

Polynesian Hymns in Papua: The Synthesis of a Christian Educational Tool and Local Creative Expression

Don NILES

Visiting Professor, Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation

Hiroshima University

Higashi-Hiroshima 739-8529, Japan

Abstract

At the end of the last century, many missionaries from overseas arrived in Papua New Guinea seeking to convert the population to Christianity. Missionary opposition to local music and dance was often intense. Nevertheless, singing was seen as an essential ingredient of successful Christianization. In the southern part of the country, Polynesian missionaries introduced a type of singing from their home islands which presented Bible teachings. Today, this symbol of the United Church of Papua New Guinea enjoys great popularity and provides both an educational message and a creative outlet.

The Christianisation of Papua New Guinea, begun during the last half of the nineteenth century, has frequently required serious decisions to be made by both local inhabitants and foreign missionaries regarding the continued performance of traditional music. As much traditional music is intimately entwined with traditional religious beliefs, could this be compatible or, at least, co-exist with the new religious beliefs being introduced? At the beginning, this seemed impossible. Becoming a Christian required breaking with traditional religion, particularly something so overt as traditional music and dance. Additionally, many missionaries believed that dances encouraged sexual excess, further proof of the incompatibility of traditional music with Christianity.

However, strategies for dealing with traditional music varied between the missions entering the country and amongst individual missionaries themselves.¹ Furthermore, some attitudes changed over time. Some churches continue to discourage participation in traditional music and dance for their members (e.g., the Seventh-Day Adventists and smaller Pentecostal churches), while others have found ways to incorporate aspects of traditions into Christian worship (e.g., Catholics and Anglicans). Lutherans, who initially had a very severe attitude towards traditional music, have come to utilise traditional melodies with Christian texts, creating a vibrant, proudly distinctive form of worship.²

Much of the Christian music substituted for traditional music originated from the home countries of the missionaries concerned, particularly, hymns from Germany, France, and England focussing on Christian pedagogy or praising God. However, this paper concerns the introduction of a type of Polynesian hymn singing into Papua New Guinea, specifically the area around the present-day capital of Papua New Guinea. These hymns are today called *peroveta anedia* or 'prophet songs' (singular, *perove-*

ta anena) in Motu, a language spoken in its original form³ by c. 15,000 people in fourteen villages and in a pidginized form by thousands of others. The introduction of *peroveta* among the Motu people primarily was due to the Polynesian missionaries who first came to this region over a hundred years ago. Today such songs are very much distinctive of the United Church along the southern coast of the country and have become a popular form of creative Christian expression combined with educational aims. In order to understand how this introduction took place and why it is today of such importance, however, it is necessary to outline briefly the place of traditional Motu music before the arrival of the missionaries (see Groves 1954).

Motu song/dance. In traditional Motu society, the composition of new music appears to have been very rare. A number of people have told me that there simply were no composers. Traditional song performances were re-creations of ancient, usually anonymous, music handed down through generations, in a language almost totally incomprehensible to performers, at least since the last century.

The main occasion for the performance of such songs was at dances, sponsored by a senior man of a clan. Gifts of food were laid before clan elders and its ancestors on the verandah of the house at the front of a clan's line of houses. People danced on the ground in front of this verandah to songs (*gaba anedia* 'drum songs') accompanied by hourglass-shaped drums, one end of which was open, the other covered by a skin. Such clan dances were performed to appease the clan's ancestors, whose well-being was essential to making gardens fruitful, and fish and game abundant. The continuance of the clan, as well as its strength, derived from the ancestors. In the government's *Annual Report for 1922-23*, a Papua New Guinean, who had worked with many anthropologists in this region of the country, remarked that, for the Motu, "... their one desire and sole trust is in the spirits of their ancestors.... All feasts, both with and without dances, are acts of worship, for by them they show their great regard for their ancestors.... Their whole trust is in them" (Ova 1925).⁴ This great regard for ancestors is partly demonstrated through the performance of such ancestral songs. Hence, songs were not performed to display musical and poetic creativity, but rather as a demonstration to the ancestors of the continuation of a long tradition.

Dances were held as a mechanism to resolve personal quarrels where one of the parties is eventually defeated by going bankrupt —i.e., no longer being able to host such a dance— and also to honour the memory of a deceased relative. In addition, however, Motu dances, as in most other parts of Papua New Guinea, were also occasions of display, both to the ancestors, as well as to members of the opposite sex. Dancers decorated with large plumed headdresses and fragrant leaves, oils and paints, which had been magically treated. Traditional Motu norms frowned upon single males and females speaking together during the day. Consequently, these night dances were wonderful occasions to arrange or engage in sexual liaisons.

Another important and well-known occasion for the performance of music revolved around the ocean voyages by the Motu almost three hundred kilometres to the west to exchange clay pots for sago (a trade known as *hiri*). At such times, *ehona* (or *hehona*) and *upara* would be sung by men and women, respectively. However, the performance of music at the feasts described earlier is of more central importance to our understanding of the introduction of *peroveta*, because of the foreign reaction to the dance and the subsequent banning of participation in it for all Christians.

Arrival of missionaries. In 1873, the first London Missionary Society⁵ missionaries began permanent residence amongst the Motu people of Hanuabada village, near the present-day capital, Port Moresby.

These first missionaries were not from Europe or Australia, but from other islands in the Pacific, particularly the Cook Islands and the Loyalty Islands. Although, they were called “teachers”, rather than “missionaries” by the LMS, they were essential to the spread of Christianity along the southern coast of the country. It would be a year before they would be joined by their superior, Rev. William G. Lawes, who would also be based at Hanuabada.

Mission objection to the dance predictably focussed on the sexual activities. In 1898, Lawes (in Papua New Guinea,⁶ 1874-1906) described Motu dance as “a carnival of licentiousness and sensuality.” Further,

[i]t lasted from three to four months during which time all work (except that absolutely necessary) was given up and the people gave themselves up to lust and immorality. The meaning of the dance, the *raison d'être* for its existence was fornication. The young men kept tally of the girls they had connexion with, and reckoned them up at the end of the season. In its origin the dance was no doubt religious, but it existed for opportunities of sexual intercourse. (Lawes 1898)

In the same letter, he states that “it has been an unwritten law that all who join our church shall give up all connexion with the dance” (Lawes 1898). On numerous occasions, Lawes came into conflict with the administration which, even at this time, was trying to promote traditional dance. In 1904, F. R. Barton, the Acting Administrator who would later contribute an invaluable article about the Motu *hiri* trade (Barton 1910), hosted a feast and carnival with dance and was planning another the following year (Pompey 1969). Outraged, Lawes felt this went against all the work the mission had accomplished, and had 240 of the participants of the 1904 dance dropped from the Church Roll (Lawes 1905a). Even in the early 1950s, dance participants were refused communion (Belshaw 1957: 188-89).

Yet, Lawes did also recognise the role of dance as social entertainment and wrote: “one of our most difficult questions is that of amusement and recreation —Christianity takes away most of those native to the soil because of their heathen associations, and what can we give them in their place?” (Lawes 1893).

In essence then, by the end of the nineteenth century, the LMS had effectively banned traditional dance for converts to Christianity and, since it was a part of the dance, traditional music as well. Yet they also recognised the need for a replacement of some type. The translation of Western hymns into Motu was one way of trying to fill this void, as well as promoting Christianity and its teachings. Since the early days of the establishment of the mission and during the missionaries’ process of learning the Motu language, Western hymns had been translated into Motu.⁷ The first book ever printed in Motu, or in any other Papua New Guinea language, consists of common phrases, stories from the Old and New Testament, and thirteen hymns (Anon. 1877), some of which are still sung. Yet, apparently even Lawes recognised that this was not enough. It is also interesting to note that, as one author kindly expressed it, Lawes was “without the gift of song” (King 1909: 194). Consequently, the teaching of singing was taken over by Lawes’s wife and, presumably, the Polynesian teacher with whom he lived in Hanuabada, Ruatoka.

Ruatoka. Information on Ruatoka⁸ is scattered among a few publications. However, one important source appears to have been ignored —his tombstone, found in the old cemetery outside Hanuabada.⁹ Because of some of the valuable information it contains, occasionally in conflict with other sources, its full text is presented here:

Motu text on tombstone:

*English translation:*¹⁰

PUPUNA BINAI	this monument to
TAOTO, RUATOKA ADAVANA	Taoto, Ruatoka's wife
BAINE AHELALOLAIA	stands in their memory
IA RURUTU AI E VARA	she was born in Rurutu
LAGANI 19 NIU GINI AI E NOHO	and lived 19 years in New Guinea
DIRAVA ENA HESIAI E KARAIA	doing the work of the Lord
APERILA 15, 1902 DIRAVA IA E BOILIA	on 15 April 1902, the Lord called her
RUATOKA DANU	Ruatoka also
SETEMA 12, 1903 DIRAVA IA E VAVEA	God called him on 12 September 1903
ENA MAURI LAGANI 60	he was 60 years old
DIRAVA ENA HEREVA IA ESE NIU GINI AI	he preached the word of God in New Guinea
E ATOA GUNA. LAGANI 31 DIRAVA	before many. For 31 years
ENA HESIAI AI E KARAIA MAI	he worked in the service of God with much
GOADANA IDA	conviction.

Ruatoka was born in Tamarua village on Mangaia Island of the Cook Islands in 1843 (determined from the information on the tombstone) or 1846 (Lovett 1902: 132). The LMS had already been active on Mangaia since 1824. In his early twenties, Ruatoka studied at the Rarotonga Theological Institute with James Chalmers, an energetic and influential missionary, who would do much pioneering work in Papua New Guinea and be killed there.

In 1872, Ruatoka and his wife, Tungane (Lovett 1902: 132), were part of a group of LMS missionaries going to Papua New Guinea. Others in the group were from different parts of the Cook Islands and also from the Loyalty Islands near New Caledonia. After a few months at Manumanu village, Ruatoka became ill and was relocated to the Port Moresby area in 1873, a region which had recently been explored by a European navigator. Tungane died in 1885 or 1886¹¹ and sometime later Ruatoka married a woman from Rurutu village in the Austral (or Tubuai Islands), to the east of the Cooks. His second wife was a widow of another LMS teacher. Information about this wife, however, is conflicting.

Crocombe (1982: 71) states that Ruatoka's second wife was a Papuan woman from Hula who was the widow of a New Guinean teacher (also see Garrett 1982: 210). However, the tombstone for Ruatoka and his second wife, Taoto, states that she was from Rurutu and had been in New Guinea for nineteen years before she died in 1902. Lovett (1902: 138), a source which Crocombe consulted, only notes that in December 1885, Tungane, Ruatoka's first wife, died and "sometime after Ruatoka married the widow of a teacher." If we assume the information on the tombstone is correct, Taoto would have arrived in Papua New Guinea around 1883. Consulting a list of LMS teachers in Papua up until 1885, the only woman from Rurutu listed as still being alive is Maru's wife, who was stationed at Kerepuna (=Keapara) and had arrived in April 1882 (Anon. 1982: 133). If Maru's wife was the woman, Taoto, who eventually married Ruatoka, this may partly explain the confusion in Crocombe's article as the village of Kerepuna is quite close to Hula.

In 1888, Ruatoka and his wife were reported as rendering the songs in church services "lively and efficient" (Pearse 1888). In 1903, Ruatoka died, seventeen months after his second wife.¹² He spent over thirty years total in Papua New Guinea.

The introduction of *peroveta*. In a 1972 article in *Pacific Islands Monthly*,¹³ Marjorie Crocombe, herself from the Cook Islands, credits Ruatoka and his colleagues with the introduction of *peroveta* (Crocombe 1982: 71). Subsequent authors, probably following her lead, have also usually singled him out as being solely responsible for the introduction (e.g., Garrett 1982: 210; Delaney 1984: 79). However, it is doubtful that the introduction of *peroveta* could have been accomplished by only one individual. Since there were a number of other Cook Islands and other Polynesian missionaries working in the same area, it seems likely that the introduction of *peroveta* cannot be credited to Ruatoka alone. Rather, such credit is probably simply a matter of adding another accomplishment to Ruatoka's long, distinguished career. Indeed, earlier authors are not specific about Ruatoka, nor even about a solely Rarotongan influence:

South-sea island mission pastors from Rarotonga and Samoa introduced a new kind of music, a repertoire of songs which the Motu call Prophet-songs—harmonised versions of biblical history. (Groves 1956)

Today, Ruatoka in particular is very fondly remembered for his thirty-year work in Papua and his name and image have been memorialised in numerous ways, including: an armshell called “Ruatoka”, brought to Boera village at the opening of the first church there in 1876; Ruatoka Road near Hanuabada; Ruatoka College at Kwikila (Central Province), where the United Church trained teachers for mission schools; Ruatoka Home at the United Church college at Gaulim, East New Britain College; a monument to him in front of the United Church at Hanuabada; Ruatoka House, a block of student flats at Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji; and, a 7¢ Papua New Guinea postal stamp commemorating him in October 1972.¹⁴

The only other source mentioning the introduction of *peroveta* is in an unpublished paper written by Loujaya Kouza-Tankirey, then a student, in 1986 as the result of interviews in Hanuabada. The people she interviewed claimed Ruatoka was too busy preaching and teaching Bible doctrine to be involved in teaching *peroveta*. Instead, a government storekeeper from Rarotonga named Teina Materua is credited with teaching *peroveta* to people in Hanuabada. He was the son of a pastor, although the identity of his father is not clear.¹⁵ He later married Boio Gau, a woman of the Gunina Idibana¹⁶ clan of Hanuabada. Although they had no children of their own, they adopted a Hanuabada boy named Aran Teina.

Teina Materua spent his weekends moving from Hanuabada to Elevala, Porebada, Baruni and other nearby villages teaching people PEROVETA songs. The villagers didn't understand him at first as he sang in his mother tongue, but they were good imitators and so they copied after hearing him. (Kouza-Tankirey 1986)

The melody taught by Teina would be learned and then, the same melody would be used with Motu texts. Certainly much more needs to be learned about the introduction of *peroveta* through oral traditions and written sources.

Regardless of whether one individual introduced *peroveta* or not, Polynesian forms of music began to fill the void left by the LMS through the banning of traditional dance. Whether this was a planned substitution or merely the result of the Polynesian missionaries teaching songs from their own homeland in a social context is not known. Additionally, by only examining recorded evidence, it is impossible at this stage to say when *peroveta* may have been introduced.

In general, *peroveta anedia* are Bible stories set to music. As mentioned previously, just five years after the missionaries first settled amongst the Motu, a booklet had already appeared containing hymn texts and, more importantly for the study of *peroveta*, it also included written versions of Bible stories in

Motu—stories such as the creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, the birth of Jesus, and his crucifixion. Hence, this booklet was for teaching Motu as a written language, while at the same time providing written versions of Bible stories in Motu which, undoubtedly, had been told numerous times in church and during other times of religious instruction. A visitor in the early 1880s wrote about the importance of hymn singing in local languages, even though the translations may be imperfect: “Many a so-called ignorant native lays hold of a great truth through its repetition in song, and it is not always mere parrot knowledge” (King 1909: 194). Numerous anthropologists, travellers, and other writers visited the Motu in the early part of this century but, surprisingly, there are no specific references to *peroveta* until writings based on field-work undertaken in 1955 (Groves 1956). And although Motu traditional music and hymns had been recorded by visitors sporadically since 1898, the first known recordings of *peroveta* also date from this fieldwork by Murray Groves in 1955.

Regardless of this difficulty of dating, the purpose of *peroveta* seems to have been, and continues to be, Biblical pedagogy. The earliest prophet songs were sung in Polynesian languages, especially Rarotongan (from the Cook Islands) and Niuean. Eventually, some were translated into Motu by the Polynesian missionaries. These early Motu translations are apparent because the texts are either awkward or grammatically inaccurate. Later, as the Motu became familiar with the musical form and with the Bible itself, they began composing *peroveta* themselves—an activity which, as noted above, was very rare or absent in traditional music.

The connection of *peroveta* with Rarotonga is plausible to anyone who has ever heard recordings of Motu *peroveta* and Rarotongan *imene tuki*. In *peroveta*, there are two main unaccompanied vocal lines: *pere*, sung by women; *maru*, sung by men. Both of these terms can be traced back to Rarotongan origins: *pere* derives from the Rarotongan word *perepere*,¹⁷ which refers to the melismatic singing of the four solo parts; *maru* is the Rarotongan term for the lowest male group part (Moyle 1985b: 7-9). Terminology for Motu four-part hymns also employs these terms, but in hymns, *pere* refers to both female parts (soprano and alto), while *maru* to both male parts (tenor and bass).¹⁸ The terms *maru* and *perepere* also used in Tahitian forms (Stillman 1991: 129) and McLean (1980: 56) notes the introduction of *imene* singing to Aitutaki (Cook Islands) by two Tahitian pastors in c. 1820. Consequently, it would be very valuable to investigate to what extent such words are used throughout Polynesia, the possible ultimate origin of the *peroveta* style of singing in Tahiti, and its spread westwards to Papua New Guinea through the Cooks.

In Motu *peroveta*, the *pere* is considered the most important part and is composed first. It also begins a performance, with the *maru* entering later. Often, performers are so familiar with the standard melodic and harmonic movements of *peroveta* singing that they can supply a *maru* to a given *pere* with little difficulty.

As stated earlier, the main purpose of *peroveta* is as a musical representation of Biblical stories. While the entire Bible in Motu has only been available in printed form since 1973 (Anon. 1973), the stories from it have certainly been widely transmitted for a long time through church services, Bible study groups, and through *peroveta* themselves. Consequently, the Bible texts in *peroveta* are not word-for-word renditions from the Motu Bible, but rather they re-tell important events for church-goers. While both the New and the Old Testament are sources for *peroveta*, available recordings show New Testament themes more than twice as abundant as Old Testament ones.¹⁹

Structure of *peroveta*. Musically, *peroveta* typically consist of two phrases, varied to accommodate

the syllables and accents of the text. The text is set syllabically with immediate repeats of each phrase. Cadences are stereotyped and phrase endings are always on a harmonic octave.

The following musical example is typical of *peroveta*. It was recorded at the 1989 Hiri Moale Festival, an annual celebration of the traditions of the Motu and, more recently, other groups of the Papuan provinces.

The text here consists of four phrases set to two contrasting melodic phrases, which are varied in minor rhythmic and melodic ways to accommodate the syllables of the text. Consequently, the structure may be analysed as:

Text	Music
AA	aa
BB	bb
CC	a'a'
DD	b'b'
CC	a'a'
DD	b'b'

Text:

A	Lohiabada oi emu Dirava oi ia ba ura henia
B	Mai lalomu idoinai e (3x) mai daramu i doinai danu
C	Itorena tauna egoau henia momokani hahediba tauna
D	Dirava ena Basileia e (3x) padamui dia daudau

Translation:

Lord, your God, you must love him
with all your mind and with all your heart

The scribe has spoken truly, this is indeed a teacher
 “The Kingdom of God, you are not far from it”

From Motu Bible (Mark 12: 32-34):

Itorena tauna ma e hereva henia, eto, Hahediba taumu e, momokani o hereva maoromu, Dirava na tamona mo, idauna na lasi; bena tau ta ese baine lalokau henia mai lalona idoinai, mai darana idoinai, mai goadana idoinai, bona dekena tauna baine lalokau henia sibona e helalokaumu hegeregereana,²⁰ bada hereana bunai, helaga karadia iboudiai e hereadiamu.

Iesu dibana ia na vada e haere mai lalo-pararana ida, bena e hamaoroa, eto, Oi bona Dirava ena basileia padamui na dia daudau. Una murinai taunimanima iboudiai na ia inanadaina garina e gari-va. (Anon. 1973: 76-77)

From English Bible:

The teacher of the Law said to Jesus, “Well done, Teacher! It is true, as you say, that only the Lord is God and that there is no other god but he. And man must love God with all his heart and with all his mind and with all his strength; and he must love his neighbour as he loves himself. It is more important to obey these two commandments than to offer on the altar animals and other sacrifices to God.”

Jesus noticed how wise his answer was, and so he told him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” After this nobody dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

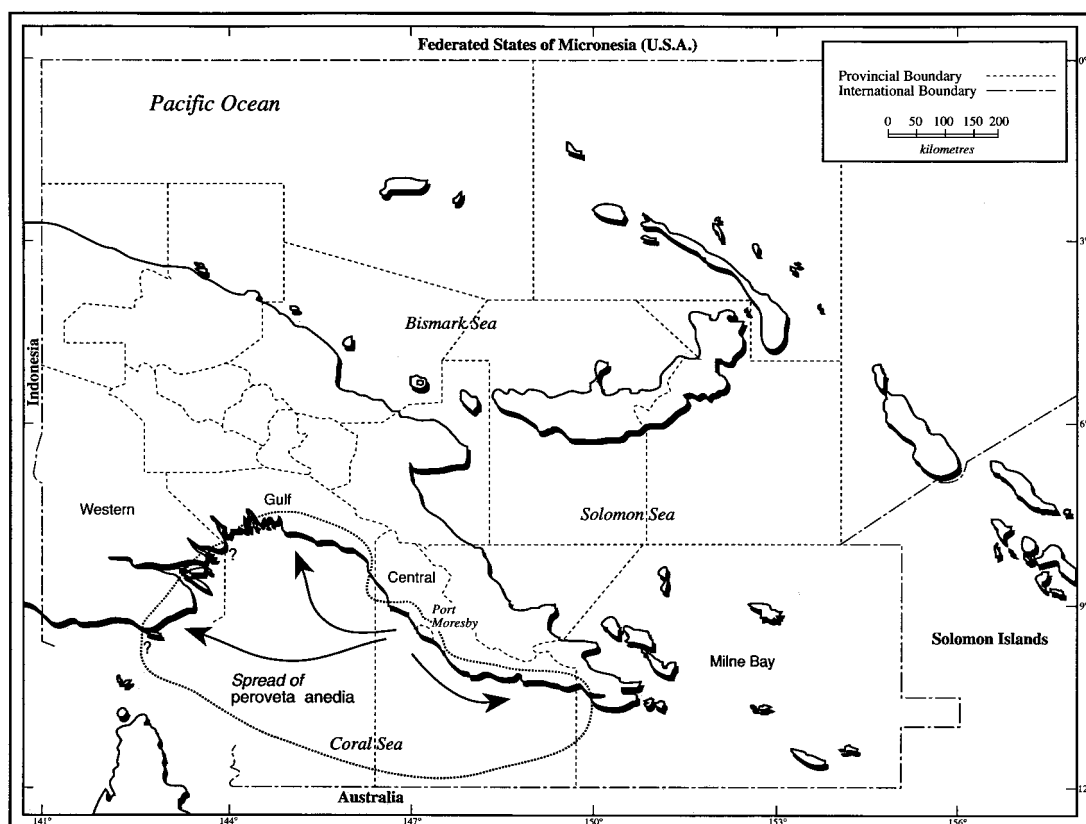
In this example, the separate male and female parts are apparent and, occasionally, other voices are heard to diverge momentarily from the main lines.

If one listens to a recording of *imene tuki* from the Cook Islands, one will be struck by much aural similarity. While for Cook Islands music, both McLean (1980) and Moyle (1985b) note the use of two main melodies, one for women, one for men, four or five named solo parts are also employed. In many recorded examples, however, the main male and female parts are predominant.²¹ What is particularly striking in contrast, however, is the much slower tempo of Motu *peroveta*.²²

Peroveta are usually performed during a church service, interspersed amongst four-part hymns. Hence, in this context, they are traditionally sung by stationary performers, either seated or standing. Today, however, they are also performed in competition during the annual Hiri Moale Festival or other important days of church celebration, especially the *boubou*, a gathering for raising money for a particular United Church circuit. At such occasions, performances may be more lively than those occurring during weekly church services and performers often sway their hips or move their hands in stereotypical Polynesian movements. Groups from different villages often distinguish themselves by dressing in the same combination of colours. Only recently have some groups started wearing traditional skirts. Previously, no traditional dress would be worn because of church opposition to the dance associated with such skirts. Besides indicating a greater laxity of the church towards traditional customs, this perhaps also demonstrates the acceptance of *peroveta* as something approaching being traditional. Rare secular *peroveta* texts may also be found. For example, at the 1989 Hiri Moale Festival one group sang a song of welcome to visitors as well as thanking the city council for having such a gathering for *peroveta* competition.

The spread of *peroveta*. Because the LMS worked in the coastal areas along the entire southern coast

of Papua, it could be assumed that *peroveta* would, from long ago, be found throughout the entire area, but this is not true. It appears that *peroveta* has been of primary importance only around the present-day capital (Port Moresby) and, perhaps, seventy kilometres to the south. It is only since World War II that *peroveta* have spread widely along the coast to other areas of LMS (presently, United Church) influence (see map). Today, *peroveta* are sung along much of the southern coast, although they are often imported initially in Motu and only subsequently translated into local languages—hence, paralleling the original introduction among the Motu.



Approximate spread and distribution of *peroveta anedia* in Papua

Still, *peroveta* remain directly associated with the United Church in the Papuan region—i.e., other churches in Papua (e.g., Catholics, Methodists, etc.) do *not* make any use of *peroveta*; conversely, the United Church in other parts of the country generally does not employ *peroveta*. The exception to the latter statement, however, is when people from the Motu area or other parts in which *peroveta* are sung settle in another part of the country—if enough people are present from the Central Province area, it may be possible for some *peroveta* performances to take place.

Cultural exchanges. Within the last decade some curious events have taken place which further tie parts of the Central Province to the Cook Islands. In 1981, a number of Motu men and women visited Rarotonga. They performed *peroveta* for the Rarotongans and the latter reciprocated with *imene tuki*.

The Motu reported that the Rarotongans were very moved by their performances, that they were in their old language, and that the places of origin of the *peroveta* melodies could be identified. A video tape was made by one of the Motu during this visit. Upon returning home, he has played it for villagers who have been quick to learn some of the songs on the tape and use them in the composition of new *peroveta*.

Additionally, a few years ago, Rarotongans visited Hanuabada and performed some songs. The Motu were initially quite upset to see them dance during the church performance where the Motu would not because of church opposition to dance. The Motu are presently confused as to whether it is acceptable to dance in church or not. As Kouza-Tankirey (1986) reports, however, these visits of the Motu to Rarotonga and vice versa have created a number of problems. Because of the similarity between Motu *peroveta* and Rarotongan *imene tuki*, an attempt was made to ethnically relate the two groups of people. It was suggested that either the Hanuabadans are descendants of the Rarotongans or that the present generation of Hanuabadans are of mixed Rarotonga-Motu origin. While it is easy to understand their desire to identify with each other through their similar music, Kouza-Tankirey fears that an emphasis on this linkage may result in further abandonment of true Motu traditions while "alien" customs are adopted.

Other introduced Polynesian songtypes and influences. A number of other songtypes with Polynesian origins have been introduced into southern Papua New Guinea. In addition to *peroveta*, *imua* or *emua* is also reported by anthropologists from the early 1950s. Groves (1954: 2-3) describes this genre: "a discreet and drab routine apparently introduced from Polynesia via the Torres Straits (where the Mission was first established), and considerably devitalized en route was danced by a large group of people in Poreporena for several months preceding the Easter of 1951."

Belshaw remarks on a Samoan origin for the dance which was introduced by Samoan teachers and the establishment of the Emua Club (Belshaw 1957: 143-44). He also observes the irony in the banning of traditional Motu dance and the promotion of Samoan dances as a replacement:

Young girls are allowed to be enthusiastic in the performance of introduced Polynesian dances which seem far more libidinous than the Motu dances (and certainly attract greater numbers of wide-eyed European men)... Those very Samoan teachers who had condemned traditional Motu dances and introduced Polynesian ones, were themselves tenacious of their own traditional dance forms. (Belshaw 1957: 189)

Finally, Sinclair (1982: 34) notes that "... the Samoans introduced their own songs and dances which had been stripped of their own 'heathen' elements. Some of these are still danced by Papuans complete with the songs in Samoan." Today, however, such songs and dances are seldom performed.

Of much greater significance today is the dance commonly known as "Kiwai dance" in Papua New Guinea. As the term suggests, it is often associated with the Kiwai people of Western Province, but is also enthusiastically performed by many groups along the southern coast of that province, where it is called *taibubu*. Although it is clear that *taibubu* derives from the *taibobo*, danced in the Torres Strait Islands between Papua New Guinea and Australia, it may ultimately derive from the Rotuma (Fiji) dance called *tautonga*. Rotuma men came to the Torres Strait to work in the pearl-shelling industry and are believed to have taught the dance to local people and other workers. The separate groups of dancers and seated instrumentalists, the use of the *pat* bamboo slit-drum, melodic contour, type of polyphony used, dance movements, etc., all suggest a Polynesian origin (Laba & Niles 1984).

The type of polyphony exhibited in *peroveta* has probably also been an influence in post-World War

II songs accompanied by guitars. Such *stringben* songs, however, also have stylistic debts to other church music and country and western music, as well as other types of popular music, so it may not be possible to isolate certain elements as being directly derived from *peroveta*.

Conclusions. *Peroveta* is an extremely important style of Christian expression in the United Church area of the southern coast of Papua New Guinea, particularly amongst the Motu people. It probably originates from a type of hymn singing in the Cook Islands and/or other regions in Polynesia and its introduction was facilitated through the work of missionaries from that area.

Although *peroveta* are not considered “traditional” in the same way as Motu *hiri* songs or the *gaba anedia* performed at feasts, they have been part of musical expression for many decades and have now become a more familiar symbol of the Motu than the traditional music of their ancestors. The type of polyphony employed has also probably had an effect on the development of different types of guitar-accompanied popular music.

Peroveta provide an excellent example of an introduced form being fully adopted and utilised, and providing a new outlet for creative activity amongst people for whom there was little opportunity in traditional society for music composition. Furthermore, the transmission of such music serves a dual role in both ensuring its continuation and providing accessible paraphrases of Bible stories.

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Notes

- [1] See Niles (1996:xxii-lxiv; 1997) for further details of the approaches used and their application today.
- [2] Zahn (1996) documents the historical development of this indigenous hymnody.
- [3] Fourteen Motu villages are scattered along the southern coast of Central Province. From west to east, these villages are: Manumanu, Rearea, Boera, Porebada, Tatana, Hanuabada, Elevala, Tanobada, Vabukori, Pari, Tubusereia, Barakau, Gaire, and Gabagaba. Today, Hanuabada, Elevala, and Tanobada are commonly called Hanuabada (Groves 1972b). For more general information on the Motu, see Belshaw (1957) and Groves (1954, 1972a, 1972b).
- [4] Ova (c. 1877–1951) himself at one time gave up dancing to become a Christian and wrote of the moral dangers of dancing (Ova 1925), but later resumed it (Williams 1939: 43, n. 98).
- [5] In 1962, the LMS combined with a splinter group to form the Papua Ekalesia, which then was amalgamated with Methodists to form the present-day United Church of Papua New Guinea.
- [6] Most of the early events which are described here took place when this part of the country was British New Guinea, i.e., a colony of Britain. However, the name of this region has frequently changed over the course of time so, in the interests of simplicity, rather than precise, historical accuracy, I use the term “Papua New Guinea”, regardless of the period being discussed. “Papua” is used to refer to the southern region of the country.
- [7] King (1909: 84) remarks at the 1876 opening of a chapel at Boera: “The first hymn sung was a Motu translation of ‘I Have a Father in the Promised Land.’”
- [8] Numerous photos and engravings of Ruatoka have been published, including, in chronological order: Horne (1894: 403; an

engraving with his wife); Lovett (1899: vol. 1, facing p. 385); King (1909: facing p. 162); Stuart (1973: photo between pp. 160-61); Gash & Whittaker (1975: 115, pl. 236; with unidentified with wife and six children); Crocombe (1982: 66; engraving with wife); and Garrett (1982: 209).

- [9] For help in locating the tombstone, I am grateful to my colleagues, Edward Gende and Dominic Yakanduo.
- [10] I very much appreciate the assistance of Jack Lahui in this translation.
- [11] According to Lawes (1896; as cited in Dutton 1985: 185), Ruatoka's first wife died in Port Moresby on 31 January 1886.
- [12] As seen above, Ruatoka's tombstone, as well as most other sources, gives his date of death as 12 September 1903. Garrett (1982: 21), however, states 1906. Stuart (1973: 276) describes the period between the death of Ruatoka's wife and Ruatoka himself as "a few months."
- [13] Reprinted as Crocombe (1982).
- [14] Information from Crocombe (1982), Bentley (1982: 40), and personal knowledge.
- [15] The only person named Materua noted in Musgrave's list of LMS teachers (Anon. 1982: 131-34) is also from Mangaia Island in the Cooks, but he and his wife were murdered by Kalo villagers in 1881, five years after their arrival. Consequently, it is doubtful that this could be Teina Materua's father.
- [16] According to Kouza-Tankirey (1986), this clan claims to be particularly knowledgeable about *peroveta* because of their connection to Teina Materua.
- [17] A form also occasionally used in Motu.
- [18] In contrast to the Motu use of such Polynesian terms, in other parts of Papua New Guinea where prophet songs are sung by United Church members, terminology may differ. In the Hula area of Central Province, prophet songs are called *peroveta marimari* (*marimari* being the Hula word for 'songs'), while the men's part is *karulu*, the women's *mari rage* (information from Mary Koupa). However, in the Toaripi language, spoken in the Gulf Province, such songs are called *peroveta fara* (again, *fara* 'song'), but the men's part is again called *maru* and the women's part *pele* (information from Mark Auhova).
- [19] Ole (1986) considers the textual content of *peroveta* in another part of Central Province, while Kreeck (1991: 67-85; 1995) also discusses the distribution and musical structure of *peroveta*.
- [20] The italicised *g* in Motu texts here represents a voiced, velar fricative. In other printed materials, it may also be represented by a macron placed above the letter or not be orthographically distinguished at all from a voiced, velar stop.
- [21] According to Moyle (1985a), such singing is also distinctive of Niue, another source of early missionaries in the Central Province region.
- [22] Possibly the Motu performance is an example of an older Cook Islands style.

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