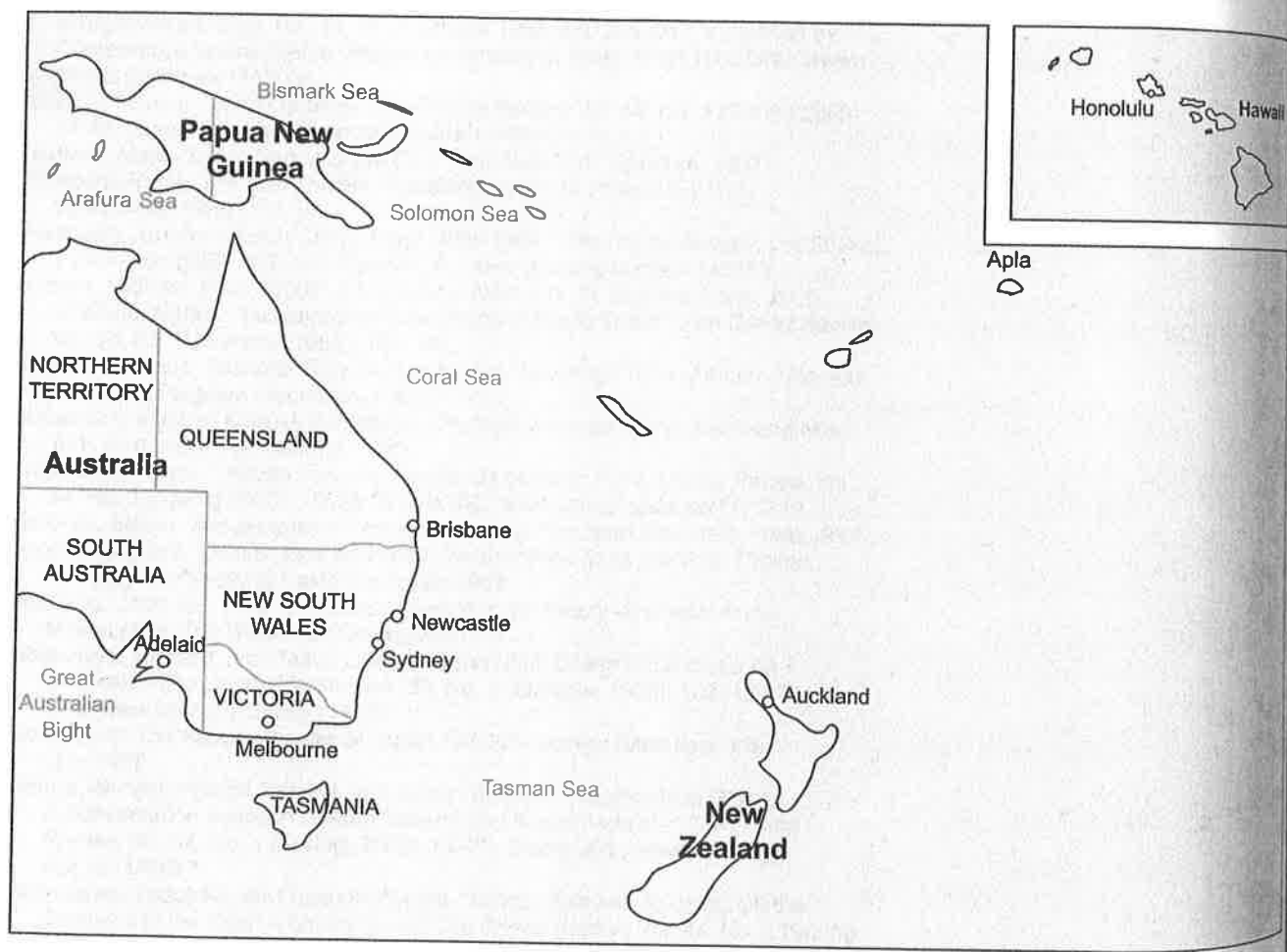




5 Hawai'i, Aotearoa/ New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea Guardians of culture

5.1 Overview

Hawaiians, the Māori of Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the Bosavi people of Papua New Guinea share deep cultural connections to nature, chant, and dance – and all have been subjugated to intrusion from those outside their own cultures. When Christian missionaries arrived in Hawai'i and Aotearoa in the nineteenth century, they eradicated the worship of numerous gods in local polytheistic religions along with other aspects they regarded as heathen, such as dance. In Hawai'i, the *hula* had long been patronized by royal courts and had deep religious significance. Yet missionaries were highly successful in converting the nobility, who then banned *hula*. The Māori, who were prohibited from practicing the *haka* and its sacred chants, battled fiercely yet unsuccessfully against British colonization in the nineteenth century. Due to their extremely remote mountain habitat, the Bosavi did not experience contact with Europeans until the 1930s. But arriving missionaries did try to convert many, and government officials interfered with the use of fire in traditional cathartic dances such as the *gisalo*, in which an audience, moved by a performer's emotional song and dance, burns them in retaliation for making them grieve.

Of all three forms, the *gisalo* has experienced the least disturbance. But the cultural practices of *haka* and *hula* have suffered tremendous upheavals over the past two centuries. Ironically, these dances, once considered pagan, were eventually appropriated and commercialized in numerous ways to serve the needs of the oppressors themselves. One example includes the Hollywood film industry, which sold "paradise" through stereotypical images of Pacific Islanders in grass skirts and coconut bras. But perhaps the cruelest irony is found in the presence of the *hula* in Christian church services today. In the name of Christianity, the wanton dance was once banned; yet *hula* – formerly a part of temple worship – is again being danced in front of an altar.¹

Currently, Pacific peoples are finding new modes of defining and representing themselves. A cultural resurgence beginning in the 1960s and 1970 in both Aotearoa and Hawai'i has led to the revivification of once-forbidden and forgotten indigenous practices and languages. Even though what has been recovered could never replicate what was practiced before pre-European times, many embrace the emergence of innovation from tradition.

5.2 *Hula kahiko*: from Hawaiian royal courts to the global stage

Key points: *hula*

- 1 *Hula* evolved from a sacred ritual known as *ha'a*. At temples called *heiau* under the auspices of a *kahuna* (priest), the major *akua* (gods) in the Hawaiian polytheistic pantheon were worshiped through *mele* (chanted poetry) and *hula* (dance), both repositories for Hawaiian mythology and history.
- 2 *Hula* performers trained in a *hula hālau* under a *kumu hula*, an expert teacher. If a troupe from a talented *hālau* found patronage in a royal court, they were paid and gained social prestige as well. Performances of *hula* were to honor the gods and to praise the chiefs and their ancestors in this highly stratified society.
- 3 After the arrival of European missionaries in 1820, many Hawaiians converted to Christianity, and rulers embracing the new religion banned *hula*. The *hula* went underground, but during King Kalākaua's reign (1874–1891), he revived the tradition of *hula* and made many innovative changes. *Hula* began to flourish again under the "Merrie Monarch."
- 4 The poetry of *mele* is communicated in *hula* through the use of a vocabulary of symbolic hand gestures representing both tangible and abstract ideas. As the dancer enacts the story of the accompanying *mele*, one or two hands can form a symbol for a specific object – a flower, a tree, a house – or convey an emotion such as love.
- 5 In the twentieth century, *hula* was divided into two major categories. Comprising the many varieties of traditional forms is *hula kahiko*, or "ancient" *hula*, which is accompanied by traditional Hawaiian instruments and performed to chant known as *mele*. *Auana* means "drifting," and *hula 'auana* has come to define all modern *hula* and is popular with tourists.

Can these be human beings? How dark and comfortless their state of mind and heart. How imminent the danger to the immortal soul, shrouded in this deep pagan gloom. Can such beings be civilized? Can they be Christianized? Can we throw ourselves upon these rude shores, and take up our abode, for life, among such a people, for the purpose of training them for heaven? Yes.²

—Hiram Bingham, Hawai'i's first Christian missionary

The *hula* before European intrusion

At least five centuries ago, sea-faring Polynesians sailed their canoes to the archipelago of Hawai'i. Native Hawaiians trace their ancestry back to these original Polynesian settlers. Despite the distance between the eight major islands, Hawaiians developed a common language, ethos, and religion. Their religion was polytheistic, in which major gods (*akua*) were worshiped along with more minor and ancestral types. At the core of this culture were *mele* (chanted poetry) and *hula* (dance), both repositories for Hawaiian mythology and history. The origins of *hula* are considered to have evolved from a sacred ritual of music and dance known as *ha'a*. At outdoor temples called *heiau* under the auspices of a *kahuna* (priest), the major *akua* in the Hawaiian pantheon were worshiped by the performance of dances accompanied by *mele* chant and the *pahu*, a sharkskin drum. These dances were dedicated to the deities with the intent of pleasing them so that the people's prayers would be answered.

Hawaiian society was ruled by *ali'i*, a noble class. At the top was a king (*mō'ī*), followed by ruling chiefs, then the common people (*maka'āinana*), and at the bottom, the outcasts, or *kauwā*. It was believed that *mana*, a spiritual life force, extended from the gods to the king. The sacred power of a ruler's *mana* determined his military success and the fertility of his lands and his people, while any defeat, drought,

pestilence, or barrenness indicated his weakness.³ To demonstrate their prestige and power, *ali'i* maintained troupes of highly trained dancers. Through chanted poetry, music, and dance, *hula* performers honored the gods, celebrated the births and war triumphs of *ali'i*, and relayed Hawaiian myths. *Hula* practice was sacred, and governed by strict rules. Dancers were taught under the protection of Laka, goddess of the *hula*, in a *hula hālau* – a consecrated training ground run by a master teacher called a *kumu hula*. Despite the stratified society of Hawai'i, men or women of any class could receive training in the *hālau*. After their education, they were presented in a formal debut called the *'ūniki*. A troupe from a particularly talented *hula hālau* could find lucrative patronage and prestige in a royal court.

Captain Cook and the advent of Christian missionaries

In 1778, Captain James Cook landed on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Cook's men soon found that the Hawaiians coveted metal, and serious bartering began. While Cook traded chisels for hogs to take on provisions, his sailors discovered that they could buy the favors of a beautiful native woman for the price of a nail. Allegedly, by the time the ship headed out on its search for the Northwest Passage, the majority of the crew could no longer hang their hammocks, and the ship was literally creaking from a lack of hardware. Officers wrote that the men would have pulled the ship apart if not stopped.⁴

On the same voyage a year later in 1779, Cook returned. He sailed into Kealahou Bay as the Hawaiians were celebrating *makahiki*, a religious festival dedicated to Lono, the god of fertility. It was a legendary belief that one day Lono would manifest himself on earth, and when the people saw Cook's massive ship with its lofty masts and sails, they thought it was a floating *heiau*. Hiram Bingham, an early American missionary, wrote a historical recount about Cook's arrival:

Some of the people scanning the wondrous strangers, who had fire and smoke about their mouths in pipes or cigars, pronounced them gods . . . and applied to the commander the name of a Polynesian deity, and rendered him the homage which they supposed would please him.⁵

The Hawaiians called these strange white men *haole*. Cook was pronounced to be Lono himself, and his men were hailed as gods until a crewman's death exposed them as mere mortals. With relations now strained, Cook sailed away from Hawai'i, but was forced to return due to a broken mast. The now-unfriendly Hawaiians hurled rocks at the *haole* and, after the Europeans shot and killed some men, a mob formed. In the melee, Cook was murdered. Although Cook's men and other European travelers left behind devastating diseases which decimated scores of Hawaiians such as syphilis, measles, and smallpox, the cultural fabric and the traditional pantheistic religion of Hawai'i was left intact. But when Christian missionaries began to arrive in 1820, their targeted and successful attack on Hawaiian culture was profound and widespread.

Christian missionaries encountering *hula* did not attempt to understand its religious, cultural, and aesthetic significance, and quickly condemned it for its "heathen" nature, half-clad dancers, and provocative pelvic movements. Bingham and others were successful in converting several *ali'i* chiefs to Christianity and pressured them to prohibit the *hula* on the grounds that it was pagan worship. When Queen Ka'ahumanu, the powerful wife of Kamehameha I converted in 1823, she banned *hula* dancing.⁶ After Hawaii nobility withdrew their patronage and formal *hula hālau* training ceased, this abandonment of *hula* effectively eliminated a keystone of Hawaiian religious culture. Yet a cultural *coup* against encroaching Western domination occurred during King Kalākaua's reign (1874–1891) when he reinstituted the *ali'i* court custom of maintaining resident *hula* performers. His motto was *Ho'oulu Lāhui* (Increase the Nation), and he fostered the resurgence of indigenous practices such as healing and surfing to strengthen Hawaiian cultural identity.

King Kalākaua and the revival of hula

When King Kalākaua assumed the throne in 1874, *hula* was in a precarious state. A great number of Hawaiians had lost both their religion and their language due to conversion to Christianity and missionary schooling. Consequently, the two basic underlying principles of *mele* chant – religion and poetic language – had been severely undermined, and most Hawaiians were no longer capable of appreciating their textual richness. Yet there were performers and *kumu hula* who had continued practicing *hula* in private, especially in rural areas. Kalākaua invited elderly *kumu hula* and dancers who still retained their knowledge to court and encouraged the preservation of old chants. *Hula* began to flourish again under the "Merrie Monarch," and in addition to recovering at least three hundred forms of ancient *hula*, his court became an incubator for experimentation and the implementation of new influences, many of them Western. *Hula ku'i* (to join old and new) became the term for this new genre, and major innovations occurred, especially in music.⁷ European stringed instruments such as the guitar and the *'ukelele* (introduced by the Portuguese) replaced indigenous Hawaiian percussion instruments; the melodious style of Christian hymn singing replaced chanting; and new *mele* were composed by court artists including Kalākaua himself, and his sister, Lili'uokalani, who composed many *mele* to Western music.⁸

Throughout Kalākaua's reign, large *hula* festivals were staged. Although some converted Hawaiians and missionaries had pronounced Kalākaua's *hula* renaissance "a retrograde step of heathenism and a disgrace to the age," by the 1880s, professional troupes had reappeared, presaging the emergence of commercialized touristic forms.⁹ In 1893, two years after his death, and six months after the monarchy was overthrown by the United States, *haole* (white) settlers encouraging tourism arranged for Kalākaua's Hui Lei Mamo court dancers to perform at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The exhibit featured a cyclorama of Pele's crater at Kilauea and had a twenty-five-foot statue of the fire goddess amidst a simulated lava flow.¹⁰ The exotic "hula hula" was met with great acclaim and the huge appeal of *hula* as entertainment for spectators was made manifest.

Case study: The overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom

As Hawaiian culture became increasingly subjugated by Western influences, Hawaiians struggled to protect their cultural identity as well as to maintain their sovereignty. Queen Lili'uokalani, who inherited the throne in 1891, also inherited much political dissent over tariffs and the sugar trade. A group of *haole* Hawaiians, Americans, and Europeans with business interests in Hawai'i formed a committee to oust the queen. With the help of the US Navy, this was achieved in 1893 and was followed by the US annexation of Hawai'i in 1898. This cultural domination went in tandem with the emergence of a tourism industry, which effectively promoted the idyllic image of "Island Life" through *hula 'auana* and Hawaiian music.

Despite Kalākaua's commitment to the revitalization of the cultural traditions such as *hula*, the Hawaiian language was officially banned in 1896. Yet missionaries and their elite, Hawaiian-born *haole* children recognized that certain aspects of Hawaiian culture could become commodities. By 1910, *hula* had become an integral part of tourist entertainment in the islands, and developing the form into a marketable commodity brought further changes. As tourism grew, *hula 'auana* developed. 'Auana means "drifting" and this genre of dance, which often to the uninitiated represents the "native" dancing of Hawai'i, is sometimes pejoratively called "airport

Figure 5.1

Hula performers with Western stringed instruments, circa 1892.

Image: photographer unknown. Published under a CC BY 2.0 license.



A Trip to Hawaii.

Pele's Crater.

HULA GIRLS

Think about: Considering *hula*'s sacredness and strict rules, would the experimentation embraced by King Kalākaua's court have been accepted if *hula* hadn't been in a state of near extinction?

Think about: Why is the banning of a people's language by those in power the ultimate coup to the subordinate culture?

hula" because of its use in welcoming tourists. To differentiate between the more modern *hula 'auana*, with its Western-influenced songs, and that of pre-European *mele* and *hula*, the term *hula kahiko* (ancient) was coined in the twentieth century.

Training in the *hula hālau*

Although court patronage of *hula* is no more, today, there are *hula hālau* throughout Hawai'i, and one can train seriously while maintaining a job or attending school. Originally, *hula* students (*haumana*) would live within the confines of the *hālau* under the strict guidance of their *kumu hula*. An account of nineteenth-century training is found in Nathaniel Emerson's 1909 book, *Unwritten History of Hawai'i*. According to his research, throughout their training *haumana* sought the protection of Laka, goddess of *hula*, until their 'ūniki graduation, since any mistakes in interpreting the auspicious words of the *mele* chants could bring on disastrous results from the deities. They worshiped the goddess at the *kuahu*, an altar in the *hālau* decorated with greenery such as *maile* and ferns that represented the spiritual power of gods and demi-gods.¹¹ While training in chant and dance, they followed strict dietary and sexual restrictions and the rules of the *hālau*, known as *kapu*. Emerson discusses these constraints:

The members of the company were required to maintain the greatest propriety of demeanor, to suppress all rudeness of speech and manner, to abstain from all carnal indulgence, to deny themselves specified articles of food, and above all to avoid contact with a corpse. If anyone, even by accident, suffered such defilement, before being received again into the fellowship or permitted to enter the *hālau* and take part in the exercises he must have ceremonial cleansing (*huikala*). The *kumu* offered up prayers, sprinkled the offender with salt water and turmeric, commanded him to bathe in the ocean, and he was clean.¹²

The students were careful to not break the *kapu*; if they did, a fine of a pig was imposed. *Kapu* upheld the authority of the *kumu hula* and maintained discipline within the group, thereby pleasing the deities.

Emerson recorded that the *kumu hula* decided when *haumana* were ready for their 'ūniki graduation. The night before the 'ūniki was devoted to dance and chant, and after midnight, all students bathed in the ocean to purify themselves and returned naked. The *kumu* met the procession at the *hālau* door and sprinkled each student with *pikai*, blessed water. At dawn the *haumana* prayed before the altar. Marking their official entrance into the guild of *hula* performers was the 'ailolo ceremony, in which a pig was sacrificed, cooked, and eaten. The students would then costume themselves carefully for their 'ūniki debut at a noble court.

Kumu hula and *hula hālau* today

Before the advent of Christianity in Hawai'i, the existing belief was that the *kumu* was a spiritual person, inspired by the gods. Many *kumu* today run their *hālau* much like a sacred order, functioning as artistic director, manager, and spiritual leader. The aim of a *kumu* is to guide *haumana* into a state of physical and mental grace through discipline and the sharing of his or her wisdom. *Haumana* learn how to make costumes, adornments, and musical instruments, and become knowledgeable about plants used for costuming and decorating the *kuahu*. When a *kumu hula* calls for a 'ūniki, preparations are made. Although this varies from *hālau* to *hālau*, in general, *haumana* fast, take a ceremonial bath in the ocean, and partake in a ritual 'ailolo feast – all elements Emerson recorded in his research. Once they complete

Figure 5.2

Members of *Hālau Hulu Ka No'eau* perform *hula kahiko*.

Image: Jack Vartoogian, Front Row Photos.



their *ʻūniki* they earn the title of *ʻōlapa* (agile). When a higher degree of training and maturity has been obtained, they may become assistants to the *kumu hula*, eventually earn the title of *hula ho'opa'a* (steadfast), and will perform *mele* chants and/or play instruments.

Diverse movement styles, aims, and varying interpretations of *mele* exist between *hula hālau*. In fact, the saying *aohe pau ka ike i kau hālau* translates as "think not that all wisdom resides in your *hālau*."¹³ *Hula kahiko* is practiced by all genders, can be performed individually or in a group as large as two hundred, and there are many forms of *hula* danced while standing or while kneeling (*hula noho*). In some instances, the style of a *hālau* is influenced by its location. For instance, *Hālau O Kekuhi*, run by the respected Kanaka'ole family, is on the Big Island, proximal to the Halema'uma'u Crater on the summit of Kilauea – the legendary domain of the fire goddess, Pele. To honor her creative forces, dancers are taught in the energetic *aīha'a* style: in the low *aīha'a* stance, a dancer draws energy from Pele's earth by keeping their knees bent, their back straight, and their feet flat.¹⁴

Figure 5.3

The Kanaka'ole sisters, Nalani (left) and Pualani of Hālau O Kekuhi, chant and play the *ipu*.

Image: Jack Vartoogian, Front Row Photos.



Case study: The myth of Pele, Hi'iaka, and Lohiau

Of the many myths involving Pele – goddess of fire, lightning, wind, and volcanoes – one involves a rivalry with her sister, the beautiful Hi'iaka. While in her spirit form during a dream lasting nine days, Pele embarked on a tryst with the handsome chief Lohiau. Concerned over Pele's slumbering state, Hi'iaka chanted to bring her sister back. Once Pele returned to her body, she was driven by a desire to consummate her love with Lohiau, but this time in the physical realm. Protecting Hi'iaka with supernatural powers, Pele sent her to Kauai with instructions to deliver him in forty days and not to fall in love with him. Hi'iaka agreed, but on the grounds that her forest grove, and her best friend Hopoe, would be guarded by Pele during her absence. When Hi'iaka arrived on Kauai, she discovered that Lohiau had died of heartbreak over his separation from Pele. After days of her sacred chanting, Lohiau was revived, but due to his infirmity, Hi'iaka could not meet Pele's deadline. The raging, jealous goddess set Hi'iaka's forest afire and sacrificed Hopoe. Once Hi'iaka and Lohiau arrived on Hawai'i, Hi'iaka retaliated by taking the handsome chief as her lover. Livid, Pele launched a torrent of lava toward the couple. Hi'iaka was untouched, but Lohiau turned into a pillar of rock and his spirit left his body as a bird. Eventually he was brought back to life and reunited with Hi'iaka.

The basic steps of *hula kahiko* are performed with the knees flexed and the feet close to the ground, and there is very little airborne work. In a *kaholo*, a dancer steps sideways: right, left, right, and then taps the floor with the ball of the left foot, and repeats this to the other side. This step is paired with *ami*, the rotation of hips (perhaps the most defining feature of *hula*), while the rhythmic sway side to side is called *lewa*. In the basic *hela* step, one foot extends diagonally front, and is placed flat on the ground, turned out at a forty-five-degree angle. The weight sinks into the opposite hip as the knee bends; the extended foot returns, and then the movement is repeated on the other side. In *ʻuwehe*, one foot lifts up and, as it is lowered, the dancer rises onto the balls of feet and pulses the knees. On top of the footwork, the story of the accompanying *mele* is enacted through a vocabulary of symbolic arm and hand gestures representing both tangible and abstract ideas. The arms can be held out in front, parallel to the floor, extended horizontally at either chest level with

one arm bending to meet the sternum, or hands can be held on the hips. "Where the hands are, let the eyes follow" is an ancient rule of *hula* in presenting the meaning of *mele*. One or two hands can form a symbol for a specific object, such as a flower, a tree, or a house, while both hands can describe locomotion, such as the movement of water, rain, or paddling a canoe. Concepts such as love, jealousy, sorrow, or power are expressed as well through gestures that are both understatedly mimetic but also metaphoric. In general, the demeanor of a performer is serious in nature.

Mele chant and hula music

Until missionaries developed a Hawaiian alphabet in the nineteenth century, *mele* chants were scrupulously memorized in an oral tradition to preserve historical facts and legends. This is especially true for *mele* that accompany *hula pahu*, which evolved from ancient *ha'a* temple worship and whose lyrics are not open to interpretation or change.¹⁵ Hawaiian genealogical history is passed through *mele inoa* (name chants), compositions that honor a specific *ali'i* or deity by recounting stories about his or her life. *Mele inoa* celebrate various legendary battles, exploits, love affairs, and births of gods and chiefs, while *mele ho'oiipoipo* are songs about people, places, or historical events.

An informed audience might perceive how a dancer skillfully reveals the double entendre inherent within the poetry of *mele*. Scholar Joann Kealiinohomoku states that the images in chants are not just simplistic reactions to nature – gestures about fish and palm trees might not really be about fish and palm trees, but are metaphoric images that at once couch and imply an idea. She explains:

Linked metaphors within a well-written Hawaiian chant seem often to be disconnected or illogical in English . . . the choice of abstruse words presents an intellectual challenge to the listener to decode the ingenious play on words as presented by a master poet and a master dancer. Few . . . were privy to all the meanings.¹⁶

These layered meanings were often cleverly incorporated in *mele ma'i*, chants that honored the genitals of an *ali'i* and his procreative *mana*.

In *hula kahiko*, *mele* are always in a 2/4 rhythm, and accompanied by indigenous Hawaiian instruments. These include the sharkskin *pahu* drum; the *ipu*, a double calabash gourd that is alternately thumped on the ground and struck with the hand; the *'uli'uli*, a feathered gourd rattle; *'ili'ili*, lava rock castanets; *ka la'au*, rhythm sticks; *pu'ili*, slit bamboo rattle; *ohe*, nose flute; and the body itself – striking the chest and the legs is called *pa'i umauma*.

Hula costuming

Traditional *hula* costuming was made of *kapa*, a material made from pounded mulberry bark, decorated, and fashioned into wrap-around skirts (*pa'u*). Men wore their *pa'u* over their *malo*, a loincloth. Further adornments included *lei* (garlands of vines or leaves worn on the head, shoulders, anklets, and wrists) and *kupe'e*

Figure 5.4

Members of San Francisco-based Hālau o Keikiali'i perform *hula kahiko*.

Image: Jack Vartoogian, Front Row Photos.



Figure 5.5

Dancers from Hālau O Keikiali play the feathered gourd rattle.

Image: Jack Vartoogian, Front Row Photos.



(wristlets and anklets of whale teeth, bone, or shells). Both men and women performed bare chested until missionaries insisted women wear a modest *holoku*, a loose cotton gown covering the dancer from the neck to the ankles. Less than a decade after the advent of missionaries, Captain Beechey observed a *hula* performance in 1827 and expressed his opinion:

The dance of the females was spoiled by a mistaken refinement, which prevented their appearing, as formerly, with no other dress than a covering to the hips, and a simple garland of flowers upon the head; instead of this they were provided with frilled chemises, which so far from taking away the appearance of indecency, produced an opposite effect, and at once gave the performance a stamp of indecency.¹⁷

By the 1880s, King Kalākaua's dancers wore Western-style pantaloons and long calf-length pleated cotton dresses.¹⁸ Today, costuming varies as much as *hula hālau* do. In general, *hula kahiko* is still danced barefoot, women's hair hangs loose, and all wear *lei*, head wreaths, and *kupe'e*. Women wear colorful sleeveless bodices and full calf-length skirts, while men are often bare chested and wear loincloths, or skirts.

Current trends

A Hawaiian renaissance in the early 1970s stimulated serious research on indigenous cultural traditions, and many Hawaiians pursued *hula kahiko*. Several *hula* festivals emerged; the oldest and most spectacular is the annual Merrie Monarch Festival. Since 1971, the Festival has invited prestigious *hālau* to compete in both *kahiko* and *'auana* styles. Judges weigh in on the dancers' entrance, interpretation of *mele*, precision of footwork and hand gestures, and costuming, as well as their exit. These competitive performances often spark passionate debates about authenticity and legitimacy: some *hālau* present chant and *hula* as ancient and sacred legacies that must be preserved and protected, while others controversially use tradition as a springboard for contemporary creativity.

The following *kumu hula* are examples of those who are rooted in tradition but continue to offer innovative approaches to choreography and music. Robert Cazimero, Māpuana de Silva, Vicky Holt Takamine, and Michael Pili Pang all studied with Maiki Aiu Lake. In 1975, Cazimero founded Hālau Na Kamale, the first all-male *hālau*. They compete only every ten years, and were the overall winners of the 2005 and 2015 Merrie Monarch Festival. Māpuana de Silva runs the Hālau Mōhala 'Ilima, Takamine is *kumu hula* of Pua Ali'i 'Ilima, while Michael Pili Pang opened his Hālau Hula Ka No'eau on the Big Island and a second *hālau* in Honolulu in 2002. In addition to their perpetuation of the ancient traditions of *hula*, Hālau O Kekuhi in Hilo is famous for its groundbreaking stage productions. Their *Holo Mai Pele* (1995) toured widely and was hailed by some as being the first "*hula opera*." *Hanau Ka Moku* ("An Island Is Born"), a 2003 co-production with Peter Rockfort Espiritu's Tau Dance Company, included *hula* and contemporary dances performed to ancient and newly composed chants about the emergence of a future Hawaiian island beneath the sea. Espiritu, currently the director of the Oceania Dance Company in Fiji, founded Tau Dance Company in 1996. His hybrid choreography integrates his deep knowledge of *hula* with Western and other Pacific dance forms. In *Naupaka* (2006), based on a legendary romance between a chief and a lowly *kauwā*, the choreography included *tango*, and pointe shoes were worn.

Outside of Hawai'i, *hula* has exploded into a global form. There are an estimated forty *hālau* in Holland, over six hundred in Mexico, and at least a thousand in Japan. In Oakland, California, Mark Keali'i Ho'omalulu runs the Academy of Hawaiian Arts, which pushes forward new expressions in *hula* and music. Patrick Makuakane, who trained at Robert Cazimero's *hālau*, opened his school Na Lei Hulu I Ka Weklu in San Francisco in 1985. His large dance company has earned awards for its productions such as *Ka Leo Kanaka* (2012), a tribute to Hawaiian-language newspapers. Their newest, *The Natives are Restless*, opened in 2016. All of these choreographers,

whether based in Hawai'i or elsewhere, regard tradition to be the bedrock of their creativity. Kekuhi Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililiani of Hāla'o O Kekuhi declares:

Whether you're changing with the world or not can determine whether your practice lives or dies. We choose to live, and we choose to evolve, based on the principles and philosophies of our grandparents and their grandparents . . . we don't compromise those things, ever.¹⁹

Discussion questions: *hula*

- 1 *Hula* has gone from being a sacred ritual to commercialized entertainment. In looking at tradition versus innovation, how can a contemporary artist today best honor both, and create cultural meaning from ritual or classical dance traditions transferred to the stage?
- 2 To Hawaiians, corpulence is auspicious. Yet in the dance world, this is often not the case. Discuss the differences between body type in *hula* and that of other dances, which value a thin physique. Does the form of the dancing body enhance the aesthetics of the dance?
- 3 The *kapu* system in *hula* enforces order in a *hālau*. In some aspect of your training, have you experienced similar restrictions, and if so, have these enhanced your commitment to your practice, and to your teacher?

5.3 The Māori *haka*: a dance of defiance, a dance of welcome

Key points: *haka*

- 1 In the thirteenth century, Māori ancestors sailed from Polynesia in large canoes, and settled on the two islands of Aotearoa. Māori ceremonial gatherings called *hui* occurred in a sacred open meeting area known as the *marae* and in the *whare tapere*, the community meetinghouse.
- 2 In Māori ideology, ancestral power is manifested in *mana* – a spiritual essence from the gods; *tapu* is a spiritual restriction from an activity; and *utu* is the concept of compensation in terms of reciprocating friendly gestures, as well as seeking compensation for offensive acts – hence their war-like nature. The Māori traditionally passed down their history via songs called *waiata*. Both *waiata* and *haka* are integral in *pōwhiri*, a welcoming ritual reflecting the tenets of *mana* and *tapu*.
- 3 Traditionally upon meeting, Māori groups tested the thin line between cordiality and hostility with a demonstration by each party of their fierce nature through an intimidating *haka*. With quivering hands, stamping feet, bent legs, highly active movements of the eyes and tongue along with facial grimaces, the *haka* could be a dance of welcome, or a true war dance – a prelude to battle that served to warn their opponents of their fate.
- 4 Early European explorers were met by Māori, who performed their “war dance” while brandishing weapons. Because the Europeans had trouble deciphering whether the *haka* was bellicose or cordial, this resulted in confusion that led to violence and death on both sides. Nineteenth-century missionaries discouraged the *haka* and other cultural traditions such as *moko* (tattooing) and speaking their own language.
- 5 Redefinitions and reclamations of Māori culture began in the 1960s, when protests against their subordination increased. Tribal rights that had long been ignored in the Treaty of Waitangi were recognized and a resurgence of interest in reviving Māori culture resulted in the revival of Te Reo Māori, their language.

Little by little, their bodies are thrown back, their knees strike together and look like convulsions, their eyes turn up so that with horrible effect, their pupils are absolutely hidden under their eyelids, while at the same time they twist their hands with outspread fingers rapidly before their faces . . . Was it a battle song they performed for us? Whatever their intention, be it victory or love, they have a music of an overwhelming force.²⁰

—Louis Auguste de Sainson, 1827

The above description, written long ago by a baffled yet awed Frenchman, is of a *haka* – the dance of the Māori people living in Aotearoa, or “Land of the Long White Cloud.” For early European explorers attempting to land in Aotearoa (called New Zealand by settlers), the *haka* was often their first impression of the Māori, and they were struck by its ferocity and appalled by its unfamiliar movements. Brandishing their weapons and directing their dance toward the strangers, the elaborately tattooed men sang, shouted, and grunted while trembling their fingers and slapping their thighs as they stamped their feet in strict rhythmic unison. In addition to the threat of weapons, the menacing facial distortions – protruding tongues, bulging eyes, and grimaces – accompanying their dance were especially disconcerting to the Europeans. Was this a show of their might, a decree of war, or a form of welcome? In fact, the *haka* could, and did, serve all these purposes. Traditionally, Māori groups who met on friendly terms knew there was a thin line between cordiality and hostility, and by performing this mock war dance, each party demonstrated their fierce nature as a means of declaring their potency. However, because Europeans had trouble deciphering their intent, initial contact between the explorers and the Māori resulted in confusion that led to violence and death on both sides. What Europeans perceived to be a “dance of war” was probably a ritualized process of welcome.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand today, many *haka* are grouped under the term *kapa haka*. *Kapa* translates as “to stand in row or rank,” while *haka* means dance and the song that accompanies it. *Haka* exposes many facets of life: it can welcome esteemed guests, belittle an enemy before a battle, or be performed ritually at tribal gatherings or at funerals. More recently composed *haka* address contemporary concerns of individual *iwi* (clans) in competitive festivals like Te Matatini. New Zealand rugby teams perform *haka* before games as an assertion of their *mana* (authority and power) and the Royal New Zealand Navy's *haka* groups are greatly esteemed. The expressive, characteristic *haka* gestures demonstrate the passion behind the singing and dancing, and are a vigorous activation of pride. To the Māori, it is a *taonga* – a cultural treasure.

Early Māori history and *haka* legends

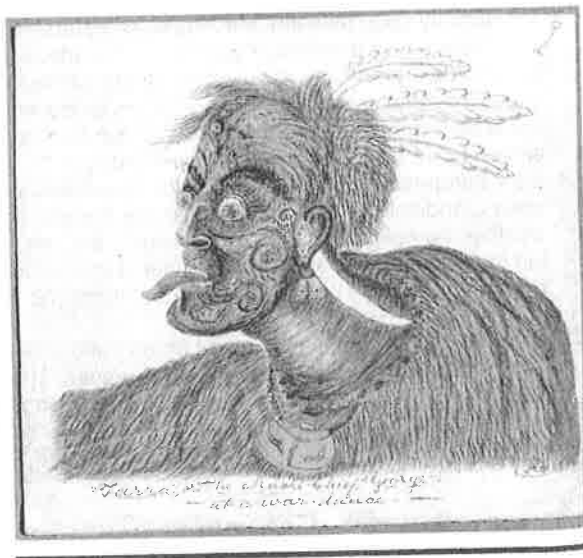
Thirteenth-century genealogical stories tell of Māori whose ancestors sailed from Polynesia in large canoes and settled on the two larger islands of Aotearoa. Initially, they lived in small settlements on the coast, but as inter-tribal warfare became more frequent, fortified settlements on hilltops called *pa* were constructed on the North Island. Māori ceremonial gatherings occurred in a *marae*, a sacred meeting area, and the *whareniui*, a community meetinghouse. The Māori greatly valued amusement and would gather here in the summertime to play games, sing, and dance.²¹

Māori oral history was passed down through generations via chants and mythological storytelling. The origin of the *haka* involves Tamanuiterā, the sun god, and his wife, Hine-raumati – the personification of summer – whose presence was revealed by a wavering radiance in the hot summertime air. Tamanuiterā and Hine-raumati had a son called Tāne-rore. The motions of the child's restless hands reflected his mother's shimmering presence and were incorporated into the *wiri* – the distinctive, quivering

Figure 5.6

The Māori Chief Tarra, also known as “George,” at a war dance.

Image: Dr. Florance Augustus, 1812–1879. Reprinted with permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



movements of a *haka* performer's hands. It is Māori belief that when it is so hot that the air shimmers, Tāne-rore is dancing a *haka* for his mother.²²

In 1820, a chief of the Ngāti Toa *iwi* named Te Rauparaha composed the lyrics for the *ka mate* – perhaps the most widely recognized *haka* song. It tells the tale of fleeing from a clan who intended to kill him in revenge for a bloody raid he had led on them years ago. He sought sanctuary from a local chief named Wharerangi and his wife Te Rangikōaea, who hid Te Rauparaha in a *kumara* (sweet potato) storage pit. In hot pursuit, the warriors chanted magical incantations to enable them to find Te Rauparaha. Protecting him, the wife dispelled these chants by straddling her legs widely over the pit, since it was a Māori belief that female genitalia had the power to neutralize the divinatory power of incantations.²³ As they approached, Te Rauparaha lamented to himself, *Ka mate! Ka mate!* (I die! I die!); as they retreated, he rejoiced, *Ka ora! Ka ora!* (I live! I live!). Te Rauparaha's composition encompassed myriad emotions: his fear of being captured, his exhilaration over surviving, his thanks to his hosts, and his joy of exiting into daylight from the depths of the pit.

European arrival

The disruption of Māori culture by *Pākehā* – those of European descent – first began in 1642, when Dutch seafarer Abel Tasman sighted Aotearoa. Soon after his vessel's smaller boats headed to shore, they were surrounded by large canoes manned by tattooed, weapon-wielding Māori. A bloody encounter between Māori and *Pākehā* changed Tasman's notions about landing. He departed without planting the Dutch flag, but not before renaming the area "Murderers' Bay" (Moordenaar's Bay).

More than a century later in 1769, Captain James Cook and his English expedition arrived in Aotearoa aboard the *Endeavour*. A smaller boat with some of his men set out for shore, which was followed by Māori in canoes. After the two parties landed on opposite banks, one sailor recounted seeing the *haka*: "We call'd to them in the George Island Language, but they answered us by flourishing their weapons over their heads and dancing as we supposed the war dance."²⁴ This was the first of many *haka* that met Cook's expedition throughout their time in Aotearoa. Māori behavior, which they perceived as ranging from bellicose to cordial, was unpredictable to them. Joseph Banks, a botanist on the expedition, described his perceptions of erratic behavior:

Their words were almost universally the same, *haromai haromai hare uta a patoo patoo oge* – come to us, come to us, come but ashore with us and we will kill you with our *patoo patoo* [weapons]. In this manner they continued to threaten us, venturing by degrees nearer and nearer until they were close alongside, at intervals talking very civilly and answering any questions we ask'd them but quickly renewing their threats till they had by our nonresistance gain'd courage enough to begin their war song and dance.²⁵

Cook and Banks said that although the "war dance" was done on peaceful occasions, they believe that the Māori never omitted it in their real wars and that it stoked their ferocity before attacking their opponents.²⁶

By the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries had established schools and churches. Missionaries found the "war dance" to be in conflict with Christian beliefs and

Figure 5.7

Māori chief with full facial *moko*, or tattoos, in 1784. When missionaries arrived in 1814, they deemed *moko* to be "heathen".

Image: watercolor by Sydney Parkinson. Reprinted with permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library.



were affronted because men performed the *haka* naked, wearing only a rope around the waist from which their weapons could be hung. Samuel Marsden, the first missionary to the Māori in 1814, posed this question in 1819: "Have they in any degree laid aside their ferocious habits, such as shouting, dancing naked, and sham fighting to inflame their passions and their warlike ardor?"²⁷ The Reverend Henry Williams prohibited the *haka* and its sacred chants, and discouraged tattooing. The Māori, with their aptitude for singing, learned to harmonize hymns as part of their conversion to Christianity.

Think about:
How should we
distinguish cultural
change from cultural
annihilation?

Case study: The tradition of tattoos: *moko*

The Polynesian tradition of tattoos, or *moko*, has existed for 2,000 years. *Moko* indicate one's genealogy, occupation, and social rank. *Moko* masters carefully followed an untainted lifestyle in order not to offend their patron god, whom they credited for their talent. Held in high esteem, they decided what designs were appropriate for whom, and on what occasion. During the early years of colonization, many Māori signed legal documents using a unique pattern within their *moko*, which was recognized by colonial authorities as proof of identity.

Counterbalancing this missionary zeal in Aotearoa was the growing market for prostitution due to the increase of American and European whalers. In an attempt to control the increasing lawlessness, "New Zealand" officially became a British colony in 1840, when Māori chiefs and British Crown representative Captain William Hobson signed the Treaty of Waitangi. The Māori unwittingly ceded their governance in exchange for the possession of their lands, forests, and fisheries. Altercations between Māori and Europeans became increasingly hostile, and eventually erupted into a war in 1860. Following a series of battles, 1.25 million acres of land were confiscated from the Māori by the colonial government in 1864. By the end of the nineteenth century, most Māori people were dispossessed of their land – a violation of the Treaty of Waitangi.²⁸

Mana, tapu, utu: Māori ideology and its relevance to the *haka*

In Māori ideology, all living things descend from *atua* – gods and goddesses – and their ancestral power is manifested in *mana* – a spiritual essence that also translates as authority or power. Because *mana* is considered to exist in certain mountains, rivers, and lakes, Māori have sustained strong spiritual ties and reverence for their land. Those who descended most directly from the founding ancestors were considered to be extremely *tapu*, or sacred, and regarded to have the strongest *mana*. This presence of godly *mana*, manifested in the earthly realm by respected *tapu* individuals, grounded early Māori society by fostering an effective system of social control. *Tapu* is also defined as spiritual restriction and is a strong force: imposed rules must be followed or the wrath of the gods could be invoked.

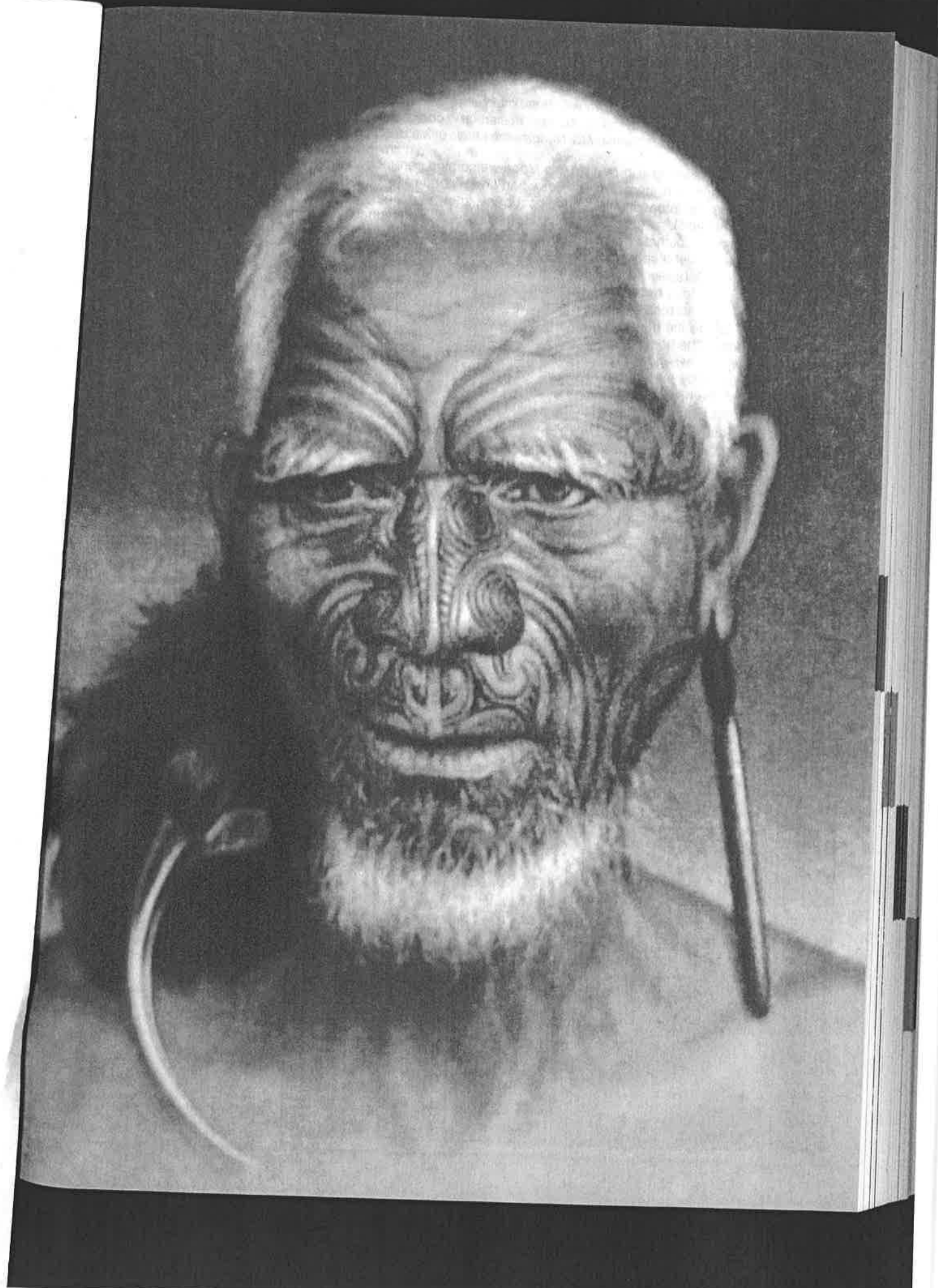
Utu is the concept of compensation, or balance. *Utu*, in tandem with the authority of *mana*, requires reciprocating friendly gestures as well as seeking compensation for offensive acts. The dual aspects of *utu* could be either peaceful offerings or violent acts of vengeance such as cannibalism, previously practiced by the Māori, whose *mana*, or authority, impelled them to eat their vanquished enemies.

Māori songs and the *pōwhiri* welcoming ceremony

Māori passed down their ancestral knowledge and history via traditional songs called *waiata*. These poetic songs, rich with imagery and metaphor, could be sung *a capella* (with no musical accompaniment) to express a range of emotions.²⁹ Some honorary *waiata*

Figure 5.8 (p. 139)

Tukukino, a land activist and leader of the Ngāti Tamaterā, with elaborate facial tattoos. Image: painted by Gottfried Lindauer in 1878. Auckland Art Galleries (public domain).



are sung for funerals, while laments and love *waiata* are often sung in welcoming guests. Traditional *waiata* continue to be sung today, but new ones are also composed that reflect current social and political concerns within *Māoritanga* – the ideals of Māori culture.

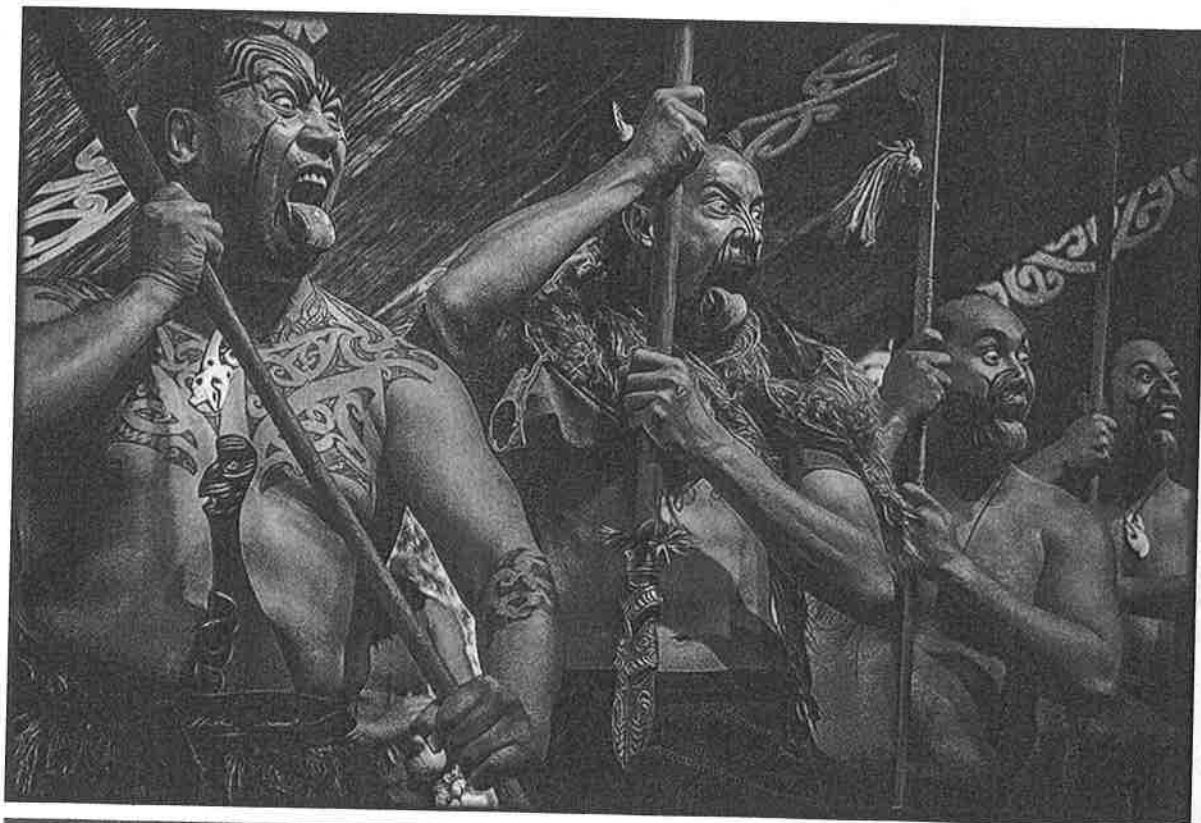
Both *waiata* and *haka* are integral in *pōwhiri*, the Māori welcoming ceremony. It continues a cultural imperative from earlier times when an *iwi* needed to insure that visitors harbored no ill intentions. When the host party, known as the *tengata whenua* (people of the land), meets their *manuhiri* (guests) on the communal meeting ground, an evolved protocol that continues today is followed between both parties. The test of the *te wero* (cast a spear) begins the *pōwhiri*: as a challenge, one of the hosts places a *taiaha* (spear) and a leaf or feather on the ground. As long as the spear is not chosen, they have come in peace. Selected women in each group trade a *karanga*, a call and response of welcome. Everyone respectfully enters the meetinghouse, where the guests are entertained with sung laments honoring the spirits of the dead. The hosts then begin the *whaikorero* (speeches), which honor ancestors of both *iwi* and is concluded by the women chanting a *waiata*.³⁰ The visitors reciprocate by performing their own *waiata* and *haka*. One by one, the hosts and guests shake hands, and touch their noses and foreheads together in *hongi*, mingling their breath in a show of unity. A feast follows and the *manuhiri* are accepted as *tengata whenua* for the remainder of their visit.

Technique and styles of *haka*

The expressive and passionate gestures of *kapa haka* demonstrate the vigorous zeal behind Māori singing and dancing. *Pukana* is the rolling of the eyes; *pukari*, wild

Figure 5.9

Haka performers show their fierce demeanors.
Image: Tom Iolan.



staring; and the rapid vibrations of the hands are called *wiri*. *Whatero* – the protrusion of the tongue, symbolic of the phallus – is the domain of men only. Originally, women performed in the front ranks of the *haka* and carried weapons. Today, females equally perform *haka* and, though the domain of girls and women has traditionally been the *haka poi*, a gentler dance, often to a *waiata*, which is a lullaby. However, it is significant to note that male warriors once trained the suppleness of their wrists for combat with *poi* – a ball attached to a long string that is twirled rapidly.

Although many *haka* from pre-*Pākehā* times have disappeared, several practiced today fulfill particular functions in social situations. *Haka taparahi* is a ceremonial dance that can express joy or contemporary grievances, such as unjust government actions, domestic violence, health concerns, etc.³¹ The defiant *haka ngeri* rouses a group to achieve its aims, using free-style movement. Normally, men lead, while women provide vocal support from the rear. These two forms are not all uniformly enacted – they both involve a good deal of spontaneity and creativity as the power of the *haka* moves the performers to give their own meaning and force to the words. This freedom is not an option in a *haka* in preparation for combat.

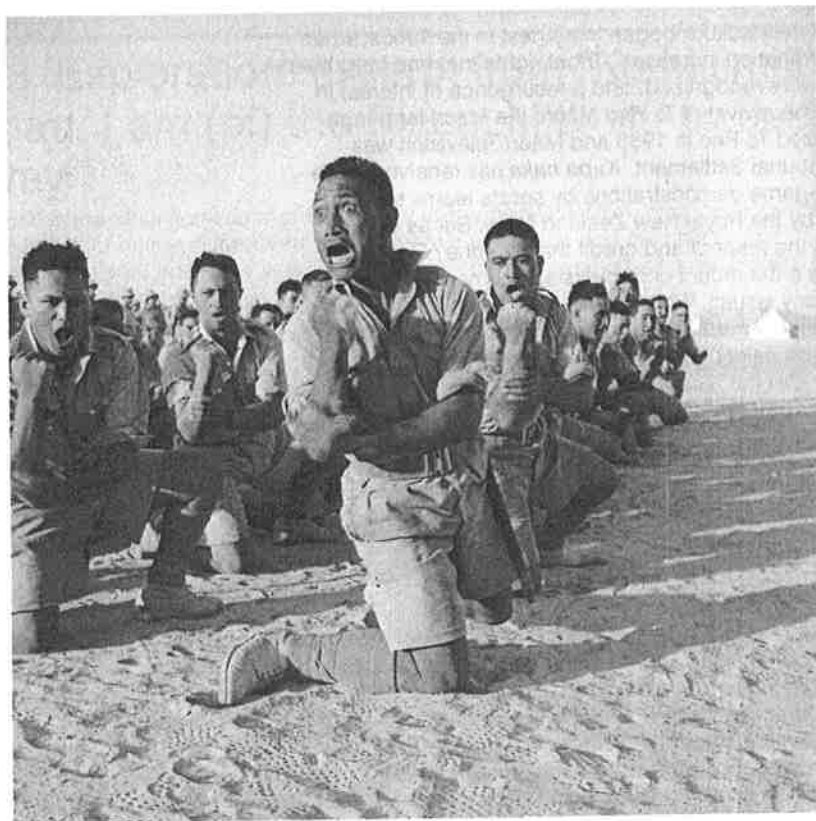
War haka

In anticipation of a battle, *haka ngārahu* was a means of inspection by elders and experienced warriors who judged if the participants were emotionally and physically ready for fighting. They also made sure it was danced in regimented unison, since any disharmony could be a disastrous omen.³² The *haka peruperu* – the true war dance – was a prelude to battle that served to warn their opponents head-on of their

Figure 5.10

A Māori battalion in Egypt during World War II performing a *haka*.

Image: Reprinted with permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



fate. *Peru* means anger, which was stoked through fierce facial expressions and the waving of weapons to invoke Tuumatauenga, the *atua*, or god of war. In both World War I and II, Māori soldiers performed the *haka peruperu* before battles. Awateri Arapeta (1910–1976), a brave leader in the Māori battalion in World War II, was an avid *haka* performer. Claiming that hard conditioning made the warriors physically and mentally fit to perform *haka peruperu*, he described its power:

This dance . . . has the psychological purpose of demoralizing the enemy by controlled chanting, by conditioning to look ugly . . . to roll the fiery eye, to spew the defiant tongue, to distort, to snort, to stamp furiously, to yell hideous, blood-curdling sounds, to carry the anger of the ugly-faced war-god throughout the battle.³³

Facing their enemy head on, the dancers did their utmost to intimidate their adversaries and concluded their threatening dance by jumping high with their legs folded underneath as they held their weapons high. For the Māori, the *haka* was a demonstration of their invincibility and authority, and steeled them for battle.

Think about:
Why do ancient, indigenous cultures such as the Māori and Native American peoples value dance as a means of preparing for war?

Māori culture: reclaiming or claiming?

After the wars with the British in the nineteenth century, the Māori unjustly lost much of their land through confiscations, compromising their traditional way of life. Many migrated to newly built cities in order to find employment and opportunity; at present, only fifteen percent of the Māori still live in a rural environment. Compared to the *Pākehā* population today, statistics show high unemployment rates, low income, poor education, ill health, and high crime rates, and these circumstances have led Māori activists to fight for the preservation of their culture and self-esteem. To this end, *marae* community meeting spaces were built in urban communities. In the sanctuary of the *marae*, Māori are able to engage in practices that enhance their worldview. In *pōwhiri*, funerals, and other ceremonial gatherings occurring there, *kapa haka* are integral to these events.

Redefinitions and reclamations of their culture began in earnest in the 1960s, when Māori protests against their subordination increased. Tribal rights that had long been ignored in the Treaty of Waitangi were recognized, and a resurgence of interest in reviving Māori culture resulted in the revival of Te Reo Māori, the Māori language. The government officially recognized Te Reo in 1988 and Māori Television was created as part of the Waitangi Tribunal Settlement. *Kapa haka* has received more international exposure due to pre-game demonstrations by sports teams such as the All Blacks and performances by the Royal New Zealand Navy. But as crowds are roused, is Māori culture given the respect and credit that it is due? Cases of cultural misappropriation, such as a the recent controversial commercial by the Italian car company, Fiat, raise many issues. Whether the *haka* has been a victim of appropriation in its transformation into an emblem representing an entire society is a question worthy of debate. But *kapa haka* plays a role in preserving tradition, gives opportunity for artistic expression and the nurturing of tribal identity, and for provides a social voice for the Māori. Choreographer Jack Gray states:

As with all aspects of Māori worldview, *haka* is a living embodiment of these complex values and symbolic of an approach towards guardianship and territorial power. It is one of the many reasons that Māori are empowered as indigenous peoples today.³⁴

Current trends

Today in Aotearoa/New Zealand, competitions of *kapa haka* teams contribute to the preservation of Māori traditional culture – and also benefit tourism. Te Matatini is the bi-annual Māori performing arts festival, in which approximately forty *kapa haka* teams from competitions compete. The winners travel the world as cultural ambassadors for two years. *Kapa haka* continues to be enjoyed both nationally and internationally through its customary performances by the All Blacks and the Black

Ferns, New Zealand's female rugby team. In schools, Te Reo and *Tikanga* Māori (language and culture) are taught through *kapa haka*, *pōwhiri* welcoming rituals, and *whaikorero* speeches; they also impart Māori social values such as kinship, hospitality, and compassion. The establishment of Te Reo as a national language has also led to new compositions and innovations in *kapa haka* and *waiata*. One innovator is Bub Wehi, the founder of several *kapa haka* groups including Te Waka Huia. In collaboration with his late wife, Nen, Wehi has composed new *haka* and *waiata* addressing Māori male violence, treaty settlements, and health issues, and has stated that his contemporary, politically charged *haka* are the equivalent of the war-like challenges of pre-Pākehā times.

In the contemporary dance realm, Atamira Dance Company is a platform for Māori dancers and choreographers. Atamira founder Jack Gray's work often offsets the theater as a place of belonging. Through community performance, ceremony, and ritual, his current project, *I Moving Lab*, functions through site-specific installation to create a type of *papakāinga* (homestead) for indigenous artists who have actually lost their familial links to ancestral land. Māori choreographer and dancer Louise Potiki Bryant has an ongoing collaboration with scholar Charles Royal, with whom she created *TE KĀROHIROHI: The Light Dances* (2014), an indigenous project on the *whare tapere* amusement traditions that incorporated Māori puppets and instruments. Choreographer Charles Koroneho explores Māori cosmology, rituals, and incantations of *tohunga* shamans in his solo, *Pure* (2013). Choreographer Lemi Ponifasio, of Samoan descent, founded his company, MAU, in Aotearoa in 1995. His work, *Stones in Her Mouth* (2013), featured Māori women's stories of oppression and abusive power, and used ancient *waiata* chants. Founded by Neil Ieremia in 1995, Black Grace Dance Company offers highly physical contemporary dancing with storytelling and dance traditions of the Pacific Islands, as seen in his 2015 work, *Siva*. Ieremia stated, "Siva explodes from the collision of the past and future, capturing our common beauty, our shared history and divine difference. It is more than a celebration of the past . . . it is about rushing headlong into the future."³⁵

5.3 Exploration: excerpt from "Ko Mitimiti Ahau, I am (of) the Place, Mitimiti" by Jack Gray³⁶

Mitimiti is the tribal homeland of Māori choreographer Jack Gray, and the inspiration for a series of research iterations that brought many artists and disciplines into creative exploration around legacy, heritage, dispersal, removal, and restoration. Gray recently performed his dance "Ruategupuke" in front of his father's meetinghouse—which is now displayed in the collection of Chicago's Field Museum.

I grew up in Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand)'s most populated city. Compare Mitimiti's population of sixty (on a good day) to Auckland's 1.4 million, and it's understandable to see the distance between them. The name for Auckland (Auckland was named after a British Governor General to India in 1840) is "Tamaki Makaurau," isthmus of a thousand lovers. A Matariki (Māori New Year) event I attended included stories about this area's famed voyagers who remind us now of our customary relationships to bird migrations, changing seasons and landscapes, recounting the ways we fished, hunted, fought wars, arranged marriages, hid in caves, carried large canoes overland.

As a child I was drawn toward learning Māori language through songs and dances, and as a young adult, captivated by the beautiful black voids of artist Ralph Hotere's paintings, where my imaginative expression surfaced through the use of contemporary dance. I founded Atamira Dance Collective as a platform for Māori Contemporary Dance artists to create new work in 2000. Ten years later, I reconnected with my tribal genealogy (after my Grandmother's death) only to discover Ralph Hotere was from Mitimiti too.