Performing Arts on Easter Island: Will they survive or transform into a tourist attraction?

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Introduction

In this article I would like to discuss the future of the performing arts on Easter Island. The performing arts have a long tradition and are unique to the island. Because the island was isolated for so long an impressive culture was maintained, but connections with the rest of the world were inevitable. Both internal development and external forces have influenced the culture and performing arts and they continue to do so. A major impact comes from tourism, the most important source of income for the economy of Easter Island. Many tourists are fascinated by the mysteries of the island. They visit the island for a couple of days, go sight seeing, make tours across the island to places of interest and enjoy the shows with ‘traditional’ music and dances. Partly under influence of tourism new styles and rhythms are incorporated, while interest in the truly ancient songs and dances is gradually fading away.

This article aims to describe recent developments in the performing arts, also discussing various aspects such as music and song, dance, performance, music and dance groups and festivals. Furthermore it describes the attitude of key figures in the performing arts and especially of the youth on the island since they are important to the survival of the authentic art forms. Based on these developments and attitudes the paper aims to answer the question whether the performing arts are sufficiently rooted into Easter Island community life to survive or to outlive the present waves of tourist attention. This paper is based on recent fieldwork on Easter Island at the end of 2003.

Easter Island

In order to understand the Rapa nui culture, and particularly the Rapa nui performing arts, I will shortly describe the historical development, and give some socio-economic information about the island.

History

There are a variety of theories that explain the history of the island, but from research it appears likely that Easter Island was colonized from elsewhere in Eastern Polynesia. The voyagers who reached the island first were led by the intrepid culture hero, Hotu Matu’a, and had either fled warfare or a flooded island (called ‘Hiva’) to land at the white sand beach of Anakena. From there they divided the land amongst the sons of Hotu Matu’a. The crucial centers of ceremonial activity were the Ahu, temple complexes. In the development of the ancient culture, there seems to have been a take off point sometime in the 7th or 8th centuries, with increased population and an elaboration of the common Eastern Polynesian temple and commemorative patterns. At each Ahu platform between one and fifteen Moai, huge stone statues, were erected, and which survive today as a unique memorial to the vanished Rapa nui society. But the Moai building ceased, Ahu fell into disrepair and islanders began destructive battles in what seems to have been a time of
famine. The cause of the collapse and the key to the understanding of the ‘mysteries’ of the island was massive environmental degradation caused by deforestation of the whole island. The sacred activities shifted from Moai building to an annual “bird man ceremony” at the ceremonial village of Orongo, high on the cliffs of Rano Kau (one of the volcanoes), overlooking the sea. The Orongo period started in the 14th century and ended with European contact and settlement from the 18th century onwards. It was a period of constant war, with destruction and cannibalism. After 1600 the culture of Easter Island went into decline and regressed to more primitive conditions.

The first Europeans to arrive at the island, were the Dutch, on Easter Day in 1722. The expedition was formed by three vessels and was led by the Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen, who gave the island her name, Paasch Eyland. Between 1770 and 1786 other Europeans visited the island briefly, amongst them was Felipe Gonzalez y Haedo from Spain, Captain James Cook from Great Britain and Jean François de Galaup de La Pérouse from France.

In the 19th century there was a decline in various fields, because after the explorers visitors came with less well intentioned interests. The most dramatic event was the assault on the island by Peruvian slave traders in 1862-1863. From this period stems the new Polynesian name for the island and her inhabitants: Rapa Nui. In the second half of the 19th century the organized mission was started from the Holy Hart (Sacré Coeur) mission in Valparaíso. The first missionary was Eugène Eyraud, who converted the entire island in only three years together with two other missionaries. Chilean vessels came to land on Rapa Nui since 1830, but serious contact started only in 1870. On 9 September 1888 Captain Policarpo Toro Hurtado signed a conveyance- and annexation-act together with the chiefs of the island. Later these rights were sold to other people that were interested in the island for commercial reasons. In 1953 the island came under the control of the Chilean Navy.

At the end of the 19th century the science of anthropology developed and the exotic and mysterious island became a place of interest, but scientists arrived in a time when not much was left of the original culture. Scientists who have done important research on the island are: Geiseler (1882), Katherine Scoresby Routledge (1914-1918), Alfred Métraux (1934-1935), Thor Heyerdahl (1955-1956), William Mulloy and recently Joanne van Tilburg.

The process of liberalization that the island experienced in the last three decades and encouraged by the Chilean government, has produced different results. On one side it permitted the island to make connections with the mainland of Chile and the world. One of the consequences of this process was the acculturation process, which was imposed on a weakened community, that already adopted many Western customs at the expense of their own ancestral traditions. The Rapa nui language, that is gradually disappearing, is an example of this loss. On the other side the opening up of Easter Island to the outside world has attracted attention to many Chilean and foreign researchers. They have recovered and described many aspects of the culture. The government supports these initiatives and has a positive influence on the way the Rapa nui themselves appreciate their cultural roots. This is illustrated by the Resolution that obligates the teaching of the Rapa nui language at school since 1976. Literary workshops for writers who use the local language are also held. Furthermore the entire island is declared a Historical Monument and is being protected by law.

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1 But in the journals of the first European voyagers these conditions aren’t mentioned, which leaves this statement somewhat unclear. Boersema suggests that out of necessity, but gradually a transition took place from a rich system into a poorer one (Boersema, 2002: 11).

2 However, this act has never been found and some Rapa nui therefore claim that the island is autonomous.
**Socio-economic facts**

Easter Island is one of the most remote inhabited places on earth. It lies in the Pacific Ocean, 3,800 km off the west coast of Chile (South America). It has a land mass of 166 sq. km. Based on a census in 2002 the resident population consists of 3,837 people and it is estimated that the population grows with 30% each decennium. Most of them live in the main village of the island, Hanga Roa. Another estimate is that one-third of the population are temporary inhabitants, mostly public servants and their families. Several hundred Rapa nui live away from their island, mainly in other parts of Chile, but also in North America and Europe. A community of about one hundred people lives in Tahiti. Spanish is the most commonly spoken language, with Rapa nui, an Eastern Polynesian tongue. There is some sensitivity locally about the distinction between Chileans and Rapa nui, and some scientists speak of a ‘Chilenisation’ of the island.

The size of the available workforce is small, with all persons over the age of thirty years having some sort of productive activity. Given that each islander has a plot of land, there is a certain amount of subsistence affluence. The most constant sources of employment are the Chilean public service (armed forces and several public institutions) and tourism. Some people work in both sectors. Sometimes government initiated public projects may absorb the entire workforce. But there are also problems of unemployment for the greater part of the year. All local trade, including the tourist sector, is under the control of the Rapa nui. All firms need a local partner, because the land is either state property or property of the Rapa nui. Most handicraft industries are small-scale enterprises, producing good quality copies of the famous artifacts.

The prevailing religion on the island is Roman-Catholicism, although Apostolics and Mormons have small congregations. Education on Easter Island falls under the Chilean education system.

Easter Island is a providence of Chile and the Rapa nui have Chilean citizenship. An islander has been governor of the Providence of Isla de Pascua (the Spanish name for Easter Island) since 1984. The Municipality of Hanga Roa holds elections every four years to elect six councilors, one of whom becomes the mayor by election. There is also an organization for indigenous rights that calls itself “Consejo de Ancianos” (Council of Elderly). At this moment there are two rivalry councils, namely No. 1 and No. 2 that disagree over the question of formal acknowledgement as an indigenous people in Chile. One group claims that such an acknowledgement will condemn the islanders to second-rate citizens.

The importance of Easter Island does not primarily lie in the size of the island, but in the geographic location. Chile is in the possession of a really advantageous and strategic important position in the Pacific. The geopolitical value of the island will probably increase with the accomplishment of economic integration agreements. These agreements are driven by an intense necessity of commercial trade, generated by the economic globalization of the world. This will encourage maritime activities in the Pacific.

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3 Information from ‘Tataku’ (2002), a bulletin from Tarai Henua (a tourist informationsystem on Easter Island)
Performing arts in literature

When studying literature on cultural expressions such as music, dance and performance, many concepts and terms are being used to describe the performing arts. Folklore is probably the most known and widely used concept. Other terms are ethnomusicology and intangible heritage. I prefer to use the term ‘performing arts’, because the music and dance, and relating aspects, on Easter Island are indeed an art which is performed. Additionally the term captures exactly the aspects I have studied. Other terms are too broad in my opinion or carry a negative connotation.

Blacking and Kealiinohomoku have studied performing arts on a theoretical level and emphasize that performing arts cannot be understood without referring to their social context and functions, because they illuminate the meaning of music and dance. But social context and function do not explain their styles and forms. Explanations of differences in styles of music and dance must begin with an account of the choices that musicians and dancers make in the course of the performance (Blacking and Kealiinohomoku, 1979: xiv-xv). A concept that they also stress is affective culture. It is important to acknowledge this ‘affect’ in music, because, as Baumann puts it: “Music has the power to reach and move people’s feelings.” Affect is constituted by performance, and performance is culture-specific and operates according to rules and principles understood by performers and audience in the folk group (Baumann, 1992: 168-9).

The non-Western musical world is highly diverse in the configuration of its responses to the coming of Western musical culture (Nettl, 1985: 24). In the twentieth century many regional and ethnically based folk music repertoires have been transmitted by the media – radio, recordings, television, and motion pictures (Bauman, 1992: 169). A particular characteristic of the media is that they have accelerated the pace of change, and have influenced its direction in favor of urban, industrial music-cultures. These have ready access to the media and their music tends to reduce the interest in rural and tribal music or out compete it entirely. Each music-culture is a particular adaptation to particular circumstances (Titon, 1984: 9).

Traditional ceremonies form the basis of many tourist attractions. They may in due course be greatly affected by tourism. The issue is really one of authenticity and the extent to which a ‘traditional’ ceremony remains traditional. The presence of tourists will engender a degree of self-consciousness that can only detract from the origin the focus of the ceremony or activity (Lumsdon and Swift, 2001: 197-8). ‘Commercialization’ of culture applies to the phenomenon that takes place when aspects of local culture, like ceremonial dances, are performed to serve the tourist. The adjustment of cultural elements to the tourist can be both a creeping and jerkily passing process. With time the dance is made into a visual show that has little reference to its original meaning. First the show is performed to please the guests, but soon it is discovered that money can be earned (Van Egmond and Ars, 1993: 92-3). Meethan writes about tourism in global society and stresses that it is important to consider examples of rituals and performances that have not been adversely affected by their commodification, or perhaps, even rely on it. Some public rituals have also resisted, or seem unlikely to become incorporated into the tourist system (Meethan, 2001: 158-60).

All kinds of changes have been made in the social context and the ways music is conceived. Once ceremonial music becomes entertainment, it looses its original significance. Cultural revitalization movements among various ethnic groups in the last hundred years or so have led to self-conscious efforts to preserve their heritage of folk music and dance (Bauman, 1992: 169).

Further classifications of responses of non-Western music on Western influences are made by Nettl himself, and Shiloah and Cohen (for more information see Nettl, 1985: 26-8).
Native leaders and indigenous-advocacy organizations have embarked on a global campaign to assert control over elements of culture that they consider part of their patrimony: art, music, folklore, even landscapes regarded as sacred. Many advocates for native rights would like to see the integrity of indigenous cultures ensured by laws that treat heritage as an inalienable resource. Proposals for new forms of cultural protection build on arguments that justify the sovereignty of native peoples. Several countries have implemented laws designed to protect the intangible heritage of native populations (Brown, 2003: 2-7). Recently UNESCO has issued an official Convention on the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Performing arts on Easter Island

The performing arts have always played a central role in Rapa nui culture. On Rapa Nui, as elsewhere in Polynesia, these arts were devoted to the worship of ancestors and gods, status validation, entertainment, and, sometimes, social criticism. Texts constituted the essential component of all presentations. Formalized into poetry, they were recited rhythmically and melodically and were visually enhanced by dance. On the island itself, Rapa nui culture has in recent years enjoyed a renaissance. The arts of wood and stone carving, which never died out, are being reinvigorated, as are Polynesian music and dance. Many Moai have been re-erected by modern archaeologists and once again keep watch over the descendants of their original creators. The aesthetic richness of the island’s other artistic traditions is being rediscovered today by a new generation of artists and scholars (Kjellgren, Van Tilburg and Kaeppler, 2001: 23 and 40-1).

Looking at different aspects of the Rapa nui performing arts is crucial to the understanding of the performing arts in general. In this section I will describe the present-day situation of the performing arts on the island, including the influence of tourism. Most of the information was gathered during my recent fieldwork. The focus of the research were young people. Important questions involve the attitude of the youth towards the performing arts and the processes of change that influence the performing arts, especially tourism. I will focus in particular on music and song, dance, music- and dance groups, festivals, transformations and property rights.6

Music and Song

The ancient music and song of Easter Island are diverse and imaginative. The ritual songs that are kept in the Rapa nui tradition until now are: Riu, Koro, Patautau, Kai-Kai and Uté, which are characteristic to Easter Island (Fischer, 1993: 189). In general young people know a lot of things about the performing arts, but music and song are not the most well-known aspects. Some ancient songs are known to them, such as Riu and Uté, but several categories are not and also knowledge about the content of different sorts of songs is limited. This is also the case with instruments. Instruments which originated from elsewhere, but that were introduced on the island long ago are easily mistaken for truly authentic Rapa nui instruments. The majority of young people listen to traditional Rapa nui music on CD or during festivals, but popular music from abroad prevails. This is partly caused by the fact that this music can be listened to in more ways than the ancient Rapa nui music, for example through the internet or in the discotheque. The Rapa nui youth in

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6 All information in this section is based on interviews with key informants and respondents, and on own observations.

7 Riu = ancient, ritual song or general term for compositions which can be described as ‘song’; Koro = special festivities with their own songs; Patautau = recitations, often accompanied by Kai-Kai = string figures (cat's cradle); and Uté = ancient songs, especially with sweet intentions (Campbell, 1971: 2, 37-8 and 228, Vera, 1998: 191-2 and from an interview I held with Papa Kíko).
general have a big talent for music. They sing, play instruments, or write lyrics, and sometimes they combine these skills. The music young people make, is often modern, but some also sing or play ancient Rapa nui songs. The young people of the island are in any case –like their ancestors- very musically gifted. The only difference is that they play different instruments and different music styles. Especially the rhythm has accelerated. But one thing is clear to Aka Rapu, the music teacher at the Lyceum Lorenzo Baeza Vega: present-day young people love the Rapa nui music, music from their ancestors as well as music that is typically modern Rapa nui.

Dance

Rapa nui dance is also a subject of which young people know little, but they do know that movements are representations of things from the insular life. The Hoko, a physical expression, in which the Rapa nui express the preparation of war, is known to all. Ancient dances like the Hoko are still being performed, but in a very different context, in shows or during certain events, just like the dance attributes, such as dance paddles and wooden sticks. They give the dance a special character and it looks impressive. But most young people prefer the Polynesian rhythms and more modern music. Especially Latin-American and Polynesian dances are greatly appreciated by the Rapa nui youth. Polynesian dances such as the Tamuré and the Sau-Sau are widely seen as typically Rapa nui since many years, while in fact they are not Rapa nui. But in those days mostly young people loved the music and dance, like young people now incorporate modern dances like the zouk and salsa. This is most noticeable in the discotheque. It is exactly the place where this music can be heard and danced to. A lot of young people gather at one of the three discotheques on the island during the weekends to enjoy the different music styles and dance rhythms, most of which are foreign. In any case, it is clear that dances with a ‘hot’ rhythm, as one young person called it, are popular on the island. And the youth does not seem to have problems with copying these kinds of dances.

Performance

Considering the many artistic expressions on the island and the value it has for tourism, performance is very important. I will discuss two aspects of performance which are very characteristic for Easter Island. A subject that interests young people much is Takona, body painting. Many different figures and designs are used and the youth knows most of them and also their meaning. Takona is used during festivals and shows. With all kinds of colors (Ki’ea = colored earth) figures are painted that were tattooed in the old days. The youth does not seem to know much about possible transformations in the figures. Some even assume that the figures are not subject to transformations. But there are clear differences between the present figures and former ones, especially concerning the style. The symbolism of Takona figures has significance to many Rapa nui youth. They participate in events and festivals in which they paint themselves or get painted by someone else, in some cases by a specialist.

Traditional clothing on the island is original and typical to the Rapa nui. Most young people like the costumes. They are familiar with the different types of material which are being used namely Mahute or Tapa (Mulberry tree - Broussonetia Papyrifera), Kakaka (banana leaves) and Huru Huru (feathers). The most well-known clothing is the Hami, a loin cloth, and the Nua Mahute, a cape. This typical Rapa nui dress is used nowadays in performances for tourists and during festivals and other occasions. But there are changes visible in the costumes, like the use of bra’s of coconuts and pareo’s that are worn as costumes. The style of the costumes nowadays is either Rapa nui or Polynesian (characterized by white costumes). Many young people like the costumes, because of the uniqueness or originality, or the cultural expression.
With respect to adornment, the Rapa nui love hats and other headgear. Besides Takona and Ki’ea as decoration of the body there are the Hau-Hau (crowns mostly made of feathers), and flower collars. During shows, performances and festivals the Easter Islanders still wear many ornaments. Crowns of Mahute, feathers and shells, necklaces with feather decorations and shells, and decoration around the legs can be seen on dancers and musicians.

**Music- and dance groups**

Youth on the island are very familiar with many music- and dance groups and often take part in them. Not only the most famous groups which perform for tourists, Kari Kari, Polynesia, Matato’a and Topatangi, are known, but also less familiar groups such as Varua, Rere Taua (which does not exist anymore), Mana Roa, and some solo artists such as Ito Pakarati, Mito, Papa Kiko, Zopsy and Ben Paoa, but there are many more. To get an impression of the ins and outs of such a group, I will give some detail of the group Kari Kari, which I accompanied many times during rehearsals and observed during shows in one of the hotels on the island.

Kari Kari is a well-known dance group on the island and was formed by Lynn Rapu and his friend Tomás Tepano, who both have an artistic background. The motivation to found this group consisted of the enthusiasm to keep the Rapa nui culture alive and the kids of the street. During my stay on the island I was welcomed into the “House of Kari Kari” and participated in the lessons. Lynn, who comes from a very musically talented family, is the only director left in the group and sometimes has a hard time dealing with undisciplined youth. I was not familiar with the relative position of families towards each other, but I was told that Lynn’s family is privileged when a little trip abroad is coming up. Other members of the group then feel excluded. Besides, the number of members varies and also persons who perform can differ. In spite, sometimes the group does seem to be one big family, for example when a member is leaving the group. According to Lynn, the present-day youth are a little more interested in the ancient music and dances than earlier. “But”, he says, “bad influences, like techno-music in Toroko (one of the discotheques on the island), stay.” Lynn is concerned with the preservation of his culture and the transmission to next generations. That is why young people are so important. According to one of the elderly women in the group, Lynn Rapu is a concept on Easter Island and it is a great honor to many to be instructed by him. He teaches everybody: older men and women, young people, little kids and even foreigners.

**Festivals**

The Rapa nui know many traditional feasts, known as Koro, of which most do not exist anymore. But besides these Koro, there are different festivals during the year. Festivals which are celebrated, are: the ‘Katangi Te Ako’ festival, which is totally conformed to music, dance and performance, ‘Día de la Lengua’, literally Day of the Language, and ‘Festival Tokerau’, a festival of the school. But the most important festival on Easter Island is ‘Tapati Rapa Nui’, that is celebrated each year and started in 1975. In that period it was a song and poetry festival, organized to attract tourists. The present modern productions, however, are characterized by indigenous dance, singing and songs, and competitions in among others horse races, wood carving, fishing, Kai-Kai, traditional body adornment, a parade and a Queen competition. The festival has become so popular that it is expanded to a two week annual celebration. But besides the high fest standard of the event, there is also a very serious side to the festival. People relive

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their culture and traditions in a special way. Within the festive and recreational ambiance people also try to save the traditional or autochthonous customs.

Concerning festivals many details are known to the youth, such as the repertoires, locations and subjects. This is not a very spectacular observation, since these are annual events, in which almost the entire population participates. Most young people experience solidarity during festivals and are excited about this matter. Attention is being paid to ancient dances and songs, such as *Riu* and *Uté*. In general young people find this attention for traditional Rapa nui music and dance sufficient, but some point out that there is just too little attention and describe the music and dance on festivals as more modern music and dance.

Most young people are very enthusiastic about the performing arts in their own definition of them. They think it is important and many are also engaged in the performing arts: they play Rapa nui music themselves or dance in a dance group, talk about it with elderly people or family, and learn things at school such as *Kai-Kai* or the *Hoko*. Most youth agree on the statement that music and dance are important for the Rapa nui identity and stress that the performing arts have special significance to them. Their opinions differ on the matter what other young Rapa nui think of the performing arts. A majority of the young people consider Rapa nui music and dance as the most beautiful of the world.

**Transformations**

Various types of transformations were mentioned to me by key informants. According to Papa Kiko, a great musicologist on the island, there are two main influences: the Tahitian influence and the tango which was brought to the island by a couple in 1930. The Rapa nui adjusted the dance to their own ideas and presently the tango is being played on accordion. He also stresses that nowadays people move their bodies too much and like to show their muscles. Other transformations include changes in texts and the use of electronic instruments. Aka Rapu believes that children and young people must know the ancient songs and dances. It is important that they learn the choreography and the sentiment of the songs. As a teacher Aka instructs children about the text, the stories of the songs, the music, and the dance. But the music and movements from before were monotonous and that has changed slightly over time. People want to see more sensual movements, both the local communities and tourists. Aka would like members of music and dance groups to study English, so they can explain tourists what the songs and dances are all about. Although the movements have changed and have become more sensual, the meaning of the songs remains the same. Children also create new dances with different music and choreography. Aka thinks this is important too. When foreigners are interested in learning the music or dances, Rapa nui are very glad to instruct them. Once persons were chosen and allowed to dance, because not everybody was allowed to dance, but nowadays everybody is welcome.

Also young people themselves have ideas about transformations that take place. Some youth mention in this context the “evolution” or modernization of music. The music has more ‘swing’ nowadays and is being modified into something with more energy and expression that everybody likes. The music acquires a kind of ‘disco-sound’. Although opinions differ, young people have a clear view on these transformations. Some approve of evolution and innovation of the performing arts. They like the music and dance from the present more than that from the past. They even think that people are more engaged in cultural expressions than before. Some add that actualizing the music and dance is necessary to preserve it and that maintaining the roots of culture is absolutely desirable. Others stress the negative aspect of the transformations. Ancient instruments are not used anymore, much technology is used and the essence of the music gets lost. Groups are formed to compete and not because of the heritage. But they are also aware of the fact that change
always takes place. Another factor concerns the Rapa nui language. Many young people point out that their knowledge about the content of the songs is limited, because the Rapa nui language has changed a lot over time. It is hard to understand the ancient Rapa nui language, because some words do not exist anymore. In spite of the fact that some do not know what the songs are about, it does not influence their opinion about the traditional music. Most young people reacted enthusiastically to this question and pointed out that the songs are important to them. They point out that the performing arts have become more visible, although it is not purely Rapa nui anymore. But it also gained in attractiveness; it is not as boring as it used to be, according to some. The transformations in performing arts I studied can be divided into seven kinds:

1. *Incorporation*:

Examples of incorporation are best seen in the use of instruments. Many modern instruments that are known to the whole world are played by the Rapa nui. Nowadays people are also engaged in electronic systems, so everything is connected during events in the open air. Also the rhythm of the music is Polynesian, although this is hardly striking anymore. Other forms of incorporation are the use of new materials to make costumes and certain dances like the Aparima, which is a combination of Rapa nui and Tahitian movements. These are mostly influences from Tahiti.

2. *Syncretism*:

According to some this process has been present for a long time. Rapa nui music is combined with Tahitian, Spanish or English lyrics. There is also a mixing of styles and dances of Rapa nui with dances from Tahiti, Samoa and the Marquesas. Also the *Hoko* is no longer what it used to be. A particular new style which has emerged is a mix of Rapa nui with Maori elements.

3. *Modernization*:

Modernization also takes place. There is more energy and more movement. The Rapa nui use positive elements from different parts in the world. Electric instruments and the style of playing makes the Rapa nui music more “modern”.

4. *Westernization*:

On the one hand the Rapa nui try to incorporate good things from abroad and adjust it to make it fit with their own style. On the other hand the flow of Western music (from Europe and the Unites States) is strong and continuous. Rapa nui lyrics are written to Reggae music and especially music in discotheques is of Western style.

5. *Disappearance*:

The ancient songs are truly in danger of disappearing. Elderly people that were engaged in preserving the ancient music have already passed away. Especially the language is fading away, which has an impact on other things, like songs. Also the prohibition of the Chilean forces to be engaged in cultural expressions a few decades ago have had a negative impact on the knowledge transmission of ancient music and dance. At present however there are still people who try to preserve songs like *Riu, Ùté, Kai-Kai* and the *Hoko* dance and still much can be saved from getting lost.

It is hard to ascertain a true revival, because it is difficult to determine whether the Rapa nui are interested in their culture or only in the money they can make. If there is no money, few people will continue, and this is certainly the case with the Tapati Rapa Nui festival according to some Rapa nui. However, interest in the performing arts does grow abroad and scientists and other interested people visit the island, interview key informants and even record music. What is really important is the interest of young Rapa nui. Present-day children and youngsters are very creative and have new ideas, but would like to see an evolution of the music and dance.

7. Impact of the media:

Easter Island has not experienced the same media development like the rest of the (Western) world. Nowadays almost everything is possible, but information stays limited and no real discussion takes place. In any case the media influence local musicians. Brazilian ideology and music were introduced through the media, like many other music styles. Matato’a, for example, is clearly influenced by the media and imitates other musicians. But opinions differ on the matter whether ancient music is also influenced by Western music or only the “new, present-day performing arts”.

Impact of tourism:

The transformations discussed here can be attributed to many factors of which tourism is one. Tourism is the most important economic sector of the island and this activity has increased so rapidly, that it now represents 85% of Gross National Product. In 2002 24,993 tourists visited the island and spent an average of US $162,- a day on the island.

Probably the most influential impact of tourism is the commercialization of cultural elements such as the performing arts. Everything is about tourists, because they supply the largest source of employment. Rapa nui music originally is very slow, has more melody and another rhythm, which makes it unattractive for tourism. In many tourist shows therefore, music is played with a Polynesian flavor and dances are performed with both Rapa nui and Polynesian elements. Several researchers have discussed the effect tourism has on the performing arts on Easter Island. Fischer and Campbell, for example, speak of tourist shows as a mockery of Rapa nui’s ancient musical tradition, a vulgar medley of air and a pastiche or imitation with little value. It is not about a spontaneous expression of a popular sentiment anymore, but only a presentation of a commercial spectacle for many dollars per hour with a variable musical basis. This situation can not be reversed, according to Campbell. Tourism causes an erosion in the customs and primitive arts. Rapa Nui has experienced this development in a high pace and it has been good for the economic currency and the Chilean nation. At the same time it ends the authenticity of the local musical art. Rapa nui’s most important cultural origin sources and the tires with the past are at danger (Fischer, 1993: 189-190 and Campbell, 1971: 239-40). But tourism makes people interested in the performing arts, although it is mostly in an economic way. Some still play music and dance from their hearts and also in a authentic way. But they have to keep themselves busy with the performing arts continuously and instruct others to make their show the best for tourists. They use foreign technology to accomplish this. Partly this is the cause of many changes in the music. Most young people enjoy these shows and do not take a negative stance towards these performances especially given to tourists. Some even see the transformation of music and dance groups into companies as a positive development. Earning money and demonstrating Rapa nui’s performing arts can be combined. If tourism indeed transforms the performing arts into a commercially exploitative resource entirely, and the youth seems fine with it, the future of the ancient Rapa nui music and dance is definitely at stake.
Attention for performing arts

Rapa nui are more interested in their own music now, but they like to change, evolve and enhance it. At present there are many people who worry about the future of the performing arts. Ten years ago there were also groups, but more arise and they professionalize themselves. More ways to reach the island have emerged and also more tourists visit the island. That is also one of the reasons why more attention is paid to the music and dance. It is a money making business. But before there was no responsibility, and now people are worried. They are also more proud of their music and dances. Also young people are interested. A lot of young people would like to have the school pay more attention to the performing arts, even though the Hoko is already being taught to all pupils. Also dance groups present this dance to tourists. Originally only man danced the Hoko, but now women in the group also participate. Nowadays the Hoko is performed with more creativity than before.

A young man I talked to had an interesting view on the performing arts. According to him there are two kinds of performing arts visible on Easter Island: a new, modern kind, in which many people are interested, and the ancient music and dances, to which people pay less attention. Especially young people seem to be more interested in the new form of performing arts, in which a new sound can be heard, modern instruments are used and many changes have taken place in the choreography. This is particularly clear in the reaction of one young person:

“We are a living culture that evolves! The roots are the roots, but we won’t stay in caves wearing a Hami. We evolve on a material, cultural and a sentimental level”.

There are several institutions and organizations on the island that are engaged in the preservation and promotion of the performing arts, like the municipality, the school and the centre for elderly people. But also national institutions, like Corfo, Conadi and Sernatur keep themselves busy with Rapa nui’s cultural expressions. Some organizations have a tourist background, like Cámara de Turismo or Tarai Henua, and also keep track of the developments in music, dance, groups and festivals. Besides the organizations and institutions, certain individuals are key persons in the preservation of the performing arts, like Papa Kiko, Peteriko Paté and Julio Hotus, but there are many more. Even music and dance groups aim to pass their musical and artistic heritage on to new generations.

Property Rights

I have asked a couple of key informants about the topic of indigenous property rights. Their opinions differ somewhat, although none of them spoke about implementing laws that protect their heritage as an inalienable resource. According to Papa Kiko, the rights belong to the person that records the music or films the dance and not to the person who supplies the information, has the knowledge or performs. He has helped many people himself, but he never received any compensation for his help. Only once a Swiss couple gave him furniture for his home, but besides them no one has promised him a percentage of the revenues of CD’s and so forth. Hugo, a member of the popular dance group Matatō’a, believes that property rights belong to every person that makes music and furthermore to all Rapa nui. Also according to Pascual, the director of another dance group called Polynesia, the property rights belong to the entire island and its people. “But”, he says, “the performing arts are not finished yet”. There are some persons that write songs and get them registered in Santiago de Chile, in order to assure their copyright. He believes that the ancient songs belong to the entire island. Pascual has had a lot of experience with...
foreigners that took advantage of the Rapa nui by bringing something on the market which they had collected on the island “without permission”. But at present Pascual is well aware of this fact and if people want to record something, they have to pay. Certainly there are also persons who come to the island with good intentions and are interested in making recordings as a kind of document for future generations. The property rights issue continues to be a difficult one. They are assigned to the Rapa nui and people that make or record music. As yet there are no fixed rules with relation to the property of the performing arts and that complicates the question whether it is justifiable that every arbitrary person can be engaged in the Rapa nui music and dance.

**Future**

It is difficult to make predictions about the future developments of Rapa nui’s performing arts, because it’s uncertain how the young generations will be dealing with their cultural heritage. Besides, tourism has a major impact and at this point commercialization has already greatly influenced traditional cultural elements. I also asked some Rapa nui engaged in the performing arts to give their view on the future. Most are pessimistic about the future. They fear that the performing arts in their authentic form will be lost in due time. Younger generations like the transformations and the mixing of music and dances. They have other sources of inspirations than just the ancient Rapa nui style or the elderly people. New groups emerge that make electronic music. Some groups preserve traditional music, but when these groups also disappear, it will be a hard task to maintain the traditional music and dance. Other types of music and dances are already present and will probably push aside the ancient Rapa nui music and dance even more in the near future. Tote Tepano, who is engaged in preserving the performing arts for many years, is hurt by the fact that more and more European things can be seen on his island. He foresees for the year 2010 that nothing will be Rapa nui anymore. But he is proud of the work he has done, which is stored and can be admired in the William Mulloy library.

**Conclusion**

Much attention is paid to the transmission of traditions to children and young people. They learn ancient music and dances at school and many interested young persons are also member of a music or dance group. At festivals entire families participate and the cultural identity is being stressed with various performance elements. Rapa nui’s performing arts are very diverse and the aspects which I have described shortly in this paper, include music and song, dance, music and dance groups and festivals. All these aspects together form the performing arts and are tightly intertwined.

Although many Rapa nui strive for the preservation of the performing arts, their future is primarily in the hands of the youth. Most young people know something about them. Only a few know little about the ancient music and dance, *Takona*, traditional costumes and festivals, but the majority can tell you many things. Every year is marked by different events, in which the performing arts are an important component. Young people experience this every year and many of them participate, either with the school or with their family. In general many young persons are interested in the cultural expressions of Easter Island, but it is mostly the young Rapa nui who underline their descent and are proud to be Rapa nui. The performing arts are then also a way of expressing their cultural identity. With relation to young people’s behavior, they are engaged in some way or another in music, dance or the materials of which costumes are made. Most young people love music and many play an instrument. They sing or they are a member of a music or dance group. But this does not mean that they are preserving the performing arts in an active and
direct form. Some key informants expressed their frustration about the mentality of the youth. They do not take sufficient interest in their cultural roots. The young people are also divided among themselves. They point out that ‘other young people’ do very little to preserve the island’s performing arts.

The transformations I studied were all identified by key figures in performing arts and young people I interviewed, but incorporation and modernization were mentioned more often than Westernization and disappearance. Most young people approve of changes in the performing arts, because they were too monotonous earlier. But opinions differ greatly on the matter whether changes are good or bad. Some consider it a natural evolution, innovation or modernization, while others emphasize the loss of the essence of Rapa nui’s performing arts. In general most people see the threat of losing the ancient songs and dances and are definitely worried. Changes that young people themselves pointed out, are mostly the acceleration of the rhythm, the mixing with other music styles, more movements in dances and the use of new/other instruments. Evolution, modernization and professionalization are terms which young people use. The majority of young people think promotion of performing arts is necessary. They find culture important and they are interested in the performing arts, but they do not show much enthusiasm doing something themselves. They mention that the present-day generation of young people on the island is more proud of their background than their parents, but if they also would do more to maintain it, is the question. Those who are member of a music or dance group try a little harder, but according to many directors of these groups they do not have much discipline. Besides the professionalization of groups, which gives ancient music and dance new attention, two forms of performing arts can be distinguished. The first form is authentic and slowly disappearing and the second form is modern and does well in tourist shows. It has a Polynesian flavor and the movements of ancient dances are “evolved” to a more sensual character. Slowly more and more people of older generations start to realize that the ancient performing arts (the first form) is disappearing and undertake action to preserve them and interest the youth.

Concerning the influence of tourism on the performing arts, scientists are worried about the disappearance of ancient music and dance and the commercialization of these cultural expressions. The youth speaks with approval of changes and developments in this area. But also the elderly generations express their fear that they might be the last persons singing ancient songs and dancing ancient dances. In any case, it is certain that tourism has an influence on Rapa nui’s culture and performing arts and what this means in the long run is hard to say. Many Rapa nui realize that something needs to be done to control the influences of tourism and organize themselves in project groups to take up the challenge. Many young people observe a change in the attention to the performing arts in recent years, but the cause is not attributed to the fact that there is too much tourism. The efforts that are being done to preserve and promote the performing arts on behalf of tourism and the tourist shows in hotels are being supported by most young people. They approve of it for different reasons: it attracts more tourists, more money is earned and Easter Island can present itself even better to the outside world. Young people agree with the statement that they get more engaged in cultural expressions such as the performing arts as a consequence of tourism. What has come forward mostly in the effects of tourism is the commercialization of the performing arts. It is more about the money now. And in spite of the fact that preservation is important, many point out that evolution is also good. There are many persons and organizations that are engaged in the preservation and promotion of the performing arts. The music and dance groups are a good example. They advertise for Rapa nui’s performing arts by performing abroad. Preservation and promotion on behalf of tourism and of the Rapa nui themselves is considered by most young people as a good development. The performing arts stay alive and meanwhile money is earned. There is no answer to the question how the future will look
like. I believe however that the performing arts on Easter Island will not vanish that easily. It is a good way to earn money and at the same time to be engaged in artistic expressions. But how authentic it will continue to be, is still uncertain. Although older people recognize that they are losing the ancient music and dance, and attempt to preserve and maintain them, younger generations are not very interested in the ancient songs and dances which are characterized as monotonous with a slow rhythm and few movements. Besides, this type of ancient music and dance is not very attractive for tourist shows. Partly because of tourism the Rapa nui continue to present the performing arts and emphasize the richness of their culture. But the survival of the authentic performing arts is threatened and without action will be lost.

References

