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The Cook Islands Christian Churches of Rarotonga

LIVING CONSERVATION IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Carolyn Hill

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, the University of Auckland, 2016.
ABSTRACT

The architecture of the Cook Islands’ coral churches has entangled indigenous and foreign beliefs, social practice and place-making since their instigation by the London Missionary Society in the 1840s. As well as examining the historical significance of their formation, this thesis explores Rarotonga’s churches, now under the Cook Islands Christian Church, as contemporary cultural landscapes. The study examines how place meanings have been recontested, recontextualised and renewed through the churches’ continued use, and questions how architectural conservation practices may respond to their living heritage.

Research methods included site investigation in Rarotonga in 2014 and an analysis of literature and images. Fieldwork involved: first, physical investigation of the island’s historical churches, focusing on the Matavera church as a case study, and second, interviews with local people. Adopting a qualitative approach enabled people’s complex emotional and cultural connections to church places to be explored in ways that directly shaped research findings.

The study supports earlier scholarship and local perspectives suggesting that churches were conceptualised and constructed as the island’s “new marae,” their presence physically restating tribal rights to land. This has bearing on their contemporary significance as places embedded in ancestral meaning and constellation understandings of time. Research findings indicate that it is churchscapes’ temporal and intangible aspects, rather than their physical form, that remain their most enduring heritage. Local agency directs modifications and use, highlighting the living reality of church places as not only indigenised but indigenous.

These findings have implications for heritage conservation in a context where decisions are based on local consensus and collective process. Churchscapes, like marae, remain entwined with tribal mana, hierarchy and land. This may mean that they continue to have cultural value for increasingly diasporic Cook Islands communities. Responding holistically to their complex and sometimes contradictory strands of intangible and tangible significance may become increasingly important for their living sustainment.

Keywords: Cook Islands, coral church, place attachment, cultural landscape.
For Naomi and Mark, who walked with me, and for Helen, who joined us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous input of the people who shared with me their knowledge and thoughts about church places. I gratefully acknowledge the Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Cultural Development and the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC) for permitting and enabling this research, kia orana. I am indebted to the General Secretary of the CICC, Nga Mataio, for his ongoing advice and sharing of material, to Ngatuaine Maui for her facilitation, to William Vogel for his kind assistance in accessing and documenting the Matavera church, to the leadership of the Otara CICC and the Newton PIPC for their welcomes, and to all those who talked with me and allowed me to interview them, meitaki ma’ata. Many thanks to Miriama Arnold, Lucy Farquhar and the Vogels for permitting me to use their personal photographs, to Jean Mason and Rod Dixon for sharing their expertise and ideas through this process, and to Rea Kautai, Alan Fenwick and Michael Fenwick whose encouragement and introductions helped to get me going in the first place.

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To my family, many thanks for your support through this journey. Mark, thank you. Thank you to my father, Peter Hill, for proofreading this work, and to my mother-in-law, Eva Tamura, for your wonderful care of our children. I have not been alone on the journey, and I am grateful.
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Conventions

• *Italicising*

The linguistic convention of italicising words in languages other than English has not been followed with regard to Polynesian languages, as it is considered inappropriate to objectify these languages as foreign in a study that is grounded in the Pacific. This follows the precedent of recent publications by Pacific studies scholars Ronald Crocombe and Ross Holmes (2014) and Rod Dixon, Linda Crowl and Marjorie Crocombe (2016a).

• *Macrons and glottal stops*

Macrons and reversed apostrophes (denoting the Māori long vowel and glottal stops respectively) have been used in consultation with the Cook Islands linguist, Sally Nicholas. Quotations from written sources may not follow this convention; they have been reproduced in accordance with the original, including the use of italics (or, occasionally, bold text) for Māori words.

• *Interview quotations*

Quotations from interview recordings have been transcribed verbatim to most accurately communicate the interviewee’s authentic voice. The Latin [sic] is not used.

• *Glossary inclusion*

Words or phrases used only once have an in-text translation and are not included in the Glossary.
Terminology

Below is a brief explanation of various terms, names and acronyms used in this study.

- **Capitalisation of “church”**

  A lowercase ‘c’ is used when a physical place is being referred to. When referring to the religious institution, a capital ‘C’ is used.

- **Papehia (a Tahitian missionary)**

  Sources spell the name “Papehia” differently. The theology academic Marama Tauira notes that “Papehia” is the Rarotongan spelling, whereas in the Society Islands it was “Papeiha” (Tauira, 2006, p. 191), the version used by Marjorie Crocombe and others. The Rarotongan spelling is used in this thesis, as this is how it is spelt by the CICC on which the study focuses.

- **Māori**

  As this thesis is based in the Cook Islands, the word “Māori” refers to Cook Islands Māori (people or language) rather than New Zealand Māori, unless otherwise stated.

- **Acronyms**

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<td>The Cook Islands Christian Church. This institution assumed management of all LMS operations in the country following self-governance (Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016e).</td>
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<td>ICOMOS</td>
<td>International Council on Monuments and Sites</td>
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<td>LMS</td>
<td>The London Missionary Society.</td>
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<td>MCD</td>
<td>Ministry of Cultural Development, Government of the Cook Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version of the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIPC</td>
<td>Pacific Island Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAB</td>
<td>Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.</td>
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### Cook Islands Māori terms:

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<td>Akairi kite</td>
<td>Shared vision</td>
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<td>Ara Metua</td>
<td>Lit. ancient path, the inland road encircling Rarotonga</td>
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<td>Ara Tapu</td>
<td>Lit. sacred path, the coastal road encircling Rarotonga</td>
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<td>‘Are atua</td>
<td>God-houses, small wooden structures used to house ki’iki’i on marae</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Are pure</td>
<td>Churches, houses of prayer</td>
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<td>Ariki</td>
<td>A chiefly title, head of a tribe and district leader</td>
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<td>Aronga mana</td>
<td>Persons of rank as a collective; hierarchical system of traditional leadership</td>
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<td>‘Ei</td>
<td>Hand-crafted floral garlands and headdresses</td>
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<td>Ekalesia</td>
<td>Official membership of the Church; a group of people comprising the Church organisation</td>
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<td>Imene tuki</td>
<td>A uniquely Cook Islands form of hymn-singing</td>
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<td>Ki’iki’i</td>
<td>Ancestral god figures in the form of carved wooden poles</td>
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<td>Kōutu Nui</td>
<td>An advisory body to the Government of the Cook Islands on matters of culture and tradition, composed of mata’iapo and rangatira</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuru</td>
<td>Breadfruit tree, <em>artocarpus altulis</em>, and its fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>Authority, power, prestige; can be supernatural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>A dedicated area of ground, delineated by stones, used in the pre-Christian era for religious purposes and now for title investiture ceremonies and other rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mata’iapo</td>
<td>A chiefly title, head of a sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moenga</td>
<td>Mat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngāti</td>
<td>Clan, a title prefixed to the name of the ancestor of a tribe or family to denote the whole of the clan descended from him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuku</td>
<td>Biblical drama pageant, performed at annual Gospel Day commemoritions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Orometua</td>
<td>Church pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa’ā</td>
<td>White person, European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paepae</td>
<td>Area around a residence, usually that of a tribal leader, usually marked out by stones or by a raised platform of pebbles adjacent to the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pe’e</td>
<td>Chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punga</td>
<td>A type of soft or live coral, usually <em>porites lobata</em> (lobe coral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā’okota’i</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tama ‘ū‘ā</td>
<td>To raise a child on the lap, to take in and rear as one of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapere</td>
<td>A sub-district, usually headed by a mata’iapo or ariki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapu</td>
<td>Sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Maeva Nui</td>
<td>Celebration of self-governance, held in July each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teretere</td>
<td>Travelling or touring party, expedition, particularly in the context of inter-ekalesia exchange visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipani</td>
<td>Frangipani tree, <em>plumeria</em>, and its flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tīvaevae</td>
<td>Traditional hand-made applique quilts made by Cook Islands women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toa</td>
<td>Ironwood tree, <em>casuarina equisetifolia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tū ‘akangateitei</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tū ‘inangaro</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umu</td>
<td>Traditional in-ground ovens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Uri’uri kite</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaka</td>
<td>Lit. canoe; the three geo-political tribal districts of Rarotonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaka tangata</td>
<td>Clan, tribe, the followers of a chief.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### New Zealand Māori and Pacific languages terms

Note: These words are New Zealand Māori unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fale</td>
<td>(Tongan/Samoan) House; domestic archetype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Inasi</td>
<td>(Tongan) The practice of appropriating architecture from non-indigenous sources for indigenous purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupapa Māori</td>
<td>Knowledge and values that validate a Māori worldview; used as a basis for research for, by and with Māori in ways that align with Māori epistemological traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malama</td>
<td>(Samoan) Light, illumination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matai</td>
<td>(Samoan) Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talanoa</td>
<td>(Tongan; “talanoanga” in Samoan) To talk, speak; face to face group conversations, story-telling and knowledge-sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taonga</td>
<td>Cultural treasure; may be intangible or tangible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiaki</td>
<td>Custodians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To’o</td>
<td>(Tahitian) Non-figurative sacred image, often comprising layers of finely plaited coconut husk fibres woven around a wooden core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>Genealogy; the art of tracing connections between people to establish identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The first churches of the Cook Islands were constructed in the early 19th century through the work of the London Missionary Society (LMS). The LMS was able to effect rapid change in the Cook Islands through the pioneering work of Tahitian and Cook Islands converts. Christianity was swiftly adopted throughout the island group, arriving in Rarotonga in 1823 (Breward, 2001, pp. 26 - 31; Gunson, 1978, p. 18; Tauira, 2006, pp. 73 - 75, 105). Over the next three decades five Christian villages were established there, each with church, graveyard, mission house and school (Henry, 2002, pp. 93, 100 - 104). Church places became the central hub of a reshaped community, and now under the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC), remain an intrinsic part of contemporary Rarotongans’ lifescapes.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the following questions:

1. Why are CICC churchscapes in Rarotonga significant from a historic heritage perspective?
2. How have meanings and values been recontested, recontextualised and renewed over time through the continued use of these places?
3. How can conservation respond to “living heritage” in this context?

Following the work of geographer Elizabeth Leppman (2005), the word “churchscape” encapsulates “the total landscape of the church and all that goes with it” (p. 84), including the human beliefs, meanings and practices that find expression therein. It is applied in this work as an understanding of place beyond the building, where the reciprocity of influence between users and their environments is acknowledged and addressed.

The term “recontested” goes to the centre of this enquiry. Christianity was first established in Rarotonga through spiritual, political and social contestation and contextualisation, resulting in complex cultural hybrids of architectural and religious form and practice. While this study is grounded in that historical context, it does not remain there. Churchscapes have continued to
be recontested and recontextualised as “living” places, subject to transformation and renewal. This thesis therefore forefronts the contemporary complexities of their social significance, exploring how the past finds meaning in the present, and how these enwoven realities may shape place management in the future.

A key aspect of this study is the cultural heritage significance of historic places. “Significance” in this context is generally associated with values that can be attributed to a place, which are often analysed using a variety of graded criteria such as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, spiritual, etc.¹ This thesis does not seek to categorise and segregate significance in this way, but rather examines the inextricability of past and present in understandings of identity, memory and history that are made tangibly manifest in church places. Analyses of significance can also lead to assumptions that “significance” is an inherently positive place attribute. This preconception can undermine the complexities of a place’s history and ongoing meaning for communities, which entwine positive and negative associations. This thesis acknowledges that significance can be both, or perhaps neither, “good” nor “bad,” and that it is these very tensions that create and recreate significance that is living and recontestable.

This study employed a mixed methods approach to research (Hesse-Biber, 2010), which centred on fieldwork undertaken in Rarotonga in 2014. Coupled with documentary analysis, research on site involved semi-structured interviews with local people, physical recordings of church sites, and a more in-depth examination of the Matavera church in the Takitumu vaka (tribal district) as a case study. This introductory chapter provides contextual information regarding the study location. It then describes the methodology and methods used for the research, which forms the philosophical and ethical framework for the analysis and discussion in subsequent chapters. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure.

Rarotonga, the Cook Islands

First settled from around 950 AD (R. Walter, 1998, p. 103), the Cook Islands are a group of fifteen islands and atolls spread over two million square kilometres of the South Pacific Ocean (Statistics Office, 2012, p. 7). Formalised as a British Protectorate in 1888 and then as part of the Colony of New Zealand from 1901, the group became a self-governing territory in free

association with New Zealand in 1965 (New Zealand High Commission, 1980, pp. 19 - 24). Over 70% of the resident population live in Rarotonga, although an increasing number of Cook Islanders live overseas.²

Rarotonga is an island of volcanic origin, characterised by deep valleys descending from central mountains that culminate in a coastal plain, beyond which is a shallow lagoon enclosed by a fringing reef. This concentric geography historically shaped Rarotonga’s land tenure system, with each ngāti (clan, tribe) controlling a wedge of land (tapere) from the mountains to the reef. Inter-tribal alliances formed vaka, geo-political districts encompassing multiple tapere (Campbell, 2002b, p. 148). Previously disputable through warfare, the coming of Christianity cemented these tribal boundaries in an enduring peace (Dixon, 2016, p. 410). These long-held tribal relationships with land profoundly affected the origination of churchscapes and continue to shape their ongoing management, as explored in this thesis.

Figure 1: The region, with the Cook Islands shown. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum (Source: Küchler & Eimke, 2009, pp. 2, 3).

² Rarotonga’s population was just over 13,000 in the Cook Islands’ 2011 census (Statistics Office, 2012, p. 10). Almost 62,000 people identifying as Cook Islands Māori resided in New Zealand at the time of the 2013 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).
Figure 2: Map of Rarotonga showing vaka and tapere land divisions and the location of CICC churches. The Matavera case study is marked red (Source: base maps: Wikipedia 2007, 2008; overlay prepared by author).

Figure 3: Aerial view of Rarotonga. Image © Ewan Smith, photographer (Source: E. Smith & Lay, 1998, pp. 10, 11).
The churches

There are six CICC churches extant on Rarotonga. Five are historical buildings constructed in the mid-19th century; the sixth (Nikao) was completed in 1972 (Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016d).

The five historical churches represent the second phase of church-building on Rarotonga, as the island’s first plastered wooden churches were progressively replaced through the 1840s to 1860s with permanent structures. Built in coral stone bonded with coral lime mortar, each church building was the prominent centre of a churchscape that included Sunday school/hall, churchyard walls and graveyard, all of which have been variously modified. ‘Orometua (pastor) residences and often ariki (chief) residences³ were located in their vicinity, some of which survive from that period.

Figure 4: Matavera CICC, completed in 1864 (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

³ Although not in the case of Matavera; see Chapter Four.
**Figure 5:** Ngatangiia CICC, completed in 1935 (Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016c. Image source: author’s collection, 2014).

**Figure 6:** Titikaveka CICC, completed in 1841 (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 32. Image source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 7: Arorangi CICC, completed in 1849 (Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016a. Image source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 8: (Left) Kimi Henry, “Nikao LMS Church.” Date unknown (Source: photograph of original painting, Nikao church noticeboard, 2014). This church was built approximately a century after the other coral churches on Rarotonga, being completed in 1954.

Figure 9: (Right) The current Nikao CICC, which was built to replace the 1954 church that was demolished to make way for Rarotonga’s airport (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
The Matavera CICC case study

Traditionally known as Rangiatea, Matavera is located in the northern end of the Takitumu vaka. The area contains five tapere: Tupapa,4 Titama, Matavera, Vaenga and Pouara. As detailed in Chapter Three, the Matavera ekalesia (Church congregation) was the third and final LMS centre in the Takitumu vaka. Following the formation of the Titikaveka Church in the mid-1830s, Matavera became independent in 1849 from the Ngatangiia Church, which had been the centre of Christian activity in the vaka since the 1820s.

Originally constructed in plastered timber and sited on the Ara Metua (ancient path) road, the church and village were shifted to the Christian-established Ara Tapu (sacred path) coastal road in the late 1850s. Church services were held in a school house before the stone church was completed in 1864.

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4 There is also a tapere called Tupapa in the Avarua vaka.
Figure 11: Matavera churchyard and signpost, viewing west (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 12: Boundary wall with trees, south-eastern corner (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 13: Main entrances, east and north elevations (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 14: Rear (west) elevation (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 15: The ‘orometa of the Matavera CICC, 1839 to 1995, listed on a cut tree trunk (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 16: Former belfry on the eastern side of the Ara Tapu, demolished in 2015 (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 17: New church hall, “Gibeona,” completed in 2015. This is the third Sunday school/hall building on this site. The location of the former belfry is indicated with an arrow (Source: L. Farquhar, personal photograph, August 2015).

Figure 18: The ‘orometua’s residence, a modern building to the south of the church (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Methodological approach

The questions of this thesis draw together strands of architectural, historical and, perhaps most critically, social and cultural enquiry. This investigation was therefore shaped by contemporary social science research methodologies, and by New Zealand Māori and Pasifika scholarship that explores research in decolonised, reclaimed and re-envisioned ways. Research was conducted using a qualitative rather than quantitative framework, with principles of kaupapa Māori, talanoa and tīvaevae models underpinning a grounded theory approach to fieldwork. The aim was threefold: to engage directly with the community in genuine enquiry (Kana & Tamatea, 2003, p. 11), to express the contradictions and complexities of Rarotongans’ lived experience without oversimplification (Clery, 2014, p. 111), and to ensure that the work had helpful outcomes for people of the Cook Islands (Amituanai-Toloa, 2009, p. 46; Nabobo-Baba, 2004, p. 19).

Qualitative research and grounded theory

This study assumes humanity’s heterogeneity in knowing and making sense of the world, a concept that underpins qualitative research. The approach challenges “the Western scientific emphasis on objectivity, testing and logic” (Chambers, 2009, p. 197) that can be the normative epistemology through which knowledge is legitimised. Qualitative research employs a wide range of empirical methods to enquire into human environments, processes and experiences. It acknowledges multiple ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding, and requires that qualitative researchers acknowledge their own subjective perspective in placing, overlaying and interweaving realities and knowledges in relevant ways (Brotherton, 2011, p. 239; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp. 3, 4; Winchester & Rofe, 2010, pp. 5 - 8). In this case it has been my role to bring together different strands of research to elucidate what makes CICC church places significant, and to whom.

For this task, I employed a grounded theory approach. This methodology is based on general principles rather than formulaic rules, focusing on “real world” engagement with people in field-based study. It uses research to generate theory, not vice versa, meaning that findings are based on current realities rather than hypothetical assumptions (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 2 - 10;

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5 These terms are explained under *Māori and Pasifika research* below.

6 It is important here to acknowledge that the dichotomy between “indigenous” and “scientific” knowledge is itself challenged. The political scientist Arun Agrawal (2009) asks why, “even when we recognise that indigenous and scientific are at best redundant and at worst obfuscating adjectives, they continue to be so in vogue?” (p. 157).
Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was highly relevant to this study’s focus on CICC churches as living places, where people’s views of significance are paramount. The flexibility of a grounded theory approach enabled field research to be shaped by participants and places themselves, as areas could be explored in more depth or in unforeseen ways (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). This is also a key aspect of decolonising research as discussed below.

Māori and Pasifika research

As a cross-cultural and Pacific-based thesis, the study was critically informed by Māori and Pasifika scholars including Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and Eve Coxon (2014), Tui Clery (2014), Helen Ferris-Leary (2013), Linda Smith (2012), Fred Kana and Karaitiana Tamatea (2003), Timote Vaioleti (2003) and Vilsoni Hereniko (2000), who provide in-depth critiques of mainstream research methodologies. Three methodological approaches that have emerged from their work have been particularly influential in shaping this project’s philosophical underpinning and methods.

- Kaupapa Māori research

Kaupapa Māori research aims to set “new directions for the priorities, policies and practices of research for, by and with Māori” (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 185). It uses principles of tino rangatiratanga, taonga tuku iho and whanau in research organising, decision-making and participation that better align with Māori language, knowledge and culture (Rangahau, n.d.; L. T. Smith, 2012, pp. 185 - 190).

Embedded in the principle of whanau is “the intrinsic connection between the researcher, the researched and the research” (Rangahau, n.d.). This highlights the need for reciprocity and respect, with research outcomes that address issues of knowledge ownership and ultimately advance the cultural aspirations of those who participate (Kana & Tamatea, 2003, pp. 4 - 5).

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8 Kaupapa – “A set of values, principles and plans which people have agreed on as a foundation for their actions.” (Royal, 2015, p. 8). The website Rangahau: Principles of Kaupapa Māori (Rangahau, n.d.) provides a useful explanation of the key principles and application of kaupapa Māori research.

9 Tino rangatiratanga – self-determination. This asserts the rights of Māori “to control their own culture, aspirations and destiny.” Taonga tuku iho – cultural aspiration. Spiritual and cultural awareness is taken into account, acknowledging the validity of “Māori ways of knowing, doing and understanding the world.” Whanau – extended family, a core social unit. This acknowledges the relationships Māori have to each other and to wider society (Rangahau, n.d.).
These aspects form an important basis for this study, which seeks to acknowledge and counter academic imperialism by situating theory in the people and place of Rarotonga in ways that are beneficial to them (Hereniko, 2000, pp. 86 - 88; Ferris-Leary, 2013, pp. i, 47, 229; Vaioleti, 2003, p. 15).

- **Talanoa**

Talanoa is a form of group discussion widely practiced in Polynesia.\(^{10}\) It is a community-based, face-to-face knowledge sharing, undertaken with a clear focus but without predetermined pathways or conclusions, and based in oral cultural practice and non-linear ways of knowing (Clery, 2014, pp. 108, 109, 111; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014, pp. 16, 17; Ferris-Leary, 2013, pp. 94 - 96; Lutui, 2007, p. 34; Vaioleti, 2003, pp. 16 - 18). Like the whanau principle, talanoa recognises relational connections and differences, nurturing empathy and mutual understanding. Its flexible, non-linear approach also has correlations with grounded theory, as both involve circular theorising that is responsive to place-specific cultural perspectives and practices (Ferris-Leary, 2013, pp. 11, 231, 232). Talanoa’s focus on process as much as outcome was conceptually important to this project, allowing the research to embrace the complexities of people’s experiences and to remain continually open to new learning (Clery, 2014, pp. 106 - 118; Ferris-Leary, 2013, p. 94).

- **Tīvaeva model**

Following the work of Teremoana MaUa-Hodges,\(^{11}\) education researchers Aue Te Ava and Christine Rubie-Davies explore the Cook Islands traditional practice of tīvaeva quilting “as a possible model for conceptualising culturally responsive pedagogy.” They discuss five key principles inherent in the process of tīvaeva creation, being tāʻokotaʻi (collaboration), tūʻakangateitei (respect), ‘uriʻuri kite (reciprocity), tūʻinangaro (relationships), and akairi kite (shared vision) (Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011, pp. 120, 121).\(^{12}\) These principles are similar to those that underpin kaupapa Māori and talanoa and have particular relevance for research in...

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10 Talanoa is a Tongan word; the same concept is called “talanoanga” in Samoa. The Cook Islands does not have an equivalent, but ‘uapou (Bible study meetings) follow a similar model.

11 An education specialist with Whitireia New Zealand. Ava and Rubie-Davies cite MaUa-Hodges, 2000, but that report does not refer to tīvaeva as a research methodology. It is understood from MaUa-Hodges herself that she has presented but is yet to formally publish on the subject (MaUa-Hodges, personal communication, May 12, 2016).

12 Other metaphorical links have been drawn between indigenous research and other indigenous crafts such as the Tongan practice of making kakala, royal garlands (Lutui, 2007, pp. 8 – 10; Thaman, 2009; Vaioleti, 2003, pp. 19, 20), and the Samoan lalaga (weaving) of ietoga (fine mats) (Seiuli, 2003, pp. 31 - 33), which involves processes of gathering/preparing, weaving, and giving away/presenting. See Kalavite (2014) for other indigenous Pasifika research models.
the Cook Islands (Herman, 2013, p. 110). The tīvaevae model therefore informed the application of research methods in this study.

**Positionality and subjectivity: a papa’ā missionary kid**

A critical aspect of qualitative research is the researcher’s own positionality and subjective view, which itself influences investigations, interactions and outcomes. In light of this, it is important to acknowledge my own background that has shaped my perspectives and motivations in coming to this research.

I am a New Zealand papa’ā (white person) with no ancestral connections to the Cook Islands. My interest in the historic churches came about during a family holiday to Rarotonga, instigated through my brother-in-law and his family who are from the island of Atiu. As an architect who has specialised in physical conservation of historic buildings, the churches’ unusual architecture and materiality stimulated my interest. Their intactness as a group caused me to wonder how much documentation there was of these places, and how their historical value, perceived by me at that stage as remnants of early missionary endeavours, had translated into living cultural heritage in contemporary Cook Islands societies.

As debated by Linda Smith and others, my legitimacy in coming into this space to conduct research, not only about Cook Islands buildings, but also about the thoughts and feelings of Cook Islanders in relation to these spiritually and culturally-charged places, is contentious. Being an outsider in this context not only presents disadvantages of lack of networks, indigenous knowledge, and cultural awareness, but can also perpetuate academic imposition through the application of a Western epistemology and extractive knowledge collection practices (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 67; Hereniko, 2000, p. 89; L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 1).

As I considered these issues, it became apparent to me that my motivation to explore, record and attempt to understand these churchscapes was influenced by aspects of my own cultural heritage. I am a third generation “missionary kid,” raised in a multicultural missionary school setting in India, and ancestrally tied to the work of Christian mission organisations in South East Asia. Critiquing my own position in a post-colonial world from an early age has left me with a culturally ambivalent worldview. This has engendered a relational understanding of not

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13 “Missionary kid” or “MK” is an internationally accepted term for children whose parents are/were missionaries, and who therefore were born and/or raised elsewhere than in their “passport” country. See ISMK, the International Society of Missionary Kids (2010).
one 19th century missionaries as “personal, emotional and three-dimensional individuals in the historic landscape” (Manktelow, 2013, p. 5), but also those whom they sought to convert to Christianity. All were real people situated in a physical place and time, with their own individual and communal motivations and contradictions that are not so different from ours, their descendants.

**Why this research is needful**

From this subjective perspective, it is considered that there are multiple dualities to the cultural significance of the CICC churches of the Cook Islands. Their value and meaning are grounded in the cultural landscapes of the islands themselves, but they also have significance beyond those shores to broader stories of cross-cultural interactions and religious transformations that span the Pacific and the globe. They are historically notable as the melded work of disparate cultures, and they continue to be contemporarily relevant as repositories of culturally distinct expressions of Christianity. Their form, fabric and contexts are variously modified, but they remain intact as a group of churchscapes that together contribute to collective memory.

It is considered that these dualities warrant exploration, particularly in light of much larger patterns of environmental and societal change in the Cook Islands that have increasing potential to affect the fabric and continuity of these church places.

**Research methods**

Fieldwork was a key part of this research, as it was critical to ground findings in Rarotonga’s physical context, exploring building fabric and seeking local people’s views (Kana & Tamatea, 2003, p. 11). Budget and time constraints limited investigation to a single, month-long trip to Rarotonga between July and August 2014.

As a cross-cultural research project exploring issues of personal and societal identity, culture, spirituality and meaning, ethical considerations were paramount, and research approval was sought and obtained from both the University of Auckland and the Cook Islands government (Appendix A). Methods of enquiry were chosen to span the three main types of qualitative research, being textual, observational and oral, enabling a level of triangulation and complementarity between findings from different data sources (Hesse-Biber, 2010, pp. 3 - 6; Memmott & Davidson, 2008, p. 85; Winchester & Rofe, 2010, p. 8). Methods included written
material research, physical investigations, semi-structured interviews and observations. These research methods and their application, along with the approach to ethical issues, are discussed below.

**Research into written material**

The key aim of this method was to understand the historical context of the former LMS churches and the particular circumstances of the construction of the Matavera church case study. It involved archival research into unpublished LMS correspondence and other historical records in the Takamoa Theological College archives, the National Archives of the Cook Islands, and the University of Auckland Library; published accounts of British missionaries such as William Wyatt Gill and William Gill, John Williams, Aaron Buzacott and Charles Pitman, and of Rarotongan missionaries, notably Maretu and Ta’unga; a variety of historical narratives and anthropological accounts written from the late 19th to early 21st centuries; and contemporary academic research by architects and architectural historians, anthropologists and archaeologists.

While the individual nature of academic scholarship precluded the close collaboration envisaged in Hodge’s tīvaevae model, I endeavoured to apply the principle of tā’okota’i by seeking advice from other scholars and Cook Islanders in terms of validity and arguments. Tū ‘akangateitei was an important aspect of working to understand and respect the time and context within which texts were written, acknowledging how these factors shaped and limited authors’ perspectives, just as my positionality shapes my own work.

**Physical analysis**

Physical investigation was chosen as a method to explore the unusual materiality and construction of the historic LMS churches in terms of how they were constructed, with what

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14 Budget and time constraints precluded archival research in other centres of LMS records, particularly the Mitchell Library in Sydney, School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. While their material may have provided additional illumination particularly regarding dates and details of churches’ first construction, the aim of this study is to holistically explore the cultural heritage significance of CICC churches, rather than to provide a church building history. In this context, information gained from the realities of contemporary Rarotonga holds more importance.

15 *The works of Ta’unga: records of a Polynesian traveller in the South Seas* (Ta’unga, 1968) was translated and edited by Ronald and Marjorie Crocombe. *From Cannibals to Converts*, by Maretu (1983) was translated and edited by Marjorie Crocombe.


17 A literature review of this work is provided in Chapter Two.
materials, and why. It was used as an important triangulation tool to corroborate information provided by interviewees and texts (Memmott & Davidson, 2008, p. 85; Stanfield, 2011, p. 23; Y. Walker, 2011, p. 206), and also contributed to knowledge of how churchscapes have been modified over time. Physical analysis focused on the Matavera church case study, although Rarotonga’s other CICC churches were also investigated, as described in Chapter Four. The close examination of a single church, combined with comparative observations of other church places and knowledge shared by interviewees, enabled some generalisation of findings, contributing to broader knowledge of the church group as a whole (Baxter, 2010, pp. 81, 93 - 95).

Tū ‘akangateitei was important with regard to physical analyses, which were undertaken following permission from the Church. Tā’okota’i and tū ‘inangaro were also fostered as I sought the assistance of others in processes of building exploration. No invasive investigations were carried out or material removed, as such actions undertaken by an outsider could be perceived as disrespectful to a historically significant and living place.

*Semi-structured interviews*

Intervi

ews were selected over other methods of engagement such as questionnaires or surveys for two main reasons. First, they could be undertaken using principles of talanoa; respectful, dynamic and living discussions that could directly shape research outcomes and reduce researcher imposition (Ferris-Leary, 2013, p. 94; Kana & Tamatea, 2003, p. 6). Second, they provided the opportunity to explore people’s complex emotional and cultural connections to CICC churchscapes, through seeking and valuing discussions of worldviews, knowledge and opinions rather than simple “tick-the-box” approaches (Dunn, 2010, p. 102).

*Participant selection*

Purposive sampling was used to select potential participants, with people being identified by their relevant employment position or role in the CICC or community, largely on the advice of the CICC administration and the Ministry of Cultural Development (MCD). Interviews with these individuals led to suggestions of other potential participants, causing some

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18 In the case of the Ngatangiia church, this involved two local children excitedly volunteering to manage the laser distance reader, which was enjoyable. I am indebted to William Vogel, a deacon of the Matavera ekaesia, who generously gave his time, equipment, physical assistance and knowledge to exploration of the Matavera church’s ceiling void.

19 I am also indebted to Rea Kautai, a friend from Atiu, who took the time to introduce me to people in Rarotonga.
“snowballing” (Denscombe, 2010, pp. 41 - 43). In Rarotonga, 19 individual interviews and one group interview were conducted. While historical and physical analysis focused on the Matavera case study, interviews were not restricted to people associated with this church or to CICC membership; twelve of the individual interviewees were CICC members, four of whom belonged to the Matavera ekalesia, and seven were non-members. An additional three interviews were undertaken with Cook Islanders living in Auckland, one of whom was a CICC member.

It was originally envisaged that more group interviews would occur. In practice, these were very difficult to arrange in a comparatively short timeframe. The one group interview that was undertaken demonstrated some of the shortcomings of this method, with group dynamics affected by cultural aspects of seniority and gender (Vaioleti, 2003, p. 14; Herman, 2013, p. 127). In comparison, individual interviews enabled greater levels of interviewee freedom to share personal views. However, it is considered that group interviews, particularly with women or youth groups, hold important potential to explore the questions of this thesis in different ways, potentially corroborating or disrupting “patterned regularities” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 33) identified in individual interviews. This is noted as an opportunity for further research.

- Ethical issues

The principle of tū ‘akangateitei was a determining factor in ethical considerations of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and cultural sensitivity. These aspects are summarised below and detailed in Appendix B. All interviews were conducted by me, and were held in interviewees’ chosen place and time. Participants were advised that the interview would take approximately one hour and this was generally adhered to. Each conversation was preceded by an explanation of my own background and the limits of my knowledge about Cook Islands culture and communication norms, and acknowledgment of the interviewee’s own knowledge and experience (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014, p. 19). ‘Uri’uri kite occurred through sharing of food and, where appropriate, of shared Christian heritages or life journeys (Filipo, 2004, p. 181).

All participants were adults, with the competency to provide informed consent. A description and explanation of the research was provided verbally and through the provision of an

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20 See Chapter Six for more detail regarding categories of member and non-member.

21 The overall quantity of interviewees aligns with participant numbers recommended for grounded theory-based qualitative research by the sociologist Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2010).

22 Interviews only extended beyond an hour on the initiation of the interviewee to continue the conversation.
information sheet (Appendix B1) to each potential participant. Consent was confirmed verbally and in writing (Appendix B2), and participants were free to withdraw at any stage before or during the interview, and up to three months later. Interviews were generally voice-recorded (Silverman, 2011, p. 352) with participants’ consent. Participants were free to stop the recording during the interview and to request the transcript for potential amendment up to two weeks later (Denscombe, 2010, p. 201).

It was important to respect participants and maintain their confidence (and consequent efficacy of the research) through establishing the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Processes for doing so were detailed in the information sheet and confirmed in person. The possibility that others may be aware of people’s participation was also acknowledged, as well as the potential for local people to guess the source of information by its nature. All participants assented to proceed on this basis. A simple code system is used to anonymously reference interview material in the thesis, namely, country of interview, interview number (chronological), year, as exampled below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI.01, 2014</td>
<td>Rarotonga interview no. 1, conducted 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI.03, 2014</td>
<td>New Zealand interview no. 3, conducted 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each interview was based on four open-ended questions. These acted as a framework that created a degree of comparability between responses, providing insights into areas of contest or consensus, while the loose structure provided flexibility to pursue lines of conversation more fully, to discuss matters raised and to seek elaboration. The semi-structured approach helped alleviate potential risks of psychological harm or cultural offence in the context of research that was both cross-cultural and focused on the sensitive area of religion, as it created a permissive atmosphere where individuals could determine their own level of sharing (Arksey & Knight, 1999, pp. 5 - 7; Dunn, 2010, pp. 102, 110).

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23 Stipulated in the information and consent forms as November 2014. No participants withdrew.

24 Three did not consent to being recorded, and a further one was not recorded due to equipment failure. Only notes were taken of these interviews.

25 No participant requested a copy of the interview transcript.

26 Where more than one interviewee is cited, the year is only put once at the end. For example, (RI.01; RI.02; RI.03, 2014).
The appropriate language for interviewing people from the Cook Islands was considered and guidance sought from academic staff within the School of Pacific Studies and from Cook Islands extended family members. These parties indicated that the use of English, rather than Cook Islands Māori by translation, would be preferred. This was on the basis that all participants would speak fluent English, most as a first language, and that an implication that they could not adequately converse in English had a greater risk of offence. In reality, it was clear that Māori was the preferred language for many participants and its use would likely have added greater depth and subtlety of discussion and mutual understanding (Clery, 2014, p. 112; Kana & Tamatea, 2003, p. 10).27

Fieldwork observations

While in Rarotonga I attempted various events, including church services, Te Maeva Nui,28 Atiu’s Gospel Day celebrations and the John Williams memorial unveiling, spending time there in observation and informal conversations. This provided insights into how churchscapes are used by, and form backdrops to, contemporary Rarotongan society. It also nurtured tū ‘inangaro, which in turn led to sharing regarding perceptions of the cultural significance and living heritage of CICC church places. Observation also contributed to general understandings of building maintenance issues and fabric deterioration. Again, tū ‘akangateitei played an important role in my attempts to adhere to protocols around entering places, participation in events, and codes of dress and behaviour.

Limitations

The research methodology was limited by several factors, including my position as an outsider to the location, culture and indigenous language, constraints of fieldwork duration, and the very nature of Western academic research as a fundamentally individual pursuit (Ferris-Leary, 2013) that constrains tā’okota‘i. These realities also made the creation of akairi kite difficult, particularly in the context of historic buildings research, a subject that most people do not contemplate in the course of daily life (RI.15, 2014).

27 This would only be the case if both interviewee and interviewer spoke Māori; a translator would have been a barrier to free communication. As I do not speak Māori, interviews in English was the only viable choice. This is included as an area for further research in Chapter Eight.

28 Celebration of self-governance, held in July each year.
A key aspect of kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research methodologies is that knowledge gained through research is not owned by the researcher or distanced from those who gave it, but that there is reciprocity between researcher and participant (Ferris-Leary, 2013, pp. 81 - 86) which enables cycles of feedback and further advances in knowledge. Early findings regarding historical and physical analysis were provided to the CICC for their quarterly newsletter soon after the completion of fieldwork, and this thesis will also be presented to the Cook Islands government and the CICC following examination. It aims to make a small but meaningful contribution to much wider indigenous knowledge that is shaping collective memory reclamation, and thus to be useful for further discussion, both in Rarotonga and further afield (Baba, 2004, p. 102; Kalavite, 2014, p. 159). In this way it is hoped that the work may cultivate tā’okota’i and akairi kite for places of cultural significance in the Cook Islands. Such avenues for further research are discussed in the concluding chapter.

**Thesis outline**

This chapter has introduced the topic and has explained the approach taken to research.

**Chapter Two** provides a review of literature relating to the study field, drawing on architectural, historical, anthropological and archaeological material to situate the research among broader analyses of Cook Islands and Polynesian architecture. It also explores contemporary conservation theory and its relevance in a Pacific milieu.

**Chapter Three** examines key aspects of the historical context of the CICC churches, exploring how the Church and ariki developed a symbiotic relationship in Rarotonga that enabled Christianity to prosper while simultaneously concentrating ariki power. Resultant churchscapes both transformed, and were infused with, pre-Christian cultural expression. The physical outworking of this is explored in **Chapter Four**, which investigates the materiality and construction of churchscapes, focusing on the Matavera CICC.

**Chapter Five** discusses churches as contemporary places, arguing that the complex enmeshing of Church, aronga mana (traditional leadership) and state continue to shape their societal role and physical form. Reasons behind modifications made to the Matavera CICC are analysed; findings suggest that its “permanent” built fabric has been mutable and continually recontestable. **Chapter Six** explores the temporal and intangible aspects of indigenised Christian heritage. It examines the strong, but ever-evolving, cultural associations of tribal
hierarchy, land and mana (authority, power) embedded in church places, suggesting that it is these aspects that are the more enduring.

Chapter Seven reflects on these findings in terms of conservation of CICC church places. It explores questions of ownership and stewardship in a context that remains firmly rooted in traditional systems of land tenure, and suggests that a three-way cultural landscapes approach may be conceptually useful as a foundation for conservation thinking. The final chapter concludes the study and discusses avenues for further research.

Conclusion

The findings of this thesis suggest that the cultural heritage of Rarotonga’s historic CICC churches centres on social values that extend beyond, but build upon, their specific historical narratives and architectural aesthetic. Their significance as places of relationship tie into broader collective understandings of their symbolic meanings, linking people and tribes to the land.

As such, the significance of church places is not necessarily limited to their ekalesia but variously extends to Cook Islanders more broadly, forming part of their cultural identity as a people and nation, and physically representing the faith-action of ancestors. Polynesian understandings of time mean that this ancestral past is not a static entity, separated and immutable. Rather, it is dynamically enwoven with the present, able to be challenged and revalidated. Place significance in this context cannot be easily segregated into discrete components, and questions of authenticity take on new meaning. It becomes churches’ temporal fabric and intangible practices that sustain their physical form, continuing to renew their strong cultural associations with tribal hierarchy, mana and land.

Cook Islands culture remains reinventive in response to its continually evolving setting. It is suggested that the funding and management of CICC church places may be increasingly affected by growing heterogeneity in churches’ connected communities and by changing climatic conditions. This thesis argues that a cultural landscapes approach to CICC church places may be a useful conceptual framework for their conservation. This view recognises the significance of process as much as product, focusing preservation on people’s values, enabling regeneration of stories and skills, and being responsive to changing views and realities.

The poet Karlo Mila contends that all representation, including research, “is contested and political,” with the critical aspect being to continue to ask questions rather than conclude with
closed answers (Mila, 2014, pp. 47, 49). This work attempts to embrace that opportunity, engaging with people and place to explore understandings of the cultural heritage significance of CICC churchscapes and to draw out the complexities and contradictions inherent in them. It does not seek to present “truth” (Hereniko, 2000, p. 89), but to highlight the dynamic views of tradition and culture that shape Rarotongan society. It may be through these very ambiguities that church places are sustained as living cultural heritage.
Introduction

An academic focus on issues of cultural heritage significance and conservation is necessarily broader than a solely architectural analysis, and requires examination of scholarly literature outside that usually covered by architectural enquiry. This chapter first reviews literature from architectural and other disciplines relating to LMS architecture in the Cook Islands. This is followed by analysis of historical, anthropological and archaeological scholarship regarding the built forms and cultural landscapes of the Cook Islands and other Pacific mission sites more generally. Literature regarding Polynesian architecture as a wider entity is then explored.

The second half of the chapter examines the historicity, evolution and current application of contemporary conservation theory internationally. It explores the Eurocentric foundation of modern conservation theory as a discrete discipline, its key tenet of science-based authenticity preservation, and the more recent postmodern challenges of relativism and cultural diversity in a postcolonial world. It then discusses the “values-based” approach that has developed in conservation ethics and the political issues of ownership and engagement entangled therein. Finally, it analyses perceived correlations between New Zealand Māori concepts of taonga (cultural treasure) and understandings of historic heritage as cultural landscapes, suggesting that these approaches together hold particular relevance in a Pacific milieu.

CICC Churchscapes and Polynesian Architecture

*Literature relating to the architecture of the LMS*

The most comprehensive architectural analysis of early mission buildings in the Cook Islands has been Jeanette Budgett’s Master of Architecture thesis (2007). Her findings were also published in the proceedings of various SAHANZ*29* conferences (2004; 2005; 2006; 2009) and

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29 Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand.
form part of the recently published book, *Cook Islands Art and Architecture* (Dixon, Crowl, & Crocombe, 2016a). Budgett’s work centres on the history and tectonics of the coral buildings instigated by the LMS, with specific focus on several key churches on Rarotonga and Mangaia. Her analysis covers contemporary changes to these historic buildings and questions the applicability of “standard” Western-derived conservation precepts in this context.

This thesis is indebted to Budgett’s work for its in-depth examination of the historical background and specific architectural detailing of LMS churches and its analysis of contemporary motivations for change. Budgett (2007) contends that these 19th century buildings have historic value, “tell[ing] a story of political, social and cultural transition” (pp. ii, 3). Building on her theme, this study examines how these values have evolved to a present-day cultural reality in Rarotonga. It explores LMS churches as contemporary cultural landscapes that are significant not only in their historical context and architectural form, but also because of the ways in which historically-entangled meanings and values have been recontested, recontextualised and renewed into the present – a living heritage that requires contemporary analysis.

In her thesis, Budgett (2007) observes that there is:

> ... a noticeably small body of architectural writing about the LMS architecture of the Cook Islands. Mission histories, Cook Island histories, anthropological accounts and post-colonial writing all touch upon the [buildings as] ... the backdrop to early scenes of colonial encounter, attracting praise and a good measure of criticism, but have rarely been the focus of specific architectural scholarship (p. 3).

Budgett notes two exceptions; first, the architectural theorist Albert Refiti’s brief examination of the buildings in a broader discussion of Polynesian architecture in New Zealand, and second, the analysis of LMS structures by architectural theorist Sarah Treadwell (cited in Budgett, 2007, pp. 3, 4; Refiti, 2002; S. Treadwell, 2000). Refiti (2002) describes the buildings’ architecture as “a cross-cultural hybrid” (p. 217). He contends that Polynesian peoples saw churches as representations “of a heavenly paradise in the eyes of a Eurocentric God,” and that their construction manifested these romantic imaginings (p. 219). Treadwell’s examination focuses on pictorial depictions of mission architecture as a mechanism for colonial imposition, through the contrast of stark white, “resolutely English” buildings against dark, indigenous backdrops
Her analysis explores the symbolic use of white coverings, theologically associated with concepts of purity, cleanliness and chastity, to control and contain the land and its people. While Budgett (2007) concludes that Refiti and Treadwell’s papers expose LMS architecture “at best, as cultural fantasy, and at worst, as the agent of colonial suppression it so often was” (p. 5), their analyses have bearing on this study’s examination of the historical physicality and contextual reality of Rarotonga’s church places, discussed in Chapters Four to Six.

Themes of monocultural assimilation (Memmott, 2011, p. 47) are also implied in the 2006 examination by architectural historian Jeremy Treadwell of contemporary architecture in the Cook Islands. Treadwell (2006) suggests that while the Cook Islands has been an independent nation since 1964, it remains architecturally entrenched in its colonial European history; “in the absence of their own buildings, [Cook Islands] Polynesians already inhabit a former coloniser’s architectural imagery” (p. 562). The artist Eruera Te Whiti Nia’s Master of Art and Design thesis (2010) confronts these issues, arguing that:

Post colonial administrations have determined the nature of all important buildings on this island, and Christian religious excesses that arrogates and has misunderstood historical Polynesian creativity and cultural belief, has in my mind acted as an impediment to the revival of like traditional structures (p. 82).

Nia strongly advocates revival of pre-Christian indigenous architecture and art forms which were lost in processes of colonisation and laments the destruction of last remnants such as the sennit-lashed ceiling of the Oneroa Church, Mangaia, in the mid-1980s (Nia, 2010, pp. 16, 22, 34, 67, 79). Nia’s example of a former LMS church alludes to the complex enmeshing of foreign and indigenous agency in these 19th century churchscapes. Budgett argues that there is a risk of overstating colonial domination in the built forms of early mission buildings, which were largely constructed and inhabited by Cook Islanders themselves, who arguably had a significant personal and societal influence on how aspects of European technology and architectural expression were perceived, placed, filtered and reconstituted (Budgett, 2005, p. 65; 2007, pp. 10 - 13).

30 The chapter cited here is a more recent version of Sarah Treadwell’s paper (2000) cited by Budgett.
The negative ramifications of 19th and 20th century British and New Zealand colonialism on Cook Islands peoples is beyond the scope of this thesis, but their outworking has bearing on the complex cultural contexts of, and conservation responses to, CICC churchescapes today. Chapters Five to Seven explore how expressions of indigenous agency have continued to direct processes of use and change, with churches being not only bicultural accommodations (Memmott, 2011, p. 47) but indigenised and indigenous cultural landscapes.31

The thesis is premised on SAHANZ scholarship that investigates indigenous culture, tradition and change in the South Pacific, including the work of architectural anthropologist Paul Memmott and architectural theorist Mike Austin. In particular, Memmott’s (2011) description of “the dynamic nature of the construction of ‘architectural tradition’” (p. 40) is a critical presumption for this analysis. Tradition is understood as a culturally-determined and determining process that is continually being reinvented and reinterpreted (Austin, 2002, p. 5). The deterritorialisation of tradition, where tradition is de-linked from its customary site through processes of material exchange and migration, and the political and commercial appropriation of tradition (Memmott, 2011, pp. 40 - 44), also have critical implications for the contemporary context and future conservation of historic church places, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Memmott (2011) suggests that:

What might seem a fairly simple processual analysis of how missionaries imposed and adapted European church designs for Pacific Island communities in an assimilative approach may take on added bicultural complexity if sufficient contextual data can be collected and assembled for analysis (p. 47).

Budgett’s work directly contributes to this call, and this thesis aims to add to the body of enquiry and to extend the discussion from the past into Rarotonga’s present day context.

*Historical, anthropological and archaeological analyses*

This study draws on the work of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists that have focused their studies on the Cook Islands, as well as others who have examined mission sites

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31 The archaeologists James Flexner and Matthew Spriggs (2015) apply the term “indigenous heritage” to mission sites in southern Vanuatu; their findings are discussed further under *Literature regarding Polynesian architecture*, below.
elsewhere in Polynesia. Their analyses cover subjects that are far broader than this research’s scope, but they provide critical insight into cultural contexts and contentions that are relevant. This thesis therefore aims to situate their findings in the specific circumstances of the inception and continuation of the Matavera Church and to consider their bearing on the contemporary form and function of CICC churches in Rarotonga.

The social historian Rod Dixon and anthropologist Jeffrey Sissons have written extensively on the architectural symbolism of the Cook Islands’ historic churches. Focusing on the island of Mangaia, Dixon (2016) traces symbolic and material transference from marae (dedicated places of religious ceremony) to churches that enabled “the continuation of pre-Christian political and religious expression” (p. 400). Sissons situates church creation in a broader story of religious revolution across the Pacific, describing their role in simultaneously maintaining and reshaping political power (Sissons, 2014). He contends that the introduction of Christianity in Rarotonga “entailed the creation of two competing social fields, one materialized through churches and the other materialized through marae” (Sissons, 2007, p. 47). He goes on to suggest that these social fields now have some complementarity as both have become subordinate to a broader “national field” (p. 61, original emphasis). These studies assist in understanding the historical situations, physical forms and contemporary circumstances of CICC churches as discussed in Chapters Three to Six, and provides scholarly context for critical analysis of the Matavera church.

Earlier work of Pacific historians and anthropologists Niel Gunson (1974b; 1978), Richard Gilson and Ronald Crocombe (1980), Kauraka Kauraka (1991) and Nicholas Thomas (1991; 1995) remain relevant. Their various explorations of the complexities of Christian conversion in the Cook Islands, the entanglement of foreign and indigenous agency in church architecture, the effects of “informal imperialism” on Cook Islanders, and their perceptions of religious objects have shaped analysis in Chapters Three to Six. These chapters examine the duality of religious and socio-political meanings inlaid in church places, and how meanings continue to be recontested and reconstructed.

The archaeologists Richard Walter (1998), Matthew Campbell (2000; 2001; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2006) and Toru Yamaguchi (2000), and indigenous studies academic Michael Reilly

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32 This article has recently been republished under the title, Fighting fire with fire: The Rarotongan iconoclasm and its aftermath (Sissons, 2016).

The Master of Arts (Anthropology) dissertation of Maria Kecskemeti (2012), a student of Sissons, explores CICC churches as sacred spaces. It touches on similar arguments, as well as addressing contestation of sacredness through physical modifications.
(2009) have explored the archaeology and cultural history of the Cook Islands. Their analyses regarding pre-Christian marae-centred religious and political practices, and how Cook Islanders engaged with and shaped processes of cultural change following the arrival of the LMS, form a critical background to historical and contemporary contexts of church places as discussed in Chapters Three, Five and Six. They additionally contribute to examination of the physical siting of the Matavera church in Chapter Four. Studies of early mission sites in Vanuatu by the archaeologist James Flexner and colleagues provide comparative material for understanding the complex cultural entanglements in churchscapes, the documentation of which is necessarily interwoven with local oral traditions, meanings, values and priorities (Flexner, 2013; 2014; Flexner, Jones, & Evans, 2015a; 2015b; Flexner & Spriggs, 2015). Their consequent implications for place conservation is highly pertinent to similar processes in the Cook Islands and is examined in Chapter Seven.

**Literature regarding Polynesian architecture**

Mike Austin, Bill McKay, Albert Refiti, Sarah Treadwell and Jeremy Treadwell have been at the forefront of architectural analysis of Polynesian architecture. Their discussions generally focus on indigenous (pre-Christian-derived) Polynesian architectural forms, with emphasis placed on their organic, light, mutable, permeable and flexible characteristics. Buildings are understood as experiences rather than objects formed by space not enclosure, in contrast to European architecture’s solidity and permanence (Austin, 2001; 2002; McKay, 2004a; 2004b; McKay & Walmsley, 2005; Refiti, 2014; S. Treadwell, 2003). As suggested by Austin (2001):

> The architecture of these islands is an architecture of spaces open to the sky rather than closed rooms, of sticks and grass as against mud and stones, poles as against walls, of single cell pavilions rather than labyrinthine complexes, of buildings raised in the air on stilts rather than sunk in the ground, of temporariness as against permanence, tension and weaving rather than compression and building, an outdoor existence and ocean voyaging as against a life grounded in the land. This difference has the potential to make another architecture that requires another way of looking - an architecture of openness and possibility (p. 17).

While this focus differs from the object of this study, key aspects of this body of literature shed light on the significance of CICC church buildings in the Cook Islands cultural context. The centrality of the ridge beam as a “defining characteristic of Pacific architecture” (Austin &
Treadwell, 2009, p. 1), and architecture as a haptic experience, a collective process that is indistinguishable from craft, art, ornament, interior and landscape (Austin, 2002, p. 8; McKay, 2004a, p. 7; McKay & Walmsley, 2005, pp. 61, 64) is relevant to physical and contextual analyses in Chapters Four and Five. Studies of Polynesian constructions of time and space, and consequent processes of architectural and communal revitalisation through building deterioration and reconstruction (Austin, 2002, p. 7; McKay, 2004a, pp. 8 - 10; 2004b, pp. 297 – 300; McKay & Walmsley, 2003, pp. 89 - 93; Refiti, 2009, p. 9) have importance for examinations of churchscapes’ modifications and possible approaches to conservation, as discussed in Chapters Five and Seven.

Austin’s (2002) argument that “every representation of tradition is a construction of tradition” (p. 1) ties into McKay’s analysis of Westerners’ discomfort with perceived “inauthenticity” in the variety and adaptiveness of the built form of (New Zealand) Māori. McKay suggests that questions of authenticity have constrained Western understandings of what constitutes indigenous architecture (McKay, 2004a, pp. 3 - 7). The Master of Architecture theses of Charmaine ‘Ilaiu (2007)33 and Karamia Müller (2011) take this argument further, discussing how the Tongan fale (‘Ilaiu) and Auckland-based Samoans’ domestic housing (Müller) demonstrate ways in which traditional architectural forms and perceptions of space and time have been recontextualised and renewed in a contemporary New Zealand context. The archaeological work of Flexner and Matthew Spriggs in southern Vanuatu also opens up the possibility of transformative thinking regarding what constitutes “indigenous” architecture, arguing that mission structures can be encompassed in this frame (Flexner & Spriggs, 2015, pp. 193, 203). These discussions are critical for analysis in Chapter Six of how local Rarotongans perceive CICC churchscapes, and for approaches to indigenous conservation considered in Chapter Seven.

Summary

The first half of this chapter has articulated how this thesis builds on Budgett’s tectonically-focused analyses to provide insight into how processes of contestation, contextualisation and renewal of CICC churchscapes affect their significance to Cook Islanders today. It has also outlined the ways in which historical, anthropological and archaeological analyses of mission

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33 See also ‘Ilaiu’s (2009b) discussion of ‘inasi, “a Tongan practice of appropriating architecture from non-original sources to advance indigenous intentions” (p. 20). She argues that a Western-style fale described as “Tongan architecture” indicates that there is no longer a clear distinction between Western and indigenous-derived building types, meaning a total appropriation of Western-style fale into Tongan culture (‘Ilaiu, 2009a, p. 13).
constructions have contributed to discussion in later chapters. Finally, literature examining Polynesian architecture more broadly has been considered with regard to the built form of church places and their dynamic role in tradition construction.

It is notable that the architectural literature to date tends to differentiate architectural materiality and craftsmanship along ethnic lines; Europeans with stone, heavy, opaque and permanent, and Polynesians with organic fibres, light, transparent and mutable. This can obscure the key role of stone in the architecture of sacred spaces in the Cook Islands well before European arrival (Campbell, 2000, p. 48). This research therefore intends to understand marae and churches as “synergistic architecture,” spaces that are not defined by a collection of disparate parts, but as holistic cultural forms that shape, and are shaped by, human meaning and practice. The analysis of anthropologists Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were (2005) regarding the importance of containment, harnessing and releasing of life forces in Polynesian architecture is germane to this argument and is discussed in Chapter Four.

This review now examines literature regarding conservation theory and practice as the context for conservation thinking regarding CICC churchescapes in the Cook Islands.

**Contemporary Conservation Theory**

*Eurocentric foundations and issues of authenticity*

While concepts of heritage and conservation have a deep and internationally widespread history, it is generally accepted that the modern conservation movement grew out of Renaissance Europe (Orbaşli, 2008, pp. 16, 17). Opposition to destructive “restoration” work in 19th century England led to the establishment of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877, which called for those responsible for historic buildings:

… to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to … show no pretence … and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament … in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying (Morris, 1877).

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These principles underpinned the establishment in 1964 of the International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which together solidified Europe’s dominance of international conservation (Glendinning, 2013, pp. 402, 412; ICOMOS, 1964; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 22).

As with all new endeavours, the Charter reflected its time and place. Heavily influenced by enlightenment theories of humanism and rationalism, and established in a context of mass utilitarian redevelopment following the devastation of the two world wars, it subscribed to the then-current ideology of the universality of ethical principles for progressive betterment of society (Glendinning, 2013, p. 392; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 22; Sully, 2007a, p. 31; Winter, 2014, p. 568). Two key tenets were the criticality of preserving an object’s physical integrity, and a belief that scientific enquiry should underpin conservation work (Clavir, 2002, p. 4). Physical integrity or authenticity was to be preserved through the principle of minimal intervention, truthfulness through respect for original fabric and distinguishability of new material, and context through the retention of built layers and their setting (Glendinning, 2013, p. 404; Orbaşlı, 2008, pp. 54 - 59). Conservation was thus firmly established as a professional discipline requiring specialist expertise and knowledge based on “objective” scientific research and techniques (ICOMOS, 1994; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 64; Viñas, 2005, p. 90).

In the second half of the 20th century the “grand narrative” and universal truth claims of conservation theory began to be undermined by postmodern relativism (Glendinning, 2013, pp. 413, 414, 423, 430). The Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1979)35 and subsequent Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS, 1994) were key turning points, with cultural diversity, acknowledgement of the local, and authenticity judgements based not only on physicalities but also “traditions and techniques” and “spirit and feeling” (ICOMOS, 1994, Articles 11, 13) being strongly emphasised (De la Torre, 2013, p. 159; Taylor, 2004, p. 430). Increasingly affected by shifting geopolitics internationally, recent UNESCO36 documents have a strong Asian and pluralist emphasis (Aygen, 2013, pp. 31, 32; Langfield, 2010, p. 190).37

35 The original full title was “The Australia ICOMOS Guidelines for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (“Burra Charter”).
37 For example, UNESCO’s Hoi An Protocols (Engelhardt & Rogers, 2009) and the World Heritage Operational Guidelines (UNESCO, 2015). Also see the ASEAN Declaration of Cultural Heritage (2002).
However, the sociologist Tim Winter argues that conservation as a discipline remains inextricably Eurocentric, with its globalisation grounded in a Western-derived model with some local diversity (Winter, 2014, pp. 559, 569). This issue is grappled with by heritage academics and practitioners across the world, with “universal” theories and charters criticised for perpetuating imperialism (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008, p. 475; Menon, 2001, p. 228; Winter, 2014, p. 563). The archaeological conservationist Dean Sully suggests that Europe’s colonial past continues to shape contemporary approaches to heritage management and conservation, maintaining control over culture itself by disconnecting peoples from indigenous ways of understanding and expressing histories and place (Sully, 2007a, pp. 28 - 30; 2007d, p. 21).

**Values-based theory**

Acknowledgment of these issues has been responsible for the development of values-based assessments of place significance which are now the theoretical norm internationally (Avrami, 2000, p. 2; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 38; N. Walter, 2014, p. 634). This approach again aims to form a globally unifying basis for practice (De la Torre, 2013, p. 155), and contemporary documents regarding conservation principles include a wide range of values in an attempt to encompass myriad regional nuances. By establishing what particular values make a place significant it is possible to create a case for authentic conservation of that specific significance. Within this framework value judgements for conservation practice can be made.

This approach has been advocated for centralising people and human values in an enlarged and cross-disciplinary cultural heritage framework. However, values-based assessments struggle to address and accommodate the dynamic, contingent and constantly renegotiated nature of values (Jokilehto, 2012, p. 227; Sully, 2007a, p. 39). This is particularly pertinent in a Polynesian context, where time and space are perceived as a constellation rather than a linear progression, and myth and history ebb and flow through each other (McKay & Walmsley, 2003, p. 92; Memmott & Davidson, 2008, p. 90; Reilly, 2009, p. 5). The inextricability of original use, gradual evolution and community association is considered a fundamental characteristic

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38 This issue has parallels with the universal application of “modern” architecture with “regional” overlays (Glendinning, 2013, p. 412; Menon, 2001, p. 208).


40 For example, it can be argued that conservation of a place particularly valued for its architectural originality should focus on retention of ‘authentic’ fabric, design and technical detailing, while a place valued for its social and spiritual meanings should have continuation of community use as its central priority, allowing for potentially radical material changes to accommodate this.
of living heritage, where the past is an integral part of contemporary reality, as opposed to a segregated past inherent in Western epistemology (Aplin, 2007, p. 432; Sully, 2007a, p. 34; 2007d, p. 22).

Nigel Walter (2014), a conservation architect, elaborates on this theme, suggesting that values-based assessments are “implicated in a quasi-scientific classificatory system which, a priori, renders the material world static” (p. 635). He instead proposes a narrative-based approach to significance assessments which acknowledges the continually evolving nature of buildings. This avoids, in his view, the inherent subjectivity of values and recognises the partnership between people and place (N. Walter, 2014, pp. 638, 643 - 646). Walter’s proposition suggests some alignment with the work of Anita Smith, an archaeologist with extensive experience in Pacific cultural heritage, who explores the primacy of processes (rather than physical outcomes) of interaction between people and place in creating “storied landscapes” of cultural significance (A. Smith, 2006, p. 357; A. Smith & Jones, 2007, p. 119). Walter himself does not explore how his approach could have congruity with non-Western cultural understandings of heritage management. Rather, he endorses SPAB’s “repair not restore” position, viewing restoration as a sanitised overwriting of authentic, multi-layered histories (N. Walter, 2014, pp. 643, 644).

While restoration and reconstruction may be dismissed as inauthentic fakery by conservation specialists (Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 52), such approaches have been an ever-present part of heritage management internationally, exposing uncertainties in mainstream conservation theory (Glendinning, 2013, p. 446). In particular, wholesale reconstruction has been a widely adopted practice post conflict or major disaster, confirming the interdependence of collective memory and identity with built form as discussed by the architectural theorist Aldo Rossi (1982, pp. 130, 131). In this context, ICOMOS values-based authenticity criteria of “spirit and feeling” are cited when fabric authenticity becomes less significant than maintaining the substance of a cultural past and present (Glendinning, 2013, p. 447; Larkham, 1996, p. 7).

Continued widespread practices of replication may hint at Polynesian conceptions of cultural conservation. It is critical in this context to free the conservation debate from arguments about authenticity, which can cause places to become frozen in an accepted version of historicity through tangible object preservation (Sully, 2007a, pp. 34, 35). This enables instead the

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41 Notable German examples post WWII include Frankfurt’s Goethehaus (1951) and Dresden’s Frauenkirche (2005) (Vees-Gulani, 2005).
exploration of “resonant time” as understood in the Pacific (McKay, 2004b), with built form reverberating with an inseparable past.

Disputes regarding heritage fabric interventions raise a further issue with a values-based approach: whose heritage is it and whose values are being protected. While values-based assessments theoretically involve stakeholder engagement they are still largely crafted by technical experts with no, or limited, transdisciplinary analysis and community consultation (Avrami, 2000, p. 2; Sully, 2007a, p. 42). This can result in simplistic analyses that deny the multifarious nature of place significance (A. Smith, 2011, p. 234), raising questions regarding whose values are actually being addressed and opening deeper debates on heritage ownership and belonging (Taylor, 2004, p. 419).

**Whose heritage? Engagement and cultural identity**

Charters and documents of international heritage bodies, most notably UNESCO and ICOMOS, aim to establish and validate a global philosophical position on cultural heritage conservation. Heritage writer Zeynep Aygen argues that global consensus is still crucial on general principles, with the issue being how to persuade governments to embrace and implement this alongside specific cultural traditions (Aygen, 2013, pp. 29, 30). In contrast, heritage academic and advisor Ken Taylor (2004) suggests that international charters for professional conservation practice continue to run the risk of imperiously imposing conservation principles in a “logic of global cultural uniformity” (p. 419), potentially denying space for local perceptions and responses to specific problems (Pendlebury, Short, & While, 2009, p. 357; Sully, 2007a, p. 35).

Social space is a social product, with potential for domination and control. As conservation is about the production, representation, and management of social space it has an inherent political dimension and can be complicit in continued or new forms of injustice, exclusion and hegemony (Jokilehto, 2012, p. 227; Logan, 2012, p. 241; Winter, 2014, p. 558). Rather than wholesale rejection of the Western conservation canon, Winter advocates a pluralist paradigm that “provincializes” the West, creating space for different socio-cultural environs to be distinct and equal rather than “the other” (Winter, 2014, p. 560 – 565; see also Menon, 2001, p. 231). The issue is whether and how former colonisers’ tools can be reworked from the ground up to have place-specific meaning and validity (INTBAU India, 2010, p. 71).
Community engagement, both in terms of cultural heritage identification and conservation approach, has been widely endorsed to address this challenge.\textsuperscript{42} Contemporary conservation ethics centralise human rights in conservation processes, moving the focus from the object to the people for whom it is meaningful (Logan, 2012, p. 233; Viñas, 2005, pp. 199, 200).

Application “on the ground” of community engagement and empowerment theory can be easier said than done. Realities of the heterogeneity of “community,” unequal power and lack of resources can cause more division than positive outcomes (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008, pp. 468, 475, 476; Martinsson-Wallin, 2011, p. 103). Multivocality and consensus-based decision-making are also not intrinsically beneficial to cultural heritage; decisions can be dominated by politics and socio-economic concerns or aspirational goals with lack of consideration for what may be “lost” (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008, p. 476; Dalvi & Dalvi, 2010, pp. 116, 117).

Local apathy can also be problematic. This can simply be due to people’s ordinary focus on day-to-day livelihood (INTBAU India, 2010, p. 70), but it may also reflect deeper perceptions of cultural heritage as essentially intangible, with physical remnants given low priority, as explored by archaeologist Helene Martinsson-Wallin in Samoa (2011, pp. 103, 104). In some post-colonial states, non-participation or even active opposition to heritage conservation can be part of a broader rejection of colonialism’s tangible remnants.\textsuperscript{43} This is given alternative expression in Pacific countries shaping national identity through reconstruction of an indigenous, pre-colonial past (Martinsson-Wallin, 2011, p. 102; Sissons, 1999, p. 98).

Nonetheless, the enablement of multiple versions of the past and present to be expressed in conservation conceptualisation and practice continues to be stressed globally (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008, p. 481). Conservation theorist Salvador Viñas argues that multivocality should include the voices of both conservation experts and future users of a place. He suggests that experts have a particular role in uncovering and conveying place significance as well as being a voice for future users, enabling a place to be sustained through evolving community appreciations and priorities (Viñas, 2005, pp. 209 - 211). However, it is internationally recognised that it is ultimately a sense of ownership at a local level that affords the best protection to places (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008, p. 477 - C. Damm comments), and, in the case of

\textsuperscript{42} New Zealand scholars were part of this shift, with Austin (1976) arguing for “the involvement of the users in the design process ... in achieving his statement of identity” (p. 237).

\textsuperscript{43} As has been the case in many African nations (see Aygen, 2013, pp. 50, 51; Lagae, 2010).
many Pacific nations the rights of customary land owners may preclude others from having any role in place management (A. Smith & Turk, 2013, p. 24). This is discussed in Chapter Seven.

*Taonga and cultural landscapes*

Sully’s seminal work, *Decolonising Conservation: Caring for Maori Meeting Houses Outside New Zealand* (2007b), explores methods of conservation of New Zealand Māori cultural heritage as taonga. While the concept of taonga as understood in New Zealand has no direct correlation in Cook Islands Māori, it may open avenues of decolonised thinking regarding conservation approaches that may have resonance in the Cook Islands, as examined below.

First, conservation of heritage as taonga considers preservation not only of physical objects but also in terms of revealing and enhancing what people value from the past and sustaining these values for the future (Avrami, 2000, p. 1; Sully, 2007a, pp. 37 - 40). As such, it is the responsibility and prerogative of every person as tiaki (custodians), not just those in positions of authority (INTBAU India, 2010, p. 73; Wijesuriya, 2007, p. 67).

Second, the transfer of knowledge of taonga is an oral and physical process of passing on stories and skills. In this context, conservation *practice* should determine theory. This opens possibilities of moving away from logocentrism with its inherent Western (English language) bias and focusing instead on physical practice and process (Aygen, 2013, pp. 21, 25, 153; Malkogeorgou, 2011, pp. 453 - 454; Winter, 2014, p. 560). As argued by the conservation architect A. G. Krishna Menon (2001) in the context of India, “some of the finest cultural resources of the world exist in the Third World as living traditions ... traditional crafts and ways of life are still in practice: this is an asset, not a liability” (p. 229).

Third, taonga is treasured because of its continued use, community connections, and evolving values, which are not prescribed by “experts” but are inherent in the heritage item or place. It is a living heritage that embodies ancestral pasts and future realities and plays a social role in building relationships and commonality (Sully, 2007c, p. 224; Wijesuriya, 2007, pp. 60, 63, 65). Critically, this means that conservation should engage not only with communities currently geographically linked with a place but also those groups for whom the heritage was created.

44 The concept of taonga is particular to New Zealand’s own socio-political history. It is embedded in the New Zealand Māori text of the Treaty of Waitangi where, in Article Two, Māori are guaranteed “te tino rangatiratanga” – unqualified exercise of chieftainship – over their lands, villages and “taonga katoa” – all treasured things (Orange, 2012). The lack of a Cook Islands Māori equivalent of “taonga” as understood in New Zealand was confirmed in various conversations with local Rarotongans and with S. Nicholas (personal communication, November 11, 2014).
(Wijesuriya, 2007, p. 64), people who may now be separated from the place but are still inherently connected with it.

As evolving and living cultural treasures, taonga require a conservation response that considers not only tangible structures from a particular period, but holistic cultural landscapes (Wijesuriya, 2007, p. 66). First recognised by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1992 (UNESCO, 2016a), the term “cultural landscape” has grown from a rural landscape emphasis to encompass a wide range of human-place interactions, with significance derived “from its totality rather than a string of particular elements” (Fowler, 2003, p. 56; see also Aplin, 2007, p. 430). The concept is increasingly accepted internationally in conservation theory but in practice is often avoided due to renewed debate around authenticity and practical management difficulties (Aygen, 2013, p. 54; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 33; Pendlebury et al., 2009, p. 352). However, cultural landscape approaches have the potential to encompass more than just physical forms by engaging with ritual and customs, collective memory, identity and relationships. They present the opportunity for conservation ethics to more fully recognise human rights by acknowledging the need for heritage to function intrinsically in community life and spirit (Chief, 2006, p. 347; Jokilehto, 2012, p. 229).

Shaped through perceptions of taonga, cultural landscapes have important applicability in Polynesia, where natural and cultural features are inseparable and interwoven with stories and performances that enliven and give places meaning (Langfield, 2010, p. 196), and where mission arrival did not negate indigeneity but became enmeshed in it. Understandings of taonga and cultural landscapes together have potential to engender ownership and custodianship of cultural heritage in a Pacific milieu.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined existing literature regarding CICC places in the Cook Islands and the architecture of Polynesia more broadly, to identify key issues for this thesis and to situate findings from a wider body of knowledge in place-specific research outcomes from Rarotonga. It has then discussed the evolution of heritage conservation as an academic discipline, providing a theoretical backdrop for understanding heritage significance and management in the Cook Islands.

Contemporary theory recognises conservation as a truly contested field, one of negotiation and renegotiation between people groups, perceptions of authenticity, and diverse value
judgements. In a Cook Islands context this opens possibilities for creative and place-specific ways of engaging with heritage as living cultural landscapes, enmeshed in an ever-present past that can be kaleidoscopically interpreted. How this applies to the cultural landscapes of historic CICC churches will be explored in Chapter Seven, following analysis of research findings regarding place significance.
Chapter three

SCENE-SETTING

Introduction

Much has been written about the LMS, pre-Christian Cook Islands, and the arrival and consolidation of the Christian Church in Rarotonga. Resources include first-hand accounts by early Polynesian converts and European LMS missionaries, later indigenous and foreign histories and records, and late 20th century to contemporary analyses undertaken by architects and historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and theologians. Oral tradition surrounding pre-Christian culture and the establishment of the church as the “new marae” also extends beyond written documents and continues as a living practice in Rarotonga. This chapter does not attempt to reproduce this information but instead captures key aspects that form the historical context of the CICC churches and the historical significance bound in them.

The LMS is first examined in terms of its raison d’être, its initial mission venture in the Society Islands, and the resultant lessons learnt in Tahiti that fundamentally shaped its missionary strategy in the Cook Islands. The arrival of LMS missionaries on Rarotonga and the island’s subsequent conversion is then discussed, with Rarotonga’s then-existing social framework and inter-tribal relations explored to give context to the new religion’s comparatively swift and extensive uptake. Political rivalry in the Takitumu district is analysed in terms of its resistance to Christianity, with Christian settlement finally established in Matavera in 1849.

The chapter then explores the indigenisation of the Church as key aspects of Rarotongans’ existing cultural and religious expression were manifested in Christian construction, forming a new social field that centralised and solidified hierarchical systems of power. The uptake of Christianity profoundly affected Rarotongan society, inextricably entangling the Church and traditional leaders and investing church places with old and new meanings.
The London Missionary Society

The LMS was founded in 1795, its stated purpose being “to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other unenlightened nations” (Lovett, 1899/1972, pp. 24, 30). While the LMS was a product of its time, in many ways its doctrinal foundations stepped well outside the accepted norms of the period. This was exemplified by its ecumenicalism, which enabled cross-denominational partnership and resourcing, a strong social justice motivation, and an understanding of Christianity as individual conversion (for common people) rather than state religion (the domain of the rich and powerful) (Council for World Mission, 2016; R. H. Martin, 1980; Tauira, 2006, pp. 59 - 61). Its inception was seen as a tangible outworking of the Evangelical Revival and “a bright day of true Christian zeal for the spreading of the Gospel in the world” (Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 35, see also pp. 1 - 3, 38; Tauira, 2006, pp. 55 - 57).

While the LMS took deliberate care to ensure that evangelism was its missionaries’ key aim, the message of salvation was intrinsically bound with notions of civilising (Ellis, 1829, pp. 64, 65; Gunson, 1978, pp. 36, 58; Thorogood, 1960, p. 21). Ardent faith was regarded as more important than theological training (Gunson, 1978, pp. 64, 79, 86; Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 28) and practical abilities were considered particularly advantageous for mission work in Pacific islands, which were seen as “rude and barbarous, and which occasion the first movements towards civilization” (Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 68). Consequently, its early missionaries were largely from Britain’s lower middle class and came with strong trade skills including carpentry, shoemaking, weaving, ironmongery and bricklaying (Gunson, 1978, pp. 32, 63, 90; Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 127). Gunson (1978) suggests that missionaries “took with them into the field the New Mechanic’s consciousness of his social position” (p. 46) and a consequent ambition for betterment (p. 66). While this perspective may understate the complexity of personal

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45 Early objections to the fledgling society’s mission goals reflect attitudes of the time; see Lovett (1899/1972, pp. 34 – 35). The LMS continues as part of the Council for World Mission (CWM).

46 Although most members were from Independent churches (Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 12; Thorogood, 1960, p. 19).

47 The 18th century Evangelical Revival movement was the fountainhead of various evangelical, social justice and mission-orientated organisations such as the LMS, the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the Religious Tract Society (1799) and the Bible Society (1804) (Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 41).

48 The LMS centred evangelism as its missionaries’ foremost priority, with “civilisation” thought to naturally follow. This approach was debated between and within mission organisations (Breward, 2001, pp. 23, 24; Gunson, 1978, pp. 102, 103; Tauira, 2006, pp. 61 - 63), with the missionary John Davies (1961) recording that “many thought civilization ought to precede and prepare the way for Evangelization, and that the missionaries had been blamed for not doing more in civilizing the people” (p. 329, original emphasis). Samuel Marsden’s work through the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in New Zealand commissioned missionary artisans to “civilise” as the first priority (through teaching of trades etc.) (Gunson, 1978, p. 36).

49 John Williams, one of the LMS’s most prominent missionaries and central to the Cook Islands conversion, was trained as an ironmonger (Thorogood, 1960, p. 23).
motivations and genuine faith-action, it is clear that missionaries were eager to extend themselves spiritually, intellectually and practically, and to assist others to do likewise.

Captain James Cook’s exploratory voyages had recently opened the South Seas to European imagination (Johnston, 2001, p. 71) and the LMS’s overseas activity commenced in Polynesia, with the first mission to Tahiti in 1796. The islands were considered a suitable first target, perceived as being free from established religion and plentiful in food and resources (Lovett, 1899/1972, pp. 120 - 134; Thorogood, 1960, p. 19). It was assumed that “natives” would naturally see the benefits of European civilisation and wish to reform accordingly (Lovett, 1899/1972, pp. 29, 44, 68, 127).

The reality was not so straightforward. While the goal of bringing “light” to the “darkness” was clear, effective means of achieving it were not. Once in the field, LMS missionaries were largely left to their own devices to meet practical needs and achieve spiritual transformation as best they could (Gunson, 1978, pp. 102, 121). The LMS’s official historian Richard Lovett (1899/1972) records their initial efforts: “they passed their time in completing their house, in assemblies for religious purposes among themselves, and in holding what intercourse they could with the natives” (p. 148). The church historian Ian Breward (2001) notes that “their attempts at communication of Christianity brought more mockery than conversions” (p. 25), and fear of being caught up in local tribal conflict caused most of the group to leave for Port Jackson in 1799 (Davies, 1961, pp. xxxix, xl; Tauira, 2006, p. 67).

The situation changed as a prominent chief, Pomare II, began to use Christianity as a way of advancing his power (Breward, 2001, pp. 25, 26; Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 183). The subsequent political unification of the Society Islands under Pomare II coincided with its conversion to Christianity (Ta’unga, 1968, p. 4). To the relief of LMS directors in Britain, success was finally able to be demonstrated with the building of Christian villages, churches and schools, and the Tahitian mission became the centre of LMS expansion throughout the Pacific (Campbell, 2002a, p. 225, 226; Davies, 1961, p. 329; Gunson, 1978, p. 12; Lovett, 1899/1972, pp. 98, 209 - 211, 226).

The experience of the first LMS missionaries was crucial for subsequent development of cross-cultural mission theology and strategy (Breward, 2001, pp. 23, 24, 29; Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 147). By the early 19th century missionaries were aware of the importance of working within existing tribal structures; authority was derived from being the priests of tribal leaders rather than from preaching and teaching per se (Gunson, 1978, p. 219), and conversion of
commoners was largely unsuccessful without chiefly leadership (Breward, 2001, p. 26; Tauira, 2006, pp. 73 - 75). Furthermore, “missionaries knew that they held their place in the community only through their acceptance by this same community reformed as a church. Where no church could be formed ... the missionary was very much a displaced person in society” (Gunson, 1978, p. 222).

Key members of the LMS had also recognised that using Polynesian converts as missionary pioneers to other island communities had greater likelihood of success than sending Europeans (Breward, 2001, pp. 26 - 31; Tauira, 2006, p. 105). This method was to prove itself in the Cook Islands.

**Christianity’s early years in Rarotonga**

*Christianity’s arrival*

The LMS missionary Reverend William Gill documents the earliest European contact with Rarotongans in his mission account, *Gems from the Coral Islands*. He records how a merchant ship from Sydney landed in Ngatangiia on the eastern side of Rarotonga, at which time an ariki’s daughter Tapaeru was kidnapped. She was left at Aitutaki, where the LMS headed by the Reverend John Williams arrived in 1821 (W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 3, 4, 9).

When the missionaries set out from Aitutaki in search of Rarotonga in 1823 Tapaeru accompanied them, along with the Tahitian missionary Papehia (Ralph & Gosset, 1940, p. 14; Henry, 2002, p. 100 - 103). Tapaeru mediated with her people for the safety of the missionaries, enabling Papehia to stay and begin to preach the gospel (W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 11, 12, 58; Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 24). By the time the island’s first permanent European missionary, the Reverend Charles Pitman, arrived in May 1827, a large chapel had been built and a Christian village established in Avarua under Papehia’s instruction (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 13; Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 22).

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50 This experience was later mirrored by the Wesleyans. Breward notes that when Wesleyans arrived in Fiji in 1835 the conversion of a major chief was critical to achieving significant change, and the work of Polynesian missionaries who better understood the tribal ethos was essential (Breward, 2001, p. 61).

51 John Williams was a driving force in this, both in channelling the enthusiasm of indigenous converts and in using their navigational skill and knowledge to rapidly expand the mission across the Pacific (Breward, 2001, pp. 26, 29).

52 The *Cumberland* in 1814 (Henry, 2002, p. 104).
Rarotonga’s rapid conversion

Christianity’s arrival and rapid uptake in Rarotonga followed earlier patterns across the Cook Island group, from Aitutaki to Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke (Henry, 2002, p. 104). Reasons for the Cook Islands’ rapid mass conversion with limited open resistance have been analysed by various scholars. Theories include: inter-tribal warfare with recently-defeated tribes keen to lay claim to a potentially more powerful god (Sissons, 2007, p. 51); desire for European wealth, technology and literacy (Henry, 2002, p. 100; Tauira, 2006, pp. 76 - 80, 204); and the use of Tahitian and indigenous converts to deliver the gospel message (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, pp. 22, 23). Gilson and Crocombe emphasise the importance of case-by-case analysis rather than generalisations, as social structure and cultural ideologies varied significantly between islands. Key personalities also had great influence as chiefly authority combined political and religious roles and concentrated mana on a few individuals (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, pp. 22, 23).

Thomas (1991) emphasises the distortion of hindsight that affects indigenous as well as non-indigenous history-making, where ancestors are reduced to simple victims of European intervention. He argues that there is:

... scope for a reexploration of the political dynamics of early transactions, aiming to establish not that islanders welcomed colonialism but that the

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53 Discussed further below in the context of Rarotonga.
54 Gilson and Crocombe note that Cook Islanders may have particularly associated material and technological wealth with Christianity in a way that other island groups did not, due to their minimal exposure in the 18th/early 19th centuries to traders and naval personnel. This situation did not change until the major trade expansion of the mid-1930s (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, pp. 22, 23; see also Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 359).
55 The LMS’s use of Tahitians as missionaries to the Cook Islands was a very successful strategy. Not only did they have close language connections, but their cultural similarities meant that Papehia and his subsequent Tahitian companions were able to understand and become part of Rarotongan society. Papehia married a daughter of ariki Tinomana and by the time of Williams’ return had the mana of a hereditary chief with consequent persuasive power (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 24; Tauira, 2006, p. 206). Sissons makes the additional point that as Rarotongans traced their ancestry to a Tahitian warrior, Tangi‘ia, the newcomers had hierarchical precedence; subsequent burnings of ki‘iki‘i and ‘are-atua were practically recognising this (Sissons, 2008, p. 330). Tepaeru, the Rarotongan who had been taken by the Cumberland and subsequently returned as a Christian, was also a very significant intercessor for the new religion (M. T. Crocombe, 1964, p. 54; Maude, 1968, p. 371; RI.05, 2014), which is clearly recognised in the CICC church today.
56 Although note Sissons’ analysis of the Cook Island’s iconoclasm being part of a broader pattern of religious revolution across the Pacific region (Sissons, 2014).
57 The Rarotongan Christian convert and missionary Maretu relates the story of Tuaivi, an influential kōmono (sub-chief) under Tangiia mata‘iapo in Ngatangiia, who converted because he was angry at his previous gods for allowing his two children to die; to abandon his gods was to take revenge (Maretu, 1983, p. 59).
early phases of their entanglement were grounded in local cultural and political agendas, rather than naïveté (pp. 87, 88).

This is supported by Chris Gosden and Chantel Knowles, researchers on colonial relations, and the archaeologist Matthew Campbell who emphasise that Islanders were active participants in the process of change, selectively appropriating and amalgamating introduced resources and ideas to suit shifting indigenous political, cultural and spiritual mores (Campbell, 2002a, p. 225; Gosden & Knowles, 2001, pp. 210, 211). To understand the specific historical, political and cultural context of Rarotonga is therefore critical. This has been explored by various scholars through a range of academic disciplines, and a full review of their work is outside of the scope of this thesis. However, a relevant summary follows.

The Rarotongan context

Tribal structures and land divisions

At the time of the Cumberland’s arrival to Rarotonga, the island was divided into three geopolitical districts, or vaka. These were Takitumu (east and south), Puaikura (Arorangi, west), and Te-Au-o-Tonga (Avarua, north) (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 6; Palmer & Linzey, 1991, p. 368). Each vaka consisted of a collection of politically independent tapere, which were headed by ariki or mata’iapo (R. G. Crocombe, 1961/2004, p. 18). The mana of these chiefly titles varied; mata’iapo were independent landholders who gained their position by success in war or by relation to an ariki. Arika, while never actually paramount, had more mana than mata’iapo and they governed the inter-tapere alliances that formed the vaka (Campbell, 2002a, p. 222; W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 4, 5; Yamaguchi, 2000, p. 153). Arika needed support from Mata’iapo to extend their tribal reach and increase their mana; obligations were reciprocal and based on mutual dependency (Campbell, 2002a, p. 237; RI.05, 2014).

The arika of the three vaka were:

- Avarua – arika Makea,58
- Arorangi – arika Tinomana,
- Takitumu had two arika – Pa in the north (Ngatangiia and Matavera) and Kainuku in south (Avana) (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 6).

58 The Makea title had been divided in the 18th century into three familial branches, Makea Nui, Makea Karika and Makea Yavatini. The Makea Nui title has had greater political power than the other two since the period immediately preceding the coming of Christianity. See R. G. Crocombe (1961/2004, pp. 20 - 23).
Situation in the 1820s

Political tensions inflamed by the Cumberland’s visit resulted in civil war on Rarotonga, which ended with the battle of Vai-o-Kura in which the people of Takitumu were victorious.
It was into this state of uneasy peace that the LMS arrived.

The people of Rarotonga knew of the European god from the Cumberland’s sailors (Ta’unga, 1968, p. 3). The defeated tribes, with ariki Tinomana of Arorangi being the first, were quickly open to changing allegiance to the new European god; they had less to lose, and potentially much to gain from a god that appeared more powerful and prosperous. In contrast, Takitumu held out against Christianity. Even when Takitumu’s ariki, Pa and Kainuku, converted, many mata’iapo did not follow suit, and inland Takitumu became a hub for anti-Christian activity (Sissons, 2007, p. 51). This has relevance to the particular history of the Matavera church as this district was one of the last to convert (Maretu, 1983, pp. 62, 200).

The significance of marae

Marae were critical to the mana of both ariki and mata’iapo, having been established across Rarotonga many centuries before by the island’s first settlers. Richard Walter (1998) notes that:

Each community maintained at least one marae within their land unit and it was probably located very close to the main residential areas. The marae served as a unifying focus. It was the place where tribal ceremonial activities took place and was probably also a centre for political decision making. More than anything it served as a symbolic link between the community and its land (p. 25).

Most marae were situated along, and linked by, the Ara Metua road, the construction of which likely dates to the 16th century (Campbell, 2006, pp. 103, 104; Rere, 1980, pp. 49, 51; Yamaguchi, 2000, pp. 130, 134, 135). This ancient road encircling the island was a key part of pre-Christian society. Dwellings were scattered along its inland side and annual processions held in the ‘aka’au atua (uniting gods) season strengthened cultural bonds between tapere (Sissons, 2007, p. 56).

The physical form and layout of marae varied across Polynesia and within Rarotonga itself, but their enclosure was generally defined by large semi-recessed stones, often forming a raised

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59 Construction of this road and its associated marae are generally attributed to the Rarotongan ancestor Tangi’ia, a Tahitian who fled from his homeland following a quarrel with his brother. He found the island of Rarotonga and settled there (Campbell, 2006, pp. 103, 104). It is elsewhere suggested that the road was constructed around the 11th century by a ruler of that time, Toi (Kuschk, 2011).
rectilinear platform that could be covered with white pebbles (Campbell, 2006, p. 106; W. W. Gill, 1894/1984, p. 50; Gray, 1975, p. 89; Hiroa, 1944/2009, pp. 308 - 310; R. Walter, 1998, p. 24). Rarotongan marae, as analysed by Yamaguchi, were not consistently shaped, but did usually contain a sacred court area, upright stones (variously coral or basalt) designating positions for title-holders, and a platform (Yamaguchi, 2000, pp. 132, 148, 149). Pre-Christian marae included wooden ‘are atua (god houses) that held ki’ikī’i (carved wooden pole god figures) ceremonially wrapped in layers of bark cloth (Campbell, 2006, p. 106).

The mana of ariki and mata’iapo was manifested in their marae, a place that had both religious and political meaning and functions (Campbell, 2002a, p. 222; 2002b, p. 159; 2006, p. 103; Yamaguchi, 2000, p. 163). Marae were tapu (sacred), and strict rules dictated individuals’ entrance, place and role on them (M. T. Crocombe, 1964, p. 31; Dixon, 2016, p. 401). Unlike dwellings and other structures that were deliberately temporal, marae were built for permanence and were maintained rather than replaced. These aspects were soon to have a strong impact on the new Christian construction.

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60 Interestingly, Yamaguchi notes that there appeared to be an important inverse relationship between the mountains, sea, and respective marae; mountain marae needed something of the ocean and seaside marae needed something of the mountain. So basalt uprights were common on coastal marae, while coral stone uprights were used on inland marae, although this was not always the case (Yamaguchi, 2000, pp. 148, 149).

61 Although in extreme situations an entirely new marae containing a new ‘are atua could be constructed as propitiation to gods, or to replace one destroyed in war (Sissons, 2007, p. 53, 54). Marae could also be temporary, used for immediate necessity rather than as part of continued settlement (Hiroa, 1927, pp. 208, 209).
Figure 20: Recorded marae on Rarotonga (Source: Campbell, 2002b, p. 153).

Christianity’s consolidation

Division along tapere lines

The first Christian settlement established by Papehia and his assistant Tiberio in Avarua was short-lived. Avarua’s ariki Makea had made cultivable land available to each tapere from the three vaka, but tensions simmered as ariki Pa, Kainuku and Tinomana resented Makea’s perceived authority over them. A hurricane in 1826 that badly damaged the church was the catalyst for the people of Takitumu to announce that they wanted their own church and

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62 Tiberio (often referred to as “Rio” in historical texts) was also from Tahiti, arriving four months after Papehia (Rere, 1980, p. 33; Tauira, 2006, p. 203).

63 This was obviously particularly irksome to Pa and Kainuku, who had recently defeated Makea in war. Papehia (and subsequent LMS missionaries) supported Makea because it was easiest to deal with a centralised power structure (Campbell, 2002a, pp. 225, 226; Henry, 2003, p. 57). An interviewee noted that, as a weaker tribe at the time of arrival of the LMS, Makea actively sought members of other tribes to join the Avarua vaka to bolster his support base and mana (RI.05, 2014). Having the Church on his land would have aided this process.
school, and the village was relocated to Ngatangiia (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 22; Henry, 2003, pp. 57 - 59; Maretu, 1983, p. 77; Palmer & Linzey, 1991, p. 368). Upon his return in 1827, Williams recognised that a single Christian village was unworkable politically and practically. Pitman and his family, who had arrived with Williams, were consequently established at Ngatangiia while Williams and Papehia returned to Avarua. A third station was established for the Arorangi vaka shortly thereafter (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 18; Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 25). Rarotonga was therefore once again structured along the geo-political lines of the three vaka, but the pattern of settlement had changed. Villages had been established on the coast, with churches, schools and houses built in timber and finished with lime plaster (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 26; Henry, 2003, pp. 74, 75; Palmer & Linzey, 1991, p. 369).

The coalescing of Christianity’s physical presence and political power in the three villages and in ariki, particularly Makea, was aimed at attracting/coercing remaining unconverted tribes into the Christian fold (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 26). Anti-mission activity centred in the areas of Titikaveka and Matavera in Takitumu. Here, mata’iapo had greater independence than in other vaka, and their relations with ariki Kainuku and Pa were based on alliances and reciprocity rather than subordination (Campbell, 2002a, p. 234). The anthropologist and historian Howard Henry notes that many Takitumu mata’iapo had lost respect for Pa and Kainuku for failing to stand against the mission (Henry, 2003, p. 77). These leaders led uprisings to overthrow Christianity, notably in 1829, when the Ngatangiia church was destroyed by arson (Maretu, 1983, p. 83). However, the dysentery epidemic of 1830 followed by a hurricane and subsequent famine in 1831 caused many conversions. These events,

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64 Mataitai, a Christian convert from Aitutaki, was left in Avarua to minister to the remaining Te-au-o-tonga tribe. However, a month later he abandoned his post and the Te-au-o-tonga people followed the other tribal groups to Ngatangiia.

65 Village-based, coastal-sited settlement was itself a change. Archaeological evidence suggests that prior to the arrival of Christianity Rarotonga had a dispersed settlement pattern, with habitations scattered over inland planting soils rather than nucleated in villages. Coastal dwellings were rare (R. Walter, 1998, p. 106).

66 Again it is important not to oversimplify the complexity of this transitional phase; allegiances and animosities between individuals and tribal groups greatly affected mission outcomes, and practicalities of day-to-day living changed slowly and in a selective fashion. Marjorie Crocombe comments in an editor’s note to Maretu’s text that the establishment of the first Christian village in Avarua was continually undermined by people returning to their own homes and food-producing gardens (Maretu, 1983, p. 76). New dwellings were often used for purposes other than living in, and it was common for them to fall into disrepair (Gunson, 1978, p. 273; Robson, 1907, pp. 31, 32).

67 The epidemic killed a seventh of the island’s population (Guiart, 1970, p. 402). Henry notes that islanders were struck by the ability of European missionaries to attend to the sick without being infected themselves, which led to many conversions for “protection” purposes (Henry, 2003, pp. 79, 80). The missionary William Gill records that the hurricane razed land, plantations and buildings, with each settlement needing major reconstruction. Planting was initially prioritised because of famine (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 20).
coupled with power increasingly concentrated in the Christianised ariki, compelled mata’iapo opposers to cease their open hostility (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 30; Gray, 1975, p. 401; Henry, 2003, pp. 78 - 80).

Figure 23: A severe rainstorm, c.1829 (Source: W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 17).

In 1834 the death of one of Kainuku’s wives enabled his formal admission to the Church.\(^{68}\) However, he refused to leave his traditional lands in southern Takitumu. With the support of various mata’iapo he received permission from Pitman to establish a fourth Christian settlement in Titikaveka (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 27; Henry, 2003, p. 91). Alexander Cunningham,\(^{69}\) who had come to Rarotonga with Pitman after the latter’s stay in Tahiti, supervised the building of Rarotonga’s first coral stone church there, with the assistance of Ta’unga, a Rarotongan convert and one of its first indigenous missionaries (Pitman, 1841, August 26; Ta’unga, 1968, p. 8). The Titikaveka people had already cut wood for a church but abandoned that for hewn stone blocks (Maretu, 1983, p. 93), with Ta’unga noting this was to

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\(^{68}\) Kainuku had two wives and had long refused to separate from either of them. His polygamy had barred his acceptance into the Church.

\(^{69}\) Cunningham, noted by Maretu (1983) as “a friend and member of the church” (p. 92), was a settler who had come to Rarotonga to establish a sugarcane plantation. He was closely associated with the LMS (unusually, as the LMS actively opposed foreign settlers) and provided advice and superintendence on LMS construction.
regain mana lost by being among the last tribal groups to embrace the new religion (Ta’unga, 1968, p. 8). This was a telling choice. As explained by Nia (2010):

Linked to the land, stone is made sacred by purpose, naming and arrangement. ... It is with stone that the Māori confirms his title, and genealogies attachment to a place, a marae and the land (p. 23).

The construction of a stone church not only restored mana through arduous technical accomplishment as argued by Budgett (2007, pp. 89 - 91). By using stone the Titikaveka people were confirming the church as the “new marae,” symbolically restating their ancestral right to the land through the construction of an immutable built form dedicated to the new god. This had been previously accomplished through the construction of marae, each stone of which had sacred and political meaning (Dixon, 2016, pp. 401, 402). The Titikaveka church was physical confirmation of the indigenisation of the Church and its precedence in a re-ordered political system.

Figure 24: Evidence of the coral stone cut for the Titikaveka church remains inscribed on the Tikioki beach, Titikaveka (Source: M. Arnold, personal photograph, April 2016).

70 It took six years to construct, opening in 1841 (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 32). This church remains, with some modifications, in Titikaveka today.

71 Maretu’s writing has a strong focus on church construction. The editor of his work, Marjorie Crocombe, suggests that Maretu may have been emphasising their importance as “a new marae for a new god” (Maretu, 1983, p. 24).
Founding the Church in Matavera

Titikaveka’s founding encouraged the mata’iapo of Matavera to petition Pitman to allow the creation of a fifth station in their tribal land in northern Takitumu. This was not supported by ariki Pa, whose power had been concentrated in the Ngatangiia station; nor by Pitman, who wanted to avoid further fragmentation of the ekalesia (Gray, 1975, pp. 402, 403; Henry, 2003, p. 93; Maretu, 1983, p. 186). Agreement to form a separate station was finally reached in 1849. The decision appears to have been influenced by the severe hurricane of 1846 which left Ngatangiia in ruins, allowing the mata’iapo of Matavera to demand their independence (W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 42, 43; Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 27; Gray, 1975, pp. 402 - 404).

Construction itself elicited further conflict between Pa’s Ngatangiia people and Matavera groups, with various burnings of partially-completed structures demonstrating a rejection of subordination to Pa. The potential for war between the parties was averted by a reconciliation meeting at the Arai-Te-Tonga marae where Pa conceded to a new district being formed. The Matavera church and village was subsequently established on the Ara Metua

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72 European missionaries appear to have not understood the nuances of these political conflicts. William Gill (1871/2001) records that “a few evil-disposed young men disturbed the public peace. … For some months the right and power of law and order were sharply contended … but the authorities proved equal … and the triumph of the wicked was cut off” (pp. 52, 53). Polynesian missionaries, as evidenced by Maretu’s records, were much more aware that such actions were part of wider cultural revolutions in an intensely competitive tribal structure.

73 It is notable that a marae, rather than a church, was the chosen venue for reconciliation, indicating that they continued to have an important socio-political role.
road in 1849 (Gray, 1975, pp. 405 - 407; Maretu, 1983, pp. 187 - 189). While tensions continued to simmer through most of 1850, the assertion of Matavera’s independence within their own land redressed perceived imbalances of mana, and hostilities between vaka tangata (tribal groups) were able to be assuaged (Gray, 1975, p. 408).

Matavera was not formally recognised in LMS correspondence as a separate ekalesia until 1858 when the district officially dissociated from Ngatangiia and built a new village, sited this time on the Ara Tapu (G. Gill, 1858, December 4; Maretu, 1983, p. 192). The district’s first stone church, which survives to the present, was built between 1862 and 1864 (Krause, 1862, March 15; 1864, January).

Cultural transformation and transposition

Analysis of Christianity’s establishment on Rarotonga supports Budgett’s findings on Mangaia that the societal upheaval that occurred after arrival of the LMS was not simply cultural displacement caused by imported influences. Rather it represented a more complex and nuanced cultural transformation (Budgett, 2005, p. 65). Sissons suggests that the construction of Christian churches physically materialised a new social field on Rarotonga, stimulating a radical transformation of existing marae as an alternative and competing social field. He argues that destruction of new Christian structures was an equivalent response to earlier marae burnings, with both sides attempting to dematerialise each other’s entire social field as power balances destabilised (Sissons, 2007, pp. 52, 57 - 59). Deeply tied to assertions of mana and religious supremacy in a highly competitive tribal system, the cessation of warfare was finally achieved when tribal lines were once again inscribed on the land, no longer symbolised by marae, but by Christian churches.

Indigenous agency

While LMS missionaries had considerable influence on the overall appearance of Christian architecture and introduced the technique of burning coral to make lime for mortar and plasterwork, their involvement in construction processes themselves varied. Papehia clearly played a key role in the erection of the first church in Avarua, applying his experience from the LMS mission in Tahiti and setting expectations for physical manifestations of the new religion.

74 Maretu notes that the new siting was due to practical issues of muddiness on the Ara Metua. However, it appears likely that the decision to re-centre the Christian village on the Ara Tapu, and to build the district’s first stone church there, was also influenced by Matavera’s leaders’ need to reassert their mana. See discussions under A new social order, below, and Layout and siting in Chapter Four.
Rarotongan converts including Maretu and Ta’unga also superintended construction projects, and Europeans such as Cunningham and the missionaries Buzacott and George Gill played active roles in the architecture of specific coral churches in Mangaia and Rarotonga (Gray, 1975, pp. 413, 414; Henry, 2003, p. 118; Maretu, 1983, pp. 93, 127, 152, 153).

However, European missionaries were very few in number, isolated and lacking in resources (Goodall, 1954, p. 398). Local groups were themselves central to the process, and their indigenous building skills were critical in a context where very few foreign tools or materials were available (Campbell, 2002a, p. 225; W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 37; Hiroa, 1993, p. 11; Maretu, 1983, p. 7). Meaning and ritual from pre-Christian religious practice were deeply woven into the resultant new churches. This process of cultural transformation and rematerialisation has been analysed by various scholars, notably Budgett, Dixon and Sissons, and is explored briefly below.

**Binding of new with old**

Budgett and Dixon argue in the context of Mangaia, the conversion of which took place shortly after Rarotonga, that the elaborately woven and patterned sennit lashings that tied timber frames together were more than an indigenous influence on an introduced architectural form. Rather, they imbued the building with sacred symbolism, figuratively binding tribes, their chiefs and gods to the (more powerful) Christian god in an entrenchment of peace and ariki supremacy (Dixon, 2016, p. 410), and binding missionaries into pre-established webs of reciprocal social, political and economic relations (Budgett, 2005, p. 66-69).

In Rarotonga, wrapping with bark cloth had similar symbolism. Sissons describes how elaborate and ritually-defined processes of constructing ‘are atua were translated to the new ‘are pure, the churches, as tribal allegiances shifted to the new religion. The figurative carving of ‘are atua was continued in the framing of the first timber churches, as was the wrapping of ki’iki’i with fine bark cloth through the wrapping of church posts and rafters (Sissons, 2007, pp. 51 - 53). He suggests that, just as new wrappings on ki’iki’i had symbolically renewed their mana and life force in pre-Christian times, the wrapping of new church elements imbued the church with “life-giving mana,” materialising a fusion of ‘are atua elements and introduced

75 The limited role of European missionaries in the Cook Islands’ conversion experience is notable; the larger islands of Rarotonga, Mangaia and Aitutaki seldom had more than one resident European missionary, and many of the smaller islands had none (Budgett, 2007, p. 1).

76 The second largest and most southerly of the Cook Islands group.
elements to encompass the tapu of the church’s predecessors (Sissons, 2007, pp. 54, 57). These processes were not merely reapplying culturally meaningful material and construction techniques in a new context. Rather, they were part of an “indigenisation of the Christian churches, their incorporation into ... society, and the materialisation of a new religious and political order” (Dixon, 2016, pp. 402 - 404).

A new social order

The siting of Rarotonga’s first churches both usurped, and was deliberately shaped by, pre-Christian norms embedded in aspects of marae practice. The churches represented a new cohesion and integration of the three vaka, entrenching formerly contestable tribal lines and concentrating power in ariki (Garrett, 1992, pp. 249, 250). This new social order was expressed in the construction of a new coastal road, the Ara Tapu.77 Throughout Polynesia an important distinction is drawn between seaward and inland, with the coast having higher status through its associations with “tapu, horizons and things foreign” (Campbell, 2002b, p. 153). Churchscapes connected by the Ara Tapu therefore both mirrored and usurped marae situated on the ancient Ara Metua, physically manifesting the new Christian order’s dominance over marae and their associated tribal leaders (Campbell, 2002b, p. 166; Sissons, 2007, pp. 56, 57). New, Christianised processions in the form of teretere (inter-ekalesia exchanges) and nuku (biblical drama pageants) replaced those of the ‘aka’au atua that had linked marae (Sissons, 2007, p. 56), symbolically layering onto the Ara Tapu the “ritually sanctified landscape” of the Ara Metua (Campbell, 2002b, p. 151).

Land for Christian settlements was given by tribal leaders and structures were built by ‘iti tangata (common people) at the request of ariki. Missionary houses and chiefly residences for ariki were built directly adjacent to churches in a reflection of former marae-centred spatial relationships (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 32). Sissons argues that these building projects were a public display of loyalty, endorsing an altered social order centred on ariki and their new (Christian) priests within the new marae (Sissons, 2007, pp. 54, 57).78 In this way, ariki claimed the Church as their tama ʻūʻā, a Mangaian phrase meaning to raise a child on the lap.

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77 The Ara Tapu had begun to be formed as part of the earliest Christian villages, but it was c.1856 that it was extended under the supervision of Maretu to form a coastal perimeter across all tapere (Maretu, 1983, p. 192).

78 Sissons later notes the two-sidedness of collective action, suggesting that it can be retrospectively misconceived as action by ariki, with the general populace as passive followers. Popular participation was not necessarily because of democratisation within the new Christian order but because ordinary people saw a more peaceful, centralised hierarchy as beneficial to a stable, prosperous life (Sissons, 2008, p. 323, 328). Either way, it was only because of their participation that change could occur.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the LMS learned key lessons in Tahiti, namely, the need to establish the Church within the embrace of existing tribal structures, and to utilise Polynesian converts as missionaries. This greatly affected mission outcomes in the Cook Islands, allowing the Church and ariki to develop a symbiotic relationship that enabled Christianity to usurp former religious practice while simultaneously concentrating ariki power.

By the late 1840s Rarotonga’s conversion to Christianity was effectively complete. The process of change had not only reshaped religious and cultural practice, but had transformed the physical spaces in which these practices were lived in Rarotongan communities. Central to these changes were the ariki, who had successfully appropriated Christianity to strengthen their mana at the expense of individual tapere under mata’iapo, entrenching their leadership of vaka through the enduring peace of Christianity.

The analyses of Budgett, Dixon and Sissons suggest that early Christian constructions on Mangaia and Rarotonga both transformed previous cultural expressions of spiritual, social and political epistemology and were pervaded by their symbols and rituals. How these expressions materialised and evolved in Rarotonga’s later stone churches will be explored in the following chapters.
Introduction

This chapter analyses the architecture and construction of CICC churches. It begins with a discussion of how architecture is understood in the Cook Islands; not as enclosed structures but as culturally-determined places that contain, control and mediate life forces. It suggests that oversimplification of the architectural impact of the LMS to a reductionist dichotomy of indigenous, organic-based architecture versus foreign, stone-centred structures should be avoided. Instead, church architecture is explored as the new marae, holistic cultural landscapes physically realised in a range of architectural materiality and form, indigenised and indigenous. This shapes their significance as repositories of historical and cultural meaning.

The erection of stone churches on Rarotonga is then examined. Construction in stone is discussed as the second phase of mission construction, progressively replacing the transitional plastered timber structures that had been the LMS’s first stations. This is followed by exploration of the materials used and techniques employed in building these churches, analysing the intertwining of European and indigenous architectures in their form and fabric.

Field research investigation of Matavera’s church construction included site measurement (boundary walls, ancillary structures, soft landscaping, main building exterior and interior), exploration of the church building’s ceiling void and photographic recording. Limited investigation was also made of the other four historic LMS coral churches, located in Avarua, Ngatangiia, Titikaveka and Arorangi, and of the more modern CICC church at Nikao. Records of these sites included building measures (exterior, interior, and some limited site data) and photographs.

Interview questions did not specifically cover technical matters of construction, as interviewee selection was not related to building expertise.\(^79\) However, general or church-specific

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\(^79\) Although several interviewees had been actively involved in church repairs or modifications.
information regarding building fabric and/or construction methods was often shared as part of broader responses. Informal conversations with a variety of local people and Auckland-based Cook Islanders supplemented or confirmed information gathered through site investigation or interviews. While most interviews and conversations related to buildings on Rarotonga itself, some comments involved churches on other islands. The discussion therefore makes general points regarding construction across the group, while focusing on Rarotonga. The chapter concludes with a closer physical analysis of the Matavera CICC, examining its particular characteristics as a building instigated, designed and directed by its ekalesia.

Synergistic architecture – the formation of cultural landscapes

Architectural studies of (pre-contact) Polynesian architecture have tended to concentrate on their lightness, transparency and impermanence, created through elaborate and culturally significant techniques of weaving, wrapping, stitching and layering in organic materials (see Austin, 2001; McKay & Walmsley, 2005; S. Treadwell, 2003 as examples). Architectural analyses of the symbolic links between pre-Christian and Christian spaces have also focused on their shared organic materiality; wood, sennit, and bark cloth. This emphasis can obscure the reality that stone, heavy, opaque and permanent, played a central role in Polynesian architecture in the form of marae (Küchler, Were, & Jowitt, 2005, p. 127). The iconoclasm of marae at the time of Christianity’s inception meant that their wooden and fibrous elements were lost, leaving only stone remains (J. Treadwell, 2016, p. 330). Marae studies have therefore been primarily archaeological. While such research has much to contribute to understandings of these places, their focus is on cultural artefacts built in stone, rather than a holistic view of marae as architectural spaces with multiple layers of spatiality and materiality.

In Polynesia, conceptions of architecture need not be limited to enclosed structures but should rather be understood as created forms that “harness and contain life force[s]” (Küchler et al., 2005, p. 126), an architectural parallel to the biblical Solomon’s temple.80 Consideration of marae as synergistic architecture enables these places to be understood as more than a collection of separate parts, stone perimeter, raised platform, standing stones, wooden god-house with wrapped god-poles inside, but as holistic cultural landscapes physically realised in a

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80 When the Ark of the Covenant was brought into King Solomon’s completed temple, biblical narratives record how the inner sanctum was filled with cloud, “for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.” (1 Kings 8: 11, NIV). Rarotongans readily correlated such Judaean-Christian accounts with their own oral traditions. See also Reilly (2005): “the transformation of belief and religious practices ... were ever voiced in the symbolic language of Mangaia’s previous religion” (p. 124).
range of architectural materiality and form, and not solely reliant on walls and roof to define its enclosure.

From this perspective, the entanglement of marae and church architecture is brought into focus, and their conceptual links made physically manifest by Cook Islanders themselves become seemingly endless. When viewed as a cohesive whole, many aspects of marae fabric, spatiality, building processes and techniques, and metaphysical meanings may be seen to have been practically utilised and/or symbolically reinterpreted in the construction of churches. It is therefore suggested that churches were not foreign religious constructs tied into indigenous ontology, but were a transformed manifestation of an (already) indigenous cultural landscape.

The construction of coral churches is examined in light of this analysis.

**A new architecture**

The earliest Christian constructions on Rarotonga were church buildings, instigated by the Tahitian LMS missionary Papehia. These were quickly followed by adjacent dwellings for Papehia and later LMS missionaries, and chiefly residences for the land-gifting ariki. Rather than stone, they were built with timber framing and plastered with a lime mortar similar to their Tahitian precedents (Sissons, 2008, pp. 320, 321). None have remained extant. These transitional buildings were considered by the missionaries to be temporary only, providing an interim solution for the need to establish focal points of Christianity as quickly as possible (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 22; Henry, 2003, p. 41). Their experimental and swift erection led to multiple physical failings and repeated losses to fire and hurricanes through the early 19th century (W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 20, 41 - 45; Maretu, 1983, pp. 75, 83).

In the 1840s and 50s this began to change, as Christianity’s embedment on the islands was made manifest in a new wave of Christian construction. Earlier timber churches were replaced with new architectural forms built for durability and permanence. The need for wholesale replacement of timber-based structures was not simply a matter of physical necessity. It also made manifest socio-political aspects of missionary expectations, tribal leaders’ power consolidation and inter-tribal rivalry. The key material employed for this new phase of construction was coral stone.
Missionary expectations

Construction in stone has been historically recognised as a symbol of wealth and power (Carran, Hughes, Leslie, & Kennedy, 2012, p. 137). The LMS mission’s linkage of social improvement and Christian conversion (Petts, 2011, p. 461; Thorogood, 1960, pp. 28, 29) meant that missionaries working in Pacific outposts endeavoured to “progress” from outdoor preaching and indigenous, plant-based dwellings, to temporary church and living accommodation in wattle and daub-type structures, and finally to masonry churches and homes (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 46). This mirrored the development of “home” missions (evangelisation within Britain) that were also occurring in the early 19th century, as described by the archaeologist David Petts (2011):

One pattern, immediately apparent in the North Pennines, is the repeated cycle from outdoor missionary events, to inside meetings in buildings built for other purposes and finally moving to the construction of purpose-built chapels (pp. 471, 473).

An important aspect from the LMS’s perspective was the physical and symbolic durability of coral stone-based Christian settlements centred around a church. As in the home missions, where masonry churches symbolised the culmination of gradual acceptance of a new Christian movement, the Cook Islands’ first stone churches physically proclaimed Christianity as firmly rooted in this new place. Their monumentalism, achieved only through the endorsement and physical efforts of indigenous converts, signified broad societal acceptance and undermined remaining opposition.

Tribal leaders’ consolidation of power

The equation of masonry construction with social elevation was not new in Rarotonga, as stone had long been linked with mana through the construction of marae (Nia, 2010, p. 23). Linked with the new god, coral stone architecture became a symbol of mana and therefore the appropriate building type for tribal leaders. Its permanence and durability both reflected and helped fabricate the new position of ariki as “high chiefs,” hereditary titles that were no longer open to contestation through war but were deeply bound with the new religion, as each enhanced and extended the other’s power (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 32; Hiroa, 1939/2008, p. 84). Processes of construction thus transposed formerly mutable tribal hierarchies into permanent built form, as described by Maretu (1983):
After the house [for Papehia and his Tahitian mission companion Rio] was finished, the high chiefs and mata’iapo wanted nice houses also. They therefore built limestone houses of coral lime thus beautifying the village. Soon everyone had limestone houses, and beds and chairs made of sennit. (p. 70).

The seeming indestructibility of the new stone edifices would have made a strong impression on those mata’iapo resisting the Church and its centralisation of power in ariki. It is notable that while early Christian buildings, constructed in timber and plaster, were subject to frequent arson attacks by opposition groups, no such incidents are recorded for stone buildings. Rather, open challenges to the Church faded in this second phase of church-building (Maretu, 1983, p. 97). Complex specificities of tribal relations and environmental factors\(^{81}\) forged peace, but the new churches’ fortress-like appearance may have played a role in final capitulation, as well as providing confidence to those converted leaders who had vested their mana in them.

**Inter-tribal rivalry**

Deeply ingrained practices of inter-tribal rivalry previously exhibited through warfare and land expropriation were also impacted by Christianity’s arrival and its message of peace. Greater access to, and appropriation of, European technology, goods and literacy became the new outlet for this competitive drive, and stone edifices substantiated claims of tribal superiority (Breward, 2001, p. 23; Gray, 1975, pp. 404, 405, 466; Henry, 2003, p. 41; Tauira, 2006, p. 204). Construction of the Titikaveka church had both reconfirmed and reconfigured stone as the material of prestige; other churches did likewise, as exampled below.

In 1848, Ngatangiia completed its first stone church, but could not invite the island’s other tribes to its opening due to a personal feud between Pitman and Buzacott (Gray, 1975, p. 397). Joe Gray in his PhD dissertation discusses Ngatangiia’s frustration in being unable to flaunt their success to Avarua, who had an old-style timber church, and their humiliation that Titikaveka and Arorangi had built stone churches before them. He notes that Ngatangiia’s disgruntlement would have been shared by their rivals due to the mutually-understood importance of maintaining the competitive system, albeit in its transformed state (Gray, 1975, pp. 397, 398).

\(^{81}\) Including an epidemic, hurricanes and famine as discussed in Chapter Three.
Similar inter-tribal rivalry was evident on other islands. Upon completing a church in the village of Tauhunu, Manihiki in 1854, Maretu (1983) recalls the anger of a Rakahanga leader, “‘Why didn’t you build a stone church first in Rakahanga?’” (pp. 172, 173). Maretu’s description of the tribes of Rakahanga and Tukao participating in the opening of Tauhunu’s church and then rapidly constructing their own stone churches clearly demonstrates these tribes’ need to use a perceived superior architecture to re-establish their mana in the face of rival one-upmanship.

**Summary**

This discussion has argued that the replacement of early plastered timber churches with stone structures was not simply addressing physical defects. Rather, this second phase of church-building created new depositories for old cultural frameworks. Tribal leaders’ hierarchies and inter-tribal mana were interwoven with LMS missionaries’ expectations for an entrenched Christianity and demonstrable social improvement. Material properties and construction techniques used for this phase are now explored.

**Stone church-building in the Cook Islands**

*Lime mortar: the chemistry*

Lime mortar is hydrated, or “slaked” lime. It is produced by burning limestone at a temperature of around 900 – 1000º C. This produces quicklime, a highly volatile powder that is added to water (“slaked”) to form hydrated lime (Band, 2004, p. 1; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 173). The setting of hydrated lime as a masonry mortar returns the material to its original limestone chemistry through the process of carbonation, as illustrated in Figure 26. Limestone itself is a mineral consisting predominantly of calcium carbonate, and occurs naturally in many forms (Oates, 1998, p. 1). Coral is an uncommon source of lime but was utilised across Oceania as the raw ingredient for masonry construction due to its immediate accessibility and abundance (Hodgson, 1997, p. 386; Mills, 2009, pp. 76, 77).

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82 Magnesium carbonate is also commonly present.
Figure 26: The lime cycle (Source: Band, 2004, p. 2. Diagram credited to Lara Band).

Hydrated lime may be hydraulic, non-hydraulic, or a mixture of the two. Non-hydraulic lime is essentially pure calcium hydroxide; it sets through carbonation, giving off water and absorbing carbon dioxide from the air. Hydraulic lime contains pozzolanic impurities such as silicates that cause setting through hydration (Band, 2004, p. 2). It has a faster initial set and a higher compressive strength than non-hydraulic lime. Pozzolan proportions determine how hydraulic a hydrated lime is, from feebly hydraulic, which is relatively weak and permeable, to eminently hydraulic, which is stronger, less permeable and can set under water (Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 173, Swallow & Carrington, 1995, pp. 11, 12).

The hydrated lime made in 19th century Rarotonga is an example of feebly to moderately hydraulic lime, with resultant properties on the weaker, more permeable end of the mortar spectrum. Unlike modern lime manufacture, which artificially controls hydraulicity through additives, historic LMS lime mortar has a level of natural hydraulicity due to the pozzolanic silicates and salts naturally occurring in the coral and sea water used, which contributes to its compressive strength.
Coral lime manufacture in the Cook Islands

The technique of using coral to make lime mortar was well established internationally by the time of its application in the Cook Islands. Mission organisations expanding their work into Oceania from Europe and America were familiar with methods of kiln- or pit-burning lime that had developed in Europe centuries before (Band, 2004, p. 1; Carran et al., 2012, pp. 117-119; Kaller, 2013). They had applied the principles in Hawai‘i and Tahiti in the early 1800s, using locally-sourced coral as the raw ingredient in lieu of quarried limestone (Lummio & Tissot, 2004, p. 2; Mills, 2009, pp. 76, 77).

The coral lime plaster made in the first period of LMS construction on Rarotonga appears to have been prepared differently from the mortar that was introduced in the late 1830s by Cunningham for Rarotonga’s first stone buildings. Maretu (1983) refers to lime being prepared in the “Rarotongan fashion” (p. 93), comparing it to the technique espoused by Cunningham. It is unclear whether this means that Rarotongans had knowledge of lime burning and use prior to the LMS’s arrival, or whether it had been introduced by Papehia who had been versed in the process in Tahiti.83 It may have been a combination of both: the anthropologist Peter Mills notes that there is evidence of some use of lime for ceramics decoration and personal adornment in Polynesia, although not in traditional architecture (Mills, 2009, p. 77), so skills local and imported may have merged in this new application.

The second period, characterised by coral stone construction, utilised lime-burning methods that had been applied elsewhere in the Pacific by the LMS (Lummio & Tissot, 2004; Mills, 2009; Thorogood, 1960, p. 27; H. J. Walker, 1962). Raw coral was burnt in pits to form quicklime, which was then progressively removed and mixed with sea water and beach sand to form a lime mortar (Ryan, 1961, p. 44). Maretu (1983) describes the first Rarotongan attempt, under the instruction of Cunningham:

First they prepared the fire and heaped firewood into the pit until they reached half-way up the pit. Then they threw the [coral] rocks into this until the firewood was completely covered. More wood was heaped above this until the pit was full then more stones were put over these. ... [When

83 The LMS missionary William Ellis provides a detailed description of lime-making in Huahine (French Polynesia) in the 1820s (Ellis, 1829, pp. 69, 70). Coral lime-burning certainly appears to have been completely new to Aitutaki in 1822, where Williams records people’s astonishment at “roasting stones” (Williams, 1837/1998, p. 20), and Hiroa states that it was an LMS introduction to the Cook Islands (Hiroa, 1944/2009, p. 494).
these partially subsided]) they threw the rest of the wood [and coral stones] into the pit until it was full (p. 93).

This first preparation was burnt only overnight and was poorly slaked (Maretu, 1983, p. 93); the method was presumably refined over time. However, Maretu’s description is not dissimilar to one provided over a century later for the making of “Coralite,” a coral-based building material which was widely used for public buildings in the 1960s (Ryan, 1961, pp. 45 – 46; see also Ponder, 1996, p. 51).84

Figure 27: A diagram of 19th century LMS lime-burning pits (Source: Thorogood, 1960, p. 27).

Some interviewees and other local people recalled this process in conversations during field research. Punga, a type of soft coral, was considered the most suitable, and was readily available in the islands’ lagoons and along beaches (Maretu, 1983, p. 171). Umu, traditional in-ground ovens, were adapted for the burning (Nooroa, 2016, p. 362). Limitations of 19th century knowledge, tools and technology meant inefficient pit heating, uneven coral breakdown and irregularities in proportions and material types in processes of sea water slaking and sand/aggregate mixing. The resultant hydrated, feeble-moderate hydraulic lime mortars would have been somewhat variable in strength and composition.

84 Winton H. Ryan, the Superintendent of Works to the Cook Islands government in the 1960s, describes the manufacture of Coralite:

- Slow-burning fuel logs were laid into a large pit in right-angled rows, with fast-burning coconut fronds and husks layered in between as kindling.
- Lighting ports were spaced around the pile and fired simultaneously; once lit, they acted as fire vents.
- Men in attendance would prod the rocks with poles to help them break down during the first day of burning, and extra coral was thrown on top if the fire broke through.
- The pit was left in a controlled burn for around eight days, with fresh water regularly sprayed onto it after the second day to begin the slaking process (Ryan, 1961, pp. 45 – 46).
While no stone or mortar tests were carried out on church fabric as part of this research, the wall composition of the Matavaera church was examined via exposed areas in the ceiling space. This confirmed an inconsistent mortar mix, with hard sections, softer areas where the mortar had exfoliated or was easily powdered, and many poorly-burnt coral fragments dispersed throughout. Wall strength therefore relies on the thickness of the walls, which in the case of the Matavaera church are approximately three metres thick at the base.

*Figure 28:* Collecting punga from the lagoon, Mangaia c.1955 (Source: Nooroa, 2016, p. 363. Image credited to the D.S. Marshall Archive, Rarotonga, Cook Islands: University of the South Pacific).
Figure 29: Preparing the umu puna, Mangaia c.1955 (Source: Nooroa, 2016, p. 364. Image credited to the D.S. Marshall Archive, Rarotonga, Cook Islands: University of the South Pacific).

Removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 30: Burning coral to restore the ariki palace in Arorangi. Note the lighting ports [red arrows] which would later act as fire vents. Image © James Siers, photographer (Source: Siers, 1977, p. 95).
Stone sourcing and use

Expediency appears to have been a key factor in the sourcing of stone fabric, with church builders utilising whatever suitable and easily accessible stone type was to hand in each place. This was certainly the approach recommended by Cunningham. Frequent hurricanes meant coastal land on which churches were situated was often strewn with coral boulders and stones (Maretu, 1983, pp. 92, 93; RI.06, 2014). Its collection served the dual purpose of providing a convenient supply of stone and clearing the site. Reefs and lagoons were a further source (RI.05, 2014; Williams, 1837/1998, p. 20).

It is significant that, unlike marae, Rarotonga’s stone churches were not built in volcanic basalt (RI.05, 2014) and generally do not appear to have reused stones from marae. The anthropologist Te Rangi Hiroa (1944/2009) notes that:

Churches were built in every village and the material symbols of the old gods were destroyed ... the open temples were desecrated and the stones

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85 Advice that was eschewed by the Titikaveka people, who chose to build the church with cut blocks of coral rather than coral rubble. The lagoon shore at Titikaveka is a source of “pa” coral, which is relatively easily cut. Blocks were hand-hewn, carried along the beach, and mortared together to form masonry walls (Maretu, 1983, p. 93; Pitman, 1841, August 26). The coral blocks remain unplastered as a testament to this effort (Kecskemeti, 2012, p. 64).
from these once sacred structures were used to support the sides of taro irrigation patches and to make walled enclosures for pigs (p. 494).

While Hiroa’s description makes it clear that marae stones were repurposed, it implies that they were not used in church construction. Hiroa’s comment was a general one regarding the Cook Islands group as a whole and was not without exception. In individual cases marae stones were incorporated into churches, particularly in the first phase of church-building, as noted by Hiroa on the atoll of Tongareva (Penrhyn) (Hiroa, 1932/2006, p. 149) and by Dixon on Mangaia (Dixon, 2016, pp. 402, 403). Culturally significant transference from marae to churches also occurred in Rarotonga through material reapplication and construction techniques as discussed in Chapter Three. However, it is suggested that the reuse of marae stones may have been limited by a variety of factors. These are examined below.

In the first phase of construction: while LMS missionaries generally treated indigenous beliefs with cautious usefulness as a gateway to the “true” faith (Gunson, 1974b, p. 188), they may have been reluctant, in Christianity’s early period, to incorporate recently-sacred stones into plastered timber churches. Missionaries would have been conscious of the still-tenuous spiritual authority of these buildings, and may have wished to avoid inadvertently undermining their shaky position by incorporating potent objects of pre-Christian power. Rather, they likely encouraged marae stone repurposing into agriculture, which not only rendered them profane to the indigenous population, but had satisfying parallels with biblical concepts of desecration (Leviticus 11:7-8, Deuteronomy 14:8).

In the second phase of construction: the mission’s theological position, that regarded church buildings merely as locations for preaching rather than places imbued with spiritual meaning, is likely to have been a factor in material sourcing for stone churches. Inland basalt was simply inconvenient for use in coastal churches, particularly in the context of an increasingly paid

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86 It also contrasts with records of church construction in Tahiti in the late 1810s/early 1820s, which indicate that churches actively incorporated material from, or even built on the ruins of, marae (Gunson, 1978, p. 314). Sissons discusses pre-Christian processes of marae “cloning,” where a stone was taken from the old marae to be the cornerstone of the new marae, thereby forming both material and ancestral bonds, and suggests that the same replications were at play in church construction (Sissons, 2008, pp. 324 - 328).

87 As discussed in Chapter Three, it should be highlighted that formerly sacred ki’iki’i and their bark cloth wrappings were sometimes incorporated into early churches (Dixon, 2016, pp. 402, 403). While this may seem inconsistent with the above analysis it is suggested that, from the European missionaries’ perspective at least, the hanging of ki’iki’i from rafters visually proclaimed their demise. This would be different from marae stones being built into the foundations or walls of the church, with their potentially concerning associations with Christ’s first commission to the apostle Peter: “on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18, NIV; see also Isaiah 44:7-9).

CMS missionaries in New Zealand were also comfortable with a level of Māori decoration in church architecture, in keeping with the CMS ideal of allowing an integration of Christianity with indigenous culture (Brown, 2009, p. 47).
workforce (Gray, 1975, pp. 488, 492). It is also worth noting that destruction of marae largely occurred in the 1820s; by the time stone church construction commenced in the late 1830s, the now profane marae stones had been used elsewhere.

Finally, it is probable that both missionaries and indigenous converts wished to make a clear point of distinction from strongholds of “heathenism” by using a contrasting material that literally stood out from its surrounding landscape (Mills, 2009, p. 76). The use of white (coral) instead of black (basalt) in church structures both alluded to Judaeo-Christian symbolisms of good overcoming evil and visually advertised the claims of enhanced mana of tribal leaders associated with them (Sissons, 2014, p. 89; S. Treadwell, 2016, pp. 373, 374).

It is important to acknowledge the complex and situational nuances that were at play in this period. Tribes jostled for dominance within a shifting socio-religious framework, and this was made physically manifest in particularised ways. The Ngatangiia church provides an interesting example of marae stone repurposing in the mission grounds (although not the church building itself), as shared by an interviewee:

Kainuku gifted that land for the mission house. But during that time, 1827, his tribe, his people, were still going on to [the marae] to worship, so they wouldn’t listen to him, because, you know, so what he did was, he made them really destroy the marae, and carry the rocks that made up the marae on Motutapu, and if you go back onto that mission ground today, you’ll see there is this pathway paved with rocks, and those rocks are from the marae. And he believes that [as] he removes these rocks from the marae and bring them there, that will bring his people to the new god. So what he did is he named the pathway … Te kura e teara manu … that name is the name of Kainuku ariki’s girdle, his royal girdle; he gave that name to that pathway, and what it means, from that very day, that he has accepted Christianity as his religion, and his old beliefs, he has laid them down … and now, the new god, reigns over (RI.11, 2014).

Oral histories such as these suggest a certain fluidity of actions and their justification, both on the part of LMS missionaries within their Christian theological framework, and indigenous leaders reshaping traditional cultural ontology. This was also the case in construction techniques employed for church building, as discussed below.
Construction techniques

- **Stone walls**

Titikaveka is the only church built from hewn coral blocks, which remain unplastered. Coral rubble walls bonded with coral lime mortar was the standard model for churches, although construction techniques appear to have varied somewhat across the Cook Islands group. In some cases a “double-skin” walling method was used (RI.06, 2014). Others had solid walls with various types, amounts and techniques of timber incorporation, such as kuru (breadfruit – *artocarpus altilis*) piles embedded into the structure88 with hibiscus vine rope tying on the top-plate (RI.05, 2014). Pandanus roots, guava saplings, coconut fronds and ironwood branches were sometimes interwoven through the stones as an aid to tensile movement (RI.16, 2014; Ryan, 1961, p. 44), but structural stability depended almost solely on the shear bulk of the walls in both transverse and longitudinal directions. Surfaces were finished with white lime wash, which built up into thick layers with successive applications over time.

- **Foundations and floors**

Foundations appear to have originally been rubble coral, with a timber floor suspended above (RI.15; RI.16, 2014). Budgett suggests that foundational platforms may have embodied spiritual notions of consecration. She describes how Mangaian marae were bounded by closely laid coral slab retaining walls, within which a raised platform was formed. She links this physical elevation with concepts of space being spiritually set apart and sanctified, and suggests that church foundations and floors may have evoked similar meanings (Budgett, 2007, pp. 95 - 97). It is worth noting however that very similar stone facing systems were used to create the raised terraces of taro plots (Hiroa, 1927, p. 211); this suggests that pragmatic considerations and merging norms of European and indigenous construction practice may have been the dominant driver. With no sub-floor ventilation, timber floors were prone to rot (Budgett, 2007, p. 97); all have been replaced with concrete in Rarotonga’s churches.

- **Timberwork and roofing**

As discussed in Chapter Three, the work of Budgett (2005; 2007), Dixon (2016) and Sissons (2007) has demonstrated how pre-Christian indigenous methods of carving, binding and

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88 The Breadfruit Institute at the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawai‘i provides information regarding the use of kuru in the Pacific. It suggests that kuru was used extensively in construction because it is easily workable and durable both in-ground and above ground, it is resistant to termites and marine worms and it is high in latex sap (National Tropical Botanical Garden, 2015). This was corroborated by an interviewee (RI.05, 2014).
wrapping were intrinsic to the construction of the Cook Islands’ first churches, weaving them into existing social, ancestral and political relationships. Reliance on timber was reduced in the second phase of church construction as stone became the primary building material. Timber was consigned to roof and floor structures and other internal detailing, and was influenced by imported design ideas and construction methods. Metaphysical significance imbued in timberwork is likely to have evolved through this period, but fabric selection, preparation and craftsmanship appear to have remained critical to establishing each church as a sacred place.

Hiroa suggests that tamanu was considered the most suitable wood for framing (Hiroa, 1927, pp. 3, 4). A variety of wood types appear to have been used in Rarotonga, including kuru, tamanu (*calophyllum inophyllum*) and toa (ironwood – *casuarina equisetifolia*) (RI.15; RI.16, 2014), with some evidence that sacred trees were specifically cut for posts (“Mauke, garden of the islands,” 2015). A variety of jointing methods appear to have been employed, including timber joints and pegs and sennit lashings. Pandanus thatching, which was a well-established method of building enclosure prior to the arrival of Christianity, also became the standard cladding for church roofs (Maretu, 1983, p. 81).

**Processes of construction**

The process of construction, as much as the final outcome, was culturally significant. The building of Rarotonga’s first churches were “joint ventures,” using collective labour orchestrated by the ariki of all three vaka. Different tribal groups worked on different sides of the same building in a projection of the competitive social structure previously maintained by warfare, and traditions of reciprocity were evident in elaborate feasts sponsored by different ariki at various stages (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 32; Henry, 2003, p. 49; Maretu, 1983, pp. 65, 69; Sissons, 2007, p. 56). As argued by Sissons, these collaborations were a societal endorsement of a transformed social order centred on ariki and their new (Christian) priests (Sissons, 2007, pp. 54, 57).

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89 The elaborate techniques of sennit lashings and pandanus thatching, now largely disused in the Cook Islands, are recorded in detail in *Arts and Crafts of the Cook Islands* (Hiroa, 1944/2009, pp. 36 - 40, 45 - 47; see also Dixon, 2016, pp. 404 - 410).

90 Sissons may overstate the power of ariki in this phase. It is important to note that the Tahitian missionaries had garnered a huge amount of mana as agents of a demonstrably more powerful god. By the return of John Williams in 1827 they had amassed land across the island, married into ariki families, and become de facto despot rulers, often feared rather than loved (Henry, 2003, pp. 50 - 60). They were key agents of this societal upheaval, and ariki affiliated with them to cement their own chiefly superiority. This was a matter of reciprocal benefit rather than ariki having authority to direct these missionaries’ actions.
By the time of the second phase of church construction in stone, inter-vaka joint ventures appear to have declined, with each district attending to their own church’s erection using community-wide “voluntary” labour.\textsuperscript{91} However, it was still critical for the constructing district to invite other tribes to participate at key junctures. William Gill describes this in the construction of Arorangi’s first stone church in 1844. Arorangi hosted a large ceremony to fix the centre stone of the building, with both Pa (Takitumu) and Makea (Avarua) ariki attending, Tinomana (Arorangi) making a speech, and all three ariki setting the stone (W. Gill, 1871/2001, p. 37). Similar rituals in Mangaia are recorded by Maretu (1983, pp. 131, 152, 153). As described above (inter-tribal rivalry), these events show the importance of building construction processes to the equipoise of tribal and chiefly mana in an intensely competitive cultural framework.

In addition to Sissons’ analysis, the emphasis of ritual over doctrine that underpinned indigenous Polynesian religious practices is relevant, with processes of spiritual expression being more important than clearly articulated beliefs (Forman, 1982, pp. 89, 90). In this context, participation in church construction work was critical to individual, tribal and inter-tribal formations of Christianity as the new life framework for society. Prayers were literally woven into church fabric and ceremonies marked their consecration, joining indigenous and Christian conceptions of “god-indwelled.”\textsuperscript{92}

Hierarchically-inscribed places

The results of these processes were architectural spaces that were inscribed both internally and externally with indigenous understandings of mana. As with marae, stone edgings to church site boundaries created a demarcation of sacred space, and the location of entrances, pathways and grave sites connoted individuals’ mana within it. Christianity’s proclamation, “here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Colossians 3:11, NIV) may have ensured all people’s right to enter the church, but traditional hierarchies carefully demarked different people’s entrances

\textsuperscript{91} Pitman was ambivalent about the work involved, noting that the people undertaking it were largely commoners who were obliged to obey their chief (Pitman, 1841, August 26). His egalitarian attitude is a reminder that church construction for the enhancement of mana for ariki or mata’iapo may have often been a heavy burden on local people.

\textsuperscript{92} Dixon notes how sennit lashing was invested with prayers in its braiding and twisting, with finished sennit patterns (Mangaia) or patterned bark cloth (Rarotonga) signifying tribes or god ancestors (Dixon, 2016, p. 405). Both Old and New Testament symbolism is important here; significantly the construction of Solomon’s temple (2 Chronicles 6:2, 1 Kings 8:13), and Christian doctrine that the dwelling place of God’s spirit (Ephesians 2:22) is in his people (and their actions). Ancient notions of consecration and offerings (Deuteronomy 12:11), and obedience to God giving entitlement to land (Psalm 37:27 – 29) are also relevant.
and seating relative to their position in society, mirroring former marae customs (Budgett, 2005, p. 69; Kecskemeti, 2012, pp. 63, 72). Specific areas, sometimes marked by structural posts, were also designated for each tapere now united within one Christian church, reflecting former inscriptions of land rights associated with marae (Dixon, 2016, pp. 401, 411, 412). Interviewees confirmed that these divisions continue today, although adherence has relaxed in many churches (RI.01; RI.02; RI.10; RI.11; RI.18; RI.19, 2014).

**Summary**

This section has examined the materials and methods of building coral churches in the Cook Islands, focusing on Rarotonga. It began by exploring the process for creating lime mortar, the material that underpinned this phase of church construction and revolutionised indigenous ideas of architecture. The use of coral stone and its contrast with the volcanic basalt of marae was then discussed, noting the fluidity of meanings in a society in transformation. Construction techniques were described, with the importance of process as much as outcome being noted in the formation of these hierarchically-inscribed places. This broader analysis leads to a more in-depth examination of the Matavera case study.

**Case study: The Matavera CICC**

**Church building instigation**

Construction of the Matavera church is conspicuous for its minimal coverage in LMS records. This contrasts with the considerable promotion of the Avarua church whose erection was closely directed by Buzacott only a few years before (Buzacott, 1853, July 6; Henry, 2003, p. 118), as well as with notification of other church constructions in Rarotonga and on outer islands (for example Buzacott, 1856, March 22; Buzacott, 1858, February 9; G. Gill, 1858, March 31).

Maretu (1983) records that “at the end of the year [1857] the missionary [George] Gill arrived and shifted Matavera village to the coast because there was too much mud on the inland road” (p. 192). Gill had arrived in May of 1857 to relieve Buzacott as the island’s only European missionary (G. Gill, 1857, June 10). He had been instrumental in the construction of coral

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93 Buzacott writes joyously: “Our people in Avarua have built a splendid Church quite in the Gothic style with a Tower one side & a vestry the other. I can assure you it is quite the wonder of the Island. We have built it as strongly as we can no labour has been grudged by the people who have built it entirely on the voluntary principle” (Buzacott, 1853, July 6).
churches in Mangaia, where he had overseen the mission for thirteen years. While Maretu’s account implies his active involvement in the village relocation, Gill’s own correspondence presents a slightly different account. Item 17 of his July to December 1858 minutes to the LMS directors records:

That on the 12th Nov 1858 the people living in the district of Matavera received disassociation from the main district of Ngatangiia and have built a new village upon their own grounds. The church members living in that district were also dismissed from the church at Ngatangiia and are from this time to conduct their schools and religious services in their own village. It being understood that when they apply for a native teacher from the Institution he shall be appointed and receive his salary from the funds of the Society as the other native teachers. In the mean time the majority of the people wish to retain the services of Tupe, and are responsible for the payment of his salary (G. Gill, 1858, December 4).

These minutes are also the first to record the district of Matavera making its own contribution to the LMS coffers, formalising its separation from Ngatangiia. However, Gill’s emphasis on his own overworked state and the wording in the above quote indicate that he had little involvement in Matavera’s disassociation or in the village construction. His following minutes of January to June 1859 mention the appointment of Matavera’s first formal ‘orometua, Tamarua, and the erection of a school house in Matavera’s new village, “to be used for the present as their place of public worship” (G. Gill, 1859, June 30). Again, this record does not suggest any personal input in construction.

It was in 1862 during the Reverend Ernest Krause’s residence that Matavera’s first stone church was commenced.94 Towards the end of a letter, Krause notes that:

We are building a new chapel in Matavera and I have to assist a little with tools (Krause, 1862, March 15).

His minimal involvement is confirmed by a later letter:

94 Krause was Rarotonga’s sole European missionary from 1860. His location and focus was the Takamoa Theological College in Avarua.
Matavera has erected a fine large chapel, but [the district’s leaders] being very wise in their own eyes, listening to no advice have procured a most undefinable order of architecture (Krause, 1864, January).

This evidence suggests that the work was instigated, designed and directed by the Matavera ekalesia itself with little intervention by outside parties. This is consistent with the Matavera peoples’ earlier demonstrations of tribal mana and independence as they first opposed the gospel, then, upon conversion, demanded a church on their own land. The result was a highly unusual architectural form.

**Architecture and grounds**

Clement Wragge (1906), a meteorologist and traveller, provides a description and photograph of his visit to the Matavera church in 1904:

> Whatever is that massive, repulsive-looking building on the right, looking like a bâtiment of some French prison, with those ugly whitewashed walls just relieved by the strange quivering foliage of the Australian *casuarina*, and the rich red flower-petals of the *poinsettia*, or coral tree?

> Verily it’s a Protestant church, and round about it is a history. ... All God’s Nature so lavish around utters a protest against the monstrosity.

> A graveyard surrounds the hideous pile with ghastly tombs, repellent and grim. No grassy mounds o’er dust beloved, telling of life and eternal spring – the perennial Oneness of all that is – but hulky piles in crude cement, typical of the silence of eternal gloom, and introduced by the missionaries of the Lutheran sect.

> ... We enter. Just by the door are the cardinal points laid in the floor in dark-ribbed wood. Old fashioned galleries and high, dark pew-benches

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95 Krause adds that the building was not yet complete. His later correspondence, which increasingly focuses on personal issues, does not mention the building again. However, in November 1864 he notes the presence of five villages, churches and schools rather than the previous four (Krause, 1864, November 16). It therefore appears reasonable to assume that the church was complete by the end of the year.

96 It is possible that Maretu had input. He was the resident orometua in Ngatangiia at the time (G. Gill, 1858, March 31), and had collaborated with Matavera’s orometua Tupe in the construction of the Ara Tapu between Ngatangiia and Matavera in 1857 (Maretu, 1983, p. 192). He also had extensive expertise in stone construction from his mission experiences. However, his lack of mention of the building in his own writing implies that his involvement, if any, was minimal.
show up the more the lime-daubed sides, and the whole is well-calculated to impress the simple-minded native with the terrors and penalties of “mortal sin” in a land where such was once unknown (pp. 131, 132).

Figure 32: The Matavera Church, 1904 (Source: Wragge, 1906, p. 131. Image credited to G. R. Crummer).

While Wragge’s description is highly disparaging, it captures aspects that have been lost by modifications over time. His image, corroborated by other photographs from the early to mid-20th century, show the Matavera church as a rectangular, gable-roofed building, formatively defined by a series of monumentally-buttressed tiers, with a double-line fenestration arrangement and semi-circular window detailing. The mass of the building served both as a hurricane-resilient structure97 and a visual statement of the mana and independence of its mata’iapo, creating an enduring Christian monument and embedding the claim of its people to their ancestral land.

97 The hurricane of March 1846 had a severe impact both physically and psychologically on Rarotongan residents, and an aim of coral stone constructions was to withstand them (Gray, 1975, pp. 393, 394, 402, 403; W. Gill, 1871/2001, pp. 41-43; Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 352).
Figure 33: The Matavera church prior to its reduction in height in c.1944 (Source: K. and W. Vogel, personal photograph, August 2014).

Figure 34: The Matavera church, c.1935 (Source: Ken Graham family collection, supplied by R. Dixon, October 2014). A hurricane in February of that year is recorded as having damaged the roof (“Hurricane! Stricken Rarotonga,” 1935). Note that the roof had already been replaced, shown by the corrugated iron cladding.
Figure 35: A further image of the same hurricane damage (Source: Johnson’s Studio Collections, Reg. 2008, Album 8, National Archives of the Cook Islands). The walls and most parts of the windows appear undamaged. Note that the windows at ground level appear to have a different joinery configuration to Figures 32 and 33; it is possible that the original joinery had been replaced with partially operable leaves to improve ventilation.

The building itself was surrounded by church grounds containing a graveyard and trees and bounded by rendered coral walls which appear to be approximately one metre high (Figure 35). Graves were also constructed in rendered coral, most with a simple pitched capping but some with a carved stone cross or other headstone. Raised pathways (Figure 37) led through the graveyard to the church’s three entrances, one at each end and on the east side, which appear to have had a small threshold (Figure 38). It is likely that a row of toa would have been planted as a wind break on the eastern (beach) boundary, adjacent to the Ara Tapu. Several trees, including two toa, are currently located on this road edge (Figure 39).

The layout of the graveyard has formal and material parallels with paepae. Hiroa describes paepae in Aitutaki as spaces in front of dwellings that were bounded and bisected by stones to form two rectangular terraces divided by a central path, with the entire area covered with white gravel (Hiroa, 1927, p. 2). A similar layout in Rarotonga is documented by Williams (1837/1998, p. 54) and confirmed by archaeological investigations, with Yamaguchi noting that paepae forefronted chiefly houses and often included stone seats assigned to ariki and mata’iapo (Yamaguchi, 2000, p. 131). These pre-European formations created physical and symbolic thresholds between unbounded and bounded space, shaping architecture as experience rather than static object (McKay & Walmsley, 2003, pp. 93, 94), an understanding that was easily assimilated into church grounds.
Figure 36: Plan of a dwelling’s paepae in Aitutaki (Source: Hiroa, 1927, p. 2).

Figure 37: Wedding at Matavera, c.1960s (Source: Johnson’s Studio Collections, Reg. 2094, Album 8, National Archives of the Cook Islands). The raised path through the churchyard appears to be covered in white gravel. The southern graves in the background were covered with a lawn in 1979 (see Chapter Five).
Timber doors opened into a double-height space with galleries on three sides, dark timber pews, and a platform and rendered stone pulpit in the chancel. Wragge notes cardinal points inlaid into the timber floor by the door, though which entrance is unclear. Joinery was constructed in timber and fixed to timber frames embedded into the masonry walls. The
windows on both levels featured a multi-paned configuration with fanlight which may have included coloured glass (RI.16, 2014).

The pandanus-thatched roof was supported by a timber post and beam structure, but no descriptions of its particular detailing have been uncovered. As with all other churches of this period, the Matavera example is likely to have combined elements of European-inspired and indigenous construction methods and design ideas. It is probable that the roof framing was formed using indigenous methods of timber jointing, with members possibly wrapped with patterned bark cloth. However, patternation is noticeably absent from Wragge’s description; this may simply be an omission, or it may indicate that by the turn of the century, the first of many hurricane-necessitated simplifications had already occurred.

Budgett discusses LMS architecture’s stylistic underpinnings, arguing that architectural entanglements were not restricted to those between local and imported influences. She suggests that denominational struggles in late 18th/early 19th century England were also outworked in Cook Islands church buildings. She traces a shift in LMS churches from the “pragmatic” architecture of Nonconformity in the mission’s early years, typified in the Titikaveka church, to the resurgence of the Gothic style in the Avarua church of 1853 (Budgett, 2005, pp. 66 - 68; 2007, pp. 65 - 159).

Figure 40: The gothic-style Avarua Church (Source: W. Gill, 1871/2001).
The Matavera church is at neither end of this spectrum. Creative control by Mataverans themselves shaped an architecture that was largely free of the architectural tensions between Nonconformist and Church of England styles, presenting instead a design that has many, or no, stylistic influences. Refiti’s (2002) analysis of Polynesians’ imaginings of churches as “the ideal version of the height of European spirituality” (p. 219) may be a factor here, but by the 1860s individual Cook Islanders had had the opportunity to explore European realities first hand. Such cross-cultural experiences resulted in both deliberate and unconscious processes of imitation and adaptation that continue to occur.

The Matavera church’s appearance has changed dramatically since its inception, in its grounds, exterior and interior. Arguably the most architecturally significant have been the reduction in height and consequent loss of upper fenestration (Figures 41 and 42) and the loss of original timberwork. The former has visually distorted the building’s massing and proportionality, and the legibility of the intricate interweavings of indigenous and foreign constructs has been obscured by the latter. Modifications and their significance for contemporary understandings of place are discussed in Chapter Five.

Figure 41: A sketch of the Matavera church c.1960, post lowering of the walls (Source: Thorogood, 1960, p. 88).
Figure 42: A similar view in 2014 (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 43: Site plan (Source: author’s drawing, 2016).
**Figure 44**: Church floor plan, interior furnishings shown (Source: author’s drawing, 2016).

**Figure 45**: East elevation (Source: author’s drawing, 2016).
Layout and siting

Understanding the Matavera church site as a cultural landscape rather than built edifice is critical. The church was not an isolated place of worship but was embedded into the fabric of the Christian village that surrounded it, a churchscape that culturally referenced both English parish and Rarotonga’s marae-oriented societal frameworks. As with the island’s other LMS churches, Matavera was the linchpin of a new Christian community, established with a school (directly opposite on the eastern side of the Ara Tapu) and mission house (to the south), both of which were demolished and replaced in the 1960s (RI.06, 2014).98 Unlike Arorangi and Avarua, Matavera never had an ariki residence as a fourth element in this grouping due to its mata’iapo-headed political structure (RI.06, 2014).

98 The cited interviewee noted that the replacement mission house was built alongside, rather than on the foundations of, the original building. The school, now used as a church community hall, was demolished and replaced for a second time in 2015.
While it is possible that Matavera’s first church, a timber-framed building on the Ara Metua, may have had some spatial relationship with the district’s former marae, it is understood that there are no marae in the vicinity of the existing church (RI.06, 2014). Instead, the church is sited on the Ara Tapu, which had been constructed through this district a few years earlier. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Ara Tapu had annexed the mana of the ancient Ara Metua. By relocating to the Ara Tapu, Matavera’s leaders were both conceding to, and claiming, this site’s enhanced status.

As with marae before it, the church’s siting makes deliberate cosmological references to the mountains and sea that form the ancestral boundaries of its five tapere. The church’s land extends east across the road and to the beach; from the church’s original gallery the sea would have been visible. Similarly, the church identifies with the mountains Te Manga and Te Atukura, which mark the Matavera tapere’s inland boundaries and backdrop the church. By capturing these viewsheds, the church legitimates Matavera’s ancestral claims on the land (Campbell, 2002b, pp. 154, 164).

Figure 47: Matavera village, showing church [red], hall [blue] and mission house [green] (Source: Google Maps, retrieved August 5, 2014).
Figure 48: The inland peaks that mark the Matavera district’s boundary (Source: Wikipedia, 2007).

Figure 49: View from the north-east; note the mountains visible behind the church (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
**Spatial planning characteristics**

As with Rarotonga’s other LMS churches, the Matavera church is orientated parallel to the coastal edge, enabling a hierarchical interior layout along each aisle. Traditional areas within the church are still formalised by the division of seating, most notably with the inland side front seats dedicated to the ‘orometua and the ocean side to traditional leaders (RI.11, 2014; RI.19, 2014). However, such customs have softened over time, with one interviewee being unsure about which door was for which people and another noting that some leaders prefer to sit by entrances, where it is cooler (RI.18; RI.19, 2014).

![Interior, showing three bays of pews and main entrances (Source: author’s collection, 2014).](image)

**Materials and detailing**

The church at Matavera is remarkable for its exceptionally thick walls with tiered buttresses. The wall composition can be examined via unfilled penetrations in the upper wall, accessible in the ceiling void (Figure 53). Inspection indicates that the walls were built up in loose coral rubble stones of varying sizes, with lime mortar bonded into both sides to a depth of around 250mm. An approximately 10mm finish coat and then lime wash was applied externally and

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99 With the exception of the Titikaveka church; refer Budgett (2005, p. 70).
internally, with re-applications of lime wash built up over time. No volcanic stone or interwoven vines or branches were observed in the structure. However, more substantial timber posts and beams are embedded into the internal surface, originally providing connection points for internal timber structures, roofing and joinery (RI.15, 2014). In some cases embedded timbers have been plastered over and/or have fully decayed (Figure 54).

One interviewee recalled observing during an alteration that there were shells embedded in the walls marked with workers’ names (RI.19, 2014). This correlates with Flexner and colleagues’ findings in the ruins of the Lenakel church in Vanuatu,\(^{100}\) where collections of shells were found concealed in its walls. They interpreted the shells as a ceremonial offering, potentially linked with the church’s consecration (Flexner et al., 2015b). This may be the case here also, although their scattered distribution may suggest a more personal ritual of faith-action (see *Processes of construction* above) and record of participation.\(^{101}\)

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\(^{100}\) This church was destroyed by hurricane Pam in March 2015.

\(^{101}\) See Petts (2011, pp. 476, 477) for similar findings in Teesdale, United Kingdom.
Figure 52: Existing ceiling void. Note the infilled windows from the lowering of the walls c.1944 [red arrow], and redundant wall penetrations for original beams, subsequently removed [blue arrow] (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 53: Hole in wall where a redundant (original) beam has been removed (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 54: View into wall interior where a timber member has decayed. Inset sketch indicates wall construction (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Much of the interior form and detailing has been lost due to hurricane damage and renovations over time, and the interior now presents as a series of planar white surfaces with clear-stained plywood pulpit and pews. The stone walls have been smoothed and painted, a particle board ceiling installed, and a tiled concrete floor laid. There is a variety of timbers in the ceiling void, the majority being modern framing, but some historic elements of varying age remain. Many of these old timber members have notches and redundant mechanical fixings in them, indicating their repurposing over time.102

The configuration of the 19th century roof form and gallery have been obscured by these layered modifications. However, observed detailing indicates that the transverse beams that birdsmouth onto the longitudinal main beam (Figure 55) may have originally supported the gallery, with some members replaced in mid-20th century alterations. These beams are unornamented, implying that they were fully clad, possibly with bark cloth or with lining boards similar to the panelled Avarua example (Figure 58), although no remnant evidence of either was sighted. At the top of each of the four supporting posts are timber bearers, the only carved timbers observed in the ceiling. These sit directly below the main beam’s half-check joint, and the entire arrangement is tenoned by the post itself, hewn to fit into through-mortises in the bearer and main beam members. This evidence corroborates an interviewee’s

102 An interviewee noted that mechanical fixings were late in coming to Rarotonga, only arriving post WWII (RI.11, 2014).
assertion that the four support posts are original to the building (RI.19, 2014), and suggests a timber structure approximating that sketched in Figure 59 for the church’s early period. If this was the case, then the timber structure had two unconnected parts like Avarua; a gallery supported on timber posts, and roof framing spanning the entire width of the building.

*Figure 55:* Transverse beams [red arrow] notched onto longitudinal main beam [blue arrow]. Notches are either timber-pegged or mechanically-fixed (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

*Figure 56:* Half check joint in main beam [red arrow], carved bearer [blue arrow] and post below [yellow arrow] (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 57: Top of post [red arrow] hewn into a vertical tenon [blue arrow] (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 58: Avarua church – note the panelled gallery and tie beams enabling a clear volume (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 59: Matavera’s possible original timber structure (Source: author’s drawing, 2016). While indicative only, the detailing is based on analysis of early photographs and descriptions, remnant fabric in the church’s ceiling void, other churches’ construction and documentary evidence of historical construction techniques in the Cook Islands generally (Hiroa, 1927, pp. 3 - 6; 1944/2009, pp. 35, 36, 423, 424) and in the Oneroa Sunday school (Budgett, Dixon, & Treadwell, 2004).

The four posts subdivide the church’s interior, and were noted by one interviewee as representing the four letters of the word “love,” and also the four corners of the world (RI.19, 2014). The same interviewee (who had been involved in church alterations over several decades) explained that there are thirteen other posts embedded in the church’s walls, which represent the mata’iapo of Matavera. Netting and plastering the wall with a cement-lime mix in 1979 has concealed this potentially illuminating detail. The final remaining original feature in the interior is a plastered coral pulpit. Like the posts, this object’s simple, slightly tapered form

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103 Other interviewees provided different responses for other churches, with roof support posts in Ngatangiia representing the church’s twelve deacons (RI.11, 2014), while in Aitutaki they signify the twelve apostles (RI.16, 2014). Interestingly, one interviewee noted that Matavera’s posts were clad in New Zealand Kauri in the early part of the 20th century, but that this was not original and was removed in modifications in 1979 (RI.19, 2014). This detail may allude to phases of Europeanisation through the colonial era of Rarotonga’s history, which were themselves later stripped away.
with bowl-like top is unadorned, suggesting that it may also have been wrapped with bark cloth or otherwise impermanently patterned.¹⁰⁴

### Figure 60: Plastered stone pulpit (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

### Conclusion

This chapter has explored the architecture of Rarotonga’s CICC churches from a physical perspective. The discussion indicates that the churches have historical significance as the manifestation of a new architecture on the islands, formed in mortared coral stone. However, their significance is not as remnant missionary edifices, but as synergistic architecture that through their materiality, construction techniques and processes of building, merge introduced and indigenous, foreign and ancestral in (re)new(ed) cultural landscapes.

The Matavera church was examined as a case study to the more general analysis. Its original architecture, created independently by the Mataveran ekalesia, was first described, followed by its context as the centrepiece of a wider churchscape. The building’s internal planning and detailing was then discussed. Findings suggest that while significant fabric remains intact, including walls, fenestration and remnant timberwork, the church and surrounds have been greatly altered. The ways in which the historical and cultural significance of CICC churches has materially shifted over time through such changes is analysed in Chapter Five.

¹⁰⁴ It is questionable how intact this object is. Not only was it relocated to its current position in 1979 (original location unspecified) but its top was apparently removed (RI.19, 2014).
Chapter five

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS PART 1: PLACE MODIFICATIONS

Introduction

While discussions of original conception and construction illuminate the historical significance of CICC places, it is the meanings, values and attachments inlaid in churchscapes by contemporary Rarotongans that shape their current use and future management. Chapters Three and Four explored the historical heritage of CICC churchscapes and the cultural and religious meaning inlaid in their architecture. Chapters Five and Six bring the discussion into the present, examining how these values have been recontested, recontextualised and renewed through continued place use. This chapter will focus on changes to physical fabric that have occurred over time, while Chapter Six will analyse evolving aspects of temporal and intangible heritage.

The chapter first provides a synoptic overview of how power relations between the Church and other social fields have shifted over time, leading to a perceived waning of Church influence and ambiguity about the Church’s role in contemporary Rarotongan society. It is argued that this is not a simple case of power devolution but rather an indicator of continued complexities and co-dependencies between the Church, aronga mana and state, and that the Church is still considered critical for upholding not only society’s moral standards but also key aspects of indigenous culture and tradition.

These shifting and continually contested social fields form a critical backdrop to understanding tangible and intangible changes that have occurred in CICC places. Key changes that have occurred to the “permanent” physical fabric of the Mataureka church case study are investigated in the context of this setting. Modifications are explored in relation to three key themes of spatial recontextualisation identified by field research, described as the pragmatic agenda, beautification objectives, and embracing the modern.
Devolution of power

Developing his discussion of the Church as a new social field in competition with earlier marae, Sissons argues that marae and Church are now both subordinate to a more complex “national field” (2007, p. 61), forming different strands within the “construction of tradition” (1999, p. 121) and the “commodification and traditionalisation of identity” (1999, p. 11) as part of Cook Islands nation-building. This view was supported by a local interviewee who described a similar evolution as well as distinguishing other contemporary drivers of change:

Prior to Christianity there was only one authority, which was the traditional leaders, they were the government of the day. Before Christianity. So they run the show. Whether you like it or not, you will do what I tell you.

So Christianity came, then there were two authorities having influence and impact on the people. It’s the same people, but two authorities. So competition started as far as the authorities were concerned.

Then came the Westminster system of government and there were three authorities, same people. Then came afterwards ... the business sector. It has a lot of influence on the life of people. You have to go and get your bread and sugar and so on and so forth. The things that are impacting on the lives of the people.

... There is a fourth authority that has recently come into place, and ... that is the I.T. [information technology] which is having a lot of influence on the lives of people. Four things or four systems that have impact on the lives of people.

And you know the very first one is the one struggling to survive in this day and age. ... The traditional leaders of today are a figurehead ... the running of the country, the traditional leaders do not have any say at all. ... The ordinary man in the street, they are not influenced in any way at all by what the traditional leaders do, they are more into their business, they are governed by the laws of the state, their kids are probably stuck with their iPads or iPhones and even [when] the traditional leaders put out the call, “OK we are having a working bee” you can be sure that probably less than
half will turn up. So there’s no more obligation by the ordinary man to comply with the traditional leaders – but of course, if you break the law then [there are consequences]. So the systems of authority ... have evolved.

[The Church is the] second agency with the least impact or influence on the lives of people. You have the traditional leaders, then you have the Church. Because of the fact that in this day and age, 2014, the laws and the regulations of the state take precedence. As well as the I.T. (RI.06, 2014).

The perceived erosion of Church influence was a common theme expressed by field research interviewees in relation to the Church’s role in local communities and in cultural identity.105 Two key aspects are discussed below; first, the subordination of the Church to the state, and second, the decline in CICC membership, both of which have implications for how historic churchscapes can be understood as living heritage.

Traditional hierarchies and the nation state

While in principle, the LMS believed strongly in the separation of Church and state, in practice, the ekalesia on Rarotonga developed into an almost theocratic system of governance with power concentrated in ariki and Church leadership (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 64; Gunson, 1978, p. 27). This changed with the British Protectorate’s establishment in 1888 of a governance framework separate from the Church.106 It was not only the Church’s authority that was undercut; in March 1905 the ariki courts were abolished, expropriating from traditional leaders their judicial functions on land matters and other disputes (Hiroa, 1993, pp. 49, 52). Indigenous socio-cultural practices had already been severely impacted by the Church, and Māori language, oral traditions, performing arts, carving and craftwork continued to

105 Multiple interviewees discussed this topic, alluding to a loss of respect for the Church and from young people to elders and vice versa, the Church’s diminishing role in community groups and events, a perceived lack of connection from the Church to the community, and issues of unbalanced demographics in Church membership (RI.01; RI.02; RI.03; RI.04; RI.05; RI.06; RI.08; RI.09; RI.10; RI.11; RI.12; RI.13; RI.14; RI.15; RI.19, 2014). Varying opinions were expressed regarding the positives and negatives of the Church’s declining influence.

106 It is important to note that the LMS and ariki were in favour of British intervention, as governance was becoming increasingly difficult for ariki and their missionary advisors in the face of unregulated immigration and trade (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 63).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, (re)construction of “traditional” identity is a major theme of nation-building in post-colonial Polynesia (Aygen, 2013, pp. 48, 51, 134; Lockwood, 2004, p. 27), and the Cook Islands followed this trend. The first post-independence government in 1965 under Premier Albert Henry actively promoted the pre-colonial past to legitimise, consolidate and indigenise the new nation state (Baddeley, 1978, p. 449; RI.02, 2014; Sissons, 1999, p. 58). Appropriation of pre-colonial identity symbols led to the statutory formation of the House of Ariki in 1966 and the Kōutu Nui in 1972 (Sissons, 1994, pp. 375, 376, 383) as a way for the government to imply deference to, and partnership with, aronga mana while ensuring that traditional leaders’ actual political power was reduced to a symbolic advisory status (Sissons, 1999, p. 58). The subordination of both Church and traditional leadership to larger agendas of the nation as a whole has meant that these formerly competing entities now have some complementarity (Sissons, 2007, p. 61) and are both appropriated to underpin cultural identity and values (Marschall, 2008, p. 361). While there are clearly aspects of cultural commodification in these processes of nation-building, there are other cultural complexities at play that affect the role of the Church in contemporary Rarotongan society.

107 The LMS supported Māori language retention, albeit “consolidated” into the written Rarotongan dialect, a stance that was in line with their philosophy of championing indigenous rights over perceived aggressive settlers and military takeover. In the 1890s the first British Resident, Frederick Moss, antagonised the LMS missionaries by insisting that English be the dominant language in schools (Garrett, 1992, pp. 252, 255). The use of Māori consequently rapidly diminished in the colonial period.

108 The House of Ariki is a statutorily-defined advisory body to the Government of the Cook Islands. It is composed of ariki across the islands appointed by the Queen’s representative. Its role is limited to non-binding recommendations on matters put to it by Parliament (Constitution of the Cook Islands, 1965, Part II, clauses 8 to 11). The Kōutu Nui is a similar body composed of mata’iapo and rangatira (sub-chiefs) who advise on matters of custom and tradition (Sissons, 1999, pp. 80, 81). See Sissons (1994) for a discussion of their establishment and authority.

109 This was affirmed at a House of Ariki meeting, where an ariki explained that when the House of Ariki was established in 1965 the ariki at that time were not aware that they were effectively agreeing to hand over their power to Parliament. He added that the organisation has always had very little real authority and a wholly inadequate operating budget (House of Ariki meeting, July 29, 2014. Notes taken by author).

110 This argument is supported by Prime Minister Henry Puna’s speech at the opening of the Te Maeva Nui celebration in 2014. Parts of his speech are paraphrased below:

Our nation is still forming our identity. ... Who we are as Cook Islanders has endured and remained constant. ... The costumes of tribes and communities are an integral part of our identity, cloaks of our nationhood, the spirit of our heritage through traditional performances and practices. Preservation of culture, language and tradition is critical to uphold our values. Our nation has a twin foundation of tradition and Christian beliefs that both together form our nation and cultural identity. Today we are able to come together and celebrate together as one, Cook Islanders (H. Puna, speech, July 28, 2014. Notes taken by author).
First, most traditional leaders are still CICC members and many mata’iapo are also Church deacons; the same people are leaders in both bodies (R. Dixon, personal communication, January 4, 2016; RI.06; RI.09, 2014). This is reflected in contemporary title investitures involving both church and marae ceremonies (RI.02; RI.03; RI.04; RI.05; RI.06; RI.11; RI.14; RI.18, 2014; Sissons, 2007, p. 61). Interviewees suggested that this was due to continued perceptions of the CICC being the Cook Islands Church, the first Church (RI.03; RI.04; RI.11, 2014), the Church that for interwoven reasons of initial impact, land gifting, myth reinforced through nation-building and continued traditional practice, is not only indigenised but indigenous. The argument that pre-Christian marae were physically and culturally transposed into the Church is taken for granted by local Rarotongans (RG.01; RI.08; RI.10; RI.11, 2014), with church places seen as tangible links between tribes (and tribal leaders) and their land. Anecdotal evidence indicating that the CICC also retains a high percentage of political leaders (RI.15, 2014) is therefore perhaps not surprising, and indicates complex overlaps between these social fields as much as subordination.

Second, commodification of pre-Christian and mission/colonial period traditions has commonly involved a strong tourism component (Connell, 2003, pp. 571 - 573; Keesing, 1989, pp. 20 - 23), and this has certainly been the case in terms of marketing “cultural experiences” in the Cook Islands (see for example, “Cook Islands: Things to do,” n.d.). The Church has played a key role in a reconfiguration of cultural expression in the Cook Islands as members increasingly shift focus from “uniformed organisations” (Boys and Girls Brigades and the like) to traditional performing arts, with congregations acting as organisational hubs and supplying many of the leaders and participants for cultural competitions and festivals. However, the Church’s relationship with tourism is more ambivalent. Individual CICC congregations are welcoming of tourists, but they have generally been reluctant to embrace opportunities for greater engagement and responsiveness to tourism agendas (RI.17, 2014). This is also reflected in people’s attitudes and actions relating to pre-Christian marae, where outsiders’ welcome is generally limited to invited ceremonial events following specific protocol. While this

111 One interviewee suggested that this was particularly the case in Rarotonga but less so in other islands (NI.03, 2014).

112 See Flexner & Spriggs (2015, p. 203) for a similar perspective in Vanuatu.

113 Put forward by Budgett (2005), Dixon (2016a) and Sissons (2007) and discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

114 Field research observations indicated that the location of marae are not advertised to outsiders generally, and tourists are not encouraged to seek them out. While caretakers of some marae welcome visitors who do come, others actively discourage approach. Exceptions include the Arai-Te-Tonga marae, which is specifically noted as a visit-worthy sacred historical site in tourism information and is included in various tours (“Rarotonga
discusses does not deny the commodification of traditional fields occurring through the Cook Islands, it is another indicator of the complexity of relationship between Church, traditional hierarchies and the state, and implies more interwoven patterns of co-dependency.

Figure 61: Performance groups from various Rarotongan ekalesia perform at the dedication of the newly-restored Takamoa Theological College and Nuku day, 26 October 2009 (Source: Mataio, 2009b, p. 6).

Accommodation,” 2014). But even in this case people are advised to seek guidance from a tribal leader and stay off the marae itself unless formally invited (Frangipani08, 2010).
Evolving priorities and perspectives

Devolution of the CICC’s societal authority is amplified by dwindling CICC membership. This has been due to shifting denominational affiliations, declining religious participation generally, and off-shore migration (R. G. Crocombe, 1990, pp. 5 - 9; Ernst, 1994, p. 276; Statistics Office, 2012). Patterns of ekalesia decline were noted by most interviewees, with one explaining:
The churches were] always full, full of locals, people who live here. And today, today it’s different, it’s very different, especially now. Ten years ago, it’s ok. But now, in the Church ... we don’t have much of our elders left. They have either travelled overseas, or they have passed on. And I can recall ... we used to work together for the youth, for the Church ... and now, no more, they are not around, they have gone overseas, a lot of the young people, they have gone overseas. ... So I see a gap, an age gap: there’s a lot of young ones, but the actual age that you want in the Church, the late teens to twenties, not so much. So you probably have a handful of leaders in the Church that does everything ... you hardly get the members, so you usually do it on your own if you are a deacon (RI.11, 2014).

Two themes evident in interview discussions were that the Church has lost influence in terms of its cultural identity and societal role, and that the CICC needs to adapt to stay relevant in a changing socio-cultural context (RI.03; RI.04; RI.05; RI.06; RI.08; RI.09; RI.10; RI.12; RI.14, 2014; see also Ernst, 1994, p. 283; Lockwood, 2004, p. 31). Somewhat paradoxically, a third theme emphasised by interviewees was that the Church remains critical in upholding not only society’s moral standards, but also its cultural fibre (RI.09, 2014). While it was recognised that community ethics and codes of behaviour could be upheld and reinforced cross-denominationally, the CICC Church was viewed as having a particular role in sustaining and supporting indigenous culture and tradition (RI.15, 2014). This is expressed in its involvement in cultural performance and through reinforcement of wider aspects of tradition. One interviewee stated that:

Now, there is a re-thinking, because the Church is becoming really marginalised and almost of no consequence. And the question that has to be asked now is that are we still the social standards upholders of today, are we still the caretaker of the nation’s morals. ... The Church itself needs to do a complete review of itself. ... But how do you put it; are we going to turn the clock back? Or are we going to be relevant? What do we do? See, if you take the Church, the Cook Islands Christian Church out, half our social fabric will disappear. We are the only Church who still preaches in our language. Everyone else preaches in English. We’re still teaching in our
language. We’re still upholding all of the traditional values, which are good values (RI.10, 2014).

**Summary**

The discussion above highlights key aspects of contemporary relations between the Church, traditional leadership structures and the state. First, there is increased complementarity between the social fields of Church and aronga mana under the now principal authority, the nation state. However, there is significant leadership overlap between all three social fields, with the Church and church places continuing to be instrumental in cultural (both Church and non-Church) practices. Cultural commodification and touristification in broader agendas of nation-building have therefore had reasonably limited impact on churches’ ongoing use and management, even as the Church remains a centre for local activity.

This discussion indicates that Rarotonga’s social fields cannot easily be classified in a clear power hierarchy; rather, they coexist in complex relationships of reciprocity and overlapping interests. This is further heightened by increased personal choice in contemporary Rarotongan society, emphasised in proliferating religious organisations, population mobility and international connectivity. This has led to ambivalence regarding the Church’s relevance even as it is perceived as remaining critical to upholding social values and cultural traditions.

These factors provide a cultural context for physical changes to CICC places as explored below, as well as the evolution of impermanent items and intangible values manifested in church places, which is the subject of Chapter Six.

**Field research findings: Shifting permanence**

Physical alterations to churchscapes are generally a critical factor in their sustained use, as generations of users maintain, repair, alter, adapt and demolish built fabric to accommodate perceived needs. Such changes have occurred in all CICC churches observed in Rarotonga and in the wider group of historic LMS churches located throughout the Cook Islands.115 This analysis discusses physical changes that have been undertaken on the Matavera CICC since its initial construction, under three identified themes of pragmatism, beautification and modernisation.

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115 Supported by information from interviewees and CICC newsletters (see for example, Mataio, 2015, pp. 20 – 24). Refer also to Budgett, Dixon, & Treadwell (2004).
**The pragmatic agenda**

In an interview discussing major restoration works undertaken on the Aitutaki CICC in 1979, a key emphasis was the need for pragmatism.

I chose [the engineer] because he’s a very casual individual, he doesn’t fret ... he’s a very confident engineer, you know, just said, “nah, nah, this’ll work.” He never really – he did the design, but he wasn’t there when we built it. But he knew of how they reinforced it, knew what the old people talked about. So it really was the builder, with the skills, to you know, that I needed, after that, after the design ... so we built this thing.

... When we got the workers we did the plans and wrote the specification on the blackboard in the Sunday school hall [laughter], because the engineer was telling us, you know, how it’s going to be, and so we drew all these diagrams, this is how we’re going to do it. We couldn’t afford to bring outside contractors (RI.16, 2014).

The project reflected the “‘collective improvisation’” of Polynesian architecture (Dixon, Crowl, & Crocombe, 2016b, p. 6; McKay & Walmsley, 2005, p. 64)\(^{116}\) and epitomised a “hands-on” pragmatic approach to church building and restoring projects. An improvisatory attitude to modifications and maintenance was a consistent theme in field research discussions. Occasionally interviewees expressed disappointment that a pragmatic agenda overrode other considerations, with work methods being seen as haphazard or “lazy” (RI.04; RI.10; RI.12; RI.14; RI.19, 2014), but it was generally assumed that pragmatism, characterised by minimal design or planning, expedient workmanship, easily-accessible resources and simplicity of ongoing maintenance, is the central framework for decision-making.

- **Case study: Matavera c.1944**

Pragmatism appears to have been a critical factor in the most major physical alteration to the Matavera church, when the walls were substantially lowered in c.1944 (compare Figure 64 with Figure 65). The church had already had its roof replaced at least once before,\(^{117}\) and it

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\(^{116}\) A similar analysis is presented by ‘Ilaiu and Müller, who discuss “design-as-you-build” principles in construction processes of fale Tonga (‘Ilaiu, 2007, p. 20) and fale Samoa (Müller, 2011). Such places are built through intensive participation of community members and are reliant on relational networks rather than working drawings.

\(^{117}\) Most notably after the hurricane of February 1935 (“Hurricane! Stricken Rarotonga,” 1935).
appears likely that the wall lowering followed the major hurricane that swept Rarotonga in January 1944, partially pulling off the roof. The tops of the walls were damaged, and they were lowered rather than repaired, reducing the building’s overall height by approximately two metres. This necessitated the infill of the original upper-level windows which are still faintly evident on the exterior and very clear in the ceiling void internally (Figure 52). While there is no documentary evidence, interviewees postulated that a major reason for the decision was to alleviate ongoing maintenance challenges posed by the original height (RI.06, 2014) as well as to address hurricane damage (RI.19, 2014).

Figure 64: The Matavera church prior to its reduction in height (Source: Wragge, 1906, p. 131. Image credited to G. R. Crummer).

118 The exact date of the work is unknown. A commemorative plaque on the church’s entrance gable (Figure 66) and an interviewee who witnessed the work as a child (RI.19, 2014) indicated a date of 1943, but another interviewee suggested 1949 (RI.06, 2014). A further interesting complication is that there is a name and date engraved into the filled-in end window; “Taua T. T. 14/4/1951,” which may indicate that the window opening was infilled (and by extension the walls lowered) at that time, although alternatively it may only indicate later patch repairs. There is also uncertainty whether in fact it was the church itself that was partially unroofed in the 1944 hurricane (“Storm damage: Cook Islands group: No loss of life,” 1944), or the associated Sunday school (“Storm damage: Cook Islands group: Heavy loss of fruit,” 1944; “Islands storm,” 1944). On the weight of evidence, the 1944 date appears most likely.
Figure 65: The Matavera CICC in August 2014 (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

An interviewee who was a child at the time recalled that the decision was not made without opposition (RI.19, 2014). When the church deacons proposed the work the tapere mata’iapo and Pa Ariki objected, invoking the tama ʻūʻā relationship between traditional leaders and the Church and alleging that the Church was remiss not to repair the walls. Foreshadowing arguments made regarding the destruction of graves at the Avarua CICC in 2003,119 the father-child implication was rejected by the Church as a defunct hierarchy that no longer applied and the work went ahead (RI.19, 2014).

This event re-emphasises the relational complexity that caused traditional leaders to advocate repair rather than destruction of the walls, embodying the evolved acceptance of the Church as the new marae and the consequent inviolability of its physical fabric. Their related desire to direct decision-making also indicates an indigenisation of churchscapes as manifestations of the work of ancestors and an integrated part of cultural heritage and identity. It is also symptomatic of how a pragmatic agenda of simplification and cost-cutting with a strong emphasis on practical considerations of ongoing use takes precedence over debatably “deeper” considerations of heritage value and traditional authority. The Church therefore emerges as first and foremost a place of occupation and action, with physical fabric being subservient to, rather than directive of, its performative requirements.

119 Discussed in Chapter Seven.
Pragmatism continues to direct church repair procedures. Readily accessible Portland cement has replaced labour-intensive, now difficult to source, lime, and reinforced concrete ring beams have been installed at the top of walls in most churches to form a level base for new treated timber roof frames (Figure 67). A timber mezzanine was added into the rear of the Matavera CICC in 1995 (RI.18, 2014) to accommodate occasional large gatherings; the low ceiling makes this modification physically and visually awkward and one interviewee suggested that it has adversely affected the acoustics (RI.08, 2014).

The casual approach to interventions is markedly different from that taken with marae. Anecdotal evidence from field research suggested that while local Rarotongans largely consider it necessary and appropriate for church places to be modified to enable ongoing use, marae are generally viewed as tapu places that should be avoided except when required for an established customary function, and that their physical elements should not be tampered with (RI.02; RI.03, 2014). Thus in many cases marae are in a state of overgrown disrepair with limited clearing taking place only when required for infrequent investiture ceremonies (RI.02; RI.07, 2014). As such, it is suggested that church places, in their capacity as the new marae, have taken on the living functions that the formerly multifunctional (R. Walter, 1998, p. 25) marae spaces embodied.

The pragmatic agenda not only emphasises the contestation of the sacred in Cook Islands culture. It also references the Church’s roots in Congregationalism, where churches were founded on egalitarian principles, deliberately built modestly for practical preaching purposes, and devoid of ecclesiastical symbolism (Briggs, 1946, p. 24; Fiddes, 1961, pp. 42 - 48, 61, 62; Gunson, 1974a, p. 185). The duality of these aspects has enabled church architecture to continue to recontextualise its foreign origin and reform traditional practices in ongoing expressions of pragmatic continuity.

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120 An early example of this is in the Titikaveka CICC, where the roof was replaced following a hurricane in the 1970s (probably hurricane Agatha, 1972, or Kim 1976). The wall-top was levelled, formwork installed and a concrete ring beam of approximately 500mm height poured in situ with 500-600mm steel reinforcing rods drilled into the coral blocks below. The same procedure occurred in the Matavera church in 2005, following the loss of its roof hurricane Nancy (De Scally, Wood, Maguire, Fournier-Beck & Silcocks, 2006, pp. 214 - 216, 220, 221, 332 - 343; RI.15, 2014).
Figure 66: Commemoration of key dates, including inception and various major renovations (Source: author’s collection, 2014). See Appendix D for discussion of each date.

Figure 67: Existing ceiling void. Note the reinforced concrete ring beam [red arrow] and new roof framing, constructed in 2005. The blue arrow indicates an original upper window, infilled (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Beautification objectives

The term “beautification” was commonly applied in field research conversations to churchscape modifications, particularly to the surrounds of church buildings. The desire to beautify sites was expressed by a deacon;

I have a strong spiritual connection to [the church], and more so now that I have been appointed as the property manager. I’m very passionate about it, I take it seriously, so my objective in that role is to make that place look good, while at the same time preserving what’s there (RI.12, 2014, my emphasis).

Case study: Matavera 1979

In 1979, the Matavera CICC’s southern graveyard was covered with a raised lawn as part of a beautification project (RI.19, 2014). As when the walls were lowered, the covering of the graves met with resistance. The deacon who managed the project recalled that the truck driver commissioned to cover the graves with sand had to be persuaded with a case of Steinlager, and more seriously, the deacon himself was warned by a mata’iapo that he would die because of his actions (RI.19, 2014). Nonetheless, an interviewee suggested that covering, rather than demolishing, the graves was generally viewed by the community as a suitably sensitive and respectful approach and that the area was now more presentable (RI.08, 2014).

121 The works also included replacing the timber floor with concrete, removing kauri cladding from the four internal posts, and relocating the original plastered coral stone pulpit.

122 The deacon sought prayer from the ‘orometua, and was later reassured when he recovered after falling ill. Interestingly, this deacon later opposed the removal of historic trees including a large tī pani from the site (conspicuous in Figure 68) (RI.19, 2014), perhaps implying a level of later regret as age mellowed youthful action to considered hesitancy.
Figure 68: A tīpāni (frangipani tree – plumeria) stands in the churchyard in this image of hurricane damage, c.1935 (Source: Johnson’s Studio Collections, Reg. 2008, Album 8, National Archives of the Cook Islands). The tree was removed in the 1990s.

Beautification objectives resonate with long-standing Western visions of the Pacific as islands of paradise, the garden of Eden (Austin, 2001, p. 15, Anderson & Herr, p. 139). To the 19th century evangelical this came with responsibility to materialise God’s first instruction to humanity, to fill and subdue creation in Christian stewardship (Genesis 1: 27-28). Furthermore, as the earth was despoiled by humanity’s sin (Guthrie, 1981, p. 334), a key biblical imperative was to restore, both spiritually and physically, a broken paradise through the renewing grace of God.

The concept of beautification was also woven into the early LMS emphasis on the Church as a civilising, as well as a redemptive, force (Gunson, 1978, p. 36; Thomas, 1991, p. 152). Williams, who was at the forefront of the LMS’s work in the Pacific, determined to “have as respectable dwelling-house as I could erect; for the missionary does not go to barbarize himself, but to elevate the heathen” (Williams, 1837/1998, p. 124). His consequent construction of a house with ornamental garden (Prout, 1846, p. 18) reflected this integration of Christianisation, civilisation and aesthetically-pleasing place-making.

In a context of intermittent and infrequent communication and dependence on central administration funding, LMS missionaries were keenly aware of the importance of quantifiable confirmation of evangelistic progress to British supporters unappreciative of incremental or ambiguous change (Gunson, 1978, p. 131). Missionaries stationed in Rarotonga therefore reported regularly on the state of construction and landscaping as evidence of a community’s
level of sincerity regarding Christian conversion (see for examples, Buzacott, 1836, journal entry May 30; Williams, 1830, journal entries May 31, June 3/26, August 19/27) and successful efforts at taming a “heathen” utopia. As well as highlighting the existence of these manifestations of the new religion, there was a strong emphasis on their picturesque qualities, as described by European voyagers to Mauke, Cook Islands in 1824:

The road ... [to our] surprise and pleasure terminated in a beautiful green lawn, where there were two of the prettiest white-washed cottages imaginable. ... We were exceedingly struck by the elegance and cleanliness of all around us (Callcott, Byron, & Bloxam, 1826, pp. 209, 210).

The creation of such places was strongly influenced by nostalgia, as LMS missionaries far from home naturally attempted to recreate imagined ideal landscapes “more English than England itself” (Sargeant, 2005, p. 326) with what materials and skills they had. Their built response to a new environment reflects both a pre-industrialised romantic vision of English village life and a desire to lay claim to its projected reality “back home” (Breward, 2001, p. 65; Rodman, 1998, p. 119; Wolf, Krueger, & Flora, 2014). Turning fantasy into reality was not restricted to Europeans. Indigenous adoption of these indicators of foreign civilisation was rapid, and villages and church grounds constructed entirely by local people groups followed the established Christian model. Refiti (2002) suggests that appropriations of mission-introduced architecture were “romantic projections by Pacific people of what a European paradise might be” (p. 219), a heavenly vision from a Euro-centric God.

While this may have been a factor in building forms, the indigenous precedent of paepae may have been more influential in terms of landscape. In describing paepae (Chapter Four), Hiroa (1927) mentions that their visual appearance was “‘e hakairo i te hare,’ ‘to beautify the house’” (p. 2). This not only demonstrates that culturally-defined notions of beautification were deeply established in pre-contact Cook Islands. It also suggests that their translation into Christian spaces would have been relatively straightforward for local people due to material parallels between foreign and indigenous perceptions of beauty, decorum and spatial ceremony.

123 See also Brook (2003) for discussion of the need to create gardens like a homeland environment.
Refiti’s discussions regarding malama (light, illumination) may also be an underlying influence of beautification initiatives. Refiti argues that in Samoan thought the “light of the world” does not come to humanity from an externality as is implicit in Western metaphysics, but rather emanates from a centrality, an internal heart. He goes on to suggest that “architecture ... fashions things towards this centrality, which radiates beauty and order” (Refiti, 2009, p. 15). Refiti’s analysis may be extended by conflating this understanding with biblical teachings such as John 1:5 (NIV),

the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it

and Matthew 5: 14-16 (NIV),

you are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others,
which creates a metaphysical and tangible space from where light, as civilisation, as sanctification, as beauty, emanates. In this grounding, ongoing beautification projects on CICC sites may be seen as part of a ritual expunging of “dark places,” with the removal of trees and wild vegetation and covering of unkempt graves physically symbolising spiritual protection and purification.

This discussion indicates that multiple strands of foreign and indigenous purpose conceived the aesthetic of churchscapes and their surrounding villages, and that these meanings have been re-woven in each successive generation of Cook Islanders so that beauty continues to equate to smooth, clean, tidy – a white building against a green lawn.124

Embracing the modern

Pragmatic and beautification agendas are closely linked with a third key modification driver noted in field research; the perceived need for “modernisation.” Various interviewees suggested that ready adoption of the new was a central characteristic of Cook Islanders’ approach to life (RI.13; RI.17, 2014), and that overseas influences were a strong motivator of change (RI.15, 2014). These factors are apparent in alterations made to the Matavera CICC.

- Case study: Matavera 1986

Perceptions of modern architecture are evident in the building’s painted exterior and particularly in the heavily modified interior. Modernisation works in 1986 included construction of a raised dais for the pulpit, laying white tiles over the concrete floor, replacing timber joinery with pre-coated white aluminium, and installing a white-panelled ceiling with fans and fluorescent tube lighting (RI.19, 2014).125 Internal walls have been progressively straightened, smoothed and painted white, concealing original detail.

While interviewees confirmed that the “white look” was introduced by the LMS (RI.06, 2014), it was also acknowledged that this is a locally sustained approach:

[Ekalesia members] have a tendency to paint everything white; so we have a general assembly, the whole church is painted white and ... all the graves

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124 This extends to private residences; an interviewee commented that Cook Islanders like to cut their hedges to be symmetrical and square and have their lawns clipped flat, so they end up looking like “English country hamlets,” especially in time for tūtuka, the annual health inspection of homes (RI.02, 2014; see also Rere, 1980, pp. 52, 53).

125 The white-rendered concrete block deacons’ rooms attached to the church’s south elevation may also have been constructed at this time, although this is unconfirmed.
and everything have to be white, so they just feel that it gives it a more clean look, so they are not really after the historic look, they are after the clean look (RI.08, 2014).

Budgett provides an analysis of major alterations to the Oneroa Sunday school on Mangaia in 2006, which included full removal of original timber and sennit work and installation of a steel portal roof structure and flat white tile ceiling. She argues that, rather than conscious cultural renegotiations or a rejection of (European) permanence, the work may have been more influenced by perceptions of, and desire for, modernisation and secularity (Budgett, 2006, pp. 47, 48). Focusing on the “blanking out” of detail and colour, Budgett suggests that contrary to the churches’ original coral whitewash variously conceptualising Christian purification and Cook Islands sacred white bark cloth,126 this flat whiteness is a contemporary interest tied to agendas of building “new” and “modern.” In contexts where traditions of reciprocity and kinship are now expressed by expatriate remittances, reworking the old is superseded by large building projects artificially enabled by external resourcing, with technical performance arguments masking “a fashionable aesthetic preoccupation with the white surfaces of minimalism” (Budgett, 2006, pp. 48, 49).

A building project recently completed to replace the Matavera church hall appears to support this argument. The Matavera ekalesia raised funds largely from CICC congregations in New Zealand and Australia for a new two-storey building to replace the existing more modest structure (RI.06, 2014), itself a 1960s replacement of the original c.1850s coral Sunday school. An interviewee recalling the demolition of the original mission house and school questioned the need for replacement, as there would have been “nothing wrong with the walls” (RI.06, 2014), and suggested that it was because they were old and potentially had rotting timberwork. Given the relatively straightforward nature of repairs in this context, wholesale replacement appears to indicate the aspirations of progressive generations for new and modern more than pragmatic concerns alone.

Budgett’s analysis aligns with Jeremy Treadwell’s suggestion that Cook Islanders continue to look to their former colonisers for architectural representation (J. Treadwell, 2006, p. 562), and with wider studies indicating that “the expansion of capitalism has been accompanied by a steady export of Western culture to the developing world” (Lockwood, 2004, p. 6). However,

126 As discussed by Sarah Treadwell (2016) and Budgett (2004). The concept of whiteness is discussed further in Chapter Five.
following ‘Ilaiu’s discussion of the Tongan practice of ‘inasi in contemporary adaptations of fale
(‘Ilaiu, 2007, pp. 89 - 105; 2009a), it is suggested that Western imports do not necessarily
result in architectural acculturation in churchscapes of the Cook Islands. Rather, forms and
materials are variously appropriated, customised and creolised in new expressions of mana
architecture is relevant here:

It must be emphasised that Pacific Island societies do not necessarily share
the Western difficulties with imitation and reproduction so that one
response to Western culture has been to copy it, and what may be seen as
mere copying has subtle complications. The mimicry involved introduces
local variations and differences to the European model so that in the
process of getting it “wrong” slippage occurs between the Western
original and the Pacific copy. ... Further, it is suggested that it is this very
slippage that produces local regional identity and character (pp. 16, 17).

From this perspective, modernisation projects at the Matavera CICC can be seen to both
imitate and contextually transpose a projected version of Western modernity, merging with
wider agendas of pragmatism and beautification to create and recreate places that are
continuously changing versions of themselves.

Field research interviews suggest that there is some shift in attitude regarding embracement
of the modern. One interviewee considered that:

In retrospect I’m not sure if the replacement today has got heaps more
advantages than the old one ... because you know a lot of these lime
buildings are known to be quite weather friendly (RI.06, 2014).

Another observed,

But I think now, a lot more [people] are appreciating the kind of historic
look of the churches, and we’re finding that we’re not doing the water
blasting and the painting as often as we used to before (RI.08, 2014).

However, the same interviewee added,

The next [CICC General Assembly] will be back here so they might, most
likely, they’ll do the water blasting/painting thing next year (RI.08, 2014),
indicating that priorities of recreating a clean, new look continue to outweigh physical conservation concerns.

Figure 70: Matavera church interior. Note the modern tiled floor, lined ceiling and aluminium joinery (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided contextual background for the perceived diminishing of the Church’s role in contemporary Rarotongan society. It argues that the continually evolving social relations between the Church, aronga mana and state is not a simple devolution of power but a complex framework of interlinkages, working within shifting realities of personal faith choices, population mobility and international connectivity.

The Matavera CICC case study was explored with a focus on modifications that have been made to its original fabric. This was analysed through three interwoven themes. First, the pragmatic agenda suggests that the Church appropriated and continues to enact the living functions of a recontextualised culture. It also tangibly demonstrates an intermingling of congregationalist philosophies of action over physical fabric with Polynesian building practices of improvisation and collective decision-making. Second, beautification objectives reiterate the Church’s strong grounding in 19th century European civilising agendas reciprocated by Polynesian conceptualisations of beauty manifested in paepae, and indicate that continued
expressions of beautification have a role in spiritual protection and purification. Finally, modernisation initiatives involving contextually transposed Western mimicry emphasise Cook Islanders’ self-determined appropriation of the new and modern over the old and historic, as churchscapes continue to reflect communal mana.

The analysis highlights the current reality of the Matavera CICC case study as a heavily modified built place. It demonstrates how changes made have been variously influenced by aspects of pre-Christian, European Christian and indigenised fusions of cultural expression, enabling meanings and values to be recontested, recontextualised and renewed through continued use. This case study demonstrates how church places are cultural landscapes, enmeshed in concepts of time as well as space, “a series of incarnations rather than one building” (McKay & Walmsley, 2003, p. 95). The next chapter will expand the analysis from permanent built fabric to temporal and intangible aspects of church places, exploring how these factors also contribute to cultural meaning and significance.
Chapter six

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS PART 2:
THE "UNCHANGED" PLACE

Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine how the evolving nature of temporal and intangible heritage values have contributed to reshaping and sustaining cultural significance imbued in CICC places. It begins by discussing field research findings which indicate that people can perceive churches as essentially unchanged despite major modifications. This perception is analysed in terms of place as social construction and Polynesian understandings of physical transience and time. How these findings tie into broader patterns of human interaction and connection with our environments is then considered through place attachment theory. This examines how identity and a sense of place are inlaid in these physical places by members and non-members.

The analysis leads to consideration of impermanent physical fabric and intangible aspects of the Matavera church case study. Findings suggest that it may in fact be temporal material items that hold the most enduring embedded meanings, and that understandings of place as a repository of intangible heritage dictate decisions on physical continuation.

The unchanged place: heritage beyond building fabric

As the alterations, demolitions and additions discussed in Chapter Five indicate, the Matavera CICC as a physical place has been heavily modified over time, with significant changes to the church’s form and massing, spatiality, materiality and finishes. The surrounding context is also greatly altered by replacement of the historic coral Sunday school and mission house by modern buildings, removal of historic trees, and modifications to the graveyard.

Field research suggests that while people are variously aware of these alterations, they are often not considered substantial to the church as a place; the place remains “unchanged” as an enduring embodiment of the work of ancestors (RI.01; RI.03; RI.14; RI.15, 2014). An interpretation of this perspective is that it is human actions and interactions rather than built forms that create and sustain place (Kecskemeti, 2012, p. 10, 11, 86). This phenomenon is well-
researched internationally (see Hummon, 1992, p. 268; Jackson, 1995, pp. 24, 25 as examples) and was supported by field research interviews, with one interviewee explaining:

It feels the same to me, I feel comfortable in it. ... For me, I’m comfortable in church, in fact I look forward to going to the church on Sunday. The singing ... its uplifting. ... One day I said to the ‘orometua, “I’m not coming back to church anymore,” and he said to me, “why not?” and I said to him, “oh, the church, you know the singing is too much,” I said, “I get too emotional, you know, the tears are coming into my eyes when we sing,” and he just laughed at me [laughter].

*Interviewer:* And do you think that that would be the same for you regardless of if it was a modern building, if the people were the same, the service was the same – would it be the same experience? Or is there something about that actual space?

To me, it’s not the building, well, that’s for me. It’s being inside, sharing with your, you know, your fellow congregation (RI.01, 2014).

This implies that places may be considered unchanged when they continue to embody the same, or incrementally evolved, functions and sense of “community” regardless of physically substantial tectonic change. As suggested by Kauraka (1991), “It is not the material object that matters but the idea which that object represents” (p. 19). In this context, alterations appear incidental and not worth recalling in the broader scheme of maintaining the idea of a place and the identity-creating social practices manifested there.

William Wyatt Gill (1892/1979) noted from his Mangaian mission experience that “we name our dwellings because they are enduring. They name the site, their huts being so perishable” (p. 11). The transitory nature of pre-contact Polynesian architecture has been contrasted with the permanence of mission construction (Austin, 2001, p. 17; 2002, p. 7; McKay, 2004b, pp. 297, 298), but alterations made to churchscapes indicate that this is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a more complex interaction of holding lightly to the physical while treasuring the work, both physical and spiritual, of ancestors.

Another aspect of unchanged place may link to wider Polynesian views on time and relational connections with and through the past. Refiti (2009) describes this in the context of Samoa:
Any concept of time that poses the past, present and future as separate moments is incompatible with Samoan thinking. The ancestors do not recede into a lost time: in fact ... they are continually available. ... Thus, in Polynesia, the concept of space-time suggests that we move towards a future by orientating our being to a collective opening that continues with us. Some call it the past, but I suggest that this past is not static but an ever-moving ancestor-duration, which is always woven within us and endures within our becoming (pp. 9, 10).

In this way, a traditional leader embodies his tā’onga (title) which remains unchanged though time; “he is his ancestors (and descendants)” (Campbell, 2006, p. 111, original emphasis). Just as a long line of genealogy can be compressed and folded in an ancestral constellation (McKay & Walmsley, 2003, p. 92), so too can the past-to-present relationship embodied in place be conceived as a dynamic enfolding rather than a discretised narrative.

Place attachment and identity

Perceptions of unchanged places and their implied emphasis on people and practices over physical place may also be informed by the theory of place attachment. While it is outside the purpose of this research to comprehensively overview place attachment theory and application (Lewicka, 2011 provides a helpful critique), a synopsis is provided below.

The concept of “place” and people’s emotional connection to places have been explored since the 1960s. However, the academic study of place attachment as an area of behavioural research is generally considered to have emerged from the work of social and environmental psychologists Irwin Altman and Setha Low (1992a), who defined place attachment as “the bonding of people to places” (Altman & Low, 1992b, p. 2). While this definition is still generally accepted, place attachment’s scholarly framework, related terminologies and

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127 This concept was reflected in a speech by an orator, Ben Nicholls, at a ceremony to unveil the John Williams memorial. He recalled feeling the passion of an ancestral hero, and expressed a sense of being one and the same with this epic past. He then went on to explain how there was an awkward relationship between himself and the descendant of the Cumberland sailor William Travis, killed by the aforementioned ancestor in retaliation for the Cumberland’s men stealing food (B. Nicholls, speech, July 25, 2014. Notes taken by author).

128 Early behavioural studies of people-place bonds include Marc Fried (1963), Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) and Edward Relph (1976). Interestingly, the pedagogy of place attachment has developed separately from (interpersonal) attachment theory developed by psychologists John Bowlby (1969) and Mary Ainsworth (1978); environmental psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford (2013) have begun exploration on their overlaps and potential for mutual insights.

129 See Rubinstein & Parmelee (1992, p. 142); Seamon (2013, p. 11); and Wolf, Krueger, & Flora (2014) for similar definitions.

The field is also complicated by its exploration through a wide range of social science disciplines which have diversified its theoretical base and application (Lewicka, 2011, p. 207; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013, pp. 4, 5). Interestingly, there has been limited academic investigation of place attachment’s relevance to cultural heritage (A. Smith, 2011 and Taha, 2013 are examples); heritage studies have focused more often on the related concept of identity (see Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; Graham & Howard, 2008; Liston, Clark, & Alexander, 2011b). However, the archaeologist Shadia Taha suggests that increasing attempts to take into account intangible social values in heritage place studies are hampered by a lack of understanding of how and why people form attachments to heritage places. She argues that place attachment may potentially form a useful framework for investigating peoples’ relationships with historic places (Taha, 2013, p. 12).

As place attachments can be powerful drivers for conservation action (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2013, p. 71), its theory has importance for this study. Several key themes regarding people’s association with CICC church places emerged from field research interviews, on which place attachment theory provides some insight. These are discussed below, with differentiation made, where applicable, between two broad groups;

1. **Members**: People in Rarotonga who have attended the CICC for all (or significant parts) of their life and who are current attendees, and

2. **Non-members**: People in Rarotonga who may or may not have previously attended a CICC but no longer do so (they either attend a different denomination or do not attend any church).

   **Memories**

People’s specific childhood memories of CICC places were explored in all interviews, sometimes in relation to a specific church which they were, or had been, closely associated with, or in relation to CICC churches in general.

   **Members’** responses were predominantly positive, expressing warm and happy memories of church places and describing their central role in their childhood experiences (RI.01; RI.03; RI.04; RI.08; RI.11; RI.12; RI.14, 2014). One interviewee who is now a highly involved member
was unable to attend as a child; he had a strong sense of “missing out” and yearning to belong (RI.09, 2014).

Expressed memories, however, were often broad and fairly undefined, and more associated with patterns of repetition rather than distinct events, for example groups walking together to church, or regular attendance at Sunday school (RI.01; RI.03; RI.04; RI.11, 2014). Physical objects or built form were notably absent from the comments; one interviewee recalled raking leaves from the churchyard’s tipani (RI.08, 2014) and another remembered gazing at the decoratively-painted ceiling of the Aitutaki church (RI.14, 2014), but most member interviewees either did not mention physical aspects at all or mentioned them in passing as part of a backdrop, for example running from Sunday school to get on the front row of bleachers on the Avarua gallery (RI.01, 2014).

Non-members’ memories were more mixed, with more negative recollections of leader domination, hypocrisy, feelings of repression and boredom (RI.05; RI.13, 2014). One non-member jovially recalled:

[I grew up in a CICC church] – that’s why I lost faith! [laughter]. As kids, you know, I always remember, we’d go to the church, and you know if, sometimes we have these white Sundays and we have to say our verses, and I always remember if I, if any of us kids, didn’t get our verses correct you know the mamas and aunties would grab me by the ear and pull – “you’re a shame to the family” [laughter]. Oh yeah, I hated church, I just hated it! (RI.16, 2014).

Physical elements were recalled more by non-members, including the collection and burning of coral for mortar repairs (RI.05, 2014) and the age and solidity of the buildings’ fabric (RI.07; RI.13, 2014), although one interviewee noted that they only considered such aspects later in life:

What strikes me I guess about the church is the oldness of it, because it’s such a unique building, so we don’t really get to see those sort of buildings around very much, not as a kid anyway. But this did not interest me as a child, I just took it for granted (RI.13, 2014).

These responses support attachment theory findings that people with long and close connections to a place have very strong social ties to it but tend to take the place for granted –
their familiarity means that they may not “see” it, whereas those for whom interaction with a place is an occasional, deliberate choice are more likely to emphasise historical and physical qualities over relational groundings (Gustafson, 2013, p. 39; A. Smith, 2011, p. 229).

**Physical place and elements**

Interviewees were asked about their feelings regarding modifications to their specific church or historic CICC churchscapes in general, and the potential for future changes. As discussed above, interviewees, particularly members, often did not recall any changes or did not consider them worth mentioning. Further prompting regarding specific (interviewer-known) events was often required to facilitate exploration of this topic.

While several interviewees acknowledged a “young versus old” dichotomy, suggesting that young church leaders were keen to alter places while the elderly wanted them to remain unchanged (RI.04; RI.13; RI.15, 2014; see also Ernst, 1994, p. 268), members generally were unconcerned with past modifications and were confident that changes in the future would be minimal, as expressed by one interviewee:

> The Church is [the traditional leaders’] tama ʻūʻā, it’s where a child is raised from their thighs, from their bosom. So when the missionaries arrived, the chiefs received them, accepted them, raised on their bosom, and raised them. They helped to enhance the Church. You will see, in all the churches of the CICC, the land, where they are using, belongs to the ariki. So yes, the ariki will be watching. What the Church is doing today. You know, if they do anything disruptive, they will speak. Otherwise, they will always be encouraging the church … inviting them to come onto the marae, inviting them to participate in cultural events.

> ... Most of the principal complexes were built by our forefathers. When you look at them, most of these buildings are limestone. And those are symbolic to our traditional leaders.

**Interviewer: Symbolic of what?**

See, it’s a link to the efforts of our forefathers, to hold the church. Those buildings were done, manpower, manually, no machinery, so to tamper with those buildings is like destroying the identity of our people. Yes, they
belong to the Church. But you will see that ariki, mata’iapo will speak up, once you decide to deface, or to change, to modify (RI.09, 2014).

Similarly, when asked what their response would be to a hypothetical proposal to demolish a church, one member interviewee articulated a commonly expressed view that:

> It would never get to that stage, where it wasn’t there anymore. You would have the arikis, and you would have the mata’iapos, and you would have the rangitiras, and you would have the people fighting against [demolition]. It’s like the Christchurch Cathedral – although a lot of people don’t have any affiliation with it, but because it’s there and it’s been there, whereas a lot of people in Ngatangiia do have affiliation with it [the CICC church building], and people today would say that you are desecrating the ancestors who built that church, who gave the Church, you know, the land, to the Church to build (RI.01, 2014).

In contrast, non-members more readily expressed disappointment about perceived unsympathetic changes to historic CICC places and were concerned that major material loss had the potential to occur in the future. One interviewee opined that interest in historic places was lessening (RI.15, 2014). Another similarly said that:

> The reason why these churches are still standing and have not been knocked down is because there are a lot of people in that [older] generation who will protect them, like the older ones, our grandparents and great grandparents – that generation would not sleep until it’s ensured that [a] decision to knock down a church was reversed. But the fear is that today, our generation, in the next thirty years, when it is our generation who are the elders, how many of us would be willing to protect that. And I’m not really sure. If there are mostly foreigners and Cook Islanders who say for example are born and raised out there [overseas] come here and live out their golden years and they’re the decision-makers, they might not have that same attachment to these buildings and they might not feel so, they might be less willing to keep it; “we need a new assembly hall,” or ministry building, or something. “We’ll just knock down the church, nobody’s going anymore,” or just build a new one, that’s
got air-conditioning and those kinds of things – maybe the decision will have less friction at that time. But I hope not! (RI.13, 2014).

Views expressed show not only the influence of the older generation generally, but more specifically the continued perceived role of aronga mana in upholding the continuing physical presence of the Church. While the examples explored from the Matavera case study indicate that the tama ʻūʻā relationship has frequently been downplayed by church leaders, it is still commonly referenced as a protection mechanism for the CICC’s historic sites. Interwoven with this is the recognised importance of the land that the churches are sited on; land as moenga, “our mat,” that which is lain and lived upon, a defining centre of self and collective (RI.05, 2014). As each church’s land was originally gifted to the Church by leading ariki or mataʻiapo in each respective tapere, these traditional leaders’ role of continued oversight was often emphasised by interviewees. One (non-member) interviewee in discussing a restoration project recalled that:

It was a thing of pride, for our tribe, and the church, because it’s on our land. I remember coming back, and some elder said “who the hell are you, young punk, to come back here – [the church] has got to be demolished,” and I remember taking this elder on ... well I just said, “look, you know, I am the son of my grandfather, and this is our land ... [our tribe] embraced Christianity, and we will preserve Christianity.” ... And they accepted (RI.16, 2014).

Place attachment research has shown that while longevity of person-place connection is a predictor of place attachment (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007, p. 311; Lewicka, 2013, p. 49), even highly mobile people may have strong place bonds (Gustafson, 2013, p. 38), leading Maria Lewicka (2013) to suggest that there is “ample space for speculation as to possible factors affecting emotional bonds with places other than residence duration or family roots” (p. 51). The above field research indicates that one such factor in Rarotonga may be a place’s close associations with wider tribal heritage and land tenure. Place attachment in this context potentially enlarges identity-based heritage place studies from their current heavily individual focus (Masso, Dixon, & Durrheim, 2013, p. 79) to an inter-relational one more in line with Polynesian senses of “life value” in the collective (Müller, 2011, p. 4).130

130 In her Master of Architecture thesis Anne Milbank (2011) explains that, “the art of tracing connections is a common practice in Polynesia – Maori call it ‘whakapapa’. It means that people do not exist independent of one another and their histories, but instead rely on one another for their existence” (p.10).
Attachment to church places is not simply reliant on individual connections, but on deeper, pre-Christian understandings of tribal relationships, hierarchy, genealogy and land, with mana as their fundamental foundation. People strongly grounded in these frameworks may therefore be more attached to place and more reliant on mana to appropriately guide change, whereas those less attached may be more cognisant of their fragility in a rapidly changing social and cultural context.

**Shaper of identity**

Each interview discussed whether the historic CICC churches have a place in a sense of Cook Islands cultural identity, and if so in what ways. The openness of the subject allowed interviewees to explore this from various perspectives, ranging from the Church as a socio-religious entity to its physical manifestation in material places of gathering and ritual.

Members’ first response was often that of a perceived decline of church influence, as discussed in Chapter Five. This was commonly followed by more personal expressions of identity connection, such as continuing traditions of forebears (RI.03; RI.04, 2014), the Church as central to personal and collective expressions of worship (RI.01; RI.11; RI.12, 2014) and as a place of community and sharing (RI.03; RI.14, 2014).

Regardless of previously-expressed negative, positive or ambivalent feelings towards the Church, non-members generally also readily acknowledged the identity-defining role of the Church, although with more emphasis on collective rather than personal identity. A common sentiment was that the Church had commingled with and appropriated previous marae-based forms of communal identity, critically influencing society for both good and bad (RG.01; RI.02; RI.07; RI.14, 2014). Not only was the Church considered part of Cook Islanders’ cultural identity regardless of what faith individuals adhered to (RI.02; RI.05; RI.17, 2014), but it was also regarded as critical to the fundamental formation of the Cook Islands as an entity, drawing formerly disparate people groups together as a nation (RI.16; RI.17, 2014). This extended to the physical places themselves, with the churches being seen as “living effigies” or icons of the Cook Islands (RI.03, 2014). As such, they are embraced as indigenous built expression alongside other tangible heritage such as marae, community buildings, landing sites and

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131 See Henry (2003, p. 98) and Rere (1987, p. 4) for more information regarding the LMS’s influence on the formation of a nation state through their establishment of a written form of (Rarotongan) Cook Islands Māori, standardising previously disparate dialects.
representations of the god Tangaroa (RI.05, 2014). As expressed by one non-member interviewee:

Well, I think it does [have significance], because [the CICC churches are] a physical embodiment of our religious belief. It’s just like our marae was the place of spiritual congregation prior to the churches, so it just shows how we have, I don’t know whether the word is evolved, maybe devolved [laughter], but it shows that change. And that change is still well and alive today, so in that respect I think it is very important.

... I think they do [have a role in identity formation] – say for example ... when I saw [a] painting [of a CICC church], I connected to it in a cultural way, I didn’t sort of think ... oh that’s a European-style architecturally styled church, you think of it as being part of our culture, and our identity (RI.07, 2014).

This field research supports the view that heritage places can be tangible manifestations of identity and history; “the cultural landscape, therefore, is a fundamental resource for understanding the complex connections between heritage, memory and identity” (McDowell, 2008, p. 40). But more than this, place is a basis of individual and communal identity formation and continuity (Taha, 2013, p. 15). In this context, physical churchscapes are not only intrinsically imbued with, but also underpin, these intangible values. This implies a more complex and symbiotic relationship between people and place than simply that of place being created and sustained by human actions. Rather, places facilitate actions that foster memory and identity that in turn lead to place attachment; intangible and tangible factors are inseparable.

Field research findings: Enduring ephemeral

How then have intangible aspects of heritage been shaped by, and shaped, the physical places of historic LMS churches? Field research findings confirm that the seemingly permanent elements of these historic places, their tangible stone and mortar, timber, fibres and metal, have in fact been intensively subject to transformative physical change. This section examines the temporal and intangible characteristics of heritage imbued in these places, suggesting that it is these aspects that are the more enduring, not only regardless of, but perhaps actively because of, their mutability.
Transitory items – coverings, living colour

While each church interior is different, two key temporal features were consistently observed; first, white coverings (usually modern lace) on all significant surfaces, and second, the presence of large quantities of fresh flowers and greenery. Some examples are shown below.

Figure 71: Matavera CICC interior (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 72: Arorangi CICC interior (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 73: Titikaveka CICC interior (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
• **Cloth coverings**

Cloth coverings are neither indigenously originated nor unique to Cook Islands expressions of Christianity. The use of cloths to veil or dress the apparatus of worship is observed in the traditions of churches across nations and denominations. However, in the context of the CICC, it is suggested that material layering entwines broader theological symbolism of holiness with pre-Christian manifestations of mana. As analysed by Sissons and discussed in Chapter Three, 19th century Rarotongans used sacred bark cloth wrappings to transfer mana from ‘are atua to the island’s first churches (Sissons, 2007, pp. 51 - 57; see also Kaeppler, 2008, pp. 33, 93, 94). While early traditions of bark cloth wrapping are no longer apparent in Rarotongan CICCs, processes of covering, layering and wrapping continue, transferred into mass-manufactured foreign linen overlaid on pulpits, deacons’ and sacrament tables, reading lecterns, and ‘orometua seats.

It is notable that in contrast to pre-Christian ki’iki’i, church cloths visually signify the mana of the rituals and performances that the covered items assist in, rather than any tapu embodied in the covered objects themselves. The LMS, in line with their Nonconformist roots and in reaction against Roman Catholic and High Anglican iconography, emphasised a clear separation of the sacred from physical objects (permanent or temporal), assigning sacred status to God (unseen and unrepresentable) and his word alone (Fiddes, 1961, pp. 42 - 48). The resulting distinction between manifestations of tapu and mana imbued in temporal coverings represents a difference between the Church and marae. While churches are recognised as the new marae, their origination in a Protestant dissenting tradition means that their materiality is deliberately devoid of tapu; it is the people who form the Body of Christ, not the building or objects therein. In practical terms, while the continued tapu of marae means that they generally remain respectfully avoided and unmodified, church places are more complex in their outworking of mana. Church buildings are for sacred services only, with ancillary buildings used for other activities, but grave headstones are openly climbed on by children, church interiors are freely explored and facilities are readily added and adapted.

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132 Although it was noted that church posts and the like are often wrapped in coconut fronds and other decorative coverings during festivals such as Gospel Days.

133 This view was supported by comments made by an interviewee (RI.02, 2014) and by Dixon, (personal communication, August 5, 2014).

134 This position sought to uphold the Fourth Commandment: “You shall not make for yourself an image” (Exodus 20:4, NIV), as well as New Testament teaching such as Acts 17:29 and Romans 1:18 – 23.
White cloths shroud symbols of power and purity, but all comers can partake in the rituals they encapsulate.

However, the complex and disparate nature of humans’ spiritual realities mean that any mana/tapu separation is not clear-cut. Christian and pre-Christian heritages continue to be blended and recontested, as is apparent in headstone unveiling ceremonies, where multiple layers of white cloths and tīvaevae (hand-made appliqué quilts) are ritually removed from the memorial stone (Figure 74). Extending ethnologist Alain Babadzan’s discussion regarding the Tahitian distinction between “dressed” and “undressed” to’o (god-icons) as corresponding to life and death (Babadzan, 2003, p. 30), it is suggested that the veiled grave embodies both the mana of the deceased and the tapu of their covered body. The recognition of the state of death through ritual “undressing” of the headstone then releases that tapu, and the grave is safe for ongoing remembrance.

Figure 74: Multiple cloth coverings on the memorial stone of the Cowan family of Takitumu, 2005 (Source: Mataio, 2014b, p. 55).

- **Floral decorations**

As with cloth dressings, floral ornamentation is not unique to Cook Islands Christian tradition. However, their vibrant colour and scent and use as personal adornment in the form of ‘ei (floral garlands and headdresses) suggest that indigenous meanings evolved within an otherwise whitened built form. The use of white was deeply entrenched in the LMS’s Protestant Reformation heritage, its non-colour physically manifesting a transformative Christian presence on a brightly coloured “heathen” state (George, 2012; S. Treadwell, 2000; 2016). Whiteness also had deep associations with mana and the sacred across the Pacific (Refiti, 2014, p. 82; Sissons, 2014, p. 89). This dual symbolism formed the basis for whiteness in church places and practices. Treadwell notes that in early mission endeavours white was
applied equally to clothing as to buildings as a clear delineator of good from evil (S. Treadwell, 2016, p. 374), and this remains evident in the white attire of churches and congregations alike (Figure 76).

However, while the endemic growth of moss, vegetation and coral stain is kept at bay on permanent church fabric by persistent cleaning, weeding and re-whitening, temporal fabric has allowed for a different shaping of religious expression. White cloth coverings remain, but white apparel is now a matter of choice and is largely relegated to specific festive days. Simultaneously, the island’s vivid colours and odours infiltrate church interiors in constructions of tradition, expressed in pots of live vegetation, floral prints and ‘ei adornments (Fiti-Sinclair, 2001, pp. 13 – 17; Underhill-Sem, 2001, pp. 29, 30).

It is notable that investiture ceremonies for ariki and mata’iapo held at marae not only have a naturally coloured backdrop but that this living coverage extends to participants themselves, who are ceremonially dressed in temporal leaf costumes (Figure 75). The encroachment of flora and colourful adornment into the enveloping white of church buildings demonstrates a symbiotic appropriation between two increasingly interwoven heritages.

Figure 75: Customary investiture of three members of the Ngāti Manavaroa tribe at the Manavaroa marae “Temiromiro” in Avana, Ngatangiia, May 2014. The Ngatangiia

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135 Colour on the permanent built fabric of CICC church interiors is limited and usually restricted to blue, which various interviewees suggested represented the blue of the sky or heavens. Some colour use was observed in the Arorangi CICC which features decorative patterning on the ceiling predominantly in blue with patterns of red, yellow, black and white, and in the Titikaveka CICC which has an exposed blue-painted timber roof structure.

The Ziona CICC in Mauke, built in 1882, is an unusual example of a church originally crafted with a truly multi-coloured interior. This church is known as the “divided church” because its interior detailing and decoration was undertaken by two competing villages Ngatiarua and Areora as two very distinct halves, originally divided by a wall. This vibrant interior was painted over in the 1990s in a predominantly white scheme with blue detailing, a decision that was later regretted by the community, with the original colours being restored in 2008 (Mataio, 2008).
CICC ‘orometua officiated at the three-part ceremony (Source: Mataio, 2014b, p. 12).

Figure 76: White attire, white interior: deacons of the Arorangi ekalesia, 2011 (Source: Mataio, 2014a, p. 73. Image credited to I. Rangi.)

Figure 77: (Left) Singing in the Arorangi CICC (Source: Mataio, 2009a, p. 3).

Figure 78: (Right) 17th CICC Women’s Conference, Avarua, April 2010 (Source: Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016b).
The explicit impermanence of cloth coverings and floral decorations also implies that significance lies in the cyclical performance of reapplication and renewal rather than in the items themselves. McKay and interior designer Antonia Walmsley have explored the mutability of Pacific architecture as an intrinsic feature of tribal society, where processes of rebuilding taught younger generations and cemented community relationships (McKay & Walmsley,
2005, p. 64). The importance of action is also highlighted by the anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler (2008), who explores Polynesian art as “not just a product, but also a process of manufacture or performance” (p. 33). It is suggested that these views pervade the recurring preparation and presentation of church decoration, embedding them in Christian doctrines of continual spiritual renewal and in pre-Christian cyclical rituals of re-dressing the sacred. Furthermore, the tasks of removing, washing and re-laying coverings and renewing floral arrangements are typically undertaken by the wives of ‘orometua and deacons, acting to ceremonially bind community hierarchies and relationships.

The intangible meanings layered into these transitory items is also manifested in other aspects of Church practice and place. This is explored below.

Intangible traditions – collective identity indicators

Interview discussions were frequently dominated by discussions of intangible heritage associated with CICC places rather than the churches’ tangible physicality. Two interwoven areas of intangible heritage were clearly evident in field research findings: the perpetuation of oral traditions, and the collective focus of Church activities. These intangible aspects are discussed with particular regard to their relationship with the tangible places of the Church.

“Intangible cultural heritage” is defined by UNESCO (2003) as follows:

... the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. [It includes]:

136 The following bible passages example this teaching:
Psalm 51: 10 – 12, NIV: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”
2 Corinthians 4: 16, NIV: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”
Romans 12: 2, NIV: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
(b) performing arts;
(c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
(d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
(e) traditional craftsmanship (p. 2).

As implied by this definition, while such aspects of cultural heritage are themselves intangible, relying on oral traditions, performances, and practices, they may be associated with physical objects and places. This was observed in Rarotonga, where continuity and evolution of identified intangible heritage is not only abstractly associated with the Church but is also intrinsically embedded in its physical places.

- **Imene tuki and Māori language**

The perpetuation of oral traditions was a common theme in discussions with interviewees on memories, connection to place and the role of the Church in contemporary cultural identity. While a comprehensive study of oral history and its contemporary practice is outside the scope of this research, oral traditions associated with and maintained by historic CICC churches are considered a key part of their intangible heritage. These focus around the singing of imene tuki and the use of Māori in Church contexts.

The word “imene” is a derivation of the English word “hymn,” and “tuki” refers to accompanying rhythmic grunts made by men (Mason & Williams, 2003, p. 34; Rere, 1976, p. 9). Early imene tuki were composed by pioneering LMS missionaries, notably Buzacott, to whom more than 200 imene tuki are attributed (Gunson, 1978, p. 191; Henry, 2003, p. 61). Some were direct translations of existing English hymns, while others were composed to reflect their new surroundings and particular conversion story. In the context of Rarotonga, it is likely that its first Tahitian missionaries were instrumental in establishing imene tuki in the four years prior to Pitman and then Buzacott’s arrival (Gilson & Crocombe, 1980, p. 21; Rere, 1976, p. 9). Local pe’e (chants) were fused with established Tahitian Christian worship, establishing a dual basis for subsequent English litany to embed in.137

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137 It is noted by Richard Lovett that Tahiti also had strong oral traditions. A collection of hymns in Tahitian (the second item to be published there after the Gospel of Luke) proved to be immensely popular “because the natives delight in verse recitations, their traditions and history all being thrown into this form” (Lovett, 1899/1972, p. 217; see also Garrett, 1992, p. 255).
The resultant imene tuki continued to evolve as a living culture and mode of worship. The missionary Reverend Henry Bond James reported from Rarotonga in 1901 that:

During the singing of the hymns [in church services], the feeling may depart from what Europeans may regard as reverent. The young people take an active part in the praise, and an overflow of animal spirits may grate our ears. … Our best plan is to teach the children suitable tunes, and develop in them a taste for quieter music. On the other hand, some native tunes express the true spirit of devotion and inspire true Christian joy (H. James, 1911, January 18).

His remarks indicate that while individuals like Buzacott had a strong hand in early lyrics, the Cook Islands’ small number of European missionaries had limited influence on subsequent vocal expression. Rather, music was an important part of Christianity’s contextualisation and indigenisation (Breward, 2001, pp. 53, 54). As explained by Gunson (1978):

It was in singing – both sacred and in the secular form derived from the himene – that the islanders found the most satisfactory compensation for the loss of the old arts (p. 192).

The heritage of imene tuki remains a distinctive Cook Islands tradition, and the CICC continues to be at the heart of their performance and perpetuation (RI.02; RI.06; RI.12; RI.13; RI.17; RI.18, 2014). Field research indicates that members and non-members consider imene tuki important to personal and national identity and community cohesion:

[Imene tuki] is unique to the Cooks … those songs are embedded in us (RI.15, 2014).

The imene tuki is very special, [it] is not practiced in other Polynesian countries – you can hear similar renditions in Tahiti – they call it the imene tawara – but here, oh, well it’s really a special kind of rendition of the holy songs. It’s wonderful. … I reckon it’s one of the icons of our spirituality in the Cook Islands, is the imene tuki; we sing choruses, we have these days [modern Western music], it’s all good and contributes to the worship – but the imene tuki is an icon of the Cook Islands Christian Church. And you will notice that it’s really rare that other denominations in the Cook Islands like the Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, will actually use it – but they still
do sometimes, like for on special occasions, they will do it; they still know it, they know the originals from the CICC, and when we join together, like all of us, then we all sing together (RI.12, 2014).

Imene tuki also have a strong teaching purpose, reinforcing oral traditions of learning (Hereniko, 2000, p. 79). This reflects and synthesises the fundamentally inculcative nature of each cultural strand that forms imene tuki lineage.

The imene tuki sung there [Atiu Gospel Day] were special compositions about the arrival of the gospel; ... way back, nobody quite knows when, but it was composed specifically to re-tell the story. So ... if you want to recall the story, all you got to do is sing the imene tuki (RI.12, 2014).

Another significant teaching role maintained by the Church is the continued use of Māori language.¹³⁸ Unlike the perpetuation of imene tuki, which was largely seen as a positive and crucial cultural heritage by members and non-members alike, attitudes regarding the use of Māori in preaching and teaching were more mixed. Some interviewees perceived it as a key part of the Church’s upholding of tradition and culture, others as exacerbating the Church’s growing irrelevance (RI.09; RI.12; RI.13; RI.14; RI.15, 2014). The tensions in maintaining a living culture were clear with some interviewees expressing both views, alluding to the complexity of simultaneously nurturing cultural constancy while allowing for contemporary change.

Regardless of perceptions of “good” or “bad,” it has been through the shifting performance and practice of imene tuki and Māori language over almost two centuries that CICC churchscapes continue to act as repositories for and conduits of language and cultural narratives, thus playing a part in maintaining a “multinational” nation and in individual and corporate identity formation. This role in perpetuating oral traditions is intimately linked with the second area of intangible cultural heritage identified in field research, that of the collective focus of Church activities.

- *Collective community*

Interviewees commonly referred to the Church’s central role in drawing the wider community together for collective events such as working bees, study groups, youth functions, building renovations and cultural performances, along with the food preparation, craft and apparel-

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¹³⁸ The CICC is now the only religious institution that uses Māori as its predominant form of communication (RI.06; RI.10, 2014).
making, practices etc. required for such activities (RI.03; RI.08; RI.19, 2014). Interviewees considered such acts an important aspect of maintaining “Cook Island values” of sharing and community (RI.04; RI.08; RI.11; RI.14, 2014) that continue to draw people together:

[There are those] who don’t come to church, although they are members. But the thing is that when there are programs or projects ... apart from the church services, like a working bee, or a group coming from elsewhere and the CICC is required to look after, you will see that about, almost double the members will be there. Because the members ... those that don’t go to church often, are still there – and that’s when they will come and help out. When there’s a calling, when there’s a working bee, when there’s a feed for a group from outside. So because the CICC is still in their heart ... they come and contribute (RI.06, 2014).

While all religious groups on Rarotonga intrinsically support, and are supported by, individuals coming together for collective activity, the CICC plays a particularly significant role in collective maintenance of cultural activities and events that have evolved out of pre-Christian traditions. This reflects the strong historical and contemporary links between the Church and traditional and political leaders and the consequent embracing by the CICC of wider aspects of indigenous cultural expression. This can conflict with more recent, foreign-influenced expressions of evangelical Christianity that may interpret such practices as idolatrous (Ernst, 1994, pp. 266, 267; RI.06, 2014).

Ancillary spaces are critical here; the Church’s intangible heritage significance is not simply embodied in the church buildings, but is as fundamentally imbued in cultural activities undertaken in surrounding buildings and spaces, together maintaining collective focus and cultural identity. This demonstrates again the Church’s co-option of pre-contact spatial arrangements and social frameworks, as well as its dependence on the relational reciprocity of these earlier cultural traditions.

139 In her Doctor of Philosophy (Anthropology) dissertation, Josephine Baddeley discusses the importance of feasts to conclude important community events. Her exploration of the indigenisation of foreign food as part of tradition construction has parallels with this study (Baddeley, 1978, pp. 419 - 445).
Figure 81: Community gathering for the John Williams memorial unveiling, July 25, 2014 (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 82: Girls and Boys brigades on the Matavera churchyard lawn (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 83: Singing in the Avarua church hall during the 17th CICC Women’s Conference, April 2010 (Source: Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016b).

Figure 84: Feasting at the same event (Source: Cook Islands Christian Church, 2016b).
Conclusion

This chapter has focused on temporal and intangible heritage aspects of CICC places. It first analysed field research findings suggesting that Church members may perceive churchscapes as essentially unchanged regardless of significant modifications to building fabric. While an emphasis on people and place over physical objects is common internationally, deeper Polynesian concepts of time as a dynamic enfolding rather than a staged chronology may be at play in the Rarotongan context. Ancestors and contemporary realities are not separate and their relationships with land remain as living continuums.

Place attachment theory is then used to explore interview responses regarding memories, place change and identity formation. Analysis indicates that members are generally confident in the sustainability of church places and practices through strong cultural associations of tribal hierarchy, mana and land. Non-members appear more aware of the contestability of such traditions in ever-evolving contemporary society.

The chapter then examined temporal coverings and floral decorations as indigenised forms of Christian expression, along with intangible heritage values of collective identity. Findings suggest that it is these aspects that hold the most enduring heritage meanings and significance to people groups variously associated with CICC places. However, it is also suggested that these ephemeral aspects are intimately linked with physical form and place, with each essential to, and reliant on, the other. The inseparability of tangible and intangible heritage significance has implications for possible approaches to heritage conservation as examined in the next chapter.
Introduction

How may conservation be approached with regard to historic CICC churchscapes, in response to their cultural heritage significance? This chapter first examines the condition of church places as observed in field research, again analysing the Matavera church in more detail. The translation of contemporary conservation theory into practice is then discussed, first in general terms and then regarding its applicability in Rarotonga’s particular cultural and socio-political context.

The chapter then turns to what international and national conventions and legislation exist in the Cook Islands for protection of cultural heritage. It finds that these frameworks are considered irrelevant and unworkable in a context where land owners remain sole decision-makers through local resource management systems. Some resulting place modifications have been contentious, raising questions regarding who has a right to be heard on these issues. This is discussed through interview responses. The chapter concludes by examining the applicability of a cultural landscapes approach to the management and conservation of historic CICC church places.

Current condition of CICC churchscapes

Physical investigation of Rarotonga’s churchscapes indicated that their most significant issue in built heritage terms is “unsympathetic” modifications rather than poor upkeep, since all are in generally good condition. The massive coral walls of the church buildings themselves remain the most consistently extant original fabric.\textsuperscript{140} Responses to hurricane damage, environmental decay or maintenance difficulties have generally been to replace rather than repair, and this

\textsuperscript{140} Although there are numerous examples of other original or early elements remaining in the church buildings, sometimes in a repurposed state, most have been variously modified over time. The Matavera church appears to be the most altered of the group on Rarotonga, with all elements, excluding the walls (which have themselves been lowered) and some remnant timberwork, being fully replaced at various stages in the last fifty years.
has applied to roofs and internal supports, floor linings and structures, window and door joinery, gallery and pulpit structures, and fixtures and fittings. While this means that architectural fabric is in good condition, the extensive nature of change, as argued by Budgett (2006), “challenge[s] conventional Western conservation tenets, such as the strict preservation of original building fabric and the reversibility of, preferably minimal, interventions” (p. 47).

The condition of the Matavera church is generally consistent with that of the four other historic CICC churches on Rarotonga. The site is regularly maintained with boundary walls and graves painted, vegetation pruned and lawns mowed. The modern ‘orometua’s residence appears sound, and the church hall is newly rebuilt as discussed in Chapter Five.

The historical coral lime masonry walls of the church building, and to a lesser extent the boundary walls and graves, are affected by the application of incompatible modern materials. An obvious example is the application of non-breathable acrylic paint over permeable lime surfaces, which can lead to moisture entrapment and the build-up of salts at their interface, eventuating in surface exfoliation and deterioration. This issue is minimised on exteriors, as the coastal conditions cause paint to be quickly worn, compromising its impermeability. However, the church’s interior has localised areas of surface exfoliation (Figures 85 and 86), which have generally been patched and repainted.

Another material incompatibility is the use of Portland cement products in lieu of traditional lime. Cement mortar has been applied in various areas to smooth surfaces and fill cracks; the relative hardness and impermeability of this introduced material can lead to efflorescence and deterioration in the surrounding lime. A reinforced concrete ring beam has also been installed at the head of the walls (Figure 88), as noted in Chapter Five. Along with the same issue of cement/lime incompatibility, galvanised steel reinforcing embedded retrospectively into lime-based masonry will be prone to corrosion, especially in this coastal environment, causing expansion of the metal and probable damage to surrounding material.

The massive wall depth means that adverse effects of incompatible materials are currently minimal. However, it is notable that while the walls are thick, their composition is predominantly loose rubble with a comparatively thin depth of lime mortar-bounded rock on each face (Figure 89). Should the solid outer layer be significantly compromised, deterioration of the wall as a whole would then occur rapidly.
Figure 85: Deterioration of lime wash layers and lime mortar behind acrylic paint coating (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 86: Surface exfoliation, east wall, mezzanine level (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Figure 87: Efflorescence caused by incompatible coatings. This is in the Takamo Theological College (Source: author’s collection, 2014).

Figure 88: Reinforced concrete ring beam (Source: author’s collection, 2014).
Complications of theory to practice

At an international level, responses from architectural heritage professionals to issues of historical place maintenance and modification have variegated as disjoints between theory and practice have become more pronounced. Having discussed various conservation approaches ranging from treating conservation as a hard science to devolving decisions entirely to stakeholders, Viñas (2005) calls for “negotiatory conservation” (p. 209, original emphasis). This involves skilful negotiation to balance the will of empowered decision-makers with that of wider user groups, thereby minimising detrimental effects on heritage values, both tangible and intangible, and achieving good outcomes for the majority (Viñas, 2005, p. 209).

141 Three approaches are described by Viñas:

**Evidential conservation** emphasises “scientific” evidence and the preservation of all material as possible future information sources. This approach prioritises the interests of specialist experts over the general public, who may not be able to interpret or value the knowledge preserved.

**Genial conservation** emphasises the conservator’s visionary role in preservation, for the sake of the current generation but also future generations. This can be problematic as it is not possible to predict the perspectives of future users.

**Demagogic conservation** involves the conservator handing all responsibility to stakeholders, with decisions based on the preferences of users without regard for wider considerations. This can lead to ‘theme park’-style approaches to built heritage (Viñas, 2005, pp. 206 - 208).
Viñas’ contrast of a “scientific” approach with contemporary conservation ethics emphasises the need for adaptability. The multiple and sometimes contradictory place-values held by different affected people means that a single standard for the implementation of “truth” is rendered useless; rather, each conservation project should respond to its own set of expectations, needs and circumstances in light of historical information and contemporary realities (González-Longo, 2012, p. 76; Orbaşlı, 2008, p. 64; Viñas, 2005, p. 203). This echoes Sully’s (2007a) call for a flexible approach that illuminates “previously submerged views of care and value” (p. 41).

One issue with such flexibility is that it can lead to heritage practitioners attempting to incorporate all approaches while trying not to admit that anything is defensible (De la Torre, 2013, p. 159). More fundamentally, these discussions are still framed by a Western model of conservation that takes for granted the involvement of heritage practitioners, who play a key role in directing, facilitating and negotiating good heritage outcomes. This can overlook the reality that in the overwhelming majority of projects involving historic places in the Cook Islands, this role does not exist. Questions of whether locals are being genuinely engaged in conservation works142 are beside the point in this context, as locals are the instigators, decision-makers, undertakers and recipients of all processes of change.

This is obviously not unique to the Cook Islands. It is in fact a continuation of ways in which humanity has addressed its cultural fabric for millennia, contrasting markedly with the professionalisation of conservation emerging from Renaissance Europe as discussed in Chapter Two. Historic places throughout the Pacific continue to be managed solely or predominantly by local people with little or no formally recognised conservation expertise. Projects are shaped by consensus-based conservation approaches and performance-based knowledge transmission, as opposed to being specialist-led and documented (A. Smith & Turk, 2013, p. 26, confirmed by RI.10; RI.16, 2014). Similar practices are common in parts of Africa and Asia, where works are undertaken by trade guilds whose members take pride in being custodians of heritage (Aygen, 2013, pp. 21, 153). These norms of historic place management prioritise process over product ('Ilaiu, 2007, p. 20), an approach that is reflected in actions of repair and modification to CICC churches that have occurred in Rarotonga over time.

However, as noted by Aygen (2013), “modernist influences [have] had a major impact on the loss of traditional skills and decline of craft guilds in a number of non-European countries” (p. 104). This is paralleled in the Cook Islands, where loss of material culture caused by Christian conversion and colonialism through the 19th and 20th centuries has become entangled with local contemporary agendas of pragmatism, beautification and modernisation as discussed in Chapter Five. The result is a cumulative decline in traditional, highly-skilled building techniques and local material craftsmanship, and a rift in knowledge transfer to subsequent generations. As described by a younger interviewee:

I don’t know of anyone who knows, who has the skill to build something like that, with the same methods like we did back in the day, so [the CICC church] has historical, it has strong historical significance, I believe. Even the wall, the wall is falling apart, and nobody knows how to repair it properly the way it should be. They’re going, “Oh, yeah, Uncle so-and-so can do it,” but he’s so old, when you think about what are the skills that have been passed along to, like, my generation; I know for a fact that nobody in my generation knows how to restore some of these old, umm, old buildings (RI.13, 2014).

In the case of CICC buildings, material loss is concentrated in those elements most rich in pre-European traditions of architectural form, particularly roof spaces and their timber support structures (Budgett, 2006, p. 48). The white walls remain, but open volumes with intricately carved, patterned, coloured and weathered wood, fibres and thatching have been lost to flat ceilings, white tiles and prefabricated metal. This raises several important issues: Do the modifications threaten to deconstruct the bicultural origin of these spaces, reshaping them into a form of acculturation? Is there a need to reclaim indigenous histories through architectural form? Is place significance adversely impacted by change?

Questions of significance underscore the reality of CICC churches as living places of practical utilisation; they are centres for worship and fellowship for their members, and part of life’s backdrop for non-members. On a day-to-day basis, their architecture is generally uncontemplated, or can be denigrated as being far from artistic masterpieces.143 As has been

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143 Wragge’s disparaging opinion of the Matavera church (as recorded in Chapter Four) was occasionally mirrored in casual conversations during field research, with individuals suggesting that CICC churches were hardly architectural marvels and were therefore unworthy of study.
recorded in similar circumstances elsewhere internationally, aspirations to modify and modernise are not only inevitable in this context, but emanate from locals themselves. This has potential to cause preservation through legislation to come into conflict with users, who see it as their prerogative to direct change (Dalvi & Dalvi, 2010, p. 117).

**International mandates to regional realities**

What forms of legislative identification and protection exist internationally and nationally for historic places in the Cook Islands, and how are they applied?

The Cook Islands ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 2009 (UNESCO, 2009). The convention aims to “promote cooperation among nations to protect heritage around the world that is of such outstanding universal value that its conservation is important for current and future generations” (Australian Government, Department of the Environment, n.d.). Participating nation states are tasked with “ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage ... situated on its territory” through development of statutory policy frameworks and measures, and state-sponsored studies, services and training (UNESCO, 1972, Articles 4 and 5). States are supported by an intergovernmental committee that provides international assistance in the form of experts, training, equipment and loans (UNESCO, 1972, Articles 8, 13, 22).

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144 See Dalvi & Dalvi (2010, pp. 116 – 117) for a similar situation in the historic Konkan division of the state of Maharashtra, India, where locally-driven processes of destruction and modernisation have been contentious. ‘Ilaiu’s analysis of ‘inasi, discussed in Chapter Five, is also relevant (‘Ilaiu, 2009).

145 Article 5 reads: “To ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, each State Party to this Convention shall endeavour, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country:

(a) to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes;

(b) to set up within its territories, where such services do not exist, one or more services for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage with an appropriate staff and possessing the means to discharge their functions;

(c) to develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural or natural heritage;

(d) to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage; and

(e) to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field.
However, there is widespread acknowledgment of the powerlessness of such international conventions without national enforcement mechanisms, and of the need to domesticate international principles to recognise the stewardship of local people and their traditional protection systems. UNESCO has therefore sought in recent years to engage indigenous communities in heritage identification and management (Logan, 2012, p. 238). In the Pacific region the objective of the UNESCO World Heritage Programme has been to address perceived inadequacies in legislation, institutional capacity, resources, and training for local people, identified by Pacific state representatives as being critical to sustainable conservation (A. Smith, 2011, pp. 228 - 229).

In the case of the Cook Islands this included a World Heritage National Capacity Building Workshop, held in Rarotonga in March 2013. The workshop’s objectives included building governmental and other stakeholders’ capacity for conservation and management of heritage sites, and finalising the Cook Islands’ tentative list of heritage sites for possible inscription on the World Heritage List (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013, p. 3).

A former Ministry of Cultural Development (MCD) staff member weighed up the benefits of the workshop in an interview:

The workshop itself, one of the outcomes of that workshop was that we have a list; sort of a national list or, I think there’s about twelve properties … which were supposed to be representative of the wider community – so they’ve identified twelve sites - but somehow I think those sites were a bit more dominated by the government workers [laughter], like the Ministry of Culture workers, the Environment [staff], and the more vocal traditional leaders.

But anyway there’s a list of twelve, and of course that can, in terms of UNESCO, that will form the tentative list for the Cook Islands. These

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148 For more information regarding the process of forming tentative lists, refer to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2015).
twelve properties. So I guess in that sense it was quite beneficial, especially with regards to all the UNESCO work. But in reality its nothing new [laughter] – we’ve had these kind of workshops before – I’ve organised a few, I went to the outer islands and the same messages keep coming across; these sites are important, our kids need to know about it, we need to protect it, but after the workshop that’s it, nothing (RI.08, 2014).

A statutory framework for protection of heritage places does exist in the Cook Islands in the form of the Cultural and Historic Places Act 1994-95 (1995). However, no site has yet been formally classified and protected as enabled by the Act in clauses 25 – 41. The Cultural and Historic Places Trust, legally created by the Act and empowered through clauses 4 – 24 to “identity, investigate, classify, protect, and preserve” historic places (clause 5), has petered out and been re-established several times since 1995, with a 2014 call for trustee nominations again failing to establish a group (Henry, 2014; J. Nicholas [Museum Manager], personal communication, February 27, 2016). An interview with MCD staff suggested that there are issues with the language of the Act in terms of protection mechanisms and the role of the Trust:

[There are] different definitions of protection, and the thinking with[in] the Historic Places Trust is that the protection [defined in the Act] is New Zealand-style protection, where you go in, and you basically take over the place. That doesn’t work here. And so the concept here is that the protection is vested … the Trust is not there to protect, the Trust is there to recognise the protection of those that are protecting it.

Say for example the Matavera church – the last thing that they would want is for someone from the Trust to come along and tell them what to do with the church – they don’t like it. That’s not going to happen. Because in their view, and I think they’re right, they’re already protecting it, they are looking after it, it’s in good order. But where the Trust will be coming in is acknowledging [the Church’s] protection of that historical site.

And so it’s like a completely different approach … if we try and follow what say is the traditional New Zealand/Australian type of historical protection, we aren’t going to get anywhere. But if we work with the
people and with the community and with the owners that are protecting those sites, we’re going to get somewhere (RG.01, 2014).

This position reflects methods of protection of cultural heritage places across the Pacific region which take place:

... primarily at the local level through traditional resource management practices within the framework of traditional systems of land tenure systems and decision making. In many cases — and especially in relation to traditional and archaeological sites — this provides very effective and sustainable management of heritage values (A. Smith, 2011, p. 230).

In the Cook Islands, full reliance on congregational stewardship of church places is not always uncontroversial. In discussing the demolition of the original sennit-lashed timber roof framing in the Oneroa Sunday school building in 2003, Budgett (2006) notes that a “Mangaia Historical & Cultural Society” was formed at the time (p. 51). This suggests that others may have shared Nia’s concern for material loss of historical fabric as had already occurred in the Oneroa church itself in the mid-1980s.

Another example of a contentious churchscape modification cited by many interviewees was the demolition of graves in the Avarua churchyard as part of a “beautification programme” by the Avarua ekalesia in 2003. Bulldozing the designated area commenced but was halted by a member of Ngāti Makea; protests and court action ensued, with the court eventually upholding the Church’s position as legal owners of the land (Kecskemeti, 2012, pp. 32 - 36). This dispute echoes that which occurred in Matavera in c.1944, where aronga mana objected to the truncation of the church’s walls. As at that time, Church leaders rejected the tama ‘ū’a relationship between traditional leaders and the Church by denying the authority of ariki to intervene in ekalesia decision-making. According to Kecskemeti, while opponents considered that ariki should be consulted as the site’s traditional owners, the Church argued that respect was garnered through lifestyle and active participation, not by title alone; the utilisers of sacred space claimed the right to alter it (Kecskemeti, 2012, pp. 40 – 45).

149 Discussed in Chapter Five.
150 Discussed in Chapter Two.
151 Which nonetheless went ahead, as discussed in Chapter Five.
Perceptions of the Act’s current wording as unworkable on one hand, and the frustrations of local people in the face of unsupported change on the other, bring into sharp relief fundamental questions of ownership: to whom are historic churchscapes significant, and who should have a say in their management?

Who should have a say?

A reluctance to engage with what is considered “New Zealand-style” heritage legislation may relate in part to the Cook Islands’ experience of colonialism, reaction to which has led to strong prioritisation of self-determination and land rights. Land ownership and decision-making authority is a strongly contested field in the Cook Islands and in Rarotonga especially, with complex systems of land tenure leading to a burgeoning number of stakeholders in increasingly fragmented land parcels.¹⁵² This has been additionally complicated in recent decades by large numbers of expatriate Cook Islanders, many of whom wish to retain potential ownership rights “back home” (R. G. Crocombe, Tongia & Araitia, 2008; Pascht, 2011). These factors in turn have led to a growing number of land disputes being taken to court for resolution.

The sites of the CICC are somewhat different. Here the land, originally gifted by each district’s aronga mana, has been legally vested in the CICC, with each site under the custodianship of its ekalesia. While their legal ownership is therefore clear, CICC churchscapes’ historical and contemporary role in society potentially raises issues regarding their management. Various potential stakeholders are discussed below.

Land owners – CICC ekalesia

The importance to CICC ekalesia of being able to autonomously determine what happens on their land was described by a former MCD staff member:

[The churches] belong to each congregation. So you had to approach each individual one [to discuss the possibilities of registration under the Act] and make your presentation and do all that work.

¹⁵² It is important to highlight that the Cook Islands’ existing land tenure system is not “customary” or “traditional.” See R. G. Crocombe (1961/2004, pp. 190 - 271) and M. James (1986) for a description of the establishment of the “Cook and Other Islands Land Titles Court” (the Land Court) in 1902 under the New Zealand administration and its effects on both traditional and then-contemporary practices of land tenure.
Interviewer: “So you did try to do that?”

Yeah, well we tried with Matavera first; I started talking to the elders first, but they were not interested. Because, well, one of their main problems is mainly the issue with renovations, because I did say you know we should try and keep the authenticity, you know, of the building, but they had other ideas, like you know, there’s an upstairs [the modern mezzanine] … they didn’t want to be restricted from making those kind of modifications. So that was their main issue, and also, “why do we have to ask you people for permission for anything? This is our building!” (RI.08, 2014).

Several interviewees discussed the processes of communal decision-making in the context of ekalesia, clarifying that most works are proposed and agreed upon at a congregational level, with only “major” projects being taken to the CICC Executive Council (RI.03, 2014; RI.04, 2014; RI.06, 2014). Projects are funded by the ekalesia itself, often with significant contributions from expatriates (RI.04, 2014; RI.06, 2014). As discussed in Chapter Six, member interviewees commonly expressed little, or generally positive, recollection of resultant modifications. However, a few voiced reservations regarding the democracy and outcomes of the process, one stating that:

I think there’s no one setting out and planning these things. The Church is sort of, continuing to roll along. Then, you normally get two or three things happen. One, you get a strong pastor. Or two, you get one or two really strong deacons. Then they say, “We’re going to do this,” and then they … hustle and bustle and away they go. The planning of it, the architectural design of it and all of that, is the last thing. They go in there, they all turn up, “What do we do? – OK, you guys do that, you guys do that, we do this,” no planning. And it’s sad because in comparison to the beautiful work of our forefathers we have junky and rubbish alterations and amendments.

Democracy has never worked in the Church. … It is the deacons who decide … they’re the drivers. And people kind of leave them alone. Because we don’t have the expertise of accountants and architects and qualified builders who’ll put a team together … it’s a luxury we don’t have (RI.10, 2014).
Decision-making and action being left to a few leaders led several member interviewees to suggest that CICC executive-level guidelines for preservation and restoration could assist in minimising haphazard and expedient alterations, by providing standards of repair and techniques of construction that could be adapted for local situations by congregation groups. Better Church facilitation of processes to consider a range of people’s views, potentially including non-members, was also suggested (RI.12; RI.14; RI.18, 2014). However, the importance of individual ekalesia, as the fund-providers and land owners, retaining fundamental decision-making authority was emphasised by most interviewees regardless of membership (RG.01; RI.01; RI.02; RI.04; RI.06; RI.07; RI.11; RI.12; RI.13; RI.14, 2014).

*Traditional leaders – ariki and mataʻiapo*

A variety of member and non-member interviewees emphasised the importance of the original gifting of land to the Church by ariki and mataʻiapo (RI.03; RI.09; RI.11; RI.12, 2014). Alluding to the inseparability of present and past as discussed in Chapter Six, interviewees suggested that the legal annulment of traditional leaders’ rights over gifted land did not deprive them of a voice. Rather, the tama ʻūʻā relationship meant that traditional leaders had responsibility to speak out against place modifications that could weaken cultural links back to the ancestors of the land (RI.09, 2014). This implies a distinction between the Church’s internal decision-makers and traditional title-holders. In reality, the reciprocal responsibilities between traditional leaders and the Church is complicated by their historical and contemporary entanglement. As discussed in Chapter Five, Rarotonga’s title holders are commonly CICC members and deacons. In these circumstances, traditional leaders may variously be directors of ekalesia-driven change, or have their tama ʻūʻā role rejected by `orometua as in the Matavera and Avarua cases.

As land tenure has become more multiplex, ariki and mataʻiapo titles have also been increasingly disputed (R. G. Crocombe et al., 2008, p. 163). This can lead to a weakening of their voice in wider community matters, as the right to speak for a particular tapere or vaka is questioned. However, whether internal or external to the Church, under investitures contested or widely accepted, their role as traditional land owners means that these individuals often continue to be strong shapers of opinion and galvanisers of action in relation to places of cultural significance, including those of the Church.

153 This interviewee’s explanation is quoted in full in Chapter Six.
The government

Aygen argues that there is a strong link between heritage preservation and politics, where decisions regarding what to preserve or demolish, what to privilege or neglect are shaped by the conscious construction of tradition as part of national identity creation (Aygen, 2013, p. 38). In some post-colonial states this has involved the rejection of colonial heritage as mentioned in Chapter Two. The Cook Islands government has generally taken a more inclusive, “fusion” approach by promoting the dual importance of its Christian and pre-Christian heritages. However, it has also strongly prioritised performing arts over tangible heritage resources (RI.07; RI.08, 2014). This suggests that it is the intangible heritage of pre-Christian culture that is seen as most beneficial to the shaping of national pride and identity (A. Smith, 2006, pp. 348 - 350). It is not unrelated that music and dance are also easily commodified for the Cook Islands’ tourist market, marrying well with the nation’s marketing as a destination for sun and sand, the Pacific paradise myth. While forays have been made into establishing a tourism-focused framework for the promotion of tangible cultural heritage such as marae, churches etc., these have generally founndered in the face of land owners’ ambivalence. An interviewee working in this area suggested that:

The Cook Islands Christian Church should have a responsibility to the nation to preserve these places, for, you know, for future generations, for education, you know, for, heritage, so that we all know, you know, and the fact that these are historical sites. So they should have a responsibility to preserve it not just for themselves and their members but for everyone.

... The other issue is that somebody needs to take on more responsibility. So Government needs to take on the fact that, you know, in the interests of the public, you know, so that government is guiding in the particular area where the organisation or the, you know, is not doing it properly. And so there’s a responsibility for government to be educated for – I mean

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154 As in much of Asia (Aygen, 2013, p. 48).
155 It is important to note that throughout Polynesia, the colonial experience of the various states and their consequent approach to nation-building has been different. See A. Smith (2006, pp. 346 – 356) for an analysis of the situation in Levuka Fiji, a former colonial capital, where there is tension between upholding pre-colonial and colonial values, and whether it is possible for these strands to be seen as a holistic cultural landscape.
156 For example, a signage project has been in progress since 2014, which aims to signpost heritage places with historical information. By February 2016, four places had been signposted (N. Maui, personal communication, February 23, 2016).
we’re terrible at preserving history. [This] is not an issue specific to the CICC; it is something within the Cook Islands. … We’re very good at adopting the new; get rid of the old stuff if it’s holding you back, and adopt the new concepts, new ways of doing things (RI.17, 2014).

However, most interviewees considered that the government should have no statutory role in the cultural heritage management of church places, with some actively opposing such a prospect (RI.01; RI.04; RI.06; RI.11; RI.12; RI.18, 2014). Nonetheless, some pondered what shape outsiders’ input could take, as discussed below.

Non-member locals and “connected communities”

Most non-member interviewees were hesitant to claim a right to speak on matters of conservation of historic CICC places. Several seemed somewhat conflicted, as this response to questions on how changes should be enabled indicates:

I guess in terms of how the church works, it’s sort of internal operations and how it provides for the people, the community, you know, because I can’t answer that question because I’m not involved; so it’s not unless you are, I think, you’re involved with the churches that you could make a comment on that. I mean … the conversation that we were having about the destruction of those graves [Avarua, 2003] and how it was part of their beautification program, it’s like how can this possibly happen, you know, and so I think with any sort of changes that are made within the church, they also need to be – umm, I would say that they do need to be monitored?157 in some way, maybe in consultation with other organisations, or maybe with the Cultural Historic Places Trust, you know, this is the role that they can have – that you would consult with them, on changes that’ll be made to the physical aspects of the site (RI.07, 2014).

A few voiced that churchscapes were also their heritage (RI.02; RI.05, 2014) and that therefore custodianship should perhaps extend beyond ekalesia members. Another suggested that church places should be conserved, but was less clear about who should be involved in stewardship processes (RI.13, 2014).

157 A question mark is added to represent the interviewee’s rising intonation here, which indicated that this was almost a self-question denoting the “thinking aloud” nature of this response.
A New Zealand-based member of the CICC shared a striking view as one of the Cook Islands diaspora:

I do have a say, if I go back, I do have a say, I can voice myself ... but from here I can’t. They will say, uh, who the hell are you? You don’t stay here! You stay over there – why you come? Then I will tell them, I am one of the members of that [the Church], I have worked for that, I have been giving funds to do that, why you push me out? I have got the right – who are you? ... I would be able to voice that ... but you know, the older ones, they will agree to that [my right to speak]. But the new generation, they won’t, you know – they don’t look at the past, what’s been happening before (NI.02, 2014).

This view raises two important points. First, a significant proportion of financial provision for the Church is coming from Cook Islanders overseas. CICC churches were built on pre-contact understandings of reciprocity, and ongoing processes of maintenance and change are enabled by remittances from expatriate populations, artificially bolstering contributions made by diminishing local congregations (R. G. Crocombe, 1990, p. 56). Second, there is a perceived generational divergence of views on the prerogative of expatriate Cook Islanders to have a say on local matters. Closer ties of blood and birth mean that older people living abroad and in the Cook Islands generally claim and affirm these rights and responsibilities through a shared sense of belonging. New generations, largely born and raised in another culture, tend to question these relationships as the individualism-collectivism paradigm is reweighed (Altrocchi & Altrocchi, 1995, pp. 237 - 238; Fitzgerald & Underhill-Sem, 1996, pp 1 - 11; Macpherson & Macpherson, 2013, p. 190; NI.01; NI.03, 2014; Triandis, 2001, pp. 908 - 912). This is reflected in the following perspectives from New Zealand-based Cook Islanders regarding remittances for church projects, the first not associated with the CICC, the second a member:

[There is] a small amount of people influencing a lot of people for something which isn’t going to benefit very many people ... because of the status of those institutions, even though they don’t represent as many of the people as they did used to, they still have that influence. And I don’t think it’s just, I don’t think it’s a sensible or most effective use of people’s limited resources (NI.03, 2014).
My kids don’t go to church ... but they do things for the Church. ... They always give their donations on Sundays for the Church. And if we have things for the Church, running fund-raising and all that ... they do them. ... They remember their grandma. That’s why they do this (NI.02, 2014).

Some 85% of Cook Islanders now live permanently overseas (R. G. Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003, p. 334). The ways in which they variously choose to interact with their ancestral Cook Islands communities in terms of ongoing remittances and participation in tribal, Church and other community decision-making may potentially be a significant determining factor in the conservation and sustainment of CICC churchscapes.

**Summary**

The work of Anita Smith is directly relevant to this discussion. Smith describes a University of the South Pacific pilot unit where students developed a skeleton management plan for a heritage site case study. It was notable, but Smith suggests not unusual, that most students selected a post-contact heritage place rather than a pre-Christian site. This indicated a bias towards identifying heritage places as those with important community functions and/or associated with nation-building histories; the social significance of a place was paramount, a value type that is least recognised in New Zealand/Australian forms of heritage legislation (A. Smith, 2011, pp. 231 - 233).

The precedence of social values had clear implications for students’ prioritisation of stakeholders in historic place management. While assessments of heritage values acknowledged the national, as well as local, heritage significance of places, decision-making was seen to be fully or primarily the domain of local communities, with government or other authorities having an incidental role (A. Smith, 2011, pp. 232, 233).

Smith’s findings directly align with interview responses described above. While people often identify CICC churchscapes as having national as well as local significance, a strong emphasis on social values – how places are used by their contemporary communities – means that responsibility of care is seen to rest appropriately with ekalesia. This supports Smith’s suggestion that managing heritage places in the Pacific is likely to be only effective when local

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158 The unit, entitled *Introduction to Cultural Heritage Management*, was part of the undergraduate history programme (A. Smith, 2011, p. 228).
communities’ place custodianship is supported, particularly when existing land tenure systems are strong and frameworks for heritage protection deficient (A. Smith, 2011, p. 230).

Ways in which local responsibilities to church places may be contested, recontextualised and renewed by societal shifts in membership and migration is likely to be a question in coming years. How might heritage place management and conservation be shaped in a context of deterritorialisation of tradition and reinterpretation of cultural practice and identity? The following section raises some areas for consideration.

**Turning to the past for the future: a cultural landscapes approach**

As discussed in Chapter Two, while international conservation theory has sought to prioritise local communities in heritage identification and management, it remains easy in practice to revert to a built heritage focus, and to limit that focus to issues of historic significance and authenticity to the detriment of living social values. A fundamental assumption is that preservation of the material past is worthwhile (A. Smith, 2006, p. 358; Sully, 2007b, pp. 34 - 36).

This premise may be questionable in a Cook Islands context. It should be remembered that historic CICC churches inhabit a worldview that sees deterioration and demise as part of new creation (Flexner et al., 2015b, n.p.; Forman, 1982, p. 93; McKay & Walmsley, 2003, pp. 86, 87), and there are many examples of disused buildings on Rarotonga that are left to slowly crumble while a new generation constructs another alongside. In this context, it is entirely possible that a church building, dislocated from living heritage practices but still enwoven in a “present” ancestral past, could be allowed to ruinate. This could conceptually reinforce churches’ entanglement with the marae they supplanted, no longer reliant on weather tight roof and enclosing walls to contain the life forces embedded therein. It is interesting that New Zealand-based interviewees alluded to this from a variety of perspectives in discussions on conservation:

I would be quite happy for a building to go into disrepair if the [CICC] Council had decided that they would instead put it into a scholarship programme for the children. ... All you’ve got to do is have a really bad hurricane that goes through there and that’s what’s happened anyway in the past, you know, things have just gone, so we can’t be – we can’t hold too closely to these things (NI.01, 2014).
Yeah, looking forward … because people are leaving, there wouldn’t be any more people going to church, what’s the use of the building, you know? And who’s … going to look after it? And who’s going to run it later on? Maybe it’s not someone from the Church, the CIC Christian Church, maybe it’s someone else from here! Or from another [denomination] … that’s what I’m just thinking. What will happen. Because our kids they don’t know! Well maybe one will change their mind, you never know! … If there’s no people, if there’s no one going to church, why should we demolish it? Just leave it as it is, just leave it – as a historical place, to see that this is the Cook Islands Christian Church, this is the LMS church, these are where our forefathers have been. They built it, and our parents and us have been there – why demolish it? Just leave it as it is. If it’s a ruin, just leave it like that (NI.02, 2014).

People still know whose house it is and what the story is, even though it’s just blocks of concrete and bush now, it’s still a thing. That could happen to them [the historic CICC churches], and they would still be able to have their special “building-ness” even though they’d have no roof (NI.03, 2014).\textsuperscript{159}

Rarotongan interviewees did not raise the possibility of ruination, suggesting that church places still inhabit a very much living space in locals’ lifescapes. Interview discussions and the well-maintained state of Rarotonga’s CICC churches suggest that responses to changing ekalesia needs and environmental issues will continue to be pragmatic, beautifying and modernising modifications. However, Cook Islands culture remains reinventive in response to dynamic settings. A changing climate, where sea level rise may affect foundational stability and extreme weather events could be more frequent and severe, and changing remittance patterns, where fund-providers have new priorities, may mean new thinking for old places.

\textsuperscript{159}See Flexner et al. (2015b) for a comparable discussion in Tanna, Vanuatu.
A cultural landscapes approach

The Cook Islands strongly celebrates its culture in continued practices of intangible heritage, including singing, dance, performance, costumery, vaka (canoe) racing and sport. As has been the case throughout human history, it is these identity markers that have been carried, reshaped and strengthened by those who migrate. They are now used in reciprocal cross-nation gatherings to bring spatially separated Cook Islanders together.\(^{160}\)

However, as discussed in Chapter Six, this does not negate the significance of tangible heritage. Historic places remain an important repository of intangible practice, facilitating actions that foster memory and identity. Place attachment formed through these processes can go unrecognised until such a place is threatened in some way (A. Smith, 2011, p. 229; J. Treadwell, 2006, p. 561). Moreover, there is evidence internationally that people who are long separated, even by generations, from a cultural homeland can feel a strong need to reconnect

\(^{160}\) At the Te Maeva Nui celebrations in August 2015 a reporter noted the Prime minister’s pleasure in seeing dance performances by “Cook Islanders from New Zealand and Australia who had not been born here, yet they were clearly proud of their heritage and their culture” (Wilson, 2015).
with ancestors through physical place (Basu, 2006; Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 8),\textsuperscript{161} which in the case of the Cook Islands may include churchscapes.

But the “place” is not just the building. As shown in the Matavera case study in Chapter Four, churches were deliberately sited and structured to reference sacred routes, ancestral boundaries of mountains and sea, transferring material and meaning from the marae that had gone before. They were bounded by walls, surrounded by graveyards and connected to other community buildings that together told and continue to tell stories of each generation and their forebears. Ancestors were identified in place-making such that history and mythology became embedded in the landscape, infusing a transformed world with cosmological and socio-political meaning (Reilly, 2009, pp. 15, 67, 283).

Recognising CICC churches as cultural landscapes may therefore be a useful framework for considerations of conservation. This recognition comes at three levels: first, as individual places; second, as part of wider indigenous and natural landscapes; and third, as part of a group of mission landscapes in the Cook Islands and potentially beyond.

- \textit{Discrete churchscapes}

Conservation of church places as individual cultural landscapes recognises the significance of their living heritage as synergies of tangible form, customs, collective memory and relationships. Priority is given to the values that connected communities attach to their church (A. Smith & Jones, 2007, p. 119; Sully, 2007b, p. 22, 39). This highlights patterns of spatial use which underpin aural traditions of imene tuki and Māori oratory, and uphold cyclical processes of renewal that are embedded in temporality rather than permanence (Kecskemeti, 2012, pp. 10, 11, 69, 95; R. Walter, 1998, p. 95). Acknowledging that church “communities” are not homogenous but a bricolage of individuals with different perspectives and priorities will be increasingly important as connected communities continue to diversify (Biehl & Prescott, 2013, p. 5).

\textsuperscript{161} The importance of genealogy to Pacific peoples is relevant here. Martin Jones, an archaeologist with Heritage New Zealand, suggests that Pakeha New Zealanders can be very attached to physical fabric when considering heritage because of a profound disconnection from our whakapapa (M. Jones, personal communication, December 8, 2015; see also Milbank, 2011, p. 10). It is possible that this tendency may develop in future generations of New Zealand-born Cook Islanders if their threads to ancestral knowledge become dissipated (M. Martin & Su’a, 2011, p. 1).
• **Broader storied landscapes**

Conservation of historic churchscapes as a form of indigenous heritage considers churches as one aspect of broader “storied” landscapes, composed together with marae, burial grounds, natural landscapes and geographical features (Budgett, 2006, p. 51; Campbell, 2002b, p. 164; A. Smith, 2006, p. 357). As the new marae, churchscapes symbolically sanctify each tapere’s claim to its land under their ariki and mata’iapo (Dixon, 2016, p. 401, 413; R. Walter, 1998, p. 25). Church land as moenga, an underlay of culture and intimately connected with those who gifted it, becomes important here, and supports the responsibility and right of traditional leaders to speak into church conservation.

Recognising church places as part of broader cultural landscapes also suggests possibilities of increasing crossover between the duality of “tradition” and “Christian beliefs” that according to Prime Minister Puna form the Cook Islands’ identity as a nation.162 An example may be inclusion of church sites in cultural education programmes being undertaken by the Kōutu Nui,163 adding another strand to the current focus on oratory and marae practices. This will acknowledge their interwoven nature, potentially engendering holistic respect for cultural identities and enabling people to contribute to informed decisions regarding their heritage (A. Smith, 2011, p. 229). It may also be timely to recraft the Cultural and Historic Places Act to remove the distinction between archaeology and “built” heritage (A. Smith, 2006, p. 360), using a cultural landscapes approach to draw together natural and cultural features of place value and recognition.

• **Wider mission landscapes**

A cultural landscapes approach also opens greater opportunities to reflect on the significance of historic CICC churches as an entire group across the Cook Islands and even further as a subset of LMS structures across the Pacific. This aspect is not discussed in detail in this thesis, which focuses on local patterns of continued use and meaning. However, shifting patterns of Cook Islanders’ church attendance and place of residence may mean that a greater sense of collective heritage, over their specific congregational heritage, develops over time. This would potentially support the view expressed by some interviewees (as discussed above) that the

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162 Puna is quoted in Chapter Five (footnote 110).

163 The Kōutu Nui is working in schools to improve pupils’ knowledge of their culture and heritage, “through pe’e, tuoro, turou (plays, chants and oratory) knowledge of marae, tribal roots and connection to aronga mana” (Syme-Buchanan, 2016).
CICC’s central Executive Council could take more strategic leadership in terms of education regarding place significance and methods of conservation. It also highlights the presence of two other connected communities to church places, namely future generations identifying as Cook Islanders, and individuals from other ethnicities who have ancestral or other linkages to Christian mission. The need for local people to actively manage their own heritage is crucial. But active awareness at the local level of the potential significance of these places to people-groups that span internationally and into the future may also be critical to ever-transforming cultural identities in the Pacific.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined how conservation of church places may be explored in light of perceptions of their cultural heritage significance as analysed in earlier chapters. It has unpacked the difficulties in applying Western-derived understandings of conservation practice, international protocols and national legislation in a context firmly rooted in local systems of land tenure and place management. In response to this, questions of ownership and stewardship have been explored, through a centring of interviewees’ perspectives regarding to whom historic churchscapes are significant and who should have a say in their management. This has highlighted the need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of churches’ connected communities, along with the potential need for ongoing cultural reinventiveness in response to dynamic settings of changing climate and funding sources.

Finally, a three-way cultural landscapes approach has been explored as a potentially useful conceptual foundation for conservation thinking, considering such landscapes at an individual/local level, as part of wider indigenous and natural landscapes, and as one element of mission landscapes in the region. It highlights these places as what in New Zealand would be described as taonga, by focusing preservation not only on physical structures but on people’s values, by prioritising processes over product, enabling the passing on and renewal of stories and skills, and by valuing ongoing use and evolving connections that acknowledge and embrace wider connected communities and changing realities.
Chapter eight

CONCLUSION

Introduction

Using a qualitative research methodology shaped by MaUa-Hodges’ tīvaevae paradigm, this thesis has brought together analysis of written material, physical investigation of church places and interview findings to explore the following questions:

1. Why are CICC churchscapes significant from a historic heritage perspective?
2. How have these meanings been recontested, recontextualised and renewed over time through the continued use of these places?
3. How can conservation respond to “living heritage” in this context?

Rather than analysing research evidence through a set of prescribed significance criteria, the study has used an exploration of the historical context and physical construction of these church places to understand how they both transformed, and were pervaded by, pre-Christian cultural meaning. But this story is not seated in a static past, a fixed tradition. As reiterated through each chapter, Polynesian conceptions of time mean that the past is not a removed entity, now behind us and out of sight, but rather it is around and before us, embedded in social relations, fluid and mutable. It is therefore the complexities of social significance that are paramount; how understandings of the past provide meaning and identity in the present.

The Cook Islands’ early Christian architecture was founded in contestation and contextualisation; of foreign and indigenous materiality and meaning, religious practice, inter-tribal rivalry and mana. It is perhaps then unsurprising that spiritual, cultural and political recontestation and recontextualisation have continued to transform and renew churchscapes as living heritage in contemporary Rarotonga. This chapter reflects on research findings in response to the thesis questions, discussing the implications of churchscapes’ cultural heritage significance for considerations of conservation and place management. It highlights the study’s limitations and explores areas for future research.
Historic heritage significance: findings

Early contestation and contextualisation

Monumental stone churches constructed on every island were powerfully symbolic of the rapid and comprehensive uptake of Christianity in the Cook Islands, a phenomenon that remains variously explained, celebrated and lamented in contemporary Rarotonga. Applying hard lessons learned by the LMS in Tahiti, conversion was achieved in significant part by the work of Tahitian and then indigenous converts, who understood and worked within traditional hierarchies, epistemology and cosmology. Locals themselves were key agents of change, selectively appropriating and interweaving introduced technology and ideas to suit shifting cultural mores.

In the specific situation of Rarotonga, ariki sequentially embraced the Christian mission as their tama ʻūʻā, their adopted child to nurture and support. This not only bound the Church into pre-existing tribal relations but also centralised and solidified these relations; territory and titles that had previously been contestable through war were now entrenched in Christian peace. In this way the Church and ariki became inextricably intertwined; ariki facilitated the formation of ekalesia, and Christianity enhanced the mana and vaka-based leadership of ariki. The formation of a separate ekalesia in Matavera is therefore significant in that it reclaimed the mana of that district’s mata’iapo as tribal leaders in their own right, independent from, but with voluntary allegiance to, the ariki of Takitumu (Pa and Kainuku). By establishing the Church on their own land, the mata’iapo in Matavera were re-sanctifying their tribal ownership.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, marae had established and legitimised a tribal group and its leader’s claim to land (Campbell, 2001, p. 169; Dixon, 2016, p. 401). The construction of monumental churches took up that function, becoming sited manifestations of ariki mana and their leadership over their vaka tangata, people and land. As the new marae, resultant church places both transformed previous cultural expressions of religious practice and political hierarchy and were pervaded by the symbols and ritual inscriptions of these beliefs. Transposed meanings were also evident in their siting on the new Ara Tapu road. By both referencing and usurping the ancient Ara Metua, the Church’s precedence in a new social field was made tangibly clear.
Physical form and fabric – spatial consolidation

The churches that remain extant on Rarotonga today represent the second phase of church construction as Christianity was consolidated on the island. From the missionaries’ perspective, these first stone churches physically confirmed Christianity’s embedment in this new place. Their monumentalism, achieved only through the assent and work of entire communities, physically ratified the new religion and undermined remaining opposition. From tribal leaders’ perspective, they created new depositories for old tribal hierarchies, enhancing their mana through their allegiance to the new, more powerful god.

Christian construction was not the first architecture to utilise stone in the Cook Islands. While dwellings were constructed in temporal, organic materials, marae were constructed in stone. Analysis of their form and function emphasises an understanding of marae as synergistic architecture, holistic cultural landscapes that are more than a collection of parts, but spaces that enwrap and control life-giving forces. As the new marae, churches were not alien religious constructs spliced into indigenous ontology, but were a transformed expression of an (already) indigenous cultural landscape; the enclosing of life-force in a new form. Their physical elements and detailing, internal and external spatial layouts, and, perhaps most importantly, protocols of person-place experience were therefore deeply inscribed with indigenous understandings of mana, transposed from former marae customs.

These churchscapes physically demonstrate the adaptation and fusion of foreign and local building techniques and materials. Budgett, Sissons and Dixon describe in detail how processes of timber roof construction, sennit lashing and bark cloth wrappings imbued church spaces with mana, fusing them with their marae predecessors. Very few remnants of this organic-based materiality remain. However, the churches do provide a physical record of Rarotonga’s earliest constructions using coral lime mortar.

An emphasis on process was critical to enjoining indigenous and Christian conceptions of god-indwelled. Individual and communal participation demonstrated Rarotongans’ emphasis on spirituality as collective ritual practice rather than clearly articulated personal belief, with prayers literally woven into church fabric and named shells embedded in walls as symbols of faith-action. Inter-tribal participation and reciprocity in ceremonies at key stages of construction was also an essential part of maintaining the balance of tribal and chiefly mana in a still-intensely competitive cultural framework.
The Matavera church is a significant example of the built form of Christianity indigenised. The Matavera ekalesia instigated, designed and directed its construction with little intervention by outside parties, deliberately evoking their tribal mana and independence. It has a highly unusual architectural form, with tiered wall massing on an unprecedented scale on the island. Questions of stylistic influence appear moot, with layers of mimicry and cultural slippage creating uniquely local identity and functional form. Remnant historical timberwork remaining in the ceiling void provides clues to the building’s original internal structure as an open roof volume structured using full-width crossbeams rather than a central post and ridge beam system.

Alongside Rarotonga’s other historic churches, understanding the Matavera church not as built edifice but as cultural landscape is critical. The church was not an isolated house of worship but was the linchpin of a new Christian village. Spatial linkages with its school and mission house, grounds, trees, graves and boundary walls culturally referenced both the English parish and Rarotonga’s own pre-Christian societal framework centred on marae. Visually linked with the taperes’ uppermost mountains and the sea, its siting reinforced the ancestral claims of mata’iapo on the land.

As with the marae before them, church places were created, enclosed and bounded as much by mana-imbuing cultural practice as by physical walls and roofs. Cyclical processes of religious ritual and social practice meant that churchscapes existed as much in time as in three-dimensional space (McKay & Walmsley, 2003). Symbolism and meaning were physically constructed into walls, roofs and sites, but were also layered into ongoing patterns of shared experience, the intangible fabric of inter-generational meaning. Architecture in time as well as space fuses and confuses understandings of permanent and impermanent, tangible and intangible. This is demonstrated in contemporary findings below.

**Recontestation and renewal through continued use: findings**

*Interwoven social fields*

The role of the Church is perceived to have diminished in contemporary Rarotongan society, with the nation-state now being seen as the predominant social field. The subordination of Church and traditional leadership to national agendas means that they now have some complementarity. However, it is important to avoid oversimplifying the cultural complexities at play that affect the role of the Church in contemporary Rarotonga. The social fields of Church,
aronga mana and state cannot be easily delineated into a clear power hierarchy; rather, they coexist in complex relationships of reciprocity and overlapping interests. This is demonstrated by their leadership overlaps, ambivalence regarding the Church’s eroding influence but its importance in upholding cultural values, and resistance to commodification of church places and practices in the face of tourism growth.

In this context it is notable that traditional leaders have often been at the forefront of opposition to modifications of church places, invoking their tama ʻūʻā relationship and reemphasising the relational complexities at play. Such controversies embody the evolved acceptance of churchscapes as the new marae, indigenous spaces that manifest the work of ancestors and are an integral part of cultural heritage and identity.

_Shifting permanence_

Research has found that the “permanent” architectural fabric of churchscapes has been heavily modified over time, with the Matavera church being a notable case in point. Notions of pragmatism, beautification and modernisation were identified and analysed as key drivers of change.

Perceptions of pragmatism continue to be central to decision-making. Expedient, swift and cheap modifications emphasise the practical reality of churches as living heritage, where ongoing use is prioritised over debatably deeper considerations of historical value and traditional authority. Pragmatic responses to change reflect the dual origin of church places in formerly multifunctional marae and in Nonconformist utilitarianism, and demonstrate how their foreign origin has been recontextualised and reformed.

The importance of beautifying churchscapes appears to enweave the civilising endeavours of the LMS with pre-contact place-making techniques involving paepae and planting. Beautification objectives originally brought together overlays of European nostalgia and indigenous fantasy, and it is suggested that concepts of malama may also be an underlying influence. This conflates Polynesian understandings and biblical teachings of light to symbolise the ritual expunging of dark places, binding neat and tidy with spiritual protection and purification.

Modernisation initiatives have involved a literal whiting out of historical detail, with progressive replacement or coverage of original elements with the “clean” lines and white surfaces of modern, imported materials. Such modifications may be seen as conforming to
global patterns of Western cultural commodification and export, artificially sustained by expatriate remittances. However, locally-determined processes of selective adoption and slippage in mimicry create changes that are contextually transposed versions of Western modernity, with understandings of mana being a central driver. Aspirations to modernise merge with wider agendas for pragmatism and beautification, with resultant modifications continuing to recreate places that are perpetually changing versions of themselves.

**The unchanged place**

Interview findings suggest that local Rarotongans, particularly Church members, may perceive churches as essentially unchanged regardless of significant material alterations. This reflects churches’ predominantly social rather than historical or architectural significance, but also blurs these artificial distinctions as Polynesian understandings of ancestry and time come into play. Alterations to churchscapes indicate that there is not an either/or dichotomy between permanent and transitory, but rather a complex enmeshing of holding lightly to the physical while cherishing the work, both tangible and intangible, of ancestors. Places also remain “unchanged” through a non-linear view of time that compresses and enfolds the past into the present, perpetually embodied in physical place. It is suggested that place attachment in this context goes beyond individual experience to interpersonal relationships, centred in pre-Christian understandings of tribal genealogy, hierarchy, and land, and fundamentally grounded in mana.

Field research findings suggest that it is the temporal and intangible aspects of church places, rather than their permanent elements, that remain their most enduring heritage. White cloths continue ancient traditions of bark cloth wrapping, entwining Christian holiness symbolism with pre-Christian practices of containing and controlling tapu and mana. The encroachment of living flora and colourful apparel into the enveloping white of church buildings has allowed for new constructions of religious expression, and demonstrates the continuation of symbiotic appropriations between church-based Christian ritual and marae-based ceremonies. Moreover, these transitory items demonstrate the continued importance of process over outcome for maintaining meaning and significance. The preparation and placement of adornment not only serves as a continual process of re-creation and rite transference but also as a ceremonial preserver of established community hierarchies and relationships. This again merges and envelops Christian doctrines of spiritual renewal and pre-Christian rituals of recurring wrapping, binding and decoration of the sacred.
Intangible heritage values dominated interview discussions on place significance, with church places identified as critical for the perpetuation of oral traditions and collective activity. There is ambivalence around some of these practices, particularly the use of Māori, which is variously or even simultaneously seen as crucial to the Church’s upholding of tradition and culture, or as exacerbating its growing irrelevance. It is these very tensions that reinforce the churches’ living heritage significance, contested and renewable.

This research demonstrates the inextricability of past and present, tangible and intangible heritage significance. Understandings of identity, memory and history are made tangibly manifest in church places, their fabric and form, the land that they sit upon. They are not only imbued with, but also underpin, intangible social values and practices of cultural continuity. It also suggests that questions of material authenticity are beside the point here. From their very inception, it has been processes of (re)contestation, (re)contextualisation and renewal that have enmeshed churchscapes into indigenous realities and have given them their cultural heritage significance.

**Responding to living heritage: conservation implications**

Research findings suggest that the contemporary condition of Rarotonga’s CICC churches is generally good, as elements have been replaced rather than repaired. However, some fabric modifications have potential for deleterious effects on remaining historical material. At an international level architectural heritage professionals have variegated responses to issues of condition and modifications of historical places, but now generally prioritise adaptability and responsiveness to specific contexts. While this can be helpful in situating conservation approaches, it can still overlook the reality that in nations such as the Cook Islands, “heritage practitioners” as understood within a Western conservation model do not exist. Instead, change occurs through traditional resource management systems that prioritise processes of consensus and knowledge transferral over end product.

In Rarotonga, these traditional processes are affected by the entwined impacts of colonialism and local contemporary aspirations for the new. This has resulted in a cumulative decline in local craftsmanship, rifts in inter-generational knowledge transfer, and conflicts between the goals of users and legal frameworks for preservation. This research has found that consequent alterations to churchscapes made by Church ekalesia can be controversial, leading to questions of who should have a say regarding place change.
While most interviewees, regardless of membership, emphasised the importance of individual ekalesia retaining their decision-making authority as the fund-providers and land owners, the roles of other groups such as the aronga mana and government were also discussed. Most non-member interviewees were hesitant to claim a right to speak regarding CICC place conservation. However, consideration of this aspect pointed to shifting realities in the Cook Islands, with demographic changes causing deterritorialisation of tradition and reinterpretation of cultural identity. Combined with the ramifications of a changing climate, this diversification in societal worldviews and priorities may lead to inventive thinking for these still very living churchscapes.

**A cultural landscapes approach**

In light of this analysis, this study proposes that a cultural landscapes-based conceptual framework may be useful for considerations of conservation for CICC churches. A cultural landscape perspective has the potential to recognise the entanglement of physical form, social values, and understandings of land that these places embody, to respond holistically to their tangible and intangible cultural heritage values, and to understand them as constructs in time as much as space.

Church places could be approached from a range of layered positions.

- First, as individual cultural landscapes, prioritising the living heritage values of their connected communities, and recognising that these communities may become increasingly diverse.
- Second, as strands in a web of indigenous landscapes, encompassing marae, burial grounds, natural landscapes and geographic features. Recognising the historical and contemporary overlaps between these landscapes opens options for wider voices to be heard and greater cultural depth to be considered in decision-making. It also has the potential to blur artificial boundaries between historic place types in existing legislation, acknowledging churchscapes as part of indigenous narrative.
- Third, as a group of historic CICC churches across the Cook Islands and as part of the LMS mission story across the Pacific. This highlights consideration of future generations of Cook Islanders and others, and the development of a sense of these places’ collective heritage.

Heritage practitioners celebrate living heritage in theory, recognising that it is in ongoing active use that historical buildings are best conserved. However, when these uses and users
themselves threaten architectural fabric, it is easy to revert to Western precepts of minimal intervention and reversibility, prioritising product over process, physicality over intangibility. Collaborative approaches grounded in cultural landscape perspectives may help to bridge the gap between Western and Polynesian epistemologies outworked in place. Understanding place significance beyond the building draws on skills of art, craft and textiles, oratory and cultural performance, as well as architecture, archaeology and anthropology, and has potential to foster the rights of connected communities to informed and holistic decision-making regarding their heritage.

Study limitations and avenues for further research

Commercialisation of churchscapes as part of a tourism agenda

This thesis has touched upon, but not discussed in depth, the growth of tourism in the Cook Islands, which has occurred in Rarotonga and Aitutaki in particular (Statistics Office, 2003; 2006; 2012). Research in this area is important for strategic planning regarding future management of cultural heritage resources, including historical church sites.

While marketing continues to focus on the islands as a Pacific paradise, it also increasingly includes aspects of cultural experience, with strong emphasis on “indigenous”/“traditional” (pre-Christian) experiences, but also drawing on historical CICC churches and services.\textsuperscript{164} This phenomenon is described by Sissons (1999) as “the South Pacific postmodern” (pp. 97, 98), a contradictory and contested pastiche of tourism-driven cultural commodification intermingled with a rediscovery of pre-colonial heritage (see S. Walker, 2014). However, commodification of tangible heritage is nothing new in the Cook Islands; as soon as former idols became European curiosities in the early 19th century, entrepreneurial individuals were making them specifically for sale (Hiroa, 1993, p. 25). Contemporary tourism objectives are similarly being deliberately shaped and managed by Cook Islanders.

May tourism be appropriated for positive and community-driven CICC churchscape conservation, while maintaining the religious autonomy and social identity of ekalesia? Heritage tourism can be seen as a sustainable opportunity for economic development in the Pacific, potentially being used to conserve historic places and provide employment (Liston, Clark, & Alexander, 2011a, p. 3). However, it can also marginalise local voices, with

\textsuperscript{164} See for example, the New Zealand Herald article, Island Time: The Cook Islands from A-Z (Battersby, 2016).

Budgett suggests that tourism imperatives are already tempering local modernisation aspirations in Mangaia. She argues that while this may induce “positive” heritage outcomes regarding Western conventions of retention of “authentic” fabric, it raises problematic questions of whose heritage is actually being conserved (Budgett, 2006, p. 50). CICC ekalesia will need to actively engage with these questions in the future, as community priorities and funding streams evolve. It will also be important to consider that expatriate Cook Islanders who have been born and raised elsewhere may increasingly be coming to the islands for an essentially touristic experience, tied in with exploration of their “roots” (Timothy & Prideaux, 2004, p. 218). In this context, fine-grained understandings of, and responses to, multi-layered tourism agendas will be critical.

Ways of recording church places

Several interviewees discussed the lack of formal documentation of historic CICC churches, with various opinions expressed regarding its necessity (RI.06; RI.07; RI.10; RI.16, 2014). Budgett discusses how conventional architectural documentation did not deter the major alteration of the Oneroa Sunday school in 2006, which destroyed much of its historical detail. She suggests that other methods of recording, that captured the detail of articulation, structure and ornament and their associated architectural, cultural and political significance, may have influenced outcomes and created opportunity for conservation discussion (Budgett, 2006, pp. 48 - 51; 2007, p. 7).

A lack of church place documentation may reflect both Cook Islanders’ prioritisation of oral and performance-based knowledge transmission and also their view of churches as vernacular, living and continually adaptive, part of a familiar backdrop that requires no formal record. As discussed in this study, the importance of historical fabric is often perceived as inconsequential to churchscapes’ social significance and life value (Müller, 2011, p. 4).

Considerations of possible approaches to churchscapes’ recording would need to address these views. They would also require engagement with Pasifika concerns about the potential

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165 The historical port town of Levuka in Fiji, inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2013, exemplifies these issues (UNESCO, 2016b; A. Smith, 2006).
of the written word (and by extension, architectural documentation) to undermine the fluidity of indigenous history, reducing multiple messages and meaning to a singular “truth” (Hereniko, 2000, pp. 84 - 90).

Müller’s (2011) “relational drawing” methodology (p. 6) has potentially illuminating application in the Cook Islands context. Developed “to act as a negotiating agency between Western architectural practice and the architectural practice of the Samoan Diaspora in New Zealand,” Müller suggests that “a paradigmatic shift from the formal to the relational needs to occur” (p. 56). Her drawings privilege a position of occupation rather than objectified view, displaying material culture and use of space that is based as much in the mutable and temporal as in permanent structure. As argued by Flexner and colleagues in the context of Vanuatu, “the importance of intangible values should not be seen as precluding a need to conserve physical structures that contain a wealth of information” (Flexner et al., 2015b, n.p.). Could relational documentation be a starting point for illuminating the living significance of churchscapes, potentially enriching decision-making about their management? This needs to be explored.

Themes across the nation and region

This study was necessarily restricted to exploration of the CICC churches of Rarotonga, with extended case study analysis of the Matavera church only. While a certain level of extrapolation of findings is possible across the Cook Islands group, it is important to remember that Rarotonga, as the nation’s capital and with its only international airport, is the exception rather than the rule in terms of stable population and burgeoning tourism. In view of this, it is essential to emphasise the individual nature of each island’s conversion narrative(s) and contemporary reality. A nation-wide study of former LMS churchscapes is needed not only to explore the specificities of historical context and architectural responses, but also to highlight similarities and differences in patterns of place attachment and identity as expressed by island communities. Such a study would give a clearer picture of the cultural heritage significance of these places as a group, which could in turn inform local and national processes of decision-making. Using a thematic cultural landscapes approach, research into LMS places could form part of broader explorations of places of cultural heritage significance, enabling deeper understandings of how different strands of collective history are inscribed on the land.

A related area for further study would be in-depth qualitative analysis of what places (Christian or otherwise) second and third generations expatriate Cook Islanders consider to have cultural heritage significance, and how they think such places should be managed. Exploration of
whether there are concurrent themes across generational and national divides would provide critical information for future planning in the Cook Islands regarding cultural heritage.

There is also a need for greater thematic review of the architectural legacy of the LMS across the Pacific. Many anthropological studies have been undertaken of their work\textsuperscript{166} and archaeologists have explored remnant settlements.\textsuperscript{167} However there is little systematic analysis of mission places that still remain actively occupied and used as architectural spaces. Such research could elucidate commonalities and differences between mission architecture across the Pacific and consolidate currently disjointed regional knowledge regarding the mission’s architectural legacy. Cross-regional and collaborative field research could also add depth to Memmott’s analysis of the dynamic nature of the construction of architectural tradition; examining the entanglements of indigenous and foreign agency and meaning in continually reworked built heritage enables better discernment for future architectural direction in the South Pacific.

\textit{Cook Islanders’ research}

As discussed in the introductory chapter, this thesis has been shaped by my own perspective as an outsider to Rarotonga and to the culture and traditions of the Cook Islands. It is hoped that this study will stimulate interest for other researchers of Cook Islands descent to explore the cultural landscapes of their heritage in new ways. It is considered that cultural insidedness\textsuperscript{168} could particularly enrich interview discussions, adding greater depth to place attachment and significance analyses and to questions of resource management practice within local systems of land tenure.

Cook Islanders’ research in this area also holds possibilities for the re-engagement of culturally-determined craftsmanship in historic churchscapes. Rather than attempting to recreate a lost material past, approaches could engage with the contemporary work of Cook

\textsuperscript{166} Prominent examples include Thomas (1991) and Gunson (1974b; 1978).

\textsuperscript{167} Flexner and colleagues’ analyses in Vanuatu (2013; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2015) are particularly pertinent to this thesis.

\textsuperscript{168} And potentially language insidedness – the use of Māori would enable linguistic nuances that are lost in translation.
Islands artists, and contemporise traditional methods of knowledge transmission through intra and inter-regional cultural exchanges that are already occurring.\textsuperscript{169}

Further research for and by Cook Islanders has the potential to reshape individual and communal perspectives regarding their cultural heritage resources, recognising cultural identity not only in oral and performance-based practices, but in time-indwelled place as well. Such studies may stimulate more local and regional interest regarding what cultural landscapes are important to people and why, and how these values are continuously evolving. As suggested by Anita Smith (2011), this knowledge may lead in turn to respect for “the cultural identity of communities in the past and present and the rights of communities to make informed decisions about their heritage” (p. 229).

**Conclusion**

This research has found that the cultural heritage of Rarotonga’s historic CICC churchscapes extends beyond specifically historical and architectural values to their social significance, as places of relationship and collective meaning and as symbols of tribal claims on land.

Patterns of responses to questions of memory, place modification and identity indicate that cultural significance is not necessarily limited to a church’s ekalesia, but variously extends to the wider Rarotongan population and potentially to the connected community of expatriate Cook Islanders. Churchscapes have come to be understood as indigenised and indigenous, part of Cook Islanders’ cultural identity. In this context, the past and present are not dichotomous. Rather, the meanings of the ancestral past actively indwell the present, and the present challenges, reconstructs and validates past realities.

Questions of significance can therefore not be broken down into discrete categories of history, physicality and community connections. It is the mutable, the temporal and intangible that uphold the nominal permanence of physical fabric in processes of continual re-creation. In light of these findings this thesis proposes that conservation thinking should be situated in an understanding of church places as cultural landscapes, places that entangle form with relationships outlived in a constellational view of time. Churchscapes, like marae, remain entwined with strong cultural associations of tribal hierarchy, mana and land. As such, they are

\textsuperscript{169} An example is the Matariki Māori Art Exhibition that was held in Rarotonga in June 2015 (Evans, 2015). Nia’s thesis explores this subject in the context of the ‘are korero (house of history and learning) in the Paepae Ariki, Taputapuatea, in Avarua (Nia, 2010).
likely to remain significant to an increasingly diasporic island population. Addressing the co-dependency of intangible and tangible heritage through multi-layered cultural landscape views may become an increasingly essential part of sustaining these ever-evolving, and unchanged, lifescapes.
Appendix A

APPROVALS FOR RESEARCH

The Government of the Cook Islands

The University of Auckland
Ms Carolyn Joy Hill
15k Roseberry Avenue
Birkenhead Auckland 0626
NEW ZEALAND

Kia Orana Carolyn,

RE: APPROVED RESEARCH APPLICATION

I am pleased to advise that the National Research Committee has granted approval for your research titled “The Cook Islands Christian Church, Rarotonga: Living Conservation in a Cultural Heritage Place” on the island of Rarotonga, from 16th July 2014 to 12th August 2014.

Enclosed is your research permit issue # 15/14

The following conditions listed below have been imposed by the National Research Committee:

- To comply with Immigration requirements
- To acknowledge the ownership of all records and photographs copied or used in your research work.
- To provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at your earliest
- To submit 3 hard copies + 1 electronic copy of your final findings to the Office of the Prime Minister by July 2016

Kia Manuia

Elizabeth Wright-Koteka
CHAIRPERSON
PERMIT TO UNDERTAKE

Research in the Cook Islands

This is to certify that: Ms Carolyn Joy Hill

Has permission from the Foundation for National Research to do a research in the Cook Islands from: 16th July 2014 to 12th August 2014

On the islands of: Rarotonga

The topic of research is: The Cook Islands Christian Church, Rarotonga: Living Conservation in a Cultural Heritage Place

The Cook Islands Associate Researchers is: Ms Ngatuaine Maui – CICC Matavera

The following special conditions apply to this research:
- To comply with Immigration requirements
- To acknowledge the ownership of all records and photographs copied or used in your research work.
- To provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at your earliest
- To submit 3 hard copies + 1 electronic copy of your final findings to the Office of the Prime Minister by July 2016

Permit Issued on: 15 July 2015

Issued by: Elizabeth Koteka

Chairperson

Receipt Number: To Pay
Reference Number: 15/14

Signed:

For enquiries concerning this permit, please quote the Name of the Researcher and the Reference Number to the Chairperson, Foundation for National Research, Office of the Prime Minister, Rarotonga, COOK ISLANDS.
Phone (682) 29 300, Fax (682) 20 856
Email: elizabeth.koteka@cookislands.gov.ck Website: www.pmooffice.gov.ck
06-Jun-2014

MEMORANDUM TO:

Dr Deidre Brown
Architecture & Planning

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 012092): Approved with comment

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled The Cook Islands Christian Church, Rarotonga: Living Conservation in a Cultural Heritage Place.

Ethics approval was given for a period of three years with the following comment(s):

1) Please use the full NICAI letterhead on your materials to the participants, i.e. the one that includes the University logo.

The expiry date for this approval is 06-Jun-2017.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals if you wish to do so. Contact should be made through the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

All communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application should include this reference number: 012092.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

Secretary
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, Architecture & Planning
Ms Carolyn Hill
**Additional information:**

1. Should you need to make any changes to the project, write to the Committee giving full details including revised documentation.

2. Should you require an extension, write to the Committee before the expiry date giving full details along with revised documentation. An extension can be granted for up to three years, after which time you must make a new application.

3. At the end of three years, or if the project is completed before the expiry, you are requested to advise the Committee of its completion.

4. Do not forget to fill in the 'approval wording' on the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms, giving the dates of approval and the reference number, before you send them out to your participants.

5. Send a copy of this approval letter to the Awards Team at the, Research Office if you have obtained funding other than from UniServices. For UniServices contract, send a copy of the approval letter to: Contract Manager, UniServices.

6. Please note that the Committee may from time to time conduct audits of approved projects to ensure that the research has been carried out according to the approval that was given.
Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were central to the interview approach of this research. Factors included ensuring participants’ informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and avoiding potential harm. These are discussed briefly below.

Informed consent

All participants were adults, with the competency to provide informed consent. Consent was confirmed both verbally and in writing as follows:

1. Each participant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) that provided clear and detailed project information (Appendix B1). An informal overview of the project was given by the researcher prior to interview commencement, which confirmed the information in the PIS.

2. Verbal confirmation that the participant consented to the interview was sought and affirmed;

3. A written consent form (Appendix B2) was also completed prior to interview commencement, which clearly articulated what the participant was agreeing to. The consent form also provided the option for participants to consent or not consent to the interview being voice-recorded.

Interviewees generally appeared relaxed and comfortable about being interviewed, and most consented to voice-recording, with three not consenting. Interviewees were less comfortable with the formalities of the PIS and consent forms, sometimes expressing mild impatience at the need for them.
Confidentiality and anonymity

It was important for the confidence of the participants and consequent efficacy of the research that interview responses were confidential, and that participant responses remained as anonymous as possible. Confidentiality was managed by:

1. The researcher undertook to maintain the confidentiality of the interview, and to securely store and, after a period of six years, appropriately dispose of, collected data.

2. In any group context, all participants were requested before and after the interview to keep all aspects confidential,

3. Participants were advised that confidentiality, especially where involving group interviews, could not be guaranteed.

4. This information was included in PIS and consent forms and articulated in pre-interview introductions.

Given that Rarotonga is a small, tight-knit community, it is inevitable that others may be aware that participants were interviewed, and possible that local people may guess who has given certain information by the nature of that information. Anonymity was managed by:

1. No participants are identified in research findings. The option for participants to expressly give consent to be identified by job title or role was included in the consent form, but it was not deemed necessary to use this information.

2. Participants were advised that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, and that in the case of group interviews, anonymity is not possible.

3. This information was included in PIS and consent forms and articulated in pre-interview introductions.

Issues of potential harm and cultural insensitivity

It was considered that the project posed negligible risk of physical harm, and a very small risk of psychological harm, as participants would all be consenting adults who could self-determined their own level of engagement. However, as the research was both cross-cultural and focused on the sensitive area of religion, it carried potential issues of psychological harm and cultural insensitivity (Lutui, 2007, p. 51). These were identified and managed as follows:
1. Participants could feel ‘exposed’ or compromised by should they share more than they intended.

   - A ‘safe’ environment and permissive atmosphere was created such that individuals could share without fear of embarrassment or ramifications.
   
   - Participants were offered the opportunity to review and potentially edit their own transcript within a two-week period after the interview to ensure they were comfortable with their own record.

2. Insult or offense could be inadvertently caused by the researcher due to the cross-cultural nature of the research, and/or the religious aspects involved.

   - My own lack of knowledge of accepted community protocols, customs and sacred values, and therefore the possibility of causing offense, was acknowledged to participants.
   
   - My own Christian mission background was acknowledged and cultural-religious linkages shared where appropriate.
   
   - Participants were encouraged to raise any issues and were reminded of the optionality of answering any question or continuing their involvement.

3. Participants could consider that intangible heritage, or aspects of sacred memory, should be secret or limited in knowledge recipients, or participants could feel negatively towards any potential role for Government/non-Government organisations in conserving heritage places.

   - This was managed partially by the very nature of a semi-structured interviewing approach and open-ended questions, which enabled people to share or not as they saw fit.

The PIS and pre-interview introduction also endeavoured to make the reason and nature of the research very clear, that all information was solely for the stated academic purpose and not clandestine information-gathering for “something going to happen,” to avoid or minimise any misunderstandings or incorrect perceived benefits.
Appendix B1: Participant information sheet
Kia orana, my name is Carolyn Hill. I am a Master of Architecture student with the University of Auckland, New Zealand. I am seeking to research the cultural heritage significance of the 19th century Cook Islands Christian Churches (CICC) in Rarotonga, using the Matavera church as a case study. As part of this research, it is important that I speak with members of the Matavera community, members of the CICC church, other Cook Islands community groups and individuals, and government personnel.

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural heritage significance of the CICC churches and the Matavera church in particular by exploring why the church complexes are significant from historic heritage and building fabric perspectives, and how meanings and values have been recontested, recontextualised and renewed over time through the continued use of these places. The study will then seek to analyse what a conservation approach to these buildings could look like, taking into account both their past and present as active, ‘living’ heritage places.

The information obtained in this study will be used to complete my Master of Architecture thesis, and in so doing, contribute to larger bodies of knowledge regarding architectural heritage in the Pacific. Following the publication of my thesis, a copy will be gifted to the CICC church and to the Cook Islands government, and an information sheet that provides a summary of research findings will be made available to all participants.

I would like to invite you to contribute to this project by participating in a one-to-one interview to share your memories, experiences and thoughts regarding the historic places of the CICC.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw yourself and any information you have made available to the project any time before November 2014. You will not be required to offer an explanation. If you do withdraw from this study, all information you have made available will be destroyed.

This interview will take approximately 1 hour. Subject to your prior consent, the interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Voice recordings made will be transcribed by me soon after the interview. You may refuse to answer any given question, request to stop the recording at any stage, and/or stop participating at any time during the interview.

You will have the opportunity to view your transcript if you request it from the researcher within two (2) weeks of the interview date, and any alterations or deletions you request will be made by the researcher prior to information being incorporated into the research findings. If you do not request to view your transcript, information will be incorporated into the research findings as recorded.
Community members will not be named in any publication or reports arising from this research. However, if you give your consent, you may be identified by your community position / title.

All personal information collected about participants will be kept confidential. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed however, because of the multiple connections that exist within the Cook Island community. This means that even though participants’ names will not be published, information may be traceable to them if their community positions / titles are used, or their viewpoints are widely known within the community.

To ensure confidentiality of the information you make available to me, all data collected during this research will be kept in storage by my supervisor in a locked cabinet at the University of Auckland for six (6) years. All data on computerised storage spaces and hard drives will be deleted after two (2) years. Where interviews are audio-recorded, transcripts and other hard copies of data will be shredded after six (6) years.

Thank you very much for your time, I would really appreciate your participation in this research. If you have any questions please ask me in person, or email chil298@auckland.ac.nz.

Meitake ma’ata.

Carolyn Hill

CONTACT DETAILS:

| Researcher: | Carolyn Hill | Supervisor: | Dr Deidre Brown |
| Email: | chil298@auckland.ac.nz | Email: | d.brown@auckland.ac.nz |
| Contact ph. (NZ): | +64 (0) 22 1876840 | Contact ph. (NZ): | +64 (0) 9 923 9012 |
| Contact ph. (Rarotonga): | To be confirmed | Head of Department: | Elizabeth Aitken Rose |
| Alternative contact: | To be confirmed | Email: | e.aitken-rose@auckland.ac.nz |
| Contact ph. (NZ): | +64 (0) 9 923 6425 | Contact ph. (NZ): | +64 (0) 9 923 6425 |
| Postal address: | School of Architecture and Planning, NICAI University of Auckland Private Bag 92019 Auckland 1142, New Zealand. |

For any enquires regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand. Telephone +64 9 373 7599 ext. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 6 June 2014 for three years, Reference Number 012092.
CONSENT FORM

Semi-Structured Interview: Individual Participant

I have read the Participation Information Sheet and I understand the purpose of this research project and why I have been selected to take part.

I understand that the information / data will be used in a thesis, and possibly to support future publications / presentations.

I understand that once the project is finished, a copy of the research findings will be gifted to the CICC church and to the Cook Islands government and that I will have access to an information sheet summarising the research findings, which will be distributed by the researcher.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I am aware that my participation in this research is voluntary and I agree to take part.

I understand that I may withdraw myself and any information I have made available to this project at any time before November 2014. If I do decide to withdraw from the study, I will not have to provide a reason, and any information I have made available to the project will be destroyed.

I understand that the interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

I consent / do not consent to the interview being recorded using a digital voice recorder. I understand that if the interview is recorded the researcher will transcribe it soon afterwards. I understand that I may refuse to answer any given question, ask to stop the recording, and/or stop participation at any time during the interview.

I understand that I will have the opportunity to view my own transcript if I request it from the researcher within two weeks of the interview date, and that any alterations or deletions I request will be made by the researcher prior to information being incorporated into the research findings. I understand that if I do not request to view my transcript, information will be incorporated into the research findings as recorded.

I understand that no other person except for the researcher and her supervisor will be able to view the transcript and any recordings made.

I understand that the information I give will be kept in a secure place for six years, and then destroyed.
I understand that I will not be named in any publications arising from this research. However I understand that my opinions may make me identifiable due to the close connections of the Cook Island community.

Signed: ________________________________

Name (please print clearly): ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 6 June 2014 for three years, Reference Number 012092.
Appendix C

MATAVERA CICC ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

- Site plan
- Plan – furnishings shown
- East elevation
- North elevation
- West elevation
- Section A – possible original/early configuration.
QUEEN POST
PANDANUS THATCH CLADDING
THATCH RAFTER
PURLIN
PRINCIPAL RAFTER
MORTAR BUILT UP AROUND TIMBER MEMBERS
TIE BEAM
GALLERY WINDOW
GALLERY BALUSTRADE
GALLERY FLOOR
CORAL WALL
TRANSVERSE BEAM
LONGITUDINAL MAIN BEAM
CARVED HEADER
POST
MAIN WINDOW
[ BUTTRESS ]
TIMBER FLOOR
CORAL RUBBLE FOUNDATION
GALLERY BALUSTRADE
GALLERY CLADDING
TRANSVERSE BEAM
(GALLERY FLOOR JOIST)
LONGITUDINAL MAIN BEAM
CARVED BEARER
POST TENON THROUGH MORTISES IN BEARER AND MAIN BEAMS
POST

DETAIL 1

MATAVERA CICC SECTION A
- POSSIBLE ORIGINAL / EARLY CONFIGURATION
Appendix D

MATAVERA CICC COMMEMORATIVE DATES

A sequence of dates is painted on a decorative timber panel on the porch gable of the Matavera CICC. These relate to key modifications to the churchscape, as described below.

Figure 91: Matavera CICC, location of commemorative plaque circled (Source: author’s collection, 2010).
This date commemorates the relocation of the Matavera church and village from the inland Ara Metua to the coastal Ara Tapu. According to George Gill’s records, formal establishment of the village occurred in 1858. The church itself was built in the early 1860s. See Chapter Four.

One interviewee stated that this was when the church was reduced in height by approximately 2.4m, likely due to hurricane damage (RI.19, 2014). As noted in Chapter Five, a major hurricane did occur in January 1944 on Rarotonga (“Storm damage: Cook Islands group: No loss of life,” 1944); it therefore appears likely that the work occurred in 1944 rather than 1943.

While a “minor hurricane” is recorded in December 1953, it appears to have caused no damage on Rarotonga (De Scally et al., 2006, pp. 171, 172). Interviews did not shed any light on works that may have occurred in this year. However, a large cross-beam in the ceiling void bears the inscription “Tarani I. N. A. 12/3/53.” This implies that the beam (and, by extension, all other equivalent beams) was installed at this time, indicating that a significant restoration project occurred, perhaps replacing decaying timberwork. The location of these beams in different holes to the original wall-embedment positions, their hewn finish and mechanical fixings all support this date.
At this time a major project was undertaken both internally and externally. Work included covering over the southern half of the graveyard to create a raised lawn (described in Chapter Five), replacing the timber floor with concrete, removing (non-original) New Zealand Kauri cladding from the four internal posts, and relocating the original plastered coral pulpit (RI.19, 2014). The belfry (demolished in 2015) and church bell, inscribed with the manufacturer’s brand “M. P. & Co., Auckland 1976” may have been constructed and hung at this time, possibly replacing a former bell or drum hanging from a tree.
Alterations included creating a raised dais for the pulpit and tiling the concrete floor, along with replacing the remaining timber joinery with aluminium (RI.19, 2014). It is likely that the mezzanine was also constructed at this time (RI.06, 2014). The two entrance porches (east and north) and deacons’ rooms (south) may have been built as part of these renovations, although the porches may be earlier.

Although not on the porch plaque, there are various name inscriptions in the ceiling void recording “1993.” It is possible that the roof and/or roof cladding was again replaced then.

The church’s walls were levelled, a reinforced concrete ring beam installed, and the roof fully replaced in 2005, following the complete loss of the previous roof during hurricane Nancy (De Scally et al., 2006, pp. 332 - 343; RI.15, 2014).


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