

TOWARDS A GENERATIVE POLITICS OF
EXPRESSION:
RE-NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN THE “TRADITIONAL” DANCES OF
FIJI AND FIJI’S CANADIAN DIASPORA

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Abstract

Recent performances of the “traditional” Fijian song-dance practice called *meke* indicate a re-negotiation of identity amongst Fijians living in Fiji and Canada. Post-independence Fiji has had a tumultuous history with four coups d’etat since 1987. Governance in that time, impacted by close to a century of British colonial rule, has been centred on a biopolitical terrain occupied by firm categories of race, ethnicity and culture. The politics of negotiating identity in post-independence Fiji have created ethnic tensions that have divided dance forms (Hereniko 2006). However, in light of Fiji’s most recent 2006 military coup in the name of multiracial harmony and anti-racism, there has been a re-negotiation of “Fijianness” in performances of *meke* that sometimes blurs boundaries formed by categories of race, and other times sustains race-based boundaries. These political and historical contexts are elements of what is being re-negotiated for members of Fiji’s disparate Diaspora in Canada that has grown significantly due to the coups (Lal 2003). In the context of shifting biopolitical terrains of power, my research asks: how does expressing movement-based affects (as relational feelings/sensations of intensity) activate and transform political tensions and identifications with nation, ethnicity, and culture for practitioners of *meke* in Canada and Fiji?

The findings of this research are based on original dance-based participant observation fieldwork and archival research conducted in Western Canada and Viti Levu, Fiji between 2011 and 2013. I argue that *meke* in Canada and Fiji enables a re-negotiation of identity through experiences and expressions of powerful feeling states

that generate and are simultaneously generated by movement. These affects enable Fijians to de-centre and strategically deploy discourses of multiculturalism in Canada and multiracialism in Fiji that divide Fijians by treating them as “ethnically” homogenous yet distinct groups. In addition, while haunted by felt intensities that migrate from Fiji, Fijian migrants in Vancouver generate new articulations of identity expressed through *meke* that emerge from new connections to place. I examine examples of Fijian dance that show how movement-based affects go beyond merely reflecting or representing culture and ethnicity, and instead expose how dance actively generates culture and identity.

Dedication

During the course of my doctoral studies, I lost two important people and gained two important people. This dissertation is dedicated to two women no longer with us who taught me not only was it possible to get a PhD, but that it was possible with children. Hilary White-Nunn, my mother who passed away at the beginning of my doctoral studies, has been a driving source of inspiration and guidance throughout my research and writing. Margaret Fulton, my great Aunt Peggy who passed away as I was completing the final chapter of my dissertation, started the first women's studies program in Canada. Both women created important pathways for me: they taught me that I was capable of tackling difficult tasks by imagining myself moving past barriers and working hard to achieve my goals.

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Aporosa's own work on *yaqona* (a ceremonial and social drink) practices in Fiji has also been instructive.

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Preface

I am not sure how my mother learned the song but the lyrics contain a sense of love and loss that was always palpable for me as a child. My mother would have probably heard “Isa Isa” on the radio as a child in Fiji. During British colonial rule in Fiji, the song “Isa Isa” was played with the National Anthem “God Save Our Gracious Queen” at the end of radio broadcasts (Matavuvale Network 2014). Anna, her Fijian nanny, may have also sung it to her. After my mother passed away, I found the lyrics written out in Fijian on a small scrap piece of paper in one of her personal folders. My mother singing “Isa Isa” to me for years is one of the clear clues I had that Fiji was important to her. I did not need to know the meaning of the song to know that when my mother sang the song she was grieving inside about missing Fiji. But also, the song was like a prayer or mantra, a way to find a feeling that calmed her, centred her, and grounded her against the difficulties she lived through. When I sing it now, I still feel the sadness, the kind and caring love or loloma, and the calming, centring feelings of the song.

Loloma as I have come to know it is like the song “Isa Isa.” It involves a deep feeling of respect, generosity, and embrace but also loss and longing. Most of my knowledge of loloma came from what my mother taught me in her everyday love, her stories, and writing about Anna, and in the way her Fiji-Canadian friends (and my mentors) treated me and cared for me during parties, gatherings, and get togethers. I also felt these feelings again and again from so many of the indigenous Fijians I interacted with in Fiji. It is the feeling of being hugged by the tapa cloth that always covered the

walls of my home growing up and that now hangs on the walls of our current home for my children to enjoy and be comforted by. It also includes a feeling of loss and grief. This is not just the grief I feel when I think of my mother's gift of loloma wrapped in the sadness of her passing; this loss has always coincided with the feeling of loloma my mother shared with me. "Isa Isa" has always exemplified the link in my own felt experiences and memories between love and loss.

The song "Isa Isa," that my mother sang to me at bedtime when I was a child, has become part of my own repertoire of songs I sing to my own children. I still sing it to them at night. It always brings some sadness with it in part because the lyrics of the song are about missing Fiji and wanting to be there. When I heard my mother singing "Isa Isa," the song always had a sadness and grief associated with leaving Fiji and Anna. Now when I sing "Isa Isa" I feel that sadness trickling through me accompanied with sadness about my mother's early death, and sadness that my children will not meet her. Sadness, grief and love are interwoven with nostalgia for a place that I only knew about through my mother and the Fiji-Canadians that were her friends. Now these nostalgic and melancholy feelings have shifted because of my research experiences and time spent in Fiji that have broadened and made more complex my knowledge of loloma.

Bringing my family to Fiji and the beautiful and powerful world that my mother experienced, created, and imagined felt like I was introducing them to her. By teaching them about where she came from, I could also share with my kids what she shared with me. Only, I shared with them something other than what my mother shared with me.

Fiji's colonial and post-independence realities yield very different experiences. Feelings associated with Fiji that my mother shared with me are, to some degree, challenged and changed by our own experiences of Fiji in the wake of its fourth coup. So, when we are presented with this beautiful song "Isa Isa" on our last day in Fiji as a gift of gratitude for all that we contributed to the support of the Oceania Centre for Art, Culture, and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, it feels new and personal. Although hearing the song still reminds me of my mother, I no longer feel grounded by the song through feelings of loloma and grief. Now the song reminds me that loloma as a relationally felt and sensed intensity is not static and has shifted to suit the economic, religious, and political realities of independent Fiji.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: Project Design

Recent performances of the “traditional”¹ Fijian dance practice called *meke* indicate a shift of identity amongst Fijians living in Fiji and Canada. In the context of shifting biopolitical terrains of power, the focus of my dissertation is a critical analysis of re-negotiations of identity emerging from *meke* in Fiji and Canada. My research asks: how does expressing movement-based affects (not simply individually felt categorical emotions such as happiness or sadness but relational feelings/sensations of intensity (Massumi 2002; and Manning 2007)) activate and transform political tensions and identifications with nationalism, ethnicity, and tradition for practitioners of *meke* in Canada and Fiji? Why does *meke* provoke political and religious anxieties for some Fijians living in Canada and Fiji, and result in some choosing not to identify with *meke*? How are essentialist notions of ethnicity so dominant and divisive in Fiji’s post-independence reality transcended and sustained in relation to local Canadian notions of multiculturalism and recent shifts towards national discourses of multiracialism in Fiji? And, how can a focus on the relationally felt dimensions of *meke* expose the directionality of recent shifts in power and biopolitical relations?

¹ I include quotations around the word tradition to indicate to the reader that I am not using the term as it is often used to legitimize an act as authentic and original, I view tradition (as did many of the Fijians of indigenous or *iTaukei* descent I interviewed) as sustaining an engagement with the past through selective or constructed continuity with past practices. I discuss my usage of tradition in more depth in the section of this chapter entitled “Generative Matters: Body, Embodiment, Culture, and Tradition.”

The research for this dissertation occurred over the course of two years and is the result of fieldwork and archival research in Victoria and Vancouver, Canada, and Viti Levu, Fiji. In addition to conducting thirty-two semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and five focus groups, I drew upon my extensive experience as a professional dancer learning many dances at Canadian and Fijian sites of research in order to gain insight into Fijian dance expression through embodied experience. This step in tandem with interviewing key performers, composers and choreographers knowledgeable about *meke* has helped me understand the differences in dance practice that have developed from one locale to another. In addition to my fieldwork experiences and interviews, I conducted archival research in order to historicize and contextualize my research. While in Fiji, I gained access to files from the “Colonial Secretary’s Office” housed at the National Archives of Fiji located in Suva, Fiji. This archive has extensive information about some of the key ways in which colonialism, religion, and tourism have had an impact on the practice of *meke*, for example, attempts by the colony to criminalize *meke* as a form of witchcraft, and later colonial efforts to use *meke* for tourism purposes. In addition, I examined an inherited and unique family archive that contains formal and informal documents pertaining to Fijian customs in relation to spiritual and religious practices from early colonial Fiji (in the 1880s) to the 1960s. Rather than ignore feelings of intensity that emerged in and around the dancing in my research, I pursued these felt intensities and found them to be important indicators of change.

The findings of this dissertation are based on an analysis of my original fieldwork and archival research and, are supported by emergent dance and anthropology scholarship on the generative aspects of motility² and affect (Ness 2011b, and Massumi 2002). My research experiences and this scholarship show how, through movement, expressions of affect can be shared and communicated between bodies. I argue that *meke* in Canada and Fiji enables a re-negotiation of identity through experiences and expressions of powerful feeling states that generate and are simultaneously generated by movement. These affects enable Fijians to de-centre biopolitical and religion-based discourses that divide Fijians by treating them as “ethnically” homogenous yet distinct groups. In order to make this argument, I look at movement-based sensations and affects as much more than merely reflecting or representing culture and ethnicity, as has been a trend in earlier dance ethnographic literature, and instead as actively generating culture and identity. My aims are: to show how the experiences and expressions of the dancing body move the micro relations of affect towards macro relations with wider political significance; and, to show how these experiences and expressions are central to understanding cultural change because they occur not in self-contained individual bodies but in relation with other bodies. I propose a “generative theoric” that aims to understand the affective tensions and conflicts between dancing bodies that address lived political realities and ethical

² Inspired by Ness’ use of the term (2010) motility to mean “the drive to move and to ‘be,’ continuously, in movement” (2010), I use the term motility here to refer to the ways the body is always active and in motion. The term allows me to continue to ground my thinking in bodily motion even in the absence of locomotion or larger macro movements of the body through time and space.

concerns related to various forms of “difference” in Fiji and the Fijian diaspora in Canada.

Although *meke* differ widely, there are some features, trends and shifts worth noting for the purposes of understanding the current negotiations of identity this paper explores. *Meke* is a text illustrated through song and dance with instrumental accompaniment. Dancers perform quick and rhythmically percussive movements (often in unison) to live polyphonic vocal chanting, and rhythms often set by a single *lali* (or slit drum) and *cobo* (cup clapping the hands). Whereas *meke* performances were once strictly divided by gender, today women and men can perform together. Prior to missionary and colonial contact, *meke* was deeply and ritually connected to pre-Christian indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices that differed depending on the area of Fiji, and shaped *meke* choreographies and movements differently as a result. *Meke* was (and continues to be) created for social and ceremonial purposes to serve a higher purpose determined through the chief of a village. Today, *meke* are also performed for national events, for tourists in Fiji and for Fiji tourism promotion internationally. *Meke* can be about events of the past, current events or prophetic about events of the future (Williams 1860, 30). In early colonial accounts, and as it is practiced today in Fiji, it is not uncommon to have several dozens of dancers dancing *meke* choreographies at once. In Canadian *meke*, there are fewer performers who are of varying descent and they are often accompanied with pre-recorded Fijian pop-songs.

Each chapter of this dissertation focuses on the incorporeal, or ephemeral aspects of corporeality in and surrounding *meke*. Within each of these chapters, I turn my focus to the different ways in which the body generates culture and identity through movement-based affects (a term I use to address the relations of intensity rooted in the moving body) that include: governing, spiriting, migrating, and haunting affects. Each chapter is part of a larger generative theoric that I deploy not as one theory, but as a theoretical matrix or ecology of affects. I developed the notion of a generative theoric out of the space left open by Susan Foster's bodily theoric (1995).³ Bodily theoric, as Foster puts it, "already exist embedded in the physical practices [of bodies]" and are "armatures of relations through which bodies perform individual, gendered, ethnic, or communal identities" (8). Foster's bodily theoric is rooted in an identity politics of fleshy outcomes, results, and effects (Foster 1995, 8). While my aim is not to discount the social continuity that bodily theoric is helpful in explaining, my aim is to also understand the relationships between felt intensities and social change, in particular biopolitical shifts in identifying with "Fijianness" in Fiji and Canada.

This introductory chapter aims to work through the design of my project and my rationale for my design. I begin by situating my own research within gaps left open by previous ethnographic dance scholarship. This involves defining my usage of some key

³ Foster's 'bodily theoric' refers to the ways in which the body theorizes as it moves. Foster derives her definition of the archaic term "theoric" from the *Oxford English Dictionary* that identifies two meanings: theoretical and performative (1995, 20). I elaborate on Foster's use of 'bodily theoric' and my own use of 'generative theoric' on pages 21-28.

terms in relation to how they have been used in earlier dance and anthropology scholarship. I spend time teasing apart the ways that relationships between motility, power, culture, the body, tradition and identity have been treated in dance studies and locate my own approach within emergent dance studies and anthropological literature on the generative aspects of affect and motility. Following this first section that outlines my theory and my key arguments about *meke* as a “tradition,” I discuss the contributions of this dissertation to ethnographic scholarship on dance, scholarship on affect, and scholarship on *meke*. Next, I explicate my methodological and writing choices and why they were necessary. Intimately connected to my project design is my own personal family connection to Fiji and to Fiji’s Canadian diaspora. Although not consciously aware of it at the time, this personal connection made me aware of the importance of particular felt expressions in the ongoing negotiations of Fijianness in Fiji and Canada. I end this chapter with a brief synopsis of the chapters to come.

Generative Matters

The main thrust of my intervention in dance scholarship is to understand how movement-based feelings are an important element in the ongoing process of identity re-negotiation that is related to and generative of culture. Rather than starting with culture as representational, I start with relational movement-based sensations, experiences and expressions in the process of their becoming cultural and actualized in cultural meaning and significance. Focusing my analysis of culture and identity on incorporeal and

ephemeral aspects of experience such as memories and affects requires explanation and interrogation. Theorizing bodies in this way marks a distinct departure from previous ethnographic scholarship on dance. Dance studies scholars such as Theresa Buckland (2006), and Janet O'Shea (2007), and anthropological scholars focused on dance in the South Pacific such as Wolfgang Kempf and Elfriede Hermann (2005), and David Murray (2000) have demonstrated how relationships to place and identity are constructed and consolidated through performing tradition in dance. However, in searching for identifications with culture, this scholarship, in line with much dance studies ethnographic literature such as the important work of anthropologist and dance ethnographer Joan Kealiinohomoku ([1969] 2001), organizes itself around cultural critiques of representation. My intervention is to look for notions of culture and identity in the sensations and affects expressed in and surrounding performance that are at once already shaped by and shaping culture.

My approach to researching *meke* draws from current work on affect theory and the indeterminate aspects of bodily expression and movement (Massumi 2002, Manning 2007). This approach that centres on felt and sensed experiences and expressions allows me to explore current questions about cultural change, power, resistance, and agency in ways that studies of the dancing and dancers that reduce the body to a static observational, self-contained, and material tool cannot. Affect theory offers an alternative understanding of movement that emerges from relational feelings of intensity that are transmitted between bodies in motion and implicated in formations of power.

Affect refers to the space of creative emergence or indeterminacy opened up by the body's relations and movements. Movement does not originate in, belong to, or become contained by individual, generically defined bodies. Instead movement has an integrative character with respect to its environment that includes material and non-material co-presences such as bodies, costumes, sounds, rhythms, technology, light, and spirit. The source of movement is not the pre-determined generic body part but the incorporation of the incorporeal phenomenon. The incorporeal dancing body's relational affects open a space of emergence that is indeterminate (where something new and not yet determined can happen) (Ness 2004, Manning 2007).

The moving body that frames my research is a major subject for current writing in dance studies, anthropology, and social and political theory (Ness 2011a, Ness 2011b, Massumi 2002, Manning 2007) that seeks to question approaches that reduce the body to material, immobile, representational, or reflective of cultural change. My investigation seeks inspiration from this writing that poses alternatives to these reductive approaches by centralizing the motility of experiencing and expressing bodies. In addition, the transmission of affect between moving, expressing bodies is implicated in formations of power (Massumi 2002 and Manning 2007). Affects move between the "voice [of one] to ear [of another], hand [of one] to back [of another]... affect [is] all and only in the linkage" (Massumi 2011, 111), and not belonging to one entity. The body has the ability to be affected (to feel and sense) and to affect others (causing others to feel and sense) (Massumi 2002). In applying this notion of the moving body, I use an interdisciplinary

approach that draws from dance studies, anthropology, social and political theory.

Specifically, although not exclusively, I draw from the work of dance studies and anthropology scholar Sally Ness, social theorist Erin Manning, anthropologist Thomas Csordas, and social critic Brian Massumi.

My work addresses a gap in dance studies literature created by an early rejection in that literature of ephemeral, unknowable, indeterminate dancing bodies in favour of a discursive and representational approach. I situate my analysis of the motile body in theories of the body where the body is not reducible to stable signs and signifiers that are rooted in the past (because they depend on prior knowledge to generate meaning) and knowable, categorical flesh. Instead, I am bringing corporeal bodies that move dynamically in space into contact with the incorporeal micro relations of affect to show how culture and identity shifts. This chapter explicates how dancing bodies go beyond Foster's material body to show how a "generative theoric," that involves multidimensional relations out of which something new emerges, might allow for an understanding of the body as generative of power and not just an effect of power that has been inscribed on the body.

Body, Embodiment, Culture, and Tradition

Because my preliminary fieldwork and archival research drew my focus towards the importance of feelings of intensity in and surrounding *meke*, I was compelled to draw from theories that centralize the experiential and expressing body in their analysis of culture and identity. By experiential I refer to the body as inextricably linked with other

phenomena (such as in Csordas' use of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's being-in-the-world) (Csordas 1990, 2004). Viewing the body as indistinguishable from the world allows for an analysis of relational and porous bodies, as opposed to self-contained bodies. Expressing is foregrounded in movement, and refers to thinking about the body as communicating through moving and reaching towards another. Therefore, expression in dance has the potential for exchange only relationally and not on its own.

Experiencing and expressing bodies are not bodies immobilized by biopolitical categories, whereby state systems control bodies by actualizing them in firm categories (Manning 2007, 113). Yet this does not preclude the possibility that bodies move in relation to formations of power that result in such biopolitical categories. Thus, bodies in motion are shaped by and shaping material circumstances as well as formations of power and governance.

Historically, writing on dance romanticized, universalized (making dances comparable using standardized categories of analysis), and de-politicized dance. For example, the early 20th century writing of German musicologist Curt Sachs (1937) was concerned with formulating a dancing body that reflected culture through universal and un-evolved primal states of ecstasy and transcendence in dance (Foster 2011, 4). These ecstatic dances were assumed by Sachs to be uncrafted and immediate, unlike Western choreographed dances. Sachs' portrayal gave the impression that non-Western dances provided an unmediated window into culture (Foster 2011, 4). In this Modern period of ethnographic writing, "objective," detached, and authoritative approaches to

representational writing also permeated dance scholarship (Kealiinohomoku 2001). Sachs and his contemporaries such as dance critic John Martin applied so-called scientific theories of social evolution to their writing about dance. Their approach used dance to ethnocentrically posit the social evolutionary view that all societies were on parallel paths of development that began with savage and primitive societies and ended with civilized and sophisticated societies (Kealinohomoku 2001). These approaches have been critiqued for: producing ethnographic representations that perpetuate ethnocentric and uneven power dynamics between the researcher and the subject of research, treating the body and dance as passive and reflective of culture in a disembodied way, and separating dance from its sociopolitical and economic context (Desmond 1997a, Reed 1998).

Because of such previous scholarship, notions of “traditional” and “ethnic” dance performance are in need of interrogation. Anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler has done much to demonstrate how non-Western dances are “works of art” that embed aesthetic systems and are part of formulating and imposing relationships, cultural values, and political hierarchies (Kaeppler 2006, 27-28). Yet, Western scholars of dance have tended to view non-Western “traditional” and “ethnic” dance forms as static, simplistic, “primitive,” and ahistorical tokens of culture (Kealiinohomoku 2001). Additionally, some have romanticized “traditional” dance as a form of cultural authenticity (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991). For example, in writing about a traditional Fijian men’s spear dance called *meke wesi*, dancer, dance writer, and dance critic Beth Dean Carell writes,

The eerie excitement developed is such that as rhythms grow faster and faster the symbolic atmosphere of the spear thrust movements takes on a timelessness as though it were all a kind of subconscious record, the imprint in ancient memory of a single mighty thrust by one great antediluvian warrior who overcame all adversaries. (Carell 1978, 16)

While this performance may have been choreographed to give spectators the impression of *iTaukei* (indigenous Fijians)⁴ fixed in a pre-contact past, Carell's writing erases the politics and economics of making the antediluvian *iTaukei* warrior through performance.

My usage of "tradition" demonstrates how it is strategically deployed to diverse ends. This approach comes from concepts of tradition that have been critically analyzed by dance scholars Theresa Buckland (2006), Janet O'Shea (2007), Zoila Mendoza (2000); anthropologists Wolfgang Kempf and Elfriede Hermann (2005), Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984), and Nicholas Thomas (1997); and Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1994). These scholars shed light on how relationships to place and identity are constructed and consolidated through performing "tradition" in dance. These scholars provide theoretical support for my own approach to *meke*, which seeks to illuminate how the notions of "tradition" and "ethnicity" are not immutable but shift to suit the needs of Fijians living in the particulars of changing times and places.

"Invented tradition" scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm (1994), and Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984) show how both nation and national identity are socially engineered through the creation of invented tradition. Indeed, "traditional"

⁴ *iTaukei* Affairs (Amendment) Decree 2010 states that all official laws and documentation pertaining to 'indigenous' (referring to original and native settlers of Fiji) Fijians be referred to as *iTaukei*. All Fiji citizens are to be referred to as "Fijian" (Fiji, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs 2013).

Fijian dance is a realm in which a pre-colonial “tradition” has been re-invented in order to promote the notion of a post-colonial, ethnically Fijian national identity (Vilsoni 2006). However, unlike Hobsbawm’s use of nation as a stable site for counter-hegemonic struggle (Gilroy, 1993, 14), Fiji and Fiji’s Canadian diaspora are disparate, unstable, and in flux. Since the end of British colonial rule, the performance of *meke* has contributed to the creation of an embodied memory that supports Fijian nationalism. “Traditional” dance in Fiji has played a powerful role in connecting indigenous Fijian identities to Fijian land (Kempf and Hermann 2005). However, as with other Melanesian, Polynesian, and Micronesian dance forms, missionaries played a dramatic role in altering and often wiping out the knowledge and memory of much Fijian dance (Vilsoni 2006). As a result, it is difficult to assess how much of *meke* is traditional, and how much has been altered by the missionary and colonial presence in Fiji. Perhaps this history of needing to invent and re-invent itself has led to the strong desire by some Fijians to establish and protect an authentic traditional Fijian dance form that must be fought for in order for it to survive.

Although those I consulted with referred to *meke* as a “traditional” dance form, based on my encounters it is more accurate to describe it as an evolving form of dance that stabilizes and destabilizes culture and identity through affect by drawing aspects of its practice from the past. Instead of using the term “tradition” as it is often used to legitimize an act as authentic and original, I view tradition (as did many of the *iTaukei* I interviewed) as sustaining an engagement with the past through selective or constructed

continuity with past practices. The emphasis is on tailoring a relationship with the past to suit present needs. What becomes “traditional” or “customary” are not simply persisting beliefs and practices that have remained the same for a long period of time. Instead, as Thomas argues, they are, “selective construct[s] defined partly in opposition to foreign ways or intrusions” (Thomas 1997, 65). In addition, what becomes “traditional” may not be “true,” or original and historically continuous. Rather, authenticity is not necessary for people to objectify a practice or attitude in order to affirm a national or local identity with ties to the past that feels authentic. This is made evident in performances of *meke* for Fiji tourism and for the national stage, discussed in my chapter “Governing Affect,” that construct the Fijian citizen as indigenous and Christian by selecting *iTaukei* dancers that look like they are from pre-colonial times and yet demonstrate their Christianity through expressions of love, happiness, and welcome.

I pursue a course suggested by Buckland (2006) and Thomas (1997) to examine the ways in which the past is used in the present and, to ask how, by whom, and for what purpose are traditions used as a form of representation (Buckland 2006, 218). However, I see these approaches as only one dimension of the role of “tradition” in culture and identity. In addition to examining the relationships between tradition and issues of representation, I focus on how *meke* as a tradition actively stabilize and destabilize culture and identity through expressions of affect. Bodies performing tradition are not passive, two-dimensional representations that are fixed and rooted in the past as prior

established signs but generative of emergent meaning and new biopolitical arrangements grounded in the current realities of what it feels like to be “Fijian” in Fiji and Canada.

While I agree with “invented tradition” scholars that traditions can be constructed and/or selected to suit present needs, Charles Briggs reminds me that this perspective can be detrimental to “the people who see the traditions that are being discussed as their own” (Briggs 1996, 435). In such cases of ownership over cultural property, traditions are objectified as things that can be possessed. Briggs is critical of approaches that show the constructedness of “tradition” because they undermine indigenous rights movements and perpetuate a legitimating of white postcolonial authority. My approach to *meke* as a tradition that shifts to suit present processes of identity and culture formation and not as authentic in an originary sense, may work in opposition to certain *iTaukei* nationalist objectives. However, from what I have ascertained through my archival research and my interviews, *meke* have often been choreographed anew to suit the needs of the occasion. And, *meke* vary from village to village and province to province because dances are based on specific pre-Christian ties to an ancestor god or *kalou vu*⁵ from which lines of common descent are traced and customs are informed. As a result, although there are larger governing confederacies (*matanitu*) that have become a hegemonic (such as Bau) voice for tradition and custom, there is not one set of dances or set of movements that are considered true, authentic and original to Fiji as a whole. In addition, I found that despite

⁵ *Kalou vu* is a pre-Christian indigenous term used to describe originary gods. A larger discussion of *kalou* (spirits and gods) occurs in my second chapter.

describing *meke* as a traditional form of dance, most *iTaukei* I spoke to were inclined to want to reject “truly traditional” *meke*, or alter it to demonstrate their Christian beliefs. It was very important to all *iTaukei* that they demonstrate values and practices as Christian and in opposition to the perceived connection between Fiji’s non-Christian traditional practices, informed by ancestor spirit worship, and so-called devil worship or sorcery. Traditions such as *meke* have had to change because they are now viewed with suspicion by *iTaukei* who since missionary and colonial contact have considered ancestor gods to be devils and demons.

Scholars of tradition tend not to examine its felt dimensions, Nicholas Thomas (1997) being an exception,⁶ however, in my research on *meke* as a “traditional” dance practice my point of departure is affect. Affect plays an integral part in the objectification of “tradition” as a part of Fijian cultural heritage and its use in stabilizing and/or destabilizing a sense of national culture and identity. I argue that the objectification of *meke* as a tradition by the *iTaukei* performers and government officials with whom I spoke occurs on an affective register as a way of constructing identity and culture that is in opposition to and safe from the perceived threat of the ancestral spirits (that were framed as devils and demons), foreigners (framed as selfish), and Western influences (framed as destructive). These threats are viewed in their own ways as dangerous and self-interested, making it imperative that *meke* performers demonstrate

⁶ His chapter “Tin and Thatch” in *In Oceania* (1997, 171-185) explores values of sharing, hospitality and respect as core elements of custom and culture in Fiji.

their indigeneity and their Christian faith through welcome, generosity, living life to the full (*bula*),⁷ and kindly love (*loloma*).

In addition, I take Thomas' point that the notion of *loloma* as a sense of kindly love and affection, and a Christian sentiment of communal caring, shapes the core of how *iTaukei* perceive their traditions and culture. *Loloma* which is also viewed as a freely given gift (Kaplan 1995, 189-191) is so powerful and prominent today because it defines *iTaukei* Fijians in opposition to the perceived selfishness of foreigners who are seen to be economically self interested, such as Fijians of Indian descent, British colonizers (Thomas 1997, 174-178), and Western tourists. As a result of its role in shaping identity in opposition to foreigners, *loloma* is integral to how many Fijians choose to see themselves as Christian and *iTaukei* (indigenous owners of the land) (Thomas, 1997, 178).

Based on my encounters with *meke*, I add to Thomas' observations and argue that expressions of *loloma* and *bula* are also key because they reify and legitimize one's connection to Christianity, and protect *meke* practitioners against the bad and uneasy feelings caused by powerful and potentially dangerous ancestral land spirits. These sources of supposed danger, that haunt and influence *iTaukei* rituals, practices, and protocols (including *meke*) threaten feelings of security for *iTaukei*. This creates an ecology of affect whereby bodies are self-governed by the desire for security through

⁷ *Bula* is translated as a greeting, but in its verb form it means to live, and as a noun it means life (Goepel 1938). In my experiences, *Bula* is expressed as a generous welcome and its meanings of life and live are often combined together to express the spirit of living life to the fullest.

their expressions and performances of felt intensities. I found *iTaukei* also governing the actions and behaviours of each other through scrutinizing and judging behaviours against specific Christian ideals of comportment that were sometimes influenced by one's Christian denomination. However, although bodies are pressured to perform along specific registers of affect, bodies are not passively controlled. Rather, they continue to emerge as actively experiencing, expressing, negotiating, and reaching towards relations with others amidst shifting nation-state biopolitical arrangements of what it means to be a "Fijian."

In addition, *loloma* and *bula* expressed in *meke* also align with the national government promotion of Fiji as welcoming, friendly, and safe for visitors and Fiji's citizens. *Bula* and *loloma* have become key themes expressed in tourist performances of *meke* and they form a part of the ongoing construction of *meke* as a "traditional" practice. However, there is a slippage between *meke* performed for tourists and *meke* performed for national events; sometimes they are one and the same. The more "good" Christian feelings are expressed with certainty, spirit, and vigor, the more convincing the performance is for its viewers who then associate *meke* with a happy and peaceful nation that is Christian and *iTaukei*. Affect, in this objectified sense, becomes representative of Fiji as a happy and safe product for tourist consumption.

Meke performed with unpredictably intense expressions of spirit and vigor, are less certain and result in feelings of uneasiness for participants and observers. These performances of "tradition" destabilize a sense of unified Fijian culture and identity.

Suddenly, “Fijianness” expands to include peoples of varying backgrounds of descent and religious orientations, including “foreigners.” This is the case with a war *meke* performed by the Oceania Centre for Art, Culture, and Pacific Studies (2012) that I explore in my chapters “Governing Affect” and “Spiriting Affect,” and a *meke* of kindly love called *Mekhe ni Loloma* that I explore in “Spiriting Affect” and “Diasporing⁸ Affect.” In both *meke* examples, feelings of certainty and uneasiness indicate the formation and directionality of governing relations.

Addressing Power in Relation to the Body

Like anthropologists of “invented tradition” literature who are concerned with the way so-called traditions are political, dance scholars have also been concerned with wanting to ground their work on dance and the dancing body in social theories that address power. These scholars are not interested in the relational aspects of the experiencing and expressing body because traditionally these experiential aspects were removed from social and material domains of power (Thomas 2003, 21). The experiential aspects of performance have been relegated to those scholars interested in studying apolitical, “natural” and biologically innate, or foundational experience and expression of those experiences.

As an alternative to researching these ephemeral aspects of performance considered to be removed from politics, some dance scholars seek to investigate the role

⁸ By using the term “diasporing” as a verb, I mean to show how diasporic identity negotiation is active, migratory, and in motion.

of power through viewing dance as a form of signification and representation in the construction of material bodies and their dances. Many of these writers are influenced to some degree by the work of philosopher, social theorist, and literary critic Michel Foucault (Desmond 1997a, 3; Desmond 1997b, 32; and Foster 1997, 235-6). These scholars include dance studies pioneers Susan Leigh Foster (1995) (influential in the work of Ann Cooper Albright (2013, 2007) and Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2007)) and Jane Desmond (1997b) (influential in the work of Ruth Hellier-Tinoco (2011)). With a shift towards applying post-structural theory, and the work of Foucault, much dance scholarship came to emphasize discursive aspects of the dancing body as text, historically constructed, and representational. The study of dance is used to analyze the construction and codification of identities through bodily movement and performance (Desmond 1997b, 29 and Desmond 1999, xiii). For these scholars, the dancing body is a site of readable text, a product of historical material forces, and, therefore, representative of social power formations that shape and discipline dancing bodies. Like Foucault, these scholars turn bodies into products of discourses, historically contingent on and disciplined by power. However, they leave little room for analysis of the immanent and emergent creativity from which choreographic and performance practices also draw (Ness 2011b, 23).

While not disputing the importance and relevance of these works, they also seem incomplete or reductive. For Foster and Desmond, the dancing body is not a simple reflection of social forces. Rather, the dancing body enacts and dialogically contributes

to the constituting of social relations (Desmond 1997b, 51 and Foster 1995, 15), creating a space for agency and resistance.⁹ Yet both scholars view the body and its movements as being highly disciplined and controlled by discursive practices and limitations (Foster 1995, 15 and 1997), making the dancing body's "writing" as "dance-making" largely ineffectual of significant change. The dancing body is reduced to being a product or function of language and knowable through reading the dancing body as a text. The body and its movements are positioned in a representational field of inquiry (Foster 1995, 15) that relies on a reader who reads based on a prior literacy of established signs and signifiers. Thus, this act of reading reduces the dancing body and "embodiment" to a manifestation and representation of past signs and signifiers.

Foster's approach to theorizing the dancing body shows how the body is involved in perpetuating power relations. However, in her theory the body is inscribed upon, disciplined, and pleased by structures of power. The power formations come first and then bodies become these formations of power as they move and dance. According to Foster,

As culture, dance is in(sinew)ated with power relations. Built bone-deep into the dancing body and permeating its practice and performance, these structurings of power both discipline and pleasure the body. And this cultivation of the corporeal takes place within and as a part of the power relations that operate throughout the body politic. (Foster 2011, 7)

⁹ For Cynthia Novack (1997), dance is also shaped by and shaping culture (15).

In this quote, the flow of power theorized by Foster moves from past to present structures of power being inscribed on the body. This movement is unidirectional and prescribes destination and prediction onto the body that can be read discursively because it is representational of power formations.

For Desmond and Foster it is the materiality of bodies and dance that make dance an important site for the study of power and its visual representation (Desmond 1997a, 2; and Foster 1995). However, making the body the equivalent of flesh and bones is also reductive. Both scholars are critical of previous writing on dance that described it as ephemeral (Desmond 1997a, 1). Desmond and Foster invest in the material body because of the academy's aversion to it, which has rendered the dancing body mute and noncognitive and dance scholarship unimportant and invisible as a result (Desmond 1997b, 30; and Foster 2005, 25-26). The turn to the material body in dance studies scholarship is partly a way to push back at being invisibilized by the academy. Internalizing this aversion to the ephemeral, Foster's 'bodily theotics,' "...armatures of relations through which bodies perform individual, gendered, ethnic or communal identities" (Foster 1995, 8), puts forth a corporeal body. Foster's corporeal body creates meaning through its physicality, motility, agency, and resistance while also being written upon and disciplined and in conversation with other modes of inquiry.¹⁰ She rejects writing about the body and its movements as ephemeral, transcendent, evanescent,

¹⁰ Foster's approach to the body as flesh and bones is also a reaction to the collapse of the real into a virtual and simulated body for the global capitalist market (Foster 1995, 16).

mystical, and untranslatable (Foster 1995, 9). She views this ephemeral approach to investigating and writing about the dancing body as problematic and “unhelpful” (1995, 10) in terms of understanding social relations of power. For Foster, research focused on the ephemeral qualities of dance is limited to self-reflexive analysis and, quoting Foster, “projecting onto or otherwise transforming what you are seeing” (Foster 2005, 22).

Though I do not claim to remove the dancing body from these critical understandings of it, as disciplined, representative, communicative, and corporeal, I argue that there are other approaches that can enable important insights into the body and culture as sites of change and emergence. A ‘generative theoric’ draws from current work on the ephemeral, unknowable aspects of bodily expression and movement to explore current questions about cultural change, power, resistance, and agency in ways that studies of the body reduced to its materiality and history cannot. Foster’s ‘bodily theoric’ that gestures towards the theoretical and the performative simultaneously (1995, 20) leaves spaces open for my ‘generative theoric’ by inadvertently acknowledging the porousness, unknowability and indeterminateness of bodies. Pursuing a course laid by Eve Sedgwick’s “weak theory” (1997), Kathleen Stewart reminds me that my engagement with Foster’s ‘bodily theoric’ is not a battle to get it right or to outsmart and assert a hierarchy of intelligence (2008, 72-73). Rather, Foster’s bodily theoric allows me to locate spaces for a mode of attunement that can simultaneously attend to historical, material, and transnational forces while also attending to expressions and experiences of

intensity in performance that are causing shifts in the encrusted relations of race and ethnicity in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora.

First, my focus on the ephemeral, unknowable potential of the dancing body adds incorporeal aspects to Susan Foster's tangible and material dancing body.¹¹ Foster is concerned with how the body has had its agency removed when treated as a mere vessel for "unconscious desires, instincts, drives, or impulses" (Foster 1995, 12). However, by emphasizing the materiality of corporeal dancing bodies (making the body knowable, tangible, and not ephemeral), I argue that Foster negates the agential potential of ephemeral experiences of the body by treating them as being of less scholarly value. In an effort to legitimize dance studies, Foster turns bodies into knowable objects that can be studied. Bodies harden into the bodies she knows that are made up of arms, legs and torso. However, in the process, she leaves little room for the illegitimate, indeterminate, porous, and ephemeral aspects of the body in active, vibrant, and relational projects (such as the bodies unsecured by shifting biopolitical terrain I encountered) that are less knowable and desirable to her. This is made evident in the following quote by Foster who is critical of writing about the body that moves past the corporeality of the body to "a theoretical agenda that requires something unknowable or unknown as an initial premise. The body remains mysterious and ephemeral, a convenient receptacle for [...] new theoretical positions" (Foster 1997, 235). Foster is looking for a more impenetrable

¹¹ Critical of how Foucault's bodies are passively inscribed upon by formations of power, Susan Foster argues that the material dancing body has agency because it is itself a form of theorizing and knowledge making (1995, 15-16).

“meat-and-bones approach to the body based on an analysis of discourses or practices that instruct it” (Foster 1997, 235).

Foster’s notion of the body is knowable and known by its physical form and the discourses that shape it. Nevertheless, while privileging a fleshy body, Foster acknowledges the existence (although disapproving of them) of immaterial bodies. For Foster, the ephemeral aspects of the body as weak and penetrable containers is used, and in a sense taken advantage of, by theory. While she sees a penetrable body in a negative light, she also inadvertently creates space for a porous body that, as I will show, is also agentive in that it can affect others (causing others to feel and sense) while also being affected (actively feeling and sensing) through its relationality (Massumi 2002 and Manning 2007).

Instead of following Foster’s approach, I consider ephemeral and incorporeal realities of the body to be important aspects of corporeality and not the opposite of corporeality. Cultural theorist Erin Manning articulates this approach when she states the incorporeal body

...reminds us that the corporeal is only ever virtually concrete. The body is always what it has not yet become. The body is in metamorphosis... Bodies are never quite there. They are not quite there because movement is characterized by its engagement with space-time that have not yet been charted... (Manning 2007, xix, xx)

In other words, the body is never fixed or fully tangible because it is always moving and transitioning into a new space-time, creating an ephemeral and unknowable quality to the

body and its experiences. Even in the appearance of stability, the body is always in a continuous state of emergence (Manning 2007).

In the case of my own research into *meke* performed in Canada, the intensity with which some experiences and expressions were shared with me during my preliminary fieldwork required the need to carve out another methodological and theoretical path that would organize itself around these ephemeral and incorporeal moments of relationally felt intensities or affect. I take these incorporeal experiences of the body to be at once intimately related to social forces that shape and are shaped by the body. In other words, the incorporeal and corporeal capacities of the dancing body are implicated in relations of power and social hierarchies that create a continuous dialogue between body and culture.

Secondly, Foster's bodily theories inadvertently enables a space for indeterminate bodies to emerge as something new. Foster writes

[n]ot all writing bodies [...] fit into the shapes that such [bodily] theories makes for them. Some wiggle away or even lash out as the historian escorts them to their proper places, resisting and defying the seep of significance that would contain them. In the making of the historical synthesis between past and present bodies, these bodies fall into a no-man's-land between the factual and the forgotten where they can only wait for subsequent generations of bodies to find them. (Foster 1995, 8)

It is the ephemeral, unknowable, and indeterminate aspects of the corporeal body that have been relegated to Foster's "no-man's land" in dance studies. But more and more scholars of dance, movement, and the body value what these aspects of the body have to offer their research (Ness 2011a and 2011b; Massumi 2002, 2010, Manning 2007). These scholars investigate moving bodies reaching towards emergent, not-yet known, or

indeterminate futures through felt relational intensities. Likewise, I see dancing bodies in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora wriggling out of signifying practices such as Foster's bodily theotics, that would determine their identities discursively in the past and present. These bodies are not only inscribed upon by the past, they also emerge as something new.

Sociologist Avery Gordon (2008) reminds me that the past may haunt the embodied present, but as Elizabeth Grosz (1999) has theorized, there is also the possibility of an embodied present that is full of uncertainty and chance that plays a role in the future as much as the past. In this regard, Grosz suggests we conceptualize pre-reflective embodied duration (feelings and sensations that are perceived prior to reflection) as having direction and movement without destination and prediction (Grosz 1999). Taking inspiration from Grosz, I see affects as experiences that enable the possibility of escaping prescribed norms because they are unexpected, uncategorizable, and give bodies an agency to enact difference and change. Rather than seeing the body as passively inscribed upon and rooted in past signification, I argue that the body's movements, sensations, and affects also imbue the body with an agency that generates culture, power, and politics. Generative and incorporeal aspects of identity re-negotiation would otherwise not be evident if I were just looking at *meke* as a form of cultural representation or at *meke* movements as a series of signs and signifiers rooted in the past.

Thirdly, Foster uses the term "theotics" to flesh out the multiple ways of theorizing the dancing body and its performed movement practices but, aside from "gesturing" towards the theoretical and the performative definitions simultaneously, she

never pins down her use of the term “theorics.” This, despite her distaste for it, creates an unknowable mystery for her readers. By not pinning her “theorics” down, I believe she has left space open for dialogue. Her theorics comes out of an important recognition that there are many forms of action that the body takes that result in multiple theories, and that the body theorizes as it moves. The actions I am interested in also generate a multitude of meanings but these meaning do not emerge from flesh alone, they emerges from flesh that experiences and expresses affect. My research offers a way of looking at corporeality that Foster’s bodily theorics attempts to disregard. I focus on the ephemeral, unknowable, and indeterminate aspects that emerge from corporeal motility. I embrace the multiplicity of what her term “theorics” has to offer while also embracing the mysterious and unknowable aspects that inform the corporeal and are in need of attention and attunement.

With Foster’s and other dance scholars concerns about the ephemeral, mysterious, and emotive dancing body being used in the past as part of a colonial endeavour to essentialize and ethnocentrically hierarchicalize colonial inhabitants, and concerns about the academy silencing dancing and treating dance scholarship as noncognitive and unimportant for academics, how do I justify a return to the ephemeral in dance? The lynchpin of such a return to the ephemeral relies on current trends in affect theory literature that provide a way to move the body beyond self-contained biology to a body in and of the world. Furthermore, in the context of Fiji’s shifting yet tightly strung biopolitical arrangements, surface representations could not easily be trusted as readable

texts of Fiji's politically lived realities. Instead, felt intensities expressed in and surrounding *meke* became evidence of political frictions and change.

Bridging Politics, Identity, and Culture Through Movement-Based Affect

Recent proponents of affect theory influenced by Baruch Spinoza (such as Massumi 2002, Seigworth and Gregg 2010, Brennan 2004, and Deleuze and Guattari 1987), view the body as having the capacity to affect others and to be simultaneously affected. This approach to affect moves the body out of stable self-containment. In other words, because affect can be shared, communicated, and transmitted between bodies (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, Massumi 2002, Brennan 2004), bodies are no longer reduced to their own biology. Bodies “catch feelings... affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage... in short, communicable affect can inflame nerves and muscles in a conflagration of every conceivable kind of passion” (Anna Gibbs in Ahmed 2010, 36). However, bodies are not shaped solely by affects in the present; they have an “affective angle” (Ahmed 2010, 36) or affective standpoint comprised of one's own unique personal and cultural context and past experiences. In addition, experiencing social inequities caused by racism, sexism, and classism are a part of one's affective standpoint and how affect is relational, expressive, and generative of differences in power and material circumstances.

My research investigates the dancing body and dance by demonstrating the links between micro and ephemeral affects with wider political significance through the performance of dance practice. I draw from the work of scholars who bridge the micro

relations of affect, sensation, expression, and experience with larger socio-political domains such as Sally Ness (2011a, 2011b, 2004), Thomas Csordas (2004, 1994, 1990), Brian Massumi (2010, 2002), and Erin Manning (2007). These scholars (along with others such as Elizabeth Grosz (1999), and Avery Gordon (2008)) share similarities in how they think about the body and its role in cultural and social organization that is helpful in my own investigation. They offer an analysis of cultural change based on moving bodies whereby the ephemeral and indeterminate aspects of the body are aspects of corporeality. Bodies for these scholars are porous in that they interface with vibrant phenomena around them (whether it be the surface of a rock or felt expressions of intensity). For these scholars, bodies are in relation with the world. These scholars are critical of a representationalist-constructivist bias that immobilizes bodies in the past as purely discursive and signifying. Instead, these scholars show how bodies move and sense in relation to each other. They argue that purely discursive bodies are not capable of this kind of mobility when they are fixed as readable text (Manning 2007, 20 and Massumi 2002, 2).

Not all of these scholars who focus on the moving bodies view movement in the same way. For Massumi (2002) and Csordas (1994, 1990), movement continues to revolve philosophically around sensation, experience, and felt expression. For these scholars, bodies move because they sense, feel, and express. Theories of affect that are rooted in the relationality of bodies tend to think of the body as comprised of micro-relations of force. Bodily motility, as a result, is viewed as micro. Larger scale bodily

movements across space and through time are difficult to see and, thus, are under-theorized. Ness (2011a) and Manning (2007) widen this thinking about the relational moving body to add physical movements that cross time and space. These larger movements of the body, according to Manning, “can never be present in position, but only in passing,” and are indeterminate (Manning 2007, 23). Movement that crosses time and space is key to their understandings of ongoing and large-scale meaning making.

Ness (2011a and 2011b) adopts a post-phenomenological, or post-individual consciousness, approach to investigate how large-scale meaning is generated from movement. As an alternative to reducing large-scale meaning making to constructed and representational bodies, Ness looks at “lived experience” as a process of large-scale meaning making (Ness 2011, 71). For Ness, bodies have the potential to originate significance in their encounters, and reconfigure previously established translocal structures of representation. Through encounters involving movements and expressions of affect, bodies generate new symbolic processes and new meaning (Ness 2011, 71). However, affect as “lived” experience is not only personal or micro, it has potential for greater than local meaning-making (Ness 2011, 82). Ness eloquently shows how experiencing and expressing affect is an outgrowth of something larger. Expressions are not consequences of local, singular crude sensations, but come from previous translocal encounters, immersions in, and contacts with the world (Ness 2011, 83). Furthermore, “lived” experiences do not simply vanish once they have been expressed. Rather, expressions of affect stay with those who are party to them, and are re-activated in

“future environments of practice” (Ness 2011, 83). Affective experiences and expressions are not just felt personally but form a process of learning through bodily practices that transcend the local to translocal meaning making potential. Ness’ work supports my adoption of a “movement-based” affect approach that continues to press for an understanding of affect that transcends micro-force relations into translocal significance through larger bodily movements.

Following Ness, key to my use of culture as a mode for analysis is the idea that culture emerges from the body and its movements in relationship to other bodies: human and non-human. For Kaeppler (2006) danced expressions are a manifestation of deeper, underlying social structures (47); and “surface manifestations of systems of knowledge” (2008a, 32). In other recent scholarship on dance, dance scholars such as Cynthia Novack (1990), Ness (1992), Mendoza (2000), Juliet McMains (2006), and Foster (2005) have theorized about how dance resonates with culture. The relationship between dance and culture is understood by these scholars to be more dialogic in the sense that dance activates and enacts culture.

I take a particular approach to conceptualizing culture that enables me to link the body, movement, and emergent meaning. I draw from Clifford Geertz in viewing culture as not substantive or separate from individuals but created at the intersection of competing views, interests, and interpretations of events, and is itself expressed and generated through the act of living (Geertz 2004, 570). But, I also take culture to emerge from the behaviours and feelings that shape and are also shaped by pre-reflective

impulses (perceptions prior to reflection) such as affects. However, pre-reflective impulses do not exist in separation from the world. Rather, drawing from Merleau-Ponty, “it is through our lived experience of our bodies that we perceive of, are informed by and interact with the world” (Thomas 2003, 29). Pre-reflective experiences and the process of reflecting on those “lived experiences” move between one another creating a continuum of culturally embodied experience (Massumi 2002, 11).

Csordas explains that exploring pre-reflective moments “...offers to cultural analysis the open-ended human process of taking up and inhabiting the cultural world, in which our existence transcends but remains grounded in de facto situations” (Csordas 1990, 10). As a simple example of this, skin becomes a naturalized marker of race and ethnicity for hierarchical formations of power. However, skin is always in a process of sensing while composing and decomposing, allowing for new experiences (Manning 2007, 114). The moment of perception before reflection is, therefore, an indeterminate moment or affect that is generated by and generative of culture. Here, the emergence of affect arises from “the simultaneous participation of the virtual [unconscious perception] in the actual [reflection] and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other” (Massumi 2002, 35). This noncausal correspondence between perception and reflection could be conceptualized, as Manning (2007) suggests, as a spiral movement (155) that does not produce a synthesis but incommensurable expressions of affect. This process is not a linear progression towards a fixed destination, or causal and

dependent on only past and present realities. Instead, affect arises from this process that involves the past, present, and future and unfolds with direction, not destination.

In direct relation to this continuum of pre-reflective experience and reflection on those experiences, I use the term identity to discuss the ways in which one comes to identify with experiences and expressions of affect. Inspired by Gille Deleuze and Felix Guittari (1987) who destabilize the myth of a stable “self” I view identity like one’s sense of self as not fixed, representable, or representative of the world. Instead, one’s identity is constantly in motion and re-negotiated through affects that are felt and sensed in the body’s experiences, interactions, and expressions. By using the hyphenated concept of “re-negotiation” I am not suggesting there was a prior constituted or inherent identity. Rather, identity is always in a process of negotiation; and it is through experiencing and expressing movement-based affects that identity is in constant motion.

I look at movement-based sensations and affects as actively and agentively generating culture and identity. This approach to the body and dance is supported by Csordas who argues “...the body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture” (Csordas 1990, 5). Csordas has inspired me to think about expression as transgressive and constitutive of social relations through feelings of intensity. I consider sensations and affects experienced and expressed in and surrounding *meke* to be such feelings of intensity. These affects, as newly felt and unexpected experiences are key to understanding the constant re-negotiation of identity for Fijians in Fiji and Canada.

I consider the following relational encounter from an interview I conducted with a Fiji-Canadian of Indian descent to be an example of an act of living as Geertz (2004) puts it or unexpected relational affect that demonstrates this continuum of culturally embodied experience that transcends and is also grounded in material circumstances. With his fist slamming down hard on the table between us, he looked me straight in the eye and told me how the 1987 coups felt: “they stabbed us in the back! But, in Canada, everything is good; we are all just Fijians now.”¹² The two seemingly separate sentiments of hurt due to feeling discriminated against in Fiji followed by a feeling of resolve and contentment in Canada make sense as co-existing sentiments in the context of our interview.

Reflecting on the event, I see the unexpected explosion of hurt as a past memory that haunts and the following expression of contentment as equally unexpected but as generating something new through its affective relational encounter. It is impossible to know precisely what, if anything, my presence contributed to his unexpected and shifting affects. But, I consider two possibilities connected to my position of power as a white, Canadian scholar interested in *meke* in relation to notions of Canadian multiculturalism. I may have created a feeling in him of needing to cater to an idea of harmoniousness in multicultural Canada. Alternatively, my question may have created a fear in my consultant of insulting Fijians of *iTaukei* descent in Canada, or of insulting me as a Canadian-born researcher. The answer cannot be pinned down. However, an attunement

¹² These sentiments emerged after I inquired about when and why my Fiji-Canadian consultant migrated to Canada. Member of Fijian Diaspora, in discussion with the author, Vancouver, B.C., August 2011.

to these unexpected affects as interactive and relational between bodies, and expressive and generative of material differences in power, indicate the directionality of cultural emergence. Expressions of affect show me through movement-based (fist slamming) affects (anger, hurt, and contentment) that the politics of Fiji linger for this individual in Canada but are transforming within new relations. After more interviews, observations, and reflections, I now see his sentiment as part of a larger cluster of affective and migratory relations that form new identifications with “Fijianness” in Canada.

Multicultural/Multiracial Mosaic and Interculturalism

The notion of ‘inclusion’ in discourses of multiculturalism and multiracialism is problematic in relation to dance. Dances of the world as representative of Canada’s multicultural mosaic (performed in folk festivals that I discuss in my chapter *Diasporing Affect*), and Fiji’s national celebrations of multiracial harmony (that I discuss in *Governing Affect*) are used to sustain boundaries between cultures, representing cultures stacked together as contained and bound by time and place and uniformly experienced. Canadian multiculturalism (adopted in 1971) seeks to ‘include’ through a model of integrating immigrants and minorities economically, socially, and politically and not through assimilating these individuals (Kymlicka 2010, 7). Through policies of integration, individuals are encouraged to continue to identify with their “ethnic origins” (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act* 1988) while also identify with Canada as a multicultural nation (Kymlicka 2010, 8). Multicultural policies in Canada often include discourses of

inclusion in which ‘inclusivity’ is based on the notion of culturally and ethnically bound communities whose members all originate from a common geographical location (Mata 1994, 18). While Fiji is just beginning to re-engage with policies of multiracialism, their mandates appear to be based on a similar model of ‘inclusion’ but with a focus on encouraging race-based identifications with Fiji as a nation. Such notions of inclusion have been criticized for grouping immigrants and minorities into homogenous, yet distinct, ethnic groups and then marginalizing those who do not fit into the parameters of accepted societal norms upon which the notion of inclusion is based (Savigliano 2011, 185).

Multicultural/multiracial discourses and practices that celebrate “difference” based on notions of “ethnicity” or “race,” presume a shared culture and identity that become statically associated with that ethnicity¹³ or race. This approach to categorizing people based on “ethnicity” or “race” also treats bodies as fixed by past signifiers and representations of racialized bodies (Urciuoli 1999, 288). As Bonnie Urciuoli puts it, multicultural discourses match cultures with “types of people” (1999, 288). In relying on

¹³ *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1988. The Act states “Whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society [...]”; Section 3.(1) (d) “Multiculturalism Policy of Canada” aims to “recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin [...]”; and, in “Implementation of the Multiculturalism Policy of Canada” section 5. (1) (g) to “assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin;” (9 June 2014) <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-18.7/FullText.html> (accessed 19 June 2014).

“ethnic” or “racialized” bodies as homogenous representations and significations of past times in other places and cultures, multicultural/multiracial discourses and practices perpetuate stereotypes of the “ethnic” and homogenous “other” rooted in pastness.¹⁴

Bodies become fixed, losing their potential for spontaneity and change when made tangible in such ethnically or racially absolute biopolitical arrangements with the state. Culture becomes nominalized as a thing that exists and can be represented as opposed to changing and in motion. The result is a failure to acknowledge and theorize how movement-based affects enable cultures and identities to merge, interact and transform.

Multiculturalism/multiracialism allows for certain markers of difference while disallowing other differences that fall outside of the status quo. Such models of ‘inclusion’ celebrate difference by creating certain boundaries around the cultures and traditions of “ethnic” or “race-based” groups and, perhaps inadvertently, perpetuate stereotypes of the ethnic or racialized and homogenous “other” rooted in the past.

According to Badiou, as explained by Savigliano,

The ethics of difference contemplated in multiculturalism and human rights poses the problem of accepting as differences only those compatible with, or assimilated to, ‘acceptable’ differences – the parameters of acceptability being defined by those who rule. Like cultural relativism, the ethics of difference dictates ‘become like me and I will respect your difference.’ (Savigliano 2011, 185)

¹⁴ This critical view is exemplified by the example in Canadian news of B.C. liberal Premier Christie Clark’s multicultural outreach plan, designed, and implemented by her minister of multiculturalism, focusing on “quick wins” or ways of getting the “ethnic vote” such as public apologies for past Canadian atrocities rooted in racism. Individuals were upset at being treated as homogenous “ethnic” groups without complexity and have their histories used by the liberal government in what was termed “Ethnic Manipulation” in order to gain voter support (Meissner 2013).

Media theorist and artist Laura Marks is also critical of aspects of multiculturalism, suggesting that it “implies the perspective of white or other dominant people” who take for granted that there is an overarching culture that continues to stem from their society (Marks 2000, 7). Marks shows how multiculturalism “has come to mean the naming and slotting of difference (Bailey 1991) and often ends up homogenizing the struggles of the diverse groups it intended to empower” (Marks 2000, 7). Multiculturalism fails to show how peoples, identities and cultures intersect and merge.

In addressing the inadequacy of these multicultural mosaic and multiracial harmony models in terms of addressing the intermediacy of identity and culture, I apply the term “intercultural,” as set forth by Marks, that allows for cultures and identities to merge, interact and transform (Marks 2000, 7).

“Intercultural” means that a work is not the property of any single culture... the term avoids the problem of positing dominant culture as the invisible ground against which cultural minorities appear in relief. Instead it implies a dynamic relationship between a dominant ‘host’ culture and a minority culture. Also, the term “intercultural” can describe exchanges between nondominant cultures. (Marks 2000, 7)

Theorizing bodies in this way enables me to situate examples of intercultural dance in Fiji and Canada in terms whereby the relationally felt dimensions of dance generate individually unique and emergent cultural experiences that push against discourses of multiculturalism and multiracialism that erase uniqueness in the act of tolerating difference. Tensions surrounding religion and ethnicity in Fiji and Fiji’s Canadian diasporic groups I discuss offer a critique of aspects of multiracial and multicultural

discourses and policies by demonstrating that relations between those who disparately identify with Fijianness in Fiji and Canada are sometimes more adequately described as intercultural. These relations as intercultural ones are made evident in the experiences and expressions of affect shared with me during my fieldwork.

Contributions of the Research

By proposing a shift towards a “generative theotics,” I aim to address a gap in dance studies and affect theory scholarship by contributing an analysis of movement-based affect as relationally felt and sensed intensities implicated in formations of power. My dissertation organizes itself into chapters that grapple with modes of governing, spiriting, diasporing, and performing affect because I want to demonstrate the multiple ways the incorporeal, motile body is theorizing. A “generative theotics” suggests there is not one singular dimension of corporeality. Rather, through affect the body takes part in a complex web of relations that is full of restrictions and agency in each of the modes I examine. I am also in conversation with affect theory literature that does an excellent job of addressing the incorporeal body but, unlike dance studies literature, sometimes loses the fleshy motility of the body that moves dynamically through space and time. My research contributes to bringing these bodies of literature together by looking at the fleshy, motile body and its ephemeral affects as connected and key to exposing the relationality and directionality of power. The incorporeal and corporeal are not bifurcated. Rather, they both need to be addressed to conceive of a body rooted in bodily

motility. This research does not apply an ontological approach to the body as a concrete, pre-determined category of being. Rather, this research takes an approach to thinking about the body as always in a state of emergence through its movements that are in relation to other human and nonhuman bodies, and non-present realities such as memories, spirits, and future potentials.

Performances of *meke* for the national stage play a role in generating national narratives. Kelly and Kaplan (2001), Kaeppler (2008b), Vilsoni Hereniko (2006), David Murray (2000), Kalissa Alexeyeff (2009) and Karen Stevenson (2002) have all written about how identity is intricately connected to the staged performance of national narratives in the South Pacific. National narratives in these cases have been a part of negotiating national identities, sovereignty, and notions of belonging. Concurring with much of their writing, my research extends the critical inquiry of performance, identity and narrative of nation into a post 2006 coup time frame. New insights are made possible by recently shifting terrains of power causing new accounts of pasts and futures to emerge. These accounts are not objective renderings of the past but stories or narratives that root themselves in ways that enable a particular approach to governing bodies.

Narratives of nation in Fiji are embedded in particular politics and formations of power. Those striving towards greater power use narratives to establish their desired political objectives (White 1987; Savigliano 1995; and Foucault 1977). These narratives that include certain stories and exclude others are used to govern the actions and behaviours of Fijians and are viewed as necessary for social, economic, political and

religious progress. However, narratives of the past have the effect of universalizing Fijian experiences and disconnecting Fiji's past and present realities from their political context.

Since Fiji's narrative accounts only include certain people and events and ignore others, these accounts are, as Michel Foucault (1977), Hayden White (1987) and Marta Savigliano (1995) have put it, discontinuous. Foucault demonstrates how one can trace power through history by exposing the historically discontinuous presence and absence of certain knowledge (1977, 154). For example, in the case of Fiji, nation building has involved the development of national narratives that reach towards different futures. One narrative provides specific links between a future of indigenous preeminence based on a romanticized notion of an *iTaukei* yet Christianized warrior from the pre-colonial past through the national performances of Christianized *meke*; and another rejects the pre-colonial past and its traditions (including *meke*) as heathen and tied to acts of war and cannibalism in order to progress towards a more civilized, democratic, and prosperous Fiji. These specific narratives of the past align with particular versions of Fiji as a nation that support one of the following nationalist agendas: *iTaukei* preeminence, multiracial democracy, or Christian evangelical prosperity. However, these narratives have, for the most part, resulted in the erasure of non-Christian indigenous spiritual practices that were key to the development of *meke*, and the exclusion of Fijians of Indian descent from a national account of the past.

While Foucault's genealogical notion of discontinuity assists in tracing colonial and post-independence power formations and enables a discursive discussion of power, I follow a course suggested by Savigliano who argues that genealogy, as a theoretical approach to tracing the contours of power in the past, ignores agency in the body and, as a result, does not sufficiently trace how power is inscribed and enacted in the body (Savigliano 1995, 226-227). Savigliano argues that in order to create a decolonized account of dance, genealogy as a theory must learn to dance, to become corporeal, sweaty, resistant and sensual (1995, 4). I add that it must also tangle with the relational intensities of affect since it is from experiences and expressions of such intensities that dancing opens spaces for countervailing interpretations of what constitutes the past, present, and the future.

I contribute to this literature on identity and nation in the South Pacific by linking the narratives of nation to the contradictory biopolitical terrain of sensation and affect. In a post-2006 coup time frame, national narratives in Fiji are being used to connect points in the minds of Fijians that are otherwise not connected in order to create action-reaction circuits built on recognizable emotions such as fear and harmony. For example, in Prime Minister Bainimarama's narrative of nation, multiracial harmony is made out to be an appropriate reaction to the narrative of Fiji's past that is two-dimensionally depicted as full of lawlessness, threats, and dangers such as cannibalism. Bainimarama's narrative bridges radical leaps across time and imaginaries to produce a new kind of Fijian citizen. However, despite using *meke* and emotion as narrative strategies to move citizens in a

particular direction based on socially recognized lines of action and reaction, affective intensities experienced and expressed in the practice of *meke* that defy categorical, and self-contained emotions disrupt the directionality of those narrative goals. As Massumi (2002) points out, affective intensities are relational and not knowable which enables these experiences and expressions to sidestep these narrative action-reaction circuits (25-28) and move into an emergent realm without a secure destination.

The politics of movement-based expression I propose fleshes out dimensions of how affects govern. I view “governing affects” as demonstrating a shift in biopolitical arrangements from bodies organized by physical and representational characteristics to bodies organized by their movement-based expressions. Whereas the governance of bodies based on categories of race was imposed in Fiji as a vertical, and hierarchical formation of power, governance through expressing affect occurs through relationally felt and sensed intensities, making the directionality of power more horizontal. This is not to say that horizontal formations of power have removed inequities, but that control happens through affective encounters that produce, re-produce and distribute power. Christian sentiments of joy and kindly love, and aggressive manliness and fear performed in *meke* for the national stage, are processes by which power is locally and translocally arranged and governing.

Recent shifts from nation-state centred and hierarchical power to more horizontal and transnational formations are creating space for new biopolitical arrangements in Fiji.

As anthropologist Charles Piot (2010) puts it,¹⁵ nation-states are no longer at the forefront of power but reacting to transnational institutions that are driving change from vertical to horizontal formations of power (Piot 2010, 8-9). In Fiji, this trend translates specifically to a shift from the hierarchical governance of chief, church pastor, dictator, or Prime Minister to the horizontal governance of transnational organizations. These transnational organizations include: NGOs who are involved in human rights issues, self-help, and family planning; intergovernmental organizations (such as Pacific Islands Forum, Asian Pacific Bank and the Commonwealth) who have suspended Fiji from participation until Fiji becomes more democratic; and, evangelical and charismatic churches (such as born again Christians, Assemblies of God, The Apostles, and New Methodists, amongst others) who encourage democratic worship and transnational mission work. While church and state¹⁶ still co-constitute much of the way power organizes itself in Fiji, there are re-distributive forces at work in re-directing biopolitics and power in Fiji to transnational organizations that, as Piot says, govern without government (Piot 2010, 8). Governance in Fiji is becoming increasingly self-imposed and interpersonal in the realm of experiencing and expressing affects that secure the status quo.

¹⁵ His analytical tools come from the influential book *Empire* by post-Marxist philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001).

¹⁶ Church and State have historically been closely allied in Fiji (see examples of this in Rabuka's leadership in Kelly and Kaplan (2001) and Miyazaki (2004)). The current president of Fiji warns against such an alliance. In his Presidential Address for Fiji's 42nd Independence Day in October 2012 president Ratu Epeli Nailatikau warns that Fiji should "tread cautiously in its choices for the future" and that merging religion with state will result in racial and ethnic discrimination.

Since older notions of governance do not adequately assist in understanding new forms of governance that are emerging, a new approach to understanding the relationships between bodies and governance is needed. My approach to understanding governance lies in the body's motility and focusing on the question posed by Erin Manning "what can a body do." This question reclaims the sensing and moving body as opposed to asking "what the body is" that serves to define and stabilize bodies in order to govern them (Manning, 2007,xv). Foucault's work on governmentality and biopolitics is helpful in understanding the broader ways in which bodies can be controlled by externally imposed and self-regulating formations of power (Hardt and Negri 2001, 27). Foucault's "technologies of power" (involving "power *over*") and "technologies of self" (involving "power *to*") (Eves 2011, 760) are certainly aspects of the way the current military dictatorship governs Fijians, and the moral and social reforms of transnational organizations (NGOs and evangelical churches)¹⁷ that generate self-governance. However, biopolitics in Fiji are contradictory in that bodies are not only controlled by formations of power rooted in the past. Bodies are also agentic and generative of not-yet charted futures through experiences and expressions of movement-based affects.

Applying Foucault's understanding of the body as fixed by pastness and immobile falls short of assisting an understanding of Fiji's contradictory and emergent biopolitical realm. As Ness points out, by suggesting the restriction of motility is tantamount to a

¹⁷ Anthropologist Richard Eves uses these insights of Foucault to critically examine how the upsurge of Pentecostalism in central New Ireland (Papua New Guinea) is a part of the moral and social reforms (including rejections of tradition for personal salvation) (Eves 2001, 760).

kind of “non-corporal” form of punishment, Foucault removes motility as an aspect of his conception of corporeality (Ness 2011b, 26). In his *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, Foucault distinguishes between modern and pre-modern forms of punishment. Pre-modern forms involved “corporal” inflictions of pain and modern forms involved “bodiless” (“sans corps”) forms of punishment entailing “merely” imprisonment (Ness 2011b, 26). Contrary to Foucault’s historicized, conceptual body that negates embodied experiences rooted in motility, Ness argues that bodies come to register changing relations by moving dynamically through their environment (Ness 2011b, 27). Ness suggests that to apply Foucault’s understanding of the body to the study of dance risks foreclosing research into forms of danced experience and intelligence that are emergent and agentive (Ness 2011b, 23).

Rather than diminish the role of motility, I take an approach to biopolitics that centralizes dynamic movement in combination with sensation and affect. This approach allows me to see how biopolitics in Fiji are contradictory. Biopolitics, a politics based on “actual” bodies that are fixed by their definitions in stable categories and forms “becomes institutionalized as a way of binding the imaginary of a body to a modality of hierarchical power” (Manning 207, 113). Through the use of national narratives, bodies are made coherent, recognizable, and governable by naturalizing markers of race, ethnicity and gender. These naturalized markers are the foundation of national body-politics in Fiji: fixing bodies as Indian, *iTaukei*, Caucasian, Chinese, masculine, feminine, male and female. However, this organization of power and politics becomes less concrete when

challenged by notions of politics and bodies that are emergent and not pre-existing in their relational contact with other bodies: human and non-human. For example, Manning explains the skin challenges a version of biopower based on “actualized” and “stabilized” bodies: “Skin as a biological and political construct reminds us that biopolitics are as virtual as they are fleshy. [. . .] Skin reminds us that the body moves all the time, composing and decomposing itself, sensing all the while” (Manning 2007, 113-114). Bodies are never actually stable even though they may appear as such. This is not to say bodies are dichotomous or stable/unstable binary opposites but to say that bodies are never wholly fixed within categories even when they appear to be. Bodies are incorporeal: at once fleshy and always shifting towards a new biopolitical pact or arrangement through their relational intensities (Manning 2007). Relational intensities operate in resonance with narratives. On the level of the skin that is always changing and sensing anew, relationally felt intensities suspend and potentially disrupt narratives (Massumi 2002, 26) of nation that seek to produce a particular type of recognizable and knowable Fijian citizen.

My own analysis exposes the directionality of shifts in identifications with *meke* and biopolitical relations by focusing on such intensities as affects: sometimes expressed in performance, sometimes expressed in whispers and rumours. These affects govern Fiji’s shifting and contradictory biopolitical terrain: at a crossroads with an uncertain future. Expressions of affect in and surrounding *meke* performance are transformative events, and part of a larger ecology generating new relations of power. This is politics

through expression rather than politics through viewing the body as a site of representation. As Manning puts it, “To express is not to state a fact. To express is to speak-with. Any speaking-with implies a dialogue, an infinite conversation. An infinite conversation supposes that the work is yet to be invented” (Manning, 2007, 111). It has not become fact it is in a perpetual state of emergence (Manning 2007, 137).

Expressions of joy, kindly love (*loloma*), happiness, aggressive manliness, and readiness for life and for battle move Fijians to reach towards their hopes and desires for the future, and to change course or to stay the course. But, even when things change and Fijians are generating a new political terrain, Manning reminds me “there is no clean slate onto which bodies are written and politics are made” (Manning 2007, xvii). In *meke* for the national stage new political terrain emerges upon old political terrain. Expressions in *meke* are not neutral or equal exchanges but rooted in material realities with consequences that shape lives and future relations. The three competing nationalist agendas with their accounts of pasts and futures I identify are aspects of these uneven material realities and a new political emergence in Fiji.

Movement-based expressions of spirit are not immune to politics and, instead, serve as a reminder of the power and politics of expressions of spirit that integrates with matter and motility. Although my intention is not to impose a Western definition of spirit on *meke* performances, I found the *Oxford English Dictionary* had a wide range of definitions that are useful in explaining the ways in which spirit seems to operate in *meke*. Within these definitions, spirit is defined as a noun and as a verb. As a noun it often

connotes the immaterial as separate from the material body, but capable of moving and possessing the material body. However, it is also defined in ways that bring the immaterial and material together so that “things” can have a lively quality. People can have a lively, vivacious, and vigorous spirit in their actions and discourse. This approach to spirit allows for intangible spirit to be an aspect of the material body.

The term “spirit” works within terminology that my consultants used to describe some of their performance experiences that were haunted by the spirits of ancestors or *kalou*. Adding to this relationship between spirit and matter, Wesleyan Reverend Joseph Waterhouse (1866)¹⁸ translates the word for spirit (*kalou*) as “the invisible cause, the mind of matter, the origin of motion which cannot be comprehended” (403-404). In relation to the performance experiences that were sometimes described in terms of dangerous possession of ancestors, spirits, such as those described by Waterhouse, draw the immaterial together with the material while forging links with the past. In showing how spirit in *meke* has links to the practice of ancestor worship, I focus on how spirit performed in the context of *meke* sustains and challenges dominant religious politics. Spiriting affect shows that despite the Christian concern in Fiji with separating the spirits of ancestors (who were named by missionaries as devils and demons) from the living (Hocart 1912, 437-439), body and spirit are not bifurcated. Rather, in the context of growing anxieties about religious practices in Fiji, the porous relationship between flesh

¹⁸ Waterhouse based his account of Fiji on the fourteen years he was appointed a missionary to the Fiji Islands starting in 1849.

and spirit results in a constant and political negotiation of proximity and distance with felt/sensed spirit.

Spirit can also act as a verb in *meke*. As a verb, spirit can be infused into a person. One can be “spirited” in ways that allow for achievements, actions and strength to overcome hardships. Actions can cause “spiriting” reactions that allow for the achievements and the ambitions of those who are being spirited. Spiriting means to excite, instigate, or stir up an audience. I see the notion of spiriting as active and agentive, and not simply a passive outcome of spirit possession from a nominalized and immaterial being. I use the term “spiriting affect” to draw attention to the ways in which spirit might also be considered an agentive relational affect that generates energetic and embodied experiences in *meke*.

I use a notion of spirit that differs from the visual ghosts and spectres theorized by Sally Ness (2001) and Jacques Derrida (1994), in that spirits in my research materialize through affects. In his *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida argues that Karl Marx invokes a specter in the opening of his *Communist Manifesto* that, for Derrida, is an immaterial presence that haunts his materialistic aims (Derrida 1994). Ness (2001) also encounters ghosts during her research in the Philippines. For her, ghosts come in the form of “western” cultural intrusion and remnants of post-colonialism. For Ness, her ghosts have left their mark on the Philippines in visual ways “in the local symbolic fabric” that haunts local life (Ness 2001,79). Ness’ ghosts and Derrida’s (1994) specters offer my research an approach that allows for the non-material and the material to co-exist. However,

rather than privilege the visual and discursive aspects of specters as Ness and Derrida have done, my notion of spiring affects, like sociologist Avery Gordon's ghosts (2008) and anthropologist Todd Ochoa's haunted bodies (2007), focuses on the felt/sensed indicators of spirit while recognizing their incorporeal and ephemeral qualities that make them disruptive and unknowable but deeply felt.

While diaspora typically refers to tangible, quantifiable and bounded groups that are culturally homogenous, and organized around common issues and concerns (Tölölyan 1996; Brubaker 2005), Fiji's Canadian diaspora offers an alternative understanding. This diaspora is characterized by practices that expose diverse political realities and concerns related to various forms of "difference." This disparate diaspora was made visible through dancing bodies that reveal the tensions within the Fijian community in British Columbia. I argue, ultimately, that the visibility of these tensions reveals how ethnic groups are not simply homogenous, harmonious, fixed, and bounded. These tensions, in turn, draw attention to what I am calling a disparate diaspora.

My research shows that Fijian dance in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora is an affectively embodied and interactive negotiation of personal and social identity that can problematize simplistic notions of nationalism, ethnicity, and tradition. I demonstrate how the biopolitics upon which these notions rest are shifting in the movement-based experiences and expressions of *meke* performances. As a result, my research contributes an understanding of the political dimensions of movement-based affect that connect intimate and micro relations to wider translocal political significance through larger

dynamic bodily movements and migrations through space and time. This approach to the motile and incorporeal body demonstrates movement-based affect in the process of generating culture that is also linked with the past.

Currently, there is little to no scholarly writing on *meke*, and what little writing does exist leaves the reader wanting. For example, consider the following description of *meke* by Matt Tomlinson:

A *meke* is a Fijian ceremonial chant and dance. The dancers and the band, who beat drums and sing, are separate groups. In some *meke*, dancers hold clubs; in others, fans; and in some varieties, the dancers hold nothing but move their hands in coordinated patterns and add the occasional percussive clap. They are generally held in formal occasions in front of large crowds. Composers often create both the lyrics and the dance forms (Fison and Gatschet 1885: 197). Lyrics sometimes come to the composer in a dream (Mahoney 1993: 29), and in the old days composers could earn fame – and a fortune in whales’ teeth – for their creations (Fison and Gatschet 1885). *Meke* lyrics sometimes commemorate real personalities and events... but sometimes they describe mythic events, such as “Wrecked on the Voyage to Lau,” a *meke* that tells of a chief’s encounter with the shark god Dakuwaqa (Morey 1932). They may also evoke natural events such as waves crashing over coral or fruit bats in a grove of bananas (Derrick 1946: 17; see also Waterhouse 1866: 64-66, 432-435). (Tomlinson 2009, 175)

Although it is significant that Tomlinson includes *meke* in his exploration of Fijian Methodism, this is one of the most extensive academic pieces of writing on *meke* I have found. While not necessarily untrue, this excerpt creates a rather disengaged and peripheral impression of *meke*. His writing draws largely from sources written prior to the 1950s, and confirms my own research findings that there is a large gap in scholarly literature on *meke*. I consider my dissertation to be an important step in redressing that gap.

In addition, while *meke* chants are sometimes explored¹⁹ the choreographed movements are scarcely acknowledged. My dissertation aims to address this by showing that movement-based expressions in *meke* are political, spiritual, migratory, haunting, emergent and performative. Movement-based expressions in *meke* carry meaning and significance that moves beyond nominalized representations of Fijian culture and heritage. My focus on the movement-based expressions of *meke* contributes a new approach to understanding politics, power, identity, and culture in Fiji as relational experiences involving those who are performing and viewing *meke* bringing new meaning and significance into play.

Just as I am left wanting from the scholarly descriptions of *meke* that only address the musical and text-based aspects, I will leave some feeling dissatisfied with my writing about the music and texts of *meke*. In this dissertation, my focus on the movement aspects of *meke* aims to redress the current lack of focus on the danced aspects. However, I acknowledge that *meke* is a song-dance not just a song or a dance. The music, text, and movement co-exist, yet I do very little to address the connections between these aspects of *meke*. So, going forward with my research on *meke*, I would like to address those connections.

In addition, owing to space limitations and my chosen emphasis on movement-based expressions in and surrounding *meke* performances, I have deliberately limited this study in other ways that need to be mentioned. Although Fiji is home to significant

¹⁹ See for example Tomlinson (2009, 175) and Kaplan (1993, 193-196).

Chinese, Rotuman, and Tongan populations I do not address the dances of these groups, or the ways in which *meke* performances might be influenced by these populations. Also, this study does not explore the social structural relationships in Fiji that influence *meke*.²⁰ One such relationship is referred to as *tauvu* (“tau” means friend and “vu” means spirit) and allows audience members to joke with the performers with whom they share the same ancestor spirit. This *tauvu* relationship came up in many interviews and observations as an aspect of *meke* performance. Examples of the kinds of joking permitted by this relationship include audience members putting baby powder, or perfume on their *tauvu* who is dancing, or putting a candy in the performer’s mouth as a way to generate laughter towards the *tauvu* who is performing. While it is beyond the scope of this current project, in my future research on *meke*, I will spend time addressing the influences of such relationships on *meke*.

This is a timely project given that the current level of migration from Fiji to Canada (primarily British Columbia) is quite significant (Lal 2003) in part due to tensions surrounding notions of race and ethnicity in Fiji. As a result, there is a great need for more exploration of the critical aspects of relocation amongst Fijian populations to Canada including their dance performance and practice. However, nothing to my knowledge has been written about Fijian dance in Canada. As a result, this research will be an important step in contributing to scholarly literature on dance in diaspora while, at

²⁰ For a greater understanding of the social structural impacts on the practice of *meke*, see Dorothy Sara Lee’s doctoral thesis on music performance in Viti Levu, Fiji (1984).

the same time, facilitating a deeper cultural sensitivity and understanding of Fiji-Canadians. This research contributes to understanding the embodied complexities of Fijian dance in Canada with the goal of expanding an understanding of how Canada's dance communities are enriched through diasporic communities. Dance amongst this Fijian diaspora in Canada is not insular but has a vast and unpredictable influence on the affective dimensions of other dance communities. It is no longer an issue of seeing dance in Canada as separate ethnic or folk dances but an issue of seeing how the embodied affects generated by these various ways of dancing inform one another and generate an emergent sense of identity and culture.

Methods of Affect and Writing Strategy

I am dreaming... My family and I are back in the Japan-Pacific ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) Centre at the University of the South Pacific. The theatre inside the Centre was a second home to us while in Fiji. But, now we have returned to the future. The Oceania Dance Theatre (ODT) is preparing to perform their newest programme: a programme to which my husband and I both contributed. Our friend Damiano is there. I see the dancers and I feel a deep longing because some part of me realizes I am not with them. I miss their lives, their personalities, their dancing and the way they dance and work together. The first dancer I see is Moira. Moira is vibrant with so much energy, as usual. She stops to greet us and simultaneously smiles and cries to see our children. She seems to embody the intense happiness and grief that I

have felt at every stage of my investigation into Fijian dance. These feelings are Moira's but they are also in me. And, yet I cannot obtain them or grasp them because they are so far away in time and place. I can only reach with direction and not destination or prediction.

Immobility obstructs my view so I roam. I can hear the voice of the director but I cannot see him. The theatre is dark and I cannot always see what is going on. There is a major obstruction in front of the stage that makes it really hard to see the dancers dancing. Whenever I sit down to watch, I find I can only see a small fraction of what is going on. The seats are sometimes facing sideways and not at the stage at all. To see anything, I have to roam. I roam about looking for a seat but never find one. I try going backstage and find myself in an underground cave with a boiler. The boiler is about to explode but my husband stops it from exploding. He is under the theatre keeping it cool and collected. I am envious of his backstage position from which he is able to see the performance so clearly. I decide to take a backstage approach too, and it allows me to see more. I can see clearly only when I am backstage and not when I am up in front of the stage watching from the audience. I cannot see what is happening when I only watch what I am "supposed" to see. I feel welcome backstage, like I was expected back there all along. My mom is in the audience and she is taking care of my baby girl and my little boy. The past and the future are now colliding together creating in me a confused sense of self: I no longer know where, or when I am. I start roaming.

I share this memory of a dream I had after returning to Toronto from Fiji because it summarizes my approach to research rooted in motility and affect. Over the course of the two years I spent doing fieldwork and archival research on *meke*, I used a distinct set of embodied ethnographic and historical research strategies to explore the recent shifts in and around *meke*. The embodied approach to fieldwork I utilize emerged from my preliminary fieldwork experiences in Vancouver and Victoria, B.C. These experiences necessitated theoretical and methodological tools that would allow me to explore and analyze the felt intensities expressed to me by Fijian migrants regarding *meke*. By focusing on relational sensations, expressions, and experiences, I locate important identity and culture shifts that would otherwise be less visible to someone engaging with purely discursive methods, and who might deny these aspects of the body. I became aware of issues of importance by attuning to affects that materialized in bodies (both in my field research and my archival research). These affects exposed the directionality of shifts in power, identity, and meaning, and became a guiding principle for my research. Therefore, I apply methodological tools that assist in locating the emergence and directionality of shifting identity, biopolitical arrangements, and cultural change that centre on movement-based affects.

Knowledge and understanding of *meke* came through movement. Rather than positioning myself statically within the research where it was impossible to see the issues involving *meke* straight on, I had to be moving to understand and to see. Nothing was certain with the experiences and expressions of affect in and surrounding *meke*, forcing

me to move and look at *meke* from different angles and to look from behind the scenes. Following the approaches of Deidre Sklar (1991) and Sally Ness (2001) I learned *meke* as a way to generate interviews and interview questions. This step helped me to understand the differences in dance form that have developed from one locale to another from a dancer's point of view. This method, according to Ness, is of great significance; it aims to generate and embody the philosophies and sensations of its subject (Ness 2001, 75) while generating interview questions geared towards understanding the key issues of embodiment. While I would not necessarily feel the same sensations as others dancing the same dance, by having a similar physical language to communicate through I was able to ask dancers about what they were feeling kinaesthetically and have them explain through a combination of words and movements. As a result, I interviewed the dancers and moved with them as a way to get at the felt/sensed experiences that were of key importance. It was not revealing enough to just observe performances. So, I took class and rehearsed with many of the dancers I interviewed and observed in performance. Through learning *meke* in Canada and Fiji and dancing with *meke* dancers in Fiji on a regular bases, I gained key insights into the ways the incorporeal body is implicated in relations of power that are in motion and migratory.

My research unfolded from three fieldwork trips to Victoria and Vancouver (totaling two and a half months) and one fieldwork trip to Fiji (just short of five months) occurring after my second trip to British Columbia. My thinking developed out of criss-crossing back and forth between Toronto, British Columbia, and Fiji. I made a first trip

to Victoria and Vancouver to begin interviews and quickly learned that each site had a different set of diasporic relations, politics, and tensions. This preliminary experience taught me that Fiji's Canadian diaspora is disparate and not one cohesive community with which I could connect. Sometimes rivalries posed barriers making it impossible for me to cross over from discussions with one group to another. The findings of this dissertation are therefore not generalizable but specific to the contexts I discuss. From these initial discussions and re-connections (in the case of Victoria where I grew up), I began to identify issues, people, and places that I would later pursue in Fiji.

Before my second trip to Vancouver and Victoria, I studied video footage of a *meke* recently choreographed and performed in Vancouver by a Fijian woman I had already interviewed during my first trip to Vancouver. I spent time with the choreographer of this *meke* on my second trip to Vancouver in order to interview her about the specifics of her choreography in relation to her own felt experiences and expressions of intensity. I was able to ask her specific questions in relation to the movements of her *meke*, and her process for and experience of creating, teaching, and performing them. This helped me to identify many important issues including some of the shifts in identification with "Fijianness" and *meke* that are resulting from the tensions and transformations co-constituted by religion and politics in Fiji and Canada, that I discuss in my following chapters. I utilized this process of conducting an initial interview, learning *meke*, and following up with a second interview in Fiji and in Canada. This approach allowed me to analyze how movement-based affects expressed in and

surrounding *meke* are generating changes in biopolitics and culture in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora.

My time in Viti Levu, Fiji involved observing several *meke*, conducting many interviews, and learning a *meke* created specifically as a gift for me to bring back to Fijians living in Canada. In Fiji, as in Canada, I found it fruitful to interview the dancers I watched perform. I observed two *meke* performances by the Nasikawa Meke Group and interviewed two of the dancers in Navola in the Western Province of Nadroga-Navosa. I did not observe *meke* performances while staying in a nearby village. Nevertheless, some of my most fruitful interviews occurred while staying there. These interviews taught me about the growing trend in Fiji of rejecting *meke* and other traditional practices. Interestingly, I was also able to interview a woman who has married into the village from Ra Province where traditional protocols and the worship of ancestral spirits is openly practised alongside Christianity. She is passionate about *meke* and was happy to share her passion in an interview with me. In Pacific Harbour, Deuba (in the province of Serua) I observed two performances at the Cultural Centre and interviewed the director of the dance ensemble. And, in Suva (in the province of Rewa) I was fortunate to make close connections to the artists at the Oceania Centre for Art, Culture, and Pacific Studies (OCACPS) at the University of the South Pacific. As a result, I was not only able to observe them performing *meke*, but was able to dance with them in their daily warm ups on a regular basis and to interview several of the dancers on more than one occasion, allowing me to follow up on issues that needed clarification and deeper

understanding. I could return to hunches and questions that emerged from relations of intensity that I experienced and learned about.

Making the fruitful connection to the OCACPS and to Damiano Logaivau, the *daunivucu* (*meke* choreographer and composer) who was to become a key source of knowledge and insight on *meke*, came as the result of a particular set of events. Prior to leaving Canada, I had been in contact with Vilsoni Hereniko, the director of the OCACPS. Because I was eager to interview him, Dr. Hereniko suggested that my family and I buy tickets to see the show he was currently directing called *Drua: Wave of Fire* and meet with him at that time. We arrived to buy our tickets two days before opening and found that Dr. Hereniko and his assistant were in desperate need of a lighting designer. No one knew how to run the lights in the new and fully equipped theatre in the Japan- Pacific ICT Centre. When they discovered that my husband is a lighting designer for theatre and dance they asked if he could help and, of course, he was happy to do so. As a result, we spent the next two weeks at the theatre.²¹ Dr. Hereniko introduced me to Damiano during the production's final rehearsals. Damiano was eager to speak with me

²¹ Our connection to the Oceania Centre was further extended when the assistant director, Peter Espiritu, invited me to take class with the dancers in the cast (having studied ballet in New York and Limon with Betty Jones in Hawaii he alternated his classes between Limon and ballet). Class was often outdoors amidst coconut and banana trees at the Oceania Center. Taking class with the dancers (and sometimes being invited to teach class) allowed me to get to know the dancers and speak with them about *meke* on many occasions. Being invited to set work on the dancers for a performance occurring the week of our departure from Fiji, my husband's assistance with providing a workshop on the lighting equipment in the theatre, and his lighting design for their performance that occurred days after our departure from Fiji kept us connected to the artists at the Oceania Centre for the whole duration of our time in Fiji.

and share his knowledge about *meke*. After the production ended, Damiano offered to create a *meke* for me to bring back to Canada to teach to the Fijian diaspora there. The *meke* called *Mekhe*²² *Ni Loloma* (translated as gift of kindly love) is about the gift of love from my mother's Fijian nanny Anna, and the migration of that love in time and space. I met with Damiano often in order to discuss *meke* and the meanings that his *meke* express. We met at the Oceania Centre at USP and in the backyard of the house my husband and I rented in Pacific Harbour. We chose spaces that allowed us to move our bodies if we wanted or needed in order to create understanding and clarify meaning about *meke*. These movement-based discussions were always very intense and often lasted up to two hours with not a moment wasted.

The relaxed time spent after our more formal discussion was also instructive. After rehearsal one day, my husband and I hacked away at the coconuts with a machete to offer fresh coconut to Damiano and his nephew to drink. Damiano gently asked for the machete and struck the coconut with one or two strikes while holding the coconut with his other hand. He showed us how to use the outer shell of the coconut to scrape out the young coconut flesh inside after drinking the refreshing water inside. Damiano and his nephew provided everyone with coconuts by knocking them out of the tree with a skilled use of a long bamboo stick. What would have taken us thirty minutes took them seconds. This is the physical knowledge about living in Fiji that makes its way into *meke*. For

²² *Mekhe* is spelled with an "h" in this case out of respect for Damiano's Fijian dialect from Macuata province in Vanua Levu that softens the "K" sound. Not all linguists agree on how to represent that softened "K" but Damiano's preference was to indicate the softened sound by adding an "h."

example, this work of preparing coconut to eat and use becomes the hand and arm gestures of *meke*. Damiano explained it is this knowledge of a deep spiritual link between bodies and the land that generates *mana* (defined briefly as a spiritually effective power of bringing-into-existence (Sahlins 1985, 38)) when expressed and communicated in these gestures.

During these rehearsals and a small performance of *Mekhe ni Loloma*, I gained invaluable insights. I experienced challenges due to my own dance performance and practice biases that are shaped by my western theatrical modern dance background. In my endeavors to physically learn the *Mekhe*, my own feelings of restriction and awkwardness gave me insights into the feelings, sensations, and movements that have become associated with varying essentialized notions of Fijianness. Being part of this *Mekhe* process from inception to its completion in a small performance also showed me how the dance form changes in terms of movement, intention, feelings, and meaning depending on the context in which it is done. In addition, as I discuss in my chapters “Spiriting Affect” and “Diasporing Affect,” by learning *Mekhe ni Loloma* and interviewing Damiano about that *Mekhe*, I came to understand an agentive approach to generating spirit and *mana* through *meke*.

Despite its large presence in my discussions with Fijians about *meke*, I initially felt it was inappropriate for me to write about *mana* due to my position as a non-*iTaukei*, Western scholar. In place of the notion of *mana* as a verb, I thought of spiriting affect. The two notions seemed to capture the same qualities of the body’s ability to be at once

material and incorporeal – porous flesh effecting change through the expression and transmission of felt/sensed energy and intention. My goal was not to hide the importance of *mana* individuals were sharing with me but to not speak for *iTaukei* experience and get it wrong. However, inspired by what was shared with me, I feel it is really important to make note of the Fijian use of *mana* as a verb because it re-claims agency and ownership over *mana* that, as Tomlinson notes, seems to have been lost with the influence of the Methodist Church translations of the concept (2009). As a result of these conflicting issues, it is with trepidation that I briefly and narrowly discuss some aspects of the complex Fijian concept of *mana* in relation to affect and spirit.

My final trip to Victoria and Vancouver post Fiji was an invaluable opportunity to deepen my thinking by doing follow-up interviews and bringing gifts to those with whom I consulted. I brought *yaqona* (kava)²³ to those who would appreciate it. In Victoria members of the Fijian diaspora spearheaded a gathering and requested a *sevu ni yaqona* (a presentation of *yaqona*) to be done as a mutual sign of deep gratitude and respect. For those who do not drink kava, I brought handcrafted gifts made in Fiji. My time in Fiji helped me to gain a clearer sense of the politics in Fiji and how my consultants in Canada were related to those politics. For some Fiji-Canadians of Indian descent these politics are the reason for their being in Canada; they have come out of necessity for their own safety.

²³ *Yaqona*, or kava, is an oceanic ceremonial and social drink made from the root of a plant (*Piper Methysticum*) in the pepper family.

Archival research became an important source of insight and evidence of the affective intensities I encountered. Archival research occurred between trips to British Columbia, with my own inherited family archive, and during my time in Fiji at the National Archive of Fiji. My family archive of formal and informal documents that pertain to Fijian customs from early-colonial Fiji (1880s) to the 1940s reveals colonial anxieties around Fijian traditions such as *meke*, as well as the narratives used to contain these anxieties and justify a “British” (including Australian) presence in Fiji.

I followed up on this archival thread at the National Archives in Fiji by pursuing files from the Colonial Secretary’s Office (CSO) covering the time period my family was in Fiji (from 1937 to 1945) up to the 1960s pre-independence. I was told that files pertaining to a post-independence time frame are not yet accessible to the public. Of particular interest in relation to my research findings from observations and interviews were files dealing with *meke* as it relates to tourism, and spiritual and religious practices. I read these archives to locate affect. This allowed me to see how colonizers who were anxious about generating income for Fiji searched for ways to turn tourism and the performance of *meke* into a profitable enterprise for Fiji, often drawing on a Hawaiian model and the performance of *hula* for inspiration. It also showed me they struggled with articulating and controlling indigenous non-Christian spiritual practices and turned to other colonies in Africa as a guide for how to criminalize such practices. I found one case of *meke* practitioners being criminalized for their participation in a *meke* because it seemed connected to non-Christian spiritual practices and was a potential source of anti-

colonial behaviour. These archival documents generated more questions and insights into current religious grounds for rejecting *meke* that coincide with a general acceptance of *meke* as a form of “cultural entertainment.”

The following personal experience, although not drawn from *meke*, intimately relates to my methodological approach. Prior to going to Fiji, I was invited by a Fijian Pastor and his Fiji-born daughter Lavonne to come to his church service in Vancouver. I had been interviewing Lavonne about a Christian themed *meke* she created for one of their Church fundraising events. Her father is the pastor of one of the three Fijian churches in Vancouver, all of which are Pentecostal and mostly attended by Fijians of native (or *iTaukei*) descent. Pentecostalism has a long history in Fiji as a form of religion coated political resistance to British colonial rule starting as early as the 1880s (Thomas 1997, 51 and Nichole 2006). It is currently on the rise in Fiji along with other evangelical groups that reject the hegemonic alliance established by colonialism between governance, chiefly authority (maintained through “traditional” and “customary” laws and practices), and the Methodist Church (Tomlinson 2009). The increased presence of Pentecostalism amongst Fijians in Canada is the result of the many who have fled Fiji, fed up with an increasingly impoverished dictatorial nation-state that, at least at the level of spectacle, perpetuates old systems of power and dominance. Unlike the Fijian Methodists who have migrated to Canada over the last few decades and who want to preserve and share their culture, traditions and heritage with which they still strongly identify, Fijian Pentecostal migrants are ready to reject the past in search of better futures.

Aware of my research on *meke*, the pastor and his wife asked me to share the motivations for my research project during the service. Being inexperienced with the protocols of any church service, I was taken off guard. I instantly felt tears start to come to my eyes at the thought of explaining that my project, initiated after my mother passed away, was in pursuit of a legacy of love spawned by an *iTaukei* woman Anna Qumia. My mother was born in British colonial Fiji and Anna worked as a domestic worker for my grandparents, caring for my mother during her early childhood. I explained to those present that I believed Anna's love was an important part of how my mother came to identify herself and was an integral gift that gave my mother comfort, strength and the ability to survive many hardships, and that the love given by Anna now lives inside of me to be passed on to my children. The magnitude of this sentiment seemed to be felt by the participants of the service: some wiping tears from their eyes as I spoke. I observed feelings of love being communicated and shared in that moment. It was not a moment of simply feeling individually felt categorical emotions such as happiness or sadness. Rather, this was an event that generated an affective pact – as Massumi and Manning put it, relational feelings of intensity that are transmitted between bodies in motion – expressing, reaching – bodies implicated in formations of power (Massumi 2002; and Manning 2007). Affects moved between the “voice [of one] to ear [of another], hand [of one] to back [of another].... affect [was] all and only in the linkage” (Massumi 2011, 111) – not belonging to one entity.

Spiriting affect was generated between us: between my expressions of felt memories in relation to feelings of generosity and support evoked by those at the service. It moved many to ask how they could help. The generosity was overwhelming. One man named Bavai who is with Assemblies of God invited me and my family to stay with his mother and father in their home situated in a Fijian village in the Western Province of Viti Levu. Although some evangelicals, such as Lavonne, still practise Fijian traditions modified in ways to suit their Christian beliefs and values, Bavai in Canada, along with his family in Fiji, rejects Fijian traditions such as *meke*. I spent time with his family in Fiji learning more about the political and religious choice to reject tradition and the impacts that has on village dynamics. In Canada, this poses different challenges on a diaspora that performs its traditions in part to be celebrated, recognized and included within Multicultural Canada.

But why was this church service an affectively intense event? Without consciously realizing it at the time, by introducing myself in the context of “Fijian” love, returning that gift of love and being myself the daughter of a Fiji born woman, I was in a sense performing an affective register that happened to link with rhetoric of Christianity, emotion of Pentecostalism and feelings of Fiji as a homeland linked to Canada through love. This link was made through affects of deep gratitude and respect (*vinaka vaka levu*) and kindly love and affection (*loloma*) making my “performance” recognizable, motivating and inspiring to those in the church. It was clear that my expressions hit a

resonant chord with Fiji-Canadians in that church service. I was in a sense performing a kind of testimony. As anthropologist Jacqueline Ryle explains,

Testimony is the externalization of an inner experience, the making public of something that was essentially personal. A personal spiritual experience becomes part of public spiritual knowledge, the shared knowledge and also shared embodied spiritual experience of the speaker and audience. (Ryle 2010, 162)

Without consciously realizing it at the time, expressing the affective triggers of deep respect (*vinaka vaka levu*) and kindly love (*loloma*) made my “testimony” recognizable, motivating and inspiring to those in the church. But why were my expressions and sentiments meaningful? I argue that my expressions were meaningful because I unexpectedly brought a fragment of Fiji to Vancouver that day that aligned with a particular construct of Fijianess that those in the group are themselves invested: recognizable, secure, Christian and in opposition to the perceived selfishness of foreigners. Through expressions of love, I was part of a relational event that enabled us to reach towards emergent identities desiring a sense of inclusion, security and recognition in a migratory zone of affect connecting Fiji with Canada. My expression of words coupled with certain relational affects generated a spirit that was understandable, knowable, recognizable, secure, and stabilizing as “good” Christian sentiments.

Although feelings and sensations of intensity were relationally generated, those present did not feel them in the same way making affect political. Each of us came into that moment with distinct qualities, desires and histories. Our bodies were somewhat shaped by our pasts and, as art historian Blake Stimson puts it, the “densely layered accumulation of affective” experiences involving social formations of power (Stimson

2008, 76). My own presence as a white, pregnant, Canadian citizen, PhD candidate, granddaughter of Fiji's Colonial Inspector of Mines and Mining Engineer, and daughter of recently deceased Fiji-born woman who identified with Anna's *loloma*, undoubtedly shaped my presence differently for each individual in the room based on their own experiences. The relational affects that emerged involved, as Erin Manning describes it, inscribing "my skin onto yours [and becoming] imprinted, forever changing the dynamic of my own writing" (Manning 2007, 121). For example, during the service, the pastor explained to those present that I had shared with him photos of Fiji taken by my grandfather. Amongst the photos were pictures of Fiji's Vatukoula gold mine, a mine my grandfather inspected during his time living in Fiji in the 1930s and 40s. The pastor explained that his grandfather, who cared for him as a child, died in the 50s when the chimneystack in one of the images collapsed on him. Upon sharing this experience, my relationship to the photos and my family history quickly changed becoming less naïve while thickening with feeling and significance. The Pastor, although stunned and saddened by the unexpected memories of his past, seemed keen to engage more in our conversation. These feelings formed a part of the relational pact that emerged during the church service through feelings of intensity that were transmitted between bodies in motion - expressing, reaching – bodies implicated in formations of power (Massumi 2002 and Manning 2007).

Writing Strategy

Although each chapter of this dissertation tends to focus itself on either Fiji or its Canadian diaspora, I also aim to demonstrate the migratory relationship between Canada and Fiji. Therefore, within each chapter I weave back and forth between Fiji and Canada as a reminder of this migration. The weaving back and forth is not imposed or arbitrary. Rather, it is a reflection of my research process and findings. I move back and forth to demonstrate the relationships and encounters as they occurred in my research. But, more importantly, I move back and forth as a reminder that the translocal relations and migrations between Fiji and Canada are ongoing and part of a continuing re-negotiation of identity. Because Canada has a significant Fijian diaspora, Fiji is in the thoughts and movements of Fiji-Canadians and Canada is in the thoughts and movements of Fijians. Identities are not fixed to bounded geographical sites but migratory and translocal.

In an effort to share these experiences of intensity in and around *meke*, and to hold myself accountable to their nuances, I have included sections of writing in the present tense that describe my own ethnographic experiences. I write in the present tense not to create a sense of ahistorical timelessness, but to bring the reader into the complexities of felt and sensed relational experiences. In addition, I shift between present tense in my ethnographic descriptions and past tense in my analysis of experiences and research findings. Like my dream excerpt that opens my methods section, I aim to unsettle divisions between past, present, and future, and to show how the past impacts the present and the future but does not bind future outcomes. The future is not purely determined by a static set of historical circumstances; the future is also full of the unknown. My own

affective experiences written in the present tense complicates the fixing of the body and its experience in the past, as has been the trend in much dance studies literature, and demonstrates emergent and unruly aspects of the body.

A Project Shaped by Grief And Love

This project began after my mother passed away; in a state of grief I became aware of how much she identified with certain feelings of love ignited in her by Anna who cared for her as a child while growing up in Fiji. My mom had just passed away and it became clear that she was able to survive many hardships during her lifetime because of feelings of love she associated with Fiji. These feelings of love developed despite the colonial cold heartedness and war that she felt surrounded her and that tried to control her. My mother was born in Fiji because my grandfather (who was Australian but carried a British passport) was working there as a mining engineer for the British colonial administration. Her need to identify with these early memories of love was made evident in several ways. She chose to stay connected to the Fijian and South Pacific Islander diasporas on Vancouver Island, and she chose to decorate our home with *masi* and *tapa* cloth (patterned bark cloth), a *tanoa* bowl (kava mixing bowl), and Fijian war clubs that were given to my grandfather as a gift. The fragments of writing she left behind pertaining to the importance of Anna's love were also evidence of how her sense of identity was powerfully formed by affective memories she associated with Fiji.

Anna Qumia left an invaluable life-long embodied memory of love that had a vital, sustaining power for my mother in times of hardship. My mother writes,

The source of my truth is an untouchable inner core of my being that has always been there for me no matter what difficulties life has placed in my way. No matter how badly others have hurt me, no one has ever been able to break into this secret part of my being to break me down. This place contains some images: the garden in Fiji where I played under the Pandanus leaves, and where Anna was always there to protect me from the stinging berries; her lap where I laughed and rubbed noses; the beauty of Frangipani... (White Nunn N.d.)

The above quote became evidence of my mother's desire to shape her identity by the embodied and affective memories of love, so deeply connected to memories of childhood in Fiji. Even on her deathbed my mother wore a muumuu covered with fuchsia flowers that she had made for herself for attending Fijian parties and Islander *luaus*. As her material existence was coming to an end, she wanted to be close to her material reminders of strength and love.

My mother's powerful memories of love from her Fijian nanny resulted in her maintaining close ties with the Fijians and Pacific Islanders on Vancouver Island, B.C. where she lived. She attended and brought her children to as many Fiji/Polynesian events on Vancouver Island and in Vancouver as possible. We were generally made to feel very included at these parties. However, amongst these memories there was also an awareness of feelings of exclusion suffered by my mother. Although some Fiji-Canadians and Pacific Islander-Canadians held my mother in high regard for her interest and care in the development of their well-being and sense of community, for some the whiteness of her skin instantly re-established a colonial boundary that despite her greatest efforts she could

not penetrate. Nevertheless, her friends remained important sources of support. In the following excerpt of a letter written to her friend in Fiji named Berenado Vunibobo (a friend she made while attending University in Australia), my mother reveals that her Fijian and South Pacific Islander friends provide her with strength in the face of hardship.

Sefo is one of the small Fijian communities here on Vancouver Island. In summer '95, while I was going through chemotherapy, Sefo, Sala and some of the others organized a "lovo" in my garden to boost my morale and to help celebrate my son, Lock's, 21st birthday. I still smile when I think of that day, sitting under a maple tree drinking kava with my friends and then feasting! In matters of spiritual healing, I believe North America has much to learn from Fijian traditions. Besides being interested academically, I have been exploring avenues to help me cope with what has become a very difficult situation. I have yet to find any western healing approaches that do the job of "i sevu sevu"[an offering or a presentation of *yaqona* or make a request that works within "one day"]. (White Nunn 1997)

Not only does this quote demonstrate the way she linked her own identity and even her survival to Fiji and indigenous knowledge, this quote also demonstrates a vibrant and shifting pulse to the Fijian diaspora in Canada creating new intercultural relations and practices.

Due to her connection to this Oceanic diaspora (including Fijians and other South Pacific Islanders), I have many happy memories of interacting with Oceanic-Canadians. I grew up on Vancouver Island going to and hosting South Pacific Islander parties and events. Two of my mother's closest friends who became important mentors of mine are mentioned in the above quote: Sefo from Rotuma and Sala from Fiji. I grew up being invited to sit and drink kava, and seeing Sefo perform fire dances, sometimes in our house! On the occasion of the *lovo* (mentioned above) to help support my mother

through a battle with breast cancer, I recall being schooled in how to drink kava in a ceremonious manner. Through such experiences, I gained first-hand knowledge of some of the affects and politics involved in identity articulation amongst the Fiji-Canadian community.

My personal relationship to the topic also creates some powerful blind spots and challenges. I was somewhat blinded by love and grief and it was often difficult to tease these feelings apart. On her deathbed, material items from Fiji and items that reminded her of Fiji provided my mother with great comfort. After she died, these items seemed to be imbued with her spirit and her feelings and memories of love spawned in Fiji. These material items were reminders that my mother shared these feelings with me as she raised me and now these feelings have been passed on and live in my body in a new way. I am grateful for this and want nothing more than to give something back. But, to whom do I give? It is here that I realize how much is blinded from view. What was Anna's experience of being a nanny for an Australian family working for the British colonial administration? What are the economic and political dimensions of the love Anna gave to my mother? Why are Fijians of Indian descent not a bigger part of this personal story when they are such an important part of the history of Fiji?

Loloma as a through-line to this dissertation became more and more complex as I proceeded with my research and analysis. Because Anna's love was of such importance to my mother's and my own understanding of Fiji, I began this dissertation project by exploring the notion of Fijian kindly love, or *loloma*. At first, I approached *loloma* in a

somewhat simplistic, naïve, ahistorical and apolitical way. However, the definition of *loloma* I read about in work by Martha Kaplan (1995) suggested a more complicated concept. *Loloma* according to Martha Kaplan (1995) comes from “...indigenous readings of the missionary tenet of kindly love [...], the term with which Fijians nowadays characterize “life in the way of the land” explicitly in opposition to European or Indo-Fijian “life in the way of money” (Kaplan 1995, 137). *Loloma* was suddenly implicated in issues relating to religion, economics and biopolitics. Over the course of my research my understanding of *loloma* has changed and evolved with this project to become an indeterminate zone where meaning is open to new possibilities, complexly connected with and an indicator of shifting relations of power, economics, politics and religion.

Choosing to write about an ephemeral notion of love as part of a dance studies project may be considered problematic, “unhelpful,” and limited, as Susan Foster puts it (Foster 1995, 9-10), in terms of investigating and writing about how the dancing body resonates with social relations of power. For Foster, such a project risks being limited to self-reflexivity and “projecting onto or otherwise transforming what you are seeing” (Foster 2005, 22). While I acknowledge Foster’s concerns, anthropologist Virginia Dominguez has taught me the political importance of such academic writing on ephemeral feelings. Dominguez views such writing as politically transformative. As a result, she advocates for a politics of writing about love in academia. She is critical of objectivist writing styles that deny such a transformation and argues that writing about

love as a feeling, and not just an idea, is needed in academic writing. Quoting Dominguez, love “may be the most closeted of our feelings at the same time that it may be the most enabling one” politically and in terms of the work it enables intellectuals to produce (2000, 388). Counter to what Foster suggests about the ephemeral aspects of the body, *loloma* is not a simple self-contained feeling but a complex relational affect. *Loloma* is implicated in formations of power, haunted by the past, and generative of new economic, biopolitical, and social arrangements.

This dissertation works through shifting expressions of *loloma* in and surrounding *meke* that evoke political feelings of nationalism, ethnicity, and tradition, as well as new biopolitical and diasporic arrangements. For example *loloma* as a relational affect was once a powerful part of a gift economy that *iTaukei* used to distinguish themselves from the perceived selfishness of foreigners (Thomas 1997, 174-178). Now due to larger transnational forces my research shows that *loloma* as an indeterminate zone has widened to take on new meanings that produce new effects. With shifts in power and economics, *loloma* is embedded within larger transnational market forces that influence *meke*. *Loloma* expressed in *meke* makes the song-dance appealing and marketable for the tourist industry. In some contexts, *loloma* continues to create a Christianized “us” versus heathen “them” mentality. In other contexts, *loloma* expressed through movement-based affects widens to include all regardless of descent in Fiji, and as it migrates to diaspora.

Some have pointed out that my approach to affect feeds into a view that non-Western peoples’ and dances are more passionate, wild, and connected to their bodies

than Western peoples who are rational, and objective. In response, I do not see feeling/sensing as separate from thinking. I do not place perception and reflection in a hierarchical order. As Dominguez puts it “to maintain a bifurcated view of who should and who should not [show affection in scholarship] is to diminish us all and to make everyone’s work suspect” (2000, 388). Additionally, affect is not necessarily an emotional outburst, but includes the everyday felt/sensed ways in which bodies relate to one another. As a scholar from the West I am not a rational, objective observer. As I hope to demonstrate through my ethnographic writing, I am emotionally, politically, and spiritually invested in understanding *meke*. These investments come out of my own affective experiences with the South Pacific diaspora on Vancouver Island and my many years of experiences as a dancer working as a full company member for neo-expressionist choreographer and mentor David Earle. From these experiences, I have become politically invested in demonstrating the agency and politics of danced expression. And, I have become intimately aware of the ways movement-based expressions of affect expose contradictory relations with power.

Throughout my research and writing, I have been highly attuned to the politics of my being a white Canadian settler and granddaughter of British colonial worker in Fiji writing about indigenous Fijian traditions. The ethics and politics of conducting research amongst indigenous Fijian and South Pacific Islanders is rife with potential problems and even a kind of “epistemic violence” as dance scholar Adria Imada has put it (2012, 24). To avoid imposing this kind of violence through appropriation, speaking for, or

undermining my consultants, I tended to separate myself. Despite these efforts to protect the knowledge and self-determination of my consultants by seeing myself as separate from them, I was almost always made to feel included, welcome, respected, and appreciated, and this is what encouraged me to keep going.

At times I felt uncomfortable about the degree to which I was included despite my white colonial/settler history. These feelings of discomfort, which were at times important, led for understanding the current political climate of multiracial inclusion in Fiji. But, they also became a reminder that separating myself from my indigenous consultants was not always what my consultants wanted. The act of distinguishing myself as an outsider was at times considered an insult. In a gathering with the Oceanic group on Vancouver Island, they reminded me that they accept me as part of their group, and that my feelings of discomfort at being so included is a sign for them that I am not allowing myself to feel part of the group. I am part of their group as far as they are concerned because my mother was born in Fiji, and because of her and my own interest and care in researching islander traditions. My internal conflict about this issue bubbled to the surface numerous times, but each time *iTaukei* consultants encouraged me to keep going with my research and writing on *meke*.

I had a number of tactics for dealing with potential “epistemic violence” my research and writing might produce. Early in the process I was made aware of how important it was for my consultants that I not generalize information based on what consultants shared with me. As a result, I have approached this research and writing as

very particular to its context. In addition, I have shared my writing throughout the process with a number of *iTaukei* consultants to ensure I was conveying their thoughts and words as they intended. This included sending copies of transcriptions and doing follow-up interviews based on those transcriptions. I also shared conference papers and summaries of my research findings with my consultants. In sharing my writing, the temptation was often to write as an advocate for indigenous rights and knowledge protection. However, I am also sensitive to the ways this might also invoke a kind of epistemic violence in relation to Fiji's current political climate. I have resisted the temptation to write as advocate in order to be sensitive to the systemic racism felt by Fijians of Indian descent living in Fiji for over 130 years. Due to this inequity, it was not so simple to just champion indigenous rights and privilege in Fiji because there were times when it seemed that might perpetuate the systemic racism.

My consultants all expressed that they were comfortable being named in my dissertation and future publications. However, because of Fiji's current political climate that includes racism, homophobia, and the high degree to which traditional practices are currently being condemned as witchcraft and devil worship, I felt that sometimes it was important to protect the anonymity of my consultants. As a result, I have chosen a nuanced approach to using pseudonyms. I include the real names of my consultants when it seems safe to do so, and I err on the side of caution and use pseudonyms when, in my assessment, there is the potential for future risk to their safety.

My analyses and approach to writing helps me to navigate these challenging and complex politics. I attempt to navigate the politics by being self-reflexive as well as maintaining a critical distance at times, even though I know that is not what my *iTaukei* consultants wanted. I try to maintain enough of a distance that I can see the politics for what they are - sometimes racist as much as I wish they were not. However, even in that critical distance I remain moved, loved, loving, and not completely distanced or impartial. Out of respect for the complexities of the politics, I include my discomforts in this dissertation. My hope in involving my own embodied memories and the memoirs of my family members in this written exploration is twofold: first, that this self-reflexivity will enable a deeper understanding of the impact of the questions I ask and; second, that I find a way to break from ethnographic convention as Ness has done by writing “...against the separation of the ethnography and the memoir” (2001, 68).

Synopsis

Following this introduction to my project design, I contextualize my research for this dissertation in an “ecology of *meke*” that includes the domains of history, economics, colonialism, politics, and religion. While the chapter is intended to provide important context for the whole dissertation, the chapter organizes itself around a colonial history in which my own family is implicated. Key to this chapter is unpacking historical shifts and tensions in the colonially impacted realms of religion, economics, identity and politics. This history, as Kaepler points out, is comprised of selected moments (2006). My aim

is not to present them as part of a smooth and linear historical narrative. But to highlight certain relationships between past and present that are key to understanding *meke* as generative of culture and identity. I will use this history to try to understand past and present moments of identifying with Fiji through *meke* in Fiji and Canada.

This particular exploration requires that I attempt to work through my family's past colonial connections to Fiji for two reasons. First, because this colonial history is, in part, responsible for the ethnic tensions Fijians are currently dealing with in Fiji and Fiji's Canadian diaspora. Second, it is because of my mother's positive affective experiences as a child in British colonial Fiji that this project emerged the way it did. My family archive has given me valuable insights and opened many doors for research inquiries throughout my dissertation process.

In my third chapter "Governing Affects," I unpack the experience of applying for a research permit in Fiji in order to examine the role *meke* plays in shifting formations of power in Fiji. A climate of crisis in post-independence Fiji has been shaped by four coups since 1987. But the most recent 2006 coup in the name of multiracial unity and harmony (U.N. 2007) takes Fiji and Fijians into new biopolitical terrains of power and authority. The increased presence of Pentecostalism amongst *iTaukei* is the result of the many who are fed up with an increasingly impoverished dictatorial nation-state that, at least at the level of spectacle, perpetuates old systems of power and dominance. Old systems of power hang on but are quickly shifting. Power in Fiji is shifting away from a vertical structure that supports chiefly authority towards horizontal forms of governance

informed by NGOs and evangelical churches, and transnational market tourism. These forces create a climate of self-governance, and *loloma* becomes part of securing Fiji as a tourist destination.

I examine how *meke* as a “tradition” is part of competing national narratives that, through movement-based affects, reach towards better futures. For some evangelical and charismatic Christians, Fiji’s future is imagined to be full of economic prosperity, democracy, happiness and joy so long as Fijians can let go of past practices and protocols that are narrated as coming from a dangerous past that is two-dimensionally imagined to be driven by cannibalism, heathenism, and war. For those who support recent government discourses of multiracial harmony, the past is also seen in a negative light as a way-of-being that will hold Fiji back from becoming democratic and equitable in the future. These two approaches to Fiji’s future create uneasiness for others who want to secure Fiji’s future for *iTaukei* preeminence by romanticizing a past that needs safeguarding and protection. While some Fijians seemed to align themselves within one of these approaches to Fiji’s future, many seemed to weave between these approaches.

Life of crisis in Fiji is not only political and economic but it is also spiritual and bound up in the domain of tradition. My fourth chapter “Spiriting Affects” (felt and communicated expressions of spirit that generate change) demonstrates the political dimensions of spirit and affect as post-phenomenological aspects of *meke*. I examine how the politics of spirit and affect in three differing approaches to *meke* connects the material body with the non-material and gives form to one’s sense of culture and identity.

Here, spirit expressed as heightened energy includes the notion of *mana*. In *meke*, *mana* emerges in two forms: as a nominalized spiritual power that emanates from God; and, as a verb in the form of human agency through expression.

This chapter examines how religion cloaks politics and sustains the status quo in Fiji by generating suspicion and fear of spiritually intense affects expressed in the performance of *meke*. One's performance of spirit needs to stay within a register that confirms one's Christian faith. Otherwise, when expressions of spirit venture outside a range that secures a Christian norm, uneasiness results and suspicions of "sorcery" and "devil worship" arise. Influenced by Fiji's past missionary and colonial impacts and present processes involving Christianity and politics, spirit performed in *meke* generates a tension that makes sensing towards uncertain feelings and intensities of spirit an indicator of devil worship, and sensing towards a sanctioned range of "good" feelings an indicator of being a good Christian Fijian national. This chapter demonstrates how social relations are embedded in, and yet shifted by movement and their felt/sensed relations between bodies. These are the complex dimensions of contemporary *meke* practice in Fiji and a part of how some *iTaukei* come to identify themselves in relation to others.

In my fifth chapter "Diasporing Affect" I focus on three case studies, each with their own examples to show how the performance of *meke* in and destined for Canada is deployed to diverse ends due to haunting and migrating affects. In my first study *loloma* is made more complex as it migrates to Canada as a "freely given gift" in the form of

Mekhe ni Loloma. The *Mekhe* is intended to generate a shifting biopolitical arrangement that includes all who wish to identify with “Fijianness.”

In a Vancouver case study, some *iTaukei* Fijian Pentecostals reject traditions such as *meke* for their perceived connection with “devil worship,” and as a political resistance to the long standing hegemonic formations of power in Fiji established by colonialism between governance, chiefly authority (maintained through “traditional” and “customary” laws and practices), and the Methodist Church (Tomlinson 2009). However, rejecting traditions in Canada disrupts the goals of other *iTaukei* who want to preserve and share with other Canadians a notion of Fijianness rooted in the idea that their traditions, culture, and ethnicity are homogenous and bounded by geographic origins. In performing culture this way, they reify a separation between Fijians in Canada: making *iTaukei* a legitimate source of Fijian identity while silencing the intercultural influences and presence of Fijians of Indian descent who make up the majority of Fiji’s Canadian diaspora. Through expressions of specific affects such as *loloma*, *meke* reaches towards not the varied and complex cultural realities of Fiji and Fiji’s Canadian diasporic populations but, a Fijianness that re-asserts the power and dominance of Christian, *iTaukei* for new purposes of inclusion and recognition in Canada’s multicultural mosaic (whereby cultures are thought to not melt together but live side by side in a harmonious mosaic). In my third case study of this chapter, I explore examples of how Fijians join together with other South Pacific Peoples on Vancouver Island to dance. Through an affective engagement with the dancing, they form an Oceanic identity.

In my final chapter “Performing Affect” I explore the experience of performing *Mekhe ni Loloma* informally in Suva, Fiji. I use this experience to unpack many of the key issues this dissertation seeks to explore. The experience highlights the need for an understanding of incorporeal dancing bodies that experience and express the ephemeral in order to grasp the complexity of relations of power. Affects in and surrounding this performance expose power and political dynamics that reading the dancing body as a representational text would be unable to reveal. I finish with some concluding thoughts that summarize my research findings as well as future areas of research I am keen to pursue.

Chapter 2 - Introduction: Ecology of Meke

This chapter weaves together some historical, religious, and political factors that resonate with the practice of *meke* in order to show how these factors ignite certain politically and religiously charged tensions in relation to *meke* in Canada and Fiji. These issues form part of an ecology of *meke* this dissertation seeks to explore, namely: relational affects bundled in the political, economic and religious tensions of Fiji's past colonial and present post-independence realities. My hope is that this chapter will provide much of the needed context for the dissertation as a whole.

This chapter unfolds by outlining the archival documents I studied, my approach to studying them, and providing historical context to the current practice of *meke*. I briefly provide a rationale for approaching my archival sources as an “archive of feeling” (Cvetkovich 2003). Next, I discuss the relationships between *meke* and indigenous non-Christian spiritual practices, key Christian influences, colonial contact, and post-independence political and religious shifts to biopolitical arrangements. Finally, I provide context for understanding the relationships between Fiji and Fiji's Canadian diaspora. I aim to show how the issues involving *meke* that this dissertation explores build over time, and haunt the present manifestations of *meke* in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora. These histories and influences are like ghosts that cannot be reduced to something knowable. Instead, they continue to haunt and disrupt a sense of the world as

coherent and a sense of linear time that can simply be divided into past, present and future (Brown 2001, 153). The starting place of my discussion is by no means a beginning for *meke*. Rather, it is a place to start unraveling why *meke* provides a fertile ground for exposing recent shifts in how Fijians identify with Fiji and Fijianess in a post-2006 coup timeframe.

Archives of Affect

In order to explore how histories of missionaries and British colonialism in Fiji impacted the present realities of Fijian identity articulation in *meke* in Fiji and Canada, I utilize a recently inherited rich archive of letters, photographs, and memoirs that provide insight into colonial life in Fiji from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. The memoirs of my mother and my grandmother provide glimpses into the workings of past colonial boundaries of identity in Fiji, as well as their cracks and fissures that are exemplified by *loloma* that seeped through colonial boundaries between colonized and colonizer. By unpacking these memoirs, I demonstrate how aspects of colonialism continue to haunt current *meke* practice just as these memoirs have a haunting presence that informs how I inhabit this project. Identity generated through performing “traditional” Fijian dance is implicated in a history of colonialism of which my family archive sheds light.

In addition to my own family archive, this chapter draws from archival records housed at the National Archive of Fiji, missionary accounts from the 1860s, and ethnographic accounts from the early 20th century. While post-independence documents

were not available to me at the National Archive, I was fortunate that they gave me full access to photographs that extend from the 1940s to the late 1970s. These photographs give me a unique window into post-independence shifts in *meke*. The photos show me that the performance of joy and happiness with smiling faces seems to have become more overt in photos of *meke* towards, and after independence. In addition, post-independence photos also indicate a shift towards staging *meke* as part of a narrative of nation.

I approach documents and photographs as I approached my fieldwork by attuning to relational intensities of affect. Affects have been important indicators of the directionality of power, and arrangements between individuals and those formations of power. Therefore, I treat documents and photos as archives of feelings. For cultural studies scholar Ann Cvetkovich, an archive of feeling is “an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception” (Cvetkovich 2003, 7). With this in mind, I follow intensities and absences of feeling that are manifested in what becomes documented. As anthropologist Ann Stoler puts it, “archives are not simply accounts of actions or records of what people thought happened. They are records of uncertainty and doubt in how people imagined they could and might make the rubrics of rule correspond to a changing imperial world” (Stoler 2009, 4). Anxieties made themselves apparent by word choices as well as the extent of dialogue and documentation surrounding particular issues of rule. For example, a file from the

Colonial Secretary's Office named "*Draunikau*"²⁴ contains a case of criminalizing *meke*. The file is an archive of feeling that shows a sense of moral crisis about how to punish Fijians for practicing the indigenous spiritual practice of *draunikau*. The file exposes a sense of crisis over how to define indigenous spiritual practices, and underlying fears about being in control of a population that sometimes resists that control through indigenous spiritual practices that, in one case I read about, included *meke*.

***Meke* and Indigenous Non-Christian Spiritual Practices**

Prior to contact with missionaries and colonizers, Fijians worshipped spirits or ghosts who are often referred to as ancestors or ancestor gods (Fiji 1936, 3); these ancestors are a key ingredient to *meke* practices of the past and present. The pre-missionary Fijian term for these ancestor spirits is *kalou*. More specifically, as universally or locally known ancestor gods and goddesses they are known as *kalou vu*, and as deified spirits of once powerful men they are known as *kalou-yalo* (Hocart 1912, 449; Waterhouse 1866, 355-404).²⁵ According to Arthur Maurice Hocart, who did

²⁴ *Draunikau* is translated as "the pointing of the leaf" in my grandmother's memoirs, but is defined by Ronald Gatty as "black magic" and "the practice of witchcraft" (2009, 72). When brought up with my *iTaukei* consultants, *draunikau* was also associated with "black magic" or "witchcraft."

²⁵ There are many different land spirits with different qualities that are associated with different aspects of the land and ancestry (see Waterhouse (1866) for an overview of the different forms of *kalou* worship across Fiji). However, *iTaukei* I consulted with in Canada and Fiji rarely referred to specific land spirits and instead referred to them in a general way as evil, devils, land spirits, land gods, ancestors, ancestor spirits and ancestor gods. All of these words have different connotations but my impression was always that those I spoke with were trying to convey a notion of spirit perceived to be tied to pre-Christian Fiji

extensive ethnographic research in Fiji in the early twentieth century, “the ghost of the dead are *mana* and work miracles; anything, therefore, that seems miraculous is *kalou*” (Hocart 1912, 446). Distinctions can be made between *kalou-yalo* who act as protectors who avenge those in their care with retribution of disease and death (Mann 1940, 174); *kalou vu* who are eternal and, for the most part, above human needs; and, *kalou* who are viewed as vengeful and harmful and reside in specific places such as caves, hills, trees, or rivers (Mann 1940, 174). Key to my own research on the spirit, energy and affect generated in the performance of *meke* is Hocart’s observation that unusual behaviour and strength or signs of the supernatural all indicated the presence of *kalou*. The varying *kalou* being worshipped and the approach to worship has always varied depending on the region of Fiji. Because local *kalou* were also a source of *meke* creativity, this variation is also evident in the diversity in approaches to *meke* and the local dialect in which it is performed.²⁶

As the original founders of Fiji, *Kalou vu* are often assigned to bodies of animals, humans, earth, water, mountains, trees and, by extension, the material items that came

enmeshed in warfare and cannibalism. It was often the case that when people did speak more specifically, the spirits or gods were less associated with evil and more associated with an entity of mythological status or an entity that needed to be treated with specific protocols of respect. For consistency I use the terms *kalou*, land spirits, or ancestor spirits.

²⁶ For example, I spoke with a woman from the province of Ra where *kalou* worship is still practiced alongside Wesleyan Methodism. In Ra, both men and women can perform *meke wau* and *meke wesi*. For others in Fiji, participation in activities that were once associated with *kalou* worship, such as *meke* and drinking *yaqona*, is considered to be a form of devil worship.

from the land such as war clubs and *masi* (cloth made from the bark of a paper mulberry tree) (Hocart 1912, Clunie 1977). For example, the god-chief Degei is said to have ruled the birthplace of the first Fijians (Gravelle 1983, 5-6). Degei was worshipped as ancestor, spirit, and man but could also appear in the form of a snake. There are also many spirits that have emerged over time as secondary deities (Tomlinson 2009). For example, in a *meke* recorded in the early 1930s (Morey 1932, 310-311) the Shark God Dakuwaqa manifests in ocean swells and unsettles a chief's canoe before the chief reaches his destination in the Fijian Lau group of islands and kills the chief at sea. In this *meke*, the lyrics demonstrate how the Fijian worship of *kalou vu* through material manifestations and ritual practices, connects Fijians to the land. As another, more embodied example of this link between ancestor worship and *meke*, the power of ancestor spirits can flow through material items such as war clubs and *masi* (Clunie 1977) that are used and worn by the dancers, and through the body of the *daunivucu* who acts as a conduit for the spirit god when creating a *meke*.²⁷

It is from the worship of pre-Christian *kalou vu* that “traditional” *meke* is understood to have emerged, and it is from this perceived foundation that is for some Fijians statically associated with cannibalism, warfare and “devil worship” that *meke* provokes certain anxieties today. I will now outline some *meke* practices and their ties with *kalou vu*. This includes a brief explanation of *kalou* and a look at the role of the *daunivucu* in connecting ancestor spirits with *meke*. I will then provide a brief

²⁷ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

examination of the impacts of Christian Missionaries and the British colonial role in generating an understanding of ancestor spirit worship as “devil worship” and “sorcery” all a part of what is contributing to current anxieties and tensions about *meke*.

The strong link between a *daunivucu* and the ancestor spirits was, to some degree, forged in the act of creating the *meke* chant and movements. In order to create *meke*, the *daunivucu* would communicate with the ancestor spirits. *Kava* or *yaqona* is said to enable communication with the ancestor spirits (Tomlinson 2009, 127). Drinking *yaqona* is one of the ways in which a *daunivucu* opens a channel to communicate with the ancestors.²⁸ *Yaqona* brings the *daunivucu* into a trance or dream state and then the movements and chants flow from the spirit world through the body of the *daunivucu*. The *daunivucu* has someone present to quickly learn and remember the movements and chant coming through the *daunivucu*. The role of this person is invaluable to the process; they must be gifted with the abilities to pick up movement, rhythm and lyrics quickly and retain them in their bodies. This role has been described to me as that of a follower of *luveniwai*²⁹ (water-sprites (Man 1940, 169)) invested with a power to create song (CSO File 109/63). Although this process of communicating with the ancestor spirits is kept confidential, some aspects of this relationship were explained to me by a *daunivucu*

²⁸ Although, the following protocols have been explained to me as originating from pre-Christian *meke* done in relation to ancestor worship, for some *daunivucu*'s, many of these protocols still exist either for Christian reasons, or due to a residual concern for ancestor vengeance. As a result, I continue with outlining these protocols in the present tense except in cases where the protocols no longer seem to occur.

²⁹ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Deuba, Fiji, September 2012.

named Damiano who has insights into this process due to knowledge of his great grandfather's experiences as a *daunivucu* in Macuata, Vanua Levu (the second largest island of Fiji that lies north and east of Viti Levu). Damiano explained to me that his great grandfather would wear a fresh garland of flowers around his neck every day in order for the ancestor spirits to communicate through the garland. The ancestor spirits could also communicate through his great grandfather's walking staff that he would use as a *meke* creation and teaching tool. Damiano explained that the ways in which the *daunivucu* enabled the spirits to communicate through his or her body varied depending on that *daunivucu*'s own personal traditions and techniques. But through various earthly materials, the ancestor spirits would communicate the rhythms, lyrics, and movements of the *meke* to the *daunivucu*.

There are practices and protocols that are part of respecting a *daunivucu* that are tied to ancestor worship. Due to the proximity of the *daunivucu* to the spirit world, protocols were strictly observed in order to appease the spirit gods. For example, to reciprocate the efforts involved in creating *meke*, it was considered respectful and appropriate to present the *daunivucu* with a whale's tooth called *tabua* (pronounced *tambua*), and several gifts from the land such as *yaqona*, and yards of *masi*. Since these protocols and rituals were also about respecting and worshipping the ancestor spirits, they were viewed as necessary in order to ensure the process of creation, teaching, and performance went smoothly. In addition, performing these protocols correctly is also

believed to increase the *mana*. *Mana*,³⁰ as Hocart (1914) explains, denotes a power of bringing-into-existence and to make true (Sahlins 1985, 38). If the protocols and rituals were not followed correctly, it was believed that the ancestor spirits would seek vengeance on the *daunivucu* and the dancers and cause human suffering.³¹ As another example of the relationship between *daunivucu* and the spirit world, when the *daunivucu* calls for the people to come and rehearse, he may ask the dancers to observe *tabu* (pronounced tamboo) in order to increase the energy and strength of the *meke*. Observing *tabu* can include refraining from drinking *yaqona*, sexual intercourse, and eating certain foods for a period of time. Breaking *tabu* was considered an insult to *kalou* and human sacrifice would result. In addition, there is tremendous pressure to get the *meke* energy and movements right. Failure to execute the movements properly, as taught by the *daunivucu*, could also result in human suffering by the ancestor gods.³²

The spiritual energy and *mana* of the *meke* expressed in performance is one aspect of how performances of *meke* have traditionally provided a directly embodied link with

³⁰ *Mana* is the power to achieve an intended purpose, to effect or influence, through words spoken (Tomlinson 2009, 21-22). *Mana* is also sometimes nominalized as a spiritual power that comes from God into the land. The meaning of the concept *mana* has been a source of long-term debate. For a detailed account of the debate, see Tomlinson (2009). I have chosen these definitions of *mana* because they align with the ways *mana* was described to me by a *daunivucu* in conversations we had in Suva, Fiji between June and October 2012.

³¹ These protocols for gift giving are still practiced in Ra province, where one of my consultants explained that if not followed, there would be human sacrifice. For example, a child might be born “looking like a fish” (daughter of *daunivucu* from Ra province in conversation with the author in Fiji, June 2012)

³² Daughter of *daunivucu* from Ra province in conversation with the author in Fiji, June 2012.

the ancestor spirits and the land through which the ancestors speak. The ability for that spiritual energy and *mana* to be affectively communicated to its viewers comes through the dancers from their connection to the *daunivucu* and the *daunivucu*'s connection to the ancestor spirits. In other words, the dancers and the *daunivucu* act as a conduit for the ancestor spirits of the land. The more the performance is charged with energy and *mana*, the better the connection to the ancestor spirits. A *manu manu ni meke* (a *meke* dancer who is a particularly good conduit for this spirit and energy) is typically selected to dance in the middle of the group and to move around the group in order to incite energy and increase *mana* amongst the dancers and viewers.³³

Christian Influences on *Kalou* Worship and *Meke*

Upon the arrival of Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Fiji in the early decades of the 19th century,³⁴ *meke* underwent certain transformations. Because of the relationship between *meke* and ancestor worship, the Missionary and later colonial impacts on ancestor worship had a direct impact on *meke*. These impacts turned *kalou* worship into devil worship on paper and in the affective experiences of daily life.

Although the ancestor spirits were once undoubtedly a source of strength and healing for many Fijians, today they are thought of by many in a negative light and as a source of considerable anxiety and misfortune. There are many historical reasons for this shift in

³³ *Daunivucu* in conversations with the author, Suva, Fiji, June to October 2012.

³⁴ According to Claudia Knapman (1986), the first European women and children were the families of London Missionary Society missionaries from Tahiti 1809-1810 (1986, 1).

perspective that include a context of widespread war out of which Christianity, perhaps as a political tool, became the one “true” religion of Fiji (Sahlins 1985, 38; Waterhouse 1866). In addition, a general view of *kalou* worship has been inextricably tied to a history of cannibalism and warfare preserved largely by detailed missionary accounts of these rituals such as those of Reverend Thomas Williams in the 1880s (Clunie 1977, 35-42) and Waterhouse (1866) that cover a period between the 1820s and 1850s. These accounts, which are often gruesome and violent, have become key sources for understanding past rituals of *kalou* worship as tied to heathenism, war, and cannibalism. According to Tomlinson, this view of non-Christian spiritual practices as heathen now rests against the current backdrop of a conservative Christian Fijian nationalism invested in tying indigeneity together with Christianity and citizenship (Tomlinson 2009, 8).

Although the Christian God is paramount in this climate of conservative nationalism, non-Christian ancestor spirits are believed by some to co-exist with Christianity, and continue to be powerful and vengeful. In order to avoid upsetting the ancestor spirits, traditional practices and protocols (such as those involving *meke*) must be strictly adhered to otherwise human sacrifice could result whereby the ancestor spirits would inflict pain and suffering on those who did not follow the proper protocols. Forms of human sacrifice most often discussed with me include sickness causing death, physical disability, leprosy, insanity, and misfortune (see also Gravelle 1983, 22). These forms of human sacrifice are still a source of anxiety for some *meke* performers. For others who choose not to participate in *meke*, *meke* is associated with “devil worship” because to an

extent it is associated with heathenism and a past time of war and cannibalism. Yet others who continue to practice *meke* within the boundaries of Christian worship continue to practice *meke* protocols of gift giving, *yaqona* drinking and *tabu* as a way of adding *mana*, strength and energy (that is believed to come from God) to the performance.

Meke are traditionally created to serve a higher purpose or God determined through the chief of a village. *Meke* can be about events of the past, current events, or events of the future (Williams 1860, 30).³⁵ However, despite the wide range of purpose and meaning, in my interviews traditional *meke* were often associated with preparing for and recording stories of war. When performed by men, I am told war dances were intended to incite affects of fear, intimidation, energy and excitement in its practitioners and spectators. These dances were often done with traditional Fijian weapons of warfare such as a war club (*meke wau*), or spear (*meke wesi*). Reverend Thomas Williams provides an account of a war *meke* he witnessed in the 1860s:

The dancers ... all bear clubs or spears, and perform a series of marchings, steppings, halts, and various evolutions a stranger would rather suppose them to be engaged in a military review than in a dance. As the performance approaches the close, the speed quickens, and the actions steadily increase in violence, accompanied by a heavy tramping on the ground, until the excited dancers, almost out of breath, shout, at the top of their voices, "Wa-oo!" and the dance is ended. (Williams 1860, 30)

³⁵ Culture and Heritage professional from *iTaukei* Institutue of Language and Culture in conversation with the author June 2012, Suva, Fiji.

This account of war *meke* documents the relational intensities that are believed to incite fear and intimidation in their spectators³⁶ that war *meke* is now expected to evoke (like the war challenge *Teivovo* from the province of Bau³⁷ I discuss in my chapters “Governing Affect” and “Spiriting Affect”).

Women’s pre-Christian *meke* were also done in relation to warfare, but to some degree these *meke* have been removed from a popular awareness of them, possibly due to missionary impacts. For example, Naval Officer John Erskine recorded a *wate* (women’s *meke*) in 1853 that was meant to mock and shame the captured dead enemies after a battle (Clunie 1977, 34, 36, 38; and Gravelle 1983, 22). This *wate* occurred at the end of a battle. The women appear nude in public and are “sexually insulting the naked enemy bodies” (Erskine in Clunie 1977, 36). The following description is from his account.

...after death... the young girls were doing in a lewd kind of dance, touching the bodies in certain nameless parts with sticks as they were lying in a state of nudity, accompanying the action with the words of the song. I found out afterwards that the opposite sex were always selected for the purpose of making the disgraceful end of their enemies notorious. (Erskine quoted in Clunie 1977, 36)

³⁶ War *meke* were not only meant to incite fear. Humour also appeared in the dances. Williams describes the above *meke* as having “a buffoon... whose grotesque movements elicit immense applause” (Williams 1860, 30). This buffoonery still makes its way into current war *meke*. For example, in a tourist performance of a *meke wesi* I discuss in my chapter “Spiriting Affect,” the performers bump and grind into one another as a form of satire – exposing the ridiculously small stage on which they are expected to perform.

³⁷ At the time of Cession to Britain in 1874, Bau was considered the preeminent ruling chiefdom (Kaplan 1995).

These women's' war dances were recorded³⁸ as being part of the ritual of *kalou* worship that occurred after a battle and in the process of, or preparation for, cannibalistic acts.

These dances have been written about in more recent accounts in association with acts of cannibalism due to these early-recorded descriptions (See Fergus Clunie 1977, 38 and Gravelle 1983, 22). However, in my interviews with individuals knowledgeable about *meke* and Fijian traditions, no one has heard of the dance. In 1860, Reverend Williams suggests that while some *meke* were becoming Christianized, others such as the sexually explicit "nocturnal dance" were no longer being performed due to missionary influences (Williams 1860, 8).

Critical to my later discussions of the ways in which *meke* resonates with narratives of nation, is the hegemonic order imposed by Bau (pronounced Mbau) and Methodism since the mid-nineteenth century. Mass conversion to Christianity occurred after Bau won the large-scale and widespread war between the ruling chiefs of Bau and Rewa in which war dragged on for twelve years. According to anthropologist and Fiji scholar Marshall Sahlins (1985), the common people and less prominent chiefs waited on the conversion of more prominent chiefs. Ratu Seru Cakobau (pronounced Thakombau), who as preeminent warring chief of Bau was under attack by Rewa and struggling with internal revolt, converted to "the true God" and quickly changed the terms of battle (Sahlins 1985,39). Cakobau won the war and, according to Sahlins, "the old religion then gave birth to the new" (Sahlins 1985, 39-40). Thus, for over a hundred years, Methodist

³⁸ These womens' war *meke* were also recorded by early beachcombers in 1809 (Clunie 1977, 38)

Christianity has become “the religion of Thakombau” (Sahlins 1985, 37). In Sahlins’ dialectical terms, the long-term mythological manifestations of Bauan experience were mediated by particular circumstances of a missionary presence and war to generate an event that shifted the social order (1985, 1991). After winning the long war, commoners and less preeminent chiefs were obligated to serve Cakobau as the Paramount Chief of the Bau confederacy and convert to Christianity (Sahlins 1985, 39-40). Once the Wesleyan church (*lotu*) was accepted, and Cakobau was installed as the King of Fiji (*Tui Viti*), the *vanua* (a complex concept narrowly defined here as chiefdoms, traditions, customs, beliefs, and values (Kelly 1995, 25)) became rapidly interwoven with the church, allowing Christian worship to exist alongside practices and protocols involving chiefly authority and the worship of *kalou* (Thomas 1997, 198). Once the United Kingdom was convinced that Cakobau was universally accepted as King of Fiji, they agreed to cede Fiji and Fiji became a British colony. The British worked with Bauan and Methodist hegemony in ordering the life-conditions of Fijians.

Alongside these impacts, another important shift to *kalou* worship came from the translation of the Bible. In the late 1830s, the missionaries started to translate the bible into a Fijian dialect and, by late 1840s to mid 1850s thousands of copies of biblical sermons and hymns and the entire New Testament and Bible itself were translated into the dominant Fijian Bauan dialect (Tomlinson 2009, 39). Of particular relevance was the way the Bible was translated. The Wesleyans in Fiji took an approach to translating “God” by using the term *kalou* which was, as mentioned, a general term used to describe

spirit beings (Tomlinson 2009, 40 and Hocart 1912, 437-39). However, by adding the definite article “na” in front of *kalou*, they made the Christian God not just any spirit but “the Spirit.” This made missionaries the sole agents of the most powerful and all encompassing spirit. It also meant that the ancestor gods could still exist as less powerful spirits. But these spirits were displaced and re-named as *tevoru* and *timoni* meaning “devils” and “demons” (Tomlinson 2009, 40 and Hocart 1912, 437-39).

The presence of a *tevoru* or devil was affectively felt and sensed in the body as described by a Fijian man in conversation with Hocart. The Fijian man knew it was a *tevoru* because “his hair stood on end at the sight.” (Hocart 1912, 439) In another case, a woman told Hocart that a man who recently died at sea “came in the night and sat on Loata’s chest, that she cried out and awoke” (Hocart 1912, 439). The “devil” could be felt and sensed as affects, and these affects still haunt the bodies of Fijians today and create affective anxieties about *meke*. These anxieties impact the feelings and processes involved in creating *meke*, and in conveying the meaning of *meke* through lyrics and movement. As a result, while *meke* is for some a part of identifying as a Christian Fijian, the felt dimensions of performance are the source of anxiety and suspicion. As I show in my chapter “Spiriting Affect,” all aspects of *meke* must now clearly demonstrate a devotion to Christianity through movement-based affects of *loloma*, happiness, peace, and joy or risk arousing suspicions of devil worship.

The interweaving of the Methodist church with indigenous customs and traditions also impacted the notion and expression of *mana*. *Mana* is a highly debated and

contested concept and, as Tomlinson points out, has often been described by European scholars (such as Emile Durkheim and E.E. Evans-Pritchard) as a vague and impersonal supernatural or invisible medium of power that is effective in ways that are beyond the power of human beings (Tomlinson 2009, 21). Tomlinson argues that in Fiji the term has changed in meaning and usage over time, and that the Methodist Church has had a very influential impact on its meaning due to the ways the bible has been translated into Fijian. As a result of the Methodist influence, the term *mana* is often used in contemporary Fiji to mean abstract spiritual power made substantial by God. In this popular and recent usage, it is used as a noun (Tomlinson 2009, 21).

Although the use of *mana* as a nominalized spiritual power was evident in my own research as the spirit of God entering bodies, I also came across another usage of the term as a verb that, according to Tomlinson (2006), has become less prominent due to the influence of the Methodist Church and Polynesian influences on the concept (177). However, citing the work of early 20th-century ethnographer A.M. Hocart and contemporary linguist Paul Geraghty, Tomlinson shows that *mana* in its verb form has a history in Fiji (2006, 174). Treating *mana* as an action creates potential for human agency through effective speech and action towards achieving an intended purpose. For my own purposes of understanding *mana* in relation to *meke*, I draw from Tomlinson (2006) to narrowly define the concept as effective in achieving or working towards an intended purpose through speech and movement in performance. Based on my conversations with one *daunivucu*, this definition includes the effectiveness of

communicating spirit, energy and affect, or spiring affect through movement. One *daunivucu* I spoke to talks about *mana* and spirit in *meke* as elements that you feel in the body.³⁹ These feelings, according to the *daunivucu*, are what make movements powerful, and through their communication of power effective. In other words, movement-based affects in *meke* actively generate *mana* and the potential for achieving or reaching towards intended goals and aspirations.

Mana in this sense of movement-based affect and human agency is a key aspect of *meke*, and is most powerful, I am told,⁴⁰ when you understand the context of what is being said through lyrics and movements. Effectiveness is lost when one does not fully understand the context, and deeper meanings⁴¹ of the *meke* chant lyrics and movements. According to *daunivucu* Damiano, since different *daunivucu*'s connote different aspects of life in their movement and contextualize those movements in the lyrics they create, it is problematic to use *meke* as a codified and fixed object of culture and heritage to be performed outside its intended setting because the *mana* (that includes communication of deeper meaning) is lost and only a superficial understanding of the *meke* is retained. This occurs in cases of transferring *meke* from one part of Fiji to another as can happen when *meke* are done for tourism purposes and as representations of larger national events

³⁹ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Deuba, Fiji, September 2012.

⁴⁰ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Deuba, Fiji, September 2012

⁴¹ The deeper meanings are not obvious but indirect. This is in accordance with Kaepler's observation of the Polynesian aesthetic principle of indirectness (2006, 37; 2008, 7).

promoting culture and heritage. For *mana* to be effective in *meke*, the full meaning must be communicated in performance.

Today in Fiji, although more than 99% of *iTaukei* are Christian, the presence of *kalou* still haunts many of these Fijians (Tomlinson 2009). For *iTaukei*, Christianity is centered on the land (Tomlinson 2009, 3). The land is believed to be sacred because *iTaukei* believe it to have been given to them by God. However, simultaneously, the land continues to be haunted by local, and vengeful spirits, making the land dangerous (Kaplan in Tomlinson 2009, 3) and a source of anxiety and suspicion. The threat of *kalou* still haunts bodies and behaviours making certain experiences and expressions of affect indicators of one's intentions and spiritual beliefs. As Tomlinson puts it

[Fijians] spoke of the ancestors' strength and violence and worried about curses from those ancestors that afflict people in the present. ...[B]ut the old spirits' malicious power never went away – it stayed like an infection, bound to flare up when the right conditions converged. The signs of ancestral strength were embedded in the soil: people could become ill by digging a taboo patch of earth. (Tomlinson 2009, 9)

As more and more *iTaukei* convert to newer charismatic and evangelical churches, the felt dimensions of life are becoming more precarious. On the one hand, intense spiritual feelings, speaking in tongue, and worship dancing are viewed as signs of one's body being filled with the spirit of God. On the other hand, intense spiritual feelings, unusual behaviour, or "bad" feelings that do not fit the codes of overtly joyous and Christian charismatic worship arouse suspicion. For some *iTaukei* evangelicals, these suspicious feelings are possible signs of devil worship.

This appears to be particularly true in relation to the performance of traditional practices and protocols that were once part of the worship of *kalou* such as *meke*.

Today, ancestor spirits continue to haunt the practice of *meke* and are at times perceived to enter the bodies of the performer and the *daunivucu*. Spirits enter bodies in *meke* through the *daunivucu* who provides the main source of spirit and energy for the *meke mata* (*meke* team). Part of the creation process for the *daunivucu* involves connecting to the ancestor or land spirits, and receiving and transmitting the spirit and energy from the ancestor spirits to the dancers. For example, according to Bale who is a *manu manu ni meke* (meaning she is particularly good at transmitting and instigating spirit and energy in *meke* performance) from the northern part of Viti Levu, district of Rakiraki, Ra province (known by those I consulted with for having “wild” *meke*), the dancers get their vitality and energy from the *daunivucu*, who in turn gets spirit, energy, the chant and the movements from the land spirits. According to Bale, who is the granddaughter of a *daunivucu* from Ra province,

for some, their bodies just respond to the chant. Their heads will just go with the chant, they don't have to think about it. In Fiji, the *daunivucu* provides that energy and vitality by consulting with the spirit gods. Consulting the spirit gods is difficult because the *daunivucu* will have to perform the *kava* ceremony to ask for the *meke*. The *daunivucu* will consult with the spirit gods and the spirit gods will then give the understanding of what words to create and the *daunivucu* will just write because it is going to come. After that, he will learn it. When he comes to teach the *meke* and give the *meke* to the people of the village to perform, then automatically, it just comes, the villagers don't need anything else. When we practice everyday, it is not that strong but when we perform it to an audience, it

[the energy and vitality] automatically just comes, and then you show everything.⁴²

Energy and vitality in this case comes from the ancestor spirits outside the body via the *daunivucu*. The movements and bodies of the dancers are directly linked to the ancestor or land spirits through the *daunivucu*. Bodies are not contained but perceived to be porous vessels or conduits for the transmission of that vitality and energy from the spirit world.

Ancestor spirits are considered powerful and potentially dangerous supernatural forces that can create fear, uneasiness, misery, and haunting feelings that generate autonomic responses such as goose bumps and feelings of uncertainty in the body. This notion of spirit as dangerous, threatening and entering the body from the outside leaving the body in a vulnerable state of porousness, can be seen in the following experience of a *meke* dancer. Simi, who performed *meke* at Thurston Gardens (near the Fiji Museum in Suva) for a domestic tourist event, explained the feeling of being entered by dangerous spirits of ancestors. Thurston Gardens is a site that was once the location of the old village of Suva.⁴³ According to Sahlins, the Rewa chief Ratu Qaraniqio attacked the

⁴² Bale in conversation with the author, Village in the Western Province, Viti Levu, July 2012.

⁴³ My family and I walked through Thurston Gardens on a number of occasions because of a playground in the Gardens where we brought our son to play. We noticed that the area was always empty of people and that the gardens were left to their own developments. Without understanding why at the time, Thurston Gardens had the feeling of a ghost town. There were some events and festivals held in the area during our time there. However, outside of those events, people seemed to choose to stay out of the Gardens. According to the Fiji Museum, Thurston Gardens is the site of the Rewa massacre of a large village of Bauans (Fiji Museum 2013).

village in 1843 and many of the inhabitants were killed (1991, 55-57).⁴⁴ According to Tomlinson, who recounts from his own research experiences, the land of old village sites is imbued with the *mana* of the ancestors who are particularly dangerous and daunting to those who enter the land. Those who disturb the land or the ancestors may fall ill or worse (Tomlinson 2009, 139).

Simi tells me about how the dancers dealt with the haunting presence of ancestor spirits, “there are spirits roaming around the museum and we didn’t believe it until we performed there. So we had to keep the chanting low in respect of the burial grounds near there.”⁴⁵ Simi explains the feelings of performing there included confusion and an unnerving, haunting feeling. But by following the proper protocols of respect for the ancestor and land spirits, the spirits gave the dancers greater physical strength and ability to do their *meke*.

Performing there, it was totally different. Even those who were chanting said that our jumping was like nothing we have ever done before. Our jumps were higher and the moves were more accurate and strong. They said they had never seen us perform like that. [Our heightened abilities came to us] because we respected the place and we maintained the silence [(a common practice at burial sites in Fiji)] until the *meke*. This made the spirits happy and they came to join us in the dance. It felt normal but we were just doing extra moves, we had more energy. After we came out of it, we saw the bruises on our knees, but throughout the *meke* we didn’t feel it at all.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ According to Sahlins, Rewa and Bau were the most powerful states in the Fiji Islands by the mid-nineteenth century (1991, 49). Bau eventually won universal hegemonic control but not before the bloody and destructive war that involved the massacre of Suva villagers (1991, 51).

⁴⁵ Simi in conversation with the author Suva, Fiji, July 2012

⁴⁶ Simi in conversation with the author Suva, Fiji, July 2012.

Simi's experience is an example of ancestor spirits entering bodies in a way that is beyond the control of the dancers, to the extent that the dancers are not consciously aware of the ways spirits are impacting their bodies in performance. In this case, the ancestors who enter the dancers bodies are beneficial for the *meke* performance, and increase its spirited vigor and energy. Yet this possession is also injurious for the dancers bodies and proves to be physically dangerous. This example also shows the control the ancestors have over bodies in terms of influencing the performers' behaviour and conduct prior to and during the performance. The threat of an encounter with the vengeful spirit world shapes movements and behaviours.

Ancestor spirits are not only able to enter bodies, they are also perceived as dangerous devils and demons (an impact of past missionary and colonial impacts as well as present day Christian influences) and Christianity provides safety from those dangers. In the following quote, *meke* dancer Bale explains the dangers of what she terms the "spiritual world," to which she refers to the world of ancestor and land spirits, in opposition to the safety of Christianity, what she terms the "religious world."

The advantages of consulting with the spiritual world are [that] you will have the *meke* you want. The *meke* and everything about it will be the best. But after the *meke*, you have to do a ceremony again thanking the gods for that. If you miss that you will [suffer]. Specifically, there are spiritual people who control that. When you do the *meke*, they will be between you but not seen. And when you don't perform a *kava* ceremony to thank the gods, they will materialize themselves. If you don't perform the correct ceremony, a human will be born who will look like a fish. The spiritual world is like this, if they are pleasing you, they also want something in return. That is a sacrifice of human beings. It still works today. That is why people choose to be on the religious side. On the religious side with Christianity, when you want something from God he doesn't

want anything from you in return. That is the difference between religious and spiritual gods.⁴⁷

Thus, not only are the spirits of the land dangerous, they are viewed in opposition to the safety of Christianity. Because of this constant danger, demonstrating one's Christian faith during *meke* creates a sense of security and safety for practitioners and viewers of *meke*. Dancers express spirited affects in performance that become objectified and codified as signs of the Christian Holy Spirit entering their bodies to create feelings of joy, kindly love and generosity. In other words, feelings/sensations that in Fiji signal a religious devotion to Christianity create feelings of knowability, security and safety in opposition to the dangers and uncertainty of the spirit world.

In light of these pressures surrounding the performance of tradition, some Fijians in Fiji and Canada reject *meke* in order to demonstrate their devotion to Christianity. The influence of newer Christian evangelical churches, which demonize ancestor worship, creates a tension between Christianity and *meke* that is very present in Fiji and in Canada today. Evangelical Fijians (of *iTaukei* descent) consider *meke* to be connected to “devil worship” regardless of the story being told by the *meke* and the way in which it was created. My evangelical consultants explain that when a *daunivucu* enters the ritualized trance state required to create *meke*, they are filled by the “devil,” a “voodoo spirit,” or “witchcraft.” They explain that the devil enters the body and dictates the movements and chants of the new *meke*, and gives strength to the *daunivucu*. As a result of this

⁴⁷ Bale in conversation with the author, Village in the Western Province, Viti Levu, July 2012

association with *kalou*, evangelical Christian churches today reject *meke* that are imagined to have been created by this spiritual practice they perceive as heathen. For example, one of my Fijian consultants on Vancouver Island recounted the experience of performing *meke* with a Mercy Ship *Anastasis* whose vision is for Ships “to become the face of love in action, bringing hope and healing to the poor” (Mercy Ships 2014). The performing group was kicked out of three separate churches in Fiji for performing a *meke* even though the *meke* was choreographed to tell a biblical story. In this case, even though the story was biblical, the act of doing the *meke* was still akin to “devil worship.” My consultants in Fiji and Canada have made me aware of numerous cases of churches in Fiji and Fijian Churches in Canada who do not want to support the practice of *meke*. These churches see *meke* as heathen and want to separate it from the church.⁴⁸ In more extreme cases, traditional practices and material objects are becoming the targets of “witch hunts.” Pentecostal and new Methodist churches believe they are cleansing villages of the demonizing influences and curses that contaminate villages through burning or removing their objects of tradition such as walking staffs, masi, tabua, and tanoa bowls (Newland 2004,16; Massey 2010, 42-43).

Other Christian *iTaukei*, who are predominantly Methodist, view *meke* as a gift from God and are in search of new ways of negotiating a *meke* process that is in line with

⁴⁸ *Daunivucu* and daughter of an evangelical Pastor in conversation with the author (January 2012).

Christian values while being respectful of Fijian culture and heritage.⁴⁹ For example, in Canada, the rejection of *meke* by some charasmatics and evangelicals is particularly distressing for Methodist Fijians whose identities are powerfully interconnected with the “culture and heritage” of Fiji. These Methodists see the rejection of *meke* as a rejection of Fijian culture in Canada that is a part of how they identify themselves in the context of multicultural Canada. By promoting Fijian identity based on Fijian culture and heritage, these Fiji-Canadians align themselves with discourses of multiculturalism that encourage the association of cultural heritage with “types of people” (Urciuoli 1999).

Stripped of feelings of spiritual intensity, *meke*, like drinking *yaqona*, has managed to endure as cultural heritage and tradition. In Fiji, a primarily Methodist Christian country, Methodists accept *meke* as preserving the culture and *vanua*. *Vanua* has been defined as customs and traditions of the *iTaukei* but also, as Tomlinson puts it, “connotes older things, local things, and therefore carries an emotional charge” (Tomlinson 2009, 23). For *iTaukei* Methodists, because customs and traditions are viewed as culture and heritage and no longer tied to spiritual practices associated with *kalou*, these practices can mix together with the church with little conflict. For these Methodists, new *meke* can be done as an element of Fijian culture and heritage so long as the *meke* are clearly in reverence to Biblical and Christian messages.⁵⁰ By combining

⁴⁹ For some, *meke* still involves worshipping of ancestor spirits (for example, in Ra province). One man from Ra who resides in Suva cautiously admitted to the possibility that not all of ancestor worship was evil and that there might be some elements worth understanding for the sake of cultural heritage.

⁵⁰ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Vancouver, Canada, January 2012.

traditional *meke* chant forms, techniques, and styles with Christian content, suspicions of devil worship are reduced. In addition to applying Christian content in the lyrics, Christian *meke* can also be deemed as not dangerous by demonstrating a clear connection to Christianity through the expression of affects of joy, happiness, and *loloma*. Combining elements of tradition with Christianity serves the combined purposes of making *meke* Christian while also rooting it in *vanua* (Tomlinson 2009, 175).

Colonial Relations and Anxieties Influencing *Meke*

Fiji encountered close to a century of British colonial rule from 1874 to 1970, and while boundaries were sustained between colonized and colonizer, boundaries were also blurred for some through relational feelings of intensity. The period between 1930 and 1950 (when gold was discovered in significant amounts) marks an increased presence of British subjects with mining expertise (Emberson-Bain 1994). This is the context in which my grandfather (a mining engineer) and grandmother came to Fiji from Australia. Their memoirs alongside my mother's memoirs, newspaper articles, photographs and texts outlining (from a colonial perspective) Fijian customs, reveal their relationships with Fiji and Fijians that sometimes blurred and sometimes sustained boundaries.

Frank Thomas Matthews White was appointed Inspector of Mines in H.M. Colonial Service to the Colony of Fiji and assumed duty on July 16, 1937 at the age of 27. Soon promoted to Inspector of Mines and Mining Engineer, he was a Fiji Civil Servant whose work duties included: technical administration of the mines section (of

Lands, Mines and Surveys Department), geological investigations, mineral technology, advisor to the Mining Board, and conducting original research on pozzolana mineral aggregates (which has the properties of cement) in Fiji. His total time in Fiji was eight years and two months. During that time my mother was born, and except for a one-year period during World War II and the Coral Sea battle (when my grandmother and my mother stayed in New Zealand) she lived in Fiji until she was four years old. According to family records, they employed the domestic labour of Anna Qumia for the duration of their stay. My grandparent's hiring of domestic labour was part of the emerging colonial relations between growing numbers of British mining experts with families and *iTaukei*. In a colonial space of Euro-domestic structure, the following memoir of my mother is, as Nicholas Thomas writes, "expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships" (Imada 2012, 6). My mother writes:

[I could] trust Anna [...], the only person who was always there. She made me feel accepted no matter what I did wrong (as compared with my parents for whom nothing I did was right and by whom I never felt accepted for myself). What I learned from her largely by osmosis was: being human, friendly, open, myself, loving, and affectionate [...]. But I somehow knew I was a welcome visitor, not one who belonged. (White Nunn 2000)

This quote contextualizes the contact between Anna and my mother. Anna's domestic labour, either wittingly or not, involved imparting a feeling of love, or *loloma* on my mother. From my mother's perspective, her loving relationship with Anna blurred colonial boundaries. However, the above quote also reveals the limits to that blurring since boundaries were, to some degree, maintained by her feelings of being a visitor and "not one who belonged." Unfortunately, the quote does not reveal if Anna's *loloma* (that

at once embraced and distanced my mother) was a tactical maneuver or an expression of creative resistance, as Michel de Certeau (1984) puts it, to a colonial strategy of instilling European dominance. But, beyond revealing a tension about boundaries, this colonial space of contact draws our attention to my mother's body as an indeterminate and emergent body that enabled new relations of power.

As another example of the expression and constitution of relationships in Euro-colonial spaces, my grandmother writes in her "South Sea Island Memories" about the first night alone in her bungalow in Fiji with her "live-in" helper "Anna":

Anna furnished her room in true Fijian style; her bed being a pile of woven grass mats with coloured wool fringes, and her pillowslip of white linen was richly embroidered with many colours. The first night we were left alone in the house, I felt a little uneasy, remembering that her ancestors had been cannibals not so very long ago, but as time went on, I was very glad to have her company, and over the years she proved to be a friend and help-mate who saw me through many troubled times. (White, N.d.)

This passage reveals the affective impact of a colonial stereotype of Fijians as cannibals that caused her to feel uneasy. The stereotype uses tropes and images to construct a naturalized separation between "cannibalistic" Fijian "savages" and "reasonable" and "civilized" British subjects. However, this passage also reveals the perception of a level of friendship that, to some degree, punctures the fears created by colonial narratives. My grandmother's memoirs confirm the point made by both Claudia Knapman (1986) and Ann Stoler (1997) that the power dynamics between colonial elite women and indigenous populations were complex relational negotiations that need to be understood in their own particular contexts.

My grandmother was part of a “civilizing” colonial presence aimed at maintaining colonial order through her own relations with *iTaukei*. In the following quote, my grandmother recounts an interaction with Anna involving the indigenous spiritual practice of *drau-ni-kau*. She writes,

As she entered the dining room to lay the table for dinner, I was putting the finishing touches to a small pair of blue bootees;
“Will it be a boy or a girl,” I mused.
“It’ll be a girl,” she replied emphatically.
And sure enough, it was, as we were soon to find out.
“I said it would be a girl.” Stated Anna.
“And what made you so sure?” I enquired.
“I drau-ni-kau’d it, “ she replied good-humouradly.
‘Drau-ni-kau’ means ‘the pointing of the leaf,’ and when the leaf is pointed one can cast a spell for good or evil. One can even will a person to die – and die he will; in recent years, however, an enlightened chief held out against it, and although already pining away, roused himself and recovered, thus disproving the age-old power of the ‘drau-ni-kau.’ Whether our daughter was the result of the ‘drau-ni-kau’ or not, she was a delight to us all. (White, N.d.)

Anna claims to have influenced the sex of my grandmother’s baby through a practice that many *iTaukei* I have spoken to believe is tantamount to devil worship, sorcery, and witchcraft. Beyond my grandmother’s account of *drau-ni-kau*, according to files I examined at the National Archives of Fiji, the term *draunikau*, a source of noticeable anxiety for many of the *iTaukei* I interviewed, was a source of anxiety for the colonial administration of the 1930s because it brought with it many unknowns. The term formed a file of its own in the category of “Crime” in the Colonial Secretary’s Office (CSO)

Correspondence Files, 1931-1958⁵¹ housed at the National Archive of Fiji. Although in my grandmother's memoirs she does not seem particularly anxious about indigenous spiritual practices, the "*draunikau*" file reveals that the demonizing of ghosts, local deities and spiritual practices was reinforced by the British colonial administration at least in part due to the fear of anti-colonial disruptions to colonial order (Kaplan 1995).

In as far as *meke* was connected to ancestor worship, it too was targeted by the colonial administration. The demonizing of certain behaviours, traditions, and spiritual beliefs in order to achieve certain colonial goals for control⁵² became clear when I examined colonial documents from the CSO files. Terms used to describe ancestor worship in these archival sources were "sorcery" and "witchcraft."⁵³ These terms were

⁵¹ This period of time was of particular interest for several reasons: it aligned with the time my family was in Fiji and, thus, helped me to understand the family archive of documents, memoirs, and photographs I inherited. This period is also interesting because it covers a period of time when a wave of anti-colonial feelings were manifesting themselves in ancestor worship and this impacted the practice of *meke*. In addition, the archives show that during this period tourism was developing and shaping the practice of *meke*, particularly post-WWII.

⁵² Based on files from the Colonial Secretary's Office housed at the National Archives of Fiji, it is clear that by the 1930s, efforts were put in place to control the movements of *iTaukei* by drawing *iTaukei* into a tax paying work force (Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO) File 7 1934), providing labour for industry such as tourism, agriculture (CSO File 25/1 1937 and File 83/10, 1934), and mining (CSO File 111/28 1938). In the early years of colonization (1879-1916), Indian indentured labour was brought to Fiji in order to avoid exploiting the labour of the Native population (Knapman 1986).

⁵³ For example, in a network of communications, British colonial authorities reach out to other British colonial authorities and their "Witchcraft Ordinances" from Kenya and Tanganyika in order to try to understand spiritual practices associated with worshipping of ancestor spirits in Fiji (referred to as "witchcraft" and "sorcery") and to determine how to control and ultimately abolish the worship of ancestor spirits through a Fijian "witchcraft ordinance" (CSO File 109/63 1936-37). The language used by colonial

used throughout the many pages of figuring out how to control rituals and practices associated with the worshiping of ancestor spirits.

The following case of “sorcery” involving the arrest of eleven young men practicing *meke* in Savu Savu district in Vanua Levu is an example of colonial attempts to control *kalou* worship for its perceived threat to colonial order. The young men were referred to as followers or *luveniwai* in the documentation of the case. *Luveniwai* has been defined as the *kalou* worship of stillbirth and miscarriage (CSO File 109/63 1936-37 and Hocart 1912, 444), and as intercourse with water-spirits (Kaplan 1995, 50, 68). *Luveniwai* have the power of making songs and its followers must abide by *tabu* (including no adultery, thieving or anything that would detract from his work). If the follower does not abide by these conditions required by the *luveniwai*, he, his wife or his children could be penalized by death. This form of ancestor spirit worship is considered dangerous because of the deaths resulting from a disregard of the conditions of *tabu* that the *luveniwai* must observe (CSO File 109/63).⁵⁴ In the particular case of the eleven followers, the defendants were young men belonging to a club that was based on boxing, developing agriculture (a possible economic threat to colonial systems of communal farming), and learning *meke*. It was in connection with *meke* that the charge of sorcery

authorities in Fiji, clearly demonstrates the borrowing of a British colonial template in order to establish Fiji’s legal protocols for abolishing worship of ancestral spirits through exploring forms of corporeal punishment (CSO 109/63 1936-37).

⁵⁴ *Luveniwai* has been defined in varying ways. Kaplan (1995) notes a link between *luveniwai* and anti-colonial sentiments (Kaplan 1995,50,68). Kaplan also notes that *Luveniwai* prosecutions occurred throughout the 1930s due to fears of anti-colonial dissention (Kaplan 1995, 132).

arose. The group was perceived to be demonstrating the desire to break away from the control of the communal system and local authority. This sparked colonial fears that these *meke* practitioners were part of a renewed Apolosi movement⁵⁵ that was the source of great anxiety for colonizers and chiefs trying to maintain control in Fiji (CSO File 109/63 1936-37). The young men were all charged with sorcery, and the court found all of the defendants guilty and sentenced them to imprisonment (two men were sentenced for four months and, nine men were sentenced for two months).

Charging these men with sorcery for practicing *meke* in this case is clearly part of a bigger anxiety about anti-colonial challenges to colonial authority and a return of the Apolosi movement, and earlier “Tuka” (immortality and strength) movement that was imagined by early colonizers as “a return to heathenism, with all its attendant practices (of which cannibalism is an essential feature)” (Kaplan 1995, 68-69). This example of *luveniwai* followers being arrested for practicing *meke* confirms Kaplan’s observation that colonizers criminalized and demonized spirit worship in order to deal with their fears of losing economic, religious, and government control and, as a way of legitimating

⁵⁵ Apolosi Nawai started the Viti Kabani (Fiji Company) in 1913 on behalf of the “*itaukei*” (people or owners of the land) and in opposition to colonial economic exploitation of Fijians. His economic leadership was viewed as a threat to order. His methods for gaining effectiveness and power (accruing *mana*) by aligning his actions with the will of Christian God and *kalou* was also threatening to colonial and chiefly order because he attained the simultaneous standing of *iTaukei* and chief in the eyes of Fijians (Kaplan 1995, 136-137). Apolosi was often compared to the “Tuka” movement that was, as Kaplan has put it a “colonial construction of disorder” involving ancestor worship at the end of the 19th century (Kaplan 1995, 2-6).

their colonial project (Kaplan 1995). In the context of these fears stemming from the “Tuka” movement in early decades of colonial rule, *luveniwai* practicing *meke* were seen as a threat (CSO 109/63 1936). The colonial response was to prosecute them for practicing sorcery and sentence them to imprisonment in the hopes of dissuading others from showing dissent through practicing *meke* or other rituals and practices aligned with ancestor gods or land spirit worship.

In the archival documents I explored at the National Archive of Fiji, *meke*, like drinking *yaqona*, was under attack only when it appeared to be connected with ancestor or land spirit worship. Archival sources reveal many cases of *meke* being eagerly anticipated by colonial administrators. However, in these cases *meke* were celebrated as a form of de-spiritualized cultural heritage and a potential source of economic interest for an emerging tourism industry. The following excerpt from one of my grandmother’s memoirs provides a glimpse into her own de-spiritualized cultural and heritage account of *meke*. She writes:

[Anna] looked really spectacular in her *meke* costume, when she dressed uniformly with a row of dusky belles to perform a native dance for some ceremonial occasion; she wore skirts of tapa-cloth, made from the bark of the paper-mulberry tree, the skirts being arranged in tiers and gathered into the waist; over a simple white blouse she wore garlands of leaves and flowers about her neck and wrists, and a red hibiscus tucked into the side of her hair [...]. From time to time, we were onlookers at a *meke*; I well remember the aroma of crushed greenery and coconut oil worn by the participants and the drumming rhythm which accompanied their movements; after watching the warrior’s fiery dance, with much stomping of the feet, and chopping of the air with war-clubs, the girls’ dance, with movements of hands and arms only, seemed very sedate and ladylike. (White N.d.)

In this quote, the performance does not create anxiety but meets with colonial approval as a kind of cultural enactment and entertainment. There is no mention of religion or spirituality in her account. Rather, the *meke* seems acceptable to her as a vivid set of rhythms and movements that denote men as fiery warriors and women as sedate and ladylike. My grandmother's colonial notions of gender collide in her affective memories of the dancing body. Her perspective is reminiscent of current attitudes towards Fijian "culture and heritage" that view gendered identifications with Fijianess as tied to past images of "traditional" Fijian dance and powerful Fijian warriors. This gendered identification with Fijian warriors of the past through the expressions of movement-based rhythms, accents, and affects in *meke* is explored in greater depth in my chapter "Governing Affects."

Biopolitics and Issues of Equality and Land

Although *iTaukei* engaging in non-Christian indigenous spiritual practices was a threat to colonial order, an even greater threat to order came from indentured Indians and post-indentured Indo-Fijians who sought political and social equality (Kaplan 1995, 95). As Kaplan puts it, the British were "[c]rucially united with the Fijians [*iTaukei*] as Christian and hierarchical, the British could always see themselves as the protectors of the Fijians [*iTaukei*], against the Indo-Fijians..." (Kaplan 1995, 95) It is the colonial history involving the importation of indentured labour from India that informs the long-term, current ethnically divisive relations in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora. Tensions

involving “ethnic” identity are believed by many (such as Fraenkel and Firth 2009; and Kelly and Kaplan 2001) to be at the centre of political instability in Fiji, and an inheritance of British colonial strategies and legacies of control and power. A brief understanding of this complex political ecology helps situate recent shifts in power and biopolitical relations that are being exposed by movement-based affects expressed in performances of *meke*.

To briefly provide context into these divisions and their impacts on dance performance, from the establishment of the Colonial Sugar Refinery in 1880, in the early years of colonial rule, to 1916 Indian indentured labourers were brought to Fiji and their labour exploited by The Colonial Sugar Refinery (Knapman 1986). The last Indian labourers arrived in Fiji in 1916 and, no longer having a cheap source of labour, the sugar plantations disintegrated by 1920 (Knapman 1986). Due to this importation of labour and dramatic decline in indigenous Fijian population due to introduced disease, the total *iTaukei* population dropped by approximately 25 thousand people to roughly 85 thousand between 1879 to 1921. By the 1940s, Indians and Fijian born Indians outnumbered *iTaukei* Fijians (Knapman 1986). However, for the most part, only those native to Fiji could own land; an enduring policy established by the first colonial governor of Fiji, Arthur Charles Hamilton-Gordon, after the Deed of Cession in 1874. Because of the prevalence of settlers exploiting indigenous populations, the policy was established as a way of protecting *iTaukei* from exploitation (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). However, it is this enduring colonial policy that informs a continuation of racially charged political

dynamics that has led to a tumultuous Fijian independence (Kelly and Kaplan 2001) involving four coups d'état since 1987. The politics of negotiating identity in post-independence Fiji have created deep ethnic divides that have tended to separate dance forms based on ethnicity (Hereniko 2006). As a result, it has been considered inappropriate for anyone other than someone of *iTaukei* decent to perform *meke*.

Following independence from Britain in 1970, Fiji continued to function on the dynamics of power established during British colonial rule. Despite attempts by prominent individuals (including British colonial officials, and those of European, *iTuakei* and Indian descent) to deploy a narrative of Fiji as multiracial after independence, a narrative of nation developed that continued the rights and privileges of *iTaukei* over those of Fijians of Indian descent. This pervasive narrative of nation perpetuated a dynamic that was a key tenant of British colonial rule in Fiji (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 130-133). As evidence of this quick disintegration of a multiracial narrative of nation, while Indian rituals were originally included in public national events, these rituals were rapidly diminished and excluded. Fijian nationalism as “ethno-nationalism” was established between 1970 and 1987 with Fiji’s national leaders being high chiefs, and national performances of chiefly ritual (such as rituals of welcome for foreign ambassadors) done to support their preeminence (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 133). As Kelly and Kaplan put it, “Fijian chiefly ritual, used in Fijian national rituals, constituted a Fiji from the top down, a continuant of chiefly-Christian-colonial synthesis” (2001, 133).

Ritual performance enshrined a narrative of nation that kept power in the hands of chiefly authority and *iTaukei*.

These performances of national ritual supported a Fijian politics that favoured *iTaukei* in the constitution. For example, Kelly and Kaplan note that Fiji's post-independence constitution gave

Disproportionate representation to ethnic [*iTaukei*] Fijians in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the House, although there were more Indo-Fijians than ethnic Fijians in the population, the two groups received equal numbers of representatives. In the Senate, the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs had special rights to appoint members, and these members had the power to veto legislation that might affect ethnic Fijian affairs and land rights. (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 132)

Enshrining the ethno-national narrative of nation through ritual performance made the post-independence Fijian nation seem real and tangible as Kelly and Kaplan (2001) illustrate. The performance of a biopolitical division of bodies and status confirmed, actualized, and enforced these divisions in the constitution.

I assert that performances of *meke* for the national stage also contributed to generating a narrative of nation that protected *iTaukei* preeminence and rights to land. In the post-2006 coup context, this narrative is increasingly challenged by discourses of multiracialism that threaten *iTaukei* preeminence. Within the early post-independence context, two sites of performance emerged that served to develop a Fijian national narrative: The Cultural Centre in Pacific Harbour that opened in 1978 (a permanent site for regular performances of *meke* in Fiji since its opening in 1978), and The Festival of Pacific Arts that opened in 1972 (a festival that occurs every four years, that shifts its

location throughout the Pacific). Both sites of performance developed in a climate of wanting to revive, relearn and protect indigenous arts and culture of the Pacific that had been impacted by many years of colonization, and to develop a sense of post-independence national belonging based on past practices. The importance of re-establishing past practices is made evident in the following early objectives of the Festival of Pacific Arts quoted from a 1972 festival brochure:

[w]e hope this Festival will [. . .] serve to re-establish much that is in danger of being lost. [. . .] Perhaps it may also enable a recapturing of some of the old chants and dances, as they were when they were originally created and in the form they were enjoyed by the peoples of the Pacific long ago. (Stevenson 2002, 32)

However, it is not sufficient for any body to re-capture the chants and dances. Rather, these past practices must be re-captured by bodies that confirm biopolitical arrangements that at least appear to represent and support indigenous national belonging.

Up until 2008 (when “contemporary” artistic practices began to be included in the Festival (Stevenson 2002, 37)), Fiji has used traditional dance to represent itself in each of the Festivals as four distinct groups categorized as Fijian, Indian, Rotuman, and Chinese (Hereniko 2006). And, as Hereniko points out, despite living together for more than 125 years, dancers of varying descent have not been allowed to perform each other’s dances (Hereniko 2006, 36). Instead, dance traditions and national identifications with them are safeguarded and protected against loss caused by appropriation. This approach firmly entrenches the idea that “culture” belongs to specific groups from specific places, and loss of ownership over that “culture” is tantamount to loss of identity, geographical belonging, sovereignty, and rights to land.

Like The Festival of Pacific Arts, the Cultural Centre also safeguards and preserves the past in a selective way to protect future national belonging and ownership over “culture” for *iTaukei*. The Cultural Centre opened eight years after Fiji became independent, when Fiji was still in the early stages of organizing itself as an independent nation-state and in need of narratives to help cohere its population around common goals and allegiances. I do not know if it was part of the original plan of the Cultural Centre to partake in the shaping of a national identity. However, based on my experiences, the experiences my consultants shared with me, and the photographs taken at its opening, the Cultural Centre generates a narrative of Fiji’s past that contributes a sense of Fijian nation based on *iTaukei* belonging. Many of the younger dancers I interviewed told me their earliest memories of *meke* were formed at the Cultural Centre.⁵⁶ The initial performances were directed and staged by Ratu Manoa Rasigatale who is renowned for his knowledge of *meke*.⁵⁷ Rasigatale continues to maintain an interest in drawing from the past to inform a future national identity for Fiji (Rasigatale 2013).⁵⁸ Currently, he encourages *iTaukei* not to be ashamed of the past but to learn the views and practices of

⁵⁶ My more senior consultants on Vancouver Island explained their first memories of *meke* involved preparing for Queen Elizabeth the II’s visit to Fiji in 1954.

⁵⁷ Rasigatale’s dance group was referred to as “Dancetheatre of Fiji” in an interview with one of the group’s initial performers (Iosefo in conversation with the author, Deuba, Fiji, August 2012). However, a photo of the opening day performance of the Culture Centre, housed at the National Archives of Fiji, has the group named “Fiji Dance Group” (photos identified as #’s 1-8101, 1-8106, 1-8098).

⁵⁸ Rasigatale’s perspective was articulated in one of his TV specials about his work reviving *Teivovo*, a *meke* war challenge (*bole*), for Fiji’s national rugby team (Rasigatale 2013).

the ancestors, and to revive them, and practice them “so that our children are implanted with patriotic feeling when fighting for their country” (Rasigatale 2013).

The Cultural Centre appears to adopt Rasigatale’s views to produce a narrative of nation enshrined by patriotic warriors with a working knowledge of pre-Christian indigenous beliefs and practices (such as an approach to generating *mana* in performance of *Teivovo*).⁵⁹ By excluding the cultural influences of Fijians of Indian, European, Chinese, and Rotuman descent (who form the largest diasporas in Fiji), and rooting its performance in the pre-Christian past, *meke* is one such practice that the Cultural Centre uses to inform a national *iTaukei* identity. However, this construction of present-day Fiji as rooted in the past views and practices of pre-contact *iTaukei* competes with at least two major trends: the recent trends of *iTaukei* evangelicals who seek a present-day construction that rejects Fiji’s past traditions and protocols; and national discourses of multiracialism that seek to move towards a united and harmonious Fiji.

Today, the past continues to be safeguarded at the Centre. Early images of the opening performance at the Cultural Centre that I observed show a similar setup to what a visitor would experience today.⁶⁰ In its current arrangement, before the theatrical performance, visitors can take a tour of a *bure* (a traditional house for men), and *bure*

⁵⁹ He describes a Fijian process of generating *mana* (narrowly defined here as spiritually effective speech and action) by knowing and communicating the deeper meanings of the lyrics and movements. Quoting Rasigatale, after the *Teivovo*, “once they enter the field they feel electrified from their toes right up to their head. They will just move in and without a doubt achieve nothing less than a win and that is if they really know the lyrics and the meaning” (Rasigatale 2013).

⁶⁰ Courtesy of the National Archives of Fiji.

kalou (a pre-Christian religious building). After a tour of the pre-Christian *koro* (village), visitors then enjoy a performance of *meke* woven into a dramatized story. The story is scripted in the nationally recognized Bauan dialect, and explained and interpreted in English by an MC who is one of the Centre's original performers. The story begins with a performance of firewalking. While the performance takes place, the MC explains the practice and protocols of firewalking, and the audience learns that the ability to walk on fire without being burned is a biologically inherited practice performed by the indigenous Sawau people of Beqa.⁶¹ We are told the Sawau people were given the gift of power over fire by an ancestor spirit or land spirit god (who came in the form of an eel). The firewalking is part of a larger scripted performance that assembles masculine *iTaukei* bodies⁶² as having extra-ordinary strength and power due to their past spiritual connections to the land. Next, there is a race to open coconuts and the winner takes the girl. Finally, there is a conflict that leads to a battle and a *Teivovo* (a pre-Christian Bauan war *meke*). While the performance takes place the MC, who has continued to perform as a dancer or MC at the Centre for over 30 years,⁶³ explains to the audience what the performances are about in terms of pre-Christian worship of ancestor and land spirits. He

⁶¹ Beqa is an island off the coast of Viti Levu, not far from Pacific Harbour.

⁶² In contrast to the idea espoused by the host at the Cultural Centre that firewalking is something that only men do, I discovered a picture of a woman performing firewalking on Laucala Island on November 18, 1978 for a Cabinet Minister Tour (Negative No. 1-7960), courtesy of National Archive of Fiji. Whether or not she is from Beqa is not made clear by the remarks attached to the photo.

⁶³ Iosefo *meke* performer at the Cultural Centre in conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Viti Levu, August, 2012.

explains the processes and protocols of connecting with the land spirits, and techniques of human sacrifice and cannibalism. The Cultural Centre orients itself not towards Fiji in the present but an *iTaukei* past solely ordered by hierarchies of chiefdoms and the worship of *kalou vu*, or ancestor gods.

The Cultural Centre, as a post-independence nation-building phenomenon, is one technology of power and governance disseminating knowledge of what indigenous bodies are and should be. The Cultural Centre generates a notion of current-day *iTaukei* as “natural” warriors of the past who inherit a knowledge and an ability to live in Fiji from their ancestors who are descended from ancestor gods. This shared biological history binds *iTaukei* together and to the land. Performances of nation that safeguard the past at the Cultural Centre (like at the Festival of Pacific Arts) have had over three decades of national and international influence on a largely *iTaukei* audience.⁶⁴ Whether or not it was part of the original intent, these performances have influenced post-independence Fiji at a national level and have arguably shaped a sense of national identity rooted in pre-Christian, pre-colonial *iTaukei* traditions and protocols that serve chiefly authority. These performances erase the many other influences on Fijian culture and heritage such as the presence of Fijians of Indian descent.

⁶⁴ According to Karen Stevenson (2002) and based on my interviews, audiences for The Festival of Pacific Arts are primarily indigenous. In my observations and interviews, it seems the Cultural Centre performances are for tourists and Fijians. The first performance I attended had an audience that seemed to be made up of mostly tourists. The audience for the second show I attended was roughly 80 *iTaukei* children who had taken the bus all the way from Ra province (about an eight hour bus ride). This was one of many performances done by the Cultural Centre for school children.

The performances of national identity at the Festival of Pacific Arts and at the Cultural Centre enshrines a biopolitical narrative of nation rooted in biology that safeguards and romanticizes aspects of past traditions and protocols for the future benefit of *iTaukei* and chiefly authority. These performances contribute to *iTaukei* preeminence by securing and stabilizing bodies through categories of race and ethnicity that qualify within the established boundaries of citizenship in order to bind territory and identity together. And yet, bodies, as Manning reminds us, are only ever virtually concrete because bodies are always in metamorphosis. A body is what a body does as it moves through space and time “that have not yet been charted...” (Manning 2007, xix, xx). As I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, even in the appearance of stability, bodies are continually emerging in relation to other bodies: human and non-human.

At the Cultural Centre, the past is romanticized as a time of extra-ordinary *iTaukei* strength and power that needs to be reclaimed to prevent the loss of power due to Westernizing pressures. But why is this narrative being generated now? What purpose does it serve? And, who is it for? In answering these questions, there are at least two political motivations behind an investment in a national narrative that safeguards the past and the *vanua* (the customs and traditions of the land (Bigitibau 2007) or chiefdom (Kaplan 1995, 25)). First, many of the Fijians I met who were “safeguarding” were motivated to reclaim traditional practices, protocols, and knowledge that was suppressed and/or eradicated by past Christian Missionaries and colonizers. A second motivation to protect the past comes as a result of current threats of erasure and change caused by

Western economic and cultural pressures, and an upsurge in evangelical and charismatic churches. These motivations to safeguard the past are also politically invested in protecting chiefly authority, *iTaukei* rights to land, and constitutional preeminence.

While independent Fiji has perpetuated *iTaukei* preeminence through its constitution and performances at the Cultural Centre and Festival of Pacific Arts, the year 1987 marks a turning point in biopolitical relations in Fiji. In 1987, chiefly *iTaukei* preeminence was challenged when the multiracial Fiji Labour Party (FLP) (a coalition of Fijians of Indian and *iTaukei* descent and headed by an *iTaukei* commoner) was elected for the first time in Fiji's history. The FLP based their politics on labour and individual rights (as opposed to communal ones), and common roll (one person, one vote) electoral politics. They were opposed to past approaches to communal constituencies whereby electors registered themselves based on ethnicity and then voted for a candidate within their respective ethnic group. The party also opposed the use of Christianity and divinity to inform political decisions. For all of these reasons, the Fiji Labour party was a serious threat to the chiefly and Christian status quo (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 133).

Democratically elected FLP leader Timoci Bavadra replaced Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the Fijian chief who had been Prime Minister since independence, as Fiji's new Prime Minister. One month later, *iTaukei* "ethno-nationalist" Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Sitiveni Rabuka staged the first of his two coups that year to restore power in the hands of chiefly authority (Miyazaki 2004). In addition, Rabuka gave the Great Council of Chiefs authority to sanction a new constitution that reaffirmed the idea

that chiefs had a divine, God-given right to sovereign power and to grant laws and rights that denied democracy to Fijians of Indian descent (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 133).

Rabuka drew from a narrative of Christian *iTaukei* sovereignty to justify his actions in a biopolitical arrangement with God. In this narrative, God gave Fiji to the *iTaukei*. Rabuka believed that the democratically elected multi-racial coalition, dominated by Fijians of Indian and commoner descent, threatened to take away *iTaukei* Fijians' God given right to their land. Quoting Rabuka,

There is only one reason for this coup, that is my apprehension that the time might come when the rule of our land and our soil might be taken and that in such future times our descendants might therefore be impoverished. We people of Fiji have been well off, because of the religion of our living God. ...The basis of our blessedness is their [chiefs] having accepted our God's religion, His name, His salvation, and His light. It is right thereby that we see everything that comes to us as something blessed, including development in the work we do... Let not our thoughts thereby be led astray so that we say to ourselves, since we have studied we can be chiefs. It's wrong, if we study we are wise, if we are chiefs, we are chiefs; they the chiefs are chiefs only from God, as the Apostle Paul says. (Miyazaki 2004,120)

Rabuka stated that the 1987 coups were his "God-given mission to restore the relationship that God had established between chiefs and people [*iTaukei*]" (Miyazaki 2004, 125). Not surprisingly, Rabuka's "ethno-nationalist" objectives were supported by the Methodist church and the Great Council of Chiefs. These two powerful and influential institutions (that enabled a system of indirect rule by the British during colonialism (Thomas 1997, 52) have continued to govern, more or less overtly, the biopolitical pact between *iTaukei* and their "God given" rights to the land. Due to the rising tensions between *iTaukei* and Fijians of Indian descent who wanted equality with

iTaukei, the military coups in 1987 resulted in increased racism aimed at Fijians of Indian descent, destruction of their property, and harassment, and lead to massive migration to a number of diasporas (Tomlinson 2009, 8) including Canada (Lal 2003).

In 1999, *iTaukei* preeminence was again challenged when Fijian of Indian descent Mahendra Chaudhry won a democratic election to become Prime Minister of Fiji. The chiefs opposed his position as leader of Fiji. And, one year after he was elected, a coup was staged by ethno-nationals George Speight and Ilisoni Ligairi (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 180). Fifty-five days later, the coups' leaders had negotiated the release of the eighteen hostages (including Chaudhry) on the premise that they would have amnesty and Fiji's military (led by Voreque Bainimarama) would ensure a revision of the constitution to secure *iTaukei* as paramount rulers of Fiji with special legal rights and privileges (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 143-144, 181). After the 2000 coup, Laisenia Qarase became Fiji's Prime Minister, and promoted policies that would favour indigenous Fijians until Bainimarama's 2006 coup.

The continuation of such racially charged political dynamics has led to a tumultuous Fijian independence with the politics of identity mired in deep ethnic tensions that have resulted in bodies and dances being divided and categorized based on ethnic groupings. It is within this context that Commodore Voreque (Frank) Bainimarama staged a 2006 coup emphasizing the need for unity and multiracial harmony (even if that meant rights and freedoms needed to be curtailed in order to achieve those objectives). With the exception of this most recent coup in 2006 named the "coup to end all coups,"

and a coup in the name of multiculturalism, the coups have been about maintaining the power of primarily Methodist and chiefly authority. A sense of crisis has been shaped by these coups, out of which competing accounts choreograph pasts in order to re-fashion futures. These accounts are influencing the ways in which *meke* are created and performed; and why some Fijians identify with *meke*, and some Fijians do not.

The coup of 2006 brought a narrative of multiracialism that, on the surface, appears to reach towards a future of ethnic and racial tolerance, unity, and harmony through a rejection of a dangerous past. Prior to the 2006 coup, Bainimarama gave a public speech deploying a narrative of Fiji's dangerous cannibal, heathen, and warring past as a way to attack the current leadership of Prime Minister Lesenia Qarase and his government's policies. He argued that leniency of the government towards perpetrators of the 2000 coup, led by ethno-Nationalist George Speight, had sanctioned a disrespect for the law, that was resulting in increased incidents of rape, homicide, desecration of Hindu temples and that government policies could take Fiji back to its cannibal past (Newland 2009, 203). In his speech, he was also critical of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma for their support of Lesenia's leniency towards ethno-nationalist coup perpetrators. Bainimarama issued an ultimatum for the government to meet nine demands including bringing the proponents of the 2000 coup to justice, and removing political barriers to economic equality based on race (Newland 2009, 190).⁶⁵ When his

⁶⁵ Bainimarama's demands also included dropping two bills proposed by Qarase government's "Reconciliation, Tolerance, and Unity Bill" and the Qoliqoli bill (indigenous rights over reefs – a

demands were not met, Bainimarama took control of the government in the capacity of Executive Authority. He rationalized his military takeover to media by saying Prime Minister Qarase was corrupt and responsible for inflaming tensions between ethnic communities by instituting divisive and controversial policies (Newland 2009, 190). Bainimarama used an account of the past as dangerous (due to its systemic racism) and threatening (by invoking cannibalism in his audiences imaginations), to justify imposing state power over Fiji's citizens in order to prevent dissent and direct Fijians towards a future of multiracial harmony.

Recalling my earlier discussion of narratives of nation in chapter one, narratives of nation supported by emotional triggers and dancing for the national stage are ways of making the intangible notion of nation more tangible, more believable and more true. Kelly and Kaplan note that post-independence Fiji used ritual as a way to enshrine needed narratives of nation that were initially multiracial and over time became centered on chiefly authority (2001, 130-133). Post-2006-coup Fiji was in need of a narrative that would bind people together in order to move in a new direction. Bainimarama's speech aimed to do just that by generating a sense of the past that was dangerous and threatening in order to move Fiji's citizens through fear towards the new, uncharted territory of multiracial harmony and unity made tangible by his story of nation. This account of nation is also actualized by dance performance for the national stage during Fiji Day

potentially divisive bill amongst *iTaukei*) – both of which supported interests of some *iTaukei* at the expense of marginalizing Fijians of Indian descent (Newland 2009, 190).

celebrations whereby *meke* is performed amidst other “ethnic” dances, and is blended with other dance practices. However, Bainimarama’s multiracial narrative competes with other narratives that promote the performance and protection of *meke* and Fiji’s traditions from the past.

Together, these differing accounts of nation that are competing for political preeminence are co-constituted, and sometimes cloaked by religion. The varying Christian churches in Fiji each have their own political investments in these narratives of nation. For example, Methodists (with a long-standing and deep integration with *vanua*, traditions and customs) were deeply offended by Bainimarama’s speech. Demonstrating its alliance with the Great Council of Chiefs who saw the coup as illegal (Norton 2009, 108) the Assembly of Christian Churches of Fiji (ACCF), which is one of two large Christian umbrella organizations in Fiji dominated by the Methodist Church, supported Qarase and rejected Bainimarama as a leader (Newland 2009, 187).⁶⁶ Quoting a reverend with the ACCF in reference to the coup, “We are now deeply convinced that the move now taken by the commander and his advisers is the manifestation of darkness and evil, and we humbly appeal to them to reconsider their present course and remain loyal to the divine rule of God which will bring order and peace to the nation” (Newland 2009, 190). Pentecostal and evangelist pastor Suliasi Kurulo who is head of the Christian Mission Fellowship (CMF) advertised in the *Fiji Times* and the *Fiji Sun* that the coup was

⁶⁶ The ACCF advised the conservative political party Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) (also known as the United Fiji Party), of which Qarase was a member.

“unbiblical, ungodly, unconstitutional, unlawful and unethical” (Newland 2009, 190).

Ethno-nationalists retaliated against Bainimarama’s subversive coup by invoking Fiji as a Christian, Methodist, *iTaukei*, and chiefly nation-state against an “evil” commoner who wrongfully takes a position of leadership.

While the Methodist Church and the ACCF are threats to Bainimarama’s vision for Fiji’s future, in contrast, the Roman Catholic Church has been actively in favour of a vision of Fiji that is more in line with Bainimarama (Newland 2009, 2006). The Catholic Church supports Bainimarama’s stated ecumenical goals of equity. Catholics saw Qarase as manipulating democracy to serve Fijian ethno-nationalism (Newland 2009, 193). They called Bainimarama’s takeover a coup “in the name of multiculturalism” (Quoted in Newland 2009, 193). As a result of this perspective, the majority of Catholics in Fiji supported Bainimarama’s interim government and saw it as a way to return Fiji to democracy (Newland 2009, 198).

Under threat of losing power and authority due to such multiracial democracy, those safeguarding chiefly *iTaukei* preeminence in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora espouse an account of Bainimarama as a dangerous dictator. Those who espouse the account of dangerous dictator shared with me rumours, stories, and accusations of the military flexing their muscle and using physical force, intimidation, and torture to maintain power and control over Fiji’s citizens and Fijians living abroad in diaspora. As part of this

account, *iTaukei* chiefs claim that Bainimarama and his team of policy developers⁶⁷ is taking away their rights because *iTaukei* cannot speak freely, and the system of chiefs is under attack, including the Great Council of Chiefs. According to village chiefs, people were suffering in villages as a result of Bainimarama's actions (Fraenkel and Firth 2009, 15). The legal representative of the Great Council of Chiefs, Savenaca Komaisavai, stated that *iTaukei* were being treated in a "vicious manner," and criticized Bainimarama for breaking the laws and nominating himself as leader which was an outrage particularly because he is a commoner (Fraenkel and Firth 2009, 15).

Chiefly power and authority has also been increasingly challenged by an influx of charismatic and evangelical churches (Bigitibau 2007, 46). In the later years of the 20th Century (Bigitibau 2007, 46), and particularly since the 1970s (Newland 2009, 188) Fiji has experienced a flood of Americanized Christian styles of worship who have also generated a narrative of nation in Fiji that rejects the past. This upswing in evangelical and charismatic churches (Bigitibau 2007) has gained traction by encouraging *iTaukei* to forgo past traditions (such as *meke*) and hierarchies of church and chief to gain a closer, more personal and direct connection to "God."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Such as Mehendra Chaudhry who was invited by Bainimarama to be part of a team of individuals in the National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) responsible for preparing the Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress (a key aspect of Bainimarama's plan to create a more equitable constitution that is needed for a truly democratic election).

⁶⁸ During my interactions with Fijians (of *iTaukei* descent), those striving towards a more direct connection to God included New Methodists, Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, born-again Christians, Apostles, and Seventh day Adventists.

Through the hostility of charismatics and evangelicals towards the Fijian concept of *vanua* (the land, people, and customs), and in particular drinking *yaqona* but also *meke* (Bigitibau 2007), a new relationship is being shaped between Fiji's citizens and governance that involves affect relations. A new biopolitical arrangement governed by evangelicals is preoccupied less with past ways of doing things that include relational dependencies through communal subsistence and gift economies (such as the gift economy of *loloma* (Kaplan 1995, 189-191)). Instead, they focus on reaching towards a future filled with economic prosperity, democratic Christian worship, individual positive thinking, peace, happiness, and individual salvation (as opposed to communal salvation that is the focus of Fijian Methodism) (Newland 2009, 189).

iTaukei evangelicals and charismatics justify their rejection of *vanua*, due to the way they narrate Fiji's past. These *iTaukei* narrate the past as being consumed by acts of cannibalism, heathenism, and war. Narrating these past acts as driven by devil worship, sorcery, witchcraft, and *druanikau* (as a kind of murderous magic (Mann 1940, 175)), has led to a present-day proliferation of devilish spirits, sorcery, witchcraft and devil worship.⁶⁹ Devils and devilish acts are used to explain occurrences of unusual behaviour,

⁶⁹ In the two most comprehensive theses on *meke* I have found (Good 1978 and Ratawa 1986), there is not one mention of *meke* in relation to devil worship or witchcraft. However, in my interviews, despite the fact that none of my interview questions initially had anything to do with religion, everyone brought up concerns about devil worship in relation to *meke*. This has led me to wonder if there is an increase in associating traditions with devil worship, witchcraft and sorcery that coincides with the increase in charismatic and evangelical churches in Fiji since the 1970s. In Canada, there is a corresponding trend. Fiji-Canadians I have interviewed who migrated to Canada in the 70s and 80s are Methodist and proud of

and misfortune as “evil” behaviour and signs of not being devoted to God. Dangerous occult witchcraft imaginaries are being tied to communal practices and traditions that support chiefly hierarchies that are perceived as undemocratic and uneconomic. As accusations and fears of occult activities rise, the charismatic and evangelical churches become more responsible for setting examples of “good” Christian behaviour. The two-dimensional past narrated as being driven by cannibalism, heathenism, and war, justifies a particular directionality of reaching towards a future of happiness, economic prosperity, and direct and democratic worship.

Because charismatics and evangelicals are linking economic prosperity with Christian devotion, Fiji’s post-coup economic decline fuel narratives of nation that reject traditional Methodist and chiefly traditions and protocols. As with Fiji’s previous coups, the economy slowed after the 2006 military takeover. Aid stopped from the United States (who is legally required to suspend aid in countries that have had a coup) (Fraenkel and Firth 2009, 14). International trade sanctions were imposed, and development aid suspended because of Bainimarama’s failure to hold democratic elections in 2009 as promised. His inability to follow through on his word had a damaging effect on his legitimacy in the eyes of international bodies, and Fiji’s economy suffered as a result. Trade sanctions were imposed by Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union (Fiji’s largest buyer of sugar) who will only trade and provide aid for its member states if

their traditions whereas more recent migrants are Pentecostal and espouse a language of devil worship, cannibalism and witchcraft when speaking about Fijian traditions.

they are democracies (Fraenkel and Firth 2009,14). In addition Fiji faced suspensions from development aid money from Asian Development Bank (Prasad 2009, 215) and Pacific Islands Forum (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2009). As poverty has increased, charimatics and evangelicals become increasingly hostile towards traditional practices that are viewed by these Christians as exasperating Fiji's economic slump.

In the face of poverty and decaying infrastructure caused by trade sanctions due to Bainimarama's failure to hold democratic elections, NGOs and evangelical churches focus on social development through which social dynamics are regulated and governed. They focus on family planning, self-help, and individual leadership as opposed to leaving leadership roles to those with chiefly status. NGOs and churches engage in fundraising activities to assist Fijians in need of economic support. The assistance is needed due to Fiji's economy's decline (Fraenkel and Firth 2009, 14). For example, the Pentecostals I consulted with in Vancouver are fundraising and sending money to Fiji regularly.⁷⁰

Post-2006 coup narratives of nation are rejecting the past in order to aim for futures of multiracial harmony and individual economic prosperity. These narratives compete with an older post-independence narrative of nation that aims to protect the *iTaukei* past for the future preeminence of *iTaukei* and chiefly authority. As a result of these competing and influential narratives, Fiji as a nation-state is becoming a shell of its former self and the role of chief, in terms of governing the social, biopolitical, and economic aspects, no longer carries the weight it once did. These shifts and their

⁷⁰ Lavonne in Conversation with the author, August 2011, Vancouver, Canada.

accompanying narratives are some of the ways in which Fijians have responded to serial coups that have resulted in a sense of ongoing crisis and real economic hardships. But, responses to these competing narratives and circumstances are also contradictory.

Dancers weave between these narratives sometimes disrupting and sometimes sustaining the biopolitical objectives of the narratives as they reach towards a multitude of futures.

Alongside these post-2006 coup narratives of nation, some Fijians and South Pacific Peoples in Fiji and Canada are invested in reclaiming and rebuilding a pan-Oceanic identity based on pre-colonial, and pre-nation-state relations that spanned the Pacific. Prior to the presence of missionaries and colonizers, travel and exchange between the Pacific islands was endemic (Thomas 1997, 4) resulting in a culture of shared traditions. For generations Islanders connected to one another by criss-crossing the Pacific Ocean. This is why, according to Thomas, the term “Oceania,” connoting “a sea of islands with their inhabitants” is now preferred by scholars and Pacific Peoples’ over the term “Pacific Islands,” which connotes “small areas of land surfaces sitting atop submerged reefs or seamounts” (Thomas 1997, 4). The shift celebrates “the connections between peoples” instead of “affirm particular peoples in a nationalist mode...” (Thomas 1997, 5).

Oceanic relations that were slowly dismantled by missionary and colonial impacts are currently being reclaimed in Fiji and Canada. Colonial attitudes and measures created ethnic divisions by dividing Pacific Peoples by geographical boundaries. British colonial rule in Fiji (from 1874-1970) brought diseases that decimated Fijian populations (Kelly

and Kaplan 2001, 85; Gravelle 1980, 139; Knapman 1986). This resulted in a loss of the manpower needed for the long-distance voyaging that enabled Oceanic culture to thrive (Hereniko 2012). Prior to this, missionaries, who also brought diseases that killed many Fijians, discouraged long-distance voyaging between Islands of the Pacific (Hereniko 2012). The joint impact of missionaries and colonialism rendered the sharing of cultural knowledge across Oceania and, ultimately, Oceanic culture itself “dormant” (Hereniko 2012).⁷¹ Thus, for historical reasons, identifying as “Oceanic” is politically and affectively important for community building amongst post-independence Pacific Peoples. Part of this reclaiming of pan-Oceanic relations involves the post-independence recovery of traditions: not the traditions of individual nations but traditions built through relations in Oceania such as seafaring knowledge (navigation and ship building), exchange, warring, and contact with missionaries (Hereniko 2012).

Canada’s Fijian Diaspora

While relationships between Fiji and Fiji’s Canadian diaspora need to be clarified in order to understand *meke* as an identity re-negotiating process in Canada, identity re-negotiations also manifest themselves in uniquely local and disparate ways. In Fiji’s Canadian diaspora identity re-negotiation occurs in relation to a diverse Fijian diaspora

⁷¹ Pan-Oceanic relations in Fiji and Vancouver Island have recently been revived by the work of philosopher Epeli Hau’ofa (2008) and scholar and director Vilsoni Hereniko (friend of Epeli Hau’ofa and invited guest speaker to Pacific Peoples’ Partnership event in Victoria, B.C., through which many members of the South Pacific Peoples community on Vancouver Island were inspired.

and its intercultural relations in Canada. The Fijian diaspora in Canada is multifarious with individuals of varying backgrounds of descent including, but not limited to, Indian, American, Samoan, Rotuman, and Tongan. I estimate the size of the Fijian diaspora in Canada who were born in Fiji to be roughly 27 000 to 28 000.⁷² Based on the 2006 census, the Fiji-Canadian population born in Fiji is highest in British Columbia at 17,870 (Statistics Canada 2006b). However, most of this diaspora is composed of Fijians of Indian descent, who live in Vancouver, B.C. and have migrated there due to systemic racism in Fiji that was exacerbated by the first three coups (Lal 2003). This estimated number does not account for subsequent generations born in Canada of Fiji born parents and those not of Fijian descent who have married Fiji-born immigrants who also identify with this diaspora. Because of these factors, rather than viewing this diaspora as culturally homogenous, organized around common issues and concerns and tied to a specific place as older models of diaspora were identified (Tölölyan 1996, 4; Brubaker 2005), I look at how affective tensions and conflicts within Fijian dancing bodies address the diverse political realities and ethical concerns related to various forms of “difference.” Stuart Hall supports this perspective on diaspora. He writes:

The Diaspora experience [...] is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity [...]. Diaspora identities

⁷² This estimate is based on 2006 census statistics from Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada 2006a) that show Fijian immigrants in Canada born in Fiji number 24,390. More recent statistical information from Statistics Canada show that between the census taken in May 2006 to 2012 Permanent Residents from Fiji have numbered roughly 2,050 (Canada 2013). Based on an average increase in Fiji born immigrants as roughly 350 per year, I add 700 to the total size by the end of 2014.

are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (Hall 2001, 570)

By Fijian government decree,⁷³ to refer to oneself as “Fijian,” one need only to be a citizen of Fiji. However, many of the Fijians I have spoken with in Canada identify themselves more specifically in relation to being of Indian descent or of native Fijian (*iTaukei*) descent. For example, I located Fijians in Vancouver through various community and media organizations (where I found Fijians of Indian descent) and Fijian Pentecostal churches in Vancouver (where I found Fijians mostly of *iTaukei* descent). In the latter case, further identifications are made in relation to the particular church to which one is a member. Fijians of Indian and *iTaukei* descent come together to enjoy rugby but differ in terms of religious affiliations and their choice or ability to participate in *meke. Meke* as a process of identity re-negotiation for Fiji-Canadians includes the diverse socio-political, economic, and religious realities of migrating to Canada.

In addition to focusing on culture and identity in this diaspora as heterogeneous, I focus on how one’s sense of cultural identity and belonging is shaped by the movements, sensations and affects generated by past experiences and new connections to intercultural spaces in Canada. Dance scholar Carrie Noland (2008) inspires my approach to researching movement-based diasporic expressions and experiences as a process of identity re-negotiation. Noland writes:

⁷³ *iTaukei* Affairs (Amendment) Decree 2010 states that all official laws and documentation pertaining to ‘indigenous’ (referring to original and native settlers of Fiji) Fijians be referred to as *iTaukei*. All Fiji citizens are to be referred to as “Fijian” (Fiji, Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs 2013).

when gestures change location, when they migrate from one site of performance to another, they in fact confront a different reception and may even be experienced in a new way... Psychological or emotional states are expressed as well as brought into being through gestures, and such states can come to define a culture's structures of feeling, transmitted from one generation to the next but also modified and in some cases utterly transformed by a generation that has been displaced. It is because gesture is such a potent means of cultural self-definition (and identification) that it merits attention from theorists of the diasporic condition. (Noland 2008, XVI)

For example, South Pacific peoples living on Vancouver Island actively absorb differences through movement-based affects in dance to strategically reclaim and rebuild a pan-Oceanic identity based on pre-colonial relations spanning across the Pacific Ocean.

Dance traditions, in particular those that express shared features, such as a warrior ancestry and a love and respect for the ocean, are ways in which the peoples of the Pacific living on Vancouver Island can relate across the region. However, as a result of previously mentioned missionary and colonial impacts that silenced or made dormant such expressive culture, the politics of re-negotiating identity in and amongst Pacific nations are mired in deep ethnic divisions. These have resulted in dance forms being divided according to ethnic groupings and their associated connections to specific lands (Hereniko 2006, 36 and Kempf and Hermann 2005, 369). In Victoria, however, these ethnic differences are sustained through visual signifiers of "tradition" and "authenticity" that shift in the Canadian context towards an affective engagement with broader Oceanic relations. This is expressed by one of my consultants who explains that, on Vancouver Island,

the feeling of being connected to the South Pacific has to do with the Pacific Ocean being the playground of our ancestors who fought and crisscrossed back and forth as time went on with livelihoods to protect and enhance the Pacific.⁷⁴

Pacific Peoples' dancing events on Vancouver Island activate the felt dimensions of identifying as Oceanic. While previous ethnic boundaries and divisions are being actively blurred, emphasis is placed instead on shared cultural similarities.

In Canada, Fijians experience competing tensions rooted in religion and politics as well as other barriers to performing *meke*. All of these forces result in Fijians finding new ways of creating *meke* based on Christian values, memories of Fiji and relations in multicultural Canada. The rituals and protocols surrounding *meke* say something of how the past matters to Fijians today in diaspora, and, in saying something about how the past is remembered (sometimes detested, sometimes revered), certain elements of the rituals surrounding the creation, teaching and performance of *meke* are erased and certain elements are given new meaning. Some aspects of these rituals have shifted out of necessity. For example, if someone wanted to perform a *meke* in Canada that was created in Fiji they would still need to approach the *daunivucu* who created it, or the chief from the village the *meke* is from, and make a proper request by following certain protocols. However, this creates a barrier for Fijians living in diaspora who are not readily able to observe these protocols of respect (which can not be done online or over the phone) when making their request. To move beyond this barrier, Fijians in Canada choreograph new

⁷⁴ Rotuman member of the Oceanic Diaspora on Vancouver Island, in discussion with the author August 2011, Victoria, B.C., Canada.

meke to pre-recorded popular Fijian songs and base their movements on memories of *meke* in Fiji and the resources and experiences they can draw from in Canada. For example, *meke* costumes are often said to be one of the most important elements involved in activating feelings and affects of inner strength and carrying the *vanua* inside.

However, costumes can also be a barrier in Canada since it is difficult to obtain the materials needed such as *masi*⁷⁵ (bark cloth made from the paper mulberry tree). In Canada, there are no *masi* trees or readily available grass skirts, instead grass skirts and flowers made of plastic, and colourful patterned fabric are used.

Meke performances and their relations to so-called traditional and non-traditional elements (such as music, costumes and movements) have become a space where “authentic” Fijian ethnicity is fought for, maintained and contested. However, examples of traditional Fijian *meke* in Canada reveal a diverse cast performing in non-traditional settings. Suddenly, performing in the street in front of “Vistaloans” in Edmonton while wearing a grass skirt and a tank top is enough to signify “authenticity” and “tradition” (Lofinau 2009). The visual signifiers of “tradition” and “authenticity” typically used in Fiji shift in the Canadian context towards an affective engagement with the dance. This is evident in my Canadian case studies with the movement-based expressions of *loloma*, deep gratitude and respect or *vinaka vaka levu*, and an aggressive manliness that migrate between Fiji and Canada. Sometimes movement-based affects create a sense of

⁷⁵ Although *masi* historically connected Fijians to ancestor spirits, for many Fijians today *masi* connects identity to a feeling of a sacred Christian connection to Fijian land

temporary cohesion during performance; other times, they generate a sense of disjuncture.

Conclusion

Due to the impacts of Christianity, colonialism, and post-independence politics and economics, the practices of *meke* and perceptions of it have undergone several shifts and transformations. Significant for this dissertation are the politically and religiously co-constituted biopolitical arrangements that resonate in and surrounding *meke*. For Methodists, *meke* as culture and heritage provides a way to position *iTaukei* as preeminent arbiters of Fijian nationhood in Fiji and Canada. This approach perpetuates a biopolitical distinction between Fijians of *iTaukei* descent and Fijians of Indian descent, amongst other distinctions, and promotes hierarchical formations of power and authority through the divine rule of chiefs. For charismatic and evangelical *iTaukei*, traditions are rejected for their perceived connection to devil worship. They are also rejected as a way of establishing new formations of power that no longer support chiefly authority and institutionalized Christian worship but support transnational church networks with democratic worship. Democratic worship allows individuals the opportunity to connect with God more directly and individually through spiritually charged affects.⁷⁶ The

⁷⁶ The relationship between *kalou* worship and charismatic worship first came to me after attending a Fijian church service in Vancouver. At the service, I could see that the act of dancing and singing still involves being filled with a sense of spirit and energy like a *daunivucu* and his/her *meke* dancers would fill their

increasing influence of these newer churches is having the effect of challenging and collapsing older systems of chiefly power. They bring into force new formations of power that heavily favour capitalist enterprise and individual economic prosperity. These new formations are just as insecure as older formations; they are also generating new uncertain spaces to maneuver a sense of “Fijianness.” And, in this climate of uncertainty that is impacting all Fijians, expressing affects that generate a feeling of security and stability becomes all the more crucial in terms of demonstrating one’s Christian faith, regardless of denomination.

Affects generated in the act of creating and performing *meke* must be in line with Christian values. For Methodists, *meke* is about connecting with spirit and energy only now that spirit and energy come from a Christian connection to *vanua*, and a spirit of nationalism. Whereas war *meke* once incited fear and intimidation, recent *meke* performed by men and women are often meant to incite joy, generosity, *loloma*, energy and excitement about an event such as the opening of a church or school or for tourist enjoyment.⁷⁷ Sometimes, the expression of aggressive manliness is used as a way to reclaim and rebuild pan-Oceanic bonds. Other times, it is used as a way to romanticize the past in order to secure *iTaukei* preeminence for Fiji’s future. In my next chapter, I examine how lyrics, movements, and affects line up with national narratives about Fiji.

While post-2006 coup national policies and discourses in Fiji espouse multiracialism and

bodies with the spirit and energy of the *kalou*. Only now, the spirit and energy are associated with Christianity and Christian values as opposed to *kalou*.

⁷⁷ *Meke* performer in conversation with the author, Suva Fiji, August 2012.

equality for all citizens of Fiji regardless of race, an underlying conservatism remains (Tomlinson 2009, 47). Some *meke* support this conservative nationalism by maintaining and perpetuating links between Christianity, indigeneity, ties to the land, and citizenship that privilege *iTaukei*, and other *meke* disrupt such securing notions of Fiji and Fijianess with expressions of uncertainty and expansions of notions of Fijianess.

Chapter 3 - Governing Affect: Narrating Pasts and Expressing Futures

This chapter explores shifting identifications with *meke* rooted in the bundled domains of nationalism, politics and religion in relation to Fiji's most recent 2006 coup in the name of 'multiculturalism,' "good governance,' anti-racism, and anti-corruption" (Fraenkel and Firth 2009, 7; United Nations 2007). Post-independence Fiji has had a tumultuous history with four coup d'états since 1987 and in that period, top down governance that favoured the constitutional rights and privileges of *iTaukei* over those of Fijians of Indian descent was centred on a biopolitical terrain occupied by firm categories of race, ethnicity, culture and gender. Alongside the most recent coup, a shift in power has taken place that diminishes top down hierarchies of power in favour of horizontal formations. In this shifting terrain, differing narrations of the past compete for Fiji's future. *Meke* for the national stage is central to the emergence of these narratives and the anxieties that result from them. In the space of uncertainty created by the most recent coup, new dancing bodies emerge in a shifting biopolitical terrain at once governed by and governing through expressions of affect. Through analyzing *meke* for the national stage (that includes National government projects of protecting *meke*, Festival of Pacific Arts and Fiji Day), the main objective of this chapter is to illuminate how expressions of affect in and surrounding *meke* support and disrupt essentializing biopolitical notions of

race, ethnicity and gender. In addition, I focus on how affects generated in performance become a part of one's emergent identity: an identity that is shaped by various forms of governance while also constantly evolving and in motion.

“Governing Affect” aims to unsettle three predominant narratives that were shared with me in Canada and Fiji by Fijians I consulted with of *iTaukei* descent. One narrative speaks of the past as dangerous, cannibal, heathen, and warring in order to justify a rejection of past traditions and customs (such as *meke*), allowing space for a future of democratic participation and individual economic prosperity. Another narrative is that Fiji's culture and heritage must be safeguarded against erasure and loss in order for a future that protects Christian *iTaukei* as having preminent rights to the land.⁷⁸ The third narrative espouses an inequitable, and warring past for a future of multiracialism whereby all citizens of Fiji have equal constitutional rights regardless of descent. While Kelly and Kaplan (2001) argue that “‘the nation’ of Fiji is a contested idea not an experienced reality” (141), instead, based on my observations and what individuals shared with me, I argue that Fijian dance practitioners deploy and unsettle these three competing accounts, sometimes weaving between them, to contend for a multitude of futures in their experienced realities of *meke* for the ‘national stage’ (defined broadly as festivals, celebrations and research projects designed to engender a national identity). Furthermore, bodies, with their experiences and expressions of movement-based affects,

⁷⁸ *iTaukei* have rights to between 83 to 87 percent of the land in Fiji according to Fraenkel and Firth (2009, 451).

are implicated within the shifting terrains of power these narratives reveal: impacting and impacted by changes in governance.

Reflecting on my own interactions with Fiji's nation-state has given me insight into the relational aspects of biopolitics and governance in Fiji. This chapter is a response to the open space or vacuum created by the experience of seeking a research permit in Fiji's military dictatorship. The details of this process that are full of affective intensities, motion, stagnancy, and disorientation say a great deal about the current political ecology of Fiji, and the dominant narratives of power that feed into this ecology. The experiences brought particular questions to the foreground. I explore these questions by unpacking my experiences of trying to attain a research permit. How does power operate in Fiji? And, what is the biopolitical arrangement in Fiji governing its citizens and that power? How is *meke* part of that biopolitical arrangement? And, most importantly, how do affects expressed in performances of *meke* expose the directionality of that arrangement? What are Fijians reaching towards? Perhaps just as importantly, why were some so willing to support my research on *meke*, others more anxious about my research, and others still non-responsive?

In light of Fiji's political ecology outlined in chapter two, I now unpack my experiences with the Fiji government and *meke* for the national stage to expose the directionality of these shifts in biopolitical arrangement. The unpacking of my experience with Fiji's nation-state organizes itself into three sections formed by the experience of dealing with three levels of government. Each governing body has its own

stake in Fiji's future, and draws from narratives that respond to and reach towards shifting formations of power. My first encounter is with the *iTaukei* Institute of Language and Culture who, in reaction to the shifts in power and governance created by evangelicals and charismatics, work to preserve chiefly power and authority, and the traditions that support that power and authority. Through a narrative of safeguarding the past as authentic and *iTaukei* for Fiji's future, the *iTaukei* Institute treats "traditional" Fijian dance as a space where an "authentic" and naturalized Fijian ethnicity is fought for and maintained through safeguarding cultural heritage. Next, I unpack my encounter with Fiji's Ministry of Education to expose tensions around "ethnicity" and "race" in relation to national discourses of multiracialism. Finally, in my third section, I explore my dealings with Immigration in relation to *meke* performances for the national stage that produce a shifting and contradictory biopolitical terrain.

Ruminating on "Ethnicity": *iTaukei* Institute

A few months before traveling to Fiji to conduct fieldwork, my Fijian consultants in Canada tell me there are reasons to be concerned about the safety and protection of my family, my self and my research while in Fiji. I am told on two separate occasions by iTaukei Fijians I consult with in Canada (one of whom lives in Fiji and is just visiting Canada for a few months) that under the military dictatorship of the current Prime Minister, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, reporters have been tortured in military

barracks in addition to other human rights abuses.⁷⁹ I am told that journalists have been refused entry into the country, all part of an official policy of censorship that ended only six months prior to our arriving in Fiji.⁸⁰ My consultants explain they waited until my audio recorder was turned off to tell me this. And, that even in Canada they feel they need to censor their criticism of the Fijian government in order to not endanger their relatives and friends in Fiji. They suggest I do the same.

The stories and whispers of caution and danger I hear from iTaukei in Canada become an important part of my rationale for not applying for a research permit prior to my fieldwork in Fiji. But what is not clear at the time, and only becomes clear after I proceed to seek a research permit while in Fiji, are the political alignments of my Fijian consultants in Canada in relation to the political objectives of Bainimarama. Their

⁷⁹ These abuses are echoed in a letter to Bainimarama from Human Rights Watch and the International Trade Union Confederation written 4 December 2012. In the letter Bainimarama is criticized for several human rights abuses that include: rights abuses that occurred during and after the 2006 coup such as censorship, control of the media and limiting freedom of expression, assembly and association, rights-restricting labour decrees (for example, the Employment Relations Amendment Decree of 2011 and the Essential Industries Decree of 2011), interference in the judiciary preventing its independence, torture, attacks on journalists, physical abuse of detainees, arbitrary arrest and detention by security personnel (Adams and Burrow 2012).

⁸⁰ Media Industry Development Decree 2010. Public Emergency Regulations were in place until weeks after being repealed, further restrictions on citizens' rights to freedom of speech and assembly were announced in January of 2012 with a Public Order (Amendment) Decree 2012. The decree enabled increased control over those perceived to be critical of the government. According to this decree, a permit is required for meeting in a public place or building. Police are given power to disperse private gatherings if necessary for maintaining public safety, public order, and essential supplies and services (Adams and Burrow 2012).

stories and whispers are part of the larger narratives that push and pull at the future of relations between Fiji's citizens and state sovereignty.

Despite the warnings, I follow the advice of a Fijian scholar with whom I have been in contact, and one of the first individuals I seek to meet with when I arrive in Fiji is a past director of the iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture. The Institute operates under the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. During our meeting, the past director urges me to seek ethical approval from the iTaukei Institute before conducting my research. He tells me the Institute houses an archive on meke that I can access once I have the appropriate ethical approvals.

When the past director goes ahead and calls the current director of the iTaukei Institute to organize an immediate meeting with me, an incredible and confused fear is triggered inside of me. My family and I are officially in Fiji as visitors and not covered under a research permit. What will happen to us if I am caught breaking federal law by researching without a permit in Fiji? Here I am in Fiji, having brought my family into an unknown but potentially dangerous situation, being told to go right into what I imagined to be a zone of intense hostility. In this zone, I anticipate feeling the full force of enmity towards foreigners who are not holidaying as tourists, to forget and enjoy, but in Fiji to think critically about the political situation. I have no one to turn to in Fiji to consult with and put my fears into check. I have no mirror to help orient me, no one to push and pull against. I only have my own best guesses based on hints and whispers of danger. As a result, every moment of our time in Fiji feels threatened and nervous. We are governed

by fear of an unknown dictatorial regime. Counter-intuitively, as an act of finding where the boundaries lie, and because I no longer have much choice (I am practically escorted directly to the Institute), I decide to switch gears and move with confidence towards my imagined zone of hostility.

The first step in the multi-stage process of trying to attain a research permit gives me important feedback about the boundaries for which I am searching. Arriving at the iTaukei institute for the first time, I am shaking and waiting to get into trouble. I show up at the iTaukei Institute with three-quarter-length pants (thinking I am sufficiently observing the cultural norm of covering the knees) and am told to put on an ankle length sulu.⁸¹ They have extras at the front desk. I put on the sulu and go up the elevator with my family.⁸² I meet with the director and his assistant at the iTaukei Institute and they seem kind and interested in my project but highlight that I will need to seek approval from the Institute before embarking on any research in Fiji. Once I have the proper approval, I will be able to access an archive on meke housed at the Institute.

Being new to wearing a sulu I am not yet aware of how I should move my body while wearing one. When my sulu falls open and exposes my pants underneath, a look of discomfort and shock transforms their faces. I feel like an imposter, a fake, not worthy of

⁸¹ iTaukei men and women wear a sulu (a rectangular cloth wrapped around the waist). The sulu is used by some to identifying themselves in opposition to foreigners and Fijians of Indian descent (Ralogaivau 2010), and as Methodist. I observed that Christian iTaukei men who are Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist as well as other Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Fiji often wear pants.

⁸² I travelled everywhere with my family because I was still nursing my daughter.

their time and effort. This experience teaches me very quickly that a sulu should stay wrapped to cover the legs. I can tell I have broken with the correct formalities and am in danger of offending them. I quickly draw the sulu over my legs and see relief on their faces.

They go on to explain I am to send them my certificate of ethical approval from York University along with my ethics protocol that outlines exactly what my research methods and questions will be. I send them my ethics paperwork and a cover letter thinking all along that, despite my deeper motivations of honouring the love of my mother's childhood nanny (that I outline in my cover letter to the Institute), I am going to be in big trouble due to my interest in politically turbulent issues of identity. But, to my surprise, in my next visit they give me their ethical approval. They immediately notify the Ministry of Education (MOE), and send them all of my ethics paperwork and certifications by e-mail. They add to their e-mail, "Mrs. Kelly's work is of interest to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs."⁸³ Somehow, although I am not yet clear why, the iTaukei Institute shows great confidence in me and is supportive of my research. Later, I come to realize much of this support has to do with my introducing myself in the context of loloma and wanting to return the gift of love given by my mother's nanny through my writing on meke.

⁸³ iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture e-mail to Ministry of Education copied to author, July 17, 2012.

After informing me that I have the approval of the iTaukei Institute, I am quickly steered towards the political agenda of the Institute when my correspondent hands me a document to review entitled 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The document outlines Fiji's objectives, as a "multiracial" nation, for the safeguarding of Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage such as "traditional" songs and dances. With Fiji's tumultuous history in mind, reading the term multiracial used in an unproblematic way spreads discomfort and confusion all over my body. Not fully understanding why or how the term is being deployed, I try to move beyond the distracting pull it has on my brain so that I can continue to engage with the important words my consultant is sharing with me about meke.

In his next words, the magnitude, power and influence of the increasingly dominant charismatic and evangelical narrative of Fiji's past as two-dimensionally consumed by evil, cannibalistic, heathen and warring desires becomes evident. The governing influence this narrative has over the actions and behaviours of iTaukei struck me when it was delicately challenged by the unsolicited comment of my consultant at the iTaukei Institute. He comments that he does not think that Fiji's non-Christian indigenous spiritual practices are entirely without some positive aspects. My consultant's comment comes out as a cautious query; perhaps to utter his dissenting thoughts in the presence of an outsider Canadian seemed safe. After all, I was still caught up in figuring out why indigenous Fijians are not choosing to embrace their non-Christian spiritual practices like so many other indigenous populations around the globe

who adopt indigenous spirituality as a way to push back against histories of imposed silence and erasure by Christian missionaries and colonizers. He spoke cautiously, carefully testing the boundaries of what he could safely say.

With that de-centring utterance, I suddenly realized where the centre of power was. My consultant created a small crack or fissure in the current dominating account espoused by evangelicals and charismatics of Fiji's devilish past, and reminding me of Anne Stoler's theory, "[s]cripted narratives and prescribed rubrics are never as tightly sealed as their preceptors might intend" (Stoler 2010, xxi). Perhaps sensing my relief at his critical perspective, he goes on to say what many I spoke to would not dare to, that he drinks yaqona to go into a trance state to create his meke choreographies – an act that would be considered tantamount to devil worship by many of the evangelical church goers I spoke to in Fiji and Canada. Drinking yaqona to go into a trance state is considered part of Fiji's non-Christian spiritual approach to meke composition. This approach allows the land spirits or ancestor gods to enter the body of the daunivucu in order to impart the meke movements and chant. His cautious remarks burrowed into my mind forcing me to ask, why was he challenging this dominant narrative within the context of our conversation? And, why was he challenging the narrative so cautiously? The answers to my questions are clarified when he tells me that he comes from a village that no longer exists. He explains that when Fiji's main roads were first being built, his village was considered inaccessible by the colonial administration because it was too far inland. His entire village was moved to the roadside for "accessibility." As a result of

this personal familial history, he is particularly concerned with safeguarding Fiji's traditional beliefs and practices, so that they do not become erased like they were in the case of his village. Later, I discover that the governing influence of the evangelical and charismatic churches is not the only concern of my consultant at the Institute. The Institute is also fighting for the protection of indigenous knowledge in the face of recent post-2006 coup discourses of multiracialism.

In the context of Bainimarama's multiracialism that, at least on the surface, espouses racial harmony and national unity, the safeguarding and protecting of *iTaukei* preeminence through its Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) such as *meke* is in a precarious position. Bainimarama has disabled social systems (supported by ICH) that he believes allow racism and inequities to flourish. The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) is one of those systems that has had their political leverage weakened by Bainimarama and, by extension, the chiefly system and its privileges in the constitution. An institution like the *iTaukei* Institute which answers to the GCC via The Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs but also answers to the Bainimarama administration, is in an uncertain political position; there is no way to achieve the objectives of one without working against the objectives of the other.

Despite Bainimarama's post-2006 coup goals of moving beyond past modes of governance that used traditional practices and protocols to secure chiefly authority, in my discussions with my consultant at the *iTaukei* Institute, it became clear that a primary focus of the Institute is to safeguard and protect *iTaukei* culture and heritage such as the

traditional practices and protocols the government is trying to move beyond. Those at the institute lament over the loss of customs and traditions such as *meke*. They view culture and heritage as being under threat by Westernizing pressures, modernizing pressures, increased religious rejection of tradition (primarily by evangelical and charismatic Christian churches), and the increased pressures to produce art and culture that address and express the current political thrust towards multiracialism in Fiji. Within this complex political situation, *meke* is being pulled in at least three directions: by charismatics and evangelicals who reject *meke*; by those who want *meke* to mix with the cultural traditions of other so-called ethno-cultural groups to become part of a new multiracial Fiji; and, by those who want to preserve and protect *meke* as cultural heritage as a way of preserving and promoting *iTaukei* preeminence. Given that my proposed research was to explore *meke* in relation to tensions and anxieties around notions of ethnicity, why was the *iTaukei* Institute moved to support my project? I believe they saw my research focus on *meke* as a potential source of safeguarding *meke* and “ethnically” *iTaukei* Fijian Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).⁸⁴ Through the guise of an international UNESCO convention that looks, at first glance, like a universally

⁸⁴ Although I did not realize it at the time, in order to partake in the process of safeguarding ICH my research needed ethical approval from the Institute of *iTaukei* Language and Culture (under Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs) and the Department of Culture and Heritage (under Ministry of Education). These are the government bodies directly responsible for ICH activities in Fiji (Bigitibau 2010, 41) and why my correspondent was adamant that I receive all the appropriate approvals from these government bodies.

sanctioned and ethically sound project, the *iTaukei* Institute straddles its uncertain political position.

On the surface, safeguarding indigenous dances seems like an ethically sound project, but in the case of Fiji the ethics and politics of safeguarding are far more complex. Looking at UNESCO's definitions of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" and "safeguarding" that are being applied to the Pacific Sub-region⁸⁵ says a great deal about the political problems that the act of safeguarding might provoke in Fiji. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is defined as the

practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith. It is manifested in the domains of oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices relating to nature and the universe as well as traditional craftsmanship, which embrace almost every element concerning the cultural development of humanity. (Park 2010, 21)⁸⁶

"Safeguarding" is referred to as the

comprehensive measures aimed at ensuring the viability of intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation,

⁸⁵ According to "The Pacific Sub-region Network" meeting report for implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention my consultant at the *iTaukei* Institute gave me.

⁸⁶ As an example of reinforcing the visibility and importance of ICH, the UNESCO program 'Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' was created in 1997 (Park 2010, 20) and it was under this program that Adrienne Kaeppler has been instrumental in having the Tongan dance "*lakalaka*" recognized as a Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2003. According to a Pacific Islands Development Report, Kaeppler preserved the Tongan *lakalaka* as a masterpiece in order to preserve Tongan national identity (2012).

protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, as well as the revitalization of various aspects of such heritage. (Park 2010, 21)⁸⁷

According to UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage is crucial for understanding and promoting cultural diversity and continuous development.⁸⁸ However, although the UNESCO document promotes an international level of safeguarding against the threat of disappearance and transformation of “living” ICH, at the local level, these objectives risk fixing *meke* in time and place. Safeguarding may result in negating ICH transformations and migrations as relevant aspects of cultural diversity and cultural development.

On the one hand, there is great value in a project that promotes research, understanding, sharing, and protection of intangible *iTaukei* knowledge. I see *meke* as a kind of “living” oral, affective, and movement-based expression containing vast amounts

⁸⁷ Safeguarding is viewed as a specific technique that is community based and addresses ethnocentrism resulting from past dichotomies established by cultural heritage preservation between Western ‘high’ culture and ‘non high’ culture from developing regions. The UNESCO document reminds its reader that in the past, cultural heritage focused on tangible art legacies and neglected cultural heritage of developing countries and regions for being intangible and “primitive” (Park 2010, 19). As a result of this bias towards “high” art that was tangible and Western, a hierarchy developed between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, ‘high’ art was believed to have universal appeal whereas ‘non high’ art was seen to have less value because it was not universally appealing (part of 1972 Convention) (Park 2010, 20). With this ethnocentric tendency in mind, one can understand the ethics of appreciating ICH for communities and practitioners at the local level and the value in this UNESCO convention for breaking down ethnocentric views about the value of art.

⁸⁸ While the Convention stresses community-based viability and not authenticity (Park 2010, 21), inherent in the convention are dichotomies between past (traditional) practices that need safeguarding and present (contemporary) practices that have emerged from impacts of tourism, urbanization, religious shifts, power shifts and multiracialism that are not deemed to be in need safeguarding.

of knowledge about historical events, past and present spiritual and religious practices, ways of living off the land, and worldviews. This knowledge, as indigenous Cree scholar Michael Hart puts it, involves “cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps that people continuously use to make sense” (Hart 2010, 2) of the world. *Meke* as an indigenous Fijian dance is part of making sense of the world. Adding bodily movement through space to this perspective, dance studies scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy suggests that philosophical, spiritual, and political

[n]egotiations are intrinsic to dance, with its required attention to shifts in weight, rhythm, relation to other bodies, and available space, and to the shifting circumstances experienced, theorized, and recorded in embodied form. In thousands of different forms, locations, and ways, Indigenous dancing has tapped these capacities: [...] dance [is] a powerful tool in continuously shifting negotiations of agency, self-determination, and resilience. (Shea Murphy 2007, 29)

While agreeing that *meke* as an indigenous dance of intangible cultural heritage has much to offer (not as “culture” turned into a reified object but in terms of ways of perceiving and living in the world), given the political and religious pressures particular to Fiji, I view the ethics of applying these universal objectives of safeguarding to Fiji as potentially politically problematic. Cultural possessions, as cultural studies scholar Rosemary Coombe (citing anthropologist Richard Handler) points out, have become linked to possessive individualism whereby certain objects have become tantamount to essentialized group identities (1998, 223). Culture becomes reified as national property and the nation becomes “a property-owning ‘collective individual’” (Coombe 1998, 223). However, in Fiji, the safeguarding objectives that support a synthesis of chiefly

Methodist authority and hierarchy wrestle against the objectives of *iTaukei* who reject traditions and chiefly authority in order to reach for a future register of culture, nation, and ethnicity rooted in notions of democratic participation, equal opportunities for leadership, and individual economic prosperity.

The ethics of safeguarding would perhaps be clearer if the erasure of ICH was being imposed from an outside source and not *iTaukei* themselves. While the eradication of indigenous dances across the Pacific was once to varying degrees imposed by missionaries (Hereniko 2006), today in Fiji, the rejection of *meke* is a choice coming from *iTaukei* evangelical and charismatic Christians. With the increasingly dominant evangelical account of a cannibal, heathen, and warring past, it is *iTaukei* themselves who are rejecting traditions and chiefly authority. These traditions include an economics of communal subsistence, and the hierarchical division between the subservient position of “commoner” and the chiefly position of “leader.” Rejecting tradition is viewed by many of the evangelicals I spoke to as enabling *iTaukei* to enter the market economy and have a democratic and even leadership voice. In this sense, rejections of tradition can be viewed alongside earlier rejections as acts of agency and de-colonization. During colonialism, efforts of *iTaukei* commoners such as Apolosi R. Nawai and his agricultural cooperative movement with the Viti Kabani (Fiji Company) to enter the market economy and to take up leadership positions were suppressed as anti-colonial and anti-chiefly behaviour (Thomas 1997, 52-55). In a sense, it would seem that *iTaukei* who currently reject traditions are rejecting a form of indirect rule through chiefly authority that, as

anthropologist Lynda Newland (2004) points out, was reified and normalized colonially. By rejecting a construction of the past these *iTaukei* are de-colonizing their futures, freeing up individual (as opposed to communal) economic and leadership opportunities. This contemporary and widespread rejection of tradition in order to achieve a de-colonized future can in some ways be seen as empowering, as Piot puts it,

because it is seen and experienced as self-authored. Moreover, . . . the church's rejection of tradition – of local ritual and cosmology – might also be read as a rejection of the colonial, and, ironically, because done in the name of a religion with Euro-American roots, as an attempt to decolonize the mind. To wit, it was colonialism that “invented” chiefs and village tradition as technologies of power, projects and technologies that were reissued by postcolonial dictatorships. Charismatics see themselves as attempting to free themselves from the weight of this (to them) oppressive tradition. (Piot 2010, 62)

Although *meke* was not completely eradicated by early Wesleyan missionaries from Western Europe, ICH such as *meke* currently faces a kind of erasure by evangelical and charismatic *iTaukei*.

Pushing against this threat to ICH, the politics of safeguarding are made clearer. In Fiji's report to the UNESCO convention on ICH, past director of *iTaukei* Institute Sekove Degei Bigitibau explains that traditions and customs of the past involving the *vanua* (with the chief at the centre⁸⁹ (Bigitibau 2010, 40)) require family roles and

⁸⁹ In my meeting with Sekove Degei Bigitibau, he explained that many view the role of chief as being at the top of a hierarchy. He drew me a diagram that exemplified what he felt was more accurate depiction of the role of chief at the centre of a circular construct. He explains that everything a villager *iTaukei* does is for the chief. But, the chief, in turn, must be responsible for the well being of the villagers. He argues that the circular image is a better way of depicting the mutual responsibilities. Based on my observations and what I have read in the National Archive of Fiji, it seems that there is probably not one unilaterally correct image

responsibilities to be passed on from generation to generation as “God given heritage.”

Traditions and customs are not just a matter of choice or preference. Quoting Bigitibau,

Indigenous Fijian customs, language, dances, traditional etiquette, etc. are oral and preservation rests pivotally on continual usage and observance. However, given the onset of a dominant global culture, with the combined influence of a conducive cosmopolitan livelihood, an apathetic youthful population, and emphasis on economic development, has placed intangible heritage in a precariously desperate position, continually being threatened, and exploited. (Bigitibau 2010, 41)

Bigitibau espouses Fiji’s ICH as belonging to indigenous Fijians, whose pasts are tied to Christianity and the land, and in need of international safeguarding from the shifts in power Fiji is currently facing including economic development and cosmopolitanism, and an “apathetic youth.” In a separate document, Degei Bigitibau argues that new churches are a threat to “intrinsic Fijian identity” and a threat to Methodist values and beliefs tied to custom and tradition (Degei 2007, 88-89).

In efforts to protect “intrinsic” links to the land and traditions as “God given,” the act of safeguarding ICH may also reify a long-term political, economic, social, and religious divide between Fijians of *iTaukei* descent and Fijians of Indian descent. In reality, the convention may fulfil a particular ethno-national conservative agenda in Fiji aimed at keeping power and land in the hands of *iTaukei*. To exemplify this, according to Bigitibau, loss of land and changes to land tenure are considered major threats to Fiji’s ICH because land is integral to ICH in Fiji (2010, 12). ICH in Fiji is considered to

to depict the relationship. Rather, the image would probably shift from village to village with some chiefs being more or less responsive to villagers needs.

belong to *iTaukei* whose land ownership, and all that comes from the land (including customs and traditions, or *vanua*), is seen to be a gift from God. Challenges to land ownership are viewed as heathen acts since they intervene in God's divine plan for *iTaukei*. The guiding philosophy behind the needs for safeguarding ICH in Fiji fits within *iTaukei* national conservative and Christian ideals and values aimed at safeguarding the ethnic purity and the past to sustain the status quo for Fiji's future against changes in power. These politics are in part what the UNESCO convention would (unintentionally) safeguard in Fiji.

Given that my research was embraced by the *iTaukei* Institute because it was imagined to fit within their own political agenda of safeguarding an "ethnically" *iTaukei* Fijian past for a future of secured *iTaukei* preeminence, why was the Ministry of Education's (MOE) Permanent Secretary (PS) concerned about my use of the term "ethnicity"? How does the PS's concern fit within the current political climate in Fiji that pushes and pulls between pre- and post-2006 coup ideals and values?

Ruminating on "Ethnicity": Ministry of Education

My consultant at the iTaukei Institute explains that my next step in attaining a research permit is to seek approval from the Ministry of Education (MOE). The iTaukei Institute initiates the process by sending a letter to the Ministry to let them know about their own approval of my research. Because the process seems relatively seamless and is progressing quickly, I am beginning to feel more confident, thinking that I will receive the

support needed to be able to proceed with my research. I forward all of my ethics approval certificates and protocols to the MOE. It is after this point that my proprioception regarding political hostilities and how to maneuver around them becomes irreparably skewed. Within a month of sending my ethics paperwork, the MOE also gives me official approval to conduct research in Fiji. However, approval is upon the condition that I “ruminate” on the use of the term “ethnicity” in my research. MOE writes

we further advise that our Permanent Secretary holds some reservations on the use of ‘ethnicity’ in your topic. This is in line with connotations that impact negatively and denote racial affiliations as propagated in our mandate. We have also copied the approval to the Department of Immigration and the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs Accordingly.⁹⁰

I think of e-mailing back to ask questions. What did the PS mean by “connotations that impact negatively and denote racial affiliations as propagated in our mandate”? Despite my best efforts, I cannot figure out what the MOE’s policies are with regard to notions of “race” in relation to “ethnicity.” I feel misunderstood, confused, and insecure. I hope that his comments will make more sense over time...

When I receive their approval with that condition attached, I am sure that I have hit a nerve. However, they have also hit a nerve with me. I am full of tension and fear about wanting to do research that might not appeal to conservative iTaukei nationals in positions of power. I am worried about the safety and security of my family and the

⁹⁰ Ministry of Education e-mail to Author, July 24, 2012.

materials I have gathered and want still to gather. I am also confused by their condition. It is not clear what the MOE is concerned about. In a country that espouses an official discourse of “race” and “multiracialism” why is the term “ethnicity” so distressing? In my own usage of the term (in the documents I submit for their ethical approval), I problematize essentialized notions of ethnicity and examine how dance plays a role in the generation and re-negotiation of ethnic identification. Nowhere in my ethics documentation is “ethnicity” an essential biological fact. Perhaps that is the problem. Perhaps the idea of biological difference is key to a discourse of multiracialism. With many questions and anxieties eating away at me, I think my best response is to turn a feeling of insecurity into a more secure one. I keep my response to the MOE polite and full of gratitude and respect. I thank them for their feedback and promise to ruminate on my use of the term “ethnicity.”

I return to the iTaukei institute with my approval from MOE and they say that both the MOE and the iTaukei institute will now approach the department of immigration on my behalf to assist my application for a research permit. After over two months of uncomfortable waiting, the iTaukei Institute urges the MOE to put pressure on the department of immigration.

Ms. Kelly has hit a dead end with Immigration. Since her area of research is close to the heart of our department and ministry, I am following up with your Ministry if there is any way we would expedite her request.⁹¹

⁹¹ iTaukei Institute email to MOE, copied to the author, Oct.2, 2012.

MOE suggests that immigration is concerned with my use of the term “ethnicity” so they actually remove their condition for approval and give me a straight up approval (without the need to ruminate) in the hopes that immigration will process my file. In an e-mail to the iTaukei Institute, MOE writes

I wonder what has been the hold up with Immigration as this is beyond our control. I also wonder if the clause we inserted in our previous July approval in regards to ethnicity on our PS’s [Permanent Secretary] concern was a major factor in this. However seeing the importance of the subject and its closeness to the heart of your Ministry [the iTaukei Institute] as alluded below, we have omitted the clause as evidenced and leave you to articulate the issue to Evadne. You may consider following up with immigration on the following probably and advising them of the importance of the research and the measures you have put to address our concern raised earlier.⁹²

In the end, no “issue” about my usage of ethnicity was ever articulated to me. Instead, further communications with the iTaukei Institute confirmed only that my research was important to the iTaukei Institute because it was seen to benefit the iTaukei people, and that it was unclear to my contacts at the Institute why immigration did not process my application to do research.

Expressions of affect exchanged through e-mail in response to my trying to attain a research permit indicate the direction of biopolitical governance in Fiji. The e-mail correspondences indicate the actual tensions between the two different government bodies and their striving towards different futures for Fiji. The *iTaukei* Institute safeguards the past by mapping and preserving indigenous knowledge for a future of

⁹² MOE email to *iTaukei* Institute copied to author, Oct.3, 2012.

chiefly authority and *iTaukei* rights and privileges against transformation and loss due to globalization, Western influences, and land loss. In opposition to this, the Ministry Of Education (MOE) is trying to move beyond ethnicity as a divisive tool and source of conservative nationalism, towards multiracial harmony and national unity in Fiji.

Understanding the different objectives requires a deeper look at what is at stake with terms such as ethnicity and race in Fiji. My usage of the term “ethnicity” triggered a negative response with the Ministry of Education because they saw my proposed research as either a dangerous re-ignition of rivalries that the current government was working to move beyond (as evidenced by Bainimarama’s justification for his 2006 “coup to end all coups” (Fraenkel and Firth 2009)), or a dangerous challenge to “natural” markers of race.

My proposed research was read by the *iTaukei* Institute and MOE in relation to the power and politics of each organization. This is made clear in the following evidence drawn from my e-mail correspondences. In these selections concerning the *iTaukei* Institute, the MOE, Immigration, and myself, affects expressed as relational intensities produce uneasiness or “sites of unease” (Stoler 2009, 28). These expressions of unease indicate desires for different outcomes or futures for Fijian governance. These differences are part of what is being negotiated by the different levels of government.

The correspondences comprise a felt intensity that brings to life political tensions and divergences. This is what anthropologist Ann Stoler has called “a force field that animates political energies” (Stoler 2009, 22). The uneasiness generated by these e-mails exposes directions of governance: who has power and in which ways. For Stoler the

archive reveals governance through affective interchanges intended to educate on the correct responses, desires and sentiments being expressed (Stoler 2009,69). Governance in these e-mails does not appear uniform and unidirectional but is part of an affective negotiation between the two government bodies. Expressed sentiments in e-mails become evidence of competing objectives and narratives. For example, consider the sentiment that my research is “close to the hearts of the *iTaukei* Institute.” The sentiment expressed indicates the felt dimensions of what is at stake. Although the MOE is careful to respond quickly and with a careful repetition of the words “at the heart of the institute” to show respect for what matters to the Institute, it is clear where the power resides. The *iTaukei* Institute is appealing to MOE for their support and the quest for my research permit can go no further without it.

By attuning to the relations of power embedded in archival expressions of affect (Stoler 2009, 35), the affects expressed in my research permit e-mail correspondences tell me I have located a site of unease (Stoler 2009, 28) that indicates relations of power. In the current Bainimarama dictatorship, the MOE are one step closer than the Institute to nation-state sovereign power and one step closer to Bainimarama’s objectives of reducing the power and authority of the Great Council of Chiefs and the Methodist Church (organizations with which the *iTaukei* Institute aligns) as part of a strategy to increase multiracial harmony.

In Fiji, there is a tendency to make “ethnicity” a set of static “traditional” cultural practices rooted in the past and located in a geographic region. This is evident in Fiji’s

report to the UNESCO convention on ICH that seeks to use safeguarding in order to protect “intrinsic” links to the land and traditions as “God given.” This approach to ethnicity is in line with anthropologist Marcus Banks’ (1996) view that “[i]n the modern world ethnicity is indissolubly linked to [Western capitalist concepts of] nationalism and race, to ideas about normative political systems and relations, and to ideas about descent and blood” (Banks 1996, 186). In other words, Fiji links ethnicity to race and biology (through blood) but also links ethnicity (as biology) to cultural practices including traditions that are viewed as possessions. Inequitable rights and privileges based on static notions of “ethnicity” in Fiji are centred on a division between Fijians of Indian descent who are primarily Hindu, and “ethno-nationals” who are *iTaukei*, Christian, and, as Bigitibau (2010) has put it, “intrinsically” connected to the land. Considering the energies and expenditures of the MOE and *iTaukei* Institute responses to my ethics paperwork, the political tensions involving “ethnicity” seem intensely felt.

However, if MOE is concerned about perpetuating divisions and tensions between “ethnicities,” why was the language of race and “multiracialism” accepted with such ease? The term “race” in Fiji connotes descent or biology and has been used in past census statistics to sustain Fiji’s constitutional inequalities in terms of voting power and land ownership.⁹³ However, the current official discourse of multiracialism is intended

⁹³ The census demarcates *iTaukei* as racially separate from Tongans, Samoans, Rotumans, Chinese, Europeans, Part Europeans and other peoples’ living in Fiji (see for example, Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007 Census). However, the idea that *iTaukei* are themselves of a single line of descent is already problematic since intermarriage between other Pacific Peoples’ has gone on for generations.

to give equal space to Fijian citizens regardless of backgrounds of descent. As a post-colonial narrative of nation with prior limited success in Fiji (Kelly and Kaplan 2001), multiracialism, like multiculturalism in Canada, is meant to generate tolerance of the different cultures, religions, ethnicities, languages, and traditions that exist in Fiji's diversely populated society. The "Fijian Affairs [Amendment] Decree 2010," stating that all citizens of Fiji are to be referred to as "Fijian" and all original and native settlers of Fiji be referred to as "*iTaukei*," appears to reduce categories of exclusion (based on distinctions between citizens of indigenous and non-indigenous descent). Yet despite attempts to remove race based inequities, discourses of multiracialism in Fiji still treat the bodies and identities of its citizens as belonging to distinct primordial biological categories. These categories are denoted by terms such as "race," "ethnicity," and the term *iTaukei* recently imposed by government decree. With a recent Fiji government decree that shifts the definition of "Fijian" to include all citizens of Fiji regardless of descent but, at the same time sustains a racial distinction by insisting all indigenous Fijians be referred to as *iTaukei*, biopolitics appear to be newly arranged. The term *iTaukei* dissolves the potential for inclusiveness in the new usage of "Fijian" to refer to all citizens of Fiji. The decree is simply shifting the biopolitical categories used to demarcate between "Fijian" bodies.

My e-mail correspondences expose "sites of unease" that tell me a great deal about the directionality of biopolitical governance in Fiji. The e-mails force attention on the political process of identification differentiation in relation to a shifting constitution

that is supposed to control for such differences. Politics in Fiji appear to continue to base themselves on biology and categorizing bodies. Only now, bodies are being categorized in a new way. *Meke* as a movement-based form of expression is central to this shifting biopolitical terrain. In contrast to my experiences with the *iTaukei* Institute and MOE that triggered relational intensities, what can my experiences with Immigration that felt almost like a vacuum tell me about the directionality of governance in Fiji?

Ruminating on “Ethnicity”: Immigration Disorientation

When my research permit request does not progress with Immigration, I push aside my fears and go directly to Immigration to speak with them about my need for a research permit. However, my efforts with the Department of Immigration are disorienting and stagnant; what I encounter is not what I expect. I had been told stories about journalists being tortured at the military barracks and read stories of journalists being deported (O’Loughlin 2009). However, in my interactions with Immigration, it feels like hitting an invisible wall. They do not respond to any of my e-mails, only acknowledging my presence when I go to Immigration in person. I move towards Fiji Immigration believing it to be either solid or full of muscle. I imagine it will flex itself and push back at me as I approach, perhaps even try to immobilize me. Instead, my proprioception is completely skewed; I do not find what I am expecting. I speak to someone who takes down my information and disappears for a good length of time, reappears briefly to point out that I will be overstaying as a visitor, and then disappears

again for another period of time. Returning a final time minutes before closing he says I should leave my contact information and he will get back to me. I am disoriented, confused, and paranoid trying to figure out if I am already in trouble. I am not sure how to move because I cannot figure out what I am moving with or against... Is this situation an example of Bentham's Panopticon? Am I the one who is seen but cannot see, "[...] the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault 2000,441) Is this how power is operating in Fiji, like a form of surveillance that generates the internal controlling of self through fear and uncertainty in those being watched?

Why is Immigration non-responsive? Was it a kind of censorship? Was it a way to stop me moving in a particular direction? Was I being sent on a wild goose chase? All paperwork was being hand written and done in triplicate. There was so much paperwork and traveling to and from buildings to get things done. Bureaucracy was like a maze. Was this a vestige of the colonial past? Or, perhaps this was a technique of military control in the guise of "cutting down on corruptions," and "good governance." Immigration as an invisible, unresponsive partner prevented me from moving in a certain direction. However, it certainly did not stop me from moving in other creative ways. I moved whether they wanted me to or not.

Nothing comes of my application to Immigration for a research permit. The iTaukei Institute writes,

I am truly sorry that it has to come to this especially from the Government. For whatever it's worth, I apologize for the impasse. It is beyond us why certain government agencies are not systematic and thorough in their undertakings. The

country especially the iTaukei population has a lot to benefit from your research which is why this Ministry (iTaukei Affairs) supported your research.⁹⁴

Although the iTaukei Institute assists me with some visual and written materials about meke, I leave Fiji without ever being able to access the meke archive housed at the iTaukei Institute since the archive would only be made available to me once I had a research permit from Immigration. Fortunately, although I am not clear why, not having a Research Permit does not prevent me from getting ethical approval to conduct research at the National Archive of Fiji. The National Archive of Fiji, which operates under the Ministry of Information, becomes a rich source of information about meke. My lack of research permit from Immigration does not prevent me from seeking individual consent to conduct interviews, attending meke performances, and even becoming involved in a meke project. These field experiences now assist in the unpacking of my affectively intense and uncertain experiences of trying to secure a research permit.

When I approached Immigration about attaining a research permit, the top-down power and force I had anticipated was simply not there in the way I had imagined it would be. This absence of force led me to question the words of caution shared with me months earlier by my iTaukei consultants in Vancouver. Was Bainimarama's top-down power only a matter of spectacle built on whispers and rumours of a dangerous dictator

⁹⁴ iTaukei Institute email to author, Nov.8, 2012.

and occasionally making an example of someone but no longer really supported? Or, had I just been lucky so far?

The body of my interlocutor at Immigration was the closest I came to having any sort of tangible experience with Immigration and yet the experience could not have been more disorienting. While the expressions of my consultants at the *iTaukei* Institute and the MOE gave me clues about how to orient myself, my interlocutor at Immigration did not seem to evoke feelings of anger or happiness; he seemed open to our physical encounter and yet unresponsive. He was not trying to stabilize his relations with me through emotive or expressive action-reaction circuits that might stimulate a familiar kind of dialogue or responsiveness. Likewise, I spoke sparingly in an attempt to avoid trouble. A light conversation about anything (such as the weather, or travel experiences) might have given our bodies a relational direction in which to move. But, since “[p]olitics – like bodies – emerge out of frictions, accidents, disagreements, and interlockings that are both firmly institutionalized within pre-constituted space-times and that create emergent space-times” (Manning 2007, xvii), perhaps our contact could be characterized by vagueness, and his somewhat random comings and goings. Without being able to pin it down, our contact highlighted a degree of indeterminacy – a space of political maneuverability – because there was nothing seemingly concrete about our relations.

With no guiding sense of how to proceed, I became an un-secured body. Secured bodies have a sense of proprioception that includes a sense of destination or horizon as Erin Manning (2007) puts it. I was not secure. I was reaching in a direction since I was

now openly trying to get a research permit, but I had no sense of destination or response from those around me. I could only imagine my case was being discussed, but I had no way of knowing. Because bodies emerge through relations of reaching and responsiveness (Manning 2007), when there was no response to my movements and reach towards immigration – a hub of sovereign power, my proprioception became dismantled. There were no relations or responses with which to align myself. I wanted some kind of “actualization,” boundary, or category to belong to but I never “actualized,” neither did the state. My fear and uncertainty of being under surveillance, and waiting for brute force, or any sign of how I should govern myself never materialized. Immigration never overtly controlled my movements. Instead, a space opened (however tenuous) for new relations of power, new directions of movement, and new bodies to emerge.

In the absence of being directed, I made my own choices. Outside my interactions with the State, I made connections with people, and people reached out towards me to share their knowledge of *meke*. Making sense of this disorienting experience necessitates a return to Manning’s question, “what can a body do?” And my own questions, how do affects expressed in performances of *meke* expose the directionality of governance and biopolitics? And, what are the directions Fiji citizens are reaching towards? In the following two examples, I use these questions to examine the particularities of what a body can do in the context of Fijian dance for the national stage.

By attuning to affects that materialized in bodies dancing for Fiji's national stage, I became aware of how movement-based expressions were generating and re-activating local and translocal meaning. I observed a performance of "Teivovo" in Suva by dancers of The Oceania Centre that was part of a larger staged theatrical production destined for the Festival of Pacific Arts in the Solomon Islands and interviewed the performers after their return from the Festival about their performance experiences. I also observed performances of *meke* and *meke* fusions for the national stage during Fiji Day celebrations. In these examples, danced expressions sometimes challenged categories and boundaries of identity and sometimes generated a securing yet emergent locus of identification. However, the dancing bodies in these performances never become fixed or still because even in the appearance of stability they serve as reminders that bodies are always in a process of emergence and transformation through their relationality.

Teivovo

The Oceania Centre for Art, Culture and Pacific Studies (OCACPS) at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji, challenges the idea that political bodies are secured sites for expression, or communication. Their danced expressions are an example of "what a body can do" within a post-2006 coup shifting biopolitical terrain. Although many of the members of the group appear to support Fiji's shift towards multiracialism (that relies on a model of racialized bodies living harmoniously side by side and not as interrelated), it would be more accurate to describe them as supporting a notion of interculturalism that allows for dominant and non-dominant cultures and

identities to merge, interact and transform (Marks 2000, 7). The dancing bodies in OCACPS are never secured or made “actual,” fixed or still because even in the appearance of stability they remind us that bodies are always in a process of emergence and transformation through their relationality.

In their production of *Drua: The Wave of Fire*, performed in Suva at USP and then at the Festival of Pacific Arts in the Solomon Islands (2012), OCACPS demonstrates shifting identifications with a national and broader Oceanic body politic. The stated underlying goal of the production is to realize the philosophical and political goals of the Centre’s founder and prior director Epeli Hou’ofa, and his successor Vilsoni Hereniko.⁹⁵ These objectives are to revive the tradition of interculturalism in the South Pacific and to demonstrate how currently practiced culture and traditions are built on knowledge sharing across Oceania. The production blurs the colonially imposed divisions between Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia (Hou’ofa 2008) and uses traditional dances, including *meke*, to tell the story of *drua* (double-hulled canoe) and *drua* culture that was shaped collaboratively by Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji prior to Western contact.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the production challenges racial categories by utilizing a cast that is made up of Fijians of mixed descent including Indian descent. This is the first year the USP (a regional university) has been able to perform at the Festival of Pacific Arts. In the past, Fiji has sent groups to the Festival that separately represent its four major ethnic

⁹⁵ After philosopher Epeli Hou’ofa passed away, Dr. Hereniko, who spoke of Hou’ofa as a friend and mentor, came to the OCACPS to carry out Hou’ofa’s vision for the Centre.

⁹⁶ The production is based on research conducted in Fiji’s Lau Islands by Director Dr. Vilsoni Hereniko

groups: *iTaukei*, Rotuman, Chinese, Indian. By sending USP's OCACPS, a group that often blurs divisions between ethnicity and fuses traditional dance with contemporary forms, Hereniko was able to achieve his previous objectives of breaking out of the restrictiveness of conservative nationalist politics that have tended to keep national dances distinct at the Festival and in Fiji, and to promote a more pan-Oceanic identity (Hereniko 2006). Yet, by using primarily "traditional" dance to tell a story from the past, the production also appealed to the safeguarding objectives of viewers in Fiji and at the Festival of Pacific Arts that are politically invested in reclaiming, reviving and protecting the culture and heritage of indigenous peoples across the Pacific for the future.

Although the production was not technically representing Fiji alone, the production centralized Fiji in its narrative through its use of "*Teivovo*," a Bauan war *meke* or *bole* (pronounced mbole) that is a challenge to war. In the face of *meke* being increasingly rejected, especially in cases where the *meke* is linked to past acts of war and *kalou* worship, using *Teivovo* in their production is particularly interesting. The *Teivovo* is performed frequently as a way to re-assert a notion of Fiji as symbolized by a powerful *iTaukei* warrior. Since 1939,⁹⁷ Fiji's national rugby team has used *Teivovo* to challenge and frighten their opponents before a match, and to heighten the team's energy for the

⁹⁷ In 1939, the captain of the rugby team, Ratu Sir George Cakobau (great-grandson of Ratu Seru Cakobau, who unified all of Fiji by the mid 1800s and ceded Fiji to the British in 1874) recommended his team adopt the *cibi* when they went for their first tour of New Zealand, so that the Fiji team would have a war dance to match the New Zealand's All Blacks' *haka*. After adopting the *cibi*, the Fiji team became the only team to return from a rugby tour to New Zealand without losing a match (Fiji Rugby Union 2014).

game.⁹⁸ *Teivovo* re-enforces a notion of Fijianness as coming from a dangerous past while generating a Fijian national identity through a collection of particular qualities associated with being a Bauan *iTaukei* warrior such as strength, fearlessness, readiness, aggressive masculinity, domination, and connection to the land.⁹⁹

It is generally the case that each area of Fiji has its own unique *meke* but the *Teivovo* being performed as a unifying symbol of Fiji breaks from that regionalism. Damiano, the *meke daunivucu* for *Drua*, was asked by the directors of the show to include an element in his *meke* that would be recognizable to all Fijians. So he chose to begin one of his own *meke* with *Teivovo* because it would be familiar and exciting to most Fijians (due to the popularity of rugby). Although not following the movements of the rugby team's version entirely, Damiano included many of the same movements and lyrics at the beginning of his war *meke* with the idea that, through recognition, the *Teivovo* could generate a unifying spirit and excitement about being Fijian.

Through its lyrics and movement-based affects, *Teivovo* asserts a Fijian national identity that connects present day *iTaukei* to a romanticized powerful and *iTaukei*

⁹⁸ Recently, Ratu Manoa Rasigatale transformed *Teivovo* done by Fiji's rugby team from a *cibi* (victory dance after war) to a *bole* (challenge to war) (Rasigatale 2013).

⁹⁹ According to Manoa Rasigatale, the meaning of *teivovo* is complex. In the past, the term was used to refer to when the yams were maturing. To clear the land, they would burn the land to prepare it for planting. The plants can then be uprooted, when they are uprooted, and the roots turned towards the sun, they die. That is what the challengers are calling out to their opponents, they will uproot their opponents and they will die giving all the power to the challengers (Rasigatale 2013).

warrior¹⁰⁰ from the past. In the *Teivovo* for *Drua*, dancers indicate their readiness and challenge for battle by a stance that includes a deep ninety-degree bend at the knee and hip with upright torso. Pelvises all face to one side with upper torsos rotating to face the opponent. Elbows are high and the *meke* war clubs (*i-wau-ni-meke*)¹⁰¹ are pulled tight beside their heads, ready to swing at an opponent. The dancers cry out “*Tei vovo Tei vovo*,” meaning the opponent will be plucked and planted upside down causing the opponents roots to dry in the air. After drying out, the opponent will die and the power will be with the challenger.¹⁰² As the dancers cry out they simultaneously pound the ground with alternating feet. They repeat the cry and begin to advance forward while staying low, with their torsos still facing side, and with their heads facing forward. They cry “*Rai tu mai rai tu mai*,” meaning look at me we have the same aims - you want victory and so do I. They continue to advance forward pounding the ground harder and more energetically. They shout “*O au na viriviri ni kemu bai*,” meaning I will be your barricade a wall you cannot tear down. They make a final advance forward with greater speed and force calling out “*ie! ie! ie!*” They do a final jump high in the air with arms

¹⁰⁰ Quoting Manoa Rasigatale, “*iTaukei* are known warriors. That means we naturally respond to harsh commands with words of deep meaning” (Rasigatale 2013).

¹⁰¹ According to Fergus Clunie, there are two types of clubs used for club dances, the spurred *kiakavo* and the *gugu*. According to Clunie, these clubs were rarely used as fighting weapons but are often carved of heavy hardwoods and sometimes light softwoods stained to resemble hardwoods with bindings of coir sinnet (Clunie 1977, 51).

¹⁰² The untranslated lyrics were given to me by Damiano the *daunivucu* who staged the *Teivovo* for *Drua: Wave of Fire*. I have found a translation of the same lyrics by Manoa Rasigatale (Rasigatale 2013)

and club swinging high above the head. They end the challenge in this way to increase the energy, excitement, and fear.

In its unifying movements and lyrics, *Teivovo* is an example of a national *meke* that erases difference to create a unifying spirit and identification with *iTaukei* warriors and Fijian land. The spirit of *iTaukei* warrior as coming from the land is in the movements and lyrics themselves. The upright torso with deeply bent legs shows a readiness and strength for life and combat. In that muscular readiness, Damiano explains through demonstration, the body is ready to move in any direction. It is not fixed or stuck but ready for the twists and turns of life in Fiji as a kind of contemporary battle. The feet pound the ground as a way of showing the opponent who the powerful owners and protectors of the land are. The challengers, as owners and protectors of the land are deeply connected to the land in terms of spiritual strength and knowledge about survival in Fiji. But this sentiment is also expressed in the lyrics.

According to Manoa Rasigatale (2013), the meaning of *teivovo* is complex. It refers to a stage in the planting and harvesting of yams. Rasigatale explains that to clear the land, *iTaukei* burn the land to prepare it for planting. Once burned, the plants can then be uprooted. When they are uprooted and the roots turned towards the sun, they die. In the *Teivovo* the knowledge of war is intimately connected to the knowledge of how to survive off the land. It is in the aggressiveness of the challenge, the lyrics and muscular sharpness of the movement (that is not loose and free but bound and tight) that Fijians I consulted with spoke about the *Teivovo* as aggressively masculine. The performance of

Teivovo signals a national political spirit that safeguards the past, as a reminder of *iTaukei* strength, power and connection to the land, for the future.

At first glance, *Teivovo* seems like a “technology of power” as Foucault would put it, or a method of control by which the *iTaukei* warrior is generated and safeguarded for a national body-politic to emulate; a technique used to “actualize” bodies and categorize them as “natural” *iTaukei*. However, despite these governing aspects, the performance of *Teivovo* in the *Drua* production complicates the application of a singular narrative of safeguarding the past for future sovereign relations and biopolitics in Fiji by challenging the classifying of bodies within rigid boundaries of race and gender. Instead dancers of varying backgrounds of descent and transgendered identifications danced the *Teivovo* showing that notions of *iTaukei* masculinity as expressed in *Teivovo* are not as essential and secure as they might seem. Despite being told to include a *meke* that would generate a national unifying Fijian spirit, Damiano¹⁰³ and the cast celebrate the diversity of Fijians, and respect the ways in which descent, customs, and practices interconnect across Fiji. In Damiano’s *Teivovo*, the dancers are not trying to look like *iTaukei* of the past: some have piercings, some have straightened hair, and some are of Indian descent.

Damiano’s political objectives are to respect the diversity of Fijians while creating a feeling of inclusiveness so that all who identify with Fiji feel welcome and like they belong. While his political views appear to align with state policies of multiracialism, Damiano pushes against terms imposed by the state used to classify

¹⁰³ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Suva, Viti Levu, June 2012.

Fijians such as *iTaukei*. Instead Damiano aims to widen identifications with Fiji and “Fijian” on indigenous terms by broadening inclusion through the notion of *iTaukei*. As a member of Fiji’s ecumenical Roman Catholic Church, his politics align with the Church by being inclusive yet respectful of difference through his *meke* choreographies. He pushes against rigid classifications of race and ethnicity imposed by the nation-state by using a cast in his *meke* that includes Fijians of Indian descent. He also challenges the *Teivovo*’s unifying force by transitioning from the Bauan *Teivovo* done in synchronicity and rigid linear formations to his own *meke* done in his own dialect from Macuata Province in Vanua Levu, with his own three dimensional formations that he says “represent life.”¹⁰⁴ He tells me that his three dimensional formations in the *meke* he creates represent diversity in the way people live and move through life. He does not want to evoke conformity and sameness that are the desired effects of Bauan *meke* like *Teivovo* whereby conformity is achieved through synchronized movements and linear formations, making the dance look like one body moving.¹⁰⁵ He rejects the idea of using the dominant Bauan dialect feeling that his chant will have the most *mana* (the power to effect through the communication of deep meaning) when expressed in his own dialect. Damiano subtly challenges Fiji’s past biopolitical arrangement that gave *iTaukei* (especially *iTaukei* of Bauan descent) preeminence and aligns with a shift towards a new

¹⁰⁴ Damiano in conversation with the author, Suva, Viti Levu, October 2012.

¹⁰⁵ These differences in style align with different regions in Fiji. According to Wendy Ratawa (1986), the Bauan style of *meke* is linear whereas the Labasa style from Macuata province is “circular and moving out” (68).

biopolitical arrangement intended to create racial equality and respect for difference by widening the definition of *iTaukei* to include all who consider themselves connected to Fijian soil regardless of biology.

For the most part, the *Teivovo* dancers share Damiano's views and reject a rigid safeguarding of the past meant to sustain a status quo built upon rigid customs, protocols, cultural, and racial boundaries. For example, when I ask dancer Peni what he thinks about the recent government decree¹⁰⁶ to use the term "*iTaukei*" in reference to indigenous Fijians, and the term "Fijian" in reference to citizens of Fiji, he tells me the term makes him feel uncomfortable because it creates "divisiveness to differentiate."¹⁰⁷ Even though he is *iTaukei* by decree, Peni prefers to call himself "Fijian."¹⁰⁸ His views on *meke* extend from his position on the decree. He tells me that *meke* can be done by anyone. "It is not something we have to hold onto, but share it. If you know it is good for you, you should share it; it has benefits for everyone. It should not just be for natives."¹⁰⁹ Like Damiano, Peni wants to do away with racializing categories that multiracial discourses still espouse. Instead, Peni reaches towards a future for Fiji and *meke* generated by the desire for intercultural inclusion in the expressions of Fijian art, culture and heritage. Peni's perspective generates a space of maneuverability where new identifications gravitating around issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation can

¹⁰⁶ Fijian Affairs [Amendment] Decree 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Peni (*meke* dancer) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, October 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Peni (*meke* dancer) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, October 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Peni (*meke* dancer) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, October 2012.

emerge. Yet this space of indeterminacy is not always so open to maneuver. Bodies performing *Teivovo* also govern and control the possibilities for maneuver.

The cast of the *Teivovo* generated secured and unsecured bodies through their movement-based expressions of affect in performance. The dancers shared an overall desire to dissolve rigid and secured categories of culture and identity (which is part of what attracted them to the Oceania Centre in the first place) and, instead, generate a pan-Oceanic interculturalism. Yet, when performing *Teivovo*, almost all of the dancers, regardless of descent, drew upon images and memories of aggressively masculine Bauan *iTaukei* warriors of the past¹¹⁰ in order to fit their bodies and expressions into a mold of what they believe war *meke* should be. By performing this aggressive masculinity they were in some ways generating secured bodies.

The dancers reached towards evoking *iTaukei* warriors of the past essentialized through their expressions of aggressive masculinity that manifested itself in the rhythms and accents of the *meke* movements. Some of the dancers told me that these accents and rhythms that are particular to *meke* should be automatic for all who consider themselves to be *iTaukei*. In other words, they are not learned but already internal to the essential *iTaukei* body. In contradiction to their sentiments of blurring boundaries of race, ethnicity and culture, they say *meke* will not come naturally if the dancer is not connected to land through descent. For example, if a dancer is not automatically accenting the movements and rhythms in a particular way, then they are not connected to the land and

¹¹⁰ For example the image of Ratu Seru Cakobau.

not truly *iTaukei*. In other words, in its “naturalized” accents and rhythms, bodies performing *meke* are actualized within categories of race that support a biopolitical terrain of safeguarding *iTaukei* preeminence through connections to the land.

The issue of a “naturalized” *iTaukei* identity in *meke* was raised in an interview I conducted with two dancers: Surech, a young Fijian man of Indian descent and Boro who is a young man of *iTaukei* descent. Surech, who relishes in the expression of masculine warrior strength he associates with *iTaukei*, tells me that “the specific accents of the head movements, the sharpness, the strength and the power of the *meke* actions” are natural instincts that are expressed in the way the movements are accented.¹¹¹ Despite being commended by the other dancers on the strength of his expressions of spirit, energy and movement, Surech does not think *meke* accents and rhythms come naturally to him because he is of Indian descent. He tells me he studied the accents from his *iTaukei* friend Boro to become proficient in them.

However, Boro dislikes *meke* because, even though he believes it comes naturally to him because he is *iTaukei*, he identifies himself as feminine and, performing what he terms “the violence” of *meke* does not fit comfortably with his femininity. Boro finds it difficult to include himself within the restrictive boundaries of what it means to be *iTaukei*. Yet, instilled in him is the notion that the ability to accent the rhythms and movements in a certain way is “natural,” biological, and, quoting Boro, “runs through the

¹¹¹ Surech (*meke* dancer) in conversation with the author, July 2012, Suva, Fiji.

blood.” Boro also tells me he has seen lots of *meke*. “I used to live near Pacific Harbour and we used to go to the Cultural Centre and watch when we had spare time. I’ve seen a lot.” The Cultural Centre (who also performs *Teivovo*) has influenced Boro’s own practice of *meke*, instilling in him the notion that his ability to accent the rhythms and movements in a certain way are “natural,” biological, and tied to an aggressively masculine warrior past.

The accents and rhythms of *meke* movements have become recognizable signs that mark bodies as coherently organized by race, sex, gender and ethnicity. And, as Manning reminds me, while bodies can never be reduced to such external signs, “systems of governance rely on these signs to compartmentalize the bodies in their midst” (Manning 2007, 113). In the *Teivovo* dancers generate securing bodies that fit into categories by reducing masculine *iTaukei* bodies to the naturalized rhythms and accents that are explained to be innately part of the male *iTaukei* body. Recognizable markers of *iTaukei*, such as rhythms and accents expressed in *meke*, form the external signs upon which bodies can be governed and categorized.

Although the *iTaukei* members of the *Teivovo* cast aim to embody the correct rhythms and accents that they believe are “natural,” their movements are also contradictory in that their bodies are also irreducible to these external signs of race and gender. Through their feelings of discomfort with trying to fit securely within recognizable markers of *iTaukei*, upon which bodies can be governed, Surech and Boro generate unsecured bodies that do not fit into recognizable categories. The fact that

neither of the dancers is actually governed by an imposed category of aggressively masculine *iTaukei* warrior - because one successfully performs the “natural” rhythms and accents as non-*iTaukei*, and the other who identifies himself as more feminine, yet still moves “naturally” like *iTaukei* – shows the emergence of new biopolitical categories by unsettling “naturalized” boundaries of race and gender.

Many of the dancers at the Oceania Centre do not like performing *meke* due to its restrictiveness, in terms of protocol and *tabu*, and their abilities to express themselves through it. In the context of *meke*, *tabu* are restrictions on behaviour (such as not having intercourse, drinking alcohol or *kava*, and not smoking) that are thought to increase the spirit, strength and energy of the *meke mata* (*meke* team) and to bring them together as a group. The spiritual significance of *tabu* relates to *kalou* worship and pleasing the ancestor spirits, who can be vengeful and harmful to the bodies of those performing *meke* if a mistake is made and *tabu* not respected. According to Boro, “the *tabu*’s make me feel stuck because if I do something wrong, I am not really a Fijian. I don’t want to feel that. So in order not to feel that, I don’t want to do it [*meke*]. It is a lot of pressure.”¹¹² These dancers expressed the feeling of being expected to be a certain way with *meke*, to be Fijian in a very restricted set of parameters with no room for variation. In many of their minds, *meke* has reduced what an *iTaukei* Fijian can be because one has to fit into a

¹¹² Boro may also dislike *meke* because he is a born again Christian and is one of the many who are rejecting traditions. This possibility is confirmed by other conversations with Boro when he spoke of one individual, whom he described as “a traditional man,” he found “scary.” Boro in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, July 2012.

particular mold, and move within set boundaries and prescribed behaviours. The pressures and restrictiveness that they feel opens a space for creative maneuver. They spoke of wishing for a future for *meke* that moves in the direction of fusions with various forms of contemporary dance in order to create expressions that are relevant to a contemporary Fiji – expressions with which they can identify.

In contrast to those who feel uncomfortable trying to fit into a top-down biopolitical arrangement that essentializes notions of *iTaukei* against more intercultural and transgendered approaches, one dancer spoke about these essentializing aspects as powerful and desirable sources of inner strength and part of God’s plan. This dancer provides an example of self-governing oneself to fit into essentialized notions of *iTaukei*. Peni, who is *iTaukei* by decree, was drawn to the masculine strength of the movements in *Teivovo*. Quoting Peni, “The movements look tough. When you see them doing it, you feel like you want to be part of it. As men, you have this strength and sometimes you really want to show that strength.”¹¹³ Peni spoke about this masculine strength coming to him “naturally” and “automatically” when he hears the chanting and the rhythms of *meke*. He echoed what many told me that *meke* just comes “naturally” to *iTaukei*. Quoting Peni,

Like *vakarau*!¹¹⁴ For Fijians on the battlefields during hard times, Fijians are not hiding they are moving. Let’s take it! It is the Fijian way, it just comes, and we are born with it - not to hide but get ready, face it head on. That is how I feel. It strongly connects to how I identify as Fijian. In the old Fijian stories of war when

¹¹³ Peni in conversation with the author, July 2012, Suva, Fiji.

¹¹⁴ Meaning “get ready!”

soldiers say stop, they [the Fijians] say we move forward, don't stop. It's the feelings of it in the meke. You don't feel afraid of anything.¹¹⁵

Peni connects the experience of performing *Teivovo* with Fijian wars fought fearlessly by warriors in the past, and to a readiness and fearlessness for his own future. In doing this, Peni is safeguarding his future with a romanticized and nationalistic account of the past as aggressively masculine.

Part of what Peni is keen to protect through his expressions of masculinity, readiness, and strength are binary sex and gender divisions. His opinions were clearly articulated when he spoke to me about gay rights. He tells me,

one good thing about religion is gay rights, they are trying to stop it. There is nothing in the bible saying that it is okay to be gay. We don't discriminate, we love them, but it wasn't God's plan and so you have to help them to see the right path. It wasn't gods plan for men to be with men.

Peni's experiences and expressions of aggressive masculinity in the *Teivovo* align with conservative Christian views in Fiji that normalize heterosexuality.¹¹⁶ Peni's views on sex and gender are formed by what he believes is "good" Christian behaviour. Peni, who refers to himself as a Disciple, is part of the explosion of new charismatic and evangelical churches in Fiji that attempt to forge a direct link with God. According to Peni, Disciples seek to return to a more direct and basic worship of God. Peni meets with other Disciples informally on a regular basis to discuss their feelings and to make sure they are staying

¹¹⁵ Peni in conversation with the author, July 2012, Suva, Fiji.

¹¹⁶ Although Fiji has in the past discriminated against men having sex with men, the 2013 Constitution of The Republic of Fiji now protects "Right to Equality and Freedom from Discrimination" regardless of "...sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression..." (Section 26 (3)(a), p.19)

committed to “personal time”: a time when they reflect on their own lives and behaviour in relation to God. For Peni, God is always watching. As a result, he governs his own behaviour based on what he believes is “God’s plan.” But for Peni, it is not enough to watch those around him fall outside of “God’s plan” and suffer the consequences. He wants to help those around him to be “good” Christians. Peni tells me,

People are confused between looking like a good Christian to others¹¹⁷ and being a good Christian in your relation with God. We [the Disciples] talk about our hearts and talk about if we did something bad. That is what real Christians should be doing.

In Peni’s mind, homosexuality is not good Christian behaviour. Heterosexuality, on the other hand, is good Christian behaviour because it is part of “God’s plan.” Peni’s religious convictions are part of what governs his expressions of aggressive masculinity in *meke* as something he is committed to and wants to use to help guide (or govern) the behaviours of those around him.

Peni’s experiences volunteering with NGOs also govern his experiences and expressions during *meke*. For example, Peni gets the energy he needs to perform *meke* from his mind using techniques he learned while volunteering for the Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji and the 2009 Pacific Youth Festival in Suva. The Family Planning NGO has taught him how to find his inner strength through “positive feelings.” His psychological approach is one mode through which NGOs govern affect. Peni explains,

¹¹⁷ A common critique of Methodists that was shared with me by evangelicals in Fiji.

everything starts from the mind and then the mind communicates with the body. So, if I think I can do it, then suddenly I have the strength to do it. If I think negatively, my behaviour will be impacted accordingly. Positive feelings have positive impact on behaviour. So when I hear the *meke* music, I think I can do this. If I think negatively, I lose my energy. So I have to resist that. I learned about behaviour change and how you can change someone from seeing themselves with a poor self-image to inspiring them to feel better about themselves. The doctor would say it all starts with the mind.

In his sentiments, there is also an evangelizing attitude of spreading good feelings in order to improve the fortunes of others. Rather than seeing structural inequities such as racism, sexism, and homophobia as being the source of hardships, Peni believes personal hardships will cease to exist with a better attitude. Peni's belief that a good mood and positive outlook will bring good fortune is the moral compass with which he self-governs and aims to evangelize and govern those around him, particularly those who do align with what he believes is "God's plan."

These are the affective impulses coursing through Peni when he is doing *meke* and what he draws on to get through the difficulty of *Teivovo*, which requires a high degree of cardiovascular stamina and muscular strength. His movement and energy are driven by his religious and political alignments and his desires for the future of new biopolitical pacts with Fiji that blur boundaries of race, culture and ethnicity while securing boundaries of sex, gender, and sexuality through self-imposed and non-hierarchical directions of governance.

Whereas Boro's experiences and expressions in *meke* are governed by fears of strict hierarchy and chiefly authority informed by the Cultural Centre, Peni's own danced expressions self-govern and guide those around him in performance. These movement-

based experiences and expressions exemplify the shift from externally imposed governance to a horizontally imposed self-governance associated with transnational organizations. NGOs and evangelical and charismatic churches operate transnationally to promote self-help and self-governance yet terrains of power remain uneven with real material inequities.

In the wake of the 2006 coup in the name of multiracial harmony, experiences and expressions of movement-based affects in *Teivovo* expose emergent and uncertain identifications with *meke* that align with wider changes to biopolitical arrangements. The dancers at the Oceania Centre performing *Teivovo* show us that secured bodies are just as processual and uncertain as bodies that do not fit rigid boundaries, categories and images. In the space of uncertainty created by the most recent coup, new dancing bodies emerge in a shifting biopolitical terrain at once governed by and governing through expressions of movement-based affects. This, as Manning shows, is politics through expression, where the body is in a state of perpetual emergence, and not politics through viewing the body as a site of representation where the body has become a fact. In *meke* for the national stage new political terrain emerges upon old political terrain. Expressions are not neutral or equal exchanges but rooted in material realities with consequences that shape lives and future relations. These transformations and shifts are also evident in *meke* for the 2012 Fiji Day celebrations. *Meke* performed by the Conservatorium of Music During Fiji Day celebrations reveals the impacts of a more direct government influence on biopolitical expressions of ethnicity and race in relation to discourses of

multiracialism – leading me to question the directionality of Bainimarama’s stated multiracial objectives.

Fiji Day

The slogan for the October 10,¹¹⁸ 2012 national Fiji Day celebrations is “Celebrate a United Fiji.” Although in general I found Fijians of Indian descent felt that the race-based tensions that once existed in Fiji were no longer an issue, my own experiences at Fiji Day suggest a lingering tension in Fiji despite a discourse of multiracial harmony. After a lengthy military parade, I observed dance programming being deployed as a method for instilling a sense of a united and multiracial Fijian identity. The program begins with a *meke* performance by the Conservatorium of Music (COM).¹¹⁹ COM is an urban Suva music school whose students perform *meke* as a way to reduce their tuition costs. Although the school opened after the 2006 coup in June 2008,¹²⁰ COM is quickly earning a national and international reputation for their high-energy, skilled, and polished performances of *meke* as well as for their respectful approach to “traditional” protocols. After COM’s *meke*, a Rotuman group performs a

¹¹⁸ October 10th 1874 is the day Fiji was ceded to Britain and it is also the day Fiji gained independence in 1970, 96 years later.

¹¹⁹ In order to maintain anonymity of my consultants, I have given the school a pseudonym.

¹²⁰ Master Lei (founder/director of COM and director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, September 2012.

traditional Rotuman “tiap hi,”¹²¹ followed by a group who performs an emerging dance form that fuses *meke* and Bollywood referred to as Bulawood, then the dance group Rako¹²² performs a fusion of Rotuman, Raratongan, Tahitian and Samoan dance. After short breaks with the Fiji police band, the dance performance series continues with a Tahitian dance group, followed by a group called “Mix and Match” who does a Hawaiian and Tahitian fusion. The “mix and match” program is clearly intended to celebrate diversity and generate a biopolitics of unity and multiracial harmony.

Although Fiji Day performances provide a potent opportunity to put multiracial discourses into practice in order to generate a “united” and “harmonious” Fijian identity, with the exception of the Bulawood dances, viewers are reminded of secure boundaries between *iTaukei* and Fijians of non-*iTaukei* descent. Besides the clear distinction made between Fijians and Rotumans through their dances, the 99% *iTaukei* military (Firth and Fraenkel 2009,117) is another such reminder of the racialized boundaries that still exist. However, COM is also a reminder of these securing biopolitical boundaries. COM begins the program and maintains a “traditional” through-line throughout the day of dancing and celebrating by appearing frequently in the program. In the context of a multiracial Fiji Day, COM reminds those present of another biopolitical reality that aims

¹²¹ I recognized the Rotuman “tiap hi” due to my conversations with my Rotuman mentor and friend Sefo Avaiki and the videos and demonstrations he shared with me on Vancouver Island at various times in my life.

¹²² Letila Mitchell (company founder and dancer and past director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, August 2012.

to protect a notion of *iTaukei* Fiji from the past. This is the political ecology of the dancing for Fiji Day: fusions indicate an opening for new relations and a new politics of touch; but fusions occur next to reminders of political tensions rooted in the preeminence of *iTaukei* sustained on firm and “naturalized” categories of race.

COM is often chosen to represent Fiji at international and national events for the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign affairs; and because of their high level of exposure and popularity, they are becoming an important generator of national spirit. Despite the current climate of multiracialism, or perhaps because of the threat it poses to *iTaukei* preeminence, COM generates a spirit that celebrates Christian *iTaukei* rooted in the past. This bias towards celebrating an *iTaukei* past is, on the one hand, mitigated by the contemporary fusions of dance that frame the performances by COM, and promise a shift towards multiracial harmony and equality. On the other hand, COM performances, like the *iTaukei* Military parade, safeguards *iTaukei* presence in the face of threat of loss due to multiracial fusions and rejections of tradition. In their performance for the national stage, COM generates a type of Fijianness rooted in chiefly authority and respect for traditions and protocols with which many audience members, especially *iTaukei* Methodists,¹²³ feel affectively drawn to identify.¹²⁴ COM’s presence at Fiji Day safeguards *iTaukei* preeminence for the future within a discourse of multiracialism.

¹²³ Statistically speaking, most *iTaukei* are Methodist (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007).

¹²⁴ Master Lei (founder/director of COM and director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, August 2012.

COM's safeguarding approach to *meke* is in part driven by the motivations of the director Master Lei Veikoso.¹²⁵ Master Lei's approach to *meke* is firmly rooted in a respect for traditional protocols and customs within the bounds of Christian worship.¹²⁶

Master Lei explains some of the traditional protocols the school follows:

we do a presentation of a whales tooth – our ancestors say that it adds to the *mana* and more inspiration for the piece. Also, given that many of our students would have been commoners [if they still lived] in the village setting, the whales tooth is to say “we hope it is okay for you, as commoners, for us to dance that chiefly dance.” It is a mark of respect and a way to seek forgiveness for making a mistake, and absolving us of ill will. Once we have learned the dance there is a premier, called a *sevu ni meke*. He [the *daunivucu*] could invite a guest [such as] a prominent chief to be the guest of honour. After the *meke* has been presented, the last thing we do is a thank you and we take gifts (20 liter drums of kerosene and many yards of fabric) to the choreographer. It is about providing care for the *daunivucu*. We just did this and it was nice for him to see the tradition continued.

Although Master Lei is personally motivated to safeguard past practices and protocols (within the boundaries of his Christian faith), his group is also governed by government influences.

The Conservatorium offers a complex picture of the relationship between *meke* and governmental influence. This picture exposes the direction in which those in positions of power and influence envision Fiji's future.¹²⁷ There is no government

¹²⁵ Master Lei (founder/director of COM and director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, August 2012.

¹²⁶ Master Lei (founder/director of COM and director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, August 2012.

¹²⁷ Although Lei is both director and founder of COM, and director of the Fiji Arts Council, at the time of our interview, his position as director of Fiji Arts Council had not been of much benefit to his school (although he spoke of that changing in the future).

funding for individual artists, companies, or institutions through the Fiji Arts Council.¹²⁸ As a result of the lack of government support, artists turn to commercial lines of support to make money. Although the primary focus of the school is classical music, a major source of financial support for COM comes from the government via the *meke* performances they are hired to perform by the ministry of tourism and foreign affairs. COM survives, in part, through the economic support it gets from these ministries for performing *meke*. However, their reliance on this economic support gives these ministries power to govern COM's approach to *meke*. For example, Fiji Tourism wants the dancers to look like *iTaukei* from the past. They ask COM to send dancers with frizzy hair worn in a "traditional" manner (not straightened or long and wavy, etc.).¹²⁹ Master Lei explains that his group provides the Ministry of Tourism with what they have long been looking for. COM provides a uniform look of indigenous Fiji (which Master Lei explains does not otherwise exist outside of his efforts), and a high energy, synchronized dancing entertainment that evokes inviting sentiments of happiness, joy, love (*loloma*), and peace to match the Ministry's catch phrase "Fiji: Where Happiness Finds You" (Bainimarama 2013).

Master Lei, who is of Bauan descent (from Tailevu), aims to generate a unifying notion of *iTaukei*. According to Master Lei, being Bauan gives him an extra sense of

¹²⁸ Fiji Arts Council, who operates under the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, organizes projects like exhibitions. Master Lei in conversation with the author, Suva, Viti Levu, September 2012.

¹²⁹ Master Lei in conversations with the author, Suva, Viti Levu, September 2012.

authority because, as he puts it, Bau is “the leading province in Fiji.”¹³⁰ As mentioned in chapter two, Bau achieved its “hegemonic ambitions” through conquest by mid-nineteenth century (Sahlins 1991, 49) and continues to generate a dominant universalizing force in Fiji.¹³¹ In addition to Master Lei’s Bauan influences, he tells me that he creates synchronicity and uniformity in his group by drawing from techniques he learned while touring with a United States Folk dance group. His dancers all wear uniforms, are told to give their movements a quality of sharpness, to dance from the heart and express themselves when they dance but to stay within the bounds of synchronicity so as not to allow individualism. Although not all of the *meke* performed by COM come from Bau, I observed that the *meke* chosen by the group to perform were all very linear, a quality that Wendy Ratawa (1986) asserts is typical of Bauan style *meke* (68). This formation and the synchronicity of the performers give the sense of one body moving. Master Lei’s unifying approach is a reminder that Fiji has been unified under a common Bauan influence.

In addition to generating a unified, happy, loving, and peaceful *iTaukei* for its tourist viewers, COM also performs internationally for political and cultural gatherings. COM performs for Fiji’s Foreign Affairs as part of a promotional team for all of the embassies, and travels for the Melanesian Spear Head Group.¹³² I am told by some of the

¹³⁰ Master Lei in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, September 2012.

¹³¹ Marshall Sahlins notes that Bauans governed Fiji by war and force (Sahlins 1991, 61).

¹³² An intergovernmental organization to facilitate trade and economic development negotiations between Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

dancers that the COM has also become a part of the Prime Minister's entourage, adding a "traditional" *iTaukei* element to the events he is part of promoting (such as the Fiji pavilion at Expo 2012 in Korea and the unveiling of Fiji Airways' new *masi*¹³³ print logo on Fiji Day 2012). Although the Prime Minister is calling for a more inclusive use of the term "Fijian," he still chooses to present himself with a *meke* group that generates a Christianized image of *iTaukei* from the past. This creates a complex dichotomy. On the surface, choosing indigenous looking Fijians to represent Fiji's nation-state nationally and internationally seems like an important way of giving voice to a previously colonized people. However, in the context of Fiji's political history and the espoused national slogans of multiracial inclusion, the use of "traditional" indigenous dance with dancers that are all meant to look like *iTaukei* from a time past, yet evoking Christian sentiments of happiness, joy and love, generates a haunting reminder of exclusion, political upheaval and upset. At the same time, in his choice of entourage for the "national stage," he fails to convincingly support his own supposed desires for multiracialism. His commitment to a future of united multiracial harmony fails like post-independence narratives of multiracialism failed in years prior to the first 1987 coups (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). Rather, his choice is evidence of a kind of safeguarding of Christian *iTaukei* preeminence for the future, reliant on a biopolitics with clear boundaries of race and ethnicity naturalized by Bauan styled *meke* performances of *iTaukei* from the past.

¹³³ *Masi* is decorated and patterned bark cloth.

Biopolitics in Fiji is about power co-constituted by politics, spiritual, and religious factors. *Meke* has been, and continues to be, a spiritual and political vehicle for connecting *iTaukei* to the land. As a result, it continues to play a profound role in maintaining and perpetuating certain religion and race-based boundaries that privilege an *iTaukei* and Christian Fijian national identity. As previously mentioned, by bringing Indian indentured labourers to Fiji, British colonizers also brought a new threat to land ownership. The resulting political importance of *iTaukei* being defined as owners of the land (Kaplan 1995, 60), and dancers doing *meke* that look *iTaukei*, demonstrate the political link being generated between the “natural” indigenous Fijian body and claims to Fijian land through an embodied knowledge of it. Performances of tradition such as *meke* performed by COM on Fiji Day continue to establish a claim to Fijian land by allowing only certain bodies to perform *meke*.

By providing an economic lifeline to the survival of the COM, the government, through the ministry of tourism and foreign affairs, exercises influence over the COM performances. These government ministries govern the bodies of performers to “actualize” or fix them in the face of shifting formations of power, to suit their own biopolitical needs. In a climate of government-espoused multiracial discourses, racialized boundaries of citizenship have shifted from Native Fijian, Indian, Rotuman, and Chinese to *iTaukei* and Fijian. The biological categories are still there but they have shifted allowing for some new unsecured biopolitical arrangements while securing others. *Meke* in the context of COM performing in Fiji Day celebrations reveals the ways in which

indigenous bodies within ethno-national politics are secured as Christian *iTaukei* from the past who are not threatening devil worshippers but happy, kind, community oriented, loving, peaceful, joyful, unified, and synchronized. The securing and uncertain relations of power are not opposites of one another but connected by the same process of emergence through relational expressions of affect. The performances of *iTaukei* preeminence in the military parade and the *meke* performances by COM next to multiracial fusions for Fiji Day celebrations exemplifies how bodies are governed through nationally staged and choreographed performances. Fiji Day performances generate *iTaukei* security and preeminence amidst a new unsecured multiracial Fijian body – a body to which I now turn my focus in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Despite the *iTaukei* Institute's hopes and desires for me to safeguard the past for the future of *iTaukei* preeminence and chiefly authority, what emerged out of my meetings with the *iTaukei* Institute was a new terrain that required mapping. The new terrain of horizontal and self-governing power emerging from the flood of new charismatic and evangelical churches and NGOs threatens older hierarchical formations. As Charles Piot quoting Nikolas Rose (2007) puts it, what presented itself was the need for a "cartography of the present" (2010, 16). A cartography that "tracks the unmaking and remaking of an entire social world and takes seriously the wager of a people willing to trade a past for a future still unknown" (Piot 2010, 16). In listening to the many *iTaukei* with whom I spoke, I came to see competing narratives. I see these narratives as

not right or wrong but as competing for sometimes familiar or sometimes new relations of power. Those rejecting the past are gaining power and influence while those who were once preeminent are finding ways of holding on to that power. This is what my consultant at the *iTaukei* Institute unknowingly shared with me in his cautious questions, doubts, and whispers about religious tensions in Fiji. Amidst what appears to be the development of a “witch hunt” mentality in Fiji with growing associations between *meke* and “devil worship” and rejections of the past, my consultant’s affectively cautious comment that indigenous non-Christian spiritual practices and protocols were not entirely evil, was one of many moments of attuning to affect that indicated the “unmaking and remaking of an entire social world.”

Power in Fiji appears to be shifting from vertical with military dictator or chief at the pinnacle to horizontal as transnational NGOs and evangelical churches pop up and take charge of development initiatives that Fiji’s, now long-term, interim military government can no longer afford. The new horizontal forms of self-governance (through happiness, positive thinking, joy, self-help, and peace) driven by charismatics, evangelicals, and NGOs rely on an account of the past as dangerous and threatening to have their influence take hold. Transnational forces in Fiji bring hope to some *iTaukei* for the future as they speak of possibilities for individual economic prosperity, self-help, and visions for democracy. At the time of their writing, Kelly and Kaplan observed a Fijian nation tightly enmeshed in a political hierarchy (2001). However, they also recognized the potential of non-governmental organizations that “could have increasing

influence in favour of civil and political rights for all in Fiji . . .” (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 191). Given that, at the time of my writing, Fiji is still awaiting its first democratic elections since the 2006 coup, it is perhaps too soon to really know if Bainimarama’s “multiracial” efforts and the work of NGOs and newer churches will have a lasting impact on formations of power in Fiji or if they have just been a façade that will quickly fade once Bainimarama is no longer in power as Prime Minister or leader of the military in a position to use the military for another coup.

The narratives this chapter explores unfold from my experiences with trying to secure a Fiji Research Permit and exploring dancing for Fiji’s national stage. Each account unfolds from a version of the past in order to move towards a different future. Sometimes these accounts are invested in safeguarding the past for Fiji’s future; and, sometimes constructing and then rejecting a two-dimensional cannibal past for future salvation, or multiracial harmony. Sometimes traditions are re-fashioned for multiracial futures through fusions such as Bulawood and fusions of *meke* and contemporary dance for performances on the national stage. These fusions generate at least a superficial appearance of multiracial equity. Many of the dancers I interviewed weave in and out of the three dominant narratives I discuss, sometimes finding a path in between narratives, showing me the varying sources of push and pull being exercised in *meke*.

While this chapter examines the political dynamics at play in and surrounding *meke*, my next chapter, “Spiriting Affects” builds on this understanding of power and politics in Fiji in order to delve into some religious and spiritual dimensions of *meke*.

“Spiriting Affects,” like “Governing Affects,” unfolds from an examination of the body as incorporeal: material and fleshy while porous, experiencing, and expressing relational intensities. “Spiriting Affect” is an attempt to address the agency that emerges in zones of indeterminacy.

Chapter 4 - Spiriting Affect: Generating Stability, Tension and Transformation

This chapter continues to examine the affective aspects of embodiment in *meke* but turns its focus to the ways in which these experiences and expressions generate a re-negotiation of identity and culture by way of notions of spirit and tradition. More specifically, I examine how approaches to *meke* as a “tradition” have the power to stabilize and destabilize notions of culture, identity and feeling of belonging through what I term spiriting affect: feelings of spirit in the body that generate stability, tension, and transformation. To explore the relationships between spirit, the fleshy body, technology and affect, I draw from anthropologist and dance scholar Sally Ness who is currently engaging with a new trajectory of embodied research. This emergent dance scholarship moves beyond perception to explore non-present, post-phenomenological realities of the body that include spirited expressions of affect. These spirited and relational expressions move bodies beyond being merely inscribed representations to becoming generative of meaning (2011a, 84).

Bodies performing *meke* are post-phenomenological in the sense that they are not self-contained and knowable, predetermined subjects that exist prior to movement. Instead bodies are always in motion, and emerging from movement. Movement does not originate or belong to self-contained individual bodies. Instead, as Ness argues, movement is integrative with “nonbodily” co-presences (Ness 2004, 129). Movements of

meke dancers integrate their porous bodies with costumes, the environments in which *meke* is being performed, rhythms, technology, imagery, past memories, future potentials, and notions of spirit in open-ended ways. Approaching incorporeal dancing bodies in this way gets at the question of what a processual body does in motion and moves away from asking causal questions or questions that presume a static body. Viewing the body as in motion and integrative with non-present realities also allows space for understanding the fallibility, vulnerability, and uniqueness of bodies that are not being represented as complete representations of culture (Ness 2004, 139). Both Ness (2004) and Massumi (2002) point out that research that presumes a static and pre-determined body (such as phenomenological and representational approaches) has reached a dead end because it has bracketed or edited out “the nature of the process” (Massumi 2002,12) that involves a continuum of perception and reflection (Massumi 2002, 12; Ness 2004, 139). Yet, it is in these indeterminate spaces of integration with nonbodily co-presences that bodies do: they grapple with new feelings and sensations; they fall short of and strive for their imaginings or memories; they mimic, etc.

With Ness’ “post-phenomenological” insights in mind, I use the term “spiriting affect” to highlight how the generative aspects of affect, that are not tied to individual consciousness but are at once felt and relationally communicated through expressions of spirit in *meke*, are implicated within relations of power. I argue that *meke* as an evolving “tradition” stabilizes and destabilizes culture and identity through affects such as

welcome, generosity, living life to the full (manifested in the Fijian concept *bula*),¹³⁴ and kindly love (manifested in the Fijian concept of *loloma*) in order to affirm a national or local identity with ties to the past. In addition, I argue that the objectification of *meke* as a tradition occurs on an affective register as a way of generating a sense of identity and culture that is in opposition to, and safe from, the perceived threat of the land spirit gods (felt as uncertain intensities), and foreigners. Both threats are viewed in their own ways as dangerous, making it imperative that *meke* performers demonstrate their Christian faith through *loloma* and *bula*. Based on my encounters with *meke*, I add that expressions of *loloma* and *bula* are also key because they reify and legitimize one's connection to Christianity, protecting *meke* practitioners against the bad and uneasy feelings caused by powerful and potentially dangerous land spirits and foreigners, who threaten feelings of security for *iTaukei*. Expressions of *loloma* and *bula* are also contradictory because while they generate a distinction between communal and caring *iTaukei* and self-serving foreigners, they also align with the promotion of Fiji as welcoming, friendly and safe for visitors and Fiji's citizens. *Bula* and *loloma* have become key themes expressed in tourist performances of *meke* and they form a part of the ongoing construction of *meke* as a "traditional" practice.

I explore the spiriting dimensions of these expressions of affect in three separate approaches to *meke* I encountered during my fieldwork in Fiji. These approaches to *meke*

¹³⁴ *Bula* is translated as a greeting but in its verb form, it means to live and, as a noun it means life (Goepel 1938). In my experiences, *bula* is expressed as a generous welcome and its meanings of life and live are often combined together to express the spirit of living life to the fullest.

demonstrate the importance of controlling affects such as *bula* and *loloma* through the performance of *meke* as a “tradition.” As aspects of tradition, these feelings are expressed in relation to sustaining Wesleyan Methodist hegemony that has dominated colonial and post-independence power and politics in Fiji while protecting against the threat of vengeful *kalou* or land spirits¹³⁵ that are believed to create unwanted feelings such as uneasiness and “misery” in the body. Processes that are less secure unhinge this hegemonic control. Such processes simultaneously insist upon multiple definitions of *meke*, tradition, “Fijian” and “*iTaukei*.” For some, affective uncertainty or uneasiness that results from less secure processes signals the presence of *kalou*. While for others, uncertainty threatens Wesleyan hegemony, and the division between *iTaukei* and “foreigners.” All three encounters with *meke* demonstrate different ways relational affects generate a sense of control or unease. But, between the securing and unsecuring

¹³⁵ I re-iterate a point made in my Introduction, that there are many different land spirits with different qualities that are associated with different aspects of the land and ancestry. However, in my discussions, those I consulted with rarely referred to specific land spirits and instead referred to them in a general way as evil, devils, land spirits, land gods, ancestors, ancestor spirits and ancestor gods. All of these words have different connotations but my impression was always that those I spoke with were trying to convey a notion of spirit perceived to be tied to pre-Christian Fiji enmeshed in warfare and cannibalism. It was often the case that when people did speak more specifically, the spirits or gods were less associated with evil and more associated with an entity of mythological status or an entity that needed to be treated with specific protocols of respect. For consistency and based on my rationale outlined in my Introduction, I use the terms *kalou*, land spirits, or ancestor spirits.

feelings, a space emerges for maneuverability and agency to direct oneself on a new emergent course. As Massumi puts it in an interview with philosopher Mary Zournazi,

There's always a sort of vagueness surrounding the situation, an uncertainty about where you might be able to go and what you might be able to do once you exit that particular context. This uncertainty can actually be empowering – once you realize that it gives you a margin of maneuverability and you focus on that [...]. It gives you the feeling that there is always an opening to experiment [...]. This brings a sense of potential to the situation. (Zournazi 2003)

The expressions of affect that emerge in the space of maneuver are some of the ways Fijians are dealing with anxieties and expectations involving Christianity, conservative nationalism, and tourism in Fiji.

In the first approach to *meke*, I explore an encounter with a couple that rejects Fijian traditions and chooses not to practice *meke* for political and religious reasons. I encountered this rejection of *meke* while staying in a village “home stay” of an Assemblies of God host and hostess. In exploring this encounter, I focus on why choosing not to practice *meke* is a politically and religiously subversive and disruptive choice. Needless to say, there was a reluctance to practice or even discuss *meke* in the “home stay.” The rejection of traditions such as *meke* coupled with the rejection of affects of *loloma* and *bula* had a destabilizing impact and created feelings of uneasiness during our stay.

The second approach I discuss serves political and economic purposes and became apparent from my encounters with *meke* performed for domestic and international tourism in Fiji, which sometimes also crossed into national events. This approach is heavily influenced by tourism in Fiji in conjunction with national politics,

and activates feelings of generosity, welcome, and kindly love to generate securing expressions and experiences of culture and heritage. This approach highlights the ways in which conservative nationalism, Fijian Methodism and Tourism Fiji objectify these feelings in *meke* as “traditional” in order to demonstrate a unified and authentic culture and identity, as well as demonstrate that Fiji is a safe and welcoming country. Affects are registered in ways that demonstrate how certain feelings performed with “tradition” have been codified and objectified and adapted as markers of Fijian identity. These official feelings secure bodies in the unchartered territories of multiracialism and increased evangelism in Fiji.

The third approach I discuss comes from my encounter with *daunivucu* Damiano who achieves a quality of uncertainty with affects of *bula* and *loloma* through his creative process of spiritually enriching his *meke* with *mana*, defined briefly as “a power of bringing-into-existence,” an action that creates truth (Sahlins1985, 38). The uncertainty of the affective tone of this encounter propelled the experience of practicing *meke* into the unknown, into new realms of possibility vis-à-vis identity and culture that aligned with his politics of intercultural inclusion. Spiriting affects saturated his process with *bula* and *loloma*. However, these affects were not expressed within bounds of control, as they were in my encounters with *meke* for tourism and national events. As a result, Damiano’s approach to *meke* creates suspicion and doubt for some *iTaukei* viewers and participants, and destabilizes safe and knowable notions of Fijian culture and identity.

These three approaches forced me to consider how the “traditional” aspects of *meke*, that involve expressing spirit and affect play an active role in sustaining and troubling culture and identity in Fiji out of which something new can emerge. Spiriting affects are a part of how people shape themselves and the world around them: sometimes aligning with dominant beliefs and values, sometimes tearing into the fabric of that dominance. These approaches to expressions of affect in and surrounding “traditional” dance demonstrate a process through which as Thomas puts it, “the cultural history of the present is being invented and contested” (1997, 67). Before pursuing the three approaches, I first profile the spirits at work in *meke* to show how the ephemeral experiences of the body simultaneously form and are formed by the material body and its material circumstances.

Expressions of Spirits in *Meke*

In order to understand the incorporeal connections between spirit, affect, and the body during *meke* performance, I use the term “spiriting affect” to highlight an agentive process of perceiving, sensing/mediating and communicating spirited feelings that generate change. Bodies have their own histories through which spirit is mediated and communicated relationally. As a result, relations of power matter in terms of what gets communicated and expressed between bodies.

In order to support this understanding of the links between spirit, affect and the material body as uncertain feelings in the body, I draw from anthropologist Todd Ochoa’s

term “sense [un-]certainty.”¹³⁶ Ochoa demonstrates how spirits are felt as “sense [un-]certainty” (such as the hair standing up on the back of the neck). These uncertain feelings of spirits are an important part of experiencing the material body.¹³⁷ In sensing the uncertain, unexpected and unknowable feelings of spirit are experienced and expressed, creating a sense of uneasiness for some. In *meke*, sensing uncertainty is about sensing beyond the security and knowability of what it means to be Fijian in Fiji. Dancing bodies sense beyond security and sovereign control to create bodies not fixed by nation-state sovereignty and biopolitics.

I explore sensing uncertainty in *meke* experiences and expressions alongside more controlled and certain affects that are an equally generative force of relations that sense towards security. Affective certainty as a named affect is part of a registered emotional repertoire that generates a sense of knowability and security. Through the sensing that comes with the transmission of affect, *meke* generates new experiences that resist essences. Affective uncertainty and certainty are both part of a cluster of relations that reaches towards different futures: new and unfamiliar grounds of inclusivity, and an economically prosperous conservative nation-state. Experiences and expressions of

¹³⁶ “sense [un-]certainty” is part of a language Ochoa develops to discuss *Palo*: a Cuban-Kongo practice for communicating with the spirits of the dead (2007).

¹³⁷ Ochoa draws from Hegel’s fleeting engagement with “sense certainty” (sense knowledge that allows one to comprehend the “pure being” of objects or their “concrete content” that, according to Hegel, is actually the “poorest truth” and only an uncertain impression) to develop the notion of sense “[un-] certainty” (Ochoa 2007, 486). This re-claiming of Hegel’s minor concept of “sense [un-]certainty” works for Ochoa in bringing together notions of “matter” and “spirit” (Ochoa 2007, 481).

certainty are no more or less conscious than uncertain ones; both are just ways of discussing the expressions of different desires for the future of Fiji and Fijianness. Uncertain and certain spiriting affects generated by *meke* can be understood as important elements of emergent identities and not dismissed as minor or unimportant.

I encountered two different but interrelated notions of spirit and *mana* in *meke* that are key features of generating experiences and expressions of affect: spirits that enter bodies and spiriting generated by bodies in motion. In both kinds of spirit, bodies are porous. In the case of spirits entering bodies, an uneasiness results through a feeling of lack of control and anxiety about the perceived vengefulness of spirits of ancestors or *kalou* as devils and demons. In addition, anxiety results from accusations of devil worship if performers are seen to be too affectively intense in their expressions of spirit and energy outside the bounds of the registered emotional repertoire of affects (*loloma*, *bula*, welcome, generosity, joy, and happiness). To avert these anxieties, dancers demonstrate a clear alignment with their Christian beliefs and values through expressions and experiences of affect that indicate they are filled with *mana* from God (*mana* in this case becomes nominalized as spirit that can be obtained through God).

A second type of spirit generated is by bodies in motion. Bodies dancing *meke* generate a spiriting energy and excitement that is transmitted and shared with viewers and participants through the physicality of their movements and the energy they evoke. These bodies are affected by sensory perceptions and, in turn, affect others through their

experience and expression of those perceptions. In their agentive ability to feel/sense and transmit a spiriting energy that brings-into-existence, they generate *mana*.¹³⁸

For my own purposes of understanding *mana* in relation to *meke*, I draw from Tomlinson (2006) to define *mana* as effective in achieving, or working towards an intended purpose through speech and movement. Based on my conversations with one *daunivucu*, this definition includes the effectiveness of communicating spirit, energy, and affect through movement. One *daunivucu* I spoke to talks about *mana* and spirit in *meke* as elements that you feel in the body.¹³⁹ These feelings, according to the *daunivucu*, are what make movements powerful and, through the communication of power, effective. In other words, movement-based affects in *meke* actively generate *mana* and the potential for achieving or reaching towards intended goals and aspirations.

Today in Fiji almost all *iTaukei* Fijians are Christian and yet still feel the haunting presence of so-called dangerous ancestor spirits (Tomlinson 2009,6). Anthropologist Jacqueline Ryle examines Pentecostal Christianity in Fiji and how it relates to traditions or *vanua*. Ryle notes that for one Pentecostal Fijian Pastor, the haunting of ancestor spirits can be detected by “misery” and “dirtiness” (Ryle 2010, 159). In this Pastor’s view there is a danger in feeling the wrong things; feeling bad could indicate the presence of the devil. However, for this pastor, good feelings indicate the presence of God.

Quoting Reverend Kurulo,

¹³⁸ See Chapter Two for further elaboration on *mana*.

¹³⁹ *Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Deuba, Fiji, September 2012.

God has a clean spirit ... and he makes us ... become holy ... good because God is good ... But the devil, you know, he has an unclean spirit. The meaning of unclean is dirty. If he comes into the life of a person he makes them miserable, dirty. (Ryle 2010, 159)

Misery, according to this pastor, indicates an unclean and dirty spirit and is a sign of the devil. Spirits are sources of suffering to the extent that “sickness, poverty, lack of education, difficulty getting married or having children, and general failure to prosper (Tomlinson 2009, 142) can all be indicators of the effective and malicious presence of ancestor spirits. Happiness, on the other hand, is a sign of a clean spirit, or one who has God in their life. In another quote Kurulo says “The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and burns away all impurities, cleans our lives, cleanses us. The wind comes to blow the impure ashes away” (Ryle 2010, 160). This language treats Christians as pure and non-Christians as dirty and enmeshed in misery. The language used by the Pastor also discriminates against those who do not fit his Christian norm he presents as happy and spiritually clean in the right ways.

Although in these quotes the pastor is referring to the devil found in ancestor spirits, he is also speaking more broadly about heathenism, making the experience and expression of spiriting affects political. As I discuss in more in depth in my chapter “Governing Affects,” in the context of Fiji with over a third of the population being Hindu or Muslim of Indian descent (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007), not only is his statement religious, it is also political. The Pastor’s words drive right to the heart of conservative national politics and the source of military coups in Fiji aimed at keeping power in the hands of Christian *iTaukei* and out of the hands of Fijians of Indian descent.

Since anxieties about ancestor spirits and “foreign” heathen influences persist, Fijians are generating new ways of negotiating a *meke* process that is in line with “good” Christian feelings and values such as those of welcome, generosity, and kindly love.

The two notions of spirit as coming from outside the body and being generated from the body are not distinct. In *meke*, bodies generating spirit are receptive and agentive in that they openly sense and transmit felt experiences in relation to other bodies, as spirited energy and excitement. Spiriting bodies are the source of spirit and excitement, but they are also penetrable, open and receptive to surrounding affects and spirit in relation to other bodies and supernatural forces. Understanding spiriting affects as generated relationally in these ways has helped me to excavate my encounters with *meke* in Fiji. These encounters impressed upon me the contentiousness of spiritual matters in the context of tradition. The tensions and anxieties surrounding these matters of spirit require that individuals make specific choices regarding their involvement and comportment with the practice of *meke*. Some choose not to practice *meke* at all as I explore in what follows.

Generating Affective Uncertainty: Choosing Not to Practice *Meke*

A few days before we travel to a village in the Western Province,¹⁴⁰ I call Katerina to confirm she is okay with the length and timing of our stay and to work out an appropriate amount of money to give her for our stay. I let her know that we feel uncomfortable staying as non-paying guests (as her son in Vancouver suggested we stay) and would like to pay a weekly rate. We agree on a rate and she gives me directions. She tells me to come to the green house at the end of the first road into the village. I question how we are to know we have the right house. She is confident it will be obvious to us and she is correct. The house is located on its own at the far edge of the village, separated from the other homes by a long and straight cement path. But the home is also constructed differently. There are Western style doors that swing open into a lobby-like entrance and the home is made with brightly painted, green cinder blocks that separate the “homestay” from the unpainted, gray cinder block homes nearby. Unlike the interior open spaces of other homes in the village, the interior of Katernina’s home is organized into separate rooms for sleeping, eating, cooking, and recreational TV watching. We arrive in the village that is situated on the coral coast in Viti Levu and is protected by the coral from strong ocean currents and waves. It is a village in the Western Province of Nadroga-Navosa. I walk inside the “homestay” to see Katerina, our hostess, and instantly feel like I recognize my mom in her. She reaches for Imogen and I pass over my three-month old baby with ease. I feel I can trust her. Katerina holds her close, inhaling

¹⁴⁰ For a brief two weeks we lived in a village in the Western Province of Viti Levu. Our time there was cut short due to illness on our part and illness on the part of our hostess. We were invited to stay in a village home stay by the son of our host and hostess who now lives in Vancouver.

her deeply through her nose. Katerina seems happy but doesn't smile. Later in the evening, while sharing a meal, I ask her about meke in the village. She is evasive and reluctant to discuss meke. She says vaguely "they used to do it over at a resort down the beach." I ask her, "when was the last meke done in the village?" She answers by saying "the last meke was 50 years ago." My heart sinks at learning we are about to stay in a village for three weeks that no longer does meke... I think this is a research nightmare. But our time in the village proves pivotal to my understanding of the generative aspects of meke.

Katerina is a strong woman. She was a school teacher who was forced into a quick retirement when the current Prime Minister Bainimarama announced in 2009, with little notice, that the compulsory retirement age for civil servants would be reduced to the age of 55. According to Katerina, she, along with hundreds of civil servants, was given two weeks notice of her forced retirement. Her unexpected retirement left her needing money. Her home provided a solution. Her home, a hub of activity for friends and family, became a "homestay." Now (at the time of our visit), she runs her "homestay" for tourists with the help of her husband who does guided tours, her daughter-in-law who does most of the cooking, and others who take part in cleaning, cooking, and caring for visitors. She wears bright and colourful muumuus and a pair of glasses. Her body moves slowly but her mind moves fast. I think of her as a thoughtful and strategic person. She reminds me of my mom. She befriends us but there is something else that we

don't know about, that we can't understand, that isn't laid out for us. A heavy weight weighs over her and her home.

Something is expected of us but we are not sure what. We are told enthusiastically about all of the generous gifts visitors have given to the homestay: a \$10 000 house, a new washing machine, a new van... We are left with the feeling that they expect these gifts from us too. They are let down by how little money we actually have. Nevertheless, Katerina volunteers to take us to the gold mine at Vatukoula to see where my grandfather worked. Knowing that it will take at least five or six hours drive to get there, I never take her up on her generous offer. Her offer seems too generous to make sense of, and is a gift I do not know how to reciprocate.

She sits with us at tea times and meal times and talks with us about the world. There are so many problems with the world... She is happy to stay in Fiji. Will she visit her son in Vancouver and his six children, I ask? No, she is happy to stay in Fiji. There are so many problems with the world... She has a quick wit and a critical perspective of the world. There is nothing frivolous about what she has to say. Her movements are the same: slow, direct, and as needed. I see Katerina mostly sitting or moving slowly from one chair to another, or walking slowly from the bus stop after being at the market in nearby Sigatoka. She seems to enjoy going to the market but she rarely smiles. She goes to a Pentecostal church; she is with the Assemblies of God.

Over the next couple of weeks, we see the Nasikawa Meke Group perform meke that were created several generations ago, and tell oral histories specific to the Nasikawa

people. They perform in a nearby resort and I have the opportunity to interview some of the group's members who are Methodists. Some of the members of the Nasikawa Meke Group live in the village in which we are staying but they only perform meke outside of the village and adhere to the practices and beliefs of the chiefly family (to which Katerina and her husband Tomasi belong) that do not include meke.

While in the village, I also meet a woman named Bale from Rakiraki in Ra province who, unlike Katerina, wants to talk about her love of meke and her knowledge of it. She is a *manu manu ni meke* (meaning she is especially gifted with communicating the spirit and meaning of meke) and her grandfather was a *daunivucu*. She does not practice meke in Tomasi's village out of respect for the customs and practices of the village and Tomasi's chiefly family into which she has married. The last chief, who has now passed on, was Tomasi's elder brother and Bale's husband's father. When Tomasi's father joined Assemblies of God (AOG), the whole chiefly family was converted into AOG. Because AOG doesn't allow traditional meke to be performed, meke has not been practiced in the family or in the village for 50 years.¹⁴¹

Our stay in the "homestay" is confusing. We feel welcome, like outsiders, and a burden all at once. Katerina understands I am in Fiji to do research on meke and to understand more about my Mother's love for Fiji. However, most who work and live in the homestay think of us as tourists on vacation. There is a major miscommunication

¹⁴¹ Bale and Katerina in separate conversations with the author, Village in the Western Province, Fiji, July 2013

about who we are and what we are doing in Fiji. We are told to walk freely in the village and the surrounding forest but when we do, villagers watch and ask with suspicion what we are doing. Are they concerned about offending the ancestor or land spirits? We get sick with food poisoning and typhoid. I feel everyone in the home pull away from us. However, why they pull away is not clear. Perhaps it is because they don't want to catch the illnesses we have, or maybe they feel guilty for potentially serving us food that made us sick. Maybe we have offended them because we are not Christian, and they perceive our sickness to be an indicator of our heathenism. Their behaviour towards us is confusing as I am sure our behaviour is confusing to them. We feel more and more uncomfortable with our interactions that never seem to be accompanied with the lively and welcome feelings we have come to expect everywhere else. I become paranoid that we have offended them by not being Christian and that they blame us for our sickness.

After waking in the night to the sound of our hostess coughing and choking, my husband and I run out of our room to see if she is alright. She is coughing up blood. She is clearly very ill: possibly cancer, or tuberculosis. We feel deeply concerned for her wellbeing. At the same time, we feel upset at the thought that she has potentially spread a communicable disease to our three-year-old boy and three-month-old daughter. Why would she endanger our children? Perhaps out of necessity for needing the money that we were giving her to stay in her home. Our time in the village is thus conflicted and confusing, creating an intensely murky and uncomfortable feeling at the time of our visit and in my memories. Our time there creates more questions than answers. There is no

emotional clarity like we have experienced so often in Fiji: Bula! Bula Vinaka! Loloma!

The sentiments are so clear everywhere else but why not here?

One year later... I am delivering a DVD to a friend of Katerina's son in Vancouver. The DVD is a video we made for him of messages from his family and different events that occurred in the village while we were staying in his parents' 'homestay.' From his friend, I learn that Katerina is dead. She died about a year after our visit from cervical cancer. Suddenly, another possible explanation for some of the weighted discomfort we experienced in the village 'homestay' presents itself. It makes sense that Katerina who was very ill needed money, and yet did not want visitors (especially sick ones) to have to entertain. I will never be able to know definitively why I felt so uncomfortable and such uncertainty.

The many questions and feelings of discomfort that emerged while staying in a village in the Western Province expose some of the complexities of *meke* as a “traditional” practice in relation to spirituality and Religion in Fiji. *iTaukei* who are with Assemblies of God see traditions as backward, perpetuating Methodist hegemony and chiefly authority (Thomas 1997, 198-204), and connected with devil worship. Unlike the many Methodists who live there, for my Assemblies of God host and hostess (Tomasi and Katerina), *meke* is not desired and upheld as an important element of culture and identity. Tomasi and Katerina have a distaste for Fijian traditions that is rooted in their religious convictions to the extent that they, like others with Assemblies of God, choose not to do *meke* and drink *yaqona* (*kava*) because of the “potential demonic aspect”

(Tomlinson 2009, 128). They want to distance themselves from “traditional” practices they associate with devil worship. But their rejection of traditions, such as *meke*, is also a political choice to reject the status quo.

To provide context for this different perspective of tradition, there is a long-standing and strong relationship in Fiji between Methodism, governance, and chiefly authority maintained through traditional practices (Thomas 1997,51). In its early days in Fiji, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, who sent some of the first missionaries to bring Christianity to Fiji, interwove itself within the *vanua* (meaning the customs and practices that are the ways of the land of *iTaukei*) allowing Fijians to identify themselves and their connection to customs and the land as Christian (Thomas 1997, 198). During colonial rule, the power of this connection between Methodism and Fijian custom supported a hegemonic hierarchy; colonial administrators and primarily Methodist chiefs held positions of power, and the chiefs were installed by the colonial administration as representative of *vanua* (Tomlinson 2009, 23).

In addition to becoming aligned with chiefly authority, the Methodist church positioned itself as the purveyor of the supreme god, thereby providing a defence against the evil and dangerous ancestor or land spirits associated with traditions (Tomlinson 2009, 10). Bale (from Ra province), who is a *manu manu ni meke* and granddaughter of a *daunivucu*, explains this relationship between God and the “lesser” land spirits in the example of a traditional *yaqona* (*kava*) ceremony. According to Bale, if the traditional custom of *sevu ni yaqona* (offering of *yaqona*) is performed incorrectly by spilling the

yaqona while saying someone's name, the spirit god will kill the person who drinks that *yaqona*,

But if in your province you believe in a spiritual power that is higher than the one who wants to kill you, then it won't be a disturbance. So, the spiritual power of your land can really help you to survive. If you are Christian, you follow the one true God who is more powerful than all the other spirit gods of the land and you are protected.¹⁴²

In this example, there is safety and security in being a Methodist since you will be protected against the perceived dangers of the spirit gods of the land. As Tomlinson puts it, this alignment of power and authority between the Methodist Church, *vanua*, and national governance "is often . . . proclaimed to be the basis of Fijian culture. In other words, they constitute a . . . formula through which Fijians describe, evaluate, and engage with a reified Fijian culture that has become hallowed as traditional" (Tomlinson 2009, 23). This hegemonic authority continues to be prominent in Fiji but is destabilized by Christians who undermine the connection between the Methodist church and *vanua*.

In Fiji, there is a long history of challenging this hegemonic authority by joining a non-Methodist Christian church such as Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, or The Roman Catholic church (Thomas 1997, 51; and Nichole 2006).¹⁴³ As Thomas points out, religion in Fiji has at times acted as a cloaking device for political maneuvers

¹⁴² Bale (*manu manu ni meke*) in conversation with the author, Village in the Western Province, July 2012.

¹⁴³ This form of political and religious resistance to the dominance of Methodist authority is well documented by Thomas (1997), Kaplan (1995), and Nicole (2006).

(Thomas 1997, 60).¹⁴⁴ Robert Nicole (2006), whose research explores religion as a source of resistance to early colonialism in Fiji, argues that although there are many possible reasons for rejecting the dominant Methodism in Fiji (such as doctrine, cultural and practical reasons), joining a rival Christian denomination is a way for one to “express dissatisfaction with and disrupt the dominance of the government, their chief or the Methodist mission” while maintaining one’s legitimacy as Christian (Nicole 2006, 261). I believe that for my Assemblies of God host and hostess in the Western Province village, choosing to join Assemblies of God and rejecting tradition is more than a religious choice: it is also political. Although they rely on tourism dollars through their “homestay,” Katerina and Tomasi play a religiously and politically subversive and destabilizing role by rejecting traditions, such as *meke*, and affective certainty in the registers of *loloma* and *bula* that, as I will show in the next section of this chapter, seem to accompany performances of *meke* and tourism in Fiji.

¹⁴⁴ An early colonial example of a rejection of this power structure, occurred between 1913 and 1917 when the hegemonic power relations that the British colonial administration maintained with the Methodists were undermined by Fijians who rejected custom and tradition in an attempt to install the Viti Kabani (Fiji Company). The Viti Kabani created by Apolosi R. Nawai was anti-colonial and anti chiefly. The aim was to promote native production and sales and remove the white colonizers who were benefitting economically as middlemen (Thomas 1997, 202). This became known as the Apolosi movement, and was an ongoing source of anxiety for the British colonial administration even into the 1930s (File 109/63, “Crime: Draunikau Practice, Sentence For” in CSO files at National Archives of Fiji, Suva, Fiji). Those involved in trying to install the Viti Kabani were made to promise to never again connect with the Seventh Day Adventist Religion. According to Thomas, the families who defected from Methodism and supported the Viti Kabani returned to Adventism in the 1930s and are still Adventists today (Thomas 1997, 59-60).

Katerina and Tomasi are aware that when traditions such as *meke* are practiced many still feel the presence of land spirits. As a result, even though Methodists say they are Christian, our Assemblies of God host and hostess do not consider them to be truly following the Christian faith because they believe traditions are associated with devil worship. While Methodists I spoke to also referred to land spirits as devilish, and traditional rituals as emerging out of devil worship from the past, they also managed to separate these “evil” practices from current iterations of them. These Methodists spoke of their current approach to these traditions as reified culture and heritage given from God. Yet, traditions practiced as culture and heritage that have been sanctioned as Christian are also still haunted by the fears and perceived dangers of vengeful land spirits. For example, the members of *Nasikawa Meke* Group who live in the village in which we stayed are Methodist but they still practice rituals out of a fear of the ancestor spirits or land gods¹⁴⁵ who, according to one of the elders in the group “is the devil.”¹⁴⁶ In this example, the group has sought permission to do their *meke* from the *daunivucu*. They explain

if permission is not sought in the proper way (with an offering of *kava*) then the dancers will get the lyrics, movements, or accents wrong and could die. But if you get permission, then you learn the dance the right way. It will be taught to

¹⁴⁵ I use the term “land gods” here because that is the term used by the dancer with which I was in conversation. The term “land gods” was used by some of my consultants but it was more common for individuals to use the term land spirits or ancestor spirits. The terms are not exactly interchangeable but I believe that my consultants used them that way.

¹⁴⁶ Group dancer and elder in conversation with the author, Komave, Fiji, July 2012.

the village and it will take a lot of practice to get it right but the verses, movements, and accents will all be right.¹⁴⁷

Although the Methodists in this group have adopted Christianity, the way the group follows protocols for their *meke* tells me that, for them, the land gods are still present, dangerous and a powerful threat. One of the elders in the group explains that after they perform their *meke*, they drink *kava* together to say thanks. They clap once for each dancer. He admits that drinking *kava* is a small sacrifice to appease the land spirits so that the *meke* performers do not get sick. Then they take their costumes off and go home. He explains this tradition has been done for generations.

Katerina and Tomasi may be correct in their thinking that ancestor or land spirits still influence those who practice traditions such as *meke*, but their disdain for tradition is not shared by Methodists who see traditions as part of their culture and heritage, and their Christian identity. For example, a young Methodist dancer from the *Nasikawa meke* group who lives in the village in which we are staying explains he has no conflict being Christian and practicing traditions such as dancing *meke* and drinking *kava*. Although both practices were once a part of worshipping the land spirits, he believes they are now cultural heritage given by God because, as he says, “God gives *kava* and *meke*. Seventh Day Adventists act from human motivations not godly ones when they stop *meke* and

¹⁴⁷ Group dancer and elder in conversation with the author, Komave, Fiji, July 2012.

kava. Now *meke* is about tradition and culture anyway, it is no longer spiritual.”¹⁴⁸

Methodists support Fijian traditions such as *meke* and see traditions as one and the same as Methodism. Thus, my interviews and encounters with *meke* in the village demonstrated a real conflict between Christians who want to include “tradition” in their lives and Christians who do not.

Katerina reluctantly explains the history of *meke* in the Western Province village but uses the opportunity to proudly weave into the story information about how Tomasi and his father have carved out a very different way of life than the rest of the villagers by not participating in the predominant traditions, culture, religious practices, and economics of the village. This separation between Tomasi’s family and the rest of the village extends back to a time when people in the village still did *meke* for tourists. Katerina explains that during British colonial rule, there was a nearby hotel called Korolevu Hotel (opened by a man named Hugh Ragg in 1948) where members of the *Vusu* lineage from Namatakula, Komave and Biausevu would perform every Saturday.¹⁴⁹ The hotel would pay their performers and they would use the money to build their houses out of bamboo (which grows nearby in Biausevu). As a result, everyone in Tomasi’s village had bamboo homes except for Tomasi’s father whose house was made out of wood. He was the only one at that time who was with the Assemblies of God. So, he did not participate in *meke*, even though the rest of the village did. When Tomasi’s father became chief of

¹⁴⁸ *Meke* dancer in conversation with the author, Komave, Fiji, July 2012.

¹⁴⁹ The hotel appears to be one of the earliest examples of tourism in Fiji (File 116/28, “Tourist Topics” in CSO files, National Archives of Fiji, Suva.)

the village (roughly 50 years ago according to Katerina), his family and others in the village also stopped doing *meke* out of respect for his beliefs. This choice to separate themselves from the rest of the village is in line with Thomas' observation that in rural areas, such as this village in the Western Province, those who adhere to Assemblies of God often live outside villages (Thomas 1997, 204). Instead, they live outside these important sites for the social dimensions of customary practice and engage in individualized cash cropping, and avoid communal economy strategies (Thomas 1997, 204). In separating themselves from the village, AOG adherents are also removing themselves from important sites for the social dimensions of customary practices. Tomasi and Katerina, whose home is separated from the village by a cement path created by Tomasi's grandfather, adopt individualistic economic strategies. They engage with tourism that allows them to accumulate wealth for personal gain. And, they reject more communal subsistence living that the Methodist church and traditional practices support. Their economic strategies have resulted in their acquiring technologies that other villagers are not able to acquire (such as a large, flat screen TV, electricity, and a degree of plumbing). This income disparity adds to the disjunctures between themselves and the other villagers from whom they are to a degree socially, culturally, religiously, spatially, and economically separated.

The ways in which Fijians engage with *meke*, as a tradition, exposes the political alliances and power formations that are sustained and disrupted by Christianity in Fiji. The dancers in the *Nasikawa meke* group I spoke to were eager to support the link

between *meke* as a tradition and its acceptance under Methodism, and to establish Methodism as higher up in a hierarchy of Christianity in Fiji. Recalling an earlier quote by a Methodist *meke* dancer, “God gives *kava* and *meke*. Seventh Day Adventists [like Assemblies of God, who reject traditions] act from human motivations not Godly ones when they stop *meke* and *kava*.” This choice of words seems to be targeted at diminishing the anti-traditionalist threat posed by these non-Methodist Christians. By joining Assemblies of God and excluding themselves from traditional practices and protocols, including *meke*, Tomasi and Katerina destabilize the hegemonic authority of the Methodist Church. While Methodists seems to be legitimizing *meke* as a Christian act through expressions of *loloma* and *bula*, the choice of Tomasi and Katerina not to practice *meke* and express feelings of *loloma* and *bula* with certainty demonstrates that *meke* is at the cross-section of religion and politics in Fiji. Choosing not to dance *meke* is subversive and threatens to destabilize the status quo by generating a sense of uncertainty.

Generating Affective Certainty With *Meke*

Since we are unable to see meke in the village we are staying, my family and I go to a nearby resort to watch the Nasikawa Meke Group perform. We enter a large room where a Fijian Feast (for the resort guests) is just ending. Many of the guests seem drunk, happy, and boisterous. An MC appears and introduces the meke group. Four

men¹⁵⁰ take their place on the stage to do a *meke wesi-wau* (spear and club dance). The stage is postage stamp small and the dancers improvise a comedic response to their plight of having to perform a “war” dance on it. They bump and grind into one another intentionally and shove each other out of the way to demonstrate, through humor, they don’t have the space they need to dance. Joking aside, there are moments of serious, intense, and focused engagement when precise movements once used in combat are exercised.¹⁵¹ These are moments that stand apart from the joking ones that seem to dismiss *meke* as unimportant. Why are these moments of intensity so vivid? Were they taught with that intensity? Are they the habits of warfare breaking into the present? These moments are fleeting and slide quickly into the next entertaining trick or joke.¹⁵²

Following this performance of locally derived *meke* performed for tourism, we drive into Suva to connect with Master Lei who is the director of a relatively new *meke* performing group that also performs for tourism nationally and internationally, as well as for the national stage. One of my Fijian consultants in Vancouver, Canada,

¹⁵⁰ In accounts documented at the National Archive of Fiji and from conversations I had with *meke* dancers and *daunivucu*'s, *meke* are often performed with many dancers (even hundreds according to some accounts).

¹⁵¹ Group dancer and elder explained in a later interview how the movements in the dance were precise killing techniques used in Fijian warfare. Group dancer and elder in conversation with the author, Komave, Fiji, July, 2012.

¹⁵² Comedic aspects of *meke* have been documented by Vilsoni Hereniko in his dissertation *Polynesian Clowns and Satirical Comedies* (1990). This particular comedic improvisation seemed to be a response to the very small amount of space the dancers were given and expected to dance on by the resort. It also added to the dismissive sentiments expressed by some of the members of this group that *meke* performance is mostly for tourist entertainment, and a show.

recommended I contact Master Lei because he is developing a reputation as an expert on meke. On the way into Suva we pass men painting the roads by hand with paintbrushes. I think this is perhaps a sign of the extreme poverty Fiji currently faces, a way to generate “employment,” or a form of punishment. I am not sure which. We locate the building in which the school for this meke group is housed. We hear beautiful classically trained voices singing choral music from down the street. We enter a space where there is a choral rehearsal in full swing. When the singers break, I meet Master Lei who warmly and generously introduces me to the singers who are also with the school’s meke performing group. In line with the recent multiracial policies and discourses of the Fijian government, and the decree that all citizens of Fiji be referred to as “Fijian,” Master Lei surprises me by saying to the group and to me that I am also “Fijian” on account of my Mom being born in Fiji. In an attempt to make me feel welcome, the whole group of performers cheer and smile in response to his statement. But the expression of joy seems controlled and even forced and, as much as I would love to feel included, I feel more excluded than included by the sentiment that I too am “Fijian.”

Master Lei generously welcomes me to attend, and video record rehearsals. The group rehearses meke for three hours every night after their choral rehearsal. They rehearse their dances in a parking lot below their studio. The cement ground of the parking lot is falling apart, and there are massive chunks missing. Nevertheless, the dancers rehearse with terrific force and energy, pounding the ground with their bare feet, legs, and hands. Their spirit and energy are magnetic and electric. They are precise and

fast, fully synchronized with one another in their energy, enthusiasm, and movements. At the end of rehearsal, they join in a circle and hold hands. They say a Christian prayer and sing a hymn. I am told they do this at the end of rehearsals to share with one another and create group spirit and respect.

In performance, they are just as breathtaking, fun, and exciting. They are the perfect choice for the national Fiji Day celebrations. They generate movement-based spirit and feelings with which many iTaukei viewers want to identify: Christian, living life to the fullest, generosity, welcoming, and full of kindness and joy. Their movements and the feelings they evoke create these spiriting affects while signaling a celebration of Christianity through movements that connect joy with God.

In contrast to my encounter with uncertainty in the Western Province village, while in Fiji I encountered several *meke* groups that perform for tourism and/or national events that generate a sense of certainty and security through expressions of affect as part of aligning with particular reified notions of Fijian culture, heritage, and identity as Christian and *iTaukei*. I had the opportunity to observe and interview two groups in particular who inform the above descriptions: The *Nasikawa meke* group¹⁵³ who perform

¹⁵³ The *Nasikawa Meke* Group is comprised of members who are descended from the Nasikawa people that came from the Sigatoka river area to settle in four coastal villages: The Nasikawa people now live in four villages situated on the coral coast: Komave, Namatakula, Navola and Navao. While staying in a village in the Western Province, I heard the *Nasikawa meke Group* practicing their *meke* chants on two occasions and, although they could not perform in the village, I observed two of their performances at the nearby Warwick Hotel in Navola. The group has a long history of performing in tourist resorts for foreigners.

meke domestically in resorts for tourists, and the Conservatorium of Music¹⁵⁴ who, as I outlined in my previous chapter, performs *meke* internationally on a regular basis for Tourism Fiji and Fiji Foreign Affairs, and domestically for national events such as Fiji Day celebrations. While the *Nasikawa Meke* Group performs locally made dances that were created several generations ago, the Conservatorium performs *meke* from various parts of Fiji that include recently created *meke* as well as *meke* created long ago to celebrate Fiji being ceded to Britain. Despite these differences in the *meke* they perform, these groups expose some of the ways in which *meke* as an affect-based tradition is objectified and made certain and secure as a form of entertainment and culture and heritage, which is ideal for the tourist economy and feeding a particular sense of Fijian nationalism. Performances by these groups coupled with what the dancers and directors told me indicate that Christian values and beliefs are sustained and legitimized by their *meke* performances through feelings that generate a sense of security and certainty. *Meke* dancers demonstrate their celebration of Christianity by infusing their dancing with “good” affects connected with *bula*, happiness, joy, peace, and *loloma*. Movements that reach towards God and Heaven in the sky also signal and inspire their Christian faith. Bodies dancing these *meke* generate these affects, social values, and beliefs in order to

¹⁵⁴ I became aware of the Conservatorium of Music (established in 2009) during my Vancouver based research. I was told they would be an excellent source of knowledge about *meke*. Later, while in Fiji, I met one of the dancers and he invited me to a rehearsal. I was generously invited to watch and record rehearsals on two occasions by the director whom I also had the opportunity to interview. After rehearsals, I also interviewed two additional dancers and a teacher. I observed the Conservatorium in performance during Fiji Day celebrations.

generate a Fiji that is secure as a unified, *iTaukei*, and Christian Nation. Expressions that generate a sense of certainty or security are just as emergent as expressions that generate a sense of uncertainty or insecurity; one is not more “natural” than the other. Along the continuum of certainty and uncertainty are spaces of indeterminacy that arise in the moments of experience prior to being named. These spaces of affect are agential margins of maneuverability (Massumi 2003). We see how these zones of maneuverability play out in the nervous tensions expressed in and around *meke*.

Members of each tourist *meke* group I consulted with explained that *meke* is a form of entertainment or a representation of culture and heritage and that *meke* is no longer a spiritual act (in terms of *kalou* worship). There was a distinct concern about expressing non-Christian spiritual feelings in association with *meke* in these groups. Instead, the feelings emerging from their *meke* performances shifted to suit notions of cultural preservation, Christianity, and tourist entertainment. Dancing *meke* was fun and exciting for the dancers but the excitement came from the movement “as a dancing entertainment.” For example, one dancer explained that, regardless of where he is performing (for example a village or a resort), “*meke* is about the excitement of dancing and putting on a show and not a big spiritual experience.”¹⁵⁵ But why were the Fijians from these groups I spoke to and observed in performance so adamant that *meke* is no longer “spiritual”? The answer to this question became clearer as I continued my

¹⁵⁵ Group member and dancer of the Nasikawa *Meke* Group in conversation with the author, Village in the Western Province, Fiji, July 2012.

research and found that when expressions of spiriting affects were felt intensely as uncertain, these expressions triggered concerns, anxieties and questions about whether or not those dancing the *meke* are in some way connecting to the land spirits through acts of “witchcraft” or “devil worship.” For some in Fiji, dancing alone is enough to signal devil worship and it is therefore a sin and is prohibited.¹⁵⁶ For others in Fiji, dancing is a legitimate act on its own but when combined with a quality of uncertain spiritual intensity, it is associated with witchcraft and devil worship. As a result of these pressures and tensions, those performing *meke* prefer to perform it without evoking a spiritual uncertainty. Instead, they express their Christian sentiments and beliefs through feelings of welcome, generosity, joy and kindly love. *Meke* for these groups aligns with reified notions of Fijian culture and heritage as coming from a Christianized *iTaukei* past and as a form of entertainment for tourists and national events.

Like many tourist destinations, tourism in Fiji¹⁵⁷ is built on the idea that visitors can come and have a good time, feeling welcome and safe¹⁵⁸ while also experience something exotic and authentic. *Meke* as a form of entertainment, and a nominalization

¹⁵⁶ See Hirokazu Miyazaki for a case involving the Suvavou Seventh Day Adventist church and a breach of the prohibition on dance when dancers who danced the *taralala* (an informal dance) are punished as a result of their dancing at a celebratory event (Miyazaki 2004, 116).

¹⁵⁷ According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, tourism earnings in 2010 were 1,194.4 (million Fiji dollars) and in 2011, earnings were 1286.5. That is a significant portion of the GDP for those years at 5218.3 for 2010 and 5633.4 for 2011 (current prices million Fiji dollar) (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2014).

¹⁵⁸ The slogan for Tourism Fiji is “Fiji: Where Happiness Finds You.” The slogan encourages visitors to come to Fiji to feel welcome, happy and safe (Fiji 8 November 2013).

of culture that orients itself by notions of pastness is infused with affects of happiness, joy, *loloma*, and peace as a way of establishing Fiji as Christian, safe and knowable for tourists.¹⁵⁹ These feelings are generated in part through movement and the stories and feelings they evoke. For example, one dancer with the Conservatorium tells me about a *seasea* (women's standing dance) performed by the women of the group. The dance is from Vanua Levu (the second largest island of Fiji, north and east of Viti Levu) and is about celebrating nature with Christianity. It tells a poetic story about celebrating the coming of Christ. The first line of the chant is about the morning dew falling from heaven. The women tell this story with their hands and smiling faces. The dance ends with energetic and joyful leg kicks. Master Lei, the director, has the women repeat the kicks several times in rehearsal - he wants the women to express more joy. The men of the group who are now the chanters (the *vakatara*) shout out to give the women more energy. One dancer explains that this vocal support helps the dancers generate more spirit and energy. She explains "the big challenge with *meke* is getting energy without the use of being in a trance or possessed by spirits – the evil side." She continues, "a long time ago, people would go to the graveyard to connect with evil spirits and become possessed and then the *meke* would come naturally. Now, old *meke* are performed with new energy..."¹⁶⁰ The director emphasizes in rehearsal that he wants the dancers to

¹⁵⁹ Literature prior to independence shows efforts by the tourism industry to promote *meke* as friendly, safe, and a window into the past. National Archives of Fiji, "Tourist Topics," *Colonial Secretary's Office Correspondence Files, "F" Series 1 1931-1958 Classification Scheme* (File 116/28, Suva, Fiji).

¹⁶⁰ Dancer and teacher of Conservatorium in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, July 2012.

express joy, to smile. His approach increases the spirit and energy of *meke* in ways that celebrate and reify Christian/Fijian sentiments of welcome, generosity, happiness, peace and kindly love in performance, generating a sense of security for *iTaukei* and tourist viewers while also creating a feeling of being witness to an exotic and authentic people connected to their land.

Meke I observed for tourists and Fijians at national events were in reference to biblical messages or accepted celebratory dances and infused with affects of *bula* and *loloma* that created a unifying sense of Fiji as *iTaukei* and Christian. There was no room for uncertain or unwanted affects that would put this version of Fiji in jeopardy. In the context of Fiji during its military dictatorship, I borrow Banaban dance scholar Teresia K. Teaiwa's term to call this a case of 'militourism' (Imada 2012, 10): putting a friendly and welcoming face to Fiji's military dictatorship. Although the two groups I discuss perform for tourists, they have both performed for national events. While the *Nasikawa Meke* Group no longer performs regularly for the national stage, the Conservatorium of Music performs for national events domestically and internationally¹⁶¹ and plays a role in generating a sense of a unified national Fijian identity. This was made clear by the many Fijians who grew up in urban Suva who told me that the Conservatorium has played a key role in teaching them about what it means to be Fijian and about Fijian culture.¹⁶² I

¹⁶¹ For example, the Conservatorium travelled as part of the Prime Minister's government funded entourage to perform at Expo 2012 in Korea for "Fiji National Day."

¹⁶² This is also true of the *meke* performed at the Cultural Centre (established in Pacific Harbour, Viti Levu in 1978 post Fiji Independence) by the Fiji Dance Group directed by Manoa Rasigatale.

was told that watching the Conservatorium perform made some proud to be Fijian and gave them direction and a sense of certainty or security about who they are as Fijians.

Master Lei recounted an experience that demonstrates the influence of the COM:

We danced once at the USP [University of the South Pacific] and a student came up to me all teary eyed and said “I am the only one in my family and I am like a rebel. I hate traditional things and I am more into hip hop and rap but when I watched you guys dance, I felt like I was being left behind. It was like watching a cloud float away without me. Just watching the dance, I was beginning to ask a lot of questions about myself. You guys make me feel so proud to be Fijian.”¹⁶³

This quote exemplifies the role COM plays in generating a unifying sense of Fijian identity that, while rooted in traditions of the past, is moving towards Fiji’s future, threatening to leave people behind as it “floats” on. To some viewers, these performances of certainty and security might seem to be innately Fijian. However, they are carefully designed to generate a unifying sense of *iTaukei* Fijian identity through synchronized movements and feelings associated with *bula* and *loloma*. Although still affectively intense and meaningful for the dancers and the viewers, *meke* performed this way reduces the range of affective possibilities and has the appearance of stabilizing Fiji as a happy and Christian country despite its tumultuous independence (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). Beyond understanding this state function of performing affect, the quote also indicates another transformative moment of maneuverability. When faced with the COM’s securing and certain expressions of Fijianness, the student felt uncertainty in his

¹⁶³ Master Lei (founder/director of Conservatorium of Music and director of Fiji Arts Council) in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, September 2012.

flood of questions (not answers) about his own identity. The securing led to transformation by unhinging one student's sense of self and then promising security if the student adopted a more "traditional" yet Christian notion of Fijianness.

The promise of security does not come with the promise of understanding the deeper meanings in *meke*. Performing *meke* out of context as a unifying representation of Fiji results in a loss of the specific meanings and intent of individual *meke*. During my time in Fiji, I observed reluctance by some to create new *meke*, and confusion by others about how one should go about creating a *meke*. Of concern to those creating *meke* was discerning which "traditional" elements were safe and Christian and which ones were not. Perhaps due to this reluctance and confusion, I witnessed few newly created *meke* and witnessed many more performances of *meke* that have been sanctioned and accepted as culturally authentic, traditional, and representative of Fiji as a whole. However, according to *daunivucu* Damiano, promoting and representing Fijian culture and heritage as a whole through *meke* removes the local context, and has the effect of diminishing the specific meaning and purpose of *meke*. Indeed, it was often the case that the dancers of the *meke* I was observing could not tell me the specific meaning of the lyrics and movements they were performing. They had only a general sense of the original intent of the *daunivucu* in terms of meaning in the lyrics and movements. According to Damiano, it is difficult for Fijians to understand the lyrics and movements in *meke* from other provinces. Those who have asked for the *meke* (such as a chief), those involved in its

creation (such as the *daunivucu* and the dancers), and those present at the event for which the *meke* was required will understand the deeper meanings.

Even though *meke* done as unifying representations of Fijian culture and heritage has the effect of promoting and reviving Fijian culture and heritage, these *meke* performances also encourage loss of locally specific meaning and *mana*.¹⁶⁴ According to Damiano, *mana* (narrowly defined here as “bringing-into-existence” (Sahlins 1985, 38) through spiritually affective and effective speech and action) as a key aspect of *meke* is generated when you understand the context of what is being said and can communicate that meaning. Effectiveness is lost when you do not fully understand the context of the words being said. As a result, in the case of transferring *meke* from one place to another, some of the *mana*, or effectiveness, of *meke* is lost when the lyrics are not fully understood and communicated. Since different *daunivucus* connote different aspects of life in their movements and lyrics that are context specific, it is problematic to codify and fix specific *meke* as “culture and heritage” for all of Fiji. While this may be true, rather than see this process as one of loosing meaning I see it as a process of shifting meaning. *Meke* as an objectified representation of culture leaves little room for the spiritual relationality and *mana* that *meke* once involved. *Meke* is no longer a way for people to connect to each other through feelings of relational spiritual intensity that are not overtly Christian because it risks accusations of devil worship. Instead, *meke* are made secure through movements and lyrics that connote a clear devotion to their Church and Christian

¹⁶⁴ *Daunivucu* Damiano in conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, September 2012.

faith, enabling people to connect to each other through a more sanctioned range of spiriting affects such as *loloma* and *bula*. Re-iterating the words of one *meke* dancer and teacher, “old *meke* are performed with new energy and meaning.” In what follows, spiritual relationality and *mana* are generated by new processes of creative expression in the production process of *meke* that sometimes involve the use of technology and new ways of thinking about *tabu*.

Generating Affective Uncertainty With *Meke*

*A few days after we arrive in Fiji, we find ourselves in the midst of assisting with the production Drua: The Wave of Fire being produced by the Oceania Centre for Art, Culture and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific. The production is happening in a black box theatre in the new Japan-Pacific ICT Centre with lighting gear that is new and unfamiliar to the technical staff at the University. As a result, the production team has asked my husband to assist with their lighting design needs and he happily contributes where he can. We are in the theatre when I watch the dancers arrive and prepare for the dress rehearsal of the upcoming production. The dress rehearsal is, in a sense, their *sevu ni meke*, an important protocol that would traditionally involve presenting the new *meke* to the chief of the village who requested it.¹⁶⁵ Today they are*

¹⁶⁵ Several dancers, directors and *daunivucu*'s in Canada and Fiji spoke about *sevu ni meke* as a key stage of the *meke* process. It is when the *meke* is first performed for the village Chief. It is also described as a rite of passage for dancers who are performing *meke* for the first time. Based on the number of individuals from varying parts of Fiji who spoke about this stage, *sevu ni meke* appears to be a widespread practice

presenting their new meke to the director of the production. The Fijian dancers who are of iTaukei and Indian descent have been observing tabu to prepare for this moment.

Tabu was once a protocol used to appease kalou, ensuring the meke would be the best possible. Today these dancers restrict their diets and behaviours to bring themselves together in their common purposes and to build strength so the meke is the best it can be.

The scene opens with fierce warriors under threat of attack. They begin... The male warriors pound their feet on the stage shouting “Teivovo, Teivovo...”¹⁶⁶ They have war clubs in their hands and black paint on their faces. Their stance is low, with wide bent legs and an upright body showing strength and readiness. A pre-recorded steady and simple lali¹⁶⁷ rhythm, accompanied with a low booming voice chanting out, calls their bodies into motion with intensity and urgency. The vocal coloring demands attention, like a baby crying or the voices of mourning in a village, full expressions of

across Fiji. However, some Fijians are trying to develop new approaches to *sevu ni meke* for situations when the *meke* is created in urban settings and there is no chief or village structure in place. In two occasions, I learned that the role of the director took the place of village chief in *sevu ni meke*: once for a theatrical performance and on another occasion for a government institute’s production of a *meke*.

¹⁶⁶ *Teivovo* is a *bole* or war *meke* challenge that has been used by the Fiji rugby team. I encountered the use of “*teivovo*” in *meke* performances on three separate occasions in Fiji including: the Cultural Centre in Pacific Harbour, *Drua: The Wave of Fire* at University of the South Pacific in Suva, and at the Outrigger on the Lagoon resort in Sigatoka. Its use in the *Drua meke* was an intentional decision to try to create a common experience of excitement and recognition according to the *daunivucu* and Director of *Drua* in separate conversations with the author Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

¹⁶⁷ A *lali* is a carved wooden drum traditionally and currently used for a number of purposes including *meke*. Only one *lali* is traditionally used in the *meke* (*Daunivucu* in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, September 2012).

their emotions and the need to be attended to.¹⁶⁸ Heads beat sideways to sharply accentuate the rhythms of the chant and the movements. In contrast to the sharpness of these accents, their heavy clubs swing with the momentum of their weighted bodies. The rhythm changes as the lali and the chant quicken and bodies pick up speed and percussiveness. I feel an adrenaline rush as the meke quickens and bodies move with a range of motion, strength, and speed that shows these staged warriors are serious and focused. They make deep resonant cries over top of the recorded chant bringing the energy of the dance to even higher levels, pulling at my insides in new and unpredictable directions.

The dancers begin by moving together in synchronicity in Fiji's familiar Teivovo but then soon break away into new formations that are less linear and more three-dimensional, they are not stuck but moving in many different directions. With every new direction of flight I see individuals committed to their movements in space. These shifts in formation have the effect of transmitting the power, strength and energy of the group who are not just following orders in line but individually motivated to act towards a common purpose. One man stands apart: he is a manu manu ni meke and the daunivucu of this meke. He is extra charged with spirit and energy and he is transmitting, or spiriting, this energy to the dancing and viewing bodies who are sharing a temporal and spatial theatrical experience carved out by his meke. There is an intensity communicated

¹⁶⁸ One of Damiano's techniques for creating an intensity of spirit and affect with his *meke* chants is to draw from his memories of the powerful sounds of village life.

by his body that has the effect of raising the spirit and energy of everyone in the room. With a shift in the tone of the chant, the scene changes and the staged warriors discover they have encountered friend not foe and a reconciliation takes place...

After the meke rehearsal is over, the daunivucu sits down. I go and sit next to him. He starts... "I come from Nanenivuda in Seaqaqa which is a town that is 20 km away from Labasa, Macuata province in Vanua Levu. Nanenivuda literally means the footsteps of our ancestors; "nane" is footprint and "nivuda" means of our ancestors. My great grandfather Elia Sawesawe had accepted Christianity when the last cannibalism in Seaqaqa took place.¹⁶⁹ My meke has been inspired by the new spirit he worshipped and that is the Holy Spirit."

In addition to encountering affective intensities that sense towards security that are found in *meke* performed for Fijian culture and heritage (in cases of tourism and nation building), I also encountered affective intensities that sense towards the unknown. Reiterating my earlier point about the relationship between security/certainty with the uncertain/unknown, I see these intensities as not bifurcated but part of an ontology rooted in the incorporeal dancing body: whereby bodies emerge through movement that is integrative with or in relation to other human and non-human co-presences. Sensing towards certainty or security and sensing towards uncertainty or insecurity are indeterminate processes with different directions and clusters of relation. With this in

¹⁶⁹ A.M. Hocart noted that Seaqaqa ("Sengangga in Mdhuaata") was the "scene of the last heathen revolt" against Christianity and colonialism (1912, 438).

mind, *meke* composer/choreographer or *daunivucu* Damiano infuses his *meke* creation process and performance with a spiritual intensity that generates affective uncertainty due to his own political desires for the future of Fiji and “Fijianness” that involve generating a spirit of inclusion and diversity of experience. In my interactions with him and observations of his *meke*, he seemed against producing *meke* that could be solidified or made representative of Fiji in part because he was against trying to fit identities and bodies into essential or homogenous categories.

The feelings of unfamiliar possibilities that emerge from our interactions are not pre-set destinations for us to conduct our conversations and interactions. I do not know ahead of time how things will feel but as the feelings are generated by our movement and conversation-based interactions, they prove to be intense yet uncertain. In addition to my extensive conversations with Damiano about *meke*, I interviewed several of his dancers and I observed three and participated in one of his *meke* over the course of my five months in Fiji. After analyzing these sources, I found his process to incorporate and result in a wide range of unpredictable feelings of intensity in rehearsals and performances. Watching Damiano at work and in performance, not all is made clearly visible. There is something happening that is not obvious but, rather, mysterious and shrouded from view. Based on our conversations, I understand that he is expressing something that is personal. But, he is also expressing something else that involves those around him, creating a feeling of intensity larger than himself, with larger than personal

meaning. This is what makes him and his dancing compelling to me and to many of the Fijians I interviewed.

However, his politics and his ability to create space for and transmit unpredictable and unknowable spiriting affects of intensity in performance does not come without costs. During our conversations, he was clearly anxious and nervous about charges of devil worship and wanted to prove that he was connecting with his Christian faith through *meke*. As a result, in his efforts to sanction his *meke* as Christian, he was keen to have me record his process of creation so that I could see and show others that he was not practicing devil worship (as he had been once accused) in order to create *meke*. I consider these anxieties to be a result of his willingness to allow for feelings/sensations less certain than those dominating *meke* for tourism and the national stage that sense towards security as representations of culture and heritage. Perhaps out of fear for being accused of devil worship, he is one of the few individuals I encountered that is willing to practice *meke* as an intensely felt spiritual act, tied to an agentive approach to generating meaning through *mana*.

In order to explain what I mean by saying that Damiano's approach to *meke* is agentive in that it creates meaning as spiritual, I have organized the remainder of Damiano's approach into subsections in order to more deeply excavate his approach to generating uncertain spiriting affects. I explore his spiritual approach to tradition and performance, and his techniques for generating and transmitting affective uncertainty with *bula* and *loloma*.

A Spiritual Approach to Tradition and Performance

Damiano defies the norm in many ways, but one key act of defiance has to do with his spiritually intense approach to “tradition” involving enriching his *meke* with *mana* that results in expressions of uncertain spiriting affects. I met Damiano within the first days of arriving in Fiji. He was the choreographer of two new *meke* for a theatrical production called *Drua: Wave of Fire* at The University of the South Pacific. The director Vilsoni Hereniko, whom I was planning to interview, invited me to attend the performance because of my interest in *meke*. Although Damiano’s *meke* are considered “traditional,” they combine what many consider traditional elements with non-traditional elements.

The “traditional” aspects of *meke* matter to Damiano in terms of increasing the energy, spirit, and *mana* of his *meke*. For example, his dancers are asked to observe *tabu* (such as not having intercourse, drinking alcohol or *kava*, and not smoking). In the context of his *meke*, *tabu* is thought to increase the spirit, strength and energy of the *meke mata* (*meke* team) and to bring them together as a group. Although the spiritual significance of *tabu* once related to pleasing the ancestor spirits, who can be vengeful and harmful to the bodies of those performing *meke* if a mistake is made and *tabu* is not respected, Damiano, who is with the Roman Catholic Church in Fiji, also uses *tabu* to increase the spirit of the *meke mata*. There are also other ways of increasing the strength of the *meke mata*. For example, traditional costumes are important to Damiano; they increase the energy and effectiveness of the performers because the materials for the

costumes come from the soil which is rich with *mana*. As a result, the costumes, that consist of grass skirts, *masi* (bark cloth), fresh garlands of leaves strung around various parts of the body, coconut oil covering the body (not virgin oil but cooked with flowers to give the dancers' bodies a nice smell), and black face paint,¹⁷⁰ are all full of *mana* that intensifies the spiritual energy and effectiveness of the *meke* to communicate meaning. The language of his chant is in his dialect. He explained this is a key part of making the *meke* meaningful and with depth of local context, and increases the *mana* or spiritual effectiveness of the *meke*.

Spirit is also generated in Damiano's *meke* with vocal cries and calls that have a deep resonance from the chest. Damiano emphasized that calling out in this way is one of the most important techniques to keep each other going strong, and keep the spirit and energy high in *meke*. He explains the sounds that are iterated become part of the oral, affective, spiritual, and energetic rhythms of the *meke*. It is a part of creating and transmitting a sense of spirit and emotional and psychological strength and energy. The way the cries intersect with the *meke* is random and improvised based on the ebbs and flows of spirit and energy felt amongst the group. As a result, those ebbs and flows of energy are unique to the performance of the *meke* on any particular occasion. When the

¹⁷⁰ Damiano uses Kajal (or Kohl), a black shade cosmetic, as black face paint instead of face paint made from charcoal. Using Kajal, a South Asian cosmetic, creates an interesting link between *meke* and Fijians of Indian descent that blurs the geographical and spiritual boundaries of Fijian *mana*. Suddenly the *meke* is enriched with spirit and energy by a South Asian cosmetic as opposed to Fijian soil.

energy is needed by the dancers you here the chanters (*vakatara*) and the dancers cry and call out more to increase the energy.

Some non-traditional elements of Damiano's *meke* are chosen out of necessity but are still invested with a high level of spirit and energy to generate a powerful and meaningful *meke*. For example, although his chants have "traditional" elements such as the use of just one *lali* (slit drum), and he follows the harmonic, stanza and strophic style of his province, he pre-records his chants that are sung by just a small group of singers but mixes and records them in a way to make it sound like there are many voices singing. In his recordings, some of the seemingly random resonant cries are pre-recorded within the chant. They are placed specifically in relation to the surrounding rhythms of the *lali*, *cobo* (pronounced thomboe) that is a way of cup clapping of the hands, and the chanting voices. The cries become a set and predictable part of the rhythm of the chant and the energetic and spiring affects of his *meke*. He records his chants so that his *meke* can be staged for theatrical performances outside the purposes and setting of a village, or in my case, created to be performed by members of the Fijian diaspora overseas in Canada. His approach to recording his chants is to a degree done out of necessity and a practical measure. However, having witnessed and participated in a recording, he invests vast amounts of time, energy, and spirit in the process of recording in order that the end result will still generate spiring affects. The use of technology enables a creative space for maneuver, allowing Damiano a space to explore and access dimensions of expression that emerge out of his indeterminate process.

Another aspect of Damiano's *meke* that he considers to be non-traditional but regards as increasing the energy and spirit of his *meke* is seeking spiritual inspiration through his Christian faith. Instead of going to the land spirits and entering a *yaqona*-induced trance state for his *meke* (something he explains he will never do in a "traditional" manner because it would mean crossing the line into practicing "witchcraft"), he allows the spirit of God to enter his body through prayer, putting him into a creative trance state. The creative trance state would traditionally be achieved by drinking *yaqona* and prayer to the land spirit gods but for Damiano, it is achieved through Christian prayer and faith. Even though non-traditional elements are utilized, the end result is still qualified as "traditional" in his own mind because the act of seeking spiritual inspiration and using his memories to create are still the same. While many of the Methodists I spoke to see traditions as objects of culture and heritage and not spiritual, Damiano views *meke* as a tradition that is deeply and unpredictably spiritual and religious.

Damiano's *meke* process mixes traditional and non-traditional approaches to generate uncertain spiring affects. As part of his politics of inclusion, he embraces and respects differences that emerge from the spaces of uncertainty his process generates. Damiano's approach is inspired by watching his mother and his paternal extended grandfather create *meke*. His mother, who creates from her mind without rituals and protocols, is a major inspiration for Damiano. However, he has also been influenced by his paternal extended grandfather who went to the land spirits for his *meke*. Damiano

distinguishes between his grandfather's approach to spirituality and tradition and his own belief in the "one true God." In the following quote, he explains the protocols of what he considers to be his extended grandfather's more "traditional" approach to accessing the spiritual world of land spirits for the purposes of creating a *meke*.

I have witnessed my paternal extended grandfather at work during rehearsals but I have never seen the actual spiritual calling in the primary stages where the core of the *daunivucu*'s followers will be present with him. The extended ritual requirements are the drinking of *yaqona*, and the renewal of a garland every day until the *sevu ni meke* (presentation of the new *meke*) and actual performance is done. I observed that every morning or day of practice, one of the rituals is to have the *daunivucu* wear a new *salusalu vono* or any *salusalu* (*salusalu vono* is a Fijian garland made of a plant called *vono*). As long as it is fresh everyday, it is a sign of spiritual strengthening for the *daunivucu*. The garland is of great significance as I observed. I asked my uncles why does the *daunivucu* wear a fresh garland every day. They say it's a sign that the spirit is in the *daunivucu*. As well, the wearing signifies the honoring of the spirit as it works through the *daunivucu*.

I was informed that his walking stick holds a lot of *mana* and spiritual strength as well. But for my extended grandfather, his walking stick is of significant value in the sense that it channels his power across to him to be able to teach. Whenever the *meke* team forgets a *meke* move, they will refer to the *daunivucu*. He then calls for his walking stick and uses it to refresh the *meke* team or (*meke mata*). It is more or less the first hand spiritual connection and a sign the spirit is around. It is almost subtle in the eyes of those who are not sensitive about the spirits but commonly known that the *daunivucu* always follow their spirits that dictates the lyrics and moves for them or refreshes them when anything is forgotten. In a simple form, they do not hold the freedom to create but they hold the freedom to choose to call on the spirits which manifest their power in them and gives the lyrics and the choreography.¹⁷¹

Damiano respects his extended grandfather's approach but the Christian God is his biggest inspiration for *meke*. He explains his views about his faith with a story:

¹⁷¹ Damiano in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, June, 2012.

My cousin had just visited me last month when I was choreographing for the “*Drua Meke*,” at one point he shared that our extended grandfather did find it difficult to get the *meke* moves given that he (my cousin) quietly drew a sign of the cross on his walking stick. My cousin was curious if the spirit in the walking stick would remain when the sign of the cross was drawn on it. According to him, he said that our extended grandfather had to unfortunately call for another stick to bring the spirits back on again.¹⁷²

This story was an important one for Damiano to tell because it was one of the many ways he sought to legitimize his spiritually intense *meke* process as a Christian process. He wanted me to know that while he too was drawing from some *meke* traditions, he was firmly aligned with Christianity and his own creativity, and not seeking the help of land spirits.

Damiano recognizes the similarities between his process of allowing God to enter him and transform him and inspire his *meke*, and the process used by his extended family of connecting with land spirits. He accepts the risks involved in choosing to create in a way that brings notions of tradition and spirit together – a dangerous mix in Fiji – one that could have real consequences of quickly being labeled as a devil worshipper. But, even though the process is similar, he feels his process is spiritually legitimate because his relationship is with “God” and not land spirits. Damiano’s process begins with a prayer to God. He feels a transformation or transition in his body when he prays to God to enrich his *meke* with *mana*. The spirit of God enters him to inspire his creativity. He

¹⁷² Damiano in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

explains that his extended grandfather would come together with his followers and they would say words to ask the spirit for a *meke* and the spirit would enter his body.

Damiano's prayer to God also fills his body with spirit:

I feel really empowered with energy in my head and my whole body, alive with creative energy. That energy just comes after I pray, and I need to sit in front of the computer or with a pen because right away it just comes and within two minutes the lyrics are there. The prayer is very important, if I don't do that, I feel I can't move. I need to centre the focus of my thinking to God.¹⁷³

His whole process is initiated by his spiritual connection to his Christian faith. Yet bringing spiritual intensity together with *meke* sparks concerns from some that Damiano is seeking inspiration and assistance from land spirits.

Damiano's approach to increasing *mana* in performance makes matters even more spiritually uncertain. In addition to being a *daunivucu* whose creativity is sparked when the spirit of God enters his body, he is a *manu manu ni meke* meaning that he is especially gifted with the ability to transmit energy, spiring affects and *mana* through his movement-based expressions in *meke*. While his *meke mata* moves together, he dances apart and does what is needed with his voice and movements to heighten the energy of the dancers and audience. Damiano explains, "I play with the rhythms to get the energy up higher. That is my role as motivator, to keep them going – always strong, really driving the energy." He controls the shape of the *meke* by shouting "*laga viro*" meaning to go again or repeat a section or "*biu khari*" or "*tana khari*" to move on.

¹⁷³ Damiano in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, August 2012.

Recalling my earlier definition of *mana* as spiritually powerful speech and movement that actively generates spirit and “brings-into existence” (Sahlins 1985, 38) intended goals and aspirations, Damiano is attempting to be effective in emotionally and spiritually energetic ways in the sense that he wants to be fully understood by transmitting meaning through his expressions of movement, spiriting affects (of kindly love, gratitude, respect, generosity, and inclusivity) and rhythm. Although, Tomlinson has argued that *mana*, as the power to effect, is characterized by many in Fiji today as disappearing (Tomlinson 2009, 22), for Damiano *mana* (as spiritual agency put into effect through his vocalizations and movements) is deeply enmeshed in his creativity and his approach to performance.

Indeed, all the Fijians I consulted with who know him say that the spirit and energy expressed by Damiano in *meke* performance transmit a powerful and unpredictable intensity generating autonomic responses such as goose bumps, chills, and turns of the stomach that excite.¹⁷⁴ However, the uncertainty of spirit and energetic intensity is confusing for many who see these qualities as a sign that he is connected to the land spirits. One dancer, a born-again Christian, expressed that he was scared by the intensity he experienced when watching Damiano. “He is a very traditional man but at the same time very spiritual. I don’t know how that works for him. He has a mix of both

¹⁷⁴ One of my interview questions asked those I consulted with for memories of watching *meke* that were affectively intense. Without prompting or guiding their responses, seven dancers and directors knowledgeable about *meke* independently brought up Damiano as an example of evoking affective intensity in *meke*.

worlds [land spirits and Christianity]. He scares me actually because he is very intense.”¹⁷⁵ Damiano’s intensity is seen by this *iTaukei* dancer as a negative quality, possibly a result of his perceived connection to the world of land or ancestor spirits. Another *meke* dancer who is a Methodist describes the energy he transmits in positive, Christian terms but still links his affective intensity (described as giving him goose bumps when watching Damiano in performance) to having an “old Fijian soul,” linking him to another older sense of spirit.

He does everything with a clean spirit and an open heart and everything comes out sounding good. He has this old Fijian soul. When I bring his chants home everyone gets the same reaction of goose bumps. Listening to his chants got me back into *meke* again. Damiano is a very inspirational person to be around. I have learned two *meke* from him... He’s one of those gang who just brings so much energy.¹⁷⁶

In this sentiment, Damiano’s spirit and soul are connected to Fiji’s past. Again, expressions of intense spirited feeling and energy are associated with the past. But, this dancer also describes him as having a “clean spirit.” Recalling the words of the Fijian Pentecostal Pastor that a clean spirit is a Christian spirit, this dancer’s choice of words makes it clear that Damiano is Christian despite his “old Fijian soul.” Depending on one’s religious orientation, Damiano’s intensity might seem more or less threatening. Regardless of orientation, Fijians I consulted with indicated they believed his intensity to be connected to the past and associated with the land spirits of the past.

¹⁷⁵ *Meke* dancer in conversation with author, Suva, Fiji August 2012.

¹⁷⁶ *Meke* dancer in conversation with author, Suva, Fiji, October 2012.

Techniques for Generating and Transmitting Spiriting Affects

Damiano does not only get his creative inspiration from God. He is also inspired by his own mind. He tells me that part of his approach to generating and transmitting an abundance of spirit and energy comes from recalling and identifying with affectively intense memories and expressing them through his body and his movements. He adopts the phrase

curumi konaio ni meke, meaning let the true spirit of *meke* come in you. It means for the dancer to really be in the moment and get into the meaning of the words and the emotions attached to it and the emotions attached to the harmonic and melodic dynamics. And, that the full expression that is there must arrive at the audience. The audience must be able to capture that deep emotion and meaning of the moment.¹⁷⁷

Using his memories allows him to identify with his chants and movements and express them to be true to his own experiences through *mana*. The more he is able to identify with what he is expressing, the more effective the meaning and the more enriched it will be with *mana*. In the following quote, he explains the importance of his memories and experiences of the land. He explains in a later conversation that his connection to the land is very important source of his identity as a Fijian. However, he is clear with me that the spirit and energy, in the form of *mana*, that he receives from the land comes from God and not from land spirit gods.

I come from the jungle or the interior of Seaqaqa, Nanenivuda. I am able to relate my struggles and challenges in life to moving through jungle. I remember moves like simple working through bush tracks where you have to squeeze in the thick of the forest to keep moving forward, simple moves as cutting banana trees, lifting

¹⁷⁷ Damiano in conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, September 2012.

hands putting loads on our shoulders, protecting ourselves from wild animals, jumping over the logs where necessary, sliding, and surrounding wild pigs, or in the village we get to stand in line to work as a team to complete tasks like clearing each others plantation. I want to share these moves that are based on survival strength.¹⁷⁸

For Damiano, memories of movements through the jungle requiring a readiness in life (as in combat) in the body generate the work of the torso and legs that makes its way into his *meke*. The legs are bent deeply to create a ninety-degree angle at the knee, the pelvis is upright and the torso moves dynamically, quickly with great range of motion. There is *mana* in the angles, dynamic movements and rhythms of his body because these are the expressions of his felt personal memories. He explains these are the movements needed when traveling through the jungle. These movements are also about struggle. However, the combat and warring with others that *meke* once evoked is now combat with personal struggles that everyone encounters in life. Struggles inevitably show more than secure and controlled feelings of kindly love; they involve unknown, in flux, and unsettled affective territory. Damiano challenges himself and those around him to venture into this unknown territory. His *meke* involve a readiness to enter into unknown challenges for a future Fiji that is inclusive of and equitable for all of its inhabitants regardless of descent.

Drawing from affectively intense memories is also a technique used by Damiano to give his *meke* spiritual intensity. For example, in creating his chants for *Drua: The Wave of Fire*, he coloured the vocals with memories of the sounds of a baby crying and

¹⁷⁸ Damiano in conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, June 2012.

the sounds of villagers mourning. He draws from these intensely emotive qualities, pulling at the felt responses of his audience. He explains that

the sound of people mourning in the village inspired my creativity in one of my chants. There is lots of emotion in the sounds of villagers engaging in village life. I weave those sounds into the beginning of my spear dance [*meke wesi*], I set the tone with the sound of grieving. Villagers have different tones and pitches and I picked one just to set the scene.¹⁷⁹

The attention Damiano's *meke* draw creates tension, anticipation, and affective intensity in the dancers and viewers, but these feelings spark questions for some Fijians about Damiano's spiritual orientation.

In my own encounters with Damiano, words and movements brought into effect Christian spirit, energy and feelings of welcome, generosity and kindly love into the creative process itself. As mentioned, Damiano's process begins with a prayer to God. The words and sentiments of this prayer align his own body and creativity with his Christian Faith but, he explains, some elements of his prayer come as a result of his anxieties about being accused of witchcraft.

you have read about the process of *meke* creation with regard to witchcraft. I don't know exactly what occurs I was not part of my extended family's processes. I ask God for his blessing and the use of the intelligence and wisdom I have to give life to the people who will see the *meke* and to bless the people with whatever they can learn and especially with the ability to live life to the full as much as they can [*bula*]. I thank God for providing health and happiness for all involved in the *meke* and to spiritually bind the *meke* group together for the present purpose of creating a new *meke*. That is the prayer that I normally say. And to thank him also for the gift that I am just able to create and choreograph with the power, the *mana* that has been given to me. I think the bottom line is to pray to God to continue to give me the strength to do that always. And two things

¹⁷⁹ Damiano in conversation with the author, Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

I always ask for: one is to emphasize the courage to forgive and the other is the courage to ask for forgiveness. Those two things are in the prayer I normally do because I am conscious that when people see the *meke* that I do, they are automatically going to think this is witchcraft. I pray for the *mana*, enriching the *mana* for the *meke* I do.

In his prayer, Damiano is asking God to bless him with the ability to bring his Christian faith together with notions of *bula* in his *meke*. His prayer is full of the sentiment of *bula* (expressed in wanting to give life to all involved and for them to be able to live life to the fullest) and *loloma* (expressed through happiness and care for those who are dancing and viewing the *meke*) but these sentiments are not clearly established in his *meke* for his viewers, creating a spiritually blurry boundary causing some viewers to wonder if he is actually connecting to land spirits through witchcraft. This blurry boundary involving the expression of uncertain and intense spiriting affects in *meke* results in tensions and anxiety for his viewers, making it particularly important for Damiano to show a clear reverence to God. However, although Damiano's connection to God informs his process, it is not something he strives to produce with certainty as a pre-set representation of his Christian faith. Rather, as the prayer exemplifies, feelings associated with *bula* and *loloma* are woven into his *meke* process, chant and movements but they are not always visible to outside viewers. In the tension between recognition of politics and feelings of *bula* and *loloma*, Damiano opens a space of maneuver for those watching him and his *meke* in performance, addressing and challenging a politics of identity in each who witness the performances.

“Good” feelings and spirit are also generated by Damiano in rehearsals with constant assurances made through utterances of “*io*,” “*isa*,” and “with all due respect.” With *io* he is expressing yes, in agreement with, you are on the right track, and evoking a feeling of generosity and encouragement. With “*isa*” he is expressing empathy and solidarity in misfortune, a desire for connectedness, and common vulnerability.¹⁸⁰ And, “with all due respect...” expresses his dissent without negating other ways of thinking or other approaches, and shows his respect for difference by affirming diverse and varying opinions and feelings. He has a presence of living life to the fullest (an expressions of *bula*), not holding back but wanting to share his life and not take his knowledge to his grave without expressing and sharing it. He encourages the same fearlessness in those with whom he interacts. He often signs off his written correspondences (such as texts and e-mails) with “*loloma*,” extending his feelings of kindly love and care towards me and my family. In these utterances, he is actualizing a kind of *mana* in his speech, bringing into effect a kind of energy and spirit into our interactions with one another while setting up the potential and possibilities for future connections and relations.

Affects as experiences and expressions of *loloma* and *bula* are a big part of Damiano’s *meke* that emerge through a process that is itself uncertain. He is largely inspired to create from the idea that spirit enters his material body. He is vulnerable and open to sensing this spirit. In his sensing, he is not reaching towards a destination but a

¹⁸⁰ Defined by Nicholas Thomas in “Tin and Thatch” (1997, 185); and, by Damiano in conversation with author, Suva, Fiji, September 2012.

direction formed by his love, readiness, generosity, respect, and inclusivity. Unlike many other *iTaukei* I spoke to who fear the feeling of spirit entering the body, he has faith in the spirit that enters his body. Opening his body to the experience of sensing and being transformed by spirit is a part of his process. This is as he puts it *curumi konaio ni meke*, meaning let the true spirit of *meke* come in you. In addition to drawing from his felt memories of the past, *curumi konaio ni meke* is his process: a process shaped by his sensory and relational experiences. As a result, the sentiments he expresses are not secure but fluid, felt differently with every encounter, not fixed but resonant in the body in new ways with every encounter.

According to Damiano, Christianity plays a big role in transforming bad feelings and hauntings of ancestor spirits to good feelings. This reconciliation process of transforming bad into good, as described by Damiano, involves *mana* whereby what is said is made true.

We believe that when you say something bad, it goes with its *mana* [bad spirit] and when you say something good, it goes with its *mana* [good spirit] too. When you say something, that *mana* stays there unless a ritual of reconciliation is performed to transform the *mana*. If the ritual of reconciliation is not performed, the bad or evil spirit remains and is felt as a barrier – a kind of discomfort between people. Good spirit allows people to open up and share things openly. If one is hurt by another, good spirit opens an atmosphere of reconciliation.¹⁸¹

His faith in reconciliation is evident in his war *meke* for the *Drua* production. After utilizing a previously established war *meke* called *Teivovo* that was requested by the directors of the production, Damiano choreographs reconciliation into his war *meke*.

¹⁸¹ Damiano in Conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, October 2012.

Through movement choices and changes in the rhythm and music of his chant, the whole affective tone changes to evoke a transformation from bad spirit to good spirit, or Christianity. The rhythm slows, the chant changes from a minor to a major key and the dancers go from movements of fierce attack to movements that generate kindness and respect such as kneeling in front of one another on stage and grasping each other in embracing touch. Damiano's pattern of speech and his choice of movements for his *meke* exemplify his work of infusing his *meke* with "good" spirit, ensuring they are aligned with his Christian faith.

Damiano also uses movements that involve *meke* weapons of warfare to put into effect his good Christian feelings and values. For example, a spear in a *meke* about pre-Christian battles would ordinarily depict its use in violent physical combat. However, in his *Mekhe ni Loloma* in which I participated, Damiano turned the spear upside down so it was no longer a weapon for stabbing a victim of war. Instead, thrusting the spear was used to depict the strength of a person who has survived the past and the strength he holds to take on challenges of the future, spiritually, emotionally, and physically – a readiness for life. He explains that reversing the spear also connects heaven by the tip of the spear to the earth and its *mana* upon which one stands. As Damiano puts it, "the ground has a lot of *mana* in it. Regardless of descent whoever stands on it shall feel the *mana* [from God], the spiritual power in it."¹⁸² For Damiano, the spear carries forward

¹⁸² Damiano in Conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, October 2012.

from the past a sense of tradition but the spiritual meaning generated by his movements with the spear is activated by his Christian faith. Although Tomlinson has argued that in Fiji *mana* has become nominalized and has lost its agentive and active qualities due to missionary influences, for Damiano expressing uncertain and unknowable feelings into effect was an agentive process that drew directly from the participants and Damiano's creativity, as well as his Christian faith, and his approach to bringing these feelings into effect through affectively charged and relational speech and movement.

My relationship with Damiano made me aware of the importance of having the right feelings in order to proceed in the relationship and the relationships with so many of the Fijians I have met. The difference between Damiano and some of my other encounters was that he was consciously engaging in a creatively uncertain process in order to arrive at these "good" feelings. While I began to conceal personal and familial feelings of ill health, misfortune, and unhappiness in many of my interactions due to nervous tensions around the misfortunes believed to be caused by ancestor spirits, I was still able to express these misfortunes with Damiano. Damiano was teaching me about the feelings that were important to him. He had his reasons for exercising and expressing these feelings. Actualizing them was a deeply thought-out decision on his part. However, when I asked him why it was so important to generate these feelings, he was not willing to share his motivations with me. This would mean sharing his personal past with me, something he preferred not to do. If feelings of connectedness, generosity, kindly love, and respect were the right kinds of feelings, what were the wrong ones to

have? What direction did he not want our unique yet relational feelings to go? Based on our conversations, domination, subjugation, coldness, lack of respect, and selfishness are feelings that are repellent to him. But what do these unwanted feelings indicate? Perhaps the danger of ill-intentioned evil spirits. Or, perhaps Thomas is correct in thinking that the notion of *loloma* is so powerful and prominent today because it defined Fijians in opposition to the perceived selfishness of foreigners who are seen to be self interested at the expense of a commitment to community. Perhaps his constant utterances of “*io*,” “*isa*,” “*loloma*,” “*bula*” and “with all due respect...” were designed to bring me as a foreigner into the fold, to not leave me behind but to include me in his vision of Fiji.

In conscious resistance to those that have tried to unify and dominate Fiji by imposing their own cultures, traditions and beliefs (such as Fiji’s adoption of the Bauan dialect as its official dialect, British colonialism, Western musical concepts and practices and Wesleyan Methodism), Damiano insisted that I sustain multiple definitions of *meke*, tradition, “Fijian” and “*iTaukei*” simultaneously. This was his ethics of difference that portrays the vast proliferation of ideas and practices in Fiji including *meke* in creation, teaching and performance. His approach to difference was a non-exclusive difference; he refused discourses that continue to be based on perpetuating Indian and *iTaukei* identities in opposition to one another. Rather, he affirmed each version of *meke*, spirit, and Fijianness we discussed while also simultaneously affirming all the other possibilities. Instead of narrowing and fixing an understanding of spirits, *meke*, *mana* and their influences on identity, his approach has led me to a proliferation of unfixed

understandings. This is his ethics of difference, grounded in intensities and repetitions of uncertain spiriting affects, upon which a politics of expression in a generative theories of culture and identity comes alive.

Conclusion

Rhythm, sound and movement are all primary sensory experiences in the political emergence of spiriting affects in *meke*. The way in which dancer and *daunivucu* engage with *meke* whereby sound, movement, rhythm, costume, energetic, affective, and spiritual conventions index and locate social, political and religious conventions, plays a role in the potential for reinvention and change in culture and identity. In this chapter, I demonstrate how in my encounters with three different approaches to *meke*, affects connected with generosity, welcome, and kindly love emerge as ways of dealing with anxieties about ancestor spirits and as ways of promoting tourism and conservative Fijian nationalism. In these expressions, zones of indeterminacy are created that allow identifications with Fiji and “Fijianness” to shift.

However, these affects are actualized through distinct ways of engaging with *meke*. For Katerina and Tomasi, who choose not to do *meke* at all, their approach to “tradition” has a de-stabilizing influence on Fiji’s social, political and religious conventions. As Thomas puts it,

[t]radition is . . . a thing that can be acted upon or deployed to diverse ends. [I]t is evident that tradition can be an objectification of the heritage one has but wants to be rid of; as a resource, it is as necessary to progressivist projects of

nonconformity as it is to those of cultural affirmation and preservation
(Thomas 1997, 208)

Katerina and Tomasi exclude themselves from traditional protocols and rituals as a way of pushing against Methodist hegemony. Tourism in Fiji uses tradition to conform and preserve representations of culture and heritage by presenting a certain range of ideas and feelings about Fiji that reflect the goals of tourism Fiji and conservative nationals. Tradition becomes unified so it can become a marker of authentic and essential Fijianness. These *meke* done as a representation of culture and heritage demonstrates how personal identities and particular contexts are generalized by certain feelings of welcome, generosity and kindly love to stabilize representations of Fiji and Fijians for tourists as desirable, friendly, and Christian. By re-producing this affective certainty for national events, *meke* becomes a powerful tool for shaping national values and associations of Fijianness as Christian (Methodist), *iTaukei* and connected to the land and tradition – linkages upon which tourism and conservative nationalism thrives. Damiano uses tradition as a non-conformist and as a way to find his own spiritual identity. In Damiano's *meke*, relational, uncertain and unpredictable feelings/sensations emerging out of generosity, welcome and kindly love involve an individual and personal spiritual engagement through *mana*. In this approach, that respects difference rooted in affective uncertainty (as opposed to sameness established through securing and controlled affects), the notion of *iTaukei* broadens to include all who are connected to Fijian land, including all citizens of Fiji regardless of descent. All three approaches to *meke* show that the

affective tones of *meke* take on political and religious dimensions in the way it is performed as a tradition.

In line with Ness' insights about current trends in dance research, this chapter demonstrates the political dimensions of spiriting affects as non-present or post-phenomenological realities of embodiment in dance research. The politics of spiriting affect and *mana* (as agentive and generative of change and not nominalized as spirit coming from God), I discuss connect the material body with the nonmaterial and gives form to a sense of culture and identity. Spiriting affects and *mana* show how the material and ephemeral can be understood as linked, and not bifurcated, within an ontology of the body as incorporeal. By seeing the body as incorporeal, social relations in Fiji can be seen as embedded in and yet shifted by movement and their felt and sensed relations. In Fiji these relational impacts also have greater implications for dance studies literature still defining itself through a rejection of the ephemeral. While these are the complex dimensions of contemporary *meke* practice and a part of how Fijians come to identify themselves, to what degree do these political and religious tensions migrate to diaspora? In my next chapter I examine the ways in which affects shift, migrate, and haunt in and around *meke* in Fiji's Canadian diaspora.

In Canada, where the performance of tradition is no longer always tied explicitly to Fijian soil, *meke* can take on new meaning. By including dancers of Indian descent, Caucasian descent, and anyone else who is interested, *meke* breaks out of the tight bonds associated with *vanua*, *iTaukei*, and Fijian nationalism. In Canada *meke* enact a shift

towards a new series of associations and experiences in the context of Canadian multiculturalism. Yet, there are still tensions felt in Canada amongst Fijians resulting from past missionary, colonial, and evangelical impacts. The result is that some Fiji-Canadians use *meke* to position themselves strategically as primary arbiters of Fijian culture and identity, and others reject *meke* entirely. The complexities of these issues are made evident in the Canadian examples of *meke* I examine in my next chapter “Diasporing Affects.”

Chapter 5 - Diasporing Affect: Hauntings and Migrations in Multicultural Canada

Throughout the 1980s large sea vessels equipped for repairing trans-Pacific telecommunication cables that lay across the Ocean floor travelled from Fiji to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and stopped in Victoria, B.C.'s capital, to give the crew some rest. On occasion, my mother held parties at our house for the crew. Fijians, Fiji-Canadians and other South Pacific Peoples came from Vancouver and Vancouver Island to these parties.¹⁸³ They would line up down the street of our house carrying curries of every kind, palusami (made with canned or frozen and shipped taro leaves and coconut cream), dalo (taro root), cassava (tapioca root), kava, and instruments. On one visit from the cable repair crew, my mother, who worked for the Intercultural Association in Victoria, managed to convince them to perform a meke for Victoria's Folkfest (1971-2006). Folkfest, a multicultural festival, showcased the multiple cultural traditions of diasporas living on Vancouver Island.

Some thirty years later at the start of my doctoral research Sefo, my Rotuman friend and mentor, invites me and my family to a gathering of South Pacific Peoples

¹⁸³ In my memories, there are rarely Fijians of Indian descent. While I do not know why this was the case, this may have been the result of divisive political tensions; or simply because these memories were formed before the first coups in Fiji, and before the larger migrations of Fijians of Indian descent to the Canadian Diaspora.

intended to say farewell to an iTaukei Fijian man and his family who are just visiting Canada and are returning home to Sweden the next day. This man is one of the Fijian men who used to be part of the crew that crisscrossed the Pacific on a cable repair ship, and one of the men who performed in the first meke I ever saw at Folkfest roughly thirty years earlier. I sit with him and the others at the gathering to ask them about their memories of meke. Amidst those memories are memories of my mother and her parties, memories of playing my brother's video games at our house, and a respect for my mother and her community-building efforts. They tell me she introduced many of the Islanders at the gathering to one another as they migrated to Canada. My own childhood memories of these parties are filled with warm, happy, and peaceful feelings triggered by the memories of beautiful voices singing to the calm and cresting rhythms of ukulele and guitar; and, joyful, spirited and energetic feelings triggered by the more upbeat songs that prompted some to jump up and dance, sometimes with fire!

Growing up on Vancouver Island as the daughter of a Fiji-born Australian, I developed a love and appreciation for all things Fijian. However, as I began my preliminary doctoral research into *meke*, I realized that there were elements of Fiji's colonial history involving tensions around religion and ethnicity that had been blinded from my view. This history haunted me as I conducted my doctoral fieldwork in Vancouver and Vancouver Island, Canada and Viti Levu, Fiji, causing certain questions to linger in my mind that emerged out of my own biases and familial history within Fiji and its Canadian diaspora. In particular, how do migratory expressions of affect reflect

and activate constructions of post-independence identity for Fijians in their Canadian-based diaspora? Why does *meke* provoke political anxieties for some Fijians living in Canada? And, how are essentialist notions of ethnicity, so dominant and divisive in Fiji's post-independence reality, becoming transcended and sustained in relation to local Canadian notions of multiculturalism?

The answers to these questions became clear when I returned from fieldwork and realized that the migratory and haunting dimensions of affect are important aspects of identity re-negotiation in Canada. These dimensions of affect were revealed to me through emotionally intense conversations, physical encounters, and observations of *meke* that involved issues of religion and ethnicity. I became attuned to feelings of love, or *loloma*, happiness and joy, political and religious anxieties causing evasiveness, anger and discomfort, and an aggressive manliness all experienced and expressed in and surrounding diasporic *meke*. The affects created moments whereby previously invisible ghosts of Fiji's past colonial and present post-independence realities were suddenly made visible through a materialization of haunting actualized as movement-based affects. This tension with the past indicates the presence of ghosts since, as sociologist Avery Gordon has put it so eloquently, it is through the materialization of affect in the body that hauntings make themselves known (Gordon 2008). The process of re-negotiating identity for Fijians living diasporically in Canada involves these ghosts from the past that migrate as affects and are made manifest by *meke* in Canada. These performance-based affects reveal some of the key ways in which a sense of Fijian culture and identity in

Canada is at times discontinuous and mutable and is at other times strategically deployed as essential, stable, cohesive and continuous. However, due to religious and political tensions that have migrated from Fiji but are also locally realized, not all Fijians in Canada will participate in *meke*. Therefore, *meke*, in its presence and absence from Fijian community events, is politically and affectively important for Fijians living in Canada in terms of re-negotiating Fiji's past and present religious realities while, at the same time, negotiating new connections and relations in Multicultural Canada.

The image of telecommunications cables connecting Fiji with Canada and needing local adjustments and care is a reminder of the constant interplay between Fiji and Canada. These lines of communication are vestiges of the past and yet they continue to generate new relations, interconnections, migrations and identifications between Fiji and Canada. The cables remind me that these two countries that touch the Pacific are a kind of "middle passage," as Paul Gilroy puts it, of diasporic identity formation created by a "living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" (Gilroy 1993, 4). I argue that the migration of affects through *meke* as a "middle passage" between Fiji and Canada enables a re-negotiation of identity through experiences and expressions of powerful feeling states. In addition, my research shows that while danced experiences and expressions of affect migrate between Fiji and Canada, Fijian migrants on Vancouver Island generate new articulations of experience and meaning expressed through *meke* that emerge from new connections to place. Affects emerge from disparate and discontinuous religious and political perspectives, and not immutable cultural or ethnic cohesion as is

supposed by Canadian discourses of multiculturalism. These danced affects can, at times, enable Fijians to de-centre and strategically deploy Canadian discourses of multiculturalism that presume Fijians to be “ethnically” homogenous yet distinct.

This chapter proceeds in three sections separated as case studies, each with their own examples. The first case study looks at *meke* as a migratory zone of affect in the choreography of *Mekhe*¹⁸⁴ *ni Loloma* (gift of kindly love) by *daunivucu* Damiano. A critical examination of my own participation in this *Mekhe* while in Fiji provides an example of how identity shifts in and around *meke* through migrations of movement and affect between Fiji and Canada. In this dance, expressions of *loloma* and its association with *mana* migrate and connect Fiji with its Canadian diaspora. In this case study, I draw from Gilroy (1993) to demonstrate how diasporic identity emerges from the migration of movement-based affects. Identity is not the product of blending one cohesive culture with another. Just as the communication impulses travelled between Fiji and Canada through ocean communication cables, identity re-negotiation is more intermediate, in process, and in motion (Gilroy 1993).

In the second and third case studies, I identify two diasporic groups residing in Canada that are located in Vancouver and Vancouver Island, B.C. These two groups have different local realities and different ways of situating themselves in relation to Canadian multiculturalism. As a result, I explore each group in its own terms in separate

¹⁸⁴ Damiano’s dialect is from the Macuata province of Vanua Levu near Seaqaqa. He uses a spelling of *mekhe* to denote a different pronunciation that softens the “k” sound of “*meke*” used in the Bauan dialect.

case studies. Taken together, they indicate a disparate diaspora that acknowledges the differences within, rather than simply between ethnic groups as in Canada's so-called "ethno-cultural groups."

In the Vancouver case study I will address some of the historical and political stakes involved in practicing *meke* in Vancouver today. I focus on some of the ways in which Fiji's encounter with Christian missionaries and British colonial rule haunt the practice of *meke*. In this Vancouver-based case study, I look at two examples of how Fiji's history of biopolitics co-constituted by religion and politics becomes a source of tension and anxiety in *meke*, and why this enables new formations of identity. The first example is a *meke* choreographed by a Fiji-Canadian for the purposes of a Vancouver-based Pentecostal church fundraising event. The event was designed to raise funds to send to Fiji by hosting an evening of Fijian culture to share with a wider Vancouver audience. In this example, haunting two-dimensional notions of Fiji's pre-Christian indigenous spiritual practices are made evident when those I consult describe pre-Christian *meke* in terms such as "devil worship," "sorcery," "black magic," and "witchcraft." These descriptions reveal an affectively tense relationship between particular Christian congregations and "traditional" Fijian *meke*. For these Fijians of *iTaukei* descent, traditional *meke* ignites feelings haunted by the worship of ancestor spirits that have become statically and two dimensionally associated with pre-Christian acts of cannibalism and war. This haunting creates an anxiety that provokes the

generation of new *meke* performed in Canada with new movements and meanings that relate to identifying with Christian values.

In my second example of this Vancouver case study, anxieties involving “ethnic” identity in relation to *meke* and identifying as “Fijian” in Canada are made particularly clear by feelings surrounding the recent addition of a second, separately organized but concurrently occurring Vancouver-based Fiji Day Festival. This second Vancouver example involves the ethnically divisive tension between Fijians of Indian descent and *iTaukei* descent that has led to a tumultuous Fijian independence (Kelly and Kaplan 2001) involving four coups d’état since 1987. This tension was indicated by the presence of two separately organized Fiji Day festivals in Vancouver, the absence of *meke* in one of the annual festivals and affects of anger, evasiveness, and anxiety that came up in conversations with members of the diaspora when discussing these festivals.

In my final case study I explore the performance of traditional dances of the South Pacific by Fijians and South Pacific Peoples living on Vancouver Island. I argue that for those who choose to identify themselves with other Pacific Peoples as more generally “Oceanic,” the dances provide a means to re-negotiate their identity. In choosing to identify as “Pacific Peoples” and in terms of their broader Oceanic connections, I suggest that they seek to build community with other Pacific Peoples within the broader context of a multicultural Vancouver Island through dance. This broader identification enables them to negotiate and de-centre essentializing Canadian discourses that work to isolate and marginalize the Fijian community. This case illustrates how, within a danced

practice, motivations for blurring categories and generalizing cultural differences can vary, sometimes acting as a strategy for marketing and sometimes motivated by efforts to build community. This case also demonstrates how Fijian dancers have re-imagined island boundaries to become “Oceanic Dance” within this new diasporic context.

Oceanic relations were slowly dismantled by diseases introduced by European settlers and imposed restrictions on movement and therefore are powerful today as part of strategic reclamation and rebuilding of relations.

However, the notion of ‘Oceanic Dance’ is itself in need of interrogation since it is contradictory: sometimes it operates to remove differences rooted in culture, history, tradition, nationalism, and religion and, at other times, it works to establish such differences as an ethnological term of classification. It operates in ways similar to other terms that contribute to ethnic classifications and processes of identity formation such as ‘multiculturalism.’ However, in contrast to recent criticisms of multiculturalism as a concept that position non-Western peoples as being passively swept into accepting Western values, modes of thinking, and aesthetics (Foster 2011, 4-6; Savigliano 2011, 170), I suggest that in this case, adopting the broader identity classification of ‘Oceanic Dance’ is an agentive process of intercultural affect relations emanating from this Pacific Peoples’ diaspora itself.

In order to understand Oceanic Dance among this Vancouver Island community as expressive of an agentive but contradictory negotiation of intercultural¹⁸⁵ identity, I examine three examples that highlight ‘Oceanic’ processes of identity re-negotiation in this diasporic community. The first example is a performance of *meke* for a “multicultural” folk festival.¹⁸⁶ In this *meke* sometimes “difference” is sustained through the migration of aggressive manliness and excitement that comes with a particular way of rhythmically accenting *meke* movements. And, sometimes “difference” is absorbed through pan-Oceanic movements described as “general Polynesian. Next, I look at the experiences of members of the diaspora in performing a “traditional” Fijian *meke* for a field hockey fundraising event. Finally, I examine the experiences of this same group of diasporic individuals in performing a traditional Maori *haka* for a fundraising event. This example highlights the role of movement-based affects in re-negotiating identity. This case study shows that the experiential aspects of dance performance are key to understanding how members of this Vancouver Island based diaspora re-negotiate identity.

In each of these three case studies, paying attention to the dancing reveals how embodied memories and unpredictable feelings/sensations of affect, as “incorporeal” and ephemeral realities of the body, are a part of re-negotiating Fijian identity in Canada.

¹⁸⁵ Inspired by the work of Laura Marks on intercultural cinema, I use the term “intercultural” as she does to “indicate a context that cannot be confined to a single culture” (Marks 2000, 6-7). It refers to a dialogic process of movement and transformation between cultures (Marks 2000, 6-7).

¹⁸⁶ I have given the Festival a pseudonym to maintain the anonymity of the performers.

These case studies reveal how the constructed and politically divisive ethnic groupings established during British colonial rule and explosive in post-independence nationalist politics continue to be embodied in the movements and affects of Fijian migrants living in Canada, a country that through its multicultural policies and practices can, at times, perpetuate the separating of ethnic groups. These political and historical contexts are elements of what is being re-negotiated for members of the Fijian diaspora in Canada that has grown significantly due to the coups (Lal 2003).

A Case Study of “Middle Passage” Identity formation: *Mekhe ni Loloma*

While in Fiji a daunivucu named Damiano creates a Mekhe for me to bring back to Canada. His motivation comes from a spirit of generosity. He is genuinely moved by hearing the story of Anna’s legacy of love and by my own interest in meke. Our rehearsals and conversations feel like mutual exchanges, and are driven by a commitment to knowledge sharing. However, as time passes, I feel increasingly like he is able to contribute more than I know how to reciprocate. He creates a Mekhe chant and invites me to be a part of his creation process. In addition, he includes me in his own definition of iTaukei because of Anna’s loloma and my mother being born in Fiji. His generosity feels overwhelming. I feel increasing pressure to find a way to give back. However, I also know that the traditional gifts given to a daunivucu are, in this case, inappropriate. He does not drink yaqona because he believes it is linked with the worship of land spirits that he refers to as devils and demons. Giving him jugs of

kerosene, yards of fabric and large amounts of food that can be shared with his village is inappropriate because he doesn't live in his village anymore but lives in a single family dwelling in a town.

The only thing I can think to give him to reciprocate his generosity is money. I consult with others and find that he has been paid for his Mekhe in a recently staged theatrical production. Those I consult with agree that money is not an appropriate way to compensate him for his Mekhe but that money is also always needed and appreciated. Feeling desperate to give back, after rehearsal one night I give him money as a gift of gratitude. He is stunned, confused and disoriented by my offering. He tries to give it back. But I insist he take the money and I naively explain that it is the one way I can think of returning his generosity. I explain that I am not trying to buy his time or his knowledge. I just want to return a feeling. He understands my intent, and, based on that understanding, he accepts the money. Rehearsals and conversations are never the same again. Our meetings become driven by his desire to deliver a finished product for me to own and bring back to Canada. I try to remove that pressure of obligation by reminding him that it does not matter if the Mekhe is finished, that the process of learning about Mekhe is more important. But there is no going back to the way things felt prior to the monetary exchange. Now he feels he owes me something and that gives me a power I do not want.

The chant and the movements of *Mekhe ni Loloma* connect Fiji with its Canadian diaspora through a migration of relational affects and movements. The direction of

migration is not singular or unidirectional. Rather, affects crisscross back and forth, changing and mutating in their passage and movements. This *Mekhe* is politically and affectively important in terms of re-negotiating Fiji's past colonial and present post-independence realities while negotiating new connections and relations between Fiji and Canada through danced experiences and expressions of the complex feeling-states of *loloma*. The process of creating *Mekhe ni Loloma* demonstrates a unique approach to *Mekhe* as a migratory diasporic space that involves a politically and affectively charged identity-negotiating experience. Damiano wanted this *Mekhe* to be a gift of a global and inclusive sense of Fijianness, and in particular a gift to those who identify with Fiji in Canada regardless of descent.

The back-story of *Mekhe ni Loloma* connects Fiji with Canada through affect. To provide context, while in Fiji, *daunivucu* Damiano heard my story involving my deceased mother's life altering memories of love, born out of the relationship in Fiji during British colonial rule in the 1930s between my mother and her nanny, and offered to create a *meke* based on this story. After my Fiji-born mom passed away at a young age of sixty-six on Vancouver Island, it became clear that she was able to survive many hardships during her lifetime because of feelings of love she associated with Fiji. After she died, I was struck by the small fragmented pieces of writing she left behind, from which I quickly began to understand her strongest pillar in life: a legacy of love passed on to her from a woman named Anna Qumia from Namosi Province in Fiji. Anna was hired as a domestic worker by my Australian grandfather, who worked just over eight years for the

British colony in Fiji as the inspector of mines and mining engineer. Anna, who cared for my mother as a child while growing up in Fiji, ignited in her these lifelong feelings of love. My mother shared these feelings with me as she raised me in Canada and now these feelings have been passed on and live in my body in a new way.

Mekhe ni Loloma expresses this legacy of *loloma* as a migratory affect, whereby Anna's *loloma* has criss-crossed the Pacific Ocean. It migrated from Anna to my mother in Fiji, all the way to Canada to my mother's children and friends in the Fijian and South Pacific diasporas on Vancouver Island, back to Fiji as part of my fieldwork, and then back to Canada again in the form of sharing the experience, the chant, and the video of *Mekhe ni Loloma* with friends, family, and research consultants. This is the story told through the *Mekhe* chant:

Vahasoho [prologue sung by the singers]:

A oku I alnoa vou meu alanoa vahina mata

(allow me to tell my new story)

Ai alanoa ni loloma alivahi vahare ahi hina

(It is about love properly weaved)

A oku ovo ni vanua Lua hei na vei ha sa sivi ake

(it is about my culture, tradition and history that has been created)

A hena yalo curumi au, au u vaharau me u wasea a oku loloma

(its spirit comes in me)

Me na tau solia a vahacegu hei na sau u' na vei gauna

(I am ready to share my love that will always give peace and *mana* all the time)

Au na laga'a iho au na mehe ahina

(I will sing about it and *meke* about it)

A vuhu yaloma'ua hei na hena yalo re

(it is about wisdom and all the good spirit)

Mena tau solia a bula

(let it always give life)

Mena tau solia a bula

(let it always give life)

Mana tau solia a bula ni vei gauna mamuri.

(let it always give life all the time in the future)

Chorus:

Usa lesu mai meu mai solia 3X

(I'm coming back to give)

Meu mai solia solia solia 2X

(I'm coming to give. I'm coming to give)

Solia lesu wake ni miau bula 2X

(I'm coming to give life in return for the life you have given)

A bula miau ma solia mai 2X

(to return the love that was given to me)

A solia lesu wake mei sau ni bula 2X

(I'm giving back in return)

Mei sau ni bula 2X

(of the life you have given to me)

Ai sau ni loloma ma soli mai vei au

(to return the love that was given to me)

O Vi'i lomani a oku Vi'i lomani

(for beloved Fiji, for beloved Fiji)

Au sasolia, solia solia solia, solia lesu ake a bula

(I'm giving it, I'm giving it, I'm giving it I'm giving life back to Fiji)

Verse One:

Curumi au bula ni lomalomarua

(once the life was double minded [my mother was caught in colonial cold heartedness and felt a struggle to belong].

Voto voli mai na meli silima ua ni koloni au vaha curuma

(she is riding on the vessel with the wave of colonialism)

Verse Two:

Au vakakare voli siga a bogi a vanua 2X

(my life was not really firm)

Amu utei sara u a oku bula 2X

(but the new wind direction came and it changed my whole life)

Liwa mai a cagi vou veisau a mua sa sira mai a marama ni vanua 2X

(The lady [Anna] has come down)

Na buhebuhe (a name given to those of Namosi province) me lave'I ha'aha'a oku bula main a liwaliwa

(from Namosi she came to lift and warm my life up from the cold)

Verse Three:

Au sana maka ni kai suha sa mua a oku waka vou

(I am on a new boat now and I am not returning to the past [my mother is more firm now])

Cirri I lagi a hena hubou voto mai Lua na yaloku vou

(the smoke of this boat floats away in the air, my new life has come)

A yalo ni tau valu se dredre cava ga au na curu basiha'a

(I have adopted a new life of battling the difficulties. Whatever comes I am ready to battle the challenges that come)

A bula solia mai o Ana Qumia hena hawa hei vi'l viroga ni ma'aha

(the life that Anna Qumia (a daughter of Fiji) gave and all the descendants of Fiji from tomorrow whatever they have given)

Sobu a hena mana, sobu a hena mana, sobu a hena mana.

(let the *mana* come, let the *mana* come, let the *mana* fall into it.)

Chorus:

Usa lesu mai meu mai solia 3X

(I'm coming back to give)

Meu mai solia solia solia 2X

(I'm coming to give. I'm coming to give)

Solia lesu wake ni miau bula 2X

(I'm coming to give life in return for the life you have given)

A bula miau ma solia mai 2X

(to return the love that was given to me)

A solia lesu wake mei sau ni bula 2X

(I'm giving back in return)

Mei sau ni bula 2X

(of the life you have given to me)

Ai sau ni loloma ma soli mai vei au

(to return the love that was given to me)

O Vi'i lomani a oku Vi'i lomani

(for beloved Fiji, for beloved Fiji)

Au sasolia, solia solia solia, solia lesu ake a bula

(I'm giving it, I'm giving it, I'm giving it I'm giving life back to Fiji)

Loloma in this chant operates as a freely given gift of kindness and love, erasing the power dynamics involved in the economic obligations tied to *loloma*. Although not part of the chant, *Mekhe ni Loloma* complicates that notion of a freely given gift,

changing the economics of *loloma*. Recalling my earlier definition of affect as the relational feelings of intensity implicated in formations of power (Massumi 2002), the *Mekhe ni Loloma* chant obscures Anna's legacy of *loloma* as a freely given gift in at least two ways. First, putting *loloma* into a colonial context where her love was also her labour alters the dynamic of her *loloma*, which is no longer necessarily freely given. Second, the generosity of spirit that comes with *loloma* as a freely given gift was instantly warped in the indeterminate space opened by my choice to give Damiano money to compensate him for his time, generosity, and efforts in creating the *Mekhe*. Adding these economic dimensions to *loloma* shows how affect shapes and is shaped by power in its bodily relations.

Although my mother developed a core sense of inner strength built on memories of Anna's love, I have no understanding of the ways Anna would have felt towards my mother or my grandparents. Anna's labour that was, in part, her love, helped to support the British Empire. Her work was part of an empire's need for domestic love and support, needed to keep the administrators happy and the colony running smoothly. Putting love into this colonial context reveals that Anna's love, as an affect, is complexly interconnected with power in its relational and migratory quality.

Mekhe ni Loloma is also implicated within an economics of affect. This was made evident when the dynamic of my relationship with Damiano changed the moment I gave him money for his freely given *Mekhe ni Loloma*. Although *loloma* is defined as a freely given gift (Kaplan 1995,189), Thomas (1991) and Sahlins (1972) also point out

that *loloma* is part of a communal political, ritual, and economic system of “generalized reciprocity” (Kaplan 1995, 189). During the *Mekhe* creation process, I could sense that I was meant to reciprocate the giving somehow. But despite my best efforts, my reciprocating never felt like a match. What was I meant to return? Or, as sociologist Marcel Mauss asks, “[w]hat force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?” (Mauss 2011, 1). Despite my explaining that I was interested in *meke* for my PhD research, my interest in returning the gift of Anna’s *loloma* generated a larger obligation of return that simply writing about *meke* could not match.

Damiano’s generosity of creating *Mekhe ni Loloma* generated an obligation for return that extended transnationally and into the future. This *Mekhe* was a gift for me to bring to Canada: to teach it and perform it with the Fijian diaspora there, and to eventually document the process in a film documentary. But these were obligations of return I could not guarantee. I explained that my primary objective was to write my dissertation, and these other objectives, while goals worth pursuing, might not happen. These transnational obligations that extended into the distant future felt beyond what I was capable of confirming. However, Mauss’ thinking seemed to ring true that *mana* (bringing-into-existence through spiritually powerful speech and action (Sahlins 1985, 38)) was at stake of being lost if I did not reciprocate the obligation appropriately (2011, 6).

The *Mekhe*, like Anna’s *loloma*, wanted to keep living in perpetual interchange, into the future and across nation-state borders. Overwhelmed by this sense of obligation

and in desperation of finding a way of reciprocating his gift that was in my reach and control, I offered money. That seemed instantly to suck the *mana*, the spirit and energy, out of our exchange. Mauss explains

[t]he pattern of symmetrical and reciprocal rights is not difficult to understand if we realize that it is first and foremost a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some extent parts of persons, and persons and groups that behave in some measure as if they were things. (2011, 11)

By bringing money into the equation, I introduced an element that he was unable to reciprocate. This act of “giving” on my part put an end date on our relationship. I turned our relationship into one of ownership over services rendered. Once the product was finished, his obligation was over and so was mine.

Prior to this feeling of closure imposed by my offering of money, a feeling of agency was established in part through Damiano’s creation process and political leanings. Damiano chooses to create from his own mind and physical memories with inspiration for his creativity coming from the guidance of his Christian faith. The creativity is initiated through a prayer that causes a transformation in his body. In this transformative moment, the unpredictable occurs. The movements and the chant flow straight from his body once the prayer is finished to generate something new and yet still uniquely connected to Damiano’s personal emotional, spiritual, and political investments that include: sharing a knowledge of *Mekhe* and widening the parameters of those who identify with it.

As an ecumenical Roman Catholic in Fiji, Damiano is invested in social equity issues and believes it is important to share knowledge of *mekhe* in order to widen the

parameters of those who identify with it. He refuses discourses that continue to perpetuate biology-based differences in Fiji. Instead, he widens inclusion based on indigenous terms. For Damiano, rather than saying that some in Fiji are Fijian and some are *iTaukei*, he believes that all who connect to Fijian soil through its *mana*¹⁸⁷ should be considered *iTaukei* regardless of descent. For example, according to Damiano, because Anna's *loloma* came from the *mana* in Fijian soil, now that *mana* lives inside of me and enriches my life with *mana*. Because of my connection to Fijian soil through Anna's *loloma*, and my mother being born in Fiji, he makes a radical choice to include me in his definition of *iTaukei*.

After teaching the movements that emerge from his body, there is a relational identity forming process of shaping the movements and the way the movements are phrased that is firmly rooted in affect. For example, coming from a Canadian modern dance background, the *meke* movements he teaches me are a challenge. It feels difficult to move with the speed, range of motion and sharpness needed. I battle feelings of clumsiness as well as personal anxieties that stem from wondering if my family's colonial history in Fiji renders it inappropriate for me to dance *Mekhe* and if my

¹⁸⁷ For Damiano, *mana* emerges in two forms: as a nominalized spiritual power that emanates from Fijian soil and originates from God; and, as a verb in the form of human agency through expression. This second notion of Fijian *mana* as a verb through the power of "bringing-into-existence" is explored in the work of Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 38; Matt Tomlinson, *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Matt Tomlinson, "Retheorizing Mana: Bible Translation and Discourse of Loss in Fiji," *Oceania*, 76, 2 (2006): 173-185.

participation in this *Mekhe* makes me an appropriator of Fijian culture. Nevertheless, when working on the third verse of the *Mekhe*, Damiano asks me if I can make up some of the movements. Feeling the encouragement of Damiano and his nephew, Livai, who is also dancing, I generate some movement. I try not to think but just start with the feelings that I associate with Anna and the love that kept my mother strong in Canada. I move to share the complexity of this love that sprung from a colonialism that is now part of a post-independence and diasporic reality connecting Fiji to Canada.

The movements that emerge connect my identity with the past, of which Anna is an important part, but also leave room for the development of an emergent identity untied to the past. Once I have finished, Damiano shapes the movements giving them a new form that aligns with the ways he imagines people moving through a battle. In this case, it is a battle for finding inner strength, and a sense of identity rooted in *loloma*. Damiano wants me to include my own movements because he wants me to identify with this *Mekhe*. My own identity like so many others who have worked with Damiano develops by feeling integral to the process. I become part of the energy and movement of *Mekhe ni Loloma*. Despite my discomforts about appropriation, my personal commitment to his *mekhe* agrees with Damiano who is politically and spiritually invested in expanding knowledge of *mekhe* as part of creating a sense of inclusiveness and sharing Fiji's indigenous knowledge with the world.

Despite the feeling of closure imposed by my crass gift of money, there is an agency tied to this transnational and futural interchange that the *Mekhe*, and my sense of

obligation tied to it, wants to keep satisfying. Quoting Mauss, “in perpetual interchange of what we may call spiritual matter, comprising men and things, these elements pass and repass between clans and individuals, ranks, sexes and generations” (2011, 12). The experience of *Mekhe ni Loloma* was at once profoundly satisfying and enriching while also at times uncomfortable due to my inappropriate offering of money. The *Mekhe* became a part of my own sense of identity that worked its way into the movements of the *Mekhe* and worked their way into my current writing. Although the story from which *Mekhe ni Loloma* emerged is strongly influenced by the past, the movement creation process, that involved social and economic dimensions of reciprocity, was firmly tied to an indeterminate yet agentic approach to identity negotiation that is itself generative of new affects and new bodily relations of power that connect Fiji to Canada.

Since its creation, the *Mekhe* has returned to Canada in various forms allowing Anna’s *loloma*, with all of its complexities, to carry on. Anna’s *loloma* remains complicated by historical formations of power and the material circumstances of colonialism in Fiji. My own uneasiness about dancing a traditional indigenous dance, despite the fact that it was created explicitly for me to dance and bring back to Canada, is evidence of these complexities. The *Mekhe* continues to arouse felt intensities in viewers who are sometimes equally uneasy with my participation in the *Mekhe*, and sometimes happy and comforted by my dancing, and my keeping Anna’s *loloma* alive.

Keeping in mind the intermediateness of identity and its migratory aspects, I turn to a case study of Fiji’s disparate Vancouver based diaspora. Here movement-based

affects in and surrounding *meke* migrate and haunt the experiences and expressions of this diasporic group. In my Vancouver case study, I explore two examples that highlight the affectively charged political and religious dimensions of re-negotiating a “Fijian” cultural identity in multicultural Vancouver. My first example focuses on the presence of *meke* at a fundraising event. My second example focuses on the absence of *meke* in recent Fiji Day celebrations.

Vancouver’s Disparate Diaspora:

A Christian Meke for a Fijian Pentecostal Church Fundraiser

Wearing masi print shirts with long, ankle-length brown skirts and plastic red Hibiscus flowers behind their ears, the dancers of Irish, Indian, iTaukei, and Tongan descent sit with their legs crossed on the stage and pulse a rhythm with their knees. They connect with the earth as they pound it with their hands, and then their fingers spring upwards from their mouths towards the sky to demonstrate they are not heathens worshipping Fiji’s devils or demons but Christians. They fold their hands together to create the image of a Fijian fan and punctuate the rhythms of the music by pulling the tip of their hand-fans up with every downbeat. Their hand movements are not graceful or soft but stiff, geometric, and patterned. Their eyes watch their hands to give the movements life.¹⁸⁸ The phrasing of their movements and rhythms are also framed with

¹⁸⁸ A technique described by the *meke* choreographer in conversation with the author Vancouver January 2012.

*cobo which is a hand clap that on its own carries historical weight and meaning expressed through its rhythm and motion-based affects. While dancing they create accents with their heads softly but not fluidly and with ease tipping side to side. Their movements and accents connect their feelings and their bodies to the past, to their Christian faith, and to a shared nostalgia for Fiji.*¹⁸⁹

The movements are angular, quick, and performed with a feeling of commitment and preparedness. This commitment from the many dancers who are in sync with each other and moving as one creates a unifying sense of fearlessness, playfulness, confidence, and readiness. They move their bodies forward to the ground and came back up strong; the movements express “let us go and not be weary or weak.”¹⁹⁰ Their energy extends outwards to the viewers to share a sense of generosity of spirit, and of wanting to cultivate joy, happiness, and peace.

The movement choices made by the creator of this meke have come from her own creativity, and inspiration from her family, her God, her schooling in “tradition” at the Fijian Adi Cakobau School (famous for schooling young iTaukei women in Fijian “traditions” and chiefly protocols), and her dancers that sit next to her on stage. Elements of the past inform her choice to weave together movements from across Oceania. Although her costumes and her movements connect what she is doing with the

¹⁸⁹ This description of a *meke* came from observing a recorded performance of the dance, learning the dance myself, and then discussing the movement with Lavonne the choreographer, Vancouver, January 2012.

¹⁹⁰ *Meke* choreographer in conversation with the author Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

*past, she mobilizes this pastness in order to ignite new meaning and new memories. Her dance-based feelings are generating a re-negotiation of identity for herself in Canada.*¹⁹¹

The above description introduces a *meke* performed for a Vancouver-based Pentecostal church fundraising event that demonstrates how movement-based affects migrate and connect Fiji with its Canadian diaspora in danced expressions of Fijianess. In this *meke*, essentialist notions of ethnicity, so dominant and divisive in Fiji's post-independence reality are in some ways transcended as participants from varying backgrounds of descent come together out of a love and nostalgia for Fiji. In other words, past relations of power experienced in Fiji shift in Vancouver to enable new intercultural relations in order to raise money for disaster relief in Fijian villages. To explicate, the movements for this intercultural *meke* performance come from a number of different countries of Oceania.¹⁹² The *meke* combines what are considered "traditional" *meke* movements with new movements and music¹⁹³ inspired by the Christian performers who self-identify as being from a wide range of backgrounds of descent including Fijian of iTaukei descent, Fijian of Indian descent, and Canadian of Irish descent. As an

¹⁹¹ This opening description of a Vancouver-based *meke* came from observing a recorded performance of the dance described, learning the dance myself and then asking direct questions about the meanings and feelings of the movements. Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

¹⁹² *Meke* choreographer in conversation with the author, Vancouver, B.C., August 2011.

¹⁹³ The dance is being performed to a recorded song entitled "*Meda Mai Ia*" which was a popular Christian song in Fiji at the time of the performance and also a popular choice in Canada because of its accessibility. The song is a blend of Fijian culture, Christianity and Western influences.

intercultural group, they bring their own unique experiences to the movements and affects they communicate through *meke*.

In this *meke, cobo*, which is a particular way of cup clapping the hands, is used throughout. *Cobo* as a movement, sound, and rhythm relates to what research participants referred to as “traditional *iTaukei*” customs that are thought to have emerged out of rituals that were once part of the worship of ancestor spirit gods or *kalou vu*, such as *meke ni yaqona* (a sacred ritual involving kava whereby meaning is ingited by movement, lyrics, *cobo*, and the gathering of people to witness the sacred performance for a high chief who is believed to embody the spirit of the ancestral gods).¹⁹⁴ In the current performance of these customs, the rhythm, movement, and depth of sound of *cobo* is still of great importance in communicating a physiological feeling of *vinaka vaka levu* defined here as deep gratitude and respect.¹⁹⁵ In light of its cultural and historical significance, the rhythms, movements, and affects of *cobo* give strength to this intercultural *meke*, and in that strength *cobo* generates a feeling of *iTaukei* legitimacy. *Cobo* performed in the context of *meke* at the Vancouver church fundraiser puts the feeling and spirit of gratitude in motion, activating and enacting a migration of spirit and affect through sound, rhythm, and movement to create a sense of Christian harmony and helping Fijians in Fiji. Simultaneously, the rhythms, affects and movement of *cobo* support a notion of

¹⁹⁴ Damiano (*daunivucu* and *manu manu ni meke*) in e-mail correspondence with the author, July 2013.

¹⁹⁵ *Meke* choreographer and *manu manu ni meke* in conversation with the author, Pacific Harbour, Fiji, July 2012.

Fijianness in Canada that is distinctively *iTaukei*, maintaining past and present biopolitical distinctions in Fiji.

The connection with *iTaukei* heritage is also present in other movement choices made by this *meke* choreographer. For example, by stretching two fingers out and clasping her other fingers, she creates the image of a fan with her hands. Her idea to incorporate this movement came from watching elders do *meke* in Fiji. In her words, “this fan movement has been done over and over again by previous generations.” This movement provides her body with a translocal link to an *iTaukei* past, adding to her feelings of legitimacy and security.

In dynamic tension with these affectively weighted historical gestures, dancers’ identities emerge as they do a series of gestures with their fingers springing upwards from their mouths, alternating hands. These are not gestures that were learned from Fijian elders. Rather, the participants of this Vancouver *meke* have chosen these gestures in order to align with the words of the song to which they are dancing that mean ‘word of God.’¹⁹⁶ The dancers use these light, springy, joyful and quick movements to express feelings associated with their Christian beliefs and values. Their movement-based expressions demonstrate a clear reverence to God, distancing this *meke* from the pre-Christian *meke* in Fiji that the *iTaukei* dancers in this group associate with “devil worship, cannibalism and war.”¹⁹⁷ In opposition to this, pounding fists on the ground is

¹⁹⁶ *Meke* choreographer in conversation with the author, Vancouver, B.C., January 2012.

¹⁹⁷ Focus group of *meke* dancers in conversation with the author, Vancouver, B.C., January 2012.

an action that she has put together with lyrics “the word of God travels the earth.” The pounding is meant to link the earth with God just as the Fijian *vanua* now links the earth with God. Here, securing notions of *iTaukei* legitimacy rooted in God-given rights to land ownership migrate from Fiji to Canada through movement-based expressions.

While these movement-based expressions demonstrate how Fijianess is secured as *iTaukei*, in many ways the *meke* group organizers use their performances to connect with wider Vancouver communities in a variety of ways that puncture dominant narrative frameworks that essentialize identity through notions of ethnicity and tradition. This was an intercultural *meke* in many respects, including the creation, teaching and performing of the *meke*. The movements for the *meke* came from Fiji and from a number of different countries of Oceania including Samoa, Tonga, and Wallis and Fatuna. For example, the idea for one series of movements with her fists stacked, twisting in opposition to one another came from a dance done in Wallis and Fatuna where her mother is from.

My mother did this dance movement growing up that involves the actions of picking the coconut, halving it and then squeezing the juice out. But, it has been suggested that it is also like the wringing out of the grog [*yaqona*] for the grog ceremony. When teaching Canadians who don't speak Fijian we called it the salt and pepper move. That was the easiest way for them to learn, by describe the actions in terms that Canadians would understand.¹⁹⁸

Through this Canadian *meke*, dancers who are from a wide range of backgrounds of descent express meaningful feelings and movements that shift as they migrate and interact in relation to bodies in diaspora. As an intercultural group, they bring their own

¹⁹⁸ *Meke* choreographer in conversation with the author Vancouver, B.C. January 2012.

unique experiences to the movements, sensations and affects they communicate through *meke*. Nevertheless, despite this intercultural outreach, certain divisions and boundaries are maintained. In their expression of Fijianness as traditionally *iTaukei* and Christian they are also distancing themselves from the primarily Hindu Fijian diaspora in Canada.

Based on my encounter with Lavonne's *meke* for a Vancouver church fundraiser, I add to my earlier experiences in Vancouver and Fiji to argue that it is through affects such as *loloma*, joy, happiness, and *bula* that *meke* practitioners reach towards inclusion, security and recognition in Canada. In this regard, Fiji-Canadians perform a Fijianness that aligns with discourses of Canadian Multiculturalism that treats culture as bounded with homogenous ethnic groups with a common geographically situated origin. In this approach to "ethno-cultural" groups, culture is not interconnected or melting together but living side by side in a harmonious mosaic (Cassin, Krawchenko and VanderPlaat 2007, 8-9). In order to situate themselves into this multicultural mosaic, the dancers perform Fijianness as "traditional," *iTaukei*, and Christian. In doing this, although not necessarily their intention, they reify a separation between Fijians in Canada, making Christian *iTaukei* the legitimate source of Fijian identity. The *meke* performs not the varied and complex intercultural influences of Fijians of Indian descent in Fiji and its Canadian diaspora but, rather, a Fijianness that re-asserts the power and dominance of Christian *iTaukei* for new purposes of inclusion and recognition in Canada's multicultural mosaic.

In Canada, the performance of Fijian "tradition" is deployed to diverse ends. Some reject Fijian traditions such as *meke* for their perceived connection with "devil

worship,” and as a political resistance to the long-standing hegemonic formations of power in Fiji. However, rejecting traditions in Canada disrupts the goals of Fijians who, in striving towards the expectations and conventions set by Canadian discourses of Multiculturalism, want to preserve and share with other Canadians a particular notion of Fijianness rooted in the idea that *iTaukei* traditions, culture and ethnicity are homogenous, cohesive and legitimate. As the following example shows, *meke*, in its presence and absence from Fijian community events, plays a key role in re-negotiating Fiji’s past and present political and religious realities while negotiating new connections and relations in Multicultural Canada.

Two Fiji Days

While it is evident that a re-negotiation of identity in Canada is generating new and emergent intercultural identity articulations enacted by and reflected in *meke*, Fiji’s political tensions resulting from the past colonial system of indentured labour take on a haunting quality as they continue to be affectively embodied in the Fijian community in Vancouver, which has grown significantly due to the military coups. In particular, in the presence of one another, the two Fiji Day festivals I encountered provide evidence that the constructed and politically divisive ethnic groupings established during British colonial rule in Fiji and explosive in post-independence nationalist politics continue to haunt the bodies, movements, and sensations of Fijian migrants in Canada. This became evident initially during two moments that indicated an affective tension resulting from this history I could not ignore. These were moments that showed an intensity of feeling

on the part of the Fiji-Canadians of Indian descent. The first was when I was told explicitly not to talk to two “native” *iTaukei* Fijian men about their withdrawal from performing *meke* at the Fiji Day Festival organized by the individual with whom I was speaking. The second was when I was looked straight in the eye and told how the 1987 coups felt. With his fist slamming down hard on the table between us he said “they stabbed us [Fijians of Indian descent] in the back! But, in Canada, everything is good, we are all just Fijians now.”¹⁹⁹

This sentiment that the ethnically divisive politics of Fiji do not exist in Canada was echoed by many of my interviewees in Vancouver and Vancouver Island. They explain that in Canada there is no such thing as “native” Fijian or “Indo” Fijian, everyone is just “Fijian.” However, a point of friction that results from the recent addition of a second Fiji Day festival in Vancouver becomes apparent to me the moment I begin to connect with the Fijian community there. It comes in the form of what is communicated by my consultants as frustration, anxiety and stress and in the form of marginalizing one another.

The first Fiji Day festival I learn about has been an annual event for the last ten years. The primary festival organizer, who self-identifies as being of Indo-Fijian descent, explains that the festival aims to connect with multicultural communities in Vancouver by, for example, beginning the festival with an international parade. However, footage of

¹⁹⁹ Member of Fijian Diaspora, in discussion with the author, Vancouver, B.C., August 2011.

the festival that he shares with me from 2009 and 2010 reveals primarily “Indo-Fijian” programming with a primarily Indo-Fijian audience. The “native” Fijian programming is minimal in comparison, reduced to a brief *kava* ceremony and few *meke* dances performed by one dance group created and led by *iTaukei* Fijians based in Vancouver. When I ask about this *meke* group performing, there is a noticeable affective tension coming from my consultant when answering. My consultant tells me it is “native” Fijians from this group who have been criticizing his Fiji Day festival, and they have since withdrawn from his festival and started their own Fiji festival with primarily “native” Fijian programming. Suddenly, the ethnic divisiveness I am witnessing begins to contradict the earlier sentiment of “we are all just Fijians in Canada” which is now a much more complicated sentiment. This point of friction reveals a point of contact or affectively felt encounter indicative of a haunting. It rubs away at the image of Fijians living harmoniously as a community in Canada having left behind in Fiji a difficult and complex political history. Instead, stress, anxiety, sadness, and defensiveness comes to the surface as feelings rooted in memories of ethnic tensions in Fiji that continue to have a presence in the Fiji-Canadian diaspora in Vancouver.

Already on my list of groups to connect with, I then interview members of the *meke* group who are the source of the most recently added annual Fiji Day festival. They tell me they focus their festivities on rugby and “native” Fijian music by bringing a popular musical group from Fiji to Vancouver that produces a mix of more traditionally “native” music and dance with popular western music. Speaking with this group

becomes particularly important after I am told explicitly not to speak with them by my Indo-Fijian consultant who organizes the older of the two annual Fiji Day festivals. From this interview I learn that in 2011 they did not perform in the older Fiji Day festival due to a “scheduling conflict.” What was clearly an affectively intense situation for the first festival organizer I spoke with was treated defensively and as a non-issue for the organizers of the recently added festival, indicating a politically complex and divided situation.

This division is further made evident when I ask members of the *meke* group what is different about the two Fiji Day festivals, they answer that mostly Fijians of Indian descent go to the first Fiji festival. I ask why this is the case and they suggest that it has to do with the organizers being Fijian of Indian descent. They add that their festival attracts more native Fijians because it is being organized by native Fijians. The two Fiji festivals are attempting to connect with wider Vancouver communities, and wanting to express their love of Fiji; both, however, also perpetuate a particular divide with one geared towards affirming Fijian identity in Canada as Fijian of native descent, the other geared towards affirming Fijian identity in Canada as Fijian of Indian descent.

Not only is this a sign of Fiji’s political history haunting Fijians in Vancouver, this tension may also be exacerbated by Canadian discourses of multiculturalism that promote culture as being tied to ethnically homogenous groups. Canadian Multiculturalism starts with the premise that Canadian migrants arrive from countries that are culturally and ethnically homogenous. The categorization of people upon which

multiculturalism rests, fixes and re-defines the “naming of groups and identities that have come into existence over centuries of economic and political relations, as these have played out colonially and globally” (Urciuoli 1999, 295). Canadian Multiculturalism and some of the policies that emerge from the Act are less prepared to address more nuanced notions of culture and ethnicity and situations where the migrants have their own culturally particular and variant experiences. As emphasized by Bonnie Urciuoli, it is not the case that particular cultures come with particular types of people (1999, 294).

The affective encounter that emerges from these festivals would not be felt if one Fiji festival were to exist without the other. Although each tries to marginalize the other through a process of exclusion, as manifested in festival programming, the presence of tensions indicates that these attempts at erasure have been unsuccessful. These tensions rooted in the past act in spontaneous and unpredictable ways that cannot be controlled through festival programming. Indeed, the festivals, taken together, indicate two differing approaches to identifying as “Fijian” in Canada co-exist, complicating the ethno-cultural typology typical of Canadian multicultural policies and discourses. Despite these policies and discourses, that have the effect of separating people based on ethnicity, these ethnic divisions produce a uniquely experienced but relational affective encounter, becoming part of an emergent Fijian Diasporic identity in Vancouver.

In the next Vancouver Island case study, the three examples I explore point to ways in which this diaspora chooses to align itself with Canadian multicultural discourses while also contesting those discourses. This Diasporic group also contests a colonial

history of imposing nation-state boundaries through affective experiences that build a feeling of identifying with “Oceania.”

Vancouver Island “Oceanic” Dance:

Absorbing and Sustaining Difference Through Meke Iri (Fan Dance) at a Multicultural Festival

‘Oceanic dance’ that provides a means to re-negotiate identity amongst Fijians living in a Vancouver Island diaspora is a contradictory process. Closer examination reveals that, for complex reasons, particular differences in cultural beliefs and practices relating to nationalism, religion, history, and tradition are at times actively sustained, and at other times are used to absorb Fijians into broader local diasporic communities and pan-Oceanic identity. This can be seen in the Victoria-based folk festival where dances of the world are performed together to generate a feeling of multicultural inclusion in Canada.

The *meke iri* performed at the festival activates the felt dimensions of identifying as Oceanic whereby certain ethnic boundaries and divisions established by colonialism (Thomas 1997, 4) and Canadian multiculturalism are being actively blurred in order to emphasize shared cultural traits. This perspective is articulated by one of my consultants who explains

In Canada we have individual pride and a love of our Pacific Islands of origin and the dances that come from them. But, in Canada, we represent ourselves as a whole, not from separate Island nations. It’s the spirit we share – we are never

away from the dance, we all dance for the same reasons: entertainment, to make everybody happy... These things are very important to our people.²⁰⁰

Similarities that are shared, and with which individuals identify as Oceanic are oriented towards knowledge based on indigenous terms: a history of identifying as warriors (through the expression of aggressive manliness in war dances), a love of the ocean (described by my consultants as “our playground”), a communal sense of love and caring (such as the Fijian notion of *loloma*), and a sense of shared history vis-à-vis traditions of ocean navigation, shipbuilding, music, dance, food, and *kava*. Island differences are blurred in order to connect through these similarities, and through the sharing of affective experience that the dances offer in order to generate a feeling of support and strength for being part of a larger Oceanic community that is included in Canada’s mosaic.

Additionally, since Canadian multiculturalism still encourages ethnic ‘others’ to represent themselves as distinct cultures, static, bounded and homogenous, (as in ‘ethnic’ dance) rather than as diverse and transcendent (Marks 2000, 7), *iTaukei* Fijians on Vancouver Island build community by claiming the broader identification, “Oceanic” to shape their identity in Canada, choosing how they will deploy their ethnic ‘difference’ and use it to work to their advantage economically and socially.

In a performance by Pearl of the South Pacific Polynesian Dance Group at the folk festival in Victoria, emphasis on the Oceanic aspect of one’s identity serves to connect South Pacific Islanders to each other, and enable a connection to other Canadian

²⁰⁰ Rotuman member of the Oceanic Diaspora on Vancouver Island, in discussion with the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, August 2011.

diasporas on Vancouver Island such as the Greek, Polish, Ukrainian, and Spanish (all of whom are diverse). This performance situates Oceanic identity within the multicultural mosaic that is part of a Canadian discourse of multicultural inclusion. Mua Va'a who is the director, one of the key performers, and master of ceremonies for the group at the festival adopts a reified notion of culture that is supported by Canadian multiculturalism discourses. He explains that his group provides a "taste of" the cultures of the South Pacific, a "sample of traditions" through the dances. In doing this, he chooses to represent Pacific cultures in ways that demonstrate their distinctiveness. He seeks to share cultural understanding and generate an appreciation of "culture" with his Victoria audiences and "preserve culture" for future generations born in Canada of Oceanic descent. In addition to using dance performance as a way of building community for People of the South Pacific on Vancouver Island, the MC tells me in a post-performance interview²⁰¹ that the group's performances are a valuable part of contributing to Canada's multicultural mosaic.

Mua's approach to teaching and performing Oceanic dance is a part of his model for identity negotiation in Canada that celebrates difference within strategic sameness. To explicate, with each introduction of the dances, Mua calls out a greeting in the native language of the island from which the dance comes. In a celebration of multiculturalism, after a Tahitian dance, Mua calls out exclamations of joy and welcome from Greece, The Cook Islands and Fiji, "*Opa! Kia orana! Bula, bula vinaka!*" Being specific about the

²⁰¹ Mua, in conversation with the author, Victoria, B.C., August 2011.

language differences in the greetings used, is one of the ways he celebrates and maintains difference. He then introduces a Fijian *meke iri* (fan dance). Three Samoan men perform a *meke iri*, the movements for which were taught to Mua by a knowledgeable Fijian who was a former member of the group. Here we have a movement example of how difference is, at times, sustained and, at times, absorbed. The movements of the *meke* are in resonance with “traditional” *meke iri* actions in terms of the use of upright torsos with deeply bent legs showing a readiness and strength for life and combat; punctuating the rhythms of the music by quickly, and sharply pulling the tips of their Fijian fans up with every downbeat; and particular accents created through the feet pounding the ground and specific movements of the head, arm, and torso that are rhythmically accented to generate feelings of excitement and “aggressive manliness.”

The aggressive manliness performed in this *meke* is a migratory movement-based affect and a relational process by which power is locally and translocally arranged and governing. Many *iTaukei* I spoke to in Canada and Fiji told me that one’s ability to accent *meke* rhythms and movements in a certain way is “natural,” biological, and tied to ancestors who were powerful and aggressive masculine warriors. These “aggressive masculine” accents and rhythms of *meke* movements have become recognizable signs that mark bodies as coherently organized by race, sex, gender, ethnicity, and Fiji’s past. And, while bodies can never be reduced to such external signs, “systems of governance rely on these signs to compartmentalize the bodies in their midst” (Manning 2007, 113). In the *meke iri*, dancers generate bodies that fit into categories by performing the

naturalized rhythms and accents that are explained to be innately part of the male *iTaukei* body.

While difference is sustained through these particular Fijian *meke* movements and accents, in other ways, difference is blurred. In dynamic tension with these accents and rhythms of aggressive manliness are more fluid and playful movements described to me as “general Polynesian.” These gestures have been chosen to align with a broader pan-Oceanic identity. “General Polynesian” movements refer to a recent and widely adopted style of movement described by Vilsoni Hereniko as *rarotongan* (1991, 135). The Rarotongans brought the dance to Rotuma in the 1940s, and since then it has become influenced by Fijian, Samoan, Tahitian, Tongan, Maori, Fatunan, and Gilbertese dances (Hereniko 1991, 141). Movements for the Rotuman version of the dance called *mak Rarotonga*, for men involves moving “the knees in and out while standing slightly on tip-toe, and for the women to shake the hips from side to side, at the same time forming patterns with the hands and fingers” (Hereniko 1991, 135). The *mak rarotonga* dance style is popular across the South Pacific because it is considered fast, sensuous, fun and “allows for individual expression of feelings in a more explicit way – through the face, hands, hips and leg movements” (Hereniko 1991, 138). *Mak rarotonga*, as it has migrated to Vancouver Island is part of what makes Mua’s *meke* Oceanic to an extent blurring boundaries of “ethnic” difference amongst Pacific Peoples.

All of my consultants in Canada and Fiji made it clear that as a protocol of respect one cannot perform a *meke* without seeking the proper permission from the original

daunivucu or village Chief from where the *meke* came. The long distance between Fiji and Canada creates a barrier to performing these protocols of respect. So to make *meke* accessible for *iTaukei* Fijians in their Canadian diaspora, *meke* are choreographed by *iTaukei* in Canada who generate their own movements, and, in this example, in collaboration with the Pacific Peoples with whom they are dancing. This leads to *meke* that combine movements that are specifically associated with Fiji, with movements from many other Oceanic cultural influences, including the *mak raratonga* movements my consultants refer to as “general Polynesian.” The resultant blurring of differences is viewed as a necessary part of making the dances accessible to my consultants and the broader Oceanic community on Vancouver Island, as well as generating a feeling of connection to Fiji and “Oceania.” Through this Canadian *meke*, identities of the dancers are re-negotiated as they express meaningful feelings and movements that shift as they migrate and interact in relation to bodies in diaspora and local multicultural discourses and practices.

Fijian cultural and traditional differences are also absorbed into a broader Oceanic identity with the use of the same costumes for the various Oceanic dances performed. To explicate, in traditional Fijian *meke iri*, men would normally wear grass skirts. This costume is an important element of what makes *meke* ‘traditional’ for many of my *iTaukei* consultants.²⁰² However, in the Victoria-based folk festival performance, the

²⁰² Damiano in discussion with the author, Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

costumes used are the same as an earlier Tahitian dance, and include colourful grass fringe that hangs from below the knee and a blue knee length *sulu* with black tank top shirts. The costume signifiers of “tradition” and “authenticity” typically used in Fiji shift in the Canadian context, perhaps out of necessity and/or by choice, to signify a more general Oceanic identity.

Aligning the dances of Oceania more closely with Western values and aesthetics, in terms of flashy “ethnic” costumes, Westernized music, and altered movement content, the dances can be made profitable. However, the blurring of difference for the sole purpose of financial gain can cross a line that is perceived negatively by some members of the South Pacific community such as Mua. He feels that if dances lose all of their distinctiveness, they lose their authenticity, become mere tokens, and are assimilated into dominant North American values and aesthetics. In this case, the community expresses concern that their cultural practices are being watered down and lost to future generations born in Canada of Oceanic descent.

For Mua, minimizing certain differences for the marketing of Oceanic Dance does not necessarily dilute “culture.” He explains that the “professionalization of dances through a business model [including teaching and performing “traditional” dances of the Pacific], as opposed to just dancing casually, can work to bring business and passion together.”²⁰³ With this goal in mind, Mua works to generate dance performances that are

²⁰³ Mua, Director and Founder of Pearl of the South Pacific Polynesian Dance Group, in discussion with the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, September 2011.

aesthetically appealing to Canadian audiences but include a knowledge building component. He seeks to share and generate an appreciation of his understanding of culture with his Victoria audiences.

Through his contradictory negotiation of difference, Mua generates a sense of intercultural Oceanic community and identity and cultural inclusion in the multicultural climate of Vancouver Island. In his final introduction to the last dance from Samoa, Mua explains to the audience that his dancers are from Samoa, Fiji, Rotuma, and New Zealand and that they share in common a love of culture, dance, and songs. He explains that the final dance in their Greekfest programme is performed with “our next generation [adults with their children]. We never stop learning [from each other about our cultures]. There are not many of us now but we keep growing as a community.” His comments indicate that all members of his group are part of a community that identifies itself as ‘Peoples of the Pacific’ or Oceanic in composition. In addition to using dance performance as a way of building an Oceanic community, Mua’s efforts are, for him, a valuable part of contributing to an idea of his new home as a harmonious multicultural mosaic.

Absorbing and Sustaining Difference Through a Meke Wesi (Spear Dance)

In the following example of a *meke wesi* (spear dance), difference is again sustained and absorbed in complex and contradictory ways through music and movement in order to renegotiate Fijian identity on Vancouver Island. As I have already discussed, it is not surprising to see a *meke* done with individuals from a number of South Pacific

Islands. In this example, of the five men I interviewed who performed this *meke*, two are Fijian, two Samoan (both of whom have extensive experience performing Fijian *meke*), and one is Rotuman.²⁰⁴ The occasion for this *meke* was a *luau* fundraiser to bring a Fijian field hockey team to Canada.

The choreographed movement choices used in this *meke wesi* demonstrates how cultural differences were sustained and absorbed in complex ways to make the dance accessible to the Fijian diaspora while also enabling a feeling of cultural connection to their homeland of Fiji and the South Pacific more broadly. The choreography was done by one of the Samoan men who consulted with the other men involved in the dance to determine appropriate movements to go with the lyrics of the song. In a typical *meke* fashion, they used the lyrics of the song to influence the movements of the dance.²⁰⁵ The choreographer explained that he was specific about accenting the music with the movements in a particular Fijian manner but that the movements themselves were created based on a “general” South Pacific aesthetic. It was not uncommon for my consultants in Victoria and Vancouver to refer to dancing in a “general Polynesian” style. This generalized style of Polynesian movement (often including *mak Rarotonga* as mentioned in my previous example) is not considered ‘traditional’ but is still distinctively of the South Pacific. It creates a sense of community through blurring some differences

²⁰⁴ Although part of the Republic of Fiji, Rotuma is considered culturally distinct from Fiji.

²⁰⁵ Damiano, a Fijian *daunivucu*, in discussion with the author, Suva, Fiji, June 2012.

between cultures of the South Pacific while maintaining some cultural differences between Pacific Peoples and other Canadian communities of non-South Pacific descent.

When combined with distinctive *iTaukei* features described to me as a particular way of accenting the movements and rhythms, the inclusive quality of this generalized Polynesian style of movement, make it a powerful diasporic genre in terms of making *meke* accessible to Fijians and other Pacific Peoples on Vancouver Island. It is accessible in that anyone can do it without the need for training or formal permission from a *daunivucu*. This general Polynesian movement style (which draws from *mak Rarotonga*) alludes to and installs a specific articulation of identity that is inclusive of all who are participating in an event. This movement style, which might also be considered a form of shared Oceanic dance, is associated by my consultants, with expressions of joy, fun and playfulness and greater potential for personal expression of identity.

My consultants tell me that difference is absorbed by using Westernized Fijian music. For their spear dance, the five men chose to use a popular Fijian song entitled “Raude” by *Black Rose* for the occasion. This particular piece of music, and others like it, that contemporize Fijian chants by adding contemporary rhythms, are a popular choice for the Fijian diaspora in Canada for several reasons. The perception is that using this upbeat music for “traditional” dances incites fun and excitement in the dancers and the spectators, making it more accessible to Canadian audiences. Additionally, by using this contemporized *meke* music, my Methodist consultants explain they do not need to seek formal permission from the Fijian province in which the chant originated in order to

perform *meke* to it. Even in Canada these *iTaukei* feel compelled to follow traditional Fijian protocols of respect. My consultants explain that because the music band *Black Rose* already got permission to alter and contemporize the ancestral chant from the province of its origin, others do not need to seek permission to use the *Black Rose* version of the chant and choreograph to it. They explain that by adding a Western contemporary rhythm to the “traditional” chant, the music becomes less distinctively Fijian and becomes more generalized, allowing more people to dance to it and identify with it.

The use of this piece of music in this specific context provides an indicator of how Fijians choose to identify themselves in Canada and through what means. Using *Black Rose* music for their *meke* performance allowed these individuals to feel connected to the South Pacific, while feeling a more specific link to Fiji. At the same time, *Black Rose* as a musical choice also enabled this group to feel they were sharing a part of Fijian culture with Canadians in a way that other Canadians would feel a certain fun and excitement, thus enabling a sense of cross-community bridge building.

Absorbing Difference Through Affect

In the following example of performing a *haka* (traditional Maori dance), Pacific Peoples come together through powerful affects generated by dance to re-negotiate identity in Canada as Oceanic. This example, an important memory for many of the Fijians and South Pacific Peoples I interviewed who live on Vancouver Island, shows how feeling states are shared when dancing together and can become powerful affective experiences and memories that also generate Oceanic identity. The feeling of a pan-

Oceanic experience is not achieved by producing the “correct” visual representation of a cultural tradition, but through meaningful affective experiences that are simultaneously subjective and shared through dance.

In 2009, many of my Fijian consultants on Vancouver Island participated in a *haka* that was done as part of a fundraising event. The participants were 20-30 men from different Islands of the Pacific including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and Rotuma. According to one of my consultants, who was an organizer and participant in the event, while performing the *haka*, “there was an amazing spirit, like we were going to bring the roof down.”²⁰⁶ In this example, bodies that move dynamically in space come into contact with the communication and transmission of affect. By doing a *haka* together, Fijians and other Pacific Peoples generated affects as dynamically moving/changing aspects of Oceanic identity negotiation. There were no static and uniform culturally authentic experiences, and yet the experience of dancing together created a feeling of vibrant intensity through their shared movements in time and space; the experience was shared but still unique from body to body in singularity of experience. My consultants explain that even though the men all came from different places (each with their own “affective angle” (Ahmed 2010, 36) or history of relationally affective experiences) dancing the *haka* together created a feeling of the South Pacific as a whole and did not signify one

²⁰⁶ Rotuman member of the Oceanic Diaspora on Vancouver Island, in discussion with the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, August 2011.

particular culture. Rather, they were generating a new sense of culture and identity in diaspora through movement-based affects.

The participants all knew how to do *haka* from playing and watching rugby where it has become popularized and infused with a spirit of New Zealand nationalism (Murray 2000, 14). However, in this case, that particular nationalism widened to include all Peoples of the South Pacific. As a result, they were all able to get into the danced expression of what they termed “aggressive manliness.”²⁰⁷ In addition to connecting through a spirit of nationalism and South Pacific pride, they also connected through the shared experiences and memories of performing war dances; dances that have been culturally important across the Pacific Ocean for generations. According to one of the participants,

All South Pacific Islanders have war dances – it’s a common thread. So, we can all come together to do *haka* as a group. We all know how to bring into our dancing a fighting spirit. And, we know how to transmit that aggression to create fear and intimidation in the spectator. War dances are aggressive. For most of us, this aggression is portrayed by war paint on faces, facial expressions, body language, and the strength of the arm movements. So, [performing a *haka*] was mainly representative of the whole South Pacific.²⁰⁸

Dances that draw from warrior ancestry are shared between islanders of the South Pacific. So, although they are normally done in culturally specific ways depending on the

²⁰⁷ Focus Group with members of the Fijian diaspora living on Vancouver Island, in discussion with author January 2012.

²⁰⁸ Rotuman member of the Oceanic Diaspora on Vancouver Island, in discussion with the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, January 2012.

island of origin, on Vancouver Island, war dances act as a common thread that weaves South Pacific Peoples together, creating a feeling of shared experience and community.

This experience of performing a *haka* demonstrates that, in terms of generating a sense of identity as Oceanic on Vancouver Island, there is more going on than danced representations of a shared South Pacific culture. Rather, this performance of *haka* demonstrates sensation, affect and movement in the process of becoming cultural. In other words, by sharing the experience of doing *haka*, Oceanic identity was actualized in cultural meaning and significance through powerful feeling states that generated and were simultaneously generated by movement. This *haka* enabled the living rhythms and pulses of Pacific Culture to move and breathe as these Pacific Peoples of Vancouver Island themselves move and breathe life into a shared Oceanic identity. As one participant puts it,

With all of us, we have individual ties to where we come from but when we come together, as “people of the south pacific,” it is a very different feeling. It’s a feeling that we can’t explain. It is common to us.... It’s that we know our ancestors, rowed, and fished and played in our ancestral playground. And at one point it became a battleground but now we group together.²⁰⁹

This example of when ‘our dances,’ and not simply ‘mine’ and ‘your dances’ (Kaepler 2008b, 101), emerge from the Oceanic community on Vancouver Island shows how

²⁰⁹ Rotuman member of the Oceanic Diaspora on Vancouver Island, in discussion with the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, August 2011.

Fijians are resisting against the residue of divisive colonial attitudes. These Oceanic dances, as dances of the world, are implicated in global forces of migration and colonialism. The Oceanic diaspora on Vancouver Island shows how Pacific Peoples are contesting the residue of divisive colonial attitudes while deploying a strategic essentialism as a way to align with notions of Canada as a harmonious multicultural mosaic.

Conclusion

These case studies involving Fiji's Canadian diaspora suggest a shift in how bodies in and surrounding *meke* can be understood: not simply as corporeal, self-contained, fleshy and fixed by history, but incorporeal and porous - as actual flesh that integrates relationally with human and non-human bodies, past memories, and future potentials. Fiji-Canadian bodies are haunted by pastness but not entirely shaped by it. Rather, bodies are intermediate and indeterminate: constantly emerging as something newly experienced and uniquely felt with the capacity to communicate and share these emergent feelings and sensations locally and transnationally.

This chapter shows that Fiji and Canada are not culturally bound by their geography. Since culture is not geographically bounded (Clifford and Marcus 1986) but migratory, and notions of ethnicity are actively absorbed and maintained in multicultural contexts (Nagata 1974, 147), we can usefully ask what is involved in processes of maintaining and absorbing difference? My research demonstrates that strategic

deployment of culture and tradition coupled with the experience and expression of movement-based affects in and surrounding *meke*, are complex and contradictory processes (and not essences) involved in the experience of generating cultural identity in diaspora. These case studies show how dance amongst and destined for the Fijian diaspora in Canada is an affectively embodied and interactive negotiation of personal and social identity that problematizes simplistic notions of culture, ethnicity, and identity as fixed, continuous and cohesive.

Past colonial and post-independence tensions are actualized in affects and enter bodies to become part of them. However, even if contact is only momentary, these tensions create new feelings and sensations, generating a body that is constantly in motion and changing and emerging as something new. This is “generative theorics”: pastness in the act of becoming futural in the body. The affective impact created by traces of the past creates potential in the body (Massumi 2002, 31), generative of something not fixed by the past but emerging as a new articulation or re-negotiation of identity. As Ochoa has found in his work on the relationship between haunting and the affective body, ghosts always escape capture and, as a result, also escape representation (Ochoa 2007). Ochoa’s work allows me to consider the tensions I have encountered in my research to be such ghosts: indicators of possibilities in that they interact with bodies to create emergent and generative re-negotiations of identity that are full of endless possibility because they never settle in the form of representation. Instead ghosts and

specters remain part of an in-between identity negotiating process actualized by the affects that are felt/sensed in the body.

Chapter 6 - Performing Affect: The Performance of *Mekhe ni Loloma*

This final chapter migrates between Fiji and Canada to continue to demonstrate the vitality in communications of affect between Fiji and its Canadian diaspora. I start by unpacking the experience of performing *Mekhe ni Loloma* in Suva, in order to address some of the major issues this dissertation seeks to examine, namely: movement-based affects as relational intensities implicated in formations of power, “tradition,” appropriation, and *loloma*. Rather than understanding issues of power through reading dance as a representation of that power, I understand power through movement-based experiences and expressions of spiriting, governing, diasporing (migrating and haunting), and performing affects all of which form part of a generative matrix of the incorporeal dancing body. My own experiences of dancing in an informal performance for *iTaukei* artists of the Oceania Centre for Art, Culture, and Pacific Studies (OCACPS) at the University of the South Pacific, together with responses I received from scholars and members of the Fijian diaspora in Canada who have subsequently watched a video of the performance, help me to unpack the performance in relation to these issues.

This performance and the responses to it provide an example of sensation, affect and movement in the process of becoming cultural. Our bodies, performing “tradition” in a very non-traditional way, were not passive nor two-dimensionally fixed as signs of the past but generative of emergent meaning. Expressions that generated a sense of security

and insecurity are a part of how we shaped ourselves and the world around us: sometimes aligning with dominant beliefs and values, sometimes tearing into the fabric of that dominance. This performance and some of the reception to it are about sustaining and blurring difference in relation to multiculturalism and multiracialism (with ethnic or racial distinctions being preserved in a united and harmonious mosaic) and even interculturalism (with cultures merging, interacting and transforming) for Fiji and for Fiji's Canadian diaspora.

I begin by providing a detailed account of the performance with an emphasis on affective intensities that shape my memory of the experience. Next, I analyze these details, including my experiences in relation to responses of those who have observed the performance in Fiji and Canada. This includes working through what scholars and members of the Fijian diaspora in Canada shared with me after watching the *Mekhe ni Loloma* video. I conclude this chapter with some final thoughts about my project and future research based on gaps in my own project.

The Performance

The day before leaving Fiji we film Mekhe ni Loloma. Damiano wants Mekhe ni Loloma to be recorded so I can bring the Mekhe back to Canada to teach and share with the Fijian diaspora there and possibly turn the footage into a documentary in the future. He has set up a four-hour block of time to film the Mekhe in costume at the music centre at USP. He wants to film the Mekhe in costume because he believes wearing the costumes

will give the Mekhe more spirit and energy, a spirit and energy that he wants to share with Fijians in Canada. He also organizes three manu manu ni meke to dance Mekhe ni Loloma to ensure the highest level of spirit, energy, and mana is conveyed.

Damiano requests we pick up some Mekhe supplies that he says are going to heighten the spirit of the Mekhe. We stop at the flea market in Suva and the Fijian handicraft market to find these items. The supplies include: a particular kind of coconut oil that has been cooked with flowers to create a nice smelling oil used for covering the skin when performing meke, and Kajol (black eye makeup) to use as black face paint. Equipped with the material supplies Damiano believes are of key importance for performing meke, we then make our way to the music centre.

We enter a room that is being eaten by termites. Parts of the piano are missing; it is quickly becoming sawdust, becoming erased. All of the music and felt intensities that have come out of it, and all of the hands that have touched it and felt it will remain as affective memories even though the piano itself will disappear when the termites are finished with it. This is as Brian Massumi puts it “concrete is as concrete doesn’t” (Massumi 2002). The material here is as unstable as the ephemeral.

The costume designer for OCACPS generously takes time away from her work to help me get into my meke costume. Merelita is an openly gay transvestite. She tells me that she is from the Bauan province and that her family is a chiefly family. By telling me this, she is letting me know that her family has a high degree of power and authority due to their descent. She says that in the past her family would never do meke and only ever

watch others come and perform it for them as entertainment. Despite her family's chiefly status, she performs women's meke. And, I have had the pleasure of watching her perform twice. Piece by piece, she gathers together a costume for me. The costume includes: a thin piece of masi with a cream coloured cowry shell in the centre tied firmly against my neck, a black cotton and strapless tunic that ends below my knees with masi covering the black fabric from the waist down. Around my waist and my wrists I have vesa, an ornamental grass fringe held together and tied with magimagi or coir-sinnet (string made from plaited coconut fiber (Clunie 1977, 50)). Vesa, like the other costume pieces, is a meaningful symbol for Damiano of carrying one's iTaukei culture and heritage close to one's sense of self. As Merelita helps me dress, she tells me my costume is from Fiji's Lau group of Islands and that it is normally used for seasea (a women's standing dance). She says that I am the perfect height for the seasea and that shorter women usually do sitting dances. As she applies the Kajol below my cheekbones, she says that her mother knows everything about the face markings. Merelita tells me "forehead marking should be a rectangle if you are the son of a chief... For the ladies, they just have two circles below the cheekbones, to highlight the cheekbones and beautify the dancer. She applies the Kajol below my cheekbones but this does not make me feel beautiful.

As she helps me with the costume, I feel more and more like an imposter. I talk to Merelita about the way I am feeling. I explain that most iTaukei have told me that the moment they put their costume on the meke spirit just comes to them and automatically

enters their bodies. But when I put the costume on this spirit does not come to me. I just feel really confused, exhausted, and overwhelmed. I catch a glimpse of my reflection and see my washed out complexion. I look burnt out, tired, and like a dark shadow compared to the brightness and openness of so many iTaukei I have met. When I put the costume on, no feeling of a fighting spirit emerges. I feel eyes watching me that are curious about what I am doing and my intentions. I myself have no idea what my intentions are anymore. I am not always sure what the proper protocols are in Fiji and I constantly feel I am being inappropriate. Damiano tells me he wants me to be a part of recording this Mekhe because the Mekhe is a part of me. In his eyes, at least, I feel a sense of security. But, outside of his assurances, I feel inadequate and inappropriate in every way.

We start re-learning our parts while wearing the costumes, black face paint, and coconut oil so that the full spirit of the Mekhe will be communicated locally to those presently watching us, and transnationally to the Fijians in their Canadian diaspora who will one day be watching the film. While Damiano is keen to transmit experiences of incorporeal or ephemeral spiriting affects transnationally, the whole process is being watched by iTaukei artists from OCACPS, making our dancing also part of a local relational exchange in a kind of informal performance. While Damiano expects me to teach the men's fan, club, and spear choreography, he also expects me to perform the women's choreography. I assist Livai and Damiano in re-learning the choreography with my own physical memories. Ledua, the third manu manu ni meke arrives half an

hour later and begins learning the large volume of choreographed movement for the first time. Livai carries a fan, Damiano holds a club, Ledua wields a spear and fan, and, although I am more familiar with their choreography and it is in my muscle memory, I do the sitting women's part that is still relatively unknown.

Damiano tells me the gestural movements are less important than getting the energy right but I feel incapable of demonstrating the right spirit of loloma, bula, and joy. I can hardly smile and I am totally preoccupied with re-learning the choreography off my laptop computer. Normally, I would have reviewed the choreography to the point of it being part of my physical memory. However, I was unable to do this. Damiano had set the choreography on me for the women's part about a week after our car accident. At the time, my body was still in shock and I was feeling broken physically and mentally. I was unable to string together the movements he was teaching me and incapable of retaining the movement material long enough to record the movement phrases for whole verses at once. So, we decided to record the movements as soon as he set them, going through the chant not verse-by-verse but line-by-line. We proceeded in this way little by little. The result is that I never had the movement in my muscle memory like I did with the men's spear, club and fan choreography.

At the time of the Mekhe ni Loloma performance recording, I watch the choreography playing on the laptop and try, for the first time, to link all of the movement phrases together, quickly getting them into muscle memory enough that I can dance. I sort of manage to do it, but the look on my face is grim. I am supposed to be feeling and

expressing joy, strength and love, but I am anxious, disoriented, frustrated with myself, and uncomfortable. I dance sitting with the three manu manu ni meke at my back and a growing iTaukei audience of artists in front of me. Normally, as a performer, I would be actively trying to extend my energy to all those around me, while also paying close attention to my own experience of dancing to generate an intensity of expression and experience for all who are present. But this time, I am mostly occupied with just trying to remember the choreography. However, every once and a while, I can feel the intensity and the heat coming from the three bodies behind me. At these moments I feel connected with their energy, and I enjoy dancing to the chant.

Despite my discomfort and feelings of being an imposter, the artists who have been watching make us feel like part of their group. After we finish, one of the iTaukei artists who has been watching invites us to have some yaqona. Out of respect for the offering, we join for one bowl. We stop at one bowl because we are also aware that Damiano is not comfortable with drinking yaqona due to its relation with land spirit gods. As a gift of gratitude and a farewell, the artists in the room join together and sing “Isa Isa.” Their singing is very moving. “Isa Isa” has become a popular farewell song to sing to those who are departing Fiji. The timing is appropriate since we are leaving Fiji the next day. But “Isa Isa” is also a song my mother would sing to her children before bed at night.

The singers line up side by side and sing to us to recognize and thank us for our contributions to the Oceania Centre. Damiano sings too. I also sing back to them...

*Isa isa vulagi lasa dina
Nomu lako au na rarawa kina
Cava beka ko a mai cakava
Nomu lako au na sega ni lasa.*

*(Isa, Isa you are my only treasure
Must you leave me, so lonely and forsaken?
As the roses will miss the sun at dawning,
Every moment my heart for you is yearning)*

CHORUS

*Isa lei, na noqu rarawa
Ni ko sana vodo e na mataka
Bau nanuma, na nodatou lasa
Mai Suva nanuma tiko ga. [...]*

*(Isa Lei, the purple shadow falling,
Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow;
O forget not, when you're far away,
Precious moments at Suva Bay)*

We sing together, connected in that moment. But we are also not connected. One of the singers receives a text in the middle of the song and texts back. One singer finishes and then after realizing the others are still singing joins back in.

They sing to all of us to thank us for our contributions but they are largely singing to my husband, Aaron. They are recognizing and showing appreciation for his assistance

with the lighting design for their first major production in the new theatre, cataloguing the new lighting equipment (that is slowly going missing) and teaching a full-day workshop to train people on the equipment. As well, the singers are thanking me for teaching weekly contemporary modern-based dance classes,²¹⁰ and setting a piece of choreography²¹¹ for another production that is just about to open. Realizing the singers are singing to thank Aaron, as much if not more than me, pushes me out of my own relationships with this project and with Fiji to create space and awareness of Aaron's emergent relationships with Fiji and our new friends there.

If bodies generating spirit are receptive and agentic in that they openly sense and transmit felt experiences in relation to other bodies, what can the spiriting affects shared in and around the performance of *Mekhe ni Loloma* tell me about the dynamics of those relations? As much as I tried to feel the way Damiano had hoped I would feel, my own expressions of affect were not joyful, fun, or happy. I felt awkward, uncertain, uncomfortable, disoriented, confused, in shock and anxious. He wanted me to feel included but I just felt like I was stepping into a territory of appropriation I should not go. I felt that my dancing this *meke* (as non-traditional as it was) would break the hearts of many indigenous peoples around the globe who have had their dance practices destroyed by colonial processes. This discomfort, along with the technical difficulties I was having

²¹⁰ I was invited to teach modern/contemporary dance classes because the dancers are particularly interested in fusing traditions of Oceania with contemporary art practices that sometimes include Western ones

²¹¹ I set a piece generously donated by one of my dance mentors, neo-expressionist choreographer David Earle.

(with trying to re-learn the movements quickly from my lap top computer, my anxieties about losing my strapless costume and leaving Fiji the following day), kept me from just enjoying the dancing. I had to keep myself detached emotionally: I was secure so long as I thought of myself as an outsider. If I actually allowed myself to love what I was doing, I would be enacting a kind of violence as an appropriator.

Perhaps it was never Damiano's intention for me to feel comfortable or secure. As a First Nations Tsimshian scholar (from the Northwest Coast of North America) suggested, maybe he did not want me to feel comfortable or secure because he wanted me to know how it felt to have my sense of identity taken away as so many indigenous First Nations in Canada did with the colonially imposed residential school system. However, earlier conversations with Damiano taught me that unknowable and uncertain experiences form an important part of his political perspective. He is invested in trying to move Fiji and Fijians into new unchartered relations of power based on improving social justice and greater equity by widening the parameters of inclusion based on indigenous values and beliefs and not on colonially imposed concepts. He was not trying to Westernize *iTaukei*; he was indigenizing non-*iTaukei*. While acknowledging my Tsimshian friend's thoughts, I consider Damiano's politics to be steering our relations in a different direction. Through his uncertain and unchartered *meke* process (that I discuss in my chapter *Spiriting Affect*), he wanted me to feel like I was entering a new affective zone of possibility built on new relations of power and new ways of understanding one another through an *iTaukei* lens. However, he was not expecting me to be in this unknown, in

flux, and unsettled affective territory alone. This is a territory Damiano challenges himself and those around him to enter through his *meke*. For Damiano, struggling with a kind of present-day battle with the unknown requires readiness for change in life and for his dancers to move their bodies in relation to quick changes that are not yet charted. So, although the past was a factor in everything that brought us to that moment (including colonialism and my own family's connection to that history), there was no time for any of us to refer backwards, to figure it out, we had to move forward and respond to the challenge of not knowing what we were doing or dancing and dancing something anyway.

I have presented the video footage of *Mekhe ni Loloma* at two conferences, in two different ways, with very different reception. At the first conference, I did not properly situate my own relations to the project and left the scholars in the room deeply troubled by my dancing a “traditional” indigenous dance as a non-indigenous person. In this instance, I was trying to discuss the spirit and energy of the three *manu manu ni meke* in the footage while ignoring myself in the centre of the video frame. I thought that if I ignored myself, others would ignore me too. I could not have been more wrong. There have been many times when I wished I could somehow erase my presence from the video. The video would, in some ways, be much easier to explain if I was not in it. But, erasing myself feels dishonest. So, I attempted to present the material again in a second conference but this time I presented the material as part of my positionality in relation to my research project.

For the second conference I presented the video and I used a fifteen-minute paper to situate the *Mekhe* in relation to Anna Qumia, *Loloma*, and my family's colonial history in Fiji. One *iTaukei* scholar came up to me after and gave me a big kiss. She said I did a good job with the dancing and that she appreciated my sharing the story of Anna and wanted to help me locate her family. According to a Canadian artist who has worked internationally with indigenous artists, it was "gutsy" of me to show the video. Although she felt that my dancing was sufficiently personal and sanctioned by Damiano, she was not sure whether or not my dancing would sometimes be "read" as crossing a boundary into appropriation.

Reading dance as a text that represents social formations of power does not sufficiently expose what bodies are doing in relation to culture and identity shifts. Before I situated myself at these conferences, my presence in the video became "the elephant in the room." But the conversations that have resulted have been productive in helping me to understand my own relationship to the dance through dialogue with others. I will continue to experiment with showing the video but I have learned that it will always be necessary to situate the *meke* and my presence in it properly and not to take for granted that my audience will think of me as a person who has considered the negative and hurtful ramifications of re-colonizing indigenous dances through appropriation. The experience has showed me that "reading" dance as a text for understanding power dynamics does not capture the whole story. A larger understanding of power is made evident by attuning to relational affects. Whether or not the video of *Mekhe ni Loloma*

can convey the same relational intensities as its live performance is debatable. But in the case of these conferences, where scholars do not necessarily speak Fijian, especially the dialect of the *Mekhe ni Loloma* chant, showing the video requires the accompaniment of verbal dialogue to convey the intended meaning of the *daunivucu*.

For the Fijians and South Pacific Peoples in Canada with whom I have shared the video of *Mekhe ni Loloma*, my concerns about appropriation are offensive. In my own treatment of the video, I read my performance like a text so I can imagine how others might be viewing the video. The conclusion I draw is almost textbook: that I am abusing my power as a white privileged Westerner; and, that inserting myself in this *Mekhe* is tantamount to erasing the colonial history of appropriating indigenous knowledge in Fiji and around the globe. But I know it is not that simple. A knowledge of the affective intensities behind my project changes an understanding of the relations of power instantly. The group from the Oceanic community on Vancouver Island that knew my mother and knew me as a child explain that by worrying that I am overstepping my boundaries as non-*iTaukei* I am perpetuating a divide by thinking of myself as a “foreigner.” They explain that the act of separating myself from them and those in the video is where the violence lies, not in trying to be a part of the group. They say that they accept me because of my mother’s impact on their lives, and her help in building the South Pacific community on Vancouver Island; because of her interests and commitment

to understanding *iTaukei* Fijian healing practices;²¹² because of her early connection to Anna; and, now because of my own commitment to learning and writing about *meke* rooted in a commitment to reciprocating Anna's gift of love. They want me to accept myself, as they say they do, as part of their group. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, reading dance as a representation of relations of power creates a superficial account of those relations and may actually impose violence by creating secure divisions that do not capture the felt aspects of the relations that cross boundaries of insider and outsider. These relations are understood differently with an attunement to affect.

The political dynamics that relational affects in *Mekhe ni Loloma* reveal include a politics of inclusion based on difference and an uncharted future full of unknowns and uncertainty. Damiano, who told me once that my mother was *iTaukei* and that he would even include me in his definition, explained that the term *iTaukei* is really political right now. The term defined as indigenous owners of the land (Kaplan 1995, 139) is often used to create exclusive race-based categories. However, Damiano is politically invested in widening the definition of *iTaukei* to include all who are connected to Fiji through the land regardless of descent. In widening the definition of *iTaukei* to include all citizens of Fiji, and all who are connected to Fijian land through notions of *mana*, he subverts efforts to create categories of people based on race and "ethnicity" that exclude Fijians who are not officially *iTaukei* from a connection to the land. Instead, he widens the parameters of

²¹² My mother did her Masters degree in medical anthropology at the University of Victoria on *iTaukei* healing practices.

inclusion based on *iTaukei* notions for greater social justice in Fiji's uncertain "multiracial" future. It is for these political reasons that Damiano wanted me to dance *Mekhe ni Loloma* and to have me be part of the video, wearing the costumes and generating the spirit of *Mekhe*. He is trying to strengthen and widen *iTaukei* knowledge by bringing people into the definition of *iTaukei* rather than narrowing the parameters of those who feel included. In a sense, he is conducting an ontological re-centring based on *iTaukei* knowledge that shifts towards an ontology rooted in the incorporeal dancing body – a post-phenomenological body that emerges as it moves and integrates with bodies: both human and non-human; and non-present ephemeral realities such as memories of the past and future potentials. Like Damiano's political outlook, the response of Fijians and South Pacific Peoples on Vancouver Island to the video of *Mekhe ni Loloma* was to destabilize race-based boundaries of myself as "foreigner" or "outsider," and instead embrace my presence in the video based on relational affects of respect and kindly love.

Concluding Thoughts

After my time in Fiji and my three trips out to Vancouver and Vancouver Island, I am now in a position to answer some of the key questions I set out to explore. Why does *meke* provoke anxieties for some Fijians living in Canada and Fiji? How does *meke* produce embodied knowledge of Fijian identity in Canada and Fiji? And, how is that embodied knowledge communicated? What does *meke* expose about the Diasporic relationships between Fiji and Canada? How do performative expressions of movement-

based affect stabilize and destabilize identifications with the ongoing constructions of nationalism, ethnicity, and tradition for practitioners and audiences of Fijian dance? And, how can expressions of affect in and around *meke* expose the directionality of recent shifts in power and biopolitical governance?

As a “traditional” song-dance genre, *meke* is not reducible to a narrow range of rhythms, movements, costumes, and chants. While *meke* differ widely across Fiji from region to region in terms of costumes, movements, purpose, rhythms, and chants (harmonies, structures, and accompaniment), some *meke* are performed to generate a unifying sense of Fijian culture and heritage and national spirit. In Canada, *meke* I encountered are still described as traditional even though they include movements from across Oceania, Christian inspired movements, “generalized Polynesian” movements, “flashy” costumes, and popularized music. This multifarious reality supports my assertion that *meke* as a process for identity re-negotiation in Fiji and Canada is deployed to diverse ends. Although still considered a “traditional” practice, it is more accurate to describe it as an evolving form of dance that stabilizes and destabilizes culture and identity through affect by drawing aspects of its practice from the past to move towards future desires.

Meke in Fiji and Canada also shares a continuum of religious/political perspectives on whether or not the practice should be rejected or embraced. In Canada, evangelical or charismatic Christian Fijians are ready to reject traditional practices and protocols such as *meke* and drinking *yaqona* that they perceive to be linked to “devil

worship.” Other Fijian Pentecostals in Canada reject aspects of *meke* such as uncertain spiritual intensities that could be considered dangerously close to signs of “devil worship” or “witchcraft.” And yet they embrace other aspects of *meke* such as cup clapping the hands to express deep respect and gratitude or *vinaka vaka levu* as a way of generating a sense of belonging in multicultural Canada. For these Fiji-Canadians who also consider many Fijian traditions to be linked with devilish behaviour, *meke* is accepted as an important strategy for claiming “ethno-cultural” inclusion in Canada’s multicultural mosaic. Other Fiji-Canadians who are Methodist feel pride about their traditional practices and protocols. They consider these traditions to be important aspects of their Fijian culture and heritage. They want to preserve these traditions (such as war dances) for their Canadian-born children by expressing movement-based affects such as aggressive manliness and *loloma* in *meke* performances and dances of Oceania.

In Fiji, similar political and religious pressures are at work, creating a continuum of *meke* perspectives and practices. Growing numbers of evangelical and charismatic Christians express outright rejection of traditional practices such as *meke*. This rejection was made clear by our Assemblies of God host and hostess in the village. Some Christian *iTaukei* are willing to accept *meke* as part of their culture and heritage, but perform *meke* with new feelings and meanings attached to older choreographed movements such as with Damiano’s *meke* and *iTaukei* dancers and teachers at the Conservatorium of Music. In dynamic tension with these *meke* shifts and transformations, some Methodists want to embrace traditions and protocols including re-

learning and preserving past practices for future relations of power. The politics of safeguarding traditions are especially pronounced in the post-2006 coup context of multiracialism that, at least on the surface, threatens *iTaukei* preeminence.

Authenticity, as it is presented to international tourists and on the national stage for Fijians in Fiji, gives tourists and Fijians the impression that they are seeing *meke* and other “traditions” as original, real, and true renditions of *iTaukei* culture. These presentations and performances of tradition create the impression that authenticity is rooted in the past and disconnected from current political realities, city life, and global connections. While in Canada, racialized and visual markers of authenticity and tradition (such as costumes) shift to an affective engagement with dance; in *meke* for Fiji’s national stage and tourism, it is more likely to be considered inappropriate for someone who does not “look” like *iTaukei* from the past to do a *meke*. In these *meke*, dancers are made to look like stereotypes of *iTaukei* from the pre-Christian past. For example, dancers are asked to perform who have frizzy “traditional” hair, and not wavy, long, or brightly coloured hair. However, this is shifting in the wake of the 2006 coup. Dancers from the Oceania Centre performing *meke* for the national stage are less restricted by having to appear like “authentic” *iTaukei* from the past. *Meke* for the national stage in Fiji is now sometimes being blended with Bollywood style dancing to form “Bulawood.” But alongside these demonstrations of multiracial harmony and unity are clear divisions being sustained between *iTaukei* and non-*iTaukei* through the expressions of affect in *meke*.

Meke in Fiji for the national stage generates a controlled range of acceptable *iTaukei* attributes formed by notions of *iTaukei* from the pre-colonial past as either warring and aggressively masculine or as “happy native” full of love, generosity, and joy. Bodies and expressions that do not fit those parameters are excluded and stigmatized. Joy, peace, happiness, *bula*, and *loloma* have also entered the market economy through tourism – generating a “happy native” for national and international audiences. At the same time, aggressive manliness expressed through movement-based rhythms and accents in *bole* (war *meke*) such as *Teivovo* for Fiji’s national stage, governs an *iTaukei* identity for the future based on biologically inherited *iTaukei* warrior traits from the past. These movement-based expressions secure biopolitical arrangements that perpetuate conservative national *iTaukei* preeminence.

At the Oceania Centre for Art Culture and Pacific Studies, dancers enter indeterminate spaces in a context of biopolitical governance. I met *meke* dancers at the Oceania Centre who self-identified as “half caste” (part *iTaukei* and part European), having Indian descent, and as transgendered. These dancers sometimes struggled with trying to fit restrictive racialized and gendered definitions of *iTaukei* and are in search of intercultural relations that allow for greater freedom of expression through cultural merging, interaction, and transformation. They make apparent “[t]he fiction of cultures as discrete, object-like phenomena occupying discrete spaces” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992,7). Biopolitical arrangements based on firm categories of race and gender that Fiji

has long relied upon are implausible for these dancers who inhabit emergent thresholds in their danced expressions.

This research teases apart an essentialized link between identity and place by looking at *meke* as a process for how Fijians in Canada, who no longer link their identities with one place but with an interconnection or indeterminacy between spaces, sustain and blur differences. As Paul Gilroy (1993), and Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) have argued, the interconnection between spaces (such as Fiji and Canada) is itself a site of social change and cultural transformation. I examine examples in and around *meke* that maintain and blur difference through movement-based affects such as aggressive manliness, *loloma*, and *vinaka vaka levu* that migrate and haunt in diaspora. In addition, events divided by notions of race and ethnicity are haunted by migrations of the affective tensions and anxieties that have been the source of Fiji's past coups. Difference is strategically blurred and sustained to generate inclusion in Canada's multicultural mosaic in contradictory ways.

In Fiji and Canada I found Fijians anchored by affects associated with the perceived hauntings of the land spirit gods that are two-dimensionally associated with misery and misfortune, and past acts of war and cannibalism. The constant haunting reminders of the past are associated with expressions of uncertain feelings and intensities that are interpreted as negative, evil, or bad. These feelings/sensations indicate the presence of vengeful ancestor or land spirits. In opposition to these negative feelings that haunt, *iTaukei* I spoke with are in search of "good" Christian feelings that liberate them

from the past. Feelings of uncertainty are what keep some *iTaukei* striving for the securing and sanctioned affects that being a “good” Christian affords.

In the examples and cases I explore, the body is incorporeal: impacted by its material and ephemeral experiences. Incorporeal is not the opposite of the corporeal material flesh of the body but an aspect of the flesh that through movement relates and integrates with the world. Incorporeal bodies dancing *meke* experience and express relational intensities that affect others (causing others to feel/sense) while also being affected (feeling/sensing). Through an understanding of the body as incorporeal, the body is emergent through its relational intensities: always forming with new sets of perceptions and relations. In some instances, emergent bodies in and around *meke* sense towards feelings of capture found in expressions of *loloma*, *bula*, happiness, and generosity. These feelings can reify a securing biopolitical arrangement based on racialized boundaries between “ethno-cultural” groups: *iTaukei* express *loloma*, *bula*, happiness generosity and joy while foreigners are imagined to be incapable of these expressions due to their perceived selfishness. In other cases, emergent bodies in and around *meke* sense towards insecure feelings of *loloma*, *bula*, joy, generosity, and respect for difference that are less secure and certain due to processes and politics that are themselves unknowable with no pre-established outcomes or static biopolitical categories. Thus, sensing towards security and uncertainty is strategically deployed as a way of moving towards future relations of power with *iTaukei* preeminence on the one

hand, and greater democracy based on equity for all of Fiji's citizens regardless of descent on the other.

Deploying a method of attunement to affective intensities through my archival research and by observing, dancing with, and interviewing dancers gave me important insights into how movement-based affects such as aggressive manliness and *loloma* are relational to power. Power is not static: it governs while also emerging out of the movements of bodies. In this regard, *Mekhe ni Loloma* taught me a great deal about the notion of *loloma* in relation to power and how movement-based affects shift in meaning while migrating in time and space. The work of Thomas (1997) and Kaplan (1995) on *loloma* has given me many leads to follow. However, it is my own family archive of photos and memoirs that taught me to see *loloma* as complicated by colonialism and the British Empire's need for domestic workers who could love as part of their job. My experiences in Fiji showed me that *loloma* is also complicated by newer shifts with Christian charismatics and evangelicals who are rejecting communal village living due to its entrenchment in Methodist-chiefly authority. *Loloma* in these cases loses the communal quality of giving love without question of return. *Mekhe ni Loloma* and other experiences in Fiji taught me that *loloma* is entering new post-independence territories of reciprocity that include translocal diasporic migrations, and the market economy with tourism.

The experience of participating in the creation of *Mekhe ni Loloma* also taught me a great deal about the transmission of meaning through movement-based affects with

regard to *mana* and the expressions of accents and rhythms that were explained to be naturally inherent in the *iTaukei* body. I learned about common expectations about the physicality of *meke*: the muscularity of the movement, the speed and sharpness, the importance of certain accented rhythms and movements such as the head tipping sideways, and movements of the spear. Through my own awkwardness in trying to accomplish these accented rhythms and movements I gained insight into their importance for the *iTaukei* and non-*iTaukei* I spoke to in terms of expressing the body as “natural” or biological *iTaukei*. The “natural” *iTaukei* body is perceived to be linked to the land through *mana*. *Mana* here is nominalized as a spiritual power coming from God infusing the land and *iTaukei* with that spiritual force.

Mekhe ni Loloma also taught me about a particular Fijian notion of *mana* as a verb and inspired my thinking about the relations between energy, spirit and affect. *Mana* in the verb sense is agentive in that individuals can generate *mana* through the effectiveness of their expressions in conveying the deeper meanings of a *meke*. For *mana* to be enriched, the true spirit of the *meke* must be expressed through the energy, movement, and lyrics of a performance. This verb form of *mana* allowed me to consider expressions of spirit in *meke* performance as an agentive process of emergence with material consequences and uncharted outcomes. Although the verb form of *mana* may have faced a degree of erasure by the impacts of missionaries (Tomlinson 2006) some *iTuakei* involved in *meke* production still consider *mana* in its verb form of bringing-into-existence through spiritually powerful speech and action, which, in my understanding,

includes a kind of human, incorporeal agency to effect the material world through immaterial expressions.

My research is part of the new trajectory of embodied research that Sally Ness refers to in her chapter “Being a Body in a Cultural Way.” This is a trajectory that moves beyond self-contained perception to explore non-present realities of the body, including past histories and memories, imaginings and future potentials (Ness 2004). Approaching my research with non-present realities of affect shows that *meke* is part of a political tug of war that involves past and present issues of religion, ethnicity, gender, race, and power. Shifting the premise upon which dancing bodies are theorized from the inscribed-upon corporeal body to the incorporeal body full of memories and affects that ignite the body in movement allows for an unknowable, indeterminate, and generative body. When this is the basis upon which bodies are understood, it is not so easy to group people into homogenous ethnic groupings based on skin colour, or perceived race or ethnicity as in representational approaches to the body and culture.

Dissatisfied with theories of the body and culture that pacify the body’s agency by prescribing past signifiers and destinations such as Susan Foster’s “bodily theotics” (1995) or discursive practices that are rooted in outcomes, results and effects, I apply theories of incorporeality rooted in memories and affects to a dynamically moving/changing, becoming body in order to imagine a generative body or “generative theotics.” Rather than focusing on culture and identity as purely representational, I start with sensation and movement in the process of their becoming cultural and actualized in

cultural meaning and significance. This generative body resists codified representation, signification, and unified meaning because these ways of reading the body fix the body to pastness. A “generative theoric” engages with bodies that have relationships to the past but change and emerge in the present to produce unpredictable affects that have direction without destination. The generative body materializes these affects as dynamically moving/changing re-negotiations of identity and culture. In this sense, there is agency in movement-based affect through its generative un-fixing of what is taken for granted conceptually.

Going forward in my research plans, I would like to continue to pursue a greater understanding of the verb form of *mana* in relation to *meke*, and to make greater contributions to theorizing its relation to *meke* as not just a song or a dance but a song-dance. While this will contribute to a conversation about Fijian *mana*, it will also contribute to my own intervention in dance studies literature. Locating power and agency in the ephemeral, incorporeal body complicates dance studies literature that dismisses writing about ephemeral experiences as simply romanticizing the dancing or de-politicizing the dancing body. Instead, I aim to show that the ephemeral (such as *mana*) is part of the corporeal and the political circumstances and agency of the dancing body.

My writing about *meke* in relation to power, politics, spirit, and migration has emphasized the need to understand the ephemeral aspects of the body. But this is just a beginning, and a mere step towards more discussions, writing and research on *meke*. Fiji is currently preparing for their first democratic elections since 2006. The most recent

constitution appears to address much of Fiji's past systemic racism (Fiji 2013). While in the past Fijians of Indian descent have migrated to Canada to escape systemic racism, some *iTaukei* are now migrating to Canada hoping for refugee status because of Bainimarama's attacks on chiefly-Methodist authority. I hope this dissertation inspires a dialogue about the sociopolitical dimensions of Fiji's growing Canadian diaspora and the important insights exposed by *meke*. There is relatively little written on *meke*, and there is nothing, to my knowledge, written about *meke* in Canada.

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