

**Untie the doves cord,  
when it is free it sings**

**fara: dancing and singing on Rotuma**

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**Iăp sui manoa, săi ma oroan**

**Untie the doves cord,  
when it is free it sings**

“Said of a woman who has always been confined; when freed, she plays. Used in reference to a girl who has been closely chaperoned by her family, but then elopes with a boyfriend during manea season (the Christmas holidays). Also said about a wife who has been tied down by her husband; when she is apart from her husband, she starts to enjoy life” (Inia 1998: 172-173).

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## *Foreword*

In November 2003 I arrived for the first time on the island of Rotuma, which is situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Everything I knew about the island I had read in books, but a lack of time had prevented me from reading everything that I wanted to read. I arrived in a country that was strange to me, yet not entirely. From my first year studying cultural anthropology at the University of Nijmegen, I had taken an interest in the Oceania region (the Pacific).<sup>1</sup> The area fascinated me immediately. Regularly people on Rotuma asked me, “What is the difference between Rotuma and the Netherlands?” I answered, “Everything and nothing. Everything, because the cultural standards and rules that lie under the surface here differ totally from the ones in the Netherlands. Nothing, because we are all people with our needs, moods, characters, etc.” Habits and common practices in Rotuma differed totally from what I was used to. At first I decided to learn something about the language. Most Rotumans speak English because at high school lessons are taught in this language. The advantage was that at least I could make myself understood. Yet I was very curious about the Rotuman language. However, I rapidly reached the conclusion that to learn the language and do research at the same time was a bit too much, so I decided to concentrate on my research.

Because I heard the Rotuman language during daily life for three months I came to understand some of it. In the end I could understand a little of what daily conversations were about. In church I sang the psalms so that I could practise pronunciation. Many consonants appeared to correspond to Dutch. There was so much to learn and I had only three months to do it in. I came to the conclusion that three months of research in a culture so strange to me was almost an impossible task. Still, I tried to make the best of it and have the feeling that never before have I learned so much in such a short time. I did my best to observe carefully and tried to adapt to the way people behaved. Moreover, I asked people questions until their ears fell off. Whenever I did not understand something I asked for an explanation. The problem is that an important part of culture lies hidden underneath the surface, as Howard says in *Learning To Be Rotuman: Enculturation in the South Pacific*: “To become a truly competent participant in Rotuman culture requires that he learns the strategies that are most likely to work to advantage in situations of problematic outcome. It involves both overt and covert knowledge, a capacity to anticipate the responses of others, and an ability to see the relationship between fragments of information” (Howard 1970: 5). During my research I positioned myself as a student. I told the Rotumans that I was interested in their culture and particularly in their dancing, and that I would like to learn as much as possible about it.

It is very likely that I asked different questions than a Rotuman would have asked and it is very likely that I would have observed different things if I had been a Rotuman. For this reason I would like to

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<sup>1</sup> See remark at the end of the Foreword.

emphasise that this report is not a reconstruction of their reality, but a construction by a non-Rotuman who lived on Rotuma for only three months. However, during my stay on Rotuma I started to feel a little bit like a Rotuman. An important personal aim during my stay on Rotuma was to take part in daily activities. This resulted in one of the nicest moments during my stay. Elisapeti Inia (my hostess whom I will introduce in the Introduction) said to me: “You know, I now treat you as a Rotuman and that is better than treating you as a guest, for there always comes a moment one rather sees guests leaving, since they have to be taken care of all the time.” During my stay of three months Rotuma and the Rotumans found a special place in my heart.

### ***Pacific or Oceania - what's in a name?***

To indicate my research area I had to make a choice between the terms “Pacific” and “Oceania”. I based my choice on Epeli Hau‘ofa’s, article, “Our Sea of Islands”, in which he contrasts seeing the Pacific as islands in a far sea, or as a sea of islands. According to Hau‘ofa, there is a large difference between these two approaches. “The first emphasizes land surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centres of power. Focusing in this way stresses the smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective, in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships”. I return to this point later. “Continental men, namely Europeans, on entering the Pacific after crossing huge expanses of ocean, introduced the view of islands in a far sea. From this perspective the islands are tiny, isolated dots in a vast ocean. Later on, continental men—Europeans and Americans—drew imaginary lines across the sea, introducing colonial boundaries that confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces for the first time” (Hau‘ofa 1999: 31).

Hau‘ofa uses the term “ocean people” because the ancestors of the inhabitants of the Pacific, who have lived there for over two thousand years, viewed their world as a sea of islands rather than as islands in the sea. In this approach the sea is part of the living space of people. “The difference between the two perspectives is reflected in the two terms used for our region: Pacific Islands and Oceania. The first term, Pacific Islands, is most commonly used, perhaps because Oceania sounds so grand and romantic”. Hau‘ofa pleads for the use of the term Oceania, which originates from the area itself and not from the continent (Hau‘ofa 1999: 27-38). Initially I also was inclined to use the term Pacific instead of Oceania, but after reading Hau‘ofa’s article I decided to use Oceania. It is not easy to switch from one to the other, especially because the term Pacific is so widespread in the western world. Even the people who live in the area prefer to speak of the Pacific. Yet, for the above mentioned reasons, I will use the term Oceania in this thesis to refer to the region.

***Word of thanks***

I would like to thank all the people who have helped me with the realization of this thesis, especially Elisapeti Inia, Alan Howard, Jan Rensel, Ad & Lucia Linkels, Ad Borsboom, Bas Lindeboom, Ansfried Scheifes and Eric Zuiderbeek. Also I would like to thank all the Rotumans who have helped me to obtain the research material.

# Introduction

## *Dance in Oceania*

This study of the *fara* has arisen from my personal interest in dancing, in combination with my interest in Oceania. According to Spencer, dance is a subject that is frequently avoided by anthropological researchers because it is difficult to interpret an art form of another culture, especially in terms that are understandable to us. However, dancing has an important place in many rituals and on public occasions and should not be overlooked. Research does not particularly concern the movements of the individual dancer as well as the collective source (Spencer 1996: 181-183).

In Oceania dance is a current topic. It is central to numerous activities and events. I initially approached the topic with a vague, broad interest and needed to find a place to do research and to choose a specific subject: Where in Oceania could I do a field study, and what aspect of dancing culture is interesting enough to do research on?

The late Ad Linkels -- an ethnomusicologist who has done extensive research in Oceania -- suggested that I go to Rotuma. He and his wife Lucia (who has also done considerable research on dancing in Oceania) put me in contact with a number of knowledgeable people, including Elisabeth Inia, Alan Howard, and Jan Rensel.

Elisabeth Inia (Elisapeti in Rotuman), is a respected elder. She has written extensively about Rotuman customs, including books on Rotuman proverbs (Inia 1998) and ceremonies (2001), and is a co-author of "A New Rotuman Dictionary" (Inia et. al. 1998). Alan Howard is an anthropologist who has studied Rotuma for more than forty years and has written many books and articles concerning Rotuma. His wife, Jan Rensel, who is also an anthropologist specialising in Rotuma, has written many articles concerning the island.

These three scholars made me aware of two occasions on Rotuma where dance plays an important role: Christmastime, when *fara*, a dance celebration takes place; and the annual Methodist Conference in July, when the *tautoga* ('traditional' dancing) is danced. After some consideration, I found it best fit my program to study *fara*. It was something I knew nothing about and it seemed very interesting. What exactly is *fara*? How is it embedded in the Rotuman society? How do the Rotumans experience the *fara*?

The aim of this thesis is to create as clear a picture as possible of *fara*, its place in Rotuman society, and how it has changed over time. Hereniko (1991: 120-142) wrote an article entitled "Dance as a reflection of Rotuman culture"; in this thesis I will show the ways in which *fara* reflects Rotuman culture.

Changes that have taken place within the Rotuman culture can be seen in the *fara*. *Fara* therefore is more than superficial public entertainment.

#### FARA

*Fara* literally means “to beg, request, ask for” according to *A New Rotuman Dictionary* (1998: 195). In the case of dance it refers to the indirect asking for gifts, such as talcum powder, perfume, lemonade, and fruit. When people talk about “going *fara*” it means that they, mostly during the evening and night, go from place to place and at each house make music, sing, dance and have fun for about thirty minutes. As a sign of appreciation for coming to their house, people sprinkle talcum powder and spray perfume on the heads and shoulders of people in the group. In some cases refreshments are distributed, such as watermelon, pineapple, lemonade, bananas and biscuits or money. The *fara* is very lively and exciting.

While on Rotuma I witnessed two types of *fara*: *ordinary fara* and *roundtrip fara*. ‘*Ordinary fara*’ takes place almost daily around Christmas within a district and sometimes within connected districts. ‘*Roundtrip fara*’ (*far kəl‘āki* in Rotuman) involves going around the island in a bus or truck. There are other types of *fara*, which I discuss briefly where necessary, but the emphasis in this thesis is on the ordinary and roundtrip varieties.

*Fara* takes place during the *av mane ‘a* period. *Av mane ‘a* literally means “time to play”. It starts at the beginning of December and ends in mid-January. During this period the Rotumans take things easy and in general do not need to work hard. Time is spent on picnics, harvest festivals, kava drinking, playing cards, and going *fara*.

Wijers, who did research on the functions of carnival, writes that carnival belongs in the study of the daily life, along with such topics as leisure time activities and festivals (Wijers 1995: 4-5). In my view, the same goes for *fara*, which fulfils the same functions as carnival. Wijers also argues that the study of carnival concerns should focus on concrete cultural phenomenon, with an emphasis more on the structure than on the incident, more on the group than on the individual, and more on development than on continuity. This approach places a premium on the function and meaning of cultural phenomena in social context (Wijers 1995: 2). I have taken this approach in my study of *fara*, which is a concrete, evolving, phenomenon embedded in Rotuman society.

I therefore framed my research question as follows:

*What is the function and the meaning of fara for Rotumans society in general and for individual Rotumans in particular?*

To answer this question I first had to immerse myself in *fara* and try to discover its essential nature, which involved asking a number of derivative questions: Why does it take place? When and where does it take

place? How is it celebrated? Who takes part in it? What kind of music is played? What kinds of dances are performed? What gifts are given and why? What is the origin of the festival? Are there different types of *fara*, and if so, how do they differ from one another? All of these questions are addressed in this thesis.

### ***Tradition***

Discourse on tradition has increased in over the past few decades, stimulated by a discussion concerning the “*invention of tradition*”, a concept introduced by Hobsbawn, who asserts that so-called “traditions” frequently have a very recent origin and sometimes are invented.

*‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (Hobsbawn 1983: 1).*

According to Keesing, “people in Oceania frequently create myths of ancestral ways of life that serve as powerful political symbols” (Keesing 1989: 19). Trask reacted sharply to Keesing’s argument. “She asserts that Keesing is guilty of academic colonialism. She says that for Hawaiians, anthropologists in general (and Keesing in particular) are part of the colonizing horde because they seek to take away from indigenous peoples the power to define who and what they are, and how they should behave politically and culturally” (Trask 1991: 159-163).

It is clear from this exchange that tradition is a sensitive topic. It is, however, a topic I cannot ignore in this thesis, because I consider *fara* as a Rotuman tradition. I will therefore try to define as clearly as possible what I mean by tradition.

“The word tradition comes from the Latin term *tradito*, which refers to the action of handing over. In modern usage, tradition refers not only to the act of handing down from one generation to the other, but also and more frequently, to that which is handed down: information, beliefs, and customs. Central to the meaning of tradition is the time dimension, continuity with the past” (Otto & Pedersen 2000: 3).

“In relation to modernity, the term can be used both negatively and positively. It can denote the irrational constraints and obstructions that stand in the way of progress—tradition as an obstacle to change. But it may also be used to refer to time-honoured customs and procedures, or to the particular and valuable heritage of groups and nations that need to be preserved in the context of modernisation” (Otto & Pedersen 2000: 3-4).

I prefer not to place tradition and modernity in opposition or as antagonistic to one another. In my opinion, tradition and modernity go hand-in-hand. Tradition is not static; it is a dynamic phenomenon. Societies continually change and their traditions change with them. This certainly is and has always been the case in Oceania. Change did not begin with the arrival of white people, as often thought. Before their

arrival many exchanges took place between people from different islands. When one considers how Rotuma was populated, it is obvious that the population comes from a variety of sources (see chapter 1). Each of these people brought their own habits and customs with them. Habits and customs mixed with each other to form a unique Rotuman culture with its own traditions. Continuity with the past, which is a key aspect of tradition, should therefore be seen not as static but as flexible. The core of Rotuman tradition has been relatively stable, but the way tradition is practiced changes through time.

### ***'Going fara' – music and dance***

Returning to the *fara*: There is little information concerning the distant history of the *fara*, but during the past century-and-a-half many changes have occurred that have altered the *fara*. Among other things, the introduction of Christianity has influenced the way in which *fara* is conducted. The Rotumans more or less incorporated Christianity into the *fara*, as will become clear in chapters 6 and 7. Still, the *fara* stays an authentic, but dynamic Rotuman tradition, although in the context of a modernising society.

Because dancing and music take a central position within the *fara*, these two topics will be taken explicitly into consideration in this thesis. The Rotumans use the word *mak* for both dancing and music. The complete form of the word is *maka*, which means “to sing, chant, intone, or recite, to the accompaniment dance” (Inia, et al. 1998).

### **COURSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The research can roughly be classified as taking place in four periods: the period before the *fara*, the *fara* period, the period after the *fara*, and the period on Fiji.

*The period before the fara*: From 12 November 2003 until 1 December 2003 I spent most of my time getting to know the island, its people, and as much as possible about Rotuman habits and customs (a learning process that continued throughout the research project). I lived at Elisapeti Inia's house, which was my home during my stay on Rotuma. It was a place where I could return to at any moment. I also talked with Rotumans about *fara* and did a number of interviews to get a picture of what “going *fara*” actually means. This gave me a slight idea about what I could expect and how I had to behave during a *fara*. Furthermore, I spoke a lot with Mrs. Inia concerning the origin of and changes in the *fara*. The more information I gathered, the more questions came up.

*The period of fara — av mane 'a*: This period started officially on the 1st of December, but the first *fara* I attended was on December 6th. Before this date no *fara* were held in the village where I stayed because the schools were not closed yet. During *av mane 'a* I stayed for a number of weeks in Malhaha district (see map) to go *fara* there. This was mainly a period of participant observation. I also attended a lot of celebrations, such as a wedding, birthdays, and harvest festivals, where food crops and mats made by the

women were ceremonially presented. I also went on several picnics, which are a common activity during *av mane'a*. During this period I did a number of interviews, but it was at the end of *av mane'a*, when the number of *fara* decreased, that I did the most interviews. The reason why is that going *fara* involved long nights of tiring activity, leaving everyone, including myself, exhausted. On January 17<sup>th</sup> the period in which people were allowed to go *fara* officially ended.

*The period after fara:* During this period I tried to get clear what exactly *fara* means to the Rotumans. Going *fara* raised a lot of questions that I tried to get answered in this period. I also tried to place *fara* in an historical framework. This seemed to be a difficult task, because many people had problems placing things in a time perspective. A possible precursor to *fara* was the *manea 'hune 'ele*, which is no longer practiced, so I interviewed people to try to find out as much as I could about it.

*The period in Fiji:* In Suva, the capital of Fiji, I interviewed a number of people concerning *fara*, and how Rotumans in Suva have adapted it to urban conditions.

#### **METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

My research methods included participant observation, several ways of interviewing, an analysis of audio and visual recordings, and a search of relevant literature.

##### ***Participant observation***

In his book on participant observation, Spradley (1980: 3) describes ethnographic fieldwork as the hallmark of cultural anthropology. "This means participating in activities, asking questions, eating strange food, learning a new language, watching ceremonies, taking fieldnotes, washing clothes, writing letters home, tracing out genealogies, observing play, interviewing informants, and hundreds of other things. Ethnography is the work of describing a culture. The central aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life from the natives' point of view".

"Ethnography means learning from people" (Spradley 1980:3). During my research I therefore took the role of a student. I explained to people that I am very much interested in dancing and in Oceania. I told them that in the Netherlands people do not dance in the same way as in Oceania and that I would love to learn how to dance *fara* style. Learning how required that I participate in as many *fara* events as possible.

Spradley defines five types of participation that range along a continuum of involvement: "(1) nonparticipation, where one observes, but does not take part in the activities; (2) passive participation, where the ethnographer is present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent; (3) moderate participation, in which the ethnographer takes part in the activities, but also keeps a distance as an observer, avoiding the status of a regular; (4) active participation, beginning with observations, but as knowledge of what others do grows, the ethnographer tries to learn the same

behaviour; and finally (5) complete observation, when the ethnographer becomes indistinguishable from ordinary participants” (Spradley 1980: 58-61).

As much as possible during my fieldwork, I took the role of an active participant. The first night of *fara* it became immediately clear to me that it is not possible to go along with a *fara* without taking part in it, so I did not get the chance to observe first. It required observing and imitating behaviour at the same time. I was told that people would like to see if I, an outsider, was able to dance. Because white people often have difficulties trying to dance Pacific-island style, the Rotumans were eager to test my dancing skills immediately.<sup>2</sup> The second night of *fara* I thought I had found a way to observe only. During our visit to the first house, I spent my time recording the music, as a result of which I could not dance. At first I doubted whether this was such a good idea after all, because I had to disappoint many dancing partners. However, when I told them I would dance at the next house, everything was fine again. With pleasure I took the role of a willing student and danced all night. The result was that I was easily incorporated into the group and in the meantime was able to observe *fara* performances. Because I was actively involved, and because it was night time, it was difficult to take notes during the *fara*. A pocket lamp could not be used, because it would have created a distraction. As a result, I had to write down my notes the next day. This undoubtedly resulted in my forgetting details, but I felt I had no choice. I would like to emphasise that I was never able to take the role of complete insider, simply because I am not a Rotuman and because my appearance, white and very blond, deviated too much. Someone commented that my hair was like a light at night.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Interviewing***

In addition to participant observation I made use of several types of interviewing, including: informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviewing (Bernard 1995: 208-210).

“Bernard defines informal interviewing as interviewing with total lack of structure or control. The researcher tries to remember conversations heard during the course of a day “in the field””. I used this method a lot. Because I lived among the people—during my entire stay on the island I lived in the homes of Rotumans—I received information during the entire day. The people around me knew about my research and communicated to me what they considered as important for my research.

“Unstructured interviewing is an interviewing method where the informant knows that you are going to talk about your research subject and is aware that you are conducting an interview. The interview is characterised by a clear plan in your head, but involves a minimum of control concerning the response of the informant”. This method I used with people whom I frequently saw.

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<sup>2</sup> My dancing style was received well and labelled ‘very graceful’. People said that I danced the way a woman was ‘supposed’ to dance. I attribute this to my study of dance from a wide variety of cultures around the world.

<sup>3</sup> This did not always make me feel very happy, because I could not hide myself in the dark as Rotumans could.

“Semi-structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide”. When I had specific questions to ask to specific people, I wrote them down in advance. This I did among other things when interviewing leaders of the *fara*, but I also used it after a night of *fara* when I had questions concerning things that I had not understood that night. Also, I had questions that I wanted to ask as many people with differing backgrounds as possible, taking into account religion, gender, age, and place of residence.

### ***Picture and sound analysis and literature research***

Going *fara* is first and foremost a visual and auditory experience; for this reason I took photos, videotaped the dancing, and recorded the music. Recording the music was easy, but videotaping and taking photos was more difficult. Most of the *faras* began in the evening when it is dark. The houses at which we stopped were hardly lighted because generators are generally turned off after ten o'clock at night. In the beginning I tried to take photos using the camera's flashlight, but this created such a disturbance that I immediately stopped doing it. A Rotuman lady took a number of pictures in the darkness and gave these to me. Fortunately, a number of *faras* took place daylight. I made use of these occasions to take photos and to videotape. My analysis of these visual materials informs my description and interpretation of the *fara*.

During my stay I also asked a Rotuman to write down some of the *fara* songs for me. These have been translated into English by another Rotuman, and have been examined concerning their origin by several Rotumans. The content of these songs will be analysed in this thesis.

Beside all the above mentioned methods, I have also researched the literature, including everything that I could find about the *fara*. Furthermore, literature concerning Rotuma, Oceania, and dance in general have informed my analysis.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

Generalising is inevitable, although I have tried to convey as many nuances as possible. Rotuma is a small island; I therefore consider my findings to apply to Rotuman culture in general. Of course my own interpretations influenced my findings, so I do not pretend that they constitute an objective picture. I chose to guarantee the privacy of my informants as much as possible and therefore only use the names of public officials, because I believe that doing so does not constitute an invasion of privacy, and in chapter 4 names are used. When necessary, I present information concerning the background of my informants. All the material was, unless otherwise mentioned, obtained during my fieldwork from November 2003 until February 2004.

In chapter 1 I provide a historical and socio-economic description of Rotuma. In this chapter I discuss only briefly the different aspects of Rotuman society. In proportion I discuss the arrival of the white people and with them the arrival of Christianity, which did much to shape the form and meaning of *fara* during the past century and a half. The aim of this chapter is to provide background information concerning Rotuma so I can place the research in a cultural and historical framework.

Chapter 2 is a description of the period in which *fara* takes place. I have made use of Leach's idea concerning the classification of the year by means of festival periods and how people organize time. In this chapter I describe the place of *av mane'a* in the annual cycle of Rotuma, and place *fara* in relation to other activities during this period.

Chapter 3 contains a description of a celebration that could be seen as a precursor of *fara*. By describing this festival and how it disappeared, I try to make clear why *fara* became more popular.

In chapter 4 I describe two different kinds of *fara* in the way I experienced them. The descriptions are a compilation of several *fara* that I experienced insofar as not all events took place in one and the same *fara*. These illustrations provide support for the next two chapters.

Chapter 5 forms the core of the thesis. In this chapter I analyse all the elements that give form and meaning to the *fara*. I make use of Howard's and Turner's ideas about a limited time frame during which the rules that apply in normal daily life are suspended or altered. The topic of romantic relations and flirting is discussed in this chapter.

In chapter 6 I discuss the subjects of dance, song texts, and musical instruments. These are three essential elements in the *fara*. I will show how they work together to form the *fara* and analyse what they say about Rotuman society and the *fara*. I make use of Hanna's description of dance and Hereniko's descriptions of the dance on Rotuma.

In the concluding chapter, I re-examine the main question of the research once again in light of the materials incorporated into this thesis, and offer an answer. I also place this thesis in relation to other studies with related topics.

### ***DVD and CD***

This thesis includes a DVD and CD that I refer to in the text. The material on the DVD is meant to illustrate the written material. Dance is a very visual thing. You can write about it, but the feeling that goes with it becomes clearer when you can watch it. The DVD also contains a summary of other important events during *av mane'a* that are discussed in chapter 2. The CD contains songs that I recorded during my research. The majority are *fara* songs although two are of a different genre that I recorded to illustrate differences in singing styles referred to in chapter 5.

# 1

## *Rotuma – an introduction*

Rotuma consists of a group of volcanic islands, the main island (Rotuma) and eight uninhabited small rocky islands scattered around it. “The main island is about 14 kilometres long and at most 5 kilometres wide” (Parke 2001: 17).<sup>4</sup> It has a basaltic core covered with rich volcanic soil (see picture 1.1). “A high temperature and heavy rainfall encourage forest growth. People practise shifting cultivation with short rotation cycles. As a result, most of the vegetation consists of secondary growth forest or coconut palms. There are no rivers or fresh water lakes on the island” (Fatiaki 1991: 1). Rotuma is surrounded by a reef. The distance from the reef to the island varies but you can always see it from the main island.

“The island of Rotuma is relatively remote; it is located 465 kilometres north of the northernmost island in the Fiji group. Rotuma has been politically affiliated with Fiji for more than a century, yet Rotumans are culturally and linguistically distinct, having strong historic relationships with Tonga, Samoa and other Polynesian islands to the east” (Rensel 1993: 215). “The scholarly consensus is that the original inhabitants came from either Melanesia or Micronesia, followed by Samoan and Tongan invasions about the beginning of the seventeenth century” (Hereniko 1995: 1), which Howard defines as; “the most significant cultural migration. This migration is sometimes called the *westward Polynesian ‘backwash’*” (Howard 1970: 14). Physically the Rotumans manifest a considerable amount of variation. First impressions lead to classify them as essentially Polynesians, but others manifest features of Micronesians or Melanesian (Howard 1970: 11-14). “The Rotuman language is unique and in no sense a dialect of any other known language, but can best be explained as the result of a fusion of several earlier languages” (Howard 1970: 11-14).

### **HISTORY**

“Rotuma is stated in all directories to have been ‘discovered’ by Captain Edwards, of H.M.S. “Pandora”, in his search for the mutineers of the “Bounty” in 1791” (Gardiner 1898). “The vessel, according to the accounts of Captain Edwards and the ship’s surgeon, Dr. George Hamilton, was received with great

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<sup>4</sup> When I use the word Rotuma, I am referring to the main island. The smaller rocky islands will be referred to by their own names.

suspicion. The Rotumans approached the ship with caution and were prepared for war, but through constant coaxing and offers of presents the crew managed to lure the reluctant natives on board, and successfully negotiated for supplies. Before the eighteenth century had ended, the island was visited by a second European vessel, the missionary ship *Duff*, but the Rotumans were not eager to trade, and after a minor incident provoked by an attempt by one of the islanders to make off with a non-negotiable item, all trading ceased” (Howard 1970: 15).

Eventually the Rotumans nevertheless permitted trade and during the first half of the 19th century contact with the Europeans increased considerably. “Whalers found the luxuriant island an excellent station for replenishing their stores, and it became a favourite stopping place. In addition to the whalers there were labour recruiters, who were responsible for transporting scores of young men to plantations in all parts of the Pacific. Also, young men eagerly signed on board visiting ships as crew members, and sailed to the far corners of the globe” (Howard 1970: 15). “Others started to work in the pearl fisheries in the Torres Straits, diving and managing boats. They earned both good wages and a reputation for competence and reliability” (Rensel 1993: 216-218). “In addition to these influences, contact with European culture (or at least a highly specialized segment of it) was rendered continuous by the large number of deserters who found their way to Rotuma’s hospitable shores” (Howard 1970: 15). Some of them only stayed for a short time and were seen as unwelcome invaders while others married Rotuman wives and started families.

“In 1839, in the wake of contacts with Europe, Christianity was introduced” (Hereniko 1995: 1). “Missionaries from the Wesleyan (Methodist) and the Roman Catholic Churches established themselves on Rotuma. Unfortunately, the French priests and the English ministers were somewhat less than tolerant toward one another’s labours, and a religious factionalism resulted. Each mission marked off its own territorial domain and jealously guarded its converts from the “evil” influences of the other side. An increasing number of disputes arose between adherents of the opposing faiths, often over the question of the right to build churches on communally-held land” (Howard 1970: 15).

“Antagonisms between the Wesleyans and Catholics continued to mount until 1878, when they culminated in a war between the two groups, in which the Catholics were defeated by the numerically superior Wesleyans. The unrest that followed this war led the paramount chiefs of Rotuma’s several districts to petition England for annexation, and in 1881 the island was officially ceded to Great Britain. The Crown decided that Rotuma should be administered as a part of the Colony of Fiji – the nearest Crown Colony – rather than as a separate unit. A Resident Commissioner was appointed to govern it along with an advisory body comprising the seven paramount chiefs. Fortunately for the Rotumans, government under English law had the desired effect of reducing religious conflict and eventually harmony between the two religious factions was restored” (Howard 1970: 15-16). Even so, a certain amount of tension remains. Besides Methodists and Catholics there are nowadays also Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and members of the Assembly of God on Rotuma, with churches spread across the island (see picture 1.2).

The nineteenth century was a time of rapid socio-cultural change on Rotuma. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the transformation was virtually complete, and the Rotumans had adjusted to

the alien culture. They had been “Christian” for nearly half a century, had engaged in commercial trading for a comparable period of time, and had submitted to English law for nearly twenty years. They wore European clothes, used European tools, and supplemented their native diet with tinned meat, tea, biscuits, and innumerable other items of European food. They also paid taxes to the government, applied for marriages and divorces through government offices, sought medical aid from the Resident Commissioner, and sent their children to mission schools.

“This does not mean that Rotumans simply adopted Western culture uncritically and made no efforts to retain their own customs. It would be more correct to characterize the nineteenth century as a period of selective cultural borrowing, in which the Rotumans adopted into their society a considerable number of foreign elements, and managed to attain a new integration” (Howard 1970: 17).

#### **ROTUMA IN MODERN TIMES**

“When Fiji gained independence in 1970, and the colonial regime ended, the relative positions of the Rotuman Council and District officer were reversed. The council was given primary policy-making powers and the D.O. was made its adviser”. “Two of the most prominent political issues in recent years have been tourism and Rotuma’s position vis-a-vis Fiji following the second coup on 25 September 1987” (Howard 1991: 234-235). Tourism continues to be an important point of debate. At the time of my research, people were discussing the possibilities of building a hotel at Motusa. Even at present opinions remain divided and no agreement has yet been reached. Concerning the second point, in spite of opposition, the council has decided not to secede from Fiji.

#### ***Demography and infrastructure***

“During the twentieth century Rotuma has continued to change, but it has changed more as a part of the modern world than as a distinct entity. Although the Rotuman community has retained its unique cultural identity to a considerable degree, economically and socially it has become thoroughly integrated with the rest of Fiji” (Howard 1970: 17).

“In 1998, Rotuma’s total population was estimated at 2500” (Lal & Fortune 2000: 568). “In 1960 two-thirds of the Rotuman population were resident on the island, with the remainder in Fiji. In the early 1990s only a quarter of all Rotumans lived on Rotuma. The rest were mostly in Fiji, although substantial numbers now reside in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and North America” (Howard 1998: 149). The entire Rotuman population is growing but the number of Rotumans resident on Rotuma remains virtually the same. Nowadays the majority of Rotumans who live outside of Rotuma are mostly residents in Suva, the capital city of Fiji.

Rotuma is subdivided into 7 districts each consisting of a number of villages. All villages are located along the coast line. “Until the 1930s Uea, the largest offshore island that belongs to Rotuma, was still inhabited” (Howard 1995: 116). “A survey of the island reveals that house-sites were previously scattered

through the interior as well as along the coast, but before the turn of the twentieth century the entire population had settled near the shore. Soon after cession the colonial administration completed a road for horses around the circumference of the western section of the island, and along the northern shore of the eastern section. In 1927 the road was improved to accommodate motor vehicles” (Howard 1970: 20). Nowadays there is also a road that rounds the eastern section, a road crossing the island to get to Losa and numerous roads going inland to the plantations (see picture 1.3). “With the increased significance of commercial trading, these roads have become the economic lifeline of the island, and at the present time houses are scattered along them, making it difficult to distinguish villages as distinct entities” (Howard 1970: 20). People use various means of transport such as bicycles, motorcycles, cars, small trucks and buses. Only a small number of people own motorized vehicles; they often take other islanders along for free or for a small fee. On weekdays, buses bring children and adolescents to one of the three primary schools or to the high school (see picture 1.4). Everybody can make use of these buses. There is a small market in Ahau every Friday, when two buses are available for Rotumans to travel around the island. On crowded buses men and boys always yield their seat to women. On special occasions the buses are rented by the church, and also by *fara*-groups.

The majority of houses are made out of concrete and a smaller number out of wood. They generally have iron roofs (see picture 1.5). You will still see thatch-roofs (roofs made out of plaited palm branches), mostly on village meeting-halls and outdoor kitchens. Almost all houses are furnished with Western furniture, such as tables, chairs and couches, but often people prefer to sit on mats on the ground.

### ***Water, electricity, telephone***

“Since 1976, when fresh water reserves were found, all houses have had piped water” (Howard 1991: 232). “Before that time, fresh water was mainly obtained from shallow wells dug near the sea, and also from rain-water tanks” (Fatiaki 1991: 1). In fact, this latter method is still being used. “Most homes have indoor kitchens with sinks, and water-seal toilets inside or just outside the main building. These toilets have replaced pit latrines in the near bush and outhouses on piers over the ocean. One of the main purposes of installing water-seal toilets, as Howard understands it, was to eliminate some of the main breeding environments for flies and mosquitoes. Unfortunately, no improvement is as yet noticeable” (Howard 1991: 232). In 2004, Rotuma was still plagued by flies and mosquitoes. In most of the villages the water supply is cut off at night, to give the water reserves enough time to fill up. It seems that there are many leaks in the piping system, so that a lot of water gets spilled.

Nowadays the entire island has electricity at least a few hours a day. Ahau and surroundings, where the government station and the hospital are located, have electricity both in the morning and during the evening. Savlei, the village where I was living throughout most of my research, has its own generator. Two men from the village were in charge of running the generator from six to ten o’clock in the evening. However, it was frequently started late. Some places have no collective generator. In that case, people often have their own generator which they run when electricity is needed. Beside generators, the Rotumans also

make use of solar panels. Electricity makes possible the use of electronic home appliances. An increasing number of households own a television. The television used to work only when hooked up to a video tape player. Whenever a film was shown, many people, especially kids, came to watch it (see picture 1.6).<sup>5</sup>

There is a telephone network on the island, although few households are connected to it. Tariffs for local phone calls are not that high, but outward calls (to Suva) are rather expensive. For this reason, many Rotumans have phones with which they can only receive calls, because otherwise everybody would want to use their phone. The post office in Ahau also has a fax machine. Next to the post office you will find the largest shop on Rotuma. Most of the shops scattered across the island are small grocery shops. These have irregular opening hours, which means that sometimes the owner must be called.

### ***Means of sustaining livelihood***

The Rotumans sustain a livelihood by cultivating food such as *a'ana*, jams, cassavas, breadfruit, pineapples, papaws and bananas. This work is mostly done by men. Also, there are many coconut plantations for the copra industry. Because of the steep fall in price of copra, production at the moment is not very high. The women on Rotuma plait mats both for their own use and to bestow as a gift during burials, birthdays, weddings and other occasions (see picture 1.7). In addition, women manage the household. Money-earning jobs on Rotuma are mostly government-related, for example in the field of education and medical care. Many Rotumans get money, clothing and food from relatives who live in Fiji or somewhere else outside Rotuma.

### ***Rotuma and the rest of the world***

The accessibility of Rotuma has increased considerably in the course of time. "In 1970, a wharf was built in Oinafa" (Howard 1991: 231). This made it easier to transport goods from the boat to the shore. When the sea is rough, the boat will have to stay in deep water and passengers and goods will have to be transported from and to the ship by small speedboats. The sailing schedule of the boat to Fiji even nowadays is not very reliable. Boats depart from Suva to Rotuma once a month on average. Around Christmas in particular, it takes a lot of effort to find a place on board and tickets are not always sold fair and square. Another way of getting to the island is by plane. "Since 1981 Rotuma has had an air strip in the Malhalla district. Air fare is too expensive for most Rotumans, and because of low passenger loads Fiji Air has reduced its bi-weekly flight to once a week." (Howard 1991: 230-231). Around Christmas the planes are frequently double-booked. This means that some people are not allowed to get on the plane in spite of having a ticket. Sometimes they must wait as long as two weeks before getting a seat. Although accessibility has increased, Rotuma therefore remains a somewhat isolated island.

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<sup>5</sup> I have been informed that since 2005 Rotuma has had access to TV channels.

Nowadays, Rotumans are in close contact with Fiji. After finishing high school on Rotuma many young people leave for Suva to do an extra year of high school, to follow professional education or to go to university. Others go to Fiji to find a job so that they can support their family on Rotuma as well. Once pensioned, many Rotumans return to Rotuma to enjoy the quiet life. They have saved enough to build a beautiful house. Many children live with their grandparents on Rotuma, while their parents have jobs in Fiji. “It is a Rotuman custom to adopt young children, especially children born to unmarried women. The child is taken away from its mother at the time of weaning. The foster parents are usually grandparents but if they are not available, other couples – including married brothers and sisters – would serve just as well” (Malo 1991: 47).

# 2

## *Fara time – av mane‘a*

“All over the world men mark out their calendars by means of festivals. The varieties of behaviour involved are rather limited yet curiously contradictory. People dress up in uniform, or in funny clothes: they eat special food, or they fast; they behave in a solemn restrained manner, or they indulge in licence” (Leach 1961: 132).

Leach (1961: 131-132) wonders why we demarcate time in this way. The oddest thing about time is surely that we have such a concept at all. We experience time, but not with our senses. We can’t see it, touch it, smell it, taste it, or hear it. Leach mentions three ways in which people experience time. Firstly we recognize patterns of repetition. This means that we perceive the passing of time through events that recur at regular intervals, such as the hourly striking of a clock or the annual celebration of New Year’s Day. Secondly, we experience time through the process of aging. [The second point, aging, is easily confused with the first point, the repetition. According to Leach this happens because we would like to believe that in some mystical way birth and death are really the same thing.] The third (rather tricky) point concerns the rate at which time passes. In the perception of a child, time passes much more slowly than it does in that of an adult. In other words, the regularity of time is not an intrinsic part of nature; it is in fact a man-made notion which we have projected into our environment for our own particular purposes.

The notion of *av mane ‘a* (time to play) relates to the first point mentioned by Leach, i.e. the experiencing of time through patterns of repetition. The *av mane ‘a* festival heralds the end of an old cycle and the beginning of a new one. “An important function of holding festivals is the ordering of time. The interval between two successive festivals of the same type is a ‘period’, usually a named period, e.g. ‘week’, ‘year’. Without the festivals, such periods would not exist, and all order would go out of social life” (Leach 1961: 134-135). The conclusion of the *av mane ‘a* marks the beginning of a new year (it is also when children start a new school year).

Because of church influences, Rotumans adopted many “western” celebrations, without however relinquishing their own. In fact, as often as not there is no clear-cut division between native and western traditions. The *av mane ‘a* takes place around Christmas, which is a celebration that was introduced by missionaries. Catholics even start the *av mane ‘a* after the midnight mass on Christmas Eve. This does not mean we can assume the *av mane ‘a* has its roots in Christianity; however, the *av mane ‘a* is now a day completely incorporated into the Christian calendar. It is plausible to assume that the *av mane ‘a* existed

already long before the arrival of Christianity. It takes place at harvesting time, during the hottest season of the year. This is a period in which the island abounds with fruit and other food. It may be for this reason that this is also a time for entertainment.

#### **DETERMINING THE PERIOD**

“Fara takes place in the *av mane’a*, which means in the period around Christmas. For about four to six weeks during December–January each year, *av mane’a* is in force” (Hereniko1995: 12). During the first week of December the quarterly meeting of the Rotuman Council decides when the *av mane’a* will be opened and when it will be closed. When I was on Rotuma the *av mane’a* opened on 1 December 2003 and closed on 17 January 2004.

Hereniko writes; “if unforeseeable circumstances should interfere with the general merrymaking, *av mane’a* may be extended, as in 1989 when the play season was lengthened by two weeks because of the death of three people” (Hereniko1995: 12). Funeral rites on Rotuma last for 5 days. The deceased is buried on the day of death. After burial, people help the family of the deceased clean the cemetery and obtain sand, cement and gravel for the grave. On the evening of the fourth day the cemetery will have been cleaned and the grave decorated. “On the fifth night after death, the *koua ne terân liam* (earth oven on the fifth day) is held for any person who came to the funeral” (Parke 2001: 64). The *koua*, will be described further on in this chapter. During all this time, people in the village of the deceased forego the catching of fish and don’t go fara. An informant told me that there are no gatherings at all at this time apart from the burial. It is indeed a period of mourning for the entire village. In this way people sympathise with the bereaved (‘Rotuma is just a small island and we care for each other’). Even so, anyone could go fara outside the village of the deceased during this period.

During the *av mane’a* of 2003-2004 a number of people passed away on Rotuma. It is probably for this reason that the *av mane’a* was extended. The *av mane’a* would remain in force for seven weeks. On 7 January 2004, an employee of the council told me that during the quarterly meeting the Rotuman council had decided to close the *av mane’a* on 17 January. According to this man the *av mane’a* usually closes a week before school starts, and starts on 1 December. I noticed that it was not clear to everyone that the *av mane’a* was going to last one week longer. Many people thought that it would close after six weeks.

There are exceptions to every rule; this also goes for the duration of the *av mane’a*. The Itutiu district always opens the *av mane’a* on 1 December. The rest of the ‘Methodist’ districts wait for the council to open the *av mane’a*. Until that time, the Itutiu people can only go fara in their own district. The two Catholic districts of Juju and Pepjei follow a different rule. Catholics start the *av mane’a* after 24 December. They wait for the celebration of the birth of Christ. It is not until after the midnight mass that young people can officially go fara. This year the chiefs of the Juju and Pepjei districts decided to let the *av mane’a* continue for two more weeks even though it had already been closed in other parts of Rotuma.

I mentioned earlier that for Catholics the *av mane'a* officially opens after the midnight mass on Christmas Eve. However, there are exceptions to this rule as well. This could be due to the intensive contact with Fiji. Savlei, the village where I spent the greater part of my research period, has a mixed Catholic-Methodist population. On 6 December the first *fara* night took place in this village, and both Catholics and Methodist took part in it. An informant told me that many young people come over from Fiji, particularly Suva, to celebrate their holidays. They also celebrate the *av mane'a* and going *fara* is part of it. These young people do not wait for the midnight mass, but go *fara* as soon as the Quarterley meeting opens the season or, like in Itutiu, when the chief of the district decides to open the *av mane'a*. Since I did not take part in *fara* in the districts of Juju and Pepjei I do not know if the people of this region actually went *fara* in the period before 25 December. I do not think so, because these districts are mainly Catholic. Savlei, however, is situated in the predominantly Methodist district of Itutiu and could therefore be an exception. At any rate, young people across the various villages and religions have a lot of contact, because they all go to the same high school. Catholics go *fara* in predominantly Methodist districts and the other way around.

“During the Christmas season, the prevailing atmosphere is one of taking things easy. Those who spend their time working are teased and reminded of the importance of play; those who neglect to feed their pigs or to tend their gardens have a ready excuse” (Hereniko 1995: 12).

I will now get back to Leach's third point, concerning the rate at which time passes (1961: 134-135). People from different societies experience time differently. For instance, Dutch people might have a different perception of the rate at which time passes than Rotumans. I would even like to claim that time passes more slowly on Rotuma than it does in the Netherlands. Dutch people generally live by the clock. If they have agreed to meet someone at, say, 4 PM, they will be expected to be there at that particular time. In Rotuma, it would not be unusual for people not to show up before 6 PM. Should a particular day turn out to be inconvenient, they might also come the next day or a few days later. This would be inconceivable in Dutch society because later in the week people will have other appointments. We live with fully-booked agendas. On Rotuma, the pace of life seems unrushed. If someone should have no time today, they probably will tomorrow. This can be frustrating when you are in a hurry and things need to be dealt with quickly. It is particularly bothersome during the *av mane'a*, when people hardly work. A woman, who at the time was busy building a house for her mother, told me that the men who worked on the construction sometimes did not show up because there was a harvest feast, a wedding or some other celebration. She said that during the *av mane'a* she was hardly in a position to say something about this. For this reason, construction progressed very slowly.

#### **AV MANE'A-ACTIVITIES**

Beside the *fara* many other activities take place during the *av mane'a*. I shall briefly describe these to complete the picture.

*Manea' 'on fa ma haina (harvest Festival or farmshows)* <sup>6</sup>

As I have mentioned before, the *av mane'a* takes place during the harvest season, when people do not work in the field except to bring in the crops. During this time of the year there is an abundance of fruits such as mango, watermelon, pineapple and pawpaw. There are also many *a'ana's* (taro corms), jams, cassava, and breadfruit. A harvest season goes hand in hand with harvest festivals. Harvest festivals (called *manea' 'on fa ma haina* in Rotuman and 'farmshows' in English) are organised by the villages. The main goal of these festivals is to present the harvest and mats (see picture 2.1). Prizes are handed out for the best harvest. The prize money is pooled together by the guests. Men who don't win a prize have to give away their harvest and go home empty-handed. The mats are either sold or taken back home. The harvest festival takes place underneath a shelter made of wooden poles and an iron roof. Around the poles, palm branches have been plaited and the floor is covered with mats. Men are gathered in a corner around a bowl of kava, a mind-expanding drink, which is usually drunk by men, but sometimes by women too. Kava is made of the roots of a plant that have been pounded. The resulting powder is put on a piece of cloth and water is then poured on top of it. The juice coming out of the cloth is the kava. A coconut bowl (usually just one) will be filled with the kava and then passed round. The women sit on the sides while the children are playing. At the harvest festivals I attended an electronically amplified band was taking care of the music. The island has two electronic bands, one from Losa and one from Motusa, who play at all kinds of festivals in return for money. There's a lot of dancing going on during the harvest festivals, always in a man-woman combination. When someone feels like dancing, he or she gets up and asks a partner. Occasionally, a woman will start clowning. Hereniko (1995) wrote an entire book on the phenomenon dealing especially with clowning at weddings. The woman that goes clowning usually makes insinuating, sexual movements towards her partner. She pulls funny faces and uses other ways of getting the attention of the crowd. A few times I saw an older lady pick a far younger partner to dance with. She then walked around with him as if they had a date. The audience were doubled up with laughter and yelling with high-pitched voices. Every once in a while, you'll see the opposite and an older man will be walking round with a girl.<sup>7</sup>

What can't be missing on such an occasion is an extensive meal. The food is displayed on a long table (see picture 2.2.). Women and girls wave their fans constantly to keep off the flies, while people walk by to fill their plates. Part of the food is prepared in a *koua*. A *koua* is an earth oven, but the name also refers to the food that is cooked in the earth oven and to the meals that are prepared in this manner. The *koua* can be made in the ground (in a hole) as well as above the ground. In both cases the food is cooked through the use of hot stones. A fire heats the stones. When the stones are hot enough and the fire has been put out, the food can be laid down on the hot stones. The food consists mostly of pork, breadfruit, *a'ana, fekei* (domestic pudding) and *'al'ikou* (packages made out of the leaves of the *a'ana* filled with coconut milk and onion) and sometimes beef. The total package is covered with big green leafs that contain the heat and keep the

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<sup>6</sup> The correct Rotuman name is not completely clear to me. Different informants gave me different names. To avoid confusion I will stick to the above name.

<sup>7</sup> This happened to me too. It probably also happened because I am white/outsider and people are always curious to see how an outsider reacts to this.

sand out. Often an old mat is put on top of it and finally the whole is covered with canvas and sometimes sand. A big *koua* is sometimes left covered throughout the night, while a small *koua* can be opened after about three hours. The whole process of making a *koua* can take up many hours (Inia 2001: 23-27)( see the DVD, 'Harvest festival and Koua earth oven'.

### ***Disco nights***

During the *av mane'a* people also organise dance evenings, so-called disco nights. It is mainly young people that go there. I once heard of a dance evening organised for adults. The Motusa band played at this evening, performing what they call "real island" music. They played Rotuman songs, besides English songs with a Pacific swing (you will usually hear popular music, whether indigenous or not). Sometimes things can turn nasty on these nights. Although I haven't been to such a night myself, I have been told by a number of young people that many young people get drunk and that there are numerous fights. Alcohol is becoming an ever-growing problem with all its consequences.

### ***Picnics and other activities***

People amuse themselves by playing cards, drinking kava, chatting, playing volleyball and not forgetting having picnics (see pictures 2.3/2.4). I shall write at greater length about the picnics. Picnics are organised by families, friends and by the church. Youth groups affiliated to the church often go for a picnic together. There are a number of favourite picnic spots, mostly remote places that normally are hardly visited. A time and a day are agreed after which the entire group sets out; when it is a remote spot they often use a small truck to get there. Some picnics are held on one of the small outer islands. People bring huge amounts of food, such as watermelons, mangos, cooked noodles, rice, *a'ana* and tins of corned beef (*poat kau*) and tuna. Once arrived at the picnic spot the entire group disappears into the water for games. A favourite one involves throwing around a rugby ball. Boys try to take the ball away from the girls and the other way around. Because of the waves and the wildness of the game a lot of seawater gets swallowed accidentally. People eat mangos while in the water to dissipate the salt taste. At lunchtime the participants divide into groups along the beach and eat. Afterwards they take to the water again. Around four o'clock everybody gets their things and walks to the place where the truck will be coming to pick them up.

### **AV MANE'A – THE RULES OF PLAYING**

The *av mane'a* takes place in a limited timeframe when the rules are different from those that hold during the rest of the year. Nowadays the *av mane'a* coincides with the school holidays. Children and youth are allowed to stay up late and to make noise on the roads. One informant told me she could not tell children to be quiet on the road at night since they were allowed to make noise during the *av mane'a*. Yet after the *av mane'a* has finished making noise at night is no longer permitted.

During the *av mane'a* many, but not all girls are allowed more freedom than during the rest of the year. Their parents permit them to go *fara* during the evening and night when there is little supervision over what is going on between the boys and girls. A Rotuman man who is a Jehovah's Witness told me he would not let his daughters go *fara* for this reason ("why should I protect my daughters during the year and then let something happen to them during the *av mane'a*?").

Of all the *av mane'a* activities, *fara* holds a special place for young people. It is their way of relaxing and making fun without the constant supervision of adults. I will come back to this point in chapter 4.

# 3

## *Manea'hune'ele – precursor of the fara*

*Manea'hune'ele* literally means 'playing on the beach'. It can be defined as a precursor to the fara, although for some time the two activities actually existed alongside each other. In the past it was the *manea'hune'ele* that provided a setting to young people for pleasure and romance. I therefore think it is important to consider the *manea'hune'ele* extensively, and to examine to what extent the fara has taken over its role.

Nobody knows when historically the first *manea'hune'ele* took place. Whenever I asked people, they would say: "Our ancestors already went *manea'hune'ele*". It was mostly young people who participated in the *Manea'hune'ele*, varying in age from 13 up to 30 years old. In some cases married couples took part; one informant told me about this, concerning a *manea'hune'ele-group* in Motusa on Islepi beach. Early in the evening children also joined in, but after a while the youths would send them away. It was sometimes quite difficult getting rid of them, however, since they would hide behind trees. The children would also blackmail their older siblings by threatening to tell their parents about their illicit romantic relationships. To get rid of the children the youths would hide in couples (boy and girl) only to return after a few hours. An informant told me that one time when he was a kid and tried to take part in the *manea'hune'ele* an older girl threw sand in his face because she found him too young. Back at home the blackmailing could very well continue. In that case the children would not keep from telling on their siblings unless their wishes were granted. An informant told me that the fun would be over for the children as soon as their parents sent them to bed. She said she was never allowed to stay till the end, because the *manea'hune'ele* could last past midnight.

In fact, many parents would not just let their children go *manea'hune'ele*. One informant told me that she was allowed to, because she was still very young. Her older cousins and sister, however, did not get permission. The young ones only went to have fun; the older ones also went in search of a partner.

#### THE WAY MANEA‘HUNE‘ELE WAS PLAYED

The *manea‘hune‘ele* would start at noon when children were sent by their parents to clean the beach. They often ended up playing games, beating on biscuit tins and singing songs. These songs were generally the same that were sung during the *fara*. Their games were more innocent than the ones played by the young people later on in the evening. By nightfall the girls would start playing on the beach, generally in their own village. They would be singing and beating their biscuit tins, to let the boys know about their presence. Boys would go around the island on their bicycle or on foot in search of *manea‘hune‘ele* groups. On finding a nice girl, they would stay with that group. Otherwise, they would continue in search of the next group. Boys seldom stayed in their own village. However, they would continue celebrating there after having returned from a night of *manea‘hune‘ele*. The *manea‘hune‘ele* usually ended around one o’clock at night.

A Methodist man from Malhaha told me that, in view of the delicate relations between Catholics and Methodists, he always thought twice before going *manea‘hune‘ele* in a Catholic district. He told me they had on occasion been chased away. A woman from Motusa told me that groups of boys from different villages sometimes got hostile towards one another. Boys from Motusa once ruined the bicycles of boys from another village. They also engaged in fighting and stone-throwing. According to a Catholic man there used to be four popular locations during the 1950s: Mofmanu in Motusa (because many girls lived there), Savlei in Itutiu, Islepi in Juju and Vaoro in Noatau.

Once the boys had arrived, they could engage in various contact related games with the girls. I shall deal with some of them more closely to create a picture of what happened during the *manea‘hune‘ele*. The games were sometimes played differently across the villages. In his article “*Youth in Rotuma, Then and Now*”, Howard mentions a number of games which were played during the *manea‘hune‘ele*. When discussing these games I will follow Howard’s (1998:148-172) descriptions and round them out with the ones given by my informants.

#### ***Kau mo‘mo‘o***

“*Kau mo‘mo‘o* means to lie in wait or ambush. This game was a version of hide-and-peek, in which first the girls, then the boys, would take turns hiding. If a boy found a girl with whom he shared a romantic interest, or vice versa, they might linger a while before rejoining the group” (Howard 1998: 157). If a boy and girl liked each other they would whisper in each other’s ear where to hide. Sometimes, as I have said before, this game was used to get rid of the younger children.

#### ***A papai***

Another game which mentioned by different informants is called ‘pull the *papai*’. Howard describes a similar kind of game called ‘*a papai*’ which means ‘eat *papai*’ (Howard 1998: 157-158). The latter name seems more plausible. First of all, because it is an entirely Rotuman name and secondly, because the focus of the game is eating *papai*. The *papai* is a type of root crop. The English family name for this kind of root

crop is taro; in Rotuman it is *a'ana*. The *papai* is a firm alternative. According to Howard this game was often played last. Since all my informants could recall this game, it seemed important to me to give an extensive description quoting Howard at some length.

“In this game the boys and girls sit one behind one another in a line. The boy who sits at the front of the line is called the “king”. The others, who are behind him, are called *papai*. One person, usually a boy, is designated owner of the “plantation”. He walks around his plantation carrying a stick. Another boy sitting some ten or so meters away, is designated king of another land. He has a servant with him, usually one of the strongest boys. During the course of the game, the owner of the plantation tells the king at the head of his *papai* that he is going away, and asks the king to look after his garden. When the owner leaves, this is a signal for the foreign king to send his servant to the king of the plantation to beg him for a *papai* he might feed upon. The plantation king tells the foreign king’s servant to pick any one of the *papai* he wants to take back to his master. Then the servant goes over to the girl selected by the foreign king, attempts to pick her up bodily, and carry her away. The boy immediately behind the girl in line is her “root”, and holds her around the waist in an effort to keep her from being carried off.

If the servant is successful the foreign king gets to hug the girl (symbolically eating the *papai*). When the owner of the plantation returns, he counts his *papai* and, when noticing one missing, scolds the king at the head of the line. He then punishes him, usually by having him stretch out his hands and hitting them with the stick he is carrying. Different boys in turn are chosen to be the alien king, and if each one keeps his *papai*, the game ends with paired-off couples” (Howard 1998: 157-158).

Informants gave me two slightly different versions of this game. They were possibly talking about the very same game and giving slightly different accounts as it took place rather a long time ago. One informant described the game as follows: The boys and girls sit behind each other in a line. If a boy and a girl are mutually attracted, they will make sure to sit behind each other. There is also a king or queen, usually a king, and a messenger. The messenger asks the king: “Your royal highness, which *papai* would you like to eat.” The king calls the name of the girl whom he wants to “eat” and the messenger will then obtain this girl, whereupon the king hugs and kisses her. Sometimes there is a struggle if the girl is unwilling or if her boyfriend does not want to let her go. Generally the game ends with the couples disappearing in the dark. The second variation also has the boys and girls sitting in line behind each other. In front a king or queen is sitting down. The boys ask the queen: “Can you give us a few *papai*.” The queen then says: “Yes, take that one and that one or choose which one you want.” The boys select a girlfriend and pull her out of the line.

The game is essentially the same in all three of the variations. It is all about physical contact between boys and girls.

### ***Togäe***

Elisapeti Inia gave me a description of the following game. *Togäe* stands for *Togia' äe* (I buy you). The boys and girls sit in two lines opposite each other. The game leader calls to the boys’ line or the girls’ line:

“Togäe o hil ou vareag”, which means “Choose the one you like”. When the boys’ line is addressed, a boy stands up, moves to the girls’ line and chooses the girl he likes. Together they will stand in the space between the two lines. The boy can ask the girl to dance while the rest of the group sings or he can ask the girl to kiss him. Kissing during the *manea ‘hune ‘ele* means rubbing noses against each other. The game leader continues to call *Togäe* till each boy has had his turn. The most beautiful girl would be chosen most frequently. The idea behind this game is that the boys and girls learn not to be shy when selecting a partner. Elisapeti Inia said that many boys and girls find their future partner during this game. “It is fun.”

### **Songs**

A woman from Motusa told me that they sometimes sat in pairs and sang and danced. Below are two of the songs they would sing:

*Pusi ʔatʔau tapen ?  
Pusi ʔaua ʔamue.*

*How does the pussycat do it?  
The pussycat does it to another one.*

and

*Neuneu se sau he rua. (2x)  
‘Is te’ pa la’ la’ se Rotuma. (2x)*

*Bow to the two queens.  
We want to go back to Rotuma.*

During the first song people danced in a sexually insinuating manner. The dancers made movements that suggested people making out. During the second song the dancers made knee-bending movements.

According to Elisapeti Inia the second song is about two stones on the island of Hatana that are called “*sau he rua*” meaning “the king and queen/two queens/two kings”. In one version of the legend, the stones were brought from Tonga by a woman from Savlei whose name was Savetama. Savetama was married to Vakatua, a man from Losa. Savetama and Vakatua went to Tonga in a large wooden canoe and brought the stones with them to Rotuma, so that the woman could worship the stones instead of the Rotuman king and queen, whom she hated. The stones were called Tui Makuka and Famafu. Savetama asked Tiugarea, the chief of Losa, to authorize bringing the stones to Hatana, so that her brother Irao from Savlei could look after them while all the visitors coming to Hatana would worship the stones and offer money as a gift. People who visit Hatana sing this song begging the waves to be small so that they will be able to return home safely. Apart from the above songs, ‘fara-songs’ were performed as well. These will be analysed in chapter 6.

### **FINDING A PARTNER**

On Rotuma, marriages often take place between Christmas and Easter. A woman told me that when she was little she once went to the *manea ‘hune ‘ele* in Paptea. She went together with a cousin, but did not like

it. There was a boy who was interested in her cousin and they ended up getting married. Nevertheless, not everybody marries their *manea'hune'ele* partner. Another woman told me she had had the same boyfriend for three years during the *manea'hune'ele*, but still ended up marrying a much older man who had been chosen by her mother when she was sixteen. In spite of the increased possibility of sexual licence during the *manea'hune'ele*, there hardly were any pregnancies.

#### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE MANEA'HUNE'ELE

The leaders of the Methodist church in particular were not very comfortable with the *manea'hune'ele*. They thought it ran counter to the moral precepts of Methodist religion. There was no keeping in check young people playing in the dark on beaches. The church warned against all the bad things that could happen, especially in relation to sexual matters. They tried to convince their co-religionists not to take part in the *manea'hune'ele*, while forbidding their own children to go. They also used their influence over the chiefs, who in their turn started to dissuade the people from going *manea'hune'ele*. Ultimately the church came up with an alternative solution in which there would be some amount of supervision. "Let the youth and children dance in the light in the village halls and possibly go *fara* at the houses" is likely to have been the idea behind it. This is not to say that the *fara* was welcomed warmly, but at least some kind of supervision would now be possible, more than on the beach. This way the *fara* started to become really popular. A woman told me this happened at the same time when the MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) was established. Before that, the youth had preferred the *manea'hune'ele* to the *fara*. At the beginning of the fifties the *manea'hune'ele* started to disappear, firstly from Methodist districts and eventually (partly as a result) from the Catholic districts as well.

The most interesting part of the *manea'hune'ele* for boys lay in the opportunity it afforded to go all around the island in search of a nice girl. After the activity had disappeared from a large number of districts, it was therefore bound to lose favour with the youth of those villages where it was still being practised. According to some informants the last *manea'hune'ele* took place in 1970, in the Catholic district of Juju.

Howard (1998: 169-170) gives another reason for the disappearance of the *manea'hune'ele*. "He claims it may have happened partly because courtship has become more open. "There seems to be less need to disguise flirtations and romantic encounters in the wraps of game like activities." Young people are no longer restricted to the *av mane'a*-period, but have the possibility of seeing each other the entire year, especially because they go to school together.

To conclude, the influence of the churches and the arrival of schools were instrumental in causing the disappearance of the *manea'hune'ele*. Schools continue to have a considerable impact on the way the practice of *fara* changes through the years.

# 4

## Two faras

As I mentioned in the introduction, participant observation has been one of the most important research methods I have used. I have included two accounts in this chapter to illustrate what the fara is like. They describe events during an ‘ordinary’ fara (in Malhaha) and a roundtrip-fara (organised by people from Savlei) and they also present a picture of my role as a researcher. The descriptions form a compilation of the faras I participated in. I mean by this that not everything always took place at one and the same fara, although it generally did.

### FARA MALHAHA

“We go fara?” asks Sylvia, the four-year old granddaughter of the principal of Rotuma High School, Tipu, and his wife Varomue. Tipu and Varomue have invited me to their place so that I could go fara in Malhaha. They have an adopted daughter in the house and three sons with whom I can go fara. We answer: “Maybe...”

The rumour goes there will be a fara tonight. I am going together with Fatiaki (adoptive daughter of Tipu and Varomue). Elisapeti told me it would be better for me to go with other girls. And I must admit that it feels better. Mere, a Rotuman who has lived in Fiji all her life, will go with us tonight. It is her first time on Rotuma and the first time in her life she will go fara.

Between six and seven o’clock is when the battle for the shower starts. After all, you never know exactly when the water supply will be cut off. In Malhaha this usually happens around eight o’clock at night. You want to be ready to join any group of fara-goers should they come by. I put some things in a bag to take with me. Mosquito repellent, a fan, a notebook, a pocket light, a minidisk recorder to record the music with, and not forgetting, water. I am wearing a sulu (a piece of cloth which you wear like a wraparound skirt), because that seems the fashion during the fara.

We sit in the living room talking to kill time. Then George comes in (one of Tipu and Varomue’s sons). He says the fara will start in Elsio at the house where Mere is staying. Outside I hear the sound of guitars, ukuleles, a drum, people laughing and talking. Just one more visit to the bathroom and for me the fara-night can begin. We join the group. The mood is elated. Some boys have already drunk quite a few beers as well as homebrew (home-made fruit liquor). I see kids and youth spread all over the field in front

of the high school and walking in the direction of Elasio. It is a bright night. The moon is full and stars are scattered across the sky. There is a small breeze which has a pleasant cooling effect. I am walking together with Fatiaki and Silvia.

Once arrived at the place where Mere was staying, I see musicians sitting on the ground; in this case all the musicians are boys. The other people sit down around the musicians. Mere also joins the group. I am glad I recognise a few people. I must admit it is a bit of tense passing a first night of *fara* in Malhaha. The group consists of approximately 30 people. The majority is aged between 15 and 22 years, but there are a lot of children too, the youngest of which is (just) three years old. Mere is the oldest of the *fara*-group and I am close.

The guitars and ukuleles start to play. You can hear the sound of the drum loud above the melody, and people start clapping their hands to its rhythm. Shortly after the introduction, someone starts to sing and immediately afterwards the rest of the group follows. I had earlier decided to record the music at this first house only. This will give me some time to look around and see how people dance and how I should react. It will also save me the bother of having to record all the time. However, getting anything recorded at all turns out somewhat difficult at first, because boys constantly touch me on my back as they would like to dance with the *hân fisi* (white girl - my acquired Rotuman name). Fortunately, Fatiaki helps me out by telling the boys I will dance at the next house. It tickles my stomach when I hear the music and see people dance and have fun. I would like to dance but it also makes me nervous. People will probably watch how I am dancing so I will have to do the best I can (see pictures 4.1/4.2).

After each song everyone sits down on the ground. I hear people talking all around me. A few minutes later the instruments sound again and the next song begins. The people of the house come outside. They have perfume and talcum powder with them to sprinkle on the heads and shoulders of all members of the *fara*-group. After approximately twenty minutes the song *Noa'ia noa'ia* is played. Fatiaki says this is always the last song. When it has ended, the lead singer of the group says "*Ta, rua...*" (one, two...) and the entire group says a word of thanks – to thank the people of the house for their gifts and patience.

The group stands up and everyone strolls in the direction of the next house. A boy takes a run and jumps into the bush. People are laughing. I hear people say *hân fisi* all around me. I believe I am the only one who is easily recognised in the dark because of my blond hair. While we're walking, I hear voices in the dark. A little further down the road a band member is playing guitar. It is not yet clear which house we're going to. It looks as if they decide it on the spot.

At a certain point we see the musicians sitting down in front of a house. I am getting mentally prepared for my baptism of fire. Together with Mere, Fatiaki and Silvia I walk up to the musicians and sit down on the ground.

The music starts and the singing begins. Two seconds later I feel someone touching my back. I stand up and dance. Fortunately the people of this house do not have a benzine lantern to illuminate the *fara*. After a short time I decide to take off my flip-flops – it does not feel good dancing on them. I look around me to see how people dance and copy their movements. There are two dancing styles and it is difficult for

me to distinguish which style belongs to which song. My dancing partner, who is about 20, looks the other way half of the time. This seems to be normal. After the song he says “*Faieksia*”, which means thank you, and I say the same. We sit down. The next person who taps me on the shoulder is a little boy of around ten years old. He looks the other way all the time while dancing.

As the evening progresses, the small children are sleeping rather than dancing and the youths are getting loosened up. There is more physical contact and more flirting around. Now I experience first-hand what participant observation implies. That night we were to go *fara* to eight houses in Malhaha. Around four o'clock at night we stroll home. Sylvia is already at home—we had dropped her off along the way. I feel tired, but satisfied. Judging from this night, this research is promising to be really something (see DVD ‘ordinary’ *fara*).

#### SAVLEI ROUNDTrip-FARA

There’s a rumour buzzing in the village of Savlei. It appears a roundtrip-*fara* is going to be organised for the people of Savlei, to be financed by a family originating from Savlei but living in Suva (Fiji). This family built themselves a house to spend their holidays in Savlei. Around afternoon the daughter of this family comes to our door. She invites us to come and join the roundtrip-*fara*. Elisapeti says that now that the *fara* has officially been announced she can go and join it too. At a quarter to four pm we head for the centre of Savlei, from where the group will be leaving. Some people are sitting in the thatched-roofed village hall waiting for the *fara* to start. They call us as we come into view. Both the men and the women are wearing long *sulus* and a number of men and women have flowers in their hair. I see a couple of instruments: two guitars, a ukulele and a drum. I am a bit nervous, because I have not gone *fara* with this group very much. Fortunately Elisapeti is with me this time. What’s also different is that this *fara* starts during the day. In the daylight you cannot hide and that makes it much more thrilling for me. The advantage is that it creates the possibility to film the *fara*.

A while later the bus from Pepjei arrives. Women and children are first to get on the bus and after them the men follow. The bus is full, which means that the boys have to stand in the aisle. I think there are about sixty of us, mainly youth and adults, but also a couple of children. A pick-up truck packed with people is coming with us. The first stop is at Tuakoi. We stop here, because this is where the district-chief of Itutiu lives. His house is the first to be visited by our roundtrip-*fara* group. I decide to film the *fara* at this house. Most of the *faras* I have seen were at night-time when it was really dark. Now it is still day and it would be stupid to let this chance pass. I notice that this *fara* is different from the other, all ‘ordinary’, *faras* I participated in. After the final song the chief of Savlei, who also takes part in the *fara*, sits on his knees and gives a speech. He thanks the district-chief and his family for their hospitality and gifts. Afterwards it is the district-chief’s turn to offer a word of thanks. After that a collective word of thanks follows.

After the *fara* at this house has finished, people shake hands and the entire group walks to the bus. We drive back to Motusa through Savlei. Someone tells me we’ll have to pick up a group of young people who

would like to join the fara. The pick-up truck following us has problems climbing the hill. After Motusa we visit Haga and Lopta. Around eleven o'clock at night we are back in Savlei. The fara has finished; because tomorrow is Sunday, the fara must be over before midnight (see pictures 4.3/4.4/4.5/4.6/4.7 and DVD 'Roundtrip-fara').

# 5

## *Going fara – in historical perspective*

As is the case with the *manea'hune'ele*, the Rotumans do not know when the fara originated. They told me that it had been practised by their forefathers. I talked a lot with Elisapeti Inia about the origin of the fara, and suggested that the fara has a lot of similarities with English Christmas carolling when people go from house to house singing Christmas songs. Elisapeti said she had also thought about this, mainly because the fara takes place during the Christmas season. However, she wondered why the fara is practiced on Rotuma while the custom is unknown on other islands in Oceania that were also visited by missionaries. It is therefore quite possible that the fara was actually introduced much earlier. Indeed, as I mentioned in chapter 3, the fara might very well have derived from the *av mane'a*. It is plausible to assume that the fara existed before the Europeans arrived; as Langi (1992: 7) argues: “According to information I gathered from some of our older people, this was a Rotuman custom practised before the arrival of the Europeans. Perhaps the visitors may have added some ‘white flavour’ to it, but our people still believe that it was originally Rotuman.” However, we still have to guess at its precise origin. All we can say with certainty is that it has been practiced for generations.

As I wrote in the Introduction, the fara is a tradition developing and changing through time. When doing my research I was able to observe how the fara is celebrated nowadays, but Rotumans also told me how it used to be practiced in the past. As the way in which the fara has changed over time is vital to my research—it defines the perception of the fara by the Rotumans—I will discuss the present as well as the past. The past goes back to what old people can tell about their grandparents. My focus, however, will be on the present. The next chapters deal with both the ‘ordinary’ fara and the roundtrip-fara. When necessary I will make explicit mention of the type of fara concerned.

### THE MEANING OF FARA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people and children make up the bulk of fara-goers. “Rotumans divide the life cycle prior to adulthood into three stages corresponding to infancy, childhood, and youth. Nursing infants are called *lä' riri' susu* (milk children); *lä' riri'* (without the modifier *susu* [milk]) is applied to children past weaning

until they finish school, or reach the age of about sixteen if they remain in school.<sup>8</sup> Those who have left school, or are past the age of sixteen, are referred to as *haharagi* (youths). The term *haharagi* means fat, stout, or plump; in good physical condition; youthful; and unmarried, in addition to adolescent. In all its meanings it has a distinctly positive connotation” (Howard 1998: 149).

### ***Liminality***

According to Turner’s concept of liminality, “‘being-on-a-threshold’, means a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status. Since liminal time is not controlled by the clock it is a time of enchantment when anything might, even should, happen.” [...] “It may also be full of experiment and play” (Turner 1979: 94-95).

“The Christmas season was very important in the 1960s since it offered Rotuman youth opportunities for courtship denied them during the rest of the year, when girls were far more restricted. *Fara* and *manea’hune’ele* provided culturally structured frames for courtship which relaxed the prohibitions that ordinarily applied to romantic escapades. The message communicated was that courtship cannot be trusted to individual whims, which might result in a couple’s defying the cultural order. By providing an approved, culturally ordered framework for courtship, Rotumans reinforced the sense of obligation courting couples owe to their kinsmen and their communities” (Howard 1998: 158).

Young people went *fara* in search of a life partner. A man in his fifties told me that, when a boy was interested in a girl, he would organize a *fara* to the place where she lived, hoping to be taken hostage (the meaning of taking a hostage will be explained below). A thirty-year-old man told me that in former days boys were unfailingly told: “don’t play for nothing”. When hearing this, they knew that they were expected to look out for a good partner. Rotuman proverbs also emphasize the importance of finding a partner during the *fara* and the *manea’hune’ele*. If boys did not succeed, they would become the target of mockery.

*A’pat finak ne has*

To compress horse manure

This literally means: “Able to go to and fro on the road but unable to get a woman. Nothing achieved. Said to a young man who travelled by horse during *fara* ‘Christmas’ season to *manea’hune’ele* ‘night beach games’ but did not get a girl to marry. All he did was spread manure on the road and tread on it till it was packed down!” During Christmas time, as I mentioned before, young Rotumans get the opportunity to flirt

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<sup>8</sup> Parents can use the word *lä’ riri’* to refer to their children when these have already reached adulthood.

and start relationships. “So, if after the Christmas season there are no proposals, the old people say to the young people, *A’pat finak ne has*” (Inia 1998: 5).

*kat maf’ia ra*  
Cannot get any

“Said of a fruitless quest, such as a fishing expedition when no fish are caught, or after the Christmas season (courting period) when one had not found a mate” (Inia 1998: 55).

### ***Changing social relationships***

In the course of time social relationships on Rotuma have changed, partly because of increasing contact with Fiji and the rest of the world. To be sure, girls are still much more protected and watched over by their relatives than boys. Nevertheless, boys and girls meet much more frequently and under less constraint. They go to mixed primary schools and to a mixed high school. They talk more freely with each other, and are not completely bound by their parents in their choice of a partner.

As a result, young people no longer depend on the *av mane’a* for meeting someone of the other sex and for starting a romantic relationship—they have the opportunity throughout the year. However, this does not mean that the *av mane’a* and the *fara* in particular do not continue to fulfil a special function in providing a romantically charged meeting place for boys and girls.

In other words, the *fara* is still a culturally structured framework for romantic relationships. Many girls, but certainly not all of them, can move around more freely during the *av mane’a*, even though they are formally watched over by brothers and other relatives. A mother of two sons and two daughters said the following about this: “for me it was hard to go *fara* when I was young. When friends of mine came over to take me to go *fara*, my dad would ask all kind of questions. Such as: “To which village are you going?” and “Who is the bandleader?” Generally he would say: “You are not going.” Later on he would say to me: “That bandleader is not to be trusted.” I do not let my daughters go to any *fara* because I do not want to let them go alone. They would have to go to another village and stay with my parents. They would give my parents a headache by doing nothing during the day. My sons *are* going *fara*.”

There are also parents who do not mind their daughters going *fara*. A mother joked about her sixteen-year-old daughter: “I do hope she will be in form four next year. If she will be in school by then, because she is having a lot of fun during the *fara* and you never know what happens.” Jokes like this are constantly being made, which indicates that flirting still plays an important role during the *fara*. Flirting looks to be the pivot of the *fara* and apparently things do not always end with flirting. This topic will recur in the various aspects of the *fara* that are discussed below.

Young people will not only go *fara* to find a partner. They will sometimes go just for fun. One girl puts it like this: “It is better than being in bed all night.” Adults also mention “having fun” as the main reason

for going fara. In addition, they told me that a roundtrip fara offers a good opportunity to meet relatives and friends on the other side of the island. Because of intermittent public transport, they do not get to see each other that often.

Nowadays the fara must be considered mainly a form of recreation during the big holiday around Christmas. There are no cinemas and disco nights are held only sporadically. Few can afford to go on a vacation abroad. During the evening there isn't much doing apart from going fara and having fun with friends.

#### **RELIGION AND FARA**

Apart from the fact that not all the girls are allowed to go fara, there are also some other reasons why Rotumans may not take part. Some people do not participate simply because they do not like to dance. But you will also find people not participating because of their religious persuasion. Methodists, Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists are free to go fara if they want to, Jehovah Witnesses and Assembly of God followers are under some restriction.<sup>9</sup>

Jehovah Witnesses do not believe that Christ's birth took place on 25 December, but claim he was born in October. This for them is ample reason not to take part in the fara; in fact, they do not have personal, lay celebrations at all, not even birthdays. Approximately 40 Jehovah Witnesses live on Rotuma. Whether or not they go fara is their own business, but generally they do not.

A member of the Assembly of God (AOG) told me they prefer not to participate in the fara. He told me every individual member has to consider the Bible and decide for themselves whether they think it is any use going fara. The same goes for birthdays which they also do not usually celebrate. Like Jehovah Witnesses, they do not believe that Jesus was born in December and for that reason they do not think of Christmas as a special period. However, it is not the religious community that forbids people to go fara; AOG members can decide for themselves what is good and what is not. All the same, they are not encouraged to go fara.

I should mention that in a way all the Rotumans take part in the *av mane'a*, simply because it happens to be a holiday period. However, a fara group will not sit in front of a house if they know its inhabitants do not participate in the fara because of their religious persuasion. They do this out of respect or because they know that they will be sent away if they do sit there.

There is another way in which Christianity has affected the fara that is worth mentioning. Rotumans observe the Sabbath on Sunday and on this day people are not allowed to go fara. One fara song even mentions this rule. This effectively means that each fara on Saturday has to end at twelve o'clock at night. No fara will then be allowed until Sunday 12.00 am. This rule is taken very seriously. One particular Saturday night a fara group was admonished by the reverend: "Do you know what time it is? It is almost twelve!" This incident was later quoted once more by the same reverend in church.

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<sup>9</sup> I can not say anything about the Mormons because I did not speak with them.

## CHILDREN AND FARA

A man told me that in 1980 there still used to be separate children's faras. These faras started just before nightfall (six/seven o'clock in the evening) and lasted till approximately eight o'clock at night. The children would go fara without instruments. A few adults would go along with them to teach the children the lyrics and encourage them to dance. People understood that it was a children's fara and that the children had yet to learn the songs and dances.

A fairly large number of households had electricity by 1989 which meant that children could go fara later at night because they would still have lighting. At first the end of the fara was moved to about 22.00 pm, when the lights went out. The young people would call out *sakot* (to strain, meaning 'to separate out') to the kids from the fara. In recent years, children have been allowed to stay up much later. Some of them will go along with the fara for an entire night. Sending them home is not considered polite. Nowadays separate children's faras no longer exist. Nevertheless, most children will go home earlier, either because they do not manage to stay awake all night, or because their parents come to pick them up or insist that they will be home at a certain time.

### *Transport for roundtrip faras*

Although children can easily participate in an 'ordinary' fara, this does not hold for roundtrip faras. As a roundtrip fara costs a lot of money and is celebrated far from home, the number of children taking part is generally very low. People have to travel a long way by bus or (small) truck. Why should they take children with them who get tired halfway through while they as adults can dance all night long? However, when the parents of a child finance the transport, the child is naturally allowed to come along.

The rent of a bus used for a roundtrip fara costs around 180 Fiji dollars (90 euros) in 2003/2004. Most Rotumans can't afford this. This year 13 roundtrip faras were organised with rented buses: six from the Itutiu district, four from the Oinafa district, two from Itumuta district and one from Malhaha. Most of them were financed by people from outside of Rotuma. A man originating from Motusa organises an annual roundtrip fara. This year approximately 100 people participated in this fara. This man lives in Suva and spends the *av mane'a* on Rotuma every year. The fara from Savlei (Itutiu) was financed by a couple originating from Savlei but now living in Suva. The Malhaha fara was financed by me to thank the people of Malhaha for their help during my research.

## THE ORGANISATION AND COURSE OF A FARA

There is no single organizational concept that holds for all faras. The course of every fara is different. I shall try to show how the organization of faras has changed throughout the years. All the different elements that make up the fara will be dealt with.

### ***Dress code, flowers, instruments***

As I mentioned before, all fara-goers officially have to wear a *sulu*. “Historically the *sulu* was introduced by the Protestant missionaries to replace the rather scant men's garment through most of the Pacific, and cover men's thighs which missionaries associated with sensuality, and sensuality with sin [i] For ladies, the keystone of The Pacific Way is the ankle-length skirt” (Crocombe 1976: 28). Nowadays the *sulu* is seen as a proper formal way of dressing throughout the Pacific. The *sulu* is not supposed to trail on the ground while people are dancing, as this is considered impolite. You have to make sure it is tied properly before you start dancing. A scarf can be used to tie around the *sulu*. However, this is only done by girls and women. The *sulu* can be worn in various ways, but discussing this in greater detail would take me too far a field. It is nevertheless important to note that during a roundtrip fara women are supposed to wear their *sulus* down to their ankles. Some fara-goers wear flowers in their hair. During a roundtrip fara flower garlands can be worn in the hair or around the neck, and sometimes people wear a *tēfui* (a necklace of handmade flowers). Nowadays a group can only go fara when there are instruments. The lead singer of the Malhaha fara band told me that it is usually groups of children from around the age of 7 up to 10 who would like to go fara. They go and search for instruments for the band.

### ***Keeping a fara group hostage.***

In former days a group could only go fara after a leader had been chosen. This leader had to be a person with a great sense of responsibility, someone who was trusted by the parents. Then the group had to ask the chief of the village for permission. This was because the fara group could be taken hostage.

Taking hostage implies the following. When a group goes fara to another village and the people of the house that the group sits in front of like the fara, the group may be invited inside the house. Once inside, the group cannot leave just like that. They must be freed by their relatives. One member of the fara group gets permission to tell the family of the group members that they are being kept hostage. It should be clear that the custom whereby people are taken hostage is based on a mutual agreement between hostages and hostage takers; no one is coerced into staying against their will. All the same, people would be frowned upon for wanting to leave.

The next morning a group led by the chief of the village goes to the place where the fara group is being kept hostage to reclaim them. The group walks in a long row. The group is headed by the chiefs' wife and daughter who are carrying a white mat under their arms (these mats are of great value). The other women follow with brown mats while the men who carry food prepared in a *koua* as well as fruits bring up the rear. Those who haven't brought any gifts aren't carrying any gifts. All the food has already been prepared.

Once the relatives and the chief arrive at the place where the fara group is being kept hostage they all set to eating. The young people who had gone fara are exhausted by now, since they have had to dance and sing all night. When the meal is finished a dancing competition follows. The group that had gone fara joins their relatives while the other group is formed by the hostage takers, villagers and others. Taking turns they

dance a *tautoga* (for an explanation of the *tautoga* see chapter 6) and challenge each other to do a better job. At the end of the day they might agree to meet again.

At that point, the occasion involves more than the fara group alone. The village of the fara group will invite the other village to join in a dance competition to be held later on. For this both groups will prepare actively. Afterwards, more exchanges may take place, not only during the *av mane 'a*, but also around Easter. During these exchanges parents have an opportunity to find a suitable partner for their children.

It goes without saying that this kind of fara is a very expensive affair. White mats are more expensive these days than in the past. Making them is a time-consuming activity and just a few women know how to do it these days. For this reason people going fara try to prevent being taken hostage. One time the fara group I had joined was almost taken hostage. I had not noticed it because I was not familiar with the signs that precede a possible hostage-taking and therefore could not recognise them, but I was told afterwards.

Two men entered the hall dancing, holding a watermelon in their hands. The chief of Savlei, one of the leaders of fara group, anticipated an imminent hostage-taking. In his view, the leaders of the village had been drinking and did not know what they were doing. The fara ended rapidly, though not without a finishing song and a word of thanks, and the fara group left. According to the chief they did not want be taken hostage, because it was Sunday the next day. The fara therefore had to finish before twelve o'clock at night. The chief told me that instead of the fara group other people from the village were taken hostage. At one o'clock at night some Methodists begged to be released, because they had to preach in church the next day. Eventually only those who had to preach were allowed to leave.

The taking hostage of a fara group has not occurred in recent years, although it may still happen. Because it hardly takes place anymore, going fara has become less formal, people no longer need permission for an 'ordinary' fara. Roundtrip faras, however, still require the chief's official permission. The fara group has to see the district chief first. He will grant permission for the fara to be held before it leaves the district. I can't say for sure whether this is the normal procedure. Sometimes the chief or sub-chief will simply join the fara.

After the new fara season has opened, it is still common for a fara group first to visit the house of the chief of a village or district. In Malhaha fara-goers were given a warning by the chief. He said they would have to wear a *sulu* during the fara and that if they did not and were dancing in shorts and trousers he would forbid the fara. Up to a certain point the youth took this warning seriously. They behaved well when they went fara to the chief's house. Still whenever I went along with an 'ordinary' fara I would see people without a *sulu* and the chief did not stop the fara.

### ***Leading a fara***

During an 'ordinary' fara the band is usually responsible for the fara-group. The band consists mostly of boys (men and boys when it's a roundtrip fara). When referring to the "band" of the 'ordinary' faras of Malhaha, I am not talking about a fixed entity. The band consists of a hard core surrounded by alternating musicians. The band leader of the 'ordinary' fara-group in Malhaha is a boy who owns several instruments.

When he didn't think the fara was good enough, was tired or just wanted to quit, this usually meant the end of the fara for that day, simply because he took the instruments home. He told me he felt responsible for the fara group. He did not want to be sent away. If the fara did not go well he would be held responsible. According to the lead singer the entire band is responsible for the fara. This responsibility shows, for instance, when the band stops playing during fights, when it asks the fara group to sit closer together, so that the songs sound more powerful, or when a band member tells someone to put on his shirt while dancing. Sometimes the band will quit playing because they do not like the fara. That effectively means the fara has finished. The band also plays a crucial role in the choice of songs and of houses that are visited.

At a roundtrip fara it is not necessarily the musicians who are in control. The person who finances the fara and the chiefs also play an important role. During the Savlei roundtrip fara on 8 January 2004, one of the musicians had taken charge because he was asked to by the people who had paid for the bus. A number of boys got a bit drunk that evening. These boys were told by him and the chief that they had to wear a *sulu* and had to behave themselves. If they didn't behave well, they would be promptly ejected from the bus, even if they should happen to be on the other side of the island. This clear language resulted in well-behaving boys during the entire fara.

### ***Choice of houses to be visited***

According to the band leader, the choice of house during an 'ordinary' fara in Malhaha depends on a number of things. Sometimes the fara group makes suggestions. In any event, they do not go to houses if they know beforehand that they will be sent away. Eventually, the band leader and lead singer decide which house will be the next one. No plan is made in advance. The lead singer told me: "When a lot of fara goers are intoxicated, they will avoid certain houses, and if the singing is good they will go to the chief's house, for example".

Roundtrip fara-goers generally visit houses of friends and relatives. Some houses are very popular and are regularly visited. It has not become completely clear to me why these houses are so popular. It is said that the people who live there are very friendly.<sup>10</sup> The arrival of a roundtrip fara is announced in advance which means that the residents of the houses will have time to prepare. They provide drinks and make sure that the guests will be seated comfortably on mats or tarpaulin and not on sand or grass as is the case of 'ordinary' faras. Another reason for announcing the fara is to make sure the people are actually at home.

### ***Make-up of the group***

The average fara group make-up will change in the course of an evening. People come and go. A roundtrip fara leader told me young people occasionally use a roundtrip fara as a way of getting to the other side of the island, transport being scarce. On average an 'ordinary' fara consists of 15 to 40 people and a roundtrip fara of 40 to 100 people.

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<sup>10</sup> But it might be that they are well off, or have plenty of watermelons or nice smelling perfume.

### ***Music, singing and dance***

Once having decided on a house to visit, the band members of an 'ordinary' fara are the first ones to sit down. The other fara-goers sit down around them. This is accompanied by a lot of noise. The musicians play on their instruments and people laugh and talk. At roundtrip faras the atmosphere is initially much quieter. As soon as the group has sat down, the band decides collectively which song will be sung.

In the past the band started to play the moment everyone sat down. People would be clapping and singing till the residents of the house came outside. From that moment on the fara-goers would start dancing in couples. Nowadays nearly everyone will begin clapping and singing as soon as the band and lead singer have started. The music is sung in parts. In the meantime people stand up to dance. Sometimes as much as half the fara group will be dancing. There is a lot of laughing and talking, while some of the children are shouting rather than singing.

In former days boys would pick a girl to dance with, but nowadays this also happens the other way around. If you want to ask someone for a dance, you will stand behind this person and touch him or her on the back, by stroking them from bottom to top. Those who are asked, will usually look out in front of themselves for a couple of seconds before getting up to dance (see the DVD). Alternatively, people may touch the desired dancing partner on the shoulders or bow their head and spread their arms before them (Hereniko 1991: 136). In fact, I have seen these gestures in combination, though not separately. If you like a particular boy or girl, you can show it by asking them for a dance whenever a love song is played. You can let them know by flirting while you are dancing. Young and old dance with each other. Once I saw an older boy on his knees dancing with a little girl. Sometimes other people in the group will teasingly push someone to pick a certain partner.

The older generation disapproves of the present state of affairs concerning the way dance partners are chosen. In their view, boys should choose a girl. Also, people shouldn't touch each other too freely. An informant told me that in former days girls would be told off by the community if they dared to pick a boy to dance with. The fact that girls *do* pick boys demonstrates the changing gender relations on Rotuma.

As soon as the song is finished, the partners bow and generally say *Faieksia* (thank you). Afterwards, they rapidly sit down around the musicians. At a roundtrip fara the next song will start off immediately and people will get up to dance. At an 'ordinary' fara you will usually hear people humming first. Sometimes this will last a couple of minutes before the next song is started.

If the residents of the house are pleased with the fara, they will call out (in between songs or at the end): *Mārie, mārie, mārie, mak lelei* (thanks, thanks, thanks, for the good songs/dances); this happens at roundtrip faras in particular. Should they be disappointed, they are entitled to say so or even send a fara away. Opinions are divided as to the increase or decrease of the number of faras dismissed in this way. I have heard of two faras that were sent away. Once this happened because the resident of the house that the fara was sitting in front of does not like the fara. The other time was at Elisapeti's home, during my stay there. This went as follows: as soon as we heard the fara in front of the house we got out of bed. Elisapeti told me to wait a while before going outside. "The singing is not so good", she said. She glanced through

the curtains. There were intoxicated boys dancing in the porch. Elisapeti decided to send them away. She said: “finish off the song and then leave. Do you people have any idea at all what fara is? You are not supposed to dance in the porch and you will have to sing better. A fara with only a few intoxicated boys is no fara.” In fact, faras are quite often dismissed. It happens because the singing is not done well, because there is no dancing or too many young people may be loitering in the dark a bit away from the fara group. In response to this the band may decide to interrupt the fara or they may urge people to sing and dance better at the next house.

Roundtrip faras are always finished off with speeches from both a member of the fara group and a resident of the house that has been visited. If the latter stands up to make a speech someone from the fara group has to follow suit. This will usually be the chief, an elder or the fara leader.

The resident of the house thanks the fara group for their beautiful dancing and singing and for coming to visit. During the speech, they may also be told what gifts will be offered. The fara group in turn thank their hosts for their hospitality. The speaker apologises for any inconvenience caused by the fara group. There is also room for personal exchanges and for jokes.

Roundtrip faras are finished once the group has returned to its own village. Sometimes people will hang around for a while before going home. The Malhaha roundtrip fara ended with eating the watermelons received as a gift and drinking beer. The ending of an ‘ordinary’ fara is not generally that obvious. On the street you will hear people saying (or sometimes asking) “*fara vahia*” (fara finished). From this you will have to conclude that the fara has indeed finished. The band does not always announce that the fara has arrived at the final house. They simply split up and disappear into the dark. The fara-goers stroll home or sit down and chat.

### ***Frequency of going fara***

Faras are not held every day. Many informants told me they only go every other day or couple of days, because otherwise it would be too exhausting. At the end of the *av mane’a* people appeared to have been struck by what I would describe as “fara fatigue”. There is a logical explanation for this. By that time many young people will have left for Fiji because of the upcoming study year. Without friends, the fara is not so interesting any more. Besides, the young people leaving for Fiji are often the ones who are in possession of the instruments. And without instruments there can be no fara.

### ***Gifts***

In Oceania, offering gifts during dance performances is common practice. The audience shows its appreciation for the dancers by presenting gifts and during faras they thank the fara group for coming to their home.

There are several types of gifts that may be offered. In Tonga, for example, it is common to stick money on the dancers’ bodies that have been rubbed with oil. In Rotuma, dancers are sprinkled with perfume and talcum powder.

John Liep has written an article on the recontextualisation of consumer goods: The ritual use of Johnson baby powder in the Massim in Papua New Guinea, Melanesia. He describes a group of young people on Christmas Eve that go from house to house singing church hymns, one man sprinkling talcum powder on the heads and shoulders of the singers (Liep 1994: 64-73).

On Rotuma Johnson's baby powder is used as well. In fact, baby powder and perfume are the most common gifts during faras. They are sprinkled on the heads and shoulders of the fara-goers.<sup>11</sup> When a fara group sits in front of a house, a number of people go around with powder, perfume and deodorant. In the past, scent and Vaseline were used exclusively. Vaseline was rubbed on the head of the fara-goer and scent was sprinkled on their clothes. If powder, perfume or deodorant are not available, vaseline is still used, or sometimes cosmetic cream.

It is debatable whether powder and perfume can, strictly speaking, be considered gifts, since they are not tangible items. At any rate, they *are* considered gifts from a Rotuman point of view. The following fragment (from a song that is typically sung at the end of a fara) shows this very clearly:

Noa'ia, noa'ia, noa'ia 'e 'es kefkef pene'isi'  
ma lol pene'isi ma 'amis tae la la'atomis,  
Fu'omus.

Thank you (3x) for giving us sweet smelling powder  
And fragrant oil and we are leaving ...  
Farewell

The oil and powder are here clearly identified as gifts. In fact, they are in a sense among the most coveted gifts, as they are usually listed first during the collective finishing speech, followed by pineapples, watermelons, etc. It should be mentioned that Rotumans in context of the fara refer to oil and perfume as gifts.

The make-up of a fara group partly determines what kind of gifts are given. When the group consists mainly of children or young people from the same village or a neighbouring village, the people handing out the gifts usually stick to powder and perfume and sometimes pieces of watermelon or pineapple. If the group comes from far, (doing a roundtrip fara, or an 'ordinary' fara that stretches a long way), then, apart from powder and perfume, money and complete watermelons and pineapples may be given to the group.

The residents of the houses that are visited by the fara frequently use a pocket light and/or benzine light to illuminate the fara so that they can see who are in it and subsequently decide what kind of gifts to give. When it is children from the same village they may let their own children (who sometimes take part in the fara as well) sprinkle the powder and perfume. An informant told me that if the music and the singing is good and the fara is from another village, people put on their best *sulus* and go outside.

In its collective finishing speech the fara group expresses their thanks for the gifts. Once, during the Nadi roundtrip fara, the band thanked their host for a basket of bananas. These bananas had not initially been offered to the fara group but were standing on the side. Everyone started laughing and the bananas were then given to the fara group.

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<sup>11</sup> Sometimes things get pretty wild, especially when youths and kids are involved. People will get perfume in their ears and powder on their face.

It is said that people nowadays give less than they used to. Some people remembered gifts being carried by well-filled small trucks containing tins with biscuits, tea and sugar. These kinds of gifts are rare today for the same reason that taking hostage no longer occurs as often as it used to. People can no longer afford the expense. Once though, I saw people giving boxes of crackers.

I will now give some examples of gifts presented at a roundtrip fara. The Savlei roundtrip fara received twelve watermelons and 280 dollars. The chiefs wanted to give the money to the family that had paid for the bus, but they did not accept it, thinking it should be spent on a village feast instead. The next day this feast was organised accordingly. A *koua* was made of pig, corned beef, breadfruit and *a'ana*. Everyone brought what they could afford. At other times picnics were organised from the proceeds of a fara.

When only little money was given, for example at an 'ordinary' fara, it was sometimes spent immediately on cigarettes and sweets. In the middle of the night a family member who owns a shop might be lifted out of bed to buy this.

The responses to a fara group are not always so pleasant, however. In Losa people threw water at the fara-goers all the time. Of course, they did not appreciate this. At a district meeting it was agreed that if someone was wetted, dry clothes had to be offered.

When asked why the gifts are offered people give an unambiguous answer: the residents of the house that has been visited thank the fara group in this way for dancing and singing and for coming to their home. On closer view, however, putting the gifts into perspective of romantic relations, you could also draw a different conclusion. You might say that nicely-smelling powder and perfume make the fara-goers more attractive. Besides, in the past (and sometimes even still today) Rotuman *tautoga* dancers used to decorate their cheeks using oil and turmeric powder (*mena*). The powder used nowadays could be seen as a replacement for the *mena*. Nice smelling oil and garlands are used in many ceremonies on Rotuma. The sweet smells suggest life as opposed to the stench of death (Howard 1995: 135). Since fara dancers are likely to sweat during a performance, the perfume and sweet-smelling powder insure that they will not smell bad as a result.

#### OTHER TYPES OF FARA

##### ***Christmas carolling-fara***

During my stay on Rotuma two Christmas carolling faras were held. They were organised by the Methodist Church with the aim of collecting money. The participants went around the entire island in two days singing Christmas songs. They made clear in advance that they did this to collect money for the church. Opinions on this fara were divided. Some thought it a good idea to organise a fara for charity, while others

thought it inappropriate to ask for a specific gift at a fara. In their view, people should be able to decide for themselves what to give.

***Fara in Fiji (only done by Rotumans)***

A woman in her fifties told me that she had lived in Suva when she was young. After completing form four she went fara there. Fara groups consisted of members of the Methodist Youth Group. They had an older leader who decided to which houses they would go. The group used taxis to move from one place to another. Generally they did not announce their arrival; however once they did. This time they had prepared by practicing the dances and they were all wearing clothing of the same colour. They received money, preserved food, biscuits and butter. They took everything home and went on a picnic bringing all the gifts. If they did not announce their arrival they would sometimes get drinks, watermelon or pineapple. Powder and perfume would also be sprinkled on the participants. The woman also said that faras were sometimes not welcomed because of neighbours who complained about the noise. For this reason the faras in Suva frequently took place inside the houses. The number of faras in Fiji has decreased. According to a Rotuman girl who lives in Suva, this has happened partly because the Rotuman Committee discourages the fara. They say that in Fiji people have to go to work and that for this reason they do not want to be woken up at night. In Fiji the *av mane 'a* does not exist.

In the foregoing we have seen that the fara has changed at all levels. The fara has adapted itself to changing Rotuman society, but still consists of people going from house to house singing and dancing in exchange for gifts. The largest change concerns the meaning given to the fara. While in former days the possibility of starting a romantic relation was crucial, nowadays having fun is what the fara is all about.

# 6

## *Dance, music and lyrics*

Dance and music are pre-eminently suitable for communication. They also form a framework within which things can be said or portrayed that are otherwise taboo or at least not easily open to discussion. By means of music and dance, feelings and emotions can be conveyed in a subtle, but nevertheless very efficient manner. Thus your movements will often get across to your dancing partner whether or not you like them, while in lyrics topics can be dealt with that are sensitive for the community, such as (on Rotuma) relations between different religions.

“At special occasions, no major gathering occurs on Rotuma without performance for which groups compose celebratory songs and dances (see picture 6.1). Depending on the size of a festival (*kato ‘aga*), performances range from an hour of informal singing around a few guitars and ukuleles, to daylong sessions in which rehearsed groups formally sing and dance” (Howard 1998: 818). In this chapter I will first discuss dancing that takes place during the *fara* – the different kinds of dances and the changes these have undergone throughout the years. I will then look at the content of the lyrics, to see what they can tell us about Rotuman society, and finally the instruments that are used will be discussed. I will approach dance and music from a socio-cultural context. This means that I will consider the form of the dance as well as the social interactions that take place during dancing.

### **DANCE**

According to Lynne Hanna (1988: 46), “Dance can be usefully conceptualized as human behaviour that is purposeful, from the dancer’s perspective (usually shared by the society to which he or she belongs), is intentionally rhythmical, and has culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements other than ordinary motor activities, the motion having inherent and aesthetic value.” These four aspects together make up the dance. In fact, “a combination of all these factors must exist.... Some of the indicators may have more significance than others in different socio-cultural contexts” (Hanna 1979: 19-20). Furthermore, “the inherent sexuality of dance may be a reason why dance is a nearly universal activity and why gender is coterminous with sexuality in dance” (Hanna 1988: 46). For this reason, I will extensively discuss gender and sexuality in relation to dance.

Perceptions of “good” dancing vary between cultures and even across subcultures. What movements are appreciated depends not only on the culture in question, but also on the dancer’s gender. On Rotuma, dance movements are clearly gender-related. The masculine way of dancing, with the upper part of the body broadened and held erect, radiates strength. On the other hand, women are expected to dance gracefully. They make elegant movements with their arms and hips and keep their feet together. The girls frequently look seductive, slightly rolling their eyes. This gender separation holds for all three dance styles discussed in this chapter.

Within these dance styles it is not common for man and woman to touch each other. However, as the *fara* offers an extremely good opportunity for flirting, physical contact between dance partners does occur. People will mostly only touch each other slightly but sometimes dance partners may separate from the group and find a spot in the dark where they can dance more closely together. I did not witness this frequently and if it did happen, the younger *fara*-goers (of primary school age) would comment loudly. Flirting usually did not express itself in physical contact, but in suggestive looks or looking away and more exuberant dancing.

“Evident in Rotuman dancing is the assimilation and adoption of elements from Samoa, Tongan, Gilbertese, Fijian, Futunan, Maori and indeed Western dances. Rotumans are a people made up of different races, the mixing of progeny having gone on since before the arrival of the early settlers. Almost every Rotuman can lay claim to an ancestor from just about every part of the Pacific, if not China and Europe. This seems to account not only for the quick adoption of European ways of life, but for the adoption and adaptation of non-indigenous ways of dancing. As intermarriage continues, this assimilative character is likely to be reinforced” (Hereniko 1991: 141-142).

### ***Dance styles that are part of the fara***

In the past the *tautoga* was danced during the *fara*. “The *tautoga* is regarded by Rotumans as the only traditional dance. Cynics, however, deny that it is traditional. The name *tautoga* has often been referred to as evidence, the prefix *tau* meaning “to learn,” and *toga* referring to Tonga. This then would seem to indicate a Tongan origin. On the other hand there are others who claim that the name was originally *tautoaga* (literally to learn a tune), shortened for the sake of convenience” (Hereniko 1991: 121). However, when one examines the actual dance movements, some relation with Tonga seems plausible.

“The *tautoga* today, when performed by both men and women together, is known as a *hafa* (meaning that half the performers are men and the other half are women). The word *hafa* is a Rotuman translation of the word “half” (the Rotuman equivalent is *vāeagraua*). Originally, it seems that the *tautoga* was divided, the two halves performed separately, that of the men called *tautoag fa* (men’s *tautoga*) and the woman’s called *tautoag hani*” (Hereniko 1991: 121). The dancers are standing in rows, the men on one side and the women on the other (see picture 6.2. and the DVD). At the beginning of a new verse, the first row moves to the back. The dance movements depict the lyrics and are gender-specific. The lyrics are often composed for the occasion using existing *tautoga* melodies or melodies of popular songs.

The *tautoga* used to be danced at the *fara*, but nowadays this seldom happens. When it does, the *fara* group will have practiced a few *tautogas* in advance. They start the *fara* with the *tautoga* and finish with dances performed in the style of other islands in Oceania. In the year before my research, this practice still took place, but in 2003/2004 it no longer did. It seems that the *tautoga* is disappearing from the *fara*. Some people say that the *tautoga* takes too much effort. More so, at any rate, than the *mak Rarotonga* and the *mak Samoa* which do not need to be practised in advance. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is these latter dancing styles that are performed at informal meetings and at *faras* as well. This does not mean that the *tautoga* has completely disappeared from Rotuman culture. There are still many occasions when this dance style is performed. For example, at the annual high school concert celebrating the end of the school year.

Kaepler gives a framework for understanding change in Polynesian music and dance which takes into consideration dimensions that are important to Polynesians. She classifies the dance and music under the following categories (Kaepler 1998: 12-13):

“(1) Traditional music and dance, referring to music that is a continuation of sounds and movements as they were performed in pre-European times.

(2) Evolved traditional music and dance, referring to music and dance that are still based on traditional poetic texts and have the same structure and sentiment, but incorporate Western pitch intervals, Western harmony or have an expanded movement vocabulary in which movements refer to new ideas or things, but are put together in an essentially traditional style.

(3) folk music and dance, (i.e., the living music and dance of the community of the type most often performed and composed today), referring to music and dance that, in addition to changes in pitch intervals, harmony, and movements, have changed in structure – often by adapting the structure of verse-chorus alternation characteristic of Protestant hymns—or in which the movements are put together in a non-traditional way, specifically in a narrative sequence rather than by allusion to selected words of the text.”

The *tautoga* is covered by the second category: evolving traditional music and dance. It is in traditional style, but the dancing is frequently derived from existing Western pop music while the lyrics are sometimes in English and Fijian. The dance style practised during the *fara*, which I shall describe below, falls in the category of folk. Western chords are used as well as verse-chorus alternation and the movements have been adopted from other parts of Polynesia.

The *mak Rarotonga* and the *mak Samoa* are the two dance styles that I observed during the *fara* in the *av mane'a* 2003/2004. Vilsoni Hereniko (1991: 135-142) gives a description of these dance styles. I will follow his description and add my own material and insights.

*Mak Rarotonga* The mak Rarotonga was introduced at the end of 1940 by a group of Rarotongans who visited the island for two months.<sup>12</sup> By the time they left the Rotumans from Motusa (where they had stayed) had mastered their dancing style and this style then spread rapidly over the entire island. As a number of Rotumans formulated it: “Rotumans are real copycats”. This however does not mean that the Rarotongan dance style was taken over unthinkingly. “The Rotuman mak Rarotonga is like Rarotongan dancing in many ways and yet it is different. The swaying of the hips and the shaking of the knees is much lower. Hand and leg movements are less varied and simpler. Also, the men tend to keep the upper part of the body more erect, not displaying the flexibility that one often sees in Rarotongan dancing” (Hereniko 1991: 137). (see also the DVD.)

*Mak Samoa* Likewise, the mak Samoa is no exact copy of the Samoan dancing style. This dance style was introduced to Rotuma much earlier, probably with the arrival of the Samoans. According to Hereniko: “most Rotumans are expected to know how to dance the Samoan way. The soles of the feet are moved in an in-and-out fashion, while the hand creates motifs” (Hereniko 1991: 141). The men also use another style, called the *fa’ataupati* (*pati* means slapping with one’s flat hand) and described in tourist brochures as “mosquito dance” (see the DVD). Here you will also see a dilution of the original Samoan dance style. Sometimes the dancers will only make a stepping movement while clapping their hands. This clapping also occurs during the mak Rarotonga.

As in the *tautoga*, in Rarotongan and Samoan dance styles the lyrics are visualized. This is not the case in the mak Rarotonga and the mak Samoa on Rotuma, possibly because the dances are purely for entertainment and pleasure, just like dancing in a disco.

People will sometimes rehearse prior to the *fara* taking place. During a roundtrip *fara* of Itumuta in Malhaha I saw a group of girls perform two Samoan dances which they had practiced for the final concert of high school. They were wearing costumes and used a tape recorder to play the music. During this *fara*, when the mak Samoa and mak Rarotonga were danced, the entire *fara* group would go down on their knees at certain points. This had obviously been agreed in advance.

Not everyone will dance exuberantly during the *fara*. If people are dancing and singing well, the *fara* is said to be “very lively”. The dancers are in full swing, emit cries and make hissing noises. In the course of the night, fatigue will strike and you will see young boys all but asleep and little girls only still clapping.

## LYRICS

The lyrics are a reflection of present-day Rotuman society but they also record how social relations have changed, sometimes very subtly, in the course of time. The lyrics also tell us something about the *fara*. As

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<sup>12</sup> The island of Rarotonga is part of the Polynesian Cook Islands.

mentioned before, flirting plays an important role, and in the past going *fara* was used as an opportunity to go looking for a suitable partner. It is probably not for nothing, therefore, that many songs are about love.

The songs that are sung have not generally been composed for the *fara*. Many songs were written a long time ago, mostly by men (in fact, when people I met knew the origin of a song at all, it always turned out to have been written by a man). This also clearly shows from the fact that most songs deal with the love for a woman. All songs in the *fara* are based on either Rarotongan or Samoan tunes. The songs with lyrics on Rarotongan tunes were all written after 1940. The songs on a Samoan tunes, however, may be dated long before that time. In the next few paragraphs I will discuss the contents of a number of lyrics, focusing on what the lyrics say about Rotuman society.<sup>13</sup>

### *Categories*

The songs that are sung during the *fara* can roughly be divided into two main categories, the first one dealing with the theme of love, particularly when it is unattainable or impossible, and the second one with the theme of religion. In fact, these two themes are frequently combined. The song discussed below deals with the love between two people from different religious backgrounds, probably Methodist and Catholic, since these two religions were for a long time the only two Christian denominations on Rotuma. Relationships between two people from different religions were disapproved of, not only by church leaders, but by the community as a whole. The lovers had either to flee or one of them had to convert to the other's religion. Nowadays relationships between people from different religions is no longer that much of a problem, although even now one of the two lovers is expected to convert.

#### *Samoan tune*

Kepoi ka 'āe 'ofa se gou ma gou la holi se 'āe (2x) la 'itarua la rotuag 'esea	If you love me, I will be converted to you (2x) So that we will be in the same religion
Ka 'āe la nāea gou la maomaaetou (2x) la famori se rāea 'āe ma gou.	You will hide me so that I will be hard to find, (2x) and that people will not see the two of us.
Ma gou la leuof 'e kis se 'āea ko le' hān te' (2x) la 'itarua la rotuag 'esea.	When will I come to you my lady? (2x) so that we will be in the same religion living together.

Some songs of a religious nature were composed between 1960 and 1970 by the Methodist Youth fellowship. According to Elisapeti Inia, these songs were never meant to be *fara* songs. The next song serves as an example. It could be heard in practically every *fara* during 2003/2004. The text of this song reminds people how they should behave as good Christians, for example, through abstaining from alcohol on Sundays (excessive drinking at *faras* in fact constitutes an ever-growing problem).

<sup>13</sup> All songs have been translated into English by a Rotuman girl. Rotuman sentence structure is different from English, which means that the text sometimes looks a bit grammatically askew.

*Rarotongan tune*

Saula te'is iā ne fir'āk rot fak karisto	Saul, a man who hated Christianity
Taf ta pān se ia 'e Tamasiko	The light was shone to him in Damascus
Gagaj te'is siāg sio se lopo	This gentleman fell to the ground
A'a'fāl ka lio ta to ka 'eag Sāuā, Sāuā	And heard a voice say Saul, Saul
Ka tes ta 'āe fir'ākie gou?	Why did you hate me?
Haharāgi se 'oaf se mane āk terān Sapatio	Young ones do not break the Sabbath law
'lom kav ma pas ma jāk ne poro	By drinking grog, playing cards and playing drafts
'lom te 'oan ma 'oh'oho 'e terān sapato	Drinking beer and shouting to the Sabbath day
ka se saunoa terānit ko hāuā 'is la siag se lopo.	Do not regret fellas for one day you would fall down.

People sometimes make use of sounds deriving from the *tautoga*. Gagaj Tamanau (a Rotuman high school teacher of “culture” and “music”, who also works for the government in the same fields) wrote a song that at the moment is very popular among fara-goers. The sounds *hi'ie hi'ie hi'ie hia e* are derived from the *tautoga*. The song also has a religious text. One should note that the word “Jihova” in Rotuman is used to indicate God, bearing no relation to Jehova-witnesses.

*Rarotongan tune*

Chorus	Chorus
Hi'ie hi'ie hi'ie hia e (4x)	Hi'ie hi'ie hi'ie hia e (4x)
Sapo la mou se rotu 'e i	Hold firm to religion today
Hanua lelei ma rotu la fu (2x)	Good community and religion will stand (2x)
Chorus	Chorus
Jisu 'os gagaja Jihova 'os Ō'fa	Jesus our lord-Jehovah our Father
Voivoi'ākiga se la 'e te'u ne ava (2x)	Praise be to him at all times (2x)
Chorus	Chorus
Hu ne 'os mauri ma 'ona fuaga	Source of life and reasoning
Titi'ākiga se la 'e te'u ne ava (2x)	Worship him always/ at all times (2x)

All faras always start with the same song. The song has not been translated entirely, because the second verse is in Samoan. In the course of time the words have been corrupted and nobody exactly knows the original text any longer. Besides, the spelling of the words is most likely to be incorrect. The song was sung for the first time between 1960 and 1970 and concerns a man in the district of Juju who had a very large harvest. According to Elisapeti Inia, people all over the island liked the song and in the end everyone was singing it.

### Samoan tune

'Aus noa'ia , 'Aus noa'ia gagaj ne hanue te'	Greetings to you, greetings to you chiefly owner of the house.
Noa'ia 'e garue maha ma re se kiu 'a'ana	Thank you for your hard work in preparing a thousand of taro.
'Urtoa' het ne 'äe na se 'on la' lam lama Hea'se' ka siriag 'e av ta 'e av ta..	The (ur tua) spear that you threw flew so high. that I wish it broke history's record.
'Ua motu lei lei sega talofa Rotuma Resio fa mâi lo ma 'e garue ma ha Ma é maori garue ga saupeneia 'e la mane 'Ufa ma la ma le mai Samoa	An island so good, Greetings Rotuma ... ... ...

The fara always concludes with the same song. As far as I have been able to find, the finishing song comes in two variations. Young people usually sing a different version than the elderly. The contents of the two versions are similar. Below I have shown the variant sung by the youths. On hearing this song, residents of the house where the fara has gathered, will realize that the fara has almost finished. They will have one more opportunity of presenting perfume and powder. Through this song, the fara group thanks the family for the gifts received and offers apologies for any inconvenience caused.

### Rarotongan tune

Noa'ia, noa'ia, noa'ia 'e 'es kefkef pene'isi' ma lol pene'isi ma 'amis täe la la'atomis, Fu'omus.	Thank you (3x) for giving us sweet smelling powder And fragrant oil and we are leaving ... Farewell
Chorus, Noa'ia, noa'ia (2x) Kaunohoag gagaj (2x) Kepoi ka teet re 'e 'otomis fara, Röt 'äk fu'omusa ka 'am la 'utuof se mua.	Chorus, Thank you, thank you (2x) Chiefly household (2x) If there's anything wrong in our 'fara' Do forgive us and we are moving on
Gagaja la hanisi a' roan 'os mąuri Rere ta terañit la po la 'is la haipoag hoi'ąki Chorus	let us hope that the lord will lengthen the days of our lives so that one day we will meet again Chorus

The residents of the house will sometimes hold a concluding speech, as will important participants in the fara. Then will follow a collective speech of thanks from all fara-goers, during which they will keep their heads bowed.

### Finishing collective speech

Noa'ia ko gagaj 'e 'es lol pene'isi Ma kef kef pene'isi ma vaselin pene'isi	Thank you oh nobles for having oil, nice smelling And powder, nice smelling and vaseline, nice smelling
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Ma sân pene'isi, ma 'amis tæe la la'atomis  
Fu' omus

And perfume, nice smelling and we will be leaving  
Goodbye

Because the songs are not written down on paper, but are transmitted orally, the lyrics sometimes undergo subtle changes. Small textual differences will occur, from village to village and between generations. Since I have not mastered the Rotuman language, it was difficult for me to detect any differences when Rotuman texts were concerned. However, I have mentioned that young people sometimes sing parts of the text in English. This, however, is broken English. The next song (that was sung as early as 1910) is an example of this. The first verse is alternately sung in English and in Rotuman. The English text is as follows:

It's true your house is very far  
But I can ride on my bicycle  
Last night I slept cry cry.

*Samoan tune*

Ka te aire 'ou hanue ta sousou (2x)  
Ka gou vahia se ma la mö' tokiriof  
Pög ta gou mös ouou.

It's a fact that your house is far (2x)  
But I am able to cycle over  
During the night I slept crying

Sala mamasa ka qalua 'e tan  
Gou fea kop ma 'atua la 'a  
Temoi te vata se 'ou hanue ta  
'æ keu ma 'otou 'uta kaokao

Dry roads surrounded by waters  
I am afraid demons might eat me  
I was thinking of creeping to your house  
Just the thought of it is wrecking my brains

Ou ou ma feufeu'äk Bulou-ni-ceva tæe la  
Sui favia  
'Otu hanisi tæe la ala ma gou (2x)

Crying and waving  
Bulou ni ceva is departing  
My love is dying within me (2x)

Fa'imea puku ma namea se gou  
Kao sio ka hanis 'on 'ou  
Ka 'æ ne forama roa'ia se gou  
ka sei ta lelua 'æ la roua gou.

Wrote a letter, and sent it to me  
I opened it and saw your love for me  
But you have told me that from long ago  
Yet what moved you to leave me

The songs that you'll hear at faras, are also sung on other occasions. I have heard them at harvest festivals, Kava meetings, birthdays and at a wedding. The songs are then frequently sung more slowly and intoned differently, which almost makes it sound like a different song altogether. Two examples of this can be found on the CD: One concerns the song with the *hi'ie* sound, once sung at the finishing evening of a novena

(catholic prayer session) and once at a fara; the other song was twice played to me by the same people, to show me the difference.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE INSTRUMENTS

Nowadays people use guitars, ukuleles and a drum when going fara. The acoustic Spanish guitar was introduced into Polynesia by missionaries and crew members of whaling ships (Moyle 1990: 57). “The Ukulele, now used throughout Polynesia and beyond, originated as a four-stringed Portuguese instrument called braguinha, which was introduced into Hawaii in 1879 by Portuguese immigrants” (Moyle 1990: 58-59). The braguinha used to have metal strings. Since these were not present in Hawaii, people made use of catgut and the ukulele was born. Nowadays the strings are made out of plastic. The ukulele rapidly spread throughout Polynesia.

The drum was introduced at the end of 1940 by a group of Rarotongans who visited Rotuma. In Rarotongan music, percussion instruments play an important role. They produce the rhythm to which the dancers swing their hips. However, drums are not only used for the mak Rarotonga, but also for the mak Samoa. Usually, the drum is home-made from tin and animal skin. When celebrating fara, drums are not always indispensable. I have joined a number of ‘ordinary’ faras where there was no drum. However, they were present at the roundtrip faras that I have attended. There were sometimes no ukuleles either, although this happened less frequently. I have not experienced a single fara where there was not at least one guitar.

Before the introduction of these instruments people would only sing and dance during the fara. In fact, not everyone welcomed the use of instruments. A 30 years old man told me that one time his grandmother did not want to come outside her house because a fara was being celebrated with instruments. Eventually, the fara left. A little while on the same night, another fara (now without instruments) came to her house. This time his grandmother went outside to sprinkle perfume and powder on the fara-goers. In her opinion, this was what a “real” fara should be like. During my stay on the island I heard people commenting on the use of the drum. Some people found that the drum drowns out the fara and therefore does not belong in it. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that in a few years’ time this instrument will also have become fully accepted. During a fara in Malhaha a boy played an electric guitar using a portable radio as an amplifier. The use of still other musical instruments in the future be ruled out.

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<sup>14</sup> In appendix 1 you will find lyrics not included in this chapter.

# 7

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to consider all aspects of the *fara*, including its temporal frame. The function, practice and meaning of the *fara* for Rotumans have all changed in the course of time, even though the core of the tradition has remained the same, still consisting as it does of a group of young people gathering in front of houses to sing and dance.

Leach states that people arrange time by classifying the year on the basis of festival periods (Leach 1961: 131-135). Indeed, this is one of the functions performed by the *av mane'a*. This “time to play” in a way concludes a cycle and announces the beginning of a new one.

Both the *fara* and the *manea'hune'ele* used to take place (the *fara* still does) during the *av mane'a* - a liminal period in which the rules that normally apply have been temporarily suspended (Turner 1979: 94-95). According to Howard, the *av mane'a* was originally a structured framework which provided the opportunity (all but lacking throughout the rest of the year) for couples to start romantic relationships that would not normally be tolerated (Howard 1998: 158). The family, for its part, could keep a closer watch on these budding relationships than would otherwise be possible. Nowadays the emphasis of the *fara* lies in entertainment.

The reason why people go *fara* differs among age groups. Nearly every *fara* goer will want to have some fun, but it is predominantly young people who will flirt or make a pass at someone. Although they no longer depend on the *av mane'a* or the *fara* to find a partner, these feasts still offer excellent opportunities. People get the chance to dance closely together in the dark. The way people dance can be very seductive, and the lyrics are suggestive (dealing with the subject of romance). There is an additional reason for adults to join a roundtrip *fara*: they will get to visit their friends and relatives on the other side of the island.

As mentioned in the introduction, a study of the *fara*, just like Hereniko's study of dance, can serve to reflect on the culture of the Rotumans and the changes it has undergone (Hereniko 1991: 120-142). Of particular interest would be the considerable impact Christianity has had on the *fara*. This also shows to what extent in the course of time Christianity has become embedded in Rotuman society.

Also, changing gender relations within the *fara* are a reflection of that kind of relations in Rotuman society. “Untie the dove cord; when it is free it sings” is an indigenous proverb that can still be applied to a girl who goes *fara*.

Fara is part of modern Rotuman society, which has become more and more westernised as a result of the introduction of modern media and means of communication. In fact, it will continue to be subject to change. It would be interesting to see what place the fara will take in, say, ten years' time and in what way it will have changed. I do not think the fara will rapidly disappear, because young people and children, but also adults, still take pleasure in the fara (just like a lot of Dutch people take pleasure in carnival, for instance).

For the past forty years there has been a revival of popular feasts in The Netherlands. The annual fair has been reinvented and carnival has spread across (almost) the entire country. This may also happen with the fara. However, this raises the following question: how can the fara continue to go well when there are a lot of *forau* (guests) on the island. While writing this conclusion, I received a letter from a 17-year-old Rotuman girl. She wrote that there were many *forau* on Rotuma during the *av mane 'a* of 2004-2005. According to her, the fara was not like it used to be in previous years. She even called the atmosphere aggressive and unfriendly. One of the problems is that many of the *forau* neither know the songs nor know how to behave during the fara. It seems that the fara has continued to exist until now mainly thanks to Rotuma's isolated position.

The changes that take place on Rotuma do not stand on their own. In a globalising world it is difficult for all cultures to retain their own identity. The different categories into which Kaepler organizes dancing in Polynesia (but also elsewhere) show the influence globalisation has had on dancing.

Young people all around the world are finding themselves in rapidly changing societies. Herdt and Leavitt write that: "the adolescent embodies culture since he or she reworks social relations and knowledge systems toward an indefinite future" (Herdt & Leavitt 1998: 3). It is they who are at the forefront.

"Anthropology's place in the intellectual world owes much to its early studies of adolescent development in Pacific cultures. Beginning with Malinowski's significant works on the Trobriand Islands and Mead's work on Samoa" [...] "These studies used the very different characteristics of adolescent life in Pacific societies to help redefine our most basic sense of culture's role in adolescent development" (Herdt & Leavitt 1998: 4). From the 1950s up to the 1980s there had been just a few studies about adolescents. The book "*Adolescence in Pacific Island societies*" tried to fill this gap. In this book the editors attempt "for the first time to document and compare a range of adolescent development issues among traditional societies of the Pacific Islands. Some of the societies discussed remain rooted in relatively traditional concerns, but all, in one way or another, have had to respond to the relatively dramatic social changes in the postcolonial era" (Herdt & Leavitt 1998: 5).

I have thankfully made use of this work. Alan Howard's article "*Youth in Rotuma, then and now*" in particular has been a source of inspiration. With this thesis I hope to have built on this text and given insight into the position of Rotuman youth in the years 2003-2004 with regard to entertainment and romantic relationships during the fara (with particular emphasis on dancing).

As Kaeppler said years ago: “The study of Polynesian art and aesthetics has been largely a recitation of objects of material culture, a listing and analysis of song and dance types, the analysis of myth and poetry, descriptions of architecture, and the imposition of Western aesthetic judgments. It is time to move on, it is time to illuminate how objects, architecture, songs, dances, poetry and oratory are parts of society and the structure of social reality” (Kaeppler 1989: 211). A lot has been written about dance as performance. In this perspective, dance is frequently related to religion, ritual and spirituality. However, there are other forms of dance too. The *fara* is an example of a festive occasion which gives the dancers room for free expression and entertainment. It would be rewarding also to look more closely at this type of dancing in Europe. The last couple of years dancing (in greatly divergent styles - from folk dancing to ballroom dancing and including dancing styles from all over the world) appear to have become more and more popular. You can follow classes in African dancing, Brazilian dancing and salsa in particular is very popular. Or alternately, you may want to take up line-dancing (dancing cowboy-style), belly dancing or simply “folk” dancing. It would be interesting to look at the function of dance in Dutch society and to examine in what way it differs from that of other cultures.

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# Appendix 1

## *lyrics*

### *Samoan tune*

Hule te mua rara se'e la no'o  
He'ama 'ae la 'itara la noho  
Mafa helava ne gou katukatu  
Ka lio ne pogi a' kokoa gou.

Hani te'isi 'otou 'ofa ma hili  
O'o'i se feke ka 'otou pa 'ese  
Funfun kakape ma se tari vavare  
Ka tau ma ne gou mose ma a'ahae

I love you but I know you love me so  
Isa Isa noqui tau  
He'ama 'ae la mam'asa ko gagaja la 'ania gou  
la ofietou.

Mata mata lelei, 'otou te ne Savai'  
Te ne Upolu ka leileia  
Ka te ne Savai'i fak se gou fear

Tiam heta ne no'omea 'e is Maftoa ta  
'oroia 'e Solroroa ta  
'Is tokasa 'e la haipoaga  
Ka Tarau fu'ena 'e Losa

The moon that's about to rise in front  
I wished that we were living together  
The beautiful eyes that I desired  
But it blinded and fooled me

This woman is the one I chose  
My parents do not be angry for it is my wish  
While frying do not wait unnecessarily for me  
But I will be sleeping and thinking

I love you but I know you love me so  
I am so sorry for you my mate  
But I wish you would wake up and eat me all

Beautiful eyes which refreshes me  
Your whole body is beautiful  
All appointed kings advised me not to fear

The speedboat that appeared in the point at 'Maftoa'  
'Solroroa' blocked its view  
We are no longer able to meet  
And 'Tarau' is staying back at 'Losa'

*Rarotongan tune*

Fu se'äe ko hänte' la 'itar la mak se'  
A'elem 'ou faliga la gou 'ea moi ta te  
" " " " " " " 'al'aligen  
Ka oilei hänte 'otou 'ata ti'ia se 'äea (2x)

Mafa ma'uru mafa maru la kel  
Pa'pasia ho'afa gou la pa's pa'sia 'ou 'ai te'te'  
Gou kal sur lag rira ka go kal a'fai ra se  
Ka oile' hänte' 'otou ata ti'ia se 'äea (2x)

Stand up lady and let's dance  
Bring your ear close so that I would say something  
Bring your ear close so that I would be saying  
"Oh! Lady my heart is with you all the time (2x)

Eyes that are so pleasant to see  
Take me with you to cut your firewood  
If you don't let me in the house, I don't care  
Oh! lady my soul is too involved with you (2x)

*Rarotongan tune*

Spoken words: ka'otou rita täe 'e täe  
ka tes ta ia' tu e äe

Fara lelei mafa peka 'e ha'ian  
Mafa ne sa'u ta hil va'hia  
Hoimea 'e vasa se 'on sagsag  
Rue fakag ka se 'on a'helav.

Ag het ne 'am räe gat ke ag mäemäe  
Fupfup ne hagäe ma kaha vävär  
Foar'ia 'os a'häe ma ta'ea 'e mäe  
Ka 'oto ri ta täe 'e täe ka tes ta la' tu e äe

spoken words: My house is there but why did you go in  
the wrong direction.

Beautiful body and eyes that are hard to find in a woman  
Eyes that the king had chosen  
Has come back from overseas in great beauty  
Moves so gracefully to its best

Actions that we see are all of your nervousness  
The beginning of gossip and stupid laughter  
Express you opinion and stop being nervous  
And my house is there and why is it you are going the  
other way

*Samoan tune*

La' se Maftoa, Hö' se Malhaha  
La' se Fuli'u la kakou  
'E rere ne ha'fu, Forag hanua  
Te' sal pumua ne Rotuma he'ahe'a

Ava ne mane'a ma 'äe ko sina  
Gou kat 'inea ra ne 'äe 'oaf se sei

Then the ta-ra-la-la

Go to 'Maftoa' return to 'Malhaha'  
Go to 'Fuli'u' for a swim  
On the surface of the water, 'Forag hanua'  
Or the best roads in Rotuma

When it's time to play with you my beauty  
I don't know who you love

then the tara-la-la

*Rarotongan tune*

Haina ős ma leum la manea'  
Ka hāntei 'āe putu 'e tes?  
Ka tes ta 'āe 'a ko hāntei 'e avat  
'āe me'a me'a ta 'āe fup tape'ie

Kepoi ko hāntei ka 'āe la hanis aier  
'āe la mamaf se' 'e mose  
Soroia 'ou sospene  
rukua 'ou 'umefe  
hō' t̄anua 'ou sopoag h̄a' ta

Ho'af gou la re'ia 'ou e'a  
Hanua pög ma gou mös ke'e kohea  
Fita' ma tag het ko gagaj  
La kukulua 'otou la  
La r̄am ta se 'ania

Ladies groom themselves and come to play  
But lady where did you grow up?  
What did you eat my lady when you were  
young to grow so much?

If your love is true my lady  
You would wake up from sleep  
Wash our pots and plates  
And fetch water for the washing

Take me to do your house chores(chares)  
When its night I can sleep in the kitchen  
At least a doormat to cover my legs  
So that mosquitoes don't bite me

*Samoan tune*

Kesması terân fak 'ofa'ofa  
Terân ti'ut se r̄ante' 'atakoa  
Ma iris ne toa' noa furia la terân ne'ona  
Ma ir mös ke 'e ri 'o'oroga

Rou sio 'ona k̄unohoga  
Tela'a ma puaka ma moa  
Fekei ma poatkau ma fakamamosa  
Ka ia 'omoe ke 'e faraoa.

Christmastime is a time of happiness  
A big day for the whole world  
But to those who are disobedient they made  
It a day of drinking  
and they end up sleeping in prison

Leaving their families  
Food pigs and chickens  
'Fekei', corned beef and ripped fruits  
and only eating bread.

*Rarotongan tune*

Far ne safu te Babylon  
Māl 'āi maṭit maṭmaṭ  
'E utut ne fakese 'is 'e Saioni

Refrein

'Is kel se as ta 'on sologa  
Kel se si'on asoah ta  
Helav ne te 'Āitu ta ra se rān ta

Kōlōr ne hanue ta  
Helav ne te' ne te  
'Is 'inea 'Āitu ta re

By the rivers of Babylon  
Underneath cool shady trees  
At a place like Zion

Refrein:

We see the sun setting  
See the hands of dusk  
Wonderful things that god created for this earth

Glory of the land  
How wonderful everything is  
We know god has created

## Appendix 2

### *Rotuman wordlist*

<b>a'ana</b>	taro tuber (the edible part)
<b>'al'ikou</b>	taro-leaves cooked with coconut cream
<b>av mane'a</b>	time to play
<b>fajeksia</b>	thank you
<b>fara</b>	to ask for, to beg
<b>far kəl'aki</b>	roundtrip-fara
<b>fekei</b>	native pudding
<b>forau</b>	literally: to travel by sea, to voyage: used to define guests
<b>hafa</b>	half
<b>haharagi</b>	fat, stout, plump, in good physical condition: young, youthful, adolescent: unmarried, single. In all its meaning it has a distinctive positive meaning
<b>hån fisi</b>	white woman/girl
<b>jams</b>	root crop
<b>kato'aga</b>	celebration (public), festival
<b>Kava</b>	mind expending drink
<b>koua</b>	earth oven and its contents
<b>Lä' riri'</b>	children, small children
<b>Lä' riri' susu</b>	milk children, nursing infants
<b>maka</b>	to sing, chant, intone, or recite, to the accompaniment of rhythmical bodily movements
<b>manea'hune'ele</b>	playing on the beach
<b>sakot</b>	strainer
<b>sulu</b>	a piece of cloth which you wear like a wraparound skirt
<b>tautoga</b>	(to perform) a certain type of <i>maka</i> or native action-song
<b>tēfui</b>	garland hung around the neck: usu. made of odoriferous flowers and fruit.



1.1 Rotuma, Fapufa



1.2 Church service at Sumi Catholic Church, Juju



1.3 Main road around the island



1.4 School bus



1.5 Elisabeth Inia in front of her house in Savlei (my home during my stay at Rotuma)



1.6 Children and youths watching television



1.7 Woman plaiting mats at Savlei Village Hall



2.1 Presenting the harvest during a harvest festival at Malhaha



2.2 Food during a harvest festival at Hapmak



2.3 Children playing cards at Oinafa



2.4 Children swimming in fuli'u, Lopta



4.1 The band during an 'ordinary' fara at Malhaha



4.2 'ordinary' fara at Malhaha



4.3 Savlei roundtrip fara at Motusa



4.4 Savlei roundtrip fara at Motusa



4.5 gift giving during the Savlei roundtrip fara at Motusa



4.6 Savlei roundtrip fara at Lopta



4.7 sprinkling of talcum powder during the Savlei roundtrip fara at Lopta



6.1 Informal dancing during the 21st birthday of a boy from Malhaha



6.2 Dancing of a Tautoga by Rotumans from Nadi (Fiji), performed at Malhaha



