

## **THE JULY FESTIVAL IN THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS: "YOUTH" AND IDENTITY IN A VALLEY COMMUNITY**

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This article documents the 1977 July festival (called the *Rare*) in one valley on 'Ua Pou island in the northern Marquesas Islands. The article focuses on the **Rare** as a liminal period in which Marquesans explored a range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday ways of life, but then emerged from the festival with a renewed appreciation of the sensibleness of everyday ways of life. Events of the **Rare** also served to mark and facilitate transitions from one life stage to the next. During this period of intense social contact and public visibility, people both experimented with and stabilized social categories. Statements regarding what it meant to be an "errant youth," a "dependent child," and a "responsible adult"--and the advantages and disadvantages of each life stage--were acted out on the social stage that the festival provided. The **Rare** and daily life have changed much since the fieldwork period, reflecting changes in economics, political identity, and access to technologies. A cultural revival has led to the reintroduction of Marquesan dances and chants into the festival and to changes in political identity. However, the deep valuing of the sensibleness of everyday ways of life and the process of reexamining and reconfirming these ways through participation in festivities that turn normal life "on its head" continue.

**THE TIURAI** (Tahitian for "July," from the English) festival is celebrated throughout French Polynesia. It is both a local event, celebrated by residents of an island or smaller community, and, at Pape'ete on Tahiti, a spectacle reflecting territorial politics. Some aspects of the festival are standard in all locales, owing to inputs from the French territorial government (such as the provision of prizes for canoe races and dance competitions). But many aspects (such as the duration of the festival, its activities, and its social

dynamics) vary across locales and change across time. The festival is a highly visible, public event that reflects the political, economic, and social concerns of the people involved.

This article documents the 1977 July festival in one valley on an island in the northern Marquesas Islands. People from three adjoining valleys celebrated the July festival (which they called the *Rare*) together. The article documents the social, economic, and psychological processes observed and relates these to Marquesan social and psychological beliefs. It focuses on the *Rare* as a liminal period in which Marquesans explored a range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday ways of life, but then emerged from the festival with a renewed appreciation of the sensibility of everyday ways of life. Events of the *Rare* also served to mark and facilitate transitions from one life stage to the next.

Hanson describes the July festival in Rapa, Austral Islands, as a stage for inter-village rivalry (1970). The youth of two nearby villages compete in canoe and boat races, soccer matches, and door-to-door dance performances. Rapans in the two villages organize festival participation differently, reflecting their preferred social organizational styles. People from one village formalize whole-village cooperation, while residents of the other prefer spontaneous, loosely structured cooperation. The effectiveness of each style is tested symbolically during the festival, and residents of each village point out the weaknesses of the social strategies of the other. In the process Rapans explore their range of social organizational possibilities.

Stevenson has shown how the *Tiurai* in Pape'ete, Tahiti, provides a context for display and elaboration of Tahitian arts and tradition distinguished from French culture and political history (1990). (The festival used to begin on Bastille Day but now begins on the date when French Polynesia was given to France.) Stevenson compares the depiction of Tahitian cultural identity in July festivities to *kastom* in Melanesian areas and to various traditions that have been analyzed recently as focusing on national identity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Keesing 1989; Linnekin 1983, 1990).

Marquesans are a small minority in French Polynesia. Their language remains distinct from Tahitian, unlike that of other outlying areas in the territory. Marquesans speak and understand Tahitian to varying degrees, and Tahitian is the language of worship for Marquesan Protestants, but Marquesans view themselves as quite different from Tahitians.

In the Marquesas, during the fieldwork period of 1975-1977,<sup>1</sup> the *Rare* was an event of and for "young people," rather than a stage for ethnic identity, political identity, or inter-valley rivalry. During the ten- to fourteen-day festival, the culturally valued qualities of youth (beauty, grace, sexual dis-

play, skills in dancing and singing) were put on display. During this time *taure'are'a* (Tahitian for "errant youth") activities, such as wandering, socializing, drinking, and loss of sexual inhibitions, were sanctioned for young people and adults. During the same festival period, however, Marquesan adults frequently noted the wastefulness of these activities. *Taure'are'a* qualities and activities were set against a background of adult work, responsibility, and economic know-how, as adults tried to make a profit by running concession booths. Statements regarding what it meant to be an "errant youth," a "dependent child," and a "responsible adult"--and the advantages and disadvantages of each life stage--were acted out on the social stage that the *Rare* provided.

The festival was a period of extreme social complexity and visibility. About half the valley members moved down to the schoolyard, by the sea, where they camped out in the back of small concession booths. People spent a great deal of time watching and gossiping about each other under these cramped conditions. In part, they discussed and refined definitions of life-stage characteristics and evaluated whether these applied to specific individuals. During this period people both experimented with and stabilized social categories.

Information was gathered through systematic observation, participant observation, filming of the process, and interviews with people at different life stages. As houseguests of the teacher, my husband and I lived on one edge of the festival grounds and about thirty feet from the center of activities. The specific questions I sought to answer were

1. How are life stages socially defined during the *Rare*?
2. How are children, *taure'are'a*, young adults, and settled adults talked about?
3. What forms of social pressure are applied to deal with behavior that is not stage appropriate?
4. What forms of transition pressure are applied to encourage children to move up to the *taure'are'a* status, to encourage teens to move into young adulthood, and to encourage young adults to stabilize in responsible ways?
5. What forms of social pressure are applied to encourage people who have slipped back into less mature ways to return to their more mature ways?

The *Rare* and daily life in general in this valley have changed much since my fieldwork period, reflecting changes in economics, political identity, and access to technologies. In 1977 none of the artistic and athletic

activities enjoyed during the festival were Marquesan in origin. "Traditional" group dancing, for example, was primarily Tahitian. Since the time of the fieldwork, a cultural revival--originally encouraged by the Catholic Church--has led to the reintroduction of Marquesan dances and chants in the *Rare*, and political identity has changed considerably (see Moulin 1996 for a description of this change and for discussion of the role of cultural borrowing in the development of political identity in the Marquesas). In spite of these changes, the themes that emerged during the observed *Rare*, I argue, remain integral to Marquesan social, economic, and psychological concerns.

### **Ethnographic Background**

#### *Setting*

The Marquesas Islands are located two thousand miles southwest of Hawai'i and about nine hundred miles northeast of Tahiti. In 1977, more than five thousand people lived on the six inhabited islands (the most recent, 1988, census reports 7,358 inhabitants). 'Ua Pou, the site of this study, is a high, volcanic island, without a coastal plain or encircling reef. Its steep valleys are separated by rugged ridges. Life within most valleys was self-contained at the time of the fieldwork since travel between valleys was difficult.

The valley described in this article had about two hundred inhabitants. Many of the twenty-five houses were built on steep slopes, set back from a loop path that ran upland on one side of a stream and then down to the sea on the other side. Near the rocky shore, the schoolhouse, the flat schoolyard, a concrete bridge, and a boat ramp served as public spaces and were the sites of the *Rare* activities.

This settlement was dispersed, with houses set back from the major path, facing away from each other. Marquesans stated that normally they valued distance between themselves and their neighbors, allowing some freedom from others' observation and potential criticism.

#### *Normal Daily Life*

Normal daily life was organized around work for the household. Men and adolescent boys left in the early morning to go fishing in outrigger canoes. Women and adolescent girls cleaned house, washed clothes, prepared breadfruit, worked in the garden, and, on some days, wove pandanus, ironed, or fished from shore. Children got themselves up in the morning,

made their own breakfasts, did light chores, looked after infants, and went to school. (Older children and some adolescents were away at the main valley boarding schools.)

By late morning men and teens returned from fishing, children returned from school, and the family ate lunch in their cookhouse. The children played for a while, then returned to school until 3:30. Adults and teens sat, talked, or slept for a while and then worked in the upland gardens or did jobs around the house.

Adults and teens finished work by late afternoon, showered, sat and talked in neighborhood groups, or went down to the public areas by the sea to play or watch volleyball. Adolescents and young adults played volleyball while children played on the bridge, in the stream, or in the sea. At dusk, family members returned home, showered, and ate a light meal.

In the evenings, children played in or near the house, read, did homework by kerosene lamp, and listened to the radio. Adults talked and listened to the radio. Children went to sleep at dark with little coaxing. Adults followed soon after. Adolescent males often gathered in public areas to play ukuleles, sing, and talk. They reportedly snuck around the valley, climbed into girls' houses, or met girls in prearranged places to have sex.

### **The Rare**

The July festival was a liminal period in which normal spatial, temporal, and social relations were disrupted. People enacted, examined, and redefined everyday expectations and then returned, at the end of the *Rare*, to similar, prefestival forms but with increased appreciation for their sensibleness.

The festival was supported in French Polynesia by the territorial government for the stated purpose of perpetuating Polynesian cultural forms such as traditional group dancing and singing. The government subsidized the festival by providing prize money for competitions in dancing, singing, canoe racing, booth decorating, and tugs of war. The festival lasted from seven to fourteen days, depending on the supply of goods. At the time of my fieldwork, it began on Bastille Day, July 14.

The observed *Rare* was an important economic, social, and cultural event. During the daytime adults tended concession booths, from which they sold each other food, liquor, sweets, and carnival games; prepared goods to sell; and wandered from booth to booth, eating, drinking, watching, and chatting with neighbors. At night, dance groups performed organized Tahitian group dances, youth sang, and youth and adults danced, Western style, to taped contemporary music. American rock, Tahitian sentimental,

and French romantic music blared throughout the festival period from a tape player run from a noisy generator.

### ***Rare Daily Activities***

In the early morning adults emerged from the small living sections at the backs of the concession booths, having had only a few hours' sleep. Music still blared, but even the hardiest *taure'are'a* had gone home to sleep. Men and women prepared food for selling that day. One morning a man slaughtered a pig, salted some of the meat, and sold some to neighboring booth owners. Women and men cooked breadfruit and sweet potatoes and pounded *popoi* (the staple food made from fermented breadfruit paste and mashed, roasted breadfruit). When children awoke, they were sent upland to the houses to bring down more goods for the booths. Adults rearranged their displays and prepared coffee and bread to be sold.

Once preparation work was done, people either tended their booths or wandered from booth to booth chatting with their neighbors. Children grouped together in the middle of the schoolyard. They sat on the rocks there, chatted, played string games, and watched adult and adolescent social happenings. Children played mainly with their siblings, cousins, and neighborhood friends. At the beginning of the period, family and neighborhood play groups were preserved. By the end of the festival, children had mingled more and had made some new friends. The *Rare* provided first opportunities for many toddlers to play away from their mothers. They played with their siblings in the schoolyard and on the bridges as their mothers watched from their booths. After the *Rare* these mothers felt more confident letting the toddlers leave home with siblings to come to this area to play.

Women spent the afternoon watching and socializing. Many men began drinking heavily by late afternoon, *Taure'are'a* boys woke up and the noise and activity level picked up. Singing groups formed near the coffee and drinking booths. Families decided where each of their members would eat and with what money, and children went off to buy evening coffee and bread.

After dusk, people took showers back at their houses and changed clothes. On nights when Tahitian-style group dance competitions were held, members of the dance groups put on their costumes and performed on the bridge. A panel of judges determined the prizes. After the performance, *taure'are'a* boys changed into dress shirts, shoes, and long pants, and girls put on long skirts or dresses. These contrasted with informal daytime wear (shorts, T-shirts, and rubber sandals or bare feet). The contem-

porary music (which had been playing constantly throughout the day) was turned up and people began to dance, Western couples-style, in the central area.

Children, young *taure'are'a* who did not want to dance, and young women with babies sat on the sidelines and watched. Older people watched from their booths. Girls who wanted to dance clustered by one booth and talked to each other while waiting to be asked. Boys asked girls to dance shyly in the early evening but more boldly as the night continued. When not dancing, *taure'are'a* boys clustered by another booth where they talked, sang, and laughed.

Young married couples, in transition between adolescence and settled adulthood, occasionally quarreled about whether they should dance. Sometimes, when one person did not want to dance, the other sought a partner among the adolescents, resulting in jealous arguments. Marquesans reported that fights often break out between jealous teenagers as well, but none was observed during this *Rare*.

Daytime activities focused on responsible adults. Children, teens, and old people watched as settled adults worked to keep the businesses running and the families fed. *Taure'are'a* boys kept a low profile during daylight hours, avoiding work and catching up on their sleep. Nighttime activities, in contrast, focused on the young people. Adults and old people sat back behind their concession booth counters and watched and discussed the young people at play. Children watched and teased from the sidelines.

Days and nights continued like this for ten days. Valley members experienced a marathon of sleepless nights, exhausted work, intense social contact, continuous drinking, singing, dancing, and gossiping, and the constant blare of music. *Taure'are'a* were constantly on display during this period-in the daytime as lazy shirkers, at night as shining youth. But settled adults also watched and gossiped about each other. Smoldering conflicts surfaced, and the community worked on some of its dormant problems. By the end of the period, most people wanted to return to quiet, private, everyday life. Some Marquesans claimed that one function of the *Rare* was to get intense sociality out of their systems so that people could return to more mundane lives with contentment. Similarly, Hanson reports that many Rapan families retreat to uninhabited valleys immediately after the intense sociality of the New Year's festival (1970).

The *Rare* was a liminal social event during which people pulled out, examined, discussed, reevaluated, and reshaped their social understandings. Living spaces, time schedules, rhythms, and relationships were temporarily scrambled and then returned to normalcy at the end of the festival.

### **Spatial Features: The Festival Grounds**

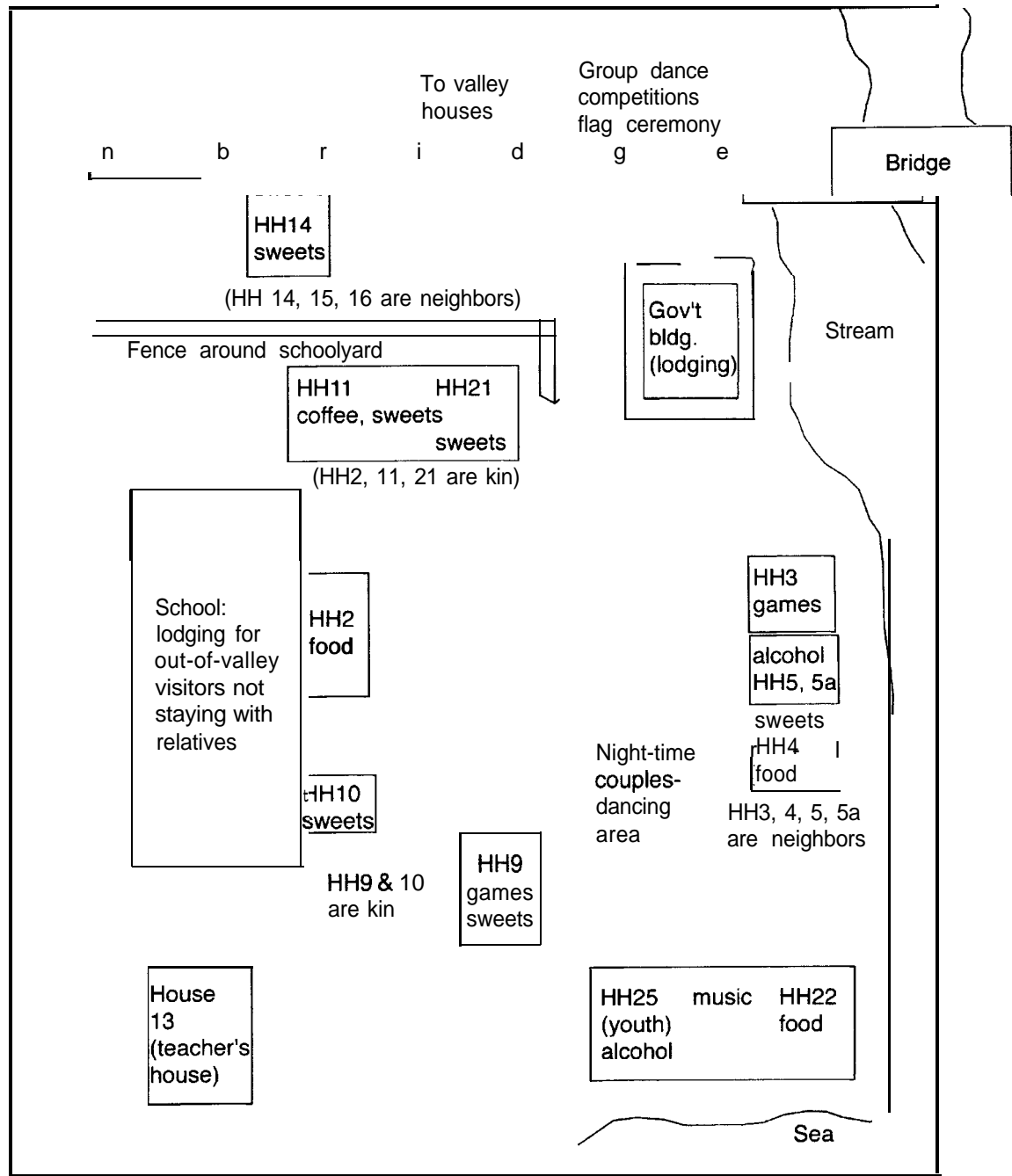
During the festival the active members of about half the families moved down to the small schoolyard by the sea, where they camped out in the backs of tiny, thatched concession booths (see Figure 1). Old people stayed at home with the youngest children to watch the houses. Relatives or friends from other valleys were invited to stay at the houses as well. This particular year, fourteen of the twenty-six households built small concession booths (about six feet by ten feet). The front of each booth was a concession stand; the back, a sleeping area. The booths were arranged to form four sides of a square, facing inward, leaving a large open area in the middle. In this arrangement people tending the booths could watch what was happening at all other booths and in the open area. This arrangement mirrored the way guests were seated in a large square at Marquesan parties. In this configuration, each person could see all others but was able to talk with only the two or three closest people. During the *Rare*, as at parties, people spent most of their time watching and commenting on each other and, in particular, on the "errant youth."

The valley was reconstructed on a small scale on the festival grounds. The arrangement of booths reflected the normal neighbor and kinship solidarity groups (Figure 1). Neighboring households 3, 4, 5, and 5a, for example, all built their booths under the same roof, as did neighboring households 14, 15, and 16. Booths by the schoolhouse and fence in the upper left of the schoolyard were also built among kin. These families cooperated with each other during the festival in an exaggeration of their cooperation in everyday life.

The physical setup of booths and living spaces brought about (1) intense social contact, as people lived in cramped quarters with few possibilities for privacy and shared utilities; (2) the need for new social rules to deal with the intensity and complexity of day-to-day contacts; (3) increased social visibility; and (4) increased social gossip. In this open courtyard arrangement, people became both actors and commentators for the ten-day period. Family arguments and conflicts between neighbors often came to a head and were acted out in full view of other valley residents.

One night, for example, members of a three-generational family began to argue. The settled couple (in their late thirties and with several children) yelled at each other and at the wife's parents, with whom they had been living up in the valley. They had to yell to be heard over the blaring music, and their actions were dramatically backlit by their propane lantern. The husband threw a beer bottle at his wife and in-laws, and the wife reciprocated by throwing a cake. Most of the rest of us sat and watched this long-





**FIGURE 1. July festival area, showing concession booths (HH = household running booth).**

brewing fight from the other side of the festival square, as if at the theater. The woman involved later said she felt safer to have this argument in full visibility rather than in the privacy of their isolated valley home. Some Marquesans claimed that the *Rare* served the function of bringing to a head conflicts that had brewed too long.

### **Exaggerated Life Stages**

Another feature distinguishing this period from everyday life was the intensification of age roles. The roles of adults as economic providers, of *taure'are'a* as agents of beauty, grace, and abandon, and of children as insatiable dependents were accentuated in several ways:

- Parents needed to provide cash for their offspring to eat during this period, underlining their roles as providers and clarifying the dependency of children and teens. This contrasted with everyday life in which food was gathered and prepared, with little use of money, and eating was taken for granted;
- Adults worked hard during this period to prepare goods to sell to make a profit. They worked in full view of children, teens, and old people, rather than away at sea or in their upland gardens;
- Children and teens became insatiable during the festival period and constantly asked for money for sweets or drink. Parents freely passed out whatever money they had made, accentuating their indulgence. At the time of my fieldwork, money, sweets, and alcohol were unlikely to be available every day.

The role of *taure'are'a* youth as objects of beauty, grace, and sexual display was highlighted and exaggerated. Tahitian-style dance performances were taken seriously; young people were supposed to dance correctly and well. This accomplishment was in contrast to children's group dancing, which was supposed to be funny and cute, and "old" people's dancing, which was supposed to spoof *taure'are'a* forms. Some pressure was put on young people to dress well, especially at night. Comments were also made that encouraged them to wander, socialize, drink heavily, and have sexual encounters. If they did not manage to stay up all night dancing, they were not true *taure'are'a*, and adults told stories of when they were young. Yet if they worked for their families less during this period, they were upbraided for being irresponsible. Adults gave particularly mixed messages at this time.

The role of children as insatiable dependents was exaggerated during the *Rare*. Parents both complained about and facilitated this pattern. Of the fif-

teen concession booths eight specialized in pastries or sweets, which adults rarely ate and which were uncommon in everyday meals. Booth owners claimed that these foods were easiest to prepare and sell, but they also knew that Marquesan parents had trouble saying no to young children, so their profits would be high (though most booth owners also had demanding young children of their own who spent their profits). People complained about the lack of “real” food (fish, starches, and fruit) during the festival, but spoke warmly of the *Rare* as a time when children begged money from their parents.

Children also provided entertainment during the festival. Parents talked at length about children who cutely mimicked adult or adolescent activity, or who pointed out adult foibles. The children’s dance troupe, for example, performed the same dances, described by Marquesan adults as associated with sexual desire, as did adolescent and young adult dancers. But the children did so with confidence and swagger, while adolescents did so self-consciously, with great embarrassment. Children were not expected to know what they were doing and were not seen as demonstrating their sexual interests, as were the teens.

Children’s roles as adult irritants were also stressed. For example, during the tedious booth-building phase, children took up playing homemade whistles and drums. The hard-working parents could neither escape nor stop this noise, which children kept up for days. Children were also observed pulling out the decorative flowers that their parents had woven into the booth walls.

### **Life Stages and Differential Participation in *Rare* Activities**

During the *Rare*, many individuals’ transitions from one life stage to another were sped up or formalized. Some transitions were temporary and exploratory, such as when one young adult filled a vacant slot in the “old people’s” dance troupe and another young adult tried to run a concession booth. Those people reverted to their earlier stages at the end of the *Rare*. Many transitions pushed ahead during the festival, though, were lasting, as when young children transitioned into the middle-childhood dance group or when older children moved up to *taure‘are‘a* status.

Table 1 provides a summary of the valley population categorized according to social stages and household roles (for a somewhat different approach to life stages, see Kirkpatrick 1983). Table 2 shows assignments of the same people to age categories as marked by their participation in specific *Rare* activities.

Assigning individuals to specific age categories was formally accomplished via the formation of dance groups. Three groups were formed in

**TABLE 1. Valley Population by Life-Stage Category**

| Female | Male | Total | Life-Stage Category   | Life Stage                                    |
|--------|------|-------|---|---|
| 9      | 4    | 13    | 1. Infants and toddlers: 0 to 3 years                                 | Children ( <i>toiki</i> )                     |
| 7      | 17   | 24    | 2. Preschool children: 2 to 5 years old                               |   |
| 27     | 32   | 59    | 3. In-valley school children: 5 to 12 years old                       |   |
| 15     | 6    | 21    | 4. Away at school in large valley, primary school: 10 to 14 years old |   |
| 8      | 2    | 10    | 5. Away at secondary school: 13 to 18 years old                       |   |
| 3      | 8    | 11    | 6. Out of school, live at home: 14 to 22 years                        |   |
| 1      | 7    | 8     | 7. Live in adolescent households: 16 to 26 years                      |   |
| 1      | 6    | 7     | 8. Away from the valley for work or military service                  |   |
| 3      | 2    | 5     | 9. Young couples: oldest child less than 6                            | Young people ( <i>po'i hou; taure are a</i> ) |
| 9      | 10   | 19    | 10. Settled couples: oldest child almost adolescent                   |   |
| 5      | 7    | 12    | 11. Quite settled couples: oldest child adolescent                    | Adults ( <i>enana motua</i> )                 |
| 4      | 4    | 8     | 12. Very settled couples: oldest children settled                     |   |
| 5      | 3    | 8     | 13. Old people: all children grown and settled                        | Old people ( <i>kokoua</i> )                  |

many valleys on this island: a *taure'are'a* group, which was primary and was seen as the most skilled, aesthetically pleasing group; a children's group, which was expected to mimic adolescent dances; and a settled adults' group (called the "old people's" group), which mocked the seriousness of *taure'are'a* display. The makeup of these groups (see Table 2) reflected norms for defining the features of children, adolescents, and adults.

The males in the *taure'are'a* group consisted of unmarried, unsettled youth who had left school. Thirteen-year-old boys who had left school were immediately incorporated into this group, and group dance participation served as a form of initiation rite. The new boys typically danced in the least visible, back rows of the group and learned by following the people in front of them.

**TABLE 2. Participation in July Festival Activities by Life Stage**

| Life Stage                  | Children's<br>Dance Group |      | Adolescent<br>Dance Group |      | Musicians<br>and Singers |      | Nighttime<br>Dancing |      | Concession<br>Booth Owners |      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|----------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
|                             | Female                    | Male | Female                    | Male | Female                   | Male | Female               | Male | Couples                    | Male |
| 1. Infants/toddlers         |                           |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      |                            |      |
| 2. Preschool                |                           |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      |                            |      |
| 3. In-valley school         | 2                         |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      |                            |      |
| 4. Away at primary school   | 8                         | 5    | 2                         |      |                          |      | 2                    |      |                            |      |
| 5. Away at secondary school | 1                         | 2    | 5                         |      |                          |      | 8                    | 1    |                            |      |
| 6. Live at home             |                           |      | 3                         | 8    |                          |      | 3                    | 5    |                            |      |
| 7. Adolescent households    |                           |      |                           | 3    |                          | 4    |                      | 7    |                            | 1    |
| 8. Away                     |                           |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      |                            |      |
| 9. Young couples            |                           |      |                           |      | 1                        | 1    | 1                    | 2    |                            |      |
| 10. Settled                 |                           |      |                           |      | 2                        | 3    | 2                    | 5    | 5                          |      |
| 11. Quite settled           |                           |      |                           |      | 1                        |      | 1                    | 1    | 5                          |      |
| 12. Very settled            |                           |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      | 3                          |      |
| 13. Old people              |                           |      |                           |      |                          |      |                      |      |                            |      |

*Note:* Numbers represent individuals observed to participate in the activity.

The *tamure* dance, in which a boy and a girl danced in the center of a circle of dancers, moving in ways that Marquesan adults interpreted as related to sexual attraction and desire, was difficult for shy adolescents. Initiation was particularly focused on this dance. Young adolescents balked in dancing this but were hooted and jeered at during practices until they complied. Some young *taure'are'a* tried to reduce embarrassment by performing these dances in a slapstick way, but this practice was discouraged by the group.

An upper cut-off age was apparent in this group, but followed relational patterns rather than absolute age differences. Specifically, boys who had been in the group for a couple years and who now had younger siblings in the group tended to leave and join the transitional musicians' groups. Some older adolescent boys still danced, whereas others made up the group of young men who played guitar, ukulele, or drums and sang for these performances. Criteria for being part of the *taure'are'a* male group, in this sense, involved leaving school yet not being so old as to have several younger siblings in the dance group. Fourteen- or fifteen-year-old boys who had not left school were considered less mature and were not included in this dance group. Two boys, in fact, danced in the children's group. Leaving school was an important criterion for male entrance into the *taure'are'a* period.

Girls who had not yet left school, in contrast, *were* included in this group, and even two elementary school girls were considered *taure'are'a* for dance purposes. The upper limit for girls excluded those who were living regularly with a boy. Other exclusions were made on the basis of physical appearance. For example, one girl was excluded because she was not thin enough, while another had a slight foot deformity. These exclusions were not verbalized as such, but when asked why the particular girls were not in the group, such reasons were given.

The children's dance group was made up almost entirely of main-valley, boarding school children home for vacation. There were also three secondary school children who danced in this group, in the front rows. Two precocious primary school girls (eight-year-olds) were bumped up into the *taure'are'a* group, as mentioned earlier.

The "old people's" group (when it was formed) consisted of settled adults --both couples with children not quite adolescent and older couples whose children were *taure'are'a*.

Specific behaviors were expected of each group:

- The *taure'are'a* group was expected to perform seriously, with grace and group coordination. Emphasis was on the realness of this display, and clowning was discouraged. Adults often expressed dissatisfaction

with *taure'are'a* dancing. They said it lacked grace, coordination, and enthusiasm. Adolescents were often seen as holding back.

- The children, in contrast, were to have fun dancing. They were encouraged to mimic adolescent and adult activities wildly. The children performed dances associated with *taure'are'a* display and desires with little inhibition. These behaviors and desires were not seriously expected of them in real life, and they could be free in their renditions. The spontaneity and exaggeration of children's dancing made it the audience favorite.
- Settled adults whose own children were adolescents were expected to mock the seriousness of grace and sexual desires performed by their children. They portrayed themselves as worn-down, experienced adults. In general, aesthetic seriousness was placed on *taure'are'a* display, whereas children and adults were encouraged to mimic or mock the valued forms.

The musicians' group contained young adults in transition. It was made up in part of older adolescent males who lived in their own "young people's" house and in part of married adults whose own children were approaching adolescence. These adults were seen as harboring their last *taure'are'a* thoughts:

A further life stage, that of quite settled adults (parents of several children) and of very settled adults (parents whose oldest children were adolescent or older) provided most of the booth owners and workers of the festival. One unmarried male and one young couple tried to run booths this year, but failed miserably as the older adults had predicted. Only the older owners managed to make a profit, since younger adults immediately spent their money on alcohol. Older people had the capital to buy the needed goods, the patience to do the work, and were more careful spenders.

Participation in Western nighttime dancing was indicative of one's life stage. Couples dancing was considered to be for graceful *taure'are'a*. Some young, married couples danced, but people warned that this would result in jealous quarrels (which it did). Young mothers and pregnant women became angry when encouraged by their drinking husbands to dance. The women said it was not right for the unborn or young children. Furthermore, young married women became angry and jealous if their husbands asked others to dance. Some members, who had returned from Tahiti for the festival without their husbands, "lived it up," according to gossip, "while free from their husbands." In general, males tended to dance later in life than women, who were seen as getting over *taure'are'a* thought earlier.

The initiation point for young dancers was unclear, and many young *taure'are'a* boys were very ambivalent about dancing. Some nights they arrived shirtless, in what appeared to be an attempt to mark the fact that they did not wish to dance and were just there to watch. Some boys also took their shirts off in the course of an evening. The nights were chilly, and younger boys, clearly not old enough to dance, all wore shirts to keep warm. In this sense, the absence of a shirt served mainly as a marker. Girls seemed to make the transition into *taure'are'a* couples dancing more easily, and even very young girls dressed carefully and sat on the sidelines waiting for the first dance.

### **Contrast between *Taure'are'a* and Adult Themes**

In contrast to youthful irresponsibility, sociality, and interpersonal intimacy were adult qualities of responsibility, work, and careful regulation of ties with others. This contrast was most clear in terms of cooperative and competitive economic themes.

As a period of social and economic complexity, the *Rare* intensified everyday patterns of relating. Help and cooperation, for instance, were very useful at this time but occurred only between kin or close neighbors. For example, households within the same neighborhood were much more likely to build their booths together or under the same roof (see Figure 1), and people not building booths helped their relatives weave palm mats for their booths. People cemented in-family ties of cooperation at this time but were economically and socially cautious with others, mirroring everyday tendencies.

One example was the extremely careful establishment of economic guidelines, accomplished in several pre-*Rare* meetings in which licenses were sold for each kind of good to be offered, and prices were set in precise ways for each item (for cookies, pastries, coffee without milk or sugar, coffee with milk, two-finger measures of alcohol, and so forth). Licenses and price lists were posted, and infractions were gossiped about and dealt with by a member of the economics committee. The *Rare* was considered to be a time to make money, and people seemed to feel comfortable only when every competitive aspect of buying and selling was standardized.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the rules and limitations, competition still found its way to the surface.

### **Gossip Clarifies Social Expectations**

During the *Rare*, social commentary called attention to unacceptable or out of bounds behavior and in this indirect way defined what was acceptable, in bounds behavior. People could infer what others were supposed to be doing



at each life stage by hearing about what they were not supposed to be doing (see Table 3).

Social gossip about young adolescents (stage 4), for example, was primarily about people's appearances and physical skills and about whether they were "ashamed" (*haka'ika*) or not while dancing. *Taure'are'a* were expected to accept their new sexual identities, lose self-consciousness, and perform well.

Gossip about older *taure'are'a* (stages 5 and 6) focused on the acceptable range of youthful beauty through notice of the slightest abnormalities or slippage in individuals' appearances. One girl was seen as too fat, another as "pregnant," a third as having a birth defect, a fourth as not wearing nice enough clothes to dance practice. Adults complained that youth did not adequately represent the ideals of beauty and grace.

Gossip about older *taure'are'a* boys (those living in their own households) stressed the potential wastefulness of *taure'are'a* ways. People gossiped about these young men's drunken binges, broken engagements, and illicit sex.

Talk about newly settled couples focused on marital jealousy and arguments, and the tendency for one partner to wander and dance while the other sat on the sidelines. Couples also fought about money and their in-laws.

Perhaps the most frequent, interesting, and extreme gossip during the *Rare* concerned settled couples whose oldest children were just approaching adolescence. Adults in this state were seen as vulnerable and at risk (similar to Western views of a "mid-life crisis"). Marquesans believed that parents of early adolescent children would try to have one last fling before their children took over the *taure'are'a* ways. People gossiped about men in this stage drinking up the family's profits, leaving all the work to their wives, neglecting their children, beating their wives, being continually drunk, having illicit sex, and depending too long on the in-laws' benevolence.

When a couple's children became *taure'are'a*, people expected the parents' adolescent thinking to go away forever. Gossip about older adults centered on their economic, diplomatic, and leadership roles--about how well or poorly they had regulated economic and social ties, about cheating, selling articles not listed on their license, decreasing prices from the posted list, or letting their food spoil.

### Conclusion

The social messages of the *Rare* highlighted youthful aesthetics and sociality, but presented these in such an overdetermined way that by the end of the festival period adults fell back into relieved acceptance of sedate, mundane, less socially involved everyday life.

**TABLE 3.** Topics of Social Gossip during the *Rare* Period

| Life Stage                          | Gossip Heard   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Transition to adolescence (stage 4) | A is new to <i>taure'are'a</i> dance group; she doesn't know how to dance yet<br>B is new to dance group; she knows how to dance and is not ashamed<br>C is too shy/ashamed ( <i>haka'ika</i> ); he won't dance the <i>tamure</i> dance<br>D doesn't dance very well, but he is not ashamed/shy<br>E dances and jokes with a boy who is seen by some as too-close kin  |
| Early adolescence (stage 5)         | Certain primary school girls will be involved in the dance group when they return to the valley from school--considered old enough<br>Some secondary school girls will not be included in the dance group<br>F replaces G in the front row of the group because G acts too shy<br>H is not included in the group because she is not thin enough<br>I is not included in the group owing to her foot deformity<br>J's father is too overprotective; he won't let her dance in the group; he took her away from dance practice one night     |
| Middle adolescence (stage 6)        | The girls in the <i>taure'are'a</i> group should wear nicer clothes to practices<br>K's father is too overprotective; he comes to dance practices to keep an eye on her<br>L should not be in the dance group at all, since she's pregnant and it's beginning to show<br>M used to be in the group, but she married an older man recently; when she made moves toward joining the group, she was called "Madam" by others but insists on joining anyway!<br>The dance group is not very good because the young people are <i>haka'ika!</i> |
| Late adolescence (stage 7)          | N broke up with his fiancée and is now staying with another girl<br>O is very drunk for the whole <i>Rare</i> week; at the end of the week, he sneaks into a girl's house with the intent to sleep with her; he is fined by the family<br>The <i>taure'are'a</i> are not helping their families enough, are lazy   |
| Newly settled couples (stage 9)     | P is angry at her husband for dancing during the Western-style dances; she refuses to dance because she has a small child and is pregnant<br>Q is angry at her husband because he won't dance with her during the evening dances; she dances with her three-year-old son in her arms   |
| Somewhat settled couples (stage 10) | R and S have a marital fight over money matters, over tensions living with her (R's) parents, and over the fact that S went off to drink, leaving R to tend the booth; they split up for a while, then both leave the wife's parents' household and establish a new household<br>T spends all the money he and his wife have earned and more on drinking; he leaves his wife to tend the booth; he beats her up when she complains   |

*(continued on next page)*

**TABLE 3. Continued**

| Life Stage                 | Gossip Heard   |
|----------------------------|--|
|                            | <p>U sneaks into a woman's house with sexual intent and is fined; he has an argument with his wife's brother over his infidelity and misconduct</p> <p>V and his wife's newborn baby dies shortly after the festival; they fight and V beats her up; people consider them irresponsible for letting the baby die</p>   |
| Settled couples (stage 11) | <p>W serves goods for which he has no license; he lets his meat spoil; a committee member corrects him</p> <p>X, Y, and Z want to build their booths outside of the designated area, to avoid complications of being on the school grounds</p> <p>AA wanted to buy the pig that BB sold to CC</p> <p>DD lowers his liquor prices against the rules</p> <p>EE lowers his potato chip prices; booth owners complain to the committee</p> |

A range of energetic, desire-laden, and romanticized alternatives to everyday life were explored during the *Rare*. Children searched for continuous sweets and noisy, stimulating play. Teenagers searched for sexual intrigue, romance, and intense social bonding. Adults searched for profits and community respect or had their last flings. Social and physical space was compressed to an untenable extent. Families that usually lived in distant households now lived cheek-by-jowl in a cramped, uncomfortable place. Just as the *taure'are'a* category was seen as liminal (Kirkpatrick 1987), so the *Rare* space and time period presented limited alternatives to the normal lifestyles of households headed by hard-working adults. Normal life was infused with value for Marquesans. Their appreciation for normal life increased dramatically as the *Rare* came to a close.

This account has focused on personal development and local community, not on the larger political and ethnic themes emphasized in Pape'ete or the inter-village themes emphasized in Rapa. At the time of my fieldwork, Marquesans in out-of-the-way valleys understood their social lives, above all, in terms of personal growth and desires, not abstractions of custom and political history.

One prominent Marquesan was not bothered by the fact that the cultural presentations at this Marquesan *fête folklorique* were Tahitian. After all, he commented, the dances and songs are *folk* lore--they're what folks like whether Tahitian, Marquesan, old, or new. Moulin presents a similar view in her discussion of more recent cultural borrowing and political identity:

Some non-Islander visitors to the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts in Rarotonga were surprised and perhaps even disappointed by an obvious absence of emphasis on strictly traditional music and dance. . . . Several delegations brought both the old and the new with them, and participants obviously enjoyed both. Yet, postfestival discussion in Honolulu indicated real points of disagreement over the original goals of the festival and the new paths being laid. While certain non-Islanders voiced their concerns about tradition, Islanders indicated their irritation over outsider definitions of their arts. (1996: 147-148)

This view of culture as consumption fits Marquesan practices well and could be more widespread than official announcements and anthropological emphases on notions of culture suggest.

### NOTES

1. The fieldwork discussed in this article was conducted in the Marquesas and on Tahiti for a year, from 1976 to 1977. I joined John Kirkpatrick, whose field stay began in 1975. For permission to conduct our research, we thank the Territorial Government and the Commune d'Ua Pou. For support and sponsorship, we thank the Pape'ete Centre of the Office de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques d'Outre-Mer, then headed by J. Fages. H. Lavondès, the pioneer in recent Marquesan studies, also provided support and counsel. Our fieldwork was supported by the National Institutes of Health (1 F31 MH0 5154-01 CUAN) and the National Science Foundation (SOC 75-13983) and our programs at the University of Chicago. Conversations with Marquesans were conducted in Marquesan and, when necessary, in French. My work focused on social organization, parent-child relations, and family dynamics (reported in Martini 1994, 1996; Martini and Kirkpatrick 1981, 1992). Kirkpatrick attended to Marquesan understandings of social life and psychology, and to social organization (1983, 1985, 1987).

2. See Baré 1992 for a discussion of Tahitian economic categories broadly similar to Marquesan ideas. The attempt to capitalize on the festival as a chance to profit was, like children's attempt to live on candy, a momentary aberration that underlines the importance of everyday modes of life.

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