

MAPPING CONTEMPORARY 'ORI TAHITI DANCE IN VIRTUAL FORMATS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to contribute to understanding how *'Ori Tahiti* (Tahitian dance) occupies particular online spaces and fosters particular imaginaries of Tahiti and Oceania more broadly. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence and role of online platforms in creating and maintaining specific communities and imaginaries are more visible than ever. In the context of this present, highly digital cultural moment, this thesis seeks to explore the dynamic place of Tahitian dance groups online and connections made between the participants of this space and how it has transformed. It will investigate representations of Tahitian dance circulating through multiple social platforms, particularly within the United States, and the emergence of Tahitian dance competitions worldwide in an online format during the COVID-19 pandemic. This thesis concludes that digital platforms have become contemporary sites for mediating Tahitian dance communities, including for *Mā'ohi* practitioners in their home islands, for *Mā'ohi* in diaspora, and diversely positioned non-*Mā'ohi* practitioners also engaged in these spaces.

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## **PREFACE: MY CONNECTION TO OCEANIA AND DANCE**

I am a Filipino woman with no direct relation to Tahitian genealogy; however, I have been involved with Pacific Islander cultures and communities since I was introduced to a Pacific Islander organization in high school. I participated in an organization called Running Start, a program where high school students attended college in high school. In this program, I participated in both Iwi Pono and Asian Pacific Islander Student Union to understand the Pacific Islander culture, history, language, and experiences. I attended the University of Washington (UW) for my undergraduate studies and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Medical Anthropology and Global Health. This degree integrated cultural, medical, social, and biological anthropology into addressing and understanding global and local health issues. This program has also grown my interest in the Pacific. During my time at UW, I continued to be involved in the culture through Polynesian Student Alliance (PSA). This club allowed me to mentor Pacific high school students, learn more about the different Pacific Islander cultures, and participate in cultural dances. One of my favorite moments was sitting in a circle on a traditional Sāmoan mat while we drank kava and talked stories. In addition, we influenced Pacific high school students through workshops about educational success and applying for college. In this event that we call “Poly Day,” we also host performances of all the different islands. For Poly Day, I was strongly involved in the Tahitian dance classes.

I graduated from UW in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts in Medical Anthropology and Global Health due to my appreciation of cultures and people. This degree integrated cultural, medical, social, and biological anthropology into addressing and understanding global and local

health issues. This major taught me how to build rapport and see health issues occurring worldwide effectively. It has also grown my interest in the Pacific.

My involvement in PSA caused me to join “Te Fare O Tamatoa,” a non-profit organization that focuses on spreading awareness of Tahitian culture. I joined this organization because I love to dance. Tahitian dance helped me stay focused and relaxed during school and my job stresses. I was an active participant as a dancer and performed in an annual showcase. I also joined Huraiti Mana in June 2019 and have performed Hula and Tahitian dance with this group. My passion for Tahitian and Hawaiian culture grew in these organizations where I visited Tahiti in 2019, where I took percussion classes, himene classes, and dance classes. I appreciated that Tahitians bring cultures together. For example, a shared experience at the conservatoire involved singing with other dancers from Mexico, Japan, France, and America. This experience allowed me to have lifelong connections with other dancers from different countries and provided a space where we could enjoy each other’s company and learn about the culture. Along with my studies, the trip also heightened my interest in Pacific Island Studies tenfold and left me wanting more. After discussing with Dr. Keolu Fox, I was encouraged to think about graduate school. These experiences caused me to move to Hawai’i to get my MA in Pacific Islands Studies.

Before moving to Hawai’i in August 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the world to go into a lockdown in March 2020. Due to this, my Tahitian dance practice was moved to a digital space, as well as other Tahitian dance groups all over the world. Usually, Tahitian dance groups do not allow dancers to participate in more than one dance organization. However, the restrictions of digital space have allowed dancers to explore and participate in dance courses elsewhere. While I was still participating in dance classes with my dance group, I started taking

online Tahitian classes from dance teachers from France, Tahiti, Japan, California, Las Vegas, Florida, and the United Kingdom. Taking these classes has allowed me to learn different dance styles and connect with other dancers. When Tehani Robinson hosted a free online dance class that brought over 700 participants to her zoom meeting to practice, I realized that the Tahitian dance space extends beyond the physical realm to a digital one. This new phenomenon has piqued my interest in understanding Tahitian dance online.

Now that I am here in Hawai'i pursuing my MA in Pacific Islands Studies, I am still vigorously participating in a Tahitian dance group called: Tahiti Mana. I dance with them two times a week. Although I am not actively participating in the digital space due to my schooling, the connections I have made through dance during the pandemic are ongoing. These ongoing connections through dance have encouraged me to study Tahitian dance in the virtual space.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a summary overview of the history of Tahitian dance from pre-colonial times to the present, including the critical suppression and trauma of the loss of dance during colonial times. Next, it briefly establishes how Tahitian dance re-emerged in the 20th century, particularly in the wake of de-colonial movements towards cultural renewal and pride beginning in the 1970s. Finally, it provides a baseline for the different types of traditional festivals in which Mā'ohi dance is annually articulated. Then discusses the increase of tourism leading to the rise of economic globalization of Tahiti and Tahitian dance, frames the increasing popularity of Tahitian dance globally, and how the popularity led to the virtual globalization of dance competitions as a notable feature of the COVID-19 pandemic era.

### *Tahitian Dance History*

*'Ori Tahiti* (Tahitian dance) is a culturally specific, deeply embodied performance art from the island of Tahiti that is a comprehensive practice by the locals and plays a crucial role in their identity. Tahiti is an island in French Polynesia, located in the Central South Pacific. French Polynesia has 118 islands and atolls divided into five archipelagoes: Australs, Gambier, Marquesas, Society, and Tuamotu. The islands are grouped into five subdivisions: the Windward Islands, Marquesas Islands, Austral Islands, and the Tuamotu-Gambier (Andréfouët & Adjeroud, 2019). The island Tahiti is located in the Society archipelago, comprising the Windward and Leeward Islands. Windward and Leeward Islands are composed of 14 islands. The Windward Islands consist of Maiao, Mo'orea, Mehetia, Tahiti, and one atoll, Tetiaroa. The Leeward Islands are Bora Bora, Huahine, Maupiti, Raiatea, and Tahaa, Tupai, which include three atolls: Mopelia, Scilly, and Bellinghausen (Traxler, 2011).

The initial European contact occurred in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan, followed by the Spanish, British, French, and Dutch between the 1770s. Around the same time, the islands' political structures deteriorated (Aguon et al., 2019). Approximately four decades before French colonialism, British protestant missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) began their religious work in Tahiti and the Marquesas in 1797. The art of Tahitian dance was discouraged and almost erased the dance altogether. In two decades, these missionaries converted the occupants of Tahiti and neighboring islands (Saura, 2015).

In 1819, all dance and costumes were banned entirely in Tahiti. The missionary presence transformed the traditional clothing and costumes. As a result, some indigenous people accepted Christianity, while others rebelled against it. Those that rebelled were labeled as heathens and forced to convert. These transformations were caused, sometimes with violence (Traxler, 2011).

Dance performance has always played a crucial role in Tahitian culture. Once Christianity was brought and forced into Tahiti, the dance was replaced with singing hymns for over a century. Missionaries considered revealing the body as heathen and desired islanders to cover their bodies (Traxler, 2011). As a result, missionaries encouraged Tahitians to wear missionary dresses to have Tahitians dress more modestly. In addition, the missionaries discouraged tattoos (Gurley, 2015, p. 7). The increase of protestant religion has caused an alteration of Tahiti's ideologies and cultural practices. The transformation of the cultural practices is especially true for the leaders, and it forcefully changed the identities of those residing in Tahiti.

The dynasty Pomare is a royal family of Tahiti that came from the island Raiatea (Smith, 1893). Pomare, under the influence of France, took over Tahiti and ruled it from 1793 to the final settlement of France in 1842. The ruling family signed a [Treaty] with France, which put an end

to royalty in Tahiti (Newbury, 1980). Once Pomare II converted to Christianity in 1815, the external markers of identity, including language, flower costumes, tattoos, nudity, dance, traditional knowledge, and rituals, were forbidden, altering the indigenous lifestyle (Newbury, 1980). In 1819, the Pomare Code, influenced by Christianity, restricted music, dancing, tattooing, and other forms of expressive culture (Traxler, 2011). Although other religions arrived in French Polynesia within the 19th century, Protestantism is the majority religion practiced in French Polynesia (Saura, 1991).

Madeline Mou'a is known for re-introducing Tahitian dance after starting the first professional Tahitian dance group called “Heiva Tahiti” in the 1950s. Mou'a revived the interests in Tahitian dance and costumes, which had been romanticized in the colonial written accounts by Europeans and concealed through the removal of oral traditions and culture (Traxler, 2011).

In the early 1960s, dance was influential in the global marketing of tourism in Tahiti (Kahn, 2011, p. 148). When Faa'a international airport was built in 1962, it brought tourists from all around the world. The revival of Tahitian dance, music, and costumes attributes to the increase in tourism. The building of this airport provided more accessible access to Tahiti and movement across islands (Traxler, 2011). When hotels were developed, dance viewing became an expectation from tourists because Tahitian dance was the most advertised (Kahn, 2011, p. 152).

In 1966, nuclear testing was started, which brought the French military to the island to assist with infrastructure supporting the testing. As a result, numerous jobs were created, bringing Tahiti a growing economy and an increase in politics, city development, and interactions with several cultures (Moulin, 2016, p. 137). In addition, the new global access in



Tahiti provided opportunities for dancers to entertain visitors and travel abroad (Moulin, 2016, p. 137).

When Tahiti gained more independence in 1977, the Heiva i Tahiti became a celebration of Tahitian culture where traditional sporting practices, Tahitian dance, and music were performed. This event was meant to take back Tahitian's cultural practices that were forbidden when converting to Christianity (Gurley, 2015, p. 30).

In the 1980s, Tahitian costumes transformed when Cook Islanders visited Tahiti and brought hip belts made from *kiri'au* (stripped tree bark). These hip belts are woven together to emphasize and define the movement of the hips when dancing (Traxler, 2011, p. 4). Georgina Keenan-Williams claims that her dance group influenced *kiri'au* belts. Today, Tahitian dancers still wear this style of hip belt, and it is famous worldwide, especially in the United States, Mexico, Japan, and Europe (Traxler, 2011, p. 48). During the 1980s, the world followed a fitness trend, which led Tahiti's fitness centers to offer dance classes as a fitness activity. Around the same time, the Conservatoire Artistique was opened and taught Tahitian dance and music. In 1985, the conservatoire transformed. They developed a more organized sequence of courses and curricula that spanned across years (Moulin, 2016, p. 138).

The 1990s to 1995 were critical for the dance community because of the dance transformations and their spread within the community. These changes brought challenges to dance directors, elders, and cultural officials. For example, the youth began demanding new dance movements to be taught by the conservatoire. These requests were complex for the older dancers because they were not trained to teach new moves and felt alienated from their culture for sticking to the older ways of dancing (Moulin, 2016, p. 140).

To further the discussion on the transformation of Tahitian dance, the *Les Grands Ballets de Tahiti* is a group that performs dance and music to entertain the Western audience instead of the local population. This dance group gained the popularity of international audiences in the 2000s, where they have performed in several musicals. The intention to perform for a global audience has influenced and, in some cases, lost the traditional meaning of Tahitian dance (Colson, 2014, 11-12).

Tahitian dance today has a role in contemporary community celebrations and gatherings, such as weddings, receptions, visiting groups, and public dedications. However, Tahitian dance is well known in the context of entertainment for tourists. Other contexts that the dance can be found is in the expression of political views and activism (Kinslow, 2005p. 3).

### *Tahitian Dance and Festivals*

*Heiva* are cultural celebrations or festivals held in French Polynesia throughout July. There are canoe races, 'Ori Tahiti (Tahitian dance) competitions, drumming competitions, *himene* (hymn) performances, fashion shows, beauty pageants, and craft fairs during this event. Those participating in the Heiva have the opportunity to present, compete, and join in Mā'ohi cultural practices (Casey, 2016).

In the modern-day, Heiva in the diaspora has been held in locations like the United States, Japan, Mexico, and Paris as dance and drumming competitions. Although these Heiva in other countries are not Heiva i Tahiti, they share some common traits and refer to it as inspiration. For example, dance competitions in the Heiva i Tahiti are choreographed, while Heiva outside of Tahiti is an improv dance. The latter encourages creativity and involves a lot of practice with randomly arranged drum beats (Casey, 2016).

In Tahiti, the dancers will compete but do it for fun and not compete to win. The Mā'ohi identity and representations of self are found through communities inhabiting this space. These events are ways for Mā'ohi to maintain their identity when they live away from their homeland. Overall, Heiva in the diaspora is a place for Mā'ohi to gather and share their culture as a united Mā'ohi practice. Diasporic Mā'ohi has the adaptability to relate to their homeland because these gatherings allow them to come together and celebrate cultures that they remember (Casey, 2016). Despite being in the diaspora, Mā'ohi will continue to connect and express their identity and culture through dance.

The spread of Mā'ohi culture in the West has been due to 'Ori Tahiti, Heiva, and Fête (cultural celebration). A majority of Mā'ohi in the diaspora will participate in dance troupes abroad. The Heiva in Tahiti contains the best singing, live music, and dance groups from all over French Polynesia and corresponds with festivities. Along with the competition in Tahiti, Mā'ohi in the diaspora will gather in Montreal (Mā'ohi students typically choose to study at universities that speak French in Quebec), Paris, Los Angeles, and Honolulu (Bennett, 2019). To keep their identities, Mā'ohi communities negotiate the distance from their homeland through these gatherings and rerouting their genealogy.

There are debates on whether Heiva is a French event because the festivities are often associated with French independence. The following names are in the French language: *La Fête Nationale* or *La Bastille*. The Heiva has a 108-year history of Tahitian celebration and has become more Tahitian over the years. Previously, Heiva used to have both French and Tahitian activities, and now is more focused on Tahitian culture, and the language of the Heiva is spoken primarily in Tahitian. From a Mā'ohi identity, the Heiva makes them more aware of their past and the importance of the future. The past and the future demonstrate this culture in the

transformation of the Pacific (Stevenson, 1990). The understanding of Mā'ohi past, present, and future would acknowledge the importance of finding the roots of the Mā'ohi people so that the past can connect with the future. Connection for the Mā'ohi people has been made possible through the expression of their culture through performance. Thus, the spread of Mā'ohi culture has been a valuable way to connect despite diaspora through areas in French Polynesia, and abroad (Casey, 2016). Performance has been a fundamental part of maintaining an identity in a homeland.

### *Economic Globalization of Tahiti*

Globalization has several definitions but is mainly a discussion about the state of the world and the expansion globally (Firth, 2000, p. 178). Another explanation is the increasing integration of economies, societies, and civilizations (Hjalager, 2007, p. 437). Firth (2000) states that the Pacific Islands went through two periods of economic globalization. The first lasted around the 1850s to 1914. The economies of the Pacific Islands were starting to be integrated into the global economy. When colonizers arrived in the Pacific Islands, their ideologies were forced onto the Pacific people and thus created a global economy (Firth, 2000, p. 181). Globalization of the Pacific Islands combined with colonialism is meant to benefit the colonial powers (Firth, 2000, p. 184). The second globalization in the Pacific is dated around the 1970s, when aid donors provided a lot of funding to the Pacific Islands (Firth, 2000, p. 185).

The globalization process is mainly a result of travel and tourism (Hjalager, 2007, p. 438). Globalization, along with modernity and mythology, has caused people to perceive Tahiti as a myth, which tourist companies widely advertise today. European visitors considered Tahiti as a paradise and a seductive destination (D'Hautesserre et al., 2005, p. 202). This myth comes

from the romanticized ideologies told by European visitors to Tahiti (Kahn, 2011, p. 4). When Tahiti's exotic ideology and accounts were circulated in Europe, this caused missionaries to arrive on the islands to convert the people. The presence of missionaries is what caused colonialism to progress and strengthen (Kahn, 2011, p. 39). This progression of colonialism is intertwined with globalization and completely transformed Tahiti.

The myth has stayed alive due to the imagery produced of Tahiti representing Tahiti as a paradise. Tourist companies have carefully created imagery related to blue lagoons, exotic men, seductive women, and beautiful white sandy beaches to bring people to Tahiti (Kahn, 2011, p. 97). Tahitian dance is also crucial to the imagery that is advertised to tourists and plays an essential role in the tourism experience (Kahn, 2011, p. 152). This exchange of cultural dance has increased the popularity of Tahitian dance and prompted the globalization of the dance.

### *Globalization of Tahitian Dance*

The mobility of dance performances and practices is why dance has become globalized (Kringelbach & Jonathan, 2012). For Tahiti, globalization did not start with a Western presence. Previously, Oceania did not have any borders and often traded and shared cultural practices (Morales, 2018, p. 110). Hau'ofa (1994) understands this movement when discussing a holistic perspective of Oceania, in which Oceania has relationships with each other that are connected. This movement causes globalization due to the exchange of cultural values, traditions, food, and knowledge. Tahiti's cultural practices were globalized even further with the growing tourism market and the controversial nuclear testing in French Polynesia (Morales, 2018, p. 110). All of these activities have brought outside attention to the culture and traditions of French Polynesia.

Madeleine Mou'a and her group performed at the Tiurai Fete in 1956, which was crucial and encouraged others to practice the dance at home. Along with the making of the Faa'a airport, and the statehood of Hawai'i in 1959, these changes transformed the perspectives of Polynesia (Morales, 2018, p. 113). As more people were exposed to the Polynesian culture, the dances have grown popular, and are practiced and performed globally.

'Ori Tahiti is spreading worldwide but resisting localization to new geographic areas as it globalizes. As a result, Tahitian dance movements are becoming uniform in French Polynesia, California, Mexico, and Japan. Any variations are normalized or left behind (Morales, 2018, p. 7). Morales (2018) argues that this uniformity is due to the involvement of native Mā'ohi, who understand cultural transmission and cultural appropriation and that Mā'ohi uses this knowledge to guide outsiders practicing the dance.

'Ori Tahiti is mostly seen globally in tourism and festivals. In the tourism context, the dance is performed in Hawaiian luaus and is mistaken by tourists as Hawaiian hula. An individual that practices Tahitian dance can spot where creativity is lost in performances showcased for tourists. It is more complicated when it comes to festivals because festivals take place in various countries and tend to use Tahitian judges and cultural experts when hosting these events. These festivals focus on Tahitian dance competitions, which normalize the practice of Tahitian dance abroad. These events have been so successful that the French Polynesian government has authorized these events (Morales, 2018). The authorization of these events further promotes Tahitian dance globally.

The oldest Tahitian festival outside of French Polynesia is the Kiki Raina Tahiti Fête, which was spearheaded in 1979 and located in Merced, California. This festival competition brings 2,000 to 3,000 guests every year, and most of them actively practice 'Ori Tahiti. This

competition has brought attention to French Polynesia. It plays a crucial role in the representation of Tahitian dance in Tahiti, although most of the organizers are not of Mā'ohi descent. (Morales, 2018, p. 8). Even though Mā'ohi are not the main organizers, they play a significant role in the participation and even judging of these events. In addition, Tahitian companies in Tahiti have also supported these events with their sponsorship.

There are some competitions in the diaspora that Mā'ohi leads. For example, Heiva San Diego is another popular Tahitian dance competition dedicated to promoting Tahitian culture. It is led by Mā'ohi president: Maeva Tarahu-McNicol. Heiva i San Diego is supported by Mā'ohi organizations, such as “Air Tahiti Nui,” “Tahiti Tourisme,” “Parfumerie Tiki,” and “Tahiti Government.” The support from Mā'ohi people further perpetuates Mā'ohi culture and dance and encourages outsiders to compete and perform worldwide.

Tahitian festivals and competitions are found in the following states: California, Nevada, Utah, Florida, and Hawai'i, and internationally in the following countries: Mexico, Japan, France, and French Polynesia. In 2018, Morales (2018) recorded about 30 Tahitian dance competitions in the United States, while some are newly formed, and others disappear, or alternate years on hosting competitions. Some contests have even gone on a hiatus for an extended time (p. 19).

The availability of Tahitian dance worldwide has shown the mobility of the culture. As a result, Tahiti is connecting and building relationships with people globally. These relationships are strong because we see Mā'ohi being active in these cultural events that are in the diaspora.

### *Digital Globalization of Tahitian Dance*

A new form of globalization is digital globalization, which brings extensive data and information flows. Digital globalization has grown data, information, and social connections through digital platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic has forcefully shifted business models to digital globalization. (Schilirò, 2020). Tahitian dance groups have turned to an online platform for practices, workshops, and performances, even opening their classes to people worldwide.

Since the pandemic lockdown began in March 2020, Heiva has not been canceled outside Tahiti. Mā'ohi and Non-Mā'ohi organizers have continued to host their competitions online globally. The pandemic has allowed people to participate from the comforts of their own homes, which caused the dance community to stay connected with people all over the world without having expenses of travel and hotel stays. While this has benefitted dancers and musicians so that they can continue to perform, it has resulted in the loss of the essence of Tahitian dance, the Heiva, and Tahitian dance competitions. Dancers are unable to connect during practices, performances, and costume making. Instead of live drumming during the competitions, the songs are recorded. Typically, dancers will improvise moves to the songs that drummers will randomly choose. However, during the pandemic, dancers are provided with recorded songs to choreograph. The pre-recorded songs give dancers enough time to choreograph a piece for the competition. The disadvantages of online Heiva include the loss of in-person connection with other dancers, costume making before the match, and loss of improv creativity.

Several dance groups have adjusted to the pandemic by putting their classes online. Although it's generally not accepted to be in more than one dance group due to conflict of interest, several teachers have permitted their students to take classes in groups elsewhere around



the world. As a Tahitian dancer, I have been able to join classes from teachers in Japan, France, and all over the United States due to the pandemic. Several of the courses are recorded, so I can practice lessons that I miss or watch a video again to keep practicing. In addition, I have been able to take private lessons from dance teachers that do not reside in the same state as me.

Although the pandemic has caused me to stop connecting with dancers in person, I feel more connected to dancers worldwide, and I have been able to grow my dance technique. While there are benefits to keeping dancing online, we cannot enjoy the in-person connection in class. The aspects of live drumming and making costumes together for performances are lost due to the online courses. Some dance groups have created their virtual showcases; however, I have not participated in them because it does not feel the same. Personally, I miss the feeling of audiences cheering us on as we dance. The cheering boosts my confidence when I perform on stage. These are some of the difficulties of performance taking place online.

Currently, in this contemporary virtual space, understanding the virtual exchanges of Tahitian dance is key to comprehending some of the maintained connections of Oceania. The comprehension of virtual Tahitian dance will provide a new form of thinking about the interconnectivity within the digital vā. This perspective of Tahitian dance is intertwined with the virtual connections of Oceania, of both Mā'ohi and Non-Mā'ohi communities. This thesis will explore these interactions as we currently utilize the virtual space to stay connected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This thesis will identify a new phenomenon in Tahitian dance and the formations of the online communities worldwide.

### *Defining “Mā'ohi”*

French Polynesians identify themselves by calling themselves *Mā'ohi*. Mā'ohi is a term that will never be universally agreed on (Gagné, 2015). Since the 1970s, the term Mā'ohi has been the expression used to articulate the indigenous identity movement in Tahiti. The word Mā'ohi builds a contemporary indigenous identity and re-imagines the relationship between indigenous Polynesian communities and their representation within the current politics of French Polynesia. The Mā'ohi are a community of those who believe they share the same past, culture, and language, which establishes the common link in which they have the same destiny (Saura 2011). In the book *Bridging Our Sea of Islands*, the term “Mā'ohi” has multiple meanings and arranges an identity regionally in French Polynesia. In literature, Mā'ohi is utilized to describe writers born or raised in French Polynesia with ancestral ties to the land and an identity rooted in Mā'ohi values (Mateata-Allain 2008, 14). Mā'ohi represents the indigenous individuals' shared identity all over French Polynesia as they connect their divisions of linguistics, history, and cultures (Casey, 2016).

Tahiti has been expressed as a colonial idea of “paradise.” Colonizers utilized imagery that depicts paradise while displaying that uncivilized, uneducated savage inhabits it. Francophone Pacific literature became important with the combination of activism after two hundred years of colonial literature being enforced onto the Mā'ohi people and altering their identity. Tahitian literature has exposed the issues with French occupation and colonial enterprise. The existence of Tahitian literature has always been part of history but needed another view on it. This view includes understanding the culture while being against France's literature on Tahiti. These perspectives of Tahitian literature are tools that reaffirm identity. The identity comes from the inside and differentiates it from those that are not of Mā'ohi descent. The

utilization of the indigenous language in literature is another feature of Mā'ohi identity revival. This revival began in the late 1970s because of Henri Hiro writing and publishing in Reo Mā'ohi (Tahitian indigenous language). In addition, Mā'ohi communities began to renew the traditions of their ancestors by using Reo Mā'ohi, tattoos, and wearing the pareu. Through these traditions, many Mā'ohi are reappropriating their Mā'ohi identity (Courat, 2020).

The usage of Reo Mā'ohi increased in the 1980s so that they could resist colonial powers. However, the French desired this usage to promote tourism at the same time. Mā'ohi writers are protecting Mā'ohi identity so that they can discover their ancestry and resist French institutions. In addition, Mā'ohi authors can share the voices of Mā'ohi to increase awareness of political and social matters. Mā'ohi fought against colonial ideas by speaking Tahitian. Although their academic writings are primarily in French, the utilization of both languages was a way to identify their culture and identity. Goenda Turiano-Reea has noted that feelings can be challenging to express in Tahitian, but when mixed with French, it's easier to be expressed. As a result, the hybrid of these languages can be a new form of identity and a potent form of expression. Reo Mā'ohi combined with French can be an expression of fierceness and culture. Polynesian culture has made their identity stronger when they proudly roll their r's to show their Tahitian side (Courat, 2020). Even if not spoken fluently, Reo Mā'ohi is a way to express identity when used.

### *“Mā'ohi” as an Expression of Identity*

Pacific body movements have influenced expressions of identity, culture, history, and politics. Dance studies have bridged a gap between body movement and Pacific studies. Most dance scholars agree that exploring ritual gestures requires attention to the body, techniques, vocabulary, or knowledge of how movements evolve (Teaiwa, 2012). Cultural practices are

preserved through dance, music, story, art, and cultural participation in a diasporic context. The dances incorporate legends to tell a story that presents the balance and harmony needed for humanity. The story is told creatively through movement while showcasing aspects of culture in correspondence to drumming traditions (Casey, 2016). Cultural expression through performance has been valuable for Mā'ohi, especially in the diaspora abroad.

Mā'ohi in diaspora holds onto their homeland by re-centering the places they inhabit and extending the boundaries of their land. Identity for Mā'ohi is less about the homeland's borders and more about shared identities. In the Anglophone Pacific, Mā'ohi culture is identified through tattoos, apparel, music, and dance. To keep their identities, Mā'ohi communities maintain their sense of culture while being distanced from their homeland through their gatherings and rerouting their genealogy. Mā'ohi are sustained in their land and their roots, which provide nourishment to create their shared existence. (Casey, 2016). This re-centering of their culture has allowed Mā'ohi to maintain their identity in a foreign place.

Casey (2016) states in her master's thesis that the Mā'ohi community is an underrepresented demographic in the Pacific Islands Studies and that Mā'ohi in the diaspora will have to acquire a new path to the understanding of Oceania. It is not a unique circumstance that Pacific Islanders are in diaspora because they have been voyaging for thousands of years (Spickard, 2002). The term "diaspora" involves the migration of several individuals out of their homeland and is considered a way of creating identities and population loyalties. The Mā'ohi diaspora includes the dispersion of Mā'ohi communities, languages, and values around the world (Brubaker, 2006). Mā'ohi individuals have been participants in mandatory migrations due to the limited organizational structures and facilities for education, health care, and commerce in French Polynesia. Due to France being a colonizer of French Polynesia, many Mā'ohi people are

French citizens. As a result, several Mā'ohi communities migrate beyond French Polynesia while negotiating their identity. Mā'ohi dispersal abroad is considered an external diaspora. The most significant reason for this migration is linked to educational and economic opportunities and completing French military commitments overseas (Casey, 2016). Mā'ohi seeks opportunities outside of their homeland but has continued to keep connections with their land.

Diaspora has been taking place for Pacific people since World War II. World War II has taken Pacific Islanders to the United States, Europe, Asia, New Zealand, and Australia. (Howard, 1999). Pacific Islanders in the diaspora have kept connections with their homelands by staying in close contact with families. The intertwining of diaspora and families makes it so that diasporas cannot exist without families sustaining them. In the Pacific Island diaspora, identity involves the circulation of knowledge and how it evolves with distance. Families are understood as networks of individuals who share knowledge and resources per cultural principles commonly acted out (Gershon, 2007). Maintaining this connection while in diaspora requires participants to constantly engage with news, information, goods, and a sense of history built on common customs and interests. However, such contact can be costly. Howard (1999) argues that frequent and cheaper communication will be required, which has become increasingly available to Pacific Islanders via the internet. The internet has provided opportunities for exchanges daily at a low to no cost. It creates spaces on the web to obtain information, express opinions, explore history and culture, and keep in touch.

#### *Mā'ohi voices on Tahitian dance*

The revival of Tahitian dance has led to the increased popularity of this art form and the culture globally. As a result, the Mā'ohi people felt stronger love for their culture and dance that

was almost lost. Furthermore, the admiration of the dance has provided the Mā'ohi people with optimism for the future of Tahitian dance as an everlasting, beautiful art form.

Tahitian dance is one of Tahiti's best spectacles that the people love to share their culture with an audience. To add to this narrative, Moena Maiotui, one of Tahiti's champion dancers, says, "I think 'Ori Tahiti is complete, you know. It's fierce but elegant and powerful, graceful, feminine when we dance. I feel beautiful [when I dance]. It's always good to be on stage and to share the culture and what we love and the passion and also tell the story... with our hands and share this moment with the people who are watching"<sup>1</sup> (Tuuhia, 2022). Matatini Mou shares the same sentiment, "I love my culture. She is alive, strong and evolving. I am proud to be [representing] Tahiti! Winning the Heiva i Tahiti Best Female Solo has made me want to teach even more about my culture!" (Tevarampadu, 2019). People are endlessly captivated by the aesthetic of Tahitian dance. The beautiful expression and connection to nature in the movements is what brings people to love this artform. Tumata Robinson, the founder, choreographer, and costume designer of the dance group Tahiti Ora describes the dance in her eyes as "the most beautiful, powerful, sensuous, and expressive" (Tuuhia, 2022). The art of Tahitian dance is not only pleasing to the eyes but also a form of physical expression of a dancer's beauty and story.

The revival of Tahitian dance has led to the evolution of the movements. Tehani Robinson, the niece of Tumata Robinson states that her father, a French man, visited Tahiti and was grateful that the dance transformed. She explained that her father told her, "Those fast movements, I can't do, the fa'arapu, they never used to do it that fast" (Gilbert, 2015). Although Tahitian dance was hampered due to the banishment of the art form, the revitalization of this

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<sup>1</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appeared in published text.

cultural practice has brought many dedicated dancers. As a result, dancers are more advanced in their movements.

Mā'ohi have taken notice of Tahitian dance spreading in popularity all over the world. Poemoana Teriinochorai reasons the popularity of the dance by stating, “I think people wanted to dance to Ori Tahiti because they have seen it on YouTube; I can see a lot of people who dance like the Ori Tahiti.”<sup>2</sup> (Tuilaepa-Taylor, 2017). Tehani Robinson mentions, “There’s a big Tahitian dance movement in Japan. I was told the other day, there’s as many people in Japan who dance Tahitian as there are who live in Tahiti.”<sup>3</sup> (Gilbert, 2015). The popularity of Tahitian dance has extended so far that it appears that the number of dancers globally exceeds the total population of Tahiti.

Part of this discussion of the revival of Tahitian dance includes a conversation on traditions and sharing the teachings of their ancestors. Poemoana Terriohorai describes Tahitian dance as being more than movements. She says, “Tahitian dancing is rooted in our traditions, and we express ourselves through dance; we represent our ancestors and our culture,” and “when we created choreography, we must have a theme, so it can be a story that we know or an author in Tahiti writes a story, and we just don’t move, it’s not like a sport or just standing, we must feel a real story.”<sup>4</sup> (Tuilaepa-Taylor, 2017). Similarly, Makau Foster is a veteran to the festivities of Tahitian dance. She describes the dance as, “a way of belonging. It shows who I am and where I come from. Our reo is also important. Without it, we are nothing.” She emphasizes her concern for the loss of the indigenous language by stating, “the younger generation speak anything else but their Tahitian language. I hope this young generation will decide to go on and learn”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appeared in published text.

<sup>3</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appeared in published text.

<sup>4</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appeared in published text.

<sup>5</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appeared in published text.

(Kahukura-Iosefa, 2017). Although Tahitian dancing has grown in popularity, the language still has a long way to go to be revitalized in Tahiti and the Mā'ohi people are very aware of this need.

Other Mā'ohi thinks of the revival of Tahitian dance as a way to stand up to colonizers for trying to banish their authentic culture. Hinatea Colombani, the Arioi culture and arts center director and expert on Tahitian culture, states, “For me it’s a revenge because they celebrate our culture. Ori Tahiti is for me a freedom. A freedom to move, a freedom for the soul ... and a really important way to escape from the everyday and connect to my ancestors and to the tradition”<sup>6</sup> (Tuuhia, 2022). This narrative describes the feelings that dance gives to the Mā'ohi people. It also shows the satisfaction of the dance thriving following the banishment of the Tahitian dance.

All of these narratives from the Mā'ohi people show the different perspectives on the dance and what it means for the future of Tahiti. While some attitudes differ, most of their views share the same desire to practice the traditions of their ancestors and express themselves in their movements. In conclusion, the Mā'ohi people are proud and educative of their culture.

### *Conclusion*

This introduction has provided a contextual history of Tahitian dance and its changing contexts throughout time. As discussed, the Mā'ohi people continuously negotiate and try to maintain their identity following colonialism. Tahiti became a popular destination following colonialism, which has caused an influx of tourists. Due to this, the Mā'ohi people have had to depend on tourism for their economy. The increasing number of visitors has exposed Tahitian

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<sup>6</sup>This online quote is quoted as how it appears in published text.



dance globally and caused the Mā'ohi people to travel and showcase their culture globally. As a result, Tahitian dancing has exploded in popularity. The revitalization of Tahitian dance has given the Mā'ohi people another avenue to share their culture and express themselves to the world.

The internet has been an avenue for people to express themselves, share information, and learn new things in the contemporary moment. The increase of internet users has provided users a platform to maintain their culture and identity in a virtual space. In Chapter 2, we will be exploring the usage of virtual space by Pacific Islanders. I will then introduce the lens of the digital vā, which has been in the spotlight recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing more people worldwide to navigate the virtual space. The digital vā concept will become important in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

The growth of the internet includes the increased availability of the internet globally. The following chapter takes a closer look at Tahitian dance being taught in a virtual space. It utilizes an analyzing typology method when reviewing the content that is shared in the virtual space. There are several dance platforms where Tahitian dancers and teachers share the foundational steps, Tahitian dance drills, and choreography. In this chapter, I will apply my lens of the digital vā to Tahitian dance. We will explore the voices and connective genealogy of Tahitian dance in the digital vā and how it could influence the relationships within dance and the future of Tahitian dance. This chapter will provide opportunities by offering a critical perspective on Tahitian dance classes online for Pacific Island scholars interested in this virtual Tahitian dance space.

The next chapter will introduce a new exciting phenomenon of Tahitian dance competitions in a virtual space. Tahitian dance competitions first went online following the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. We see annual live competitions that were moved to a

virtual format, and new competitions were created following the pandemic. This chapter will explore the genealogies of these online competitions and how they occupy the digital vā through several virtual platforms. Ultimately this chapter analyzes virtual Tahitian dance competitions and then discusses what this online format could mean for the future of Tahitian dance.

In my concluding chapter, I will discuss the importance of studying Tahitian dance in the virtual space and connect it to what it means for the broader community of the Pacific Islands. Finally, I will discuss how the digital vā is present in Tahitian dance and other Pacific Islands disciplines, making the virtual space essential to research and understand.

## **CHAPTER 2: DEFINING THE PACIFIC ISLANDER USAGE OF VIRTUAL SPACE**

The internet is an infinite space that can be used as a tool to gather information, connect, entertain, promote political movements, share content, etc. The interaction in this virtual space can be proactive or reactive depending on the context of a person's behaviors in this space. As technology advances, more people around the world are engaging in the virtual space which increases access to other people and resources from all over the world. The continued development of the virtual space has caused concern regarding internet addiction and misinformation being spread; however, the internet has also been a place of valuable information, expression, and connection to people located far away from the user. Ultimately, the internet has changed the world's livelihoods and is a daily part of our lives. In this chapter, I will introduce the Pacific Islanders' relationship to their identity and culture in a digital space. Then I will introduce the role of social media in Pacific politics. This is important to consider for understanding Tahitian dance in a virtual space and the connections and information that are created and shared online.

### *Pacific Activism and Identity in the Virtual Space*

Identity plays a large role in our lives because it gives us an understanding of who we are, what we like, how we feel about ourselves, and our characteristics. The internet places a large role in identity because it is a controlled space to share a livelihood that can be different from reality. Since the rise of the internet, Pacific Islanders have been negotiating their identities as they navigate within this space. Part of this negotiation includes the fight against the colonizers' demeaning ideas of the Pacific people.

For a long time, Pacific Islanders have been grouped with Asians in the census, research, and also for putative national recognition as in the assignment of April as The Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This has caused much frustration because it erases the distinct contexts and struggles that Pacific Islanders face, that Asian Americans may not be facing. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 14, 2020, there were a lot of anxieties about the future, however, more than a dozen Pacific Islander activists and media representatives gathered together at San Mateo so that they could host an online conference concerning the 2020 census to ensure a more accurate count. Hundreds of Pacific people gathered in this online conference. In the online conference, each speaker addressed their concerns about the aggregation of Pacific Islander and Asian populations in the census. It is important to disaggregate the data so that there can be more accurate information on the needs of Pacific Islanders in education and healthcare (Hedin, 2020). The pairing of Asian and Pacific data falsely represents the Pacific people because Pacific livelihoods are very different from Asians. Unfortunately, the minimization of Pacific Islanders is found everywhere and Pacific Islanders have to fight to represent their true identity.

Another diminishing representation of Pacific Islanders happened on the Netflix series, “Game On: A Comedy Crossover Event.” Initially, Micronesians saw the preview of this episode with excitement due to the representation of their country on a large streaming platform. Once the show aired, the narratives changed and Micronesians were frustrated at the commentary within the episode. The Netflix show called the Federated States of Micronesia a “terrible country” and portrayed it as an inferior country. A petition was created on change.org called, “Misrepresentation of Our Country” with the purpose to remove this episode and apologize to the Federated States of Micronesia for their commentary (Walker, 2020). The demeaning

messages from the streaming platform are dangerous to the Micronesians because it sends a message to the audience that Micronesians are terrible, small, and unimportant. The petition was created by Pacific Islanders to change the inferior narratives that colonizers put out on Micronesians and re-imagine the Federated States of Micronesia as something greater than being an inferior and “terrible” country.

Another issue of colonialism that Pacific Islanders have to face is climate change, which Pacific Islanders are the victims of, due to environmental destruction of colonialism, and globalization. Pacific Islanders have been threatened by the loss of their land due to the rising sea levels and also the ownership and destruction of land due to colonization. Some of the climate change activism by Pacific Islanders is done on social media and other forms of virtual space, such as e-learning platforms, video conferences, videos, and images. Social media platforms like Facebook and Viber have been useful tools when it comes to communicating, and climate activists have used these platforms as tools for communicating. This connectivity has allowed activists to be able to share information with other individuals and also share issues with a wider audience (Titifanue et al., 2017, p. 140). While social media is effective for communication and information, it has other opportunities such as coordination and promotion of climate activist events, and also sharing images, videos, and artwork. This multimedia content is a useful tool when it comes to grabbing the attention of users on social media. Individuals and groups have used social media for advocacy and activism (Titifanue et al., 2017, p. 141).

As more Pacific Islanders move to the virtual world, they have another way to advocate against the damaging narratives that commonly label them as “small,” “inferior,” or “savages.” To take into account Hau'ofa's (1994) re-imagination of Oceania, the Pacific people can defy the reducing narratives of Polynesia, Federated States of Micronesia, and Melanesia, and resist the

discourses of colonial development. With the continued growth of the internet, there are more opportunities for Pacific Islanders to express themselves and their authentic culture. Hau'ofa emphasizes the importance of connecting the sea, although the languages and culture may vary, he states the importance of islanders connecting within Oceania. In a similar sense, Margaret Jolly (2007) discusses how the indigenous and foreign representations of Oceania differ from each other, often with opposing perspectives and ideas. These opposing thoughts can be seen as genealogy versus cartography. Jolly suggests that the Pacific and its rim are intertwining imaginations of space and time and the visions of islanders should be highlighted (p. 502). The expression and fight against insulting narratives are re-imagining the ideas of the Pacific Islands.

### *Pacific Islanders on Social Media*

Pacific Islanders are utilizing multiple platforms of social media, in the same way that people are using social media globally. There are many studies on cultural identity and ethnicity on the internet. One notable study from Howard and Rensel (2020) discusses how the development of the internet caused social media to lead to the formation of a global community where family and friends can keep in continuous contact while enabling their identity (p. 374). In connection, a particular social platform: Facebook has impacted the Pacific Islander community by providing them connections with each other, updates on news, and also a voice in politics. Although there are so many benefits of ongoing communication on social media, it can be time-consuming and also a place of conflict. Here, I will be discussing the different uses of social media by Pacific Islanders.

Facebook is the most popular platform that Pacific Islanders use (Cave, 2012). In 2012, research was done on an e-family kinship, which consisted of 76 individuals. By April of 2016,

the efamily number had increased to 163. The geography of the e-family includes Fiji, Sāmoa, Tonga, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Australia, the USA, the UK, and the Cook Islands. As time goes by, the number of Pacific Islanders engaging with their family online has increased across age groups as more members become comfortable with utilizing technology. Skype has been a popular platform that has replaced the chat function that comes with mobile texting as a distant way of communicating. Facebook has also been a simple platform to communicate with family. Greeting cards, birthday cards, and anniversary cards that were once sent have now been replaced by online posts to a Facebook profile and shared with the public. The e-family will share information on illnesses, funerals, weddings, births, graduation, and travel information. Although communication of essential events and life-changing news has been beneficial to share, there has been a rise in oversharing details of a person's life. For example, Pacific Islander users would take pictures of their breakfast, their new partner, bible verses, and fundamentalist memes that ask users to click the "like" button on Facebook or to type "Amen" into the comment section of a photo. These memes are normally accompanied with "ignore if you love Satan". Other common uses of Facebook by Pacific Islander families are to share selfies, memes, invitations to Facebook games, and nightclub photos (Koya, 2017, p. 8).

When Facebook became available in 2006, Rotumans (locals from Rotuma, an island in Fiji) joined and created Facebook groups with different purposes. The Facebook group types are: 1) Groups based on specific communities 2) Groups based on locations in Rotuma 3) Church-centered Rotuman groups 4) School-based groups 5) Sports-based groups 6) General Rotuman-centered groups. In their research, Howard and Rensel (2020) found that memberships in these groups have grown significantly and found that from August 6, 2014, to May 24, 2016, there has been a 35.3% increase in membership. (p. 387-388). They analyzed the subcultures of these

groups and found that the posts and comments in these groups tend to have the following variables 1) Audience 2) Images 3) Topics 4) Interactional 5) Language 6) Number of Responses to Posts (p. 389-390). In their concluding observations, they found that Rotuman identity has changed over time from the origins of the migration from Rotuma to Fiji to the diasporic communities and their expression abroad to their digital environments such as Facebook and the Rotuma Website. A notable change that is emphasized in the physical space, the Rotuman identity is found in their participation in dancing, singing, preparing, and sharing their Rotuman foods, touching, and body language communication. In the digital space, the Rotuman's identity is found in their photos, soundtracks that reference Rotuman activities, and pictures. The digital space has been a place for Rotuman to share their identity, and plan events and gatherings in a physical *vā* (p. 400). Social media has not only uplifted the Rotuman identity but has been another avenue for expression that strengthens their sense of belonging.

Dr. Koya (2017) states that although she has positive real-life relationships with twenty of her family members who reside across islands, she has only met half of her family group. Although Facebook is considered a personal space, she states that it is very much a public space, especially if a user does not change the privacy settings of their profile, they can be sharing everything they do with everyone on their Facebook friend list (p. 9). Some postings can be considered offensive or uncomfortable to see, and as a response, users would negotiate this space by pretending they did not see what they may consider offensive. In one case, a Tongan e-family had feuds with each other in the same ways they do in real life, however, online feuds sometimes escalated too far where insults and slurs were thrown at each other on Facebook. When this occurs, male family members do not engage with the feud and wait for it to calm down before engaging again and when they come back, they act as if the feud did not occur. It is difficult to



determine if this silence is an acceptance or disapproval. Cultural practice is typically affirmed in real-life situations within villages and cultural communities through positive and negative reinforcement (p. 10). These ambivalent meanings make the e-culture of the Pacific Islands important to research and understand.

The Chamorro people have used various social media as a *vā* to express and learn about their culture. The Chamorro people come from the Mariana Islands of which Guam is the largest of the island chain, and a territory of the United States. Although a significant amount of the culture was lost due to Western colonization, Chamorro people find it essential to pass down their cultural knowledge orally through generations. In social media, there has been evidence of the preservation and practicing of Chamorro culture (San Nicolas-Robba & Parrish, 2014).

Social media is greatly valued when it comes to the preservation, sharing, and practicing of Chamorro. In San Nicolas-Rocca & Parrish's (2014) research, they had a survey that was distributed via surveymonkey.com and was accessible on Facebook, 671recipes.com, and chamorroroots.com. In total, 128 responses to the survey were from people who claim to be Chamorro. Of these 128 Chamorro participants, 49 identified as male, while 79 identified as female. Chamorro's were also asked about their usage of the following social media websites: Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube. The survey found that a majority of Chamorros (57.8%) will utilize Facebook to learn about their culture. Following this is MySpace at 3.1% of Chamorro respondents, Twitter at 1.8% of Chamorro respondents, and YouTube at 2.3% of Chamorro respondents. They also found that 108 (84.3%) of Chamorro respondents strongly agree or agree that social media can be a place to preserve the Chamorro knowledge, while 101 (78.9%) of these Chamorro respondents strongly agree or agree that social media websites can capture Chamorro knowledge. Another finding is that 121 respondents (94.5%) strongly agree or

agree that social media can be a place to share Chamorro knowledge, and 120 of these respondents strongly agree or agree that social media websites can provide opportunities for people to educate themselves and learn about the Chamorro culture. Finally, 116 (90.6%) Chamorros strongly agree or agree that social media can provide opportunities for Chamorros to recall their cultural knowledge (San Nicolas-Rocca & Parrish, 2014).

Social media gives a space for Pacific Islanders to maintain, express, and also learn about their culture. Colonialism has greatly impacted the Pacific Islands, where culture, art, traditions, languages, and beliefs were discouraged. Despite this, Pacific Islanders are resilient and continue to practice their traditions. In the modern-day, Pacific Islanders are doing what they can to maintain the culture so that it would continue to thrive. Social media plays a vital role in maintaining these cultures.

### *Social Media's Role in Pacific Politics*

Social media plays a large role in political conversations in countries with the freedom to express themselves in media when compared to countries without the freedom of expression in media. Those that have to follow a law concerning media expression find themselves believing that the government is not supportive of the issues they express online. Freedom of expression is significant to the relationship between the government and the respective Pacific Islands country. Ultimately, social media is a powerful tool for those utilizing the platform as a place for activism.

In Fiji, social media is utilized for e-democracy. The censorship of media can be found in Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands, but Fiji has the most extreme rules (Finau et al., 2014, p. 6). The heavy media censorship in Fiji has been a contributor to discussions transitioning from

traditional media to blogs and then to social media. Social media has become a place for Fijians to practice free speech and civic engagement. Facebook is the most utilized platform amongst the Fijian people, which has led discussions on national issues through Facebook groups (Tarai, 2015). The most popular Facebook page in Fiji as of February 28, 2014, is the “Letters to the Editor Uncensored” page, which had 7,222 members (.83% of the population) that followed this page out of 874,742 people of the Fijian population. The Letters to the Editor Uncensored page is supposed to be based on the popular section, “Letter to the Editor” in Fiji’s National Newspaper, The Fiji Times. The Facebook page is meant to provide a place for the citizens of Fiji to express their thoughts freely, which they can’t do as much in the Newspaper version (Finau et al., 2014, p. 4). Although the government has control over the media through their penalties, social media platforms are more difficult to regulate and restrict (Tarai, 2015). In Finau et al., (2014) research, they found that a majority of the Fiji interviewees did not perceive social media as essential in allowing their voices to be heard in politics. Some of these respondents stated that they were afraid that speaking up for their opinion would cause them to be taken to a military camp. The militarism in Fiji is so high that it makes it difficult to advance the conversation on the democracy of Fiji (p. 6). The Fiji Government has its own Facebook and Twitter platforms; however, it is not used to engage with citizens but to provide citizens announcements of government statements (Finau et al., 2014, p. 7).

The Solomon Islands have a high level of corruption which the Solomon Islanders are speaking up against. Finau et al., (2014, p. 4) found in their research that the most followed Facebook page (as of February 28, 2014) in the Solomon Islands is called “Forum Solomon Islands - International” and contains 6,716 members (1.22% of the Solomon Islands population). This Facebook page was created with the purpose to expose the government corruption and hold

the Solomon Islands Government accountable for its corrupt actions. Those that created this Facebook page are Solomon Islanders that are living abroad. In addition, the people that are active on this page tend to be abroad as well. Later, the popularity of this page was so great that it was registered as a Civil Society Organization (Finau et al., 2014, p. 5). Some Solomon Islanders felt that social media allowed them to engage more with government officials. One Solomon Islander student described that social media is a place for those who want to be heard without fear of the repercussions because they know that others will understand and support their problem because they experience this themselves. These voices on social media are giving opportunities for citizens of the country to be heard by their leaders (Finau et al., 2014, p. 6). Although the Solomon Islands are freer when it comes to media expression, the government has tried to restrict them by removing the registration of some civil society groups by stating that the nature of these groups is too political. As a result, members of the civil society group have requested the Prime Minister to resign due to claims of corruption and abuse of power (Finau et al., 2014, p. 7).

Vanuatu is a great example of the fast development of information, communication, and technology in politics. A popular political Facebook page in Vanuatu is the “Yumi TokTok Stret” which has 12,056 (4.88%) out of the 247,262 people in the population (Finau et al., 2014, p. 4), which is the highest percentage when comparing Fiji and the Solomon Islands political pages. The purpose of the Yumi TokTok Stret page is to provide a space to discuss political, social, and economic issues that affect the country. The majority of the users on this page are citizens however government officials may use these pages to defend or promote themselves (Finau et al., 2014, p. 5). Ralph Regenvanu is an example of a politician that regularly engages on this Facebook page by engaging with the discussions, the citizens, and also debates on the

policy issues (Finau et al., 2014, p. 6). The popularity of the page is so high that the posts on this page will appear in the Daily Post, which is Vanuatu's national newspaper. The engagement on this page has led Vanuatu to feel that their government is responsive, provides transparency, and holds the government accountable (Finau et al., 2014, p. 7).

West Papua is another Pacific Island with media censorship that has led its citizens to use Facebook and Twitter for their activism on politics. When mainstream media was impacted on reporting the state of affairs in West Papua, this caused activists to turn to social media and blogs to make an effort to express their problems to the world. A particular social network, such as Facebook has been essential when it comes to raising awareness on the issues occurring in West Papua (Titifanue et al., 2016, p. 263). Facebook was utilized by the campaign to provide information and raise awareness among activists in West Papua and people outside of the land, communicate with campaign members, and coordinate, promote, and organize events about the campaign (Titifanue et al., 2016, 264-265). Facebook is valued highly due to the strictness of Papua New Guinea's regulations on spreading news and stories of the problems that West Papuans have been facing. It has resulted in politicians from other Pacific Islands expressing their support for the people of West Papua (Titifanue et al., 2016, 275).

In some Pacific Islands, there is a strong relationship between Facebook usage and political discussion. The trend for utilizing Facebook for politics is higher in islands with strict rules when it comes to political expression. Facebook is a proactive social media platform that has transformed the discussions of politics in these islands. The space that Pacific Islanders inhabit is expanded across traditional boundaries into the digital world. Those with Pacific genealogy are utilizing the digital world to further their expression of their identity.

## *Digital Vā*

*Vā* or *wā*, is a word that is defined as “relationships” and it is of Austronesian origin and is still widely used in Polynesia. This word is not unique to one island of the Pacific, as it is found in 22 Pan-Pacific languages (Mila-Schaaf, 2016). *Vā* is a sociospatial connection that is defined as “space between people or things.” The idea of *vā* as “space” can be found in Tonga, Sāmoa, Rotuma, and Tahiti. In Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Hawai'i, *vā* is known as *wā* (Ka'ili, 2005). Although this concept is shared in some islands within Oceania, it is complex and not widely written about in academia. It is important to understand the concept of *vā* in the various contexts in which it emerges. Regardless of distance, Pacific Islanders are always connected within *vā*, which is a space that is permanent and always growing. Pacific Islanders have a history of traveling a far distance from their homeland and sometimes not knowing when or if they will see their people again. In today's world, when Pacific Islanders travel, it is for opportunities in education, medical care, and sometimes a hopeful mindset that they will return to their homeland. With the growth of the internet, Pacific Islanders have an opportunity to stay in communication with their family and friends and allow them to stay updated on the current state of their livelihoods. Technology has advanced so much over the years that it is transforming the Pacific Islands as more people utilize it. Technology has created a new space for Pacific Islanders to inhabit that is called the “digital *vā*”.

Due to the Pacific region's vast geography, there are a lot of challenges in communications and the economics and practical dimensions of their development and implementation. The addition of cell phones has reduced some of these issues across many Pacific Islands. The internet and mobile applications have given Pacific Islanders accessibility to

educational materials, organize events, transfer money, and obtain health services. It has also caused a rise in social media users due to allowing Pacific Islanders to connect, share content, and their opinions, and also promote debates. As a result of this, the ‘Pacific digital generation’ emerged and brought influencers, informers, activists, and thinkers (Cave, 2012).

The increasing usage of the internet and social media has caused the emergence of digital culture. Dr. Koya (2017) states that there is an increasing number of digital spaces of being and to engage with, which has caused the term e-culture to emerge (p. 5). The cultural practice of nurturing relationships through *vā* is now possible through the digital world. The digital world has provided several opportunities to nurture and maintain the *vā*, especially in places where people are temporarily or permanently in diaspora from their homeland. The internet provides connections for cultural communities and creates relationships that might not take place in the real world (Koya, 2017, p.7).

Colonizers have considered the cultural values of Pacific Islanders to not be an effective way to teach or learn for students, although the Pacific way of knowing has been around for thousands of years. Despite the dismissing of Pacific values, Pacific educators would continue to hold their cultural views in their educational practices. (Fa'aea et al., 2021, p. 2). Pacific educators have maintained their *vā* over the years and continue to do so in a virtual space.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused educators to struggle with connecting and engaging their students which has caused educators to have to adapt to the virtual format. Aiono Manu, a Sāmoan New Zealander, cared for her elderly parents and lived in a Sāmoan cultural world around her. The values in this world that were taught and instilled within her is the value of *tautua* (service), which became an essential part of her identity. While living in the pandemic and being in lockdown with her elderly parents, she enacts *tautua* in a different way. For

example, she states that she works from home so that she can protect the health of her parents while taking care of their needs (Fa'aea et al., 2021, p. 4). Another example of containing *tautua* is church meetings being moved to Zoom because it allowed for decisions of the church to be made together. Other digital transitions include the offering of church services on Facebook through the church's page (Fa'aea et al., 2021, p. 5). The traditional practice of *tautua* continues in the digital vā.

Sonia M. Fonua identifies as a being a woman of European ancestry, but is married to a Tongan and lives with her children and extended Tongan Family. She describes her experience with the Tongan culture as demonstrated by her Tongan family. She focuses on the behavioral characteristic, *'ofa fe 'unga*. *'Ofa* is defined in Tongan as love while *fe'unga* means limitations or boundaries. Together, *'ofa fe 'unga* is defined as compassion at an appropriate time. Sonia practiced *'ofa fe 'unga* during COVID-19 as a course coordinator by offering solutions and flexible practice for students when their situations became complicated. In addition, she encouraged staff to practice *'ofa fe 'unga* when it comes to grading, penalties for late work, and providing support. After this, Sonia reported that the staff spoke differently and the practice of *'ofa fe 'unga* began to be part of the norm (Fa'aea et al., 2021, p. 7).

Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga discusses the word *Ola* which is defined as 'life' or 'to live.' When COVID-19 caused New Zealand to lockdown, she found that practicing *Ola* was significant while working online so that she can protect Pacific students' lives. Students and teachers were immediately thrown into an online space where everyone in this situation had to adjust. Cherie discusses the importance of practicing love in the online space because students may not have access to a laptop or Wi-Fi. Students were distressed at the sudden change to an online space which is why Cherie states that it is essential to care for the class. Cherie cared for her class by



ensuring that they perceived the class as being part of their breath, not as their daily thing to do (Fa'aea et al., 2021, p. 8). During the pandemic, isolation has greatly affected students' livelihoods and also caused students to have a deeper need to connect. It is essential for educators to be aware of their students' energy levels during this time and to provide compassion for the collective struggles they are dealing with, such as having to navigate the educational space online.

Janice Ikiua-Pasi is a daughter of Niue Island and discusses utilizing *Fakaalofa* in her vā. *Fakaalofa* is defined as Love in the English language. Janice mentions that when she was growing up, what it means to demonstrate love for someone was to feed them. She carried this practice on in the classroom where she provides food in her class so that students can have the energy to learn (Fa'aea et al., p. 9). The unfortunate part of the pandemic lockdown was that it was difficult to provide *Fakaalofa* to students. To accommodate, Janice searched for options to pay for online shopping when students were faced with welfare agencies running out of food (Fa'aea et al., p. 10).

Although Pacific Islanders are unable to practice their culture in a physical vā, they managed to navigate this by searching for other opportunities to continue their practices online in a digital vā. The digital vā transcends the boundaries of traditional practices by evolving these practices to make it work in a digital environment with the same purpose. For example, social media is a strong avenue for Pacific Islanders to express themselves politically. The digital vā is expanding as more Pacific Islanders have the opportunity to navigate in this space. I introduced dancers and dance groups that teach Tahitian dance classes online pre- and post-pandemic.

The introduction chapter is important to consider here because of the discussion on the rising popularity of Tahitian dance, but the internet has also played a role in the explosion of

Tahitian dance. As the internet evolved and more people have access to the virtual world, there's been an increase in the sharing and expression of Tahitian dance online. As a result, the vā has expanded to a digital space, the digital vā. While the digital vā has been utilized for activism, politics, and re-imagining the idea of Oceania, it has also been used for the expression and sharing of cultural practices, such as dance. Dance organizations have used the digital vā to promote their classes, and events, and to communicate with other dancers. The popularity of Tahitian dance is found all around the world and the internet is connecting these dance groups and the dancers that are occupying the virtual vā.

The foundation of this concept will become essential in the next chapter where I show how Tahitian dance groups and dancers utilize the digital vā to teach and learn dance, and who participates in these social media pages. Through this virtual vā, a new awareness will emerge that will contribute to the continued spread of Tahitian dance and the Mā'ohi culture. We will also take a look at the digital vā as a space where people create and mediate their relations across time and space. Within the digital vā, the participants negotiate their identity while connecting with others globally. In the time of COVID-19, the digital vā is found where our community is nurturing relationships online through dance, in a powerful way that is also unique.

### CHAPTER 3: TAHITIAN DANCE IN THE DIGITAL VĀ

Learning Tahitian dance online is possible because of the increasing availability in the virtual space. On February 2nd, 2022, I used the google engine to search “Learn Tahitian dance online,” which yielded 680,000 results. An alternative search I checked on the google engine the same day was “Learn Ori Tahiti online,”<sup>7</sup> which yielded 776,000 results. Instructors are not only providing live online dance classes but are also providing recordings to those wanting to learn at a time that is appropriate for them to practice.

As the internet becomes more accessible to people globally, it has turned into a place for people to view content that they cannot access in the comfort of their home country. The practice of 'Ori Tahiti has grown globally due to the revitalization of the Tahitian dance in the 1950s. In addition, the tourism industry in Tahiti has allowed Tahitian dance to spread globally worldwide. As a result, Tahitian dance increases accessibility on several platforms in today’s day and age. In this chapter, we will be reviewing the types of dance courses in the virtual space and analyzing the lengths that these dance courses occupy through the lens of a digital vā. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital vā has nurtured relationships through dance and connected people through the shared love of 'Ori Tahiti.

#### *Mā'ohi Leaders of Dance Groups Teaching in the Digital Vā*

Several Mā'ohi people have utilized the virtual space to express their culture, teach and share their dance with the public. As the internet has grown, the accessibility of dance has also increased. The virtual space has allowed teachers to spread their dance to a broader audience and authorized students worldwide to access dances generally not offered in their hometowns. The

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<sup>7</sup>The conventional spelling of 'Ori Tahiti was not used in my search.

opportunities for dance are endless, and dance teachers within the Pacific have begun taking advantage of the virtual space to have their classes online.

TahitiDanceOnline is a website that teaches Tahitian dance lessons for women online. This website features Tahitian dance lessons in the following languages: English, Japanese, Spanish, and French. The dance lessons range from beginner to advanced. They feature prominent and well-known Tahitian dance teachers from Tahiti, such as Asia Hammill, Vaheana Le Bihan, Hinavai Raveino, Teruria Taimana, Tuarii Tracqui, and Poemoana Teriinohorai. A trial period is available, including free videos, for those coming onto the website, encouraging dancers to purchase the video packages. Dancers can buy from different levels where they can choose to purchase between beginner or the intermediate/advanced course or access all videos for a monthly subscription. Alternatively, a dancer may also purchase all of the videos and have unlimited access to the content or purchase all dance videos from a specific teacher of their choice. The website also contains the history of Tahitian dance and up-to-date Tahitian dancing events for those interested in performances and competitions. TahitiDanceOnline seems to teach Tahitian dancing from Mā'ohi practitioners primarily. The availability of the dance packages in several languages shows how aware these Mā'ohi practitioners are of the people within the Tahitian dance space. The digital vā is seen here through the sharing of Tahitian dance, which nurtures a relationship with participants that choose to learn online.

Tahia Cambet is a dancer from Tahiti based in Paris, France, and is the leader of the O' Tahiti Nui. She has trained at the Conservatoire and offers online Tahitian dance classes as a way to bridge the gap between distant learning. She provides her dance classes in French but with English and Japanese subtitle options. The classes are €64 a month, or €175 a quarter. Tahia offers dancers the opportunity to practice techniques from both the Conservatoire of Tahiti and

the modern movements and creativity of Tahia. Every week, students will have access to a new video for regular training, and that one-hour video will only be available for ten days, which the dancer could watch an unlimited number of times. Tahia also provides personalized guidance for dancers that send their dance videos to her directly to receive advice on improving their technique. In addition, her online studio, 'O Tahiti Nui, has its own Facebook group so that dancers can share their videos and encourage each other.<sup>8</sup> Tahia is an example of a Mā'ohi that is in the diaspora by being based in France but still actively sharing her culture in person and the digital vā. She has actively expressed her digital vā through having her courses available online and providing dancers an avenue to have a relationship with herself and other participants through her Facebook group.

Another Mā'ohi practicing his culture in the diaspora is Manarii Gauthier, one of the leaders of Tahiti Mana, who is married to Nalini Gauthier, another leader of the dance group. Tahiti Mana is a Tahitian dance group based in Hawai'i and an award-winning dance company that has received several invitations to perform and teach internationally. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this online studio emerged and is meant for beginners and experienced dancers who want to supplement their current knowledge of Tahitian dance. Their goal is to share Tahitian culture and provide an outlet for dancers to move their bodies, stay fit, and relieve stress. Class offerings are split into basics, choreography, basics and conditioning, and culture and history classes. Before committing to a monthly plan, dancers can experience the courses through a 7-day free trial. Later, if participants decide to take the course, they can do so at \$25 per month for unlimited access to Tahitian dance plans. In addition, there are new videos every single week that can be accessed from the comfort of a dancer's home and any device. Tahitian dancers can

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<sup>8</sup>Information can be found at: <https://video.tahia-ori-tahiti.com/en/program/> (accessed February 02, 2022).

attend the live classes on Tuesdays from 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM HST and Thursdays at 5:00 PM HST for the beginner class and 6:00 PM HST for the intermediate/advanced dancers. The Tuesday and Thursday classes are also recorded through Facebook Live and Zoom. By participating in the Tahiti Mana Private Facebook Group, dancers can ask questions, connect and share their dance with their worldwide dance community. Dancers are also encouraged to share their dance videos through the Facebook Group or directly for instructor feedback.<sup>9</sup> An inclusive space has been created per Tahiti Mana's online studio, which digitally embodies and expands the vā.

A unique Mā'ohi in the diaspora is Tehani Robinson, who comes from a strong genealogy of dance teachers. Her aunt, Tumata Robinson, has been teaching her dance since Tehani started to walk. At the age of 14, Tehani joined and danced with the Les Grands Ballets de Tahiti, one of the most famous dance companies in Tahiti. Later, she toured with an award-winning group called "Tahiti Ora" and went with them to Japan and France.<sup>10</sup> Tehani co-founded a dance group in New York City called "'Ori Manea" with Kim Davidson. 'Ori Manea started due to bringing friends together for a casual dance class. They were enthusiastic about continuing Tahitian dance classes following this casual dance class, and then 'Ori Manea was born. Tehani's sister, "Loana Benjamin" also grew up dancing with her aunt Tumata and added choreography and instruction to 'Ori Manea when she moved to the East Coast.<sup>11</sup> Tehani is now a lead dance teacher at the London School of Hula and 'Ori (LSHO) and continues to succeed as a dancer. In 2019, she won 1st Place Overall Soloist in the competition "Heiva i Paris." Within the same year, her choreography for the LSHO dance team won 1st Place Mehura Overall in Paris and 3rd place

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<sup>9</sup>Information can be found at <https://tahitimanadanceonline.uscreen.io/> (accessed February 02, 2022).

<sup>10</sup>Information can be found at: <https://www.lsho.co.uk/ohana> (Accessed February 09, 2022).

<sup>11</sup>Information can be found at: <http://www.orimanea.com/instructors.html> (Accessed February 09, 2022).

Mehura Overall at the 'Ori Tahiti Nui competition.<sup>12</sup> In the digital vā, Tehani teaches a four-week foundational course for beginners on Tuesdays from 6:30 - 8 PM GMT at the cost of €95. The classes are live on zoom but are recorded for members to review until two weeks after the course ends.<sup>13</sup> Tehani teaches three courses. The three traditional and contemporary storytelling movements for €40. The ten-week pehe beats and storytelling course is also offered that is focused on understanding the conventional pehe (beats) and teaches students to discover ways to apply movements and storytelling to these beats for €125. Lastly, the shorter pehe course (5 weeks) is offered for €68.<sup>14</sup> In the spirit of the Pacific collaborative culture, the LSHO dance school practices the digital vā by providing their courses at a discounted rate or free by just getting in touch with the group. Their website offers discount codes that provide 25% off or 50% off her courses<sup>15</sup> The discounts and options for free dance courses extend the culture and practices of Tahitian dance to people worldwide that may struggle with access to the class financially. This generosity is very apparent across Pacific cultures. Here, the digital vā is showcased by supporting dancers globally and not preventing dancers from learning when going through financial hardships.

In French Polynesia, some dancers have opened online courses. Perle Renvoye is well known for winning the best dancer of Heiva i Tahiti in 2018. Perle began advertising her online Tahitian dance courses at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 31st, 2020, via her Instagram account (@Perle-Renvoye), which she promoted in both English and French, where she said she was hosting a free Tahitian dance course on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday live

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<sup>12</sup>Information can be found at: <https://www.lsho.co.uk/ohana> (Accessed February 09, 2022).

<sup>13</sup>Information can be found at: <https://www.lsho.co.uk/foundationcourse> (Accessed February 09, 2022).

<sup>14</sup>Information can be found at: <https://www.lsho.co.uk/courseswithtehani> (Accessed February 09, 2022).

<sup>15</sup>Information can be found at: <https://www.lsho.co.uk/dance-for-all> (accessed February 09, 2022).

on her Facebook page: Perle Ori Tahiti<sup>16</sup> at 5 PM GMT. The same year on April 27, Perle began advertising her 2-hour “Aparima Workshop,” which consists of a 30-minute warm-up and a 1-hour and 30-minute choreography course to the song “Aparima Fait Ore” by Silvio Cicero. This workshop was initially advertised for May 09, 2020, but was updated to take place online on May 13, 2020, instead. She stated that the class would be on her private Facebook group page for 24 hours. The course is \$20, and she would send the payment details by emailing tumanavaot@gmail.com. Perle has continued hosting workshops by announcing them on her Instagram. She revealed that she was doing a 2-hour 'Aparima workshop to Ken Carltter's Tahitian version of the song “Can't help falling in love with you” by Elvis Presley. This workshop will take place on Zoom and later on a private Facebook 24 hours after the workshop on August 07, 2020, at 5 PM GMT. She also hosted a 1-hour and 30-minutes 'ōte'a online workshop on October 31, 2020, via Zoom and Private Facebook for a 24-hour replay. Lastly, she had a Mehura workshop on November 06, 2021, where she mentioned that those who want access to this workshop online could access it on Facebook by messaging her. Besides the workshops, Perle announced on May 14, 2020, that she would offer regular online classes for 1-hour per week for intermediate and advanced levels at 6:30 PM GMT to start in June. She wrote about this course in English and stated she would teach both 'Ōte'a and 'Aparima lessons for \$35 per month where the lessons are recorded, and students will have access to them for one week on the private Facebook. It is unclear if this online class is still happening because the last mention of the online course on her Instagram was on August 10, 2020, when she stated she would teach classes in September for all levels of dancers.<sup>17</sup> When checking Perle's website for online

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<sup>16</sup>The Facebook page is found at: <https://m.facebook.com/perleoritahiti/> and the name appears as it is published online with no correction to the spelling (accessed April 05, 2022).

<sup>17</sup>Information can be found at this website: [https://www.instagram.com/perle\\_renvoye/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/perle_renvoye/?hl=en) (accessed February 16, 2022).



courses that are noted in the biography on her Instagram, I see that she is not advertising online courses either but is advertising private 1-hour and 30-minute dance lessons for \$100.<sup>18</sup> At the pandemic's beginning, Perle extended her classes to the virtual world to grow a larger dance community for free for some time and then switched to paid courses. As restrictions were lifted, she was focused on in-person classes instead of teaching online, but she is still sharing her dance experiences and pictures within the digital vā. In addition, Perle participates in the digital vā by actively engaging with her fans and participants of 'Ori Tahiti.

Mā'ohi practitioners may be occupying the digital vā. However, they remain close to their cultural values of a communal lifestyle and how they carry themselves within their dance. As noted in my introductory chapter, Casey (2016) states that Mā'ohi dancers in Tahiti may compete but will do it for fun and not with a desire to win. The Mā'ohi dancers in Tahiti and diaspora practice the digital vā by maintaining their identity, culture, and community through their classes in an online world.

#### *Non-Mā'ohi Leaders of Dance Groups Teaching in the Digital Vā*

The genealogy of Tahitian dance extends to non-Mā'ohi practitioners that received substantial training from dancers of Mā'ohi descent or other non-Mā'ohi practitioners who Mā'ohi people have trained. 'Ori Tahiti has expanded so far into the United States, Mexico, Japan, and many prominent non-Mā'ohi Tahitian dancers now occupy this space. Several of these non-Mā'ohi Tahitian dancers are present in the digital vā in many different forms. However, their presence and popularity in the physical vā have also gained large audiences and followings in competitions and other significant events. In addition, non-Mā'ohi practitioners have practiced

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<sup>18</sup>Information can be found at this website: <https://www.tumanavaoritahitibyperle.com/cours-en-ligne> (accessed February 16, 2022).

the digital vā by establishing relationships through their 'Ori Tahiti genealogy social media platforms and online dance courses.

In February 2019, Yamelle Martin started an online dance course studio called “Te AhiVai Ori.” Yamelle has a personal Instagram account called “yamellelynnne” with 4,256 followers. In addition, she has an Instagram account for her online dance group called “te\_ahivai\_ori” with 376 followers as of February 10, 2022. Yamelle has competed and trained in Tahiti, which can be seen on her Instagram account, where she posts videos from those experiences. The weekly classes are on Mondays and Thursdays at 6 PM EST, Saturdays at 10 AM EST, Sundays at 2 PM EST, and 3 PM EST for choreography. Following the classes, Yamelle will post videos of drills and her, or sometimes her students’, the choreography performance on her personal Instagram. She will also teach improv/freestyle classes and host private lessons on drills and improv practice for Tahitian dance.<sup>19</sup> Yamelle also has a YouTube account with the username “yamellem81” that has 12.4k subscribers, which includes her practices, competition videos, and performances. The oldest post on this YouTube channel was in September 2013, and her most popular video was posted in December 2013 and contained 2.8 million views.<sup>20</sup> Upon reviewing Yamelle’s presence in the digital vā, we see that she has been widely successful in her dance journey. Her practice of the digital vā helped her create and maintain relationships to grow her online dance group.

Several non-Māohi Tahitian dancers showcase their Tahitian across several virtual platforms. Another example of this is Jessy Muñoz. Jessy has an Instagram account (@jessymc) with 30.6k followers that showcase her Tahitian dance practices, performances, and pictures. In

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<sup>19</sup>See more information at: [https://instagram.com/yamellelynnne?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://instagram.com/yamellelynnne?utm_medium=copy_link) and [https://instagram.com/te\\_ahivai\\_ori?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://instagram.com/te_ahivai_ori?utm_medium=copy_link) (accessed February 10, 2022).

<sup>20</sup>See more information at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/yamellem81> (accessed February 10, 2022).

addition, her Instagram bio has a linktree that connects people with different classes that she offers. For example, she provides a free Tahitian dance training webinar on her website and also a playlist of other Tahitian dancers on YouTube that inspire her.<sup>21</sup> Jessy's YouTube channel is "Jessy Munoz" and has 2.78K subscribers. She has 21 videos, and 14 of those videos were posted over five years ago. The video includes her Tahitian dance competitions, performances, and practices with Nonosina and a free Tahitian dance workout video. Her most recent video is called "E Ruaragi - Online 'Aparima Challenge," which she posted on January 26, 2021, and results from her 4-week 'Aparima course. As explained in the biography of the video, the choreography is supposed to tell the story of the goddess, "Ruaragi." Ruaragi is Mother Nature and the creator of the world. The choreography shown is a collaboration of Tahitian dancers worldwide dancing to this song with their unique choreography.<sup>22</sup> Jessy also has her own personal website called "Arts of Past".<sup>23</sup> On the courses page of the website, she offers five different 'Ori lessons. Coming soon is a one-on-one private Tahitian dance lesson. The other lessons include the "4 Week 'Aparima Challenge", "4 Week Ori Tahiti Challenge", "Active Vahine Challenge," and Fa'aora Challenge. Each of these challenges costs \$79 to attend.<sup>24</sup> In her practice of the digital vā, Jessy teaches her classes to connect with and teach dancers all over the world about Tahitian culture and different dance styles in this discipline. She has expanded her dance community by putting her classes in a virtual space.

Kanani Lokelani Asuega is of Hawaiian and Sāmoan descent and a prominent Tahitian dancer in Orange County, California. She has performed in Tahiti, Bora Bora, Mexico, Europe,

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<sup>21</sup>See more information at: <https://www.instagram.com/jesyymc/?hl=en> (accessed February 14, 2022).

<sup>22</sup>See more information at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhjnCPNorh8> (accessed February 14, 2022).

<sup>23</sup>Website can be accessed here: <https://www.artsofpast.com/> and all names of her dance challenges and classes appear in this text like how they were published online (accessed April 05, 2022).

<sup>24</sup>See more information at: <https://www.artsofpast.com/courses> (accessed February 15, 2022).

Japan, and all over the United States and has taught workshops in London, Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Kanani comes from a family of Polynesian dancers and grew up dancing in her family's group, Lokelani's Rhythm of the Islands. Kanani has won overall as a Tahitian soloist in various competitions around the world, which eventually led her to perform with the group Nonahere under the direction of Matani Kainuku of Mahina, Tahiti, in the 2018 Heiva i Tahiti performance. Kanani has begun teaching in a virtual format during the COVID-19 pandemic to share her dance knowledge with dancers near and far. Due to Kanani's successful dance career, her online course was instantly popular with dancers worldwide. Her online classes have reached over 700 students in one year of the virtual journey.<sup>25</sup> Kanani's online classes are open to both beginner and advanced dancers. The beginner classes are an eight-week training course focused on strength, basic steps, and technique and take place two days a week. There's a total of 12 classes at the cost of \$85. The advanced class is the "Pupu Here" course and costs \$100 for 18 classes. Pupu Here is a lesson that teaches competition. Dancers will learn creativity and will be stronger Tahitian dancers. The class is focused on basic steps, techniques, and advanced movements, such as *Tifene*, *Fa'arapu*, *Te'i*, and more. For those who cannot make it during the class period, all of Kanani's classes are recorded and provided to dancers within 24 hours of the live course.<sup>26</sup> Kanani is an example of a non-Mā'ohi that is skilled in Tahitian dance and culture that has trained and gained the respect of Mā'ohi around the world. This is because so many non-Mā'ohi in the Tahitian dance space are bringing their classes into a digital vā, and sharing their collective knowledge of Tahitian dance to a broader audience across space and time.

A unique non-Mā'ohi that was born in Tahiti is Beatrice Caisson. Beatrice was trained in the sacred and ancestral dance in Tahiti and has combined this knowledge with her knowledge of

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<sup>25</sup>See more information at: <https://www.kananiokelani.com/about-kanani> (accessed February 02, 2022).

<sup>26</sup>See more information at <https://www.kananiokelani.com/general-8> (accessed February 02, 2022).

fitness, wellness, and health to teach thousands of women from various cultural backgrounds since 2009. In addition, Beatrice is offering Tahitian dance classes at an affordable set price, where there are no monthly fees, and clients have access to over 200 videos.<sup>27</sup> There are different packages for adults, children, and seniors interested in learning Tahitian dance, but they all get lessons, lyrics, and song names. The adult starter package is for beginners and is priced at \$97, but currently costs \$57 and offers 12 lessons on basics, drills, choreography, lyrics, and names of songs. The adult starter package is for beginners and is priced at \$97, but currently costs \$57 and offers 12 lessons on basics, drills, choreography, lyrics, and names of songs. The second adult package is the “Adult Ultimate Beginner/ All Level Package,” priced at \$167 but is “discounted” at \$97 for beginners and has 30 lessons on basics, drills, and choreography. The third adult package is for the “intermediate/advanced” levels of dancers and costs \$217, but is currently at \$147 and includes 30 intermediate and advanced lessons, advanced basics and drills, and choreography. Finally, there is only one senior package, and it is priced at \$89 but is currently at \$57 and described as being “slow-paced,” “safe and relaxing,” and “tailored for seniors and physically limited individuals.” Finally, there are two packages for parents that want their children to take Tahitian dance courses online. The first package for children is specifically for toddlers aged 3-5 years old and costs \$97 but is currently priced at \$57, which will have access to 10 full classes that can be replayed. The second package for children is for kids aged 6-12 years old, and they also have ten complete courses that can be replayed weekly, choreography, and a bonus class.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to other non-Mā'ohi dancers, because Beatrice was born in Tahiti, she practices the digital vā by continuing to instill the values of Tahiti by carrying their

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<sup>27</sup>See more information at: <https://www.tahitidancefitness.com/signup120628761> (accessed February 10, 2022).

<sup>28</sup>Information found here: [https://www.tahitidancefitness.com/sales-page1585841459665?cf\\_uvid=191ba062970c0ab5189125dc281ff621](https://www.tahitidancefitness.com/sales-page1585841459665?cf_uvid=191ba062970c0ab5189125dc281ff621) and the class names and descriptions are written as they have been published online (accessed February 10, 2022).

ideologies of dancing for fun, for expression, and sharing the culture while teaching and building dance relationships in Singapore.

The digital vā has allowed Tahitian dancers to grow a following online, opening their doors to more significant opportunities in the virtual Tahitian dance space. Tahitian dance courses online have transformed the way Tahitian dance is taught and shared, and it will likely continue as social media platforms continue to grow in usage. Online dance courses have provided Tahitian dancers the flexibility to take classes in the comfort of their own homes and to access recordings whenever they want to practice at another time or repeat a practice. The opportunities to take dance classes online from prominent Tahitian dancers who are well known through their performances found in the digital vā is something that many dancers take advantage of due to the hopes of earning the skills for performance and competition training. The many opportunities for Tahitian dance will significantly increase the number of skilled Tahitian dancers and their relationships. Tahitian dance will continue to evolve as it becomes more accessible virtually to people worldwide. The digital vā is infinite and can create and strengthen relationships that dancers have with each other.

#### *Tahitian Dance Lessons on Teaching Platforms*

Tahitian dance classes are not only being taught through online dance groups. Tahitian dance lessons can be found on Raqsonline and Skillshare websites but at a cost. The growth and interest in Tahitian dance are strong enough for teachers to add another avenue to make money and teach Tahitian dance through these platforms.

Raqsonline is a website focused on teaching dance classes online where self-growth is their philosophy. The classes can be streamed on over a thousand devices, such as iOS devices,

Android devices, and smart TV. The streaming is open to everyone as long as they subscribe for \$24.99 per month or \$239.88 a year (\$19.99 per month).<sup>29</sup> There are 24 Tahitian dance videos, and they are all authored by Glenda “Aiwa” B. Florez. Glenda has over 25 years of experience as a Polynesian dance performer and teacher and founded the non-profit Halau Kalama. When reviewing the content of these videos, I found that 33.3% (8) of the videos were focused on teaching 'Ōte'a choreography, 37.5% (9) of these videos were focused on teaching the foundational steps of Tahitian dancing, 12.5% (3) of these videos were fusion classes (a mixture of Tahitian dancing and belly dancing), 4.1% (1) of these videos were on warming up, 4.1% (1) of these videos were on cooling down following Tahitian dancing, 4.1% (1) of the videos are an introduction to the dance video series, and lastly, 4.1% of the videos are on specifically fa'arapu drills.

Another platform that contains Tahitian dance lessons is SkillShare. Skillshare is a website where students can explore thousands of hands-on, creative classes. Skillshare does have a membership cost, but when it is paid regularly, students will have unlimited access to the website.<sup>30</sup> The only Tahitian dance course that I found on this website is a level 1 Tahitian dance course by Laura Iniesta Ruiz, who is from Mexico, as shown on her Instagram, @lausob147, which is linked to her profile on the SkillShare website. Laura teaches both Hula and Tahitian dance. She states to have won several competitions and is certified by the Conservatoire of French Polynesia. The class is 35 minutes long but is split into 16 lessons. But two of these lessons are an introduction and a concluding thoughts video. She begins with an introduction to Tahitian dance. She then teaches how to tie a pareu, a warm-up, a lesson on posture guidance, dance directions, and 9 (56.25%) videos detailing Tahitian foundational steps. Laura also has a

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<sup>29</sup>See more information at <https://raqsonline.com/> (accessed February 02, 2022).

<sup>30</sup>More information can be found at: <https://www.skillshare.com/> (accessed February 02, 2022).

“Hands-on Class” project described on her page when she asks her students to record a 1–3-minute video utilizing any song from a provided Spotify list that she links in her profile. In the project, she asks her students to dance the basic 'Ori steps and upload them into SkillShare so that she can provide feedback. As of February 03, 2022, there have been 187 students listed on the website who participated in her class. Although there's high participation, not many students give a rating following the course. Only five students rated the class, and four (80%) ranked that the class exceeded their expectations, while one (20%) ranked that the course met their expectations.<sup>31</sup>

Both SkillShare and RaqsOnline platforms seem to provide a place for prospective students to have an introduction to Tahitian dance. The teachers do not appear to be posting regularly; instead, they have a sequence of videos that teach Tahitian dance. Most of these submitted videos are focused on teaching foundational steps (37.5% for RaqsOnline and 56.25% for SkillShare videos). Currently, the dance courses on these platforms do not seem enough to become an incredibly skilled dancer of Tahitian. However, these platforms include flexibility for students because they can take dance classes at their own pace and repeat the courses if they desire. Anyone curious about learning Tahitian dance, but does not have access to it, can choose to learn online, which will result in an expansion and development of relationships through the digital vā.

### *Tahitian Dance on Patreon*

Patreon is a big crowdfunding membership platform where creators have a continuous relationship with their crowd. Patreon has brought together content creators and people that

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<sup>31</sup>More information can be found at: <https://www.skillshare.com/classes/Learn-How-to-Dance-Ori-Tahiti-Level-1/1762177064?via=search-layout-grid> (accessed February 03, 2022).



appreciate their content. The membership is meant to support creators monthly on exclusive content that they put out (Regner, 2020). If creators want to have a large dance audience and a sustainable income, Patreon does not seem to be a supportive platform. During my research, I found five creators focused on Tahitian dance. Several of these Patreon creator accounts are inactive; however, the creators have social media accounts that are very active. The inactive Tahitian dance creators on this social media do not have much time, as seen in previous posts on inactive Patreons.

Leolani's Patreon has three tiers. The first tier is called "Intro to Tahitian" and costs \$1 a month and provides access to two introduction videos of Tahitian dance. The second-tier costs \$2 a month and is titled "Beginner Level 1-2." The second tier provides access to every basic tutorial and is all about building a strong foundation in dance. The final tier is called "Friends and Family," which is for \$5 and provides access to all tutorials and content earlier than other tiers. Leolani was last active on this page on October 07, 2020, when her previous video, "Drill Exercise 2: Amaha, Tarau, 1-legged Ami," was posted. Therefore, I assumed that the Patreon had been paused. In a previous post on June 21, 2018, Leolani stated she had not been able to publish content for a few months and had halted all subscriptions, noting to students that they would still have access to these tutorials and would not have to pay. Within her Patreon, she has 19 dance videos. Four of those videos are public to those not paying for any of the tiers.<sup>32</sup> The public videos are linked to her YouTube account, "DanceWithLeolani," which has 44.5k subscribers as of February 09, 2022. Her YouTube account was more active, with her last video dating two months ago, and she has 147 videos that have been posted throughout 11 years.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>More information at: <https://www.patreon.com/dancewithleolani> and the titles of these videos and post are quoted here as how they were published online (accessed February 05th, 2022).

<sup>33</sup>More information can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DanceWithLeolani/videos> (accessed February 09, 2022).

Leolani does own a website,<sup>34</sup> which also points people to the Facebook page and states that the Facebook group contains recorded dance videos from 2020. When reviewing her Facebook page, “Te Aho Nui Tahitian Dance School,” it has 1.7K followers and appears to have daily posts.<sup>35</sup> In addition, she has a Facebook page called “Dance with Leolani” with 2.3K followers. However, it has not been active recently because her last post was on November 29, 2016. Her Instagram is also linked to her website, “teahonui,” and has 11.1k followers as of February 09, 2022. In her Instagram posts, the creator has a reciprocal engagement with the community. Leolani also has a personal Instagram account related to Tahitian dance, called “dancewithleolani,” with 20.2k followers, active posts, and engagement. Although Leolani’s Patreon is not active, we can see that her social media accounts are famous and she has active communication with her followers. When reviewing her Patreon, it is very apparent that Leolani seemed to have a meaningful reason for being on this platform because the tiers are affordable.

The Patreon with the second-highest patrons is a non-Mā’ohi named Myriam Valenzuela, who teaches Tahitian, Hula, and Bellydancing, but has focused recently on a non-dancing platform. Her dance account has nine tiers, but only 5 of these tiers have some aspect of Tahitian dance. The lowest tier for Tahitian dance is “Tahitian Dance ('Ōte'a and 'Aparima),” which is \$10 per month and provides immediate access to exclusive Tahitian dance content and is described as a place to learn and master the fa'arapu and her choreography. “Belly Dance & Tahitian” costs \$20 per month and is the next tier that includes all previous videos and, in addition, belly dance. Next, “HULA & TAHITIAN \*New\*” is \$25 per month and consists of previous Tahitian video content and Hula dancing (Kahiko & Auana). The next tier is called “Tahitian Dance Personal Feedback” and includes all Tahitian dance videos and personal feedback from Myriam on dance

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<sup>34</sup>Her website is: <https://www.teahonui.com/classesinfo> (accessed February 05th, 2022).

<sup>35</sup>More information at: <https://www.facebook.com/teahonui> (accessed February 16, 2022).

technique, grace, and mastery. This tier allows patrons to send Myriam directly a video once a month of their practice, performance, and choreography to get feedback and improvements. The last tier is “Hula, Tahitian & Belly Dance,” which costs \$35 per month and includes all Hula, Tahitian, and belly dance content. Myriam’s more active on Patreon, but her last post was October 31, 2021, and was related to playing Hawaiian instruments. Her last post regarding Tahitian dancing was on “September 27, 2021” and titled “HOW TO DO A FA'ARAPU THE RIGHT WAY.” The oldest post about Tahitian dancing was posted on July 19, 2020, and is called “HOW TO TA'IRI | Basic Tahitian Steps.” Myriam has a total of 26 videos concerning Tahitian dance.<sup>36</sup> She has not specified why there have not been any recent videos. Myriam’s Instagram and YouTube accounts are linked to her Patreon page. Her Instagram is “myriamvalenzueladance” and contains 860 followers and 447 posts. Myriam has her Patreon in her Instagram bio, and even her most recent posting on October 14, 2021, is advertising her Patreon page.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, her YouTube account “Maeva Ori Tahiti” has not had a post since October 2021.<sup>38</sup> Upon further research, Myriam has another YouTube account unrelated to Tahitian dance. It is “Myriam Valenzuela,” which is focused on manifesting and transcending limiting beliefs that have daily postings.<sup>39</sup> Although her videos have a lot of engagement, Myriam seems to be focusing on another business avenue to make money.

The third Patreon is made by “Lizzy” and appears to be a virtual classroom. Her Patreon does not show the number of patrons; however, the posts have a lot of engagement. The oldest

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<sup>36</sup>More information can be found here: <https://www.patreon.com/myriamvalenzueladance> and the names of these class videos are written here as they were published online (accessed February 05, 2022).

<sup>37</sup>Information found: [https://www.instagram.com/p/CVBWJLnPFAt/?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CVBWJLnPFAt/?utm_medium=copy_link) (accessed February 09, 2022).

<sup>38</sup>Information found: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MaevaOriTahiti/videos> and the name of the account appears as it is published online (accessed February, 09, 2022).

<sup>39</sup>Information found: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMkdb2OA4kCSVzkSp\\_amCaQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMkdb2OA4kCSVzkSp_amCaQ) (accessed February 09, 2022).

post made by Lizzy was on March 31, 2021, and is titled “How To Tie Your Pareo/Pareū” and has 59 likes and nine comments. The newest video was posted on January 30, 2022, titled, “Class #42 January 31, 2022”. Several of Lizzy’s classes are titled with the class number and the posting date. Lizzy appears to post weekly, typically seven days apart between posts on a Sunday evening.<sup>40</sup> When searching online, I found that Lizzy has an Instagram account called “@oritahitiwithlizzy” with 4,024 followers. In her account biography, she advertises her Patreon to learn Tahitian dance.<sup>41</sup> I also found her YouTube channel (WhatWouldLizzyDoVlogs) intriguing to review because she has 422K subscribers. The YouTube channel consists of vlogs about her life, and I found two videos related to Tahitian dance. The oldest video I found is called “Dance Competition, CA Donuts, & Ultra Shenanigans,” posted on January 28, 2015, and is 22 minutes long. This video showcases part of her dance competition and some of the other things that she did throughout that day. In the Starbound National Dance Competition, which is not specific to Tahitian dance, she won first place for this competition. The most recent video is called “COME DANCE WITH ME: TAHITIAN ORI WORKOUT” and was posted on March 15, 2021; and is 12 minutes long and 23 seconds with 13,726 views and 213 comments. The whole video is Lizzy advertising the Tahitian dance class she teaches on Patreon.<sup>42</sup> Based on this review, it can be assumed that Lizzy is a popular YouTube creator and influencer that is using Patreon as a platform to make money and host dance courses as a workout for her viewers.

On Patreon, there is also an inactive Tahitian dance account by “Manahine Tahitian Dance School.” Manahine Tahitian Dance has one tier at the price of \$3 per month that is meant

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<sup>40</sup>More information can be found here [https://www.patreon.com/OriTahitiWithLizzy/posts?sort=-published\\_at&filters\[media\\_types\]=video](https://www.patreon.com/OriTahitiWithLizzy/posts?sort=-published_at&filters[media_types]=video) and the names of these class videos are written here as they were published online (accessed February 05, 2022).

<sup>41</sup>More information can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/oritahitiwithlizzy/?hl=en> (accessed February 15, 2022).

<sup>42</sup>Video found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYiXt9ZU2V0> and the names of these videos are written here as they were published online (accessed February 15, 2022).

to provide access to the beginner course of videos with the promise of new content. The postings are in English and French. The oldest posting happened on June 23, 2021, and the video is titled, “First Tahitian Dance class: The 'ta'iri tamau.” The newest posting was on July 16, 2021, and is titled after the Tahitian dance move “Te Afata.” This school only has four videos posted in one month from the first dance post. Their dance school has 0 patrons subscribed to this page.<sup>43</sup>

When reviewing this page, it seems clear that the school did not continue to keep their Patreon active due to the lack of engagement. I tried searching for this dance school, but I could not find any social media related to the school’s name, so it may not be a school with experience using social media for their business.

“Dance in Paradise” is another inactive Patreon with three different tiers. The lowest tier is called “Beginner Support” and costs \$1 per month. The Beginner Support tier provides access to patron-only updates where they receive one exclusive video per month and access to the chat community. Following this tier is the “Intermediate Support,” which costs \$5 per month, which is supportive of the creation of episodes and ensures that projects are carried out regularly. In addition to the previous tier, the Intermediate Support tier receives access to all video content and the private making of merchandise that those supporting this tier can receive, such as caps, t-shirts, sarongs, etc. Finally, the “VIP Support” tier is the last tier, which costs \$10 per month. The VIP Support tier will receive gratitude from the “Dance in Paradise” team. Other benefits of the VIP Support tier include access to live streams, access to all channel content with no ads, the patron’s name in the credits of each of their videos, and patrons will receive the merchandise (caps, t-shirts, pareo) regularly. They can also assist with choosing the subjects of the video projects, and patrons within this tier will be entered in a drawing for a free plane ticket to Tahiti.

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<sup>43</sup>More information can be found here: <https://www.patreon.com/manahine> and the names of these class videos are written here as they were published online (accessed February 05, 2022).

The first post on this account was made on June 22, 2021, as a welcoming post and their goal of 10,000 members for their Patreon. A first-season video was posted on June 23, 2021, showcasing different Tahitian dancers. The last post was on November 08, 2021, as a new project on YouTube for the 2022 year. Unfortunately, I could not view this new project video because it is set to private. Therefore, there are no patron members of this Patreon so far.<sup>44</sup> However, I did find an active Instagram account called “dance\_in\_paradise” and a YouTube account “danceinparadise” that appear to be primarily related to this Patreon.<sup>45</sup> Their Instagram has the YouTube link in their bio with the description, “ORI TAHITI VIDEO EVERYDAY!”. On both Instagram and YouTube, I found that the biography is accurate because these accounts post regularly and sometimes post multiple videos a day.<sup>46</sup> The Patreon account may be a step in the future for people who want to periodically subscribe to Tahitian content to support this company’s mission. Additionally, DanceinParadise utilizes both YouTube and Instagram to create and build a regular following since these two platforms are widely used today.

The platform Patreon appears to be a place that those with a more significant social media following will utilize. Four out of five Patreons (80%) are more prominent influencers on various social media platforms. The one Patreon that did not appear to have social media had no activity on the Patreon or followers. When it comes to social media activity, 80% of these Patreons (4 out of 5) have both an Instagram and a YouTube account, but Instagram appears to be the most dynamic platform these influencers would use. Patreon seems another avenue for dance teachers to make money and share their dance classes on another platform.

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<sup>44</sup>The Patreon can be accessed at this website: [https://www.patreon.com/Dance\\_in\\_paradise](https://www.patreon.com/Dance_in_paradise) (accessed April 30th, 2022).

<sup>45</sup>The YouTube account can be accessed at this website: <https://www.youtube.com/danceinparadise> and the name of the videos quoted are seen as they are published online (accessed April 30, 2022).

<sup>46</sup>The Instagram account can be accessed at this link: [https://www.instagram.com/dance\\_in\\_paradise/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/dance_in_paradise/?hl=en) (accessed April 30, 2022).

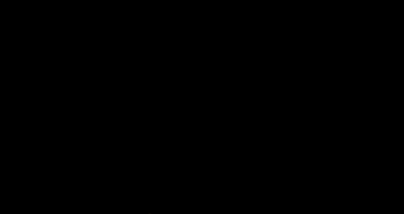
### *Mā'ohi Voices within the Digital Space*

Even when in the digital space, the Mā'ohi culture and traditions are not lost. In the digital space, Mā'ohi are connecting more than ever with their community and the world. These connections are the avenues for the Mā'ohi people to express their traditions and educate on their culture. While some Mā'ohi taught online classes before the pandemic, many of them have taught open courses during the pandemic. Opening virtual classes online was a way to show care for the community during this challenging change.

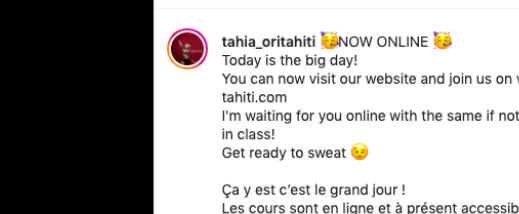
Even before the pandemic halted 'Ori Tahiti courses and forcefully moved the practice to an online space, dance content was already available on the internet. On October 15, 2019, Tahia Cambet announced her online English, French, and Japanese classes on an Instagram post. Her classes are taught in French but have English and Japanese subtitles. A follow-up Instagram post made on October 17, 2019, shows her gratitude for the dancers that participated. She noted that dancers from France, Tahiti, the United States, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Russia, Italy, New Caledonia, Spain, Mexico, Australia, Taiwan, and Vietnam tuned into her recorded classes.<sup>47</sup> Tahia's mindfulness and making her dance classes available in several languages makes it accessible for so many dancers. This accessibility shows her awareness of the popularity of the dance in several countries and that she is open to teaching these communities.

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<sup>47</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3t9ZQvompv/> (accessed May 02, 2022).



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Get ready to sweat 🥵

Ça y est c'est le grand jour !  
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お待たせしました〜今日は重要な日です〜オンラインコースの開始となります〜アクセスはこちらからvideo.tahia-ori-tahiti.com汗をかく準備して頑張りましょう🥵

#tahitiandanceonline #tahiacyambettahitiandanceschool  
#tahiacyambet #tahiacyambetdanceclass #otahitiniui  
#tahitiandance #oritahiti #tahti #dansetahitienne #aparima  
#otea #learnoritahiti

Liked by \_teaitu\_ and 2,170 others

OCTOBER 15, 2019

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her business, she teaches the Tahitian language. In one of her Instagram posts that targets Tahitian dancers, she advertised her YouTube channel on September 19, 2019. She talks about a soldier named Louis Martin that used the word “Tamure” in place of “Ori Tahiti” in the 1960s. Tamure was the name of his song and was all about Tahitian dance. The issue that Moenau mentions is that this name is inaccurate. She says, “The real translation of Tahitian dance is 'ORI TAHITI in the Tahitian language according to the FARE VANAA official dictionary.” In her post, she notes that some people do not correctly understand how to write in the Tahitian language, and those misspellings can transform the word’s meaning. She then advertises her YouTube channel, “REO TAHITI FOR BEGINNERS.” The video she points people to watch is called “To 'ORI or not to ORI.”<sup>48</sup> The reason why this is essential to look into is because this is an example of a Mā'ohi wanting to ensure that outsiders get the language correctly. Any mistake can misrepresent the culture. In another post on June 05, 2020, introducing herself, she talks about her passion for traveling to Tahiti and the language. Then she says, “My mission in life is to share and help all those who are passionate about Polynesian CULTURE, LANGUAGE, TRAVEL and also everything i have learned in my ‘momprenneur’ life.” Then she ends this post with, “I welcome you here and look forward to get to know you more, create a fun, loving, friendly, exciting relationship.”<sup>49</sup> Moenau may not be a Tahitian dancer, but she regularly communicates with the community and encourages them to learn about the culture and language through her company. She further extends the desire to keep the culture alive through her interactions.

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<sup>48</sup>The Instagram post referenced is found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B2nSLu2AmAy/>.

<sup>49</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBE0ehvplCm/> and is quoted as it appears in published online text except the use of single quotation marks within the quote (accessed May 02, 2022).

Another Mā'ohi that has a business focused on Tahitian culture is “Arioi Cultural Center” that was founded by Hinatea Colombani. In a post on February 25, 2022, Hinatea states, “The philosophy that we advocate in the ‘Arioi cultural center is to share Tahitian culture to anyone who wants to learn about it. These feathers are the symbol of the sacredness of these words and of this commitment, of this vision.”<sup>50</sup> Hinatea’s Instagram is focused on sharing her adventures in Tahiti, the culture, and the dance, which she is heavily utilizing the online space for. In her post on March 24, 2022, she says “I told you something BIG, AMAZING and INNOVATIVE is coming. You are going to have Tahitian Culture access ONLINE.” After tagging two of her Instagram accounts, she then says, “More than 'Ori Tahiti, this is the Tahitian Culture !”<sup>51</sup> When reading this post, we can see another example of a Mā'ohi that is using the digital platform to share their culture and make a living off of it. Hirohiti Tematahotoa has echoed these statements in a post on November 29, 2021, where he states, “The ‘ori tahiti is not just a simple dance, or just to dance, just to perform, it is also knowing the Polynesian culture #Day1 #SaturdayNovember27th.”<sup>52</sup> The emphasis on Tahitian culture as more than just a dance is another way to transform outsiders’ perspectives. Mā'ohi are actively using the digital platform to expand the ideas of Tahiti.

When the pandemic started, Tehani Robinson quickly reached out to the world through her Amui Tātou project. She made her first announcement on Amui Tātou on March 23rd, 2020, on Instagram to advertise an online workshop on March 29th, 2020. In her post, she wrote about staying connected and looking out for each other. With the lockdown due to the pandemic,

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<sup>50</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B9BE4kQArkU/> and appears as it was published in online text (accessed May 02, 2022).

<sup>51</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-JoBV4ARMI/> and appears similar to how it was published in online text (accessed May 02, 2022).

<sup>52</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CW5IMVzryG1/> and appears as how it was published in online text (accessed May 03, 2022).

Tehani planned free workshops with dance teachers to share their time and knowledge with students globally. These classes are live-streamed, and the purpose of this product was to uplift and support each other.<sup>53</sup> Although the class is free, On March 25th, 2020, Tehani posted to encourage dancers participating in her project to donate to a local charity of a participant's choice or their recommended charities on their website: amuitatou.com (now discontinued).<sup>54</sup> Following her workshop on March 29th, 2020, Tehani made a post on March 30th, 2020, as a gratitude to her class participants. She mentions that they had 540 dancers that took her workshop from France, Spain, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the US, Latin America, Canada, Polynesia, Brazil, and Siberia.<sup>55</sup> This project further maintains the community-centric ideology that the Mā'ohi culture people have instilled from their culture.

**Figure 3. TEHANI'S INSTAGRAM POST ON MARCH 23, 2020**

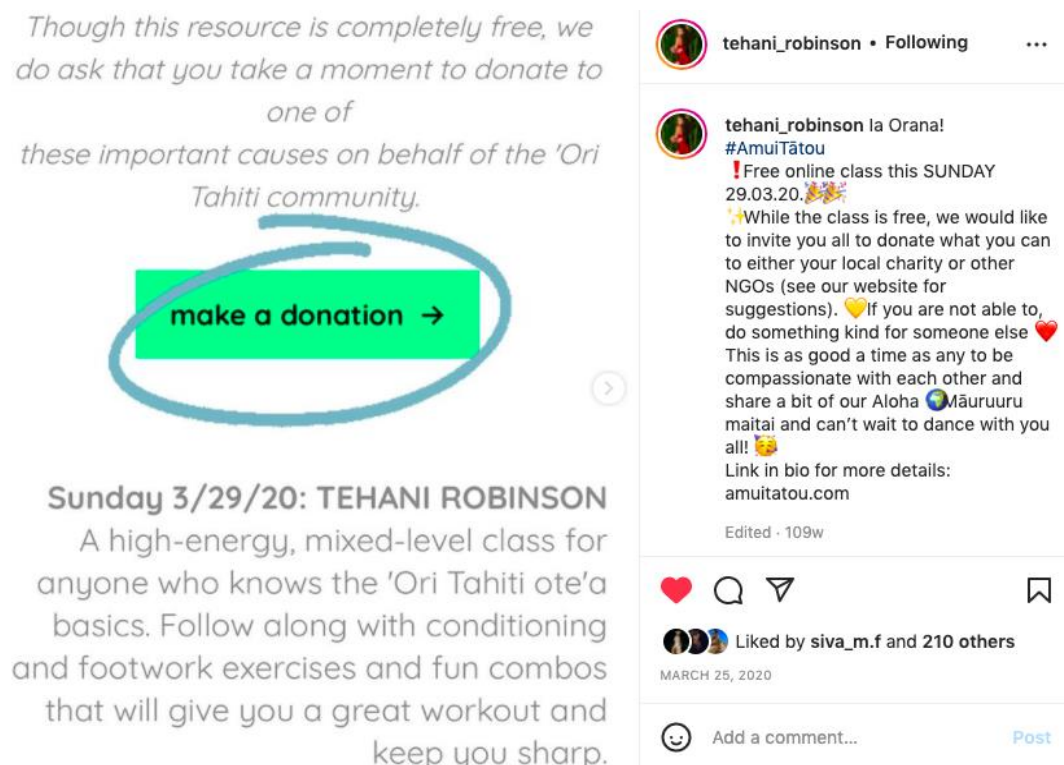


<sup>53</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-FmWJSFFzc/> (accessed May 02, 2022).

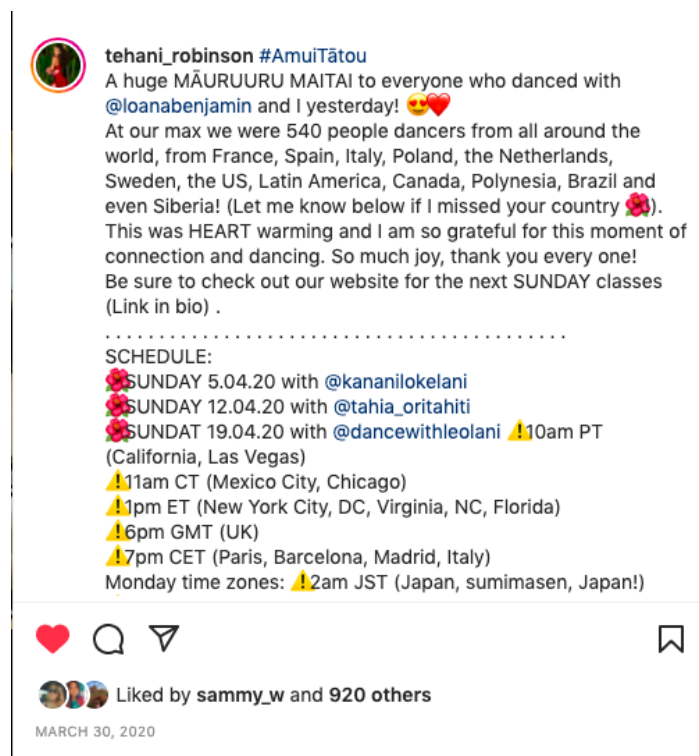
<sup>54</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-K5QOqlAaT/> (accessed May 02, 2022).

<sup>55</sup>Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-XbnfyFYOU/> (accessed May 02, 2022).

**Figure 4. TEHANI'S INSTAGRAM POST ON MARCH 25, 2020**



**Figure 5. TEHANI'S INSTAGRAM POST ON MARCH 30, 2020**



There are a lot of Mā'ohi participating on the internet, especially on social media. A notable takeaway is the desire to share and practice the culture in an online environment. These postings that we see are educational on the dance practice, the language, and the culture. With these posts, the idea of Tahiti is re-imagined as Mā'ohi emphasizes the true meaning of their cultural practices, language, and dance. With that, they show that Tahiti is more than the beauty and dance and that people should have more awareness of the other aspects of the culture.

### *Conclusion*

Both Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi dance practitioners teach Tahitian dance classes in the digital vā. However, non-Mā'ohi Tahitian dancers are more likely to teach courses on multiple platforms of the digital vā when compared to Mā'ohi teachers. In addition, non-Mā'ohi are more likely to teach classes focused on improv and freestyle for Tahitian dance competitions. While both Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi Tahitian dancers share the same communal lifestyle of sharing their dance practices, performances, and classes with the digital vā, non-Mā'ohi Tahitian dancers tend to teach more of the competition aspect of Tahitian dance. Mā'ohi dancers are more focused on sharing their culture and identity through dance classes, performances, and digital vā postings.

Tahitian dance has increased accessibility through the digital vā, where the Tahitian dance culture transcends the boundaries of the physical world. The digital vā is where Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi dance practitioners build relationships by sharing their dance practices, classes, performances, and pictures. In addition, the digital vā is a space for dancers to connect, support, and meditate with each other worldwide on their dance journey. As the internet becomes more accessible globally, the digital vā will continue to be a space to educate, navigate relationships, have dance practices, and perform.

## CHAPTER 4: TAHITIAN DANCE COMPETITIONS IN A DIGITAL VĀ

Tahitian dance competitions have emerged in the digital vā due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Before the pandemic, Tahitian dance competitions were solely performed in person. These competitions have attracted more than 12,000 dancers in the United States, more than 10,000 in Latin America, and 25,000 in Japan, which is projected to grow to 500,000 by 2027 (Tuuhia, 2022). Due to the pandemic, Tahitian dance competitions that have annual in-person competitions have moved their competitions to the digital vā and is also the reason several virtual dance competitions have been started. This chapter will explore the digital vā of these competitions and analyze the type of content and categories of dance performed by participants. In the time of a global pandemic, the digital vā is significant to understand because we find a larger community in Tahitian dance that is resilient. Even in an online space, dancers thrive and continue to dance while developing relationships with one another. In conclusion, I will state that some Tahitian dance competitions will continue to follow the result of the pandemic due to the accessibility, cost-effectivity, and reduced stress of performances that it provides to dancers worldwide.

### *The Process for Participating in virtual Tahitian Dance Competitions*

The process for participating in a virtual Tahitian dance competition is simple. First, a dancer would register for the Tahitian dance competition through the websites of those organizing it. Signing up for competitions involves paying a fee and providing information about the dancer's age, dance level, the dance group they are affiliated with, and then choosing the dance categories they would like to participate in. A popular dance category found in all dance

competitions is the 'Ōte'a. Once the dancer is registered for the competition, they will receive the song they are dancing to for their category.

Virtual dance competitions are different from in-person competitions because dancers would have to improvise to randomly assorted drum beats when competing in a live competition. In a virtual competition, after the dancer receives their song, they can listen to the music several times and plan their choreography accordingly along with their outfit. In both in-person and online dance competitions, dancers will perform with a theme that either tells a story or is related to nature. I would argue that virtual dance competitions are easier to prepare for because the dancer does not have to feel the pressure that comes alone when entering a stage to dance. The dancer also has plenty of time to practice and does not have to perform in front of an audience, judges, or alongside other dancers like in live competitions, enhancing the anxiety of a dancer's mentality. Since the dancer does not have to improvise, preparing for this competition is less stressful and does not require continuous practice with random drum beats.

Although the virtual dance competition is more accessible than a live competition, it can also be more competitive. It is more competitive because dancers have more time to listen to the music assigned to them; they have more time to perfect the dance to match their chosen theme and music. If a dancer films and makes a mistake, they can re-record their performance until they are happy with their performance video. In addition, dancers can work with their dance teachers to assist with choreography and provide feedback on their routines. Another benefit is that dancers do not have to spend a lot of money traveling long distances and lodging to compete in the competition. So, the virtual space provides more opportunities for dancers globally to compete. On the other hand, the added competition in the virtual vā can make it challenging for dancers that want to be placed in the top 3 dancers of their respective categories.

Once dancers submit their videos to the competition, the videos are grouped and sent to judges to review. When the scoring is completed, dancers can watch the match in a live stream on YouTube. First, the dance videos are grouped by the dance category, level, and age group. Then, the performances are shown with some advertisements in between them from sponsors. Finally, at the end of the live stream, the emcees announce the winners for each category.

### *Tahitian Dance Competitions that Moved to Virtual Spaces*

Over the years, there have been several Tahitian dance competitions globally. Some are active annually or bi-annually, while others have ended or are planned every few years. In my research, I found 24 virtual Tahitian dance competitions, and 10 of these were in-person competitions that had adjusted to the pandemic and moved to the online format. These ten competitions that moved to a virtual space are: Heiva Ma'ohi 'o Patitifa, Hura Tahiti, Heiva San Diego, Ori Tahiti San Diego, Heiva i San Francisco, Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori, Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal / Heiva i Montreal, 'Ori 'Ori Tatou E, Te Varua O Te Ori, and Heiva i Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> After organizing competitions for several years, organizers were able to change the format of their competition which involved pushing the expected date to a later time to figure the virtual format out.

Most of the competitions that moved to virtual spaces concentrated in the United States, specifically in California. Still, some contests adjusted to the virtual format from other parts of the world. For example, 6 (60%) of these competitions are from organizers in California, 1 (10%) is from Canada, 2 (20%) are from Mexico, and 1 (10%) is from Taiwan.

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<sup>56</sup>I am not changing the orthography of these names but keeping them as how they appear in published online text.



Most of the competitions that moved to a virtual format have been consistent with putting on their competition annually. In my research, I found that 6 (60%) of these competitions switched to a virtual platform in 2020 when the pandemic started. These same competitions continued with this format in 2021. The competitions that adjusted quickly to a virtual competition and maintained this during the pandemic are Heiva San Diego, Heiva San Francisco, Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori, Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal / Heiva i Montreal, 'Ori 'Ori Tatou E, and Heiva i Taiwan.

There are 2 (20%) competitions that quickly adjusted to a virtual format; however, they did not host another competition the following year. Both Heiva Ma'ohi 'o Patitifa and Ori Tahiti San Diego hosted their competitions virtually in 2020 but did not continue hosting a competition in 2021.

Lastly, 2 (20%) of the competitions (Hura Tahiti and Te Varua O Te Ori) were canceled when the pandemic started in 2020 but hosted a virtual competition in 2021. Currently, per their website, Hura Tahiti intends to have an in-person competition in 2022. As for Te Varua O Te Ori, it is unknown if they will continue in 2022. However, the same organizer of this competition, Sao Sao Walle, is organizing the Aito competition, a new competition that is taking place in 2022.

While most dance competitions adjusted by moving to a virtual format, a few competitions did not continue in the virtual arrangement and intended to have an in-person competition. For the most part, annual in-person competitions try to maintain hosting a yearly competition, even in a virtual format. The digital vā is being practiced here by continuing their events through the online world and maintaining relationships with both dancers and judges.

### *New Tahitian Dance Competitions during the Pandemic*

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we saw new dance competitions emerge. Out of the 24 virtual dance competitions, 11 did not have any previous history as an in-person competition. These 11 competitions are Pupu Here, Heiva 'Ori Tahiti International Competition 2020 & 2021, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics, Tā'amu 'Ori Competition, Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti, Hura Nui, Aito Competition, Ori Tahiti Solo Japan Cup, Tahiti Heiva in Japan, Heiva i West, and Heiva i Sakura.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, these dance competitions are open to participants worldwide, expanding the opportunities to compete, watch, and meet other dancers. This unique period shows the resilience and the solid communal bonds that 'Ori Tahiti offers for dancers globally.

The 11 dance competitions created during the pandemic have been started by dance organizers all over the world. Four (36.4%) of these competitions are from organizers in Mexico, four (36.4%) are from organizers in Japan, 1 (9.09%) is from an organizer in Tahiti, 1 (9.09%) is from an organizer in Indonesia, and 1 (9.09%) is from an organizer in California. While competitions tend to be concentrated in the United States, organizers from other countries have had more opportunities in the pandemic to host Tahitian dance competitions and open these competitions to participants all over the world.

The type of dance presented in these new competitions is a range of categories. Only 4 (36.4%) of the competitions host an 'Aparima Soloist category, 3 (27.2%) represent the Group Ō'tea (more than two dancers performing), 2 (18.2%) represent the Couples Ō'tea (only two dancers performing), 1 (9.09%) represent the Couples 'Aparima, 3 represents the Group Mehura

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<sup>57</sup>I am not changing the orthography of these competition names. I am keeping the names as they appear in published online text.

(27.2%), 2 (18.2%) represents the Mehura Solo category, 1 (9.09%) represents the 'Ārearea Solo category, 1 (9.09%) represents a Group Mevina, and 1 (9.09%) represents a Fa'arapu and Pa'oti Challenge. The unique categories are the “Group Mevina” category and “Fa'arapu and Pa'oti Challenge,” which is found in the same competition, and “Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti” which Conny Medina created, an organizer in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The most distinctive competition is “Pupu Here” by Kanani Asuega. Pupu Here is mentioned in Chapter 3 as a class that is focused on improving solo competition routines. The competition class is solely virtual, and the class ends with an in-house competition where participants take what they have learned in class and perform a solo piece. The participants’ solos are then broadcasted on YouTube and end with the winner’s announcement for each category. In the Pupu Here competitions, Kanani challenges her dancers to embody a specific theme that participants trained on during her weekly classes for Pupu Here. The Pupu Here course is a six-week course, which results in a Pupu Here competition video being broadcasted on YouTube every two months. Although Kanani is a non-Mā'ohi, she is a Polynesian dancer that grew up in a dance school and has been trained by notable Mā'ohi dancers. In her competition, she has included several Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi practitioners trained extensively with Mā'ohi practitioners and in Tahiti. In her several Pupu Here competitions, she’s had the following dancers as her judges: Lehia Mama, Jeannie Napoleon Heu, Tutu'ila-Taumoeofolau, Shanna Pineda, Tiana Liufau, Matatini Mou, Tehani Robinson, Conny Medina, Jocelyn Magos, and Mahilani Teuira.<sup>58</sup> This new competition is unlike other competitions because of the pre-competition class format. In addition, Kanani has been able to host multiple competitions due to her eight-week course, while other competitions tend to occur only once a year. This new

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<sup>58</sup>The Pupu Here competition can be viewed on Kanani’s YouTube channel at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/c/KananiLokelaniAsuega>.

phenomenon allows her to practice the digital *vā* through nourishing her relationships with judges and her dancers and also forming new relationships with dancers she would not have access to at her location.

Japan has several competitions that the same person has organized. Due to this, a particular organizer has created several new virtual competitions in Japan to replace old in-person Tahitian competitions. Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi created Heiva i West to replace Heiva i Fukuoka, and also Tahiti Heiva in Japan was made to replace Heiva i Tokyo. Kensuke also started Heiva i Sakura, which did not replace any live competitions. Each of these competitions shares the same Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts. While all these competitions have an Ōte'a Solo category, the Tahiti Heiva in Japan has a Mehura Solo category, and the Heiva i West competition has a Group Ōte'a category. Kensuke's website appears to be focused on hosting several competitions, providing opportunities for those in Japan to compete.

The only virtual Japan competition that Kensuke has not organized is the Ori Tahiti Solo Japan Cup, organized by Island Communication Co., Ltd. and Hula Oritahichi Co., Ltd. The competition is focused on Ōte'a solos, and they have had a virtual competition in 2021, and 2022. However, it is unclear if this competition will ever be an in-person competition, though it appears it will be utterly virtual since the competition was started during the pandemic and has continued to be in the digital *vā*.<sup>59</sup>

In Mexico, four competitions started during the pandemic. There are three Mexico competitions (75%) organized by organizers in Guadalajara, Mexico, while the other Mexico competition (25%) was organized in Puebla City. All three of the Guadalajara competitions are organized by different groups. The first competition is the Tā'amu 'Ori Competition organized by

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<sup>59</sup>See information at their Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/oritahitisolo/?hl=en> (accessed March 05, 2022).

Te Pupu 'Ori Toa Rere. It has the following judges for their 2021 competition: Francky Tehiva, Tiana Liufau, Mevina Liufau, Natalia Louvat, Poerava Taea, Mataini Mou, and Manouche Lehartel. The competition has also hosted virtual workshops with the following teachers that have all trained and competed in Tahiti: Francky Tehiva ('Ōte'a Tāne), Poerava Taea ('Aparima Vahine), Natalia Louvat ('Ōte'a Vahine Workshop). The second Guadalajara, Mexico competition is Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti, organized by Conny Medina and has the following judges on their 2021 competition panel: Mevina Liufau and Teruria Taimana. The last new Guadalajara, Mexico. Conny organized several virtual workshops with the following prominent Tahitian dancers that seem to be of Mā'ohi descent: Kaelhi Brunel (Online Competition Workshop), Tuarii Tracqui (Tāne workshops for winners), Maïlie Clavé (Workshop for women that place 3rd), Leia Diard (Workshop for 2nd place winners), Teruria Taimana (Workshop for 1st place winners), Mevina Liufau (International Workshop), Tuarii Tracqui (Tāne workshop for winners). The third Tahitian dance competition is Hura Nui, organized by Nelly Serrano Dance Academy and has the following judges for their 2021 competition: Erena Uura, Vaehakaiki (Moon), and Vaheaia. In 2020, Hura Nui hosted workshops with Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi practitioners, such as: Bertha Vargus (Methodology), Marcela Delgado (Reo Tahiti), Dulce Sanchez (Marae Taputapuataea), and Gabriela Gonzalez Guerrero (Leyendas). In 2021, they hosted workshops with Vaheana Le Bihan ('Ōtea Choreography), Vahe Le Bihan ('Aparima Choreography). The Aito Competition is organized by Sao Sao Walle from Puebla City and has the following judges and workshop teachers for their 2022 competition: Sam Tetumu, Hugo Oopa, and Olivier Lendir. Out of these four Mexican Tahitian dance competitions, they all host Ōte'a solos, 3 (75%) host 'Aparima Solo categories, 2 (50%) host an Ōte'a group category, 2 (50%) hosts an Ōte'a Couples category, 2 (50%) hosts a Mehura Group category, 1 (25%) hosts an 'Aparima Group category,

and 1 (25%) hosts an 'Aparima Couples category. Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti offers two categories that no other Mexico competition has: the “Mevina” category and the “Fa'arapu and Pa'oti Challenge.”<sup>60</sup> Overall, competitions in Mexico seem to focus on Ōte'a categories in either solos, groups, or couples. The 'Aparima category is the second most popular in the types of solos, group, and duos. On the other hand, the Mehura category is not as popular, where only two competitions host the Mehura category, and it's only in the “group” category and not found as a “Couples” or “Solo” category. Lastly, although the organizers and participants of these 'Ori Tahiti competitions appear to not be of Mā'ohi descent, the organizers and participants work closely with Mā'ohi practitioners by having them host dance workshops, in addition to having Mā'ohi practitioners on the judging panel of the freestyle performances.

Indonesia only has one Tahitian competition, and it has been online. Upon research, I could not locate any previous Tahitian dance competitions in this country. The competition is called “Ori 'Ori Olympics,” hosted by Hulala Living. Hulala Living is known for hosting a 4-day dance retreat in their country and often hiring a well-known dancer to lead the dance workshops. The last workshop was in 2019, and Tahia Cambet assisted with the dance training. There has been no other workshop hosted following 2019 due to the ongoing pandemic. In 2020, Hulala Living started the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics as a place for dancers globally to connect while giving back to the dance community and those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Hulala Living states on their website their empathy for financial struggles that have come about because of COVID-19. Due to this, they are offering a large cash prize to winners of their competition and several workshops. The overall winner of the 2020 competition would receive USD 2000 and a cultural experience of making “tapa” at the cultural center in Tahiti and a month of E-

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<sup>60</sup>See appendix for more information.

learning class on Tahitian culture by Hinatea Colombani. The overall runner-up would get USD 1,000, and all finalists of this virtual competition would receive USD 50. The 2020 competition was focused on 'Ōte'a solos, while in 2021, the competition was focused on both 'Ōte'a and 'Aparima Solos. In 2020, the competition was judged by Hinatea Colombani and Tahia Cambet. In 2021, Tahia Cambet continued to be a judge, while Kehaulani Chanquy was the second judge. Although Hinatea Colombani did not judge for 2021, she hosted a cultural workshop for the competition in 2022.<sup>61</sup> While this is Indonesia's first Tahitian dance competition, it seems like this is a competition that will continue following the pandemic. The competition was born during the pandemic as a way for dancers to perform and connect with each other and to provide workshops from Tahitian dancers all over the world. In addition, this competition had Tahia Cambet as their judge, who has been to the Hulala Living Retreat in 2019, and judged both competitions in 2020 and 2021 and taught workshops for these competitions. Hinatea Colombani has also been a judge and consistently taught workshops during the competitions. Both Tahia and Hinatea are Mā'ohi that have dedicated themselves to this competition and will likely continue to be involved if the virtual competitions continue.

The last new competition comes from the motherland, Tahiti, the Heiva 'Ori Tahiti International Competition. Hirohiti Tematahotoa is a Mā'ohi and the sole organizer of the competition, and he hosted this competition in 2020 and 2021. The competition has the following categories that competitors can compete in: Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Aparima Group, and Mehura Group. Dance groups and solo dancers are judged by six professional Tahitian judges for this competition. Dancers from all over the world have participated in this competition, such as dancers from Tahiti, Reunion Island, France, Mexico, Japan, Italy, United States of America

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<sup>61</sup>See more information at this website: <https://www.hulalaliving.com/oriorilympic2021aparimaedition> (accessed March 07th, 2022).

(California and Hawai'i), Switzerland, New Caledonia, and Chili.<sup>62</sup> Hirohiti is an example of a Mā'ohi that has placed himself in the digital vā and is maintaining his identity by hosting globally Tahitian dance competitions for dancers.

While a majority of these new competitions emerging during the pandemic are from non-Mā'ohi organizers, we can see that Mā'ohi people are very much involved in these competition processes. Mā'ohi people are involved in both the judging portion of these improv competitions, and also assists with teaching workshops during these events. Virtual workshops are more likely to be found in competitions that are organized by Mexico organizers, since the workshops are not found elsewhere, except in the Indonesia competition, “Ori 'Ori Olympics.” The Mā'ohi people have a strong presence in the digital vā, just as much as the physical vā. They are also practicing the digital vā through the formation of their online relationships, and their performances in competition. Although we see only one Mā'ohi practitioner (Hirohiti Tematahotoa) from Tahiti that is hosting a virtual competition, we see many other competitions within the digital vā that the Mā'ohi people are strongly involved with and actively participating in. These non-Mā'ohi practitioners practice the digital vā with their continued engagement with Mā'ohi people in their virtual competitions.

### *Hybrid Competitions*

During the pandemic, new competitions have also been started due to the pandemic. Another unique format that has formed due to the pandemic is “hybrid” competitions where the competition has some aspects of it that are virtual and other aspects of it that are in-person. Three competitions are in the hybrid format: Heiva i Paris, Te 'Ori Ora, and Kamani Illikai.

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<sup>62</sup>More information on this competition can be found at this website: <https://tahitidanceonline.com/virtual-ori-tahiti-competition-2021/> (accessed March 07, 2022).



Heiva i Paris is hosted by Ken Carlter, an indigenous Mā'ohi from Tahiti. This competition started in 2014 and has been a regular competition in France. In 2020, Heiva i Paris had their first round of competition be in the digital vā due to the pandemic. Those that advance to the next round would have to compete in person at the Casino de Paris in France on October 10, 2020. Contestants had from July 13, 2020, to August 23, 2020, to send their videos to [iaorana@hipsleague.com](mailto:iaorana@hipsleague.com). The judges would review the videos on August 24 and August 25, 2020, and announce the finalists on August 26, 2020.<sup>63</sup> Heiva i Paris took a break in 2021. As of early 2022, they intend to have Heiva i Paris be an in-person competition. The website states that the competition will be held on September 16 and 17, 2022. While Ken Carlter had this competition be half online and half in-person in 2020, he did not continue to host the competition in a virtual format when moving forward with the competition.

Te 'Ori Ora is hosted by Isa Pérez and takes place in Mexico. Te 'Ori Ora started in 2019 but did not appear to have had a competition in 2020. In 2021, competitors had the option to choose to compete in the in-person competition or the digital vā. There is a winner in either the in-person competition or the digital format. There are several categories that competitors can compete in. The 2022 virtual competition had registration in 2021, and dancers had until December 18, 2021, to submit their 'Aparima video, or until December 31, 2021, to submit their 'Ōte'a video. The online broadcast premiered on February 19, 2022, on YouTube.<sup>64</sup> The in-person September 10 and 11, 2022 competition registration is currently open. While the competition is available for those who want to participate in either format, virtual and in-person competitions are separate. Te 'Ori Ora seems to keep the virtual competition an option for those who are not

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<sup>63</sup>More information can be found here: [https://www.hipsleague.com/files/ugd/79f4a6\\_2fce9340a8454afd8603ba3c68c08ab3.pdf](https://www.hipsleague.com/files/ugd/79f4a6_2fce9340a8454afd8603ba3c68c08ab3.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2022).

<sup>64</sup>The video can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWyozkdpMd8>.

comfortable competing in the in-person competition due to the pandemic. The virtual aspect of the competition also opens up opportunities for dancers all over the world to compete. Their Instagram page (@teoriora\_competition) advertises their competition as both an in-person and online competition.<sup>65</sup> Based on this bio, Te 'Ori Ora appears to be a competition that will continue utilizing both competition formats even after the pandemic ends.

The last hybrid competition that I found is Kamani Illikai. Kamani Illikai is unique because the competition is in-person. However, it is broadcasted online to keep audience members safe from COVID-19. So far, on their Instagram page (@kamani.ilikai), they intend to have an in-person competition in 2022.

The trend for hybrid competitions is the continued value of keeping the essence of live competitions. These mixed competitions chose not to go completely virtual and have chosen or planned to go back to an in-person competition format. We have also seen non-hybrid competitions that have moved from an in-person form to a virtual structure that stopped hosting virtual competitions or planned a future competition event with intentions of having it in-person. Although the number of competitions in virtual formats is small, we can assume that hybrid competitions would not continue to be hosted in a virtual space, even if it is more convenient.

### *Unique Online Competitions Categories*

Tahitian dance competitions are well known for their 'Ōte'a solos, and the same trend is found in virtual competitions. Every virtual competition I found has a category in their competition that is focused on 'Ōte'a solos. While this is a trend in competitions that have also been found in a virtual space, some competitions have categories meant for dance participants to

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<sup>65</sup>Instagram page: [https://www.instagram.com/teoriora\\_competition/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/teoriora_competition/?hl=en) (Accessed February 23, 2022).

be creative and express themselves.

Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal (Heiva i Montreal) has several unique categories that set this competition apart from other competitions. The “Fusion category,” which may be the most controversial category, allows students to mix Tahitian dance with another dance. Another unique category is the “Lockdown” category. The Lockdown category is meant for participants to express how they felt during the lockdown, which resulted in some emotional performances. While these categories are different from the regular categories that Tahitian dance competitions offer, it provides Tahitian dancers a space to express themselves.

In 2021, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics decided to host an 'Ārearea category. This category is meant for fun and is a faster-paced dance category. Dancers that participate in this category have to express joy and a party-like style of Tahitian dance. This category is appreciated because it is a unique style not often seen in competitions. The creativity for this category is incredibly challenging.

Another competition with multiple unique categories is Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti. The first special category is the Mevina category. The Mevina category is a group category that performs the judge’s (Mevina Liufau) songs. This category requires a minimum of 5 female dancers to participate in a group and has no maximum number of dancers. The dancers have to be aged 15 and over. The dancers must be in the intermediate and advanced level and can only choose one song per group. Each dance group performs a song by Mevina that is not being utilized by another dance group competing. Dance groups are encouraged to register as quickly as possible so that they can reserve their desired song. They are free to choose a costume design but are recommended to have their costume represent the topic of their selected song. Group dancers are evaluated by their technique (posture, arms, and feet) and the precision of their rhythm and

tempo to the music. The judges are also looking for synchronization of the dance group and that the dance moves and transitions are varied. Lastly, they evaluate the expression and presence of dancers in their performance. The Mevina group category costs USD 71 for group dancers interested, and late payments cost USD 76. The rewards of the Mevina category include 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. In addition, there is the best competition video awarded (for all categories of the competition) and the best competition costume. Other prizes include “audience favorite” for the best support from the audience and “the chosen one,” an award given by a jury specializing in costume. The following special category that the Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti competition offers is the Pa'oti category.<sup>66</sup>

Some competitions offer unique categories for competitors that have won several of their previous competitions. For example, the Te Hura Te Heiva (Heiva i Montreal) provides this as the “Excellence Category America’s Championship” and participants are required to have been a winner in another competition where they have placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd.<sup>67</sup> Heiva i San Francisco 2020 offers a more challenging category, the Premier (one-step) category. In the Premier category, dancers are asked to perform a choreography that is solely round movements (fa'arapu, ami, etc.) or harder hip movements (tamau, afata, etc.). Heiva i San Francisco also offered another category for champion dancers in the following year in 2021, which involved an 'Ori Tahito solo (ancient Tahitian dancing). The 'Ori Tahito solo category requires dancers to wear a moré skirt, a heavy traditional Tahitian costume made from the bark of a purau tree.<sup>68</sup> Finally, Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori is another competition that offers a category for those that have won 1st place in

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<sup>66</sup>More information on the competition can be found at this link: <https://ruahine.wixsite.com/tiurai/english> (accessed March 12, 2022).

<sup>67</sup>More information on the competition categories can be found here: [https://www.tehurateheiva.net/2020-autumn-en.html#tab\\_en2](https://www.tehurateheiva.net/2020-autumn-en.html#tab_en2) (accessed March 13/2022).

<sup>68</sup>Information found here: <https://heivaisanfrancisco.org/solos/> (accessed March 3rd, 2022).

a Tahitian dance competition or have placed as the overall best dancer in a contest. Dancers that compete in this category have been required to choose a theme of their own choice.<sup>69</sup> Although these competitions are meant to challenge dancers with these categories, it adds difficulty for these skilled dancers and causes them to think fast and be creative.

Virtual competitions have allowed competitions to become more creative as a way to both challenge and provide dancers a place to express themselves. The unique categories offered by these various competitions make the competition distinct from other competition events that are hosted. These special categories are also another way to challenge dancers to perform a solo they have not practiced or have had a lot of experience performing. As a result, these unique categories provide the more skilled solo dancers an opportunity to shine.

#### *Social Media Platforms Utilized by Competitions*

Competitions have benefitted from utilizing several social media accounts to advertise their events. Social media has also been an avenue for competitions to showcase their participants, judges, workshop opportunities, and communicate with dancers who follow their profiles. Ultimately, social media has been essential for dancers to keep updated on the competition posts and connect with the broader dance community in a virtual space. Dance competitions' most utilized social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

The most utilized social media platform is Instagram. In my research, I found that 23 out of 24 (95.8%) competitions have an Instagram account for their competition. It should be noted that Tahiti Heiva in Japan, Heiva i West, and Heiva i Sakura all share the same Instagram social media account (Tahiti\_heiva\_in\_japan) because the same person in Japan organizes them:

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<sup>69</sup>More information can be found here: <https://mataireia.org/> (accessed March 4th, 2022).

Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi. Although Sao Sao Walle from Mexico has managed both the Aito competition (aito.competition) and the Te Varua O Te Ori competition, the Te Varua O Te Ori does not have an Instagram account, while the Aito competition does. Although Te Varua O Te Ori does not have their own social media account, the organizer Sao Sao Walle has advertised this competition within its Instagram account @saosaowalle. Instagram is the most popular social media platform that dance competitions use to post their content and advertisements, and every competition utilizes Instagram in some form.

The second most utilized social media platform is Facebook. There are 22 out of 24 (91.7%) virtual competitions that use Facebook. Like Instagram, the three competitions: Tahiti Heiva in Japan, Heiva i West, and Heiva i Sakura, all share the same Facebook account (Tahiti Heiva in Japan). In contrast, Sao Sao Walle from Mexico has organized the Aito competition and the Te Varua O Te Ori competition. They have separate Facebook accounts for their specific competition, the “AITO International Competition” and the “TE VARUA O TE ORI.” Facebook is an increasingly popular social media platform for competitions to advertise and share content.

The third most popular social media is YouTube. Only 21 out of 24 (87.5%) virtual competitions use YouTube for their competition videos. Although this is a large number, several of these competitions utilize the following YouTube accounts: Bryson Kim, Michael Lagman Photography, Playback Memories, and Checkervideo to have their competition videos shared. In addition, Hura Tahiti, Heiva San Diego, Ori Tahiti San Diego, and Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori have all utilized Bryson Kim. This San Diego based photographer is known for posting pictures and videos of dancers from Pacific Islander events.<sup>70</sup> Heiva San Diego and Ori Tahiti San Diego have also utilized Michael Lagman Photography as their YouTube platform to post their dance

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<sup>70</sup>Bryson Kim’s YouTube channel can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/c/brysonhk/about> (accessed March 16, 2022).

videos.<sup>71</sup> While Ori Tahiti San Diego has utilized Michael Lagman Photography and Bryson Kim as their YouTube platform for competition videos, they created their own YouTube channel for their virtual competition, called “Ori Tahiti San Diego.” Heiva i San Francisco and Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori are virtual competitions that utilize the YouTube channel Playback Memories to stream their competition videos. The last YouTube channel used by Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori and Hura Nui is Checkervideo Productions. I found 13 out of 24 (54.2%) competitions with their own personal YouTube account (this is not including the three competitions organized by Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi that share the same social media accounts). A little more than half of the competitions have their own YouTube account, and it appears that competitions are looking more into sharing their content on a personal YouTube account.

The least utilized social media account that I found is Twitter. Hura Tahiti, Heiva San Diego, Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal (Heiva i Montreal), and 'Ori 'Ori Tatou E have Twitter accounts. Hura Tahiti has the Twitter account @hura\_tahiti, which is not active because the last posting occurred in February 2019. Heiva San Diego has three Twitter accounts: @HeivaSanDiego, @Heiva\_SanDiego, and @HeivaSD. The first account (@HeivaSanDiego) was created in May 2013 and had its last posting in May 2013. The second account (@Heiva\_SanDiego) had similar behaviors as the previous Twitter account. The account @Heiva\_SanDiego was created in July 2015 and also had its last posting in July 2015. Finally, the last Heiva San Diego Twitter account (@Heiva SD) was created and had its last post in February 2021. These accounts from Heiva San Diego are inactive and follow the same trend of being created and last used within the same month. The next competition, Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal has a Twitter created in November 2015 and is more active. The last posting was on

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<sup>71</sup>Michael Lagman Photography YouTube channel can be viewed at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MichaelLagmanPhotography/featured> (accessed March 16, 2022).

December 21st, 2021, and detailed the results of their online competition.<sup>72</sup> The last competition with a Twitter account is 'Ori 'Ori Tatou E, created in June 2019 but does not have any postings on the social media account. While Twitter has the least amount of social media accounts designed for virtual competitions, it also appears to be very inactive for the competitions that use them. Therefore, Twitter is not a good space to advertise competitions and connect with dancers.

While several competitions utilize different social media platforms, the most use happens on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Virtual competitions may create Twitter accounts but do not utilize them enough to be effective. Therefore, any virtual competition that is looking to practice the digital *vā* by advertising, showcasing their dancers, and connecting with the more significant dance community should focus on utilizing Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook as their platforms.

### *Video Formats Utilized by Competitions*

Since competitions were moved to a virtual format, dance participants are being asked to take a video of themselves dancing to a beat that the competition provides. The requirements vary depending on the competition categories. For the most part, competitions require that the camera is still and that the dancer is in a place where the background is not as distracting. In this section, we will be looking closely at the video formatting that participants are being asked to do.

When researching each virtual competition, I found that 21 out of 24 (87.5%) virtual competitions require participants to record their videos only in landscape mode, which is the most requested format. Conversely, the least requested video format is portrait mode, which only

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<sup>72</sup>Twitter account for Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal (Heiva i Montreal): <https://twitter.com/tehurateheiva>.



1 out of 24 (4.2%) of virtual competitions ask their participants to do. Lastly, 2 out of 24 (8.3%) virtual competitions have asked for landscape and portrait video formats.

An example of a typical landscape request is found in figure 1 of a Heiva San Diego 2022 video guideline.<sup>73</sup> In this screenshot, we see that videos have to be reported at 1080P (full high definition). Heiva San Diego requires that dancers are visible throughout the whole video, where no body part comes off the video frame. In addition, dancers are requested to have minimal background items and no backlighting or glare that can distract from the dancer. Dancers are requested to have no editing in their videos, cuts, filters, and are asked that the video stays still. This guideline appears to challenge dancers to perform within the camera frame and keeps a controlled video format for all dancers to follow. Of course, the competition also states that those who do not follow their guidance will not be considered for the final rounds of competition in order to encourage dancers to follow these guidelines closely.

#### **Figure 6. HEIVA SAN DIEGO 2021 VIDEO GUIDELINES**

- VIDEOS NEED TO BE CAPTURED IN **LANDSCAPE** MODE AND NOT IN PORTRAIT MODE. VIDEOS MUST BE RECORDED AT 1080P. PLEASE BE SURE DANCER IS VISIBLE AT ALL TIMES FROM HEAD TO TOE. IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE PLEASE REFER TO OUR VIDEO TITLED, "HOW TO SHOOT MY VIRTUAL SOLO"
- MINIMIZE BACKGROUND ITEMS
- NO BACKLIGHTING OR GLARE
- NO OTHER INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE IN THE VIDEO EXCEPT THE DANCER
- HAS TO HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF THE DANCER. HANDS AND FEET SHOULD NOT BE CUT FROM THE FRAME DURING THE DANCE
- SOLO BEAT IS ASSIGNED TO SPECIFIC AGE CATEGORIES.
- NO CUTTING. NO EDITING. NO FILTER. THE FRAME CANNOT BE MOVED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE RECORDING
- **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*** ONCE YOU START RECORDING PLEASE ALLOW 4-6 SECONDS BEFORE YOU START MUSIC AND ALLOW 4-6 SECONDS AFTER MUSIC STOPS BEFORE YOU END RECORDING
- WHEN SUBMITTING YOUR VIDEO PLEASE MAKE SURE TO COMPLETE ALL THE INFORMATION REQUESTED ON THE ONLINE VIDEO SUBMISSION FORM. VIDEO SUBMISSIONS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH OUR GUIDANCE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR ADVANCING INTO THE FINAL ROUND. PLEASE FOLLOW THE GUIDELINE

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<sup>73</sup>The video guidelines can be found at this link: <https://www.heivasandiego.com/virtual-hsd-2021/> (accessed March 18, 2022).

'Ori 'Ori Olympics had similar guidelines in 2020, but their policies were a lot less than Heiva San Diego. The requirements for the videos were to show the number of the contestant before and after the performance. Dancers were required to take the video in a vertical (portrait mode) position for the preliminary rounds with no editing or cutting of the video. The competition also requested that dancers do not move out of the frame and that the video frame cannot be moved throughout the recording. On both Instagram and Facebook, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics recommended that dancers follow these guidelines or else dancers are disqualified. In the finals round, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics required dancers to utilize landscape as their video format, and they have continued to request the landscape format in their competitions following 2020. While 'Ori 'Ori Olympics started their competition requiring portrait as their video format, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics seems to prefer landscape since they have not utilized portrait mode since their initial competition in 2020.

The next competition that utilized portrait mode was Ori Tahiti San Diego. The competition happened virtually in 2020 and has not continued to host virtual competitions since then. The video guidelines in 2020 stated clearly that the video cannot be in landscape mode but that dancers have to be visible at all times. Besides the video format, the rules are very similar to Heiva San Diego, and the rules can be reviewed further in Figure 2.

**Figure 7. ORI TAHITI SAN DIEGO 2020 VIDEO SUBMISSION RULES**

**ORI TAHITI SAN DIEGO**   Home   [Registration Form/Rules](#)   More +   Search   Cart

**VIDEO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

VIDEOS NEED TO BE CAPTURED IN PORTRAIT MODE AND NOT IN LANDSCAPE MODE. PLEASE BE SURE DANCER IS VISIBLE AT ALL TIMES FROM HEAD TO TOE.

MINIMIZE BACKGROUND ITEMS SO THAT THE DANCER IS CLEARLY SEEN.  
NO OTHER INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE IN THE VIDEO EXCEPT THE DANCER.  
BE SURE TO FILM VIDEO FROM THE FRONT SO THE JUDGES CAN SEE THE ROUTINE JUST AS IF THEY WERE THERE.

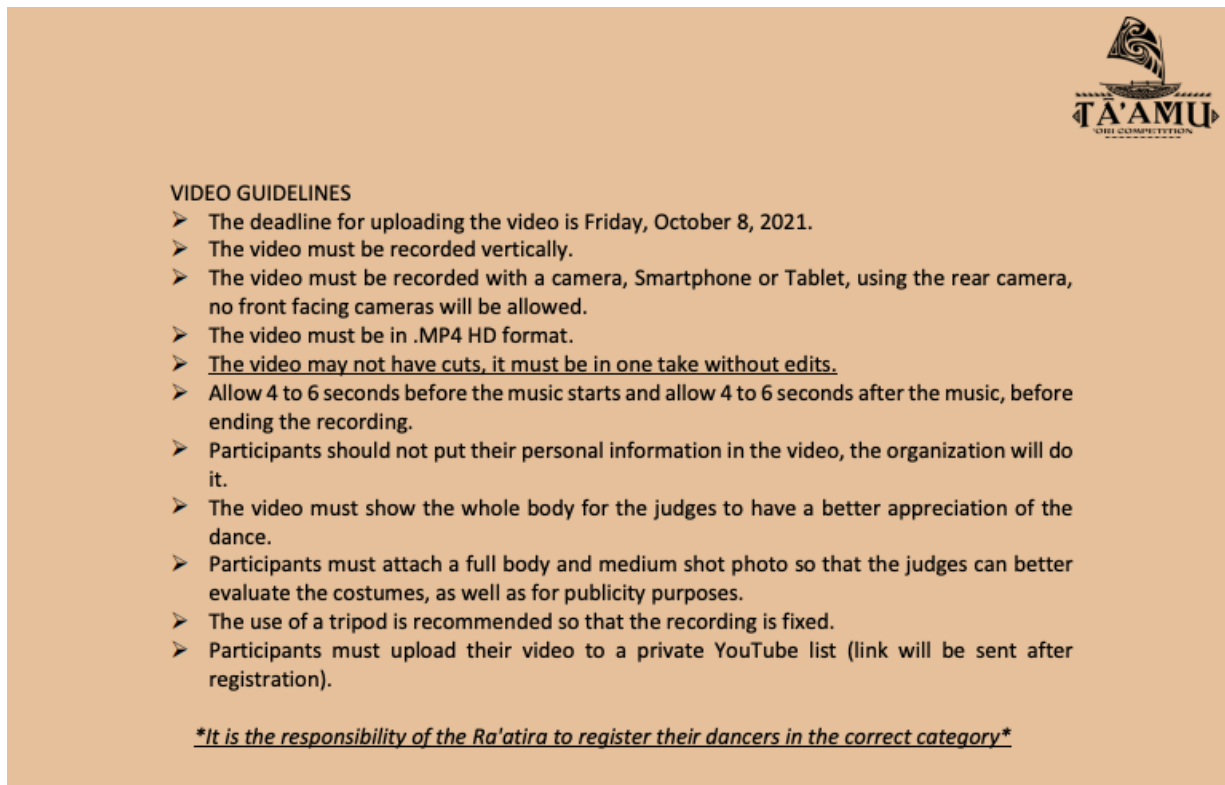
ONCE SOLO NUMBER AND SOLO BEAT IS ASSIGNED TO SOLOIST YOU CANNOT SWITCH SOLO NUMBERS OR SOLO BEATS.

YOUR VIDEO CANNOT CONTAIN GRAPHICS, FILTERS, INTROS OR EXITS.  
**\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*** ONCE YOU START RECORDING PLEASE ALLOW 4-6 SECONDS BEFORE YOU START MUSIC AND ALLOW 4-6 SECONDS AFTER MUSIC STOPS BEFORE YOU END RECORDING.

WHEN SUBMITTING YOUR VIDEO PLEASE MAKE SURE TO COMPLETE ALL THE INFORMATION REQUESTED ON THE ONLINE VIDEO SUBMISSION FORM.

The next competition using the portrait/vertical format is the Tā'amu 'Ori Competition. Besides requesting that videos be recorded vertically, they ask that the video be recorded via a camera, smartphone, tablet, and a rear camera, emphasizing that no front-facing cameras can be utilized. They also ask that the video is submitted in MP4 format. More information on the rules can be seen in Figure 3. Several competitions use landscape mode, which seems to be because it offers a broader range of video and a more extended range of dance for those performing versus the vertical way. If virtual competitions continue to thrive, we will most likely see dances performed in the landscape format.

**Figure 8. TĀ'AMU 'ORI COMPETITION 2021 VIDEO GUIDELINES**

The image is a poster with a light orange background. In the top right corner, there is a logo featuring a stylized sailboat above the text 'TĀ'AMU' and 'ORI COMPETITION' below it. The main text is titled 'VIDEO GUIDELINES' in bold. Below the title is a list of ten guidelines, each preceded by a right-pointing arrow. The guidelines cover topics such as the deadline (Friday, October 8, 2021), video orientation (vertical), recording equipment (camera, smartphone, or tablet), format (.MP4 HD), editing rules (no cuts, one take), timing (4-6 seconds before and after music), content restrictions (no personal information), shot requirements (whole body), photo attachments (full body and medium shot), tripod use (recommended), and upload instructions (private YouTube list). At the bottom, there is a line of text in italics stating that it is the responsibility of the Ra'atira to register dancers in the correct category.

**VIDEO GUIDELINES**

- The deadline for uploading the video is Friday, October 8, 2021.
- The video must be recorded vertically.
- The video must be recorded with a camera, Smartphone or Tablet, using the rear camera, no front facing cameras will be allowed.
- The video must be in .MP4 HD format.
- The video may not have cuts, it must be in one take without edits.
- Allow 4 to 6 seconds before the music starts and allow 4 to 6 seconds after the music, before ending the recording.
- Participants should not put their personal information in the video, the organization will do it.
- The video must show the whole body for the judges to have a better appreciation of the dance.
- Participants must attach a full body and medium shot photo so that the judges can better evaluate the costumes, as well as for publicity purposes.
- The use of a tripod is recommended so that the recording is fixed.
- Participants must upload their video to a private YouTube list (link will be sent after registration).

*\*It is the responsibility of the Ra'atira to register their dancers in the correct category\**

### *Virtual Dance Competition Controversy*

Tahitian dance competitions are not absent from controversy. Even in the virtual world, competitions have caused frustration within the dance community. In discussions of the digital vā, it is essential to include political and controversies when researching this space to understand the community better. Although society and culture are mainly positive, there are also negatives and disagreements in the Tahitian dance space.

'Ori 'Ori Olympics made it clear that those that do not follow their rules would not be participating in the final round of competition. Although they stated this on their website and social media, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics did not follow through on disqualifying dancers that did not follow the guideline. Te Rahiti Nui is a dance group based in California that utilized a

professional videographer, Bryson Kim, who took videos of their preliminary rounds in landscape mode and moved the camera as the dancer moved. As seen in Figure 4 of the videography guidelines, dancers that do not comply with the policies are not supposed to be considered for advancement into the final round. In the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics announcement of finalists, four dancers: Rae Cuenca, Isabella Joyce Mercado, Mailea Duenas, and Gennison De Soto from Te Rahiti Nui advanced into the final round.

### **Figure 9. 'ORI 'ORI OLYMPICS VIDEOGRAPHY GUIDELINES**

#### Videography Guidelines

Show the number to the camera before and after you dance.

Video has to be recorded with Vertical position from front.

No cutting. No editing. The frame cannot be moved throughout the whole recording.

Has to have a clear vision of the dancer. Hands and feet should not be cut from the frame during the dance.

Video submissions that do not comply with our guideline will not be considered for advancing into the final round. Please follow the guideline.

While Pacific culture is inclusive and 'Ori 'Ori Olympic's mission is to promote community globally, having Te Rahiti Nui in the finals after the girls did not follow the video guidelines met many controversies. Unfortunately, the conversations on the Ori 'Ori Olympics social media about this topic have been deleted; however, I will be writing about some of the points dancers and the greater community have made about this concern. The first concern that I will bring up is that Te Rahiti Nui dancers had an advantage because having a professional videographer film them in landscape mode provided these dancers a broader area to perform than those who followed the rules utilized the vertical position when filming. Second, the camera's movement also allowed the dancers a greater space to dance, while dancers that followed the rules were limited. Another point to make is that Te Rahiti Nui was a part of the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics because the teachers Janice Minabe and Michelle Limon taught an 'Aparima workshop on July 5th, 2020. Therefore, it can be argued that because the teachers assisted with teaching a dance workshop, 'Ori 'Ori Olympics felt obligated to allow these dancers to continue in the competition, despite

not following the rules. One central question was asked: Should Tahitian dance competitions be strict with their guidelines if this is a conflict of interest?

'Ori 'Ori Olympics had 320 soloists, and only 10% moved to the final round, meaning that 32 dancers moved onto the final round, and 12.5% of those dancers were Te Rahiti Nui dancers that did not follow the rules. Five dancers (15.6% of 'Ori 'Ori Olympics finalists) from Te Rahiti Nui advanced to the final round. One of these dancers is Junnie Niu, who followed the rules when filming her performance in her own home. In the finals of the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics competition, all the Te Rahiti Nui dancers that made it into the final portion of the competition did record their performance per the guidelines. Only one dancer from Te Rahiti Nui placed, Isabella Joyce Mercado, who won overall 4th place.

The ethics of competition will always be argued in both the physical and virtual vā. In this situation, it can be argued that since Te Rahiti Nui was able to move onto the finals, the competition would have to make exceptions for other dancers that did not follow the guidelines. However, even with this exception, it does not provide benefits to dancers that followed the rules. Either way, this competition did some questionable things and, as a result, pushed away from practicing the digital vā with the diminishing of the relationships between dancers, the competition organizer, and the dance group: Te Rahiti Nui.

### *Mā'ohi Participation in the Virtual Competition*

In the digital space, the Mā'ohi people are just as much involved in dance competitions as they are with in-person competitions. Several of these Mā'ohi people participate in more than one dance competition. Even though non-Mā'ohi are the sole organizers of these competitions, they work closely with the Mā'ohi experts of dance. Ultimately, the Mā'ohi people are happy to share

and educate on their culture and are grateful for these opportunities to participate in these events.

Hirohiti Tematahotoa is a Mā'ohi that has judged two online competitions: Heiva Ma'ohi 'o Patitifa, and Te 'Ori Ora. He has shown gratitude as a judge for competition events. For example, Hirohiti wrote in an Instagram post about the Te Ori Ora competition on January 29, 2021, about 'aparima soloists. He mentioned his shock to the dancers that competed by stating, “I was so surprised by the level and so proud of them. You made my day competitors 😊 Very honored that around the world the ‘ori tahiti pleases to foreigners. Māuruuru for your love to our culture.”<sup>74</sup> He is also the organizer of the virtual Heiva 'Ori Tahiti International Competition 2020 & 2021. He writes in English, Spanish, and French when advertising his competition. Following his competition, he showcases the top performers through his Instagram posts. An example was found in his post on October 17, 2020. This post talks about the overall winners in the different categories offered.<sup>75</sup> The sharing of the winners is an acknowledgment of their outstanding performances. In addition, these acknowledging posts are encouraging to the dancers that participated in his competition. This type of connection through competition is what builds relationships between the Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi in this space. As a result, the Mā'ohi relationship with the culture and dance outsiders will continue to thrive.

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<sup>74</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CKp9yBFACVm/> and the text is left as it was published online (accessed May 03, 2022).

<sup>75</sup>The Instagram post referenced can be found at this link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGef-mKg4re/> (accessed May 03, 2022).

**Figure 10. HIROHITI'S INSTAGRAM POST ON OCTOBER 11, 2020**



Another Mā'ohi that judged for a virtual competition and has expressed their response to the competition is Tylon Buendia. Tylon judged for Hura Tahiti; a competition based in California. In an Instagram post he made on June 26, 2021; he mentions his gratitude to the dance group: Nonosina. As a judge for Hura Tahiti 2021, he expressed his appreciation for representing Nonosina and for trusting him with the responsibilities of the competition.<sup>76</sup> This gratitude post displays the ideologies that Pacific Islanders carry that they are connected through their genealogy. In this case, Tylon attributes the opportunity as a judge to his dance genealogy.

<sup>76</sup>The Instagram post referenced is found here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQrwmXst9Og/> (accessed May 3, 2022).



He believes that he is not alone in his successful endeavors and that many others were a part of his dance journey.

**Figure 11. TYLON'S INSTAGRAM POST ON JUNE 28, 2021**



In a video on the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics (@oriorilympic) Instagram channel, the esteemed judge, Hinatea Colombani discusses the dance categories of the competition for 2021. In the video, she says, “We decided to join the 'Ori 'Ori Olympics competition and to make it different as an ‘Aparima’ competition and for that, we decided to educate and to share more about the polynesian dance, the 'Ori Tahiti. She then explains two categories, the 'Aparima/Mehura category and the 'Ārearea category. “The 'Aparima/Mehura would be more for music really slow, really smooth and the 'Ārearea would be the more joyful music. You know, 'Ārearea means joy, party, and joy for life.” Following this explanation, she kinesthetically shows the types of

movements for each category.<sup>77</sup> This video is an educational piece by Hinatea that is meant to reach the outsiders of her culture. In this educational piece, she is not only teaching participants but is also expressing herself in her movements.

The Mā'ohi peoples' involvement in Tahitian dance competitions around the world is high. In their participation in these outsider events, they use the platform to express gratitude to the people that host these events and the participants. In addition, they educate the people participating in the virtual competition space. In this sharing of their culture, participants can receive authentic teachings in the dance.

### *Conclusion*

The process of participating in a virtual competition is simple for any dancer that is interested in becoming a participant. Many virtual competitions share a similarity in guidelines to each other, with few differences. In many cases, older competitions continued to be hosted, even after the COVID-19 caused significant changes to the competition format to a virtual one. While many dance competitions continued to host their competition online, some did not last or switched back to an in-person event. In other cases, competitions were started during the pandemic. Even with controversies of a dance competition, participants will continue to compete. COVID-19 has provided a unique experience for the Tahitian dance community to continue to thrive and allow dancers from all over the world to participate at an affordable price.

Lastly, while non-Mā'ohi are the main organizers of in-person and virtual Tahitian dance competitions, the Mā'ohi people are very involved in the competition process. These competitions have provided opportunities for Mā'ohi to educate and express their culture. As

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<sup>77</sup>The Instagram video post referenced can be found at this link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJtAn2Cgmmf/> (accessed May 03, 2022).

competitions continue to be virtual, there will continue to be new experiences that are essential to be researched for those interested in Tahitian dance in the digital world. Overall, the online competitions engage the digital vā by enhancing their relationships with the dance community while negotiating their online identity across time and space.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the construction of virtual Tahitian dance competitions, through their articulations and mediations of a digital vā and virtual cultural events. In this work, this thesis presents the new possibilities of Tahitian dance and the communities that participate in this space.

My Preface chapter discusses my connection to Oceania and Tahitian dance. My passion for Pacific culture and Tahitian dance has led me to center this thesis on studying Tahitian dance. Because of my experiences in Polynesian Student Alliance, Te Fare o Tamatoa, and Huraiti Mana, I am passionate about understanding Tahitian dance under the lens of the digital vā. While my family is not of Pacific descent, I use my experiences and education with Pacific organizations to showcase my desire to understand the virtual Tahitian dance space.

This thesis looks at the historical processes of both Tahitian dance and the Pacific Islander usage of the virtual world and then ties these two topics together. With this setup, this thesis showcases the movement of Tahitian dance and the community's connection in the digital space. The first two chapters were meant to introduce the migration of Tahitian dance and the digital world.

In my first chapter, I explore the history of Tahitian dance and take a deeper dive into the festivals in Tahiti that Tahitian dance is often associated with. Following this, I talk about the economic globalization of Tahiti and how it leads to the globalization of Tahitian dance. The increase in tourism in Tahiti has provided the Mā'ohi people with several opportunities to work, especially in dance. These opportunities are why dance studies are critical because, as Teaiwa (2012) states, it bridges the gap between body movement and Pacific studies. Casey (2016) further discusses the importance by noting that stories are told creatively through movement and,

at the same time, shows aspects of the culture. In this chapter, we discuss the opportunities for Mā'ohi to perform their dance and showcase their culture around the world. I also define the word “Mā'ohi” and how it is utilized to explain the identity of the people in Tahiti and French Polynesia. As Gagné (2015) states, Mā'ohi is a word that the definition will never have an agreement on. What is essential to consider is the representation that the Mā'ohi expresses as their individuality. I discuss Casey's (2015) work on Mā'ohi identity extending past the boundaries of their homeland, where they are practicing their traditions outside of Tahiti. This transcending of limitations ultimately recenters the culture and allows Mā'ohi to keep their identity as a Mā'ohi in a foreign land. Some of this expression comes from performing Tahitian dance, even when they are in diaspora. Finally, I discuss the Mā'ohi voices on the practice of Tahitian dance by referencing interviews. I highlight the voices of Moena Maiotui, Matatini Mou, Tehani Robinson, Poemoana Teriinohorai, Makau Foster, and Hinatea Colombani. In summary, these dancers share the connection of their ancestors, the movements, and practice of sharing their culture to the world.

Next, in Chapter 2, “Defining the Pacific Islander Usage of Virtual Space,” I begin by describing how Pacific Islanders utilize social media for activism to combat damaging narratives. I reference Hau'ofa's (1994) account on re-imagining Oceania to connect the resistful discourses mentioned. To further the Pacific Islander presence on social media networks, I explain the Pacific Islanders' usage of various social media platforms and center on the social media network: Facebook in this discussion from Cave's (2012) and Dr. Koya (2017) work. Then I mention the importance of social media in Pacific politics and reference research from Finau et al. (2014) and Tarai (2015) on the political uses of social media in different Pacific Islands. I conclude the chapter by defining the *vā* per Mila-Schaff's (2016) and Ka'ili's (2005) definition of

the term. Then I discuss the idea of digital vā, and I provide examples of this term from the research of virtual spaces by Koya (2017) and Fa'aea et al. (2021). I argue that the digital vā goes beyond the limitations of physical practices by evolving them to make it possible in a digital environment for the same purpose. The digital vā is expansive by allowing Pacific Islanders more opportunities for navigation in their identity, culture, and space in an online world. The connections of Tahitian dance to the digital space pave the way to understanding how the relationships within Tahitian dance have evolved. In addition, we can see the evolution of the exchanges within this community regarding what is shared and what practices are accessible online.

In Chapter 3: Tahitian Dance in the Digital Vā, where we take a deeper look at Tahitian dance offered in the virtual space. The revitalization of Tahitian dance in the 1950s was crucial for this dance to become accessible to people worldwide, especially those that may not have access to this dance in their home country. This chapter focuses on online Tahitian dance and its growth digitally. I review the types of Tahitian dance classes and practice online, the digital platforms that the dance occupies, and the teachers teaching Tahitian dance. As a result, we see that both Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi dance practitioners are found in the digital vā and that non-Mā'ohi dancers are likely to teach the dance on several platforms. We also find that non-Mā'ohi practitioners focus more on improv classes when compared to Mā'ohi practitioners. The Mā'ohi engagement in this space is high, where they have several non-Mā'ohi participants that they can share and educate their culture with. This chapter shows how the digital vā has increased the accessibility of Tahitian dance culture where it goes beyond the boundaries of the physical world and connects dancers in a shared digital space. It further expands Hau'ofa's (1994) idea of our sea of islands to a space even greater.

Chapter 4: Tahitian Dance Competitions in Digital Vā, explores a new phenomenon in Tahitian dance. Previous to the pandemic, there has been no recorded practice of Tahitian dance competition in a digital vā. However, once the pandemic started and dancers were required to distance themselves socially, some Tahitian dance competition organizers adjusted by moving their dance competitions to a digital vā. In addition, new Tahitian dance competitions emerged within this space, where they did not have a previous presence in the pre-pandemic time. In this chapter, I explore the dance competitions that switched to an online format and competitions that are half online and half in-person, and the new competitions that are created in this space. Then, we review the unique competition categories within the virtual space and explore the social media platforms that these competitions are utilizing. Following this, we examine the formatting for videos that are used in the digital vā. Then, I cover a controversy of a virtual dance competition and emphasize that the digital space is not absent from being in disagreement with the community. Following this, I discuss the Mā'ohi participation in the virtual competition space as judges, and educators. To conclude, I state that joining a Tahitian dance competition is easy, and the guidelines for each virtual competition tend to overlap. Overall, it seems that virtual Tahitian dance competitions will continue to thrive following the conclusion of the pandemic, which makes this essential to research. In addition, the Mā'ohi culture is being found in the digital vā and they are forming connections with people, globally. The digital space is a place to grow and nurture relationships, while maintaining the Mā'ohi identity.

What are the consequences of Tahitian dance in a virtual space? To begin with, it limits the dancer's learning capabilities to a computer screen. Both the dancer and teacher will have difficulty seeing the full range of motions, making the learning process more difficult. Second, the virtual space loses the essence of the culture that comes with Tahitian dance in person.

Dancers cannot connect with other dancers and receive personal feedback from their teachers. In addition, dancers cannot enjoy the experience of creating their dance outfits together and the bonding that happens during the creation process, practices, and performances that are all done in person.

By bridging Tahitian dance and the digital vā, my goal was to include these exchanges within these communities globally. The growth of Tahitian dance came with the globalization of the dance but did not stop there. As the internet provides access to the world globally, it has become a place to exchange the teachings and performances of Tahitian dance. The examples in this thesis are woven together to understand the digital presence of Tahitian dance.

This thesis has provided a conversation on the contemporary livelihood of Tahitian dancers within the digital vā. This thesis argues that Tahitian dance and the relationships within this space have transformed due to the availability of the internet. It argues that it will continue to evolve as long as the internet is around. Tahitian dancers globally are negotiating this digital vā by staying connected with Mā'ohi and non-Mā'ohi dancers worldwide on social media and by sharing and commenting on dance content. They also regularly participate in cultural events, where they come together to compete and share their love for Tahitian culture. The Tahitian practitioners negotiate the digital space to teach mainly introduction-level courses. A few other practitioners will use platforms to teach regular dance courses to their dedicated students. The digital vā extends Hau'ofa's (1994) idea of our sea of islands to a bigger digital space. Above all, this thesis connects all dancers in the virtual Tahitian dance community across oceans and lands to the virtual space that they occupy.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the logistics of competitions. Several competitions have moved to a virtual format, while new competitions have emerged.



Tahitian dance competitions utilize multiple social media accounts to advertise and update on their events while connecting with dancers worldwide. This new phenomenon will continue to exist in the post-pandemic era because of the accessibility, connections, and active participation of dancers.

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## APPENDIX

### Pre-Existing Tahitian Dance Competitions that moved to the Virtual Space

Virtual Tahitian Dance Competition Name	Organizer Location	Competition Categories	Video Format	Organizer	Social Medias
Heiva Ma'ohi 'o Patitifa	Elk Grove, Ca	Ōte'a Solo, Ōte'a Group	Landscape	Rhea Engkabo and Athena Hererra	Facebook: makamaemelia Instagram: heivamaohiopatitifa Youtube: Heiva Ma'ohi & Heiva Ma'ohi O' Patitifa
Hura Tahiti	Norfolk, Ca	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group Tamari'i, 'Ōte'a Couples, Mehura Group, Traditional Drumming, Creation Drumming	Landscape	Te Faro o Te Ra	Facebook: Hura Tahiti International Cultural & Performing Arts Twitter: hura_tahiti Instagram: huratahiti Twitter: hura_tahiti Youtube: Bryson Kim
Heiva San Diego	San Diego, Ca	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo	Landscape	Lindsay Reva McNicol (CEO), Maeva Tarahu-McNicol (President), Rosalina Perez-Serag (Vice-President), Leianna Adame (Secretary), Jude Pascua (Finance Chair), Anna Andrade (Operations Chair), Jane Cabuco (Programs Chair)	Facebook: Heiva San Diego Instagram: heivasandiego2021 Twitter: HeivaSD, HeivaSanDiego, and Heiva_SanDiego Youtube: Bryson Kim and Michael Lagman Photography
Ori Tahiti San Diego	San Diego, Ca	Ōte'a Solo	Portrait	Angel Case and Johnny Case	Facebook: Ori Tahiti San Diego Instagram: oritahitisd Youtube: Ori Tahiti San Diego, Michael Lagman Photography, Bryson Kim
Heiva i San Francisco	San Francisco, Ca	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, Mehura Group, 'Aparima Group, Premier (one-step), 'Ori Tahito Solo, Drumming	Landscape	Nemenzo Te Fare	Facebook: heivaisanfrancisco Instagram: heiva.i.sf Youtube: Playback Memories



Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori	Stockton, Ca	Ōte'a Solo, Master Class Division	Landscape	Yolanda Amen (CEO), Cecilia Smith (Treasurer), Dezarae Quilantang (Secretary)	Facebook: Te Fa'a Nō Te 'Ori Instagram: tefaanoteori Youtube: Checkervideo Productions, Playback Memories, & Bryson Kim
Te Hura Te Heiva Montreal / Heiva i Montreal	Montreal, Canada	Ōte'a Solo (Hope Challenge), 'Aparima Group, Fusion category, Lockdown category, Excellence category	Landscape	Te Hura Te Heiva	Facebook: TeHuraTeHeiva Instagram: heiva_montreal Twitter: tehurateheiva Youtube: Heiva Digital 2021
'Ori 'Ori Tatou E	Mexico City, Mexico	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo, 'Ōte'a Group	Landscape	Victor Soto	Facebook: OriOriTatouE Instagram: orioritatoue Twitter: oriori_tatoue Youtube: 'Ori 'Ori Tatou E
Te Varua O Te Ori	Puebla City, Mexico (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Ōte'a Couples, 'Aparima Solo, 'Aparima Group, 'Aparima Couples	Landscape	Sao Sao Walle	Facebook: TE VARUA O TE ORI Youtube: TE VARUA O TE ORI DIGITAL 2021
Heiva i Taiwan	Taiwan	Ōte'a Solo	Landscape	Taitan Okichi Maisho Hisai	Facebook: heivaitaiwan Instagram: tenatiraa_official_taiwan Youtube: Heiva Taiwan

### Tahitian Dance Competitions that began during the pandemic

Virtual Tahitian Dance Competition Name	Organizer Location	Competition Categories	Video Format	Organizer	Social Medias
Pupu Here (In-House Competition)	Orange County, California (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo	Landscape	Kanani Asuega	Instagram: kananilokelaniworkshops Youtube: Kanani Lokelani Asuega
Heiva 'Ori Tahiti International Competition 2020 & 2021	French Polynesia, Tahiti	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Aparima Group, Mehura Group	Landscape	Hirohiti Tematahotoa	Facebook: Hirohiti Tematahotoa Instagram: hirohiti987

Aito Competition	Puebla City, Mexico (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Ōte'a Couples, 'Aparima Solo, 'Aparima Couples	Landscape	Sao Sao Walle	Facebook: AITO International Competition Instagram: aito.competition Youtube: Aito International Competition
Tā'amū 'Ori Competition	Guadalajara, Mexico (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo	Portrait for solos, Landscape for groups	Te Pupu 'Toa Rere	Facebook: Tā'amū 'Ori Competition Instagram: taamu.oricompetition Youtube: TĀ'AMU 'Ori Competition
Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti	Guadalajara, Mexico (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo, Mehura Group, Ōte'a Couples , Fa'arapu and Pa'oti Challenge, Mevina Group category	Landscape	Conny Medina	Facebook: Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti Instagram: tiurai.oritahiti Youtube: Tiurai 'Ori Tahiti
Hura Nui	Guadalajara, Mexico (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Aparima Group, Mehura Group	Landscape	Nelly Serrano Dance Academy	Facebook: Maestrosdelconservat orio Instagram: hura_nui_ Youtube: Checkervideo Productions and HURA NUI
Ori Tahiti Solo Japan Cup	Japan (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo	Landscape	Island Communication Co., Ltd. & Hula Oritahichi Co., Ltd.	Instagram: oritahitisolocup
Tahiti Heiva in Japan (Heiva i Tokyo)	Japan (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, Mehura Solo	Landscape	Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi	Facebook: Tahiti Heiva in Japan Instagram: Tahiti_heiva_in_japa n Youtube: Tahiti Heiva in Japan
Heiva i West (Heiva i Fukuoka)	Osaka, Japan and Fukuoka, Japan (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group	Landscape	Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi	Facebook: Tahiti Heiva in Japan Instagram: Tahiti_heiva_in_japa n Youtube: Tahiti Heiva in Japan
Heiva i Sakura	Tokyo, Japan (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo	Landscape	Kensuke Tamatoa Onishi	Facebook: Tahiti Heiva in Japan Instagram: Tahiti_heiva_in_japa n Youtube: Tahiti Heiva in Japan

'Ori 'Ori Olympics	Jakarta, Indonesia (Online Only)	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo/Mehura Solo, 'Ārearea Solo	Portrait in 2020 Preliminary Rounds, but Landscape in 2020 Finals Round, Landscape in 2021	Hulalaliving	Facebook: HulalaLiving Instagram: oriorilympic Youtube: HulalaLiving
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### Hybrid Tahitian Dance Competitions

Virtual Tahitian Dance Competition Name	Organizer Location	Competition Categories	Video Format	Organizer	Social Medias
Heiva i Paris	Paris, France	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, Mehura Group	Landscape	Ken Carlter and Serena Carlter	Facebook: HeivaiParis Instagram: heivaiparis Youtube: Heiva i Paris - HiP's League
Te 'Ori Ora	Guadalajara, Mexico	Ōte'a Solo, 'Aparima Solo	Landscape	Isa Pérez	Facebook: teoriora Instagram: teoriora_competition Youtube: Te 'Ori Ora / 'Ori Tahiti ONLINE competition
Kamani Illikai	Guadalajara, Mexico	Ōte'a Solo, 'Ōte'a Group, 'Aparima Solo. Note: Dance competition is in- person but showcased on video	Landscape	Kamani Illikai	Facebook: competenciakamani Instagram: kamani.ilikai