The most recent estimate for speakers of Jèriiais, the language of Jersey, is 3.2 percent (Johnson, 2005:73).

[4] Although Edwards’ mother came from an old Guernsey family, Edwards’ grandfather on his father’s side had migrated from Devon in the middle of the 19th Century to work in the quarries. Census returns provide an interesting record of the family’s improving fortunes. In 1901 Edwards’ father was listed as an employer at the quarry. His next-door neighbours were the family of Henry Giffard, KC and Jurat, and from 1902 the Bailiff of the Bailiwick of Guernsey.


Bibliography


Oxenham, J (1907) *Carette of Sark*, London: Hodder and Stoughton
LOCALISATION AND LOCAL SONG REPERTOIRE ON NORFOLK ISLAND

Philip Hayward

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Introduction

This paper examines two allied processes of musical development, localisation and local origination, with particular regard to small island cultures, and Norfolk Island as the focal study. Localisation is a familiar global practice. It involves either the modification of material adopted from external sources and/or the creation of specific local contexts and significance(s) for its performance. The local origination of material is more straightforward and exists in various relations to the former. It can be induced by localisation of prior material, can occur side by side with localisation, or else can happen in reaction to patterns of localisation. The precise nature of these processes and their interaction varies from community to community.

Localisation is a descriptive rather than analytical term. Put simply, if pre-existent materials are modified in a local context, they can be viewed as having been localised. This characterisation includes a range of phenomena. With regard to songs that have primarily circulated orally (ie without fixed written or recorded referent texts), it can be argued that these predominantly exist as a series of contemporisations or localisations. Here then, local differences—which we might now understand as localisation—should not so much be gauged against single referent texts as against all other varieties. Where a song has a more stable reference text (ie a printed or recorded version) that it can be seen to have adhered to in various contexts, localisation can occur in two main ways. One is ‘accidental’, in that versions that may have been recalled and/or repeated ‘wrongly’ through oral transmission subsequently stabilise into a distinct local version. The second (and clearest) form of localisation occurs when a text bears obvious signs of local modification. The principal types of modification in such songs comprise variations to melodic lines (and/or their common delivery), metre and/or lyrics. With regard to the latter, the insertion of local references is one of the clearest markers of localisation. As this brief discussion of these characteristics should serve to indicate, the processes of localisation and local origination form something of a spectrum between simple acquisitions of pre-existent material through to the origination of new repertoire.

It is common for research—particularly that conducted by outsiders—to fix on the production of original material (and the most obviously marked modifications of pre-existent texts) as key markers of community originality and thus identity (or, at least,
identity as it is indicated by difference). The logic goes that if a community can be seen to have produced definite innovations to its received culture, it can be understood to have unique attributes; and, if such innovations are dramatic and/or continuing, this can be seen as a sign of cultural vitality (with, implicitly, the converse also the case).

Islands are particularly prone to the kind of imagination and agendas I have just outlined. As Godfrey Baldacchino argues, it is tempting (for the outsider) to “embrace an island as something that is finite, that may be encapsulated by human strategy, design or desire” (2005:247) when, in fact, even the remotest islands can be seen to be marked more by the:

confluence and juxtaposition of the understanding of local and global realities, or interior and exterior references of meaning, of having roots at home while also deploying routes away. (ibid:248)

Many researchers will recognise the set of assumptions about the value of local difference I have outlined, the manner in which they reflect research agendas, and the prominence the researcher gives to promoting particular aspects of what they ‘find’ and analyse. Here, it is the signs of difference and uniqueness that are often deemed the most important (rather than the interrogation of the system of thought and expectation behind such a value system). As may be apparent, the ideas presented in this paper are informed by a researcher’s meditation on processes and results of research. In my particular case, this opening framework has been one that draws on my extended work on the music history of Norfolk and Pitcairn islands since 1998 (see Hayward, 2006).

Norfolk Island: Culture, Music and Song

Norfolk Island is 1440 kilometres east of Brisbane and 1120 kilometres north west of the New Zealand city of Auckland. It was unpopulated at the time of European arrival in the Pacific, although there is evidence of Polynesian settlement in the pre-colonial era (in the form of plantain trees and adzes). The British first used the island as a penal colony until it was evacuated in 1855 to make way for the relocation of the descendants of mutineers from the HMAS *Bounty* from Pitcairn Island. Today, following a steady trickle of immigration from outside, Pitcairn descendants form about one third of the island’s population, the others being mainly of Australian and New Zealand descent. Many of the *Bounty* descendants are bilingual, speaking English and a mixture of 17th-Century English and Tahitian usually referred to as ‘Norfolk’ (pronounced Norf’k).

When I first arrived on Norfolk Island in 1999, I had a particular set of anticipations. These were, firstly, that the island would have a tradition of singing a range of English-language vernacular songs learnt from mariners and other 19th-Century contacts that would have continued into the 20th Century, and would possibly be known and/or still performed by older islanders. Secondly, I anticipated that there would be a distinct, but related, tradition of Norfolk Island-language songs. These perceptions were based on my previous knowledge of song cultures in other remote ocean island communities, such as Tristan da Cunha, and other Western Pacific areas, such as the Whitsunday archipelago and the Torres Strait.
While my research quickly uncovered a modern tradition of local original songs that dated from the 1980s, I initially attributed my failure to locate and identify earlier vernacular songs to the reluctance of islanders to volunteer information on their cultural history to an outsider, and/or inadequate historical records of past usage. But a growing realisation that the traditions I had imagined were not part of Norfolk’s cultural history and heritage caused me to reflect why and to look for different threads and fragments.

One thing that I did expect to find, and found in abundance, was a tradition of Christian hymn singing. I soon realised that—in the late 20th Century at least—there was a small body of hymns that were regarded as locally significant in that their performance signified and stood for a local Christian identity and (on an island that continues to represent itself as heavily Christianised) for Norfolk Island itself. Illustrating the key role of Pitcairn ancestry in anchoring Norfolk identity, these were often termed ‘The Pitcairn Hymns’ (Hayward, 2006:118-132). By the 1990s, the core group of these hymns comprised two musical settings of Bible passages composed in the mid 1800s by British Pitcairn settler and community leader George Hunn Nobbs with Pitcairner Driver Christian: The Pitcairn Anthem and Gethsemane. Also in the core group of hymns include four US hymns introduced to Norfolk in the late 1800s: Let the Lower Lights be Burning, In the Sweet by and by, Ship of Fame and Ahava.

In interviews, many of the locals patient enough to respond to my insistent search for local ‘folk songs’ tended to argue one or either of two points. The first was that the combined conservatism and religiousity of the original Pitcairn settlers of Norfolk acted to block new secular song repertoire. This explanation accorded with similar arguments made by Norwegian researcher Peter Munch to explain what he characterised as “the absence of endemic songs” on the South Atlantic island community of Tristan da Cunha in the mid 20th Century, after some 130 years of settlement, namely that the absence was “clearly related to the general conservative and traditional character of the community, which in turn is a result of its high degree of isolation” (1970:36).

The second point local discussants made is that the Pitcairn hymn repertoire in many ways filled the function of a vernacular repertoire. While initially sceptical of this (since I had not heard of a similar phenomenon elsewhere), my repeated experience at hearing these hymns sung in various social and family contexts led me to accept this point, particularly in combination with observations such as the following, made by a regular visitor to a local drinking establishment named Paradise in the 1960s and 1970s:

When everybody had had a few drinks, if there was no other music playing, someone would start up singing a hymn, sometimes on their own or other people would join in and afterwards they’d get straight back to whatever they were doing—talking and drinking, and fighting sometimes too... And this could happen several times in an evening with no one batting an eyelid. All quite normal—for here, at least.

In an interview in 1999, local linguist Alice Buffett described impromptu performances (such as those described above) in terms of islanders wishing to express a depth of emotional feeling through one of the cultural forms closest to their hearts. In terms of
localisation, the processes of selection of the (current) core hymn repertoire over a
century are obscure, but represent a distinct local action in themselves. The style of
performance of the songs and the manner in which this has become normalised as a
tradition, is another obvious localisation.

Although diligent research eventually recovered a scattered group of original island
songs from the late 1800s to immediate post World War II period (which had not
lodged in continuing performance repertoire, and largely been forgotten) (see Hayward,
2006:169-177), the most obvious markers of island originality in song that I
encountered were those new Norfolk-language (and Norfolk themed English-language)
compositions that emerged in the mid 1980s through the work of Don Christian-
Reynolds, Susan Pedel, Aline Snell and Steggles LeCren, and again in the late 1990s
and early 2000s through the work of George ‘Toofie’ Christian, Allison Ryves and Kath
King (ibid:156-161, 177-208).

In contrast to the slow—and ever modifying—‘organic’ accretion of performance
styles, repertoire and context for the Norfolk hymns, the body of new songs produced in
the 1980s and early 1990s represented a conscious, reactive response to socio-cultural
change occasioned by modernity, the Australian Government’s attempt to remove the
island’s semi-autonomy, and the allied perception that Norfolk’s language and
traditional ways of life were under threat. One particular boost for the origination of a
body of contemporary songs was a Norfolk-language song contest in 1984, organised
by a new pro-autonomy lobby group, the Society of Pitcairn Descendants, which was
won by Don Christian-Reynolds’ Norfolk es Auaus Hoem.

As a result of this contest, and a more general sense of timeliness for such an enterprise,
a body of about a dozen songs entered the island’s vernacular repertoire around this
time, and were performed at social gatherings and at official performances by Norfolk
troupes. While these lack the overt Christian association that gives the hymns much of
their resonance (even in secular performance contexts), they can be seen to have a
ceremonial and heritage role as expressions of ‘Norfolkness’.

A new body of songs emerged in the 1990s that were less socially ‘dispersed’ and,
consequently, more closely associated with their singer-songwriter originators than the
earlier work discussed above. However, their motivations were similar, both Kath King
and George ‘Toofie’ Christian consciously seeking to preserve and maintain Norfolk
language, social history and folklore, and Allison Ryves, who moved to Norfolk in 1980
from the US, seeking—in some of her songs, at least—to establish her own place in and
perceptions of the island in English-language songs.

There are now five CDs by island singer-songwriters available, with another on its
way—a surprising amount for an island of Norfolk’s size (population c1800). The
volume of CDs attests to the particular character of Norfolk Island culture around the
cusp of the 21st Century. Although it is too early to see whether these songs will be
adopted as social performance items (in a similar manner to earlier songs), they do serve
a new cultural communicative function through their dispersal on CD to the island
community and relatives overseas, and their radio airplay locally, in Australia and
internationally. So now, in the early 21st Century, we have a situation where a long-existent localised core repertoire and practice of hymn singing sits alongside a more recent corpus of locally originated songs as a dual testament to Norfolk Island’s cultural difference (from its ‘owner’ nation-state of Australia), its vitality (as a living, developing culture) and its adaptability and resilience.

If I ended this brief historical-academic analysis at this point I could provide an affirmative and upbeat conclusion appropriate to the celebration of Norfolk culture that ran through the 2nd International Conference on Small Island Cultures (2006) at which this paper was first presented—and there would be substantial grounds for this. But as an advocate of the approach that I described in the Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Small Island Cultures as ‘culturally engaged research and facilitation’ (Hayward, 2005), a cautionary discussion is merited.

Vital Practices

Research on the history of other small island cultures has shown that small population bases and the potential to be dazzled by various waves of modernity and global connectivity can move cultures from positions of energetic local expression at one generational/decade point to positions of passive consumption of non-local forms a short time later. A key element in such patterns is generational rupture along lines of preferred cultural practices. The lesson seems to be that any local and/or small island culture wishing to maintain distinct aspects of local identity amid times of change and various phases of globalism needs to expend thought and effort into—variously—how to ensure generational interest in such a project; how to provide opportunities and incentives for new generational engagements; and how to forge new, modern local identities (rather than retreat to defensive anti-Modernism and/or the museumification of aspects of local culture; see McKay, 1994).

This is a tougher project than it might sound. In discussion with several of the island songwriters, I have voiced the fact that four out of five are aged over 45 and working in musical styles that do not immediately connect to those of teenagers and 20- to 30-year-olds. In 1999 and again in 2001, I raised the suggestion with various islanders that it would be worth running rap/hiphop workshops for young islanders to encourage them to express themselves within a more contemporary genre. I received very cold responses to this suggestion on the grounds that rap/hiphop is seen as ‘unmusical’, profane and actively anti-social. I did not make any headway with my arguments about how each generation resists and distrusts new styles. Here, I felt the steel trap of conservatism that Munch observed on Tristan da Cunha clamping down and drawing a line in the sand of modernity which Norfolk identity should not cross. Respecting the right of others to disagree, I decided not to push the suggestion any further.

If anything, my continued research work over the last few years has strengthened my opinion on the issue of generational updating and, indeed, one recent experience suggested to me the possibilities that might be available. On my last research visit to the island, I walked down to Bomboras beach. Just back from the foreshore were a group of mid teenage boys, one of whom stopped me and suggested that I should not go
swimming since the sharks were very aggressive that day. Aware of the long tradition of teasing tourists—which they took me for—I stopped, smiled and said that I would risk it. This led to one boy speaking in a very stylised form of Norfolk—a ‘youth slang’—and visually enacting with his hands a shark attack on a swimmer. Laughter and various overlapping comments and remarks followed, which continued as the boys shouted cautions and jibes (in mixed Norfolk and English) as I walked off. While there was a (deliberately) confrontational ‘edge’ to the interaction, I was—in the perverse manner that researchers can be—heavened by this encounter.

Here was ‘living language’, with evident pleasure being taken in phraseology, interaction, overlapping speech and jibing. Here was ‘organic’ ‘rap’ in action and, what’s more, it represented a generational continuation of previous local practice. Interviewed in 2002 about how vernacular songs were first developed in the 1970s and 1980s, Alice Buffett described processes of private song generation (of texts deliberately not performed outside small groups). When referring to Eileen Snell’s song writing, Buffett stated:

This is playing around . . . see you and Stegs and people get together around and they’ll throw in a clause or a sentence or part [of] a sentence and laugh and defy anyone else to say anything good. In a small community you daren’t—you know [repeat these things in public]—with a name or anything like that.

Eileen and Alice are now recognised figures in island life—cultural ‘elders’ accorded respect for their contributions to the community—while their earlier ‘disrespectful’ practices have been recontextualised by time and processes of heritage. Like their early ‘joshing’, the verbal antics of the youths at Bomboras are unlikely to be circulated more widely or fixed in song or verse, but it does show that there are vital forms of autonomous and organic culture that could be channelled and explored by local activists and policy makers interested in developing new forms and outlets for cultural maintenance and succession.

Conclusion

The astute reader who has followed the argument to this point will be aware that a degree of elision has occurred. Having identified the localisation of an imported hymn repertoire as a key musical marker and expression of local musical identity, I do not speculate as to whether such localisations of current repertoire may be taking place (or, may subsequently occur). Similarly, I have not speculated whether these may—like the hymns—obviate the necessity of new local songs being created to express facets of contemporary life. These points need addressing. While it is unviable to dismiss such a scenario out of hand, the most salient aspect is a contextual one. The hymns were gradually localised through a long-term repetition within a socially endorsed performance context that had weekly (and sub-weekly) patterns of performance—traditional Christian church services. For better or worse, this institution is far less prominent in late 20th-/early 21st-Century island life than it once was. There is nothing even vaguely comparable through which sustained performance repetition can lead (quasi-‘organically’, as it were) to repertoire localisation. While it may be that some
current (or future) musical genre may originate material that might be ‘Norfolkised’ (to the extent that it signals that localisation as its identity marker), there is little evidence that this might be imminent or viable. In this context, new local origination of song material is most likely to communicate distinct aspects of local identity to the island itself and to outside communities.

Bibliography


PERFORMING OKINAWA

Eisâ, Identity Construction and the Recontextualisation of Traditional Performing Arts

Henry Johnson

(University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand)

Introduction

Some traditional Okinawan performing arts have been transformed with regard to their content, context and reception over the last few decades as a result of the impact of tourism. Moreover, they have been pivotal in the construction of local identity and a sense of place within the nation-state, and, since the wide-scale development of tourism in Okinawa, have been popularised and recontextualised to showcase representative aspects of Okinawan identity to suit the cultural tastes of short-term visitors. This research explores the dialectics of identity construction in terms of self-representation and consumer fetishism relating to new contexts of Okinawan traditional culture, in particular a dance form known as eisâ. The new cultural environments in which so-called traditional performing arts are found exist as contested sites that mediate and negotiate between traditional culture and tourist consumerism.

The specific ethnographic focus of this study is Okinawa, one of Japan’s south western (Nansei) islands. Okinawa has several identities. It is a Japanese prefecture of over 160 sub-tropical islands; it is the largest island of that prefecture; it is a city on that island; and it was once part of the Ryûkyû Kingdom (in this discussion the term Okinawa refers primarily to the island unless otherwise indicated). Stretching about 1320 kilometres from Japan’s largest south western island of Kyûshû to very close to Taiwan, the Ryûkyû islands are usually subdivided into four groupings: Amami-Ôshima, Okinawa, Miyako, and Yaeyama. Okinawa prefecture comprised the last three groupings and has a population of around 1.3 million.

The Ryûkyû Kingdom was established in the 15th Century and provided a link between China and Japan. It had a strong relationship with China, from which much Okinawan culture has its origin. Since the 15th Century, Ryûkyû experienced turbulent relations with Japan: the Kingdom’s autonomy was challenged in 1609 when the Satsuma clan of Kyûshû invaded; the Meiji government replaced the Kingdom with Okinawa prefecture in 1879; and the US occupied the islands from the end of World War II in 1945 until 1972. Still, Okinawa has a distinct place within the Japanese nation-state. Using a
paradigm of multicultural Japan (Sugimoto, 1997), Okinawa has several cultural traits that are seen as unique vis-à-vis the dominant mainland culture. As well as being geographically isolated, it is also culturally different and a geographic ‘other’ within the nation-state. For example, while the Okinawan language is related to Japanese, it is a distinct and unique language that most Japanese would not understand. There are also several dialects within Okinawa itself.

Now known mainly as a tourist destination, as well as for the US military bases that have been present since the end of US occupation, the islands have a rich cultural heritage that are often celebrated with pride through cultural display within the tourist industry. Okinawa is well positioned as a tourist destination with a sub-tropical paradise setting, although Okinawans are often linked to minority and human rights issues in that some other Japanese sometimes discriminate against them. Okinawa holds a somewhat paradoxical place in the Japanese nation-state in that its culture is celebrated in a culture of difference, but that difference is also negated in a culture of antipathy.

Some of the ideas presented herein relate to what Schechner (1985) in his study of the anthropology of performance terms ‘restored behavior’. Some performances, especially those that are typically prevalent in touristic contexts relate very closely with this notion, where “the original ‘truth’ or ‘source’ of the behavior may be lost, ignored, or contradicted—even while this truth or source is apparently being honored and observed” (Schechner, 1985:35). But with some of the recontextualised spheres of performance the source is not always explicitly acknowledged; rather, it is implicit as one symbol of Okinawan cultural identity.

Studies of touristic sites, to use the notion in its broadest sense, whether ‘away from home’, ‘at home’, ‘virtual’ (DeWitt, 1999:73) or ‘sonic’ (Taylor, 1997:19), have the potential to identify and understand convergences and tensions between such binary notions as traditional/modern, private/public, authentic/inauthentic, sacred/secular, centre/periphery and local/global. Without dwelling too much on essentialist categories of difference, these dualisms and others do help to foreground opposite ends of continua that are often found as a result of the influences of tourism, as well as other spheres resulting in the recontextualisation and cultural transformation of traditional culture.

A basic deconstruction of the concept ‘traditional performing arts’ points to the construction of that notion vis-à-vis that which is perceived not to be traditional (and vice-versa). This was perhaps epitomised in the early years of ethnographic studies, which so often focussed on the traditional as a construct linked to ideas of an authentic culture where the old was usually foregrounded in studies that presented histories and descriptions of the culture or country and seldom touching on the contemporary. Times have certainly changed, but ideas of a perceived traditional culture that acts as a mediator between the past and the present seems to exist in increasing contexts with site-specific instances of symbols of a real or imagined past acting as forceful signifiers of contemporary cultural practices, seemingly in search of a modern identity. Touristic sites that showcase the performing arts are one example; and eisã is one example that is especially visible in one of Japan’s peripheral regions.
Writing in a special issue of *Critical Asian Studies*, Hein (2001:32) noted that “the last decade has been an unusually active moment for the re-construction of Okinawan identity. Nor does that activity seem to be diminishing”. Indeed, this activity is especially visible in the performing arts, where symbols of Okinawan identity have taken on a whole new meaning. As a prefecture on the periphery of the Japanese nation-state (in culture and geography), Okinawan performing arts hold a unique position in that they occupy spaces of nationhood and ‘otherness’. Their study can show how culture can be marginalised yet celebrated within a notion of difference that is both an ‘other’ and part of one’s own national setting. Okinawan performing arts are increasingly celebrated and consumed within a paradigm of celebrating local difference within local, national and international touristic settings. Drawing from my own field research and from secondary sources, I show that on Okinawa there is a heightened awareness of performing identity where traditional modes of performance are transformed and recontextualised in the tourist industry, but also in related spheres that consume Okinawa as a kind of ethnic ‘other’. There are, of course, numerous performing arts on Okinawa, old and new, and this paper focuses on one, albeit a highly significant one that deserves scholarly attention.

This paper, which focuses on the context of eisâ rather than on its content, divides into three main areas, each of which looks at a distinct eisâ setting. The first focuses on eisâ’s traditional ritual context at an annual Buddhist celebration; the second looks at a competition and festival context, which shows one of eisâ’s recontextualisations; and the third centres on eisâ and tourism, especially the transformation of this traditional performing art for tourists at theme parks. The aim of the discussion is to show the movement of eisâ from religious to other contexts, and to show how the genre has significance today as a marker of cultural identity for Okinawans and other Japanese.

### Religious Context

The term ‘eisâ’ is thought to originate from the vocal utterances (*hayashi*) that are found in eisâ chants (eg ‘iya sâsâ’—vocables), and the dance form is believed to derive from *nenbutsu odori* (Buddhist dance), which was transmitted from mainland Japan (Okaze, 1992:22). In its religious and ritualistic context, eisâ has significance in that it is understood to awaken the deceased ancestors, to console them and to dispel bad spirits.

An eisâ ensemble consists of male and/or female dancers accompanied by several instruments and chanting. Men usually play the drums *ôdaiko* and *shimaôdaiko* while dancing, and women often perform hand dances, although hand dancing by men is not unusual. Other instruments often include *yotsudake* (castanets), *pârankû* (drum) and *sanshin* (three-string lute). Also, the performers sometimes whistle.

Eisâ is a type of dance with musical accompaniment that is normally performed during the summer Buddhist *bon* festival (see Combs, 1979, 1980). *Bon*, which is sometimes referred to as the Festival for the Dead, is a three-day event beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, and is the time when the souls of ancestors return to the living world. It is an especially affecting time of the year and...
an occasion for family reunion and visits to the tombs of dead ancestors (see Hogg, 1973 in Combs, 1980:17).

Contest/Festival Contexts

In 1956, the Koza government (present-day Okinawa city) founded the Okinawa Island-Wide Eisâ Contest “in order to celebrate the birth of Koza” (Okaze, 1992:37), which in its first year attracted around 30,000 spectators.[5] The founding of an eisâ contest was a result of the local government wanting “to inspire cultural identity in Okinawan people in order to promote community morale” (Okaze, 1992:37).[6] The contest, which ran each year from 1956 to 1977, was always held after the August bon festival. In 1977, however, the competition became an annual festival in response to dissatisfaction regarding the rules and the placement of a folk performing art into a competition context (Okaze, 1992:43).[7] Like the contest before it, the festival is an annual event and falls on the first Sunday after bon.[8] It is held at the City Sports Park in Koza and currently runs from 3pm to 9pm.

Most of the groups participating in the festival come from the central part of Okinawa, and involvement is by invitation only, with the Festival Committee selecting the groups that will perform. “The prestige of participation is so great that rejection of this opportunity by the groups is rare” (Okaze, 1992:54). About seven groups normally participate each year. Some groups attend annually, some are invited to attend from mainland Japan, and some have even come from outside Japan. Each group is required to have over 50 members, and must perform for 30 minutes (Okaze, 1992:43). There are some single-sex groups and some mixed-sex groups.

In comparison to the ritual event, there has clearly been a change in performance practice. As well as regulating the size of the eisâ team, one of the categories in the competition was formation, which saw the contestants developing new dances to fit the rules of the competition. Also, “the category of dance composition, which included the combination of traditional, modern and creative innovations, was crucial to the evolution of today’s eisâ style” (Okaze, 1992:40). Modern songs too are part of the event. Even regarding the appearance of the performers, costuming has become more elaborate in the festival over the years (Okaze, 1992:29, 40).

Eisâ Under the Tourist Gaze

Gyokusendô is the biggest theme park in Okinawa prefecture. Here, the park displays two contexts of music: one is a small building that houses a sanshin maker within a traditional musical instrument shop; and the other is a place where eisâ is performed for the visiting tourist. Both the sanshin shop and the eisâ display provide points of inbetweeness, as something that is staged in a perceived authentic way for the visitor, yet is recontextualised and far removed from its perceived original setting.

Gyokusendô’s advertising brochures are replete with images of their eisâ group, depicted in full costume, playing large drums and in a dynamic performance mode. Indeed, the eisâ show is given prominence at the theme park, with four daily
performances in a large outdoor stage area (partly covered), which is designed to attract onlookers due to the visual appearance and sounds put on display. This particular show includes eisā, lion dancing, sanshin, folk songs, and sanba (castanets). It is billed as having lively performances, and there are also CDs and videos of the show available for purchase. The eisā show is labelled ‘Sûpâ Eisâ’ (Super Eisâ) and features the group called Mafekaji.

Theme parks are distinct physical spaces that have cultural display at their core. Unlike many theme parks throughout Japan that emphasise international or non-Japanese culture, Gyokusendô portrays the local—albeit it is a local that is somewhat exoticised and showcased in terms of its cultural difference. Gyokusendô recreates a perceived traditional Okinawan lifestyle, and showcases through the performing arts representative examples of music and dance. This theme park is one example where two specific music themes are present that serve to stand for aspects of traditional Okinawa. While quite different in form to the Disney experience, there is fantasy at Gyokusendô: that is, a fantasy of reliving an idealised historical Okinawan experience. In such an experience a nostalgic longing for the past might be linked to the Japanese notion of furusato (hometown) (see Robertson, 1989, 1995). As well as a space of leisure and consumption, Gyokusendô acts as a site of nostalgia for traditional Okinawa—the consumption of one area of traditional Japan. For the visitor, it might be difficult during a short stay on the island to visit a sanshin maker or see an eisā performance, especially since the religious and secular events are held at certain times of the year. Seeing both of these symbols of Okinawan identity at the theme park allow the visitor to enter a world, a fantasy world, where the experience of Okinawa can be consumed the whole year round.

When anthropologist Joy Hendry (2000:1-18) talks of “going abroad at home”, it must be stressed that in the case of mainland Japanese visitors to Okinawa, who are by far the majority of tourists there, consuming Okinawan identity in a theme park is both going abroad and staying at home. Okinawa is one of Japan’s ‘others’, and it is well positioned in the nation-state as an ‘other’ that is both close to home, yet simultaneously distant.

Closing Thoughts

In each of the contexts discussed above, eisā is displayed as a symbol that represents Okinawan culture. It has an ability to travel across cultural settings, either maintaining or changing form, but transforming meaning. Its propensity to travel shows how it can have intense effect as an emblem of local culture and identity through its display and consumption in many places.

Why, one might ask, is eisā used to represent Okinawan cultural identity? The dance form is visually and aurally distinct, and in its religious context provides a sense of traditional culture and something that is unique to Okinawa in terms of its form and presentation. In other contexts, the foregrounding of traditional performing arts might be a response to the oppression that Okinawans have often felt within the Japanese nation-state, and such performance is utilised to gain political visibility. Also, within a
notion of multicultural Japan, Okinawa is on a periphery of the nation-state, both geographically and culturally, and the promotion of eisâ in touristic contexts might be viewed as a reaction to mainland hegemony.

Some eisâ performances are connected to the idea of invented tradition, or at least re-invented tradition (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983), where “performances are invented and presented as traditional when they are not” (Schechner, 1985:75). Some eisâ troupes present their show in terms of a perceived traditional past, when in reality their version of eisâ is actually quite modern. This is particularly evident in contexts that present an eisâ performance that is clearly influenced by contemporary culture. Eisâ occupies a somewhat ambivalent place in contemporary Okinawan culture. It exists simultaneously in different guises: as a form presented authentically in traditional and contemporary settings; and as a form that is easily transformed and recontextualised so as to celebrate and represent traditional Okinawan culture. Eisâ has an ability to be used as simulacra in commercial and touristic contexts. In tourism, for instance, it gives the impression that it is presenting an authentic form, one that represents an ideal in a ritual setting. But this nostalgia is presented in a contradictory way, outside the perceived authentic context, out of time and out of place. What makes theme park settings especially interesting is that they are not based on a purely imaginary world, but on a perceived real world that is imagined through simulation.

In many Okinawan contexts, nostalgia is on display through the articulation of identity in eisâ performance. The cultural staging and representation of eisâ in any of the contexts discussed are part of a negotiation of performing a tradition and transforming it, and for the viewers there is also a re-interpretation of the display (cf. Carlson, 1996:185-186). As a performing art, eisâ is a form through which local identity is celebrated, whether it is for community, ritual, religious or economic purposes. Okinawa is awash with cultural exhibits, sites and shows, and has many symbols of Okinawa, yet eisâ has the ability to travel between disparate cultural spheres and still represent traditional culture.

This study, therefore, has shown how a small island ritual and performing art can capture a local and national imagination, how a dance form can mediate and negotiate between traditional culture and contemporary touristic culture, and how culture and identity are expressed through music and dance, whether for religious, entertainment or economic reasons. In each context and within a changing cultural environment, Okinawans are performing, and in each they are performing Okinawa.

Endnotes

[1] Even though Japan is an island nation of over 3000 islands, I use the term ‘mainland’ to refer to the dominant and sometime hegemonic culture of Honshû, particularly that of Tôkyô.

[3] Eisâ is sometimes referred to as shichigachi eisâ (seventh month eisâ). Bon is celebrated at different times in different parts of Japan, either in July or August depending on whether the lunar or solar calendar is observed.

[4] The lunar calendar was officially abandoned in 1872 when Japan adopted the solar calendar. There is about a one-month difference between the two systems. When calculating the date of a festival one of three methods are used: (1) a calendar month is added to the lunar calendar date; (2) the same date is used for the festival; and (3) the lunar calendar is maintained. On the bon festival in Okinawa and the US see Combs (1979).

[5] The post-World War II years saw the building of US military bases around Koza, which were important for regional development.


Bibliography


WAITING FOR THE TIDE, TUNING IN THE WORLD

Traditional Knowledge, Environmental Ethics and Community

Kumi Kato

(University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia)

Introduction

“(Underwater) I hear the water coming into my body, I hear the sunlight penetrating the water” . . . “sound of fish, seaweeds, shells, in the water, it is so quiet but so noisy”.

(Ama diver)

The island town of Suga-shima, located in central Japan, holds a small community of female divers known as ‘ama’. Ama (literally ‘sea women’) dive for abalone, various seashells and seaweeds throughout the year. The traditional form of diving is still maintained in the coastal areas of Japan, Korea and China, and the current ama population in Japan is estimated to be around three thousand.[1]

This paper explores ama’s knowledge, and their sense of connection towards the ocean environment. It is argued that ama connectivity articulates a human-nature relationship and alerts us to the changing state of the surroundings both socially and ecologically, thus playing a critical role in the formation of environmental values. Although it is increasingly difficult for ama to maintain such connectivity, it is critical that ama recover sensitivity to their environment, and promote a sense of community, both conceptual and geographical. For the recovery of ama tradition to happen, the concept of ‘soundscape’ is used in this essay to capture the symbiotic relationship between the human and the environment in traditional ama practice. Here, the divers’ distinct whistle sound (isoboue) combines with the seascape, the women’s narratives, and the community’s life-sounds to create an ama soundscape that symbolizes their profound connection with the ocean.

Ama in Suga-shima

Suga-shima is a small island located in Shima Peninsula, south west of Nagoya and facing Ise Bay.[2] The word shima in this region has a particular significance. As well as
*shima* being the regional name, it also means ‘islands’ and ‘underwater rock faces’, where the harvesting of abalone and other shellfish takes place. The topography in Shima Peninsula is reflected in a large *ama* population, with approximately 1300 *ama* living here. The region is known for its spectacular coast lines scattered around some 300 small islands, both inhabited and uninhabited. Steep cliffs and coves isolate the region’s villages from each other, many of which are referred to as ‘land islands’ (*rikuno koto*).

Suga-shima is one of the four inhabited islands of Toba City, and currently holds an *ama* population of about 90. Each island is connected to the city by ferry services to Suga-shima, with six return services operating daily. The short 20-minute trip allows many islanders to commute to the city for work and study, shopping, health services and various forms of entertainment. With the highest point at 236 metres, this steep and rocky island has little land available, except for the small harbour where most of the population lives. There is no agricultural land, except for some small private vegetable gardens. One side of the island is often subject to illegal fishing, which villagers monitor by taking turns to patrol in their small boats. The main means of communication is a loud speaker through which daily announcements and regular clock bells echo throughout the village. Before festival days, frequent announcements are made calling for volunteers for various jobs and giving specific instructions (eg cleaning, cooking, decorating and rehearsing). Crowds gather promptly and jobs are carried out smoothly in an orderly manner.

The twenty *ama* women interviewed for this study were mainly in their late 50s and 60s (the oldest diver was 76), and have worked, or are working, as *ama* in various capacities. Like many rural areas in Japan, the population of Suga-shima and many other villages in the regions is aging. Interviews, observations and sound recordings were carried out at various locations in the community: at the beach, the port, the fish market, the fishery union office, the community hall, as well as in shops, in shrines, at festival sites, in guest houses, in schools, in the streets, and in ferry terminals.

**Ama and Work**

*Ama* dive 5 to 20 metres deep while holding their breath for one to two minutes. In between dives, they rest only a few minutes. Although *ama* vary from region to region, they are typically divided into two distinct kinds: *funado*, or those *ama* who dive from a boat to a depth up to 20 metres, and typically work with a male boat handler (*tomae*); and *kachido*, divers who swim in from shore and dive to a depth of 5 to 10 metres. Among their harvests, abalone is most prized, fetching up to 8000 yen a kilo. In the region, the diving season is typically between June and August, although abalone fishing is officially allowed all year, except during the breeding season (*ama* division). Decisions to ‘open the sea’ are made by each regional fishery union. Decisions are based on not only on the tide and the weather, but also on festivities, rituals and local beliefs, such as the belief when sharks are most likely to be plentiful in the region. The number of days when the sea is opened varies according to the region, but typically lasts 10 to 40 days. Diving time per day is also restricted to 30
minutes to 1.5 hours, and the announcement is made in the morning. Suga-shima has the least number of days (12 in 2004) and their diving time is restricted to one hour.

Japan’s first chronology, *Nihonshoki* (c 718), and court attendant Sei Shonagon’s *Pillow Book* (c 967) act as the earliest known documentations of the *ama* being clearly identified as female divers. Little seems to have changed about the women themselves, even with the introduction of new equipment in the 1960s, and it is quite surprising and personally moving to read a chapter in the *Pillow Book*, such as “Times when one should be on one’s guard” (c 967, Chapter 285), and share similar sentiment towards these women:

*The sea is a frightening thing at the best of times. How much more terrifying must it be for those poor women divers who have to plunge into its depths for their livelihood! One wonders what would happen to them if the cord round their waist were to break. I can imagine men doing this sort of work, but for a woman it must take remarkable courage.* (Morris, 1967:248)

**Whistling and Soundscape**

The whistle is a distinct method of breathing for *ama*, and also acts as a way to rest and prepare for the next dive. The whistle also helps to maximize the number of dives, which could be as many as 50 in an hour. The whistle sometimes sounds like ‘painful gasps’, as depicted in the *Pillow Book*:

*When finally she wants to comes up, she gives a tug on her cord and the men haul her out of the water with a speed that I can well understand. Soon she is clinging to the side of the boat, her breath coming in painful gasps. The sight is enough to make even an outsider feel the brine dripping. I can hardly imagine that this is a job that anyone would covet.* (Morris, 1967:249)

The sound is more prominent with *funado* divers who dive deeper and longer than *kachido* divers, but there are also regional variations. The regional sound variations of *ama* have been described as *hooi, ooi, hue, ha* or *hou* (Segawa, 1970:146). The whistle sound, and the word itself (*isobue*), are said to be specific to the Shima region, whereas other regions refer to it as a belly breath (*haraiki*) and a fast breath (*hayaiki*). Women said they “feel better with the whistle and this breathing pattern becomes habitual even on land eg working in the fields or running up stairs”. In group diving situations, the whistle is also a way of subconsciously identifying and locating each other, providing safety as well as respect for work territories. The whistle sound has been featured in poems, folklore and songs, and is sometimes referred to as *iso nageki* (sea lament) for its sigh-like quality.

In this paper, the *ama* culture is captured through soundscape: the whistle blends with the surrounding seascape of ocean waves and sea breezes, as well as the women’s narratives and the community’s life-sounds. Soundscape here acts as a symbol of the *ama*’s knowledge, their ethics and their sense of connectivity to the ocean. The
soundscape articulates the human-nature relationship of the *ama*. Soundscape, as Casey suggests:

*Helps humans to recognize their place in relation with the surrounding*. . . . [They] are perceived and interpreted by human actors who attend to them as a way of making their place in and through the world, and [they] are invested with significance by those whose bodies and lives resonate with them in social time and space. (Casey in Feld, 2003:226)

The sound that “literally grip[s] the entire community by the ears” (Schafer, 1995:89) captures the totality of *ama* culture and gives it a distinct identity to this part of cultural heritage.

**Ama as Women**

Perhaps the most commonly asked question about *ama* is: why are the *ama* female? Although the diving is not restricted to women, and in other regions many male *ama* exist, in the Suga-shima region, *ama* have remained predominantly women. Recently, male divers have appeared, but they have kept a lower profile than the female *ama*. Apart from the gender role division of the traditional diving method where men usually handled the boats, it is commonly believed—and many women themselves said—that women are better suited for diving as they “are insulated better”. None of the women, however, looked insulated in any way, and although a number of studies seem to suggest that women’s bodies have a better tolerance and suitability for endurance and cold (e.g. Ashcroft, 2001), the reason seems to be more social than physical. Traditionally, girls were introduced into the *ama* community, learned to dive, made their own diving shirts, and received a set of diving gear as their wedding gift.

The myth of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and the beginning of the abalone offering also connects women to the diving tradition. The myth describes a deity who is travelling in a region in search of a suitable location to enshrine the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. One day, an *ama* offers an abalone to the deity. The deity is most impressed by the delicacy of the abalone, and requests that the abalone be made as an offering in the Sun Goddess' shrine, now Ise Shrine. The tradition of offering is maintained to date (three times a year), in which dried abalone gives the region the title of ‘sacred food source’ and ‘the country of delicacy’. As also described in Martinez (2004), it is a regional belief that the sacred abalone must be harvested from the region’s most easterly point where the first sunrise is sighted, and some also believe that (although written in different characters) the word *ama* actually relates to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. The myth, therefore, provides historical and cultural contexts to the ocean environment, connecting nature and culture, and illustrating the mutually dependent nature of the conservation of cultural and natural heritage.
Ama Ethics

“It (the wetsuit) was warm but with that on, I could not feel the ocean any more you hear the tide changing” . . . “the ocean disciplines us, it decides everything about our life”. (Ama diver)

Abalone harvesting for ama is, of course, a source of income, but it is also clear that they take pride in carrying on the tradition as well as respecting the ocean as a place they have a profound connection with. The numerous rules, rituals, customs, ceremonies and festivities that relate to this practice are not only to ensure safety, but also to pay respect and gratitude to the natural and cultural heritage they that the ama care for. More importantly, the ama ensure that over-harvesting and depletion of sea resources do not occur. The introduction of diving equipment to ama practice, however, did cause overharvesting and depletion of sea-resources.

The timing of the introduction of masks and wetsuits varied from region to region, but in general, masks were introduced in the early 1900s and wetsuits in the 1960s. Maraini (1962) and several photographers such as Segawa (1970) captured on film women diving naked or with white cotton shirts called isogi. Before the introduction of the masks, the practice of searching for sea resources was referred to as ‘blind-search ’ (mekura-sagashi). The introduction of both masks and wetsuits received significant resistance from the ama themselves, because with the masks “you see too well”. Some of the ama with diving equipment then ended up taking too many sea resources, and also taking too many small ones as the glass magnifies the shells that are meant be no less than 10.6 cm. Even if the ama who had taken too many sea resources from the ocean and returned them, “removing [the abalone] from the rock-face still disturbs them”. Many ama unions resisted the introduction of wetsuits, and imposed initial “one wetsuit per household” rule and restrictions on season, location and time, which still applies to all region ranging from half-an-hour to one-and-a-half hours. No diving is allowed during the breeding season in the region (15 September to 31 December). Sugashima was the last village to introduce both masks (1965) and wetsuits (1988) and has the shortest diving season of 10 to 12 days. One woman said: “with wetsuits you are of course warm but cannot feel the ocean”; and the other “it felt rude to go into the sea with that black thing on”.

One interesting observation is that the male divers’ population increased around the time when wetsuits were introduced. It was also around this time that many many men took city jobs, leaving women to be shore divers rather than boat divers. Because of less of a need for boat handlers, some of the men started to dive. It seems true that wetsuits demystified and neturalized the gendered role of ama, and allowed more men to take up diving as well.

With the introduction of wetsuits, however, new kinds of accidents started to occur. There was an accident on the next island a week before our fieldwork where a diver’s “sleeve got caught in the rock”. Women explained that the rubbery material can get jammed in the rough rock surface when you slide your arm into narrow caves and underneath the rock. Another incident was a heart attack. Wetsuits can be deceptive of
the cold temperature of the water, and may cause the ama to take risks that they otherwise would not take. They also said that “wetsuits exhaust you without you noticing as you have to swim resisting buoyancy carrying three to four kilograms of weights”. It was also explained that the traditional mulberry waist cord has now been replaced by a plastic cord. The fear expressed in the Pillow Book—where the ama fear if the cord should break—is now an opposite fear, where ama can now become trapped underwater by the plastic cord.

The introduction of wetsuits also led to an unfortunate increase in illegal fishing by both recreational and commercial divers. This, together with increased use of technology (GPS, transport and storing) and mass harvesting, as well as pollution, are believed to be the main cause of the severe decline in abalone that reduced to almost one tenth in 20 years (Toba Fishery Union, 2004). The ama have noticed a gradual, but definite, change in the ocean, and made comments such as: “the seaweeds are dying like plants wilting in summer heat”, “unusual fish and shells started to appear” and “more rubbish started to get tangled in seaweeds, sea floors and shores”.

Ama Community

The decline in the aging population of ama is evident in the demography of the women interviewed. Some of the ‘younger’ ama start diving “when the children had left school, and had some free time at hand”, while others who work full-time in the city and dive on weekends and holidays refer to themselves as ‘recreational ama’. Another type of younger ama identified by the women is ‘new ama-san’, or young ama, who do not belong to the ama community and who go diving more or less independently. They arrive on their 50cc motorbikes already dressed in their wetsuits, and leave immediately after diving “as they have lots other things to do”. Again, with wetsuits “anyone can dive to some extent”, but the knowledge, skills and sense of ethics held by these new ama would be quite different from that of traditional ama. A 19-year-old who started to work as a ‘show ama’ at the Mikimoto Pearl Island in 2005, “grew up with the ocean on one of the islands and chose the job because I love the ocean and the sense of freedom”. She says she wants to “learn to whistle one day like other ama, and to become a real ama”. The whistle is clearly symbolic of ama, and although women do not ‘instruct the novices’, and say that ‘we all have to learn from your own experiences’, without the ama community, becoming a real ama would be a difficult task for anyone to undertake.

Conclusion: Traditional Knowledge, Environmental Ethics and Community

“Many of us are born as the tide comes in, and leave as the tide goes out” . . . “I hear the tide changing”. (Ama diver)

The ama’s strong sense of ethics is expressed through a number of self-regulations, as well as a wide range of rituals, ceremonies and festivities. Not only has the traditions of the ama allowed the practice to sustain for centuries, it has also formed timeless connections, both between one another and between the human and ‘more-than-human’ world (Abram, 1997, 2004). It is ironic that a number of external forces that breach such
ethics have caused a decline of the resources and the ama practice itself. On the morning of a festival held on a the Monday according to the lunar calendar, a stream of city workers and high school students headed towards the ferry terminal as on any normal day. Meanwhile, in the opposite direction of the city workers and high school students, a stream of festival goers, including fishery workers, ama, older generations and young children walked as if they were swimming against the current towards the festival site. It was significant that the life of the fishing villages that continue to follow the tides had little meaning to the outside world that follows the solar calendar.\

Ama soundscape represents the tradition sustained by an acute sense of ethics and sense of connectivity, and symbolises the mutuality of natural and cultural conservation. The soundscape demonstrates that the women’s senses, language, emotions, history, knowledge and narratives—and their life itself—are an intricate part of the natural surroundings, and that environmental degradation implies much more than a loss of external physical features, biodiversity, habitat and ecosystem, but also the loss of a vital cultural heritage.

The women’s voices resonate with the tides, and their simple words sum up the ama’s relationship to the ocean: ‘Because I love the ocean. In the water, we are so free.’ For ama, the ocean is their identity itself. They feel most free and invigorated being in and with the ocean, sensing and feeling a world that comes through all of their senses, and through a profound connectivity with a practice that has continued for centuries. If such connectivity is no longer relevant in the outside world, clearly it is the surrounding world, not the women and their fishing community that has become out of tune.

Endnotes


[3] Japan has 6852 small islands.

[4] The island has a primary school but no high school. There is one quarry on the other side of the harbour.

[5] Nationally, 65+ is nearing 20 percent of the total population. Thirty-one percent of Suga-shima’s population is over sixty-five.

[6] The author is grateful for the expertise provided by sound artist Ross Bandt, whose observation also provided unique insights to this study.

[7] For male ama, different Japanese characters, or kanji, meaning ‘sea persons’ are used.
[8] Amaterasu, literally ‘shining heaven’ or ‘she who shines in heaven’. Also, Amaterasu Omikami, the highest deity worshiped at Ise Shrine.

[9] The deity, Yamatohime, is believed to be a daughter of 11th Emperor Suinin (Kojiki, Nihonshoki). See Aoki (1982) and Sakamoto et al. (1965-67).

[10] Miketsu-kuni, umashi-kuni. Over 1000 festivities are held at the shrine throughout the year, but the most important is the abalone offering made three times a year: June and December (tsukinamesai) and October (Kannamesai). Tsukinamesai used be held every month.

[11] Restrictions on location include rotation of the harvesting spots (rinsai) and a ‘no-wetsuits’ rule.

[12] 50cc scooters are the most popular form of transport on the island.

[13] In the region, three other tourist places employ such ‘show ama’.


Bibliography


Aoki, K (ed) (1982) Kojiki (Hieda no are), Tokyo: Iwanami


Toba City (2005) *Toba City*, Mie: Toba City Council

ISLAND DREAMS AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF SMALL ISLAND CUISINE

Susie Khamis

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Introduction

At two very different locations in Sydney, Australia, diners can sample dishes from two little-known island territories, the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island. Both cafés are run by women who have articulated their intention to bring to Sydney the distinctiveness of their island heritage, through menu design, décor and ambience. Nonetheless, I would like to suggest that these cafés are not so much clean snapshots of clearly demarcated cultures. Rather, each café is probably best seen as a complex, protean intersection of agendas, expectations and assumptions. From the interests of the proprietors (driven by a blend of nostalgia, enterprise and cultural pride) to the interests of the clientele (which can stretch from the hungry or curious to the strictly religious), the point remains that to understand how these cafés represent the islands, they need to be culturally contextualised. In turn, given Australia’s political climate over the last few years, I will suggest that these cafés demonstrate a most ironic example of Islamic initiative.

History of Islands

Firstly, though, a few words are required about the history of these islands. The Cocos Islands comprise an archipelago of 27 coral islands, the main two being West Island and Home Island. As of 2004, they share some 629 inhabitants. West Island has a population of about 130, mostly made up of mainland-based employees of various government departments and their families. Most government employees are on short-term postings of one to three years. Home Island, however, is mostly populated by the Cocos Islander community, descended from people brought to the islands in the 1800s and 1900s from Malaya, East Africa, China, Java, India and Ceylon. They speak a dialect called Cocos Malay, 80 percent are Sunni Muslim and they generally lead a traditional lifestyle in accordance with Islam.

The islands were discovered by Captain William Keeling in 1609. However, they remained uninhabited until 1825, with the arrival of John Clunies-Ross, a Scottish merchant, sea captain and explorer. With easy anchorage, safe harbours and no human population, Clunies-Ross saw the economic potential immediately by clearing the
native vegetation and planting crops. One year later, his employer, Alexander Hare, established a settlement on one of the islands with a small, mostly Indonesian crew. While Clunies-Ross settled on another of the islands, both men forwarded claims for ownership of the islands. Clunies-Ross even went so far as to proclaim himself King, a title which, although maintained by his heirs, was only ever recognised on the islands.

The dispute between Hare and Clunies-Ross was finally settled when Hare fell ill and had to leave in 1831, leaving Clunies-Ross to get on with his plans. By that time, many of Hare’s mistreated workers (essentially slaves) had defected to the Clunies-Ross camp anyway. These slaves had mostly been Malay people of Chinese, Papuan and Indian descent. Clunies-Ross built up this labour force and brought over more labour from China and Malaysia, cleared more native vegetation for coconut trees and made his fortune trading in coconut oil and copra. The islands were soon producing over 420,000 coconuts annually. From the mid 1800s, official control of the islands passed from London, to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), to Singapore, then finally to Australia in 1955. In 1977, Australia purchased the islands from the Clunies-Ross family for $AU6.5 million, and established the Cocos Island Council two years later.

The history of Christmas Island is also caught up in the ambitions of the Clunies-Ross family. In July 2005, the population was approximately 1600, with 70 percent Chinese, 20 percent European and 10 percent Malay. The island was named by Captain William Mynors of the East India Ship Company, who arrived there in 1643 on Christmas Day. There were several attempts to survey the land over the following few centuries, but with few conclusive findings. Then, in the 1870s, naturalist Dr John Murray carried out a more comprehensive study. Among the rocks he obtained were many of nearly pure phosphate of lime, a discovery which prompted the British Crown to annex the island in June 1888. Meanwhile, George Clunies-Ross, heir to the so-called Cocos Kingdom, had been a regular visitor to Christmas Island, and had made extensive use of the island’s timber. Spurred on by Britain’s interest in Christmas Island, Clunies-Ross set up his own colony on the Island, at Flying Fish Cove. In 1896, an agreement was reached between Clunies-Ross and Murray, and they became joint lease-holders in the London-based Christmas Island Phosphate Company (Jameson, 2003:26-27).

In the early years of the 20th Century, using cheap labour from China, Malaysia and Singapore, the phosphate mines were returning almost 80,000 pounds per annum. After World War II, at Canberra’s request, Britain transferred sovereignty of Christmas Island from Singapore to Australia. By then, a massive expansion programme had swelled Christmas Island’s workforce with more recruits from Cocos, Malaysia and Singapore. Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands became Australia’s Indian Ocean Territories (IOTs), and since 1997 have shared a single administrator based on Christmas Island.

The Islands and Australia

For all Canberra’s efforts to consolidate Australia’s control of and interest in the islands, it is safe to suggest that many Australians remain largely unaware of the country’s IOTs. The island populations, however, are highly conscious of mainland affairs. In 1984, under UN supervision, a referendum on Cocos Island found that over
90 percent of the voters favoured integration with Australia. Within a year of the referendum, and armed with Australian citizenship, almost half the island’s population migrated to the mainland, mostly to Western Australia. In 1994, a vote on Christmas Island found no support for secession from Australia (Aldrich and Connell, 1998:53).

For many Australians, these territories may well have remained largely unknown, obscure or forgotten, were it not for their implication in one of the most divisive events in recent political history: the Tampa affair. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, Christmas Island has received boatloads of refugees, mostly from Indonesia. This had not caused too much fuss on the island. During 2001, Christmas Island received an especially large number of asylum seekers, many from the Middle East. The arrival of the Tampa, a Norwegian cargo vessel which had rescued people from a sinking Indonesian fishing-boat in international waters nearby, prompted a diplomatic showdown between Australia, Norway and Indonesia. The vessel held 420 asylum seekers from Afghanistan, thirteen from Sri Lanka, and five from Indonesia. The refugees were eventually transported to Nauru for processing, while another boatload of asylum seekers was taken from Christmas Island to Papua New Guinea, after the erroneous claim that many of the asylum seekers had thrown their children in the water (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003:208-209).

The affair had a major impact on Australia’s IOTs. In the final week of parliament in late September 2001, the Border Protection Bill was driven through parliament in two late-night sittings that bypassed customary conventions. Among other things, the Bill excised Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef, the Cartier Islands and the Cocos Islands from Australia’s migration zone. This meant that asylum seekers arriving there could not automatically apply for refugee status, and the Australian navy could relocate them to other countries.

This event has been comprehensively critiqued from numerous perspectives, and there is not the space here to do these issues any justice. At the very least, one point bears stressing: the Australian government’s hardline response was widely seen as one attempt to take control in a world where the borderless flows of people, goods and ideas actively invoke nationalist concerns. Or as one commentator put it, Tampa tapped into “contemporary fears of ‘our way of life’ being swamped by the appearance of a few hundred Muslim asylum seekers on the horizon” (Perera, 2002).

Island Dreams Café

The Tampa affair was about a simmering discord between a particular image of Islam and a particular image of Australia. My case study rests on this very same current: the way contemporary Australia accommodates and even encourages Islamic initiatives—specifically food outlets that provide halal options, observe traditional Islamic conventions and cater to a growing and increasingly diverse Islamic clientele. That the cafés I am discussing specialise in the traditional foods of the Cocos and Christmas Islands puts, I think, an interesting slant on this process. Firstly, they act as portals, or ‘foodways’, into Australian territories that numerous Australian patrons are, by their own admission, mostly unaware of. The menu is familiar, with hints of Malaysian,
Singaporean, Indonesian and Chinese flavours, but fused in such a way that evades too close a comparison with any one of these otherwise distinctively marketed cuisines.\(^1\) Secondly, these businesses survive by a shrewd negotiation of local Australian conditions: specifically, the micro-politics of Sydney city (cosmopolitan, adventurous and glib); and the micro-politics of Lakemba, the epicentre of Sydney’s Muslim communities. I will argue that these two very different locations, or ‘foodscapes’, have had a decisive impact on how the cafés function and what they signify.\(^2\)

**Haldon Street: Little Tripoli**

The first Island Dreams Café opened eleven years ago in Lakemba, in Sydney’s south west. The café’s owner and chef, Hjh Alimah, arrived in Australia from Christmas Island in 1973, but is of Cocos descent and culture.\(^3\) It is a significant point that Alimah’s culinary knowledge encompasses both Christmas Island and Cocos Island foods, but as Hjh Alimah identifies herself as a Cocos islander, she brings to her café the devotion to the Islamic faith that is typical of the Home Island culture. The café is located on one of the busiest strips in Lakemba, Haldon Street, often described by locals as ‘Little Lebanon’ or ‘Little Tripoli’, probably because many of the 10,000 Muslims living in and around the area come from the region around Tripoli in northern Lebanon. Lakemba is also home to the famous Imam Ali Mosque (the Lakemba Mosque). As one visitor describes it, “Haldon Street contains shops which have re-created as best they can the atmosphere of shopping in Tripoli and other Lebanese towns and villages” (Deen, 1995:89). Many of these shops have Arabic names, with signage in Arabic as well as English, and attract Muslims from all over Sydney. For many of these customers, Haldon Street’s range of Middle Eastern specialties is incomparable.

So how does the Island Dreams café fit into this picture? Alimah is a Lakemba local, and lives with her immediate family in the house on top of her café. As far as she is concerned, the café’s extensive menu has changed little over eleven years, and it retains a bias towards the dishes of Home Island. When the café opened eleven years ago, Haldon Street’s selection of restaurants did not stretch beyond Lebanese and Chinese. Alimah’s dishes were not just different, they were unheard of. In turn, and perhaps inevitably, the menu has been tempered by the business imperative: on the islands, meats are traditionally served rather dry; in Lakemba, they are saucier; and of the chili dishes served only mild to medium. Perhaps the biggest difference though, between food on the island and food in the café, is the café’s virtual absence of fresh coconuts (for lack of both demand and supply).

Customers often quiz the café staff about the islands, and many are shocked to learn of their Australian IOT status. There are detailed maps and photos on the wall, and the staff frequently directs customers to them. This point is worth remembering: one of Alimah’s intentions is to extend knowledge of and interest in her Cocos Island heritage. However, this underscores the café’s importance as a unique cultural signpost. It punctuates what is an overwhelmingly Middle Eastern precinct with a glimpse into two little-known islands in the Indian Ocean. To do this successfully (which is to say profitably, since it is a business) requires careful negotiation. Firstly, the café needs to affirm what is discernibly different enough about its food to persuade customers to
choose it over a growing range of alternative options; but secondly, it needs to acknowledge, and at times even incorporate, the cultural conventions of its local clientele. So, for example, on one of my visits to the café, I noticed that the music playing was in fact an Arabic ‘nashid’ or anthem, praising the prophet Mohammad. This complemented other Islamic features in the café (such as a photograph of a Jerusalem mosque and Koranic scriptures), and helped Alimah with her study of Arabic.

Of course, Lakemba’s population is not exclusively Arabic Islamic. Nonetheless, by the proprietor’s own admission, and my personal observation, it is a strong cultural presence that any businessperson would be brave, if not foolish, to ignore. As one Lakemba local explains, “finding Arabic-speaking people made us feel at home; [also] the shops were named in Arabic, doctors were Arabic speaking, builders, engineers and painters were all Arabic speaking. When my children had grown up and began to work, we bought a house closer to the Lakemba mosque” (Bouma, 1994:78).

This kind of conflation is common: Lakemba-Muslim-Arab. In Alimah’s words, then, her café “broke the barrier” eleven years ago. Although the proprietor was Muslim and the food was halal, local resistance was twofold: Arab customers found the food strange (rather than ‘exotic’), and many were noticeably aggrieved by the fact that the café was run by a woman, albeit one wearing the traditional hijab. Yet, over the last few years business has picked up considerably, which Alimah attributes to the area’s growing multiculturalism, the curiosity of a younger and more adventurous generation of Muslim locals, and her own increasingly adept handling of Lakemba’s gender politics, confidently using what she calls her “boxing gloves”.

Sydney City/Global Culture

It was on the encouragement of some of these more experimental customers that Alimah opened a sister café in the heart of Sydney city in 2000, at the corner of Campbell Street and Castlereigh Street (opposite Central Station).[4] Unlike the years of reticence from the Lakemba locals, the city café was an immediate success. Alimah blissfully explains the contrast thus: firstly, the city customers were generally more familiar with different foods from around the world, and were, therefore, more inclined to add new dishes to their diet. This is less a comment about these clients’ sophistication or intelligence than a common observation about city life generally. It is a milieu that rewards diversity and difference, as familiarity with the foreign communicates a kind of globalised, urban, postmodern literacy and glamour. This taste for exotic and ethnic foods reflects a certain kind of attitude, one which is often referred to as “cosmopolitanism” (Bell and Valentine, 1997:117). Sure enough, this was Alimah’s experience. Compared to their Haldon Street counterparts, her city customers tended to order with fewer questions about the food and fewer complaints about the prices.

True cosmopolitans happily experiment with the unknown, eschewing the standardised and homogenised for the seemingly unique and authentic. To this end, the Sydney-based Island Dreams Café fares well as it is seemingly more idiosyncratic than neighbouring cafés and restaurants. On the edge of Sydney’s so-called Chinatown, the café appears to be what one food writer called “so unique as to be beyond
classification” (Bodey, 2002:32). In an area that is increasingly distinguished by a preponderance of Thai restaurants, Island Dreams Café benefits from a point of difference over which it has a practical monopoly.

On this point, though, it is worth noting the extent to which the Island Dreams Café markets a style of cooking and a range of foods that belong to a particular conception of island food, one that probably owes more to the proprietor’s memories of island life than a studied reflection of island food today. Over the last few years, there has been a relative decline in the amount of seafood consumed on the island, and a rise in the amount of sugar, flour and processed chicken. However, Canberra’s oversights have been at least partly responsible for the changing (if not degraded) consumption patterns on the islands. When the Federal Government reduced the number of weekly commercial flights to its IOTs from five to one in 1998, there was an immediate impact on access to fresh fruit and vegetables. As the space for freight shrunk from 4000 kilograms to 600 kilograms, the subsequent reduction of fresh food deliveries was critical and devastating (Contractor, 1998:3).

It was not the last time the Federal Government undermined the islanders’ food supplies. During the Tampa crisis, Canberra’s closure of Christmas Island’s harbour had, in addition to blocking journalists (which was the intention), simultaneously prevented islanders from leaving the harbour to fish. According to the president of the Christmas Island Shire Council, “there was total disregard for the dietary needs of people for over a week. Where would that be tolerated in the rest of Australia? Nowhere” (Lewis, 2006:12). Since 2004, the city store has been run (and is now owned) by Alimah’s aunt, Hjh Mebia. Like Alimah, Mebia sees the city café as one way to preserve the traditions that are seemingly threatened by the convenience of pre-packaged foods and supermarkets. The long-term effects of bureaucratic myopia might prove just as consequential.

Conclusion

I found the Island Dreams Café significant for two main reasons. Firstly, both cafés exemplify the resilience and adaptability of a living culture. There are only about 50 to 60 Cocos Islanders living in Sydney (and these basically belong to Alimah and Mebia’s extended family), but there are two cafés devoted to the islands’ foods. On the other hand, for better or for worse, these cafés intersect with codes and conventions already present in Sydney. Culinary fusion becomes, therefore, less of a postmodern indulgence than a necessary function of business survival.

When the Howard Government excised these islands from Australia’s migration zone in the wake of the Tampa affair, it made a crystal-clear statement about border control, and the need to police Australian boundaries, both territorial and cultural. I am suggesting that incursions by our Islamic neighbours (IOTs, no less), are neither predictable nor straightforward. Such interventions invariably escape the control of any one party—and I think the Island Dreams experiment is a case in point.
Endnotes

[1] This is not to suggest that either of these cuisines is ‘pure’ or free from influence and adaptation; rather, it is argued that, insofar as they are marketed in Australia, they are clearly demarcated.

[2] The literature on ‘foodways’ and ‘foodscapes’ is wide and diverse. A thorough overview of both the various theoretical positions as well as numerous case studies is provided in Bell and Valentine (1997); see also Brown and Mussel (1984).

[3] My interview with Hjh Alimah took place on 1 February 2006 in the Island Dreams Café (Haldon Street, Sydney). Unless stated otherwise, all the information about this site is from this interview, which lasted approximately two hours. There was a follow-up visit a few days later, whereupon I photographed the café and sampled several items on the menu.

[4] At the time of my interview with Hjh Alimah, the city café was being renovated and re-named. As of mid February 2006, it has operated as Mutiara Café. Unless stated otherwise, all the information about this site is from my interview with Alimah (see endnote above). I visited the city site twice in December 2005 to introduce myself (and my project) to Hjh Mebia, and to photograph the café.

Bibliography


Bell, D and Valentine, G (1997) Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat, London: Routledge


COMMANDING PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISLES OF SCILLY

Robert Maybee’s Ballad of Sir Cloudesley Shovel

Marea Mitchell

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

General Background

The Isles of Scilly consist of an archipelago set in 45 square sea-miles in the British Isles: there are five inhabited islands and 51 uninhabited islands (Mumford, 1970:20).[1] While islands are distinguished between those that are inhabited and those that are uninhabited, a distinction also exists between islands and large rocks. In terms of Scilly, the definition of an island is taken to be “land surrounded by water at high tide, supporting a variety of land vegetation at all times” (Bowey, 2004/2005:7).[2] Scilly is 49 degrees 55 minutes north latitude, 6 degrees 19 minutes west longitude. The population of Scilly is about 2000. The closest landmass is Cornwall, with Land’s End 28 miles off the nearest island, although Penzance, the sea and air departure point for Scilly, is 42 miles away. It is often said about Scilly that it possesses a kind of “multum in parvo” (Mumford, 1970:37), or a wide variety in a small location. While the source of the name Scilly is uncertain, Scillonians do not like their home being described as ‘the Scillies’ (plural) but prefer ‘Scilly’ (singular). The slogan repeated throughout the long-running journal The Scillonian is ‘There is only one Scilly’—an interesting phrase in its anxious insistence. As Baldacchino and Milne say of small islands generally, it has a “firm sense of boundary and distinctness” (2000:1).

Until the 19th Century, the fortunes of Scilly waxed and waned, like the ever important tides that lap its shores, according to the needs of the mainland and the demands of war. Whenever the English perceived a threat of war from her old enemies—Spain and France—then time, energy and resources were put into shoring up Scilly as a strategic position for defence. In times of peace, Scilly was pretty much left alone, cropping up in mainlanders’ consciousness only as an item in the weather forecast, or when it petitioned mainlanders for financial help through the national newspaper, The Times. Scilly’s history, culture, architecture and politics deserve much more attention than they have received. Rather like its closest neighbour, Cornwall, Scilly has a kind of iconic status, but it is a status that is underpinned by myths that serve purposes convenient to others. To ask how Scilly sees itself is also a vexed question, given the seeming contradictions between the idea that ‘there is only one Scilly’, and the real distinctions...
made between St Mary’s and the other islands known as the ‘off islands’. However, the question of how Scilly sees itself is a question beyond the scope of this paper.

Here, I explore one aspect of Scilly’s identity as it emerges in a 19th-Century ballad that alters the perspective on a story more commonly seen from a national or international perspective. Re-addressing a famous maritime incident from a particularly Scillonian point of view, Robert Maybee’s ballad *The Loss of Sir Cloudesley Shovel* is used as a case study to suggest the resilience and tenacity of small islands that seize an opportunity to tell their own version of a particular story.

**Robert Maybee**

Robert Maybee was born on 1 April 1810, and died sometime in December 1891, at the age of 81, apparently in the poor house. His parents were millers, based on the island of St Mary’s, although it appears that Maybee himself spent time on other islands as an itinerant worker. He worked as a labourer and builder, but is also recorded as selling fruit and ballads door to door, as records indicate that he was indicted for doing so without a licence. Maybee’s life spans an interesting and important period in the history of the islands, the bulk of the 19th Century, which saw vast changes in the economic life of Scilly.

The changes occurred primarily with the arrival of a new Proprietor or Governor of the islands in 1834, Augustus Smith. Until this point, Scilly had been governed in a very ad hoc way by individual men who were virtually absentee landlords, predominantly represented by the Godolphin family for the Duchy of Cornwall. In 1834, Augustus Smith took over the islands on a 93-year lease for a payment to the Duchy of 40 pounds per annum. Smith himself is a fascinating character, the subject of a number of books, and was very much concerned for the long-term benefit of the islands and islanders. He introduced compulsory education for children forty years before this happened on the mainland. Smith’s arrival on Scilly brought structured change in employment, education, transport and government, and he is seen by most commentators to have enabled an escape from entrenched poverty for many people. Smith was no doubt strict, and attempted to force productive labour on people who had not been used to being actively governed and organised, and this is perhaps the context in which to see Maybee’s own encounters with the law. Maybee missed out on the schooling opportunities that Smith’s changes brought, and Maybee’s financial existence seems to have been precarious as his *Lines Written on Opposition in Trade* (1881) suggest. In this poem, he laments how at the age of 70 he is forced to sell berries from door to door, and has to face competition from two younger men who threaten to undercut him to steal his customers, whom they will then fleece with higher prices when they have broken him. The final lines of the poem describe Maybee’s dilemma and lack of opportunities:

*I am too old to go abroad
Into a foreign land[.]
I must spend my few days at home
And do the best I can.*
Maybee’s circumstances indicate how difficult life could be on Scilly, in spite of the vast improvements that Smith began in the middle of the 19th Century.

Maybee has had a particular kind of status in relation to Scilly as a documenter and describer of the islands, whose words regularly crop up in histories and guidebooks of Scilly. Knowledge of Maybee is limited, dependent largely on his memoir, *Sixty-eight Years’ Experience on the Scilly Islands* (Baxter, 1973), and a series of ballads he dictated. Additional material comes from comments and recollections about him by islanders recorded in *The Scillonian*, and from invaluable work done by R M Baxter in 1973 in the only publication dedicated to him, *Robert Maybee: The Scillonian Poet*. More recently, Maybee’s work has found its way into an anthology of labouring poets of the 19th Century, which provides a broader context in which to see his work.

His reputation could be described as contested. For Baxter, he is ‘the’ Scillonian poet, and he is described in *The Scillonian* of March 1957 (v129:58) as “the island bard”. More recently, Scillonian writer Sam Llewellyn wrote that Maybee had been “rather flatteringly described as the Scillonian Poet” (2005:32). Some of the disagreement about his value undoubtedly lies in the nature of his compositions. His memoirs are direct and descriptive, his poems are simple ballads that reflect the way they were composed. They have the repetitive rhythm and vocabulary that you would expect of material composed orally, designed to be remembered easily, performed easily and drawing on a long history of ballad making. The stories are local, pit people against nature, include a strong sense of the intransigence of nature, and of the fragility of human beings at the mercy of stronger forces, particularly the sea, and divine judgement. They are descriptive, action-based, narrative-driven, uncomplicated yarns. They are fundamentally oral compositions—though they were also transcribed and sold door to door by Maybee himself.

**The Loss of Sir Cloudesley Shovel**

Most of Maybee’s ballads are about shipwrecks, which is not particularly surprising given the location and nature of the islands, and the fact that they consist of a large number of very dangerous rocks that historically have not been very well signposted for the seafarer. In the past, much of the islands’ income derived, precariously, through trade with passing ships, and through the provision of expert pilots to guide ships through the rocky passages to safe harbours. It has to be said also that some of the islands’ income has derived from salvaging the remains of ships that did not make it to safe harbour. That the sea should play such a large part in Maybee’s work reflects the huge impact that the natural environment has on small island cultures, and the volatility of the relationship between people and the forces that surround them—forces that cannot be directly controlled, and must be respected if they cannot be fully understood. Shipwrecks in Maybee’s poetry also stand as markers of historical time. In contexts where seasons are more important than individual days, the passage of time can be understood through events that everyone can remember rather than through events of particular individual or personal significance. A shipwreck, then, becomes a collective experience, drawing together a group of people who witness an event of large-scale
significance, where lives and property are endangered. Ballads about shipwrecks are part of a culture’s way of understanding itself across time, by providing a mark in collective memory. Shipwrecks provide the possibility for the demonstration of human endeavour on a grand scale, and for the celebration of island heroism by brave and knowledgeable locals who risk themselves to save those who are literally ‘blown in’. Shipwrecks mark the spot where the natural physical environment and the products of mankind collide; indeed, ballads about shipwrecks invite the listener to reflect on these collisions. Shipwrecks often entail significant loss of human life, and ballads about shipwrecks invite the listener to consider the fragility and impermanence of human life in the face of forces with greater longevity, while at the same time affording listeners a moment to celebrate their own present survival in inhospitable circumstances, and, perhaps, to celebrate the survival of the tribe through individuals who it pass on.\[8\]

Maybee’s ballad about the loss of Sir Cloudesly Shovel is a striking case in point, and an intervention in national myth-making.\[9\] True to traditional ballad style, most of Maybee’s ballads, even those not about shipwrecks, are local and contingent, inspired by an event, the weather or some immediate response to the environment. The Clouesley Shovel ballad is different because it returns to an event well before Maybee’s birth. Sir Cloudesly Shovel was an English admiral, named Rear Admiral of England and commander-in-chief of the British fleets in 1704. At 8pm on 22 October 1707, Cloudsley’s ship Association and the rest of his fleet struck the Gilstone Ledge in the Western rocks off Agnes, with the loss of about 1700 lives. It was a large-scale and significant disaster, and one that contributed to the pressure on Parliament to bring in the 1714 Longitude Act that established the prize for someone who could effectively introduce a way of identifying longitude, and therefore, more accurate navigation and location.\[10\] A pamphlet from 1709 is entitled “The life and glorious actions of Sir Cloudesly Shovel knight Admiral of the confederate fleet”, while the poem at the end of the pamphlet refers to Cloudsley as “Britain’s glory”.\[11\] In another contemporary document, allegedly by a “Gentleman who served” with Shovel at Toulon, we have detailed coverage of “His Birth, Education and Rise; with a full Account of all the Naval Battels since the Revolution”. The tone is heroic and laudatory as this section from the Dedication suggests:

And tho’ there has not been wanting in every Age some Marine Heroes to support in their respective Generations the Glory of the British Nation, to whom Nature seems to have assign’d the Dominion of the Sea, I am confident it may without any Flattery be affirm’d, that if the noblest of them be compared with the fam’d Commander, whose Memory this Essay is intended to perpetuate to the latest Posterity, there will hardly be one found, in whom all the Qualities requisite to the Composition of an accomplish’d Marine Officer were so conspicuously lodged.\[12\]

The pamphlet deals fleetingly with Cloudsley’s death, “the singularity of which will enhance the Glory of his famous exploits”, but instead returns anxiously to it, circling uneasily around one obvious question: how did such an “accomplish’d Marine Officer” manage to lose his fleet only a few miles off his own mainland?
‘Tis in vain for Humane Reason to pretend to enquire into the Affairs of Providence, or to demand the Causes of Events from the Almighty, we must therefore acquiesce in the Decrees of Fate, and bear with Resignation what Lot the Will of Heaven assigns us, yet where we ought not to express our Resentment we may our Admiration, and certainly nothing can appear more surprising to our Judgements than the shipwreck of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who was as experience’d an Officer, and commanded as skilful Sailors perchance as ever serv’d under any Admiral, he was familiar with Dangers, and acquainted with all the Terrors of the Ocean, he had serv’d the Nation for several Years in eminent Posts at Sea, had often view’d those very Rocks he split upon, he had rid out that stupendious Storm when Admiral Beaumont and several other Officers were cast away, a Tempest more horrid and unusual than had ever been known by the most aged Mariners; his Knowledge and Experience in Marine Affairs was consummate, he knew himself in Person the working of Ships, and advanc’d himself at first by his Skill in navigation, and gradually went thro’ all the Posts that could give him an Opportunity of improving himself in that Art, yet after all he died, as already related, in a manner not more surprising than lamentable.\[13\]

On 12 May 1873, Robert Maybee provided an answer to this question by allowing what Edward Said (1993:78-79) might call a ‘contrapuntal reading’ of the shipwreck, or a reading that contrasts accounts to highlight the power relationships they entail, and the interests they can be revealed to serve. By 1873, over 160 years since the shipwreck itself, Maybee’s point of departure is the memorial to Shovel on Porthellick Green. His treatment of the wreck diverges markedly from other commemorations of the tragic event, and intriguingly asserts the importance of the islands and the islanders that are only a backdrop to the main events when they are represented by non-islanders. In the quote above, very little is said about Scilly itself or the cause of the accident, with only a brief reference to the “rocks of Scilly”, and the sea that “cast his Body upon the Sands of the same Island where he suffer’d Shipwreck”. In Maybee’s story, the Admiral is warned by one of his sailors that the fleet is too close to the rocks, the sailor is hanged for his impudence, and the fleet is wrecked because of this.

Sir Cloudesley’s fleet when on the main,  
Sailed round the coast of France and Spain  
Long with a gallant band.  
It was a dark and stormy night,  
The Admiral thought his course was right— 
He was far from rock and sand.

One valiant seaman, bold and brave,  
Knew they’d soon meet a watery grave,  
Aloud he then did cry:  
Our course must alter, wear, or stay—  
No farther can we run this way,  
The Scilly rocks were nigh!

The Admiral had the seaman hung,  
And while on yard-arm wild he swung, 

Specific comparisons between the 18th-Century pamphlets and Maybee’s ballad yield illuminating evidence of the effect of counterpoint. First, both prose documents marginalise the shipwreck by treating it as literally accidental to the main story of Sir Cloudesley Shovel. The 1709 pamphlet celebrates all of Shovel’s maritime successes and telescopes the wreck down to a few brief pages. Furthermore, this text actively discourages consideration of how the incident happened with the phrase: “‘Tis in vain for Humane Reason to pretend to enquire into the Affairs of Providence”. Here we find that the wreck occurred after the destruction of eight French ships at Tolon, and the wreck is seen as an unfortunate element in an otherwise successful career.

By contrast, Maybee’s poem is only about the wreck—that is, Shovel’s career and character are irrelevant except as they are revealed in this incident. We do not know why he is sailing “round the coast of France and Spain”, but we do know why the wreck happened—through the Admiral’s arrogance. What the Admiral thinks (“the Admiral thought his course was right”) is sharply contrasted with what the sailor knew (he “knew they’d soon meet a watery grave”).

Similarly, the telling of the story varies significantly in tone and style. The pamphlet offers a formal, impersonal, calm and confident account designed for the public arena. It advises the reader how to see the event as a ‘lamentable’ moment in an otherwise illustrious career. The ballad, on the other hand, includes direct speech from the sailor (“Our course must alter”), as well as the evocative word picture of the hanged man swaying from the yard arm to the sound of the seabirds ‘shrilly’ crying.

Even more telling to the analysis of how Maybee’s version counterpoints standard English versions is the shift in the penultimate stanza to the present tense, and the personal voice of the ballad’s speaker as the ballad ends with the supernatural tone that is common to the genre:

One hundred years have passed away,  
And seventy three,—so histories say,  
This tale came to my mind.  
I viewed the spot on a bright spring day,  
In seventy three—the twelfth of May,—  
No flowers there could I find.

Thousands have passed along that way,  
And viewed the spot on summer day—  
They always found it bare;  
No wild flowers there are to be found,  
No pinks or daisies growing round,  
No green grass ever there. (Baxter,1973:27)

The focus for this version of events is Scilly itself. Far from being the background to a part of England’s military history, Scilly here provides the perspective from which to
understand the fateful events. Rather than the admired hero and leader of his men, Shovel here is given the role of arrogant and tyrannical master who squanders his men’s lives rather than take advice from a subordinate. The ballad has a strongly revengeful sense of the thousands who pass by, enjoying the sunny spring day, while the luckless Shovel has left no trace behind.\[14\] It is an appropriately Scillonian punishment for his grave not to yield growth given the islands’ continued association with flowers and plants luxuriating in favourable growing conditions.\[15\] In Maybee’s version, there is no suggestion that we see in other accounts that the islanders might have been culpable in the foundering of Shovel’s fleet. Bathurst (2005:124-125), for example, retells a story in which Shovel was washed up still alive only to be murdered and mutilated for an expensive ring by a female wrecker who confessed to the crime on her own death bed. In contrast to the dispassionate authoritative voice of the pamphlet, the speaker brings the reader right up to the present moment. In Maybee’s account, history is not over, final and finished, but rather resonates into the present, asserting the survival and resilience of the islands themselves.

End Thoughts

It is no part of my argument that Maybee’s version of the wreck of the Association is more accurate or truthful than any other. Indeed, its colour and liveliness testify to its imagination and creativity. It could also be argued that it sentimentally heroises the sailor just as the prose texts heroise the Admiral. Furthermore, the reader/listener is certainly not encouraged to bring to the ballad the knowledge that these kinds of wreck have been attributed to the deliberate effects of wreckers. Nor am I arguing that the sailor is explicitly represented as a Scillonian, although his knowledge of the rocks makes this implicitly plausible. Rather, the ballad can be seen as a stage in the battle for ideological control over the cultural representation of small islands in its focus on the way that history can be used to address the here and now, as it ends celebrating the sunny spring day in May on St Mary’s island. It is Maybee, not the sailor, who asserts a perspective that is explicitly Scillonian.

If we read Maybee’s poetry and think about it in the context of the Isles of Scilly, it reminds us that centre and margin, core and periphery, depend upon point of view. From Derrida we have learnt that binary oppositions such as mainland and island, which suggest an acknowledgement of difference and equality, can be deconstructed to reveal vested interests that privilege mainland over island, while crucially relying on the notion of the island for its definition.\[16\] Postcolonial critics such as Said, in turn, have analysed the power relationships that exist between what is seen as centre and what is seen as margin, insisting that cultural representations need to be read against each other to provide fuller meanings.

From a different perspective—one that addresses colonialism and island cultures as they are experienced rather than understood from a meta-theoretical standpoint—Barbara Christian, born on the Virgin Islands, has some very sharp words about the use of centre/periphery:
Periphery . . . is a word I heard throughout my childhood, for if anything was seen as being at the periphery, it was those small Caribbean islands which had neither land mass nor military power. Still I noted how intensely important this periphery was, for US troops were continually invading one island or another if any change in political control even seemed to be occurring. (Christian, 2001:2260)

Maybee’s ballad shifts our perspective on a moment in history and alters the significance of particular individual agents. The Admiral, whose death was of such importance to the English that it resulted in new energy being put into long standing navigational problems, is relegated to a bit part. Rather than being the key tragic figure, the Admiral is symbolically equivalent to Coleridge’s albatross hanging around the Ancient Mariner’s neck, a momento mori, or a warning to others. In Maybee’s ballad, the land survives the transient intruder, and lives on in the words of the poet and the continuing experiences of the readers and listeners. By reversing traditional hierarchies of admiral and sailor, by ending with the view of those on the islands, Maybee illustrates Barbara Christian’s point that many people “have never conceived of [themselves] only as somebody’s other” (Christian, 2001:2259). His ballad provides us with another view of historical events. Maybee’s version of events may bear little reality to what actually happened, which, given the extent of the tragedy, might be impossible to establish. Maybee’s ballad refuses to see Scilly as marginal, the mere vehicle for an English maritime disaster. In place of marginality, that sense of what is “not major, not central, not powerful”, Maybee asserts a sense of Scilly as central, with an identity that is “powerful, important, and ours” (Said, 1993:392-393), and encourages us to “rethink our mind’s sense of what makes a place strong or weak, or what makes for peripheral or central space” (Baldacchino, 2000:2). By creating its own hero in the unnamed martyred sailor, the ballad provides an alternative way of seeing, and looks from the islands outwards, commanding the perspective.

The wreck of the Association, then, can be seen as a site of conflict not just between rocks and ships, but over who has the right to tell or write history. Reading contrapuntally might work towards understandings of small island cultures that resist the hierarchies implicit in definitions of centre/margin, mainland/island or core/periphery. It is islands, in many cases, that provide the physical and spatial boundary markers of nations and cultures, and as such they are quite literally fought over. One area of small island culture research might examine how the representation of islands in literature and culture provides other kinds of boundary markers, constructed in history and contributing to very different kinds of cultural memories.

Endnotes

[1] Bowey (2004/2005:7) makes the point that there are six islands ‘if the Gugh, on which there are two houses, is regarded as separate from St Agnes’.

[2] As Bowey (2004/2005:75) goes on to point out, this disqualifies ‘Hanjague [Han’jig], which is 85 feet high, but does not have sufficient vegetation to accord it island status.


[5] See, for example, Inglis-Jones (1969) and, more recently, Llewellyn (2005).

[6] Intriguingly, David Buffet’s presentation at the 2nd International Conference on Small Island Cultures, Norfolk Island, 2006, suggested that Norfolk Island too introduced compulsory education before the rest of Australia. Education is, of course, a double-edged sword and can easily be seen as a tool of colonialism, particularly where issues of standardising language are concerned.


[9] There are actually two versions of this ballad in Baxter’s collection of Maybee’s work. The one I cite here seems clearly to have been composed by Maybee; the provenance of the other is less clear. It seems more literary, is more intertextual and is more sophisticated in its structure and patterning than the first. The relationship between the two ballads deserves further scrutiny, and I am grateful to Peter Goodall for his insights here.

[10] The Act established a prize of between £20,000 and £10,000 depending on the degree of accuracy, and was eventually reluctantly awarded to John Harrison in 1773 (Matthews, 2000).

[11] *Eighteenth Century Catalogue*, microfilm 1651 reel 1893 n4. It should be said, though, that there were sceptical English voices such as Pope and Addison. Addison, for example, is reported to have remarked that “Shovel could not reap any honour from dying by an error of his profession” (Mortimer, 1954:4).


[14] The second version of the ballad has the sailor request to hear Psalm 109 before he dies, with the added impact of invoking the curse that the punishment for those who reward good with evil should include his children being fatherless, his wife becoming a widow and that “his posterity be cut off”.

[15] The story runs that the industry began when William Trevellick sent a hat-box of flowers from Scilly to Covent Garden and received one pound. The current guide for
Scilly asserts this to have been in 1868 (Bowey, 2004/2005:39) while Mumford (1970:126) is less clear whether it was 1867, 1879 or 1881.

[16] See, for example, Derrida (1981:279) and his paradox that “it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. . . . The centre is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center”.

Bibliography


Court House Records (1857) 18 November, Isles of Scilly: Isles of Scilly Museum


Eighteenth Century Catalogue, Microfilm 1651, Reels 2613, n3, and 1893, n4, Canberra: National Library of Australia


Mortimer, M (1954) ‘Scillonian Literature’, Old Cornwall v5n5


Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the curator of the Isles of Scilly Museum, Amanda Martin, for the time, energy, and enthusiasm with which she shared her own extensive knowledge of the islands’ history with me. I would also like to thank Michael and Jenny Thompson for their hospitality, and for sharing their knowledge and love of Scilly. Thanks, too, to the anonymous readers of earlier versions of this paper for their constructive criticism.
THE NORF’K LANGUAGE AS A MEMORY OF NORFOLK’S CULTURAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Peter Mühlhäusler

(University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia)

Introduction

In this paper I shall attempt to make a few general points about the languages of small islands. I will demonstrate these points by using a small sample of Norf’k words, and by illustrating how the history of the Pitcairn descendants is reflected in their language. I will also make suggestions as to how a linguistic study of the Norf’k language can help to strengthen and revive the language.

My interest in the languages of small islands, particularly relatively young mixed languages or Creoles that have developed on such islands, is the consequence of general methodological considerations. Like many other linguists, I am keenly interested in the general principles that govern the birth, development and decay of human languages, just as many biologists are interested in the origin and development of life forms. Biologists would have a difficult task if they bred pandas or giraffes in order to observe such development. Instead, they work with fruit flies, guinea pigs and rats. Analogously, linguists cannot easily develop general principles from big old languages such as Chinese or English. Quicker and more reliable insights can be gained from the study of languages that developed on small islands over a short period of time. Arguments to this effect can be found in the contributions to Calvet and Karyolemou (1998). Small island languages follow the principles known from population genetics (ie there is greater speciation and a faster rate of change). Pitkern and Norf’k are particularly interesting because 150 years ago most Pitcairners permanently relocated to Norfolk Island, where the Pitkern language had to adapt to a new environment.

The Lexicon of Norf’k as a Memory of the History of its Speakers

One of the particularly interesting characteristics of small island languages is the influence of single individuals in their genesis:

*In a normal speech-community, such as our own, or that of the Anglo-Saxons, the linguistic influence of a single individual must always be extremely insignificant. In English, we can hardly point to a single example of such a thing; Lewis Carroll’s*
chortle (made up from snort + chuckle) affords one of the very few examples of a word created by an individual becoming part of the normal language. But, at the birth of Pitcairnese, matters will not have been at all like this; in such a tiny community the speech of every individual must have been of vital significance. (Ross and Moverley, 1964:137-138)

Similarly interesting is the subsequent development of the language. The grammar and lexicon of any language are shaped by its speakers and over time become a fossilised memory of experience.\(^1\) Norf’k grammar provides many examples. Consider the grammar of location: both Pitcairn and Norfolk Island are characterised by difficult steep terrain and this experience has become fossilised in spatial orientation grammar. Norf’k, unlike English, has an absolute orientation system, with the main reference point taun (Kingston) and two coordinates: one vertical, daun-ap as in daun ar taun (‘in, to Kingston’), or ap Ban Pain (‘to Burnt Pine’), ap in a stik ‘(into the woods in the mountainous north west’) and a horizontal one, where greater distances from Kingston are signalled by aut: aut ar mission (‘to/in the former Melanesian Mission grounds’), aut Duncombe (‘in, to Duncombe Bay’), etc. A second example is the contrasting first person plural pronouns wii and aklan. The latter probably derives from our clan and is used as the insider pronoun referring to Pitcairners only. Finally, there is the semantic distribution of words of Tahitian and English origin. Close inspection of Nobbs Palmer (1992) and Buffett (1999) shows that numerous Tahitian words refer to the undesirable, unclean and abnormal. This may reflect the racism that prevailed on Pitcairn Island in the first years of settlement (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tahitian word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eeyulla</td>
<td>adolescent, immature, not dry behind the ears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoowi-hoowi</td>
<td>filthy, extremely dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>howa-howa</td>
<td>to soil one’s pants from a bowel movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iwi</td>
<td>stunted undersized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laha (also lu-hu)</td>
<td>dandruff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutty-mutty</td>
<td>dead, died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ootatow</td>
<td>youth who has reached maturity but is still very small in stature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>po-o</td>
<td>barren or infertile soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poo-oo</td>
<td>unripe or green fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tarpou</td>
<td>stains on the hands caused from peeling some fruit or vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toohi</td>
<td>to curse, blaspheme or swear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tye-tye</td>
<td>tasteless food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unna-unna</td>
<td>to lack self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa-haloo</td>
<td>dilapidated, ramshackle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Norf’k language came into being as a consequence of the mutiny on the *Bounty* in April 1789 and the subsequent settlement of the mutineers and their Tahitian entourage on Pitcairn Island in January 1790. Within a short period of time, the pressure for the Tahitians to communicate with the speakers of English led to the crystallisation of a contact language which continues to be spoken with English by the descendants of the Pitcairn settlers. I shall examine what the present-day Norf’k dictionary tells us about the provenance of the Pitcairn settlers and the knowledge of Pitcairn’s natural environment and life. I shall then briefly look at the linguistic evidence on the Pitcairners: what they knew; what they did on Pitcairn; and how they made Norfolk Island their new home.

**Provenance of Pitcairn Settlers**

There were nine mutineers on the *Bounty*, four of whom died within four years of their arrival on Norfolk Island. Another four mutineers, Fletcher Christian, John Adams, William McCoy and Matthew Quintal spoke dialects of English, whilst the last mutineer, Edward Young, was a native of St Kitts (West Indies). Young’s first language appears to have been Creole English.

Several linguists have worked on tracing English-origin dialect words in Pitkern-Norf’k. For instance:

*English dialect words are very abundant. The question of tracing them to actual mutineers is difficult, chiefly owing to the wide spread of many of the words under discussion in the dialects...only two groups of words are definitely traceable to particular mutineers.*

*First, there is a very considerable amount of Scotch, due to John Mills (Aberdeen) and William Mickoy (Ross-shire), e.g. blood ‘to bleed’, bole ‘to make a small hole in anything’, dark ‘to become dark’, devil’s-needle ‘dragon-fly’, gaggle ‘to cackle’, heave away ‘to throw away’, No, Sir! ‘it is not so’, what-way, ‘how; and, with Tahitian admixture, hilly-hilly ‘choppy (of the sea)’ (Tahitian reduplication) and [i:wi:] ‘little’ (wee + T[ahitian] iti ‘small’).*

*There does also seem to be a definite influence from the South-West, due to Matthew Quintal (Padstow), e.g., beeth and prosthetic verbal, granny-bonnet ‘k. flower’, possibly also [du:] ‘don’t. (Ross and Moverley, 1964:168)*
The full story of all English dialect words would be the topic of a doctoral dissertation, and the same could be said about words of Tahitian origin. The difficulties here stem from major changes in pronunciation and the unavailability of a dictionary of old Tahitian. The percentage of Tahitian words in Pitkern-Norf’k is difficult to establish as there is no agreement which words of English origin actually qualify for Norf’k words. Having produced a draft dictionary (Eira, Magdalena and Mühlhäusler, nd) and having made decisions on what words should be included as Norf’k, my estimate is that about 10 percent of word types are of Tahitian origin. Many of these have a very low token frequency (e.g. am’te ‘trough’ or ha’waii ‘guttering’).

The contribution of Edward Young from St Kitts has generally been underestimated, in spite of the fact that he was the community leader after 1793, that he introduced church sermons and education, and that he was a prolific storyteller. His status as a linguistic role model is illustrated by West Indian Creole words such as:

- morla (‘tomorrow’);
- morga (‘thin’);
- santaped (‘starfish’);
- cherimoya (‘guava’);
- bastard (‘inferior or inedible variety of a plant’ as in bastard ironwood, the wood found on both the West Indies and on Norfolk Island);
- airish tieti (‘potatoe’).

**Settlers’ Knowledge**

A commonly expressed view is that the Tahitian women had extensive knowledge of plants and other biological lifeforms on Pitcairn Island. On closer inspection (Mühlhäusler, 2002), it turns out that their knowledge of plants and the women’s knowledge was more limited than generally assumed. The women who went to Pitcairn Island were not from the social background where such specialist knowledge was found. The limitations of their knowledge are evident from a study of plant names and usages (Göthesson, 1997). Only 56 names of Pitcairn plants have a Tahitian name, while 190 of English or local origin, and 53 species of lichen and mosses on Pitcairn Island have no local name at all. Many plants that were of cultural significance in Tahiti were never named or used on Pitcairn. Of the 26 fern species of the island, only nine were named: three had a Tahitian name, while six had a Pitkern name, such as rockfern, blackfern, old man fern or creepy fern. One of the unnamed ferns is used in 36 Tahitian remedies, but none on Pitcairn; three other unnamed ferns were also used for medicinal purposes in Polynesia, two were used as a food source elsewhere but not on Pitcairn.

Where Pitkern has a Tahitian word for a useful plant, the range of uses tends to be much narrower. Thus, the tiplant or rauti was used on Pitcairn to distil a spirit, but it was not used as fodder, eaten or for medicinal purposes as it was in Tahiti. Again, api or giant taro was used as food, but not as a remedy. Single use on Pitcairn contrasts with multiple uses in Tahiti.

When looking at English-derived names from Pitcairn life forms, the metaphorical transfer of English names is noticeable:

*The wood-pigeon is a pigeon but you could not mistake it for the true wood-pigeon; the snipe is a shore bird but could never be mistaken for the British snipe. The sparrow does not look like a house sparrow—or hedge-sparrow—but it was probably the only bird of the general kind of sparrow on the Island. The sparrow-hawk is not even a hawk, but it has a hooked bill and is belligerent and a swift flyer. To sum up: I would say that the naming was on the basis of obvious relationship in the case of the wood-pigeon, but because of some superficial similarity in ecology or behaviour in the case of the others I have mentioned.* (Ross and Moverley, 1964:166)

**Life on Pitcairn**

Many Pitkern words are concerned with food and shelter: *rama* (‘to collect seafood or to go fishing by torch light at night’); *a’u* (‘the insides of a crab used as burley’); and *fence* (‘a fenced enclosure or garden’). In their search for food, the Pitcairners unsurprisingly encountered many species with unpleasant characteristics: *dreamfish* (‘a fish, which, when eaten leads to unpleasant dreams’); and *poison trout* (‘an inedible trout like fish’). And on Norfolk Island: *sailor’s piss* (‘a poor tasting fish from the Labridae family’); and *sharkwood* (‘smells like rotten shark flesh when cut’).

Gardening words such as *taapieh* (‘to force ripen bananas), *hutihuti* (‘pull weeds’) and *hulu* (‘garner root vegetables’) recall early horticultural practices. Food preparation involved the *yolo* (‘grating stone’), *papahaia* (‘wooden block on which food is pounded’) and the *ana* (‘seat grater’). Dishes originating from Pitcairn include *pilhai* (‘baked grated sweet potatoes and bananas’). Nursery words reflect the role of women. Thus, Pitkern-Norf’k *salan* (‘people’) is a nursery pronunciation of ‘children’. Words such as *mimi* (‘to urinate’) *babi* (‘breast’), *puupuu* (‘to huddle close together’) and *taio* (‘to ruffle a child’s hair, to make them laugh’) originate in the nursery context.

Also, the role of women in healthcare can be seen in the comments by Kallgård on the Polynesian roots of some medical words on Pitcairn:

*Not much seems to have been written about the colony’s medical history. Since many medical words with Polynesian roots are still used on the island (hupé is ‘nasal discharge’, ili-tona is ‘stye’, and hapa means ‘ill, not well’) it is fair to assume that initially much of the health matters were taken care of by the Polynesian women. We also know that to some extent traditional Polynesian medicine has been practised.* (The Pitcairn Miscellany, 1996:146)

Buffett (2004:13) mentions *kraenki* (‘datura’), a plant “used by our Polynesian foremothers for various health reasons, one of them being birth control”.

---

*Refereed Papers From*
*The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference, Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, 9-13 February 2006. Edited by Henry Johnson*
Resettlement on Norfolk Island

Norfolk Island was a very different place from Pitcairn—it was distinctly unhomely in the first few years after 1856 and *hoem* continued to be the word for Pitcairn. This is reflected in *hoem nanwe* (‘the Pitcairn dreamfish’) or *hoem oefi* (‘the Pitcairn oefi fish’). The mournful wail of the wedge tailed shearwater frightened the Pitcairners, and they named it *goesbad* (‘ghost bird’). Numerous other unfamiliar life forms received names, which remember those who first identified or introduced them:

*Isaac wood* (‘a tree named after Isaac Quintal’);
*Siah’s backbone* (‘a tree recording the strength of Josiah Adams’);
*William Taylor* (‘a pest plant introduced by the mission mason’).

The name of their new home was often prefixed as in *Norfolk Island bean* (*conavalia rosea*) and *Norfolk Island chaff tree* (*achyrantes arborescens*). The memory of individuals is present in words describing their actions and characteristics, such as *toebi* (‘to help oneself to other people’s produce, like Toby’), *big Jack* (‘to weep, like Mr. Jack Evans’) and *Bremen* (‘to be skinny’ taken from the visitor Mr. Breman’).

The economy of Norfolk in the first 50 years has been labelled ‘subsistence affluence’. Norfolk Islanders were amply provided for by nature and only had to use their ingenuity to create useful objects such as:

*behg iepan* (‘apron made from a sugar bag’);
*behg tawel* (‘towel made from a sugar bag’);
*niau brum* (‘broom made from ribs of palm leaves’);
*chip hiita* (‘heater using wood chips or small branches’).

Living on Norfolk Island did not mean total isolation, as there were contacts with the Melanesian Mission (1860s-1920s), the NSW-controlled education system (after 1890s), whaling (1850s-1960s), experiences of two world wars and tourism (after 1960). The NSW education system discouraged and persecuted the Norf’k language and its only contribution is *breking da king’s crown* (‘to speak non-standard English’).

Whaling expressions are far more numerous. For example, *baeliap* ‘to be flat on one’s back’, *fin aut* ‘to be finished’, or *faesboet*, which was shouted when a harpooned whale would tow the boat, now used as an exclamation to draw attention to something extraordinary or funny. Contact with foreign sailors gave the Norf’k language *Thanksgiving* and *potagii* ‘unreliable’, as Portuguese crew.

From World War I and II, when American and New Zealand soldiers lived on Norfolk Island, we have the expression *cushoo* and *faens iron*. ‘Cushoo’ derives from the army slang ‘cushy’, while ‘faens’ refers to the misappropriated iron landing strips from the American-built airfield.

Modern life on Norfolk is reflected in words such as *honda rash* (‘the condition contracted from excessive motorcycle riding’), *the foenkaad* (needed for making
overseas phone calls), *tep* (‘temporary entry person’) and *wettls bus* (‘mobile fast food stall’; renamed *se mussa buss*, literally ‘about to burst’). Of particular interest are the numerous Norf’k placenames that recall events or personalities: *sofa* is ‘a place where an angry husband having caught his wife with the neighbour on the sofa, tipped this piece of furniture over a cliff, and *Simon Water* is a stream running through Simon Young’s allocation of land (Mühlhäusler, 2002). Other placenames, such as *Goese korna* (‘Ghost Corner’) refer to folk beliefs or recall former pastimes and social practices.

Conclusions

I would like to conclude by illustrating the complexities found when reconstructing the past from the lexicon of a language with the word *tintoela* ‘sweetheart’. Pitkern has *toela*, which Ross and Moverley (1964:263) trace back to *tauhara* ‘faithful friend’. Norf’k has *taoela*, which Harrison (1972:150) derived from the pet name Tola of a girl who was living on Norfolk Island. The Norf’k word *tintoela* is explained by Buffet as:

*tintoela*: sweetheart, lover, spouse, i.e. the person with whom you toll the tin. (from T: *toara* (toala) native drum which gives message) hence *tin toela*, tin drum.

Back in Pitcairn and early Norfolk days, parents and older relatives would keep track of the moral behaviour of young people who they suspected of having premarital relationships by tying a tin billy with spoons in it under the beds. (Buffet, 1999:101)

The Tahitian etymology Buffet produces is *toala* (‘a native drum which sends messages’). But one wonders if the tin under the bed is the same as in *bilitin* (‘a bothersome spirit under people’s beds’). What this example shows is that memory is not a fixed given, but often contested and negotiated. With regard to the word *aata*, one might ask whether there was an ‘Arthur’ who showed excessive admiration for his children, as Harrison (1972:88) contends, or whether it derives from Tahitian *aataina* (‘longing of the heart’) as Buffet (1999:2) suggests, and whether the expression *apkuks* (‘non committal, lacking knowledge’) refers to the Cook family which once lived near Duncombe Bay or whether it refers to the Captain Cook memorial.

There are still many islanders who remember the origins of such expressions. The preservation of their recollections is integral to the revival of Norf’k because it is the function of language as a repository of individual and collective memory that sustains a positive islander identity.

Endnotes

[1] Memories are not factual records of events but socially negotiated. Etymologising for any language is a mixture of factual information and socially acceptable accounts. I have refrained from commenting on the history of words that would give offence to members of the Norf’k speech community.
Bibliography


Eira, C, Magdalena, M and Mühlhäusler, P (nd) Unpublished draft of a Dictionary of the Norfolk Language

Göthesson, L-Å (1997) *Plants of the Pitcairn Islands Including Local Names and Uses*, Sydney: University of New South Wales

Harrison, S (1972) *The Language of Norfolk Island*, unpublished MA dissertation, Macquarie University, Sydney


*The Pitcairn Miscellany* (1996) v37

Ross, A S C and Moverley, A W (1964) *The Pitcairn Language*, London: Andre Deutsch

Acknowledgements

Research for this paper has been supported by a grant of the University of Adelaide. I would like to thank my many friends on Norfolk Island for their time and advice.
TREASURED ISLANDS

Eleanor Rimoldi

(Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand)

Introduction

This paper is based on fieldwork on Buka-Bougainville, which now has the status of an ‘autonomous region’ of Papua New Guinea, located around 1000 kilometres from Port Moresby, and on Waiheke Island which is 17 kilometres from downtown Auckland, New Zealand. Bougainville and Waiheke, with their very different histories and cultures, are nevertheless perceived by others as ‘treasure islands’ and they perceive themselves as being so different from their associated political entities as to desire either separate treatment, or full independence. I want to consider the effects of social/cultural strategies that seek to secure island identity while remaining dependent in one way or another on the ‘outside world’. Although islands are valued in many different ways, the means for their survival in the contemporary world may well depend on a universal means of exchange—money. It is the process of globalisation and standardisation of financial transactions through technology that may, in a seeming contradiction, allow for individuation and localisation, while remaining connected to the world at large.

Geographically, islands are generally defined in relation to their size, being surrounded by water, and their distance from a mainland. But the perception of what makes an island an island also follows from political, economic and cultural mapping. The Buka islanders, where I carried out fieldwork from 1975 to 1979 (Rimoldi and Rimoldi, 1992) and again in 2000, often referred to the much larger island across Buka Passage (about a ten-minute trip by canoe) as ‘Big Buka’ and themselves as ‘Little Buka’ or just ‘Buka’. However, on maps of Bougainville, Buka appears alone at the northern tip of the larger island. Overall, the population of Bougainville is about 154,000 (Buka about 35,000 of that) with a land area of about 9300 square kilometres. Maps of the region show a line drawn across the Solomons chain. That is an artificial distinction—an artefact of the colonial division of Pacific territories. Bougainvilleans recognise Solomon islanders as kin (both are largely matrilineal societies) in spite of local variations in custom and language. The Solomon Islands gained full independence from Great Britain in 1978. Bougainville, which had been a protectorate of the United Nations administered by Australia, was included in PNG when it became independent in 1975, in spite of repeated objections carried to the United Nations, and a brief insurrection in the same year when a temporary compromise solution was reached. Bougainville was granted special provincial powers which ultimately were given to...
other tribal areas in the country. However, full independence remained an issue for Bougainvilleans.

Waiheke lies inside the waters of the Hauraki Gulf in the port of Auckland. It is 25 kilometres long and 20 kilometres at the widest point. The island, with its 96 miles of coastline, was more or less ignored by outside administrators, and in 1945 its 835 residents rejected a merger with Auckland City. In 1970, the Waiheke County Council was established, but by 1989 a national government “shake-up in local government . . . led to amalgamation with Auckland City [and] a subsequent call for de-amalgamation failed to restore its independence” (Picard, 2005:49). Auckland City is seen as the ‘mainland’ which exacts taxes and regulations that many Waihekeans feel should not apply to them. In spite of no real ethnic difference from that of the rest of New Zealand, they see the island as different in its values and way of life from the big city whose spires are just barely visible on a clear day. The improvement in the ferry service over the last two decades has cut travel time in half and encouraged new settlement that seemed to the long-time locals to change their world overnight—‘old time Waiheke’ was being taken over by middle-class and wealthy newcomers. From a population of about 3500 in 1978, there are now about 8000 permanent residents. Over 1000 daily commuters are prepared to travel 40 minutes by ferry twice a day from the island to work in Auckland city. As one of these commuters, I am amused that colleagues in the city find this colourful and wonder how we can survive the ‘rigorous’ commute over sometimes stormy seas, even though the delays and dangers of Auckland’s motorways are legendary.

Treasure

Two newspaper reports that recently caught my attention were both headlined ‘Treasure Island’. One referred to Bougainville and its gold and copper deposits, and the other referred to Waiheke Island in the New Zealand Herald ‘Real Estate’ section. Many, if not most, of the residents of these two islands are alarmed at the effects of such perceptions of treasure on the quality of life that they value on the island they call home. On Waiheke, it is ironic that even those people who rush to buy increasingly valuable land and build expensive houses to replace more traditional simple cottages soon adopt the identity of a ‘local’ and join the struggle against further development of the island. One effect of this is a rise in rates that threatens to drive less well-off ‘old-time’ Waihekeans off the island and has generated a renewed cry for ‘secession’ from Auckland City Council jurisdiction.

Bougainville is a minefield of treasure. As a rich source of copper and gold, it helped to support the economic base for an independent Papua New Guinea. It is a relatively small island that became a focus for global economic and political interests supported by the World Bank and the United Nations. In 1969, villagers tried to stop bulldozers from preparing the way for the Panguna copper mine with a human chain—to no avail. In 1988, matters came to a head over disputes related to royalties and pollution. Francis Ona and his supporters closed down the mine. After a 10-year war, and extended period of negotiation and reconciliation that resulted in quasi-autonomy for Bougainville, the mine is still closed. Ona remained in his stronghold at Panguna until his death early in
2005. But now there are whispers in the new Bougainville government about re-opening the mine to support the ‘autonomy’ Bougainville fought for, which now requires an economic base to survive and prove its viability and prepare itself for the promised referendum on full independence at some point in the future—probably decades away, if ever.

The relationship between economics and identity is not always simple, nor is it a straightforward proposition to locate the evidence to support a theory that links values to island identity, even when islanders themselves make such a claim. Island dependency and resistance in relation to ‘mainland’ economic/political jurisdiction creates internal conflicts, mediating between the force of entropy and the perception of distance. Such contradictions create a dialectic, and one effect of this can be to reinforce the experience of a common, treasured ‘island culture’ clinging to a limited but valuable landmass—a treasure that must be protected.

Value

In relation to Bougainville, I have not had the sense that the desire for independence from Papua New Guinea is felt as part of an island identity per se. Whereas on Waiheke, I think many residents identify strongly as islanders, and what they share is the island rather than longstanding ties of kinship and communal ownership of land. I think of Waiheke as an island of strangers who articulate a common identity most strongly when united against Auckland City. Bougainville identity is an expression of historical and contemporary social/cultural values, and a way of life which exists “in the minds of people in a web of social relations” (Graeber 2001:9) based on centuries of political/economic practices that allowed for a successful adaptation to their environment. Bougainville is still deeply influenced by the practices and values based on matrilineal inheritance of chiefly status and rights to land.

Francis Ona, leader of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, chose to isolate himself and his followers from the peace process in order to make the point that they were already independent, and by all accounts, his community used the land and traditional knowledge along with innovative application of Western knowledge and technology (some was scavenged from the mine site) to support that independence. The settlement, near Panguna, is called Mekamui, but it also became known as the ‘no-go zone’ by peacekeepers, Ausaid, and even the new Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). Negotiations with Mekamui are diplomatic in nature. Ona’s death early in 2005 has made the future of his settlement uncertain.

Ona’s retreat into a more self-contained, traditional, cooperative community has been compared to other social movements in Melanesia, including the Hahalis Welfare Society on Buka. The latter comparison, made by some of Ona’s followers themselves, was the topic of some debate in the Hahalis community in 2000, where there was both interest and suspicion surrounding these claims. Both Ona’s Mekamui and the Hahalis Welfare Society withdrew and turned inward in order to use the power of customary knowledge to regain some control over the process of economic and social change resulting from colonisation in its many forms. At the same time, there are many
differences between these two movements—a topic too complex to fully explore here. It is the process of withdrawal as a strategy that I wish to emphasise.

Every now and then some Waiheke islanders also call for an independent Waiheke. Many Waihekeans think of the sea as a virtual ‘moat’ around their way of life and want to maintain it. They do not want a bridge or a tunnel to be built at some point where the mainland comes closest to Waiheke. The small Maori community, depleted historically by tribal wars and European confiscation, is represented by the very open multicultural Piritahi Marae. While one might expect that they would be more entitled than settler Waihekeans to claim the island as their own, they seem more inclined to invite the rest of the community in to share in what the marae has to offer. This contrasts with some of the more strident debates among the settlers as to who is a real ‘local’ or genuine Waihekean.

Sometimes it seems that the ways in which Waihekeans work to maintain their borders amounts to a kind of social sabotage. In the summer, Waiheke is a major holiday destination and the population can nearly double from the usual 8000 permanent residents. Some residents take advantage of this by renting out their homes to tourists and holiday makers at a high rate, thus less well-off Waihekeans can recover some of the cost of annual council rates while staying with friends or relatives over the summer. There were complaints this year that visitors could not find space in the public camping grounds because so many Waiheke residents had moved out of their houses to rent them to visitors, and then pitched a tent for a few dollars at the camping ground. Islanders devise many evasive tactics to profit from visitors while avoiding excessive disruption to their own stated values of community, privacy and a relaxed life-style. Waihekeans talk about wanting to pull up the drawbridge when the tourist season arrives. However, this tendency towards entropy is constrained by a need for the income tourism delivers. The ferry service that links Waiheke to Auckland City depends on the tourist season, and a fall in visitors means a rise in ticket prices for locals. Daily commuters have begun to wonder if they can still afford to live on the island and work in the city. Increases in the cost of transportation and a huge rise in rates (reflecting the value of the real estate) threaten to undermine the balance between dependency and resistance that has become part of the identity of Waiheke islanders and kept entropy at bay. I use ‘entropy’ here in the Greek sense of ‘entrope’ or a turning toward, or in the case of islands, a turning inward rather than outward. As a scientific metaphor, it might be more appropriately used to describe the measure of the amount of energy unavailable for work in a thermodynamic system. Entropy keeps increasing and available energy diminishing in a closed system. A truly ‘closed system’ is, however, difficult to imagine in a social system, and thus I use the term entropy as an analogy.

The establishment of a community in a more remote corner of Waiheke reflects this entropic tendency—forming a communal eco-village of fifteen families established some ten years ago. Financial arrangements are central to the values of the group. They are all shareholders in a 170 hectare property where they can find their own balance between isolation and the benefits of a face-to-face consensus style ‘self-governing’ way of life and connection with the ‘outside’. Some of the residents work in the city,
while some on the island, and others just subsist on their piece of property. Islands within islands.

Recently, a Waiheke woman who had been in the retail business on Waiheke for 34 years initiated a Waiheke credit card which is available only for Waiheke residents and accepted at Waiheke shops. It is a kind of geographic loyalty card and works towards the kind of exchange circuits that localise identity and are specifically not available to outsiders, yet makes use of global technological advances such as debit machines and computer technology. It is also the case that moving off the island may not always cut you off from all kinds of credit in the community. It partly depends on your ‘island identity’, and whether or not that is in sufficient credit to warrant overlooking geographic dislocation. Although this initiative represents a connection with the wider world through technology and the consumption of off-shore goods, there is at the same time an entrenchment of the local through the localisation of debt. There is also potential for entropy if earnings as well as purchases become overwhelmingly local.

Money

Keith Hart has proposed that money, in combination with technology and globalisation, offers humanity a unique circumstance in which to develop a more equal and just world. In order to move beyond the present inequality in wealth and power which he sees as the real threat to democracy, Hart says “[s]omething has to give; but our intellectual task today is to envisage a revolution that is universal, not just limited to individual states” (2000:64):

The meaning of money is thus what each of us makes of it. It is a symbol of our relationship, as an individual person, to the community (hitherto more often singular than plural) to which we belong. This relationship may be conceived of as a durable ground on which to stand, anchoring identity in a collective memory whose concrete symbol is money. Or it may be viewed as the outcome of a more creative process in which we generate the personal credit linking us to society. This latter outlook, however, requires us to abandon the notion that society rests on anything more solid than the transient exchanges we participate in. And that is a step few people at present are prepared to take, preferring to receive the money they live by, rather than make it. (Hart, 2000:263)

The ‘monetization’ of traditional cultures has usually been treated as a process of subversion, undermining the integrity of ways of life that were hitherto resistant to insidious commerce. Hart contrasts the use of money in Western economies with what he calls ‘indigenous’ societies around the world that:

Take Western money in their stride, turning it to their own social purposes rather than bending themselves to its supposedly impersonal logic . . . there are two circuits of social life one, the everyday, is short-term, individual and materialistic; the other, the social, is long-term, collective and idealized, even spiritual. The expediency of market transactions falls into the first category, and all societies seek to subordinate them to the logic of social reproduction in the long run. For some reason . . . money has
acquired in Western economies a social force all of its own, whereas the rest of the world retains the ability to keep it in its place. (Hart, 2000:270-271)

There are many examples of indigenous inventiveness in relation to money including those social/political/economic movements sometimes referred to as ‘cargo cults’ that were seen by various colonial administrations in the Pacific region as a threat to their rule and the establishment of a state controlled economy. One such movement, Maasina Rulu in the Solomon Islands, was harshly suppressed by the British:

So many were in jail that the labour-intensive economy of farming and fishing became practically unsustainable back home. To get their young men back from the prison camps on Guadalcanal, the Malaitans agreed to stop Maasina Rulu and drop their demands for self-rule and higher wages. “We could have done great things [recalled one old chief] but the British stopped us because we ignored them and were a threat to their rule. So we came back here and ignored them until they gave us independence in 1978”. (McDonald 2003:56)

Some indigenous societies retain traditional objects of value as a medium of exchange, as in the East New Britain island province of PNG. The provincial government has legislated for the use of traditional currency, tabu, in the formal sector, effectively recognising a dual currency system in the province. This enabled people to “transform their traditional wealth into modern PNG currency. Conversely, Tolais who need shell money for their customary obligations or settling disputes could exchange PNG currency for tabu” (The National, 2002).

Economic movements, or experiments, that seem to emerge from and contribute to island identity potentially share a direction towards greater equality, independence and flexibility in relation to economic exchange. Innovation and flexibility is almost certainly the only way that small island cultures will be able to survive and generate some form of economy of scale. Whether or not small islands are resource rich as in Bougainville’s copper and gold, or Waiheke Island’s real estate, they will remain attractive to major powers as strategic territories. The implications of their struggles for some sort of self-determination are basic lessons in the relation between self and society.

It would be difficult in this day and age to deny that “[e]xclusion from the economy quite simply means potential exclusion from society as a whole” (Godelier, 2004:8). However, it is in the nature of that economy and the means of exchange that human beings are able to discover treasure and determine its value.

Conclusion: Subaltern Value

Subalternity as a value... is a form of consciousness about human relationships. Subalternity as the radical questioning of the received doctrine of the elite is not something that only politically subordinated people can do. It is a value that intellectuals can appropriate for themselves if they so desire; for the radical humanist intellectual, subalternity is the supreme value. (Gregory, 1997:310-311)
The position of small island cultures in a globalising world is inevitably subaltern and the strategies they use to survive may well depend on finding a unique, creative way to protect as well as generate treasure that is valued, and has value—generating cultural and material energy against the force of entropy. Anthropologists have known for a long time that ‘the economy’ of any given society is not necessarily based on money or commerce as we know it. And as compelling as Hart’s argument may be, we must also consider alternatives. Maurice Godelier, the eminent economic anthropologist draws our attention to this in his essay “What Mauss Did Not Say”:

In an era in which the idea that “everything is for sale”... is rapidly gaining worldwide credence, it is urgent that historians and anthropologists begin to re-examine the place of non-commercial relations in market societies and to seek to determine whether there are realities essential to the life of societies that lie beyond the market and will continue to do so. (Godelier, 2004:8)

Focusing on two such different islands is like comparing apples with oranges, but that is what we need to do in order to abolish the notion that the difference between them is essential or that Melanesian islanders are somehow outside of history when in fact they are contemporaries. Yet, for Bougainville-Buka, and for Waiheke, their own perception of the ‘difference’ that justifies some form of self-determination may be influenced by the nature of their island geography, but ultimately will depend on what they value and to what extent they can protect their treasure without destroying it in the process.

Bibliography


CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND THE TOURIST GAZE

The Falkland Islands

Stephen A Royle

(Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast, UK)

Introduction

This paper engages with the effects of insularity upon cultural development and survival, demonstrating that, for example, in some of the islands of the British Isles, old languages have survived to a greater extent than in more accessible mainland areas. The paper then focuses upon the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, where over the eight generations of British occupation, there is some evidence of specific cultural development, especially in the rural areas. These areas are now under economic challenge and one of the mechanisms for coping has been the encouragement of tourism. The ‘tourist gaze’, to borrow the concept of John Urry (2002), can impact negatively upon that which it views, but to some, tourism is seen as a welcome economic diversification, which helps to support the economy and the culture of these remote islands.

Culture and Islands

Culture develops over time and in a place, partly in response to the constraints and opportunities associated with that place. This is not a claim for the re-introduction of determinism; for example, if a people inhabit a coastal ecumene where they engage in fishing, they will develop a culture that has reference to that activity. This will contrast, if only in detail, with that of people even from the same country and ethnic group who live inland and engage in subsistence agriculture. Let us consider the constraints associated with small islands, for their people face a range of issues common to their insularity, independent of location. All have to deal with the small scale of their landmass, the fact that their resources may be of limited range and quantity, the peripherality of their homeland and its absolute, and, usually, relative remoteness and powerlessness.

Taking the British Isles as an example, as a result of the constraints of insularity, the small islands off the different national mainlands have cultural similarities, if mediated
in detail by their actual location. This can be appreciated most readily with regard to language. English is the dominant tongue of the whole archipelago, but there are also a number of other languages: Scots Gaelic, Irish, Welsh, Manx, Cornish and a French patois on the various Channel Islands. Some of these languages are particular to islands: namely Manx on the Isle of Man and the patois of Jersey, Guernsey and the other smaller Channel Islands. Elsewhere, where the traditional languages were spoken on the large islands of Great Britain and Ireland, they have been pushed aside by the advance of English to survive as first languages either in remote, often mountainous, rural locations or, pertinently to this article, on islands. Scots Gaelic is strong on the Isle of Skye, other islands of the Inner Hebrides and especially the more remote Outer Hebrides or Western Isles. Irish, too, is strongest in the island realm: on Tory, Aranmore, the three Aran Islands, Cape Clear and others. Welsh has a larger foothold on the mainland than the other Celtic languages, even though it is again largely a rural and mountain district first language, but another bastion is the Isle of Anglesey, which Welsh-speaking islanders would prefer to see written as Ynis Môn.

I use language here as a shorthand for the wider aspects of culture, of course. Also, traditional cultures being pushed to the island realm donates problems of sustainability, for these societies are fragile and across the whole of the British Isles in the last couple of centuries hundreds of islands have become depopulated, their culture dispersed and lost. One of the most notable losses associated with culture was Ireland’s Great Blasket Island, location for three Irish-language autobiographies of the early 20th Century (O’Crohan, 1978/1929; O’Sullivan, 1953/1933 and Sayers, 1974/1936). The island was depopulated in 1953, the local island culture that was celebrated in these wonderful books now as dead as these three authors. There is a Blasket Heritage Centre celebrating their life and work—on the mainland. It would seem, then, that mechanisms that support island economies may be valuable also in preserving traditional culture. I will explore this point regarding tourism and its impact on the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic.

Island Culture and the Falkland Islands

There are about 700 islands in the Falkland Islands archipelago, of which two, with the prosaic names of West and East Falkland, are of substantial size, making up the bulk of the 12,173 square kilometres area. British navigators first saw the uninhabited islands (in 1592) and landed upon them (in 1690), but the French were the first to establish a settlement at Port Louis in 1784. A year later, ignorant of the French presence, the British settled at Saunders Island. The British abandoned their foothold and the French sold their settlement to Spain, and this claim was inherited by Argentina upon that country’s independence. Meanwhile, after a lawless period following the clearance of the official settlement by the Americans, the British established control in 1833 and have continuously ruled the islands since, with only the hiatus of 1982 when the Argentineans expelled the British, only for them to lose the islands to Margaret Thatcher’s task force later that eventful year.
The British moved the islands’ only settlement from Port Louis to the planned town of Stanley in 1845. Stanley then developed as a place of service, repair and refreshment for sailing ships making the ferocious passage round Cape Horn. It became a very urban place, with all the functions and activities of a capital city, although in miniature. In the second half of the 19th Century, the rest of the Falkland Islands was opened up for settlement (Royle, 1985). In this treeless expanse with its rough grasses and low bushes, the most suitable economic activity was extensive ranching. In the early years of settlement, this had focussed upon cattle, but under the British it was sheep estates that came to dominate the rural economy. These huge holdings of tens of thousands of hectares tended to be owned and run by companies rather than families. The product was wool, not meat; the islands were too remote and the total scale of the rural economy too small for a market for sheep meat to be developed. The Falkland Islands, with a civilian population total that has never yet reached 3000, has thus developed over what must now be eight generations two distinct lifestyles—urban in the one town and port of Stanley, and rural elsewhere, everywhere outside Stanley known collectively as ‘Camp’.

Figure 1. Off-roading in East Falkland.
This article will now focus on Camp. Here, the usual constraints of islandness were magnified. Communications within the Falklands were very poor. Until the last few years there were no proper roads outside Stanley. Journeys were long and tedious affairs by horseback over land or by small ships. In the 20th Century, matters were eased somewhat by the development of four-wheel drive vehicles capable of traversing the boggy terrain, and the Land Rover became a staple form of transport (fig 1). However, the isolation of the Camp settlements remained extreme, especially on West Falkland (Stanley is on East Falkland) and on the several small islands that had become estates. This fostered a tradition of self-sufficiency. The estate settlements would grow their own vegetables and cut their own peat for fuel. Although the commercial livestock operation was sheep, most would run a few cattle for milk and they would slaughter the beasts themselves for meat. Even delicacies such as jam could be home-produced, and that from diddledee berries was particularly prized (Wilkinson, 1992). The scale of the communities was always tiny (fig 2), with people living out their lives in company with just a handful of others. Camp life was set around the seasons, with shearing being the most important event. Other periodic activities were the necessary get-togethers, vital chances for social interaction. Sports days were important, the annual summer horse races after Christmas in Stanley remain popular, as do the sports days on West Falkland, which move location from farm to farm each year. There was also a characteristic Camp education experience, with its necessary distance education programmes. In these circumstances a distinctive culture emerged with a focus on these activities and experiences. Taking language as an indicator, one can point to the use of a few distinct words such as Camp itself, from the Spanish campo, field and palenque, the killing shed (‘abattoir’ does not convey the essential simplicity of a Falklands palenque), although other common words are used also in other rural Anglophone southern hemisphere regions such as smoko for a break, presumably a term brought in by Australian shearers.

Camp Culture: An Uncertain Future?
The survival of Camp culture is in some doubt as changes to the Falkland Islands take place. The national economy now is dominated not by wool from Camp, but by the sale of fishing licenses (for squid) and also services, both focused on Stanley. There have been significant alterations in Camp. From before the conflict of 1982, there was a process of land reform that has eventually seen the huge estates broken up into smaller units—there were 36 farming enterprises in 1979, now there are about 90 (Royle, 1994) with only a few company estates left. All enterprises are still thousands of hectares in extent, but given the low stocking rate possible in the Falklands, the sub-divisions are now largely just family farms. This transformation has seen much shedding of non-family labour, with consequent rural–urban migration into Stanley, which has grown by about 50 percent since 1982. Thus, a higher proportion of the Falkland population now is urban with limited knowledge of Camp or its culture. One Camp dweller told the author in surprise that visiting Stanley children did not even know what a palenque was. Some of the family farms are struggling, the sub-divisions having made some of them too small (Gurr, 2001). The tiny domestic market means that they have to export their produce, competing in the global market against larger units. The world wool price has been fickle in recent years, and there remain the inevitable high costs of collection and transportation of the product to market from farms isolated on the local scale in a territory itself very distant from consumers. There has been diversification, and the Falkland Islands Development Corporation has been active in that arena. Examples are the EU standard abattoir near Stanley, which has helped increase meat exports, and there has been the development of woollen garment production on the islands, and pasture and stock improvement schemes have increased productivity. However, the rural economy still struggles and the Camp population is ageing and falling. West Falkland has now less than 400 residents, and there are few children left now for the Camp Education Service to teach.

The Tourist Gaze on the Falkland Islands

Tourism is an industry that may ease the rural problems of the Falkland Islands (Royle, 2006). The islands get about 35,000 tourists per year, with the vast majority on cruise ships—39 ships making 85 voyages were involved in the 2004-5 season. Passenger tax alone brought in £300,000 sterling to government coffers in 2003-4. The voyages are either by large ships circumnavigating Latin America and mostly full of elderly North Americans, or they are by smaller vessels with more adventurous passengers calling in on their way to the Antarctic (Ingham and Summers, 2002)—the Falklands have the last shops and pubs they will see on their trip. The cruise ships often make two stops, one at Stanley, a second at one of a variety of places in Camp chosen for its accessibility to wildlife. The ships anchor offshore and zodiacs transport the passengers to land. Stanley offers several shops and pubs; and it has a good range of facilities for a settlement of a couple of thousand people. Some tourists, seemingly unaware that the Falkland Islands are both anglophone and safe, just cluster round the jetty. The more brave venture into town and ‘gaze’. In the recollection of a former Chief Executive of the Falkland Islands, they:
Drift as though they were inhabitants of another dimension, like giants observing a model village ... [without] concept that the roads carry traffic and real people are doing real work in real offices while they shamble around. (Gurr, 2001:221)

Some get taken by road to the nearest penguin site at Gypsy Cove, which was spoilt by trampling associated with the feet of up to 1000 tourists per day at peak times. It is now carefully fenced and protected. Others do get out into Camp, as shown below.

A second tourism sector comprises the land-based visitors who fly in from Chile or with the British Royal Air Force from England via Ascension Island. There are a few hundred each year, the limited infrastructural capacity on the islands regulates the market—Stanley’s largest hotel has just sixteen beds. These tourists tend to be middle-aged people, usually with an interest in the wildlife and/or the military history; and there are many sites from the 1982 conflict to be explored. A third sector is the military market. There are about 1500 service personnel stationed on the Falklands at any one time, and given the islands’ isolation, they take their rest and recreation in the Falklands, often in Camp if only to escape from their main base at Mount Pleasant.

Figure 3. Gentoo penguin rookery, Kidney Cove, East Falkland.

One guesthouse owner in West Falkland reports that it is the choice of getting up when they want and having a long, hot bath that attracts her military clients, but most visitors to Camp come at least partly to see the wildlife (Strange, 1992; Woods and Woods, 2006). There are sea lions—one popular offshore destination is Sea Lion Island—and other marine mammals, such as dolphins, whales, fur and elephant seals. Even more spectacular is the avian wildlife. Everywhere, there are surprisingly sizeable birds: upland geese, the Falklands flightless steamer duck, grebes, shearwaters and petrels. Falcons, hawks and caracaras, both striated and crested, are birds of prey. Turkey vultures are scavengers and of a size sufficient to be able to tackle sickly sheep (the author has watched with transfixed horror a turkey vulture consume a steamer duck). More palatable and more popular sights are the penguin rookeries. The Falklands are of
global importance for breeding gentoos and rockhoppers, less so for kings and magellanic, and it is the penguin that is the iconic image for rural Falklands tourism. A number of the farms can offer tourists a close-up view of penguin rookeries. One is Kidney Cove on East Falkland (Kidney Cove, 2006). Trips here see tourists taken directly from their cruiser or from the pier in Stanley by ships’ boats or tourist company launch to a small jetty, then collected by Land Rover and driven off-road to the penguin sites. Some find the off-road ‘safari’ challenging; to others it is part of the fun. The principal site is a gentoo penguin rookery, a disturbingly malodorous attraction (fig 3). Near to the rookery are what the owner calls two ‘bucket and chuck it’ toilets, benches and a hut selling souvenirs. The income generated from such visits helps to keep the overall farm enterprise afloat and maintain the owners’ presence in Camp and so make an indirect contribution to the survival of Camp culture.

Figure 4. Shearing shed, Port Howard, West Falkland.

Other types of tourism experience impact more directly on Camp culture insofar as it is the culture that is at least one reason for taking the trip. Some of those staying in guesthouses in Camp settlements may be there for that reason. The author has stayed in one in Port Howard in West Falkland and the operators in showing him round ensured that there was the chance to see the farm and appreciate the associated way of life by, for example, getting into the shearing shed (fig 4), its distinct odour being a memorable Camp encounter. Other tourism experiences are even more focused on traditional rural culture, and many take a trip out to observe a traditional farm. Some of the relatively small Falklands farms of 4-8000 hectares may now obtain around half their income from tourism. By directly paying to see it in operation, tourists actually help to sustain this traditional culture, if at a risk of fossilising it. John Urry in his development of the concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ (2002) has shown how places can be appropriated for the tourist experience. In the extreme, traditional culture becomes just a living museum—there are examples of Irish island cultures where this has happened, such as Inishmore, where the author has observed a patch of potatoes with a sign referring visitors to their leaflet, which explains that potatoes used to be an important crop (Royle, 2003).

---
---

*Refereed Papers From*

*The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference,*
Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, 9-13 February 2006. Edited by Henry Johnson

125
Without the tourists, those potatoes would not have been planted. In the Falklands, the journey to the living museum has not yet been completed, insofar as the rural enterprises are still engaged in active production, which tourists can observe, but which would be taking place anyway without their presence. However, perhaps the journey is underway. Consider this extract from a tourism provider regarding Long Island Farm (fig 5) on East Falkland, an 8000 hectares enterprise belonging to a sixth-generation Falklands couple:

**Who still live and farm in completely traditional Falkland style. They farm using skilled sheep dogs and Falkland Island bred horses, milk their own cows, make their own bread, butter and cream. They also use the traditional fuel, peat, which is a tradition that has nearly died out in the Falklands. A sheep shearing demonstration will take place. There will be a horse gearing display (Sullivan Shipping, 2006).**

The tourists are also brought into the traditional farmhouse to see the peat stove and have *smoko* with bread, butter, jam and cream, all home made. Tourists here view what is, at least for the present generation of farmers, a living Camp culture, although the fact that horses are still used for sheep work here, rather than the otherwise ubiquitous quad bikes might suggest that some of the old ways are being preserved for the visitors. Tourists also contribute directly to Long Island Farm’s traditional culture more than just financially in that some of them get the chance to cut the peat for the stove.

**Figure 5. Long Island Farm, East Falkland.**

**Conclusion**

This article has shown that the characteristics associated with insularity can foster either the survival of an older culture or the development of a distinctive island culture. Focusing on the rural areas of the Falkland Islands, it has demonstrated the development of a rural island culture, with emphases on self-sufficiency, the cycle of the wool producer’s year and the need to overcome isolation. This traditional culture is under
threat as economic and social changes, including land reform, have affected it, especially as the Falkland Islands’ rural population is now ageing and declining. Some economic support comes from tourism, and when it is focused on wildlife this supports the rural areas and culture indirectly by paying into the overall farm enterprise. The wildlife is certainly commodified, but at least the avian actors in this theatre are not aware of this, and with the now careful management of the sites the sustainability of the commodified penguin is reasonably assured. Tourism that focuses rather on the Falklands’ rural culture might be seen as an operation of MacCannell’s (1973) conceptualisation of some tourists’ desire to see and experience what is authentic, even regarding interactions with a host community. Achieving this without commodification of the Camp culture itself may well be difficult. Perhaps small-scale visits to farm guesthouses may get close, but it is probably impossible to attain within the confines an organised tour. Following MacCannell, Cohen (1988) suggested that the quest for such experiences may result in the performance of only a ‘staged authenticity’ (see also Brown, 1996, or Halewood and Hannam, 2001), reminiscent of Urry’s appropriation of the tourist gaze. The gaze has the possibility of turning the culture it observes into stone by fossilising it in its current and attractive state. There is already some element of staged authenticity regarding the farm visits in the Falkland Islands, and, as the generations move on, perhaps this trend towards a living museum will become stronger.

References


O'Sullivan, M (1953) *Twenty Years A’growing*, London: Oxford University Press (first published in Irish as Ó Súilleabháin, M (1933) *Fiche Bliain ag Fás*, Baile Átha Cliath: Clólucht an Talbóidigh)


“SYNCHRONICITY HAPPENED”:

Dance and Music as a Social Force in the Furneaux Group, 1954-2004

Robin Ryan

(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia)

Everyone loved the dances—music was in our feet. (Mallett, 2001:14)

Introduction

The aim of this research has been to account for dance/music-culture as a lively social force in the Furneaux Group, eastern Bass Strait, Tasmania, focussing on local environment as a motivation for participants and audience for whom the movement of dance and the sound of music evokes special cultural meanings in communal life. Insights gleaned from interviews, observation of school music, local choral work and Scottish dance supplement readings of Flinders Island’s fortnightly print bulletin Island News (henceforth IN) and writings by part- and non-Aboriginal authors to support a genre breakdown of the fifty-year period following the bulletin’s establishment in 1954.[1]

Accounts of indigenous Tasmanian history vary in interpretation of cultural change, continuity, resistance and accommodation, yet all lean on the work of Plomley (1966, 1987). Since the European invasion of Tasmania reduced the number of Aborigines within three-quarters of a century to small groups relocated to the Furneaux islands (Plomley, 1987:1), traditionally-inflected dance and music persisted in this remote region longer than in mainland Tasmania, co-existing alongside—and becoming increasingly consumed by—the competing agendas and agencies present in ‘introduced’ forms of dance and music.

The old and new flavours of these forms are best captured by dovetailing the individual cultural histories of the Group’s two largest landmasses, Flinders Island (the administrative centre) and the less populous Cape Barren Island, which currently houses 58 families. Of the remaining 50 peaks of the Bassian Isthmus that once linked Tasmania with mainland Australia, only Clarke Island is permanently populated, with “six people” <http://www.flindersislandonline.com.au/aglance4.asp>.

[1]
Flinders Island numbers were boosted by an influx of settler-soldiers in 1952. The infrastructure has not supported growth in recent years and the effects of Furneaux demographic change on the performing arts merits funded study. Persons identifying as ‘Aboriginal’ comprised almost one-third of the 900-strong population in 2000 (IN, 6/10/2000:3). On 15/2/1957, IN remarks that Flinders Island’s field of entertainment was very limited, although Davie (1980:41) suggests that “the isolated population studies things in the abstract”, and that “this gains much wider knowledge of life in the outside world”. The author conceptualises cultural recreation as a form of disengagement from mainland Australia that breathes freely in local space, although it will be shown to have some global influences and interconnections.

The anthropologist Duranti (1997:96) insists that one person cannot cover the whole story of a cultural group, hence the present paper is limited to exploring introduced dance/music-culture in terms of social behaviour, and picks up on a rare focus of creative energy originally described by IN (12/5/1995:13-14) as “synchronicity”. It will be shown that synchronicity spontaneously occurs in a broad range of activities as a unifying force that transcends issues of age, race and gender. In these ways, it promotes junctions of communication between special interest groups, a theme articulated by islander Desiree Fitzgibbon:

*True isolation is not about living on islands, rather, more about cities, lack of true community, loss of connection to nature, to each other, to selves. Splendid are we in our isolation, for is it not that very state which connects us? The threads and fibres interweaving, interlocking—each one important to the whole, part of the whole. (IN, 23/6/1995:10)*

**Early Cultural History: A Brief Background Summary**

The Bass Strait was uninhabited when Captain Charles Bishop commenced sealing operations there in 1798, although ancient middens have since been located. Caucasian sailors, sealers, whalers and escaped convicts gravitated to the Furneaux Group in large, unsubstantiated numbers. Historian-naturalist Derek Smith envisaged these early days as “enveloped in silence” (ie left without a single original song or lament) (Flanagan, 1990:92). However, the present author suggests that the singing voice remained available to those Straitsmen not in possession of instruments, as did their bodies for dancing.

Regarding the ‘banditti of bushrangers’ who kidnapped indigenous Tasmanian women to labour for them in sealing, Plomley (1966, 1987) implies that the women danced in modes of resistance with traditional movements becoming gradually corrupted as they shared dance with the men. By 1820, an estimated 50 sealers and 100 Aboriginal women and children lived in Bass Strait (Smyth and Bahrdt, 2004:179). In 1837, 40 women still lived on islets outside Flinders Island (Boyce, 2001:49).

In 1871, seven families were granted land on Cape Barren Island (Smyth and Bahrdt, 2004:179), and in 1881, its western end was gazetted as a Reserve (Boyce, 2001:66). In time, this resourceful hybrid group identified itself as ‘The Moonbird People’, Moonbirds being Tasmanian Muttonbirds or Short-tailed Shearwaters. Muttonbirding
conducted on the smaller islands became their main source of income, providing the context for large end-of-season celebrations of feasting, dance and song on the grass floors of birding sheds (eg on Babel Island). Cultural and social exchange between the islands flourished as people visited one another and sang a mixture of Aboriginal and European songs at gatherings (Smyth and Bahrdt, 2004:179). [6]

In a separate tragic drama, Wybalenna, Flinders Island was used as a dumping ground for the last remaining 160 Tasmanians. The transportation, conducted by Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson in the 1830s, committed the Aborigines to pursue their own culture, with the intent of proving that they wished to advance towards Christianity (Ryan, 1981:183). [7] The people performed dance representing their conflict with Europeans on the Tasmanian mainland (ibid:189), thereby demonstrating that traditional dance and song were adaptable. Most soon died, but in 1847, the remaining 47 persons removed to Oyster Cove, southern Tasmania ‘plunged’ into ceremonial dancing (ibid:193-199, 205). [8] One of them, Fanny Cochrane, married a European named Smith, and her voice supplied the only recorded examples (1899 and 1903 respectively) of Tasmanian song and speech ever made (see Moyle 1960, 1968).

Flinders Island was leased to two successive families from 1850, and two years later a series of Church of England missionary voyages commenced to “the half-castes of Bass Strait” (Boyce, 2001:49). Hymn singing was perpetuated by musician Canon Marcus Brownrigg’s thirteen voyages there in the 1870s. Second generation community and Christian leader Lucy Beedon (or Beeton, 1829-1886) was a daughter of Aboriginal woman Emerenna. Taught by her ex-convict father James Beedon to sail boats between the islands, Beedon housed a piano on Badger Island, but its date of arrival there is unknown (Boyce, 2001:52; West, 1987:83).

Systematising Contemporary Dance and Music

Many changes have taken place regarding why or how the islanders adopted, adapted or discarded dance/music traditions, but notwithstanding gaps in the evidence, the following genre breakdown suggests that mid-to-late 20th Century activities may be divided into eight distinct (yet sometimes overlapping) categories, namely:

- The Unique Dance Music Style of Cape Barren Island
- Dances and Balls on Flinders Island
- Specialist dance classes and theatrical productions on Flinders Island
- School, Church and Anzac music on Flinders Island
- Choral and instrumental groups on Flinders Island
- Festivals and workshops on Flinders Island
- Flinders Island disco, tavern and sports club culture, and
- Furneaux Aboriginal cultural revival.

The Unique Dance Music Style of Cape Barren Island

In accounting for Cape Barren Island’s mid 20th-Century heyday, promotional material suggests that the sealers shared their Irish and Yorkshire folk music with the locals.
Somewhere along the way the North American folk fiddle appeared, and with the addition of local bluegrass fiddle, 20th-Century ‘Cape Barren music’ evolved. In the mid 1930s, a new Cape Barren Hall was built to accommodate frequent dances at which self-taught musicians—most notably the Brown Brothers, Les, Athol, Dennis and Norm—played accordions, banjos, mouth organs, mandolins, ukuleles, violins and spoons. A substantial proportion of the community contributed to the musical culture, as the stage would often overflow with several people playing each instrument (http://www.atic.gov.au/news_room/atsic_news/Autumn2001/Island_Music.asp).


In 1991, 77 people travelled from surrounding islands by aircraft, barge, dinghy, speed and sailboat to attend Cape Barren Island Bonfire and Fancy Dress Ball (IN, 14/6/1991:1), while the following year about 50 Flinders Islanders and their children danced in costumes before sailing or ‘winging’ their way home (IN, 12/6/1992:2).

Dances and Balls on Flinders Island

The rest of this paper focuses on Flinders Island, where the first permanent non-Aboriginal settlers established a micro-colony in the late 1880s. In the pre-television era, long evenings were conducive to dancing. In the early 1900s, a Mr Brown used to play fiddle all the way to Whitemark on horse and jinker (a conveyance for two or three passengers). Horseback riders spread the word efficiently, and by the time Brown arrived at the hall, people would be waiting for the dance to begin (IN, 29/3/1996:13).[9]

Another musician, Walter Briant, played button accordion for almost 40 years. IN (12/11/2004:7) described him as “a genius pure and simple” for inventing a music-making machine and gas-powering a car to drive islanders to dances during World War II. Patrons danced the Waltz, Barn-dance, Schottische, Polka, Pride-of-Erin, Gipsy Tap and Lambeth Walk, often until dawn (Davie, 1980:42-43). The 1930s saw the building of a second Whitemark Hall, while the 1950s saw a Municipal Hall built with dancing space. The Girls Art Club Hall eventually provided a pianola to replace piano accordion, concertina, mouth organ and other instruments (IN, 29/3/1996:13).
Moments of synchronicity between different social groups on Flinders Island assume import given the instances of prejudice towards part-Aboriginal patrons at general dances, recalled by West (1987). Her family, the Armstongs, preferred the socials at which their relations from Cape Barren Island joined them on Flinders Island. Grandfather Neuto Everett (accordion, violin),[10] ‘Uncle Albert’ (mouth organ), Clem Beedon (accordion, violin) and Bill Wheatley (accordion) would form a scratch band. The Armstrongs also staged dances at their Robertdale home to a Columbia gramophone, and West’s mother Ivy cooked muttonbirds and damper for the travellers. When the family stayed overnight at Lady Barron and Pine Scrub dances, they used saddles as pillows (West, 1987:24-25).

Flinders Island balls were comparatively elaborate. In the period 1954-2004, those listed by Worsley (2004:25) included the Fancy Dress, Bad Taste, Boilers and Spoilers, Fireman’s, Gun Club, Guy Fawkes, Mad Hatters, Municipal Debutantes, Olympic, Outer Space and Returned Soldiers League (RSL) Balls. For non-dancers, there were motion pictures, musical evenings, euchre parties, bridal parades, kitchen teas, garden fêtes, fashion parades, novelty socials and ugly man contests (adapted from Worsley, 2004:25).

Specialist Dance Classes and Theatrical Productions on Flinders Island


Flinders Island’s first ballet school was founded by trained dancer Lindsay Luddington after she migrated from England in the early 1970s to marry an English-born farmer. Luddington became a tireless advocate for the Flinders Island creative arts scene, and currently operates the island’s leading tour business with husband James.

Nonagenarian Mary Mactier has conducted Scottish Country Dancing classes in Whitemark since 1982.[11] ‘Our Lady, Mary of the Tartans’ (thus named on account of her late husband’s title) exemplifies how people can be Flinders Islanders while still reflecting their original heritage. During Easter 2001, Melbourne’s Royal Scottish Dance Society visited Flinders Island (IN, 27/4/2001:10), and in 2002, the local Lion’s Club sponsored a Scottish gathering (IN, 22/2/2002:16).

A belly dancing group formed in 1997 (IN, 20/12/1996:6), and Latin American dance classes commenced in 2001 (IN, 22/6/2001:6). Since specialist dance classes were being conducted almost every night of the month, Latin dance instructor Ian Rochfort suggested that regular nights be held to share all types of dancing. Angie Boyes thus organised a night of “multi-cultural flingin, singin and hootnannyin” [sic], at which cross-pollination of dance cultures engendered “great hilarity” (IN, 26/10/2001:2; 21/12/2001:21).

School, Church and Anzac Music on Flinders Island

Bruce Evans has developed a successful method for teaching ukulele to all young primary pupils at Flinders Island District High School, and he co-produced a CD with some older students in 2003. At Presentation Night 1996, students previewed their item *Beached* for The Sydney Cove Festival on Preservation Island to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the beaching of the ship *Sydney Cove* (the event that triggered exploration of the Furneaux islands by Bass and Flinders). On the anniversary the children danced to drum rhythms before the ghost ship ignited (IN, 20/12/1996:1; 21/2/1997:1-2).

Flinders Island exemplifies ecumenical living, with support for any function being forthcoming from all denominations. Annual events include Community Christmas Carols and a Combined Churches Dinner Dance. The latter attracted 90 people to Lady Barron Hall in 1991 (IN, 17/5/1991:1). The following year, local churches fellowshipped with island visitors at a programme of community singing and recitations by the late Elvie Bowman—Flinders Island’s most eminent home-grown poet—of her original works including *Moonbirds*. St Alban’s Anglican and St Paul’s Catholic churches produced a Bush Bash the same year (IN, 12/6/1992:3; 21/8/1992:1).


Choral and Instrumental Groups on Flinders Island

For many years, the backbone of fundraising on Flinders Island has been English immigrant Gillian Woods, former student of the Royal Academy Conservatorium of Music, London, and former music teacher at Methodist Ladies College, Melbourne. Woods’ late husband bought land on Flinders Island for holiday purposes, and the couple eventually took up permanent residence there. Drawing guest artists from mainland Tasmania and Melbourne, Woods organises regular concerts of classical music on behalf of The Royal Flying Doctor Service and Anti-Cancer Council at her homestead ‘Yirriluka’. On 9 October 2004, for instance, she raised $1443 (IN, 29/10/2004:19). It might appear that anyone could come in and lead music-making on the island but it takes many years just to be accepted as an ‘islander’. Woods’ concerts, now a popular feature of the annual calendar, have filled a cultural need for many.
The Country Women’s Association (CWA), active on Flinders Island since 1946, promotes carols at their annual Christmas Party (IN, 21/12/1956:8). At an initial meeting held at the CWA, Whitemark, on 23 July 1970, interested members of the public were invited to form Flinders Island Choral Group.[13] Currently known as Island Harmony, this amateur group has benefited from workshops conducted on the island by Melbourne singer Judy Jacques (Ryan, 2005), and conductor Gillian Woods who often adapts lyrics to suit Flinders Island.[14]

Many ditties have been inspired by the huge number of dead animals strewn across roads (IN, 26/5/1992:2), but 1996 marked the “resurrection of the dead into living music” when school employees Jon Hizzard, Bruce Evans and Mark Alexander joined whale scientist Debbie Glasgow to form Roadkill Drummers. Hizzard and Evans constructed drums from the skins of feral cats and goats, potoroos, wallabies, wombats, wild boar, and flotsam and jetsam washed up on beaches including driftwood, rope, and fishing net buoys:

_We’re pretty isolated here on Flinders, so we have to look after ourselves and be resourceful, be ingenious. Here you have to make and fix everything yourself._ (Hizzard, interviewed by Richard Cornish 26/2/2001, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/arts/adlib/stories/s881866.htm>).

Hizzard and Evans subsequently founded Flinders Unique Drumming Group Experience (FUDGE), gathering together about 20 teachers, shopkeepers, farmers and the local vet. After Hizzard promoted FUDGE as “an excellent example of a vibrant, positive community, singing, dancing and having fun” (IN, 7/12/2001:1), it became fashionable for Flinders Islanders to own a Roadkill drum.

**Festivals, Workshops and Visiting Performers on Flinders Island**

In 2001, six boys known as The Island Inferno Drummers participated in the Launceston Streets Alive Federation Parade, at which FUDGE performed the African dance _Fume Fume_. The style developed by the three groups contains African influences, but projects itself as Flinders Island’s own brand of ‘world music’. At workshops led by magician/musical engineer Strato Anagnostis in 1995, strangers came together to produce a ‘sound kaleidoscope’ through a new way of interacting: “At one moment, one special moment, the focus was pure, _synchronicity happened_, it was a moment to change the world” (IN, 12/5/1995:13-14).

In 1999, Annabel Apps initiated the Flinders Island Identity Distinct project, collecting visual arts, craft, precious objects, poems, drumming, and natural island sounds for an interactive CD ROM. Each year visiting artists contribute to festivals, most notably the 2000 Flinders Island Wind Festival. Listing 21 events over a ten-day period, Festival Chairperson Hizzard promoted collaborative exploration of new musical genres. At the Preview, FUDGE drummed in the round and an all-night Windbound jam session ignited the camaraderie that characterised the festival (IN, 10/3/2000:9; 2/6/2000:14; 6/10/2000:1-2).

---

Refereed Papers From
_The 2nd International Small Island Cultures Conference_,
Museum Theatre, Norfolk Island Museum, 9-13 February 2006. Edited by Henry Johnson

135
Flinders Island Disco, Tavern and Sports Club Culture

Flinders Island has not escaped the global juggernaut of disco culture. On 12 September 1981, IN allocated the island’s three discos a four-star system of ratings. They noted that the first had operated from 1976 as Sargeant Pepper’s Disco in The Interstate Hotel, Whitemark. Later, a name change to Bosun’s Disco accompanied an increase in volume, but conversation was “still possible”. The Flinders Island Sports Club has sponsored a School Holiday Disco and Karaoke Night for under 18s to encourage younger memberships. It boasts ample seating, dance space and music of “moderate volume”. Likewise, the Furneaux Tavern in Lady Barron has utilised music videos and a resident disc jockey.

Furneaux Aboriginal Cultural Revival

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), founded in 1973, has stimulated resurgence of disrupted cultural practices. The changing relationship of dance and music to Furneaux concepts of identity manifest in cultural revival can be gleaned from Cape Barren Island-born poet Japanangka Errol West (1947-2001):

I use my childhood memories of places, people and words to re-create my identity. Uncle Leedham, a fine black man is my fondest memory—He could sing, he could dance and play the mouth organ or gum leaf. His broad shoulders carried me . . . I owe him and his contemporaries a debt—and I’ll pay—But there is no-one to teach me the songs that bring the Moon Bird, the fish or any other thing that makes me what I am. (Gee, 2004:119-120)

In 1999, The Island Coes recorded the cassette Born on Ol’ Cape Barren. The traditional item Little Burnt Potato is a version of an old American fiddle tune from 1800 or earlier; the song Mother was attributed to Les Brown and Margaret Mansell; and the 1960s archival track features Brown picking out an unknown tune (sleeve notes). In 2002, The Island Coes performed at the first Shared Dreaming Festival (the Flinders Island component of Tasmania’s annual Ten Days on the Island), instigated by New South Wales-born Aboriginal educator/songwriter Bob Wilson, who has resided on Flinders Island and mainland Tasmania.

Judy Jacques re-interpreted and recorded two Fanny Cochrane Smith songs in 2002 (Jacques, 2005; Ryan, 2005). Two other traditional songs are sung on Flinders Island (Ryan with Cameron, 2003:34), but at this point in time, Cameron reserves the right to withhold further information.

Conclusion

This paper has overviewed dance/music culture as a primary reference point to Furneaux cultural history, identifying eight distinct, sometimes overlapping genres flourishing on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands from 1954 to 2004. Clearly the complex history of dance and music in the region has embodied some general fads of popular culture circulating in the global musical flow. Several Flinders Island festivals and
workshops have taken place in cultural overlap with mainland Tasmania and, to a lesser extent, mainland Australia and beyond.

The cultural forces at play between people—and between the individual histories of Cape Barren and Flinders Islands—directly influenced the adoption and adaptation of the genres and local grass-roots traditions that evolved, which merit documentation in their own right. Cape Barren Islanders vigorously adapted Western music/dance genres to their antipodean island world, most notably The Brown Brothers in the community contexts of Cape Barren Hall. On account of its sparse population, socio-economic disadvantage, and insignificant number of visitors, the island’s musical culture remained relatively stable in its separation by Franklin Sound from the more culturally diverse Flinders Island.

Varieties of synchronicity were manifest in the range of activities practised on Flinders Island. Old-time country dance enhanced life before rock’n’roll and television challenged and changed musical practices. In commenting on the advent of piped and noisy band music, Davie (1980:30) rued the disappearance of the friendly nights of dancing under kerosene lights. Since the 1970s, migrants from the British Isles, including Luddington, Woods, Mactier and Hizzard, have enthusiastically provided other cultural dance and music options for the Flinders Island public. In the 1990s, Hizzard and Evans developed a social drumming tradition inspired and furnished by the natural environment.

It is apparent that a larger comprehensive description of the rich performance history of the Furneaux Group throughout its century-and-three-quarter long period of human occupation would inform the general history of the region, and of Tasmania as an arena of struggle for the survival of Aboriginal identity. The canon for documenting the region as exploited territory must be supplanted by an island-centric approach that can thoroughly negotiate its delicate multicultural dimensions.

Endnotes

[1] Island News does not name all its authors. The bulletin was preceded by Flinders Island News (1939-1942).


[3] Prior to the establishment of a wireless station in 1912, Flinders Island’s only form of communication with the outside world was fortnightly mail. A radio telephone link did not follow until 1942.


[6] Intermarriage has always been commonplace in the Furneaux Group. Many Cape Barren Islanders have relocated to Lady Barron, Flinders Island, but at the same time many immigrants to Flinders Island have not intermarried. Elders identify as ‘Aboriginal’, but it is offensive for visiting researchers to interrogate individuals as to their precise ethnic mix. In the Tasmanian context the blanket terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘non-Aboriginal’ have little to do with skin colour; ‘Aboriginality’ (strictly ‘part-Aboriginality’) being a contested identity across the state.

[7] The captured men built Wybalenna Chapel in 1835. Restored by the National Trust in 1974, it remains a poignant symbol of Christian charity misdirected towards socialising indigenous people to European existence.

[8] Captain Malcolm Laing Smith accommodated ceremonial dancing whilst commanding Flinders Island. In 1836 he had been the first lessee of King Island, western Bass Strait, where he owned a flute and taught his children music (Jones and Sullivan, 1989:33). Before aviation, social exchange between King Island and the Furneaux Group was restricted by Bass Strait’s treacherous seas.

[9] This was possibly Edwin (‘Tip’) Brown (1867–1950), who shot the joint of his finger off to avoid death from snakebite. Brown played at dances during the late 1800s and early 1900s, according to his violin display notes at Furneaux Museum.


[12] Baritone Bob Witten was appointed vicar of St Alban’s Anglican Church, Whitemark, from 2000 to 2005. He sang at many concerts on the island.

[13] Longstanding choir member Lois Ireland is the daughter of poet Elvie Bowman.

[14] Woods’ original songs include Where the Roaring Forties Blow (lyrics by Elvie Bowman), and Ride the Difficult Storms. The author observed an Island Harmony rehearsal on 2 December 2004.

[15] Sources that still need to be exhausted include books, journals, diaries and memoirs, museum ephemera, photo albums, recordings, reminiscences and verse.
Bibliography


Murray-Smith, S (1973) *Beyond the Pale: The Islander Community of Bass Strait in the Nineteenth Century* (reprinted from *Papers and Proceedings, Tasmanian Historical Research Association* 20/4)


**Discography**


Acknowledgements

Judy Jacques introduced me to the Furneaux Group, and Professor Philip Hayward has encouraged research of its culture. I am grateful to The State Library of Victoria, Melbourne; The Archive Office of Tasmania, Hobart; and The State Library of Tasmania in Hobart and Whitemark, Flinders Island, especially Kayleen Mort. I acknowledge the work of journalist Ken G. Worsley and other contributors to Island News. Conversations with Annabel Apps, Patsy Cameron, Bernice Condie, Bruce Evans, Jim Everett, Jon Hizzard, Lois Ireland, D’reen Lovegrove, Lindsay Luddington, Mary Mactier, Lynn Mason, Judy Walker and Bob Wilson have been appreciated. Finally, thanks to Mick and Mim Pitts, Judy Jacques and Sandro Donati, James and Lindsay Luddington, Lois Ireland, and Gillian Woods for island hospitality.
TRAVERSING THE WAVES

Bridging Cultures Through Music

Rachel Shave

(Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia)

Movement between countries can be difficult, if not daunting, for those trying to adapt and create a new life. One of the primary issues facing immigrants is how to become functioning members of their new countries and communities. This includes learning how to access services and facilities, how to manage education and training differences, how to meet people and handle social assumptions that are accepted without question in the new culture, and how to overcome language differences. Simultaneously, migrants must also negotiate how much of the original culture to retain, and what methods and processes facilitate this maintenance, a process that Adelaida Reyes has described as migrancy.[1] This paper presents a case study of one group of young Seychellois people, currently living in Perth, who have consciously sought to address these issues of home, origin and belonging through music.[2] The band they formed is called Seychelles Rhythms. I met the founder and original manager, Giovana Neves, through working with her at an Employment Service and subsequently made a short documentary about the group, A Seychelles Rhythm, as part of a Murdoch University undergraduate assignment in 2001. Throughout subsequent years, I have maintained my connection with the group, interviewing them for different projects and purposes. This paper aligns these studies.

I begin with a brief history and geography of the Seychelles as its music is bound to this environment and colonial context. Like the young islanders who move to Perth in Western Australia, I trace the movement of music from the islands to Perth. Through following the triumphs and frustrations of this group, this paper explores the challenges for migrants in retaining place, space and self while simultaneously embracing Australian citizenry and citizenship because, although each group and individual has unique experiences, these can resonate for others, enabling self-awareness and collective insight.

The Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean covering an area of approximately 450 square kilometres, just 4 degrees south of the equator. The islands are still covered in lush, tropical vegetation and surrounded by broad, white, sandy beaches. The islands, with a current population of approximately 81,000, were uninhabited until the French landed there in 1742, formally claiming them in 1756. The
population grew from the original French colonists, deportees from France and large numbers of African slaves who were initially brought in to work the land. After the Napoleonic wars, the colony was ceded to the British, remaining under their influence until granted independence in 1976. The following year, a coup d’etat formed a republic that continues to this day. Through the years, Asian influences arrived with migrants from India, China and Malaysia. Widespread intermarriage has resulted in a people of mixed descent with a unique language. This is evidenced by the islands’ official languages, which are Creole, French and English. This diversity flows into the music that permeates all aspects of life for the Seychellois. While it has roots in the rhythms of Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, the music also incorporates European influences, particularly French. These elements continue to shape the music which spans traditional, hip hop, electronica, jazz, blues and pop.

While there are Seychellois communities in Melbourne and Sydney, many immigrants from the Seychelles end up in Perth, which hosts two Seychelles clubs. A number of the Seychelles polytechnic teachers were educated in Perth and pass on their love and knowledge of the city to students who, in turn, come to the city to complete their education. After finishing study, many of the students return to live permanently, creating a growing network of friends and family which encourages more Seychellois people to move to Perth than other parts of Australia.

A similar path was followed by Giovana Neves when she came to live in Perth to attend university and then stayed for ten years, although she returned to the Seychelles in 2005. Giovana became concerned that Seychellois youth were not attending social functions held within Perth’s Seychelles community, and would thereby lose their cultural heritage and identity. Combining her love of her culture, dance and music, she formed the Seychelles Cultural Troupe in 1997 as a means of engaging and involving young Seychellois people. As Giovana explains:

*I feel that it is important that you don’t lose your roots, your sense of grounding, because it does give you a sense of identity and ‘being’ as well. But also, it gives you something where it acts as your springboard so that you can actually acquire other cultures and get also a sense of respect for others and also be able to share what you already have.*[3]

The original members, Giovana, Grace and Joelle Barbe, and Jacqueline Anacoura, began performing traditional dances to a tape and guitar while they saved for a drum set and other band equipment. In 1999, the group incorporated as the Seychelles Cultural Troupe WA Inc. Remaining under this banner, the band evolved into a distinct identity, naming itself Seychelles Rhythms in 2000. Members have changed and numbers fluctuated over the intervening time. At present, the band consists of Grace and Joelle Barbe, Jacques L’Etourdie, Jemmy Louange and Michael Laporte, who are all Seychellois. Throughout its history, the band has incorporated people from England, Australia and Samoa, although the majority hail from the Seychelles. One band member explained that although he had been born in Australia, being a member of the band had provided an avenue for him to access and appreciate his Seychellois heritage.[4]
When Seychelles Rhythms perform, they draw on African, Caribbean, Indian and European influences. The group uses keyboards to reproduce the French influenced sounds of accordion and violins. They mobilise the African soukous and the moutya. Soukous is dance music that originated in central Africa in the early 20th Century, its name being derived from the French word for ‘shake’. Recent forms include high energy dance music due to the work of Kanda Bongo Man. The moutya is a traditional song originating with the African slaves in the Seychelles. The song constitutes a dialogue between a man and a woman: the man calls out and the woman answers. The accompanying dance is highly sexualised, incorporating slow, accentuated hip movements.

After the eroticism of moutya, the band can segue into the sega, an up-tempo rhythm that evolved from a combination of Mauritian and Réunionnais folk music. Both the sega and the moutya have been translated into a contemporary context and instrumentation, with the use of electric instruments. The band also plays seggae, where sega is blended into reggae, softening it into a mellow, lilting sound. Similar to the sega, but with an even faster pace, is a Caribbean zouk, which is Creole-based. Lead singer, Grace, clarifies the rationale for this diversity: “if it’s catchy and creates a good vibe, a good mood, a good beat, we take that new idea. Beat is very important because what we play is to let people dance to it and feel the music”.

The band calls on various people from within the community to perform traditional Seychellois dances at some of their performances and works closely with a Seychellois DJ, who plays ‘island vibes’ music during the breaks. The DJ plays music which is vibrant and with a strong beat that demands dancing rather than attentive sitting and listening. The playlist includes old island songs, as well as the latest in club music that he brings in from the Seychelles, and also music from America or Aotearoa/New Zealand, displaying an openness to cultural diversity that history and geography have encouraged in the Seychelles.

The enthusiasm and commitment of these young people was evident from the outset; when the Seychelles Cultural Troupe incorporated, it instigated a five-year strategic plan that included specified goals. These were aimed at promoting Seychelles culture, providing an awareness and understanding of the social, cultural and economic contributions made by Seychellois to the wider Australian Society, creating a platform for social and cultural interactions and sharing of ideas with other cultural groups and businesses, and providing a total Seychelles experience through ways of life, arts, music, literature, cuisine and cultural exchange. Seychelles Rhythms sought to achieve these aims. In 1999 and 2001, the band played at the Minnawarra Festival, a celebration of multiculturalism held in Armadale, a suburb of Perth. They have also taken part in the multicultural Festival of Light at Murdoch University, and the Perth Youth Festival.

In March 2001, as part of Harmony week, the group organised the Gosnells Multicultural Festival, which attracted large numbers of people. In the weeks leading up to the festival, they undertook workshops in collaboration with other artists, including an African band and a South American dance instructor. This series of free workshops taught 150 people dances from South America, Africa and the Seychelles. On the day of
the festival, many of the 500 people attending were dancing the salsa and the sega on the podium and around the stage. Interest generated by the event led to a six-month series of dance workshops. It energised the band, giving them a higher profile and spreading knowledge of Seychelles culture.

It was later in that year that I made the documentary about the group, which involved interviewing the band members. They all enthused about what they had accomplished and were looking forward to furthering the goals in their strategic plan. Together with their desire to bring Seychelles culture out into the wider community and to work with other cultural groups, the members of Seychelles Rhythms also showed a strong desire to establish themselves as part of Australia, not an excluded community. This desire to translate, build and create dialogue has a powerful social and political energy and importance. In 2001, this goal led to the band taking part in the Centenary of Federation celebrations. In Giovana’s words:

_We wanted to be part of the moment and be Australian. . . . We’ve a different culture, a different background but yet we are people living in Australia, who have embraced the culture. And it is very significant in that it is the same process of embracing the culture and being accepted as well._\(^7\)

The band successfully applied for a Gosnells City Council grant to write an appropriate song and perform it at the Gosnells Centenary Fayre (sic). They brought in Alan Webster, a professional musician, to mentor and workshop with them. The group decided on sega but also included elements of jazz and rock. _Federation Song_ incorporates sega in the drumbeat, a reggae rhythm through the keyboards and a rock bass line. Overlaying this hybridity is a potent melody and, as Grace suggests, “the most important thing: a catchy chorus for people to pick up and sing”.\(^8\) The group’s belief in the song was vindicated when they played it on the day when people danced and sang along to the chorus.

The performance of this song at the Gosnells Centenary of Federation celebrations contains both irony and hope. The irony stems from this group of young people of colour writing and performing a song that celebrates Australian Federation. This is the same Federation that, through the 1901 Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act instigated the White Australia Policy that would have effectively barred their immigration to Australia. However, there is also hope because the vestiges of this policy were finally abolished under the Whitlam government in 1973 (Tavan, 2005).

In early 2005, a book on the Perth music scene was published: _Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its Popular Music_ (Brabazon, 2005), which included my chapter on the Seychelles Rhythms. At that time, when discussing the _Federation Song_, I wrote, “even when barriers and exclusions are resurrected through government policy, a popular multiculturalism has changed Australia and Australians” (Shave, 2005:169). While it is just over two years ago that I wrote those words, I have less faith in the force of this change as neo-conservative Australia furthers its move away from multiculturalism.\(^9\) However, I do retain some hope because this band of Seychellois people, singing a song about a unified Australia, with English lyrics accompanied by music influenced not
only by rock and jazz, but also Caribbean and Indian rhythms, actualises the multicultural project.\[^{[10]}\]

Until the end of 2004, the band continued to hold four or five dances throughout the year—the most important being held on New Year’s Eve. This night was a direct link to the most festive occasion in the Seychelles where, over a week, families that might be spread throughout the islands for the rest of the year come together in order to celebrate the past year and welcome in the next. The band has forged links with other Perth cultural communities, including the East Timorese and Samoan communities. Indeed, Seychelles Rhythms was invited to play at the Perth welcome for the Samoan Team who played in Perth for the 2003 Rugby World Cup.

In October 2003, when I interviewed Giovana prior to writing my chapter, the group’s efforts appeared to have more than met the goals set out in their strategic plan. I was, therefore, surprised when Giovana described the last four years as a “long and frustrating journey. It is full of disappointments and, I would say, some despair”.\[^{[11]}\] This attitude developed through the group finding itself at the mercy of institutions that were neither supportive nor understanding of the group’s goals. Local councils, trying to maximise income, insist on charging high fees for venues despite the group actively promoting multiculturalism and better understanding between communities. This problem was exacerbated by the cost of both equipment and practice venues. When band members are either studying or on low wages, the cost of putting on an event can seem overwhelming.

At that time, Giovana described multiculturalism as something that is talked about by the federal government, but which is not a lived experience for Australians. While some councils do try to promote and encourage diverse music, there has often been a lack of consultation and communication. These systematic and institutional concerns indicate a lack of value placed on creative development. This lack of support from local organisations can be exacerbated by internal competition within communities.

When I interviewed her in late 2003, it had reached the stage where Giovana was seriously questioning whether it was worth the effort and the disappointments, despite her love for her country, her music and the young people in her community. Giovana returned to the Seychelles to live early last year. Unfortunately, despite trying a number of avenues, I have been unable to contact Giovana to discover whether concerns about Australian multiculturalism contributed to her decision.

Despite Giovana being the main motivating force behind the Seychelles Cultural Troupe and Seychelles Rhythms, her leaving has not led to their demise. The band continues, with Grace Barbe taking over the role of manager while retaining her roles of bass player and lead singer. When I interviewed Grace in January this year, I was encouraged to hear that the band remains dedicated to ensuring that Seychellois culture will flourish in Perth. Grace still maintains the commitment as evidenced when I interviewed her in 2001:
It’s so sad to see some cultures dying. And I don’t want to see that happening to my culture. So, we want to be able to pass on what we have to the next generation. And, looking at people like my sister Joelle, and Navim, the younger ones, coming in and playing the music—the guitar and the drums and writing music. And speaking the language and all. It’s a good sign. So we’ll know that they can pass it on to the next generations as well. So, I think that’s really, really important.¹²

These words demonstrate Grace’s understanding of the importance of intergenerational linkage in cultural continuity.

The band is currently assessing how to achieve its aims of encouraging young people to have an interest in their culture and to also bring that culture to the awareness of the wider community. One of the difficulties is that three of the members of Seychelles Rhythms are now also members of a successful Perth reggae band, Raggabeats. Their music is mainstream and popular. The band has two or three gigs per week. As the members are unable to focus their attention on both areas while keeping up daytime jobs and study, the commercial opportunity has gained increasing importance. However, Grace wants to incorporate some of the more traditional Seychelles elements into Raggabeats, fusing them with the reggae rhythms. As people often approach the band members after the gigs to ask questions about their culture and music, she hopes that this will create a pathway enabling greater access to the more traditional Seychelles music.

As Grace Barbe explains:

*There’s a diversity of cultures in Australia, here, and I’m thinking why can’t we expose our culture and we’ve got the potential, we’ve got the capacity as much as all the other cultures to expose ourselves. And it’s a beautiful culture—beautiful rhythms, beautiful people—and I think we can do it.*¹³

Unfortunately, there is a discrepancy between government policy and lived multiculturalism. The New Agenda for Multicultural Australia, tabled in Federal Parliament in December 1999, aimed at making multiculturalism relevant to all Australians, and ensuring that the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity were maximised. It refers to strategies, policies and programmes designed to make Australia’s administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of its culturally diverse population. They are also intended to promote social harmony among the different cultural groups and to optimise the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians. This strategy does not work for Seychelles Rhythms. While Perth and, indeed, Australia, contain the fabric and rhythms of multiculturalism, there must be structural change and political commitment if we are to recognise, encourage and celebrate diversity. Seychelles Rhythms is one group of dedicated people that is transferring and translating their small island culture into that of Australia. Cultural and creative development should be taken seriously so that cultural groups such as this can be resourced—and not just financially. It remains to be seen whether current policy manages to fulfil its promise and assist groups such as Seychelles Rhythms. The Western Australian Government’s Department of Culture and
the Arts’ report, *Championing Creativity: An Arts Development Policy Framework for Western Australia 2004-2007*, proposes to support creative activity in Western Australia, with “Young people and the Arts” and “Multicultural Arts” being two of its four priority areas (ArtsWA, 2004:9). This would initially appear to augur well for Seychelles Rhythms. However, *Championing Creativity* is based on the cultural industries model, which focuses on funding arts organisations, rather than individuals and groups.

Further difficulties that Seychelles Rhythms face when trying to access government funding become apparent through examination of ArtsWA’s definitions. ‘Commercial music’ is incorporated into creative industries while ‘music’ is included in the creative arts sector. While Kulcha Multicultural Arts of Western Australia received triennially based funding as of 2004, the majority of music represented in the funding recipients is primarily classical, jazz and experimental (ArtsWA, 2004:15), or what may be considered high art. The music of Seychelles Rhythms does not fit into this category; rather, it is quotidian music that encompasses their culture, or music to dance to, instead of an intellectual engagement. Neither is their music currently commercially viable. Seychelles Rhythms slips through the definitional gaps of this policy.

There are other models available. Through developing partnerships between industry, business, universities, the professions and government, creative industries has the potential to assist in endeavours such as those undertaken by this group of young people through its linking of the economic and the artistic. Indeed, it could be of great benefit for Seychelles Rhythms by enabling corporatisation and loans for further equipment. Setting up a supportive infrastructure under the aegis of creative industries could also assist with recordings and venue hire. Enabling groups such as Seychelles Rhythms is vital, not only to assist small island groups retain their origins and identity, but to ensure that all Australia’s citizens have the opportunity to learn the steps of difference, diversity and social change.

**Endnotes**

[1] Adelaida Reyes utilises this concept to designate the social dynamics that result from the movement from one place to another. It focuses on the emotional, psychological and creative behaviours that are produced by the move, rather than the physical locations (Reyes, 1999:206).

[2] This paper examines the response of a particular group to migrancy and the band they formed. For an alternative approach that overviews a migrant population, see Cathy Falk’s work on Hmong living in Australia, which includes aspects of musical practice (Falk, 1993,1994).

[4] Band member, Seychelles Rhythms, videotaped interview, 15 October 2001. This participant gave permission for me to draw from the interview for the original documentary. However, as I am unable to contact the person I am reluctant to use their name or pseudonym in this paper.


[9] As Richard McGregor has noted, in John Howard’s first term of government he “almost single-handedly wiped the word multiculturalism from the mainstream political lexicon”. (McGregor, 1999:163). Howard’s negative attitude towards multiculturalism continues, as evidenced in his 2006 Australia Day Speech:

We’ve drawn back from being too obsessed with diversity to a point where Australians are now better able to appreciate the enduring values of the national character that we proudly celebrate and preserve . . . that dominant pattern comprises Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment and the institutions and values of British political culture. (Howard, 2006).

[10] The optimism of The Federation Song is evidenced in its chorus:

Centenary of Federation,
That’s the reason for our nation.
And as we all now just work together . . .
Oooh, a future so bright.


Bibliography


Pan African Allstars <http://www.panafricanallstars.com/default.asp>

Reyes, Adelaida (1999) “From urban area to refugee camp: how one thing leads to another (the evolution of two types of Vietnamese music)” Ethnomusicology Spring-Summer v43n2


Filmography

Shave, Rachel (2001) A Seychelles Rhythm.
VISUALISING SOCIAL CHANGE

A Case Study of the Traditional I-Kiribati Canoe

Tony Whincup

(Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand)

This paper focuses upon the role of the photographic image in sociological research. The discussion centres on the extent to which objectifications of lived experience can provide tangible forms for photography to visualise intangible dimensions of human activity. It argues that concrete objectifications can be considered a symbolic system through which the interplay of experience, social structure and sources of expression is mediated and made manifest.

My initial photographic images made during a recent research project exploring the role, significance and sustainability of the traditional canoe (te wa) in contemporary Kiribati society, alerted me to potential sites of social tension or change. Questions provoked by these photographs led me to considerations of broad social issues. The images from my on-going research project are used here as a case study for discussion of the potential to document and communicate intangible aspects of social change photographically.

Context is clearly critical to the understanding of any socially constructed symbolic system and is, therefore, no less important in the interpretation of objectifications of lived experience and their interrelationships. Objects have specific meanings for those with eyes to see them and the background to understand their implications. Before any interpretation of individual images is undertaken, it is vital that the context in which the traditional I-Kiribati canoe exists is understood.

Standing a mere two to three metres above the sea, the sixteen atolls in the main island group of Kiribati straddle the equator due north of New Zealand. The reefs are the defence against relentless waves upon these precarious landfalls. The sound of the sea is inescapable in Kiribati, and at no place, not even in the centre of the lagoon, can the incessant roar of the breakers not be heard.

The sea, therefore, dominates life on Kiribati. The ocean and the lagoon can nearly always be seen from anywhere on the island, and with the landmass threatened by ecologically offensive nations, the tiny, low ribbons of coral are the home of the I-Kiribati. Here, the peaceful and the gentle, the deep and the strong, the inner and the outer, stand in constant contrast.
For the people of Kiribati, then, resources are meagre, and the people maintain a knife-edge existence. Even today, virtually everything for the construction of houses and canoes comes from the land and is prepared by the communal effort of the family. The imperative of survival demands the integration of people and place. Something that is made reaches deeply into cultural beliefs, needs, history, resources and self-recognition. Therefore, the making of a canoe expresses this complex interaction, and is deeply rooted in social concerns, traditional values and practices. The making of a canoe also mirrors those enduring qualities of the traditional skills, ancient spirituality and survival that remain at the heart of what it is to be I-Kiribati.

The construction of a canoe remains a male domain, yet women play a vital role by making coconut string. After several months of soaking the coconut husk in the lagoon, women tease the fibres from it. By rolling the fine strands on their thighs, skein after skein of string is made. This string is used in every aspect of the canoe’s construction. With it, the planks of the hull are stitched together, the outrigger is lashed on and all spars are held firmly in place. The women’s role literally holds the canoe together.

I have owned and sailed my own traditional canoe, which has left me with a passion for its beauty and appropriateness that I will never lose. A traditional sailing canoe is a wonderful sight as it skims over the turquoise waters of the lagoon. Neither nail nor screw hold the canoe together; rather, it is held together by string made by the women in the community. The traditional canoe comes into being through the combined efforts, skills and traditional values of a family. Were the canoe discarded and not cared for, it would disintegrate rapidly. It is in this context that we try to appreciate the significance a canoe must hold for those who from birth stare out at the immensity of the Pacific Ocean—the canoe’s ‘highway’ between people and places.

The challenge for those who wish to use photography in research is to transcend the readily available surface descriptions provided by the photographic image, and through the construction of compelling symbolic relationships, assert powerful readings of the intangible. Dilthey (1976) suggests that to understand ourselves, we should not try to look inward. Rather, we should take the more circuitous route and reflect upon the objectifications of our activities, which include not only our self-conscious productions of art and fashion, but also include expressions arising from the fundamental hegemony of the time and group. Concrete objectifications of lived experience reveal complex and intangible aspects of a group or individual. I am interested in the way these individual productions are contextualised and juxtaposed, and I propose that photography provides a unique medium through which to explore, document and communicate these contexts.

I suggest that changes occurring in the wider I-Kiribati society are represented in the changes of canoe culture. The tangible manifestations of changing attitudes and practices provide an opportunity to photograph otherwise intangible aspects of social change. Each image poses questions concerning changes of I-Kiribati social existence. Specific aspects of material culture and social practice are framed and juxtaposed in the photographs, and signify shifts of a general social nature. The following images, I will argue, point to changes in technology and the application of skills, a growing emphasis
upon a cash economy in contrast to traditional subsistence patterns, and the rejection or denial of historic modes of spirituality within contemporary I-Kiribati society.

With the exception of those living on Tarawa, on which the seat of government, the central bank, international airport and seaport are to be found, the people of Kiribati predominantly live in a subsistence economy. Materials of survival and social activities are painstakingly won from the natural resources of the coral atolls. The coconut string, ‘te kora’, is prepared from the fibres of readily available coconut husks. Nylon fishing line must be purchased, the significance of which cannot be over emphasised in a predominantly subsistence economy. The whole edifice of a cash economy starts here—money to purchase the goods, the import of goods and the necessary infrastructure, fishing for sale rather than family, and so forth.

Canoe builders indicate that nylon, although quicker and easier to use, is not as inherently safe as coconut string. A ‘tightness’ in the lashings that could be attained with ‘te kora’ could not be achieved and sustained with nylon. Significantly, the intricate traditional lashings of the canoe guarantee that if a break should occur, the whole lashing would not unwind and the outrigger or boom would not be lost. Nylon does not provide this insurance, while the traditional ‘te kora’ string does (fig 1).

The traditional techniques of producing the coconut string are a long and arduous process for the women of the family. The purchase of nylon requires no such commitment, and its use inevitably provides significant ‘free’ time for women. The loss of this social practice impacts upon the shared time of women and children, the intergenerational continuity of discourse, and the dissemination of traditional material skills of an actively oral society.

In the juxtaposition of coconut and nylon, this visually rather mundane image represents both subsistence and cash economies. The framing of the image simultaneously unites and isolates two elements generating a visual discourse. As a result, the questions posed

Figure 1. String and nylon. Canoe lashings present both ‘te kora’ (coconut string) and nylon fishing line side by side, lashing the same piece of wood.
lead to reflections on the nature of this transition in the cultural practices of Kiribati. (A further example of the tangible representation of social change is demonstrated in figure 2.)

It must be remembered that canoes are traditionally a predominantly male domain, and access for women is restricted. In figure 2, a woman has the significant responsibility of being at the helm of the canoe—or having control of ‘te bwe’, the steering oar. On closer examination, it can be seen that an outboard engine has been centrally located on the canoe’s outrigger supports; the only place the engine clamps would find purchase. Although the outboard propels the canoe, it cannot be steered efficiently from this position. In the choice between controlling the engine and steering the canoe, the man is seen to relinquish the helm in favour of maintaining control of the engine. When a sail is used to propel the canoe, both the main sheet and the steering oar are in the control of the helmsman, while the woman passenger sits passively towards the bow, and balances the canoe. Due to the adoption of a new technology, a shift of gender roles has occurred in relation to the woman’s position in the canoe, and her responsibility and practice in the canoe.

Figure 2. Woman at helm of a canoe.

The next image (fig 3) also shows an outboard motor clamped to a canoe’s outrigger. In addition, it demonstrates significant fouling by weed on the underside of the canoe and outrigger because the canoe had been left in the water for extended periods of time. Because the lashings on traditional outriggers are vulnerable to chaffing, and in order to prevent damage through contact with the sand, the lashings were always traditionally supported by coconuts. The fouling of the canoe in the image, due to the absence of coconuts as supports, clearly visualises changes at the root of previous canoe practice.
As has been noted in the general contextualisation of I-Kiribati, canoes were traditionally considered to be a part of the family. When referring to canoes in the I-Kiribati language, the same grammatical possessive noun is used as for family and to indicate objects of closeness and indispensability. The many months of hard work and skill of the builder were treated with great respect, and originate from a sense of pride of ownership, the pure practicality of safety, and the spiritual significance of the canoe. The shifts indicated in the image point to significant social changes of traditional orientation of spirituality and historical patterns of production. In recent years, particularly on the main island of Tarawa, there has been a decline in the utilisation of the canoe in favour of the outboard-powered aluminium boat for the utilitarian practices of travel and fishing. It can be argued that the canoe is losing its singular hold as essential to survival, and in consequence its status and respect is diminishing. Such changes of relationship to this once central I-Kiribati icon of survival, spirituality and masculine pride demand further investigation.

The only area in which my photographs reveal a sharp increase of canoe practice is in the traditional art of racing. The following image (fig 4) shows a selection of canoes, from a field of approximately twenty, racing at a weekly Sunday event on Tarawa. Over the last few years, the number of competitors has grown steadily. Similar to the European practice of horseracing with jockeys and owners, the owners and the builders of the canoes are attributed more prestige than the helmsman and crew. The growing interest in racing traditional canoes ensures the continuation of building skills and procedures, as well as sailing techniques.
It would appear that removing the canoe from a fundamentally utilitarian role to one of sport and culture presents an opportunity for its preservation. This same process can be seen to contribute, in part, to the preservation of dance on the islands. Traditional dance practices have been revived for social definition and self-recognition in national and international competitions and arts festivals. Therefore, for traditional patterns to be sustained, they must be valued either for their original purpose or re-invented as a significant part of developing social systems.

The visual significance of figures 4 and 5 (racing canoes and shrine) lies more in establishing the veracity of their existence, whereas the content of the previous images emphasised the juxtaposing of symbols within a frame. Clearly visible on the shrine, ‘te bangota’, are both new and old ‘offerings’—simple headdresses and part of a tinsel Christmas decoration. (Interestingly, this ‘bangota’ was less than 100 metres from the canoe left to lie on the sand in fig 3.)

Offerings made at such shrines are intended to provide success in dancing, canoe racing, and relationships and so on. They also maintain an ancient and traditional sense of spirituality. I was told many times that ‘te bangota’ no longer existed, yet this image clearly demonstrates their continuing usage. The wish to disclaim any on-going involvement with ancient practices may arise from the fact that Kiribati’s Christian population is statistically designated as 50 percent Protestant and 50 percent Catholic. One old canoe builder whom we interviewed in this research stated that he no longer made canoes. When questioned as to why, he replied that he was a Christian. He further revealed that he believed a canoe could not be built without ‘magic’, and that as a Christian he could no longer practise that magical aspect of canoe construction. Secrecy, therefore, surrounds not just the shrine, but also associated practices; it also raises further questions of social change and the tension between the publicly declared commitment to Christianity and the maintenance of traditional values of spirituality.
However, the relationship with objects is not just a one-way relationship. Although the meanings of objects are constituted by our actions to them, objects also constitute the types of actions and experiences with which we become involved. Every aspect of our inevitable involvement in symbolic systems shapes the shaper. “Each new object changes the way people organise and experience their lives” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981:46). Also, Bruner comments that:

*The relationship is clearly dialogical and dialectical, for experiences structure expressions, in that we understand other people and their expressions on the basis of our own experience and self-understanding. But expression also structures experience.* (1986:6).

In contemporary societies, where objective conditions are in a continual and rapid state of change, objects can be seen to be powerfully implicated in either the maintenance of continuity, or the promotion of change. “In the first sense they (objects) reflect what is; in the second, they foreshadow what could be; and thus they become a vital force in determining cultural evolution” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981:27).

It has been argued that it is tangible objects that comprise a photograph, and it is in the relationship of these tangible ‘things’ that intangible aspects of social change can be visualised. The skill for those who use photographs is to isolate and unite objects within the photographic frame to realise the rich connotational, as well as denotational, potential of the image.

Photographic images are often treated as a form of contributory data within the overall fieldwork, and are recognised to play a valuable role in recording the proxemics and kinesics of cultural texts. In the face of apparent interpretive problems in the utilisation of images, researchers have leaned heavily upon the use of written text for image contextualisation. Berger and Mohr argue that although photographs do not have a language of their own, they quote from reality. “A photograph quotes from appearances but, in quoting, simplifies them. This simplification can increase their legibility.
Everything depends upon the quality of the quotation chosen” (Berger and Mohr, 1982:119). I have emphasised that if the contents of photographic images are treated as signs, they must be understood from socially accepted conventions. Photographic meaning, then, is to do with the contextualisation and relationship of signs within the image. It is the interrelationship of symbols that is vital to construction and interpretation. “Just as one word from a poem used in another context has no poetry, so one physical object has no meaning by itself, and the question of why it is valid has no meaning either” (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978:72).

I suggest that, although there are essential differences between symbolic systems, there are fundamental underpinning principles at work throughout, and that visual symbolism is no more or no less problematic than others; “all cultural codes must be learnt, including those that are visual. . . . To read an artwork, then, is to embark on a process as difficult and demanding as reading a written work” (Morgan, 2002).

The images presented in this paper not only record denotational information of the canoe culture of Kiribati, but also point to visually intangible shifts in gender roles, traditional skills and values, changes in economy and spirituality in the general society. The particularity of photographic images reveals the specific context of a cultural activity, whilst also providing a vehicle for symbolic readings. Photographic images of ‘things’ become texts of symbolic significance, and the frame becomes its visual syntax. The engagement with, and of, photography, provides the potential for a rich visual discourse in which to explore, document and communicate intangible aspects of social change. As Berger and Mohr suggest, “by its nature, revelation does not easily lend itself to verbalisation” (1982:118).

Bibliography


NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Cattermole <jennifer.cattermole@students.mq.edu.au> is currently a PhD student in the Department of Contemporary Music Studies, Macquarie University, Sydney. She is primarily interested in researching contemporary popular music genres of Oceania, with an emphasis on the issues of space, place and identity.

Charlotte Chambers <C.N.L.Chambers@sms.ed.ac.uk> is a PhD candidate in the Institute of Geography, The University of Edinburgh, Scotland. She is currently on the island of Tongareva where she is finishing research for her thesis on circulations of knowledge in the Cook Islands.

Wendy E Cowling <wendyc@waikato.ac.nz> is a senior lecturer in Anthropology in the Department of Societies and Cultures, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Her teaching covers a range of ethnographic subjects, but with a particular focus on aspects of Pacific studies, as well as on religion and ritual. Her most recent publications have been a series of papers, including ‘Restraint, constraint and feeling: Exploring some Tongan Expressions of Emotion’ in Polynesian Paradox: Essays in Honour of Professor ‘I Futa Helu, Suva, Fiji, University of the South Pacific (2005).

Rebecca Coyle <rcoyle@scu.edu.au> is a senior lecturer in Media at Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia. She has published widely on sound, cinema, radio and new technology media. Her most recent book was the edited publication Reel Tracks: Australian Feature Film Music and Cultural Identities (2005).

Mark Evans <mark.evans@mq.edu.au> is Head of Contemporary Music Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. He is Co-Editor of Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture. He is the author of Open Up The Doors: Music in the Modern Church (2006, Equinox Publishing).

Peter Goodall <Peter.Goodall@humn.mq.edu.au> is currently Deputy Dean of Humanities at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. He specialises in the study of medieval literature, especially Chaucer, and twentieth-century literature, especially George Orwell. In 1995, he published High Culture, Popular Culture: The Long Debate on the division between high culture and popular culture. His annotated bibliography of Chaucer’s ‘Monk’s Tale’ and ‘Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ will be published by Toronto University Press in 2007. He is currently at work on a larger study of the literary history of the Channel Islands and of G B Edwards’ place in it.
Philip Hayward <phsicri@meridianart.org> is co-ordinator of island cultures research and a professor of Contemporary Music Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. He is the SICRI network convenor and is currently researching the operation of the Melanesian music industries (with Denis Crowdy) and music culture in the Amami islands (with Sueo Kuwahara).

Henry Johnson <henry.johnson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz> is associate professor in the Department of Music, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. He lectures and performs on a number of Asian instruments, including koto, shamisen and gamelan. His most recent publications include The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan, and Tsugaru: Regional Identity on Japan’s Northern Periphery.

Kumi Kato <k.kato@uq.edu.au> is a lecturer in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, the University of Queensland, Australia. She has a diverse teaching and research background in environmental studies, cross-cultural communication, teacher education and community development in conservation. Her most recent publications include the World Heritage Areas in Australia (2006, Hiroshima, Setouchi Research Institute) and ‘Traditional knowledge, Natural Heritage and Community’ (2006, International Journal of Heritage Studies).

Susie Khamis <susie@khamis.com.au> is a researcher in the Media Department, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Her doctoral thesis is on the cultural logic of branding, and uses Bushells Tea as a case study. Research interests include advertising and national identity. Her work has recently appeared in the Journal of Australian Studies and Australian Cultural History.

Marea Mitchell <marea.mitchell@mq.edu.au> is a senior lecturer in the Department of English at Macquarie University. Her research and teaching interests focus on early modern studies, Cornish studies, Marxism and feminism. Recently, she has published books on Margery Kempe, the representation of women in English romance, and an edition of early modern women's writing.

Peter Mühlhäusler <peter.muhlhausler@adelaiade.edu.au> is the Foundation Professor of Linguistics at the University of Adelaide, Australia, and Supernumerary Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford, UK. He has taught at the Technical University of Berlin and in the University of Oxford, and is an active researcher in several areas of linguistics, including ecolinguistics, language planning and language policy and language contact in the Australian-Pacific area. His current research focuses on the Pitkern-Norf'k language of Norfolk Island and Aboriginal languages of the West Coast of South Australia.

Eleanor Rimoldi <E.C.Rimoldi@massey.ac.nz> is senior lecturer in Social Anthropology at the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand. Recent publications include ‘The Temperate Passion of Democratic Reason’ (2004 Social Analysis) and ‘Human Sacrifice and the Loss of Transformative Power’ (2005 Social Analysis).
Steve Royle <s.royle@qub.ac.uk> studied geography at St John's College, Cambridge and is reader in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology at Queen's University Belfast. His interest in small islands has seen him travel extensively for research and conferences. One of his principal publications is A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity, Routledge.

Robin Ryan <robinryan25@hotmail.com> holds a doctorate in Australian Aboriginal music and advised the Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia (2003) in this area. Her work on the music and dance of the Furneaux Group was researched as an Honorary Associate of the Department of Contemporary Music Studies, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

Rachel Shave <r.shave@murdoch.edu.au> is undertaking her PhD at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia. Her interests incorporate body politics, feminism, multiculturalism, media and diversity. Her published work includes ‘Slash Fandom on the Internet’ in Refractory (v6) and ‘A Seychelles Rhythm’ in Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its Popular Music.

Tony Whincup <a.n.whincup@massey.ac.nz> is associate professor and Head of the School of Visual & Material Culture, College of Creative Arts, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. His research interests are primarily concerned with issues of self-definition and self-recognition. His work emerges at the interface of the disciplines of photography and anthropology. For the past 25 years his photo-ethnographic practice has been based primarily in Kiribati.