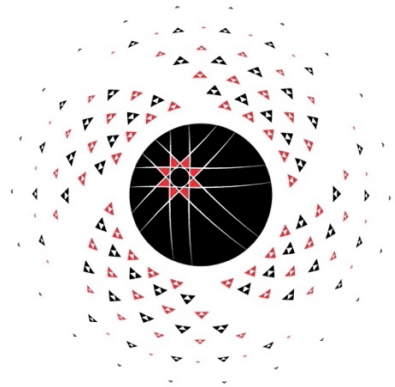


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Sex the ‘Pacific Way’: An autoethnographic talanoa

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Abstract

The colonisation and missionisation of the Pacific has perverted Pacific sexualities to such an extent it remains taboo for Pacific people, especially young women, to talk about sex. To bring this subjugation of Indigenous sexuality into focus this article utilises the Pacific methodology of talanoa to give an autoethnographic account of one Mana Moana va’ine (Indigenous Pacific woman) quest to reclaim her sexual sovereignty. This talanoa not only depicts the journey of sexual subjugation to sexual empowerment it also makes clear that re-indigenisation requires access to Indigenous knowledge and practices. Escaping the usual coloniality of sexuality and academic research, this talanoa privileges Pacific women's voices, gender and sex. This talanoa takes sexual experiences that exceed colonial Christian imaginations and claims them wholeheartedly as sex the Pacific Way. Moreover, this talanoa provides inspiration and practical solutions for those wanting to re-indigenise their sexuality.

Keywords: Pacific/Indigenous sexualities, re-indigenisation, talanoa, Mana Moana va’ine

Sex the ‘Pacific Way’

The ‘Pacific Way’ was coined in 1970 by the Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamiesese Mara in his address to the United Nations (Lawson, 2010). He used this terminology to identify the unique way Pacific people behave. Since then this term has been adopted by many Pacific Island leaders to differentiate Pacific ways of being from other political influences and entities. This article takes up the notion of a ‘Pacific Way’ to consider the sexual expressions, acts, and rituals of the Pacific. Sex the ‘Pacific Way’ introduces the idea that there are unique Pacific ways of expressing sexuality while explicitly reminding us that sex is an integral part of the physical, social, spiritual, and cultural identity of Pacific people. At the same time we are reminded that sex, like all other aspects of Indigenous life, has been colonised and regulated. Importantly, sex the ‘Pacific Way’ promotes Pacific narratives and realities allowing thinking and discussion to move away from a pre-colonial viewpoint of Indigenous sexuality to a decolonial viewpoint. But more than this, sex the Pacific Way has enabled me to re-indigenise my sexuality.

Beginning with a literature review of academic scholarship on sex in the Pacific, this article starts with literature about the colonisation and missionisation of sex in the Pacific. This literature is dominated by the accounts of early European explorers and non-Indigenous anthropologists. To redress this colonial viewpoint, Indigenous scholarship of Pacific sexualities is discussed alongside pre-colonial Indigenous sexual narratives within stories, dances, songs and arts of the Pacific. Overall the literature review exposes the lack of Indigenous Pacific research in general with a more intensive absence of Indigenous accounts on the impact of colonisation on Indigenous sexualities. The literature review concludes with an argument for a decolonisation or re-indigenisation of Indigenous sexualities.

The second half of the article redresses this absence and does the important work of re-indigenisation. I use the term re-indigenisation over decolonisation because decolonisation keeps the colonial experience and viewpoint at the centre of the process (Cairns, 2020). Indigenisation, on the other hand, puts indigeneity at the center with “the promise of a created space where we as the Indigenous people can determine the space, the content [and] the practice, according to their own autonomy and independence” (Cairns, 2020).

Taking leadership in the space of Indigenous sexuality, I provide a first-hand account of what re-indigenising sex looks like for a Mana Moana va’ine (Indigenous Pacific woman) reclaiming her sexual sovereignty. Addressing my sexual language, culture, and identity, my re-indigenisation culminates in the creation of a Indigenous calendar connecting sexual rhythms with environmental rhythms. Extending the Māori moon calendar the Maramafaka calendar is birthed. In conclusion, I send out a wero (challenge) to other Pacific scholars to not only write the Indigenous narratives of our people, but take up the mantle of decolonising their sexualities.

(C)literature Review

Missionaries led the colonisation of sex in the Pacific. They “embarked on a deliberate campaign to eliminate all forms and practices associated with traditional religious life: a cultural genocide associated with this systematic destructive programme was pursued” (Nokise, 2017, p.xiii). This destruction included the elimination of Pacific sex and sexuality with its shameless embrace of open sexual expression, nakedness, and premarital relations. In the conversion of Pacific peoples missionaries used Christian scriptures as their guide on what behaviours were to be eradicated and why. The following excerpts from the Bible illuminate the Christian attitudes towards sex that the missionaries enforced.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10: Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price (as cited in Platt, 2015, p. 20).

The elimination of Indigenous sexualities through missionisation was harmful. Havea and Havea (2021) go so far as to correlate contemporary abortion and suicide in Samoa with the colonisation of Samoan sexuality. They argue that the church and its Christian values have so much power and control over Pacific people that when sexual relations do not align with Christian values some people feel it is easier and safer to have an abortion rather than an unplanned pregnancy. In the worst-case scenario some people view death as an easier option than the wrath of the church.

Though colonialists and missionaries sought to eradicate Indigenous sexual practices they were themselves very preoccupied with Indigenous sexualities and their “uncivilised sexual behaviours” (Moloney, 2005, p. 33). There are many historical accounts of the ‘uncivilised’ sexual behaviours of Pacific people written, in the majority, by European men. These accounts, grounded in the male patriarchal gaze, position the European settler as the civilising force beneficially “imposing reason and order upon irrational, passive, and ‘feminine’ colonial subjects” (Moloney, 2005, p. 30).

Wallace (2003) complicates these biased historical accounts of European settlers and travellers by suggesting Europeans were in fact deeply intrigued and preoccupied with Indigenous sexuality, specifically because Pacific ways of being sexual were so different from their own cultural norms. Wallace (2003) exemplifies his argument by drawing on Indigenous sexual narratives rather than European accounts of Indigenous sexual narratives. In this way Wallace is able to highlight the sexual confidence of Pacific women through the common practice of ‘imi haku’ (to search for a lord). A practice whereby Hawai’ian women boarded ships to seduce sailors and have sex with them for the purpose of stealing their mana (power). Through ‘imi haku’ Wallace presents Pacific women as in control of their bodies and sexual behaviours rather than innocent victims of European male sexual desire or beset with uncontrollable sexual desire and thus in need of being saved by the Church.

Wallace (2003) also argues that the presence of fa’afafine or māhū (third gender) Pacific people deeply confused European settlers' notions of acceptability. Sodomy, for example, was condemned in European societies, while in the Pacific sodomy was acceptable behaviour. Highlighting the openness of male-to-male sexual encounters in Pacific culture allowed Wallace (2003) to challenge the taken for granted, Western view of “sexual normativity” (p. 2), which continues into the present day.

The continued subjugation of Pacific sexuality is further exemplified in the lack of Pacific voices discussing sex and sexuality in community and in academia. There is minimal academic literature by Pacific academics about Indigenous sexual expression or narratives. On the rare occasion sexuality is discussed it is done so implicitly through metaphor. For example, Anae’s (2017) paper titled “Nafanua and Reflections on Samoan Female Sexual Personhood” seldom mentions sexuality in explicit terms. As a respected Samoan academic, Anae had the opportunity to unapologetically discuss sexual personhood, but instead her paper positioned Nafanua (a female warrior chief) as an Indigenous example of female empowerment,

highlighting her strength by likening women's childbearing qualities to the lifecycle of a coconut.

The difficulty for Pacific academics is managing the line between producing academic content that is credible while also being respectful to cultural norms and expectations. How does one talk about sex when it is taboo to do so? Tupuola's (2018) work titled, "Learning Sexuality: Young Samoan Woman" addresses this issue front on. Tupuola crosses cultural boundaries while acknowledging how fa'asamoa (Samoa world view) practices will condemn her for being a young woman writing about sex. Openly discussing the traditional disciplinary mechanisms within fa'asamoa that could see her ostracized from her family, Tupuola suggests changes be made to these fa'asamoa covenants. Tupuola's (2018) argument is that these fa'asamoa values and principles need rethinking because they are colonial and thus heavily influenced by European Christian views, practices, and standards. According to Tupuola (2018) there is an emerging wave of young Samoan women who are willing to challenge fa'asamoa attitudes and the taboos related to conversations about sexuality. This article exemplifies Tupuola's foresight.

Anae (2017) and Tupuola's (2018) writing on Pacific sexuality exemplify some of the impacts colonisation has had on the ways Pacific peoples' do sex and gender. Mikaere (2017) speaks to these impacts directly claiming that colonisation broke the all-important balance in Indigenous cultures between the masculine and feminine energies. Mikaere (2017) speaks about this problem in terms of the Māori concepts of tapu and noa. Tapu is translated as sacred, prohibited, set apart, under atua (Gods) protection (Moorfield, n.d.-b), while noa is translated as freedom from the restrictions of tapu, ordinary, and unrestricted (Moorfield, n.d.-a). Because colonialists interpreted tapu and noa through their Christian lenses they skewed the meaning and relationships of these terms. Rather than being complementary forces noa and tapu were represented as binary oppositional forces, in terms of good and bad, pure and impure, clean and dirty. Implanting the inherent sexism of Christianity onto these concepts tapu was then associated with men while noa was associated with women. This alignment came out of the Christian belief that men are a vehicle for the spiritual and sacred while women are the vehicle of flesh and profanity. Through Christianity's perverse logic Indigenous women's sexuality and genitalia became associated with badness, impurity, and dirtiness. This colonial subjugation of women radically distorted the gendered realities of Indigenous women and their communities. Over time Indigenous Pacific communities blended their own cultural traditions and beliefs with the Christian doctrines and rhetoric of the colonialists (Sullivan, 2021) and Indigenous ways of being sexual were regulated out of existence.

Indigenous Sexual Expression

It is through Indigenous voices and stories that we can understand Indigenous sexual expression. Moreover, it is the Indigenous interpretations of our traditional stories, songs, chants, artworks and dances that matter as these practices can only be adequately understood from within their cultural context. Māori academics have done some interesting work exploring pre-colonial sexual expressions in terms of gender roles, takatāpui (same sex relationships), marital relations and the awesome power of female genitalia. A continual theme within this Māori scholarship is the importance of harmony and balance within all sexual practices. In Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) the importance of balance includes the balance between humans and the environment, male and female, the seen and the unseen, and Papa-tū-ā-nuku (deity of the land) and Rangi-nui (deity of the sky).

Returning to the balance between tapu and noa, Mikaere (2017) explains that the ability to impose restriction through tapu is always met with the ability to remove tapu. Removing tapu

is the practice of bringing about a state of noa, which is called whakanoa (removal of tapu). According to Mikarere (2017), women, “by virtue of their sexuality, are regarded as possessing special powers in mediating the boundaries of tapu and noa” (p. 71). Specifically, it is a woman’s vulva that has the ability to whakanoa and whakatapu (make tapu) (Mikarere, 2017). Māori pūrākau (stories) tell of ruahine (elderly woman) stepping over warriors preparing to leave for battle so as to whakatapu the warrior, to prepare them for battle. There are also pūrākau telling how men would eat cooked fern root that had been passed between the legs of a ruahine to enter whakatapu so they could enter the whare wananga (place of higher learning).

Mikaere (2017) also highlights the important role of pōtēteke (naked sexual dance) for Māori, whereby women used their sex openly and shamelessly to manipulate the audience. The “recognised centrality of female sexuality to survival meant that [Māori] women celebrated their femaleness with confidence, both expecting and exercising sexual autonomy” (Mikaere, 2017, p. 71). This is also shown in whakapohane, whereby a woman bares her genitals as a sign of contempt or disapproval. What these pūrākau make clear is that pre-colonial times Māori female genitalia and the woman they belonged to were believed to have super spiritual powers.

Similar to the pōtēteke that took place within Māori communities Samoan culture had the tradition of poula. Poula was a night of dance and pleasure where the dances were theatrical, humorous, sexy and provocative. The dancers would be naked or lightly clothed with small woven mats covering their genitals (McMullin, 2011). At poula, female dancers tease and entice male dancers encouraging them to join in their nakedness. After the dancing couples (men and women, women and women, men and men) and larger groups of people would disappear into the darkness of the night, sexually aroused because of the performances they had seen at the poula, to have sex. Missionaries condemned poula outlawing the practice.

There are many documented accounts of the public celebration of sexual expression throughout the Eastern Polynesian islands. In the Marquesan pūrākau of Kae, women masturbated with pandanus roots to fulfil their sexual needs (Guiart, 2008). While in Tahitian ‘Arioi’ society the unapologetic explicit displays of sexual expression of the Tahitians filled the notebooks of early European explorers (Moloney, 2005). Like their Samoan neighbours, polyamorous practices were common and accepted in Tahiti, and sexual knowledge and expertise was openly passed from generation to generation, between men and women (Moloney, 2005). In Tahiti “carnal knowledge was not the prerogative of men; not a secret to be learnt by women on their wedding night: Instead, it was openly taught and practiced by girls from an early age” (Moloney, 2005, p. 38). Much like Māori women, Indigenous Pacific women of Tahiti, Marques and Samoa were celebrated for their sexual power prior to colonisation and missionisation.

A Call for the Decolonisation of Sex

Māori academics, Aspin and Hutchings (2007), argue that “revealing the truth about our sexual past is fundamental to developing a full understanding of where we have come from as well as our place in the world today” (p. 435). However, the complication with investigating our sexual past is that much of what is recorded about Indigenous sexuality is written by non-Indigenous researchers and colonialists who perverted Indigenous sexuality when interpreting it through their own worldviews. Adding to this, Christianity and colonisation actively suppressed Indigenous sexuality so that many practices no longer exist and, if discussed, they are relegated to history as outdated practices. Just as colonisation dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their language and land it also dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their sexualities. To reclaim our Indigenous ways of being we therefore must also decolonise our sex and sexualities.

Now is the time for Indigenous people to reclaim sexual sovereignty over their sexual expressions. Indigenous communities are thriving with a “new generation of activists working hard to change today’s sexual landscape” (Littauer, 2015, p. 182). Littauer claims that “sexual self determination is ultimately a matter of social justice. Rebellious sexuality of the past has helped to create greater sexual democracy in the present, but it is up to us to forge a radical, ethical, and erotic sexual culture for the future” (2015, p. 184). Sullivan (2021) speaks of Indigenous “pussy power” and the need to “utilise our innate sexual weaponry to emancipate ourselves” (p. 3). Arguing for the need to bring visibility to the sexual expressions and behaviours of Indigenous women Sullivan (2021) argues that we must rewrite our sexual narratives to ensure our Indigenous identities, femininities and sexualities are portrayed as forms of strength, empowerment, and mana. Sullivan (2021) calls for a sex-positive Indigenous culture with social and political domains that promote bodily autonomy and agency while highlighting and empowering sexual expression. I take up this call for a decolonisation of sex and sexuality in the following section.

A Methodology for Re-indigenisation

Mana Moana people (power and vitality of the Pacific ocean that exists within Indigenous Pacific people) are intricate story tellers. We descend from lines of elaborate tulafale (Samoan orators) and eloquent whaikōrero (Māori orators) practitioners. Our stories are told through chiefs in the fonofale (meeting house) and on the paepae (orators’ bench). Our stories are told through the pulsating beat of the pate (drum), the rhythm of the i’e (mallet) hammering the tapa (the striking surface of the drum) and the a’u (tattoo tool). Many of our stories are now typed on computers, edited by supervisors and written into academic dissertations. Regardless of the modes of delivery, we continue to tell our stories.

Bringing our stories into the academy is a matter of talanoa. Tongan academic Timote Vaoleti first brought talanoa into the academy as a Pacific research methodology. Talanoa can be translated as a casual conversation, discussion, or sharing of stories (Vaoleti, 2006). Tala means talk, and noa means an absence of tapu (sacred). As a research method talanoa is rooted in Indigenous Pacific values, traditions, and practices grounded in an “Indigenous concept of relationally mindful critical oratory” (Tecun et al., 2018, p. 156). Talanoa allows the knowledge that resides in our Indigenous bodies, songs, dances, chants, prayers and artworks to be expressed. Moreover, in this research talanoa opens up the creative collective space for the voice of an Indigenous Pacific woman to be privileged.

Whitinui (2014) describes autoethnography as a culturally informed research practice that can validate Māori ways of knowing and being because it allows “native” methods of inquiry. According to Lee (2005) “Māori research should not only take into account cultural notions but also embody our experiences and keep our cultural notions intact” (p. 8). Autoethnography enables this by privileging the voice of the Indigenous researcher and the complexities of their narrative. This in turn contributes to the collective social, political, and cultural development of the Indigenous group (Lee, 2005). As Ellis et al. (2011) explains, autoethnography can be used to “systematically analyse personal experience to understand cultural experience” (p. 273).

Talanoa

I was raised as an only child by a solo mother. My parents had a fleeting summer romance after meeting at a Baha’i event. Born out of wedlock my existence contradicted the rules and regulations of the Baha’i faith. My mother’s indiscretion resulted in her being a strict Baha’i mother consumed with showing me how to lead a chaste and holy life. Baha’i writings detail

the need for “daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures” (Effendi, 1984, p. 30). Indoctrinated from birth I feared the physical and spiritual implications of breaking religious rules. I believed I would suffer punishment at the will of God if I broke the rules. I also feared my mother would disown me if I acted against the will of God.

Despite this, or because of this, I became a teenager that wanted to explore everything forbidden. At the age of 13 I had sex for the first time, though I didn't quite understand what I was doing. Halfway through the encounter one of the boy's family members walked in on us. I was embarrassed for being seen in such a vulnerable position. But I was also excited that I had been seen. I left the house and walked into town to meet a friend. I was full of the feeling that I had just been through an important initiation into womanhood. I wondered if people could tell by the sway of my hips as I walked along the road that I had just had sex for the first time.

I went on to have sex with others learning about sex through experimentation. I had no access to books or the internet and I had nobody to ask about sex. Living on an island with only one sexual health clinic, in a village where everyone knows everyone's business, I was unable to ask for sexual health information without my Baha'i mother finding out. My life split in two. During the day I lived a holy and chaste life as an exemplary Baha'i. I hosted devotionals, planned holy days, taught children's classes, attended all the youth events and said my prayers. During the night I learnt about sex under the mango tree in the empty section next to our house. Two years later, at the age of 15 and after moving to Aotearoa New Zealand I found myself pregnant. At 20 weeks I miscarried. I had kept my night-time habits a secret from my mother and was now able to keep my pregnancy and miscarriage a secret from her too.

A year later I became pregnant again. This time there was no miscarriage and my pregnancy became known. My mother did not beat me. She spiritually disowned me and cast me out of the family. I was summoned to the Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly (LSA) where I was interrogated by nine adults about my sexual habits. I lied and said I had only ever had one sexual encounter; the one that had caused my pregnancy. I begged for forgiveness. I claimed I would, henceforth, lead a pure, holy and chaste life. The LSA told me that God would punish me for being sexually active before marriage through the hardship I would endure as a 16 year old single mother. My fear of God was so great I did not have the confidence to leave the faith, even though I knew I would not stop being sexually active.

When my son was born I struggled to bond with him. I believed he was my punishment from God. At 23 I became pregnant again. This time I was secretly living with my boyfriend, to whom I had become pregnant. Again I was summoned to the LSA. This time I refused to meet with them because of the trauma I experienced from my previous meeting with them. Because I refused to meet with them they named me a “covenant breaker”, one of the worst spiritual crimes a Baha'i can commit. Despite my refusal to meet they still had immense power over me and they pressured me into marrying the father of my pregnancy. In fear of God, I obeyed. Shortly after our Baha'i marriage I experienced extreme domestic violence from my husband. I sought leave of the marriage for my safety. But the LSA ignored my request, instead, directing me to stay married for the full “year of patience”. The “year of patience” is when a couple actively seek a deepening of the sacred scriptures to rectify any marriage problems. With my life at risk I had to leave my marriage without the LSA's support. I was deeply hurt by the lack of care and support for me and my children. I stopped praying, attending Baha'i events, and making monetary contributions to the Baha'i Fund.

At 29 I became pregnant a further time. I had not been active in the Baha'i community for two years. Yet, I still received an email from the LSA condemning my continual disobedience and

removing all my rights as a Baha'i. Instead of feeling fearful of the spiritual punishments imposed upon me by the LSA, I felt relief. I saw what the LSA called God's will and plan was nothing more than man-made manipulation and control. Instead of fear I felt empowered. I felt proud to carry my daughter in my womb and bring her soul into this world. I no longer needed religion to tell me whether I was a good person or not. I knew I was a good person and that my sexual activity did not change my goodness.

Tinder

With hard work, support and healing I learnt how my religious upbringing, my unaddressed depression, the trauma of being physically abused by my husband, and my negative body image issues had generated a deep distrust of men and exacerbated my sense of low self-worth. Simultaneously, I learnt to accept my voracious sexual appetite. Accepting that I was not ready for a committed relationship, but that I still required regular sexual intimacy, allowed me to honour my sexual needs. I accepted that my sexual needs needed to be met by multiple people, at multiple times, and in multiple ways, and that this did not make me a bad person.

Tinder became my means of meeting my sexual needs by connecting with people who I could be sexually intimate with. Tinder enabled me to experience and learn how to be sexual on my own terms. My current tinder profile exemplifies my sexual growth and self-acceptance. My first profile photo shows my eyes, a penetrating gaze to entice the swiper. My second photo shows my breasts. I am in a vibrant colourful bikini with water lapping over my mounds. The last image is a boomerang video showing me poking out my tongue. My bio states:

Appreciate a hello before a DTF. Creeping cos my kids are old enough to snap me out. Good time, not a long time. MILF. Thicc. I like to eat *peach, melons, cherries, eggplant emoji*. I'm also good at maths. I like onesums, twosums, threesums and more. Holla *tongue emoji*

I know exactly the type of people that swipe right on me, so I purposefully swipe right on them and successfully match. After 6 years on Tinder I now have a large pool of regular people I have sex with, and seldom need to use the app. I refer to this pool of people as the 'rotation'.

#HOELIFE

I am not the exotic Polynesian woman who adorns billboards advertising holidays in Rarotonga. I am fat. I have stretch marks, cellulite, and skin discolouration. My seductiveness is that I fulfill desires, fetishes, and kinks. There are men that want a thicc (thick) woman, younger men who want a MILF (Mother I'd Like to Fuck), men that like to be dominated, men that have partners but are seeking external sexual relationships, and men that want to be unapologetically themselves without fear of judgement. Society tells us that desirable women have a skinny waist, tight arse and perky breasts. But, the men I meet want a woman with curves and rolls of fat. They want thicc girl sex. With the help of Tinder I became a thicc single mother confident in my sexual energy. I am no longer shy or embarrassed about who I have sex with, or how often I have sex.

I take up the motto, 'living my best hoe life'. What started as a joke about my overactive Tinder life quickly developed into a term of sexual liberation and sovereignty. 'Hoe' is often used as a derogatory name for someone who is sexually promiscuous. I self-identify as a 'hoe' to embrace and celebrate my sexual promiscuity. Calling myself a 'hoe' is empowering for me in the same way the word 'thicc' is empowering for women who self-identify as fat. Calling

myself a hoe also encourages other women to embrace their inner hoe. Supporting others to embrace their sexuality is now an important part of my life.

I actively share my sexual learnings on a private Instagram page titled “Cock and Culture”. I post information, stories, experiences, and advice about sex to stimulate discussion and learning. The content of my posts include, amongst other things, diagrams of vulvas, images showing where the clitoris is, my sexual diary, discussions about how pegging should simply be referred to as anal sex, demonstration videos of sexual positions and oral sex techniques, and polls allowing people to compare sexual preferences. I actively promote masturbation as a form of meditation. Within my community of followers there are women who have never masturbated. I encourage women to make love to themselves and explore their bodies identifying their key areas of pleasure. I do this from a place of non-judgemental, open, and honest talanoa. I do this to support the reclamation of sex from religious dogma, churches, conservative families, bigotry, shame, abuse, trauma, and colonisation.

Maramataka and maramafaka

I grew up knowing the moon was important. It was common in the Cook Islands for fishermen and gardeners to have the cycles of the moon dictate their days of productivity and rest. Teenage girls would usually menstruate at the same time due to the pull of the moon. And it was a source of humour in our village that women were considered crazy on the full moon. In my search to learn more about the phases of the moon and how the moon affected me I began working with Meretini Bennett-Huxtable, a tohunga (expert) of Maramataka.

Maramataka can be translated as the turning of the moon (Te Papa Tongarewa–Museum of New Zealand, n.d.). Te maramataka is the name given to the Māori calendar that maps the dynamic relationship between the moon and the elemental forces of the environment (such as the earth, water, air, the sun and other stars). Te maramataka is used to indicate the best times to do particular activities, such as planting out seeds, harvesting, fishing, fighting, talking and travelling. Bennett-Huxtable uses social media to teach people how to implement Maramataka in their daily lives. A key tool in this learning is a QR code Bennett-Huxtable developed that overlays peoples online calendars with moon phases (Bennett-Huxtable, n.d.). This code includes information about the oceans, gardening, physical activity, and energy levels within each moon phase. What was missing for me in Bennett-Huxtable’s work was an understanding of the relationship between moon phases and sexual energy. We decided to work together to address this gap.

I began by tracking the sexual drive and sexual activities of myself and a small number of other women, over several months. I journaled daily, noting every sexual interaction I had. This included how sexually aroused I felt each day, whether I needed to have solo or partnered sex and what emotions I felt during my sexual activities. My journaling was detailed, specific and explicit. With Bennett-Huxtable’s knowledge of Maramataka, my journal, and the other women’s observations, Bennett-Huxtable and I were able to detail the different types of sexual energies present during various moon phases. I called this new information about the connection of moon energies and sexual energies Maramafaka. Created through my experiences, the Maramafaka is the culmination of the many years of research and practice I have put into this kaupapa. The Maramafaka is now part of Bennett-Huxtable’s Maramataka QR code (Bennett-Huxtable, n.d.), but remains the intellectual property of this author. The following table is taken from the Maramafaka. It details the moon phase Rākaunui.

Rākaunui

Practical Application: a good time in Mahuru to plant kūmara.

Kare-a-roto: time to start prioritising; good for all things; everything will grow positively

Mahinga Kai: a very good day for fishing but not eeling; seed plants grow vigorously; plant kūmara

Kai: medium kai intake; start to lessen vegetables and protein

Korikori Tinana: medium physical activity; speed and reaction training; good for increasing muscle

Wāhine: ovulation; prime opportunity over these few days for successful fertilisation

Tāne: high energy and prime flow; prime opportunity over these days for successful fertilisation

Maramafaka: beastmode; high energy; initiating and inciting; actively seeking sex; needing physical interaction; plagued by sexual thoughts. (Tiana Griffin, personal communication of information taken from the Maramafaka, November 11, 2022)

I now use our Maramataka to guide my sexual interactions. There are certain sexual partners I choose to have sex with on Rākaunui. I know our sexual encounter has the potential to be passionate and exhilarating so I choose partners whose sexual style and expressions are best suited to Rākaunui. Other moon phases require different partners. The following moon phases and their sexual energies in the Maramafaka are detailed below:

Korekore: mischievous; explorations; looking for alternative ways to have sexual needs met

Tangaroa Mua: sexual flow; love making and heightened intensity

Ōtāne: gratitude to Tāne Mahuta; rituals for Tāne.

Mauri: intense and intimate sexual encounters resulting in multiple and expressive orgasms; period of high trust, communication, and openness. (Tiana Griffin, personal communication of information taken from the Maramafaka, November 11, 2022)

During the moon phase Korekore I may choose to have sex with someone new from my tinder 'rotation' because Korekore is a time for exploring and being mischievous. The excitement of having a new sexual partner aligns well with this moon phase. During Ōtāne I will intentionally seek to pleasure my male sex partner rather than seeking pleasure for myself. During Mauri I will have sex with someone that I have a more intimate relationship with, or someone that I am more emotionally invested in. Attuning to the moon has enhanced my sexual expressions because it has allowed me to choose compatible sexual partners. There are sexual expressions that are purely 'fucking' and there are sexual expressions that are 'love making'. I am not restricted as to who I fuck or make love with or when I do so. But I am now able to use the Maramataka to guide and support my choices.

Re-indigenising my sexuality

This talanoa tells of the Baha'i suppression of my sexuality and how this colonialism affected me, an Indigenous Pacific woman. This colonial dispossession directly resulted in me experiencing domestic violence, solo parenting and being made an outcast. To reclaim my Indigenous sexual sovereignty I had to heal the trauma of this violence. Trauma is endemic to all Indigenous people and healing colonial trauma requires reconnecting with Indigenous knowledge and practices. In the Pacific healing is called *teu le vā*. *Teu le vā* is the practice of mending a void.

Re-indigenising my sexuality has not meant changing my sexual behaviour. It has meant embracing it. My sex is no longer a thing to be shunned, silenced or rejected. It is an integral inseparable aspect of my whole being. This integration and healing came from reconnecting

with Indigenous knowledge and practices. I found myself reflected in the stories of my Pacific tipuna and found the strength and power inherent to my Indigenous female body. Reconnecting with my indigeneity has provided further opportunity for me to challenge and reflect on my assumptions and beliefs about what it means to be an Indigenous sexually active and powerful woman. I now find my sexual expression can be utilised to whakanoa (remove tapu) and whakatapu (to make tapu). It is not only sexual orgasms I receive, but spiritual orgasms, what I call Hawaiki level orgasms.

Conclusion

Weaving academic literature with the Pacific research method of talanoa I tell the story of a Mana Moana va'ine's reclamation of her Indigenous sexual identity. Beginning with historical accounts of sexual expression in the Pacific, I highlight the impacts of colonisation and missionisation on Pacific sexuality. Christianity is shown to have deeply perverted Pacific sexual expression, especially for Pacific women. The importance and significance of female genitalia in the Pacific, before missionaries enforced their patriarchal beliefs, emphasises the powerful role of Pacific women within Pacific communities. In collating the literature written about Indigenous sexuality in the Pacific it becomes clear that the writings of early missionaries, colonialists and non-Indigenous academics dominate this space; there are too few Indigenous Pacific stories or voices in the academy.

To countervail the missing voices of Pacific womens' accounts of Indigenous sexuality I present the story of the malaga (back and forth movement) of an Indigenous Mana Moana va'ine re-indigenising her sexuality. This autoethnographic account of sex in the Pacific arrives via the Pacific methodology of talanoa, privileging my voice and allowing me to teu le vā (mend the void). This talanoa enlivens the essence of Mana Moana va'ine energy by connecting the traditional stories of powerful Pacific women with my own sexual empowerment via Tinder and #HOELIFE. The re-indigenisation of my sexuality is further activated through the creation and practice of Maramafaka. In the Maramafaka the powerful relationship between female sexuality and the natural environment is celebrated and made accessible.

Sex the 'Pacific Way' is an Indigenous sexual narrative. It is the normalisation of the fluidity of sexual expression drawn from Indigenous Pacific energy and wisdom. This talanoa lays down a wero (challenge) to Pacific academics to write the Indigenous narratives of our people, including sexual narratives. By sharing my sexual experiences I hope to inspire Indigenous people to re-indigenise their sexualities, embracing their sexual desires unapologetically, as our tūpuna once did. My dream is that all Mana Moana va'ine will realise and experience the energetic spiritual potential of their sexuality and learn how to express this power unashamedly.

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