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Making Multiple Skins

Tattooing and Identity Formation in French Polynesia

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Except where otherwise indicated, I certify that the thesis is my own original work.

Makiko Kuwahara

4 April 2003
Preface

Do you have a tattoo? Have you got a tattoo in Tahiti?

These are questions that I have been asked so many times since I started studying tattooing. Does it matter if I have got a tattoo or not? Why do so many people ask me these questions? Why do people rarely ask me whether I have ever made tattoos on people? These questions have made me nervous and annoyed; they have also made me laugh.

In 1996 I finished a MLitt thesis on Tahitian tattooing from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. That led me to research on contemporary tattooing. I conducted fieldwork in Tahiti from December 1998 to July 2000 (including three months in the northern Marquesas), and spent a further month in July 2001. My daily schedule was visiting three or four tattoo stands and salon in Papeete and its suburbs. When there were festivals and exhibitions and the tattooists whom I normally worked with had a stand there, I went with them. I interviewed formally and informally the tattooists, their clients, and friends; photographed the tattoos and people; filmed the process of tattooing; and helped tourist clients who did not speak French (I used mostly French during the fieldwork and I had to understand Tahitian in some occasions). When the tattooists who mostly worked at home and outside had an appointment, I travelled to more remote districts with them.

Even before I left for the fieldwork, I was anticipated that I would spend most of my time with tattooists and tattooed people, and I have always been traumatized by not being tattooed. Some people said to me that I would never understand tattooing unless I get tattooed. Other people said to me that I would never get into the tattoo community without a tattoo on my body. I agree with both. I would never fully understand tattooing and I would never belong to the tattoo community.

These suggestions, however, reveal prevailing assumptions on tattooing. Tattooing is physical, personal experience. The pain or joy of getting tattooed can never be understood without actually experiencing the insertion of needle on your body. Social freedom or constraint by having tattoos can never be experienced without actually possessing a permanent mark on the body. These experiential aspects make tattooing a ritual and establish a strong affinity, including those who have tattoos and excluding those who do not.
Doing anthropology is experiencing cross-cultural dislocation of the self. I dislocated myself from Japan where tattooing has a deep social, moral connotation, to Tahiti where I was immersed in *tiki designs, encre de chine*, the sound of tattoo machine, and oozing blood.

Many of my Japanese friends advised me that I should not get tattooed because “tattoo is stuff for Yakuza”. “If you have tattoos,” they said to me, “you cannot go to public bath and swim in public pool, and you would never get married with a ‘normal’ Japanese man.”

During my fieldwork, Tahitian tattooists were continuously persuading me that I should get tattooed. Watching tattooing and hanging around with the tattooed people everyday, I started wondering why I did not have tattoos and really wanted to get one. I even felt guilty and considered it betrayal because I had not got any tattoo on myself although I said their work was beautiful and I admired it. If I were a friend of tattooists and admired their works, I must have a tattoo from them.

The fact that I felt guilty for Japanese friends and family by getting tattooed and for Tahitian tattooists by not getting tattooed shows the nature of tattooing which intervenes the relationships. Whether my body is tattooed or not does matter both of parties. Tattooed or unmarked body determines my relationships with Japanese friends and family and Tahitian tattooists. Indeed, my parents and friends would never change attitude toward me although I would be tattooed. Tahitian tattooists never get angry by my not being tattooed nor kick me out of their work places but simply tease me that I must be scared of pain.

Tattooing is embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of each society. It locates oneself in the society and forms the relationships accordingly. Neither being tattooed or not is social obligation in Tahiti and Japan. The choice of being tattooed or not is to make a statement of who you are and whom you are living with and for. Thus, being tattooed or not is writing one’s relationships on the body.

Dislocated from both Japan and Tahiti, now I am in Canberra where I relate myself with anthropologists who make me to write about the relationships on paper rather than on the body.
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Abstract

This thesis examines how people situate themselves in the world, physically and ideologically through manipulating the body. Acknowledging that the body is constructed socially and culturally, it analyses tattooing of contemporary Tahiti in French Polynesia, on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork.

Tahitian tattooing was embedded in a social and cosmological system in the pre/early contact period, and it had been transformed through interaction with Europeans and Christianization. Since it was abandoned due to missionaries’ suppression in the 1830s, there was an undeniable absence of tattooing in Tahitian history until its revival in the 1980s. The socio-cultural implications of tattooing in the pre-/early contact period were displaced by those of youth culture, globalization, modernization, and prison culture. The thesis examines this discontinuous nature of Tahitian tattooing which is different from other Polynesian tattooing such as Samoan, and its impact on the contemporary revival. It also aims to address the issues of corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and ideology of tattooing.

The thesis explores the formation of identities and social relationships, through examining the mobility and confinement of people, object, practice, and knowledge, in the context of taure'are'a (adolescent) culture, exchange between Tahitian and non-Tahitian tattooists, geo-politics within French Polynesia and in the Pacific, and the prison culture. It also investigates the concept of sequence of time, by analysing the significance of “the past”, “tradition”, and “ancient” in the discourse of tattooing on the process of constructing adolescent masculinity, and that of the cultural and ethnic identities; and also the concept of the past, present, and future in the discourse of art festivals and in the prisoners’ contemplation.

The thesis shows that tattooing is an embodiment and representation of identities and social relationships resulting from objectification of their own body, and others, in a shared time and space, and it is also a way of making discontinuous history continuous, and secluded and disconnected places interconnected.
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6.4 After modification. (Photo: Makiko Kuwahara)
**Introduction**

This thesis examines how people situate themselves in the world, physically and ideologically. It works from the broad understanding that the body is constructed socially and culturally. What this means depends of course on specific social and cultural contexts. The thesis analyses one such context, that of contemporary Tahiti in French Polynesia, on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork. Though Tahitians have various ways of manipulating their bodies, I examine tattooing, which is singularly powerful because it is permanent. When ink is inserted into the skin, an indelible mark is made on the body that stays with the person for as long as they remain alive.

Previous studies have been concerned, as this is, with Polynesian tattooing and the relationship between society and the individual body. Alfred Gell’s comparative study, *Wrapping in Images* (1993) was a pioneering investigation of the complex relationships between tattooing, stratification, and political power. It dealt with the traditional and early contact period. This social context is fundamentally different in many ways to that of today. There have been a number of studies of recent tattooing in Tahiti (Lavondes 1990; Stevenson 1990, 1992, and 1999). They have focussed mostly on the reinvention of tradition and ethnic identity. Though these themes are addressed in this thesis, I am concerned with key aspects of tattooing that have not featured significantly in previous studies. These are first, the discontinuous nature of Tahitian tattoo history and the impact of that discontinuity on present understandings and practices, and second, the defining importance of the spatiality and temporality of tattooing.

The historical discontinuity is one of the significant features of Tahitian tattooing, which is differentiated from other Polynesian practices such as Samoan. Tahitian tattooing was abandoned due to missionaries’ suppression in the 1830s. It revived in the 1980s as a part of a cultural revitalization movement, but tattooing in the pre- and early contact period was lost after long absence and displaced by the practice, which is extensively implicated in youth culture, gender relationships, cultural revitalization, modernity, and prison culture. The values and meanings of tattooing are often conflicting in these heterogenous contexts, but these conflicts have induced the transformation of Tahitian tattooing into another dimension.

This study of discontinuous tattoo history is concerned with the temporality and spatiality of tattooing. I consider that the definition and conceptualisation of “society” and “culture” are complicately articulated in terms of time and space. In other words,
“society” and “culture” are constituted by bordering the space and ordering historical time. The thesis studies contemporary Tahitian tattooing, but contemporary Tahitian tattooing cannot be separated from the practices in other times and places. It has been practiced over time (although discontinuously) in Tahitian history and is strongly interrelated with tattooing elsewhere in the world. Thus, the study needs to be historically situated although it is primarily concerned with the contemporary practice, and from both local and global perspectives although it is about “Tahitian” tattooing. Time and place characterize not only the technical and formal aspects of tattooing, but also the contexts in which tattooing is practiced. By problematizing the extended temporal and spatial scope of “contemporary Tahitian tattooing”, the thesis attempts to elicit how Tahitians conceptualise time and space, and how they situate the time and place in which they are living in enduring history and borderless space.

The thesis also discusses the question of the corporeality of tattooing. The body is a basis to identify ourselves as different from the other and a medium to relate ourselves to the other. We form personal and social identities and establish social relationships through the body. Furthermore, the manipulation of the body such as tattooing can be considered as the active practice with which people engage in this self-identification and positioning in their relationships with the other. Yet, it remains unclear how the body becomes the domain where the identities are inscribed and the interface where social relationships are developed. The thesis explores the issues of identity and relationality by interrogating what is the meaning of the body in tattooing? Why do people mark on the body? What is the consequence of this marking? What is the relationship between the body, the self, and the society? Do people get tattooed simply of their own free will, or beyond it?

As tattooing is practiced beyond different times and places, it is often charged with different ideologies. In other words, people’s beliefs, often particular to a certain place and time, are reflected in their judgement and attitude toward tattooing, according to the treatment of the body of a certain belief system such as cosmology, religion, aesthetics, political regime and so forth. This involves conflict resulting from power inequality according to different periods of history, but modernity, which has affected Tahitians over past decades, has induced the coexistence of various ideologies and put people in a position to make their own judgement. Through studying tattooing which is the bearers’ active modification of the body, the thesis focuses on Tahitian agency and engagement in social transformation by modernization and globalization.
The Corporeality of Tattooing

Adopting and developing the phenomenological approaches of Husserl (1989) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), which are out of historical and social contexts, Foucault (1973, 1978, and 1979) and Bourdieu (1977) demonstrate that the body is socially and historically constructed. For Foucault, the body is a “direct locus of social control” (Bordo 1989:13). The institutional power such as those of political regimes, hospitals, prisons, schools, and religious organizations, disciplines and configures both the appearance and practice of the individual body. While Foucault focuses on discontinuity and shift, Bourdieu is more interested in the continuity and persistence of bodily practice which is constructed by the “habitus” – the social structures of each society.

Following these thinkers, recent debate in feminist theory focuses on the difference between gender and sex. Both Butler (1989, 1990 and 1993) and Bordo (1993) also consider that the body is socially constructed. Rejecting the idea that gender is socially constructed and sex is biologically determined, Butler argues that both sex and gender are socially constructed because the body is always already within “a historically specific discourse of meaning” (Butler 1989: 254). Bordo challenges Butler’s post-modern feminism by insisting the significance of the materiality of the body. She argues that the discourse of “natural, biological body” exists although the debate begins with the presupposition of “the constructed body”.

The body that I explore in this thesis is also the socially constructed body. The tattooed body is not a natural body because tattooing is a posterior inscription on the body by people’s hands. I consider that this aspect of tattooing as an “inscription” or “writing” is significant in terms of identity formation. In her chapter “Inscriptions and body-maps: representations and the corporeal”, Grosz (1990) explores the metaphor of corporeal inscription, which treats the body as something on which messages are written or inscribed. Grosz states that “the ‘messages’ or ‘texts’ produced by such procedures construct bodies as networks of social signification, meaningful and functional ‘subjects’ within assemblages composed with other subjects” (ibid.: 62-63).

Body inscription, which is voluntarily undergone, is to make the body into a socially conceived kind of body such as “pagan, primitive, medieval capitalist, Italian, American, Australian” (ibid. 65). Grosz explains further:

the subject is named by being tagged or branded on its surface, creating a particular kind of ‘depth-body’ or interiority, a psychic layer of the subject identifies as its (disembodied) core. Subjects thus produced are not simply the imposed results of alien, coercive forces; the body is internally lived, experienced and acted upon by the subject and the social collectivity. (ibid.)
This delicate relationship between exteriority and interiority of the body plays a significant role in self-identification. Instead of separating interiority from exteriority and making superior either of them, Grosz suggests “becoming” and “transforming” which happen simultaneously both on the surface and “a psychic layer” of the subject.

If tattooing is a self-identification process of making the body into the body of “Tahitian”, “man”, “woman”, “prisoner”, “dancer”, “artisan”, and so forth, the question is whether tattooing creates a particular “gendered”, “ethnic”, “occupational” body, or emphasizes those characteristics that the body already has; how the message of inscription (such as this marking means “Tahitian”, and that means “dancer”, for example) is produced; how this meaning is shared by people; and how it is transformed. In answering these questions, this thesis reinvestigates Grosz’s point that inscription on the surface of the body creates the interiority of the individual and his/her identity.

**Tattooing and Identity Formation**

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

Identification involves classifying oneself according to pre-existing categories. Through identification, one includes oneself in a certain category, and at the same time excludes others from the category. Thus, the relationships of identification are concerned with inclusion and exclusion. For instance, if one person identifies herself as “female” and “Tahitian”, she includes herself in the collective category of “female” and excludes herself from “male” and “liminal gender”, and includes herself in “Tahitian” and excludes herself from the other ethnic and cultural categories. Tattooing plays a significant role in this identification; Caplan notes that “the tattoo occupies a kind of boundary status on the skin, and this is paralleled by its cultural use as a marker of difference, an index of inclusion and exclusion” (2000: xiv). The categories are never static and fixed, and are created and changed through identification.

Categorization is often problematic, because it is determined by power inequality and subject to stereotyping and essentialization. It has power to include or exclude forcibly those who have not yet been categorized. The complexity about the category...
emerges firstly when the person refuses to be categorized, although possessing the "natures" to be categorized into the pre-existing category(ies), and secondly when s/he desires to be categorized into the category(ies) although having no nature to be categorized into the category. The repetitive use of the categories is a process of affirmation, of essentialization and stereotyping. Yet, while acknowledging these characteristics of categorization, it is important to analyse the categories which are discussed in this thesis such as ethnicity, gender, and age, in order to unpack the intricacy and contingency of identification.

a) Ethnicity- Ma’ohi, Tahitian, and Polynesian

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

The cultural/ethnic identities in Tahiti are expressed with categories: “Ma’ohi”, “Tahitian”, and “Polynesian”. ¹ They all mean indigene to Tahiti, and are concerned with place. The categories: “Ma’ohi”, “Tahitian”, and “Polynesian” indicate indigenous affiliation to land, connection to ancestors, knowledge of the past, and belonging to place. As “Tahitian”, “Polynesian”, and “Ma’ohi” are geographical references, ethnic and cultural identities are articulated with regard to a reassertion of the indigenous right over their land as well as power and knowledge associated with land under the neo-colonial condition.² The name of places is also implicated in the political history because they indicate how indigenous people considered their places as well as how international recognition of them has been changed.

The terms indicate not only those who are categorized into “Tahitian”, “Polynesian”, and “Ma’ohi”, but also “non-Tahitian”, “non-Polynesian”, and “non-
Ma’ohi”, which are counter components of a relational matrix. Gender and occupational identities are also interwoven into national and indigenous identities.  

Cultural and ethnic identity is not something that all people automatically possess because they are indigenes. With ethnic intricacies, people in French Polynesia have different recognition of and hold different attitudes toward cultural identities. They are differently located within *le culture ma’ohi* or react upon colonial stereotypes.

“Polynesian”, *porinetia* in Tahitian and *polynésien/polynésienne* in French, is the most widely used term, referring to indigenous people in five archipelagos of French Polynesia. 4 “Polynesian” refers, at the same time, to people who are from other islands in the Pacific such as Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii, New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Easter Island.

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

The term “Ma’ohi” is conceptualized with a metaphor of plant. “Ma” signifies “pure”, “right”, and “dignified”. “‘Ohi” signifies “offspring”, “offshoot”, which is “qui a déjà ses racines lui assurant une certaine autonomie de vie, tandis qu’il est toujours relié à la tige-mère”. 5 Tahitian linguist, Turo Raapoto states:

I am *Maohi*. It’s the program of my life. Trees, plants in general, play an important role in the life of the Polynesian, as medicine, a source of food, but also as a projection of oneself. It is thus that the foreigner, that is to say he who has not right to the land in the island in

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3 Michel Raapoto whom I introduce in the latter chapters, for instance, is a Tahitian as well as a man and a tattooist. He is all of three, and cannot be merely a Tahitian, a man, or a tattooist.

4 Five archipelagos of French Polynesia are the Society, the Tuamotu, the Marquesas, the Australs, and the Gambier.

5 “Those have already their roots, assuring certain autonomy of life, while it always links with mother-trunk” (my translation). “ma – propre, pur, clair, exempt de souillure et de pollution; ohi – rejet, seigneur de bannanier, etc…” (Tevane 2000).
which he appears, is called *hutu painu* (drifting fruit of the barringtonia). The fruit of this tree, carried away by the waters, is at the mercy of the waves, trying to take root on the first sand-bank it meets. Its main characteristic is its great resistance to sea water, and normally it’s on the coast that it will drive down its roots. (1988: 4)

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

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

“Tahitian” originally refers to the indigenes who are from and living on the island of Tahiti. It is a term to distinguish people on the island of Tahiti from other “Polynesians” within a territory. Besides the role of intra-indigenous identification, “Tahitian” possesses a colonial and neo-colonial stereotypical image. Since Captain Wallis arrived in Tahiti in 1767, indigenous people on the island and their customs have been observed and documented by European explorers, artists, beachcombers, missionaries, traders, tourists, and anthropologists. As the observers had different ideological backgrounds and intentions, the ways that indigenous people were perceived and represented were manifold and accordingly so were the images of them that resulted from these perceptions and representations. “Tahitian” stereotypes have emerged from this multiplicity of interpretations, and become powerful images in tourism and the media. As Raapoto continues:

They call me Tahitian, but I refuse this. I am not Tahitian. This denomination has an essentially demagogic, touristic, snobbish and rubbish vocation. “Tahitian” is the *pareu* shirt whose material is printed in Lyon or in Japan; it’s the Marquesan *tiki* called Tahitian as well as the *tapa* of Tonga, Uvea, or Samoa sold in Papeete under the Tahitian label, and which any foreigner is proud to exhibit in his apartment, somewhere in Europe, in the anonymity of a neighbourhood in France, Germany or elsewhere, to prove to whoever is

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6 In this thesis, I use this term simply to refer to people on the island of Tahiti. When I mean the term implying colonial stereotype, I bracket the term like “Tahitian”.
willing to believe it that he’s been to Tahiti. Tahiti is an exotic product made by the Western World for the consumption of their fellow-countrymen. (1988:3)

For Raapoto, “Tahitian” is used in the commodification of his islands and people. Many “Tahitians”, however, use this commodified image strategically in the tourism industry. The gender difference is captured in the term “Tahitian” in the same way as the colonial stereotype. Yet, “Tahitian” tends to be applied to women and those of feminine qualities and emphasizes accessibility of them for the West.

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

b) Gender – Vahine, Tane, Mahu

Gender identity is formed by and represented in a distinctive physicality, behaviour, characteristic, and social role in Tahiti. Physicality is significant as a representation and embodiment of gender identity, but varies even within one gender (man, woman, liminal gender). The stereotypical young vahine, woman, is represented as “exotic” by Western people, but is also considered as an ideal figure by Tahitians. They have long black hair, slender body, light brown skin, and a gentle smile. Yet, many Tahitian women are stout, which is also valued as a sign of a hard worker and good for bearing children. Women tend to gain weight as they become older and their big body represents a dignified appearance and position both in the household and public. The ideal physical appearance of tane is tall, tanned, tattooed, fit, and muscular. Most of these features are reflected in the life style and their activities (I discuss this in detail in Chapter Three), but there are also variations. The liminal gender is differentiated according to their sexual orientation, conduct, and physical appearance.7 Mahu are effeminate, who are often responsible for domestic works and spend most of their time with female family and friends. Raerae are transvestites, dressing in clothes which are usually considered women’s. In Papeete, raerare are considered to be transvestite prostitutes standing along the street near Papeete Town Hall in the evening. Pédé derives from the French word

7 See Besnier’s work (1996) for more detailed analysis of Polynesian liminal gender.
"pédéraste" who practice homosexual activity. They do not necessarily behave and represent themselves like women as *mahu* and *raerae* do.

The social roles of each gender, particularly woman’s role in politics, in both pre-early contact and contemporary contexts have been the object of anthropological study. For instance, *tapu/inoa* (sacred/secular) in gender relationships, which is analysed in Chapter One, has been discussed by a number of writers. Hanson (1982) re-examines the equation of “female = pollution” which was overwhelming in the study of Melanesian and Polynesian gender relationships.\(^8\) He claims that females were dangerous not because they were polluted, but because they were too sacred; their orifices, especially the vagina, connected the secular domain of *ao* and the sacred domain of *po*.\(^9\) Women had a destructive potency for men because the male *tapu* were absorbed into *po* through the vagina (Driessen 1991; Gunson 1987; Hanson 1982; Ralston 1987; Thomas 1987). The prevailing idea that women were polluting because of their menstrual blood is misleading. It is more likely that menstrual blood was well recognized as having a connection with the reproductive function.

Today, each woman and man has a distinctive social and domestic role in Tahiti. At the domestic level, men occupy themselves with physical work such as fishing, constructing the house, and hunting, while women and *mahu* are responsible for cooking, minding children, cleaning, and washing. These differentiations of the role are, however, unfixed, especially in the urban household where both husband and wife are working outside. The increasing numbers of *mahu* do not stay at home any longer, but achieve high education and positions in employment. Women and liminal gender people are active both in public and domestic areas, and often occupy positions of making decisions, establishing networks, and being representatives of political and cultural Associations.

Due to social change by neo-colonization and modernization, women, men, and people of liminal gender began sharing similar social and domestic roles in urban areas of French Polynesia. However, physical differences continue to be distinctively marked between different genders. I consider that tattooing is one of those practices which mark these gender differences on the body. This thesis attempts to answer why physicality is

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\(^8\) For instance, if the *amo’a* rite is interpreted in the repellent thesis, "it is contamination, defiling to both humans and gods, arising from the presence of female blood and the prominent role of female genitalia in parturition" (Hanson 1982: 366). On the other hand, in the affinity thesis, "a surplus of godly influence which accompanies the passage, via the female, of an embodied spirit from the divine to the human realm" (ibid.).

\(^9\) See more discussion of *ao/po* and *tapu/inoa* in Chapter One.
important in establishing and representing gender identity, and how the physical differences of the gendered body are related to the social role of each gender.

While recent historical and ethnographical works (D’Alleva 1997; Elliston 1997 and 2000; Jones 1992; Langevin 1990; Lockwood 1988 and 1993) explore woman’s role in family, society, politics, and art production, there are less studies on Tahitian men and masculinity. As tattooists and most tattooed people are men, this thesis focuses on the identity of men and their embodiment of gender identity.

c) Age – Taure’are’a

Anthropological literature (Gennep 1977; Malinowski 1987[1929]; Mead 1928; Turner 1969) regards adolescence as a period of life in which young people are integrating into the adult community, and those who have gone through this stage are socially recognized as being ready to take an adult role such as marrying, bearing children, and so forth. This approach, however, obscures young people’s cultural agency (Bucholz 2002). Sociology and cultural studies alternatively have approached youth culture from the aspects of deviant subcultures (in the case of American cultural studies) and class-based sites of resistance (in the case of British cultural studies). More recent anthropological works on young people discuss local engagements of young people in the cultural transformation through modernity and globalisation.

Maturation was ritualised in Tahiti as in many islands in the Pacific in the pre-/early contact period. It was related to the social stratification on the basis of tapuinoa (sacred/secular). The infants were considered as tapu (sacred) and they needed to remove the sacredness by having different stages of maturation rites, which was called amo’a, removal rite. The children reduced their tapu by performing amo’a (removal) rites on the process of maturation. Both male and female children who had been secluded because of their tapu became deconsecrated by proceeding with amo’a, and were incorporated into broader and more elaborate social relationships.

Tattooing was associated with maturation and practiced as a part of the initiation ceremony. Tattoos were an indicator of maturation and a person’s availability for

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10 I consider, however, that the study of women indirectly examines men and liminal gender, and that of men does women and liminal gender.

11 I was informed that there were a Portuguese woman tattooist working in Bora Bora and a Tahitian woman, a tattooist’s daughter, learning/trying out tattooing during my fieldwork, but I did not meet and hear of any woman Tahitian tattooist working full-time. There is the division of artisan activities between different genders (see Chapter Three), and tattooing is considered as men’s activity. However, as I explain later in this thesis, The Tahitian tattoo world has been enormously influenced by global tattooing, which includes many woman tattooists, so it might be possible in future that woman Tahitian tattooists would be working in Tahiti.
procreation. Tattoos on the arm were tokens to show that children had gone through amo’a, so they were allowed to participate in social activities. Moreover, the adolescents had tattoos on their buttocks, which were not only associated with rites of passage, but also had the function of demonstrating availability for sexual access and fertility.

In contemporary Tahiti, tattooing no longer marks maturation. Those who are tattooed neither perform amo’a nor get a tattoo on the arm to prove maturity. Tattooing is not a practice that is restricted to young people, but people of any age get tattooed in Tahiti. I argue, however, that contemporary Tahitian tattooing has been developed by young people, and is consequently related to youth culture in Tahiti.

The adolescence called taure’are’a in Tahitian, as I demonstrate later in this thesis, is not only the stage of life at which people are too immature to belong to adult relationships, but also the time when taure’are’a establish strong solidarity among the same age groups. Karkpatrick (1987), Langevin (1990), and Martini (1996) analyse the Marquesan and Tahitian taure’are’a, and show how adolescence established a social role in both public and private areas by passing the processes of maturation. This solidarity often requires marking such as tattooing, showing that they belong to the same group and differentiate themselves from the other.

As taure’are’a is a transient period, the identity of taure’are’a is unfixed and transforming as Bucholtz states:

Youth foregrounds age not as trajectory, but as identity, where identity is intended to invoke neither the familiar psychological formulation of adolescence as a prolonged “search for identity,” nor the rigid and essentialized concept that has been the target of a great deal of recent critique. Rather, identity is agentive, flexible, and ever-changing – but no more for youth than for people of any age. (2002: 532)

Tattooing opposes to this nature of identification as it is a way to inscribe an unchanged mark on the body and stabilize oneself. Tattooing is not the practice for integrating young people into the adult social networks, but for forming and extending the network of taure’are’a. By examining this solidarity formation of taure’are’a, I attempt to analyse the reasons that young Tahitians mark an indelible mark on the body when they are at the unfixed stage of their lives.

12 I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Three.
13 Many professional tattooists refuse to tattoo people under eighteen years old without their parent’s consent. Hand-pricking and remodelled razor tattooing on the streets are often practiced among those are younger than that.
Ideology and the Body

The next issue which is examined in this thesis is the dialogue between the individual and society acting on the body. As Foucault shows with his studies of prison and hospital (1973 and 1979), society constrains and controls the body, and the criminal, psychiatric, and gendered bodies are socially historically constructed. I also consider that the tattooed body is to some extent embedded in the social meaning system. If you are tattooed, you are embedded in the social system which reads “the tattooed body” in a particular way. I argue, however, that there is individual agency in this social construction and transformation. Although he is concerned with European and American cases, I suggest that Featherstone’s points on the characteristic of body modification as “the sense of taking control over one’s body, of making a gesture against the body natural and the tyranny of habitus formation” (Featherstone 2000: 2) can be applied to contemporary Tahitian tattooing.

There are two levels of involvement of individual agency in tattooing. First, body modification, including tattooing, is an active practice of individual agency. Except in a few instances, it is the tattooee who decides to be tattooed. Even if tattooing is embedded in the social system, it is that person who decides to engage with this system (even sometimes in a rebellious way). Secondly, whether one actually practices body modification or not, people are actively involved in the construction and transformation of social systems through making assessments on tattooing and tattoos. I suggest that there are two assessments, aesthetic and moral ones that are implicated in the study of tattooing.

First, aesthetic assessment is to make a judgment on whether a particular representation is appealing or not. The term “aesthetic” is often problematic when it is applied to the study of non-Western art because it is “a rubric term with no simple, universally acceptable, definition” (Morphy 1992: 181). By showing that bir 'yun, “brilliance” is a key element which makes the Yolngu art effective, Morphy defines aesthetics as “concerned with how something appeals to the senses” (ibid.) I also argue that the aesthetics of tattoos is indeed often expressed with “c’est beau” and “c’est top”, but it cannot be simply reduced to “beauty”. There is often inconsistency and slippage of meaning among different stages of assessment. I propose three stages of aesthetic assessment made on tattoos: 1) whether the tattooed body is appealing or not; 2) whether a particular design/motif/form/style is appealing or not; and 3) whether technique (outlining, filling, colouring or shading) is appealing or not. Aesthetic assessment of tattoos is concerned with the state of the body, of the self and others, and
is often grounded in one's education, occupation, gender, age, and class. Thus, it situates oneself in a particular location in the society. However, there are some aesthetic natures which are effective beyond these background and cultural differences.

Second, moral assessment is to make a judgment whether particular behaviour is right or not. Like "aesthetic" "morality" is a term which invokes various implications in the different contexts, but I use it as "individual and social acceptability and unacceptability of certain behaviour". While aesthetic assessment is made on representation, moral assessment is made on action and behaviour. It assesses "tattooing", but not "tattoos". Moral assessment of tattooing is made by interrogating: 1) whether tattooing is right behaviour or not; 2) whether tattooing a particular design/motif/form/style is problematic or not; 3) whether tattooing on a particular part of the body is right or not. Moral assessment of tattooing is concerned with treatment of the body, of the self and others.

Each society has dominant aesthetic and moral assessments. These assessments, on the one hand, provide us with regulations to rely on and, on the other hand, they constrain us. Moreover, we can be free by suppressing or going beyond these assessments. The socially dominant assessments are references that cover a wide range of conditions in our life, but not completely. When we face the conditions that the dominant assessments do not or only partially apply, we have to make assessments based on our personal sense of responsibility. In forming relationships and social identity, Tahitian individuals choose how they act and what they value by making reference to the broader social ideology. Power relationships between individual and the dominant social assessments, therefore, locate individuals in the social and cultural inequalities. We also make assessments that are intentionally different from socially dominant ones.

Moral and aesthetic assessments are beliefs. To believe that what we are doing is right and what we have done is appealing, is to have confidence in who we are, and how and what we live for. Belief protects us from being threatened in the face of different others and different value systems, but does not completely exclude ourselves from them. On the contrary, belief is negotiable. We can either reject or accept different assessments, and whether ours are rejected or accepted is determined by our relationships with people. When relationships are of primary concern, they override what you had believed, so you believe in others' assessments more than your own in a process of acceptance or negotiation for co-existence. Bauman ponders on morality as follows:
We are, so to speak, ineluctably – existentially – moral beings: that is, we are faced with the challenge of the Other, which is the challenge of responsibility for the Other, a condition of being-for. Rather than being an outcome of social arrangement and personal training, this 'responsibility for' frames the primal scene from which social arrangements and personal instruction start, to which they refer and which they attempt to reframe and administer. (Bauman 1995: 1)

We have been learning social arrangements in general as reference, but we cannot escape ourselves from facing the ambivalence, in Bauman’s term, of the moral condition. General social arrangements are references, which cover various conditions, but not all of them. Those who are living with people and in conditions where these social arrangements are not at all or only partially applied, have to make moral decisions using their responsibility. The moral decisions would be applied to their relations with people in the society, in the community, or in the group. The most important for us is the actual need to know how to be for the others whom we are living with. Moral choice or assessment is in this sense an on-going process of dealing with relationships with others.

In terms of Tahitian assessments, power inequalities need to be considered in the colonial and globalizing contexts as well as in politics with other islands in the Pacific which Tahitians are facing now. While situations differ historically, power relationships of socially dominant ideologies consequently locate individuals in the social and cultural inequalities and affect the value of tattooing.

**Ideological Shifts of Tahitian Tattoo History**

The Tahitian body is treated in various ways according to the different periods in Tahitian history. I analyse each in detail later in the thesis, but here I simply point out there are three distinctive ideological periods that treated the body differently in Tahitian history. Tahitians have been constrained in their physical and mental activities by the main ideology in each period, but their expected behaviour has also varied according to gender, age, class, and ethnic differences, and social situation.

The first period is the pre-/ early contact period when Tahitian cosmology and *tapu* system differentiated gender, age, and class according to the level of *tapu* (sacredness) of the body. Tattooing was a way to manipulate different levels of *tapu* and relate to people of different gender, age, and class. Moral assessment constrained the bodily practice and established the ideal image of each body.

The ideological shift in terms of treatment of the body took place when Tahitians started converting to Christianity. Christianity taught that the body should not be
modified such as being cut, inscribed, and tattooed: it should be kept as it is created by God. Social hierarchy based on the genealogical closeness to Tahitian gods was displaced by a new colonial regime. Law founded by missionaries and Tahitian aristocrats prohibited Tahitians from being tattooed and imposed a "civilized" body on them.

The third shift was brought with the introduction of modernity to Tahiti. This is the period on which the thesis focuses. After Christianity had more fully permeated Tahitian religious beliefs, evangelical churches did not totally impose negative values on tattooing, but Tahitians more or less voluntarily stopped tattooing. In the 1970s, Euro-American designs started being tattooed on the street and in the prison. Many Tahitians associated these tattoos with criminals and prostitutes. In the 1980s, however, tattooing became a cultural emblem expressing "Tahitian", "Marquesan" or "Ma'ohi" identity and became acknowledged as a way to decorate the body. Consequently, tattooing has become an aspiration for prison inmates, both the tattooed and tattooists, as it connects them to the outside world where tattooing is considered "cultural" practice.

Facing colonization and globalization, Tahitians have been put into the situation where they have to make moral choices for co-existing with the colonizers or non-Tahitian others who do not have the same social arrangement or only partially share it. This thesis aims to elicit to what extent Tahitians are bound to their assessments and to what extent they can negotiate their assessments with those of others. Moral and aesthetic assessments are an on-going process of relating to others.

The Temporality of Tattooing

Acknowledging Tahitian engagement with these ideological shifts, in this section I outline some significant issues of the temporality of tattooing and how people conceive the sequence of events through tattooing. Tattooed people often compare the state of the body and relationships before and after they are tattooed. They compare how they change or how people around them change attitudes to him/her "after" they are tattooed. Tattooing for initiation also had the notion of "before/after". "Before" getting tattooed the person was a boy and became a man "after" being tattooed. Tattooing is an event that marks the dramatic physical and psychological change in one's life between "before" and "after".

In other discourse, tattooing has been conceptualized in terms of the past, present, and future. One of the distinguishing features of tattooing, different from other body decoration such as clothing, make-up, or body painting, is its indelibility as a mark on
the body. Once inscribed into the skin, the tattoo will remain on the body for the rest of one’s life. Many people tattoo to remember and to carry the memory on their own body. Emotion in a certain moment is captured as a tattoo on the body. In this sense, tattooing is a desire for stabilization and configuration of the self in a certain moment of time. It deals with the past, memory, and souvenir. Remembering is considered as mental practice, using the brain and mind, but we also often use various other ways such as writing, photographing, filming, painting, singing, and narrating to capture the past. Tattooing is another way of remembering.

Tattooing marks the personal and collective past on the body. In terms of the personal, tattoo captures a certain moment of the person’s life, which can be a particular moment or a period of time when one has a strong feeling of happiness, sadness, anger, and so on. Tattooed people remember the feeling, event, people, place, and object that are captured by marking on the body through looking at the tattoo. Tattoo is a biography and history of the person. It represents what the person did, what s/he is doing, and what s/he is going to do.

The collective history consists of numbers of personal histories, but in the context of tattooing, Tahitians often refer to their ancestral past. They share the tattoo design and motif, and pain of tattooing with their ancestor. Time is not necessarily continuous nor has the same velocity in the history of tattooing. Tattooing is a way to appropriate the past in the present. It is also a method to relate oneself (Tahitian) to Western colonial history as well as their Tahitian history, and to make one’s personal history a part of these collective histories. By tattooing collective history on the body, the individual appropriates it into his/her own history.

As Tahitian tattoo history is discontinuous, this thesis examines how Tahitian memory of tattooing re-emerges in the contemporary practices and tattoo forms, and in what ways the revived Tahitian tattooing has been transformed or remains unchanged. The collective history tattooed on the body is in this sense not only the pre-European contact history, but also the colonial and neo-colonial Tahitian history.

I have been discussing the past-ness of tattooing, but the past is not the only time tattooing is concerned with. The past is always conceived in the present and has value in relation with the future. It cannot be cut off from the flow of time. It is not totally fixed, but rather re-assessed, transformed, and re-applied at different times. A tattoo also changes. It blurs and smudges in ten years or so as the skin grows and becomes old.

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14 In fact, some other body modifications such as scarification, branding, and foot-bounding are also permanent.
Sweetman (2000) points out that one of the significances of body modification is permanency. Tattooing is a way “to fix, or anchor one’s sense of self through the (relative) permanence of the modification thus acquired” (ibid.: 71). I consider this applies to contemporary Tahitian tattooing to some extent, but I also argue that tattoo is not a necessary fixed eternal mark. People are destined to go through different stages of life and feel nostalgia or regret over the past. Many have already been tattooed and are not satisfied with the old tattoos. People’s attitude toward the past also changes. The tattoo as a mark of the past can be covered up, modified, or erased, but the old design continuously remains underneath the new ones. Emotions are pacified, fortified, transformed into a different phase, or remain unchanged over time. Different techniques of tattooing and manipulation of the old tattoos attempt to fill the gap between what the tattooed people intend to do with their past, how they live in the present, and what they will make of their future.

Spatiality of Tattooing

The form and practice of tattooing are often considered as implicated in a place. They are invented in the place, belong to the place, and consolidated in the place. Thus, styles of tattooing are often distinguished one from another by the name of the place or ethnic group named after the place, such as “Tahitian tattooing”, “Samoan tattooing”, or “Japanese tattooing”. This affiliation with place is not only characteristic of tattooing, but also found in any cultural practice. A group of people, who live in a place that is geographically secluded by sea, mountain, river, forest, valley, and border, develop culture differently from neighbouring towns or villages because of this isolation.

Tahiti is an island, secluded from neighbouring islands by sea. As Polynesians have been great navigators and travelled extensively between neighbouring islands, they distinguish the differences between their island and neighbouring ones, and characterize people and culture by the unit of an island. The geographical confinement has been the basis for differentiating societies, cultures, and people.

This line of thought has been produced by both anthropologists and indigenous people. Appadurai (1988) criticizes anthropologists for having confined the people whom they study within a place. He points out the notion of “native” includes “not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places” (ibid.: 37). This derives from the juxtaposition of the mobility of anthropologists and the immobility of “native”. This idea of “native” is not only found in anthropological and ethnological discourse, but is
also common in colonial discourse as the colonialists from the West encountered, observed, and colonized the “native” who were bounded to the place.

Reflected in cultural revitalization movements and land rights issues, the indigenous claim for their place emphasizes their ancestral connection with the land. In a different way from the anthropologists that Appadurai indicates, the indigenous people do not confine themselves to the place, but rather move or are forced to move between places. The point of their claim resulted from this dislocation is that whether they immigrate, are exiled, displaced, taken away, or travel to the different places, they maintain a connection with the place where they are from, and are consequently attached to the ancestor, family, and culture in the place.

As a consequence of people’s movement, space itself has been transformed. Political, economic, and cultural powers act upon the space, and characterize the space as a site where the relations between tattooing, identity, and social relationships are intertwined. Making nations, for example, is another process of making space into place. As Kearney states, “The land surfaces of the earth are mostly divided into national territories” (1995: 548). Nationalism is bordering that distinguishes one place from another by political intention. These “imagined communities” in Anderson’s term (1983) extend their bordering power to cultural production.

Globalization of culture goes beyond this bordering of nationalism. Anthropologists who have concentrated on the study of localities need to take this into consideration. Kearney continues, “Globalization as used herein refers to social, economic, cultural, and demographic processes that take place within nations but also transcend them, such that attention limited to local processes, identities, and units of analysis yields incomplete understanding of the local” (ibid.).

Global tattooing exists in wide geographical areas. It is the system of compiling and exchanging knowledge of technical, conceptual, formal, and historical aspects of tattooing in geographically different places. The intention of the local tattooists to associate their practice of tattooing with ethnic/cultural identity formation is appreciated in the global tattoo world. This globalization has produced the new value of tattooing, which includes these cultural and ethnic issues.

The spatiality of Tahiti has been affected by nationalism and globalisation, which has been problematized by several writers such as Elliston (1997 and 2000) and Kahn (2000). They suggest considering space not only as a field site, but as a site that is constructed with multiple social factors, such as geo-politics, images, gender relations, and so forth. Space is no longer a definite stable entity under these studies, but the
conception and definition of it are fluid. The boundary is consistently re-conceptualized and re-defined. Place is not fixed and immobile, but a construction as its border and name are contingent in different political and economic contexts and in different periods of history. Thus, when tattooing is categorized by the names of place, it is burdened with all the implications of the category. Moreover, tattooing itself moves physically, conceptually, and digitally from one place to another.

Although holding internal autonomy, French Polynesia is a part of French overseas territory. The politics of the territory is, therefore, primarily concerned with its relationship with France, i.e., whether to remain an autonomous government within the French Republic or be independent. Furthermore, there is discord among five archipelagos of the territory on the issue of political structure. The Marquesas, for example, insists on independence from Tahiti (the Society), but remains within the French Republic. The tensions among different ethnicities: Polynesians, Chinese, French, and demi (half-descent) also affect the ways people establish and represent their identities.

In their article “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference”, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) propose anthropological inquiry for the emerging realities of the places whose boundaries are disappearing. The spatiality of tattooing also needs to be considered in the light of their argument. Their first point is concerned with people who “live a life of border crossings”, the movement of a culture beyond national boundaries. These are “migrant workers, nomads, and members of the transnational business and professional elite” and more permanently “immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates” (ibid.: 7). Tahitians now travel to the USA, New Zealand, France, Australia, and other islands of the Pacific, or emigrate to these countries. Tahitian tattooing is, therefore, located and practiced in different places in the world. It has been increasingly popular among Tahitian tattooists to participate in the international tattoo convention or undertake apprenticeship at tattoo salons in the USA or Europe.

The second point is about “cultural differences within a locality”, which in the case of tattooing is about the different tattooing practiced in Tahiti. Tahitian tattooists acquire the information about tattooing practiced outside Tahiti through interaction with tourists,

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

16 See Moulin’s work for more discussion. Marquesan refusal to be submerged in a Tahitian identity is not only political, but also cultural. Moulin notes that “the Societies and the Marquesas exhibit markedly dissimilar cultural features, to the point where language, religion, and culture have more often been barriers than bridges to communication and understanding” (1996: 131).
French military personnel, non-Tahitian tattooists, and tattooed people and journalists, or through television, films, magazines, books, and the internet. Now Tahitians tattoo with Euro-American, Japanese, tribal, and other Polynesian styles such as Maori New Zealand, Hawaiian, Samoan, and Marquesan. They often mix more than one different cultural style in one tattoo design.

The third point is the question of post-colonialism and the hybrid culture that resulted from it. As French Polynesia is an overseas territory of France, the study needs to be concerned with the cultural complex between Tahiti and France in the neo-colonial condition. Tahitian artisan culture such as pareu, tifaifai, himene, fibre plaits are hybrid with Christianity (Jones 1992). Tattooing has been mostly located in the opposition of Christianity, French culture, and the hybrid culture that came with them, but is still practiced as a part of artisan activities. The ideological dilemma and conflict of tattooing in this neo-colonial condition are also analysed in this thesis.

The fourth point is about social change and cultural transformation within interconnected spaces. Tahitian tattooing is in the process of transformation through dislocation of people, object, knowledge, and practice from one place to another. Tahitian tattooing is understood by both Tahitian and non-Tahitian people in comparison with other non-Tahitian tattooing as well as its location in global tattooing. The particularity of Tahitian-ness is constantly re-defined through this interconnection of spaces.

My approach to the spatiality of tattooing focuses on the tension between movement and confinement. In other words, it makes an inquiry into the complex and dynamic relationship between place and cultural/ethnic collective that has been emerging from the movement and confinement of people, (tattooists, tattooed people, and the other people) and knowledge, (tattoo design, style, motif, and practice) and also considers how the geo-politics of nation making affects the Tahitian practice of tattooing. Emphasizing the significance of “place bound-ness” in the indigenous discourse and calling for further analysis of the anthropological creation of “natives”, this thesis proposes to shift the analytical point from confinement to movement, and from stability to transformation.

I have been considering place as space that Tahitians live, fish, build houses, and that the government claims as a French overseas territory. In terms of tattooing, the body is another important space. I consider that tattooing is the practice in which people make the body space into the place. The body is possessed, territorialized, conquered, handed over, and cultivated through tattooing.
Methodology of the Study of the Body

The methodological problem, which has been extensively discussed within anthropology but which is still worth addressing, is: to what extent can the researcher understand and write about the practice of other people? If the researcher’s understanding and writing cannot avoid being partial and subjective, what does partiality and subjectivity mean to anthropology as a science, and how does it contribute to the people who are researched and to people who do not have any association with the studied society?

To consider and attempt to answer these questions, I emphasize that the body is a crucial domain of this study as tattooing is practiced and represented on the body, and also becomes a key factor in the methodology of the study. The body has been theorized and objectified in many strands of Western thought: philosophy, psychology, physiology, biology, feminist theory, sociology, and anthropology, but it is not necessarily the case that everybody starts objectifying his/her body in these particular ways. My question is when and how Tahitians objectify their body. Furthermore, providing the fact that I am not Tahitian, I interrogate what are the implications of researching the Tahitian body by a non-Tahitian researcher, or how the non-Tahitian researcher can objectify the Tahitian body? To answer these questions, I need to consider two points of objectification.

The first point to note is that of self-objectification; Tahitian objectification of the body in the context of the study, is not happening all the time. The body is preobjective to us most of time. We live through the body and objectify the space, things, and people around us through the body, but are not in fact aware of the body as a medium of perception. As Merleau-Ponty points out, “the body is in the world from the beginning” (Csordas 1990: 9). However, the body becomes an object of perception under particular conditions such as when the normal functions of the body is disturbed by sickness or injury (Leder 1990) and when people encounter the body of others who have different skin, hair, eye colours, height, weight, and shape, which questions the fact that the body is taken for granted as it is. I consider that tattooing, making the tattooee experience pain and transform her/his body into a different state—specifically marked, is one of the practices to awake the body from the preobjective state and objectify it.

The second point is about the objectification of the others’ body, both the Tahitian objectification of the non-Tahitian body and the non-Tahitian objectification of the Tahitian body in the case of this study. This objectification is occurred by encountering the others’ body and induces the self-objectification explained above. The objectification of the others’ body in Tahiti is not limited to the present circumstances,
but has taken place in the colonial encounter; religious and ideological confrontation such as evangelisation; eroticisation and romanticisation of indigenous people and their culture in fine art and literature production; and the development of the tourist industry. The objectification of the other’s body often has been the non-Tahitian objectification of the Tahitian body, documented by the non-Tahitians from their perspective, but it has been conducted by both sides. Tahitians also objectified the non-Tahitian bodies in interactions in Tahitian history.

Through self-objectification and the objectification of the other’s body, people recognize the similarity and difference of their own body in comparison with the others. If their body is similar within the collective, it emphasizes the sense of belonging and solidarity. At the same time, they differentiate themselves from people of the different collective. If the body is different from the others within the collective, people establish personal identity. S/he belongs to the group, but is different from the other members of the group in some aspects. As I have explained above, collective and personal identities are established by this inclusion and exclusion on the basis of similarity and difference. The body, both its appearance and practice, plays a significant role in establishing identities.

This study is featured by two-layered objectification as it objectifies the Tahitian objectification of their body. As I have mentioned above, the body of non-Western others has already been objectified in Western thought. Yet, the body of these non-Tahitians, which would be a tool or condition to understand, has not necessarily yet been objectified by themselves. The body of a non-Tahitian, specifically a researcher’s body often remains preobjective. Anthropological projects are consistently ignorant of the Tahitians’ objectification of the researcher’s body. In order to problematize the nature of Western body theory and seek a different path, the researcher’s body needs to be objectified by himself/ herself as well as the people researched.

This study is based on participant-observation during my nineteen-month fieldwork, mainly at the places that tattooing was practiced such as the salon, stand, hotel, street, the tattooists and the tattooee’s house, festivals (Heiva, the Festival of Pacific Arts, Marquesan Art Festival, and Tatau i Taputapuatea), artisan exhibitions, commercial fair, and prison. Interviews were conducted formally and informally according to the circumstances. I generally took notes in the first research (1998-2000) and tape-recorded more extensively in the second research (2001). I also photographed and filmed the process and finished work of tattooing, as well as the tattooists, the tattooed people, the observers, and the places that tattooing took place.
During the fieldwork, my body was constantly objectified by people I worked with in the categories of age, gender, ethnicity, skin colour and texture. I was “a Japanese female student in her twenties with un-tanned skin which is not marked with tattoos”. This study of tattooing is, whether the researcher’s body is tattooed or not, thought through the body. The body becomes not only the object but also the subject of the study of tattooing. This study is therefore based on the researcher’s two-layered objectification of the body resulting from fieldwork in Tahiti. The researcher’s intention to objectify Tahitian bodies coincides with their objectification of their body.

As I have pointed out above, the study of assessments cannot be free from the researcher’s assessment. The information and data were observed and acquired for the thesis by me, which indicates that all the accounts made in the thesis are subjected to my background and identity, such as a female, Japanese, and anthropology student of an Australian university. It is inevitable that my assessment primarily would frame my research. It is not necessary to conclude, however, that I cannot escape from assessing the assessment of people I am concerned with. In this thesis, I attempt to examine the way the researcher and the researched people understand and misunderstand the assessment of each other, and how their bodily differences and relationships result in another objectification and assessment of the body.

The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One delineates the history of Tahitian tattooing from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. It shows how tattooing was embedded in a social and cosmological system in the pre-/early contact period and how it was transformed through European contact and Christianization. It also illustrates the general political and social background of the revival of tattooing in the 1980s after a long absence due to suppression by missionaries. This chapter demonstrates the continuity and discontinuity of Tahitian tattoo history, and the expansion of Tahitian tattooing beyond the island.

Chapter Two introduces the practice and form of tattooing. It illustrates how tattooing was practiced and how it looked in the early contact period by studying journals and documents written by Europeans, and also provides basic information about methods, tools, and pigments of the contemporary practice and the formal categorization such as motif, design, and style for the contextual discussion in the later chapters.
Chapter Three introduces contemporary Tahitian tattooists, tattooed people, and their networks. It elucidates the location of Tahitian tattoo culture in the Tahitian society at large. Because the Tahitian tattooists who are extensively working are all men and many of those who frequent the tattooists' work places are men, the chapter focuses on male *taure'are'a* (adolescents) and their relationships with people of different gender, age, and ethnicity. It also analyses *taure'are'a*'s mobility and their manipulation of the past in the formation of their ethnic and male identity.

Chapter Four locates Tahitian tattooing in the world, by analysing the transmission of knowledge and technique between Tahitian and non-Tahitian tattoo practitioners. While Tahitian tattooing has been transformed by introducing American and European machines, pigments, technique, designs, and styles, non-Tahitian interest in Polynesian tattooing has broadened the dimension of “global tattooing”. The chapter examines the cross-cultural transmission of tattoo forms and practices in terms of ethics and relationality in the Tahitian social context.

Shifting from global to regional perspective, Chapter Five examines the geopolitics of nation making in French Polynesia, exploring tattooing at three art festivals, *Heiva*, the Festival of Pacific Arts, and the Marquesan Art Festival. It examines how the government and political authorities utilize the festivals for making an “overseas territory” of France in the case of the Festival of Pacific Arts, and an independent archipelago in the case of the Marquesan Art Festival. It also analyses the concept of past, present, and future, which is often articulated in the festival discourse.

While the previous chapters explore movements and mobility, Chapter Six focuses on the confinement of tattooists and their practice, by taking up the case of prison tattooing. It examines to what extent this confinement affects tattooing in the prison and how the prison tattooing is located in Tahitian tattooing at large. It also analyses how the inmates conceptualize and manipulate their sequence of time by tattooing, covering up, modifying, erasing, or refusing tattooing.
Chapter One

Discontinuity and Displacement: Place and History of Tattooing

Settlement of the Society Islands began around AD 600 by the voyagers who navigated from Western Polynesia (Samoa and Tonga) and settled in the Marquesas first around AD 300 (Emory 1968; Shinoto 1967, 1970, and 1983). Yet, instead of this single population movement from one archipelago into another, with the latest archaeological data, Kirch suggests that the process of the expansion of Eastern Polynesia involved at least three movements, which began in the late first millennium BC and were under way by about AD 1. He also notes that it may have taken until around AD 600-800 before the full interaction spheres developed (Kirch 2000: 245).

As Polynesians had been adept navigators, they frequently interacted with the neighbouring islands, and accumulated knowledge of the islands farther away such as Hawaii and New Zealand. Tattooing might have been brought to Tahiti with the settlers who had been practicing it in Marquesas and Samoa.

Although there were similarities, tattooing developed differently in both formal characteristics and social meanings in each island of Polynesia as each society had been differently established and developed according to the islands. Before starting to analyse the contemporary practice of tattooing, in this chapter I review the history of Tahitian tattooing from the time the islanders were visited by European explorers in the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. This demonstrates how the place of Tahitian tattooing has been extended over time.

Tapu and Body - Tattooing in the Late Eighteenth Century

In the pre-and early contact period, tattooing was embedded in a social system, with which cosmology and religion were closely integrated. In Tahitian cosmology, the world consists of po/ao. Po was the domain of the gods and signified “dark” and “night”. It was the place where the dynamic transformation of birth and death took place. In po,
Ta’aroa, the supreme god, digested the bodies of the dead and reproduced the new human bodies. Ao was the domain of human beings and signified “light” and “day”. The bodies that were produced in po were carried to ao with excrement. The relationship between po and ao was not a simple dichotomy, but rather complementary in ordering the natural and social world.¹

In this dual structured world, people, objects, and places were categorized into tapu if they belonged to po, and noa if to ao. Those who belonged to po, were considered to have mana, which was divine power, and expressed its potency in war, procreativity, and agricultural fertility. The possession of mana signified the strong affiliation with the gods, and provided Tahitians with prestige, authority, and high rank. Tapu was a restricted condition, which limited and controlled the activities of the noa or relatively less-tapu persons. People who possessed mana and were tapu could levy on place, food, and objects with intention as well as automatically by touching them or being in the place. Noa was an unrestricted condition, and “an unmarked state vis-à-vis tapu, not its direct opposite” (Ralston 1987: 116).² Tapu/noa relationships were contextual and contingent, in that the same person could be tapu in one situation and noa in another.

Tapu restrictions appeared on activities related to eating, management of space, reproduction, and worship. In the following section, I analyse the nature of tapu in relationships of gender, class, and age differences.

In terms of gender difference, women’s activities were more restricted by tapu than those of men. The tapu system sensitively resonated with the physical state of women and was linked to the symbolism of reproduction. Reproduction was conceived in the context of ao/po dualism. The inside of the female womb was po because it was the place where reproduction took place. Women who were in menstruation or pregnant were tapu and dangerous to men and women who were neither in menstruation nor pregnant.

¹ According to the cosmological explanation, po was “the Other-World of gods and spirits” (Driessen 1991: 42) where the dead went to and infants came from. Ta’aroa, the Creator god lived in po, devoured the souls of the dead graded into a pulp. Then, “after a soul was devoured by a god it ‘came through him again among his excrements’” (ibid.: 47). Driessen asserts that “unlike ra’a, it [tapu] had to be contained, controlled and separated from the social realm. It was, ideally at least, temporary and periodic, confined to marae as places of interaction between Po and Ao. Unlike tapu, as a somatic sacredness ra’a was an existential condition of all males. It was a pre-requisite for tapu and hence only males could become ta’ata-tapu, ‘consecrated men’ or human sacrifices” (ibid.: 56).

² Thomas shows that there was no term, which referred to noa in the Marquesan case, and the term opposed to tapu, which was me’te, signified “unrestricted” or “clear” (1987: 124).
The restriction on eating was not only on the food, but also on the cooking utensils and dishes. Men were not allowed to touch any cooking utensils that women used. Moreover, women were prohibited from religious activities. They could not touch the sacrifice for the gods, become a sacrifice themselves, attend religious ceremonies, enter the male marae, nor watch any performances, including entertainment such as wrestling. Restrictions on women’s eating and religious activities derived from the general tapu rule that men were tapu and women were noa, which resulted from the division of labour, as religion was men’s business and food preparation was women’s business.

Tahitian society was highly stratified, consisting of ari’i hau, ari’, ra’atira, and manahune. The social class was concerned with the right and management of the island, which was divided into territories, which were further divided into districts. Ari’i hau were the highest-ranking people who governed the territory consisting of several districts. Ari’i were the second highest-ranking people who governed the district and were entitled to the land and its products. Ari’i hau and ari’i were believed to be descended from the gods. Ra’atira were landowners, who did not have direct genealogical connection to the gods, but possessed the authority to manage the land under the reign of ari’i. Manahune were commoners, who did not have any title to the land, and worked on the land that was under the control of ra’atira.

Ari’i, both male and female, were tapu while ra’atira and manahune were noa because ari’i had a more direct genealogical affiliation to the gods. Morrison notes that ari’i were dangerous especially to female manahune. If an ari’i entered or touched a female’s house, the owner of the house could no longer eat there, and a new house had to be built for her (1935: 168). Ari’i were carried on the shoulders when they travelled because the ground became sacred if they trod on it. Tapu was also transferred to the names of ari’i. De Bovis explains the name of Pomare, Te tu’u nui eaae ite Atua:

All these words became tapu ‘forbidden’ and even this word that I have just used was later replaced by rahui because the Ari’i had reserved the first [tapu] for their use. The people had to change tu’u for tia, eaae for pa’uma or paiuma and nui for rahui. (1976: 19)

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3 Morrison observes, “the Men may partake of any of the Weomens Food but must not touch any but what is given them and tho they enter the eating house of their Wives but must not touch any of Her Culinary Utensils, otherwise she must not use them again but He may apply them to his own Use and she must provide herself with a New set or as many as he has touchd” (1935: 208-209).

4 Hau means “high”.
The eating of *ari'i* was highly restricted. *Ari'i* were not allowed to use their own fingers to convey food to the mouth because they prevented *tapu* attached to *ari'i*’s fingers from being carried to the inside of the body through food.

Gender relations were symmetrical in the political arena. The first born, whether male or female, succeeded to the title. Matrilineal descent was, however, significant in the genealogy of *ari'i*. If women succeeded to the title, they were supposed to act and receive the same treatment as male *ari'i* did. They also had effeminate male servants, called *mahu*, who prepared food for female *ari'i* (Gunson 1964: 58-59 and 1987: 145). The *noa* state of women was changed into *tapu* with the titles, which proved their direct genealogical affiliation to the gods.

Younger people, especially infants, were *tapu* in relation to the adults who were *noa*. Ellis observed that “as soon as the child was able to eat, a basket was provided, and its food was kept distinct from that of the parent” (1969: 260). *Tapu* restrictions were more severe for female children. Gunson notes:

> In the Tahitian family, only the mother could gather food for the daughters and his labour could not commence until after midday. The Rev. James Elder, who was the missionary surgeon at Tahiti, stated that the rearing of a female child often put an end to the mother’s life because of the “inexpressible burden” placed upon her. (1964: 58)

Both mother and children were strongly *tapu*, so they were secluded from each other as well as from the other members of the society by being kept in different houses. Only a mother could feed infants, but there were still restrictions, as mothers were not allowed to eat the food of their children.

The *tapu* of the infants can also be explained by the cosmological interpretation of *po'aroa*. The infants were considered as *tapu* because they had just come from *po* - the domain of the gods into life with excrement of Ta’aroa. The children reduced their *tapu* by performing so-called rites of passage, *amo'a* (removal) rites on the process of maturation. From birth to adulthood, females had to pass seven stages and males had to pass six stages of *amo’a* (Oliver 1974: 437). Both male and female children who had

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5 The first *amo’a* was performed just after the birth of a child. The umbilical cord was cut and the child and mother were secluded from the other members of the society in the temporary hut (*fare-huia*). The mother was prohibited from touching food and eating with her own fingers, so she was assisted by someone. The mother was in the *tapu* state until the first *amo’a* had been completed. The seclusion of infants was gradually released at the second *amo’a* for father and uncle and the third *amo’a* for mother and aunt. A child could enter the father and uncle’s house where men ate after the fourth *amo’a* had been completed and the mother and aunt’s house after the fifth *amo’a*. Male children could complete another *amo’a* rite when they married.
been secluded because of their tapu became deconsecrated by proceeding with amo'a, and were incorporated into broader and more elaborate social relationships.

Because the infants were tapu and had more direct access to the power of the gods, the first-born child of ari'i, regardless of gender, succeeded to the title immediately after s/he was born. Although the actual political potency of the father or mother of the child remained active until the child reached the appropriate age for assuming sovereignty, the title of the parent was officially degraded because mana related to the gods were transferred to the child.

The determination of tapu/noa relationships, therefore, characterized the Tahitian political system; ari'i had authority and power over ra'atira and manahune; women held chiefly title if they were born first in an ari'i family; and first-born child of an ari'i succeeded to the title immediately after their birth.

In terms of the economics, the tapu system established the division of labour and also defined the ownership of properties. Tapu restrictions on food and religious affairs determined that men conducted religious affairs while women were proved to be inappropriate because of their noa. Women had a role of preparing food while men could not do this for women. The ownership of properties was clearly demarcated by tapu restrictions, as the property of the tapu persons was not accessible to the noa persons. The potential inequality of tapu and mana possession constituted inequalities on social hierarchy, gender relationships, and the relationships between different generations.

The institution of Arioi also illustrated social differences in the notion of sacredness and was relevant to tattooing. Arioi was a religious cult, consisting of both male and female members from all ranks. It originated in Raiatea, a religious center of eastern Polynesia in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. European explorers and missionaries who visited Tahiti in that period observed and documented the activities of Arioi such as worshiping the god 'Oro; travelling from one island to another; and performing plays, dance, speech, and athletic games.

Arioi were not a minority of the main society, but rather respected by the other members of Tahitian society. They were also regarded as an ideal who represented and dealt with mana to set a best living condition for human beings because the symbolism and activities of Arioi implied their connection with significant domains of society: war, land, harvest, and population. Arioi members were given a special house to stay at during their visits to other islands and were offered many gifts such as hogs, breadfruit, and bark-cloth.
Arioi were above all associated with warfare. They worshipped the god ‘Oro, who was known as the god of war. Their emblem representing three spires also indicated their association with warfare. The god figure, a model of ‘Oro, was made of a stick, which was made of the same wood as a weapon. This wooden figure was wrapped in sennit and ornamented with red and yellow feathers. It was called ‘Oro-maro-ura (Warrior-of-the-red-girdle) or ‘Oro-maro-tea (Warrior-of-the-yellow-girdle) (Henry 1928: 121). Inter-tribal warfare frequently occurred in Tahitian society because of struggles over land and political power. Victory meant obtaining fertile land and political hegemony, while the defeated became captives and human sacrifices. The struggles for political and economic hegemony promoted the worshipping of ‘Oro as a god of war and a man-slayer.

‘Oro as a man-slayer was not satisfied only by slaying the enemy; he also demanded his adherents as human sacrifices. Human sacrifices were originally offered to Ta’aroa as a prayer for rain in drought (ibid.: 196). They had gradually become popular as dedications at religious ceremonies such as setting up new marae, the initiation ceremony of an heir, or the installation ceremony, since the ‘Oro cult had spread on the islands in the eighteenth century (Henry 1928: 196-198). Gell, citing the myth of Arioi in which brothers of ‘Oro, Orotefeifa and Ouretefa sacrificed themselves to the gods, argues that Arioi played a role as a self-sacrifice to ‘Oro (1993: 150-158). Babadzan also points out that:


The decorated bodies of Arioi and their performance were offerings to ‘Oro. Tahitians offered the gifts to Arioi, but these were actually for the ‘Oro intending to receive more harvests in return. Arioi played a mediating role between ‘Oro and human beings in this religious exchange system.

Another distinctive custom in Arioi society was infanticide. Although infanticide was not unique to Arioi but pervasive in Tahitian society, it was an obligation for Arioi to kill their offspring immediately after birth. Unlike social rank, Arioi were not

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6 “Arioi were offered the products of the soil in exchange for the reproduction of plant life in toto. Abundance for first fruits. The whole in exchange for part. But these Arioi who each year brought abundance were also returning from the place of the dead. The dead and fertility are here associated, as they doubtless are throughout Oceania” (my translation).
inherited by birth, but nominated by the highest graded members. There are several explanations of infanticide. The *tapu* of the infants was one possible reason because *tapu* restrictions on bearing children, especially female, increased the work of mothers—the only persons who were able to prepare food for children and feed them. The preservation of female beauty could be another motivation for infanticide. Tahitians believed that child bearing ruined the physical beauty of the mothers. Infanticide also possibly functioned to maintain the exclusive title of *ari'i* because *ari'i* were not prohibited from procreation and allowed to keep infants (Gell 1993: 147). Another possibility was population control (Bligh 1792: 79). As there was a limit to both land and resources on the islands, overpopulation caused the crucial problem of provision.

Arioi, a symbol of death or sterility for human beings, turned into a symbol of fertility and abundance for animals and vegetation. They played a significant role in the ceremony of fertility (the feasts of the first fruits, the feasts of the season of fertility), which was periodically performed in Tahitian society. Enormous amounts of food and other offerings such as dugouts, mats, cloth, breadfruit, bananas, coconuts, pigs, dogs, and poultry were prepared and offered to Arioi (Moerenhout 1837: 260). The sterility of human beings and fertility of animals and vegetation did not contradict each other, rather these characteristics indicated the requirements of Tahitian society in which war was frequent, land was limited for provision, and the region was subject to variable climatic conditions. The principle of Arioi was to gain fertility and abundance even through sacrificing other lives, making war, or killing offspring.

Despite their prestigious status and significant role in war and the control of resources, there seemed to be no direct involvement of Arioi in politics, except *avae-parai*, the highest grade of the society, who were usually *ari'i*. Yet, Arioi did not remain as a secluded religious body nor as performers and dancers of religious themes, but satirized social affairs. In their performance, Arioi mocked *ari'i* by wearing red-feather girdles. The costume of the highest grade, *avae-parai* was “made of paper mulberry and was sprayed with red and yellow to resemble the royal feather girdle. Other clothing used in acting was also in burlesque imitation of royal apparel” (Henry 1928: 234).

Although satirizing *ari'i*, Arioi did not infringe the political authority of *ari'i*, because Arioi were merely mediators between ‘Oro and human beings. Arioi carried *mana*, which was effective in politics, war, farming, and fishing, but those who actually used the *mana* were *ari'i*, warriors, farmers, and fishermen. *Ari'i* needed to receive extra *mana* in addition to that they possessed from their birth because the genealogical superiority was not sufficient for *ari'i* to ensure their rank. Newbury points out that “the
chiefs were expected to be efficacious as well as high-born” (Davies 1961: xxxiv). The authority of ari’i was achieved by factors such as “success in war, fertile harvests and the wise use of local food resources in peace, and suitable marriage connections with other ari’i families” (ibid.: xxxiii-xxxiv). Ari’i sought mana for success in war and in order to achieve the abundance and fertility of harvests from ‘Oro. All the symbolic implications of the capability at war, sterility of human beings, and fertility of vegetation attached to Arioi were advantages for display of ari’i’s political efficacy.

The tapu system made class, gender, and age distinctions, which meant that tapu restrictions set a condition that materially and physically secluded ari’i from lower-ranking people, women from men, and infants from adults. Arioi were excluded and given a prestigious status because they carried mana from po to ao, which provided abundance of provision and affirmed the exclusive title of ari’i. Both the tapu system and Arioi were based on sacredness, and implied that those who were more sacred (closer to the gods) became high-ranked, and excluded or exploited those who were not.

Although people of different class, gender, and age were clearly marked, differentiated, and secluded from each other as seen in the tapu system, they established social relationships and interacted with each other. Tattooing, as covering the body, kept mana within and at the same time protected a noa person from it. Tattooing was a technique to manipulate tapu restrictions that differentiated and articulated social relationships among different levels of tapu holders.

I propose that tattooing was a transpositional form of socially-patterned wrapping practices. In Tahitian society, the practices of wrapping or covering were replicated on various occasions in Tahitian life from religious ceremonies to everyday life. This practice might have derived from environmental factors, where bodies and food were more appropriately wrapped to protect them from the tropical sun, but most instances did not involve such a practical reason. People wrapped because their parents and grandparents had been doing so.

Wrapping and unwrapping occurred in both conceptual and empirical domains. According to the chant collected by Orsmond, the supreme god Ta’aroa came out of an egg-like shell, and this shell was transformed into all living and non-living creatures. Thus, the universe was created out of shell from a state of nothing:

As Ta’aroa had crusts, that is, shells, so has everything a shell. The sky is a shell, that is, endless space in which the gods placed the sun, the moon, the Sporades, and the constellations of the gods. The earth is a shell to the stones, the water, and plants that spring from it. (Henry 1928: 339-340)
Shell was the origin of all materials and living creatures including human beings. The chant continues “man’s shell is woman because it is by her that he comes into the world; and woman’s shell is woman because she is born of woman” (ibid.: 340).

Other instances of wrapping the body of the gods were observed in religious ceremonies. This was evident in the ritual called pa’iataua (the renewal of the shell of the body or of that which covers the gods) (Moerenhout 1837: 258-259). Ellis explains it as follows:

On these Occasions all the idols were brought out from their sacred depository, and meheu, or exposed to the sun; the cloth in which they had been kept was removed, and the feathers in the inside of the hollow idols were taken out. The images were then anointed with fragrant oil; new feathers, brought by their worshippers, were deposited in the inside of the hollow idols, and folded in new sacred cloth: after a number of ceremonies, they were carried back to their dormitories in the temple. (1967: ii: 217)

Babadzan (1993) explains that the significance of the ceremony was in the accumulation of tapu and transferring it into the feathers stuffed inside the god figures. The sennit, which wrapped the figures, created a boundary between ao and po. In the course of unwrapping and rewrapping the figures, mana and tapu were transferred from po to ao. In doing so, the god figures were disposed as merely wooden sticks without any carving. This taught Tahitians the nature of po. Babadzan alludes to this:

L’effect du dévoilement consiste donc en fait à donner à voir l’absense de cette forme. Les chants de création polynésiens dépaignent, eux aussi, la divinité, ou plutôt le principe présidant à la création de l’univers et de toutes choses jusqu’aux temps présents, comme une forme absente: à l’origine de tous les créés, un incrété; à l’origine de toutes les formes, l’informe. (1993: 114) 7

The god figures and the rituals of pa’iataua embodied the creation of the gods. The formless contained the potential power for creation.

Wrapping and unwrapping also frequently appeared on the human bodies. The primary body wrapping was everyday clothing. Tahitians also conducted many ceremonial body wrappings on various occasions. For instance, the infants, who were just born, were wrapped by tapa, and so were their cords. The dead bodies were also well anointed and wrapped. The adolescents, who were tattooed and bleached, were also wrapped. Warriors were wrapped with enormous cloth round their bodies for protection.

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7 “The effect of unveiling is thus actually to show the absence of this form. The Polynesian creation chants also depict divinity, or rather the principle residing at the creation of the universe and of all things up to the present, as an absent form: at the origin of everything created, something uncreated; at the origin of all forms, something formless” (my translation).
from the enemies’ attack. Dance costume consisted of enormous lengths of cloth, which wrapped around the waist and legs. Wrapping was also a significant part of the ceremony of *taio* - friendship contract.\(^8\)

Tahitians also frequently conducted the practices subordinate to wrapping, such as uncovering and disclothing. On the ceremony of fertility, for instance, a girl who was wrapped by the enormous quantities of cloth was uncovered during the performance of dancing.\(^9\) *Ra’atira and manahune* had to uncover the upper part of the body when they met *ari’i* or came close to the *marae*. They also had to take off their head covering.\(^10\)

Analogous to clothing, from Polynesian perspective, the skin was another significant wrapping of the body. As *tapa* was made of tree, Koojiman suggests that “the ‘skin’ of tree surrounding the human body as clothing is equated with the human skin itself” (1972: 284). Yet, the skin is a part of the body and not easy to wrap or unveil as people did with cloth. Although the documents that Tahitians stripped the skin are scarce, I suggest that Tahitians regarded the skin as a wrapper, veil, or shell of the body.\(^11\)

Although Tahitians unveiled or stripped the skin (even in a forcible way), wrapping the body by the skin seemed impossible because the body already had skin at birth. Tattooing, however, rewrapped the body by creating a second layer of skin. After the operation of tattooing, the inscribed parts, which were covered with the blood and serum, were peeled off in a few days and there appeared the new skin with design. Tattooing was the physical experience of wrapping and unveiling the skin.

Some instances of wrapping might be unconscious practice in which people had no particular intention and meaning, but others were obviously linked with the ideological and symbolic system such as *tapu* system. Sacredness was generally construed as

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\(^8\) See the discussion below.

\(^9\) Cook observes, “…one of the Young Women then step’d upon the Cloth and with as much Innocency as one could possibly conceive, expose’d herself entirely naked from the waist downwards, in this manner she turn’d her Self once or twice round, I am not certain which, then step’d of the Cloth and drop’d down her clothes, more Cloth was then spread upon the Former and she again perform’d the same ceremony…” (1968: 93).

\(^10\) Morrison documents, “When a Chief is present in any Company the Men strip their Bodys to the Waist not suffering any Covering on their Head or Shoulders in His Presence – and all the Weomen present uncover their Shoulders tucking their Cloth under their armpits, to Cover their Breasts in token of obedience and respect, to his presence…” (1935: 168).

\(^11\) The special care of the skin, such as frequent washing, anointing, and covering might derive from the fact that people had to protect themselves from strong sunlight. Yet, when these treatments occurred in the religious ceremony, the reasons were cosmological not practical. For instance, the ceremony for the birth of a prince was described thus: “The *paia* [royal family doctor] then took a cylindric piece from the heart of the stem of a banana tree from the sacred ground and rolled it over the skin of the child, whom he then anointed well with sandal wood oil… Soon the babe was wrapped in soft tapa, and after short preparations mother and child were moved into the *fare-hua*, there to remain for five or six days, during which time oil was frequently used on the child…” (Henry 1928: 183). The treatments concentrated on the skin made people conscious of the significance of the skin and evoked the cosmological meaning related to the shell of Ta’aroa.
transmittable from the gods to the human bodies through places or objects. The *tapu* restriction on eating practice, for instance, indicates that sacredness was transferred to food, so the *tapu* persons were prohibited from touching food with their own fingers. In fact, the restrictions such as that men and women should not eat together in the same room or that women should not pass over men’s belongings, show that sacredness was also effective without touching. Furthermore, the body or skin were the transmitter of sacredness, so the body had to be washed, brushed by the branch of a sacred plant, and wrapped by cloth in order to avoid contagion.

The *tapu* system made Tahitians conceptualise their living space as inside and outside. The house was the structure that divided space into inside and outside. The body was also conceived based on inside and outside. Eating was the practice that brought food from outside the body to inside. The female body was considered as a small scale of *po* and *ao*, and the baby came from the womb, which was inside the body as well as *po*. The process of wrapping also located the body inside clothing or the skin, and concretized the outside space, which Tahitians had to share with the different levels of *tapu* holders.

Taking these characteristics into consideration, I suggest that tattooing, as wrapping of the body, controlled the *tapu* restriction. For *tapu* people, tattooing was to prevent their *mana* from transmitting to objects and other people, and preserve them inside. The extended tattooing of warriors seemed to intend to keep this function.

The tattooing of Arioi and priests had a role of conserving *tapu* inside the bodies since both Arioi and priests were close to the gods. Arioi covered their bodies by tattooing to accumulate *mana* inside. Yet, these qualities, which involved capability in war, fertility, and abundance, in exchange for sacrifices and offerings, were first given to the bodies of Arioi from the gods, and distributed to non-Arioi people by travelling and performing plays, dances, and athletic games. Arioi was a transmitter of *mana* from *po* to *ao*, and from ‘*Oro* to human beings.

For *noa* people, tattooing was to protect them from the *mana* of the *tapu* persons. Tattooing stopped dispersing *mana* and enabled the *tapu* persons to access others. Gell (1993: 140-141) argues that the *tapu* possessors wrapped their sacred body by tattooing to make their body less sacred in order to conduct secular practices.

Tattoos were also used as an indicator of maturation and a person’s availability for procreation. Tattoos on the arm were tokens to show that children had gone through *amo ʻa* – an initiation rite, so they were allowed to participate in social activities. Moreover, the adolescents had tattoos on their buttocks, which were not only associated
with rites of passage, but also had the function of demonstrating availability for sexual access and fertility.

If the skin was the shell of the human body, tattooing could be considered as a manipulation of the human shell, which controlled the function of procreation. Ellis’ version of the myth of tattooing implies the significance of tattooing as controlling the procreative function:

Hina, the daughter of the god Taaroa, bore to her father a daughter, who was called Apouvaru, and who also became the wife of Taaroa. Taaroa and Apouvaru, and who also became the wife of Taaroa. Taaroa and Apouvaru looked steadfastly at each other, and Apouvaru, in consequence, afterwards, brought forth her first-born, who was called Matamataaru. Again the husband and the wife looked at each other, and she became the mother of a second son, who was called Tiitiipo. After a repetition of this visual intercourse, a daughter was born, who was called Hinaereeremonoi. As she grew up, in order to preserve her chastity, she was made pahio, or kept in a kind of enclosure, and constantly attended by her mother. Intent on her seduction, the brothers invented tatauing, and marked each other with the figure called Taomaro. Thus ornamented, they appeared before their sister, who admired the figures, and, in order to be tataued herself, eluding the care of her mother, broke the enclosure that had been erected for her preservation, was tataued, and became also the victim to the designs of her brothers. (Ellis 1969: 262-263)

Gell (1993: 142-143) does not interpret literally the seclusion of the elder daughter as preservation of chastity, but as the stage of fattening and bleaching, which was significant for making girls into women in addition to amo’a rite. Gell also notices that Matamataaru and Tiitiipo were brothers of Hina Ereeremonoi, and insists that tattoos were considered as a condition that made any sexual intercourse (including incest) possible. The bleached body was secluded because of its sacredness, which was continuously disseminating, but tattooing rendered the body of girls less sacred and available for sexual access, and at the same time, stopped the diffusion and accumulated mana for procreation inside themselves.

Different Skins - Change through European Contact

European explorations in the Pacific in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries were occasions to broaden the geographical perception of the world not only for Europeans but also for Tahitians. By encountering people from the places they had never been and heard of, Tahitians realized that the border of the world was much farther away than they had known.

Through contact with European explorers who had been visiting since 1767, the tapu system was confronted by new categories and the violation of restrictions, but basically remained consistent because these novelties and transgressions were incorporated into its own system.
Tahitian and European relationships were more or less characterized as amicable. Tahitian warriors attacked Captain Samuel Wallis and his crew in the Dolphin when they landed on the island for the first time in 1767. Soon after the crew fired on Tahitians, Tahitians appeared to show a friendly attitude, crying out “Tiyo!” They held a branch of the plantain, which signified peace, and they brought provisions and clothes to exchange for European goods (Hawkesworth 1785[1773]).

Many Europeans observed friendship contact, called *taio*, in the early contact period. *Taio* was a pact to develop and extend social relationships among those who were not affiliated by kinship, and was generally pledged between those of approximately the same rank, age, and gender as a part of the *amo’a* rite. Some people made their children *taio* with members of Arioi.

*Taio* was significant in the economics and politics of Tahitian society. The economic aspect of *taio* was twofold. Firstly, *taio* promised that land rights were transferred to a friend, as Morrison states:

> No Man ever Claims a right to any land but his own, or His adopted Friends, which he may Use during his Friends life, and should his Friend die without any other Heir the Adopted friend is always considered as the right owner and no man disputes his right. (1935: 194)

Secondly, *taio* established an external network of material supplies and labour support. In this lifelong relationship, people offered assistance with labour and food supply to *taio* partners when needed. Tahitians brought an enormous number of gifts such as hogs, fowls, breadfruits, and *tapa* when they visited their *taio* partners. As Finney points out, one of the reasons for establishing *taio* partnerships was that “a stranger to a Tahitian community may have no kinsmen there with whom to share goods or labour. He may become bond-friends with a local inhabitant to satisfy needs ordinarily met through kinship obligations” (1964: 433).

With regard to politics, *taio* established an alliance with *ari’i* from different districts or islands, whose political regency could be inherited by a friend or members of a friend’s lineage. Gunson explains *taio* between *ari’i* as follows:

Friendship contract rites solemnized by two chiefs at the *marae* had similar political implications to marriage rites. It is probable that political powers acquired by this adoptive relationship were virtually regency rights, and could only be inherited by members of the friend’s lineage if there were no immediate blood heirs. These friendship rites inaugurated political alliances for life with some degree of extension into another generation. A high

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12 Morrison (1935: 188-189) considered *taio* as a subsequent ceremony followed by the nuptial.
ranking Tahitian chief could thus consolidate his hereditary position by means of important marriage and friendship alliances. (1964: 53-54)

For instance, Tu (later Pomare I), who was descended from a Paumotu (Tuamotu) family had taio with the ari’i in Pare district, which enabled him to establish a base in Tahiti. Although there were several powerful ari’i in districts such as Ataheuru and Teva who aimed at hegemony, Pomare, who was an ari’i of the relatively small, less-powerful district, took advantage of taio with Europeans, especially their firearms, and surpassed these leading ari’i.

Taio was embedded in cosmology like the tapu system, though in a different way. While the tapu system distinguished people in terms of rank, gender, and age to maintain and protect sacredness, taio destroyed these differences and disseminated sacredness. This was shown in two features of taio: name-exchange and wrapping. A man identified his taio partner in the family structure by exchanging names, and became an adopted son of a friend’s father and shared taio-partner’s wife, but was prohibited from having sexual relationships with the friend’s sisters or daughters (Morrison 1935: 237). Gell explains this in the analysis of name-exchange in Marquesan society:

Name-exchange annulled differences; it represents the opposite pole, conceptually speaking, from tapu. The prevalence of name-exchange as an expedient device for disseminating identity poses an interpretative problem; at one level the Marquesan system seems acutely preoccupied with differentiating personal identity, yet in practice, identity was extraordinarily labile; a man with an extended network of name-exchange partners was, in effect, a multiple person. (Gell 1993: 176)

Name-exchange blurred the identity of the person to enable his/her taio partner to access the possession of the person that was normally confined to her/him by his/her tapu. This also took place in the relationships with Europeans, as Cook documented in his journal:

The Chief and his friends received us with great Cordiallity, express’d much satisfaction at seeing me again, desired that he might be call’d Cook (or Toote) and I Oreo which was accordingly done, he then ask’d after Tupia and several other gentlemen by name who were with me last voyage. (Beaglehole 1969: 223)

13 The Tuamotu is a group of atolls, which spreads to the east of the Society Islands.
14 For this reason, the mutineers of the Bounty, who had been incorporated into Tahitian society through taio played a significant role in the subsequent political history of Tahiti.
15 Parkinson notes in Huahine, “the custom of changing names prevails much in this island, and is deemed a mark of great friendship” (1773: 68). James King observed in Cook's third voyage, that “we were much pester’d by the Natives desiring to exchange names & become friends; the Ceremony is by suffering the
Another significant characteristic of taio was wrapping practice in the ceremony. Taio partners were wrapped in tapa. Menzies, who was in Vancouver's voyage, noted that:

Mooree, who then divided Mr. Broughton's intended present which was very considerable into four equal parts & each of us [Vancouver, Broughton, Whidbey and Menzies] being then wrapped round in a quantity of Island Cloth separately carried our presents & laid them upon a Mat close to the young prince. (Lamb 1984: 395)

Exchange, which was one of the main practices in taio, was also conducted through tattooing between Tahitians and Europeans. Newly introduced European goods and animals become the object of tattoo design. Tahitians tattooed the designs of muskets, swords, pistols, goats (Ellis 1967: ii: 465), fleur de lis, compasses, and mathematical instruments (Kotzebue 1830: 174-175) on their bodies.

Meanwhile, European voyagers tattooed themselves. Beaglehole (1962: i :41) referred to the letter from Charles Davy of Hensted, Suffolk, 5 June 1773 (D.T.C.I, p54); “If it is not giving you too much trouble, I should be much obliged to you an exact copy of the characters stain'd upon your arm....” Banks himself did not mention anything, but he was tattooed. Parkinson writes, “Mr. Stainsby, myself, and some others of our company, underwent the operation, and had our arms marked” (Parkinson 1773: 25). Munford notes that “Ledyard had himself tattooed. He does not say so in this journal, but in a letter from France in August 1786 he relates how in a country tavern in Normandy the mistress and the maids discovered the ‘Otaheite marks on my hands” (Ledyard ‘papers’, vol. 1. P.68, in Munford 1963: 49). In July the next year he wrote from Siberia to Thomas Jefferson in Paris, “Unfortunately, the marks on my hands procure me & my Countrymen the appelation of ‘wild-men’ (Ledyard ‘Papers’, vol. 2, p.7, in Munford 1963: 49)”. According to Greg Dening, James Morrison “tattooed around his thigh with the motto Honi soit qui mal y pense. John Millward had a Tahitian feather gorget (taumi) on his chest” (Dening 1992: 35). Thomas Ellison inscribed the date “25 October, 1788”, which was the date when they saw the land of Tahiti (ibid.: 36). Fletcher Christian tattooed the design of a star on his chest and presumably had buttock tattooing (ibid.: 35). Peter Heywood, who was tattooed to a large extent, wrote to his mother:

men to rowl round you a large piece of Cloth. As it is no easy matter to shake off your adopt’d name, It behoves a stranger not to take that of a troublesome fellow...” (Beaglehole 1967: 1374).
I was tattooed, not to gratify my own desire, but theirs [the Tahitians], for it was my constant endeavour to acquiesce in any little custom which I thought you'd be agreeable to them, tho' painful in the process, provided I gained by it their friendship and esteem. (ibid.: 36)

These instances were the beginning of the long history of sailor's tattooing in Europe.

Tahitian tattooing had been transformed by introducing European designs, and these designs were often tattooed on the parts of the body that were exposed to the eyes of the public. Buttock tattooing, however, was documented by the missionaries (cf. Orsmond [Henry 1928]; Ellis 1967) as having similar features to those observed by the early explorers. This cosmologically oriented tattooing was presumably not much affected and continued in an unreflective way by European contact at this stage. The fact that buttock tattoos were mostly hidden under cloth might be another reason that these tattoos were less influenced. Since the 'Oro cult and Arioi were still strongly supported during the period of early contact, Arioi grade-tattooing also remained unchanged. In short, the tattooing that was most influenced by European contact was neither cosmological buttock tattooing nor religious Arioi tattooing, but merely decorative tattooing.

Religious Influence: Evangelization and Tattooing

In 1797, the Duff, which carried thirty members of the London Missionary Society – four ordained missionaries, artisans, wives, and children – arrived in Tahiti. With the assistance of Pomare II, the missions in the Society Islands succeeded in evangelizing a large number of people by the mid-nineteenth century. The Society Islands became a base of the London Missionary Society in the South Pacific, and native Tahitian missionaries were dispatched to the other islands.

As Gunson shows, however, Christianity did not immediately permeate Tahitian society after it was introduced (Gunson 1962). The new religion drew Tahitians' interest, but the missionaries found difficulties in actually gaining a commitment from them. Davies writes that "at first the people were attentive when addressed, but when they had satisfied their curiosity, they had in general, no further desire after these things" (Davies 1961: 41). Bligh's conversation with the priest, Taowah, prior to the arrival of the missionaries, illustrates how most ideas of Christianity seemed alien to Tahitians when taken out of context:

He said, their great God was called Oro; and that they had many others of less consequence. He asked me if I had a God? – if he had a son? and who was his wife? I told them he had a
son, but no wife. Who was his father and mother? was the next question. I said, he never had father or mother; at this they laughed exceedingly. You have a God then who never had a father or mother, and has a child without a wife! (Bligh 1792: 87-88)

Tahitian religion and customs were regarded by the missionaries as not only objects of curiosity, as by most explorers, but "idolatrous" and "heathen", so needing to be abolished. Their practices of infanticide, promiscuity, and human sacrifice were for the missionaries unforgivable. Orsmond wrote:

For deception, lasciviousness, fawning eulogy, shameless familiarity with men, and artful concealment of adulterers, I suppose no country can surpass Tahiti. She is the filthy Sodom of the South Seas. On her shores chastity, and virtue find no place. The Predominant theme of conversation from youth to old age is the filthy coition of the sexes. (Orsmond 1849: South Seas Odds 6)

On the process of the mission, conceptual similarities between Christianity and Tahitian cosmology enabled Tahitians to interpret from one religion to another, but also generated ideological conflict over their commitment to the new religion.

"Darkness" became the most problematic concept in this process. The Tahitian concept po signified "dark" opposed to ao as I have shown above. Although this "darkness" was simply a consequence of the condition as inside, the missionaries used the word "dark" to indicate the uncivilized, "pagan" state of Tahitian life and the mental state of Tahitians who were preoccupied with their own religion. One young man who began to be taught by the missionaries, suffered from "finding mind dark" (Davies 1808: April 14). For the missionaries, the darkness that had connotations of "bad", "evil", "dirty", "false", and "hell", referred to traditional Tahitian customs. The idea that Tahitians must be brought from dark to light with the help of God convinced the missionaries of their vocation. When the priest of the old religion and his followers died, Davies had a conversation with converts, called pure-atua:

...they were asked where is such a one? He is dead and buried. Yes, but that is only the body, but his Varua (spirit) where is that? After some hesitation it was answered, It is probable it is gone to the Po, to the fire. Why then will you follow his track, are you in love with the fire? Some of them answered, we are in fear, we will also learn the word of God, we will pray to Jehova. (Davies 1961: 185)

Both the spirits and bodies of dead people were understood to go to po and to be devoured by Ta'aroa in Tahitian cosmology, but missionary instruction led Tahitian converts to believe that the spirit of the pagan was separated from the body and went to hell. Hell was interpreted as po, but this po had fire to torture dead people everlastinglly,
instead of Tahitian gods who generated the incarnation of human beings in the process of digestion.

The dualism in Christianity divided the world into sacred/profane, good/evil, light/dark, and true/false. If Christianity was “sacred”, “good”, “light”, and “true”, then Tahitian religion was “profane”, “evil”, “dark”, and “false”. The missionaries disregarded the dual layers (poloa) of the Tahitian cosmos, and classified Tahitian religion as “dark” in the dualistic framework of Christianity. In the same way, the distinction between Tahitian gods and evil spirits became blurred as the missionaries called the evil spirits “Satan”. For instance, Davies documented in Eimeo, the wife of Arioi became ill and people considered that it was caused by the anger of the gods because she attended the missionary school. In order to cure the illness of the woman, the priest Pati’i prayed:

“O satani iahana e ridi, faora, faora, teiete hapa, na farue ia oe, ha havare hia oia te papaa, teie te Bua, i aha e ridi.” “Satan Do not be angry, restore her to health, this the crime, she cast away thee has, being deceived by the Papaa [Europeans], here is a Pig don’t be angry.” (Davies 1814: March 8)

This conflation of the evil spirit “Satan” indicates that Tahitians, including the converts, did not deny the existence of the evil spirit or the gods of Tahitian religion, but reinterpreted them in terms of Christianity.

Even forty years after the first missionary arrival, there were different degrees of commitment among people who had already been converted, rather than a complete takeover of indigenous religion by the Evangelical church. F. D. Bennett, who visited Tahiti in a whaling ship in 1834, suggests:

Many of them appear to be sincerely devout, and steadfast both in faith and works; others are induced by hypocrisy and interested motives, or influenced only by the prevailing opinions of the day; while a third, and by far the most numerous class, pass through the routine of devotional forms from a sense of propriety, or by the coercion of the laws, but view religious matters with indifference and would be glad to escape from their restraints. (Bennett 1840: 79-80)

Ellis claimed that the converts felt ashamed of their custom and abandoned it, but this suggestion was merely from the missionaries’ viewpoint. Even those who converted voluntarily still did not deny the power of the Tahitian gods and were afraid of their revenge.

For some Tahitians, however, conversion was not compelled by the missionaries. Social and cultural change, which resulted from continuous interaction with European
voyagers, traders, and beachcombers, laid the foundation for the Tahitian reception of the new religion. Tahitians were convinced by the empirical evidence of the inefficacy of tapu when the rules were violated, as well as by the persuasive words of Europeans. Facing the facts: that missionary wives’ activities were not restricted; that the church was open to everybody; that the missionary family ate together; and that diseases were cured with European medical knowledge and techniques, Tahitians came to admit the efficacy of Christianity and reconsider the validity of Tahitian religion and tapu restrictions imposed on eating, sex, and religious activities.

As both cosmology and social system had been articulated in tattooing and the treatment of the body, the ideological shift resulting from the missionary influence also appeared on the Tahitian bodies. Clothing was one of the most prominent representations of this shift. Ellis mentions that the Tahitian preference for European cloth, especially cottons, as items of barter, was due to “their durability compared with native manufacture, their adaptation to the climate, variegated and showy colours, and the trifling injury they sustained from wet” (Ellis 1967: ii: 123). Women rather than men, and ari‘i rather than ra‘atira and manahune, were more attracted to European cloth and incorporated it into their dress.16

Tahitians initially wrapped European cloth around their bodies with the pareu - indigenous cloth, and later imitated the ways of European fashion: bonnet, shirts, pants, and dresses. European cloth became a new device for body beautification, but fused with local cloth. As O’Railly notes, “les modes seront en quelque sorte filtrées par le goût local et adaptées avant d’être adoptées” (1975: 42).17 European clothing largely covered the bodies. Consequently, tattoos on the chest, arms, and legs could no longer play their prior decorative role.

Tahitian imitation of European attire was not a practice particular to the early nineteenth century. Many European observers documented that Arioi mimicked the appearance and behaviour of ari‘i. Name exchange of taio was another mimicking, in that one became the other, and could appropriate his friend’s property by possessing the name of the taio partner. In the early contact period, European explorers tattooed in the Tahitian way and Tahitians tattooed European designs. Tutae ‘auri (see below), who disagreed with the strict disciplines of Christianity and the government, mocked the

16 F. D. Bennett observes, “On ordinary occasions, the lower class of men are yet content with the scanty maro, or cloth girdle; and the best attire of the chiefs consists of a cotton shirt and neckerchief, a few yards of calico folded round the waist and legs, and a beaver or straw hat. The females, with a propensity common to their sex, indulge more largely in foreign modes” (Bennett 1840: 70).
Christian institution. Name, tattoo, and clothing as well as the power, status, and identity affiliated with Europeans were derived from the original owners and were reinterpreted into a new context through mimicking.

Besides the beautification of the body, European clothing had different roles according to those with different religious beliefs. For the missionaries, the black, half-naked, tattooed Tahitian bodies were a threat. Black meant darkness. Nakedness signified a “savage”, “uncivilized”, and “promiscuous” state. The notion of shame was attached to half-naked Tahitian bodies. Tattooing represented immorality and unfaithfulness to God, because any mutilation of the body, which was created by God, was regarded as a practice against God. Therefore, the missionaries instructed Tahitians to cover their bodies with cloth because they considered that religious belief and degree of civilization were manifested on the body, and that regulation of the body was a step towards Christianization and civilization.

The missionaries instructed the converts to wear a “wrapping” that reached to the foot for women and to the middle of the legs for men (Gunson 1978: 274). By enclosing darkness – the pagan state – through covering black, naked, tattooed bodies, the missionaries believed that they brought the Tahitian bodies and souls under their control. This is obvious from Ellis’ comment that “our assemblies now assumed quite a civilized appearance, every one, whose means were sufficient to procure it, dressing in a garment of European cloth” (Ellis 1967: ii: 124). Although Tahitians favoured European cloth, they found traditional cloth more comfortable in the hot climate. Thus, women always carried a pareu to cover their shoulders and hide their breasts when they came across the missionaries.

If two religions coexisted in the beliefs of many Tahitians, I propose that there were two possibilities for the role of European clothing in the constitution of this religious structure. First, this religious complexity was reflected as well as sustained through the practice of wrapping. Wrapping the bodies with European cloth created a po state under the cloth and made the bodies exist in ao. Wrapping the bodies was a mode of travelling between po and ao, which were redefined by the missionaries in Christian terms in that po was the domain of Tahitian religion and ao was the domain of Christianity. Thus, the conventional practice of wrapping produced a religiously ambiguous condition in that Tahitians existed simultaneously in two religious domains. In fact, the transportation

17 “The fashions were in various ways filtered by local taste and adapted before being adopted” (my translation).
18 See Sturma’s (1998) discussion about cultural cross-dressing in Tahiti and Australia.
between po and ao was not an unfamiliar idea for Tahitians. They experienced this movement in religious ceremonies (such as pa’ia tua) through the practice of covering and uncovering.

Second, the choice of clothing enabled Tahitians to possess two religions. Tyerman and Bennet (Montgomery 1832: i: 91) suggest that the wives and daughters of chiefs went to the church wearing European clothing on the Sabbath day, but usually wore the native clothing at other times. As long as they wore European clothing, Tahitians were exempt from traditional religious restrictions. For those who were religiously ambivalent and possessed Tahitian religious beliefs to some extent, tattooing probably continued to have religious and cosmological importance.

For pure-ataua, those who devoted themselves more to Christianity, tattooing and wearing European clothing had different meanings. In the absence of the notion of contagious sacredness in the Christian context, pure-ataua did not believe any longer in the role of tattooing to conserve or protect them from tapu. The role of tattooing was transformed from wrapping to itself being wrapped in the context of a Christianized and civilized society. Wearing European clothing and becoming like Europeans produced new physical distinctions in Tahitian society. Those who wore European cloth were dressing for the eyes of other Tahitians more than for those of Europeans. European cloth became a new means of prestige for pure-ataua.

While most tapu objects, the god figures, and marae, were destroyed, tattooing was for a while “preserved” for those who believed Tahitian religion or “hidden” from the missionaries and pure-ataua by wrapping. For most Tahitians, wrapping in cloth produced a means of membership in an evangelized and civilized society, which was the intention of the missionaries, but inside the coverings in the domain of po, those who believed Tahitian religion and nominal converts still preserved tattooed bodies and Tahitian religious beliefs. Wrapping of tattooed Tahitian bodies in European cloth embodied the religious complexity of the early nineteenth century.

Law and Punishment

The religious beliefs of individuals were politically constrained in a pre-Christian society, and even in an evangelized society. It was crucial for ari’i to control the customs and beliefs of ra’atira and manahune in alliance with the missionaries. Thus,

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19 For instance, Wilson notes, “The custom of uncovering before the chiefs is universal. We have introduced, however, it is said, a mode of evading it: if any man or woman be clothed in a shirt, or coat, of European cloth, or has a hat of our manufacture, he is not obliged to be unclothed: it suffices if he removes the piece of Otaheite cloth which is over his shoulders” (Wilson 1966: 366).
tattooing as one of the indigenous customs was implicated in political intentions. The establishment of legal codes was due to the missionaries’ concern with entrenching Christianity. Pomare II at first showed considerable reluctance to act on the advice of the missionaries to affirm his supremacy against other ari'i and reconstruct internal power so as to reconstitute the boundary between the ruling and the ruled.

As an alternative to the tapu system, which had legitimated hierarchy and power inequalities, legal codes asserted the supremacy of ari'i and missionaries in the evangelized society. The first legal code was established with the assistance of Henry Nott and the agreement of some principal ari'i in Tahiti in 1819 (Bouge 1952). This was followed by a code that was constituted by Tamatoa IV of Raiatea and the ari'i of Bora Bora, Ta'aha, and Maupiti with the assistance of Williams and Threlkeld in May 1820 (Lesson 1839: 437-442). A revised version was adopted in Huahine in 1822 (Ellis 1967: ii: 427-440). Legal codes dealt with murder, theft, adultery, marriage and divorce, and Sabbath-violation.

In the same way that the tapu system regulated the bodies and bodily practices, legal codes that prohibited tattooing manifested the missionaries’ intention to regulate the individual body and behaviour, consistent with Christian discipline and civilized behaviour. Ellis believed that tattooing “was connected with their former idolatry, and always attended with the practice of abominable vices” (Ellis 1967: ii: 463); thus tattooing was significant not only in the sense of physical practice, but also because of its relation to the tapu system and Arioi. The control of tattooing signified the control over the beliefs and behaviour of the people. Tattooing was taken into account in the first three legal codes as follows:

1. The Pomare Code of 1819 mentioned, among other evil people:

[64. Te uhi tia moana ra.] Celui qui utilise profondément, au bas-ventre et dans le dos, l’instrument à marquer la peau. 20

2. The Tamatoa Code of 1820:

Toute personne qui marquera ou fera marquer quelque partie de son corps sera forcée de faire une étendue de chemin qui n’excédera pas cinquante brasses, ou tout autre ouvrage

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20 “Those who use the instrument of marking on the skin deeply on the lower part of belly and the back” (my translation). The beginning of the sentence in Tahitian means the same. Besides moral and religious reasons, Bouge suggests that the reason for the prohibition was medical because the operation occasionally caused serious accidents (Bouge 1952: 20).
pour la première offense; pour la seconde, elle fera le double, et ainsi en proportion (Lesson 1839: 441).  

3. The Huahine code of 1822:

XXVII Concerning Marking with Tatau
No Person shall mark with tatau, it shall be entirely discontinued. It belongs to ancient evil customs. The man or woman that shall mark with tatau, if it be clearly proved, shall be tried and punished (Ellis 1967: ii: 435-436).

Tattooed people were punished in two ways. One of these punishments was forced labour. In Huahine code, for a man, “he shall make a piece of road ten fathoms long for the first marking, twenty (fathoms) for the second; or, stone-work, four fathoms long and two wide; if not this, he shall do some other work for the king” (Ellis 1967: ii: 436). For a woman, “she shall make two large mats, one for the king, and one for the governor; or four small mats, for the king two, and for the governor two. If not this, native cloth, twenty fathoms long, and two wide; ten fathoms for the king, and ten for the governor” (ibid.).

The punishment was also imposed on ari’i. Taaroa‘i, the son of the ari’i in Huahine, was tattooed as an expression of disagreement with his father’s conduct and was punished by being ordered to assist in construction work (ibid.: 467-468).

Another punishment for those who continued tattooing was tattooing intended to erase the design by blackening, but which resulted in intensifying it. Ellis mentions that “the man and woman that persist in tatauing themselves successively for four or five times, the figures marked shall be destroyed by blacking them over” (ibid.: 436). Those who tattooed someone were daubed and exposed publicly, as documented by Tyerman and Bennet:

A Youth, not more than sixteen years of age, having been found guilty of attempting to persuade another boy, younger than himself, to be tattooed by him, was sentenced to be daubed from head to foot with black and white. He was then tied to a pole, and carried upon men’s shoulders, before all the inhabitants of the district, to the pier, where, being laid down, the lad whom he had tried to seduce to a heathenish custom was directed to flog him smartly till he begged pardon, and promised to leave off his wicked ways, for this was not the first offence of the kind of which he had been convicted. He was accompanied to and from the place of punishment by a crowd of young folks, who shouted and hooted at him. (Montgomery 1832: ii: 152)

Besides the execution of law, Lesson observed that women in Bora Bora received a mark of tattooing on their forehead for infidelity. Lesson explained:

21 “Everyone who marked or will mark some parts of the body will be forced to work in the extension of road which is not more than 50 brasses, or all the other work for the first offence; for the second offence,
Les qui ont sévèrement défendu le tatouage, font tatouer une certaine marque sur le front des femmes galantes. Il est vrai de dire que cette punition, que M. Orsmond a fait infliger dans l’île de Borabora, a été blâmée par quelques-uns de ses collègues. (Lesson 1839: 443)\(^{22}\)

H.B. Martin (Martin 1981: 126-127) of H. M. S. Grampus also notes that a woman who killed her husband was tattooed with the word “MURDERER” across her face instead of receiving capital punishment.

Although tattooing did not signify wrapping for the missionaries, for Pomare II and many \textit{ari‘i}, I suggest, punishment by blackening or daubing the tattooed bodies could be regarded as another practice of wrapping. Wrapping as an extension of power and wealth, as seen in \textit{taio} partnerships, was reincarnated in the form of double wrappings in this punishment. The aim of these punishments was to visibly indicate that the bodies were controlled by the government and the “true” God, rather than to make the Tahitian bodies untattooed and civilized. Political power rather than religious doctrine was enacted upon the Tahitian bodies.

The overlaying of wrappings was a process of civilization in both senses of double wrapping: that of European cloth and that of punishment. These double wrappings, however, contrasted in their functions. While the wrapping of European cloth signified that Tahitians were incorporated into the Christian and civilized society while holding to Tahitian religious belief, that of punishment secluded those who broke the law from the main society of the colonial state.

Tattooing became a method of punishment as well as the object to be punished. Law, which prohibited tattooing, was ironically inscribed on the bodies of criminals in the form of tattooing, and remained as a mark of the criminal on their bodies. The significance of tattooing for the missionaries, Pomare II, and the \textit{ari‘i} was that they could supersede the function of tattooing and control the bodies of \textit{ra‘atira} and \textit{manahune}. As tattooing regulated \textit{ra‘atira} and \textit{manahune}, tattooing as punishment also regulated the people who believed in the Tahitian religion. New meanings of tattooing as a criminal practice were embodied through physical experience. This embodiment re-contextualized tattooing from religious custom to legal punishment.

\(^{22}\)“The missionaries, who severely prohibited tattooing, tattooed a certain mark on the forehead of prostitutes. It is true to say that this punishment, which Mr. Orsmond did in the island of Borabora, was condemned by some of his colleagues” (my translation).
Tattooing and Resistance

Legal codes constrained the Tahitian bodies, as Pomare II made use of the codes for seeking power by allying with foreign political organizations and religious institutions. Tahitians, however, did not simply let these dominant forces control their bodies. Some Tahitians reacted against this political pressure by using their bodies.

Tahitian religious beliefs were not always secretly hidden, as discussed above. The burning of god figures and the destruction of marae infuriated many people who strongly believed in Tahitian religion by Pomare II and pure-ataua. They took up arms in revenge and to restore the god figures. In 1815, in an especially memorable example, a group of people in Atehuru of Tahiti had a major battle with the army of Pomare, who had declared himself a Christian in 1812 (Davies 1961: 190-193; Ellis 1967: i: 247-259).

The second reaction occurred later among those who had already been converted to Christianity. Those people, who knew enough of both religions to be able to compare the two, disagreed with Christianity but well understood the inefficacy of Tahitian religion. Gunson points out that “such natives were hardly likely to re-embrace the old system entirely, and it is extremely likely that they had accepted certain Christian explanations of things, as being more credible than their own traditional accounts” (Gunson 1962: 211-212). This movement spread among young people who were discontented with strict Christian discipline and legal codes. They went to the mountains and returned to the old way of life. They were called tutae 'auri – Rust of Iron or Arioi. This movement took place in Huahine, Raiatea, and Tahiti. Ellis explains:

It appeared from the declarations of several, that the conduct of the young men, and especially the chiefs’ sons, had not proceeded from any desire to ornament their persons with tatau, but from an impatience of the restraint the laws imposed; that they had merely selected that as a means of shewing their hostility to those laws, and their determination not to regard them. (Ellis 1967: ii: 470)

Gunson suggests that “the negative character of the tutae 'auri movement is clearly seen in the entire rejection of Christian teaching, and the attempt to go even further by mockery and desecration of Christian institutions” (Gunson 1962: 213). As Tahitian religion lost its efficacy in the face of problems associated with the enormous social changes, it was also disclosed to pure-ataua that Christianity could not always solve their problems either.

The distinctive physical appearance of tutae 'auri was tattooing. According to Tyerman and Bennet:
...they had tattooed themselves, which, though harmless in itself, is now contrary to law, as associated with obsolete abominations; by them it was used as a symbol of their dissatisfaction with the better order of things, and a signal for revolt against the existing government. Many of these mal-contents proved to be refugees from other islands, who had resorted hither that they might return to their heathen freedom from religious restraint. (Montgomery 1832: i: 161)

Stripping off European cloth, *tutae auri* abandoned the behaviour constituting the Christian bodies and retrieved the tattooed bodies, which had been embedded in indigenous religion and cosmology. Tattooing revived by *tutae auri*, however, appeared to have had an implication in constructing indigenous identity against the missionaries and the government rather than affirming the wrapping functions of cosmological tattooing such as conserving *mana* and protecting themselves from others' *tapu*.

**Recovering *Ma’ohi Skin - Renaissance of Tattooing***

The geographical border of Tahitian conceptual space had enormously changed since Pomare IV agreed that Tahiti be a protectorate of France overseen by Admiral Dupetit-Thouars in 1842. The other islands in the Society Islands had been gradually included under the control of France. In 1945, the territories officially became “territoire d’outre-mer” and was named “Polynésie française” in 1957.23 A letter sent to the territorial assembly by the minister of France of outre-mer describes the process of naming:

Nous désirons que notre Territoire soit appelé “Tahiti” parce que cette appellation correspond à une notion simple que tout le monde connaît...On a reproché à l’appellation que nous proposons de ne pas comporter l’adjectif “français”. Et pourtant, cet adjectif ne figure pas dans tous les noms des territoires d’outre-mer français (Nouvelle-Calédonie par exemple)... Nous insistons à nouveau pour que l’appellation de “Tahiti” soit adoptée pour notre Territoire, en y adjoignant l’expression “Océanie française”. L’appellation officielle de notre Territoire serait donc “Tahiti- Océanie française”. (Ministère de l’éducation de la Polynésie française 1994: 30)24

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23 *L’Outre-Mer français* consists of four “départements d’outre-mer” (Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique and Réunion), two “collectivités territoriales à statut particulier” (Mayotte and Sant-Pierre-et-Miquelon), four “territoires d’outre-mer” (Nouvelle-Calédonie, Polynésie françaises) and many uninhabited islands (les Iles esparses and l’îlot de Clipperton). D.O.M. (départements d’outre-mer) are organized in the same status as the departments of France. The law and rules of the State are applied to these territories. T.O.M (territoires d’outre-mer) are parts of French national territory, but do not necessarily apply the law of the State. Each territory of outre-mer has autonomy according to the Constitutions of 1958. T.O.M. have local autonomy while D.O. M do not.

24 “We want our Territory be called ‘Tahiti’ because this name corresponds to a simple notion that everybody knows... We criticized the name and we propose not to include the adjective ‘français’. And yet, this adjective does not appear in all the names of French overseas territories (for example, New Caledonia)... We insist again that the name of ‘Tahiti’ be adopted for our Territory, and the expression ‘Océanie française’ is added to it. The official name of our Territory will thus be “Tahiti- Océanie française”” (my translation).
In 1977, French Polynesia gained “l’autonomie de gestion” (administrative autonomy). On September 6, 1984, “l’autonomie interne dans le cadre de la République française” was applied to French Polynesia. French Polynesia has two authorities to exercise the competences: that of the French State and that of the government of Territory. The State serves in the domains, which go with the interest of the nation: army and defence of Territory, in relations with foreign countries, finance, and justice. It also takes charge of the problems concerning nationality, and the control of immigration and foreigners. The Territory takes charge of creation and organization of the territorial administration, the posts and telecommunications, pre-elementary, elementary and secondary education, and administration of territorial domain, determination of sum of tax and import, determination of regulations concerning the price and the external commerce and the quota of importation, the control of weight and measurement, authorization of foreign investment, the code of labour, and support for students (Ministère de l’éducation de la Polynésie française 1994: 32). The status of autonomy has been extended in 1996.

Although the autonomy was consolidated, the islands are still a part of French overseas territory. In the territory, there are five archipelagos: the Society, the Tuamotu, the Marquesas, the Australs, and the Gambier islands. The archipelagos are subdivided into further categories. For instance, the Society is subdivided into the Windwards/ the Leewards. The Windwards consists of Tahiti, Moorea, Maiao, Tetiaroa, and Mehetia; and the Leewards consists of Huahine, Raiatea, Tahaa, Bora Bora, Maupiti, Tupai, Mauhihaa/ Mopelia, Manuia/Scilly, and Motu One/Bellingshausen. The Marquesas is subdivided into the southern islands consisting of Hiva Oa, Tahuata, Fatu Hiva and the northern islands consisting of Nuku Hiva, Ua Huka, Ua Pou. The islands and archipelagos, which had been culturally and ecologically distinguished one from another, comprise territory named “French Polynesia”.

French Polynesia is located 17,100 km from Paris in France, 6,200 km from Los Angeles in the United States, 8,800 km from Tokyo in Japan, 5,700 km from Sydney in Australia, 4,700 km from Noumea in New Caledonia, 3,900 km from Auckland in New Zealand, and 7,500 km from Santiago in Chile. Despite these distances, French Polynesia is not isolated islands in the international arena. Migration is common among French speaking countries such as New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and the Reunion. Some students study English or tourism in Fiji, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia.

25 French Polynesia is situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It consists of 118 islands of which 76 islands are inhabited, scattered between 7 and 28 south and 131 and 156 west.
Many Tahitians have been to Hawaii and the West Coast in the United States for vacation and shopping. France is on the other side of the planet, but there are large numbers of people who move between France and French Polynesia for holiday, education, work, and so forth.

This thesis focuses on tattooing on the island of Tahiti because Tahiti is the place where the most dynamic process of transformation and multiplication of tattooing can be observed. Tahiti, administrative capital and economic center of French Polynesia, is one of the islands of the Windward Island group whose population is 130,000, making it the most populated in the whole territory (74%). Tahiti is intermingled with people from the archipelagos within French Polynesia and from other islands, French administrators,
military personnel, and tourists from all over the world. Although Tahiti is the central place for this study, the thesis attempts to locate Tahiti in relation to the other archipelagos in French Polynesia, Pacific, and the rest of the world.

The ethnic composition of the population has changed along with the political shift. Polynesians, indigenous people in French Polynesia, make up 66% of the population. Europeans (popa’a) are 12% of the population. Many of them are French people (farani) who are sent to French Polynesia for a few years as government officials, teachers, and military personnel. Chinese (tinito) make up 5% of the population. The first Chinese immigration started in 1856 for the plantation of sugar cane. Chinese have succeeded in commerce in French Polynesia. Demi, half cast Polynesians, Europeans, and Chinese, occupy 17% of population. They often have high education and social status in Tahitian society.

There is an undeniable, almost one and a half century absence of tattooing in Tahitian history. I assume two reasons for this. First, Christianity was so powerfully permeated in Tahitian faith that tattooing was not practiced or even if it was, in a hidden way. Second, supposing that tattooing was practiced even underground among a few people, the practice might have been rarely considered to be worth documenting in any

26 Popa’a means “burned (by sun and sea salt)”.
ethnography because they were more personal practices rather than social/institutional ones.

Fig.1.3 Demi Edgar (left) and Tahitian Rau.

Tattooing began on the streets and in prison in Tahiti in the 1970s. These tattoos were mostly western designs (the so-called “old school style” such as heart, cross, and rose in the tattoo world), and were considered by most people in Tahiti as a mark of convicts and prostitutes.

The revival of a “traditional” style of tattooing occurred with the cultural revitalization movement in Tahiti in the 1970s and 1980s when modernization and urbanization in Tahiti were undertaken by mass migration from the remote islands and from outside French Polynesia to Papeete due to the installation of nuclear testing facilities and an international airport in Faa’a.²⁷ By facing these social changes, many

²⁷ Several distinguished personalities led these cultural movements. Henri Hiro, who completed his degree in theology in France, returned to Tahiti and realized he had to regain Tahitian spirituality and way of life. Henri Hiro wrote many poems and plays, which enchanted Tahitian life harmonized with nature, family, and ancestors. Henri Hiro did not only express nostalgia for the past, but also indicated the pride of being ma‘ohi in the contemporary Tahiti and the possibility of living with ma‘ohi-ness in this changing world. His words and way of living aroused empathy from young people and made them engage passionately with dance and artisan activities. For Young Tahitians, being ma‘ohi, knowing how to carve wood, stone, how to plait coconut fibre, how to do canoeing, and how to dance are highly respected things to do. Tattooing is one of these activities and practiced by young Tahitians. In the other archipelagos, for instance, the Marquesas, the cultural revitalization and the foundation of Motu Haka took place later. I explain this in Chapter Five.
Tahitians came to recognize French colonialism and their cultural differences.\textsuperscript{28} They began urging for independence from France and asserting cultural identity to demarcate \textit{ma'ohi} land and people from France. The cultural revitalization movement and the independence movement, thus, emerged from the rejection and contestation of French culture and the desire to regain an indigenous past. The custom and practice particular to their land were regarded as essential to be \textit{ma'ohi}.\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Te reo Maohi}, Tahitian language started being taught at school.

Le Service de l’Artisanat Traditionnel was founded and has been promoting artisans to establish associations and maintain their skills and knowledge of “traditional” activities such as carving wood, stone, bone and mother-of-pearl, plaitsing coconut fibre, pandanus; physical activities such as dancing, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. Body decoration such as wearing pareu, ornamenting with shell or bone carved accessories, and tattooing have been re-acknowledged in the ethnic identity formation. Many

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Fig. 1.4 Narii.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig1.5}
\caption{Fig. 1.5 Ellis.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{28} The population of Papeete is 25,553, but many people who work in Papeete live in Faa’a (25,888), Pirae (13,974) and Arue (8,899). The population of French Polynesia is 224,340 (Institut Territorial de la Statistique: 1998).
\textsuperscript{29} The term \textit{ma'ohi} has a linguistic genealogy with Maori in New Zealand, which provokes the cultural and political connections with other Pacific islands. Many Tahitians define \textit{ma'ohi} as “Polynesian”. As
tattooists now belong to the artisan associations and tattoo at Marché, Fare Artisanat, and at expositions. Besides tattooing, many tattooists have other skills such as carving, plaiting coconut fibre, dancing, and playing *pahu*.

![Fig. 1.6 Patrick.](image)

Tattooing resumed as a part of the cultural revitalization movement in the early 1980s. Tavana Salmon, half-Tahitian and half-Norwegian, led Tahitians to the recognition of Polynesian dance and fire walking through a search for his cultural origins. Teve, a Marquesan from Nuku Hiva, also became conscious of his Marquesan identity and wanted to be tattooed in the way that Marquesan warriors did. As there was no one who could tattoo the ancient motifs with traditional tools in Tahiti, Tavana and Teve went to Samoa and were tattooed by a Samoan tattooist. As Teve was a dancer of *Ia Ora Na Tahiti* and was elected as Tane Tahiti (Mr. Tahiti contest), his embodying *ma'ohi* identity attracted many Tahitians and led them to get tattooed. Tavana invited Samoan tattooists to *Heiva*, an annual Festival in Tahiti, from 1982 to 1985 who made the traditional style of tattoos on the body of many Tahitians. Tavana himself took traditional tools and tattooed many people. Apart from the negative image associated with criminals and prostitutes, tattooing representing *ma'ohi* identity has gradually become a major part of body decoration by a large population of Tahiti.

Elliston suggests, *ma'ohi* cultural revitalization was promoted by what happened across the Pacific in the 1980s. See Chapter Four for more detailed analysis of this term.

I discuss “Mr. Tahiti contest” in more detail in Chapter Five.
Tattooing by traditional tools was banned in 1986 for hygienic reasons. A remodelled razor was invented as a new tool of tattooing and prevailed among young local Tahitians. Tattooing then became easier and more accessible to non-artisan Tahitians. Today many people who do not call themselves tattooists make tattoos either on their own body or others’ by hand or by remodelled razor. These people tattoo their brothers, cousins, friends, and neighbours on the streets or at the house. Many full-time tattooists also start tattooing with their friends and relatives. When they are beginners, they tattoo for free or in exchange for bottles of *Hinano*, for packets of *Bison* or for a very cheap price such as CPF 5,000 for tattooing a whole arm. They do not earn their living by tattooing, but do it mostly as a pastime. Normally they have another job and tattoo only on weekends or when they are spending their idle time with their male friends.

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31 Reymond Graffe also learned tattooing with traditional tools and he also tattooed many local Tahitians.
32 They are called “cobaye” – guinea pig. I discuss this issue in Chapter Three.
33 CPF5,000 was equivalent to AUS70 and US$50 in 2000. *Hinano* is local beer. *Bison* is imported Dutch tobacco leaves, which is the most popular among Tahitians because it is the cheapest and the strongest (according to them).
Many Tahitians acquire their first tattoos at school by hand-pricking one another.  
These tattoos are often simple designs such as three dots - "flic de mort", a heart, their initials, or those of their boyfriend or girlfriend. Later, they come to professional tattooists to modify or cover up these marks. The most common reason for having the hand-pricked tattoos is that they have nothing else to do and are *fiiu* (bored). They sometimes have alcohol or *pakalolo* (marijuana) before and during pricking. They are scolded by parents and regret it later because it is usually done badly and is not aesthetically appealing.

![Mano tattooing Colla.](image)

Professional tattooing has been developed in close relation with tourism. Since Faa’a International Airport opened in Tahiti in 1960, Tahiti has become a popular holiday destination, and tourism is one of the major industries for French Polynesia. Approximately 190,000 tourists visit French Polynesia per year. Artisans have been producing not only "traditional" crafts and art, which represent and consolidate their ma’ohi identity, but those that appeal more to the tourist market. Tattooists also respond to tourists’ demands. With the popularity of tattooing elsewhere in the world, tourists, French military personnel, and gendarmes who spend their time in Tahiti get tattooed as

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34 Rose, who came to cover up her old hand-picking tattoo at Thierry’s stand, explains that on her eighteenth birthday, Thierry’s wife, another friend, and she got together and tattooed each other by hand. Thierry’s wife tattooed her. When I asked her why so many people tattooed like that, she said it is “*laisir*”.
a souvenir of their stay. Many tattooists have abandoned remodelled razors for hygienic as well as for aesthetic reasons. *Ma'ohi* identity formation is now largely engaged with tourism and the globalization of tattoo culture.

As tattooing became popular, many tattooists started working full-time. Their charge is often higher than those working at the residence or on the streets, as they need to pay the rent for the salon or the stand, the imported tools and materials, gloves and creams, and utilities for sterilization. An increasing numbers of Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists started participating in international tattoo conventions in Europe (Berlin and Paris conventions are popular) and U.S. They also work at their friends’ tattooist salons in Europe (often in France). As Tahitian tattooists travel abroad and observe tattooing in America and Europe; read American and French tattoo magazines; and receive visits from foreign tattooists and tattoo magazine journalists at their work places, they have started acknowledging the wide range of expression possible with European and American machines and pigments.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated the history of Tahitian tattooing along with social transformation of the island. In the pre- and early contact periods, Tahitian tattooing was embedded in the *tapu* system and social stratification. The *tapu* system and Tahitian social structure were transformed through interaction with European explorers and missionaries. Tattooing was continuously re-contextualized in social situations as it underwent transformation. Tahitian chiefdom declined and the *tapu* system and Arioi society also lost efficacy. After missionaries suppressed tattooing in the 1820s, there were both rejection and affirmation of the practice for some time but in the end, tattooing was basically abandoned. In the 1970s, European design started being tattooed in prison and on the streets. In the 1980s, as a part of the cultural revitalization movement, there was a revival of Tahitian and Marquesan styles of tattoo. Since then, many Tahitians have been tattooed in the Tahitian or Marquesan style to mark their cultural identity. Many tourists get tattooed as a souvenir of their stay in the islands as well as for the global fashion of ethnic tattooing.

Contemporary Tahitian tattooing is not for controlling *tapu* or for rites of passage. There is discontinuity between the early contact and the contemporary practices of tattooing. However, I argue that as tattooing was embedded in the socio-cultural system in the early European contact period, Tahitians reconnect their contemporary practice of tattooing with the values in the contexts of gender differentiation, cultural revitalization,
tourism, and social relationships. In the following chapters, therefore, I elicit ethnic and cultural identity formation in the complexity of Tahitian society under the dynamic process of globalization and localization, and how the past becomes a part of the present.
Chapter Two

Practice and Form

As I have shown in Chapter One, there is discontinuity in the history of Tahitian tattooing because the practice that was observed in the early contact period was displaced by the revived tattooing which is embedded in the context of youth culture, gender relationships, modernity, and prison culture. Young Tahitian tattooists are learning the “traditional” way of tattooing and motifs, and also introducing non-Tahitian technique and tattoo designs and styles into their tattooing.

Therefore, this thesis intends to study any tattooing practice and tattoo forms observed in Tahiti today. It focuses on Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists and tattooed people, but also French military personnel and tourists from any parts of the world because they are tattooed in Tahiti. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, it is impossible to study “contemporary Tahitian tattooing” without analysing past practice, the relationship with the rest of the world, and that with non-Tahitian people.

The significant questions resulting from the discontinuity and displacement of Tahitian tattooing and Tahitian appropriation of non-Tahitian tattooing are: what is “contemporary Tahitian tattooing”? How important is it for Tahitians to distinguish their tattooing from other tattooing? How do Tahitians conceptualize and practice the non-Tahitian tattooing? How do Tahitians define “Tahitian tattooing” among various practices and forms available to them?

Although the practice and form are invented, imported from outside Tahiti, and interpreted into contemporary social contexts, it is not the situation that globalization and ethnic cultural movement has taken over contemporary Tahitian tattooing. Young Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists and tattooed people differentiate the practice and forms from one other, and actively make a choice according to the local and global aesthetic and moral assessments. The close analysis of the practice and form of tattooing discloses the nature of contemporary development of Tahitian tattooing and their localization of globalized cultural activities. Contemporary Tahitian tattooing becomes a product of the dialogue between “tradition” and “modernity”, “localization” and
“globalization”, and “Tahitians” and “non-Tahitians”. I examine in detail how Tahitians manipulate the practice and form in different social contexts in latter chapters, but in this chapter I introduce basic characteristics of practice of tattooing and tattoo forms.

**Practice of Tattooing**

European explorers, traders, and missionaries who visited Tahiti from the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, were interested in tattoos on the Tahitian body. They observed, sketched, and documented tattoo form and its location on the body. They were also fascinated by the tools, pigment, and method of tattooing. For instance, James Morrison explains:

> The Instruments used for the Tattowing are made of Hogs tusks fixed to a handle in form of a hoe, the Instruments being of different sizes having from 3 to 36 teeth about one eighth of an inch long; these they strike in with a little Paddle made for the Purpose. When they Tattow or Puncture the skin they dip the teeth of the Instrument into a Mixture of Soot (prepared from the Candle Nut) & Water, which being Struck in to the skin leaves the Mark of a Black or Blueish Colourn. (1935: 220-221)

Joseph Banks, who travelled with Captain Cook, observed the practice of tattooing as follows:

> The colour use is lamp black which they prepare from the smoak of a kind of oily nutts usd by them instead of cocoa nut shells and mixt with water occasionaly for use. Their instruments for pricking this under the skin are made of Bone or shell, flat, the lower part of this is cut into sharp teeth from 3 to 20 according to the purposes it is to be usd for and the upper fastned to a handle. These teeth are dipped into the black liquor and then drove by quick sharp blows struck upon the handle with a stick for that purpose into the skin so deep that every stroke is followed by a small quantity of Blood, or serum at least, and the part so markd remains sore for many days before it heals. (Beaglehole 1962: i: 336)\(^1\)

Forster also documents:

> Both sexes have many marks on their skin, made by puncturing the part with a toothed instrument of bone, dipt into lamp black and water, and by this method they imprint marks which are indelible for life...The toothed instrument is called Eoowee-tataou; a spatula of wood, with which they constantly stir the black colour, and on one end of which they have contrived a kind of small club of the thickness of a finger, is the second instrument employed on this occasion; with the small club they give repeated gentle strokes on the toothed instrument, in order to make it pierce the skin. This spatula is called Tataê, and the black colour araboa- tattâou. (Forster 1778: 557)\(^2\)

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\(^1\) See Cook’s description in Beaglehole (1968: 125).

\(^2\) Samuel Wallis also observes, “These marks were made by striking the teeth of an instrument, somewhat like a comb, just through the skin, and rubbing into the punctures a kind of paste made of soot and oil, which leaves an indelible stain” (Hawkesworth 1785[1773]: 341).
Forster picked up the name of the toothed tool as “Eoñwee –Tataou”, which might be “auri tatau” - tattoo needle. Tahitian tattooists now call the tattoo needle “nira”, which is derived from English “needle”. The tattoo ink “araboà tattou” might be “arahu tatau”, which means “tattoo charcoal”.

According to these descriptions, the tool was made of bone or shell of animals; pigment was prepared from burned candlenut that was diluted with water [Fig. 2.1]. The tattooists put this pigment into a coconut bowl, dipped the teeth into pigment, placed it on the skin, and tapped it on the handle of the tool with a stick.

![Fig. 2.1 Traditional tools.](image)

Tattooing tools and pigment have been transformed from those that Banks and other explorers observed in the nineteenth century. Three kinds of tattooing tools are used in contemporary tattooing. First, the traditional tools are reproduced by modelling the bone/shell/wood made tools, documented in the journals and logs that I explained above, and used by a couple of contemporary Tahitian tattooists. The bar with a needle is called “peigne (comb)” and the tapping bar is called “marteau (hammer)” in French.
Lines marked by the traditional tools tend to be thicker and the comb is inserted deeper than the needle of the later tools. The tattoo made by the traditional method sometimes had a special effect so as to become a scar with the depth of the line and filling one can observe in Maori *moko*.

When Polynesian style tattooing was revived in the 1980s, there was no tattooist who could tattoo with the traditional tools in French Polynesia. Thus, as I explained in Chapter One, when Tavana Salmon and Teve decided to get tattooed, they went to Samoa and were tattooed by a Samoan tattooist. In the 1980s, several tattooists such as Tavana Salmon, Rayment Graffe, and Chimé tattooed with the traditional tools, but stopped in 1986 because of the risk of blood transmission diseases. In the late 1990s, young Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists who had been tattooing with other modern tools reasserted the cultural value of the traditional tools. They attempted to reproduce the traditional tools and some of them started practicing tattooing with them.

After the prohibition of tattooing with traditional tools by the Tahitian Minister of Health in 1986, the remodelled razor was invented, which is made from a travelling razor and functions with batteries [Figs. 2.2 and 2.3]. The blade is detached from the top of the razor, and then a needle is fixed to a wooden tooth pick with a thread attached to the razor. Batteries are used where electricity is unavailable, but the razor is connected to electricity if the tattooing session takes a long time. The remodelled razor became popular among young Tahitians between the 1980s and the late 1990s as travelling razors are easily purchased at the local shops at an affordable price (around CPF5,000).³ While the hygiene of the traditional tools remains problematic even it is washed each time after use, the needle of the remodelled razor can be easily detached and discarded after each tattoo session. As a single sewing needle is normally used, the expression of the remodelled razor is fine and detailed, but filling takes longer with this tool. The motifs tattooed with the remodelled razor tend to be smaller than those employing the traditional tools.

³ CPF5,000 is about AU$70 and US$50.
Tattoo machines were introduced into the Tahitian tattooing scene in the 1980s for the first time by a European tattooist and later spread among Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists. They became popular among many full-time tattooists in the late 1990s. There are various models of tattoo machines, but the basic structure is that two machine coils are generally fixed by two metallic machine frames and a needle tube is connected.
to it. A needle bar, a long metal attached to the needles on the top goes through the needle tube. The motor makes swift up and down movements, which enable the rapid needle movements to enter the skin. Machine tattooing is faster than remodelled razor tattooing because of the speed of the motor and the different numbers of needles the tattooist can attach to the machine. It is also easier for the tattooists to work with the machine as they can hold the tube in the same way that they would a pen. The tattooists order machines by mail from France, UK, Holland, and the USA. They also ask friends and family who travel overseas to purchase a machine for them. Some tattooists rebuild a machine by using the parts of old ones. The tattooists use machines to work on both Polynesian and non-Polynesian styles.

Needles affect the expression and the result of tattooing. The pricking part of the traditional tool consists of several flat projections. Thus, the numbers of projections and the sizes vary. The needle of the remodelled razor is normally a single sewing needle. The tattooing machine users often apply various types of needles. A round needle, which consists of three or more needles together in a round shape, is usually used as a liner. A flat needle is made of five to seven needles, lying two needles in front and three at the back in the case of five flat; three in front and four in back in the case of seven flat. The flat needle is applied for filling and shading. The needles are soldered to the top of needle bars after they have been made into the round or flat shape. The needles are put into a medical plastic bag and sterilized [Figs. 2.4 - 2.6].

The drawing ink, Rotring (China ink) is the most popularly used in French Polynesia. The black ink of Rotring becomes greenish black when it is tattooed on the skin. Full-time tattooists often use tattoo inks produced by the tattoo supplier companies. Its black ink is darker then that of Rotring, and is called “noir-noir (black-black)” by some tattooists to distinguish it from greenish black of Rotring. The colour of traditional Polynesian tattoo ink made with burned candlenut was greenish black, so some people consider tattooing with Rotring ink realizes more authentic colours of Polynesian tattooing. Yet, tattoo ink has been increasingly popular for tattooing both Polynesian and non-Polynesian styles. Some tattooists mix Rotring ink with tattoo ink.

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4 Some tattooists attach a bullet-pen tube to the remodelled razor machine to achieve the same effect.
The ink turns into different colours according to the colours of the skin. Tahitian tattooists advise those who have a darker skin not to tattoo colours, but instead to be tattooed in Polynesian or tribal designs in black tattoo ink. For instance, a Tahitian who
works at the black pearl farm in Tuamotu came to Tahiti on vacation and saw a tattooist
to get a coloured dragon, but the tattooist advised him to have the design tattooed in
black because he was tanned well by working outside for long hours every day. Tahitian
tattooists also know that colour inks turn into different effects according to the skin
colours. The tattooists, who tattoo Euro-American or Japanese designs, like to tattoo on
a fair skin because the colours remain on the skin almost as they originally are.

There are three ways that tattooists place the tattoo design on the skin. Firstly, the
tattooists use carbon paper to transfer the design from the paper to the skin [Figs. 2.9
and 2.10]. They draw the design on the tracing paper, retrace it onto the carbon paper,
sometimes cut into the shape of the design, and place it on the skin, which is made
moist with a deodorant cream. This method enables both tattooists and the tattooed
people to check the size of the design and its location on the body, and to change
it if the design or its location is not appropriate. It is an effective way of reproducing exactly the
same design and size as drawn on the paper. The tattooists can enlarge or reduce the
design using a photocopying machine. It also enables the tattooists to produce a
perfectly symmetrical design by folding a paper in two.

Fig. 2.7 Drawing a design with pen.

Another method tattooists use is to draw the tattoo design on the body with a pen
before tattooing [Fig. 2.7]. The advantage of this method is the same as the above, but
the design can be unique while the traced design can be used for many different people.\textsuperscript{5} This method also enables the tattooists to place the design and motifs with reference to the shape and movement of the body for each person. For instance, the big lizard design tattooed on the back was drawn by pen before tattooing. The head of the lizard was designed to move when the bearer moved his shoulder [Fig. 2.8].

The final method is to directly tattoo the design on the body. The tattooists and the tattooed person discuss what the design or style would be, and put the needle on the body without any marking on the skin. This method is often applied when the tattooed person trusts in the tattooist and lets him tattoo what and how he wants. While some tattooists call the last two ways “free-hand”, others consider that only the third is the real “free-hand”.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{lizard_tattoo}
\caption{A big lizard on the back.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{5} I discuss the issue of reproduction /copying in more detail in Chapter Four.
Four techniques are used in contemporary Tahitian tattooing: outlining (tracage/tracer), blackening or filling (remplissage/remplir), shadowing or shading (ombre/degrader), and colouring. Outlining and filling are basic techniques of tattooing and were also used in the pre- and early contact period. Outlining is the first
process of tattooing. It involves shaping the design and motif, or bordering the sections of block. For European grey designs, the tattooists do not outline, but shape the design by shading. Filling involves blackening the areas that are separated by outlines. Polynesian tattooing consists of contrasts between the areas that are filled in black and those are not.

Shading and colouring are techniques that have been introduced into Tahitian tattooing from European and Japanese tattooing. Tattoo design is shaded by flat needles in ink that is diluted with water. Through shading, the design is given a three-dimensional effect. The design is also coloured in the same way as by filling in black ink. Some tattooists use dotting to make similar three-dimensional effects such as shading.

The tattooists prepare drawings, photography, flashes, and/or use tattoo magazines, to give the clients ideas of tattoo design and style. Many tattooists spend their spare time drawing tattoo designs, which are then photocopied and filed into folders to prevent the original from being damaged or stolen. They often draw a series of different versions of, for example, turtles on a sheet of paper, manta ray on another sheet of paper, and so forth, so that clients can seek a particular design (animals, tiki, etc), or shape (armband, oval, necklace, string, etc).

Photographs of the tattoos that have been made previously are also used as a sample design/style. These give more precise images of the tattoo as it will appear when positioned on a particular part of the body than drawing. The clients can also check the technical proficiency of the tattooist, such as straightness of line and smoothness of filling. The photographs are filed in a holder or put up on the wall or on the board.

Some Tahitian tattooists use flash cards for the same reason. These are a set of designs printed on an A4 sized sheet, which were often drawn by renowned tattooists and sold through tattoo equipment suppliers. The designs include ones such as dragon, samurai, North-American Indians, hearts and roses, cobra, wolf, lion, eagle, Celtic, tribal, and so forth. Flash are generally put up on the walls of the salon or stand so that the clients can look at and discuss them with the tattooists. Many tattooists also file the Flash or the photocopy of them in a folder.
Tattooists have tattoo books and magazines, which are also used to give the clients an idea of possible tattoo designs. *Tatouage magazine* published in France was the most popularly distributed among Tahitian tattooists [Fig. 2.11]. American magazines such as *Skin & Ink, Savage,* and *International Tattoo Magazine* are also purchased by the tattooists or their friends when they are overseas. Besides using them as a sample, the tattooists study the design and styles that are tattooed outside Tahiti and introduce them into their tattooing.

**Form of Tattoos**

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the tattoos that had already been on the body were observed and documented more frequently by European explorers and missionaries than the process of making them. They were observed on almost every part of the body: the chest, the back, the arm, legs, toes, hands, ankles, the instep and joints of finger, the neck, the throat, the hand, and the ears. Yet, Tahitians were rarely tattooed on the face while the face was one of the significant locations to be tattooed in the Marquesan and Maori cases. Yet, there were a few exceptions. For instance, Tyerman and Bennet documented in Huahine that the last priest “at the murderous shrine of the
god of war” (may be ‘Oro cult) had facial tattoos (Montgomery1832: i: 76). Tattoos were also documented on Tahitian women’s chins and on warriors’ and priests’ foreheads (Henry 1928: 288). Sydney Parkinson, the artist of Cook’s voyage of the Endeavour, sketched the tattooing both on the buttocks [Fig. 2.12] and on the face of Tahitians [Fig. 2.13].

Tahitian tattoo in the pre- and early contact period consisted of geometric and figurative motifs and designs. The choice of tattoo design depended upon “the humour of each individual” (Beaglehole 1962: i: 335-337 and 1968:125) except tattoo for Arioi, high-ranking people, and for indication of maturity (on buttocks and armpit).

The tattoos on the buttocks were documented and sketched by several observers when the bearers were on the beach or on the ship. Forster, for instance, describes as follows:

The arches which they design on the buttocks obtain the name of avâree; the parts which are one mass of black on the buttocks are named toumârro, and the arches which are thus designed on the buttocks of their females, and are honourable marks of their puberty, are called toto-boôwa: the priests are the only persons entitled to perform these operations, and are paid for their trouble in cloth, fowls, fish, and after the natives had obtained European commodities, in nails and beads. (Forster 1778: 557)

Fig. 2.12 Tattoos on buttocks.
Morrison also reports on the tattoo on the buttocks:

With this the Hips of Both sexes are Markd with four or five Arched lines on each side, the Uper-most taking the whole sweep of the Hip from the Hip bone to the middle of the Back where the two lines Meet on one, which is drawn right a Cross from one hip bone to the other and on this all the other lines begin and end; under this Center line are generally four or five more, sweeping downwards, but Most Weomen have that blackd all over with the Tattowing – but evry one pleases their own fancy in the Number of lines or the Fashion of them, some making only one broad one while others have 5 or 6 small ones ornamented with stars & sprigs & c. (Morrison 1935: 221)6

As for the tattoos on the rest of the body, the tattoo form was manifested in more various ways. Tahitian tattoo motifs and designs were often figurative and geometric. Ruth Greiner categorizes tattoo designs and motifs observed as a summary of Ellis’ tattoo description (Greiner 1923: 82) as follows: 7

1) Angular geometric designs: straight lines, square, crescents, lozenges, figure “Z”, zigzag, stars (See also Bank [Beaglehole 1962: i: 335-337]; Cook [Beaglehole 1968: 125]; Ellis

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6 George Robertson, a master of Dolphin, writes, “They have a very particular custom in this county which is this at the age of sixteen they paint all the men’s thighs Black, and soon after paint curoeus figures on their legs and Arms, and the Ladys seems not to exceed the age of twelve or thirteen when they go through that operation” (1973: 211). Cook describes, “all agree in having all their buttocks cover’d with a deep black, over this most have arches drawn one over an[other as high as their short ribs which are near a quarter of an Inch broad” (Beaglehole 1968: 125). Samuel Wallis notes that “it was here a universal custom both for men and women to have the hinder part of their thighs and loins marked very thick with black lines in various forms” (Hawkesworth 1785[1773]: 314).

7 I also make reference to writers who observed the designs and motifs corresponding to Greiner’s categories.
The institution of Arioi, which I explained in Chapter One, had unique tattoos of which eight grades were distinguished, as follows (Henry 1928: 234-235):

1) **Avae parai** (besmeared legs) or **Arioi maro ‘ura** (comedians of the red loin girdle) were tattooed completely black from the feet up to the groin.

2) **Harotea** (light-print) and filigree bars crosswise on both sides of the body from the armpits downwards towards the front.

3) **Taputu** or **haaputu** (pile-together) had diversified curves and lines radiating upwards towards the sides from the lower end of the dorsal column to the middle of the back.

4) **Otiore** (unfinished) had light prints on their knuckles and wrists and heavier ones on their arms and shoulders. **Hua** (small) had two or three small points upon each shoulder.

5) **Atoro** (stripe) had one small stripe down the left side.

6) **Ohe-mara** (seasoned-bamboo) had a circle round the ankle.

7) **Tara-tutu** (pointed-thorn) had small marks in the hollow of the knees.

8) **Tara-tutu** (pointed-thorn) had small marks in the hollow of the knees.

The lower grades of Arioi had smaller tattoos. The higher they were promoted, the more heavily tattooed they were. In addition to the tattoos from the previous grades, the high grade of Arioi became heavily tattooed. When Darwin visited Tahiti in 1835, he observes, “Many of the elder people had their feet covered with small figures, so placed as to resemble a sock. This fashion, however, is partly gone by, and has been succeeded by others”, which seemed to be the tattooing of high grade Arioi (Darwin 1905: 414).

There are two types of tattoo forms, one-design and block. Block tattoo consists of more than one motif covering a substantial area of the body. The one-design tattoo has only one motif/design and leaves more space on the body. Most Tahitian tattoos were linear and/or one-design tattoos. The exception was buttock tattooing and high grade Arioi tattooing, which covered a large part of the body. None the less Tahitian tattooing
did not occupy the body to the extent of Marquesan tattooing which was whole body
tattooing, Samoan which covered hips and thighs, and Maori which covered the entire
face in male tattooing. Many people often possessed more than one tattoo, but each
tattoo was self-contained and maintained space between tattoos [Figs. 2.14 - 2.17].

Fig. 2.14 Chiefs.

Fig. 2.15 The tattooed Tahitian.

The style and design vary in contemporary Tahitian tattooing as I will show later,
but there are basically only two types. Before choosing a particular design and style,
contemporary Tahitian tattooists discuss with the tattooees whether they want a
one-design tattoo or block tattoo. If the client is a woman or non-Polynesian tourist, the
tattooists automatically consider that the client wants a one-design tattoo or in the case
of block, it would be likely to be a band (arm, brace, wrest). Block tattoos are found on
the leg, arm, shoulder, back, hips, and thigh. They are tattooed in Marquesan style, and
Tahitian tattooists call it *le style polynésien* or *le style local*. 
In the case of block tattoo, there are often main motifs such as figurative animals or tiki, and many tattooists first mark the space that they tattoo and locate these main motifs in the space. However, the main motifs, even representational ones, are always considered in relationship with other motifs, and are connected to or organised in relationship to other motifs. For example, a big oval on the calf [Fig 2.18] consists of two big tiki's faces: one tiki above has oval eyes shaded with dots and a half-circled nose; another tiki, below and upside-down, has Marquesan ipu motif eyes and a nose with two nostrils. Two tiki share the same mouth. Besides these tiki, the small side-faced tiki are located in the middle of both right and left sides of the oval. When the tattoo is looked at from upside down, these small tiki faces become the nose and mouth of another two big side-faced tiki, which share the eyes of the big ipu eyed tiki. Tattooists often use compositional techniques in which motifs are interrelated in complex ways with some representations sharing elements in common.
Categories of Tattoo Form

Tahitians, especially tattooists and tattooed people, differentiate tattoo forms by different categorical terms such as style, design, and motif. The use of these terms sometimes varies according to the tattooists and tattooed people, but I attempt to tease out the general use of these terms in the following section.

9 Motif and design is /ho'ot'a in Tahitian.
1) Motif

Motifs are minimum components of tattoo, referring to Tahitian and Marquesan elements. A motif is related to another motif, and some of them appear in repetition. Even figurative motif needs to be considered in relation to other motifs. They are often geometric forms, which are circles, ovals, triangles, lines, lineal forms, curves, and curvilinear forms. There are also figurative motifs consisting of two or more such geometric elements, representing a manta ray, a whale, any body parts of tiki, a turtle, a lizard, wave, sun, human beings, and so forth. Motifs are usually defined by geographical categories such as Tahitian, Marquesan, Samoan, and Maori. Motifs are also categorized into those that were tattooed in the pre-contact period (le motif traditionnel or le motif ancien), those have been created after the 1980s revival (le motif local, le motif polynésien/ tahitien/ ma’ohi), and those which have been imported from outside French Polynesia (le motif européen).

The tattooists study the meaning of motifs in books and explain it to the clients, particularly non-Polynesian clients. Many Tahitians already know or are not really interested in the meaning of the motif. The same geometric motifs often have different meanings according to the arrangements. For instance, triangles horizontally placed in a line are considered as “shark’s teeth” [Fig. 2.19]. They can be blackened, remain unfilled, or filled with lines. Sixty degree of equilateral triangle is the most popular, but they are also tattooed with a more acute angle at the top (A tattooist explained it as “marlin’s teeth”). If one line of the triangle is longer than the other, these triangles are referred to as “wave”. If the triangles are vertically located, they are considered as a “spear”.

Most figurative motifs are the “ancient” Marquesan motifs. Manta ray motif has big arched wings spreading to the left and right hand sides, and a pentagonal shape of a tail. The head is a croissant shaped element located between two wings [Figs. 2.19 and 2.23]. The whale motif represents the side body of the animal. It has a long oval shape, but the ends are slightly pointed. There is a mouth and an eye on one end and a tail on the other end. Its back is formed with two spirals [Fig. 2.19]. Lizard and turtle motifs are similar. Their body is a long oval with a small head on one end and a tail on the other in the case of the lizard, and no tail in the case of the turtle. Four paws are shaped in a Marquesan curvilinear shape [Fig. 2.24]. The other Marquesan motifs are also popularly used [Figs. 2.20 - 2.22].

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10 See Ottino-Garanger’s work (1998) for the explanation and meaning of each Marquesan motif.
Fig. 2.19 *Le style modern* with Marquesan motifs.

Fig. 2.20 Marquesan motifs.
Fig. 2.21 Marquesan motifs.

Fig. 2.22 Marquesan motifs.

Fig. 2.23 Marquesan manta ray motif.
2) Design

While motifs are related to other motifs, designs exist on their own. They are possibly interrelated with other designs, but this is not necessary as a compositional requirement. Design is often figurative and refers to non-Polynesian tattooing. Design defines what the tattoo is about, and is ambiguously replaced by motif and style. Figurative designs that are popularly tattooed in Tahiti, are shark, lizard, turtle, manta ray, string ray, dolphin, scorpion, tiki, hibiscus, tiare tahiti, coconut tree, casse-tête (headache), and oar. Most figurative designs are sea animals. Design also signifies the shape of these animals and objects, in which motifs are filled.

Hibiscus is one of the most popular designs among women [Figs. 2.25 and 2.26], but men also get tattooed with it [Fig. 2.27]. It is tattooed in a realistic manner either in colours or black, and is often coordinated with le style tribal. The most popular design is with the hibiscus in the center and decorative elements in le style tribal on each side. Women choose hibiscus because “it is a beautiful and local flower”. However, this does not apply to all the flower designs. While hibiscus is popular, another flower, which is also considered typical of Tahiti, tiare Tahiti or pitate is rarely tattooed.
Fig. 2.25 Hibiscus with tribal and local style.

Fig. 2.26 Hibiscus with tribal style.
Two 84

2.27 Hibiscus

is the central motif of contemporary Tahitian tattooing, derives
Marquesan tattooing [Figs. 2.28 - 2.31]. Tiki in Marquesan and ti’i in Tahitian, is a
Polynesian god figure. While tiki was one of the main designs in the ancient Marquesan
tattooing, tiki was not tattooed much in the ancient Tahitian tattooing. As I have shown
in Chapter One, ti’i was a more shapeless figure in Tahitian cosmology. Contemporary
Tahitian tattoo designs often include tiki because of the dominance of Marquesan motifs.
Tiki is considered as a guardian deity by contemporary Tahitian tattooists and tattooed
people.

Fig. 2.27 Hibiscus with tribal style.
Tiki itself is a motif, but the body parts of tiki, such as arm, eye, nose, mouth, and ear are dissected as tattoo motifs, and each body part is believed to protect the tattooed person with a particular function. For example, tiki eyes watch out and a tiki nose smells out an enemy coming. Tahitian tattooists have developed their concept of tiki and familiarized tiki by tattooing them. Lucien Kimitete, a mayor of the island Nuku Hiva, states:

Aujourd’hui, les gens ne croient plus au pouvoir des tikis. Je pense qu’un objet qui a été objet de culte pour une personne, une famille, ou une tribu, reçoit toujours une quantité exceptionnelle de magnétisme, de force. Qu’on y croit ou pas, moi je dis que cette force, elle peut être là quand on l’invoque. Je crois au pouvoir exceptionnel que peut représenter un tiki. (Agniel 1998: 126) 11

Tiki is considered as a motif, but also as a design. Tiki as a design is often tattooed in a realistic way [Figs. 2.28 and 2.31]. In the domain of art and crafts in French Polynesia, tiki appears in wood sculpture (Marquesan), stone carving (Marquesan/Tahitian), mother-of-pearl carving (Tahitian/ Tuamotu) and T-shirt and pendants and so on. Tiki as a design is often tattooed in the form of those tiki

11 “Today people no longer believe the power of tiki. I think that the object which had been the object of the cult for a person, family, or tribe, always receives exceptional quantity of magnetics and power.
represented in sculpture and carving, which have a head, body, arms, and legs. Some tattooists express *tiki* in three dimensions by shading and dotting [Figs. 2.28 and 2.31].

Although figurative designs such as a tree and a human figure were tattooed in the pre- and early contact period, most animal figurative designs are contemporary innovations.\(^{12}\) The designs such as turtle, shark, dolphin, lizard, stingray, manta ray, and *tiki* are often tattooed in a figurative form. The small figurative designs are often embedded in the larger figurative design. For example, there is a turtle in a ray manta design [Figs. 2.33, 2.34, and 2.37] and *tiki* face in a turtle design [Figs. 2.34 and 2.41] and in a swordfish design [Fig. 2.39]. While figurative designs documented in the early contact period were either realistic (in Tahitian tattooing) or motif with geometric elements (in Marquesan tattooing), contemporary figurative designs have the outline of animals and are filled with Marquesan motifs [Figs. 2.32 - 2.41]. These figurative designs have become popular among both Tahitians and non-Tahitians because most tourists and French people living in Tahiti prefer to have small tattoo designs.

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\(^{12}\) According to Michel, a Tahitian tattooist, when he started at salon in 1996, he had tattooed these figurative designs for many French tourists and military personnel. He did not use them much for the local people. Efraima, another tattooist, told me that he had already tattooed these figurative designs in 1989-1991, but he suggested that it was not him who started tattooing them.
Marquesan motifs that were components of whole body tattoo require a frame when they are tattooed in the smaller size.\footnote{13 The figurative motifs are often tattooed in the small size, but the big one is also tattooed on the back.}

Large numbers of French and American tourists get small animal figurative tattoos at the end of their stay in French Polynesia. These tourists desire to have a Polynesian tattooed turtle, shark, dolphin and lizard for a souvenir of their stay. A large number of gendarmes and military personnel are also tattooed. They tend to have bigger designs than the tourists do. Many of them get tattooed with American/European figurative, Japanese designs or letters as well as Polynesian ones. The reasons for the choice of a particular animal are often personal experiences such as seeing a manta ray while snorkelling in Bora Bora; simply liking lizard; or a fondness for travelling so they want to have a dolphin as a symbol of their voyage.

The animals that are often tattooed as a motif in le style polynésien such as dolphin, shark, manta ray, and lizard are also tattooed in a realistic way, either shaded or coloured. These animals are not necessarily unique to Polynesia, but are considered typical animals in Polynesia and tattooed as a souvenir of a stay on the islands. Among non-Polynesian designs often tattooed, those derived from Western and Asian horoscopes such as lion, tiger, cow, and scorpion are popular.

Portraits have also begun to be tattooed, but still by a small number of tattooists because it requires more sophisticated techniques. The design is often sought in flash or a tattoo magazine, but the photographs of family brought by the client may also become a model. Daughter, son, and wife are the most popular people to be portrayed.

Some people have their name or the name of their children, partner, and so forth tattooed on their bodies. Chinese characters meaning “love” and “peace” are also popularly tattooed. They are often combined with other Polynesian and non-Polynesian designs.
Fig. 2.32

Fig. 2.33

Fig. 2.34

Fig. 2.35
3) Style

Style is the overwhelming character and image of a tattoo. It is defined by place, time, and tattoo artist, and referred to as “le style tahitien” (place), “le style ancien” (time), “le style Efraima” (tattoo artist) and so on. One of the most significant features of contemporary Tahitian tattooing is hybridity of different styles. The major non-Tahitian styles that are often incorporated into Tahitian tattooing are Marquesan, Samoan, Moko (New Zealand Maori), and tribal. In the following section, I demonstrate how Tahitians
characterize each geographically-oriented style, and analyse the complex ways that Tahitian tattooists refer to their tattooing style, and how style is defined by the different historical period.  

Marquesan style is the most popularly used because there are detailed ethnographical references to the Marquesan style in the early 1900s. The best known references on Marquesan tattooing are the ethnographies of von den Steinen (1925) and Handy (1922). Both are anthropological and ethnographical works documenting Marquesan tattooing in the early twentieth century. Von den Steinen and Handy photographed and illustrated the tattoos of Marquesans. Today Tahitians can access these references in the libraries of Musée de Tahiti et ses Îles and la Maison de la Culture. According to Vairea in Musée de Tahiti et ses Îles (per. com. 1999), ninety percent of people who ask for these references are young male Tahitians. As Von den Steinen’s book is written in German and Handy’s in English (von den Steinen’s book is now being translated into French by Jean Pagès), most young Tahitians do not read them but photocopy the illustrations and pictures of motifs. Most Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists are sceptical about anthropological and ethnological works on tattooing. For instance, Michel Raapoto, a Tahitian tattooist, considers that these works are all the same because they only reiterate the description of a German ethnologist (he means Von den Steinen). Michel criticizes these books as being written from the Western perspective.

While the Tahitian style is mostly a self-contained design in sufficient space, the Marquesan style is basically a whole-body tattoo, covering the surface of the body with motifs particular to each location of the body. Yet, in the application to Tahitian tattooing, the Marquesan-ness often remains only in the motifs. For there is less demand for whole body tattooing today than for small one-design tattooing.

Samoan style is also used in contemporary Tahitian tattooing. Tahitian tattooists are interested in Samoan tattooing because this tattooing continued without interruption by missionaries. Tahitians consider the Samoans to have kept the religious and spiritual significance of tattooing from the pre-European contact period in their contemporary practice. Tahitian tattooists often use the straight lines, zigzags, and wavy lines, of the Samoan style. A distinctive feature of Samoan tattooing is its location on the body, which is the area from the buttocks to the loins. Most tattooing of this part of the body is done in the Marquesan style in Tahiti.

14 The style of tattooist is analysed in detail in Chapter Four.
Tahitians are also interested in *Moko*, New Zealand Maori facial tattooing. With increasing interest in facial tattooing, Tahitians seek the styles for face in Marquesan or Maori tattooing (or a mixed style of both). The application of Maori tattooing is, however, often motif rather than location of the body. Numerous Tahitian tattooists include Maori motifs as a part of the composition of their tattooing. They explain the spiral motifs as Maori or Maori inspired motifs. Tahitian tattooists have also started tattooing triangular motifs on their arms, legs, and sides of their body. They explain this as the Hawaiian style.

*Le style tribal* is derived from the tribal style in Western tattoo culture and has been tattooed by Tahitians who work in the salons since around the 1990s. It became popular among local people while I conducted my research from 1998 to 2000, and this reflected the popularity of the tribal style elsewhere in the world. *Le style tribal* is tattooed on its own or arranged with the local/Polynesian style. The tribal style is originally Bornean tattooing, which is figurative, using images such as flowers and fish, while the tribal in global tattooing is characterized by black curvilinear lines with sharp ends. Most tribal style in tattoo culture is decorative rather than representational. Tahitians imitated the Western tribal style at the beginning, but have developed it in their ways.

Tahitian *le style tribal* has different characteristics from the tribal style in global tattooing [Figs. 2.42 - 2.45]. There are three variations of *le style tribal* in Tahitian tattooing. First, *le style tribal* is characterized by curvilinear lines, which has been introduced from the tribal style of global tattooing. There are variations, but the principle is that curvilinear lines gradually become narrower and the end is pointed [Fig. 2.45]. Second, *le style tribal* is characterized by spirals representing connections with Maori *moko*. The tattooists consider this style to be both tribal and Maori. Third, *le style tribal* is characterized by Polynesian motifs such as a hook, *tiki*’s nostril and so forth. For instance, in the tattoo of Fig. 2.42, a figurative *tiki* rowing in the ocean where the wave is expressed in *le style tribal*. This tribal style appears as Polynesian motifs, but its value is the connection to the global tribal.
Tahitians refer to colourful or grey figurative designs (except those with oriental themes) as “le style européen” (European style), or occasionally as “le style américain”
(American style) or, rarely, "le style farand" (French style). If the design is oriental, they call it "le dessin japonais (Japanese design)" or "le dessin tinto/chinois (Chinese design)".

The geographical adjectives are applied not only to the tattoo style, but also to the tools and the tattooists. Tattoo machines are well distinguished by Polynesian tattooists as "National" and "Spaulding" as "la machine américaine (American machine)", "Jet France" as "la machine française (French machine)", "Micky Sharpz" as "la machine anglaise (English machine)". Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists remember non-Polynesian tattooists who visited their workplaces or featured in Tattoo magazines, by associating them with the place they are from, mostly by the names of countries, but in the case of French and American tattooists, often by the name of the town or state where the tattooists own a shop. When a Tahitian tattooist had an American tourist as a client and found out she was from the same town as his friend a tattooist, the tattooist asked the tourist if she knew the American tattooist. This tourist did not know the tattooist. She just stepped into the tattoo stand to get a souvenir tattoo at the end of her vacation in Tahiti and was not familiar with the American tattooists and tattoo culture.
Many Polynesian tattooists have participated in international tattoo conventions or have friend tattooists elsewhere in the world and have experience of working in their shops. For them, the difference between countries and their tattooing are obvious. Thus, Polynesian tattooists differentiate between tattoo styles, tattooists, and tattoo machines by geographical names.

European and American tattooists categorize the tattoos which Polynesian tattooists call “le dessin/ style européen” into more specific categories, such as “old school style”, “new school style”, “bio-mechanic”, “Paul Booth’s style”, “grey work”, “portrait” etc [Figs. 2.46 - 2.49]. Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists who are familiar with these terms by reading tattoo magazines also use them.

The tattoo style is differentiated not only by geographically specific adjectives, but also by more broad space- and time- oriented categories, such as “local”, “traditional”, and “ancient”. The style that was tattooed in the beginning of cultural revitalization, such as those on Teve’s body and those of Tavana Salmon and Raymond Graffe derive from the archival resources, mostly ethnographical works by Von den Steinen and by Handy. Le style ancien or le style traditionnel are faithfully copied from the archival designs and are continuously tattooed. In le style ancien or le style traditionnel, Marquesan motifs are used and arranged in the same or similar ways that Marquesan people used them in the old days.
Fig. 2.48 Crab cocotier: bio-mechanic style. Fig. 2.49 Le style européen.

Fig. 2.50 Tribal and local style.

Fig. 2.51 Tribal, local, and realistic style.
Contemporary Polynesian style is often referred to as *le style local* and *le style polynésien*. These are mixtures of different Polynesian motifs such as Maori, Samoan, and Hawaiian. *Le style local*, therefore, blurs the regional distinctions such as Marquesan, Tahitian, and Samoan. “Local” possibly refers to only Outumaoro (which is a suburb of Papeete), Tahiti, French Polynesia, or all over Polynesia. *Le style ancien* or *le style traditionnel* is only black. Most Tahitians, and non-Tahitians, consider the use of black as a fundamental feature of Polynesian tattooing. (In the Western tattoo world, “black tattoo” includes all the ethnic works such as Polynesian, Celtic, tribal etc.). Some Tahitian tattooists have started colouring *le style local* [Figs. 2.51]. As *le style local* became popular, many clients ask for the combination of *le style local* with *le style tribal* [Figs. 2.50 and 2.52].

Both *le style local* and *le style ancien* are bound to *fenua* (the land). The difference is that *le style ancien* is concerned with the past while *le style local* is concerned with the present and the process of being geographically bounded. I propose to call the figurative animal designs filled with Polynesian motifs “the tattooed animals”. Turtle, lizard, dolphin, shark, and manta ray are tattooed with Polynesian motifs on their bodies, and then tattooed on the body of people. These animals are native to French Polynesia, but need to be localized by tattooing the “local” “ancient” motifs. Then, these animals become not turtle in Madagascar or lizard in Australia, but turtle and lizard in Tahiti.
The animals are localized by the tattoo motifs that are widely acknowledged as local motifs. This localization of the animals also occurs with the animals that do not inhabit in French Polynesia, such as lion and dragon.

Fig. 2.53 Modern local style.

Conclusion

"Contemporary Tahitian tattooing" does not imply merely one definite style and practice of tattooing, but includes the practice and form of the pre- and early contact periods and those of global tattooing. Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people distinguish, categorize, and apply them into their tattooing. There are two distinctive categories "modern"/"traditional" and "local"/"global". Tahitians differentiate methods and forms of
tattooing, and locate their tattooing in tattoo history and in the world map of tattooing by using these categories.

Tattooing tools are invented and introduced as a response to the demands of the tattooists and clients at each period of Tahitian history such as public consciousness of hygienic issues and popularity of global tattooing. The remodelled razor is a new invention, but considered as an artisan and local tool after the tattoo machine was introduced in Tahiti.

Because of its adaptability to different techniques and expression, and safety in hygiene issues, the tattoo machine has become popular among Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists. It has been considered as European and American technology. However, as the increasing numbers of tattooists started using the tattoo machine, Tahitian tattooing has been characterised as “machine tattooing” by other Polynesians.

Many young Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists have become interested in tattooing with traditional tools because of the expectations of non-Polynesian tattooists and tattooed people and opportunities to observe other Polynesian tattooing with traditional tools such as Samoan tattooing.

Tahitian tattooing has been developed through learning from non-Tahitian tattoo practitioners and references rather than inheritance. Young Tahitians started tattooing American and European designs, and then Polynesian tattooing, which some Tahitians studied with ethnographies, became popular. Tahitian tattooing has been transformed since then by Tahitians who seek non-Tahitian motifs, designs, and styles and localize their tattooing by incorporating them into their tattooing. As the example of “tattooed animals” indicates, modern designs and styles of tattoos are localized by filling with “traditional” Marquesan motifs, and categorizing the mixture of Marquesan, Samoan, Maori, and Hawaiian motifs and styles as “Polynesian tattooing”. While Tahitian tattooing is inclusive as Tahitians are incorporating non-Tahitian elements into their tattooing, Marquesan tattooing is exclusive as Marquesans want to distinguish their tattooing from the others, (see Chapter Five).

Tahitians conceptualize their time and space through naming, categorizing, and using the practice and form of tattooing. The encounter and interaction with European explorers and missionaries are embedded in the practice and form. Contemporary socio-political systems, gender and ethnic relationships are manifested in the practice and form of tattooing, which I explore in detail in the following chapters.
Chapter Three

Marking Taure’are’a: Social Relationships and Tattooing

Tattooing, which was embedded in the tapu system until the 1830s as Chapter One has shown, no longer functions as controlling tapu or as rites of passage. Tahitian society is not structured in the classes of ari’i hau, ari’i, ra’atira, and manahune, men and women no longer eat separately because of tapu, and aging is no longer marked by a certain initiation rite. I argue, however, that contemporary Tahitian tattooing is still embedded in the contemporary socio-cultural system and reconnects to certain values in the contexts of gender differentiation, youth culture, cultural revitalization, tourism, and social relationships.

This chapter aims to elicit the location of the tattoo world in Tahitian society. Firstly, I illustrate how gender, ethnic, and age differences are marked in the contemporary Tahitian society. Secondly, I introduce Tahitian tattooists and their different working styles and organizations. Thirdly, I analyse the ethnography of tattoo organization and attempt to locate the tattooists in Tahitian society. Fourthly, I consider how the form and practice of tattooing are related to gender, ethnic, and age differences in the society.

Gender, Ethnic, and Age Differences in Tahitian Society

One day, my friend Turia and I were chatting about boyfriends, marriage, and other things at the table of her snack bar. We talked about and reacknowledged the differences and similarities between partnerships in Japan and in Tahiti. Then as a conclusion of the discussion, Turia said, “Don’t hang around with a Tahitian man. They are not nice.” Turia is a Tahitian woman who is married to a French man. She explained that Tahitian
men are infantile, idiotic, lazy, drink too much, smoke *pakalolo* too much, and hit their wives.1

Turia’s perception of Tahitian men is often heard from other Tahitian women, and non-Tahitians, for instance, French perceptions of Tahitian men is more or less similar to Turia’s remark. Bruno Saura states, in his essay on how French and Tahitians consider each other, that “Le Tahitien est souvent vu comme un sauvage; au mieux un sauvageon lorsqu’il est jeune; au pire, comme une brute épaisse” (1998: 37).2

Certainly, individual human beings are more complex than suggested by any such generalisations, but in the process of self-identification we are likely to respond to such stereotypes. Our response, regardless of whether accepting or rejecting, consequently engages us in the establishment of our identity, and characterizes our relationships with those people who make these generalizations. Tahitian men are diverse and more complicated than would appear from the perceptions expressed by some Tahitian women and French people. Yet, these perceptions reflect their relationships with Tahitian men, and in turn, Tahitian men have been referring to or even conforming to this generalization to relate with different gender and ethnic people and to furthermore establish relationships with other male Tahitian friends. These generalizations are “the techniques of the body” in Mauss’s classical term, and are culturally patterned bodily behaviour and representation, which form identity according to gender, age, and ethnicity.

As the Tahitian tattoo world is male-dominated, in this section, I examine how Tahitian masculinity is embodied in the different domains to which Tahitian tattooists belong such as the household, the artisan association, the Territory, and male-exclusive relationships. Yet, my main aim here is not to consider exclusively Tahitian masculinity, but to demonstrate the overview of gender, ethnic, and age differences in Tahitian society.

Being masculine is, for Tahitian men - particularly tattooists and their friends - to be both physically and mentally strong.3 Physical strength is embodied as the figure of

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1 Langevin explains, “Le premier compliment que fait souvent une tahitienne sur son conjoint est en effet: ‘il ne me bat pas, c’est un bon tane’”. (The primary compliment that is often made by Tahitian women on their partner is that ‘he does not hit me, he is a good husband’ - my translation). Although a certain level of physical violence shows that “he knows how to look after his wife”, constant aggression makes women value the absence of physical violence in the European family (1990: 127).

2 “Tahitians are often regarded as savage, at best a wild child when they are young, at worst like dull brute” (my translation).

3 The following discussion on masculinity does not cover that embodied by Tahitian men who achieve higher education and employment. Masculinity is conceptualized and demonstrated differently in different societies and there are many masculinities even within a society.
the ancient warriors, *aito* in Tahitian and *toa* in Marquesan. Like the warriors, Tahitian men have to be muscular and tanned. Indeed, many of them are muscular and tanned due to their activities. Tahitians living in the districts except Papeete and its suburbs are often engaged in outside labour such as working in copra, constructing houses, cutting and cleaning brush off the property and so forth. Many Tahitians living in Papeete and its suburbs enjoy outdoor sport such as canoeing, rugby, and surfing. Clothing is also important for expressing masculinity. Tahitians normally wear a T-shirt, or sleeveless shirt, and short pants. On the occasions when they intend to express cultural heritage and ancestral connection, however, masculinity is represented in so-called “traditional” fashion. For instance, in artisan expositions, tattooists and artisans wear *pareu* (salon printed with Polynesian motifs); and a pig’s tusk or shark’s teeth necklace; and decorate their hair, arms, and legs with *ti’i* leaves. Tahitian men connect themselves to their ancestors, especially warriors, by emulating the warrior figure [Figs. 3.1 - 3.3]. Besides physical appearance, masculinity is embodied through a particular behaviour in a certain situation. I discuss this in later in this section.

Masculinity is embodied throughout a Tahitian man’s life, but it is founded mostly during their adolescence, *taure’are’a*. Both female and male Tahitians have *taure’are’a*
from the late teens and the early twenties although some of them have a longer period of *taure 'are 'a*. As *tau* means “season” or “period” and *re 'are 'a* means “fun”, *Taure 'are 'a* is the period to enjoy liberty from domestic and social obligations, which will be imposed upon them as they become older.\(^4\)

![Fig. 3.3 Warrior figure.](image)

During this period, adolescents establish solidarity based on the same-sex relations. Girls share time with girls and boys with boys. Yet, it is also the time for *taure 'are 'a* to explore sexual experiences with different partners. Female *taure 'are 'a* are more occupied with activities at home although many female *taure 'are 'a* in urban areas spend their time outside with their friends after school. Male *taure 'are 'a* spend more of their time outside the home with male friends, playing soccer, surfing, drinking beer, smoking *pakalolo* (marijuana), playing the guitar or ukulele, and singing.

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\(^4\) In the dictionary of Académie Tahitienne (1999), *tau* signifies “saison, temps, époque, période” (season, time, époque, period) and *re 'are 'a* signifies “joyeusement, gaiement” (cheerfully, gaily).
“Fiu” is a common term often expressed by *taure ‘are ‘a* (probably not only *taure ‘are ‘a* but also Tahitians of any generations), which means “to be fed up with”. *Taure ‘are ‘a* often become “fiu” with study, work, weather, traffic, any kinds of relationships such as family, relationship, and friend, and even doing nothing. They exorcise the feeling of “fiu” by playing sports and music, having *bringue* (party), and tattooing.

![Fig. 3.4 Young men in Papeete.](image-url)

Many *taure ‘are ‘a* travel to different districts, islands, and countries to visit their friends or relatives.⁵ Or, if they reside in one place, they move around to see friends or do some business. Although they move whimsically, Tahitians know how to find their friends. They know the spot where the friends are likely to appear, so they hang around there or leave word with the people who are there. The message is passed on through people.

Large numbers of *taure ‘are ‘a*, especially males, quit school. Female *taure ‘are ‘a* who quit school become involved in the household structure by helping out with domestic work such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of younger siblings, and making *tifaitai*, male *taure ‘are ‘a* work with their father or relatives either full or part-time.

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⁵ As Elliston (1997) points out, I also consider that there is a strong connection between *taure ‘are ‘a* and Arioi.
Many of male *taure'are'a*, on the other hand feel more comfortable spending their time with other male friends of the same age rather than staying at home (Elliston 1997; Grépin 2000; Langevin 1990).

As they travel or share time with other male friends, male *taure'are'a* spend less time at home and distance themselves from female members of the family. They concentrate more on the relationships with other male friends and relatives. Female *taure'are'a* are gradually involved in the domestic work and household relationships. Both male and female *taure'are'a* establish gender identity by consolidating the place where their activities take place, and the people with whom they spend the most of their time.

The main reason that male *taure'are'a* avoid spending their time at home is the nature of the Tahitian household, which is female dominated. *Mama*, literally mother, has power in maintenance and decision-making in the household. The elder male members are also respected, but often remain as quiet figures in the family. While female *taure'are'a* are involved in domestic work and maintain close relationships with *mama*, male *taure'are'a*’s work usually takes place outside, such as fishing, hunting, constructing houses, cutting and cleaning brush off the property and so forth.

After exploring different jobs, partners, and places, Tahitians end *taure'are'a* by marrying or having a stable relationship, finding full-time employment, and settling
Three in one to even (especially on Sunday afternoon after service). Gender identities are constructed and enforced through assimilation and differentiation, which is often articulated in the conversation among people of the same gender. In the presence of their male friends, Tahitian men often talk about and to women with sexist language, although their actual relationships with women are not necessarily sexist. In their conversation among men, they stress an interest in the physical features of women rather than personality. By making little of women, Tahitian men make implicit the significance, respect, and affinity with their male friends and relatives. Tahitian men enforce male solidarity by articulating and exaggerating female otherness. The older men are taken care of by the younger men, but in terms of respect, it is not simply that the older person is more respected, but rather those who have more knowledge and skill are more respected.

The third gender has different involvement in the family structure and the same-age relationship. *Mahu* are grown up as *mahu* from the early stage of their childhood. They often spend their time with girls and they tend to be more involved in domestic activities. Some *mahu* put on female costume and dance with girls at the festival of the district, but they do not necessarily wear women’s clothes (they usually wear T-shirt and shorts). They also play volleyball with girls and boys. They are often good strikers as they are well-built.

For the male artisans including tattooists, female dominance occurs not only in the household, but also in the artisan associations to which they belong. Jones notes that:

> The membership in associations artisanales is overwhelmingly female. Male artists tend to work out of private workshops (ateliers) adjacent to their homes. Typically, these workshops support only one craftsman, although more prominent artists sometimes take apprentices or hire younger men (usually relatives) to assist with large orders. A few men participate in the cooperative movement, but there are rarely more than one or two in a single association. Many associations have no male membership. (1992: 153)

In general, male artisans carve stone, bone, wood, or shell, and plait coconut fibre, while female artisans plait fibres, make *tifaifai*, shell necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. The associations are mostly organized and run by female artisans although male artisans also participate in them. Jones states that “Craft associations offer Polynesian women
positions of leadership and social prominence, the possibility of getting their pictures in the newspaper, and an arena in which to advance the prestige of their family” (1992: 145). At any of the artisan expositions and Heiva, the figures of senior female artisans are outstanding as they dress in the neo-traditional attire: cotton flower printed dress, plaited hat, and necklace made of shells, seeds, or flowers [Figs. 3.6 and 3.7].

Women artists in the artisan associations are often called “mama” or “mummy” with respect and intimacy. Mama is literally mother in the artisan associations, which are formed as a fictive household. They order male artisans or young female artisans to set and clean up the stand, transport their crafts, run errands and so forth. Young male artisans listen to the senior artisans who are, in many cases, their mother (either biological or foster), aunt, elder sister, or cousin. Male artisans often share time with the other male artisans, talking and playing music with them when they are not busy.

Eight young Tahitians, especially male ones, is one of the

Fig. 3.6 Mamas at Heiva.

Ethnic complexity is also entangled with the age of taure ‘are ‘a and gender relationships. The unemployment of young Tahitians, especially male ones, is one of the

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6 Heiva is an annual festival, taking place from the end of June for about four weeks. See Chapter Five for more information and discussion.

7 As Jones puts it, “as a term of address, it expresses respect, affection, and familiarity. To call a woman Mama also implies the attainment of maturity, responsibility, and respectability in her community” (1992: 146).

8 During Heiva, many male artisans came to tattooists’ stands and spent time. While most of the stands are dominated by female artisans, the stands of tattooists were male dominated.
most significant problems in French Polynesia. Many Tahitian men complained that “Il n’y a pas boulot pour nous parce que Farani sont venu et pris tous (there is no job for us because the French came and took them all)”. Taure’are’a who do not adapt to the French educational system and drop out of school, face another French authority over employment. The hostility and irritation that has resulted is directed at French people by asserting “warrior” masculinity.

When the pro-independence and anti-nuclear protest broke out in 1995, many Tahitian men appeared in traditional warrior costume:

several taure’re’a men wore red pareu, evoking the red feather girdles worn by the ari’i hau (highest chiefs) prior to French colonialism and associated with the last years of Polynesian self-rule. More striking, however, was that substantial numbers of these young nationalists wore guerrilla gear to the protests: green and
tan camouflage pants, black military boots, bare chests or t-shirts, bandanas around their necks or covering parts of their faces. (Elliston 1997: 491)

The antagonism of Tahitian men towards French people is generally implicit. They often mock them by emphasizing physical differences. Tahitian men call French people taïoro. Taïoro means “fermented grated coconut”, but when addressed to French men, it signifies “uncircumcised penis”. Saura explains:


Some Tahitian men themselves embody “savage-ness” – wildness as a feature of Tahitian men, which has been perceived by French people. Wildness is essential for Tahitian men to form their identity as a taata tahiti – Tahitian men, who claim mountains, sea, and islands as their territory, not French. Through performing wildness or actually embodying the wildness of nature, Tahitian men assert that the nature of the islands is inaccessible to “the civilized” French people or popa’a (white foreigners). Only Tahitian skin that is hardened by the sun, sea water, and heavily tattooed can protect them from the wildness of the islands.

By embodying “warrior” masculinity, Tahitian men are emancipated from female dominant households, artisan associations, and the French controlled State (although they inevitably remain within), and consolidate Tahitian identity and descent from male tupuna (ancestors). Therefore, identities as male (gender) and as Tahitian (ethnicity) are constructed through interrelation with different gender and ethnic people.

In contradiction to the masculinity, which emphasizes physical strength directed to women and French people, Tahitian men establish fraternal bonds with their male relatives and friends. The tension that is generated through emphasizing physical strength is restrained. In the male-exclusive relationships, Tahitian men become moderate and cooperative. Easygoing-ness is also considered an ideal character by Tahitian men. Tahitians often say “aita e peapea (no problem)”. A Tahitian tattooist

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9 According to the dictionary of Académie Tahitienne (1999), taïoro means “amande de coco râpée et fermentée à l’aide de divers ingrédients: chevrettes ou crabs écrasés et mélangés dans un peu d’eau (kernel of coconut grated and fermented with diverse ingredients: young goat or crushed crabs in a little bit of water – my translation)”. They also use moa him (oily cock), moa iri (cock skin) etc.

10 “Taïoro can also be applied among Tahitian men to mention all the propensity of trickery, treacherous, and muck. ‘Taïoro teie mea ‘oe’, ‘you are a taïoro’ means ‘you are disgusting’ in metaphorical sense” (my translation).
explained that his friend is nice because “il est simple extérieur et rich dedans (he is simple outside but rich inside)”. The easygoing nature of Tahitians is juxtaposed to the complexity of French people as generalized by Tahitians. Tahitians often state that French people do “trop blah blah blah” (too much talking) and “être trop manière” (being too uptight). These are not considered proper behaviour among Tahitian men.

Juxtaposing the hierarchical structure of household and the State, male relationships tend to be egalitarian and inclusive. The question that I need to interrogate here is whether Tahitian male friendships are really supportive, moderate, and less aggressive? I argue that within this inclusive structure and fraternal bond, male Tahitian relationships are competitive. Most Tahitian men are proud of themselves, but it is considered inappropriate to make their pride explicit. “Il est trop fier (he is too proud)” is often used as a reproach. I argue that Tahitian masculinity is demonstrated apparently toward people of different gender and ethnicity, but in fact it is implicitly directed to those who are the same gender and ethnicity - Tahitian men. Women and French people are mediators to avoid Tahitian masculinity from enacting too directly and severely on the other male Tahitians.

Meeting Tattooists in Tahiti

Gender, ethnic, and age differences affect the formation of the network of tattooists, which has been formed mostly among those who work full-time and have many tourists and military personnel as their main clients. Most tattooists are interested in what design and styles and in which method and with which tools the other tattooists are working. The exchange and diffusion of knowledge of style and technique are manipulated by their cooperative and competitive attitudes towards the other tattooists.

In the following section, I introduce tattooists who have been transforming as well as consolidating the practice and form of Tahitian tattooing in their networks. In doing so, I intend to unpack my subjectivity as a female, non-Tahitian researcher in the context of Tahitian social positioning and relationships according to gender, age, and ethnicity. I also argue that my regular visits among different tattooists were not totally irrelevant to the process of their networking.

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11 I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Four.
1) Aroma, Mano, Michel and Colla – at the Salon

The sound of death metal band, Cannibal Corpse is shaking the bleak room. This is a tattoo salon, called Polynesian Tattoo located above the Bar Taina in the quarter of Papeete, which by night is frequented by sailors and military personnel.¹²

Aroma is tattooing a devil on the shoulder of a French military man, shaking his head and mumbling the lines of the song.¹³ Devil is bleeding black blood. Music is, Aroma explains, necessary for his creativity. Aroma believes all his clients share his same musical tastes. Jimmy, Jérémie, and a guy that I have not met before are watching the tattooing and drinking Heineken.

Aroma sees me and calls out.

“How are you, Maki? What did you do this weekend? Did you eat Tahitian kokoro?”

“No. Not kokoro. I want mafatu!”¹⁴

“That’s not good. You should try Tahitian kokoro before you go back to Japan.”

The other men all laugh and keep on joking. Every time I see Aroma and his friends, there is a lot of joking, especially about sex.

Aroma, 26 years old, started working at Polynesian Tattoo in 1993 when Bruno Kea, a French tattooist and the previous owner of the salon, decided to return to France [Fig. 3.8]. Bruno handed over the salon to Aroma who was working at the Beachcomber Hotel and tattooing only at weekends. Aroma was from Fakarava, Tuamotu, but spent most of his childhood in New Zealand. These dislocations have made him fluent in English, Tahitian, Paumotu (Language spoken in Tuamotu), and French and have also given him a frank and friendly character.

The guy that I do not know leaves the room. I ask Aroma who he is.

“He is my cousin.”

“How many cousins do you have?”

I have already met many of his cousins at the salon.

“Many. You see, Maki. All the boys are my cousins and all the girls are my girlfriends.”¹⁵

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¹² There are two tattoo salons in Papeete. One of them is Tattoo Shop owned by Jordi, who is from Spain and opened the professional tattoo shop complete with tattoo machines, sterilization, and flash for the first time in Tahiti.

¹³ Eighty percent of their clients are French military personnel and gendarmes.

¹⁴ Kokoro means “penis” in Tahitian and “heart” in Japanese. All Tahitians know this. Mafatu means “heart”.

¹⁵ While Tahitian men include their male friends in the fictive family structure, they call women, not “sister” or “soeur (sister)”, but “copine (girlfriend)”. 
Fig. 3.8 Aroma.

The French military man has already had many sessions with Aroma. After each session, Aroma and this man have beers at Bar Taina. They have become friends. Aroma explains, in front of him that he is "taioro", but a good guy.

In the room behind a big reception and waiting room where flashes of North American Indians, *Samurai, Geisha*, Satan, dragon, and tribal designs decorate the wall, Mano, aged 23, Aroma's younger brother, is drawing a big Polynesian style manta ray on the tracing paper for a local French boy [Fig. 3.9].

"Hi, Maki, how is your pussy today?"

"I am fine. Thanks. How was your weekend?"

"Great. Fucked many girls."

Mano stepped into the shoes of Aroma when he moved from Fakarava to Tahiti at the age of eighteen. Aroma and Mano are very intimate brothers. They have been playing death metal music with two other friends. They also canoe in the same team. Before Hawaiki Nui, they have been training after lunch or late in the afternoon.16 Aroma once explained that Mano and he had been doing many things together. They understand each other: they support each other. When one is down, having problems

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16 Hawaiki Nui is an annual canoe race, which takes place in the Society Islands.
with his wife or drinking too much, the other supports him. Mano tattoos only black works, Polynesian and tribal styles. He explains that he cultivated and developed the designs and his style of tattooing by himself and learned techniques such as handling and tuning machines and making needles from Aroma.¹⁷

I enter the last room of the salon. Michel is tattooing a small lizard with *le style local* on the back of a French tourist.

"Bonjour, Michel."

Michel raises his fist toward me and I rap my fist against it. He does not say any words. He often ignores me at the beginning and starts murmuring jokes, but today his silence is longer than normal. That means he is a little grumpy.

Michel normally becomes passionate when he tattoos a large free-hand dragon because he is *"flu"* to tattoo small local style of turtle and dolphin.

"I saw Tava and his friends in Mahina. Alexandre and Toto are learning tattooing with Tava."

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¹⁷ Their close brotherhood faced a new phase later in my fieldwork. Aroma who wanted to make his salon a "professional" space, kicked Mano out. Mano had many friends, who often came to the salon, drinking beers, chatting and sometimes smoking *pokalolo.*
“I have to modify them. They have to stop tattooing with razor.”\textsuperscript{18}

“Oh…but it would be good for you. You can have more clients then.”

Michel, 32 years old, is from Raiatea. He learned tattooing with his friends on the street at Pamatai where he is living. Michel worked at a furniture shop for eight years and tattooed at weekends and after work [Fig. 3.10]. In 1996 he started working with Aroma at Polynesian Tattoo. Michel is strongly conscious of being a working “professional” and constantly distinguishes himself from the artisan based tattooists. Not only Michel, but also Aroma and Mano distinguish themselves as “professional” from artisan tattooists who tattoo mostly Polynesian design by using a razor with a

\textsuperscript{18} Most tattooists know the works of the tattooists who are not really their friends because they have clients who come for modification and covering-up the old tattoos. Tattooists observe not only a bad tattoo but also the beautiful work of tattoos that have already been marked on the bodies of clients.
single needle and China ink. The artisan based tattooists, however, do not assert that “we are artisan”. They say that “we are tattooists”.

Michel is neither a death metal musician nor a canoe racer. He does not drink much as he believes that drinking spoils his tattooing. The relationship between Aroma and Michel, however, is more than that of work colleagues. They criticize each other’s work, but consider that they are both good tattooists and work well together.

Colla who has a tattoo stand at Marché, drops in at the salon in the late afternoon because Marché closes at five o’clock. Colla is from Tupuai, Austral, but has been living in Tahiti, mainly in Mahina and Moorea, for twenty years.

“Maki, ça va? Do you want to come to Moorea with me? We will do bringue tonight. I am taking the ferry soon.”

“Tonight? But, I have not prepared anything and I have to see Pipipe tomorrow morning.”

“Maki, Tu es très maniere (you are too serious). That’s not good.”

Colla is one of many tattooists in Tahiti and Moorea who frequent the salon. He is good friends with Aroma and Mano. The first time, Aroma introduced Colla as “his cousin” although he is not his biological cousin. They have been playing music, canoeing, and tattooing together for many years. Colla spent five months in Fakarava and Aroma’s parents treated Colla as their son. Colla says that Aroma and Mano are the best hoa (friends) for him.

Colla moved to Noumea, New Caledonia at the end of 2000. He explained that he was fiu and wanted to change his life. He now has a small salon of his own in the town and has been tattooing tourists, Melanesian and French local people, and Tahitian immigrants.

Tattooing at the salon is distinguished by the fact that they tattoo in all the styles: Polynesian, tribal, European, and Japanese. They use a “machine complet” – tattoo machine, a wide rage of needles, professional tattoo ink with many colours, flash, carbon papers, ultrason (a needle and tube cleaner), and sterilizer.

Aroma, Mano, Michel, and Colla have modernized and developed their local styles. Tiki tattooed by these tattooists often incorporate facial expressions such as tiki faché (angry tiki), tiki souri (smiling tiki), tiki dormi (sleepy tiki) and so on. Some tiki (cf. Michel’s) show teeth. Aroma had tattooed tiki whose eyes are open, but recently started tattooing tiki whose eyes are closed. He said that he wants to change his style once in a while. Aroma tattooed tiki Spiderman by cross-hatching the head of tiki. Mano tattooed several female tiki that have long eyelashes.
Aroma says his grey works (shaded in diluted black ink) are different from Michel’s because Michel uses less shading, but he considers it more beautiful to shade darker. Michel considers Aroma’s works as being cartoon like and less realistic. Aroma and Michel do not consider Colla a good tattooist. His freehand always ends up with winding lines and motifs which are too large, but because of his friendly nature and location of his stand, Colla has many clients. Michel and Aroma criticize his work more severely in his absence, when Colla drops in at the salon after Marché is closed, and tells them that he had many clients.

2) Eric – in Outumaoro

Getting off le truck, most people cross the street and go to the Continent, the biggest supermarket in Papeete, but I walk in the opposite direction and cross over the filthy ditch and step into the spot where all the rubbish is scattered. 19 Four guys, Saté, Erita, Louïc, and Heihere are sitting on a fallen trunk and listening to Bob Marley.

“Ia ora na, how are you?”

I shake hands with them. Some of them raise red eyes and nod, smiling.

“E maitai roa, Are you looking for Eric?”

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19 Le truck is the public bus, in which the passengers sit on the bench seats, facing each other.
“Is he going to tattoo this morning?”
“No. He is over there, the other side. Talking with his friends.”

Saté was born and grew up in Outumaro. He is one of a few men in Outumaoro who is not vague and always gives me a quick and clear response [Fig. 3.12]. He is tattooed on the chest in a mixture of European and Tahitian styles by Eric. His tattoo is not yet finished and Saté wants to have it finished someday. Saté said to me the other day that he is happy to have Eric’s tattoo because he is an artist. This tattoo is Eric’s painting (le tableau d’Eric) and he always carries it on his body.

![Saté](image)

Fig. 3.12 Saté.

Louïc has many match boxes in his cotton knapsacks. When he sees a car or a Farani approaching, Louïc silently disappears from my sight and comes back after a while.²⁰

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²⁰ Some male Tahitians are gaining cash by selling marijuana (that contained in one match box costs from 3000 to 5000 F).
Figs. 3.13 - 3.16 Men in Outumaoro tattooed by Eric and Pipipe.
Erita spits and says, “Bring your friends from Foyer here. There are many girls over there, right? Here there is no girl, only men…” Erita is the younger brother of Eric and has many tattoos by him.

“But, the girls do not like dirt like this. You’ve got to clean it all first. As you spend the day without doing anything, you can clean here. You should work!”

I mean “work” for cleaning, but Erita takes my words differently.

“We cannot work. No work. French people take all the work, and there is no more for us,” Erita says.

Fig. 3.17 Erita, Tehau, and Maui.

I leave them to look for Eric. He is talking with his friends at the other end. I do bisous and ask him:

“Clément told me that you will tattoo somebody today.”

“No, I stopped tattooing. Fiu. I started doing the sand painting. A bit of change.”

Eric, aged 28, is a big man who always smiles showing the holes of missing teeth in his mouth [Fig. 3.18]. Eric worked at a black pearl farm in Tuamotu for three years and travelled around the different islands and stayed with his relatives there. Now he stays in Outumaoro most of the time. Eric is heavily tattooed himself. He explains that

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21 During my fieldwork, I was staying at le Foyer de Jeune Fille, girls-only dormitory run by the evangelical church.
he has the same tattoo as “Maia ara i te po”, the ancient warrior of Papeeno. Eric once explained to me that while tattoo is decoration for most people, for him it is the representation of aito (warrior) and tupuna (ancestor). Together with Pipipe, who is now living in Arue, Eric tattooed many of his colleagues in this district.22 Eric’s tattoo consists of a wide range of the traditional Marquesan motifs. His tiki figure is elegant and similar to those of artisan carving. Eric has always liked drawing since he was young.

Eric always moves slowly and shows an overt and friendly smile, but our relationship changed when he found out that I had been working with the other tattooists

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22 Pipipe is a tattooist, mostly working at his home or that of the tattooee. Pipipe is dumb and does not have a telephone. Most of Pipipe’s clients, however, do not find it as a problem. They just drop in and get tattooed, or arrange the time when Pipipe is at home.
in Tahiti. Since then Eric has been keeping a distance from me and trying to hide that he is still tattooing.  

A couple of months ago, I was on the motu (small island) beside the Sofitel Maeva Beach Hotel, watching Eric tattooing his friend, Tupuna [Figs. 3.19 and 3.20]. Tupuna had already got tattooed in the Western style, a dragon on the left shoulder when he was a “hippie” (as he explained). He decided to cover his right shoulder and arm with le style local. Then, he can be a real tupuna.

Fig. 3.19 Eric tattooing Tupuna.

“That’s better,” Tupuna lays his body in a comfortable position and says.

“Why did you stop being hippie and became tupuna?”

“It was bad. Stole and caught, stole and caught.”

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23 While networking by artisan based and salon based tattooists has developed, the tattooists working on the streets or at the residence remain outside the network.
“Tupuna is better now because he doesn’t do such nasty things,” Eric smiles.

From out of his cotton hibiscus print bag Eric takes out a razor, sewing needles, and Rotring ink and starts attaching needles to the head of the razor with thread. After he has finished preparing the razor, Eric roughly divides the surface of Tupuna’s arm by marking it with a pen and starts tattooing the motifs of “tiki bras” (tiki arm), “tiki mata” (tiki eye) etc. The subtle sound of the razor is accompanied by the sound of waves and wind. Tupuna closes his eyes and seems to be sleeping.

“It is good to tattoo outside,” I say and Eric smiles, showing his missing teeth.

“Yes. This is tattooing.”

Fig. 3.20 Tupuna getting tattooed by Eric.

3) Thierry – at Fare Artisanat

Fare artisanat is located next to the Continent in Outumaoro. In the round shaped neo-traditional building, there are several mamas plaiting coconut fibre and making shell necklaces while minding the stand. I always say bonjour to Mama Tehea and Mama Carmen and have a chat with them before seeing Thierry and Clément.

Thierry, thirty-one years old and born in Tahiti, has his work place at the end of the fare [Fig. 3.21]. He has been a member of the artisan association for seven years, and

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24 Tupuna has a real name which is Edie, but his friends call him “Tupuna”. Many young men hanging
has been plaiting coconut fibre. He started tattooing two years ago. Thierry learned tattooing by watching the tattooing of Eric and Pipipe who were hanging out in the district, but Thierry does not spend much time with them any longer. As he has a wife and kids, tattooing has become a way of earning a living. Thierry wants to be more “professional” in hygienic and technical senses than is possible in street tattooing. Like Efraima, Simeon, and Varii, Marquesan tattooists in the other artisan association, Thierry has been working at Heiva, l’exposition d’Artisanat, and la foire commerciale. He has been tattooed on his shoulder by Eric when he was spending more time with Eric, and wants to get tattooed more on the back and probably on his legs by Efraima.

Fig. 3.21 Thierry.

Thierry started tattooing tribal style in 1999, but most of his tattooing is a modernized local style, a mixture of Marquesan, Maori, Tahitian, and Hawaiian motifs. With his friendly nature, Thierry is getting along relatively well with other tattooists. He around in Outumaoro have a nickname and call each other by a nickname rather than by a real name.
calls the other tattooists “chef (boss)” and seeks their advice. Not only does he collect knowledge, Thierry is also a hard worker. He is always drawing designs when he does not have any clients.

“Aha te huru, brad!” William comes in.
William is a friend of Clément and has been tattooed by him little by little.
“E, brad! Ça va, toi, Maki?” Thierry stops tattooing and greets us.
“Clément, aita anei oia e rave te ohipa teie mahana?” (Isn’t Clément working today?)
“Aita. I te fare (No, he is at home).”
“Ok. Alors. I will drop in here tomorrow.”
“Ok, brad.” Thierry goes back to tattooing.

Clément, a brother-in-law of Thierry, works at Thierry’s stand. Clément has been working in construction and tattooing only at weekends at his own or his clients’ residences. During my research, Clément is tattooing numbers of fire fighters at the fire station of Papeete because Hugue, his brother-in-law, is working there [Figs. 3.22 - 3.24].

Although Thierry and Clément work at the same place, their ways of tattooing and clients are different. Clément has tattooed many local Tahitians, most of whom are his
friends, but since he started working with Thierry at Fare artisanat, Clément has been tattooing many French tourists and military personnel.

While Thierry has extensively learned from salon-based tattooists and another artisan-based tattooist and his tattooing has transformed in the mixture of these styles, Clément prefers to tattoo with a fine, detailed motif style. Clément, however, has started gradually mixing Maori, Marquesan, and Hawaiian motifs into his tattooing. Thierry sometimes said to me that he does not want the friends of Clément hanging around in their stand because the other clients, particularly French tourists and military personnel, would be afraid of them.

4) Efraima, Simeon and Varii – at Marché

Marché - market, is a heart of Papeete, not only in the geographical sense, but also at the level of everyday life. The ground floor is a space for food, displaying breadfruit, taro, banana, mango, coco, papaya, tomato, cucumber, tohu, fish, meat and take away \textit{posssion cru}, chaomen, \textit{taioro}, pain de coco, cakes, \textit{frifri}, Marquesan dried banana,
maniota, spiced mangos, and flowers. The upstairs is a space for artisan crafts, where stands sell pareu, shell necklaces, bracelets, barrettes, black pearl jewellery, wood carvings, stone carving, bone carvings, coconut fibre plaited bags, hats, mats, tiare mono, vanilla perfume, postcards and so forth. A local music band is playing sweet ukulele music at the restaurant. Efraima’s stand occupies the small space between the craft stands on the first floor of Marché.

"Kaoha nui, Efraima!" I say to Efraima and also smile at the young Polynesian whom Efraima is tattooing.

“How are you, Maki? Where are you from?"

Tattooists know that I am visiting other tattooists. As they do not like to visit the other tattooists without reasons, they often ask me about the others and acquire information about them.

“I saw Thierry this morning.”

“What was he tattooing?”

“A big manta ray on the back of Farani.”

25 Poisson cru is raw fish marinated with vegetable, coconut milk, and lemon juice; chaomen is Chinese fried noodle; titoro is shellfish marinated with grated coconut; pain de coco is coconut bread; frifri is fried bread, usually served as a part of weekend breakfast; maniota is steamed manioc.
Efraima is 28 years old, a stout Marquesan from Ua Pou [Figs. 3.25 and 3.27]. As his signboard states, his tattooing is Marquesan and that is his sales emphasis. His Marquesan style is, however, different from those sketched by Von den Steinen and Handy in the early 1900s. Efraima indeed uses the traditional Marquesan motifs, but has arranged them on curvilinear space, which creates particular movement in his tattooing. He marks only the shape and location of the design with pen, and tattoos the details directly to the skin, except when tattooing small symmetrical designs (he uses the carbon paper for them). Efraima uses not only Marquesan motifs, but also Tahitian and Maori ones. He explains that his Maori is not real Maori anyway, but it is “Marquesan Maori”.

Today Efraima is tattooing a big traditional Marquesan warrior (toa enana) on the back of Teni, his cousin who has just completed his two-year military service and come back to Tahiti [Fig. 3.25]. Teuni will return to Ua Pou for two months. He wants to come back to Tahiti and work as a tattooist like Efraima. When he does not have any clients, Efraima often draws a Marquesan warrior on paper, but this was the first time that he actually tattooed the design on the body. The warrior is holding in his hand a carved club (casse-tête, u’u) and his body is all wrapped by Marquesan motif tattoos [Fig. 3.26].

“Comment tu dis ‘combien ça coûte’ en anglais?” (How do you say ‘how much does it cost?’ in English?) Efraima stopped tattooing and asked me.

“How much does it cost?”

“And ‘combien du temps’?” (And ‘how long’?)

As Marché is one of the most popular tourist places in Papeete, Efraima has many tourists from France, the United States, and the other countries of Europe. These tourists get a small dolphin, turtle, or manta rays in the local style. Efraima explained to me once that he did not study English seriously at school because he thought that he would not need it much later on.

Besides tourists and local Tahitians, Efraima tattoos many Marquesans, both those from his island, Ua Pou and those from the other Marquesan islands. Many Marquesans get big tattoos on their back, legs, and shoulders from Efraima. Efraima tattooed colourful European designs before, but now most of his clients come to him and ask for haka, or le style marquesien.

Simeon came in this small stand, did bisous to me, grabbed some needles and tubes from the sterilizer and left. Simeon, Efraima’s younger brother, aged 20, works at a stand not far from Efraima’s [Fig. 3.27, Efraima tattooing Simeon]. Simeon came to
Tahiti in 1997 and went to Centre de Metier d'Art to learn carving and drawing the designs. Six months later, however, Simeon quit the school because he wanted to concentrate on tattooing. He was sure that he could earn money by tattooing. He worked with Efraima at the beginning and obtained his own studio in 1999. Some tattooists consider Simeon too proud, but I think he is just quiet.\footnote{Moreover, Tahitian which is spoken among local men is not his primary language.}

Simeon said that he did not learn from Efraima much other than a few techniques. The influence of Efraima's styles, however, is prominent in Simeon's work. Simeon has not only Marquesan motifs on his own body, but his most recent tattoo is a style of triangular Hawaiian tattoos marking the side of his body by Efraima. Simeon explains that he wants to have a unique tattoo of his own. It was unique in Tahiti at the time he got it, but he also expects that other people will get the same style later. When I asked him why he got tattooed Hawaiian, not Marquesan, he answered that he wanted "changer un peu" (a bit of a change). This is often stated by male taure'are'a (probably many Tahitians regardless of age and gender). They become fiiu and "change a bit". Efraima and Simeon have a cousin, Varii, who is also working as a tattooist in Tahiti.\footnote{See Chapter Four for more information and discussion about Varii and his tattooing.}

Fig. 3.27 Efraima tattooing Simeon.
Like many other Marquesans, Efraima, Simeon, and Varii have and express strong Marquesan identity. They were born in Ua Pou, spent their childhood and adolescence there, and speak Marquesan. Simeon once stated that they are different from these Marquesans who were born in Tahiti and do not speak Marquesan.

The styles of these Marquesan tattooists are similar. It is Efraima who has been leading this new Marquesan tattooing. There is, however, a certain originality of style among them. Simeon and Varii include the photos of Efraima’s works in their sample files. Efraima includes Simeon’s work, but not Varii’s, in his file. Efraima confesses that he does not like Varii tattooing his style, but Simeon is good enough and willing to share his designs although Simeon still needs to draw more designs.

5) Akoti and Moïse – at Heiva

Heiva began. Heiva is a festival which takes place annually in French Polynesia from the end of June for about one month. Almost every island in French Polynesia celebrates Heiva or at least has a dance party around that time, but the largest festival is on the island of Tahiti. People often state that Heiva on the other islands are better because they are more local, while Heiva in Tahiti is more for tourists. Various activities such as dancing, chanting, sporting competitions, the installation of an artisan village, and fire walking, take place during the Festival.

The artisan village is installed by the associations of artisans from the districts of Tahiti and different islands in Aorai Tini Hau in Pirae. There are six hundred artisans and twenty-one delegations at Heiva d’artisan 2000. The artisans have stands where they sell their art products such as wood, stone, mother-of-pearl, and bone carvings, tifaifai (patchwork), pareu, cloth, shell and seed necklaces and bracelets, tapa, black pearl products, coconut fibre plaiting products (hats, baskets, mats), and cloth. Besides crafts, there are massage and tattooing stands. Competitions for craft production are held at the stage in the centre of the village. The competitions also demonstrate the process of production. The audience is able to approach the mamas, female artisans, who are making tifaifai or pannier and ask them questions. There are also short lessons on craft-making provided by these mamas. Tattooists who usually work in different places pack up their machines and materials and install themselves in the Artisan village.

A mama enters the stand of Moïse and Akoti.

“Comment vas-tu, bébé?” The mama kisses Moïse and Moïse answers bluntly.
Moïse is 19 years old, tall and fit, as he dances in *O Tahiti E*, a professional dance group [Fig. 3.28, Moïse tattooing his father]. He is not “bébé”, but as he has the same name as his father, people need to distinguish one from another. Ange, a young female artisan, only a couple of years older than Moïse also calls him bébé Moïse. Following her, I also call the son Moïse “Bébé Moïse” and his father “Papa Moïse”.

Moïse was born in Tahiti, but his parents are from the Marquesas. Efraïma and Simeon are his uncles and Varii is his cousin. He understands Marquesan but cannot speak it. He normally works at his home or the clients’. He also tattoos at the garden of the Sofitel Maeva Beach Hotel in Puunauia on Sunday afternoons.

Fig. 3.28 Moïse father and son.

“Are you going to see the dance spectacle in Vaiete? We will dance tonight.”

“Of course.”

Moïse explains to me that he was passionate about plaiting coconut fibre, then tattooing, and now dancing.

Moïse’s father plaits coconut fibre and attaches black pearls, gems, and shells to make necklace, bracelets, and anklets. He has been heavily tattooed on the face and the body. He used to tattoo other people, but not any longer. His son learned tattooing from his friend, Akoti.

Akoti, 33 years old, started tattooing European designs on his friends by hand-pricking in 1984 [Fig. 3.29 Akoti on the left hand side]. He used the remodelled razor
and then invented a tool, which was made by attaching a pen tube to the head of a travelling razor. According to Akoti, it is more practical and easier to hold. Akoti usually tattoos at clients’ houses.

As Moïse participates in the artisan association, they have a stand, selling their products. Moïse’s father prepares and plaits coconut fibre and his son tattoos. Akoti often works with Moïse. Akoti and Moïse have many young female clients because of the style of Akoti. He uses mythological themes in his tattooing; mermaid, uru, Taaroa and so on.

Fig. 3.29 Akoti (left) and Cobaye (Peni).

“Let’s go for a walk!”

Akoti talks too much nonsense when he is together with Moïse, so I prefer to talk with him without Moïse or the other friends. Akoti has pride and is to some extent stubborn. Unlike Thierry, Akoti did not visit Efraima or Michel working at the different stands in the artisan village to ask them about their machine or technique. He just keeps on his way of tattooing with his style and his tool. Having more occasions to work at the expositions and la foire, however, Akoti has gradually become friends with the other tattooists. He has begun visiting the salon, Efraima, Simeon, and Colla’s stands at Marché, and Thierry and Clément’s stand in Outumaoro. He has started using the tattoo
machine. Akot is one of the tattooists who are changing their position as a street tattoo practitioner to that of a professional artisan tattooist.

**Tahitian Tattoo World**

This section examines those who are involved in producing “Tahitian tattoo culture”. It considers mainly tattooists, but also people who are tattooed and those who are strongly interested in tattooing. The people who do not tattoo, are not tattooed, and are not interested in tattooing, indeed, indirectly characterize Tahitian tattoo culture. Yet, in this chapter, I focus on the former.

The first question to interrogate is whether tattoo-related people organize any kinds of affinity or solidarity. In other words, the question is whether I examine “Tahitian tattoo culture” as a collective or individual activity.

When I started conducting research at the end of 1998, the tattooists rarely assembled for drinks or other social activities with the other tattooists who were not working partners although they often met with their brothers, cousins, and friends. They did not have regular meetings or gatherings.28 As I have shown in the previous section, tattooists have their own working place and their own way of tattooing. They do not need to work in a group, as would be necessary for canoeing or playing band music.

The Tahitian tattoo world is not hierarchical. Apprenticeships are not common among tattooists.29 Most tattooists state that they have learned tattooing by themselves, by watching what the other tattooists are drawing and tattooing, and trying it out themselves at home. Yet, tattooists give advice to each other on handling machines and drawing designs, more often with those who work together. Full-time tattooists often work in a group of two or three in the same place to share the rent of the work place. They are often brothers (like Aroma and Mano, Efriama and Simeon), cousins (like Efriama, Simeon, and Vari), friends (like Moïse and Akot), and relatives (like Thierry and Clément). Yet, many tattooists like Eric who tattoo outside or at home, work by themselves. The co-workers share a sterilizer, flash, and sample photo files, and exchange knowledge of design and technique. They often arrange their clients to suit the convenience of the others.

A network of tattooists has been established and developed with the increasing popularity of tattooing among local Tahitians and tourists, as well as with the increase of

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28 The exception was the time when there was a Tattoo Festival in Raiatea, 2000. They had several occasions to get together before, during and after the Festival.
29 At the time of the revival of ethnic tattooing in the 1980s, there were apprenticeships among Tavana Salmon, Raymond Graffe, and Chime.
occasions when tattooists meet each other such as Heiva, the exposition of artisans, la foire commercial, and a Tattoo Festival. Tattooists who are accustomed to tattooing their family and friends in their own districts have started tattooing tourists and people outside their community. Consequently they are required to do a more “professional” level of work in both technique and form. The exchange of designs and knowledge of techniques between tattooists has been promoted by the demand of clients and has made enormous changes in Tahitian tattooing.

Fig. 3.30 Tapu tattooing at his friend’s house.

A tattooists’ association was founded in 2000 after the International Tattoo Festival in Raiatea. It aims to organize the second Festival and to protect the rights over Polynesian tattoo motifs and designs (L’Association Tatau 2000a and 2000b). Currently only the full-time, experienced tattooists are members of the association; there are always many young people starting tattooing and they take usually some time to get in touch with older tattooists. In this sense, the gap between the full-time professional tattooists and part-time amateur tattooists has been extended through establishing the association.

30 The first International Tattoo Festival took place in Raiatea on 28-30 April, 2000. It was organized by Tahiti Manava Tourist Bureau for the promotion of tourism in Raiatea and tattooing and youth culture. See Chapter Four for more discussion.
The mobility of *taure 'are 'a* is reflected in that of tattooists. As I have shown above, Tahitians move from one district to another, from one island to another, but their family and friends do not usually have problems in finding them. They simply hang around at the place the person is likely to appear or pass a word in the network of people. The same tactic can be applied to find a Tahitian tattooist who moves from one place to another. However, non-Tahitian customers, tourists, military personnel, or those from the other archipelagos (although he might be likely to have a relative or friend in the area) do not have the network, so they need the tattooist to be at one specific place so that they can find him easily. The mobile tattooists are embedded in more local networks while the full-time tattooists who work at a fixed place tend to have more tourists and military personnel as clients. Yet, the latter tattooists also travel farther, which I examine in Chapter Four.

I propose that “Tahitian tattoo culture” is located in three arenas of Tahitian society. Firstly, it is located in *taure 'are 'a* culture. Tattooing is a pastime for male *taure 'are 'a* and assists bond-making among them. Eric, for instance, has tattooed many young men and women in the Outumaoro district. Most of them, like Sâté, are proud of being tattooed by Eric and become conscious of being a member of the community in Outumaoro. The fact that Clément tattoos many fire fighters of the Papeete Fire Station
derives from the same taure 'are 'a solidarity, although these men are older than those in Outumaoro and in a strict sense, have completed the taure 'are 'a phase.

Masculinity formed in the taure 'are 'a period, is also expressed in the tattooing places. The Tahitian tattoo world is male-dominated and consists of those aged from the late teens to the early thirties. All tattooists are men as are their friends, and Tahitians who get heavily tattooed, frequent tattooists' places, and stay there for a long time are men. Half of the clients for most tattooists are women, but it is rare that female clients regularly visit the tattooists after they are tattooed. Thus, the relationships which are predominant at the site of tattooing are those between men. The nature of gender relationships observed in the tattoo society, for example, the attitudes of Aroma and Mano toward me at the salon, is reflected in those of the Tahitian society.

Secondly, Tahitian tattoo culture is partially located in the artisan association. The tattooists who are based in the artisan association such as Akot, Moëse, Thierry, Clément, Efraima, Varii, and Simeon, mainly tattoo le style polynésien although most of them can tattoo non-Polynesian style. They often have other craft-making skills as Varii carves wood, and Moëse and Thierry plait coconut fibre. They often wear pareu, a necklace of carved wild pig tusk, and head and leg dresses made with ti'i leaves. Tattooing is, in this context, one of the Tahitian "traditional" cultures, which express ethnic identity and their life style different from Farani.

Masculinity expressed in this context is also "warrior" masculinity in physical terms, but is embedded in the gender relationships of Tahitian domestic structure. As I have illustrated above, the artisan organization has the same structure of household, which is controlled and managed by the senior female member. Male tattooists in the artisan association are often submissive, as we have seen in Moëse's stand.
Fig. 3.32 Aroma tattooing a gendarme.

Thirdly, Tahitian tattoo culture is also located in the global context. Polynesian tattooing, as I discuss further in Chapter Four, has already been located in the global tattooing scene and has developed in both technique and form in a particular way. The tattooists such as Aroma, Michel, Mano, and Colla consider themselves a part of the tattoo world outside French Polynesia and differentiate themselves from the tattooists based on the artisan associations. Although they have many clients, particularly tourists, who want to be tattooed Polynesian style, they tattoo more non-Polynesian styles and introduce non-Polynesian technology than those who belong to the artisan association.

Tattooists often state the difference between artisan based tattooists and salon based tattooists. In fact, the activities of artisans have been globalized through their trips and exhibitions abroad. Globalising Tahitian tattooing has partially encompassed the characteristics of artisan or “traditional culture”, which it is expected that the non-Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people will observe.

These tattooists have more opportunity to meet and become friends with tourists, French military personnel, and non-Polynesian tattooists. However, tattooists such as Aroma also keep on teasing French people calling them “taioro” and joking about them among their Tahitian friends. Their ethnic identity is formed and articulated in the relationship with non-Tahitian people and their culture, which is examined further in Chapter Four.
Creation and Transformation of Tattooing

Tahitian tattoo culture is located in three different contexts: taure 'are 'a, artisan, and global tattooing, and these contexts are superimposed on one another. Some tattooists are more involved in the artisan or global tattooing, but most of them are moving from one context to another, and tattooing beyond these different contexts. The fluid positioning of tattooists in the interwoven contexts of Tahitian tattoo culture is expressed in their choice of a particular way of practice and their repertoire of tattoo forms. Gender, ethnic, and age differences are expressed in the form and practice of tattooing. In the last section, I discuss how the form and practice of tattooing are assessed, particularly by tattooists and how they have been transformed through these assessments and interactions of tattooists. In doing so, I also show how the tattooists construct, affirm, or negotiate their identities. I consider how the practice and form of tattooing that I have delineated in Chapter Two are assessed and incorporated into the tattooing of each practitioner.

The choice of tool has a different significance in each context. In the context of cultural revitalization, the significance of ma 'ohi tattooing is not only in the representation of “traditional motifs”, but also in the practice of tattooing. In this sense, the “authentic” ma 'ohi tattooing is realized by using the traditional tools. The more prolonged pain that people suffer with being tattooed with the traditional tool is important in terms of warrior masculinity. Enduring the pain is a way to make a warrior body and to demonstrate both physical and mental strength. Many tattooists are interested in tattooing with the traditional tool. Simeon and Colla have fabricated a tattoo comb although they have not actually tattooed with it yet. Chimé, a tattooist in Moorea, learned the traditional technique from a Samoan tattooist and started tattooing

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31 Assessment is inevitably subjective. My primary question here is how to write about the assessments of the others without being completely free from my assessment. My assessment of tattooing has been consolidated during this research. In the field, I have learned most from Michel who was passionate about handling of the tattoo machine and colouring and shading techniques. I had no research experience on tattooing in any other countries except French Polynesia, but I regularly read American and French tattoo magazines. A beautiful tattoo for me somehow meets the globalized “professional” tattooing criterion. It is impossible to adopt a neutral position, but I argue that one can write about the others’ assessments to some extent faithfully without assessing these assessments or sliding the assessments in the different categories. The relationships affect the assessment making and eventually the assessments would change the relationships.

32 In the early European contact time, as tattooing indicated the maturation, the endurance of pain during the operation is likely to have been considered as a rite of passage which every adolescent must go through. The operation was accompanied by enormous pain. As Ellis states, “many suffered much from the pain of tattooing, and from the swelling and inflammation that followed, which often proved fatal” (1967: ii: 466).
with the traditional tool. Tahitian tattooists are also expected to tattoo in the traditional Polynesian way by a global tattoo audience.

Fig. 3.33 Pipipe tattooing with remodelled razor.

Fig. 3.34 Remodelled razor tattooing.

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33 I saw that Simeon and Colla had a fabricated tattoo comb (although I did not see them actually tattooing with it).
The tattooing of the remodelled razor is differently conceived according to the tattooists. Clément, Eric, and Pipipe insist that tattooing with the remodelled razor is less painful and makes fine and detailed expression possible. Aroma and Michel consider that the tattoo machine is better than the remodelled razor because it is faster, more hygienic (easier to clean), and more powerful. They state that both machine and razor tattooings are painful because both prick the skin with needles.

The remodelled razor has been accommodated with male taure 'are 'a’s life style and relationships. Firstly, it has been adapted to their mobility because the remodelled razor works with batteries, not with electricity, so that tattooists can tattoo everywhere, even on the streets or on motu as Eric tattooed Tupuna. Tattooing is a good way of killing time for male taure 'are 'a while on the street or travelling. Secondly, the remodelled razor has been accommodated with the way of embodiment of taure 'are 'a masculinity. In the tattooing male-exclusive gathering, taure 'are 'a masculinity is embodied as moderate, expressing in the easygoing, “aita e peapea (no problem)” way. Unlike tourists or the French military personnel, taure 'are 'a would take possibly as much time as they want and they would stop if they are fiu and sometimes continue later. Many Tahitian women prefer to be tattooed with the remodelled razor because they consider it less painful by judging its subtle sound.

Fig. 3.35 Free-hand tattooing.
Fig. 3.36 Remodelled razor tattooing.

Fig. 3.37 Machine tattooing.
Fig. 3.38 Tattoo motifs marked with pen.

Fig. 3.39 Drawing the design with pen.
The ways of transferring the tattoo design on the skin are also differently conceived. Some tattooists such as Eric and Pipipe assert that good tattooists do not use carbon paper and tattoo directly on the skin (even without drawing the design with pen). Other tattooists such as Aroma and Michel, however, claim that it is better to draw the design on the carbon paper before tattooing because the tattoo becomes more accurate and more “professional”. They also tattoo in free-hand, but often use carbon paper to trace the designs that are symmetrical such as turtle and ray. Free-hand has been popularly used by the artisan based tattooists. Efraima, Simeon, and Varii use carbon paper for marking only the shape of the design. The infilled motifs are directly tattooed on the body. Aroma and Michel mark the details of the big design by pen.

The motifs of the other crafts such as stone, wood, bone, and mother-of-pearl carving are directly carved into the material without tracing on the carbon paper or drawing by pen. Some artisans mark the form of designs by pencil. When I asked these artisans or tattooists whether they did not need to look at the models for the motifs, they usually pointed to their head and said, “tous est dans la tête (all in the head).” For these artisans and tattooists, free-hand proves that they are “Tahitian”, “Ma’ohi”, or “Polynesian” and naturally possess the knowledge of their tradition.

The type of clients also affects the choice of the way of transforming the design. Non-Tahitian, non-local, and female clients demand more accuracy. Straightness (aforo
maitai) is also one of the elements of good tattooing for Tahitians. However, Tahitians, particularly men, do not complain even if a line is not straight and a symmetrical design is tattooed as asymmetrical. This is also owed to the easygoing nature of Tahitian men among peers.

Fig. 3.41 Remodelled razor tattooing.

Many Tahitians just choose a tattooist whom they would like to tattoo them and let him tattoo whatever he likes or tell him only the basic characteristic such as “quelque truc local/ haka (something local/ haka) or “dolphin” or “tiki”’. They are often brothers, cousins, or friends of the tattooist, and know his work well, and trust in him. Furthermore, this is another embodiment of masculinity based on fraternal bonds.

Observing that world famous tattooists tattoo not only the design from flash but also their own design by free-hand, some Tahitian tattooists consider that free-hand tattooing distinguishes artist tattooist from flash-only tattooists. Tattoo artists are required to have drawing skill as well as creativity. Free-hand tattooing rejects reproduction of the same design and seeks originality and uniqueness, which is in contrast to the practice of Tahitian tattooing in the early European contact time. However, free-hand is supported by the contemporary artisan tattooists. The notion of “artist” of the global tattoo world has been introduced into the Tahitian tattoo world. Free-hand tattooing is, in this sense, located between the local and global tattoo contexts.
This is made explicit when Michel says that he is an artisan and he defines “artisan” as an “artiste local (local artist)”.

Figs. 3.42-3.45 Machine tattooing.
The tattooists are also differentiated by the tattooing expression derived from the different use of tools. Aroma, Michel, Mano, Colla, Efraima, Simeon, and Vario prefer thick lines, big motif, and black tattoo ink, using a tattoo machine with three to eleven needles. These tattooists are familiar with the Western “black works” such as tribal, Celtic, and Euro-Polynesian. They explain that thick lines would not be smudged much even after ten years and remain black and sharp. Pipipe, Eric, Akoti, Moïse, and Clément prefer the thin, fine, detailed style tattooed by the remodelled razor with a single sewing needle. These tattooists consider that the thick lines, big motif, and black ink style is too modernized. Both groups consider their style as le style local, but while the former means is comparing it with non-Polynesian tattooing, the latter means that it is more similar to the old Polynesian tattooing. The dichotomy such as thin line equals local and thick line equals less local is too simplistic, so requires further consideration.
The thickness of line, colour of ink, and size of motif mark the distinction of man and woman, Tahitian and Farani, and locals and visitors. Thick, black, and bigger motifs of tattoo are associated with masculinity. Many young Tahitians leading the contemporary Tahitian culture through dancing and artisan activities are heavily tattooed and often in thick, black, and bigger motifs because they stand out better from a long distance when they dance. As for motif, “spear”, triangles vertically aligned, is popular as a representation of “warrior” masculinity. For instance, many dancers of les Grands Ballets de Tahiti were tattooed during my research. Tavita was tattooed by several different tattooists such as Simeon, Efraima, Varii, and Mano [Fig. 3.50]. Christian, for example, was tattooed with tiki representing his family – himself, his wife, and his children, on the loins by Aroma and Mano. These tiki were tattooed in thick, black, bigger motif tattooing and modernized as they had facial expression [Fig. 3.51]. Olivier, a leading dancer from Austral, had been tattooed by his friend there, but wanted Aroma to add a Maori inspired spiral on his arms. [Figs. 3.48 and 3.49].

Fig. 3.47 William’s leg.
Non-dancers and non-artisan Tahitians also apply this style. William, for instance, had detailed, fine, small motif tattoos on his legs by Clément, but later he asked
Clément to fill some of the motifs in black to make them bigger and more solid [Fig. 3.47]. For these tattooists and tattooed people, masculinity expressed in thick lines, black ink, big motif tattooing are associated with “tupuna (ancestor)” and “the ancient warrior” although this style of tattooing is modernized, featured with tattooists’ creativity, and mixed with other Polynesian motifs.

Some artisans are tattooed on the face such as Moïse (father) and Cobaye. One of the main reasons to get tattooed on the face is to identify themselves as “an artisan”, “Ma’ohi”, and/or “Polynesian” and to distinguish themselves from “non-artisan”, “non-Ma’ohi”, and “non-Polynesian” as well as from the other artisans who are heavily tattooed but not on the face. Yet, for Tahitians facial tattooing does not necessarily represent the identity as an artisan and “Ma’ohi”. The other artisans are reluctant to get tattooed on the face for the same reason – that it is too noticeable. Some tattooists, such as Aroma, refuse to tattoo on the face because it is difficult to modify it when the bearer changes his/her mind later. Some people choose the time to be tattooed on the face more carefully than they do for tattooing on the other parts of the body. Son Moïse, for example, wants to get tattooed on the face like his father, but will do so after he is married. He does not consider that most women like facial tattoos.
Fig. 3.54

Figs. 3.52-3.55 Girls’ tattoo.

Fig. 3.56 Logo of local beer, *Hinano*. 
While the block tattoo is popular among male Polynesians, the one-design tattoo is popular among women and non-Polynesian residents and tourists [Figs. 3.52-3.55]. In terms of women’s tattooing, there is no difference between Tahitian and non-Tahitian women. Women prefer small one-design tattoos, often figurative such as turtle, dolphin, hibiscus, and lizard, on the upper back, near the naval, on the feet, or on the ankle. A thin band around wrist and ankle is also popular. A design stretching both sides, forming a bikini string shape, above the hip is also often tattooed on women. In this sense, women’s tattoos are considered a substitute for decorative accessories such as bracelets, anklets, and bikini strings. Some women are tattooed inside the ear. Women’s tattoos are often fine, black, Polynesian, or tribal style, although hibiscus and dolphin are also tattooed in the realistic style.

Conclusion

Tahitian tattooists had a loose solidarity among them, but have been developing into more firm affiliation over recent years through networking and collaboration. Tahitian tattoo culture is located in three arenas of Tahitian society, taure'are'a life style, ma'ohi identity making particularly in artisan activities, and global tattooing. The contexts, however, overlap with one another and tattooists explore the possibility of their style and practice through interaction with the other tattooists, which is cooperative at one time and competitive at other times. The practice and form of tattooing are parts of Tahitian culture, and used as a way of forming gender, ethnic, and age differences and identities. The selection of a particular tattoo form and practice, and the assessment of them also express gender differences, ma'ohi identity formation, and globalization of tattoo culture.

The spatiality of Tahitian tattooing is determined by both mobility and stability of tattooists as taure'are'a tattooists are normally based in a district, but often travel from one district to another, or from one island to another, and tattoo in each place. Full-time tattooists normally have a salon or stand and work at the same place. Yet, they also tattoo in the different places in Heiva, exhibitions, la foire commercial, conventions, and so forth. They have started tattooing more on these kinds of occasions and travel to different places. With the mobility of the tattooists, tattooing and friendship bonds are extended in different districts and islands, and recently outside Tahiti, which I discuss further in Chapters Four and Five.

The temporality of Tahitian tattooing is distinguished as “modern” or “ancient” by technical, technological, and formal aspects of tattooing. Modern tattooing is a
contemporary invention and introduced with Euro-American technique and technology. The “ancient” or “traditional” motifs and style of being heavily tattooed are significant ways to embody masculinity for Tahitian men and to consolidate taure 'are 'a relationships and especially for dancers and artisans to represent cultural identity. “Modern Polynesian style” has developed with tourism by responding to the demand for smaller designs and sophistication of the style. Yet, Tahitians are also tattooed le style modern on their body, in small size for women’s tattoos and in big for men’s tattoos.

This chapter has shown that tattooing is a process of establishing their cultural, gender, occupational, and age identities for young Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people. This is a different process from that which occurs when the knowledge of tattooing is heritage, passed from the elder people to the younger. Because of discontinuous Tahitian history, young tattooists and tattooed people have been exploring and cultivating the tattoo forms and technique both in and outside Tahiti. The notion of “tradition” is, however, still significant as it boosts the social value of tattooing.
Chapter Four

Exchanges in Taputapuatea: Localization and Globalization

On April 28th, 29th, and 30th in 2000, in the marae Taputapuatea at Raiatea, heavily tattooed people from Tahiti, Marquesas, Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Hawaii, Rapa Nui, and the Cook Islands assembled for the first International Tattoo Festival in French Polynesia.\(^1\) Over three days, the buzzing of the tattoo machine was echoing in the sky of the ancient marae. The bodies had been inscribed with *haka*, *moko*, Samoan, Tribal, Celtic, European, and Japanese styles.

\(^1\) There were many journalists from tattoo magazines, photographers, and film makers from everywhere in the world. Big cruising ships, *Paul Gauguin* and *Renaissance* also brought their clients to Taputapuatea.
There were also many local Raitaeans. The organizers, GHE Tahiti Manava, estimated 6,000 or 8,000 people visited the festival. The tattooists of 17 different countries participated in the Festival.
Tatau i Taputapuatae was organized by Tahiti Manava Visitor’s Bureau, a Governmental Tourism Office, in order to develop tourism in Raiatea, which had been less popular with tourists than the other islands such as Bora Bora and Moorea. The object of Tahiti Manava Visitor’s Bureau was to unify the youth, culture, and tourism. Tatau i Taputapuatae was, therefore, different from the normal international tattoo convention. “Culture”, the organizer implied, was “Tahitian” or “Polynesian” culture rather than “tattoo culture” at large which is practiced not only in Tahiti but also in the rest of the world. However, there was a more dynamic shift, as “Tahitian” or “Polynesian” culture has become a part of “tattoo culture”, and “tattoo culture” has been a part of “Polynesian culture”.

Traditional ceremonies were conducted during the Festival. Fire walking (Umu Ti) took place at the Taputapuatae at the night before the opening, for marae must be awakened and purified. Many tattooists and visitors walked across burning rocks after the tahua, priest. On the first day of the Festival, a Kava ceremony took place in the marae. Each tattooist had a bowl of Kava after the speech of tahua, which derived from the tradition of the pre- and early contact period when Tahitians drank Kava to make the body numb before getting tattooed [Figs. 4.1 and 4.5].
Tahitian tattooists had been excited about the Festival for about a year in advance. Some tattooists considered it an international tattoo convention and were ambitious to demonstrate their tattooing skill and compete with other tattooists. Some of them converted their tool from remodelled razor to tattoo machine. The others had tattooed big pieces of designs on the back of their friends who were going to Raiatea with them to be shown as a living sample of their works. After the Festival, almost all Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists said that the Festival was great as they could meet many famous tattooists from all over the world and they could observe the different styles and techniques of tattooing.

Tattooists who were invited from other countries also had positive impressions of the Festival. Many commented that they were moved by being at the place where tattooing was considered to originate. Felix Leu, a famous tattooist from Switzerland, said, "C’est un honneur immense, pour nous, de venir à Tahiti. C’est ici que tout a commencé, pour nous, tatoueurs européens. Nous avons découvert cette tradition lorsque le capitaine Cook a ramené de Tahiti une personne tatouée" (La Dépêche de Tahiti, 2 May 2000, p. 36). During the Festival, Polynesian and non-Polynesian interests intersected in Taputapuatea.

Fig. 4.5 Kava ceremony.

2 "It is big honour for us to come to Tahiti. Here is the place that all began for us, European tattooists. We discovered this tradition when Captain Cook took a tattooed person from Tahiti" (my translation).
Questions raised during the Festival are: what did the Tattoo Festival mean to Tahitian tattooists? Why was it important that the Festival took place in the marae and was accompanied with these ceremonies? Why was it important for Tahitian tattooists to meet the tattooists from America, Europe, and the other parts of Polynesia? Would Tatau i Taputapuatea change Tahitian practice of tattooing and tattoo design and style?

The tattoo called “Tahitian” or “Polynesian” today is different from those tattooed when the first European explorer landed and observed in Tahiti in the late eighteenth century. Tattooing has been transformed according to changing local contexts, which also link to the tattoo worlds outside Tahiti. Furthermore, Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists have been making non-Polynesian styles and designs, and incorporating these foreign motifs/style/designs into their Polynesian tattooing. In this chapter, I consider the dynamism of creation and transformation in contemporary Tahitian tattooing and identity formation under neo-colonial and global contexts. The discussion implies the issues of cultural appropriation, postmodern creation, and sharing and exchange in social relationships. Firstly, I illustrate the history of Polynesian tattooing outside Tahiti and the history of non-Polynesian tattooing in Tahiti. Secondly, I review the issues of ownership, exchange, and appropriation. I demonstrate the local way of exchanging, borrowing, or using the other’s properties and knowledge in social relationships, and how this is shifted in the international domain, for example in Tatau i Taputapuatea. After demonstrating ethnographical examples, lastly, I examine the transmission of ownership of tattoos at the four stages: collective, tattooists, tattooed people, and photographer.

**History of Polynesian and Non-Polynesian Tattooing**

Polynesian encounters with non-Polynesian curiosity about their tattooing dated back to the early eighteenth century. Tahiti was first visited in 1767 by the British explorer Captain Samuel Wallis, in 1768 by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, in 1769 by the Endeavour under Captain James Cook and in 1788 by William Bligh in the Bounty. The encounters and interactions between Polynesians and non-Polynesians as well as the explorers’ observation of Polynesian people and customs were documented in their logs (Beaglehole 1962, 1967, 1968, and 1969; Bligh 1792; Bougainville 1967[1772]; Corney 1913, 1914, and 1919; Forster 1778; Hawkesworth 1785 [1773]; Kotzebue 1830; Morrison 1935; Parkinson 1773; Robertson 1973). Although the logs were written from
the European perspective, they also depicted how Polynesians responded to a European gaze and material demand. The body was a primal object on which both Polynesian and non-Polynesian gazes were focused, and tattoos as marks on the body were a target of intersecting interests.

There were material exchanges between Tahitians and European explorers in the early contact period. Tahitians received nails, hammers, muskets, ear-rings, bracelets, and red feathers in return for breadfruit, coconuts, hogs, fowls, fish, tapa, and shells. There were also mimetic exchanges of tattooing. European explorers got tattooed, and Tahitians did non-Polynesian motifs. European voyagers such as Banks, Parkinson, Ledyard, and many of the crew of the Bounty tattooed themselves as I have explained in Chapter One.

There were tattooed Polynesians and non-Polynesians who went to Europe with the explorers. Omai, from Raiatea, travelled back to England with the expedition of Captain Cook. He had tattoos on his hand and attracted the attention of English people (Alexander 1977; Guest 2000; Hetherington 2001; McCormick 1977).

Jean Baptiste Cabris was born in Bordeaux in 1780. Cabris sailed in an English whaling ship, which sank around Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas. Cabris was saved by Marquesans, learned the customs and language of Nuku Hiva, and lived with Marquesans. He was tattooed and married to the daughter of a Marquesan chief. After he went back to Europe with the Russian admiral Kruzenshtern’s expedition in 1804, Cabris became famous in the fairgrounds of Europe through demonstrating his heavily tattooed body (Oettermann 2000).

John Rutherford, an English man, was also popular in the fairgrounds of Europe. He told the public that when he was on board the ship he was captured by Maori in New Zealand in 1816 and forcibly tattooed. He also claimed that he was adopted by the tribe, was married to the daughter of the chief, and became a chief. His face was tattooed in Moko style, but his body was tattooed in the Tahitian style (Drummond 1980; Oettermann 2000). Subsequent analysis suggests that Rutherford left the ship voluntarily and was roaming around the islands freely.

The London Missionary Society with Duff arrived in Tahiti in 1797. Although the process of conversion took place over a long period of time with movements between indigenous religion and Christianity, large numbers of Tahitians were evangelized through the mission. Although they intended to abolish tattooing, many of the

\[3\] I explore exclusively Tahitian use of the other Polynesian tattooing in Chapter Five.
missionaries in the early days were interested in the practice of tattooing and documented it (Ellis 1967; Henry 1928).

These early European writings were intended to be scientific and objective, but were colonial writings, which described the Polynesian body as exotic. As these Europeans were interested in the physical characteristics and customs of the indigenous people, tattooing became an object of their interest.

The recent worldwide interest in Polynesian tattooing began and has been simultaneously developed in different places of the world, but interconnected and formed the global tattoo trend.

The Modern Primitive movement started in the 1980s in relation to the gay-lesbian, punk, S/M, New Age cultures, and underwent steady development in San Francisco. Fakir Musafar, known as a father of the Modern primitive movement, has explored spirituality through the practice of body-modification in North-American, Asian, and South Pacific Island societies, such as tattooing, piercing, branding, and scarification. He has practiced many rituals and ceremonies using his own body. His practices have been shown in the 1985 film “Dances Sacred and Profane” and in the book Modern Primitives Quarterly (Vale and Juno 1989). He is also the Director of the Fakir Body Piercing and Branding Intensives, where people can learn techniques of piercing and branding. After Fakir, many body practitioners have engaged with non-Western body modification. They intend to acquire a connection with non-Western spirituality through transforming the body (See Featherstone 2000; Klesse 2000; Rosenblatt 1997 for more analysis of “modern primitives”).

The popularity of Polynesian tattoos: Marquesan, Maori, and Samoan; South Asian: Borneo, Thai, and Philippine; and Eastern Asian: Chinese and Japanese stems from the tattooists and tattooed people’s inquiry into its origin. The tattooists and tattooed people’s interest initiated the revival and conservation of the practice and motifs,

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4 A similar phenomenon can be observed in the different areas of creative art, for example, in music, Lounge music. This is a line from the CD cover of Mondo Exotica, “Exotica was a round-trip ticket departing everyday for something more fabulous. It had the feel of distant places, but it took you to spots never before trekked by man, places that didn’t exist except in the minds of musicians busily mangling Polynesian folk tunes, Chinese scales, Arabic harmonies and Indian instruments” (1996. Capital Records inc.).

5 Fakir has a large bone through his nose. He wears tight metal bands on his limbs and waist which resemble the itiburi waist belt of Itbore in New Guinea. Fakir has a tattoo on the lower part of his belly that he explains is similar to Balinese textile patterns. In the way of Sadhu boys’ sexual negation in India, he has stretched his penis with weights; and his neck with a metal collar like Padung girls. He has hanged himself by fleshhooks as in an Indian O-Kee Pa ceremony and he dances again with fleshhooks as in the American Indian Sun Dance. Many spears pierced his skin as in the Kavandi-beating ceremony in India.
subverted the negative social meanings of a particular cultural tattooing, and bestowed new meanings. There is an on-going dialogue among people of different tattoo cultures.

The interaction of Tahitian tattooing with non-Tahitian tattooing began with European contacts as I have shown above, but was followed by more various tattoo traditions. I refuse to limit the foreign influence and exchange on Tahitian tattooing to the relations with Europe and America, but rather attempt to locate Tahitian tattooing in a wider geographical connection.

Non-Polynesian design and style has a long history, back to the period of European exploration in the late eighteenth century. However, the introduction of figurative, realistic tattooing as fixed style and design such as a skeleton, tiger, rose, and heart dated back to the 1970s, beginning in the prison and on the streets. Tahitians call these non-Polynesian styles and designs *le style* (*dessin*) *européen*, *le style* (*dessin*) *américain*, or sometimes *le style* (*dessin*) *farani*. As I show in Chapter Six, some Tahitians conceived that tattooing, particularly these European styles, is prison culture, and this concept derives from the American and European tattoo culture.

The knowledge of Asian tattooing has been introduced via the American and European tattoo culture, which had already included these tattoos in their practice. “Tribal style” in the tattoo world refers to a black solid tattooing style. This style is derived from Bornean tattoos, which are black curvilinear motifs. Most Bornean tattoos are figurative, representing flowers, scorpions, and dogs, but the style that is called “tribal” in the tattoo world is mostly non-figurative and decorative design. “Tribal” was introduced to the Tahitian tattoo scene in the 1990s, but has become popular since 1998.

Japanese design was introduced into the Tahitian tattoo scene with Western designs in the 1970s or later. It was stylized in the Euro-American tattooing, as its theme is Japanese such as carp, cherry blossom, *samurai* (Japanese warrior), but the colour and technique are Euro-American. Yet, more authentic Japanese style, in terms of design, colour arrangement, and composition, recently started being tattooed by Tahitian tattooists. Tahitians call these tattoos *le style* (*dessin*) *chinois* /tinito or *le style* (*dessin*) *japonais*.

Non-Polynesian elements in Tahitian tattooing practice are linked to the contemporary multi-ethnicity in Tahiti. For example, Chinese immigrants influence the popularity of Asian design. Chinese Tahitians and *demi-Chinois* have been articulating their Chinese identity in Tahitian society over the last decades. The language (*haka*), dance, music, traditional costume and food have been conceded to have meanings and forms, and consolidate their collectivity within Tahitian society, while a large Chinese
population in Tahiti is relatively intermarried with Tahitians or demi-Tahitians and speaks Tahitian. The dragon is one of the most popular designs in Tahiti, particularly Chinese Tahitians and demi-Chinois. It is tattooed in the different styles, Polynesian, tribal, European, and Japanese, in colours, black and grey (shaded).

Non-Polynesian curiosity about Tahitian tattooing has taken three different forms of publication: anthropological, photographical, and tattoo cultural. First, anthropologists and ethnologists have been interested in Tahitian and Marquesan tattooing since the early twentieth century. Their concern has been with the relationship between the body decoration and political and religious systems, how the formal character of tattoos and the practice of tattooing represent social meanings and are embedded in the social system. The most prominent reference on Marquesan tattooing are the ethnographies of von den Steinen (1925) and Handy (1922). These anthropological and ethnographical works document Marquesan tattooing in the early twentieth century with abundant photography and illustrations. As I have described in Chapter Two, these books are the most popular reference for contemporary Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists. Gell’s Wrapping in Images (1992) is a theoretically inspiring and significant comparative work of Polynesian practices of tattooing. Le tatouage aux Îles Marquises, (1998) is the latest publication on Marquesan tattooing based on Marie-Noëlle Ottino’s doctoral thesis, but also includes a paper on the recent renaissance of Marquesan tattooing by Jean-Louis Candelot.

Second, there are quite a number of photographic publications on contemporary Tahitian tattooing. These photographic works respond to the journalistic aim of documenting the social aspects of tattooing, and the artistic aim of demonstrating the aesthetics of body decoration. The former example is Tatau: Maohi Tattoo (Coirault 1993), which compiles the ancient motifs in the Society Islands which were tattooed mainly by Tavana Salmon in the 1980s. Marie-Hélène Villierme, the photographer for the book, has taken portraits of people all over French Polynesia. Her recent photographic publication (1996) is on the portraits of Polynesian people, which also includes many Tahitians with facial tattoos. Her photographs intend to depict the individuals who have tattoos rather than focussing on the tattooed parts of the body. There are the portraits of tattooists, school teachers, models, business men, convicts, artisans of Polynesian, French people, and demi.

The latter example is Barbieri’s photography book Tahiti Tattoo (1998) which represents a stereotypical occidental exotic image of Tahitian tattoos and tattooed men. Barbieri worked as a photographer for the French edition of Vogue. His book includes
the regular faces for tattooing books, such as Olivier Renoir, Tavana Salmon, Raymond Graffe, Roonui and so on. Some of his other models, however, are painted with the tattoo designs by pen.

Third, as the tattooists and publishers in Tahiti acknowledge an increasing interest in Polynesian tattoo outside Tahiti, some publishers responded to this interest and demand by the publication of a booklet and magazines. Polynesian Tattoo (Koessler and Allouch 1998) is published in English and French by Gotz, a French artist who has been painting in the theme of Tahitian and Marquesan tattooed bodies. This book is oriented towards tourists and briefly describes the social function and motifs of tattooing over the South Pacific, such as Hawaiian, Samoan, Rarotongan, Maori (New Zealand), Marquesan, Tahitian, Tuamotu/Australis/Gambier, and Easter Islanders’ tattooing.

For non-Polynesian tattooists, a new semi-annual local tattoo journal appeared in March 2000. The first issue of Tatu Art reports a long interview with Chimé, a Tahitian tattooist based in Moorea, and includes his tattoo designs. It also has historical accounts on Marquesan tattooing and the photos of the tattooed body of Vatea, another heavily tattooed Tahitian tattooist. Gotz, who took charge of illustration and photography, told me (per. com. 2000) that they would take up one tattoo artist in each issue.

Tahitian tattooists have been interviewed and documented by journalists from elsewhere in the world for tattoo magazines, museum magazines, airplane magazines, tourist boards, local TV stations, radio, newspapers, and so forth. Their discourses on Polynesian identity have been elaborated and articulated by having numbers of interviews and listening to the other tattooists’. Tatouage Magazine, published monthly in France, is the most widely read tattoo literature among Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists. This magazine includes interviews with famous tattoo artists, reports on tattoo conventions, and many photos of high quality tattoos. It contains historical research on Euro-American tattooing, convict tattooing, sailor tattooing as well as the tattooing practiced over the world such as Japanese, South Asians, Polynesian, and so forth. It has put out several special issues on Polynesian tattooing (Tatouage Magazine No. 4, 1998 and No. 9, 1999, No. 15, 2000 for Tatau i Taputapuatea).

Ownership and Transmission of Tattooing

In the transaction between Polynesian and non-Polynesian tattooists and tattooed people, the ownership of tattoo becomes a significant issue. The tattoo is considered to be owned by an individual and/or collective. The ownership is concerned with the design, motif, and style; technique; and the tattoo itself, and it is related with the right to possess,
use, and transfer. Claiming ownership is a process of identity formation, as it distinguishes the owners from those who do not have the right to own. Cultural ownership is significant in the discourse of cultural/ethnic identity formation, particularly in post-/neo-colonial situations.

A tattoo is transmitted from one person or a group of people to another. The transmission can be interpreted as exchange, borrowing, sharing, gift, stealing, inspiration, or appropriation according to the contexts. The rules of this transmission and morality associated with it, need to be analysed in the local context as well as in the global context. The practice, creation, and circulation of tattoos are implicated in social relationships among Tahitians and between Tahitians and non-Tahitians.

The transmissions of objects such as gift or ceremonial exchange in a particular cultural setting have been extensively analysed by many writers such as Gregory (1982), Malinowski (1922), Mauss (1970), and Strathern (1988). These works show that exchange establishes social collectivity, and social identity and relationships within the collective. The cross-cultural transactions in the colonial and post-colonial period have also been studied. Thomas (1991) examines the transaction between Pacific islanders and Europeans in colonial encounters, and demonstrates how both islanders and Europeans form identities by exchanging and appropriating the objects. The contemporary transaction between the settlers and indigenous people has been more political and economic. The recent debate focuses on the Australian and Canadian cases, considering the appropriation of indigenous cultural heritage and property (Christine 2000; Johnson 2000; Coombe 1995 and 1997).

Among different forms of transmission, appropriation is often considered the most problematic in the contemporary global/neo-colonial context. As Ziff and Rao (1997) demonstrate, in Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation, cultural appropriation is one form of cultural transmission. In other words, it indicates the relationships of the appropriator and the appropriated and the power inequality between the two. The conception of appropriation is often inconsistent between the appropriators and the appropriated. Cultural appropriation is a problematic issue because the appropriated property is often associated with ancestral knowledge and cultural identity.

A power relationship is implicated in the transmission. As Ziff and Rao point out, “appropriation can be viewed as a multidirectional phenomenon. Although it is perceived primarily as a taking from a subordinate into a dominant culture, this is not the only type of cultural borrowing that occurs…cultural appropriation can be construed to have a complementary opposite: cultural assimilation” (Ziff and Rao 1997:...
5). Colonial appropriation is generally defined as an appropriation of the non-West by the West. Contemporary ethnic and cultural identity formation and cultural revitalization reverses this power inequality and the direction of flow of the power.

When cultural appropriation is discussed, there is an idea that culture should not change or that culture must continue and remain in the same phase as it was before the European contact. It is based on the premise that Tahitian tattoo must remain in the same form and style, including the same motifs as in the pre-contact period. There is, however, discontinuity from the “ancient” practice in both technique and form. Tahitian tattooists themselves have been introducing the style and motifs from other cultures into their tattooing. In the contemporary global/neo-colonial Tahitian context, the issue of appropriation has not been problematized to the extent that it has in the Australian and Canadian cases. Yet, increasing numbers of Tahitian tattooists began to be aware of this issue.

In the following section, firstly, I illustrate how the exchange system is embedded in the Tahitian social relationships, especially friendship. Then I explore how this local exchange system can be applied to the relationships between Tahitians and non-Tahitians.

**Friendship Bond in the Tahitian Tattoo World**

As I have illustrated in Chapter One, Tahitian society in the pre- and early European contact period was highly stratified, but kinship was mobile and fluid through inter-island marriage and friendship contract called *taio*, a strategic way of developing and extending social relationships among those who were not affiliated by kinship. *Taio* is no longer practiced in the same way as it was before. Tahitian concepts of ownership have changed through interaction with European explorers, Christianization, the commercial trade with non-Polynesians, and economic globalization. The friendship system, however, still plays a significant role in Tahitian relationships and economic system. With social change and interaction and relationships with other Polynesians and non-Polynesians, Tahitian exchange and ownership systems have become complex, varying according to whom they exchange with and what the object of exchange is.

Globalization and urbanization have made an enormous impact on Tahitian kinship and other relationships. The change has been observed throughout French Polynesia, but particularly in Papeete, an economic, political, and educational centre of French Polynesia. Almost every island has a pre-school and elementary school, but students on remote islands come to the biggest island in the archipelago or Papeete and its suburbs.
to achieve higher education. While parents stay on their island, young islanders who are new to the big town usually depend upon and conjoin with brothers, sisters, or relatives who have already established their lives there. After they complete school, large numbers of them remain in Papeete and its suburbs, find jobs, marry a person from a different island, and settle down. They study, work, and live with not only people of the same island, but those from different islands, with different ethnicity such as European (mostly French people), Chinese, and demi (mixed-descent).

Identity of origin becomes significant in this context. Many of them who are from the island of Tahiti and the other Society Islands regard themselves as a Tahitian. Most of them are actually mixed-descent. Tahitians determine their Tahitian identity on the basis of language, custom, and the place where they are born and live.\(^6\) Being born as a demi does not mean locating themselves in an ambivalent location, between two ethnicities, but in fact allows them to have free choice of being either of them according to various situations; one can be a Tahitian at one time, a French person at another time, and a demi at a different time.

Tahitians have been developing a way to establish and maintain relationships in this multi-ethnic and multi-Polynesian society by forming a friendship bond. As my main aim is to analyse the relationships in the Tahitian tattoo world and this is a mainly male preserve, I focus on the Tahitian men’s way of bond making.

Tahitian men call each other and their friends “brad” or “frère”\(^7\). “Brad” derives from the English word “brother”. It does not necessarily indicate real brother either in a biological or legal sense. For tattooists, male friends and acquaintances from a wide age-range are called “brad” except that the old are called “papie” or “papa” and children called “bébé”. The narrative of “friendship” is not necessarily consistent with actual relationships. Particularly as “brad” is English, most Tahitians are using it without acknowledging that it means “brother”.

Tahitians use “brad” not only to their close friends, but also to those who are not friends in the strict sense but only acquaintances or to even those whom they have never met before.\(^8\) “Brad” is a useful term to address a man whom you do not know or whose name you have forgotten. Tahitian men rarely address male friends, cousins, and even

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\(^6\) Yet, blood is significant in affirmation of ethnic identity. For instance, there is an independent party called Toto Maohi (ma’ohi blood).

\(^7\) Tahitians use “brad” although they speak to each other in Tahitian.

\(^8\) Claudia Barcellos Rezende (1999) also notes this in her study of Brazilian friendship.
brothers by their names. The term “brad” is not used as an indicator which
distinguishes a friend from a non-friend, but is a more amicable and conciliatory tool to
include themselves and those who are called “brad” within the fictive family.

Tahitian men establish friendships for several reasons. First, they become friends
through geographical affinity as they are from the same island, village, and district.
Second, institution, group, and club are significant factors in becoming friends such as
going to the same school, participating in the same activities such as canoeing, boxing,
surfing, music playing, hunting, fishing, and dancing. Tahitians often explain their
friendship with someone by saying “I rowed with him in the same team” or “we played
basketball together”. They like to spend time together at bringue by drinking, smoking
pakalolo, playing music, and singing.

Friendship is established between Tahitian and French men in the same way as
Tahitians, basically through spending their time together. Tahitians often joke about
French people among friends. Even when they become friends with French people, they
still joke about them in front of them, but not in an intimidating way. They say that “Il
est taioro, mais bon copin (he is taioro, but good friend)”.

Use of the term “brad” does not represent relationships, but rather establish them. I
consider that this formation of relationships is an inclusive strategy. Tahitians convert
their friendships into fictive congenial relationships by calling their friends “brad” to
include strategically themselves and their friends within a fictive family structure.

This brotherhood bond plays a significant role in tattooing. Many Tahitians choose
a tattooist who is their friend rather than those who are generally considered a good
tattooist but not their friend. The main reason is that they can get tattooed by their friend
at a lower price or even for free. The obligation to give some discount is imposed upon
the tattooists. However, it sometimes becomes a burden for some tattooists. For example,
when Efraima tattooed a Marquesan who is from his island but not really his relative or
friend, the man took it for granted that he was tattooed for free because they are both
Marquesans. Efraima did not say anything in front of him, but after the man left Efraima

9 While they use “brad” to call the friend himself, Tahitians use “copin”, “hoa”, or “collègue” to refer to
their friends in conversation with a third party.
10 Levy notes that “in Piri hoo in its common same-sex meaning retains (among the qualities which
differentiate it from the western term ‘friend’) some of the elements of ‘fictive kinship,’ even though there
is no formal name-exchanging ceremony involved in its inception” (1973: 200).
11 “Adolescent hoo may go fishing together, will travel into the port town together, and go walking
together after dark on the village path. Sometimes they go to eat at and may sleep at each other’s
houses... The accessibility of each other’s household is another feti’i like aspect of the smaller hoo groups
within the taure are’a generation. Hoo will also give each other gifts of food occasionally, and one will
sometimes buy a sweet such as a twisted doughnut or a bottle of syrupy soda for the other at the village
store” (Levy 1973: 201).
sulked and said, “He never pays”. The tattooees acknowledge the obligation to return something, which is not necessarily an object, but can be support. Different from the monetary economy, the exchange system of this friendship does not require an immediate return. The receiver will return something some day, and it is morally appropriate for the giver not to demand anything immediately. This moral stricture is emphasised by the fact that the giver must trust in the receiver because they are friends, but it can be applied to the loose friendship bond and creates misunderstandings as Efraima experienced.

Most clients of full-time tattooists are non-Tahitian, non-friends, and non-relatives. Some tattooists criticize the other tattooists who have not been good enough to earn by tattooing but are paid by tattooing clients by stating that the beginners must practice with “cobayes (guinea pigs)” who are their family and friends until they become good enough. For example, Michel had tattooed his brothers, cousins, and friends for several years without being paid, (although he had received beer, fish, roast chicken, and so on) and he started tattooing tourists and military personnel at the salon full-time. As another example, Tapu, another Tahitian tattooist, was suffering from infection on the leg that had been tattooed by his son who was a debutant tattooist and inserted the needle too deeply into the skin. Even professional tattooists have cobayes to challenge a new design or style, especially when they plan to participate in the international tattoo conventions or festivals.

This implies two points. First, a certain level of quality must be required when tattooing is located in the consumer business, especially where their main customers are French and American. Tattooists call their male friends “brad” or “frère”, but use “chef” to refer to the others, often male non-Tahitian clients who are not located in the fictive brotherhood relationships. Second, family, relatives, and friends are out of this consumer economy and they must be generous and supportive even if they receive a lower quality of tattoo. They can be “cobaye” and sacrifice their bodies to the beginner tattooists because of their relationships to the tattooists. The clients tend to give instruction about the design in more detail if they are tourists or are those who do not know the tattooists and just drop in to the salon or stand. The design is drawn on paper, copied to a tracing paper, and placed on the body in the case of tattooing tourists while free-hand is more often applied to tattooing Tahitian friends and family.

Friendship is mapped on the body in the forms of tattoos inscribed by different friend tattooists. Some people prefer to get tattooed by only one tattooist because they keep consistency in the combination of tattoos which were marked even at different
times. Others prefer to get tattooed by many tattooists. For example, Henri, a musician of the dance group Heikura Nui, has been tattooed on the back by Emile, on the left arm by Roonui, Charle, and Pipipe, on the chest and around the naval by Pipipe, on the right arm by his brother and on the leg by Colla [Fig. 4.6]. Vatea, a tattooist based in Moorea, is friends with many tattooists in Tahiti and Moorea. His body is almost covered with the tattoos of his tattooist friends [Fig. 4.7].

While male Tahitians choose a friend tattooist and let him do whatever he wants, but for free, or at a lower price, tourists, French military personnel, and local women choose a tattooist in different ways. Tourists tend to look for a tattooist who is a good designer, has high technique, and works with a tattoo machine in a hygienic environment. They do not generally worry about the cost much, as they find the cost of tattooing in their home country is generally higher. French military personnel are often introduced to a tattooist by their colleagues who have already been tattooed. They have actually looked at the works of the tattooist on their colleagues’ body before they visit him or have already spent time with the tattooists while accompanying the colleagues who are tattooed. They also care about technique and hygiene. Tahitian women often come to a tattooist because the tattooist is a friend of her boyfriend, she is a friend of the tattooist’s wife, or her friend has been tattooed by the tattooist and so forth. Local
women put more importance on the relationships than on the technical factors, as do local men.

The relationship affects the way of tattooing, but tattooing also develops the relationship. The tattooists often become friends with his clients, particularly those who are tattooed with a big design. The bigger the tattoo is, the longer the tattooist and his client spend together. A large piece of tattoo usually requires several sessions to complete, so the client frequents the tattooist’s workplace once a week for several months. Some tattooists take a couple of breaks usually for smoking, during a session. The tattooists and their clients also have a chat. Some tattooists often give the client of a large design the last appointment in the day, so they can have beers with him after the session.

Fig. 4.8 Painful tattooing.

Besides the length of time, another factor of establishing friendship is skin intimacy. Tattooing is a practice of touching. Tattooists are very conscious about the texture and condition of the skin. They also know the condition of the client’s body through looking at and feeling the skin. For instance, when Michel was tattooing above the hip of a female French tourist, he suddenly stopped his work and asked his client if she was all right. She was just about to faint. Her face was invisible from Michel as he was tattooing on her back, but he knew that she was about to faint by feeling that her body temperature had dropped. When another male client had enormous bleeding while
tattooing, Michel stopped tattooing and booked him on a weekday, advising him not to drink beers before the next appointment.

The tattooists also understand the pain of tattooing [Fig. 4.8]. Most experienced tattooists make an effort to complete the session as quickly as possible. Some tattooees do not show their suffering even while being tattooed on the sensitive parts of the body such as elbow, inside the knee, and the side of the body. Although it is rare that the tattooists and the Tahitian observers (who are usually friends) comment on this, these tattooees prove their strength to these people.

Exchange based on the friendship bond occurs not only between a tattooist and his clients, but also between the tattooists. Each tattooist has particular tattoo styles and designs. Tahitian tattooists do not like other tattooists using their style and design without asking them. They consider this act stealing. However, the tattoo style and design can be a gift, which reinforces the fictive brotherhood. In this case, the use of the others’ designs and styles are not considered as an appropriation. For instance, Akoti offered his tattoo designs to other tattooists. The tattooists gave him needles, needle bars, plastic bags for sterilization, and so forth.

The exchange and conservation of tattoo style and design also occurs between tattoo groups. As I have shown, the tattooing style is different between the tattooists of artisan associations and those of the salon. Michel and Aroma who have been tattooing many non-Polynesian styles and designs have taken inspiration from Efraima and Akoti’s works, which have been developed in the sophisticated local style. The artisan based tattooists learn and introduce Euro-American tools and designs into their works. The transmission of technique and formal features take place through interaction and network.

Besides the designs and styles, tattoo tools are circulated among tattooists. Artisan based tattooists, such as Efraima, Simeon, Varii, Thierry, Clément, Akoti, and Moïse began using a tattoo machine during my fieldwork in 1999 and 2000. Most tattooists acquire a second-hand machine as a gift or by purchasing one from the other tattooists. For example, Simeon gained his first machine from Mano. When he ordered new machines from France, Simeon sold the old machine to Akoti. The machines circulate among the tattooists who have not been friends. The knowledge of the machine, how to use and maintain it, is also handed down. Tattooist networks have been formed through circulation of machines and knowledge. The tattooists also know who possesses what machine. If a tattooist obtains a new machine, the other tattooists come to know and criticize it.
Exchange in Taputapuatea

The ownership and exchange of the tattoo design and machine are based on Tahitian friendship bonds. The tattooists consider that the ownership of a particular tattoo style and design is possessed by the tattooist who created it, and they clearly differentiate each other's style and nature of tattooing. The designs and tools of tattooing are given or exchanged among the tattooists as a token of brotherhood relationship. My next question is what type of ownership, and what exchange takes place between Tahitians and non-Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people. I return to the International Tattoo Festival at Taputapuatea to consider this.

Fig. 4.9 Tattooists at Tatau i Taputapuatea.

*Tatau i Taputapuatea* was not a tattoo convention that normally programs competitions in various categories. The tattooists, therefore, seemed to be more relaxed and enjoying the event. They charged for tattooing, but many tattooists generously tattooed for free or at a lower price than normal. For instance, Filip Leu, a famous Swiss tattooist, tattooed for free many local Polynesians. The invited tattooists tattooed even in the evening at the hotels where they were staying.

There were many exchanges between tattooists from French Polynesia and those from the rest of the world. Some tattooists, such as Chimé and Purotu, tattooists in Moorea, have already participated in the international tattoo conventions, and have
established long term friendships with many other tattooists. They have been working at each other’s salons, and learning the different technique and form of tattooing. These tattooists were good hosts for the invited tattooists.

The tattooists who have never been to any of these international tattoo conventions, had a good opportunity to meet the world famous tattooists. The tattoo stands were installed beside marae in Taputapuatea. Each stand was not divided by a board, so tattooists could easily visit each other and observe the work of other tattooists. Many non-Polynesian tattooists and tattooees asked Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists the meanings of each motif, and referred to the ethnographical books of tattoo that they had already read, assuming that these tattooists had the cultural and historical knowledge of tattooing. Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists attempted to answer them as much as possible.

Some Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists who tattooed with the remodelled razor were offered tattoo machines from non-Polynesian tattooists. Many Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists who became friends with non-Polynesian tattooists offered them the copies of their designs and showed their works. The other tattooists such as Efraima, Simeon, Michel, and Aroma made friends with non-Polynesian tattooists and visited their salon in Europe and participated in the tattoo convention after the Festival. The inclusiveness and sharing of Tahitian friendships were also applied to the relationships with non-Polynesian tattooists.

Global tattoo culture has been constructing common discourse and sentiment among the tattooists around the world. Tātāu i Taputapuatea was one of the events, at which the tattooists can share this. A tattooist, who has been contributing to the
development of this global tattoo culture is, in this sense, a significant member of “a big tattoo family”. For example, during the Festival, a stele was made for the famous Samoan tattooist, Paulo Suluape, who had suddenly died in the previous year [Figs 4.10 and 4.11].

At Tatau i Taputapuatea, all the participants, tattooists, the tattooed people, journalists, local visitors, and tourists, established a “universal tattoo family”, which included all people who love tattooing. The ownership of tattooing, as a “traditional custom” for Polynesian people, was acknowledged, and at the same time, formed an alliance among the people who gathered for the Festival. Tattooing became shared practice.

**Tattooing Non-Polynesian: The Case of Michel Raapoto**

In the following section, I further investigate the issue of ownership of tattoo, through looking at the works of a tattooist, who has been extensively tattooing with both Tahitian and non-Tahitian styles. Michel Raapoto was from Raiatea. He had been tattooing for eight years. He distinguished himself from the other tattooists by claiming that he could tattoo any style. But he was more enthusiastic about tattooing big Polynesian style, coloured and shaded European style, and Japanese style rather than small local style of figurative animals. He also liked mixing different styles in one design. He wanted to develop his skill of tattooing any style, although many European and American tattooists advised him to concentrate on developing Polynesian style rather than exploring European or Japanese styles. Michel also noted that after the International Festival of Tattooing in Raiatea, a famous European tattooist had come to the studio and looked at the photos of his local style, but did not carefully look at his works of non-Polynesian designs. He thought that non-Polynesian tattooists did not want to accept that a Tahitian could tattoo beautifully coloured or shaded dragon, rose, and lion. Michel’s ambition was “to make people surprised that this beautiful work of dragon was made by a tattooist from a small island”.

Michel wanted to send the photographs of his works to French and American Tattoo magazines. He also wanted to participate in international tattoo conventions. Unlike other Polynesian tattooists who had received the first prize in the Black work category at the convention, Michel wanted to compete with non-Polynesian tattooists with non-Polynesian designs. For Michel, local tattooing was boring, only outlining and filling. All Tahitian tattooists could tattoo *le style local*. Michel considered that *le style*
Michel went to France with Genaud, his cousin and assistant, in November 2000 and in June and July 2001. The latter visit was intended for working at the studio of a French tattooist with whom he became friends during Tatau i Taputapuatea, and participating in the tattoo convention. Michel won prizes at the International tattoo conventions in Paris and Belgium. Michel stated in the interview, “On croit que les Polynésiens se font tous tatouer avec des motifs marquisiens, mais c’est faux. Les Polynésiens, enfin ceux que je tatué, préféraient les motifs asiatiques, voire agressifs comme les dragons” (La Dépêche de Tahiti, 8 July 2001). Michel continued, “Il y a beaucoup de gens en métropole qui reviennent au style tribal. Mais moi, j’aime faire des tatouages marquisiens en couleurs. Ou noirs avec des reflets. Ici, certains tatoueurs n’aient patatouer le tribal car c’est trop géométrique” (ibid.).

1) Tattooing Mano

Mano Salmon was a Tahitian tattooist. His father was from Fakarava, Tuamotu archipelago and his mother was from Tahiti, but he had spent a lot of time in his youth in New Zealand. Thus, Mano spoke fluent French, English, and Tahitian. He was living in Tahiti and occupied himself with canoeing, playing death metal music, drinking, hunting girls, and tattooing.

In April 1999, Mano had already had a Polynesian wave-motif tattoo winding up on his arm. He explained that it was a Maori-inspired motif. He wanted to fill the empty space with other tattoos and asked Michel who worked with him at the salon to tattoo some Japanese design. Michel wanted to practice Japanese style and was pleased to have Mano as his cobaye. Both Michel and Mano looked at Tattoo magazine, chose Japanese carps, and discussed how they would arrange it on Mano’s Polynesian tattooed arm [Fig. 4.12].

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12 “People believe that Polynesians are all getting tattooed with Marquesan motifs, but it is wrong. Polynesians, at least those I tattoo, prefer Asian motifs, even aggressive ones like dragons” (my translation).

13 There are many metropolitan people returning to the tribal style. But, I like to make Marquesan tattoos in colours. Or black with reflection. Here certain tattooists do not like to tattoo the tribal because it is too geometric” (my translation).
Fig. 4.12 Michel drawing designs on Mano’s arm.

Fig. 4.13 Tiki out of lotus flower.
Michel made carps swimming between Japanese and Polynesian water and waves. Flowers of cherry blossom were floating. In the empty space on the top of the shoulder, Mano wanted to have a Buddha coming out of a lotus flower. After Michel drew a lotus flower and was about to draw a Buddha, Mano suggested that it might be better to have a Polynesian god, tiki there. As a result, tiki had come out of the lotus flower and was sitting on Mano’s shoulder [Figs. 4.13 and 4.16].

Mano was happy and said that “I am Tahitian Yakuza!” Mano was not particularly interested in Japanese culture. He merely wanted something cool and different from the others. Michel was interested in le style japonais and Japanese cameras for photographing his works, and wanted to see Japanese tattooists.

Fig. 4.14 Michel tattooing Mano’s arm.
2) Tattooing Charlie

Charlie was a demi-Tahitian and demi-Chinese, working at the pharmacy near the Marché of Papeete. He was a good friend of Stéphane, a tattooist based in the artisan association in Papeeno. During the Heiva 1999, Charlie frequented the stand to get tattooed on his leg by Stéphane and he came to know Michel who worked together with Stéphane at the same stand.

After Heiva, Charlie started coming to Michel’s salon every Friday after work to get tattooed by him. He had his left shoulder modified with a lizard in the realistic style, and acquired tribal style tattoos around it. Then Michel tattooed a manta ray in the modern local style with colours, which was also accompanied with the tribal style tattoos on the right shoulder [Figs. 4.22 and 4.23].

Then, Charlie was tattooed with le style tribal on the chest which formed a “collier” (necklace). Michel wanted to tattoo something large and Charlie was keen to provide his back as a canvas. Michel suggested he tattoo a big turtle and Charlie let Michel do whatever he wanted.

Michel drew a turtle in the realistic style with a pen. He looked at a picture book to get an idea of the figure of the turtle. Michel tattooed Maori spirals in the carapace of the turtle. Around the turtle, twelve zodiac signs were tattooed [Figs. 4.17 - 4.20]. He was also tattooed in Marquesan style on his thigh [Fig. 4.21].
Fig. 4.17 Michel drawing a design on Charlie's back.

Fig. 4.18 Michel drawing a turtle design.  Fig. 4.19 A big turtle on Charlie's back.
Fig. 4.20 Colouring the turtle.
Fig. 4.21 Charlie's thigh.

Fig. 4.22 Charlie with a manta ray tattoo.
Fig. 4.23 Manta ray with tribal style.
Charlie was a *cobaye* for Michel, so Michel charged him almost nothing. Charlie instead brought Michel Vaseline, gloves, and bags for sterilization from the pharmacy he works at, as he could obtain a discount.

During the Tattoo Festival in Taputapuatea, Charlie’s turtle attracted attention as a modern Polynesian tattoo by tattooists from elsewhere, and journalists from tattoo magazines. It was photographed and published in their tattoo magazines.

**Four Ownerships of Tattoo**

Tahitian tattooing is transformative and inclusive. The categories such as “Tahitian”, “Polynesian”, or “Marquesan” are consistently redefined by absorbing and fusing with foreign motifs, designs, and styles. However, it does not indicate that the other cultural or tattooists’ styles are dissolved into the overwhelming “Polynesian”, “Tahitian”, or a particular tattooist’s style. The foreignness or otherness of motif, design, and style are clearly conceived by Tahitians who have included them in their tattooing. The significance of their application is not in making others in theirs, but in possessing others within theirs.

Any transmissions of tattoo are considered as horizontal (on the same domain), collective (cultural/ethnic) or individual (tattooist). In other words, they are concerned with the transmissions, for instance, between “Polynesian culture” and “European culture”, and “the appropriation of other tattooists’ style” is between “a tattooist Efraima” and “a tattooist Michel”. A transmitter or appropriator, indeed, cannot be a “culture” in the former case, but has to be a tattooist or a tattooed person.

A tattoo, however, moves not only horizontally, but also vertically from collective (I have been particularly regarding it as “culture”), to a tattooist, to a tattooed person, to a photographer (or the owner of photography). The ownership is not taken over by the latter, but the conceptual ownership remains over physical relocations. Bringing back the previous argument of inclusive friendship bonds, in the last section, I illustrate how the relationships are formed through transferring or expanding the ownership of tattoo and how tattoo is charged with cultural, personal, and relational meanings through physical and conceptual transmissions. I examine four categories, to which tattooing/tattoos are considered to belong: collective, tattooist, tattooed person, and photographer.

1) **Collective**

Style, design, and motif of tattoo are often differentiated by geographical names such as Tahitian, Marquesan, Maori, and Samoan, which also refer to the relevant culture or
society. The cultural/social collective is considered to own a particular tattoo style, design, motif, and practice because tattooing is a practice embedded in the socio-cultural system of the society, and also because the people who make and use the tattoo are parts of the society or culture. Their collectivity is consolidated through sharing these styles, designs, and motifs.

This concept has become a political assertion in the post-colonial or neo-colonial situation. "Polynesian", "Tahitian", and "Marquesan" tattoos are an emblem of ethnic identity against the colonizers. Tattooing a style, motif, or design of their own culture is a legitimate action for those who belong to that society/culture. How about tattooing one of the other cultures? Why do people want to tattoo or be tattooed of using styles, motifs, or designs from other cultures? Is it infringing the rights of others?

Tahitians who have been tattooed with a non-Tahitian design and style explain that: 1) they considered foreign tattoos beautiful; 2) they wanted something different from their friends and colleagues; and 3) they wanted to have a tattoo with a particular personal meaning such as horoscope and Chinese signs. Tattooing non-Polynesian is a way for Tahitians to differentiate themselves from other members of the society. These tattoos are intended for individual identity formation rather than collective identity formation.

When Michel tattooed Mano, both Michel and Mano attributed tiki to Polynesian culture, and the carps and the tattoo style to Japanese. Mano’s choice of non-Polynesian design and style was derived from his intention to form a personal identity in relationship with his Tahitian colleagues and family. At the same time, Mano expressed his Polynesian identity by possessing a tiki and Maori inspired-spiral motifs in the relationships with his non-Polynesian clients, tattooists, and friends. Tattooing in the mixed styles of Polynesian and non-Polynesian encompassed two relationships, inside and outside Tahitian society. Tiki was tattooed in the realistic style with colours. Yet, regardless of the style in which it was tattooed, tiki became a typical emblem, expressing “Polynesian-ness”.

In the case of Charlie’s back, Michel and Charlie attributed the turtle to Tahiti, the realistic style and the use of colours to European, and spirals on the carapace to Maori. As do many demi-Chinois men, Charlie identified himself more with Tahitian. He spoke Tahitian, and lived in the Tahitian way. It was natural for him to be tattooed with Tahitian or Polynesian style. Some demi-Chinois like Thierry and Norbert, who also lived in the Tahitian way, sought Chinese or oriental tattoo styles [Figs. 4.24 and 4.25]. Eric had a big coloured dragon in Japanese style on the back. As for Charlie’s non-Polynesian tattoo, I assume that Charlie sought a high quality of tattoo rather than affirmation of personal identity because Charlie did not mind much about the specific design and tattoo, but let Michel tattoo anything he wanted. Yet, the quality of tattoo also differentiated the bearer from the others, and formed personal identity.

For Tahitians, other Polynesian styles such as Maori, Samoan, Marquesan, and Hawaiian are easy to incorporate into their tattooing because they are all black and geometric. They believe that they can use these styles because they are all “Polynesian”.¹⁴ Most Tahitian tattooists consider the use of Polynesian styles and motifs by non-Polynesian tattooists to be appropriation. They do not think this, however, about Polynesian tattooists’ tattooing European and Japanese designs and styles, because these

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¹⁴ I examine Marquesan reaction to this Tahitian inclusiveness in Chapter Five.
designs and styles have already become universal and do not belong to a “specific culture”. Tahitian and Marquesan tattooists consider that they can do nothing to stop non-Polynesian tattooists’ appropriation. Yet, they consider the Polynesian styles of tattoos done by non-Polynesian tattooists to be “something wrong” or to demonstrate “lack of mana”.

2) Tattooists

The tattoo motif, design, and style of a particular culture are not fixed and identical, but have been transformed by the tattooists. Therefore, there are variation of “Tahitian”, “Polynesian”, or “Marquesan” style using the same motifs and designs.

Most tattooists have a strong identification with the tattoos they make. The tattooed people also identify their tattoos with the tattooists. This is revealed in the case that I have shown in Chapter Three where the colleagues who had got tattoos from Eric were proudly stating, “C’est la tableau d’Eric”.

The tattooists own a tattoo simply by tattooing it. It is the same relationship between an artist and his/her painting, or a writer and his/her book. People claim that “it is Aroma’s tattooing” or “it is Efraima’s” because Aroma or Efraima did it. Besides simply being a producer, the authorship is emphasized by their particular use and arrangement of “traditional” motifs and the theme of the design. As the “traditional” Marquesan and Tahitian motifs that were documented and are available in the present are limited, the tattooists refer to the same books to learn these motifs. The originality of the tattooists is manifest in their expression, and proves that the tattoo is of the tattooists. The specific features of styles are often expressed on the figurative designs such as tiki and turtle.

Tahitians, particularly tattooists, clearly recognize the style of different tattooists. For instance, the style of Akoti is identified by the mythological theme and the use of dots for shading [Figs. 4.26 and 4.27]. The style of Efraima is characterized by the curvilinear arrangement of the motifs [Figs. 4.28 and 4.29]. The style of an individual tattooist is often shared by co-workers. Efraima’s style is applied by Simeon and Varii into their tattooing, and Akoti’s by Moïse. The individual tattooists’ style is extended to the larger collective such as le style artisanat or le style du salon. Le style artisanat implies more “traditional” or “ancient” motifs although most artisan based tattooists have developed their own styles rather than tattooing exactly the same motifs and style of Von den Steinen’s pictures. Many of le style artisanat are similar to the style of carving.
In the case of Mano's tattoo, tiki is Polynesian god and carp is Japanese fish, but when Michel tattooed them, they became Michel's tiki and carps because he articulated tiki in a realistic way with colours and facial expression and carps though in the Euro-
Japanese styles but made to swim in the Maori wave. His way of positioning and combining designs and motifs was different from those of the other tattooists. His technical features, such as straightness of outlining and smoothness of filling were also distinctive characteristic. The collective ownership, which was represented in Polynesian and Japanese elements of Mano’s tattoo, remained in the recognition of the tattooists and the tattooed people. However, the tattooist’s ownership, which lay in Michel’s originality and creativity in this case, becomes more manifest in a certain domain, such as in the friendship bonds because it advocates having a dominant figure within the collectivity. People of a group establish solidarity by having “Eric’s tattoo” or “Michel’s tattoo” as well as differentiating themselves from the others who do not possess the tattoo.

The ownership of the tattoo is acknowledged also because the notion of “tattoo artist” has been introduced from global tattoo culture into the Tahitian tattoo world and the tattooists put more effort into being creative and unique. The cultural identity of the tattooists is also a significant element to be considered in this transmission of ownership. The fact that Michel, as a Tahitian, tattooed Japanese carps added a unique character to the tattoo. Tahitian tattooists’ use of non-Tahitian tattooing is another way of making “his tattooing”, which is different from other tattooists’ ways.

Charlie sought high quality of tattoos and chose Michel. From the beginning, what Charlie wanted was not a cultural tattoo, but a tattoo by Michel. His big mixed style turtle was an outcome of established friendship between Charlie and Michel. Charlie was Michel’s *cobaye*, who trusted in his work and no normal monetary transaction was involved, instead evoking the Tahitian friendship exchange system.

The tattoo culture, for Tahitian tattooists, is their own culture, Polynesian, Tahitian, or Ma’ohi. Tahitian tattooists also intend to locate themselves in the tattoo world. In the discourse of ethnic identity formation and cultural revitalization where Polynesian culture becomes political strategy, Tahitian tattooists claim their tattooing as belonging to them. In the discourse of global tattooing, Tahitian tattooists apply post-modern creations. Most young Tahitian tattooists consider tattooing is not a thing that always remains as it used to be. For them, their traditional style is beautiful, but its beauty has not yet been accomplished. They insist that they are attempting to make their Tahitian tattoo (or Marquesan or Polynesian) more beautiful. By tattooing their own style, tattooists include themselves in the global tattoo culture as well as in Tahitian society. They identify themselves as a tattooist as well as a Tahitian or Polynesian.
3) Tattooed People

An American tattooist who has whole body tattoos says:

When I’m planning a tattoo I get deeply involved with the spiritual and metaphorical implications of the prospective design, but after it’s on I forget about it – it’s become a part of me. Just like: you probably don’t constantly think about the color of your eyes, or your haircut. (Vale and Jun 1989: 39)

As this quote shows, tattooing is a practice of making a new skin. Tattoo inks, which are non-organic material, are inserted and absorbed into the skin. After the scar has healed, the inked skin regains the normal organic texture with hair and wrinkles, and starts breathing as a part of the living body. Tattooed skin has become a part of oneself.

The body is often considered to be owned by the person. It is “my body” or “your body”. It is a basis of the self and a unit to define the self by differentiating oneself from the others. The body is a territory to possess, conquer, occupy, intervene with, claim for, and supervise. The identification of the person, such as gender, ethnic, ancestral, occupational takes place on the body.

The ownership marked by the cultural collective and tattooists, is rendered to the tattooed person when the tattoo needle is inserted into the skin. The carps were Japanese and tiki was Polynesian and the style was Michel’s, but the tattoo was marked on Mano’s body and would live as a part of Mano’s life. Neither culture (Japanese or Polynesian collective) nor Michel could constrain Mano’s body and keep it in the box or the show window. The tattoo moved with Mano, and was exposed or hidden at Mano’s will.

The collective and the tattooist’s ownerships are, however, never obliterated from the nature of the tattoo. They are instead controlled and appropriated by the tattooed person. First, the culture of the tattoo still plays a significant role from the tattooed person’s perspective in the way that the tattooed person forms cultural identity by acquiring the culturally categorized motif, design, and style. Tiki, as a Polynesian design, was a marking of cultural identity for Mano. Yet, the culture of the tattoo does not impose the identification upon the tattooed person. In Mano’s case, even if he acquired Japanese carps, he identified himself as Tahitian/Polynesian. In Charlie’s case, although he was tattooed with Maori spirals, he did not identify himself as Maori nor feel strong connections with Maori culture.

Second, the tattooist of the tattoo is also important for the tattooed person because it indicates the tattooed person’s relationships, particularly friendship, as Charlie’s case
reveals. By letting Michel tattoo whatever he wanted, Charlie's identity as a Tahitian was consolidated in the Tahitian friendship. The foreignness of the other cultural designs also had significance in local relationships with his friends, brothers and so on. Tahitians differentiate themselves from these close relationships and establish personal identity by having foreign tattoos.

The body belongs to a person as well as a group. In the place of defining personal identity, the body is continuously invaded by the collective ownership of the body. Thus, the notion of "own" or "ownership" becomes significant when the body is continuously subject to the intervention of tattooing.

For the tattooed person, it is not cultures and the tattooists that form, identify, and control his/her body. It is the tattooed person that determines how to relate to cultures, and forms and explains the relationships with the tattooists working on his/her body. In the case that the tattooed person is tattooed with more than one cultural categorized tattoos by more than one tattooist, the person lives with these cultures and with these tattooists. The body is the territory of the tattooed person. It is not culture and tattooists that territorize them. When the body is marked, the ultimate ownership of the tattoo is given to the tattooed person.

4) Photography

I photographed the tattooists' works during my fieldwork. I was allowed to photograph on the condition that I would not use these photos for commercial purpose, but only for my study. Some tattooists did not have a camera, so they assigned me as their photographer, promising that I would offer the photos when I developed them. At the beginning, I filed the developed photos and brought them to each tattooist. I let them have the photos they liked from those of their works. Eventually, the tattooists and their friends looked at the photographed works of the other tattooists who were not friends and rarely saw each other. They evaluated and criticized the others' work, which was very useful for my research. Some tattooists, however, ordered me to show these photos to them before showing them to the other tattooists because they would steal the design and style. When increasing numbers of tattooists became suspicious about the other tattooists' stealing the style and design, I stopped bringing photographs of one tattooist to another, but sorted them out and gave the photos of each work to the appropriate tattooist.
The tattooists use photography to record their works as a sample so that the clients can look at them. Some tattooists photograph the tattoos without asking permission as if they consider it to be taken for granted. Most clients agree to being photographed. Some clients ask the tattooist not to include their face, but only the tattoos (the tattooed part of the body). The tattoo that had belonged to the tattooed people by being inscribed on the body and naturalized to be a part of the body, is conceptually detached from the body through photographing. Photographing is a way of rendering the tattoos that have once belonged to tattooed people to the tattooists.

The body is dissected into pieces by being photographed. Photographing has the same function as drawing a portrait, which is picturing the figure of the human body. The difference is, however, that in the case of photographing the tattooed body, the camera lens often focuses on merely the shoulder, leg, loin or wherever the tattooed is

Fig. 4.30 Charlie's turtle on a tattoo magazine.
marked. The head is not pictured unless the face is tattooed. The body is dissected, fetishized, and frozen on the surface of photographic paper.

At *Tatau i Taputapuataea*, Charlie’s back was photographed by many journalists of tattoo magazines [Fig. 4.30]. It was intended to exemplify a “contemporary Tahitian tattoo” rather than “Charlie’s tattoo” or “Michel Raapoto’s tattoo”. Thus, the photographing renders the “Charlie’s tattoo” to the collective “Polynesian”. For Charlie, however, his tattoo on the tattoo magazine is “his” tattoo, and for Michel “a piece of his work”.

The photograph also functions as a mirror, showing his/her tattoo marked on the part of the body where the bearer finds it difficult to see. Charlie often asked me if I had developed the photos of his back (usually it took long time as I sent films to Japan for development and had the developed photos sent back to Tahiti to reduce the cost). He confessed that he could not see on his back properly by using a mirror. He wanted to see it properly on the photo.

**Conclusion**

Tattoo/tattooing is considered something to be owned. Its ownership transmits horizontally between cultures, and tattooists, and vertically from culture, the tattooist, tattooed person, to photographer. The transmission is not only conditioned by the relationships between those in which the tattoo moves, but also constructs and develops a relationship between them.

The event of *Tatau i Taputapuataea* shows that Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people locate themselves both in the tattoo world and in Tahitian society. Tahitian tattooists acknowledge what non-Tahitian tattooists expect in their (Tahitian) tattooing through media interviews, participating in the international tattoo conventions and festivals, and interacting with non-Tahitian tattooists. “Tahitian” elements of their tattooing are significant for Tahitian tattooists and the tattooed Tahitians to form identities as a tattooist or as a tattooed person in the tattoo world, and as a Tahitian in the world at large. Professional tattooists establish their identities by both using the designs of their heritage and borrowing from others. Identities as “tattooists” and “Tahitian” are inseparably established, developed, and transformed by the practice of tattooing and represented in the tattoos. Traditional motifs are shared by those who are categorized as “Tahitian” or “Polynesian”. Sharing is a form of identity. It groups people into the categories “Tahitian” or “Polynesian”.


Dancing and Tattooing at Festivals: Tahitian, Polynesian, and Marquesan Identities

At the end of the hall where the artisan exhibition was taking place, Varri Huuti's tattoo stand was installed. It was in the middle of June, the exhibition was a little quiet as
people were busy preparing for *Heiva*, which was coming in a few weeks’ time. When I arrived at his stand, Varii did not have any clients, but the sound of a machine was buzzing. He was tattooing himself [Fig. 5.1].

“Are you bored of waiting for clients?” I asked.

“No. I’m preparing for Tane Tahiti contest. It is better to be well tattooed”, Varii stopped tattooing and wiped up with a paper towel the part that he just blackened.

“But, you’ve already become Mr. Marquesas.”

“Yes. Tane Tahiti this time!” Varii continued tattooing.

Varii is a solidly built Marquesan. He has long hair dyed blonde and always ties it back. Varii is heavily tattooed in Marquesan style. Varii was born in Hakamarii on the island of Ua Pou. He carved wood as the other members of his family did, and learned tattooing by trying it out with his cousin Efraima. He moved to Tahiti when he was seventeen years old. Many members of Huuti’s family moved to Tahiti and settled down. They work as artisans, carving and tattooing. Lately Varii tattoos more than he carves, because he has more clients for tattooing than for carving. Varii also explains that carving takes more time than tattooing to earn the same amount of money.

Varii normally works at his studio which he set up in his residence. At the exhibition of artisan, *Heiva, la foire commerciale*, Festival of Pacific Arts, Marquesan Art Festival, and Marquesan Artisan exhibition, Varii sets up the stand, tattoos, and carves wood when he does not have a client for tattooing. He often works with his cousins, Efraima and Simeon at these events. Varii is well known in Tahiti. He is a kind of emblem of “Marquesan” culture because he was nominated as Mr. Marquesas in 1997. He dresses himself with *pareu*, carved wild pig’s tusk on his neck, and *ti’i* leaves decoration around the ankles. He dances *haka* with his cousins Efraima and Simeon. Their bodies are heavily tattooed in the Polynesian style [Fig. 5.2].

Like many other Marquesans, Varii, Efraima, and Simeon have and express a strong Marquesan identity. They were born in Ua Pou, spent their childhood and adolescence there, and spoke Marquesan. Simeon once stated that they are different from these Marquesans who were born in Tahiti and do not speak Marquesan.

As Varii has been participating in the different festivals which were featured as “Marquesan”, “Tahitian”, and “Polynesian” culture, and became both Mr. Marquesas and Tane Tahiti, he raises some interesting questions: did Varii differently represent ethnic identities according to each festival he participated in? Is Varii’s tattooing at each festival identified as “Marquesan”, “Tahitian”, or “Polynesian” tattooing?
In this chapter, first, I illustrate some political and economic factors, which affect the organization as well as the nature of festival performances and activities. Second, I introduce dancing and tattooing in Tahiti in their socio-cultural contexts. Finally, I describe historically and ethnographically Heiva, the Festival of Pacific Arts, and the Marquesan Art Festival, comparing the socio-political implications and process of identity formation at each festival.
Festivals and Images of Islands

Festivals are sites at which the images of nation, or those of territory in the case of French Polynesia, are politically constructed and contested. The images of territory have been constructed and represented by government authorities to meet their political and economic ends during colonialism and neo-colonialism. The images of territory drawn by politicians vary from pro-French to pro-independence. As Anna Laura Jones points out (1992), however, both pro-French and pro-independence societies engage in so-called “indigenous/traditional culture”, and the formation and representation of “indigenous identity”.

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

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

“Indigenous culture” embraces various meanings not only because of different conceptualizations of time, but also because of regional diversity. Each archipelago in French Polynesia has its unique style and specialty of “cultural” activities. For example, Marquesas is famous for carving, tattooing, and tapa; Tuamotu for shell products; and the Australs for tifaifai and plaiting. As I analyse in more detail in the latter part of the chapter, “indigenous culture”, which is variously characterized by political and regional differences, is all-inclusively represented and performed at the festivals. However, from the pro-French perspective, all these diversities over time and place are incorporated
into a present territory. Organizing festivals is the making of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) and of homogeneity out of heterogeneity (Bossen 2000: 128-129).  

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

L’Etat a payé ainsi pour plusieurs opérations telles que la restauration des marae et des sites archéologiques de Huahine et de Ua Pou, pour la climatisation et la sécurité de Musée de Tahiti et des îles, la formation d’animateurs culturels du territoire, la lutte contre l’illettrisme et le développement de la lecture publique… (Wardi 1998: 264)

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

The image of “Tahiti” in tourism derives from the essentialization of indigenous ethnic and cultural identities in colonial and post-colonial relationships. The image of indigenous people is discursive in the first place but fixed and stabilized as a “simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized figure”. This stereotyping is a way to understand and represent the colonial others.

The differences of the others, which are emphasized in stereotypical representation, are fetishized. Bhabha explains that “fetishism is always a ‘play’ or vacillation between

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

2 “The state paid so for many operations as it is the reconstruction of marae and the archaeological sites in Huahine and of Ua Pou, for the air condition and the security of Musée de Tahiti et ses îles, the formation of cultural coordinator of territory, the battle against illiteracy and the development of the public lecture” (my translation).
the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity... and the anxiety associated with lack and difference” (1994: 74). Bhabha continues, “what is denied the colonial subject, both as colonizer and colonized, is that form of negation which gives access to the recognition of difference” (ibid.: 75). Physical and cultural differences are articulated in the coincident practice of recognition and disavowal.

Colonial fetishism is preoccupied with race and sexuality. So is tourist fetishism. While French colonial discourse articulated indigenous women’s sexuality within a signifying sexual economy of immoral looseness and licentiousness, it articulated indigenous men’s sexuality within a discourse of savagery and barbarism. The past seems to be fixed in fetishistic representation. The stereotypical images of indigenous people are captured in colonial discourses. As William Pietz states, “the fetish is always a meaning fixation of a singular event; it is above all a ‘historical’ object, the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event” (1985: 12). In fact, colonial stereotypical images are not totally fixed, and the indigenous disavowal of the colonial stereotype rejects its fixation and subverts the images through performance, which constantly incorporates the creativity of artists and other external influences. The stereotypical images undergo transformation despite a Western desire to naturalize the image as fixed and eternal. Moreover, indigenous people often use the colonial stereotype strategically to satisfy their political and economic desires in the post-colonial or neo-colonial state and in globalization.

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

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

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

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

Competition is possibly undertaken on the condition that the competitors possess
similarities to a large extent. Moulin discusses a drumming competition between
Rarotongan and Tahitian delegations at the Sixth Festival of Pacific Arts that
“underscores the point that the two musical systems are considered similar enough to be
mutually comprehensible and capable of being judged on compatible criteria” (1996:
131).

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

At festivals, identity is formed in the intricate relationships of competition and
harmony, differences and similarities. When the participants of festivals are rather
similar, which is the case of *Heiva*, they tend to differentiate between one another. When they are rather different, which is the case of the Festival of Pacific Arts, the participants tend to find some similarity to unite them all. The Marquesan Art Festival embraces both differentiation (among Marquesans) and unification (among people in the Pacific).

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

*Heiva*

The history of *Heiva* reflects the history of French Polynesia. The festival has been transformed due to political change from colonialism, annexation, to internal autonomy and has undergone economic change as a result of the development of tourism.¹

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

Institutionalization of culture by Polynesians, rather than French people began from the mid-1950s. In 1965, Maco Tevane established le Maohi Club, aimed at creating and revitalizing “traditional” culture. L’Académie tahitienne, *Fare Vana’a*, was established

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¹ For more detail, see Stevenson’s work on the history of *Heiva* (1990).
in 1972 to revitalize indigenous language and promote its use in society. It has also published a Tahitian grammar book and a Tahitian-French dictionary.

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

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

Pour bien marquer l’accession du territoire à l’autonomie interne, le président du gouvernement, Gaston Flosse, décide d’introduire le Heiva i Tahiti par le Hivavaevae, une journée de grand rassemblement organisée le 29 juin, date de l’annexion de Tahiti et ses îles par la France… Si la fête nationale du 14 juillet est conservée pour célébrer le maintien de la Polynésie française au sein de la République française, le gouvernement local institue la journée du 29 juin, date de l’annexion de Tahiti et ses îles par la France, pour débuter les fêtes traditionnelles annuelles désormais appelées Heiva i Tahiti sous la forme d’un grand rassemblement nationaliste baptisé Hivavaevae. (Le programme officiel du Heiva i Tahiti 2001, P.14)

4 “In order to mark the accession of the territory to internal autonomy, the President, Gaston Flosse, decided to introduce the Heiva i Tahiti by the Hivavaevae, the day of big assembly organized on June 29th, the date of the annexation of Tahiti and the islands by France… If the national festival of July 14th is kept for celebration of maintaining French Polynesia in the heart of the French Republic, the local government institutes the day of June 29th, the date of the annexation of Tahiti and the Islands by France, to start the traditional annual festival from now on called Heiva i Tahiti under the form of the big national assembly blessed Hivavaevae” (my translation).
In 1986, the name of the festival was changed from *Tuirai* to *Heiva i Tahiti*.

Today, during *Heiva*, Tahitians enjoy dancing, chanting, sporting competitions, the installation of an artisan village, and fire walking. The representation of cultural identity and related activities such as dance, art and craft, and sport has become more important in island politics in the relationships with France. *Heiva* has grown to a larger national festival and includes various events.

Miss Tahiti and Tane Tahiti contests are one of the major events of *Heiva*. There is a difference in the nature of the two contests. Miss Tahiti can participate in the Miss France contest and even go on further to the Miss Universe contest. The standard of beauty is more universal and *demi* (mixed-descent) are often nominated. The Tane Tahiti contest, however, does not have such an international dimension. Tane Tahiti is selected on the basis of local values such as knowledge of traditional culture such as tattooing, ability to lift a heavy stone or climb up a coconut tree and grind it as fast as possible. Tattoos are a requisite for a candidate for the Tane Tahiti contest. Not only Varii, but most of successive Tane Tahiti, such as Teve and Olivier Renoir, are heavily tattooed, and consequently tattoos have become a kind of requirement to become Tane Tahiti. As I explain in Chapter One, tattooing is a process of making “warrior masculinity” which Tahitians embody their ancestral past in the contemporary gender and ethnic relationships.

The dance competition is one of the major events of *Heiva*. Dancing was also prohibited in the process of Christianization and colonialization, Madeleine Moua created the first semi-professional dance group, which gave birth to other professional dance groups. Dance was practiced even before the revolution of Madeleine Moua, but according to Gilles Hollande, it was not regarded as an activity for “les filles qui dansaient, on disait que c’était des traineuses, des filles qui allaient avec les garçons, qui buvaient, qui ne pensaient qu’à faire la fête, bref qui n’avaient rien dans la tête” (*Les Nouvelles de Tahiti: Heiva 1999*, pp.10 and 12). However, dance has become a cultural activity for *demi* girls from good families.

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

6 For instance, Mareva Galanter, Miss Tahiti 1998 became Miss France 1999.

7 “The girls who danced, one says that mobs, the girls who were with the boys, who drink, who think only about party, in short, who do not have anything else in their head” (my translation).

8 Some girls, however, claim that they are not allowed to dance in the group because their fathers are worried about them being with boys.
On the one hand, dance and music have been institutionalized by the regulation of dance competition at Heiva, which I discuss below, and le Conservatoire artistique territorial (Fare upa rau), which aims for the conservation "par la reproduction écrite et mécanique du patrimoine musicale polynésien... concernent la danse, les percussions, les cordes, le chant" (Comité organisateur de la Délégation Polynésienne, 2000). On the other hand, dance and music have extended the sites of performance and developed different modes of expression.

While the contemporary development of dance is associated with cultural revitalization in the 1970s and 1980s, it is also strongly linked to tourism. The formation of dance groups is based on the districts of Tahiti, but many professional or semi-professional dance groups, which are not based on districts, perform regularly at hotels and restaurants. They also go on dance tours to Europe, America, and Asia for special events (such as the opening of a new flight route between Tahiti and Osaka) or for a campaign sponsored by an enterprise marketing local products (noni - medical juice made of fruits). The needs of tourism sometimes take priority over those of cultural revitalization. When Manouche Lehartel, the director of the dance group Toa Reva, found that the international folk festival was to take place at the same time as Heiva, she decided that "nous allons au Quebec. Bien sûr, ce sera une occasion formidable pour pronouvoir le tourisme au fenua" (Horizon Magazine, July 1997, No. 324, p. 26). Yet, Lehartel also claims that "être reconnu dans les hôtels, ou à l'étranger c'est bien, mais ce que nous voulons d'abord c'est être reconnu par les nôtres, chez nous" (ibid., p.27).

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

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9 "By written and mechanical reproduction of Polynesian musical heritage...concerned with dance, percussion, cord and chant" (my translation).
10 "Let's go to Quebec. Of course, it will be a formidable occasion to promote tourism for our country" (my translation).
11 "Being popular at hotels, or with foreigners, that's good, but what we want first of all is to be popular at home" (my translation).
Like tattooing, people distinguish the origin of the components of dance, but tend to incorporate different dances into their performance. Incorporation of different styles can be observed at both internal and external levels. Moulin (1996) discusses the example of external incorporation of Rarotongan dance. The influence of Rarotongan dance is explicit in the “Tahitian” dance as a large number of Rarotongans worked in phosphate mines in Tuamotu in the 1950s. Internal incorporation is observed among different dance groups in French Polynesia. The influence of performances by superior dance groups often appears in the performances of different groups at subsequent festivals.

The programs are composed of two or three dance (ori) and chant (himene) entries, starting in the evening at 7:30 and lasting until midnight for about seven or eight nights during Heiva. Both professional and amateur dance groups compete with each other in the categories of tradition and creation. The category of tradition is set up for the performances which are more faithful to those practiced in the pre-/early contact period while that of creation is for the performances which involve contemporary choreographic and musical ideas. The competition is serious and political, the groups having rehearsed almost every evening for over three months. Prizes are awarded to the best individuals and groups in the different categories. The winners may have various opportunities such as overseas tours, or the chance to produce a CD and video. The prize is also a great honour for individual dancers and choreographers, as people always remember them for years afterwards. The motivating factors for participating in the dance competition are various, but Manouche Lehartel explains:

Les tahitiens aiment la fête, aiment la danse. Si on est à Tahiti, il faut faire le Heiva car on ne peut rester en marge d’une mouvance à laquelle on appartient. E puis vous savez, ils ont tous le sentiment d’appartenir au meilleur groupe, à celui qui va gagner. Alors pourquoi ne pas y aller? D’autre part, pour un artiste se montrer devant un vaste public, c’est motivant, c’est valorisant même. Beaucoup de nos artistes, quasi bénévoles, sont sans emploi. Ils n’ont souvent pas d’autre existence sociale ou professionnelle pourrait on dire, qu’au travers du groupe de danse auquel ils appartiennent. Et puis, quant nous avons la chance de

12 The traditional category has a theme at each Heiva. For instance, the theme of Heiva i Tahiti 1999 was “Tuamotu”.
13 For instance at Heiva i Tahiti 1999, the prizes were: concours hura tau traditionnel (traditional for professional groups), concours hura tau création libre (free-style category for amateur groups), concours hura ava tau traditionnel (traditional for amateur groups), concours meilleur costume (the best costume), concours meilleur orchestre programme imposé (the best orchestra on the fixed program), concours meilleur orchestre programme libre (the best orchestra on the free-style program), concours meilleur danseur individuel (the best male dancer), concours meilleure danseuse individuelle (the best female dancer), meilleur couple (the best dance couple), prix spécial et unique Josie and Don Over Memorial (the best dance in the pre-European contact periods), meilleur auteur-compositeur (the best author and composer), and so forth.
The “traditional” characteristic is central, but creativity and originality are regarded as essential in order to surpass the performance of other competitors. There was a big debate about the selection process of dance competition for the “traditional” category. At Heiva 1999, the performances of the group O Tahiti E in the “traditional” category were very original and creative. Thus, the question was raised as to the difference between “traditional” and “creative”. The general consensus was that the creativity of the “traditional” category is also highly regarded.

Competition does not take place in every Heiva. At Heiva Nui 2000, unlike in previous years, the delegations from five archipelagos, consisting of dancers, musicians, and artisans merely exchanged their performances and art forms. People noted it as a festival but not as a competition. The Ministre de l’Artisanat, Llewellyn Tematahota, explains that “elle symbolise la diversité, la richesse artistique de nos archipels et la multiplicité des pôles qui les composent, tous liés par le sentiment fort d’une appartenance commune à l’entité maohi” (le programme officiel du Heiva Nui 2000).15 Heiva Nui 2000 attempts to unify five archipelagos in French Polynesia and let them acknowledge their similarities and differences. For example, the Tahitian audience was impressed by the dance performance of Gambier, which they had rarely seen before, while they were used to watching the Marquesan haka and Puamotu. This festival enabled Tahitians to realize the geographical scattering of the territory and their diversity.

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

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

15 “It symbolizes the diversity, the artistic richness of our archipelagos, and the multiplicity of poles that compose them, connecting all by the strong sentiments of commune belonging to the Ma’ohi entity” (my translation).
Some professional dance groups that had participated in *Heiva* up to 1999 did not participate in 2000 and 2001, due partially to the excessive politics involved in the competition and held separate performances at which they sometimes charged entry fees. Professional dance groups also tend to be keen to distinguish themselves as professional as opposed to amateur district groups which are formed only for the duration of *Heiva.* Louise Peltzer, Ministre de la Culture, comments:

> ... deux groupes de danses renommés, attendus par le public, seront absents. Le piste du *Heiva* est peut-être devenue trop étroite pour leurs ambitions. Leur travail acharné tout au long de ces années leur ont ouvert les portes des scènes internationales et nous nous en réjouissons. Tout en leur souhaitant bonne chance, Je les remercie d'ores et déjà d'être les ambassadeurs de notre fenua et de sa culture de par le monde. (Le programme officiel de *Heiva I Tahiti 2001*, p. 7)\(^{16}\)

Although the government and tourist agencies have been attempting to attract more tourists during *Heiva*, *Heiva* rarely becomes the primary object for their vacation.\(^{17}\) In fact, the tickets for dance competitions are relatively expensive (CPF1,500 to 3,000), and most of the audience in *Heiva Nui* 2000 and 2001 were tourists or French people living in Tahiti.\(^{18}\) The competitions were shown live on TV, so most Tahitians watched it at home. As many friends and family are involved in one of the performing groups, many Tahitians were interested in the competition. They had often already observed the practice before *Heiva*.

*Heiva des artisans* was organized by le Service de l’Artisanat Traditionnel and le Comité Tahiti i te Rima Rau. The artisan village was installed by the associations of artisans from the districts of Tahiti and different islands in Aorai Tini Hau in Pirae. There were six hundred artisans and twenty-one delegations at *Heiva d’artisan* 2000. The artisans had a stand where they sold their art products such as wood, stone, mother-of-pearl, and bone carvings, *tifaifai* (patchwork), *pareu*, cloth, shell and seed necklaces and bracelets, *tapa*, black pearl products, coconut fibre plaiting products (hats, baskets, mats etc), and cloth. Besides crafts, there were massage and tattooing stands. There was

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\(^{16}\) "Two famous dance groups, waited for by the public, will be absent. The trail of *Heiva* probably becomes too narrow for their ambitions. Their work, which we have been passionate about for a long time, opened the international door and we are delighted with it. We wish them good luck and thank them for being our ambassador for our *fenua* and culture to the world" (my translation). Two groups that Louis Peltzer refers to are Te maeva and O Tahiti E, winning groups at *Heiva* for several years.

\(^{17}\) More likely, they happen to watch dance performances while they wait for a flight, or visit the artisan village between trips to Bora Bora or Moorea.

\(^{18}\) There were free seats behind the stage in 1999 as the orchestra played at the sides of the stadium. Many local people were in the stadium and watched the show live. In 2000 and 2001, however, the orchestra was located on the central stage and there were no free seats for the locals.
a stage at the centre of the village where competitions for craft production took place. The competitions also demonstrated the process of production [Fig. 5.3]. The audience was able to approach the mamas, female artisans, who were making tifaifai or pannier and ask them questions. There were also short lessons on craft making provided by these mamas [Fig. 5.4].

The artisan activities represented at Heiva are located both in a local social matrix and tourism-related globalization, just as dance is. The artisan products sold in the Artisan village are expensive, but many local Tahitian and French people buy them because they are often of better quality and different style from those available in Marché. While some tourists visit the artisan village in Pirae, the majority of tourists who come for the beach and marine sports, do not bother to come to Pirae to buy pareu and carved wood products. Instead, they buy some pareu or monoi at the hotel souvenir shops or at the Marché.

Although acknowledged as la culture ma’ohi, tattooing has an ambivalent position at Heiva. At Heiva 1998, there was only one program on tattooing while there were many on dancing, canoe racing, chanting and tifaifai making. Stevenson (per. com 1998) suggests that this was due to the Health Organization’s fear of HIV infection. Moreover, Christian discipline is still more or less preventing many people from
tattooing. Tattooing first started to be practiced at Heiva in 1982 when Tavana Salmon invited Samoan tattooists. They demonstrated the traditional tool practice at Musée de Tahiti et ses Îles. Tavana Salmon has tattooed with Lesa Lio and Matahi Brightwell at Heiva in 1983, 1984, 1985, and 1986. In 1986, tattooing with traditional tools was prohibited for reasons of hygiene, but tattooing returned to Heiva with the use of remodelled razors in 1989.

![Image](image-url)

Fig. 5.4 Mama Tehea teaching plaiting coconut fibre.

The numbers of tattoo stands varies from one Heiva to another. For instance, there were five stands in 1999, four stands in 2000 and three stands in 2001. There were about two tattooists working at each stand. The stands in the Artisan village were organized according to the different artisan associations. Each association, usually formed by either families or district members, pays a rent for a stand. Tattooists must belong to an association in order to work at the artisan village. Some did not normally work with an association, but joined with the tattooists who belonged to one and were allocated a stand. Michel, for example, was a tattooist generally working at the salon and tattooing many non-Polynesian styles, including European, tribal, and Japanese. At Heiva, he worked with a friend, Stéphane, who belonged to an artisan association in Papeeno. Clément, who worked in the construction industry and tattooed at home only at the
weekend, worked at Heiva with his brother-in-law Thierry who belonged to an association in Puunauia.¹⁹

Fig. 5.5 The demonstration of tattooing.

Fig. 5.6 The demonstration of tattooing.

¹⁹ As I showed in Chapter Three, Clément has become a full-time tattooist and has been working with
The tattooists had many local clients who often asked for covering-up and modification during Heiva. For tattooists, Heiva is not only a great opportunity to earn money, but also a good advertisement for their business. Some clients who were uncomfortable with the prospect of being tattooed in public made arrangements to visit the usual workplace of the tattooists after Heiva.

Fig. 5.7 Michel’s stand at Heiva.

Tattooing at Heiva maintains the subtle rules acknowledged between tattooist and client, and among tattooists. As I have shown in Chapter Three, clients generally choose a tattooist based on friendship. Similarly, friendship is important in the relationship between tattooists as they share a style among work partners, who are often friends, brothers, or other relatives. During four weeks of Heiva, artisans, including tattooists, spend most of their time at the village; some even sleep there to guard the stand at night.

Thierry at Fare Artisanat.

20 Covering-up is a technique to hide an existing tattoo by tattooing a new design on top. The existing tattoo was usually badly done, or the design or the letters, no longer appealed to the wearer. Modification is another technique for dealing with unwanted old tattoos. In contrast to covering-up, modification retains the old tattoos but improves them by re-outlining and/or re-filling with darker ink. The theme of the design often remains as it is, but it can be transformed. See Chapter Six for more analysis of covering-up and modification.
They establish friendships by passing idle time with artisans of similar age while the stands are not busy, and later many of them are tattooed by their tattooist friends.

Fig. 5.8 Akoti's stand at Heiva.

Fig. 5.9 Artisans and tattooists playing music together while they do not have clients.
Tattooists are mutually differentiated based on their style and technique. Their intention to locate themselves in both “artisanat”, which means within *la culture ma’ohi*, and the global tattoo world, which implies the tourism industry, becomes apparent at *Heiva*. By regarding themselves as “artisans” and connecting tattooing to cultural revitalization and ethnic and cultural identity formation, tattooists, through *Heiva*, re-affirm and re-claim that tattooing is *la culture ma’ohi* to tourists and French people living in Tahiti, and importantly, to themselves. At the same time, by tattooing tourists with tattoo machines, the tattooists demonstrate that their tattooing is also located in the global tattoo world.

Fig. 5.10 Varii tattooing at *Heiva*.

Variatii set up his stand as a part of the artisan association of his family in 1999 [Fig. 5.10]. He also worked with Efraima and Simeon in 2001. The peculiarity that Varii wanted to emphasize to differentiate his tattooing from that of the other tattooists participating in *Heiva* was “Marquesan-ness”. There were people who particularly wanted “Marquesan tattoo” and came to be tattooed by Varii, Efraima, or Simeon.

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

At Heiva, Varii was first of all “Marquesan”. He differentiated himself and his tattooing from Tahitian tattooists and their work. Being Tane Tahiti, Varii became the representative of Tahiti rather than of the Marquesas. Yet, Tane Tahiti would suggest representation of French Polynesia rather than that of the island of Tahiti.

Festival of Pacific Arts

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

Sending a delegation and hosting the Festival have different political and financial implications. At the highest level, the Festival is organized by the Secretariat of Pacific Community (former South Pacific Commission), but the Festival takes on the different features of each host country due to cultural politics and the attitudes of local audiences (Myers 1989: 60; Simons 1989; Yamamoto: 2001). When sending a delegation, the French Polynesian government was much concerned with the image of territory represented to the other countries and territories in the Pacific, especially the image presented to the host country. French Polynesia has experienced both host and non-host roles. In order to elicit cultural politics and identity formation processes at each Festival, I compare French Polynesia as host of the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts and as a delegation participant at the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts.
The fourth Festival of Pacific Arts was held from June 29 to July 15, 1985. 1197 delegates from the following twenty one countries and territories participated: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Northern Marianas Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, and Western Samoa. The location of French Polynesia was problematic from the outset as travel costs were high for most delegations. The problem was solved by the financial support of UNESCO, France, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States (Les Dépêche de Tahiti, 11 June 1985, p.17).

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

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

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

From the political perspective of French Polynesia, hosting the Festival implied comparison and competition with New Caledonia. Both are in similar political situations regarding their status as French overseas territories, but the populations of the two territories had different attitudes about the political structure. The Festival was used
by the political authorities to demonstrate this to the other nations in the Pacific and in
the world, and Hivavaevae, parade, on 29 June was:

L’occasion d’appeler toutes les forces vives du territoire à témoigner de leur sens du
patriotisme polynésien et de montrer au reste du monde océanien que le statut d’autonomie
interne de la Polynésie française peut constituer à la fois les atouts d’un meilleur
développement économique et la préservation de l’identité Ma’ohi. (Le programme officiel
du Heiva i Tahiti 1999, p. 5)\(^{21}\)

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

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

The eighth Festival of Pacific Arts took place in Noumea, New Caledonia from
October 23 to November 3, 2000. There were more than 3,000 participants from twenty
four countries and territories, giving dance, music, and theatrical performances,
photography and painting exhibitions, and art and craft demonstrations.\(^{22}\) The Festival

\(^{21}\) “The occasion to call on all the active forces of the territory to prove their understanding of Polynesian
heritage and show to the rest of the oceanic worlds that the status of internal autonomy of French
Polynesia can constitute a trump card for the best economic development and the preservation of Ma’ohi
identity” (my translation).

\(^{22}\) The countries and territories that participated in the eighth Festival of Pacific Arts were as follows:
American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French
Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Tonga, Kiribus, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island,
had the theme of “Le discours d’hier, le discours d’aujourd’hui, le discours de demain (yesterday’s vision, today’s vision, and tomorrow’s vision)”. The log of the Festival represents Melanesian “traditional” roof decoration, with the symbols of the past, present, and future comprising three elements: a “toutoute” (conch shell), profiles, and an axe.

French Polynesia, under the direction of the Minister of Culture, organized a delegation, called Association ‘Aha Tau, which means “sacred bond of time’ represented by a 5-strand braid which symbolised the 5 united archipelagos” (Comité Organisateur de la Délégation Polynésienne 2000). ‘Aha Tau consisted of 150 dancers, musicians, and artisans. French Polynesian delegations are typically large and well equipped because of substantial financial support from France. In a similar way to how it hosts a Festival, French Polynesia demonstrates to the other countries and territories in the Pacific the advantage of being affiliated to France by sending a large delegation.

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

Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

23 The Marquesan delegation, led by Lucien Kimite, came to New Caledonia independently of the Tahitian delegation. It made a sister-city contract with Mont-Dore and had cultural exchange with them during the Festival.

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

25 Only Victor Lefay was present at the inauguration at the centre Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Victor says “c’est très diversifié, il y a des œuvres de tous les styles. Tout cela a fait beaucoup d’effet sur le public, les sentiments étaient partagés entre la surprise et la rigolade (it is very diverse. There are the works of all styles. All of them make great effect on the public. The feelings were shared between surprise and laughter – my translation)” (les Nouvelles de Tahiti, 26 October 2000).
The French Polynesian delegation gave dance performances on October 27, 28, and 29 at the Kami Yo of Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou [Fig. 5.11], and also during the daytime in Artisan Village [Figs. 5.12 and 5.13]. The show, titled “Maui e te vehera’a o te tau”, consisted of the dance styles of three archipelagos, the Society Islands, Marquesas, and Tuamotu. Generally, the dance group that won the first prize in the previous Heiva is nominated for the Festival of Pacific Arts. There was no dance competition at Heiva Nui 2000, but dance performances by delegations from each archipelago. Thus, for the eighth Festival, the group was a newly formed unit of about one hundred people. The dancers, musicians, choreographer, director, and staff acknowledged the particularities and similarities of style of each archipelago and incorporated them into one spectacle. The big screen was effectively used to depict how a young Maui living in contemporary Tahiti becomes interested in his ancestral legends and history. Jean-Paul Landé, the artistic director of the delegation states:

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

The show consists of four acts: Act One, “A trip though time”; Act Two, “Maui lights up the fire”; and Act Three, “Maui’s hook or the discovery of the other”,
Fig. 5.12 Tahitian dancers.

Fig. 5.13 Tahitian dancers.
representing dances and songs from the Marquesas Islands; and Act Four, “Catching the sun or mastering one’s future”, representing dances and songs from the Tuamotu. The dance performance of the French Polynesian delegation was the fusion of different archipelagos, different dancers and musicians, modernity and tradition.

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

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

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

This self-differentiation from the other islanders was also apparent in tattooing at the Festival. Three tattooists Varii, Thierry, and Moïse worked during the Festival [Figs. 5.14 - 5.18]. As I have already mentioned, Varii normally emphasized the “Marquesan-ness” of his tattooing. Thierry had been tattooing many new Polynesian designs that were mixed with Marquesan, Maori, and Tahitian motifs. Moïse usually works with Akoti and uses his designs. Although each tattooist has his own style, the styles these three tattooists tattooed were modernized Polynesian styles consisting of mostly ancient Marquesan motifs but in modern arrangement. Modern Polynesian styles feature many animal figures, such as turtle, shark, dolphin, manta ray, and lizard.
Fig. 5.14 Varii tattooing at the Festival of Pacific Arts.

Fig. 5.15 Thierry tattooing.
At the Festival, Thierry, Varii, and Moïse had many local clients both French and Caledonian. There were also many people of mixed-descent, such as half-Wallisians, half-Indonesians, and half-Tahitians. Many Tahitian emigrants to New Caledonia were tattooed during the Festival. Most clients, who were tattooed by tattooists of the French Polynesian delegation, had also visited the Maori and Samoan stands. Their reasons for choosing the Tahitian tattooists were the price, the use of the tattoo machine (although Maori tattooists also used the tattoo machine), and the design.

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

As far as I observed, there was no exchange of knowledge or communication among Tahitian, Maori, and Samoan tattooists partly because the tattooists were busy with tattooing, and partly because of the language problem. These three tattooists did not speak English fluently and the Samoan and Maori did not speak French. They had, however, visited the stands of New Zealand and Samoa, and had an occasion to study the other styles and technique. The direct influence of other island tattooing on the work of these tattooists was not observed during the Festival because they had tattooed what the clients wanted, which was “Tahitian” or “Marquesan” styles. The exchange and sharing of tattooing, however, took place between people of the different islands, as many Wallisians have been tattooed by Rafaele Suluape [Fig. 5.19], a Samoan tattooist; many Maori, French, and Caledonians were tattooed by Vairi, Thierry, and Moïse. Cultural sharing among people who participated in the Festival was realized on the surface of the skin.

Fig. 5.17 Vairi tattooing.

26 Yet, I presume that Tahitian tattooists might try some Maori and Samoan styles when they return home.
Each tattooist brought files of motifs and designs and photos of his works (although Moïse used the designs of Akoti. The clients viewed the samples of photos in the files and chose a design and motif they wanted. As there were many clients waiting in line,
however, the tattooists took a client who was the first in line. In this way, the tattooists were required to tattoo the designs of the other tattooists.

For both tattooists and tattooed people, the tattoos done during the Festival were not very important for their individual artistic style, but rather for their regional style such as “Tahitian” or “Marquesan”. For the French Polynesian political authorities, they were more important as a collective representation of the “imagined territory”. Thus, at the Festival of Pacific Arts, Varri and his tattooing was considered by the members of other delegations and the visitors “French Polynesian” more than “Marquesan”. Varri continued considering himself “Marquesan”, but indicated to the people at the Festival that “he is from French Polynesia” through tattooing.

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

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

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

**Marquesan Art Festival**

The Marquesan Art Festival has been held on one of the islands of the Marquesas archipelagos every two years for the first three festivals and every four years since then. The first festival took place in Ua Pou in 1987, followed by Nuku Hiva in 1989, Hiva
Chapter Five

Oa in 1991, Ua Pou in 1995, Nuku Hiva in 1999.\textsuperscript{27} In the following section, I examine the fifth Marquesan Art Festival in 1999, but before that, I briefly introduce the history and background of the Marquesan Art Festival.

The idea of the Festival was raised and realized by Motu Haka, an association, which aims to revitalize Marquesan language and culture. Motu Haka was founded in Hakahau, Ua Pou, in 1984 by school teachers.\textsuperscript{28} Marquesan language and culture had been suppressed since most islanders became Catholic Christians. However, the cultural movement began in the 1980s when Monseigneur Cle’ach, the Catholic Church priest, worked with other Marquesans to try to re-educate the significance of Marquesan culture. Teachers of all the Marquesan islands had a meeting and started teaching Marquesan language, legend, and dance at school.

The dance group of Motu Haka, led by Toti Teikiehuupoko and Tina Klima, participated in the fourth Pacific Festival of Art. This made Marquesans more conscious of representing their song and dance to people from other islands and countries. Two years later, the first Marquesan Art Festival was held on the island of Ua Pou, where Motu Haka was based on.

The fifth Festival was intended to celebrate the beginning of the third millennium, which was co-scheduled with the celebration around the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou in Noumea, New Caledonia. Comothe, the organizer of the Festival, sought support from Jacques Chirac, the président de la République, Jean-Jacques Queyranne, le ministre de l’Outre-mer, and Gaston Flosse, le président du gouvernement de la Polynésie française.

The delegations of Hawaii, Tuvalu, Rapa Nui, the Cook Islands, Tahiti, Austral, and Tuamotu came to Nuku Hiva and demonstrated dance performance over three days.\textsuperscript{29} The Festival firstly aimed for decentralization of Tahiti. The Tahitian delegation was merely one of the delegations that were invited to the Marquesas.\textsuperscript{30} Secondly, it aimed for centralization of the Marquesas in its relationship to other Pacific islands. It was a move to shift the Marquesas from being a periphery to the center, from isolated to interrelated.

\textsuperscript{27} The Festival was scheduled to be held every two years until the third Festival, but for financial reasons, changed to every four year from the fourth Festival.

\textsuperscript{28} The foundation members were Mgr Hervé Le Cleac’h, évêque des îles Marquises, président d’honneur, Georges (Toti) Teikiehuupoko, president, Benjamin (Ben) Eikitutoua, vice-president, Etienne Hakaupoko, secretary, etc.

\textsuperscript{29} Rapa Nui, Tuamotu, Marquesan living in Tahiti participated in the second Festival.
The fifth Festival took place in Nuku Hiva, the largest island of the Marquesas from 27 to 31 December in 1999. It began with a short ceremony welcoming delegates and a speech given by Gaston Flosse in Taiohae on the opening day. The Festival featured the theme of “the past, present, and future”. As the delegation moved from one village to another, they moved from the past, the present, and on to the future. Three colours, yellow, white, and red of the Marquesan flag corresponded to this sequence of time, and were applied to the theme of the Festival. On the second day, all the delegates moved to Hathieu, a two hour drive from Taiohae, a village possessing a small wharf and a beautiful walking path along the coast. Hathieu was themed “the past” with the colour yellow, so people wore yellow T-shirts or pareus. Dance performances were held all day long (until midnight) in two tohua, Hikokua and Kamuihei [Fig. 5.21]. These archaeological sites, including Koueva in Taiohae, had been reconstructed and cleaned by archaeologist Pierre Ottino and young Marquesans well in advance of the Festival.

On the third day, the Festival moved to Taipivai valley, a village located between Taiohae and Hatiheu, famous for Herman Melville’s novel, Typee [Fig. 5.22]. Taipivai was featured as the present with the colour white. Three groups simultaneously danced

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30 Tahitian delegation was Te Maeva, a winning dance group for Heiva 2000.
in the spacious soccer ball field of the village. A big *kaikai*, Marquesan feast, was offered to all the delegates and participants. The afternoon program was a presentation in the ecumenical context, mainly chanting. On the fourth day, the Festival moved back to Taiohae, which was featured as the future with the colour red. The Festival had its climax in *tohua* Koueva, Taiohae with dance performances which ended around midnight.

Dance performances by Marquesan delegations expressed the continuity of tradition as well as contemporary creativity. The Festival was not competitive, but the performance of each island was discerned and evaluated on the basis of "traditional" Marquesan-ness and creativity. For instance, many Marquesans acknowledged the extraordinary fire dance performance by the group of Ua Pou although it was not performed in the old style in the strict sense.

Fig. 5.21 Hathieu.
Lucien Kimitete, mayor of Nuku Hiva, states that “la memoire est aussi dans le corps: ce sont les sensations qui nous guident pour creer. Lorsque le cœur est pris dans l’élan de créer, on est sur la voie. La culture doit vivre et évoluer avec son temps, elle ne doit pas être figée ou contenue dans une vitrine” (Vea Porojetani. No. 3. April, 2000. P. 8).\[31\]

Artisan stands were installed at the sports ground of a college in Taiohae. The art products from the Marquesas and Australs such as wood, bone, stone carving, seed jewellery, tapa, pestle, and so forth were sold there. Varii was the only tattooist who worked at the stand. He tattooed many Marquesans from different islands during the Festival. The local tattooists in Taiohae, Isidore, and Roland of Taiohae [Figs. 5.23 and 5.24] also tattooed many Marquesans and tourists at their home during the Festival. Thierry, who was just released from prison and returned to Nuku Hiva, tattooed. Dominique in Hatiheu did demonstrations of tattooing on the second day of the Festival.

\[31\] “The memory is also in the body; this is the sensations which guide us to creation. When the heart is taken on the impulse of the creation, we are on the way. The culture must live and evolve with time. It must not be fixed or contained in a showcase” (my translation).
There is no tattoo stand or salon in the Marquesas. Tattooists tattoo at their residence. Most of them have another job and tattoo after work or at weekends. Roland, for instance, works at a hospital in Taiohae, taking charge of medical machines. He tattoos at his home after work or at the weekend. His clients are mostly tourists.

Like many young Tahitians, many young Marquesan tattooists are restless. For example, Dominique, a young tattooist and carver, has been moving between Ua Pou, Tahiti, France, Hawaii, Nuku Hiva and so forth. His cousin, Kina is normally living on the island of Ua Pou, but often moves from one village to another. Large numbers of Marquesan tattooists started their artistic activities with carving and continue it as their principal activity because they do not have a client for tattooing every day in the Marquesas.
Fig. 5.25 Bernadette.  
Fig. 5.26 Marianne.  

Fig. 5.27 Thierry tattooing Vincent.
Fig. 5.28 - 5.31 Marquesan men.
Marquesan tattooists based in Tahiti, such as Varii, Efraima, and Simeon, intend to distinguish themselves from Tahitian tattooists. Simeon, for example, insists that tattooing is *la culture marquesien* and considers that “Tahitians don’t like their motifs, but like Marquesan motifs”. As for the contemporary development of Marquesan tattooing, Simeon considers that “the ancient motifs always remain, but the creativity is coming along”. What about Varii’s identity representation at the Marquesan Art Festival?

At the Marquesan Art Festival, Varii was, needless to say, Marquesan and felt comfortable being there while many Tahitian tattooists who often work at festivals did not participate in the Festival because they were not Marquesan. Many Marquesans were satisfied to be tattooed by Varii who is Marquesan, and at the same time were satisfied with the quality of his tattooing which had developed through learning and exchanging knowledge with other tattooists in Tahiti. Getting tattooed by Varii was in a sense a solution of the contradictory situations which resulted from modernization and the urge for the maintenance of “Marquesan-ness”.

The Marquesan intention in relationships with Tahitians is differentiation rather than unification. Marquesans culturally and economically differentiate themselves from Tahitians. Many Marquesans consider that their “culture” will be modernized and changed in the future, but that they have to maintain their tradition. They need to keep their own style rather than mixing many different styles from other places. A significant question for them is how they could undergo modernization and transformation through introducing external technology and information and at the same time maintain their own way.

**Conclusion**

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

At *Heiva*, creativity and originality were regarded as significant in the competition and comparison of dancing and tattooing. The dancers and tattooists establish and affirm their personal identity through excluding others who share their ethnicity, gender, and
profession, on the basis of the differences resulting from their creativity and application of external knowledge and technique.

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

At the Marquesan Art Festival, the emphasis was put on being Marquesan, and thus also Polynesian, but not Tahitian. This is reflected in their desire for regionalization of French Polynesia and internationalization of the Marquesas. Creativity and individuality of dancing and tattooing are acknowledged within the category of “Marquesan”.

These festivals aim to situate Polynesians in space and time. They transform space into the places that are designated “French Polynesia”, “Tahiti”, and “Marquesas”, and situate these places within the territory, in the Pacific, and in the world. As shown in the festival discourse of “the past, present, and future”, Polynesians articulate that they are living in continuity of history. They interrelate with other places and times, and establish their identities through dancing and tattooing.
Chapter Six

Inscribing the Past, Present, and Future: In the Nuutania Prison

Tu’u i here
Na ta’u i here
Teie himene
Ua moe hoi oe ia’u
Te mihi nei ra hoi au ia oe
Te oto nei to’u mafatu i teie nei

Na te fatu i rave ia oe e ta’u here
(Tepupura) here
Tei te paradaiso oe i teie nei
E ta’u here e

The Road to the Nuutania Prison

After ten minutes ride from the Marché, I got off le truck in front of the Nuutania grocery shop, which is located in the heart of Faa’a community. From this shop, the City Hall is three minutes’ walk away, and the Faa’a International Airport is five minutes by car. I took a path beside the shop and started walking inland. By going off the main road, I suddenly realized that I had stepped into the rural residence area of the island. Hens and dogs hovered around among mango and banana trees on the sides of the road. Young boys and girls were sitting on the trunk of a tree, chatting and smoking. Local music playing on a stereo leaked out from one of the houses along the path.

One girl walking ahead with her mother, sisters, and brothers, noticed me and started accompanying me.

“Are you going to see your papa?” the girl asked me.

“No,” I smiled and answered, “I am going to see my friends there. Are you going to see your papa?”

1“This song is for you/ My love/ You do not exist any more/ My heart cries/ The God took my darling from me/ My darling Tepupura/ You are in the paradise/ My love” (my translation). This is a song from CD
“Yes.”

“How long has he been inside?”

“For long time,” the girl kept on smiling. The girl and her family were in a mood of mundane happiness and boredom. They seemed to be going to the shop to buy ice cream or to see grandma in the neighbourhood. This had made me forget that our destination was the prison until we came to face a vast old building surrounded by barbed wire after twenty minutes’ walk. On the bench in front of the main entrance, mamas and young vahine with bébé were chatting cheerfully and waiting for the calls for family visits. A pile of cans of Coke and Fanta were to be brought into the visiting room with them.

I took my ID card out of my bag and knocked on the iron front door. The small square window of the door was opened. I inserted my ID card into the window. The guard checked inside my bag and asked me if I had a mobile phone. I went through the metal detector. I heard a bleeping sound, indicating that the lock of the electric door was being released. I passed through it. Immediately, another electric door was unlocked with the same bleeping sound. I passed through it. I walked down the corridor, feeling cooled by air conditioning on my skin. When I came to the end of the corridor, I pushed a white button to indicate to the guard that I wanted to come through. I told the guard the name of the inmate tattooist that I wanted to see that day. The tattooist that I nominated also came through several electric doors to reach the meeting room.

The Nuuatania prison is not far from the places where the inmates’ family and friends are eating, sleeping, and working, but many doors shut the inmates off from the outside world. Some inmates have regular family visits and the others hardly ever do.

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated how identity has been locally, regionally, and globally established based on gender, ethnic, and age differences and transformed through inclusion/exclusion, similarities/differences in various social interactions and relationships. The prison is, on the contrary, secluded from the outside world and permits limited social interaction and relationships. The seclusion of the prison conditions the inmates’ living space as mono-gendered (lack of women) and mono-ethnic centered (dominance of Tahitians). The gender and ethnic dynamics of the prison are self-contained to a certain extent, but still resonate with those of outside.

One of my main aims in this chapter is to elicit the diversity and complexity of the tattoo world. Anthropologist Margo Demello recognizes four separate spheres within the

“Nuuatania”, which was produced in 1998 by the inmates who had a talent for music in support of l’association Puna Ora. It was written by one of the inmates whom I introduce below.
American tattoo culture that “include the professional sphere (within which is found the fine art style of tattooing most popular among the middle classes), the semi-professional sphere, street tattooing, and prison tattooing” (1993: 10). She also remarks that “prison tattooing falls at the lowest end of this hierarchy, and tattoos that are created in prison, because of the technology used to create them, the style in which they are worn, and the imagery portrayed, can be easily distinguished from professionally executed tattoos” (ibid.). I argue that prison tattooing in Tahiti is linked to European and American prison tattooing and its history to some extent, but has also developed in its own way and is connected with the practice of tattooing outside.

There is a historical, though discontinuous, connection between tattooing, crime, and punishment in Tahiti. Tahitian tattooing which was embedded in the socio-cultural system had been transformed into an “immoral/pagan” practice in the process of Christianization in the early nineteenth century. When missionaries set up legal codes, which dealt with murder, theft, adultery, marriage and divorce, and Sabbath-violation, they prohibited tattooing considering it to be inconsistent with Christian discipline and civilized behaviour.

As I have already shown, many Tahitian tattooists, dancers, artisans, and musicians who have been part of leading the cultural revitalization movement freed tattooing from moral stricture and reconnected it to their ancestral significance as a body-marking of cultural identity. The inmate tattooists and the tattooed inmates also have been marking and remarking their bodies to locate themselves in a place where different values are intersecting. Just as Tahitian tattooing has oscillated between immorality/criminal practice and morality/ethnic identity marking, so do the inmate tattooists and the tattooed inmates oscillate between two values. Prison tattooing has been transformed or reproduced by the inmates’ interests and objectives. As I have shown in the previous chapter, Tahitian tattooing has been fluctuating between different value systems at different times in history, such as sacred/secular, moral/immoral, beautiful/ugly, and clean/dirty. This conflict of values is more distinguished in the prison tattooing.

This chapter speculates on the spatiality of the prison in the areas of temporality, the body, and emotion. The argument encompasses the issues of masculinity, globalization, colonial history, and morality, which I have explored throughout the thesis. The chapter also aims to elucidate what tattooing as a way of manipulation of the body means to the inmates in the process of value making. It also examines the way moral assessments become contingent, especially in the case of prison tattooing.
Le centre pénitentiaire de Nuutania

Le centre pénitentiaire de Nuutania is located in Faa’a on the island of Tahiti. The prison was under the control of the government before 1977 and of the Haut-Commissaire from 1977 to 1984. The State (le ministère de la justice) has been taking charge of it since 1995. In mid-September 1999, for instance, eighty-seven defendants, one hundred and ninety seven inmates, three minors, and eleven young adults were incarcerated. As for the length of sentence, 50 percent of them were convicted for less than five years, 17 percent for five to ten years, 16 percent for 10 to 15 years, and 17 percent for more than fifteen years.

Prisons are also installed in Uturoa, Raiatea (the Leeward Islands) which accommodates 15 detainees and in Nuku Hiva (the Marquesas) there is a room for seven detainees. A female prison adjoins the male buildings in Nuutania, which holds less than ten inmates. The majority of the inmates in the Nuutania prison are convicted of sexual assault, and substantial numbers are for incest. The rest of the inmates are there for murder, theft, and drug trafficking. Most crime is committed single handedly rather than in groups.

Prison riots broke out in Nuutania in 1972 and 1978. The latter was associated with independent movements. On January 14, 1978, the guards were attracted by a simulacra fight into Building A. Pierre Hoatua, one of the guards, was murdered immediately and the others were confined. Charlie Chung, a member of the independent party Te Toto Tupuna, was considered to be the initiator of the mutiny. In negotiation with Nedo Salmon, the director of the prison, the mutineers demanded independence, the departure of French people in the territory, and an end to nuclear testing (Spillmann 1993: 307-310).

The prison had only basic facilities and was in bad condition before 1995. The principle idea of installation of the prison at that time was that the criminals should be confined for punishment and secluded from other citizens. Since the State began administering it, the prison is no longer a place for punishment, but officially for correcting and rehabilitating the inmates so as to adjust them to the social life. The livre d’accueil, published by the High Commission states:

2 The total numbers of the prisoners are 257: 168 inmates, 89 detainees. 100 of them are convicted for sexual assault (60 %) and 20 % of them are convicted for drug trafficking. 90 % of them are from the island of Tahiti and 10 % of them are from the other islands. The prison terms range from one month to twenty years. It is not my intention to discuss the relationships between crime and masculinity (See Messerschmidt 1993), but substantial numbers of sexual assault may indicate another nature of Tahitian masculinity.

3 David Arnold argues in his study of the Indian prison, that “the prison was not cut off from all contact with and reference to the rest of civil society. On the contrary, it often served an exemplary role, showing how discipline and order could, or (not infrequently) could not, be imposed on indigenous society by an alien ruling class, how a desire to overturn cultural and social ‘prejudices’ needed to be tempered by political pragmatism, how medicine might reign without its customary hindrances... The colonial prison was, in many respects, a remarkably permeable institution, connected to the outside world through venal warders and communal identities, as it was later to be through political affiliations” (1992: 171).
Il prépare la réinsertion des détenus. En lien avec le juge de l’application des peines et le chef d’établissement, il assure un suivi individuel de chaque détenu et coordonne les actions d’insertion dans les établissements pénitentiaires: actions culturelles, sportives, enseignement, lutte contre l’illettrisme... il prépare les aménagements de peine (semi-liberté, permissions de sortie, libérations conditionnelles) et les met en oeuvre. (Haut Commissariat de la République en Polynésie française 1999: 149)

In 1992, the association Puna Ora was founded as an extension of le service judiciaire d’insertion et de probation, aimed at the rehabilitation of the inmates. The buildings and cells of the prison have since been under renovation. The inmates have been given more visiting privileges and access to the outside world (TV, telephone etc). They are also encouraged to consult the social workers who arrange work outside, during and after the prison term. Various activities have become available for the prisoners such as bodybuilding, English, French, the plastic arts, casting, chess, jazz dance, theatre and so forth. Religious services: Catholic, Protestant, Adventist, are also provided. Books are available in the library for loan.

There is public criticism that the new prison is like a five-star hotel and that the inmates are pampered. Indeed, many inmates who had been released return to the prison by conducting minor crime because the prison life is better than the life outside. They do not have a house, family, and job outside, but they have room, food, siesta, and sport facilities in the prison. Mr. Marchand, the director of le centre pénitentiare de Nuutania, objected to the criticism by claiming that the inmates need the good life to rehabilitate them from the delinquent atmosphere.

The rehabilitative schemes are controversial in terms of actual effect of correction. Some inmates state that in the prison they have learned a range of different things, which they had never done outside. The others confess that they are doing several activities in an attempt to shorten their sentence.

Rehabilitation aims to convert the inmates into “moral beings”. The inmates under rehabilitative schemes are enforced, even implicitly, to feel guilty for what they have

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4 “It prepares the reintegration of the inmates. In relation to the judge of the application of the sentence and the director of the institution, it assures an individual follow up for each inmate and coordinates the actions of reintegration at the prison: cultural, sportive, instructive actions, struggle against illiteracy. It prepares the adjustment of sentence (half-liberty, permission of leave, conditional release) and implementation of these” (my interpretation).
5 Puna Ora means “source of life”. The president of the association is Judge Philippe Pottier, who is also responsible for le service judiciaire d’insertion et de probation. The finance of the association comes from the Minister of Justice and the Contract of Town for the State and the Minister of Youth and Solidarity for Territory.
6 While the prisoners have obtained more access to the outside, people outside such as family, journalists and researchers are also given more access to the prison.
done, to have sympathy for the victims, and to subdue aggressiveness, extreme anger, and hate. Yet, the questions remain: what do correction and rehabilitation mean; were the inmates “evil” or deficient in morality when they committed the crime; how do the inmates change themselves before and after imprisonment; and how is seclusion from the outside world effective in terms of rehabilitation?

The Prison Life and Tattooing

Both tattooists and tattooed people take advantage of tattooing and being tattooed in the Nuutania prison. The inmate tattooists consider their colleagues as appropriate “cobayes (guinea pigs)” to practice tattooing. As most inmate tattooists intend to live on tattooing after they are released, it is a valuable opportunity for them to have numerous “cobayes”. The tattooed inmates consider that the advantages of getting tattooed in prison are its low cost and the availability of talented tattooists. Because of this combination of demand and supply, Nuutania has been producing a large number of high quality tattoos and talented tattooists. In the following section, I explore prison life, especially economics, relationships, and the daily schedule, and show how tattooing is implicated in the life of the inmates.

Tattooing was prohibited when the Territory was administering the prison, but it has been allowed since the State took over the administration of the prison in 1995 and a new director was assigned from France. The director Jean-Jacques Marchand explained that the inmates were always tattooing in secret with unhygienic materials, so it was safer to provide them hygienic materials such as gloves and pomade, and allow them to tattoo under proper conditions. As tattooing has been widely accepted as a mark of cultural identity and as a potential job for the inmates because of its popularity in Tahiti and in the rest of the world, I assume that besides hygienic reasons these positive images of tattooing have also affected the authorization of the practice in prison.

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7 My research in Le centre pénitentiaire de Nuutania was conducted during three months in May, June, and July in 2000 and during one month in July in 2001. It was based on interviewing the inmates whom the director of the prison listed as tattooists. There were initially five inmates, but I excluded one who no longer tattooed and asked to add three who were actually tattooing by the information of the other inmates. I had received permission to interview in the visiting room which was normally used for the consultation with a lawyer and social worker. I asked the director to let me enter their cells or the field where tattooing took place and observe their tattooing, and he organized one session of it. I had already known that several tattooists in Moorea and Tahiti were in Nuutania and many of them started tattooing there. I found out that more tattooists that I knew had been in Nuutania (they did not tell me that they had been in Nuutania) and tattooed.

8 However, the problem consistently arises. Bernard who works to an assistant at the nurse says that many inmates who are tattooed and infected come to the nurse because the needles and the skin are not clean enough.
The inmate tattooists use hand-made machines, remodelled travelling razors, or a machine attached to a revolving motor. Rotring drawing ink is used for pigment. The inmates are permitted to order these machines and materials. The tattooing machine is, however, not an item that the inmates are allowed to purchase.

During May to July in 2000 when I conducted the first interview in the Nuutania prison, about six or seven inmates were tattooing. There were also a few inmates or defendants who were learning tattooing from other inmate tattooists by trying it out. The beginners start by drawing the designs and motifs on paper before they actually scratch it on the skin.

The inmate tattooists tattoo any style: Polynesian, tribal, and European. The most popular designs are a dragon, rose, woman, lion, scorpion, and skull (tête de mort). The Polynesian style has become popular in the prison, resonating with the outside tattoo trend. Tribal style is also tattooed, but is less favoured among the inmates than it is outside. In the Tahitian prison tattooing, there is no design that is restricted to prison, while icons, emblems, or symbols of gang groups are often observed in American, South African, and Russian prison tattooing. The American and European designs had already been introduced in the Nuutania prison in the 1970s before the revival of Polynesian tattooing and the global popularity of tattooing. Yet, these designs were those more generally tattooed in America and Europe rather than those particular to the prisoners.

Although the inmates who want to be tattooed more often choose the design, the tattooists also suggest the design by showing tattoo magazines or their drawings. The inmates often observe the other inmates’ tattoos and ask the tattooists to tattoo the same or a similar design or style. The tattooists tattoo in free hand, either drawing a design on the skin with pen or tattooing directly without any marking. Many tattooists draw a design on the paper and show it to the tattooees before they actually start tattooing. Tattooing takes place in the cells, on the corridors, and in the field, according to the building they inhabit. In Building B, for example, the door of cells is open during the daytime, so they often tattoo in the corridor.

Prison life basically does not require cash. The inmates are provided with beds, meals, and basic utilities. Yet, money is significant for the inmates because it connects them to the outside world. The inmates can earn from CPF5,000 to 26,000 by cooking or cleaning inside or outside the prison (cleaning the town hall, roads in the Faa’a

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9 Except those of large size, tribal is often tattooed intending the decorative effect while the (European and Japanese) design and Polynesian style are tattooed to express and/or establish cultural or personal identities.
community and so forth).\textsuperscript{10} For example, an inmate tattooist earns CPF22,000 per month by cleaning around the post.\textsuperscript{11} Many inmates put money aside for life after their release. They are allowed to purchase the extra commodities such as food, clothing, daily necessities with, which they used to be familiar with before they were incarcerated.

Commodities are a memory of their past lives and also a cord to connect them to the outside world in the present. The inmates also can be informed about what is happening in the island and in the world through watching TV, listening to radio, and reading newspapers and magazines, which they buy with money they earn through working. Since 1999, the inmates have also been allowed to make telephone calls to their family if they have extra money to buy a telephone card.

As the inmates are not allowed to be paid by tattooing, the inmate tattooists receive food: SAO, Nescafe, Twisties, sugar, \textit{bonbon chinois} (spiced dried plums), vegetables, oil, tinned salmon, and cheese; cloth and accessories: T-shirts, short pants, chain necklaces, rings- even engagement rings!; and electrical appliances: walkmans, TVs, radios and coffee makers. For instance, an inmate tattooist explains that he has had walkman, jacket, chain necklace, and so forth from tattooing. He usually receives corned beef, SAO, needles, ink to the value of three to five thousand francs for tattooing. Some tattooists refuse to receive anything for tattooing. Another inmate tattooist receives only needles because he considers that he is practicing tattooing on his colleagues. Yet, many inmates who were tattooed by him want to give something in return, and often give him a portion of a meal. This tattooist himself has had European style tattoos on his right arm free of charge by his friend who has already left Nuutania, and his left cheek and left leg free of charge by another inmate tattooist. The other inmate tattooist never says what he wants for tattooing to his clients. It is his clients who decide how they pay for tattooing. An inmate whom he tattooed was so pleased with his tattoo that arranged his car to pass to the tattooist. Another inmate also liked the tattooist’s work, so he arranged to send money to the tattooist’s son and relative outside.

The spatial configuration of the prison affects the practice and process of tattooing. Le centre pénitentiaire de Nuutania consists of three buildings. Building A accommodates defendants. Building B accommodates the inmates. Building C accommodates the inmates who work inside or outside the prison. During the prison term, the defendants are first accommodated in Building A, and after their judgement they move to Building B. If

\textsuperscript{10} CPF22,000 is about US$220 and AU$154; CPF26,000 is US$260 and AU$180; CPF5,000 is US$50 and AU$35.

\textsuperscript{11} Post is the office of prison guards located in front of the entrance to three prison buildings.
they receive permission to work, they move to Building C. The period that is required for completing a tattoo does not necessarily coincide with the period that the tattooist and the tattooed inmate are incarcerated in the same building. The tattooists can tattoo only the inmates who inhabit the same building. Two to four people share cells, so those who live together can have a tattoo session in the cell. Some inmates are released before completing their tattoos. As many inmates constantly return to the prison by committing crime, they often continue being tattooed by the same or different tattooist.

The limited mobility of the inmate tattooists is not necessarily paralleled by the mobility of the tattooed inmates. Many of them are released before the inmate tattooists, and move around outside. An inmate tattooist notes that he has already become well known outside because people outside see his works of tattooing.

Tattooing is one of the best ways of killing time. Although there is institutional pressure upon the inmates to be busy with activities under the rehabilitative schemes, it is also possible for them to spend time without doing any activities and working. Being lazy is legitimised by the confinement of the prison. In this sense, the prison life resonates with the way of spending their time by male taure 'are 'a outside. As all the prisoners are living together in a daily schedule, it is easy for them to arrange time for tattooing sessions. Sharing time with other inmate colleagues establishes friendship and solidarity as "prisoniers".

The inmate tattooists consider their prison sentence as a time for learning and practicing the technique of tattooing. Most of them started tattooing in the prison. A tattooist claims that if he had not been sent to prison, he would never have started tattooing because he had so much work outside and was busy with family after work. The tattooists often take the plastic art course, drawing, and painting, which advance their tattooing. Generally, inmate tattooists draw and paint more than the tattooists outside.

**The Inmate Tattooists**

The following stories were told by the inmate tattooists, four of whom were tattooing and one of whom was not tattooing during my research. The stories are not objective, as I did not listen to the stories from their victims, the family of the victims, or that of the inmates with some exceptions. I did not research the tribunals. I was basically not allowed to interview the other inmates who were not selected by the director. Thus, what I describe here does not cover certain aspects of the inmates, their crime, prison life, and tattooing.

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12 Some inmates have a cell to themselves if they are either men of good conduct or aggressive to the other prisoners.
My aim in presenting these stories, however, is to show how the inmate tattooists intend to make their crime and themselves understood. They also tell us how they are dealing with their past through tattooing, rejecting tattooing, or changing the old tattoos. Moral assessment is a conflict between social and individual moralities based on relationships. Listening and attempting to understand them arouse the inevitable conflict, but this conflict would problematize one’s moral position and challenge socially dominant values and morality.

1) Tupea

Tupea was not very tall, but he was solid and had braided long grizzled hair. At our first meeting in Nuutania, he asked me with a sharp cautious look why I came to see him and what did I want to know. I explained that I was researching Tahitian tattooing and had heard that there were many good tattooists in Nuutania, so I wanted to know what kinds of design and motif were used, and whom and how he was tattooing there. Tupea smiled and said that it would be great pleasure to talk about it.

At the time of my research, Tupea was considered the best tattooist in Nuutania. Tupea could tattoo any style, from Polynesian to le style européen, and many people wanted to be tattooed by him. Tupea wanted to work as a tattooist when he was released. He was taking an English course because he would have American clients when he would work as a tattooist outside.

Tupea was living in Faa’a, on the island of Tahiti before he was sent to Nuutania, but he was originally from Ua Pou, the Marquesas. Like most Marquesans, Tupea was proud of being a Marquesan. Tupea knew the traditional Marquesan motifs and admired their beauty. Unlike many other Marquesans who do not like to mix their tattoo with the other styles, Tupea did not want to tattoo only Marquesan style, but also le style tribal, le style européen, and Maori style. He believed that tattooing should be transformed through the creativity of tattooists.

He had been drawing numbers of portraits. The inmates and prison guards had asked Tupea to draw their parents, daughters, sons, and wives to put these portraits on the walls of their cell or to give as a birthday or Christmas present to the family outside. Every meeting he showed me the portraits that he had drawn during the week. One day, explaining that it was half drawn, he showed the portrait of one girl who was the daughter

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13 It also reveals how I understood them and how I want to write about them.
14 The names of the inmates represented in this thesis are pseudonymous.
of a prison guard. He had hardly begun, there were only two eyes on the paper, but these eyes were sparkling and full of life.

Tupea loved his wife, maybe a little bit too much. During the interviews in 2000, I had never asked Tupea what he did to come here, but the other tattooists outside, Efraima and Simeon who were his cousins and Eric a good friend of Tupea, told me what Tupea did. He had hit his wife. She did not die right away. Because she was abandoned with serious injuries, she died overnight. She was pregnant at the time. Efraima told me that Tupea was drunk. Joseph (see below), another inmate, told me that his wife had had lovers. Tupea was convicted for eight years, which was short for a murder conviction.

Tupea had many tattoos on his arms and shoulders, mostly le dessin européen. Tupea said that he wanted to remove all the tattoos by a laser operation if an American doctor specialized in this area would come to Tahiti. I asked him why he would not modify them by himself because most of his tattooing in Nuutania was about covering up or modifying old tattoos and he was very good at it. He answered that he knew he could, but he wanted to remove them completely from his body. For Tupea, the trend of tattooing is consistently changing. The design and style, which are presently “cool” and “joli”, would, within a few years, be “out of fashion” and “pas tellment joli (not really beautiful)”. Moreover, Tupea wanted to work for the church after he was released, he believed that it was better to have a “propre (clean)” body without any marks. I pointed out to him that many church-goers also had tattoos, but Tupea answered that these guys came to Sunday mass to look for girls. If he really wanted to serve God, he should have a clean body in the state that God created.

2) Tetuanui

Forty three years old Tetuanui lived in Building C. He took charge of mechanical and technical works in the prison. Tetuanui had worked at the garage, painting the damaged cars outside. Tetuanui was from Tahiti, a short but muscular demi-Chinois. He was passionate about sport. He had been boxing for three years, which was a source of his energy. He also played football and did bodybuilding in Nuutania. Tetuanui considered that physical exercise was excellent because he could concentrate just on the body movement and did not need to think about other things.15

On arrival at Nuutania, Tetuanui thought that he should start tattooing because it was the prison custom. He said, “Here people want tattoos. When you leave and were tattooed here, this means that you were in the prison.” Tetuanui tattooed any style, but he preferred
tattooing *haka* because it was local and beautiful. Yet, Tetuanui had the tattoos of *le style européen* on his own body.

An angel tattoo on the right shoulder had been covered up with the design of women and flowers in colours by Tupea. For his left shoulder tattoo which was the design of a man and woman holding each other, Tetuanui also wanted Tupea to cover it up with the design of a tiger’s head. All these old tattoos were made in one-needle hand-pricking by his *ta’ero* (drunken) friends. Tetuanui frowned over the snake tattoo on the left arm and said, “C’est pas joli (it is not beautiful)”. He wanted to transform all the old bad tattoos into beautiful ones.

Tetuanui had been with his demi-Chinoise wife for eleven years. Tetuanui loved his wife very much and they had seven children. Tetuanui worked hard for his family. When he was about to finish building a new house, his wife suddenly disappeared. Tetuanui looked for her for days and days, but could not find her. Her mother seemed to know where she was, but she did not let Tetuanui know it. When she was found in Takaroa, Tuamotu, his wife, a pious Catholic, explained to Tetuanui that she could not any longer live with him because he was not a good Christian. Tetuanui said to his wife, “If you have time, you can go (to church), but not me”. He believed that it was not good if you went to church but drank, smoked *pakalolo*, and spoke nasty language at home. Tetuanui also considered that his mother-in-law wanted to have a newly built house so kicked him out. Abandoned by his wife, Tetuanui drank and smoked *pakalolo* a great deal although he normally did not drink and smoke much. Then he raped a girl who was sixteen years old.\(^{16}\)

Tetuanui often prayed to God and read the Bible in the prison. He understood that the Bible prohibited people from tattooing. As he insisted that he would continue tattooing, I asked him why he wanted to tattoo even though he believed God and read the Bible. Tetuanui explained that God saw inside of you: whatever the outside of you looked like, it did not matter.

“Laisse-tomber! (forget about her!)”, that was Tetuanui’s feeling toward his wife. It was he who asked her for a divorce. During the first year of the prison term, he was extremely upset with his wife and was planning to kill her and her new lover when released. As time went by in the prison, however, this anger had subsided. Tetuanui had no anger and hate against his wife, but he always felt sorry for the girl.

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\(^{15}\) Tattooing also has the same effect to evade reflecting on the crimes and unwanted feelings.

\(^{16}\) Tetuanui is not at all reticent, but he had never talked about himself and his past when I conducted interviews in 2000. When I came back to Tahiti and visited the prison in 2001, however, Tetuanui explained what happened.
Of Tetuanui’s seven children, five lived with his wife and her new partner, and two lived with his brother. He wanted to earn money for his children. Tetuanui rarely had family visits. He told his children to come to see him only when they needed money or support. He did not want them to see him often because it gave him a difficult time after the short meeting. His ex-wife also told her children not to visit him. His second eldest, a 17 year old son came to see him three months before the interview because his girlfriend was having a baby. Tetuanui gave him CPF100,000. He cried afterwards because he had not seen him for almost five years.

3) Manutahi

Manutahi was a solid man. He had been fatter before but lost weight by doing bodybuilding in the prison. The right half of his face became twisted in a car accident when he was running away after a robbery. He walked reeling from side to side. Manutahi did not smile when we first shook hands, but just twitched the end of his lip.

He was tattooed on his left cheek in Nuutania in 1992 and around the ear by his brother-in-law with a razor outside. He had a motif of a centipede tattooed on his cheek that was covered up to be a Marquesan motif by Tupea later. Manutahi had European designs on his right arm. His left shoulder was tattooed in the Marquesan style by Thierry who was from Ua Huka and had already left the prison. A snake on his hand was tattooed in hand-pricking by his friend from school when he was eleven years old. Manutahi blackened it because it was not beautiful. The design of Adam and Eve on his arm was tattooed by his brother-in-law with a remodelled razor. The haka on the right shoulder was done by his friend with a remodelled razor in 1994, but he did not find it beautiful and wanted it covered up. Flowers on the upper right chest were tattooed with a razor in the prison. Tupea started tattooing the Polynesian style of tattoo on the left leg of Manutahi in 1998 when both Manutahi and Tupea were defendants in Building A. Tupea could not finish it as he had moved to Building C and Manutahi had continued to live in Building B. A tiger on his back had also been tattooed in the prison.

As with Tupea, Manutahi also wanted to erase all his tattoos.

“I like to tattoo, but not on me. It is not beautiful,” Manutahi grimaced. “I liked them (tattoos) when I was young, but now I became older. Then when you are in front of people, they look at you and say ‘C’est sauvage.’” Manutahi started tattooing in the prison. He tattooed le style polynésien, but not le dessin européen.

“My occupation was robber. Because of staying in prison for long time, I came to know how to tattoo.” Manutahi was a great thief. He stole five hundred motorbikes per
year. His record was nine motorbikes in one night. He specialized in stealing motorbikes, Vespa, and scooters. He transformed and resold them. He was incarcerated almost every year from 1996 for stealing, but he stayed in Nuutania no more than a couple of months. At this time, however, he was sentenced for rape for thirteen years. Manutahi sulked and explained that it was not really rape since the accuser was his girlfriend. She got upset because she found out that Manutahi had another girlfriend and a baby with her. Manutahi allowed himself a wry smile and continued to say that he did not hit her at all, but her doctor made up all the documents and sent him to the prison. This one-sided story did not reveal what really happened, but the prison guards and friends were surprised because he returned to Nuutania under the accusation of rape. Manutahi confessed that he felt shamed by being convicted for rape. He regretted what he had done. He did not feel the same way about stealing because he was earning his living by it.

"Life is outside, not here," Manutahi sighed.

"I've got to change my life, not always staying 'gamin' (childish)."

Manutahi was from Ua Huka, the Marquesas, but was adopted by a couple in the Paumotu and brought up in Tahiti. His actual father was German, but he had never met him. Papa Manutahi, his adoptive father, visited his son every Wednesday and Friday. Symine, the woman who adopted Papa Manutahi, visited Son Manutahi in prison on Saturday fortnightly.

After the last meeting with Manutahi, I had a visit by his adoptive father, Papa Manutahi at the Foyer where I was living. Papa Manutahi gave me a photo of Manutahi and asked me to give him a photo of mine for Victor (which is the first name of his son Manutahi). I said OK and gave him one. Papa Manutahi, putting this photo in his wallet, said that Victor wanted to tattoo the portrait of me on his chest. I screamed and started persuading Papa to tell Victor not to do it. I regretted that I had given my photo to Papa, but I soon realized that my face in the photo was too small to depict the details to make it alike and the only tattooist who could tattoo portrait there was Tupea, who was in a different Building from Manutahi. I also knew that unlike Joseph, Manutahi’s conduct was not good enough (he sometimes punched the other inmates) to be allowed to go to the different building to be tattooed by Tupea.17

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17 Tattooing portrait is related to the desire for possession. People get tattooed with the portrait of their partner, children, and favourite star. My immediate rejection of Victor's idea of tattooing the portrait of me was a rejection of being possessed by him. It was not because of Victor, I would not allow my portrait to be tattooed on the body of anybody, even my partner or parents for the same reason.
4) Joseph

Joseph was heavily tattooed. He had Marquesan tattoos on shoulders and chest. Two big shaded tiki were tattooed by Tupea on his back. Before he came to Nutania, Joseph did not particularly care about getting tattoos. He already had tattoos on his hand, which were done at school. He also had a skeleton design tattoo on his left shoulder. It was in Nutania where he came to be interested in tattooing. He was planning to be a tattooist after the completion of the prison term. The reason that tattooing was popular in the prison, according to Joseph was that the prisoners wanted to have a souvenir; a tattoo was a sign that they had spent time in the prison.

Joseph was one of the best behaved inmates in Nutania. He was always wearing a pannier hat, which gave him a nice farmer look. He spent most of his time outside of the jail as he was allocated a job of cleaning the post. Joseph was living on his own in one of the largest and best cells in Nutania. Every time the officials or journalists visited, they came and looked at his room. Joseph had been in Nutania for eight years and he knew everybody and what had been happening in Nutania. He was an easygoing person. Apart from the story about himself, he told me about the other inmates and the happenings in Nutania.

Joseph came to Nutania in 1992. For the first couple of years, he had not found his “bon chemin (right road)”. In 1995, he had taken a French course for eight months. That course enabled him to write to his children in French, which he believed better as his children learned in French at school. From 1996 to 1997, Joseph has taken a theatre course taught by Patricia Molié. He has always been practicing bodybuilding. In 1997, he had taken an English course for ten months, but he stopped halfway through because he did not like the teacher. At the time I interviewed him, Joseph had been taking a plastic art course. As for the prison life, Joseph commented that “It is not normal life, but good for me. Without Nutania, I might not have found a good path”.

Joseph had been painting substantially. He had painted a series of local style of turtle and manta ray in the tattoo style in colours. Some colleagues asked him to tattoo in this style, but he refused to do it. Joseph did not mind tattooing in the normal local style and that these tattoos would go outside, but did not want the tattoos in his new and original style to leave the prison before him.

Joseph believed that justice was not fair between French and Tahitian prisoners. He continued that for example, he as a Tahitian killed one man without intention (which means without arm) and was sentenced to twenty years in prison. A French man who killed a Tahitian with a gun was sentenced for six months. According to Joseph, two
French paedophile men raped twenty-seven children, and were sentenced for two years and seven years. In the case of Tahitians, however, if he raped one woman, he was sentenced for 15 years. Joseph said, “It’s not fair. That’s why there are not so many French here.”

I asked Joseph if French prisoners were discriminated against by Tahitian inmates. Joseph explained that the French were usually incarcerated into the closed and isolated cells, but if a Tahitian became friends with them, the director would ask the Tahitian if he could put these French inmates beside him. Many Tahitians intimidated and teased French inmates by calling them “taioro”. They also told French prisoners to “go home” and so forth. Joseph had a French friend whose name was Pierre. For Joseph, a pure Tahitian like him and a pure French man like Pierre were the same. He said to Pierre, “If Tahitians would call you “taioro”, you should say that you might be taioro below, but they were taioro in the head.”

When I conducted a series of interviews in 2000, Joseph told me that he was convicted for killing a man in a fight. When I visited him again in 2001, however, he told me another story. Joseph had already been in the Nuutania prison twice and this was the third time. The first time was when he punched a man, but did not kill him. The second time was when he hit his wife. Joseph used to go fishing every night. One evening, when he came back from fishing, Joseph found his wife in bed with another man. This was his third prison term. His wife confessed to Joseph that she had a lover. Joseph hit her and that caused her death. Joseph asked himself why he did it and why his wife was unfaithful.

5) Bernard

Bernard was from Nuku Hiva, the Marquesas. Unlike the other Marquesan inmates, Manutahi and Tupea, who resided on the island of Tahiti before they were sent to the prison, Bernard was living in Taiohae in Nuku Hiva and was sent to Nuutania immediately after the incident happened. Bernard was the only inmate among those I visited who was not actually tattooing in Nuutania at the time. The director might have put him on the list of my interviewees because he was a carver and taught carving at school in the Marquesas.18

Bernard had the Marquesan style of tattoos on the right shoulder, representing the history of the islands. Bernard drew the design and his friend tattooed it.

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18 The listed inmates seemed to be selected not only for tattooing but also for their good conduct and artistic background.
I found Bernard to have a strong Marquesan spirit. He was very proud of his island and culture. He spoke enthusiastically of Marquesan independence from Tahiti, which was a common account I had heard from many Marquesans. Bernard refused to be tattooed, which had no meaning, nor tattoo those who did not understand Marquesan culture.

Bernard considered that the prison life was hard because there were not so many Marquesans. Marquesan mentality was different from Tahitian mentality. Bernard explained that Marquesans were kind, honest, and direct. He also added that they were simple, loyal, and trustworthy. Bernard emphasized that Marquesan motifs must be kept only to Marquesans. Bernard also felt that dragons should be tattooed only in China and so forth. Bernard was suffering from double isolation, firstly from the outside world and secondly from the Marquesas. When I asked him if he was “un peu triste”, Bernard answered “beaucoup triste”.

The event leading to Bernard’s conviction happened during the July festival.\(^1\) Everybody was drinking and dancing on consecutive nights. There was a man who became rough when he was drunk. He began bullying a young man. Bernard noticed it and reproached him. The man got angry and began picking a quarrel with Bernard. The man kicked the chair on which Bernard was sitting and Bernard stood up and accepted this by saying, “You want to fight with me”. Then Bernard punched the man’s cheek once, in front of the face once, and one more on the cheek. The man was knocked out. Eventually, Bernard’s girlfriend who had gone to buy some drinks came back to discover that Bernard had just knocked a man down. She did not like fighting, and became panicked and upset. She grabbed Bernard and urged him to go home. On the way home, his girlfriend made him stop the car. She got out of the car and began running into the sea. Bernard followed and grabbed her back. Therefore, when the gendarme visited him two hours later, Bernard thought his girlfriend tried to commit suicide or something. The gendarme asked Bernard if he hit the man a short while ago. Bernard said yes. The gendarme told him that the man was dead. Bernard said that this was not true. The gendarme said yes it was true, took him to the hospital, and showed him the dead man’s body.

Bernard still wondered if he really killed that man. The fatal wound was the injury on the back of the head, which might have been made by hitting his head on the stones when

\(^{1}\) I had not talked with Bernard about his crime at all. He had never brought up the subject. I asked Joseph about it, but Joseph did not know about it much. Yet, at the last meeting in 2000, Bernard said with a sigh that he had spent too much time here. It was a waste of time. I asked him what made him come here. Contrary to my expectations, Bernard started telling earnestly what he did.
he had fallen down. Bernard believed that other drunken men had used this opportunity and hit him after Bernard left. There were many witnesses to this incident who were called up to the court, but Bernard thought that nobody really told the truth.

When Bernard was sent to Nuutania, his girlfriend with two children also moved to Tahiti. They came to see him as frequently as possible, but the situation was still difficult for his girlfriend. She stopped eating. Her children told their father that she was not eating. Bernard persuaded her to eat something, but she could not. Then she became weak and was sent to the Hospital Mamao. Bernard was allowed to see her at the hospital just before she passed away.

I asked Bernard if he would feel the “pitié” toward the man whom he killed. Bernard said no. Bernard considered what happened to him was an accident, a terrible nightmare.

**The Spatiality of Prison Tattooing**

The prison tattoo world is unique, but not secluded from Tahitian society, the Tahitian tattoo world, and the global tattoo world. Gender, ethnic, and age relationships of outside worlds are reflected in the relationships of the prison.

In the study of Martindale, a local prison in the United Kingdom, sociologist Keith Carter emphasizes the significance of masculinity in understanding the prison regime. He states that “masculinity in the prison is one-dimensional… In the absence of a diversity of social relationships the men draw on a common stock of understandings about masculinity, and institutional modes of expression” (1996: 7). Tahitian masculinity, as I have shown in Chapter Three, has enforced male solidarity through emancipation from the authority of colonial and domestic structures. The State that controls the prison, a secluded male world, is for Tahitian inmates, another authority that they are eager to be emancipated from. In the following section, I illustrate how Tahitian inmates manipulate their bodies under the control of the State authority and establish their identities by focusing on their practice of tattooing in the Nuutania prison.

Besides the fact that tattooing in prison is not expensive, many inmates are tattooed because they consider that it is the thing everybody does in prison. Although it is actually not correct that every inmate is tattooed in prison, both the inmates and people outside consider that tattooing is prison culture and tattoos on the body indicate that “I am a prisoner” as Joseph and Tetuanui explain. It does not mean that all the people who are in the prison want to be tattooed when they come there for the first time. Joseph’s cousin, for instance, did not like tattoo before he came to Nuutania, but later he acquired the design of Yin Yang by Joseph on his shoulder. Tattoos are a mark of prisoner identity for most
inmates. They do not have anti-social implication, but rather are a natural indication that you are in prison.

The distinctive features of the inmate body are not only tattoo, but also muscles. The inmates (in fact Tahitian men generally) wear short pants and no-sleeve shirts. Consequently, shoulders, arms, and the calves of the legs are exposed to the public eye. They are the places on which tattoos are inscribed, and muscles are built. The effect of exercise is apparent on the body, which becomes fit and muscular. The demonstrative physicality of prison masculinity is reflected in Tahitian warrior masculinity.

Bodybuilding is one of the most popular activities in the Nuutania prison. The prison has a gym equipped with bodybuilding machines. The gym is allocated to the inmates of the Building B and C and the defendants of the Building A on a time schedule. The prisoners can exercise for one and a half hours or two hours during weekdays. The introduction of gym and bodybuilding has decreased the numbers of fights and violence in the prison. As Joseph states, before the rehabilitative schemes were introduced, there was no activity for the inmates and there were more fights among the inmates.

The prison is a male exclusive world. This exclusiveness is different from that of male taure 'are 'a outside in the sense that it is constructed impulsively rather than by their choice. I explained in Chapter Three that, in the relationship of general male taure 'are 'a, women are mediators to establish, consolidate, contest, and negotiate relationships with other men. Although some inmates have regular visit by their wife, girlfriend, mother, sister, and daughter, women are those of the outside world or those of the past for the inmates.

Both the relationships with and seclusion from women affect the practice of prison tattooing. Joseph and Tetuanui explain that most inmates have no wives to stop them being heavily tattooed as they had left them or were dead. Most wives and girlfriends do not like their partners heavily tattooed. The other inmate tattooists (including Joseph and Tetuanui) state that many inmates want to make their body beautiful by bodybuilding and/or tattooing because they want to attract women to be a new wife or girlfriend when they are released. Making a body masculine is one of the preparations for the life after leaving the prison. These contradictory statements on women’s taste of tattooing indicate that the inmates are required to redefine their masculinity, which have become ambiguous in the face of the disappearance of women in their lives and in their new relationships with the male inmates.

In the prison, the inmate must continue being a “man” who is physically strong. For instance, Manutahi stopped boxing since he has broken his jaw in the accident, but he has
not revealed it to any of his colleagues because if they knew it they would think him as “pédé.” The absence of women in prison leads to the fear of emasculation.

As a reason for doing bodybuilding, some explain that they want to be fit and have a muscular body showing that they are strong enough to endure the severe life in the prison. Tetuanui says that the prison life is psychologically intolerable, so they would receive pain on their body. (Actually he pointed his head and said “it is painful here, so they want to receive pain on their body”). Linking to Tahitian warrior masculinity, the masculinity of the inmates implies that they have been through various difficulties in their lives including some serious fights, trouble with women, drug problem, and so forth. The aesthetics of criminals consists of toughness and the experience of life difficulties. The concept of “criminal” and “inmate” is shifted or modified into the components of Tahitian warrior masculinity.

Tahitian friendship and generosity based on reciprocal exchange which I discussed in Chapter Four are also distinct in the relationships in the prison. The friendships are formed between the tattooists and those who like and are interested in tattooing. The inmates I interviewed said that there was no difference between friends inside and outside. For instance, Manutahi said that there are nice men and bad men both inside and outside the prison. Yet, Joseph pointed out that people inside tend to avoid conflict more than they do outside because they have to share space with each other all the time.

The relationships between the guards and the inmates, and among inmates are male exclusive and they share a particular moral judgment. As Davidson states on the prisons of San Quentin, “inmates are concerned about their fellow inmates though. They live by the inmate code: never snitching and never doing anything for one’s personal benefit that would be detrimental to the group or another member of the group” (Davidson 1974: 48). The inmates I interviewed consider that the guards are nice or that there are good and bad guards. Joseph explains that one needs to respect the guards because it makes life in the prison easier. If an inmate is reported in a favourable way by the guards, he can easily get any special permission or make an order for a commodity.

The prison was a more dense population of Tahitians than the outside world. There were six or seven French, three Chinese, and one Malaysian inmate in the Nuutania

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20 Homosexual activity that is often observed in American and European prisons was not brought up as a subject of my interview with the inmate tattooists although I wanted to enquire about it. The reason that I did not ask about it was that the inmate tattooists kept a polite attitude toward me during the interview and there was no atmosphere to talk about sex, which was different from the outside tattoo world where the tattooists were joking about sex to me all the time. The only information that I obtained from Manutahi about the third gender in the prison was that there was one raerae (transvestite) who washed the clothes of the prisoners.
prison when I conducted research in 2000. As Joseph states, the antagonistic feeling against French people, which Tahitians secretly or explicitly possess in the outside world, was also observed in the prison.

Demello argues that “the prison tattoo is a ‘subversive bodily act’ in that it re-establishes the inmate’s authority over his own body and challenges the system which attempts to control it” (1993: 13). Together with bodybuilding and exercising at the gym, tattooing is another way for the inmates to regain control and power over their body, which is physically constrained by the State. Tattooing is also a way to re-make the body, in a way that would be sustainable in the gendered world. The inmate body, which has been emasculated by the institutional power, is metamorphosed into a masculine body through tattooing and bodybuilding. It also connects the inmates to the outside worlds, both Tahitian society and the world outside the island. For the government authority, the inmate body is docile; tattooing and bodybuilding comply with their rehabilitative schemes

Body in the Past, Present, and Future

If the tattoo is a prominent mark of the inmates, the crucial question to be answered here is whether the inmates want to be seen as an inmate through making a “criminal body”. Do they intend to identify themselves as an inmate? Why are they indifferent to hiding their time in prison when they are released?

The answer to these questions can be sought in the inmates’ conception and manipulation of time. I consider that the skin is, for the inmates, an interface by which they conceptualize the flow of time. Tattooing is often considered a mark of the past because of its nature of indelibility, but as I have already argued, the past is not predominant in tattooing, particularly in prison. Rather the prisoners need their skin to be liberated from the past and to be transformed into the new skin, to live in the present and future. Tattooing makes the inmates realize that the future is continuously becoming the present and the present is becoming the past. Once the marks of the present and future are inscribed on the skin, they are already marks of the past. Tattooing is associated with remembering for many people, but remembering coexists with forgetting. Many inmates desire to forget to live in the present and future. They intend to divert from the past and to live in the present. Moreover, the conceptualization of time is associated with the inmates’ location and condition in terms of space. For the inmates, the present is the time of the prison term, the past is before they came to the prison, and the future is after they are released.
In the last section, I consider the identity formation of the inmates and their articulation of the past, present, and future by exploring five different ways of manipulating the skin: tattooing anew, covering-up, modification, erasing, and refusing to tattoo.

1) Tattooing anew

Tattooing is an act of capturing the present for the future, or making the present into the past. It is an act of marking a certain moment of time, which otherwise disappears. It is the act of consolidating uncertainty and filling up emptiness. Tattooing is an act of making memory of people, place, object, and event. It also establishes solidarity among the inmates who are living and spending time together for a long period. The past is for the inmates something they can inscribe on the body.

The inmates want to show that they have been in prison and can bear the life there. Most inmates whom I interviewed such as Tupea and Tetuanui are conscious of being ex-inmates when they are released. Tupea himself does not particularly want to express that he had been in the prison when he is released, but he notes that Tahiti is small and everybody knows that he has been in the prison anyway. He notes that his family and friends have not changed their attitudes toward him after he was incarcerated.

Tupea explains that the inmates’ tattoo represents the period when they stay in the prison. The longer they stay, the more tattoos they get. Possessing many tattoos means for the inmates that “tu es fort (you are strong)”. It is the evidence that they are strong enough to sustain the long prison life. Tetuanui started tattooing in the prison because it is the prison culture (Tetuanui uses the term “la coutume- custom”), and there are many inmates who want to be tattooed. This pre-existing concept “tattooing as a prison culture” is producing many tattooists and tattooed people in the prison. Consequently the increasing practice enforces and ratifies the concept.

Joseph points out the function of the prison tattooing as “souvenir”. Tattoos remind him of the tattooists who have done them, the friendships with the tattooists, and the prison term. For Joseph, the time he spent in the prison is not something to delete from his memory, but rather a significant time to remember for the rest of his life. Tattooing is a way of making individual life history continuous by recording the relationships with the other prisoners and guards, family and friends outside, and for self-reflection and contemplation of the affair and the future life plan. Tattooing marks the stages of
transformation of the inmates. The inmates want to record these stages on their body for their past and future.\textsuperscript{21}

While many inmates are heavily tattooed, some are not. According to Tupea, those who are not heavily tattooed or without tattoo at all did not really intend to come to the prison. It is obvious that the majority of the inmates did not intend to come to the prison, but most of them, as Manutahi says, knew that they would be sent to the prison if they committed the crime. They admit what they did and accept their punishment to a large extent. Those who do not want to be tattooed, however, according to Manutahi, do not want to accept that they are sent to the prison and do not want themselves marked as a criminal.

Marking as a criminal is not immoral for the inmates. Being an inmate might be something to be ashamed of for those who have never been inmates, but is not for those who have already been an inmate because it is the same “self” whether he committed the crime or not. As Joseph and Tetuanui state, there is no categorization of “good” and “bad” persons. In other words, there is no totally “good” person or totally “bad” person. Everybody has a “good” side and “bad” side, or has the possibility to take “bon chemin” and “mal chemin” in Joseph’s term.

Morality is a guideline for people to be a social being. It imposes on us, constrains or protects us in the complex social systems. Yet, how morality is enacted upon individuals depends on the location of each individual in society. People who have never been convicted conceive the tattoo as “a mark of criminals”. Inmates such as Tetuanui also consider that tattooing is a marking for them, but the conception of their tattooing does not necessarily imply the concept of “bad” or “immoral” although they concede to some extent this “bad” or “immoral” signification imposed by the others. This is indicated by Tupea’s ambiguous attitude toward tattooing, such that he is willing to tattoo other people’s body but wishes to erase the tattoos on his own body. “Badness” or “immorality” does not represent the wholeness of the individual, but it is only part of him/her. Thus, denying this partial self is different from total “self-denial” stemming from a strong sense of guilt. The inmates are dealing with their partial selves through transforming their body. I specify part of the body as the skin, referring to the theme of this study. On the skin, the inmates condense the partial self that they desire to enforce, efface, or transform.

\textsuperscript{21} Prison tattooing is similar to taure ‘are ‘a’s tattooing. Both taure ‘are ‘a and the inmates understand the period of taure ‘are ‘a and prison term are a transitional stage of life, and want to inscribe it on the body as an eternal mark.
As Joseph asked himself why he did it and why she (his wife) did it, the inmates feel that things went wrong and even their own conduct was beyond their reach. The inmates lost a sense of integrity with the world and even with themselves. When the self becomes fragmented, in one sense, tattooing is a way to retain the integrity of the self through putting oneself in relationships with other people. In another sense, it is a way to enforce this fragment of the self, which one can deal with. The partial self is concentrated on the surface of the skin through tattooing, and the inmates can control it by themselves.

2) Covering-up

Covering-up is a technique to hide an existing tattoo by tattooing a new design over it. The existing tattoos are usually badly done, or the design or the letters, which the bearers liked formerly, are no longer wanted on their body. These old tattoos are the past or memory, which they do not want to carry on for the rest of their life. Thus, those who desire to cover up the old tattoos often situate themselves on the verge of a life transition, which is the basis of the changes of ideology, social status, age, and social relationships. Most of Tetuanui’s old tattoos were done by his friend when both of them were drunk. He was satisfied with having the bad hand-pricking angel tattoo covered up by Tupea whose technique is at a professional level. The past is something one can cover it up.

A new design, which is to cover the old one, is usually bigger than the old one and tattooed in darker or in multiple colours. It is often just blackened and becomes a big black block. The old tattoos remain underneath the new tattoos as one can sometimes see the old tattoo designs through the new tattoos. A big black block is often not considered beautiful by most people, but the wearers think that it is better than having the designs they do not like. The design, which is used for covering-up, is often Polynesian design because there are many which use black filling. In some cases, it is better to cover it up with the European design. The choice of the design for covering-up depends on the state and size of the old tattoo.

There is a connection between aesthetics and morality. The ugly tattoo is bad and tattooed on bad people while a beautiful tattoo is good and tattooed on good people. Bad tattooed people are “criminal”, “prostitute”, and “anti-social”; good tattooed people are those who have deep knowledge of their history and old practices such as tahua, dancer, and artisans. Covering up bad tattoos with good tattoos is a way to subvert the anti-social and immoral image of prison tattooing into the socially regarded image of practice. Tattooing remains constantly the practice for the prisoners, but in covering-up and
modifying the bad tattoo, the prisoners are attempting to challenge the social image of tattooing.

The prisoners preferred the European designs to the Polynesian designs in the 1970s and the early 1980s. While the European design continues to be popular, many prisoners also began acquiring the Polynesian style of tattoo, resonating in the cultural
revitalization outside. Thus, the inmates started covering up the old European design with the Polynesian style of tattoo. Since tattooing became popular from the late 1980s, some tattooists acquired higher technique and started using tattoo machines and ink to tattoo European and Euro-Japanese designs in colours or shading. These tattoos are regarded as “art” and differentiated from the Euro-American tattoos produced in the street and prison in the 1970s.

Not only the trend of tattooing, but individual’s aesthetic taste is also unstable. For example, when Manutahi got tattooed with a centipede on his cheek, he thought the centipede was beautiful, but later he did not like it any longer and covered it up with traditional Polynesian designs.

The inmate tattooists attempt to cover up the negative aspect of the old tattoos which is generally due to inferiority in quality of technique and design by the socially accepted image of ethnic (Polynesian) tattooing or high quality European and Euro-Japanese tattooing.

The criminal past of the inmates is also covered up by the ordered, disciplined prison life and by becoming a professional tattooist when they finish their sentence. Covering up the past is at the same time making new marks, which are going to be the past from the moment that it is inscribed on the skin.

3) Modification/Improvement

Modification is another technique to deal with the undesirable old tattoos. Different from covering-up, modification retains the old tattoos but improves them by re-outlining and/or re-filling with darker ink. The theme of the design often remains as it is, but it is also transformed. For instance, a round local design is transformed into a turtle by adding a head and four feet. Modification is used for a design which is basically already sustainable, but needs minor correction. It requires high technique, a tattooing machine rather than hand-pricking, and experienced tattooists rather than beginners. Different from covering-up and erasing, modification is not a denial of the old tattoo designs. The bearers only want to make the tattoos better or good enough so that they can compromise with them. From this perspective, the past is something one can modify.

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22 Figs. 6.1-6.4 were photographed outside the prison. I was not allowed to photograph in the prison.
23 Modification requires an artistic creativity and imagination. Tetuanui likes modification because he can use his imagination. He claims that he has to look for the right design for it.
While modification intends to change “bad” tattoo into better, improvement intends to make “tattoo that is good enough” into a much better state. When the tattooists and the tattooed people call it “améliorer (improvement)”, they respect the old tattoos and the tattooists who had done these tattoos. The relationships, between the tattooist and the tattooed person, or between the tattooed person and his partner, children, parent or friend, loaded in tattoos, are more precious.
From the perspective of rehabilitative schemes, the question is whether the nature/conduct of the inmates have been modified/improved. Tattooing is for the inmate tattooists a connection to the outside and their future life. Joseph is one of the inmates who seem to be, relatively, enjoying prison life. He said that he has been changing since he has got here. He could not speak and write French well before, but he could improve it by taking a French course in the prison. He has started drawing, painting and tattooing. Joseph is proud of himself for being able to achieve and improve all of these skills.

4) Erasing

While covering-up is for discarding the design, which the tattooed people do not want, erasing the tattoos by laser operation is for discarding the tattoos themselves, regardless of the design. Erasing a tattoo is a desire to erase the past. The tattoos are for these people stigmata. As the desire to remove the tattoos was observed in the process of Christianization in the early nineteenth century, those who want to conceal the old tattoos are in the middle of an ideological transition. The old tattoos can be erased by laser operation. Yet, the tattooed skin cannot be completely restored to its unmarked state. The past can be an indiscernible scar, but still remains on the skin.

Both Tupea and Manutahi were eager to erase their old tattoos, but for different reasons. Manutahi’s reason is concerned with the change of his aesthetic taste. Manutahi previously considered that tattoo was beautiful, but now he does not. After he has gone through taure 'are'a life (he uses the term “gamin”), Manutahi wants to change his life style. He wants to work in Tuamotu. He thinks if he would stay in Tahiti in the same environment with the same friends, he would be easily dragged into the same mistakes. Manutahi intends to cut himself off from his past life. As his tattoos are part of his past life, Manutahi wants to discard them.

Tupea’s reason is more a religious one. Tupea does not consider that God likes him marked on the body. Yet, he also considers himself a good artist and tattooist, expecting to work as a professional tattooist when he is released. Tupea is also conscious of the ever-changing nature of tattooing. Through tattooing, covering-up, and modifying the old tattoos substantially and challenging new styles and techniques by himself, Tupea affirms that the tattoo design and style which are popular at the present time would be out of fashion before long.

Both Tupea and Manutahi do not want the tattoos on their own bodies any longer, but want to keep on tattooing other people. There is clear distinction in conception of the body between the self and the other. For both of them, tattooing is still an important part
of their lives. Both Tupea and Manutahi desire to cut themselves from the past and restart a new life, which is not associated with marking on their own bodies. They know that time keeps on flowing, and tattooists, the tattooed people, and the tattooed body are changing accordingly. The change is implicated in the life change, which is the change of moral assessment in Tupea’s case, and that of aesthetic assessment in Manutahi’s. Both of them are eager to shed their tattooed skin and be reborn.

5) Refusing to Tattoo

Tattooing is a way for some Tahitians and Marquesans to attach themselves to the island/land (*fenua*), and their ancestors and family. Prison tattooing has been related to cultural revitalization and the global popularity of tattooing outside by covering up or modifying its negative image. Their practice of tattooing has a power to transform the old meanings and create new, but the intention of a particular group would be in danger of being absorbed into a large-scale of meaning creation and losing its location. To refuse tattooing is a denial of being absorbed by large. In doing so, they can protect their own tattooing from being loaded with different values.

Three Marquesan or half-Marquesan inmate tattooists, Manutahi, Tupea, and Bernard, attribute their creation and knowledge of tattoo design to their island of origin. Unlike Manutahi and Tupea who have been living in Tahiti, Bernard keeps his firm stance on contemporary tattooing. Bernard’s denial of tattooing is not of their Marquesan tattooing itself, but of the tattooing happening in Tahiti and elsewhere in the world now. Bernard refuses to locate himself in the Tahitian as well as the prison tattoo worlds because tattooing is for him a connection to the ancient time and his island. Rejecting a cultural connection with Tahiti means to Bernard, to conserve the distinctive nature of his Marquesan culture and identity, which have been developed in a place a long distance from Tahiti and over a long period of time.

Conclusion

Prison tattooing rejects imprisonment. Although one of the distinctive features of prison is detaching the inmates from the outside world, the designs, technique, and knowledge of tattooing are trafficking between inside and outside the prison through the movement of inmates, ordered supply, and family visits. The inmate tattooists are referring to the trend

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24 Tahitian tattooists, Joseph and Tetuanui, also tattoo with Marquesan motifs. They have the photocopies of Von den Steinen’s sketches.
of tattooing outside and intend to work as professionals when they are released. Tattooing is consistently connecting the inmate tattooists to the outside world.

Time is conceptualized by the special positionality of the inmates: the present is the time that they are in the prison; the past is the time before they were incarnated; and the future is the time after they are released. Tattooing freezes the past by inscribing the design on the body, but the inmates manipulate the tattoos and the past by covering-up, modifying/improving, and erasing (or desiring to erase). The five techniques of manipulation of the skin indicate the inmates' strong emphasis on living in the present and the future. The partial self, which the inmates desire to maintain, strengthen, discard, change, or modify, is condensed on the surface of the skin. The inmates deal with the skin by tattooing anew, covering-up/ modifying the old marks or erasing- to manipulate the partial self.

The body of the inmates is constrained, dominated, occupied, and colonized by law. The inmates need to reassert their body through bodily practice such as bodybuilding, boxing, running, and tattooing. The inmates are establishing their identities as male, Tahitian, and prisoner through tattooing. While the inmates acknowledge the social conceptions of “criminal” and “imprisonment”, “being a prisoner” becomes naturalized to the inmates themselves in the same way that tattoos become part of the body. Tattooing, together with bodybuilding, is for Tahitian inmates the way to reassert the control over their own body which is constrained, supervised, and regulated under the French judicial system. In the terms of rehabilitative schemes, however, the State authority is still controlling and disciplining the inmate body through providing bodybuilding facilities and permission of tattooing.

The identities of “male”, “Tahitian”, and “prisoner” are formed through reasserting control over their own body from the authority. Yet, the inmates cannot emancipate themselves from the authority of prison, the juridical system, and the State like the male *taure'are'a* outside. In other words, the bodies of inmates are not totally docile for the inmates themselves against the institution, but still docile from the perspective of the authority.
Conclusion

This thesis has explored the establishment of identities and social relationships through tattooing over time and space. It has examined the movement and confinement of people, objects, knowledge, and practice by examining male taure 'are 'a’s mobility (Chapter Three), travelling and exchange between Tahitian and non-Tahitian tattooists (Chapter Four), geo-politics within French Polynesia and in the Pacific (Chapter Five), and institutional confinement of the prison (Chapter Six).

The thesis has also investigated the concept of duration and sequence of time. The significance of “the past”, “tradition”, and “ancient” in the discourse of tattooing is focused on the process of constructing “warrior” masculinity by male taure 'are 'a (Chapter Three), and that of the cultural and ethnic identities: “Ma’ohi”, “Tahitian”, and “Polynesian” (Chapter Four); and the concept of the past, present, and future is articulated in the discourse of art festivals (Chapter Five), and in the prisoners’ contemplation (Chapter Six).

Tattooing is the practice of sharing time and space between the tattooists, the tattooed people, and observers. These people observe, compare, and experience their bodies and the others, which are or are not tattooed, and are or are not going to be tattooed. Through objectifying the body, they mark the similarities and differences, and include and exclude each other according to the representation, experience, and social contexts of the tattooed body. Tattooing, as a body inscription, is thus the embodiment and representation of identities and relationships resulting from objectification of their own body, and others, in the shared time and space.

For taure 'are 'a, time is abundant and enduring. As they leave school and are unemployed, taure 'are 'a spend their time together and tattooing is one of their ways of killing time. They are often tattooed by a peer, a tattooist of the same district or neighbourhood. They construct solidarity among the group of taure 'are 'a in the district through tattooing.

As taure 'are 'a travel from one district to another and from one island to another, they tattoo everywhere, in the streets, at home, on motu, on ships, and so forth. Although taure 'are 'a tattooing is a mark of solidarity of the group identity in the district or neighbourhood, it is not totally fixed to the place. As the tattooists move to different districts or islands and extend their relationships, the tattoo also moves with them and marks the body.
While the *taure 'are 'a* tattooists travel and tattoo everywhere, many full-time professional tattooists have a permanent workplace. They also travel, but more internationally than locally and domestically as *taure 'are 'a* often do. Yet, the stability of the professional tattooists does not result in them having limited local relationships. They rather maintain dynamic local relationships, which extend beyond the district or the island by having visits from friends at their workplace.

Chapter Three has also shown that the gender and ethnic identities of tattooists and tattooed people are reflected in those of Tahitian society at large. Their identities are embodied to emancipate them from female dominance in households and French dominance in neo-colonial territory. By embodying masculinity, Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people contest hierarchies based on technology and the over-sophistication of tattoo styles, and consolidate “brotherhood” friendship.

Further issues about movement and transmission over space have been interrogated in Chapter Four, by examining the interactions between Tahitian tattooing and global tattooing. Tahitian tattooing has been developed by reference to global tattooing, and global tattooing has been transformed by incorporating Tahitian tattooing. Tahitian tattooists acknowledge the popularity of their tattooing in the world, and many of them integrate non-Tahitian techniques and styles with their tattooing. They started travelling abroad for tattoo conventions or apprenticeship at tattoo salons, and have also been visited by tattooists from Europe or America at their stand or salon.

The issues of using Tahitian tattooing styles by non-Tahitians has been problematized by Tahitian tattooists. However, the use of non-Tahitian tattooing styles by Tahitian tattooists is generally considered non-problematic, as global tattooing is considered to have no owner and is open to everybody to use. As use and circulation of the tattooing styles and designs of the particular tattooist are implicated in local relationships, those of non-Tahitian tattooists come to be accepted if there is an exchange similar to Tahitian local friendships.

Temporal concepts are consolidated in the terms “modern” and “ancient”. “Modern Tahiti” is considered to be connected to the rest of the world, and “ancient Tahiti” is considered to be autonomous and disconnected from the rest of the world. The “ancient” is regarded as a fixed time, but manipulated by the contemporary tattooists who arrange different styles such as European, Japanese, tribal, and mixed Polynesian, and tattoo using non-Tahitian techniques such as colouring and shading. Contemporary Tahitian tattooists manipulate the “past” that is associated with the tattoo motifs, and transform it into “contemporary” tattooing by applying these styles and techniques in their tattooing.
The cultural identity of Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people is formed through their knowledge and access to their past, which is condensed in “ancient” tattoo motifs as well as the network with non-Tahitian tattooists and knowledge of other tattooing. It is this identity which situates Tahitian tattooists and tattooed people both in Tahitian society and in the world, and evokes their self-awareness of interconnectedness to different times and places.

Chapter Five was concerned with the spatiality of tattooing in more adjacent regions, and was about the relationships of Tahiti and the other archipelagos in French Polynesia and the other islands in the Pacific. The process of bordering space is political and related to nation-making and inter-island diplomacy. At Heiva, the government attempts to construct “traditional culture”, which evokes Tahitian’s cultural identity and ancestral connections. Heiva has also become a significant tourist attraction. At the Festival of Pacific Arts, the delegations and their performances show the diversity of archipelagos but also their cultural unity as French Polynesia. At the Marquesan Art Festival, Marquesans articulate their belonging to the Pacific, but their cultural independence from Tahiti and also imply their political and economic independence.

The concepts of the past, present, and future are articulated in the discourse of these festivals. The past is the ancestral past, which people refer to in the construction of their cultural and ethnic identity in the present, and the future is the direction of transformation of their culture. This discourse emphasizes the continuity of history from Tahitian perspective and their active engagement in the transformation. Colonial history, neo-colonial situations, and regional political complicity within the territory are articulated through dancing and tattooing at these festivals.

The previous chapters mainly discussed the mobility of people, practice, and knowledge of tattooing, but Chapter Six examined the confinement of the prison and how it affects tattooing. The inmates are secluded from Tahitian society and the world, but they can access information and goods from outside through television, radio, newspapers, family visits, telephone, and incoming inmates. The prison is not a place which is totally detached from the rest of the world, but rather connected to it and there are incoming and outgoing transactions of people, objects, and knowledge.

The inmates themselves often consider that tattooing is their practice, but do not consider it “antisocial” or “immoral”. Tattooing does not carry any morally charged assessment, but provides a mark merely to indicate the fact that time has been spent in the prison. The value of prison tattooing fluctuates between the idea of immoral practice in occidental prison history and the idea of cultural practice associated with the cultural
revitalization movement occurring in French Polynesia and other parts of the Pacific. The inmate tattooists are also undergoing ideological fluctuation and oscillate between being an “anti-social” who wears “a typical criminal mark” and an artist who has been contributing to the re-acknowledgement of Tahitian culture.

Time is conceptualised by the inmates in relation to space, pivoting on the confinement of the prison. The present is the time that they are incarcerated; the past was before they came to the prison; and the future is after they are released. Furthermore, the inmates are manipulating time through tattooing. They capture the prison time by tattooing anew, reconfigure the past by covering up or modifying the old tattoos, discard the past by erasing (or wanting to erase) the old tattoos, and connect themselves to the ancestral past by refusing contemporary practice of tattooing.

As these chapters have shown, the confinement of the island and the prison is not real confinement. Although a person may be incarcerated in one place, other people travel to him or her with objects, knowledge, and practice. The rupture, discontinuity, or gap of time is closed through tattooing, which is conceived as enduring and everlasting. The absence of tattooing in Tahitian history due to suppression by missionaries, and the prison term which is a sort of a dead period of a person’s life, can be revived as a significant part of the life through marking on the body. Through tattooing, discontinuous time becomes continuous, and separate and bordered places become interconnected.
**Glossary**

afa: half-decent (usually Tahitian/European or Chinese)

aforo: straight

aita: no

aita e peapea: no problem

aito: 1) warrior; 2) very strong tree

amo 'a: rites of maturation

ao: light, day, the world of human being in Tahitian cosmology

ari 'i: the second highest ranking people who governed the district

ari'i hau: the highest ranking people who governed the territory

arioi: religious cult, originated in Raiatea and worshipped for 'Oro

atua: gods

farani: French

fare: house, building

fenua: country, land

feti 'i: parent

fiu: to be fed up with

haka: Marquesan

hau: high

Heiva: a religious ceremony, an annual art festival

himene: song

hoa: friend

hoho 'a: motif, design

kaikai: (Marquesan) meal

kokoro: penis
ma'a: meal
mafatu: heart
mahu: effeminate men
maitei: good
mama: mother
mana: divine power
manahune: commoners
ma'ohi: indigenous people and culture in the Society Islands
marae: temples for Tahitian religion
maro 'tea: yellow feather girdle
maro 'ura: red feather girdle
me'ie: unrestricted, clear
moa: 1) chicken; 2) penis
monoi: perfumed coconut oil
mo'o: lizard
motu: small island
noa: profane
nira: needle
'ohipa: work
ori: dance
'Oro: the war god, worshipped by Aioi
pahu: drum
pa'iatua: a ceremony of changing sennit of god figures
pakalolo: marijuana
pareu: traditional cloth
pitale: Polynesian jasmine
po: darkness, night, the domain of gods in Tahitian cosmology
popa‘a: European people

porinetia: Polynesia

pure-atau: Tahitians who converted to Christianity

ra‘a: sacred

ra‘atira: landowners

rae rae: transvestite

rahui: the restriction set by chief for a certain period of time

reo: language

satani: satan

taata: human being

Ta‘aroa: the supreme god of Tahitian cosmology

ta‘ero: drunken

tahua: priest

taio: friendship contract

[laio: 1) grated coconut; 2) uncircumcised penis

tane: husband

Tane: the god of Tahitian cosmology

tapa: bark-clothing

tapu: sacred, interdiction

tatau: tattoo

tauare ‘are ‘a: adolescent

tiare: flower
	ifai: patchwork

ti‘i: the figures of gods, made of stone

tiki: (Marquesan) god figure

tinito: Chinese

to‘o: the figures of gods, made of a piece of wood and sennit
tupuna: ancestor

tutaeʻauri: Tahitians who disagreed with Christianity and went to wild life

umu ti: fire walking

uru: breadfruit

uʻu: club

vahine: woman, wife
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