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Patrick E. Molohon

Central Washington University, molohonpe@gmail.com

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SMALL ISLANDS, BIG HEART:  
REPRODUCING THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS THROUGH THE BODY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
Resource Management

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by  
Patrick Evan Molohon

July 2015

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the thesis of

Patrick Evan Molohon

Candidate for the degree of Master of Science

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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Dr. Lene Pedersen, Committee Chair

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Dr. Kathleen Barlow

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Dr. Mark Auslander

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Dean of Graduate Studies

## ABSTRACT

### SMALL ISLANDS, BIG HEART: REPRODUCING THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS THROUGH THE BODY

by

Patrick Evan Molohon

July 2015

Through the analysis of a Marquesan family in a touristic setting in Tahiti, this thesis explores the notion of the Polynesian body as a site of struggle between the gaze of cosmopolitan French tourists on the exotic other, and the resistance and self-interiorizing of the body by Marquesans. Many contemporary Marquesans choose to migrate to the more urbanized, popular tourist destination of Tahiti, for work, schooling, and medical procedures. Removed from their native land, Marquesans build upon traditional cultural practices and worldviews, while simultaneously actively creating innovative aspects of their experience in the new setting, on and within the body. Based on data gathered through ethnographic research, participant observation and interviews in August, 2014, Pape'ete, Tahiti, I analyze how tourist performances, food preparation, consumption and distribution, as well as tattooing create and affirm Marquesan culture in the diaspora.

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life, my heritage, my strengths, and my flaws. Thank you. As you will see, you gave me this opportunity.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

My research addresses how contemporary Marquesans living in Tahiti, away from their homeland, have come to define personhood, ethnic identity, and the self, while maintaining their kinship networks, in the context of geographical and economic challenges. Many Marquesans have migrated from the Marquesas to other areas in French Polynesia (especially Tahiti), for occupational and educational opportunities, in what Arjun Appadurai (1996:6) categorizes as a “search for hope.” Tahiti is more urbanized and features a great deal more work opportunities than do the Marquesas Islands. All of my Marquesan migrant informants stated in interviews that work and economic opportunities were the leading reasons for migrating to Tahiti from the Marquesas. In the case of these Marquesan migrants to Tahiti, my initial data suggest that both specific bodily cultural practices and extended kinship ties are vital to the production and reproduction of a collectivist, Marquesan cultural identity. This is tied to the high significance they place on ritualized performance (such as *haka* dances), and the reception and exchange of material forms and goods, including artwork, tattoos, and specifically food, as expressions of personhood and belonging. All of these practices together affirm for both individual and kin group what it means to be Marquesan, and the responsibilities that come with it. The geographic and cultural place of the Marquesas Islands is recreated by Marquesans who live abroad by the circulation and consumption of these specific substances and enacting of specific practices.

Pape’ete, Tahiti is both the political capital and the urban center of French Polynesia, and is the destination for many Marquesan migrants. My fieldwork dealt almost entirely with such

Marquesas Islanders. In fact, Carol Ivory (1999:323) found that more Marquesans now live in Tahiti (ten thousand) than in the entire Marquesas Island chain (eight thousand). This shift is largely due to a larger pool of job availability and an abundance of boarding schools in Tahiti, according to my informants. Much economic research has been conducted on the high rate of outmigration in Polynesia. Thirteen per cent of the total population of French Polynesia lives transnationally (Hossain 2007). According to the World Bank, remittance inflows to French Polynesia have risen to over \$755 million annually in 2013, jumping over \$340 million from \$408 million in 2002 (World Bank 2014). Yet, there is a gap in data on the implications of current internal population migrations within Polynesia, especially at the level of the family unit (Borofsky and Howard 1989:290). As the trend of outmigration continues, both Marquesan self-identity and kinship obligations to distribute material goods among kin continue the long legacy of inter-island transactions in the Pacific.

### *Research Purpose*

The purpose of this ethnographic research is to identify and understand the production of Marquesan identity, and kinship-family units, and their associated exchanges and obligations in the context of inter-island population migration. Specifically, how does a Marquesan person construct and continually produce Marquesan identity away from the Marquesas Islands? For instance, has the geographical distribution of family members in different locations led to changes in Marquesan definitions of identity? The medium of the body is important to consider because, as John and Jean Comaroff (1992:90) state, the human body serves as the mediator between the self and the world. The Comaroffs argue (1992:90) that “The human experience everywhere tends stubbornly to reassert the inseparability of physical and social being.” Thus,

how Marquesans used and presented their bodies in Tahiti (via dance, food, and tattoo) was important for me to analyze during fieldwork. I used the ethnographic field methods of participant observation and interviews to pursue the following research questions:

1. How do Marquesans living in Tahiti come to define and produce cultural identity, apart from their homeland? Have Marquesans living in Tahiti come to define themselves differently from Marquesans living in the Marquesas based on migration and geographical separation from co-resident members of the family in the islands and or kinship unit? How are Marquesan worldviews and practices regarding self-identity, including dance and tattoo practices, expressed in the diasporic population? Frederick Barth (1969:117-134) demonstrates that ethnic identities are dynamic, and sustained through public behavior. (Barth 1969:132). John Kirkpatrick describes (1983:86) that Marquesan identity, *'enana*, exists in a binary schema in opposition to Tahitian. Marquesans may differentiate their ethnic identity from Tahitians at times (to be non-Tahitian), but at other times enact specific practices that define their identity as Marquesan.

2. How do Marquesas Islanders construct and maintain kinship networks with family members living across islands? Is the historical ramage style kinship system, as described by Marshall Sahlins (1957:291-300) still salient for contemporary Marquesan migratory populations? Specifically how do Marquesan families communicate, and distribute resources amongst themselves, and between Tahiti and the Marquesas? Does this correlate with changes in gift giving obligations or in movement of resources among family members? It will be important to identify what resources Marquesans send to intended extended family members, and what is done once they arrive. How do Marquesans living in Tahiti use the physical body as a medium to construct familial bonds while separated from family members?

### *Research Significance*

This thesis aids in understanding the production of self-identity and personhood, as well as the kinship unit and resource distribution obligations in the context of internal population migrations in Polynesia, especially as embodied phenomena. As mentioned earlier, the Comaroffs (1992:90) argue that the human body serves as much more than a metaphor, but “images of reality that reside elsewhere.” My research contributes to the accumulated knowledge of embodiment in anthropology, especially within diasporic communities. It has long been recognized that "cultures" are not neatly bounded entities, but, as Ulf Hannerz put it, “overlap and mingle” (1990:239). The boundaries that we define around cultures both locally and regionally are arbitrary. In the 1990s, meanwhile, much theoretical discussion started centering on how cultures are not located in one unitary place, giving rise to the question of how to do ethnography in a transnational, increasingly globalizing world (e.g. Appadurai 1996, Hannerz 1996). This essentially calls for ethnography to consider multiple geographic locations instead of just the homeland (Marcus 1995), in this case the Marquesas. In addition, Polynesia is open for new and innovative ethnography, as Borofsky and Howard (1989:286) state, and many ethnographies were conducted decades ago, their very age calls for restudy. New research is needed to document cultural change in Polynesia (Borofsky and Howard 1989:290), especially in the Marquesas. My research helps address the gap in the data for recording cultural change. Also, the authors state that studies that examine the relationships between Western contact and Polynesian communities would be very beneficial (Borofsky and Howard 1989:290). This study contributes to an understanding of how local populations may construct and perform identity also through a growing tourism industry.

## *Methodology*

This study was based in Tahiti, in and around the capital city of Pape'ete, with an eye to possible future expansion to a multi-sited study including the Marquesas and Tahiti (cf. Marcus 1995). My main methodology included participant observation and both semi-structured and unstructured interviews; to remain flexible and allow for the possibility of following the train of thought of informants, while also ensuring that the interviews obtained information relevant to the focus of my research (Bernard 2011:158). Specifically, I:

1. Conducted participant observation with members of a Marquesan family. I spent time with this family (whom I will call the Hakatoas), while they tattooed and performed dances for tourists, and also at their home hanging out and eating on the weekends. Overall, I spent time with nearly fifty different individuals in the field, with most of my time being spent with a group of five young men. As discussed in chapter iv, Marquesan social life is rather segregated by gender. This allowed me to gain a deeper insight into the lives of the men in my age group (with whom I spent so much time). Coincidentally, young men are also the most transitory demographic of Marquesans who migrate, often as students, and or tattooers, cultural dancers, or other workers in the tourism industry. I established a very strong rapport with a few individuals with whom I have kept in touch and will continue to learn from in the future.

I continued participant observation and informal conversations alongside my interviews to track my interlocutors' behaviors as well as their responses to the interview questions. I focused especially on behaviors related to personhood, identity and kinship organization. Examples of this include what foods this family of Marquesans in Tahiti consumed, and where

these foods came from; and what images Marquesans selected for tattoos, and what the meanings of foods and tattoos were. Participant observation was a key method used for understanding the production of identity for Marquesans living in Tahiti, because I was able to witness firsthand how Marquesans organize and present themselves and their families in their new location.

2. Using snowball sampling to select these individuals amongst the Hakatoas, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten Marquesas Islanders who out-migrated to Tahiti, and one Tahitian, concerning kinship obligations, and identity. This way I was able to compare what was said verbally to me in interviews, with my own observations. To elicit ways that they maintain ties with their family members in the Marquesas, for instance, examples of my interview questions include: Who do you consider to be family? What obligations do you have with each other, or what do you do for each other? What are the forms of communication for Marquesans between Tahiti and the Marquesas, and how often do you correspond? What foods do you eat, and what foods do you give to kinship members? Do you or other family members rely on remittances? I coded my informants' names with pseudonyms so that their identity is protected, except in circumstances where they explicitly wished to be addressed by name. Since all French Polynesians have a working knowledge of French, almost all my fieldwork was conducted in French, in which I have intermediary competence. I also picked up a few Marquesan and Tahitian phrases during my stay. All participants in this study were made aware that in addition to being transcribed by me, portions of their interviews might be played for my French language professor, Dr. Michael Johnson, to help me with translation as needed.

Furthermore, I had been preparing for this study for much longer than the fieldwork period in Tahiti might indicate. Throughout my undergraduate career in college, I spent the

majority of my time learning from Tahitian, Tongan, and Samoan male students. Most of this time was spent hanging out, or playing sports. However, as a graduate student, I was able to conduct an in depth ethnographic study with a Samoan-Tongan household over the course of three months, documenting resource distribution, and kinship obligations. I was able to hone my interviewing and participant observational skills during this study. Combined, these data allowed me to better understand how migratory population trends (family structure, kinship ties) related to the production of a Marquesan identity, and the self, as well as matrices of exchange and resource distribution within kinship groups.

### *Positioning Myself*

In addition to my ethnographic methods, I myself became a focal point for my study into Marquesan identity, as my informants sought to bring out the Marquesan in me. My very body was used as the key bio-social site in my cultural reorganization, via dancing, eating, and tattooing (all of which I will discuss later). To give a bit of background, I am a 24 year old aspiring American cultural anthropologist, who had lived in Washington State his whole life. I am from a middle class family that adopted me as a 10 month old, so I do not know too much about my biological family. But the parts I did know led me to Tahiti. I was told that my biological mother was Irish, and part Marquesas islander, and although she had her share of struggles (crack, sex, financial), she was still my mother so I always had a pull to try to learn more about her. Unfortunately this had been a daunting task, as I learned in 2011 that she passed away in 1998. She also was adopted, and her adopted parents were deceased as well. The courts never established who my biological father was, and I never felt any sort of attachment or desire



to know him. The family that adopted me was Irish, so the only way to pursue any sort of unique attachment to my mother was through learning about Polynesia.

I did not start getting into this until about high school, when I began to do the American thing of finding myself. I read all I could on the region, and got my first Polynesian tattoo the day that I turned eighteen. Many of my friends and family stated that Polynesia was all I would talk about. However, it had always been a struggle for me to balance my multiple identities. I do not have my mother's jet black hair or tanned skin. But I have prominently featured Polynesian tattoos on my forearms and other areas. Often people have thought that I either was trying too hard to be Polynesian or that I wasn't even Polynesian at all. However, I would wager to say that most of these doubts were self-imposed. In college I instantly was drawn to the field of anthropology, not only for the aforementioned spiritual reasons, but the academic as well.

Coming into this study I not only had broad personal questions to answer such as 'what is life really like for Marquesans-Polynesians?' But also more direct ones, "How do Marquesans living in Tahiti come to define and produce cultural identity, apart from their homeland?" Also, "How do Marquesas Islanders construct and maintain kinship networks with family members living across islands?" Fortunately for me, this study began to answer both of the above questions, and so much more in only three weeks. This is because once my informants knew I was adopted, and part Marquesan, they truly felt obligated to participate, and to teach me how to be Marquesan. Adoption is a common occurrence in Polynesia, and as Ivan Brady (1976:11) states, "emerges as one method of recruiting people to fill identities in the social system." This was especially the case for me, as my informants attempted to adopt me into their kinship group, by giving me so much that I am now obligated to reciprocate this kindness going forward. I will

discuss these obligations specifically in much greater detail in chapter v. I have been in touch with my closest of friends in the field via social media since my return to the States. They have continued to support my study by answering any questions I might have, and just being supportive in general, congratulating me on any accomplishments. I would not have gotten very far without them, and their help.

### *Study Area*

Historically, Polynesia as a region was settled through human migration, from Samoa between 200 and 300 BCE, according to Yoshi Sinoto (Blackburn 1999:117&123). Stretching over more than ten million square miles, settlement of Polynesia required great nautical ingenuity and trade over vast distances (Thompson 2012). Polynesians first travelled to and within Polynesia, and then were exported to Europe when Western explorers desired to advertise “noble savages” to a domestic audience (Blackburn 1999:108). Today, with new means of transportation, many tourists from around the world travel to Polynesia (Brash and Carillet 2012). Harrison (2004) states that many island groups have experienced mass tourism because Polynesia has been stereotypically labeled as paradise. Although Kawaharada (1999) states that tourism is the largest industry in Marquesas Islands, many Marquesas Islanders are relocating within French Polynesia from the Marquesas to Tahiti, in large part because of the rapidly growing and more lucrative tourism industry in Tahiti (Kirkpatrick 1983:17). There are simply more jobs available in Tahiti than in the Marquesas. Tahiti is the most visited island in French Polynesia, and is marketed as an ideal destination to experience Polynesia (Brash and Carillet 2012:50). I will return to the significance of the geographical differences between Tahiti and the Marquesas later in this chapter.

Currently the Marquesas Islands politically depend on being a part of French Polynesia for funding from France (Aldrich, 1990:248). An article from a London Newspaper, *The Independent* (1997), states that Marquesans want closer ties to France as a “full-fledged part of France.” Then-mayor of Nuku Hiva, Lucien Kimitete is quoted as saying, "Polynesia's autonomous status does not inspire our confidence. There is a risk, in our eyes, that the territory could become independent” (Independent 1997). In essence, many Marquesans feel that the further they separate from France, the worse off they will be financially (Independent 1997). However, this sentiment is not shared by many Tahitians. Five time President of Tahiti and French Polynesia (as recently as 2013), Oscar Temaru, is the head of the pro-independence party in French Polynesia, and although Tahiti is also feeling the effects of the 2008 economic recession, the Tahitian economy is much healthier than that of the Marquesas Islands (Prince 2012:52). Truly highlighting this political debate in French Polynesia, Temaru was succeeded by two pro-French leaders, Gaston Flosse, and Édouard Fritch (the former was also a senator for France prior to his position in Tahiti).

### *Negotiating Tahiti-The Marquesas*

Although my study was entirely based in Tahiti, it is important to consider the geographic setting of the Marquesas Islands, to better understand differences between my informants’ motherland and current home. The physical location of the Marquesas substantially separates them from the rest of French Polynesia (and thus the larger influx of tourism). Unlike Tahiti and other areas of the region, there are no “turquoise lagoons, swanky resorts, and... electric nightlife” (Brash and Carillet 2012:174). The geography of the Marquesas has led to different types (such as hiking and eco-tourism) and a lesser amount of tourism overall than

other areas of French Polynesia. Tahiti and the Society Islands feature coral reefs, lagoons, and sand beaches, and the Marquesas do not (Brash and Carillet 2012:50 & 174). With more beaches, came more tourists, leading to the greater amount of economic opportunity in Tahiti than the Marquesas. The Marquesas Islands are simply not as ideally suited for mass tourism as is Tahiti. To take better advantage of the wealth that tourism brings in, Marquesas Islanders have to migrate to Tahiti.

The geography of the Marquesas also has led to historical isolation of groups within their population. Tribes were largely concentrated within their own valleys, and food was much harder to come by in the Marquesas Islands than elsewhere in Polynesia, such as Samoa, from where the first settlers of the Marquesas arrived (Gell 1993:165). Gell (1993:165) explains how the Marquesas lie in colder waters than western Polynesia, and have substantially less to no arable land for growing taro. The colder waters also made marine resources much less abundant. Breadfruit was the staple resource for Marquesans, but the islanders still were vulnerable to years of prolonged drought. Given the context about the shortages of food, it would be much harder for chiefs to procure the absolute followings that they did in areas like Hawai'i. Robert Suggs (1960:165-166) argues that Hawaiian society was extremely stratified due to the ability of paramount chiefs to extract large amounts of resources from the land. E.S. Craighill Handy (1923:35) references the accounts of early visitors to the Marquesas that found that governmental structure was quite communal, even with the presence of chiefs. Handy (1923:35) states that it would be incorrect to call a historical Marquesan chief a king. Historical Marquesan society was much less regimented and stratified than other Polynesian societies, such as Tonga or Hawai'i (Gell 1993:2).

Cultural Polynesian similarities between Tahiti and the Marquesas have also influenced migration decisions. Essentially it is easier to migrate to a location that is more similar to your home than one that is drastically different. Because of the familiarity with Polynesian and French languages, migration of Marquesans to Tahiti would certainly be less of a shock than migration to an altogether new country or region like the United States of America. During my fieldwork, one of my informants, Jacque, a middle-aged building painter, regularly spent the weekends at my key informants' household on what they referred to as "Marquesan time." Jacque is a very introverted individual, and never mentioned to me that he was not related to the Hakatoas. He did eat and participate in all the things that everyone else did. It was not until my last day in the field, that Pierre (the head of the family) informed me that Jacque was Tahitian. The whole time I had had no reason to believe that he was not Marquesan. This example shows how, to the outsider, Tahitians and Marquesans do not generally seem distinct from one another within Tahiti. This is true both in physical appearance and linguistically, as Tahitian and Marquesan (both Northern and Southern dialects) are quite similar. The general presence and use of the French language, moreover, helps make the overall society appear "Tahitian." Tahitian is also widely spoken, as many of my informants were fluent in French, Tahitian, and Marquesan. None of the Tahitians that I met spoke Marquesan.

### *My Arrival in Tahiti*

I was nervous as could be, when I arrived. I was staying in a pension room in Pamatai, about five kilometers from the urban center of Pape'ete, which is meshed together with the surrounding cities of Fa'a'a and Punaauia, creating an urban area with a population of around one hundred thousand (Brinkhoff 2011). Kirkpatrick (1983:xiv) found that Marquesans who

migrated to Tahiti formed a distinct “non-community.” My goal was to find any of these Marquesans I could who would be willing to participate in my study. After I found my way downtown, I took my only community lead, that Marquesans were expert tattooers, and entered one of the prominent tattoo shops on the Rue de Pomare. I stumbled through, asking the secretary if she or anyone who worked there were Marquesan. They were all Tahitian, but she gave me directions to a famous Marquesan tattoo shop just a few blocks away, on the Rue Paul Gauguin. This shop, located up a stairwell in between a music shop and Chinese owned convenience store, was one of the principal sites of my field research. The large white door features a painting of the Marquesas Island flag, and traditional bone tattooing instruments. Inside, the shop features a single couch, two tattooing beds, a restroom, and the balcony, which oversees a bank and the Marche du Pape’ete.

I will never forget taking the first steps up those stairs, rehearsing what I would be saying in French about my study. I was too ambitious, as I would discover later, as I was already preparing to ask people if I could interview them. When I pushed open the door and entered the shop I was overcome by how many people were there. Two tourists were being tattooed and many Marquesans were standing around, and closely watching. Reggaeton music was playing loudly on the speakers, and almost all of the young males bobbed their heads to the beat. I inwardly wondered where to start; to whom do I introduce myself? I had already forgotten my perfectly rehearsed phrasing from the stairwell. A middle aged woman at the counter motioned to me and pulled out a large black calendar. She asked me what I wanted. I understood that she was trying to schedule me for a tattoo appointment. I did want to get a tattoo while I was in Tahiti, so I scheduled one for two days in the future, but I was also reminded that I came across

as a stereotypical, lost tourist who did not speak perfect French. I was an American. After I scheduled the tattoo, the importance of which I describe in chapter v, I threw my sales pitch about anthropology. It was met with marginal interest. Many people were more interested in trying to speak English than they were in an anthropological study.

However, one young man looked at me from beyond the tattoo table with a particular expression of curiosity. He was about 5'11 and quite fit. He came up to me and greeted me with a firm handshake and welcoming smile. This was Vari'i, with whom I was to share the most time and friendship throughout my stay. He often advocated for me, brought me places, fed me, helped heal me when I was sick, everything. However, at this moment in time, he was just one of many people in a busy tattoo shop. He asked briefly about the tattoo, but was the only person who seemed to be quite interested in my anthropologist agenda. He asked how long I would be in the area. When I said three weeks, he was very excited and said that he would love to help me with my study. Yet, he wanted to know one thing: Why was I so interested in Marquesans? Vari'i's question opened the gates to my acceptance into the community. I explained my connection to the Marquesas via my biological mother, and pulled out a photo book that had images of Central Washington University, my adoptive parents, me playing basketball, and other images of my life in the United States. The book also contained the only image I have of my biological mother and I.



Figure 1. My biological mother and I.

When Vari'i saw this image he called everyone in the shop to see it. Everyone took turns looking between the old photograph and myself, amazed that someone so blond, skinny, and pale would have any connection to the Marquesas. Vari'i asked me how I was getting home that night, I told him that I was planning on walking, and he responded that I should come home on the bus, and eat with his family. The parameters of my study area were already taking shape. From this point on, I spent every day at the tattoo shop, Vari'i's house, or both.

### *The Hakatoa Household*

Vari'i's house is located about five kilometers outside of Pape'ete in one of the surrounding suburban villages. I have renamed the neighborhood Hakahau (a village on Ua Pou, where the Hakatoas are from) to maintain some anonymity for him and his family. I came to understand the household, which served as a central gathering point for me during my research,



as a fundamental location for the formation of Marquesan identity and *habitus* (cf. Bourdieu 1990:52). It is in the household that individuals and families continually and intentionally repeat practices that construct personhood and identity. Examples of this include food preparation and social interaction. My informants used their household to intentionally practice Marquesan practices on the weekends.

The village is comprised mainly of houses, and runs from the main highway up the steep slope of the mountain. The winding road that goes up the mountain side is void of any sidewalks, so I always felt that walking to or from Vari'i's at night was a precarious journey. The house itself is one story (most homes here are), with 4 rooms: a kitchen-living room, two bedrooms, and a bathroom. Along the walls hangs various Marquesan artwork, pictures of the Marquesas Islands, and photographs of Vari'i's uncles, siblings, and other family members.

It seemed people spent most of their time here outside of the house proper in the yard, or on the *pétanque* (a French croquet like sport, without the mallets) terrain. The yard was mainly dirt, and featured a barbeque grill and an outdoor dining furniture set. Based on the other homes that I would walk by every day, the outside of Vari'i's house seemed quite typical of the region. The two things that really set the home apart were the Marquesan artwork on the outer walls, and the people that came and went on weekend Marquesan time. On the outer wall of the house is a six by three foot, black and white painted panel that is decorated in Marquesas symbols and reads, "les iles Marquises." The image features a central tiki figure which immediately draws the viewer's attention. However, I learned from Vari'i that the tiki is actually just a piece of that larger artwork, which depicts the ka'a, or gecko, which is their family symbol. Vari'i's uncle, a world renowned tattoo artist, who has won many awards at Polynesian tattooing festivals,

completed this mural (Brash and Carillet 2012:64). The image stands next to the front door, and reminds residents and visitors not only where they are from, but also from whom they descend. In this way, my study area was focused not on the geographic locations on different islands that my informants were spread across, but in the micro-cultural locations of the tattoo shop and the Hakatoa household.

### *Outline*

This thesis takes a thematic approach to examining the production of Marquesan personhood in Tahiti, and the preservation of kinship ties across islands. Each chapter ties together theory and personal data from the field to develop an understanding of what it means to be a Marquesan individual and family member living away from the homeland.

The above Introduction and Study Area sections have set up the geographical and socio-cultural boundaries for my research, and also covered the methods used in this ethnography, as well as my positionality with my informants. The remaining chapters will be organized as follows:

Chapter II, *Cracking the Skulls of the “System” in a Polynesian Performance*, explores how ritual *haka* (Marquesan, dance) performances for tourists by Marquesas Islanders in Tahiti serve as necessary actions for continual production of Marquesan ethnic identity in the context of the touristic gaze. The body is the physical space where cultural history and resistance are both written and presented. Additionally, this chapter establishes baseline understandings of Marquesan worldviews regarding personhood and the self that can be used to understand the following thematic chapters.

Chapter III, *Fattening You Up: Food Transactions and Moral Transformation*, examines the role of food and eating together in constructing Marquesan identity. Specific foods that Marquesans eat are integral to their cultural identity, as well as how they are prepared, and with whom they are eaten. Food is the essence that we take into the body, so which foods are actively selected to be eaten help to write our cultural history and form our personhood. Furthermore, food is utilized as a resource for maintaining kinship bonds across islands, as well as within the local community.

Expanding upon the role of food as a social resource in Chapter III, Chapter IV, *The Who of the Gift: Reciprocity as a Dimension of Social Positioning*, discusses the role of gifts and reciprocity within an informal economy that Marquesans engage in to preserve kinship bonds, personhood, and identity. This informal economy runs alongside the capitalist market economy of French Polynesia, and they often intersect. Who gives gifts to whom, and what makes a good gift (and why), are important here. Marcel Mauss (1967:5) states that in Samoa, and throughout Polynesia and the Pacific, there is an absolute cultural obligation to reciprocate gifts. I have found that this is certainly the case for Marquesas Islanders, who distribute remittances and food within their kinship networks that cover multiple island groups within their diaspora.

Chapter V, *My Skin is Our Skin: Sealing Relationships and Protecting Identity*, explores the pivotal role of tattooing in contemporary Marquesan society. Tattoos are used both to establish Marquesan personhood, and ethnic identity, but also as a social resource to create and maintain kinship ties within a collectivist society. For me, my skin was essentially re-written from American to Marquesan by my informants.

The conclusion, chapter vi, “*Do Not Forget Your People.*” *A Conclusion and a Beginning*, summarizes my findings on how Marquesans living in Pape’ete, Tahiti, apart from their home archipelago, continue to create and produce Marquesan personhood and identity, while strengthening family and kinship bonds. They do this by:

- a) Dancing Marquesan dances with other Marquesans, to be seen by others who are not Marquesan, as well as by other Marquesans.
- b) Preparing and eating Marquesan foods with other Marquesans.
- c) Distributing money and other resources amongst members of kinship networks.
- d) Receiving Marquesan tattoos from Marquesans.

All of these practices were also used on and in interaction with me, to make me Marquesan. As I will describe in detail, a goal of my informants was to bring forth my Marquesanness, and incorporate me into their kinship system. The thesis concludes with my story of how my informants sent me off, back to America, and how I have attempted to maintain my new kinship ties and obligations.

## CHAPTER II

### CRACKING THE SKULLS OF THE “SYSTEM” IN A POLYNESIAN PERFORMANCE

“If you do not dance, you are not Marquesan,” Tekiva tells me before we embark in the back of Alfonse’s white van, crammed with Marquesan drums. It was evening, about 18h, and Tekiva was preparing me for the grim reality that I would be dancing the haka at some point that night in front of the tourists at the Radisson Hotel in Pape’ete. I nodded and inwardly thought, “participant observation may be pretty hard.” Entering what Bruner (2005, 232) refers to as the “touristic borderzone,” where tourists and local meet, I would have to burst out of my comfort zone to perform on stage (in a polo and plaid shorts no less). Nevertheless, Tekiva’s statement reveals deep realities to me about Marquesan cultural understandings of the self.

Kirkpatrick (1983:77-78) characterizes the Marquesan worldview with respect to identity and personhood as based in contrasting sets. Persons, ethnicities, and all other things are defined by contrast to one another. These categories as presented by Kirkpatrick are quite stark and provide little room for ambiguity. To Kirkpatrick (1983:86-87), ‘enana exists in binary opposition to Tahitian, and other Polynesian identities. This worldview of contrasting sets was subtly and implicitly communicated to me throughout my fieldwork. Any and all differences between Marquesans and others were stated verbally, as if to make sure that dissimilarities in identity were hammered home. My good friends, Kahu, Vari’i and Tekiva all adamantly maintained that Marquesans are fiercer, stronger, and more warlike than Tahitians or other Polynesians. Going back to Tekiva’s statement, dancing Marquesan dances made one Marquesan, because not dancing, or dancing in any other way but that, would render one as

something other than Marquesan (not Marquesan). Specifically, Kirkpatrick (1983:80) asserts that the Marquesan worldview uses five different contrasting sets, as can be seen below in Figure 2 (from most general, 0, to most specific, 5). It is important to state that ‘enana translates as both maleness and Marquesan, especially when considering set 5, which exists simultaneously with the other sets. For instance maleness and femaleness contrast, but this does not suggest that to be female is not Marquesan. However, this contrast has pervasive implications seen also in social and spatial organization.

Non- ‘Enana	Can be seen as ‘Enana
0. Beings without souls	Beings with souls
1. God, demons, ghosts, ancestors, priests	Secular human beings
2. Non Polynesians	Polynesians
3. Tahitians, Samoans, Hawaiians, etc.	Marquesans
4. Children, errant youth (teenagers)	Adults
5. Women	Men

Figure 2, Kirkpatrick’s (1983) sets of the Marquesan Dichotomy.

Evidence of the contrast between women and men is found also in anecdotal literature, such as Heyerdahl’s, *Fatu Hiva* (1974:109). He describes how, near the end of a hike, a woman had to wait behind because the pinnacle of the hike that the group was reaching was considered a man’s space (thus set 5). The knowledge that the destination was a man’s space, moreover, influenced

the two Marquesan men to vigorously complete the hike, and not be left behind in the woman's space (Heyerdahl 1974:109). This story helps account for the fact that set 5 is compared against the gendered (male-not male) definition of 'enana, and not the ethnic categories of the prior sets. I will focus primarily on Sets 2 and 3. While Kirkpatrick's contrasting sets are useful as an ideal typical heuristic framework, my field data suggests that in practice these categories are a good deal more ambiguous.

Set 2 applies to differences between Polynesians and non-Polynesians. In Tahiti, the two most common groups of non-Polynesians are French and Chinese. According to Kirkpatrick (1983:84) all Europeans and Orientals [Chinese] are described by Marquesans as being more naturally brilliant than them, due in large part to their technological advances and surplus wealth. Although Kirkpatrick (1983:84) mentions that these distinctions "vary situationally," he states that non-Polynesians are viewed as different from Polynesians based on their professions (such as bankers, government officials, or anthropologists), which are rarely if ever held by Polynesians. Interestingly for my research, Europeans and Chinese are seen by Marquesans to be completely reliant on money because of their innate brilliance (Kirkpatrick 1983:85). This has two implications for Marquesans. One, it helps establish the differences in expected behaviors between the categories of set 2. For instance, Marquesans expect whites to save money for future needs, and expect Chinese to work hard at buying or selling; they are even deemed to be part of an economic system in which bodily energy is replaced by money (Kirkpatrick 1983:85-86). Yet more importantly, these examples of brilliance create the parameters for why my informants have a dance group that performs for tourists. As we shall see, my informants are using the "brilliant" traits of Europeans to maintain their own cultural

identities. My informants engage in and actively produce the cultural products that are sold to tourist audiences in the economic system.

Additionally, origin and citizenship are seen as completely different things amongst Marquesans (Kirkpatrick 1983:85). Thus, one is a French citizen by virtue of belonging to French Polynesia, but Marquesans certainly do not regard themselves as French for the aforementioned reasons. In addition, Marquesans all speak French, but it is quite important for them to also speak Marquesan. This distinction is significant because it strongly distinguishes Marquesans (and Tahitians) as being separate from France, while engaging in their political and economic system.

Set 3 as described by Kirkpatrick (1983:86-87) is less distinct than the differences in set 2. Differences amongst Marquesans and other Polynesians are largely described along the dimensions of what foods they eat (important to my findings in chapter iii) (Kirkpatrick 1983:87). Yet my informants often spoke of Marquesans being fiercer warriors than Tahitians, and more capable of living off the land. Also, Kirkpatrick (1983:87) does note that Tahitians and other Polynesians are often lumped together and called Tahitian, whereas Marquesans distinguish amongst themselves based on their specific island or valley. I found this to be true during my fieldwork. My informant Kahu, was very proud to be from ‘Ua Pou, and would often mention this when describing to me what ‘enana was. Also, when older Marquesan men at Vari’i’s house learned that I was part Marquesan, the first question they would ask was which Marquesan island my mother was from. This focus on specific island origin is important because Kirkpatrick (1983:87) notes that Marquesans never “serve to separate people from a category of ‘enana, but only to oppose them to people from other islands or valleys.” So I essentially was



Marquesan, but at the same time my informants had a hard time categorizing me within set 3 because they did not know if I was from ‘Ua Pou. As I will explain at the conclusion of this thesis, it seems that the Hakatoas rationalized this uncertainty by making me from ‘Ua Pou after all.

This oppositional worldview of contrasting sets is quite different than what is found among Tahitians and other Polynesian groups. As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978:19-20) also notes, isolation can lead to differentiation in cultural worldview. Essentially, populations living in relative isolation produced unique differences, and it is only through these distinct differences that progress or ingenuity is created (Lévi-Strauss 1978:20). Peter Leiataua AhChing (2005:24) notes that the Marquesas Islands were first settled about 100 CE by Polynesians from Samoa. Furthermore, he states that Marquesans remained in the Marquesas, and did not explore or settle new East Polynesian archipelagos for at least two hundred years (300 CE, Tahiti) and did not reach Hawai’i until 500 CE (Leiataua AhChing 2005:24). According to Blackburn (1999:119), at the time of European contact, Marquesan societal boundaries were organized by the sharp valleys of the islands, each occupied by separate tribes headed by a chief. This is likely because for the most part, Marquesan societies were concentrated to their own island group, specifically to their own valleys, and thus aiding the production of their unique worldview of contrasting sets. Yet, I found during my time with the Hakatoas that the boundaries between Sets 2 and 3 were not as stark as represented by Kirkpatrick (1983:80). This is in large part likely due to the lack of isolation, and increasing cultural and economic exchange with other ethnic groups in Tahiti with the presence of tourism, and the global economy.

Consider the attitudes and worldviews surrounding the live performances of my informants. As alluded to in the opening quote, the Hakatoa family participates in a Marquesan haka (Polynesian dance) group, Takitooa that is based in Pape'ete, Tahiti. Takitooa is comprised of around fifty members (all of whom are Marquesan), ranging in age from high school teenagers to middle-aged adults. The group performs weekly at different up-scale hotels throughout the island, such as the Radisson. Vari'i, Kahu, and Tekiva all take part in performances, both as dancers of the haka, and as drummers. Takitooa performs in the evenings, when the hotels serve guests an excellent meal, and the show essentially becomes a cultural dessert. For the tourists these performances surely can be categorized as cultural commoditization, and some might find that trivializing or disenfranchising; but as I shall argue, it is certainly not so for all of the Marquesan performers. For my informants, participating was not at all, but rather a matter of pride.

Haka is the Marquesan word for dance; it follows from Kirkpatrick's (1983:80) set 3 that if one is Marquesan, one would dance in Marquesan ways. The dancers chant in Marquesan to the beat of drums, and make aggressive, visceral movements depicting violence such as pantomiming cracking open a skull or pulling out a victim's intestines. For parts of the show the male dancers even brandish *u'u* clubs, the traditional weapon of the Marquesas Islands, and swing them vigorously while extending their tongues to the audience. The actual show runs about an hour. Dancers wear traditional regalia, as do the drummers, and the result is a very well-polished, "traditionally Marquesan" show. What I found to be most interesting both academically and emotionally was the ending of the show. After performing as a group for nearly forty-five minutes or so, the women of the group invite the women of the audience on

stage to perform as well. Then the group leader explains to the males of the audience how fierce the following dance will be, as well as sensual. What first began to truly pique my curiosity was that the leader encouraged the audience to take pictures both of themselves and of their loved ones in attendance. The images of wealthy tourists in fancy dresses and skirts next to Marquesan women in *pareau* (Tahitian-Marquesan sarongs) were quite stark.

Such images are a continuation of a consistent history within Polynesia, of the Polynesian body image being objectified by Europeans. Bernard Smith (1950:66-67) notes that Joseph Banks, the topographical artist under Lieutenant James Cook during the 1776 *Endeavor* voyage, was very interested in what he considered “curiosities,” and Polynesians, along with other indigenous peoples, were certainly thought of by European philosophers, and their audiences, as curiosities (Smith 1950:66). Banks categorized his drawings from the Pacific into two categories: biological-natural objects such as plants or animals, and scenes of “savages” or landscapes (Smith 1950:69). The scenes of the natives had to be drawn particularly vividly and fantastically, even if at the expense of accuracy, because the audience in Europe demanded marvels (Smith 1950:69). Often images of Tahitians were depicted by European explorers of the 18th century peacefully in ways that gave homage to ancient Greece, to establish a fictitious connection between the Polynesians and European antiquity that would add veracity to the popular concept of the noble savage (Smith 1950:79). However, these ideal scenes of friendship between Europeans and Polynesians were not always as they were recorded. In fact, the case can be made that the European aestheticization of Polynesia was rooted in structural, colonial violence and oppression. Blackburn (1999:110) notes that while the French Captain Louis Antoine de Bougainville wrote in his journal comparing Tahiti to the Garden of Eden, finding

inner peace and joy from the company of the native inhabitants, four Tahitians were killed by Bougainville's men.

Smith (1950:94) documents how the image of the noble savage began to shift during the 19th century, with the greater influence of Christian mission work in the islands. Instead of noble savages, Polynesians began to be depicted as wild heathens (Smith 1950:94). Polynesian men were shown as savage warriors with unkempt hair, and women as overtly sexual, without European refinement. Smith (1950:95) asserts that Christianity was seen by contemporary 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans as holding the burden of civilizing the pagan man, and the legacy of this is crucial to consider when viewing images of tourists posing with Marquesan performers. Many historical images of the time depicted either Polynesians in European style clothing, or depicted next to Europeans themselves, highlighting the cultural power and progress of European Christianity, as well as upholding the moral duty of civilizing the heathen man (Smith 1950:95).

When I first witnessed Takitōa perform the haka, I initially could not put my finger exactly on how I felt, watching them pose for pictures when the dance was over. Then, to my horror, Tekiva's prediction came true. I was sitting off to the side of the dining room, on the floor, writing down field notes when I vaguely heard the announcer mention something about the men of the audience. I looked up to find Vari'i standing in front of me, with his very open and generous smile, "*Mai!*" he said as he beckoned (Come-follow in Marquesan).



Figure 3, Tourists and Takitooa performers.

I obliged and set down my notebook and followed him on stage. His Polynesian tattoos shone jet black against his skin in the firelight, and alongside the loud drumming, he certainly upheld the fierce image of a *toa* (warrior). Yet, it was interesting to me that as I climbed onto the stage, he was not some foreign, exotic warrior. This was Vari'i, the father, my friend, who had invited me to his home after only knowing me for mere hours. I tried to squint and see into the audience to see who was watching me but with the bright lights mixed with flaming torches I couldn't really make any one person out; it was just, the audience.

The leader instructed me and the rest of the tourist men that had been selected by the group that it was our job to stand in a row behind the male dancers and to mimic their movements. The dance was slowed down and all of the tourist men did their best to memorize

the steps. Many of them were joking or laughing about it in French or German, and I noticed the flash of multiple cameras coming from the audience. I felt that we tourists (myself very much included), looked ridiculous. When the interactive dance finished, I shuffled off the stage as quickly as I could to return to my space of refuge with my field-notebook. Even without the torches, my face was bright pink and hotter than flame. That aside, I noticed the male audience members taking pictures with the dancers, just as the female dancers had done. Reminded of the laughing and joking they had done during the dance, it seemed rather trivializing to me at the time (see Figure 3 above). It felt like a Pecos Bill Wild West show; how could such proud people resort to dressing up and taking pictures for money? It seemed as if my informants were actively buying into the colonial system that has marginalized them within Polynesia to the degree that the islands are what Kirkpatrick (1983:18) calls, an economic “dependent hinterland” of the rest of the region.

“Patrick! Come take a picture with us!” It was Vari’i again, with his same gleaming and welcoming smile. I put aside my doubts and took him up on the offer. The picture of me in the center of my friends is one of my favorite pictures from all of my fieldwork (see Figure 4 below). We all posed, muscles flexed, and tongues extended outward, in true Polynesian fashion. Of theoretical significance, this picture seems to show how I do not fit into Kirkpatrick’s (1983:80) static contrasting sets of the Marquesan worldview, thus highlighting the structural limits of this binary system. I was on stage, covered in Polynesian tattoos, tongue extended, but yet apart – blue polo, khaki shorts, and wristwatch. The Marquesan worldview began to seem more complex than the black and white image I was used to. Was I ‘enana, or not? How exactly did the Marquesans view me, or other people in general for that matter?



Figure 4, Takitoa and I, posing.

Photographs may enter into the construction of identity because of their reflexive roles, and can be conduits also for acknowledging the anthropologist's cultural positioning in their fieldwork. According to Roland Barthes (1964:158-159), the photograph represents the relationship between mechanically recording “what is there” and “having been there.” In a photograph that contains ones’ image, one sees oneself not only as recorded by the camera at that moment in the past, but also how one wishes to be seen in the present, creating a self-conscious, reflexive relationship (Barthes 1964:159). In Figures 3 and 4 above, what do my informants see? How were things really? How do they present and re-present themselves?

I asked my informants how they thought about dancing for tourists, and having the tourists pose for pictures, at the tattoo shop. They explained that they were proud of dancing for tourists, and that it was a good thing. Michel Picard (1986:44) states that cultural performances are at the center of a relationship between the expectations of tourists and locals, and vice-versa. Drawing on research of intelligentsia discourse surrounding tourism in Bali, he coined the term "touristic culture" (1986:74), pointing out that as they become commoditized such cultures become self-conscious spectators of their own culture, and end up blurring the lines, even for themselves, between culture and tourism. Marquesans certainly increase production of what sells to tourists as an economic strategy, but I would argue that they also produce their cultures and cultural selves through these performances. Vari'i said that the tourists got to see who they really are; Kahu mentioned that because of Takitooa, Marquesan youth will not forget the traditional dances of old. I also asked Tekiva again why it was so important for me to dance with the tourists during the interactive portion of the evening. He said, "We are Marquesan, and Marquesans dance."

This is very interesting in the sense that it highlights a blending of the distinct contrasting sets listed earlier in the chapter. Instead of viewing someone with a common origin as "Marquesan-not Marquesan" (set 3), it appears that Marquesans instead try to view these individuals as "Marquesan and not Marquesan." The reason that the Hakatoas so adamantly attempted to include me, and bring out my "Marquesan-ness" does correspond with Kirkpatrick (1983:159), because Marquesans often attempt to find common ancestry among people; kin are described as "one blood," and furthermore, even the most distantly related individuals are all "family of Adam" (Kirkpatrick 1983:159). In addition, adoption is a common practice



throughout Polynesia and the Pacific at large. Morton (1996) notes that nearly all Tongan adults had some experience with adoption during their lifetimes. Adoption certainly seems to be a common practice with Marquesans as well. In fact, when I spent time at Vari'i's house on the weekend Marquesan time, it was often explained to newcomers that I was an adopted American, and that my Marquesan mother had passed away. This was met with common understanding. However, whereas fosterage is quite common, Kirkpatrick (1983:191) notes that full scale legal adoption, when the parent cedes total control of the child to a new party is quite rare. Within this context, children maintain ties to their natal parents as well as those who have taken them in. The Polynesian connotation of adoption has much more to do with expanding kinship ties, while the American concept involves the severing of prior kinship ties. Handy (1923:82) states that the most common reason for adoption in the Marquesas Islands was to “accomplish the union of two families.” Kirkpatrick (1983:93) states that Marquesan and non-Marquesan traits that exist in set 3 may be co-present, but not combined. I was American (French, Irish), as well as Marquesan, but not mixed. Thus, although my Marquesan heritage is distant, and certainly not present in my physical appearance, I was still categorized into their existing social world as a Marquesan, still somehow maintaining fringe ties to the Marquesas, and thus not “something else.”

We also see that Marquesan definitions of personhood in Tahiti are tied to an altogether new schema on Kirkpatrick's spectrum. Contemporary Marquesan-ness is defined in terms of being seen by non-Marquesans. As Kahu told me on the balcony of the tattoo shop, “Anthropology is good, because other people, American people, French people, can look in a book and see: ‘Ah yes, that is a Marquesan. Now I know who they are’.” This quote, along with their dance performances and their tattoos that are constantly in sight, highlight the production of

Marquesan identity through the gaze of others. An element of having been "witnessed" appears to emerge as significant here too, reminiscent of how, for example, witnesses to a Balinese ritual became co-constitutive of the power of the ritual and the associated claims to social status and power (Pedersen 2006:266-267). Hobart (1990:323) similarly notes that witnesses are important in a performative sense, helping to constitute such happenings as culturally significant events.

In this sense, tourists and anthropologists are important witnesses for Marquesan performers. All of my informants were very proud to be dancers, and very glad that they were able to show their dances to tourists. Performing for the crowd, and having those performances recorded by witnesses, affirmed their Marquesan self-definition. My informants were being empowered through being recognized. While important community leaders may not have been present at the Takitooa performances, tourists were there, representing French power itself. Marquesanhood was not being lost, but rather, a hyper-Marquesan culture survives and thrives through the eyes of those who are not Marquesan. I feel it is very appropriate that when on stage, I only noticed the audience at large. I saw myself reflected not in individuals, but rather in a collective gaze. While not all of the dancers in Takitooa may be as critically engaged as Kahu, they all follow his lead, and the group as a whole participate in the same dances and wear the same regalia. Thus, even if a performer in Takitooa was not trying to make a political statement about colonialism as we shall see, the end result is that the performer would still take on aspects of the Marquesan identity portrayed in the Takitooa performances. In essence, the Marquesan worldview on one facet deals with contrasting sets of what is, and what is not Marquesan.

At the same time, items that are inside of categories that "are Marquesan" are shown in affirmation to those who are "not Marquesan," thus sealing their identity in a two way, reflexive,

connection, between the Marquesan image and those who view it. Picard (1986:46-50) discusses how in touristic settings in Bali, cultural presentations tend to become similar and uniform over time – as local populations produce more of what is found favorable by tourists. This was certainly the case for Marquesan artwork as well. Carol Ivory (1999:320) documents the shifting styles of Marquesan tourist artwork over time, and how the styles that came to dominate the trade were the ones that sold better. However, I contend that this relationship is not as one sided as Picard (1986 44) asserts. While certain designs and performances might sell better to tourists, the Marquesan population is still actively selecting how to produce their art and present themselves. These shifting styles are actively chosen by Marquesans. There is not only the witnessing gaze from the tourists, but also the creative agency of the Marquesans, who select what image of themselves is presented to the larger world. Marquesans choose how to present themselves on and off stage.

We see here the phenomenon which Sahlins (1999:410) has termed “culturalism,” or the “indigenization of modernity.” Sahlins (1999:410-411) states that marginalized communities often try to use the capitalist system to create their own cultural space within the globalized, world system. These populations do not completely wall off and resist the technologies, products, or media of the West, but rather, they attempt to produce images or products themselves, which can be “sold” back into the system – thus increasing veracity and importance of their indigenous culture. Picard (1986:62) states that the commercialization of dance in Bali reduced Balinese ritual to tourist entertainment; yet in the case of my field site, Kahu and the others embraced the ability to provide a cultural dance show to tourists in Tahiti. They welcomed the guests on stage to take pictures. Every day of the working week, they greeted

tourists into their tattoo shop to receive Marquesan tattoos. All of this, in the promising idea that their performances would be witnessed, their Marquesan identity would be empowered and validated, when under other circumstances they would be disempowered or ignored in the larger Tahitian context.

The Takitooa performances offer the Hakatoas an avenue of resistance as well. The performances become a culturally written “hidden transcript” as Scott (1992) would put it. The audience claps and cheers as the dancers flex and thrust vigorously, chanting in a Polynesian dialect, unintelligible to Europeans. It certainly makes for a great show. However, there is much more going on during these situations than understood by most, if not all, of the tourists. Let us return to Kahu, and his role in the purposeful and simultaneously subtle cultural resistance of Takitooa. Kahu is a young college student (18) at the University of French Polynesia, in Punaauia, just a few kilometers outside of Pape’ete. We have become very good friends, and I have been blessed to stay in touch with him via Facebook since my return to the States. I knew from the start I was dealing with a natural leader. What the members of Takitooa found most impressive about Kahu is that not only does he participate in the Takitooa shows, he actually writes them as well.

It was a late night outside Pape’ete, and the rain was coming down thick and heavy. The male Takitooa group members were gathered inside an empty boathouse that they had rented for practices, and the women were practicing their parts in a different boathouse across the street (thus highlighting Kirkpatrick’s set 5). I was approached by David, a middle aged Marquesan who MC’ed the groups events. After some small talk, I asked him what exactly was said during the haka for the tourists. David replied, “War. Toa. ‘Enana. But you’ll have to ask Kahu. He

writes them. Normally, only the adults, like Pierre, write them. But he [Kahu] has a gift.” This is likely because according to set 4 of Kirkpatrick (1983:87-89) children, youth, and adults are seen as distinctly different based on “mature thoughts”. Children are seen as constantly playing, even when doing work, while adults “see work to be done and do it” (Kirkpatrick 1983:87). Kahu is seen as special and unique by other Marquesans because he possesses “brilliance” or mature thought, which Kirkpatrick (1983:89) finds are held in high regard in youth by other Marquesans.

After practice, I approached Kahu, and asked him about the haka. He explained that he writes the haka to fight his enemies. But his enemies are no longer Marquesan warriors from other valleys. “I fight the system. The French system. The American system. When you see us ‘crack the skulls’ on stage, those are not people. They are the skulls of the system.” Kahu is very unique in this sense. None of my other informants ever made these types of comments, or referred to the system. Yet I could certainly see why people followed Kahu’s direction. He always carries an air of leadership about him, a presence of quiet pride, which is not forced. I saw him as a prodigy: “You’re like Mozart, Kahu,” I joked. He told me that it was quite rare for someone his age to compose the movements and words of a haka, but that he had been instructed from a young age to do so by his father, who is a chief back on Ua Pou. Throughout my stay, even before these direct questions regarding his role in the haka, Kahu was always very tuned to understanding the role of globalization in his people’s lives.

Kahu speaks five languages, and wants to become an actor so that he can star in movies about Marquesans, to provide a positive role model for their youth. Our very first conversation was held after a dinner at Vari’i’s, following his learning that I was American. “Patrick, what do

you think of the American system,” he asked in English. “Good or bad?” I was first taken aback by his knowledge of English, secondly by the pointedness of his question. Another time he paid for my sandwich after dance practice. He showed me the paper monetary bill, “Remember Patrick, you are the power. You use money. But it is not the power. You are the power, *mon frère* (my brother).” When Kahu mentioned the American and French systems, he alluded to capitalism, Christianity, and colonialism. He once lamented to me on the balcony of the tattoo shop that life was better before the French and American economies, and that if I had visited the Marquesas in the good times, he could have shared his hypothetical wife with me, as I was a visiting guest in his home. Now he can no longer do this. Instead he has to pay rent and tuition; many of my informants also mentioned that now it is very hard for Marquesans to live off of the land, especially in Tahiti. While Kahu may be uncommon in holding these ideas, as mentioned earlier, his ideas help create the Marquesan identity for all of Takitooa.

It is fascinating how complex the entire transaction is during the Takitooa performance. The tourists will never know Kahu, or Vari’i, or Tekiva. The tourists see an exotic warrior on stage, and a young man wearing Billabong and Nike’s off stage. Nonetheless, Kahu and the rest of Takitooa accept their money at the door, all while the tourists are being told in Marquesan, “We don’t need you here, go back to France.” Kahu in many ways is typical of a young Marquesan man in Tahiti, but is also quite exceptional. He is a leader for his people, and many of his unique traits become expressed by others in the group, through following him. In essence, Kahu purposefully packages a hyper-Marquesanized product to non-Marquesans within the context of the capitalist system, while simultaneously providing four outcomes:

- 1) Income for the members and families of Takitooa.
- 2) Preservation of the knowledge of Marquesan cultural practices for younger and future generations of Marquesans.
- 3) Shaping how Marquesans present and think about themselves.
- 4) The spread of Marquesan culture to new places around the globe.

Having considered these outward-facing stagings of personhood, let us now consider more internally facing practices, discussing how identity is shaped and written within the body, as well as the outside. The next chapter focuses on food consumption and transactions, marking the cultural construction of a Marquesan person from the inside out.

## CHAPTER III

### FATTENING YOU UP: FOOD TRANSACTIONS AND MORAL TRANSFORMATION

Food, and all the practices and actions surrounding its preparation and distribution are of utmost importance when discussing kinship, familial obligations, and trust. In fact, food became a key component in my understanding of how Marquesans living in Tahiti produced what it means to be Marquesan, as well as a key mechanism towards including me in the Hakatoa kinship group and making me a Marquesan myself. This was quite different from the outward facing production of identity seen in Marquesan dancing. John and Jean Comaroff (1992:90) argue that the body can be seen not only as a biophysical entity, but also in the production and reproduction of the self and the world. Food consumption and transactions often represent social organization and movement (Comaroff 1992:78, see also Dumont 1970 on the role of food sharing rules in constituting the Indian caste system). For instance, the Comaroffs (1992:78) reference several Bantu speaking communities in South Africa who refer to consumption of one's food by a political superior as "to be eaten," and expulsion from the social community as "to be thrown up." Miriam Kahn (1980:268) notes that food for the Wamira of coastal Papua New Guinea, "seems to take on a symbolic value which exceeds its immediate nutritional importance for sustenance and survival." Furthermore, food is exchanged, prepared, and eaten frequently and without reserve within extended kin groups (Comaroff 1992:76). Often a man gains rights over his children by "regularly nourishing them with food" (Munn 1986:50). For the Massim, both kinship ties and personal identities (such as generous versus stingy) are tied to consuming and sharing food. According to Carole Counihan (1999:6), food lies at the heart of both cultural and familial identity. Food consumption and preparation often involves many individuals within



a family or kinship group, and this was certainly true of my informants. These concepts of food consumption and distribution are quite common throughout the Pacific. In sum, people share and eat with those important to them, and the distribution of food amongst kin can trace the cultural boundaries of families, essentially shaping communities (Counihan 1999:6).

The distribution of food is certainly important in Polynesian societies as well. Leiataua AhChing (2005:60) states that food is centrally important to all Polynesian societies, and the distribution of food (and all things) was required for the good of the collective kin group. Mauss (1967:5) states that in Samoa, and throughout Polynesia, there is an absolute cultural obligation to reciprocate gifts that are given. However, because some gifts could not fully be reciprocated due to high values, this made social rank and hierarchy inevitable. Alfred Gell (1993:169) notes that the *mau tupupaka*, or ceremonial feasts for the ancestors, were common in the historical past of the Marquesas. These feasts were collaborative in the sense that all households in a tribe would contribute food to the feast, yet they were also competitive in that the goal of the chief during such feasts was to bring shame on visiting chiefs by providing more food than the other could consume (Gell 1993:169). Even more common were feasting club houses where men of high social status would eat together, and strengthen social bonds (Gell 1993:169-170).

Elsewhere in Polynesia, such as in Nanumea, an atoll island community in Tuvalu, there is the concept of *fia kano*, or “wanting to be related” (Chambers 2001:163). A person is only considered to be related if he or she performs all the roles required of that family member, especially concerning the reciprocity of food. For instance Tuvaluans prioritized the giving of surplus material goods from the heads of family first to neighbors, next to close relatives, and then distributing the remaining surplus with more distant kin (Chambers 2001:134). Specifically

for Marquesans, Sahlins (1957:293) states that the maximal ranges of the entire kinship system of the past were determined by the geographical dispersal of families within a tribe, but also by the ecological availability of resources. In essence, they were usually located near the intensive exploitation of important resources, such as breadfruit or fish, specializing in the resources that were available. These resources would then flow upwards through the hierarchy of the system, and periodically be redistributed downwards by heads of the ramage system (Sahlins 1957:294). This leads to Alfred Gell's (1993:163-166) description of the uncertainty of food being tied to the openness of Marquesan society. Chiefs often gained influence by the providing food (a big deal in the precarious Marquesan situation). The distribution and reciprocity of food were tied to the very cultural boundaries of Marquesan families. This is of utmost importance when considering contemporary Marquesans in Tahiti, because their identity as Marquesan can be illuminated through the analysis of food, when they would otherwise be difficult to trace outside of their homeland.

More specifically, which foods people eat and share with others can highlight markers of cultural and group solidarity as well. This is especially true for Marquesas Islanders. For instance, Marquesans solidify their identity based on food consumption (Kirkpatrick 1983:87). Essentially Marquesans view identity based in contrasting sets. Tahitians are known by Marquesans for eating *fafaru*, or raw fish in brine, and Austral Islanders are known for taro consumption (Kirkpatrick 1983:87). Opposed to the Tahitian *fafaru*, the Hakatoas prepared for me a meal that they eat most regularly on the weekends, *ikate'e*, a Marquesan variant of the Polynesian *poisson cru* (raw fish), a ceviche-like dish, marinated in citrus and coconut. However, *'uru*, or breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*) is perhaps the fruit that is most iconic to the

Marquesas Islands inhabitants. Breadfruit has always been associated as a staple resource for Marquesas Islanders as it grows abundantly in both the Marquesas and in Tahiti; Herman Melville in the 19th century even made note of it in his popular romantic novel, *Typee, a Peep at Polynesian Life*, which was published in 1842 (Blackburn 1999:119). Breadfruit is versatile as a food source, and can be eaten raw, as well as ground into a paste, or eaten with a sauce made from coconut milk, seawater, and lime juice. However, the fruit itself is not the only resource that the plant provides. The wood is very light weight and suitable for constructing canoes, boxes and other items, as well as being a food for pigs (Little & Skolmen 1983:1).

Further cementing the markers of difference described by Kirkpatrick (1983), during my stay in Tahiti, it was very important for Vari'i to not only feed me Marquesan food, but also to teach me how to make it. This way I could carry on Marquesan food practices in the future. I was bio-culturally internalizing this knowledge of Marquesan food practice. The Hakatoas, specifically Vari'i and Mui (another male informant) were especially adamant about teaching me to make and eat 'uru which was the staple of Marquesan cuisine. Vari'i and Mui not only showed me how to prepare the 'uru, but insisted that I film the process, so I would not forget. Essentially, to be Marquesan I should continually partake in making and eating Marquesan food. As for the 'uru itself, it takes on different names depending on how it is prepared.

A common way for tourists to eat 'uru in cafes, or for Tahitian families in the home is 'uru *frites* (breadfruit fries). However, when ground into a paste with coconut milk into a dough-like substance, as eaten by Marquesans, it becomes *popoi*. Popoi was never sold or served by any Tahitian vendor or family that I observed during fieldwork, but the Hakatoas said (and showed) that it was most common for Marquesans to eat with any and all meals. Kirkpatrick

(1987:245) notes that in Tahiti, *kaku* (fire roasted ‘uru, as also enjoyed by Marquesans) is available in markets, and furthermore was eaten by Tahitians. However, Marquesans insisted that *kaku* be prepared and eaten fresh, directly off the fire. Due to this, the Marquesans do not purchase *kaku* in the market because it likely has sat too long for their taste. In sum, Vari’i showed me the “authentic” Marquesan way to prepare ‘uru, as differentiated from the Tahitian and French ways. Furthermore, even during the preparation of meals, food was used to solidify gender identity amongst Marquesans. When my male informants prepared *popoi*, it was done forcefully, and aggressively, complemented with jokes about how beating the ‘uru simulated breaking skulls during battle – further reinforcing the Marquesan identity of the masculine *toa*, or warrior. My informants often enacted hyper masculine traits in a joking manner, and in this sense, the masculine traits associated with enacted violence and force were formed into the very food that they would later ingest, and thus, in a recurrent process, continue to found their masculine *toa* identity from the inside out.

Dishes such as *ikate’e* and *kaku* are usually prepared by the *Hakatoas* mainly on the weekends. It was clarified that, “weekend time is Marquesan time.” Then the family gathered at the house and prepared their traditional “Marquesan” dishes. During the working week at the tattoo shop, the Marquesans regularly eat, “*tous!*” (everything) as was constantly explained to me in interviews, and shown to me during lunch breaks. Western-Frenchified foods were readily available from vendors throughout downtown Pape’ete. Kahn (1994:29) states that Pacific Island cultures have been increasingly exposed to imported food resources in the last century, and now have to make conscious choices between traditional food sources and the newer imported ones. For Marquesans living in the more urbanized island of Tahiti imported and

processed foods are much more readily available than they are in the rural Marquesas. Kahn (1994:30, 36) found that for the Wamira of Papua New Guinea, often times social solidarity could still be maintained during social gatherings with Western foods such as canned beef or fried chicken because the foods were still distributed in a traditional manner (Kahn, 1994:37). This strategy was also the case during my fieldwork in Tahiti. Even on nights when the Hakatoas would serve a very French dish, such as *biftek* (steak) or *steak frites* (steak and French fries), it was still distributed in ways that were normal. Guests (such as myself) are served first, and they are to eat their fill with the specific individuals who invited them over (in my case Vari'i), before anyone else is served. Then, the adults eat at the table together, men and women (the children usually come to the table and eat last). In this way, food is used to mediate and blend the gender division that usually exists. Under normal circumstances, men and women sit apart and spend more time within their own gender groups, even at large family functions (such as feasts or pétanque games). This practice coincides of course with Kirkpatrick's (1983:80) contrasting set in the Marquesan worldview regarding men ('enana) and women (*vehine*). Vehine are seen as more domestic, and generally prepare all of the meals, with the exception of *pua'a* (pig) or popoi-kaku. These were always cooked by 'enana. Yet, Kirkpatrick (1983:90) notes that while 'enana and vehine are noted to have clear differences in thought, behavioral patterns, and domestic roles, they do not make distinctively different choices in food consumption. Thus, the sharing and eating of food together for Marquesans creates a space for fluidity between two normally different experiences (male-female), and thus blurring the lines of set 5 of Kirkpatrick's (1983:80) schema.

It was not until after I had returned to the States, and could no longer eat Marquesan foods with the Hakatoas, that I fully comprehended the extent to which food was used to create Marquesan self and personhood. During my fieldwork I certainly appreciated being fed by my informants. Their distribution of food to me was the first step in which the Hakatoas made me Marquesan. I ate foods prepared by the Hakatoa kinship group, with the Hakatoa kinship group. This is very important because Marquesan society is collectivist, and I could not socially exist in the Hakatoa kin framework in a vacuum by myself. I ate Marquesan foods that made me “like them.” Eating these foods with the Hakatoas blurred the lines between Polynesian and American (cf. Kirkpatrick's set 2 1983:80). Not only were they explicitly teaching me about their artwork and their dances, they subtly were teaching my body how to be Marquesan, from the inside out.

Thus, a compromise has been made for my informants, but not via geographical space, but rather on a temporal and professional scale. The “Marquesan time,” on the weekends, when the Hakatoa family gathered, prepared, and shared Marquesan food became the “space” that created the Marquesan identity away from the islands that they came from. They were also no longer at work, in the shop, but free to be Marquesan on their own terms, in their home space. Furthermore, Marquesan identity can only be produced through community space. In the United States, (or anywhere else for that matter), Marquesan identity cannot be formed in solitude. This is because simply preparing and consuming foods by oneself does not create community (and thus a social being) through reciprocity and distribution, which is the very essence of what it means to be ‘enana.

The circulation of food is an instance of a broader dynamic constellation of exchange through which interpersonal identities and solidarities are built up in the process of distribution.

The following chapter investigates the specific roles of exchange in producing and solidifying Marquesan identity.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WHO OF THE GIFT: RECIPROCITY AS A DIMENSION OF SOCIAL POSITIONING

Marcel Mauss (1967:8-9) argues that for Maori, and other Polynesian societies, gifts are a vehicle of mana (spiritual power), and individuals are spiritually obligated to reciprocate things given. Mauss (1967:8-9) provides the following example from Maori informant Tamati Ranaipiri:

*Hau* is not the wind. Not at all. Suppose you have some particular object, *taonga*, and you give it to me; you give it to me without a price. We do not bargain over it. Now I give this thing to a third person who after a time decides to give me something in repayment for it (*utu*), and he makes me a present of something (*taonga*). Now this *taonga* I received from him is the spirit (*hau*) of the *taonga* I received from you and passed on to him. The *taonga* which I receive on account of the *taonga* that came from you, I must return to you. It would not be right on my part to keep these *taonga* whether they were desirable or not.

Ranaipiri's statement highlights the structure of reciprocity for Maori communities, and indeed other Polynesian societies. First, things are not given at random, "the *Hau* is not the wind" (Mauss 1967:8). Things are not blown (given) in one direction, without later return, much like the example of wind given in the metaphor. Instead, gifts long to return to their point of origin. This is because gifts represent the personified extension of the person who gave them. Gifts come "morally, physically, and spiritually from a person," embodying that connection between giver, gift, and recipient (Mauss 1967:10). Mauss (1967:10) goes on to state that, whether it is



food, possessions, or anything given, it retains a spiritual hold over the recipient. The thing given is alive, and “strives to bring its original clan and homeland some equivalent to take its place.” This structure around gifting and repaying helps solidify a collectivist societal structure, and strengthen kinship bonds. Resources (gifts) flow within the entire kinship network, as opposed to remaining fixed within one particular individual or family. This creates an “obligatory circle of wealth” (Mauss 1967:10). Kirkpatrick (1983:57) notes that among kin groups in the Marquesas, and even neighbors, generalized reciprocity is practiced on a temporal scale. Individuals give when they have an abundance of something, and recipients are expected to contribute back at some time when they have a surplus of a similarly specialized resource.

I found this to be quite true during my fieldwork, both on a family, and individual level. Subsistence resources in the Marquesas commonly flow throughout the region, just as the people do when they migrate. This often takes place even within the context of highly commoditized social relationships. My informants in Tahiti showed me that most of the food in their household originated in the Marquesas, and is transported to Tahiti for them from their family members on the region’s cargo ship, the Aranui. They also maintained in interviews that at least once a month they sent money and food to their family members who still reside in the Marquesas. Resources commonly are distributed amongst individuals in the Hakatoa family system. Furthermore, they rely on a great diversity of resources. While certain food staples such as breadfruit and tuna were a necessity for producing Marquesan dishes on the weekend Marquesan time, western foods such as fruit cocktails, canned beef, and French bread are used for the majority of weekday dinners. Although a great deal of fruit, especially breadfruit grows wildly in Tahiti, most of the canned fruit is purchased for convenience. Weekday lunches are almost

always purchased from sandwich vendors in Pape'ete during breaks at the tattoo shop. A common theme that ran through many of my interviews with informants was that the lifestyle in Tahiti was too much about work and money, and that Marquesans in the Marquesas were much better at living off the land and being resourceful. A reliance nonetheless on a diverse variety of subsistence resources sheds light on the importance of gift giving and reciprocity for Marquesans. During interviews, all of my informants stated that they sent money (*mondots*) and or food resources monthly to other family members. It was also unanimously described as a common practice for Marquesans in general, not unique to their family.

I observed that in the Hakatoa household, most of their subsistence resources came from family members who lived in the Marquesas. To ensure that resources arrive to their family members who live on other islands, all of my informants utilize the French Polynesian cargo ship, the Aranui, which makes a regular circuit around French Polynesia, unloading in each of the island groups (Brash and Carillet 2012:176). Marquesans know the arrival and departure dates of the vessel, and will leave resources on it in the names of their family members to pick up upon completing its trip. Vari'i's mother, who works as a crew member on the Aranui, is consequently only home at the Hakatoa household in Tahiti for only one week a month. However, she brings with her food from the Marquesas that lasts the family for the majority of the month. This includes frozen fish that have been caught by the Hakatoas, green mandarin oranges, canned goods, and breadfruit. Vari'i let me inventory the food of the household and I determined that more than half of it had arrived via the Aranui, with the other half being purchased or collected in Tahiti.

My informants establish and maintain their kinship groups entirely via generalized reciprocity. For instance, resources are not simply collected in Pape'ete by the Hakatoas without sending *mondots* and other resources back to 'Ua Pou. While food from the large Pape'ete market is sent back via the Aranui, *mondots* are sent monthly through the post to family members. Kahu told me in an interview that the end of the month was the most common time for him and other Marquesans to send money, after rent and all living expenses had already been paid. Marquesans eat Marquesan foods together locally, wherever they may be, but remain intact with their larger kinship networks by participating in intra-island kinship reciprocity. For instance, all of my informants noted that it was their individual responsibility to send money or food to their family members. Vari'i said that Marquesans form a large family, and that not everyone that was family were actually biologically related. Not only does this highlight Kirkpatrick's (1983:159) finding that Marquesans do their best to find common ancestry amongst individuals, but it also illustrates that behavioral practice plays a larger role in defining kinship and family than bloodlines. As Vari'i explains, "Family is relationships. And they are family because they send [money]." Sending *mondots* to family members abroad is different in some ways than sending food resources. Tangible food resources are "animated with the *hau* of its forest, its homeland, and the *hau* pursues him who holds it" (Mauss 1967:11).

At first glance, money can be seen as the "wind" in Ranaipiri's quote (Mauss 1967:8). Monetary transactions in a global economy could be seen as impersonal and existing outside the framework of the generalized reciprocity of the *taonga*. On the other hand, sending *mondots* actually fits right into the Marquesan reciprocity networks. Kirkpatrick (1983:57) noted that Marquesans gave things to one another at a later date when they had a surplus. The most

common reason that Marquesans migrate to Tahiti is for work opportunities, and the surplus of money from work that they earn is redistributed back to family members in the Marquesas. To return to Mauss (1967:10) to give something is to give a part of oneself. This includes wages and *mondots*. The things given have a spiritual hold over those who have received them, to be repaid. This keeps the kinship bonds strong by in a sense, locking them down. Tekiva told me in an interview that he would be angry, surprised, and saddened if kin members never reciprocated gifts that he sent to them. He and the other Hakatoas expect that if a thing (or money) is given, that eventually it will be repaid.

I now turn to my personal examples of how gifts played a large role in making me into a functioning member of the collectivist Hakatoa kinship group. In fact, I do not think I would have gotten very far with my research in any respect if I did not incorporate and account for gifts and reciprocity. When I first met Vari'i and the others in the tattoo shop, I paid in advance, as is practice, for a tattoo on my right arm, which I describe in more detail in the next chapter. But I wanted to find a way to divorce myself from the tourist label, to demonetize my relationship with the Hakatoas, while still compensating them for their time. All the tourists, no matter where their origin, pay for their tattoos. To be incorporated into their family, and their kinship system, would take much more than a standard economic transaction. I decided to try my hand at entering into the system of generalized reciprocity by gifting the Hakatoas with tangible items. I went downstairs from the tattoo shop to a convenience store owned by a Chinese family. I had seen Vari'i go here for cigarettes earlier in the day. I do not know what my original reasoning was; it was probably just because it was hot out, but I settled on buying Coca-Cola's for the group. Not just for Tekiva (who administered my tattoo), but for Vari'i, and the secretary Malia,

and all the other Marquesans who were standing around watching people get tattooed. My plan was to show that I could have just left and perhaps come back the next day, with the same anthropologist agenda, but instead I wanted to be more than that. I wanted to be with them.

The Coca's as they are called in Tahiti went over quite well. I believe that it showed that I was genuinely interested in them. I had created as Mauss (1967:9) describes, the taonga. This could not be initiated with money. While money can be the utu, or repaid gift, starting a transaction with money would be like "the wind." I had used a tangible item, Coca-Cola, to create the thing given (taonga). The Hakatoas all thanked me and drank their Coca's. The two young men my age, Tekiva and Vari'i drank theirs on the balcony with me, overlooking the market. It was a moment of serenity, and it was my first taste of how to pass time with Marquesans. Silence was common during my fieldwork, and at times it was a difficult challenge for my AD/HD. At other times I felt that this meant that I was not liked. However, this silence was not seen by them as awkward or negative. Rather, these moments of contentedness are what substantiate bonds between individuals, forming friendships and family ties. It is quite different from the tourists who enter the shop, want to talk about what they want and then leave after they receive it. It is instead a continual dialogue of physical presence. This is quite similar to what Keith Basso (1970:217) described with Apache Native Americans, that when meeting strangers, it is quite common to use silence to become comfortable, closing social distance between individuals, moving towards friendship.

This exchange was only the first of many gifts between us, and this process is ongoing. That very same night, Vari'i repaid the hau of my taonga by inviting me over to dinner at his house. This gesture provided him two outcomes. First he upheld his social responsibility to

repay a thing given. Second, he was beginning to fulfill his collectivist obligation to incorporate me as a Marquesan individual into his kinship group, by teaching me about and feeding me Marquesan food (as well as reciprocating my gift). It is important for me to note that many of the things given to me by the Hakatoas were not tangible items. I am convinced that their time and events were categorized by all involved as a gift. They took me to their haka performances. I did not hire a taxi, walk, or take the bus to the Radisson. I was taken with them, crowded in the back of their van, Marquesan drums and weapons all around me. This is not an experience that people outside the group get to have. They went out of their way to take in this odd anthropologist. Thus, I had to constantly repay these acts of giving with my own gifts.

Most often I could do this with food. Even though I described myself first as an anthropologist, the French Polynesian government saw me just like everyone else: as a tourist. This was quite true in the sense that I had much more disposable income than my informants did. This meant I was often able to take my friends out to lunch, or buy them Coca's. However, I did learn that some gifts were better than others. During my first week of fieldwork, I thought switching up the type of gift might be good, so I bought cigarettes at the convenience store. These were met with thanks and smiles, but I noticed no one really went for them like they did the Coca's. It turns out that only one woman was a regular smoker, and she preferred another brand. While I struck out in terms of branding, I did learn a valuable lesson: that gifts that incorporate multiple individuals on a collectivist, or group wide level are more valuable than those that may only affect one person.

I learned more in my fieldwork from mistakes than I did from my successes. One of my biggest lessons came from the social blunder I created surrounding my headphones. I brought

with me Beats by Dre headphones, which are very popular commodities both in Tahiti and in the United States. I primarily used them for the long flights, but I used them one of the mornings with my iPod when I was walking to the tattoo shop. When the day was over, and Vari'i and I were walking to his house from the bus stop, he asked if he could listen to my iPod. I obliged and he enjoyed the rest of his walk listening to Te Vaka, a popular Tokelauan Polynesian group. I could tell that he really enjoyed listening to music with high quality headphones, as the ones he usually used were just the ear bud models that often fell out of his ears. I thought headphones would be a great gift for him. Later that week, when Vari'i wanted to go to Carrefour, a large French chain store, I took him with me to the electronics section and showed him some headphones that were still in the case (they did not sell Beats by Dre). He seemed interested, but certainly not to the level that he liked my own headphones. Here I made my mistake. I bought him the brand new headphones (produced by a French company). He enjoyed them, as they were certainly a technological upgrade to his current earbuds; yet sometimes I feel that I should have given him my own headphones. However, this was a tough situation. If I had given Vari'i my headphones, perhaps the others would have felt that they were not as important to me as Vari'i was, thus offending them. I also may have gone overboard when I purchased brand new headphones for him, bearing in mind the competitive feasts that Gell (1993:169) described, where chiefs would give so much that they would shame others due to their inability to repay them in the future. Perhaps I made a social mistake, but perhaps it is precisely my mistakes that showed the Hakatoas that I was not a tourist. I was trying to give taonga and repay utu. I was trying to become aware of the hau that exists in our relationship. It is through the spirit of the

things we gave and shared with each other that we added a new individual (myself) into the larger Hakatoa kinship unit.

Dance, food transactions and resource distribution establish the foundation upon which Marquesan identity and personhood is built, but the specific achievement of Marquesan social personhood comes through managing the social skin, as is discussed in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER V

### MY SKIN IS OUR SKIN: SEALING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROTECTING IDENTITY

Perhaps nothing quite illustrates both the kin based worldview of the Marquesans I studied, and how they produced their identity away from their home islands, than their tattoos. In Tahiti, and throughout French Polynesia, tattoos of various levels of quality permeate all levels of society. Polynesians often sport tattoos in quite visible areas on the body even in white collar job professions (for example, a local newscaster had a visible neck tattoo on air). Interestingly, even individuals living in more precarious housing situations seemed to have tattoos, just more faded tattoos, so I assumed they were administered outside of a tattoo shop. I noticed some of these individuals on the streets daily in Pape'ete. Furthermore, both men and women had tattoos. While it seemed that in general, men in Tahiti have more tattoos than women, it was rare for me to see a woman in her twenties without any visible tattoos. However, it is not only Marquesans who receive Marquesan tattoos. Tourists (including myself) often pay to receive "Tahitian" or "Marquesan" designs, although most of them are watered down versions of Marquesan designs. Certainly it seems much more of a social norm to have tattoos in open sight in Tahiti than in America.

Gell (1993:1-3) states that throughout Polynesia, tattoos have played an integral role in historical social organization and function; and furthermore, through modifying the body via tattooing, Polynesians formed and reproduced socially appropriative self-understandings. I find this still to be the case for Marquesans, as I will discuss throughout this chapter. Not only did nearly all of my informants had tattoos, and I witnessed a few of them receive some during my

stay in Tahiti, but in fact, receiving Marquesan tattoos from my informants turned out to be the definitive step in becoming Marquesan.

To contextualize how Marquesans think about their tattoos today, I turn to how they were historically perceived. The tattoos of the Marquesas Islands were the most intricate and widely spread on the body in all of Polynesia (Gell 1993:2). Gell (1993:163) goes on to state that both men and women were commonly tattooed from head to foot, and that in 1925 there were over 174 different known symbols in the Marquesan tattooing lexicon. Samoans had the second most diverse tattooing motifs, with 50 different known symbols. Gell (1993:166) attributes much of the diversity and complexity of tattooing to the socio-political, geological, and geographical realities of the Marquesas, as compared to other archipelagos in Polynesia, relating it to their respective geographies and resource bases. In stratified Polynesian societies like Hawai'i, where food was less of an uncertainty, the art of tattooing was much less emphasized than in the open (politically decentralized) society of the Marquesas (Gell 1993:3). Why would this be? Gell (1993:23-25, 188) describes the skin as a symbolic representation of the mediation between the outside world and the self. This metaphorical barrier would be quite important in a society such as the Marquesas, which employed a worldview of binary contrasting sets; the skin essentially became the line between the self, and "not self."

Continuing the theme of producing identity through the body, Marquesans, and many other collectivist societies, view the skin much differently than is the case in the West (Gell 1993:24). The "social skin" as discussed by Terry Turner (1980), Gell (1993:24) notes, is seen by these collectivist groups as the outside of the body which comes into public contact with other individuals, and because people in collectivist social organizations are the sum of their relations

with other people (see also Sarah Lamb 1997), the person “is his-her skin.” It is no wonder that my skin, (both previously tattooed and un-tattooed), was of great concern to my informants. They had to “make their mark” of our burgeoning relationship, on my social skin, because that was reflective of who we are in relation to one another, so to speak.

Additionally, Marquesans viewed tattoos as armor or protection. With so much strife and tribal warfare in the Marquesas due to control of valleys and their resources, tattooing served as a practice that provided stability, and protection. *Pahu tiki*, or the full body tattoos of Marquesan men, were used to protect the interior self from external threats (Gell 1993:38). Marquesans used tattooing to not only intimidate and strike fear in enemies, but also to define and protect themselves from things outside of their control (see Reid 1988 on this theme throughout Southeast Asia). The Marquesan term for contagious sacredness, *tapu*, was seen like spiritual heat, in that it would dissipate off of individuals. The entire Marquesan society was organized in a *tapu* system that dictated social rules, classes, and norms based on hierarchies of who possessed more *tapu* (Gell 1993:171): “*Tapu* quality was quite powerful, dangerous, inconvenient, but its loss was attended with penalties which affected, not so much the person who infringed another’s *tapu*, as the individual whose *tapu* had been violated” (Gell 1993:171). *Pahu tiki* offered Marquesans protection, sealing their *tapu* from violation from external forces outside of their control.

Yet, not all tattoos were meant to seal off others. Tattoos were also thought of as solely a human affair, thus occupying set 1 in Kirkpatrick’s (1983:80) findings (Gell 1993:184-186). Being thought of as a specifically human practice, Marquesans described in their mythologies that tattoos helped produce erotic invincibility, and were sexually attractive to the opposite sex

(Gell 1993:187). In broader terms, Gell (1993:36) states that some tattoos draw in the gaze from onlookers, lowering defenses and the eye “enters the body of the other, because peculiarity of tattooing is that it is inside the skin rather than on its surface. Thus to view a tattoo is to already be in a position of seduction.” In this sense we see the skin as the medium, operating in the delicate balance between the interior and exterior selves of Marquesans. On the one hand there was a strong collectivist pull to open the skin to reflect relationships with others, while on the other, to seal it off and protect the interior self.

As previously discussed in the Study Area section, geographic isolation can also lead to cultural differentiation in worldview and practices. This certainly seems to be the case for the Marquesas, who over time became more and more isolated (Gell 1993:164-165). While Marquesans were the ancestral settler population of the Society Islands (including Tahiti) and Hawai’i, their society became more inward looking, in large part due to the relative scarcity of resources and high levels of warfare (Leiataua AhChing 2005:37, Blackburn 1999:117). Dr. Patrick Chapman, a cultural anthropologist at South Puget Sound Community College who has done work in Polynesia, explained to me (personal communication in April, 2015) that had European contact not intervened, the Marquesas Islands were becoming so isolated in their organization, that the Northern and Southern groups (three islands each) likely would have considered themselves parts of entirely separate archipelagos. The result of this growing isolation along with the strain on resources helped lead to the notable increase and diversification in tattooing compared to anywhere else in Polynesia.

Brash and Carillet (2012:232) state that since the 1980’s, Polynesian tattooing has experienced a great revival after having been previously banned by the French colonial

government for over 100 years. They also claim that today tattooing in the islands only exists solely for beautification (Brash and Carillet 2012:232). While I would certainly agree that this may be true for the tourists who get them, I argue that tattoos continue to be an integral avenue for how Marquesans (and other Polynesians) produce and construct identity and kinship networks. This is quite different from how tattooing often has been practiced and perceived in the West. Gell (1993:37-38) states that criminal sociologists often see tattooing as self-stigmatization, and that many in the West associate tattoos with populations cut off from the core of society such as prisoners, criminals, and sailors. Opposing this, in the Marquesas tattoos were seen as a sign of wealth, even to the point that females viewed men that were completely tattooed as most suitable for marriage because the tattoos indicated high wealth and social status (Blackburn 1999:120).

When discussing the abundance of contemporary Polynesian tattoos in Tahiti, it is important to consider the demographics of the region. Unlike Hawai'i, where the Hawaiian community is a small minority of the overall population, up to 78 percent of French Polynesia is indigenous, and only six percent of the population is French (Central Intelligence Agency 2015). This creates an environment where being Tahitian or otherwise Polynesian is the norm, which extends to cultural practices such as performances, artwork and tattooing. Vari'i illustrates this quite well. We were having a discussion about how he and some of my other informants would like to visit me in America someday. Vari'i is a good looking young man, who sports tattoos on his torso, arms, legs, and most recently his face. I was telling him that some people in America, even in Hawai'i, might be wary of him due to his facial tattoos. Vari'i was very confused as to why anyone would fear someone because of visible tattoos. To him, facial tattoos are a matter of pride, and exist within the realm of what is socially

acceptable for a young Marquesan man. This is interesting because Vari'i's current somewhat peaceful perception of facial tattoos contradicts the very history he gave me of them, which I recount later in the chapter.

In addition, Kahu told me over dinner once that he felt very sorry for Hawai'i. He explained that, "At least in the Marquesas, and in Tahiti, we still have some of our ways. In Hawai'i, it is just America." He explained that Hawaiian culture had become commoditized, and replaced with capitalism. In this sense, the hau was the wind. Customers purchase tattoos, and leave, in a one directional gust of wind. While this is a Marquesan perspective on Hawai'i, it does help substantiate how Marquesans feel about their traditions and cultural representation in Tahiti. Kahu, by virtue of how he juxtaposes his perception of Hawai'i with French Polynesia, makes an affirmative statement that Polynesians still maintain a strong hold on some of their cultural practices in French Polynesia. While tattoos are certainly a social norm in Tahiti, I argue that as Marquesans are a minority within the larger Tahitian population, they experience some of the same marginalization and underrepresentation that Hawaiians do in Hawai'i. For instance, Leiataua AhChing (2005:70-71) claims that mainstream United States culture stereotypes and trivializes the Hawaiian population, as well as confuses them with Filipino or other ethnic communities. While most tourists to Tahiti and French Polynesia would likely describe Marquesans as Polynesian, I suggest that they are most often quickly categorized by non-Polynesians as belonging to one conglomerate Tahitian population. In the field, Vari'i told me on more than one occasion that tourists often think they are receiving a Tahitian tattoo, when it is really comprised solely of Marquesan artwork. I have noticed that this is a common experience with Polynesian tattoos as a whole. In the United States, specifically Washington where I am

from, people get “Polynesian” or “Hawaiian tribal” tattoos that actually are a blending of the art styles from different island groups (usually Maori, Samoan, and Tahitian) with contemporary American influences.

Mark Blackburn, in his work *Tattoos From Paradise: Traditional Polynesian Patterns* (1999), documents and compiles historical photographs and sketches of Polynesian tattoo styles from many of the archipelagos in Polynesia. The traditional Tahitian images that were quite common in the 19th century according to Blackburn (1999:111) were nowhere to be found in Pape’ete while I was there in 2014. Instead, all of the artwork that was featured on statues, or murals, or tattoos seemed to be of Marquesan design. Not only did the images line up with the Marquesan images presented by Blackburn (1999:116-155), but they were displayed throughout the Hakatoas in photographs and on their bodies at their Marquesan tattoo shop. The production of the Marquesan worldview, globalization and the large role of tourism correlate strongly with tattoo art and styles.

John Urry (1993:1) coins the term of the tourist gaze. The touristic gaze is essentially how one views a location, and its people, as other, when they go to visit it (Urry 1993:1). Furthermore, when you travel to other places, you have preconceived notions of that locale that they expect to see. In the example of Tahiti, one often expects to find beautiful beaches, and warm, smiling (and tattooed) natives. Tourists from the West, in this case France and the United States, are often praised for “seeing the world,” and “experiencing other cultures.” This has a deeper meaning than just surface admiration. In essence, touring Tahiti and other locales reinforces the tourist’s home identity as modern, or civilized, and at the same time different than the “exotic cultures” they are temporarily gazing upon (Urry 1993:2). Going back to the tourist

gaze, tourists want to arrive in Tahiti and see what they have preconceived. The implications this has for Marquesan and Tahitian tattooing is thus: the tattoos that people expect to find in Tahiti, are the ones that are produced most often. It is for this reason that Marquesan images in Tahiti have overcome the images used in the Tahitian artwork of the past. In fact, Carol Ivory (1999:323-324) notes that almost all carvings for sale in Tahiti are of Marquesan design. It is because of the tourist gaze that in the example I give later of my own tattoo, that Marquesans use much more filigree work, and less large zones of pure black in their tattoos. Ivory (1999:327) describes that the images most often seen in Marquesan artwork today have been directly influenced by what sells with tourism. Essentially the images that tourists and explorers have found most interesting and or willing to purchase are the ones that get replicated the most, especially in public and shopping areas.

### *Finding the Tattoo Shop*

As an anthropologist, I was essentially a tourist in Tahiti. And that is exactly how I was received when I first poked my head in the door of the Marquesan tattoo shop in downtown Pape'ete. When I first learned of it, it was my first day in the field; and I was admittedly still concerned about my prospects of finding Marquesans in Tahiti who would be willing to talk or spend time with me. I had asked people on the streets if they knew of any Marquesans and was directed here, to the small tattoo shop up the stairs of a small alleyway to a balcony. Just seeing the painting of the Marquesas Islands flag on the door raised my spirits tenfold.

Inside, the shop was full of guests, both Polynesian and European, all crowded around the small tattooing tables, watching patrons receive tattoos. I did not notice it right away, but I came



to discover that the Polynesians in the shop (almost all of whom were Marquesan) were either friends or family of the tattoo artists, and would spend time in the shop “hanging out.” The tattoo artists that were there during my stay in Tahiti were (in the order that I met them): Vari’i, Tekiva, and Pierre. The secretary of the shop, whom I will call Malia, is a middle aged woman who wears fancy French clothing. As related earlier, she approached me when I first entered the shop and asked to schedule a tattoo appointment with me. This was the moment I realized that anthropologists are not special, and look just like everyone else. Naturally, I was identified and categorized into the Marquesan world as just another white guy with tattoos. For my own personal reasons, I decided to oblige to this categorization and schedule a tattoo. I figured that I would have a real Marquesan tattoo, and it might give me better access to the group than if I had not. When, having scheduled the appointment, I tried telling Malia that I was an anthropologist trying to meet Marquesas Islanders who lived in Tahiti, I was still expecting a rush of excitement. Instead this information was just sort of brushed aside. I was inwardly deflated. I would later realize that this sort of response was typical of our gender relations (young male-older woman), and her reaction was quite Marquesan of her. Throughout my fieldwork I found that men generally spent time with other men, and women with women. Age further segregated casual conversation. It was quite rare for young men to spend much time talking with older women. As silence was already a key method for establishing a relationship in general terms, it was even more so between women and men. I likely came off as very upfront and abrasive by asking so many questions and for interviews all at once.

While Malia did not commit to talking to me very much about my study (she always seemed to be of few words), she introduced me to Vari’i. She told him first when my tattoo

appointment was, and mentioned quickly that I was an anthropologist, before turning to talk to other customers. Vari'i gave me a wide smile and firm handshake, but he also looked me over, spending a decent amount of time analyzing my existing visible Polynesian tattoos on my forearms. His facial expression seemed puzzled, but I decided not to ask him about it at the time. He first asked me what kind of tattoo I wanted, and where I wanted it on my body. I explained that I did not have too much money, so I would like a small band on my bicep. I was basing this off of my experience with tattoo prices in the United States; a band the size of the one I received would likely cost somewhere between \$250 and \$300, depending on the reputation of the artist. After converting the price from French Polynesian Francs (CPF), the final cost was \$300 USD, after the tip, so in fact comparable.

### *Planning the Tattoo*

After the size and price were settled, he wanted to know what symbols or motifs I would like in the design. I told him to just do whatever he thought was best, because I just wanted a true Marquesan tattoo. This might have been the best response that I could have given, as I will later discuss that to truly produce Marquesan identity through tattoos, they have to come from a Marquesan. Vari'i then spent time asking me about the tattoos that I already had in plain sight. "Where did you get those tattoos?" "Who gave them to you?" "Ah, a Samoan design." All of these were directed at me from Vari'i. I could tell that he was trying to be nice, but he did not think the designs or quality of my existing Marquesan tattoos were nearly as high as he could produce. I find it very fitting with Kirkpatrick's (1983:80) set 3 that he liked my Maori, Samoan, and Hawaiian tattoos. His favorite among my tattoos was actually the Irish Celtic cross on my calf. Tattoos are either Marquesan, or they are not, so if they are Marquesan, they have to be

done right. The tattoos that are not could just be taken for aesthetic value. He assured me that his family held the highest reputation when it came to quality of tattooing, and directed me to observe the awards that decked the walls of the shop.

When we finished planning the tattoo, Vari'i asked me about anthropology. I briefly explained my study, how it dealt with migration, and that I was hoping to interview Marquesans. At this point I thought it was a long shot, but instead was met with his smile, a head nod, and "OK." I will forever be indebted to Vari'i, for it was his welcome and openness that got me in the door. It was his initiative to introduce me to Kahu, to Tekiva, and to Pierre, and to allow me to tag along with him to everything; I would not have gotten very far without him. Not only was Vari'i participating in my study, he seemed genuinely interested in why I was conducting it. I pulled from my sack the photo album with the picture of my mother. As I briefly stated in the Study Area section, he took great interest in this picture. Her tan skin and thick black hair fit right in with the Marquesans in the shop. "You have her eyes," Vari'i said. He showed the picture to everyone in the shop. Even Malia was intrigued. From that moment onwards I was not just a tourist, not just an anthropologist. I was a probationary-Marquesan, and it was his responsibility to produce Marquesanness in, on, and through my very Irish American body.

### *Receiving the Tattoo*

I have discussed how Vari'i went about rendering me Marquesan in the preceding chapters (food, dance, gifts) and now I will specifically address how he and his family used tattooing to produce their (our) Marquesan identity. As presented earlier, Marquesan society is quite collectivist in nature, thus not only must I be incorporated in the Marquesan system, but

Vari'i could not do this alone. It would take a village, so to speak, to make my pale skin 'enana. The first sign of this was that Vari'i himself did not administer my first tattoo. It was Tekiva, Vari'i's cousin who had just returned from working on Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Tekiva was the same age as Vari'i, and had similar curiosities as Vari'i concerning my existing tattoos. Vari'i was present, intently watching me receive my tattoo, as were the other young male Marquesans in the shop. It seemed part of the process to be observed while one receives a tattoo. It makes it a collective act: It forces one to keep one's composure, but furthermore, it is sort of a bonding feeling, reminiscent perhaps also of the importance of "witnessing" as mentioned earlier. I remember thinking, "I am becoming one of you now." While this may not have been exactly what they were thinking, it certainly had a collectivist feel to be surrounded by others the whole time I received the tattoo, which never really took place for me when I had received tattoos (largely on my own) in the United States.

After I received the tattoo, Vari'i often showed it off to others at his home when I spent time there, and he would often say that one day he would finish tattooing my arms, and up my neck, and even tattoo my face. I would then be asked to roll up my sleeves or take my shirt off so that others could see. In doing so, my chest tattoo (a Marquesan tiki design) became exposed for others to see. Of all my tattoos this was the one that everyone thought was most puzzling. The ink had started to fade (this I knew) as it was a few years old. However, I did not know that the image was off-center. This was immediately obvious to everyone else. In addition, they did not think so highly of the quality of the image itself. They did their best not to openly ridicule me, but I certainly could tell that they found some humor in the image. I did my best to just suck it up, and go with it. Inwardly I was slightly ashamed of it, but I said nothing of it.

One Sunday in Vari'i's yard, he told me that he would like to fix my chest tattoo. I smiled and said thank you. I privately was excited, but knew it would cost a great deal more than my meager remaining food budget to procure such work from him. When back in the shop the next day, he and Tekiva asked me to take my shirt off. No other Marquesans were in the shop, so it could not have been about showing off my arm band again. Tekiva took a Sharpie and began to draw on my chest, around my existing image. Vari'i also had a sketchbook, and he started drawing conceptual ideas of my chest tattoo, and how it could be fixed. The goal was to incorporate the existing tiki image while centering it on my body by adding in Marquesan motifs around it. After a couple hours of sketching things out, standing still in the mirror, and discussing things over, we had decided a date. Later that week I would receive the tattoo, a gift from Tekiva and Vari'i.

I asked "how and why," Tekiva said, what would become one of the most heartwarming things that have ever been said to me, "Because we are friends." This tattoo effectively became my rite of passage into being Marquesan. I have received many tattoos in my life, and none of them came close to the pain level that this one did. Part of the tattoo runs along my collar bone, and I almost fainted while this section was being completed. The whole tattoo took fourteen hours, and was done in sections. Each day, a quarter of my chest was finished. I remember learning not to take the bus home on these days, as the blood would leak through my shirt, and patrons would ask if I had been shot or stabbed. Walking the five kilometers home was not any easier. I certainly was in a liminal stage here. Not fully American, nor fully Marquesan. But exhausted, and bleeding, I would force myself into the shop, onto the table, and back under the needle. There was no way I could prep myself for the pain. I would tell myself that it would

only be a few hours at a time, but it seemingly got more difficult and painful each session. Vari'i and Tekiva worked hard to produce this image, and luckily they finished the piece before I had to return home (we finished with a day to spare).

The finished piece is much more than an effort to make Patrick Molohon a Marquesan. It encapsulates me into the larger Marquesan experience and history. My tattoo is more historical in design because of the large zones of black (Gell 1993:190, Ivory 1999:319). Today most tattoos and artwork feature intricate, filigree images that are found desirable to tourists (Ivory 1999). In the past, there were fewer filigree motifs that were used, in between larger zones of black. Vari'i and Tekiva told the following story about the meaning of the tattoo:

Maui was a god. He had a beautiful woman. However, she left him for another man, who was a strong warrior. What was Maui to do? He was so angry. He decided to get tattoos all over. Black. Black. Black. His whole body. No little images. Just black all over. He went and found his wife's lover and challenged him to the death. They battled and Maui won, because he was stronger, and more fierce. Pure black are the strongest tattoos. That is why Marquesans used lots of black in their tattoos.

My tattoo features the images of Maui and his wife in the very center of the tattoo, and each of their side profiles combines to make a larger tiki image (an image can be found in Appendix A). Vari'i also told me that facial tattoos could strike fear in opponents, as well as large black tattoos in general. As he mentioned in the story of Maui, the blacker and larger the tattoos, the fiercer the warrior. The central tiki image that existed before has been centered, with large black areas, homage to the importance of black in Marquesan worldview. The circles on my shoulders

represent the stars, which signify foresight and finding one's path. They included these because they felt that I was guided to Tahiti to find them. Filigree images representing mana are placed in between the larger zones of black.

Perhaps most important, is the image of the *ka'a*, the gecko, in between the tikis. This was their way of both signing their artwork, but also sealing me within their Marquesan kinship group. Although my social reconstruction took place over various mediums (food, gifts, dance) it was not official until it was sealed and personified. As Gell (1993:175) states, names are often exchanged in the Marquesas (for political bonds). Handy (1923:86) notes that names are not considered solely as descriptive terms, but as identical to the thing itself. The Hakatoas were now permanently signed onto my skin, not referencing a research trip I had made to Tahiti, but rather going with me as a physical component of my body.

Although I received my tattoo in a much different time period than the historical climate that Gell (1993) discusses, I was also protected from interference from outside forces in today's context. The permanence of tattoos is why Gell (1993:26) states they are associated with birth and death. I was now "born" into the Hakatoa family, as signified by their gecko. Gell (1993:175) notes that known things-items are given actual names. My tattoo was not known to others as Patrick's tattoo, but rather, an extension of Vari'i and Tekiva. The Hakatoa family symbol on my tattoo places Vari'i, Tekiva, and the whole Hakatoa family with me. My personhood had been reconstructed by modifying my body, as Gell (1993:3) discusses. It also seals and protects my internal tapu inside, so it cannot be harmed by outside forces, nor can it interfere with the tapu of others. It also was not all about me. Because I was entering the Hakatoa kinship group, tattooing my skin would also prevent me from interfering with their tapu,

as it would seal in my interior self. In addition, by tattooing me, the Hakatoas not only formed a friendship, and reconstructed my social identity, but are also establishing political power over me. This was a taonga of a gift, so to speak. I am now obligated to repay the utu, be an active part of this kinship group, not just a passive recipient. I leave this chapter with an excerpt from a *pu'e*, or Marquesan chant associated with consecrating new things (including adoptions), that was recorded by Handy (1923:325). I find that it corresponds with my adoption into the Hakatoa kinship group, and that it references a journey that is completed together, not alone.

Kee tahito Tapanā nei, e ui. Ui e'a oa, ui e'a poto. 'I tikina mai au ia oe, Te tama o Hopu, Ehee taua i tai, Moia oe mea hoahoa fa'e o Atanua.

Translation: Anciently Tapanā came this way as a messenger, Questioned long and questioned short, "I have come up hither to you, the child of Hopu, Mother-of-soil, let us go down shoreward together, So that you may fill and level the platform of Atanua's house."



## CHAPTER VI

### “DO NOT FORGET YOUR PEOPLE.” A CONCLUSION AND A BEGINNING

The last night of my stay truly highlighted the importance of reciprocity and the physical embodiment of identity for Marquesans. It in many ways tied together my entire fieldwork experience, with food, dancing, tattoos, and gifts all playing a large role. Although I spent time with one extended kinship group, it is apparent that my data is consistent with the migratory Marquesan experience at large. To put it as plainly as possible, one becomes and maintains oneself as Marquesan through embodied practice with other Marquesans, not only by geographical ties to island landmasses. This is done via preparing and eating food, dancing Marquesan dances and performing them for others, participating in reciprocal kinship networks by distributing food, money and other resources to family members, and receiving Marquesan tattoos from Marquesas Islanders. These practices are critical to maintaining Marquesan identity for migrants, as they are removed physically from a specific geographical homeland. In this sense, these practices become their link to the Marquesas Islands in their absence. As with other island groups in the Pacific, Marquesas Islander culture is collectivist in structure. One is Marquesan because one exists within a cultural kinship matrix, connected with other Marquesans. This can be brought to light very well with an anecdote from my last day in Pape’ete, before I boarded my flight for home.

It was a somber day for all involved, knowing that I would be departing that night. It felt that I was leaving what I had made home in such a short amount of time, which is quite fitting, given the common occurrence of migration for all of my informants. Vari’i had insisted that he

would make me dinner before I left, and that Alfonse and he would take me to the airport, in that same white van, chock full of the Marquesan drums that were almost as large as I am. Vari'i and Alfonse picked me up at the pension where I was staying and drove me over to the Hakatoa household. The usual weekend crowd was already all there, cooking food on the grill, playing petanque, and drinking. Kahu greeted me and explained that everyone wanted to prepare a goodbye dinner for me. I was quite honored by this, and tried to show as much thanks as I could.

This night, the usual gender and age barriers seemed to vanish for me. Older men who had shown little interest in my anthropological work approached me and asked if I still needed to conduct any interviews. The same was true for women. Until this point securing interviews outside of the tight knit group of young men had been a precarious situation at best. One of the older men, Pierre, and the patriarch of the family told me (in English), "I am sorry I did not do interviews with you. But my story is too big. Not one hour, not thirty minutes. My story starts in the Marquesas. Very big. Now all the way here. When you come back, I will tell you my story." Pierre had often shown me little interest (or so I had thought). I had tried getting an interview with the famous tattooer but to no avail. However, at that time I was not taking into account the combined impact that all of our silences had. I realized now that I was involved in the Hakatoa kinship system. It was such a powerful moment for me, that I do not know how I was able to hold back tears. I had no idea that it would become even harder. A wave of relief rushed over me, I was involved in this Marquesan kinship network. They expect me to stay involved, and to come back. The key point in this is that it highlights the very transformation of my physical body into the hau of the gift. The physical and moral transformations that I

underwent to become Marquesan are expected to return, not to blow away with the wind to America, never to return.

The food they prepared for dinner was excellent. Interestingly it was a combination of the weekday American foods, such as steak and hot dogs, as well as my last chance to have the Marquesan uru. As usual, I was expected to eat my fill as the guest. I had learned by this time that I should not delay, and began to eat. Vari'i explained that this dinner was for me, and that they all would miss me. It was quite touching, but for the meantime, the dinner went on much like the other meals I had eaten there. People socialized, and Vari'i and Tekiva insisted I take my shirt off so that everyone could see their tattoo on my chest, as if to openly proclaim how I was sealed into their kinship group. Kahu told me to pull out my notebook, to record his contact information. The others did the same. This is when the night began to truly become a farewell ceremony.

Individuals who usually spoke little to me opened up and laughed with me, even asking to take pictures with me. The Hakatoas began to bear me gifts. One by one. Shell necklaces from the women started the event, and then the men, each presented me with taonga. A ceremonial paddle from Vari'i, which many stated was a wonderful gift. Tekiva took off the bone fishhook necklace that he wore every day and put it on me. He explained that his grandmother had given it to him, and now he had to give it to me. I could never take this off unless I gave it to another. This was the utu that Mauss (1976:9) described. To this day I have never taken it off. Kahu presented me with necklaces. I was overwhelmed. I had to repay this, even though I knew I could not. At this moment my job was simply to receive. The Hakatoas were making a simultaneously altruistic and calculated move. They were adding a well to do

American to their kinship unit, and he would be obligated to continually repay their gifts throughout the future, while at the same time being genuinely welcoming and friendly. It was quite a remarkable and moving moment for me, but perhaps quite normal in the Marquesan context, given the common occurrence of migration. Most thanked me, and told me not to forget them.

I was compelled to meet these gifts with my own. I scrambled through my sack and found some items that I had bought in the market as souvenirs. For Vari'i, I picked a mother of pearl tiki necklace that I had been wearing for much of my time there. For Tekiva, a bone hooked necklace, and I gave Kahu, my last leftover American dollar. Kahu gave me this look of understanding that I will never forget. Between us, that dollar is invaluable, and it represents so much more than one USD. That dollar represents the American system, and all that Kahu is working to accomplish for his people. It also represents me, and everything he taught me during our time together. The Hakatoas then met these gifts with even more. Vari'i went into the house and then brought out a wooden staff, with Marquesan carvings on it. Many commented at how beautiful a gift it was. Vari'i's little brother, who was eight years old, ran out of his room and held out a pearl and shell necklace that he had made himself, and had been working on for over a year. I was shocked. I gave away my snacks that I had saved for my plane ride home.

I had nothing else to give him, not even another Coke. My sack was empty now, except for my field notebook. I pulled my notes out and held out my sack for Vari'i. Of all the things I had given, this was the gift that landed the strongest. Vari'i seemed very honored by this gift, holding it and gazing at it with a smile on his face once again. This simple, canvas grocery sack was associated with me. I was in the hau of this gift. I had carried it everywhere; from the day

they saw me poke my head into the tattoo shop, to my departure. Vari'i then took the shirt off of his back and handed it to me, as I bit my tongue to hold back tears. I tried saying that I could not accept it, but Vari'i insisted. This was not just any t-shirt. This was Vari'i's Takitooa t-shirt. I was not only 'enana, but I was in this specific 'enana kinship group.

Kahu, Tekiva, Vari'i, and Alfonse packed into his van, and we drove to the airport, all trying not to show our sadness. When we got to the airport, they insisted on carrying my luggage to the baggage check. As it was being loaded, Kahu pulled me aside. He said that they had planned this for me. "Planned what for me?" Kahu just smiled. Then he walked over to the sidewalk where he was joined by the others. A loud shout was bellowed by Kahu, and I was crippled by humility. I realized they were performing a haka, for me. In full sight of everyone, mostly French tourists, leaving Tahiti for Europe, three Marquesans in street clothes performed a haka, in the process making a fourth Marquesan. This was the most powerful moment of my life thus far. As I look back on the scene, it was quite fitting that it was done in the airport. There were witnesses to it, just like the Takitooa presentations on stage at the Radisson. My friends were not only seeing me off for my journey, but presenting me (and themselves) as Marquesan in front of the on looking tourists. The last words Kahu spoke to me, with the others very much in support, before I went through the door for security checks, were, "Do not forget your people."

Another example of the embodiment of Marquesanness took place when I was still preparing my thesis proposal for my committee. I conducted a Wikipedia search for the Marquesas Islands, looking for information about the islands to use as starting points for my research. The page stated that there were fifteen islands in the archipelago, or nineteen if one included the seamounts and shoals. This was a trivial point and to be included when describing

my study area, but nothing more beyond that, and I paid it little thought. This changed when I was in Tahiti, drinking Hinano beer with Vari'i at his house on the weekend, Marquesan time. In passing I mentioned that there were fifteen Marquesas Islands, and I was met with a correcting, "No, there are six. Three in the north, and three in the south." Vari'i drew in the sand six circles and named them off, "Nuku Hiva, 'Ua Huka, and 'Ua Pou – our island – north. South – Hiva Oa, Fatu Hiva, Tahuata." I was slightly puzzled by this, why would Vari'i just forget about at least nine islands? But I jotted the point down, thinking that I would not want to come off as if I knew more than he did about his own homeland. It seemed like an interesting question, but not directly tied to my research questions. Meanwhile, Kahu, and others also mentioned in passing the "six Marquesan Islands."

When I had returned home and started analyzing the data I had obtained in the field, I once again brought up the same Wikipedia page on the Marquesas Islands, and clicked on the first island in the Northern Group that appeared, Eiao. I noticed in the demographic sidebar that the listed population of the island was zero, as of 2002 (Wikipedia 2015). A fire ignited in my mind as I raced to check all the islands in the entire group. Sure enough, only three of the islands in the Northern Group were inhabited. The same three islands that Vari'i drew for me in the sand. The same was true for the islands of the Southern Group. The reasoning for my informants' distinction on the number of Marquesas Islands made perfect sense in the context of people and food. Marquesan food is at the heart of creating self and community for Marquesans in both substance and practice, from the preparation to the service and consumption. It is essentially a biological and socio-cultural resource, as it serves the natural and cultural needs of sustaining Marquesan life. Thus, if islands like Eiao are uninhabited, then there are certainly no

Marquesans living there, eating Marquesan foods, and thus making them Marquesan in the worldview of Vari'i and the rest of my informants. The question then arises, why did my informants not consider Tahiti to also be a part of the Marquesas? There were Marquesans there, dancing Marquesan dances, preparing, exchanging, and consuming Marquesan foods, wearing Marquesan tattoos. The answer lies with the contrasting sets of the Marquesan worldview. While Marquesan foods and practices are present in Tahiti, the island is also overwhelmingly Tahitian and French, thus making it "not Marquesan." The foods that are commonly eaten there are also prepared in ways that are not considered to be Marquesan.

These epithets show that one is Marquesan in a group. I never could have received such insight into how one creates and maintains Marquesan identity without my informants' generosity in including me into their kinship network, from 'Ua Pou. After I returned from fieldwork, I was leading a lecture on my research to the Anthropology Student Association at Central Washington University (CWU). After it ended, a student posed the question of if I still partook in any of the actions that made me Marquesan in Tahiti. After mulling it over, I responded that unfortunately, I do not eat Marquesan foods here in the States. It was not enough just to exchange one time with my informants, and then leave with the wind. My insides are the same as everyone here, I eat American foods. I do not dance Marquesan dances. I cannot affirm my embodied identity to others. I cannot visibly show people who I am, and who I associate with in that same way. I also do not look so different or act in ways that set me apart from the general population. My skin may bear the Marquesan tattoos, but they are met with completely different understanding. My interior self may be sealed and protected by my tattoos, but I am

unable to form new relationships with my social skin in America. I cannot just be Marquesan in a vacuum. There have to be other Marquesans in my presence.

However, I can still hear Kahu's words. Although Safeway does not sell breadfruit, and there are no Marquesans to dance with, I can still do my part to be included in their group, albeit from a distance. I also realize this feeling of separation is a common experience for Marquesans who migrate without other members of their community. In fact Mui left for work in France not long after I returned to the States. He had left alone, so I imagine his feelings of disconnection to the Hakatoas are stronger than mine. For Christmas I sent a package to Kahu on 'Ua Pou where he visits for the holiday break, full of foods from the Pacific Northwest, along with t-shirts of CWU and other things. The package had cards and gifts for everyone in the family. I wanted to show that I am still included in their cultural matrix. I had not forgotten my people. I still maintain contact with Kahu on social media. He is the most active on Facebook amongst those whom I met, so I communicate with the others through him. In many ways, the Hakatoas and I continue the silence that was so prevalent when I was in Tahiti. However, it is not embodied; we are not in each other's presence. So while I may not be able to be fully Marquesan, as the nerdy anthropologist graduate student in Ellensburg, Washington, with no other Marquesans within a great distance, I have maintained my position as Marquesan and not-Marquesan.

Historically, Polynesia as a region was settled through human migration, across the vast Pacific Ocean. This phenomenon of migration has rapidly increased for Marquesans in today's globalized world. As I have discovered through my fieldwork, and the physical process that I underwent, the geographical distances that separate individuals who have migrated around the globe are brought closer together through and on the body. At the heart of being Marquesan for



my informants, was family, and remaining connected to them no matter the cost or distance. This centralizing of kinship can be seen through and on their bodies. Tekiva once told me, “In America, you have everything. So much space. Cars. McDonald’s. But in the islands, Tahiti, Marquesas, you have not as much. The islands are small. But the heart is very big. Make sure you tell your friends in America that we may be small, but we are also the biggest.”

It is this big heart that Tekiva references that brings this whole process full circle. The relationships that I have formed require me to bring my body (the hau) back to Tahiti, and onward to the Marquesas for future research and social bonding. I am now called back into the lifelong sequence of socio-cultural exchange and movement to and from the Marquesas Islands.

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## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX A — TATTOOING IMAGES AND SYMBOLS



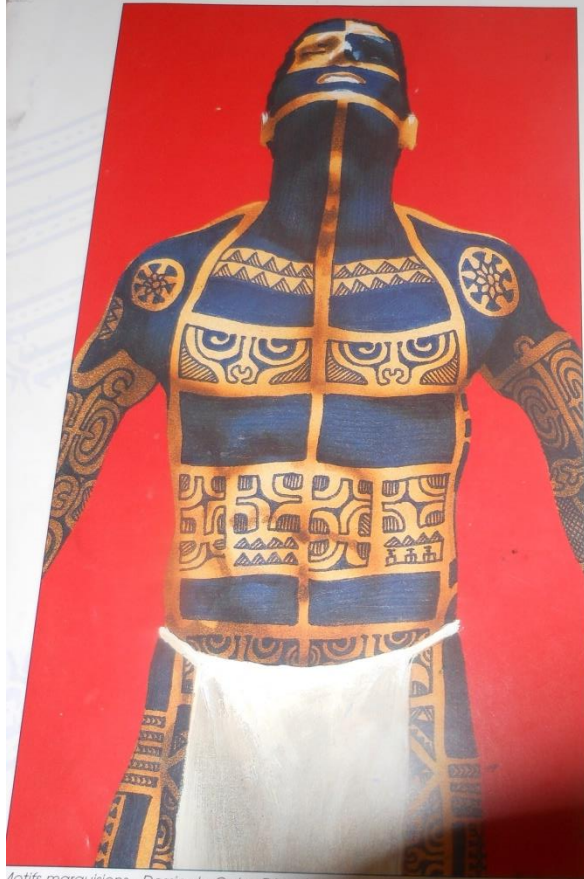
Figure 5, My original chest tattoo.



Figure 6. Completed chest tattoo.



## Les îles Marquises



Motifs marquisiens - Dessin de Gotz - D'après Karl Von Derrmann.

A. GRANER 1819

Il existe un certain nombre de fêtes auxquelles ne sont admises que les personnes tatouées d'une manière particulière. Je fus témoin moi-même de l'une d'entre-elles durant mon séjour dans l'île. Ceux qui étaient admis à prendre part à cette fête, dont j'ai parlé, et à partager le cochon rôti, étaient tous tatoués d'un solide anneau autour de l'œil gauche.

### Les hommes

La spirale autour des yeux est caractéristique des guerriers de l'ancien temps.

Les spirales kakoata sur les joues et les hanches étaient réservées aux chefs, tout comme les minuscules points à l'intérieur de la cheville gauche.

Les tatouages faciaux indiquaient une appartenance tribale.

Le paheke était caractéristique de Nuku Hiva ; deux bandes horizontales étaient la marque de Hiva Oa ; une bande centrale horizontale couvrant les narines était typique de Fatu Hiva.

Tricia Allen d'après W. Handy

Une grande quantité de tatouages faciaux ont été répertoriés. En voici quelques exemples.



Figure 7. Historical Marquesan tattoo images



Figure 8. The Hakatoa household mural.