EPILOGUE: STATES OF THE ARTS

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> Come, dancing as you are, if you like it, lead away,
> For never yet, I warrant, has an actor till to-day
> Led out a chorus, dancing, at the ending of the Play.
> --Aristophanes, "The Wasps"[1]

Scene 1: Before Dawn--The Arts and Pacific Studies

The lack of attention to certain areas of human endeavor often proves to be an advantage. I refer here to the paucity of significant studies on the arts of the Pacific, which, in part, makes it possible to start with nearly a clean slate. Unlike studies of African art, which appear to have been overly influenced by European artists and philosophers and their preoccupation with "Primitive Art" and primitivism in art, the arts of Pacific cultures were seldom touched by these often irrelevant Eurocentric ideas. Such ideas about non-Western art were much more concerned with European art and aesthetics (primarily French) than they were with the original makers of the art. Only a few Melanesian pieces and an occasional Polynesian sculpture, which somehow found their ways to French (and occasionally English and German) artists' studios, had to suffer the indignity of African art objects and the philosophy of *l'art negre/negrophilie* that encompassed them. Thus, in works about Pacific art it is usually not deemed necessary to include a discussion about "Primitive Art" or European reactions to the arts of the Pacific, as Bogumil Jewsiewicki found it necessary to do in what might be consid-

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ered a companion volume to this one, *Art and Politics in Black Africa* (1989).

Yet the arts of the Pacific have not been immune to appropriation by the West (see Peltier 1984). The British sculptor Jacob Epstein acquired the extraordinary Lake Sentani sculpture now in Canberra and was influenced by Polynesian sculptures in the British Museum. The German Emil Nolde collected art works in Melanesia and used them as models in some of his pictures. Picasso had New Caledonia objects and a cast of the famous Rurutu sculpture from the British Museum in his studio. The Frenchman Paul Jacoulet, living in Japan, did masterful woodcuts of Micronesian men and women. The American Charles Sarka, following Gauguin to Tahiti, used Polynesian models and imagery in his paintings, while John LaFarge explored new terrain in Samoa. But few artists (or others) sustained an interest in Pacific arts as appropriate for scholarly or artistic confrontations or explication.[2]

Although in some ways this lack of interest is an advantage, in other ways it is not. For example, if there were more publications and interest in Pacific art, the authors in this volume could have taken up previous insights and comparative concepts in their analyses. Again, in comparison to Africa where the analysis of artistic forms in the study of society and culture has long been recognized as a necessity by a number of anthropologists (for a summary, see Ben-Amos 1989), Pacific anthropologists are only beginning to note the importance of visual and performance arts in the understanding of society and power (e.g., Forge 1979).

Occasionally a chapter on art can be found in Pacific ethnographies or theoretical works (e.g., Firth 1951). Occasionally a chapter on the Pacific will be found in books on "primitive" or non-Western art--but they are usually less than enlightening. In the last few years, in books that focus on the arts, a few Pacific anthropologists and art historians have been represented: Six papers on the Pacific were included in the 1990 volume edited by Dan Eban, *Art as a Means of Communication in Pre-Literate Societies;* two in the 1991 volume edited by Susanne Kuchler and Walter Melion, *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation;* three in the 1985 volume edited by Paul Spencer, *Society and the Dance: The Social Anthropology of Process and Performance.* But even in a book that focuses on tattoo, *Marks of Civilization* (Rubin 1988), only two papers about the Pacific were included.

In the four volumes published so far by the Pacific Arts Association, *Exploring the Visual Art of Oceania* (Mead 1979), *Art and Artists of Oceania* (Mead and. Kernot 1983), *Development of the Arts in the*

Pacific (Dark 1984), and *Art and Identity in Oceania* (Hanson and Hanson 1990), a wide variety of perspectives are brought to bear on the arts, but only a few are anthropological perspectives. An overview volume on future directions in the study of the arts in Oceania was published in 1981 by the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, and two special issues of journals were published on Pacific music--*Ethnomusicology* in 1981 and *The World of Music* in 1990.

Most anthropologists are not really equipped to apply their anthropological training to so-called expressive forms, nor are they trained to recognize the importance of the arts as part of culturally constructed social realities--thus the "initial puzzlement" noted by Nero when she suggested the topic of the arts and politics, that anthropologists should seriously consider the arts. Although many of the papers here focus on politics rather than the art itself, the present volume is an important step in correcting the shortsightedness of many anthropologists who have systematically dismissed the arts in their Pacific studies, Even though most of the authors had not been trained as artists or in art history, or even to take art seriously as an anthropological focus, during their field studies they came upon wonderful artistic material that simply could not be overlooked and took the challenge to use it.

As I was not part of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) meetings during which these papers were presented, I was not part of the discussion of what the authors defined as "art." Social activities that include expressive forms usually considered art in the West are visual art, music, dance, and theater. These, of course, are Western categories, but with the creep of Western ideas into Pacific island cultures, they are beginning to be accepted into the blurred boundaries of indigenous categories. I characterize art as any cultural form that results from creative processes that use or manipulate words, sounds, movements, materials, scents, or spaces in such a way that they formalize the nonformal in much the same manner as poetry intensifies the formalization of language. I use the term "aesthetics" to refer to evaluative ways of thinking about these cultural forms (see Kaeppler 1989). Evaluative ways of thinking can be applied to all of the cultural forms included in the articles in this volume, and, although the authors do not necessarily focus on this aspect of their data, evaluation can be inferred from Duranti's excellent analysis of Samoan speeches, from Nero's analysis of Palauan *bai*, from Petersen's analysis of Pohnpeian dance, and so on.

More than an analysis of the art form itself, the authors are interested in art as a political resource and especially a resource for asserting iden-

tity. Most of the contributions here are concerned with performing identity and complement the articles in a related volume, also deriving from an ASAO symposium, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (Linnekin and Poyer 1990). Performing identity is probably the most pervasive theme in this group of papers, one that could well he expanded by historical analyses. Indeed, Hereniko's and Sinavaiana's insiders' points of view make strong contributions to this subject. Other insiders' points of view can be seen in action at the Pacific Arts Festival held every four years, during which politics and the arts are enlivened in cross-cultural dialogue.

Scene 2: The Present--Invention, Reinvention, Innovation, Transformation, Recontextualization, Negotiation

It is gratifying to note that the articles here do not dwell on the concept popularized by Hobsbawm and Ranger's *Invention of Tradition* (1983). Except for a few true inventions, such as those by Gibson in Rotuma as noted here by Howard, in my view the concept was inappropriately used in most Pacific studies. Hopefully, the bandwagon has now crashed. The articles herein use more appropriate concepts--transformation (Howard), transformation and recontextualization (Donner), transformation and re-creation (Nero), retention, resurrection, and revision (Flinn, Sinclair), intermixture of indigenous and foreign (Petersen), and especially negotiation (Nero, Sinavaiana, Duranti, Pinsker, and others).

Perhaps one of the thorniest problems in analyzing art has been the wide variety of understandings of the issue comprising such concepts as authenticity, tradition, and acculturation. But the authors here have successfully sidestepped this issue. To avoid the problem of considering introduced *irrelevant* changes as "acculturated," I like to use the term "evolved traditional." In the following scheme this refers to art that is a continuation of traditional art (for example, as it was recorded at European contact) that has evolved along indigenous lines, retaining its indigenous basic structure and sentiment. Thus, objects may be made with metal tools, may be made of similar but introduced raw material (e.g., walrus ivory instead of whale-tooth ivory), may depict European objects, might incorporate Western pitch intervals, an expanded movement vocabulary, or introduced flowers. But if the structure and sentiment remain, in my view the art forms have only evolved. Flinn's discussion of Pulapese dance, Nero's discussion of Palauan architecture, and Billings's *malanggan* theater are examples of evolved traditional.

In contrast, I find the term "folk art" more appropriate when change is made primarily in structure, but the sentiment remains the same. Folk art in this scheme refers to the living art of the community that may incorporate new concepts and methods that were not part of the traditional culture--objects may be made of dissimilar materials, music may have adapted the structure of verse-chorus alternation characteristic of Protestant hymn-tunes, dances may combine movements into narrative sequences--essentially creative combinations of traditional and nontraditional concepts and values. Donner's analysis of guitar music is an example of folk art. Folk art, of course, is also "traditional" in the sense that it, too, has time depth. But the problem of using the term "traditional" to refer to more than one thing is evident when reading the papers by Stevenson and Jones side by side. They both refer to traditions presently being played out in French Polynesia, but they are talking about two different bodies of material and different conceptual negotiations of the past and present. Stevenson's analysis of Ma'ohi is an evolved version of traditional art forms, whereas Jones's *artisanat traditionnel* combines introduced forms with Polynesian ones.

A more extreme stage in artistic change can be characterized as "airport art." This refers to artistic products or performances that are often evolved from "folk art" (as described above) but are consciously changed in sentiment as well as structure, or in which the object or performance itself overshadows any meaning that it might have had indigenously. Airport art is usually made or performed primarily for those who do not understand the original language and/or culture from which it derived. Pinsker gives several examples of this kind of dance performance.

Being more explicit about exactly what is changing would be helpful for understanding innovation, transformation, recontextualization, and negotiation.

Scene 3: Times Past--Ethnological Art/The Anthropology of Art

This volume helps bring into focus the difference between two kinds of analysis that in the past have often been treated as one, but that I believe should be considered as two separate types of investigation: ethnological art and the anthropology of art. *Ethnological art* studies, as I see it, are not usually done by anthropologists, but by scholars interested in non-Western art for its own sake. The "ethnology" comes in when they place non-Western art into its "cultural context"--often a superficial analysis of how this mask or that dance was used in such and such ceremony to attain such and such ends. Then comes the lengthy

description in formal terms of the mask or the dance. Studies in the *anthropology of art,* however, are more likely to focus on artistic systerns, the importance of intention, meaning, and cultural evaluation rather than art in context. Anthropologists are interested in social constructions of the arts, the activities that generate them, how and by whom they are judged, and how they can assist in understanding society. That is, the aim of anthropological works is not simply to under, stand art in its cultural context, but rather to understand society through analyzing artistic systems. It is primarily a question of foregrounding and backgrounding. In ethnological studies of art, the social relationships of the people are backgrounded while the art itself and its changes over time are foregrounded. In anthropological studies of art, the social or political relationships of the people are foregrounded while the art content is backgrounded.

The articles included in this volume are essentially studies in the anthropology of art--that is, the emphasis is on understanding society, specifically politics and power, with only a limited discussion of artistic content.

Scene 4: Time Future--Art as Socially Constructed Knowledge

Visual, movement, and sound images are important aspects of Pacific cultural traditions, yet few Pacific anthropologists have focused on the artistic content or the aesthetic systems that underlie this important part of traditional systems of knowledge. But without a systematic understanding of content, is it possible to understand art as socially constructed knowledge or as systems of meaning? Although Billings, Fitzpatrick, Flinn, Howard, Nero, Sinclair, Hereniko, Sinavaiana, and Pinsker do give us content, the artistic *systems* that underlie the content are not in evidence.[3] Nevertheless, the political manipulation of the content is surprisingly clear.

The integral association of verbal and visual modes of expression is characteristic of many Pacific artistic systems, as noted here by Donner, Flinn, Pinsker, and Petersen. But, although we find out what danced stories are about, except for Pinsker's descriptions I find it difficult to visualize what the dances look like--the verbal is much easier to handle than the visual. There are some tantalizing hints about underlying aesthetic ideas, such as the disguising of emotion in Pohnpei as noted by Petersen, but an understanding of how the content is part of a system of knowledge or how systems overlap or form a larger system is usually left to the reader.

Let the Play Go On

What this volume makes perfectly clear is that although art may be used as entertainment, it is not simply a recasting of the old for purposes of cultural identity. The aesthetic construction of society cries for serious consideration. Politics and power can be maintained, enhanced, and created through artistic forms. What is needed to advance these important concepts is anthropology courses on art and aesthetic philosophy in the Pacific. We can learn a great deal from our Africanist colleagues who have incorporated such courses in African studies curricula. The resulting anthropological studies of the arts include sophisticated analyses of power, politics, performance, art forms, and philosophy. Many Pacific anthropologists appear to be almost totally indifferent to such studies, yet, as this volume indicates, there is much to be gained by studying them. Echoing Alice in Wonderland, one can only agree with the final statement of Billings's article, "Without politics, art has no power; without art, politics has nowhere to go, and no way to get there."

Other Times, Other Places

As I write these pages, two important exhibitions are drawing record crowds here on the Mall in Washington, D.C.--Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration and Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany. As I walked through Circa 1492 I encountered extraordinary works of art from Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, Japan, Korea, China, North America, and South America, but not an object or word about the Pacific. After an introduction to the arts in Europe and the Mediterranean in the late fifteenth century, the exhibition catalogue goes on to say,

> The show then takes a bold leap into the imagination. It invites the visitor on an imaginary voyage, to explore the European search for "Cathay," the Indies, "Cipangu" (Japan), moving into the subjunctive mode to reveal, with the hindsight of 500 years, some of the extraordinary rich cultures that existed in Asia, in the order in which Columbus would have encountered them if he had been able to complete the voyage that he thought he had made until his dying day. (Brown 1991:9)

But that is not how I read the map. If Columbus were to have carried on traveling west from Hispaniola and enter the Pacific, the first place

he would have arrived is Polynesia--with such impressive art works as the stone heads of Easter Island or the trilithon and stone tombs of Tonga. Next he would have encountered Micronesia--with such architectural wonders as Nan Madol on Pohnpei or the stone *latte* of Tinian --or perhaps New Guinea with its extraordinary portable stone sculptures. Why was the Pacific systematically dismissed from this exhibition and catalogue? Politics perhaps, or have we not yet impressed upon the world the importance of the Pacific and its arts?

The second exhibition, Degenerate Art, tells the compelling story of Hitler's recognition of the power of art. It chronicles how he dictated what kind of art was acceptable and how artists were controlled by derision, expulsion, and forbidding them to create. Hitler's romantic view of Aryan peasantry and classical forms was the only approved art --the rest, and especially Modernism, was forbidden, completely tied up with his view of what Nazi Germany must do in order to silence opposition. Artists with modern ideas had to be silenced, their books burned, their music and films forbidden. After viewing Degenerate Art, I thought the articles in this volume seemed timid; we can only hope that the world has learned from Hitler the dangers of censorship, although the interview here with Vilsoni Hereniko on his political-theater-piece shows that these ideas are not yet dead.

As can be seen in this volume, the political use of art is a positive force, destined to be played and replayed in many forms for many reasons on the many stages of the Pacific. Continued critical analyses of both the arts and the politics remains an open field in Pacific studies, but as this volume demonstrates, the dawn has come. Pacific artists will continue to create political works, and the authors of this volume should continue their analyses as a dancing chorus leading the way.

NOTES

1. This epilogue is offered in the spirit of a classical Greek play--a speech by one of the actors *after* the conclusion of a play--that is, it is not a conclusion, but a tag ending as a moral of a fable added for special effect.

2. See Kaeppler 1989 for an overview of Polynesia.

3. For examples of studies that do delve into the underlying systems, see Kaeppler 1978c and Tedlock 1984.