

## **Dancing and Tattooing the Imagined Territory: Identity Formation at *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts**

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This article considers indigenous and national identity formation at two festivals, *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts. It does so by exploring how the festivals are implicated in national cultural politics and globalization in French Polynesia, and how festival participants, particularly on the island of Tahiti, act on the politically and economically charged structure of the festivals themselves. It analyzes the relationships between identity formation and the manipulation of the body, and so focuses on dancing and tattooing in order to elucidate the ways in which the body becomes a site where people embody identities. At the Festivals of Pacific Arts, the differences between individuals, groups, or regions (districts and archipelagos), which were emphasized in *Heiva*, were blurred and incorporated into a “French Polynesian” territory. In featuring the Festival and a delegation the organizers concentrated on establishing national identity rather than personal identity. The dance performance and the tattooing of delegates were integrated into this creation of territory, however from the perspective of each dancer and tattooist, participation was for economic benefit, fame, self-esteem, and personal enjoyment.

**Keywords:** Tahiti, festivals, identity, *Heiva*, Festival of Pacific Arts

### **Introduction**

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## INTRODUCTION

This article considers indigenous and national identity formation at two festivals, *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts. It does so by exploring how the festivals are implicated in national cultural politics and globalization in French Polynesia, and how festival participants, particularly on the island of Tahiti, act on the politically and economically charged structure of the festivals themselves. My aim is to analyze the relationships between identity formation and the manipulation of the body, so I focus on dancing and tattooing in order to elucidate the ways in which the body becomes a site where people embody identities.

Although it maintains internal autonomy, French Polynesia is a part of the overseas territory of France.<sup>1</sup> The politics of the territory are, therefore, primarily concerned with its relationship to France; a key question is whether to remain an autonomous government within the French Republic or be independent. Furthermore, there is discord among the five archipelagos of the territory on the issue of political structure. The Marquesas Islands, for example, insist on independence from Tahiti (the Society Islands), but remain within the French Republic.<sup>2</sup> Tensions among different ethnicities: Polynesians, Chinese, French, and *demi* (mixed descent) also affect the ways people establish and represent their identities.

In this article, first, I illustrate some political and economic factors affecting the organization as well as the nature of festival performances and activities. Second, I identify different categories (“Tahitian”, “Ma’ohi”, and “Polynesian”.) that people use to express national, indigenous collective, and intra-indigenous identities on the island of Tahiti, and examine the historical and political contexts of each category. Third, I introduce dancing and tattooing in Tahiti in their socio-cultural contexts. Finally, I demonstrate historically and ethnographically how people form identities through dancing and tattooing at *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts, comparing the socio-political implications of each festival.

## FESTIVALS AND IMAGES OF ISLANDS

Festivals are sites at which the images of nation, or those of territory in the case of French Polynesia, are politically constructed and contested. Images of territory have been constructed and represented by government authorities to serve their political and

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<sup>1</sup> French Polynesia is one of the T.O.M (territoires d’outre-mer), which makes it a part of French national territory, but does not necessarily apply the law of the State. The territory has autonomy according to the Constitution of 1958.

<sup>2</sup> See Moulin’s work (1994) for more discussion. Marquesan refusal to be submerged in a Tahitian identity is not only political, but also cultural. Moulin notes that “the Societies and the Marquesas exhibit markedly *dissimilar* cultural features, to the point where language, religion, and culture have more often been barriers than bridges to communication and understanding” (1996: 131).

economic ends over post- and neo-colonialism. The images of territory drawn by politicians vary from pro-France to pro-independence. As Anna Laura Jones (1992) points out, however, both pro-France and pro-independence elements engage in so-called “indigenous/traditional culture”, and formation and representation of “indigenous identity”.

“Indigenous culture” is a significant concept for both pro-France and pro-independence elements in the image-making of the territory, but the conceptualization of time in the images of “indigenous culture” is different between the two. Pro-independence elements consider that their arts and customs are those in the pre-colonial periods: “voyaging canoes, thatched houses, tattoo, even Polynesian religion” (Jones 1992: 137). The cultural revitalization movement, expressed as *la culture maohi*, is based on this concept (Jones 1992; Stevenson 1992).

The “indigenous culture” conceived by pro-France groups is that imported and developed during colonial periods, such as “cloth *pareu*, piecework *tifaifai* bedcovers, elaborately plaited hats, [and] Christian *himene* songs” (Jones 1992: 137). This kind of craft production, known as *artisanat traditonnel*, has become a significant element of *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts, and has political implications because it is “epitomized by an idealized picture of rural Polynesian culture: it is devoutly Christian; centered on the home, the garden, and the sea; and emphasizes values of modesty, generosity, and hospitality” (ibid.).

“Indigenous culture” embraces various contents not only because of different conceptualizations of time, but also because of regional diversity. Each archipelago in French Polynesia has its unique style and specialty in terms of “cultural” activities. For example, the Marquesas Islands are famous for carving, tattooing, and *tapa*; Tuamotu for shell products; and the Australs for *tifaifai* and plaiting. As I analyze in more detail in the latter part of the article, “indigenous culture”, which is variously characterized by political and regional differences, is all-inclusively represented and performed at the festivals. Organizing festivals is the making of “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) and of homogeneity out of heterogeneity (Bossen 1998: 128-9).<sup>3</sup>

In the neo-colonial state in French Polynesia, ethnic/cultural identity is articulated against France and French people. Ethnic/cultural identity is used to gain popularity and establish solidarity among indigenous people in opposition to French people. Yet, as Sémir Wardi (1998: 264) states, cultural politics that are consolidated through objecting to France are actually performed with the financial aid of France:

L’Etat a payé ainsi pour plusieurs opérations telles que la restauration des

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<sup>3</sup> For comparing different ways of dealing with multiplicity in the nation making at the festivals, see Toyota’s (2001) work on Papua New Guinea and Bossen’s (2000) on Fiji. For more discussion of the nation making in the Pacific, see Foster (1995) and Otto and Thomas (1997).

*marae* et des sites archéologiques de Huahine et de Ua Pou, pour la climatisation et la sécurité de Musée de Tahiti et des Îles, la formation d'animateurs culturels du territoire, la lutte contre l'illettrisme et le développement de la lecture publique....<sup>4</sup> (Wardi 1998: 264)

While neo-colonial politics mould the festivals, the gaze of tourists also has an effect, albeit indirect, on the structure of the festivals. Tourism is a major source of revenue and provides much employment in French Polynesia. Tourism was opened to the international market after the construction of an international airport at Faa'a in 1961, and has developed steadily with the advance of hotel chains, airlines, and travel agencies. French Polynesia has become one of the largest tourist destinations in the South Pacific. The images of Tahiti in tourism have been romanticized and stereotyped: a gentle, smiling long-haired Tahitian woman with red hibiscus behind one ear, lying under a coconut tree on a white sand beach in front of turquoise ocean, with plentiful tropical fruits. Tourists from the United States, France, Australia, and Japan come to Tahiti to experience what these images portray.

The image of "Tahiti" in tourism derives from the essentialization of indigenous ethnic and cultural dispositions in colonial and post-colonial relationships. The image of indigenous people is discursive in the first place, but fixed and stabilized as a simple and widely recognized figure. This stereotyping is a way to understand and represent the colonial Other.

The differences of the Other, emphasized in stereotypical representation, are fetishized. Bhabha explains that "fetishism is always a 'play' or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity... and the anxiety associated with lack and difference.... [W]hat is denied to the colonial subject, both as colonizer and colonized, is that form of negation which gives access to the recognition of difference" (Bhabha 1994: 74, 75). The physical and cultural differences are articulated in the coincident practice of recognition and disavowal.

Like colonial fetishism, tourist fetishism is preoccupied with race and sexuality. While French colonial discourse articulated indigenous women's sexuality within a signifying sexual economy of immoral looseness and licentiousness, it articulated indigenous men's sexuality within a discourse of savagery and barbarism.

The past seems to be fixed in fetishistic representation. The stereotypical images of indigenous people are captured in colonial discourses. As William Pietz states, "the fetish is always a meaning fixation of a singular event; it is above all a 'historical' object, the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event" (1985: 12). In fact, colonial stereotypical images are not totally fixed; rather the indigenous

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<sup>4</sup> "The state paid so for many operations as it is the reconstruction of *marae* and the archeological sites in Huahine and of Ua Pou, for the air condition and the security of Musée de Tahiti et des Îles, the formation of cultural coordinator of territory, the battle against illiteracy and the development of the public lecture" (my translation).

disavowal of the colonial stereotype rejects its fixation and subverts the images through performance, which constantly incorporates the creativity of artists and external influence. The stereotypical images undergo transformation, despite Western desire to naturalize the image as fixed and eternal. Moreover, indigenous people often use the colonial stereotype strategically to satisfy their political and economic desires in the context of the post-colonial or neo-colonial state and of globalization.

As one of main industries, tourism is strongly related to the political image-making of the territory. In his study of the Hibiscus Festival in Fiji, Bossen analyses the significant role of tourism in Fijian nationalism and argues that “choosing which part of the national heritage should be marketed is simultaneously a statement on national identity, and, in order to provide a suitable environment for tourists, the state has to adjust and control the public arena, for example through Keep Smiling campaigns” (2000: 128).

As some anthropological studies show (Furniss 1998: 30; McMahon 2001: 389), festivals have a characteristic of multiplicity. Festivals are sites where the desires of people with different social roles and positions collide. Among the people involved in the festivals, I have discussed the organizers who make the imagined territory, and tourist audiences who desire to fetishize the colonial stereotype of island and people. My aim in this article is, however, to show how indigenous performers and audiences react to the political intention of festival organization and colonial stereotypes held by tourists. Among several significant characteristics about festivals, I examine the competitiveness and harmony that festivals generate, in order to consider how participants accept, contest, or negotiate these politically and economically charged images of the territory.

As Victor Turner (1969) states, festival is a disorder out of order, or anti-structure of structured everyday life. Celebration is a “safety valve” or “release” of tension and conflict in everyday life (Leach 1961; Gluckman 1963). These anthropologists considered that everyday life was governed by order, and that festival is governed by disorder. However, I argue that the festivals produce order and disorder, tension and harmony simultaneously. The play between wholeness/similarity and lack/difference that Bhabha states applies not only to colonial stereotyping, but also to identity formation among indigenous peoples who are regionally and culturally different and heterogeneous.

Competitiveness is one of the significant characteristics of festivals. Although festivals are not always competitive (For instance, as I show later, *Heiva* is, but Festivals of Pacific Arts are not), being a representative of district, island, archipelago or nation arouses some elements of competitiveness because the performers and audiences compare and evaluate the different performances. Competition is a way to locate oneself and others in the social, inter-district, inter-island and international relationships.

Competition is possibly undertaken on the condition that the competitors possess similarities to a large extent. Moulin discusses that a drumming competition between

Rarotongan and Tahitian delegations at the Sixth Festival of Pacific Arts “underscores the point that the two musical systems are considered similar enough to be mutually comprehensible and capable of being judged on compatible criteria” (1996: 131).

Exchange and sharing are the terms often spelled out by the participants and the organizers of the festivals, provided that exchanging and sharing heritages is possible as people are assembled in one place, dancing, singing, chatting, and eating together. These terms imply that all people in an island or a territory (at *Heiva*) and in the Pacific (at the Festival of Pacific Arts) have some cultural heritages to share with and these heritages are similar as well as different. Exchange and sharing are conventional ways to relate oneself to other people.<sup>5</sup>

At festivals, identity is formed in the intricate relationships of competition and harmony, differences and similarities. When the participants of festivals are rather similar, which is the case at *Heiva*, they tend to differentiate each other. When they are rather different, which is the case at the Festival of Pacific Arts, the participants tend to find some similarities to unite them.

Indigenous performers and audiences participate in the festivals mainly for personal interests, such as economic gain, satisfying personal esteem and pride, or having fun. Yet, in doing so, they form and reaffirm local as well as international relationships in the dynamism of competition and harmony at the festivals. Their participation enforces and supports the politically intentional colonial/tourist stereotyping, but at the same time opposes and deconstructs these images through creativity and engagement in the external/global culture.

### MAOHI, TAHITIAN, AND POLYNESIAN

Identity formation is contingent according to different contexts. A man living in Papeete identifies himself as Tahitian towards tourists, as Ma’ohi towards the French government, as Raiatean towards other Tahitian colleagues, and as Polynesian while travelling in Europe. Identity is about relationality. Identification is a process of interacting relationships based on similarities and differences.

Identity is a concept of occidental worlds, and other societies do not necessarily possess the same or equivalent notions of identity. Yet, identity has become an important concept for both indigenous and non-indigenous people when the issues concerned with indigenous rights in the post-colonial and neo-colonial worlds become problematic. Identity is a communicative tool to bring these issues to national and international attention and discuss them on an equal basis.

Identification is to classify oneself according to pre-existing categories. Through identification, one includes oneself in a certain category, and at the same time excludes others from the category. Thus, the relationships of identification are concerned with inclusion and exclusion. The categories are never static and fixed, and

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<sup>5</sup> cf. *Taio* friendship contact (Finney 1964; Kuwahara 1996).

are created and changed through identification. The categories, people, and images of identification are all transformed through confronting and negotiating one another over place and time.

Categorization is, however, often problematic, because it is determined by power inequality and subject to stereotyping and essentialization. It has potential to include or exclude forcibly those who have not yet been categorized. The complexity about the category emerges firstly when a person refuses to be categorized despite possessing characteristics that fit into the pre-existing category(ies), and secondly when a person desires to be categorized while having no characteristics to fit into the category. The repetitive use of the categories is a process of affirming essentialization and stereotyping. Yet, while acknowledging these characteristics of categorization, I argue that it is important to analyze categories in order to unpack the intricacy and contingency of identification.

Cultural/ethnic identities in Tahiti are expressed in categories: "Ma'ohi", "Tahitian", and "Polynesian". They all mean "indigenous to Tahiti", and are concerned with place. These categories indicate indigenous affiliation to land, connection to ancestors, knowledge of the past, and belonging to the place. As "Tahitian", "Polynesian", and "Ma'ohi" are geographical references, ethnic and cultural identities are articulated with regard to a reassertion of the indigenous right over their land as well as power and knowledge associated with land.<sup>6</sup> The name of place is also implicated in the political history because it indicates how indigenous people considered their places as well as how international recognition of these places has been changed.

The terms indicate not only those who are categorized into "Tahitian", "Polynesian", and "Ma'ohi", but also "non-Tahitian", "non-Polynesian", and "non-Ma'ohi", which are counter components of a relational matrix. I focus on national and indigenous identities, but gender and occupational identities are also concerned; gender and occupational identities are interwoven into national and indigenous identities.<sup>7</sup>

Cultural and ethnic identity is not something that all people automatically possess because they are indigenes. With ethnic intricacies, people in French Polynesia have

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<sup>6</sup> Deborah Elliston states, "places are laid out in geosocial maps through which and in terms of which Polynesians order and negotiate social relations. First, having a place of origin in common with others frequently serves as a basis for affinity, enabling common bonds activated through and articulated as the sentimentality of attachment to a shared place. Second, places of origin are used symbolically as the ground on which Polynesians erect differences among themselves and between them and others: differences of lifestyle, temperament, morality, habits, and possibility. For these reasons, placing people, literally, is the first task one must accomplish in order to interact socially with other people in the Society Islands" (2000: 180). See also Kahn (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Thierry Pirato, for instance, is a Tahitian as well as a man and a tattooist. He is all of three, and cannot be merely Tahitian, nor a man, nor a tattooist.

different recognitions of and different attitudes toward cultural identities. They are differently located within *la culture ma'ohi* and react differently upon colonial stereotype. In the following section, I examine “Polynesian”, “Ma’ohi”, and “Tahitian” identities, considering what relationships are entangled, how time is captured or deployed, and how a sense of place is formed and transformed in each category.

“Polynesian”, *porinetia* in Tahitian and *polynésien/polynésienne* in French, is the most widely used term, referring to indigenous people in the five archipelagos of French Polynesia.<sup>8</sup> “Polynesian” refers, at the same time, to people who are from other islands in the Pacific such as Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii, New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Easter Island.

The term “Polynesian” is an invention of geographers and anthropologists to distinguish cultural and biological features of people in the southeastern Pacific from those of the rest in the Pacific: Melanesia and Micronesia. Although the terminology was coined in the Western world, people labeled as “Polynesian” intend to use this term to establish pan-Pacific solidarity. While people of each island emphasize their originality and particularity as distinct from those of neighboring islands, Polynesians also recognize their cultural similarity and proclaim their shared heritages. “Polynesian” collectivity becomes a significant assertion in international politics, extending their cultural identity from an island level to a regional level by labeling people, objects, and activities as “Polynesian”. Although excluding non-Polynesians or non-indigenous, “Polynesian” is concerned more with inclusion than exclusion, and more with similarities than differences.

The term “Ma’ohi” is based on an organic metaphor. “Ma” signifies “pure”, “right”, and “dignified”. “’Ohi” signifies “offspring”, “offshoot”.<sup>9</sup> Tahitian linguist, Turo Raapoto states:

I am *Maohi*. It’s the program of my life. Trees, plants in general, play an important role in the life of the Polynesian, as medicine, a source of food, but also as a protection of oneself. It is thus that the foreigner, that is to say he who has not right to the land in the island in which he appears, is called *hutu painu* (drifting fruit of the barringtonia). The fruit of this tree, carried away by the waters, is at the mercy of the waves, trying to take root on the first sand-bank it meets. Its main characteristic is its great resistance to sea water, and normally

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<sup>8</sup> Five archipelagos of French Polynesia are the Society, the Tuamotu, the Marquesas, the Australs, and the Gambier.

<sup>9</sup> Ma’ohi are those “qui a déjà ses racines lui assurant une certaine autonomie de vie, tandis qu’il est toujours relié à la tige-mère”. “Those have already their roots, assuring a certain autonomy of life, while it always links with mother-trunk” (my translation). “ma – propre, pur, clair, exempt de souillure et de pollution; ohi – rejet, surgeon de bannanier, etc...” (Tevane 2000).



it's on the coast that it will drive down its roots. (1988: 4)

“Ma’ohi” implies an affiliation with the other islands in the Pacific in the same way “Polynesia” does. Ma’ohi has an etymological link with “Maori” in New Zealand, which implies cultural and political connections with other Pacific islands. Yet, “Ma’ohi” indicates a collective indigenous identity, differentiating “Ma’ohi” from “non-Ma’ohi”, which specifically refers to French people. While “Polynesian” is concerned with inclusion in relationships among people in the Pacific, “Ma’ohi” is concerned rather with exclusion of non-indigenous people.

Through independence movements and anti-nuclear protests in the 1970s and the 1980s, “Ma’ohi” identity has been intertwined with nationalist discourse, asserting opposition against the French government. From a gender perspective, “Ma’ohi” represents masculinity, embodying the “warrior” image, but also the image of *mama*, the senior women in the household and the artisan association.

“Tahitian” originally refers to indigenes from and living on the island of Tahiti. It is a term to distinguish people on the island of Tahiti from other “Polynesians” within the territory.

Besides the role of intra-indigenous identification, the image of “Tahitian” possesses colonial and neo-colonial stereotypical aspects.<sup>10</sup> Since Captain Wallis arrived in Tahiti in 1767, indigenous people on the island and their customs have been observed and documented by European explorers, artists, castaways, missionaries, traders, tourists, and anthropologists. As the observers have had different ideological backgrounds and intentions, the ways that indigenous people have been perceived and represented have been manifold and accordingly so have been the images of them that have resulted from these perceptions and representations. “Tahitian” stereotypes have emerged from this multiplicity of interpretations, and become powerful images in tourism and the media. As Raapoto continues:

They call me Tahitian, but I refuse this. I am not Tahitian. This denomination has an essentially demagogic, touristic, snobbish and rubbish vocation. “Tahitian” is the *pareu* shirt whose material is printed in Lyon or in Japan; it’s the Marquesan *tiki* called Tahitian as well as the *tapa* of Tonga, Uvea, or Samoa sold in Papeete under the Tahitian label, and which any foreigner is proud to exhibit in his apartment, somewhere in Europe, in the anonymity of a neighbourhood in France, Germany or elsewhere, to prove to whoever is willing to believe it that he’s been to Tahiti. Tahiti is an exotic product made by the Western World for the consumption of their fellow-countrymen. (1988: 3)

For Raapoto, “Tahitian” is used in the commodification of his islands and people.

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<sup>10</sup> In this article, I use this term simply to refer to people on the island of Tahiti. When I mean the term implying colonial stereotype, I bracket the term like “Tahitian”.

Many “Tahitians”, however, use this commodified image strategically in the tourism industry. Indigenous agency is a significant part of this representational process.

Gender difference is captured in the term “Tahitian” in the same way as are colonial stereotypes. “Tahitian” tends to be used in the feminine, and emphasizes accessibility for the West.

The complex articulation of indigenous and national identities expressed in the terms “Polynesian”, “Ma’ohi”, and “Tahitian”, indicates that people in Tahiti face socio-political complexities at several levels; dealing with the cultural diversity of archipelagos at the regional level, with the political state as internal autonomy within the French Republic at the national level, and with the commodification of the islands and people in tourism at the international level.

### DANCING AND TATTOOING IN TAHITI

Cultural representations, for instance dancing and tattooing, are also characterized by categories of identification. Yet, identification is not only how one is named in relationships, but also how one establishes and acts on relationships in different social contexts. Tattooing and dancing are practices of moving and manipulating the body by which people embody identity. Bodily practices are fluid and generative, and often establish identities without being channeled into the categories of identification<sup>11</sup>. In order to examine tattooing and dancing as examples of identity embodiment, I briefly introduce the general features of tattooing and dancing in Tahiti in the following section.

Tattooing is practiced in different socio-cultural contexts in Tahiti. First, tattooing connects to *la culture ma’ohi*, and is considered as an emblem of cultural and ethnic identity. Second, tattooing is linked to the popularity of “ethnic” and “tribal” tattooing elsewhere in the world. Third, tattooing is considered as a practice related to anti-social behavior such as that of criminals and prostitutes. These contexts of tattooing exist not independently, but rather they intersect one another and form the complexity of the contemporary tattoo world in Tahiti.

Tattooing was suppressed by missionaries and colonial authorities in the 1820s. After a long historical absence, tattooing was re-introduced to Tahiti with European designs and practiced by hand pricking in prison and on the streets. In the 1980s, Tavana Salmon, half-Tahitian and half-Norwegian, brought about the recognition of Polynesian dance and fire walking through a search for his cultural origins. He returned to Tahiti with Polynesian style tattoos done by Western Samoan tattooists. Tattooing in the Polynesian style was revived, resonating with cultural revitalization

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<sup>11</sup> David Murry’s study of New Zealand *haka* suggests that “the *haka* may represent (pan) Maori, tribal, extended family and/or performance team identifications – all are equally valid positions employed in different contexts for different purposes, ranging from political and economic to personal or descriptive” (2000: 356).

movements. The significance of tattooing in the context of *la culture ma'ohi* is not only in the representation, but also in the practice of tattooing. The "Ma'ohi" tattooing was considered to be realized by using traditional tools, which were made of teeth (shark, whale or dog) or bone (pig) attached to a wooden stick with coconut fibers. The tattooists dipped this comb into pigment made by burning candlenut and tapped into the skin with a mallet.

Tattooing with traditional tools was banned in 1986 by the Minister of Health out of the fear of transmitting infected blood. A remodeled traveling electric razor, with the blade detached and a sewing needle attached on top, became the new tool for tattooing and prevailed among young local people. Tattooing then became easier and more accessible to a large population.

As tattooing has become popular elsewhere in the world, an increasing number of tattooists, especially full-time practitioners, use tattoo machines: firstly for reasons of hygiene, as many tourists and French residents are more concerned with the risk of transmission of disease through tattooing with "non-professional" tools in unhygienic environments; secondly, for the technical reason that tattoo machines enable tattooists use a large variety of expressions such as shading and coloring. The use of the tattoo machines has become a status symbol for tattooists, indicating their professionalism and differentiating them from those who tattoo among friends by using the remodeled razor.

"Tahitian" tattooing creates and offers "savage" and "exotic" images of the island and people to the tourists. The display and operation of traditional chisel tattooing takes place at the luxury hotels and cultural centers. Tattoo goods such as transparent seals, postcards, and books are produced and sold at souvenir shops in the hotels and at the airport. Symbolically, tattooed skin is removed from the living bodies of "Tahitians" and made into commodities, which respond to the urges and expectations of tourists.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of gender, while men's tattoos are often large in size, representing masculinity characterized with strength and "savage-ness", women's tattoos are small, emphasizing the femininity and the eroticism of the body. "Tahitian" women (often *demi*) with a tattoo above the hip, around the navel or ankle are represented in tourist brochures. In recent photographic representation, there is a subversion of the savagery of male tattooed bodies into eroticized images.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The study of these images and the process of image production itself is interesting (Jolly 1997; Guest 2000; Smith 1992), but I focus on how Tahitians respond or react to these stereotypes and images. I assume that the stereotypes and fetishistic representation and products have been both co-opted and resisted by the local people. They manipulate this stereotype and locate themselves in the society interconnecting global politics, economics and local culture. They react to this stereotype unevenly, accepting and at other time refuting their identification as "Tahitian".

<sup>13</sup> See Gian Paolo Barbieri's photographic work as an example (1998).

Tattooists differentiate each other not only by the tools they use but also by the tattoo forms they apply. Tattoo forms are owned by the collective (ethnic, cultural, and working group) as well as by the individual (tattooist and tattooed person). The ownership of tattooing is clearly marked and acknowledged by both tattooists and tattooed people.

The “ancient/traditional” motifs, which have been documented in the ethnography in the 1920s, are now limited, so tattooists refer to Karl von den Steinen (1925) and W. Chatterson Handy’s (1922) ethnography of Marquesan tattooing to learn these motifs. The particular use and arrangement of these motifs and the theme of the design, therefore, determine the originality of each tattooist. Most local clients chose the tattooist whose style they like or who is simply their friend.

The tattooist often shares the style with co-workers. Consequently, the individual tattooists’ style is extended to a larger collective such as *le style artisanat* if they belong to an artisan association and tattoo at *Marché* or *Fare Rimai*, or *le style salon* if they work at the tattoo salon in town.<sup>14</sup> *Le style artisanat* implies those that are faithful to the styles documented in Von den Steinen and Handy’s works, although most artisan-based tattooists have developed their own styles rather than copying exactly those from the old days. Many of *le style artisanat* are similar to the motifs and styles used in wood, bone, and mother-of-pearl carving, and *tapa*.

*Le style salon* is regarded as the tattoo style that is integrated with Euro-American and Asian styles and designs. It includes the local style of tattoo, but modernized and often mixed with non-Polynesian styles (tribal, European, and Japanese) and tattooed with the use of Western techniques (shading and coloring) and materials (tattoo inks, machines, transparencies, etc).

The tattooists, who specialize in either *le style artisanat* or *le style salon*, often mix different Polynesian styles – Maori, Hawaiian, and Samoan – in their “Polynesian” tattooing. *Le tatouage polynésien*, and *le style/dessin polynésien* refer to all the kinds of Polynesian styles and designs. Although tattooists and local tattooed people clearly distinguish the style and other characteristics (size and location on the body) of each island’s tattooing, calling the mixed tattoo style “Polynesian” is a strategy for the tattooists to legitimize tattooing Maori, Hawaiian, and Marquesan styles and designs, by stating that they are all Polynesian and share the same cultural heritage. As all traditional Polynesian tattoos are black, tattooists consider that they are compatible when they mix different Polynesian styles in one tattoo design.

While “Polynesian” tattooing includes the styles of different islands, “Tahitian” tattooing is exclusive. *Le tatouage tahitien* (Tahitian tattoo), *le style/dessin tahitien* (Tahitian design), refer to the styles that are different from the other Polynesian styles such as Marquesan, Samoan, Hawaiian, and Maori. While Marquesans use the term

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<sup>14</sup> *Marché* is a central market in Papeete, where fruits, vegetable, meat, and fish are sold on the ground floor, and artisan products on the first floor. *Fare Rimai* is a neo-traditional house, round and thatched, where artisans of associations work and sell their products.

“Tahitian” exclusively to differentiate it from their own tattoo, Tahitians use the terms exploitatively when they refer to “Marquesan” style as “Tahitian” to tourists.

Dancing was also prohibited in the process of Christianization and colonialization, Madeleine Moua created the first semi-professional dance group, which gave birth to other professional dance groups. Dance was practiced even before the revolution of Madeleine Moua, but according to Gilles Hollande, it was not regarded as an activity for every girl, but only for “bad” girls.<sup>15</sup> However, dance has become a cultural activity for *demi* girls from good families.<sup>16</sup>

On the one hand, dance and music have been institutionalized by the regulation of dance competition at *Heiva*, which I will discuss below, and le Conservatoire Artistique Territorial (Fare upa rau), which aims for the conservation “par la reproduction écrite et mécanique du patrimoine musicale polynésien... concernent la danse, les percussions, les cordes, le chant” (Comité organisateur de la Délégation Polynésienne, 2000).<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, dance and music have extended the sites of performance and developed different modes of expression.

While the contemporary development of dance is associated with cultural revitalization in the 1970s and the 1980s, it is also strongly linked to tourism. The formation of dance groups is based on the districts of Tahiti, but many professional or semi-professional dance groups, which are not based on districts, perform regularly at hotels and restaurants. They also go for dance tours to Europe, America, and Asia for special events (such as the opening of a new flight route between Tahiti and Osaka) or for a campaign sponsored by an enterprise marketing local products (*noni* – medical juice made of fruits). The aspects of tourism sometimes take priority over those of cultural revitalization. When Manouche Lehartel, the director of the dance group Toa Reva, found that the international folk festival was to take place at the same time as *Heiva*, she decided to go to the folk festival. She notes that “nous allons au Quebec. Bien sûr, ce sera une occasion formidable pour pronouvoir le tourisme au fenua” (*Horizon Magazine*, 1997 : 26).<sup>18</sup> Yet, Lehartel also claims that “être reconnu dans les hôtels, ou à l'étranger c'est bien, mais ce que nous voulons d'abord c'est être reconnu par les nôtres, chez nous” (ibid. : 27).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Les filles qui dansaient, on disait que c'était des traîneuses, des filles qui allaient avec les garçons, qui buvaient, qui ne pensaient qu'à faire la fête, bref qui n'avaient rien dans la tête” (*Les Nouvelles de Tahiti: Heiva 1999*, p.10 and p.12) “The girls who danced, one says that mobs, the girls who were with the boys, who drink, who think only about party, in short, who do not have anything else on the head” (my translation).

<sup>16</sup> Some girls, however, claim that they are not allowed to dance in the group because their fathers are worried about them being with boys.

<sup>17</sup> “By written and mechanical reproduction of Polynesian musical heritage...concerned with dance, percussion, cord and chant” (my translation).

<sup>18</sup> “Let's go to Quebec. Of course, it will be a formidable occasion to promote tourism for our country” (my translation).

<sup>19</sup> “Being popular at hotels, or with foreigners, that's good, but what we want first of all is to

Dancers and musicians are mobile. They often change groups, especially before *Heiva*. Most dancers and musicians shop around and choose a group whose theme and choreography appeal to them. There are always rumors, which help dancers and singers to find out about and choose a group. Dance performance is more collective than tattooing. Their performance and the evaluation of it are first of all on the basis of group. However, the evaluation of an individual dancer/musician's performance is important, for they are located within the group accordingly. The best dancers are positioned in the front line, and might have a chance to dance solo or in a couple.

Like tattooing, people distinguish the origin of the components of dance, but tend to incorporate different dances into their performance. Incorporation of different styles can be observed at both internal and external levels. Moulin (1996) shows the example of external incorporation of Rarotongan dance. The influence of Rarotongan dance is explicit in the "Tahitian" dance as a large number of Rarotongans stayed in Tuamotu to work in phosphate mines in the 1950s. Internal incorporation is observed among different dance groups in French Polynesia. The influence of performances by superior dance groups often appears in the performances of different groups at subsequent festivals.

Tattooing and dancing in Tahiti have been developed through being practiced and performed in the contexts of cultural revitalization and tourism. Differences are clearly marked in contemporary tattooing and dancing in Tahiti by individual artist/group style, by regional (archipelago/island) differences, and by the choice of knowledge and technology (whether traditional or modern).

### *HEIVA*

The history of *Heiva* reflects the history of French Polynesia. The festival has been transformed according to political changes through colonialism, annexation, to internal autonomy and the economic changes resulting from the development of tourism.<sup>20</sup>

One year after the Society Islands was annexed to France in 1880, the colonial administration decided to celebrate *la fête de juillet*, which derived from *la Bastille* on July 14. In the early 1880s, *la fête* was a celebration for the French governors and colonial officers, who held a military parade, a regatta, and children's games. Athletic competitions such as swimming, shooting, bicycling, horseracing, and track and field took place (Stevenson 1990: 261). There was a ball-dance party in the evening of July 13 at the governor's residence. Indigenous activities such as *himene*, dance, costumes, outrigger canoe racing, and javelin throwing, were also taken into the program. Other athletic pursuits included horseracing, fruit carrying, stone lifting, copra making, and sand carrying (ibid.). French culture and nationalism were the predominant features of

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be popular at home" (my translation).

<sup>20</sup> For more detail, see Karen Stevenson's work on the history of *Heiva* (1990).

the festival, indicating that the territory had become French and the indigenous people were in the process of being assimilated.

Institutionalization of culture began from the mid-1950s. In 1965, Maco Tevane established le Maohi Club, aimed at creating and revitalizing “traditional” culture. L’Académie tahitienne, *Fare Vana’a*, was established in 1972. Its purpose is to regenerate indigenous language and promote its use in society. It has also published a Tahitian grammar book and a Tahitian-French dictionary.

As Tahitian language was accepted as a national language, the festival organizers changed the name of the festival from *La Fête* (or *La Bastille*) to *Tuirai* in 1977. (*Tuirai* is the Tahitian word for July). Stevenson states that “the name change gave the celebration a more explicit Tahitian identity” (1990: 264). In 1977, Musée de Tahiti et des Îles was established for the conservation of archaeological and ethnological information and to educate Tahitians about their own past. In 1980, the Centre Polynésien des Sciences Humaines (Te Ana vaha Rau) and OTAC (Office Territoriale d’Action Culturelle) were founded. OTAC has been taking charge of organizing and operating of *Heiva*. The Centre Métier d’Arts was founded in 1981, and craft and art production has been institutionalized. Linked to the cultural revitalization movement, *Tuirai* began to offer a performance space, which led to the formation of *la culture ma’ohi* through the institutionalization of culture and the raising of people’s awareness of their past and contemporary creation.

On September 6, 1984, French Polynesia achieved *l’autonomie interne* (internal autonomy). The territorial authorities began to emphasize the significance to cultural politics of “traditional culture” including art and craft, sport, performance art and dance, oral history, archaeological sites, rituals and ceremonies. In 1985, l’assemblée territoriale decided to celebrate the national festival as *fête de l’autonomie interne* on June 29, the date France annexed the islands. The *Heiva i Tahiti 2001* official brochure explains:

Pour bien marquer l’accession du territoire à l’autonomie interne, le président du gouvernement, Gaston Flosse, décide d’introduire le *Heiva i Tahiti* par le Hivavaevae, une journée de grand rassemblement organisée le 29 juin, date de l’annexion de Tahiti et ses îles par la France... Si la fête nationale du 14 juillet est conservée pour célébrer le maintien de la Polynésie française au sein de la République française, le gouvernement local institue la journée du 29 juin, date de l’annexion de Tahiti et ses îles par la France, pour débiter les fêtes traditionnelles annuelles désormais appelées *Heiva i Tahiti* sous la forme d’un grand rassemblement nationaliste baptisé Hivavaevae.<sup>21</sup> (Le programme officiel

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<sup>21</sup> “In order to mark the accession of the territory to internal autonomy, the President, Gaston Flosse, decided to introduce the *Heiva i Tahiti* by the Hivavaevae, the day of big assembly organized on June 29th, the date of the annexation of Tahiti and the islands by France... If the national festival of July 14th is kept for celebration of maintaining French Polynesia in the

du *Heiva i Tahiti 2001*, p. 14.)

In 1986, the name of the festival was changed from *Tuirai* to *Heiva i Tahiti*.

*Heiva* is a festival which takes place annually in French Polynesia from the end of June for approximately one month. Almost every island in French Polynesia celebrates *Heiva* or at least has a dance party around that time, but the largest festival is the one on the island of Tahiti. People often state that *Heiva* on the other islands are better because they are more local, while *Heiva* in Tahiti is more touristic. Various activities such as dancing, chanting, sporting competitions, the installation of an artisan village, and fire walking, take place during the Festival.<sup>22</sup> Today the representation of cultural identity and related activities such as dance, art and craft, and sport has become more important in the island politics in the relationships with France. *Heiva* has grown into a larger national festival and now includes various events.

Miss Tahiti and Tane Tahiti contests are two of the major events of *Heiva*. There is a difference in the nature of the Miss and Tane contests. Miss Tahiti participates in the Miss France contest and can even go on further to the Miss Universe contest. The standard of beauty is more universal and *demi* are often nominated.<sup>23</sup> The Tane Tahiti contest, however, does not have such an international dimension. Tane Tahiti is selected on the basis of local values such as knowledge of traditional culture such as tattooing, ability to lift a heavy stone or climb up a coconut tree and grate it as fast as possible. Tattoos are requisite for a candidate for the Tane Tahiti contest. Most of successive Tane Tahiti are heavily tattooed, and consequently tattoos have become a kind of requirement to become Tane Tahiti. For instance, Varii Huuti, Tane Tahiti in 2000, is a tattooist and tattooed his legs just before the contest.

The dance competition is one of the major events of *Heiva*. The programs are composed of two or three dance (*ori*) and chant (*himene*) entries, starting in the evening at 7:30 and lasting until midnight for about seven or eight nights during *Heiva*. Both professional and amateur dance groups compete with each other for the category of traditional and creation.<sup>24</sup> The competition is serious and political, the groups having rehearsed almost every evening for over three months. Prizes are

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heart of the French Republic, the local government institutes the day of June 29th, the date of the annexation of Tahiti and the Islands by France, for start the traditional annual festival from now on called *Heiva i Tahiti* under the form of the big national assembly blessed Hivavaevae" (my translation).

<sup>22</sup> Sports which are contested during *Heiva* are those considered as "traditional" such as *les courses de porteurs de fruits* (fruit carrying race), *le concours de lever de pierre* (the stone lifting contest), *le concours de préparation de coprah* (copra preparation contest), *le lancer de javelot* (lance throwing) and *les courses de va'a* (canoe racing).

<sup>23</sup> For instance, Mareva Galanter, Miss Tahiti 1998 became Miss France 1999.

<sup>24</sup> The traditional category has a theme at each *Heiva*. For instance, the theme of *Heiva* 1999 was Tuamotu.



awarded to the best individuals and groups in the different categories.<sup>25</sup> The winners may have various opportunities such as overseas tours, or the chance to produce a CD and video. The prize is also a great honor for individual dancers and choreographers, as people remember them for years afterwards. The motivating factors for participating in the dance competition are various, but Manouche Lehartel explains:

Les tahitiens aiment la fête, aiment la danse. Si on est à Tahiti, il faut faire le *Heiva* car on ne peut rester en marge d'une mouvance à laquelle on appartient. E puis vous savez, ils ont tous le sentiment d'appartenir au meilleur groupe, à celui qui va gagner, Alors pourquoi ne pas y aller? D'autre part, pour un artiste se montrer devant un vaste public, c'est motivant, c'est valorisant même. Beaucoup de nos artistes, quasi bénévoles, sont sans emploi. Ils n'ont souvent pas d'autre existence sociale ou professionnelle pourrait on dire, qu'au travers du groupe de danse auquel ils appartiennent. Et puis, quant nous avons la chance de partir en tournée, vous pouvez imaginer tout ce que cela représente pour eux<sup>26</sup>. (*Horizon Magazine*, No. 324, July, 1997: 27.)

The "traditional" characteristic is central, but creativity and originality are regarded as essential in order to surpass the performance of other competitors. There was a big debate about the selection process of dance competition for the "traditional" category. In *Heiva* 1999, the performances of the group O Tahiti E in the "traditional" category were very original and creative. Thus, the question was raised as to the difference between "traditional" and "creative". The general consensus was that this creativity in the "traditional" category is also highly respected.

Competition does not take place in every *Heiva*. In *Heiva 2000*, unlike in

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<sup>25</sup> For instance at *Heiva i Tahiti* 1999, the prizes were: *concours hura tau traditionnel* (traditional for professional groups), *concours hura tau création libre* (free-style category for amateur groups), *concours hura ava tau traditionnel* (traditional for amateur groups), *concours meilleur costume* (the best costume), *concours meilleur orchestre programme imposé* (the best orchestra on the fixed program), *concours meilleur orchestre programme libre* (the best orchestra on the free-style program), *concours meilleur danseur individuel* (the best male dancer), *concours meilleure danseuse individuelle* (the best female dancer), *Meilleur couple* (the best dance couple) *prix spécial et unique Josie and Don Over Memorial* (the best dance in the pre-European contact periods), *meilleur auteur-compositeur* (the best author and composer), and so forth.

<sup>26</sup> "Tahitians love the festival, love the dance. If one is in Tahiti, he has to do *Heiva*, for he cannot stay on the periphery of the thing he belongs to. And, as you know, they have all the feeling of belonging to the best group that would win. Then why not going ahead? On the other hand, for an artist performing in front of the public is motivating, and also valuable. A lot of our artists, almost voluntarily, are unemployed. They often don't have any other social or professional existence, besides the dance group which they belong to. And then, when we have a chance to go on a dance tour, you can imagine what this all means to them" (my translation).

previous years, the delegations from the five archipelagos, consisting of dancers, musicians, and artisans merely exchanged their performances and art forms. People noted it as festival but not a competition. The Ministre de l'Artisanat, Llewellyn Tematahotoa, explains that "elle symbolise la diversité, la richesse artistique de nos archipels et la multiplicité des pôles qui les composent, tous liés par le sentiment fort d'une appartenance commune à l'entité maohi" (le programme officiel du *Heiva Nui 2000*).<sup>27</sup> *Heiva Nui 2000* attempts to unify the five archipelagoes in French Polynesia and let them acknowledge their similarities and differences. For example, the Tahitian audience was impressed by the dance performance of Gambier, which they had rarely seen before, while they were used to watching the Marquesan *haka* and Puamotu. This festival enabled Tahitians to realize the geographical scattering of the territory and their cultural diversity.

The organizers of *Heiva* divide the contest into professional (*ura tau*) and amateur (*ura ava tau*). However, the decision to enter either the professional or amateur category is made not by the organizers, but by the director of the dance group. Some group directors prefer to enter the amateur category, in the hope of picking up the first prize rather than being the last in the professional category.

Some professional dance groups that had participated in *Heiva* up to 1999 did not participate in 2000 and 2001 due partially to the excessive politics involved in the competition and held separate performances at which they sometimes charged entry fees. Professional dance groups also tend to be keen to distinguish themselves as professional as opposed to amateur district groups which are formed only for the duration of *Heiva*. Louise Peltzer, Ministre de la Culture, comments:

... deux groupes de danses renommés, attendus par le public, seront absents. Le piste du *Heiva* est peut-être devenue trop étroite pour leurs ambitions. Leur travail acharné tout au long de ces années leur ont ouvert les portes des scènes internationales et nous nous en réjouissons. Tout en leur souhaitant bonne chance, Je les remercie d'ores et déjà d'être les ambassadeurs de notre fenua et de sa culture de par le monde<sup>28</sup>. (Le programme officiel de *Heiva I Tahiti 2001*: 7.)

Although the government and tourist agencies have been attempting to attract

<sup>27</sup> "It symbolizes the diversity, the artistic richness of our archipelagos, and the multiplicity of poles that compose them, connecting all by the strong sentiments of commune belonging to the Ma'ohi entity" (my translation).

<sup>28</sup> "Two famous dance groups, waited for by public, will be absent. The trail of *Heiva* probably becomes too narrow for their ambitions. Their work, which we have been passionate about for a long time, opened the international door and we are delighted with it. We wish the good luck and thank them for being our ambassador for our *fenua* and culture to the world" (my translation). Two groups that Louis Peltzer refers to are Te Maeva and O Tahiti E, winning groups at *Heiva* for several years.

more tourists during *Heiva*, *Heiva* rarely becomes the primary object for their vacation. The tourists who stay in Tahiti in July, however, enjoy dance competitions.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the tickets for dance competitions are relatively expensive (CPF1500 to 3000), most of the audience in *Heiva 2000* and *Heiva 2001* were tourists or French people living in Tahiti.<sup>30</sup> The competitions were on live TV, so most Tahitians watched them at home. As many had friends and family involved in one of the performing groups, many Tahitians were interested in the competition, and often had already observed practices before *Heiva*.

*Heiva des artisans* was organized by le Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel and le Comité Tahiti i te Rima Rau. The artisan village was installed by the associations of artisans from the districts of Tahiti and different islands in Aorai Tini Hau in Pirae. There were six hundred artisans and twenty-one delegations at *Heiva d'artisan 2000*. The artisans had a stand where they sold their art products such as wood, stone, mother-of-pearl, and bone carvings, *tifaifai* (patchwork), *pareu*, cloth, shell and seed necklaces and bracelets, *tapa*, black pearl products, coconut fiber plaiting products (hat, basket, mat etc), and cloth. Besides crafts, there were massage and tattooing stands. There was a stage at the center of the village where competitions for craft production took place. The competitions also demonstrated the process of production. The audience was able to approach the mamas, female artisans, who were making *tifaifai* or pannier, and ask them questions. There were also short lessons on craft provided by these mamas.

The artisan activities represented in *Heiva* are located both in local social matrix and tourism-related globalization, just as dance is. They are both "pro-France" and "pro-independence"; both "pre-colonial" and "post/neo-colonial". The artisan products sold in the artisan village are expensive, but many local Tahitian and French people buy them because they are often of better quality and different style from those available in Marché. While some tourists visit the artisan village in Pirae, the majority of tourists (who come for the beach and marine sports) do not bother to come to Pirae to buy *pareu* and carved wood products. Instead, they buy some *pareu* or *monoi* at the hotel souvenir shops or at the Marché. These arts and crafts for the tourists represent the exoticism of "Tahiti" in Raapoto's terms. The products are "indigenous culture conceived by pro-France" although the tourists seek "pre-contact", "pre-colonial" Tahitian culture.

Although acknowledged as *la culture ma'ohi*, tattooing has an ambivalent position in *Heiva*. In *Heiva 1998*, there was only one program on tattooing while there

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<sup>29</sup> More likely, they happen to watch dance performances while they wait for a flight, or visit the artisan village between trips to Bora Bora or Moorea.

<sup>30</sup> There were free seats behind the stage in 1999 as the orchestra played at the sides of the stadium. Many local people were in the stadium and watched the show live. In 2000 and 2001, however, the orchestra was located on the central stage and there were no free seats for the locals.

were many on dancing, canoe racing, chanting and *tifaifai* making. Stevenson (personal communication 1998) suggests that it was due to the Health Organization's fear of HIV infection. Moreover, Christian discipline is still more or less preventing many people from tattooing. Tattooing first started to be practiced at *Heiva* in 1982 when Tavana Salmon invited Samoan tattooists. They demonstrated the traditional tool practice at Musée de Tahiti et des Îles. Tavana Salmon has tattooed with Lesa Lio and Matahi Brightwell at *Heiva* in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986. In 1986, tattooing with traditional tools was prohibited for reasons of hygiene, but tattooing returned to *Heiva* with the use of remodeled razors in 1989.

The numbers of tattoo stands varies from one *Heiva* to another. For instance, there were five stands in 1999, four stands in 2000 and three stands in 2001. There were about two tattooists working at each stand. The stands in the artisan village were organized according to the different artisan associations. Each association, usually formed by either families or district members, paid a rent for a stand. Tattooists who worked at the artisan village had to belong to an association. Some did not normally work with an association, but joined with the tattooists who belonged to one and were allocated a stand. For example, at *Heiva* 1999, a tattooist generally working at the salon and tattooing many non-Polynesian styles, including European, tribal, and Japanese, worked with a friend who belonged to an artisan association in Papeeno. Another tattooist who worked in the construction industry and tattooed at home only on the weekend, worked with his brother-in-law who belonged to an association in Puunauia.

The tattooists had many local clients who often asked for covering-up and modification during *Heiva*.<sup>31</sup> For tattooists, *Heiva* is not only a great opportunity to earn money, but also good to advertise for their business. Some clients who were uncomfortable with the prospect of being tattooed in public made arrangements to visit the tattooists' studio after *Heiva*.

Tattooing in *Heiva* maintains the subtle rules acknowledged between tattooist and client, and among tattooists. Clients generally choose a tattooist based on friendship. Similarly, friendship is important in the relationship between tattooists as they share a style among work partners, who are often friends, brothers, or other relatives. During four weeks of *Heiva*, artisans, including tattooists, spend most of their time at the village. Some even sleep there to guard the stand at night. They establish friendships by passing idle time with artisans of similar age while the stands are not busy, and later many of them are tattooed by their tattooist friends.

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<sup>31</sup> Covering-up is a technique to hide an existing tattoo by tattooing a new design on top. The existing tattoo was usually badly done, or the design or the letters, no longer appealed to the wearer. Modification is another technique for dealing with unwanted old tattoos. In contrast to covering-up, modification retains the old tattoos but improves them by re-outlining and/or re-filling with darker ink. The theme of the design often remains as it is, but it can be transformed.

Tattooists are mutually differentiated based on their style and technique. Their intention to locate themselves in both “artisanat”, which means within *la culture ma’ohi*, and the global tattoo world, which implies the tourism industry and “Tahitian culture”, becomes apparent at *Heiva*. By regarding themselves “artisans” and connecting tattooing to cultural revitalization and ethnic and cultural identity formation, tattooists, through *Heiva*, re-affirm and re-claim that tattooing is *la culture ma’ohi* to tourists and French people living in Tahiti, and importantly, to themselves. At the same time, by tattooing tourists with tattoo machines, the tattooists demonstrate that their tattooing is also located in the global tattoo world.

*Heiva* is simultaneously nationalistic and touristic, in other words, both *la culture ma’ohi* and the “Tahitian” stereotype are prominent. Both dancing and tattooing are strongly linked to tourism and the global market. Differences in dance performance and tattooing among individual dancers, tattooists, groups, stands, and districts are important indicators of identity formation in local relationships. Differences between amateur and professional have also been well established and marked, and dancers and tattooists tend to articulate themselves as “Ma’ohi” in nation making in French Territory and as “Tahitian” within the global market. This ambiguity also becomes apparent in the gender differentiation at Miss Tahiti and Tane Tahiti contests. While Tane Tahiti is judged on local criteria, Miss Tahiti is judged by international standards of beauty, as it is connected to the Miss France and Miss Universe contests. Miss Tahiti is more “Tahitian” or “French”, while Tane Tahiti is more “Ma’ohi”. The tattooed body of male dancers reinforces the “Ma’ohi” warrior identity, but also responds to the Western gaze of colonial stereotyping.

### FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

The Festival of Pacific Arts which runs for two weeks has been held every four years since 1972 when hosted by Fiji. This was followed by New Zealand in 1976, Papua New Guinea in 1980, French Polynesia in 1985, Australia in 1988, the Cook Islands in 1992, Western Samoa in 1996, and New Caledonia in 2000. As I discuss in more detail below, arrangements for the Fourth Festival to be hosted by New Caledonia were cancelled due to political upheaval there, and French Polynesia hosted the Festival the following year.

There are political and financial differences between sending a delegation and hosting the Festival. At highest level, the Festival is organized by the Secretariat of Pacific Community (formerly the South Pacific Commission), but the Festival takes on the different features of each host country due to cultural politics and the attitudes of local audiences (Myers 1989: 60; Simons 1989; Yamamoto: 2001). When sending a delegation, the French Polynesian government was much concerned with the image of territory represented to the other countries and territories in the Pacific, especially the image presented to the host country. As French Polynesia has experienced both host and non-host roles, in the following section, I compare French Polynesia as host of the

Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts and as a delegation participant at the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, and elucidate cultural politics and identity formation processes at each Festival.

The Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts was held from June 29 to July 15, 1985. 1197 delegates from the following twenty-one countries and territories participated: American Samoa, Australia, the Cook Islands, Easter Island, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, the Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, the Northern Marianas Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, and Western Samoa. The location of French Polynesia was problematic from the outset as travel costs were high for most delegations. The problem was solved by the financial support of UNESCO, France, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States (*Les Dépêche de Tahiti*. June 11, 1985: 17).

The Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, originally scheduled to be hosted by New Caledonia in December 1984, was cancelled due to concern over possible interruptions by the local pro-independence movement. At the meeting of the South Pacific Commission in French Polynesia in February, French Polynesia offered to host the Festival in June. This take-over by French Polynesia was highly political, as Marie-Thérèse and Bengt Danielsson observed:

From the beginning, Flosse made no bones about what he had in mind – it was to polish up France’s image in a region where, in his opinion, too many government heads and political leaders had a regrettable tendency to side with the FLNKS “terrorists” (as he consistently labeled Tjibaou and company) instead of supporting the law-and-order government of the White settlers. In the other words, by staging the festival in Tahiti, Flosse was sure he would be able to show the world what a happy and prosperous place a French colony is in “normal” circumstances. (Danielsson and Danielsson 1985: 22)

Gaston Flosse, the President of French Polynesia, wanted to begin the Festival on June 29, which he had designated as a national holiday to celebrate “internal autonomy”, but the date is actually when Tahiti and Moorea were annexed to France in 1880. Jean Juventin, Mayor of Papeete and pro-independence advocate, disagreed with Flosse’s political intention, and declared “all parks and public buildings in the capital off-limits to the organizers for the duration of the festival” (ibid.: 25). Thus, Flosse had to build a new theatre for 2000 spectators in Pirae, where he was mayor. In April, Flosse announced that the festivities on June 29 were not to mark the annexation, but for the achievement of internal self-government, which was on September 5 in 1842.

From the political perspective of French Polynesia, hosting the Festival implied comparison and competition with New Caledonia. Both are in similar political situation regarding their status as French overseas territories, but the populations of

the two territories had different attitudes about the political structure. The Festival was used by the political authorities to demonstrate this to the other nations in the Pacific and in the world, and Hivavaevae, parade, on 29 June was:

L'occasion d'appeler toutes les forces vives du territoire à témoigner de leur sens du patriotisme polynésien et de montrer au reste du monde océanien que le statut d'autonomie interne de la Polynésie française peut constituer à la fois les atouts d'un meilleur développement économique et la préservation de l'identité Ma'ohi.<sup>32</sup> (Le programme officiel du *Heiva 99* i Tahiti, p. 5.)

Many opposition party politicians objected to the date of the Festival partially because it began on June 29 (*Les Dépêche de Tahiti*, June 20, 1985: 13) and partially because it overlapped with *Tuirai* and they were concerned that "in such circumstances the Festival of Pacific Arts would lose its specific and independent character" (Danielsson and Danielsson 1985: 22). Yet, the report of the South Pacific Commission considered the concurrent holding of the festivals to be a positive outcome as "thus all the usual activities of this local ceremony took place during the Festival and foreign delegates were invited to participate in them" (South Pacific Commission 1987: 45). These activities were canoe racing, fruit carrying, sand carrying, stone lifting, javelin throwing, and copra preparation. Fire walking and *marae* reconstruction were also popular with the foreign delegations.

During the Fourth Festival, dance performances by each delegation were held in the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles, OTAC, and the artisan village. By night they were held in Aorai Timi Hau, Vaiete, and OTAC. When the Festival is hosted by other countries, only a limited number of dancers, musicians, and artisans can watch the performance and artisan production of the other islands. However, at the Fourth Festival, many people who were not selected for the delegation had the opportunity to observe the performances and production live.

The Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts took place in Noumea, New Caledonia from October 23 to November 3, 2000. There were more than 3000 participants from twenty-four countries and territories, giving dance, music, and theatrical performances, photography and painting exhibitions, and art and craft demonstrations.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "The occasion to call on all the active forces of the territory to prove their understanding of Polynesian heritage and show to the rest of the oceanic worlds that the status of internal autonomy of French Polynesia can constitute a trump card for the best economic development and the preservation of Ma'ohi identity" (my translation).

<sup>33</sup> The countries and territories, which participated in the Eight Festival of Pacific Arts were as follows: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island, Federated states of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Tonga, Kiribus, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

French Polynesia, under the direction of the Minister of Culture, organized a delegation, called Association 'Aha Tau, which means "<sacred bond of time> represented by a 5-strand braid which symbolise the 5 united archipelagos" (Comité organisateur de la Délégation Polynésienne 2000). 'Aha Tau consisted of 150 dancers, musicians, and artisans.<sup>34</sup> French Polynesian delegations are typically large and well-equipped because of substantial financial support from France.<sup>35</sup> Similar to the way it hosts a Festival, French Polynesia demonstrates the advantage of being affiliated to France by sending a large delegation to the other countries and territories in the Pacific.

The village of the Eighth Festival was installed in l'Anse-Vata, where roughly 300 artisans were allocated stands. French Polynesian artisans demonstrated their creations such as wood, bone, and stone carving, fiber braiding, and tattooing. Crafts such as baskets, shell and grain accessories, *tifaifai*, *tapa*, and *pareu* were sold. Three carvers made a *pahu*, a ceremonial drum, which was offered to the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou. *Ma'a tahiti*, which was a feast of pork, sweet potatoes, and bananas cooked under the ground, was served accompanied by a dance performance at the artisan village. A conference on *Te Reo Ma'ohi*, in line with the policy of focusing on indigenous language education, was also given by Louise Peltzer. The work of four French Polynesian contemporary artists, Tehina, Ione, Heirai Lehartel, and Vitor Lefay, was exhibited at the Fourth biennale d'art contemporain de Nuomea.<sup>36</sup>

The French Polynesian delegation gave dance performances on October 27, 28, and 29 at the Kami Yo of Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou. The show, titled "Maui e te vehera'a o te tau", consisted of the dance styles of three archipelagoes: the Society Islands, the Marquesas, and Tuamotu. Generally, the dance group that won the first prize in the previous *Heiva* is nominated for the Festival of Pacific Arts. Yet, at *Heiva Nui 2000*, there was no dance competition, but dance performances by delegations from each archipelago. Thus, for the Eighth Festival, the group was a newly formed unit of about one hundred people. The dancers, musicians, choreographer, director, and staff acknowledged the particularities and similarities of style of each archipelago and incorporated them into one spectacle. The big screen was effectively used to depict how a young Maui living in contemporary Tahiti becomes interested in his ancestral legends and history. Jean-Paul Landé, the artistic director of the delegation

<sup>34</sup> The Marquesan delegation, led by Lucien Kimitete, came to New Caledonia independently from the Tahitian delegation. It made a sister-city contract with Mont-Dore and had cultural exchange with them during the Festival.

<sup>35</sup> Stevenson (1999: 32) states that "due to the importance placed on festivals as a venue for the promotion of cultural and artistic identity, French Polynesia often subsidises quite a large delegation of artists, dancers, and performers".

<sup>36</sup> Only Victor Lefay was present at the inauguration at the centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Victor says "c'est très diversifié, il y a des oeuvres de tous les styles. Tout cela a fait beaucoup d'effet sur le public, les sentiments étaient partagés entre la surprise et la rigolade" (*les Nouvelles de Tahiti*, October 26, 2000).



states:

We wanted to respond to two important basic principles: that of the Arts Council, which was to give precedence to our young creative artists, and that of our country, which was to blend in the new communication technologies, a very topical theme in French Polynesia, into our show. (Comité organisateur de Festival des Arts du Pacifique 2000: 39)

The show consists of four acts: Act One, “a trip through time”; Act Two, “Maui lights up the fire”; and Act Three, “Maui’s hook or the discovery of the other”, representing dances and songs from the Marquesas Islands; and Act Four, “Catching the sun or mastering one’s future,” representing dances and songs from the Tuamotu. The dance performance of the French Polynesian delegation was the fusion of different archipelagos, different dancers and musicians, modernity and tradition.

Apart from the producer’s intention, performance was perceived in various ways, but mostly received conventional criticism and valuations generally made on the performance of the French Polynesian delegation. Tahitian dance performance often was regarded as “too professional” by members of other delegations. Stevenson states:

At Townsville in 1988, comments relating Tahitian dance to ‘Las Vegas’ or the Folies-Bergère were frequent, as well as a disdain for a Tahitian influence over Melanesian dance, especially the National Theatre of Papua New Guinea, Tahitian dancers are often considered too ‘professional’, their performances too slick. They are show stoppers, not primitive and/or savage. In attempts to demonstrate virtuosity and precision in dance, hours of practice go unheralded and, to add insult to injury has been associated with ‘Airport Art’. (1999: 33)

The French Polynesian delegates acknowledged this criticism in comparing their performance with those of other delegations; however, they considered their performance as more “professional”, “sophisticated”, and “appealing internationally”.

This self-differentiation from the other islanders was also apparent in tattooing at the Festival. Three tattooists worked during the Festival. Tahitian tattooist Thierry Pirato belonged to the artisan association and had made plaited coconut fiber accessories for long time. He had been tattooing for two years and worked at the Fare Artisanat in Punaauia. Varii Huuti was originally from Ua Pou, the Marquesas Island, but lived in Faa’a, Tahiti. He worked in a studio at his residence. He carved stone, but had decided to concentrate on tattooing because there were more customers for tattooing than carving. He has won the titles of Mr Marquesas and Tane Tahiti and had been a prominent figure in artisan activities. Moïse Barsinas’ parents were Marquesan, but Moïse was born and grew up in Tahiti. Moïse had started his artisan activities plaiting coconut fibers, as his father had been a famous plaiter. Moïse had also been dancing in a professional dance group.

The styles these tattooists employed were Polynesian styles consisting mostly of ancient Marquesan motifs but in modern arrangements. Modern Polynesian styles featured many animal figures, such as turtles, sharks, dolphins, manta rays, and lizards. Each of the tattooists had an individual style. Varii had developed his modern Marquesan style together with his cousins, Efraïma and Simeon. Thierry had been tattooing many new Polynesian designs which were mixed with Marquesan, Maori, and Tahitian motifs.

At the Festival, Thierry, Varii, and Moïse had many local clients both French and Caledonian. There were also many mixed-descents, such as half-Wallisians, half-Indonesians, and half-Tahitian. Many Tahitian emigrants to New Caledonia were tattooed during the Festival. Most clients, who were tattooed by tattooists of the French Polynesian delegation, had also visited the Maori and Samoan stands. Their reasons for choosing the Tahitian tattooists were the price, the use of the tattoo machine (although Maori tattooists also used the tattoo machine), and the design.

Communication between the tattooists and the clients was limited because of the language barrier. Although Varii, Moïse, and Thierry spoke a little English, it was not enough to discuss a topic in anything other than superficial terms. The tattooists were not overly interested in where the clients were from, and did not usually ask them. When a journalist from the local newspaper, *Les Nouvelles de Calédonienne* interviewed Thierry and Varii, they had stated that they had tattooed many Australians, New Zealanders, French, Caledonian, and American. When I asked Thierry how many Americans he had tattooed, he revealed that he had tattooed only one.

As far as I observed, there was no exchange of knowledge or communication among Tahitian, Maori, and Samoan tattooists because the tattooists were busy with their work, and partially because of the language problem.<sup>37</sup> The three Tahitian tattooists did not speak English fluently and the Samoan and Maori did not speak French. They had, however, visited the stands of New Zealand and Samoa, and had an occasion to study the other styles and techniques. The direct influence of other island tattooing on the work of these tattooists was not observed during the Festival because they had tattooed what the clients wanted, which were “Tahitian” or “Marquesan” styles. However, the exchange and sharing tattooing took place between people of the different islands, as many Wallisians have been tattooed by Rafeale Suluape, a Samoan tattooist; many Maori, French, Caledonians were tattooed by Thierry, Varii, and Moïse. Cultural sharing among people who participated in the Festival took place on the surface of the skin.

Each tattooist had brought files of motifs and designs and photos of his works (although Moïse used the designs of the tattooist whom he often worked with). The clients viewed the samples of photos in the files and chose a design and motif they wanted. As there were many clients waiting in line, however, the tattooists took a

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<sup>37</sup> Yet, I presume that Tahitian tattooists might try some Maori and Samoan styles when they return home.

client who was the first in line. In this way, the tattooists were required to tattoo the designs of other tattooists. Therefore, for both tattooists and tattooed people, the tattoos done during the Festival were not very important for their individual artistic style, but rather for their regional style such as “Tahitian” or “Marquesan”. For the French Polynesian political authorities, they were more important as collective representations of the “imagined territory”.

Tattooing and dance performance were considered “too modern” by the other delegations because dance performance used technology and Hollywood-like stage effects and because the tattoo tools are not “traditional bone chisels” but tattoo machines. From the Tahitian perspective, dancers and tattooists are more professional as they achieved in global standards in both the tattoo and dance worlds.

The geographical politics of hosting the Festival and of sending a delegation were manifested in different ways. At the Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, where French Polynesia hosted the Festival, the geographical dimension of French Polynesia was minimized into the island of Tahiti, more precisely, into Pirae, the district of Gaston Flosse. The developed urban area of the island became a representative of the whole territory of French Polynesia.

At the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, where French Polynesia sent a delegation, the geographical dimension of French Polynesia was maximized to the territory encompassing five archipelagoes. The differences among districts, groups, and individual artists were maintained and acknowledged among the delegates, but were incorporated into a larger unit of territory. At the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts, the exchange and sharing of dance and tattooing happened not only among people of the other delegations in the Pacific, but also among the delegates of French Polynesia.

### CONCLUSION

Identity is formed through differentiation rather than unification at *Heiva* as most participants are from the island of Tahiti (although *Heiva 2000* had delegations from each archipelago in French Polynesia), while it is formed through unification rather than differentiation at the Festival of Pacific Arts. The dancers and artisans articulate “Ma’ohi” identity in the context of cultural revitalization, “Polynesian” identity in the context of Pacific regional relationships, and “Tahitian” identities in the context of tourism.

*Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts were implicated in colonial and neo-colonial politics and in globalization. Yet, as Reed notes that “ambivalence about the dancers and their practices is often evident because the practices themselves often resist being fully incorporated into nationalist discourses” (Reed 1998: 511), the participants of *Heiva* and the Festival of Pacific Arts did not necessarily play a role allocated by the organizers. They reacted to these imposed politics and images according to their position in local relationships and within globalization.

At *Heiva*, creativity and originality were regarded significant in the competition

and comparison of dancing and tattooing. The dancers and tattooists establish and affirm their personal identity through excluding the others who are the same ethnic, gender, and profession, on the basis of the differences resulting from their creativity and application of external knowledge and techniques.

At the Festivals of Pacific Arts, the differences between individuals, groups, or regions (districts and archipelagos), which were emphasized in *Heiva*, were blurred and incorporated into a "French Polynesian" territory. The organizers concentrated on establishing national identity rather than personal identity in featuring the Festival and a delegation. The dance performance and tattooing of delegates were integrated into this making of territory, but from a perspective of each dancer and tattooist, their participation aimed for economic benefit, fame, self-esteem, and fun.

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