Tīfaifai of French Polynesia and the Internet
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Introduction
The internet is a powerful tool of contemporary communication, facilitating the processes of transnational information exchange, commerce, and opinion. It is therefore not surprising that images of and information regarding Pacific art proliferate on the internet as people share information, look for sources of inspiration and participate in commerce. Pacific art featured on the internet provides a window into wide-ranging interests in and uses for art forms by anyone in the world with access to the internet. What is placed on the internet about Pacific art may range widely; postings may draw upon the art for new purposes, add new insights or even carry incomplete or distorted information.

In this paper, I provide a brief background to tīfaifai and an overview of the kinds of information online revolving around tīfaifai, sometimes referred to as Polynesian “quilts,” which have been made in Tahiti and many other islands of French Polynesia for over 150 years. I then proceed to a discussion of two contemporary internet developments regarding tīfaifai -- that of tourism-related sites which include allusions to tīfaifai and that of sites for people who wish to draw inspiration from tīfaifai in fashioning their own textiles. I have chosen to investigate these two arenas of internet information because they exemplify ways in which tīfaifai and its uses may be modified by others who are not themselves part of the core of island artisans who create tīfaifai.

Background and Overview of Tīfaifai on the Internet
Tīfaifai are the syncretic result of the combined influences of indigenous barkcloth traditions and introduced Western quilting. The origins of tīfaifai date as far back as the early to mid-19th century. Evidence suggests that the earliest tīfaifai were probably piecework style textiles, created by Mā‘ohi (indigenous) women sewing many pieces of geometrically shaped cotton fabric together to form designs, some of which were undoubtedly based on Western piecework designs and some, perhaps, unique to islanders. The term tīfaifai, usually translated as “to piece or patch repeatedly,” suggests that the piecework style was prevalent in the initial stages of tīfaifai creation. Early piecework tīfaifai were made by groups of women, a practice carried forward from the creation of barkcloth. Applique designs made by folding cloth into fourths and cutting out a symmetrical design to be sewn to a contrasting background cloth may have also been created by the mid-19th century. Neither style uses a middle batting layer or is quilted. In the Society Islands, applique design tīfaifai have been more popular than piecework style for many decades; they are now almost exclusively created throughout French Polynesia. With the arrival of outsiders and Western cotton cloth, many of the uses of barkcloth were transferred to tīfaifai. Tīfaifai became and continue to be highly valued gifts for major life events such as marriages, twenty-first birthdays, departures, and sometimes funerals. They have also been used to decorate beds, typically for special occasions only or upon the arrival of a guest. Islanders have also used tīfaifai to decorate walls and ceilings in meeting places for important gatherings and to encircle people with a gift of tīfaifai to honor their contributions and achievements. Islanders who live outside the islands often take or are given tīfaifai as reminders of home and unbroken bonds. As significant symbols of Polynesian heritage, tīfaifai express Mā‘ohi values, symbolize human relationships, and convey Polynesian pride. Many communicate islanders’ vital connections to their island environment. Tīfaifai also embody a legacy of intercultural interactions over time.

As with most art forms, some changes have occurred over time. Tīfaifai designs, methods of construction, and uses have not remained static, as now documented in several scholarly works by Patrick O’Reilly, Joyce D. Hammond and Michèle de Chazeaux and Marie-Noëlle Frémy. With the arrival of the computer age, more changes have occurred as tīfaifai images and information have reached people worldwide. Vast as the internet is, it is impossible to characterize thoroughly how tīfaifai and information about tīfaifai are presented through such varied
venues as Google searches, blogs, tweets, Flickr and Pinterest sites, YouTube videos, academic articles, commercial advertising, Wikipedia-like entries, museums’ online collections, etc. However, some general trends emerge.

In a kind of reversal of the flow of outside influences to the islands which figured in the origins of tīfaifai, today there is a flow of information about tīfaifai that can reach people anywhere through the internet. Some of it is created by tīfaifai makers themselves, but much of it is generated by others. Pinterest and Flickr are two sources of tīfaifai images. Placing the search term tīfaifai into Google or Bing Images brings up many, many images of tīfaifai—some of which are commercial versions of machine-sewn tīfaifai made outside the islands, but most of which are made by islanders. A few images also appear of tīfaifai-inspired textiles made by non-islanders. Many postings of tīfaifai images are created in frank admiration of the art form. Given the visuality of tīfaifai, it is not surprising that people use the internet to show and share images of tīfaifai. Some commercial sites, for example, post images of their machine-sewn, factory-made textiles on the internet. Other images of tīfaifai that are hand or machine-sewn and made by islanders appear in tourists’ posts, in posts by citizens from France who live in the islands for several years, and by journalists in and outside of the islands.

In addition to images of tīfaifai, there is also a great deal of information about tīfaifai that might be categorized as “knowledge for knowledge’s sake.” For example, several museums around the world have acquired some tīfaifai for their collections and the information that is available on museums’ web sites, while usually sparse, falls into this first category.

Not surprisingly, given the internet’s expansive potential, much of what is written about tīfaifai is associated with the commercial interests of promoting tourism or of selling tīfaifai. The latter includes a small number of islanders’ websites and a few companies that create factory-made tīfaifai fashioned outside of the islands. To date, factory-made tīfaifai displayed on the internet has had little impact on island tīfaifai makers who sell their work primarily to locals and French citizens from France living in the islands. A greater “on the ground” impact is that of the imported commercially-produced tīfaifai sold in island stores.

In what follows, I explore two trends of tīfaifai connected to the internet—that of promotional materials for tourism and that associated with people (primarily women) who are not from the islands who wish to make tīfaifai-inspired textiles. Tourism has little impact on tīfaifai designs or creation, and textile aficionados’ inspiration from tīfaifai also has negligible effects on islanders’ making of tīfaifai. Yet, despite the fact that neither trend is having a major impact on tīfaifai makers’ work or lives (at least at this time), the two trends respectively extend and transform tīfaifai use and creation. Over time, it is possible that their existence will have greater impacts on the creation and uses for tīfaifai made by women within the islands.

I have chosen to investigate these two areas of internet information because they exemplify ways in which an art form may be modified by others who are not part of the core of artisans who create tīfaifai but who, nevertheless, draw upon them for their own purposes. The two trends pertaining to contemporary tīfaifai—the incorporation of tīfaifai into tourism promotion and activities, as well as the inspiration drawn from tīfaifai for non-islanders who wish to make similar textiles—are associated with what might be regarded as largely opposing philosophies. Within tourism, the use of tīfaifai may be seen as an extension and validation of islanders’ tīfaifai traditions through dissemination of knowledge and repetition of past tīfaifai practices. For people outside the islands interested in creating textiles inspired by tīfaifai, there is an emphasis on disseminating tīfaifai knowledge to lead to innovation and creativity. Paradoxically, however, below these two surface readings of the trends, there is evidence of contradictions to the philosophies. Within tourism, there are deviations from past understandings and uses that overturn fundamental values associated with tīfaifai creation and use, and within the borrowing of tīfaifai for artistic inspiration there is a reinforcement of long-held values and practices of islanders’ tīfaifai practices.

**Tourism and Tīfaifai on the Internet**

References to tīfaifai on the internet are often associated with tourism businesses in or outside of French Polynesia (e.g. travel companies, airlines, tourist accommodations, guide books, etc.), as well as some tourists’ postings of photos and commentary.
Along with dance, food, and other distinctive aspects of island culture, ʻifafai are presented in tourism promotion sites as part of an entrancing island culture. ʻIfafai may also be used to establish a Polynesian ambiance for tourists, and, as will later be explained, ʻifafai may also be used within some destination weddings for tourists.

Most tourism-related descriptions of ʻifafai include an explanation of the indigenous word ʻifafai, a description of the textiles and some information on their history. Tahiti Nui Travel’s website, for example, offers the following observation: “Literally meaning ‘applique’, the ʻifafai is part of the Polynesian family life.” The literal translation suggested, however, does not coincide with the explanation given by the Fare Vāna’a, the official academy of Reo Mā’ohi (the indigenous language of Tahiti). The academy translates ʻifai as patch (the reduplicative form implies a repeated action) and defines ʻifafai as: “Couverture faite d’un drap sur laquelle on a cousu des appliques ou encore faite de morceaux de tissu assembles.” (Cover made from a sheet on which one has sewn some applique [motifs] or still made from joined pieces of cloth.)

Errors in information are also found in Tahiti.com, another tourism promotion website that declares “This form of tapestry consists of handmade applique designs.” In the common usage of the word for a woven textile, tapestry is not a correct term for ʻifafai, and the implication that all ʻifafai are sewn by hand is incorrect since machine-stitched ʻifafai are also created in the islands. Furthermore, as the Fare Vāna’a site explains, piecwork style ʻifafai is still extant (if less common). Even though it is not as prevalent as the applique style, to suggest that the applique style is the only style is incorrect.

Descriptions of ʻifafai on tourism-related websites usually mention the origins of ʻifafai as deriving from introduced Western quilts, as exemplified by this passage from Tahiti.com:

It wasn’t until the 18th century when the wives of Protestant missionaries taught patchwork techniques to the Polynesian women. Before that, they only knew how to make tapa (barkcloth) from breadfruit and banyan trees.

This and similar passages typically overlook the important influence of barkcloth creation which preceded the making of ʻifafai, influencing early work organization of ʻifafai, color and design preferences, and, very significantly, the ways in which ʻifafai replaced several ceremonial uses of barkcloth. Descriptions may also emphasize ways in which ʻifafai designs convey distinctively Polynesian themes of the environment and way of life. On Tahiti Tourisme’s North American site, for example, the designs are said to “usually represent nature: flowers, leaves, fruits.”

On Tahiti Tourisme’s French language site, the following statement appears:

Le goût de l’observation et l’amour de la nature se retrouvent dans les somptueux ʻifafai, couvre-lits aux motifs végétaux ou ethniques cousus à la main. L’engouement des femmes pour cet élément de décoration typique des fare, ou maisons polynésiennes, témoignent d’une réelle créativité.”

(The taste of observation and the love of nature are found in the sumptuous ʻifafai, bedspreads with plant or ethnic motifs sewn by hand. The passion of women for this decorative element of the typical fare, or Polynesian house, testifies to a real creativity.)

In addition, some descriptions of ʻifafai also include remarks on the ways in which ʻifafai have figured in island culture as gifts bestowed upon people for significant events such as marriages, birthdays and appreciations.

The Tahiti Traveler site includes the information that:

The tifaifai is a first choice of present that is traditionally offered for special occasions as wedding ceremony or a birth. This is a resistant gift that will symbolize the event to which it is linked. More than a wedding gift, the tifaifai plays an important role during the traditional wedding ceremony. It is used to cover the newlyweds reminding them of their new and main preoccupation: ensure their
descendants. Nowadays, the tīfaifai decorates the Polynesian houses in various ways: as a pillowcase, a tablecloth, a bedspread or as a tapestry.  

These descriptions may be critiqued primarily for shaping partial explanations to reinforce Polynesian “ambiance traits” such as nature or “ethnic” motifs in tīfaifai and the use of tīfaifai in familial contexts. While nature motifs predominate in appliqué designs, descriptions fail to mention that in the past and present some tīfaifai motifs are based on Western ideology and items incorporated into islanders’ lives. These include Christian iconography and religious themes, as well as motifs such as chandeliers, crowns, vases, and peacocks. The use of tīfaifai as wall hangings in large halls at events such as Christian and political gatherings are also not mentioned. Further, the reference to covering the newlyweds with tīfaifai is a custom abandoned by many islanders in preference to simply giving the tīfaifai to a couple in a wedding celebration. In short, the descriptions selectively emphasize traits or draw upon the past in ways to reinforce tourism’s romanticized depiction of islanders and their way of life. Together, tourism-related explanations and descriptions of what tīfaifai are, how they are made and how they are used constitute a means of communicating that tīfaifai are unique cultural products of the islands and part of the Polynesian difference that awaits a visitor. Journalists’ accounts of tīfaifai, which typically contain much of the same information, may also contribute to tourists’ interest in tīfaifai, as do tourists’ own posted images of tīfaifai, sometimes taken at a venue such as the annual Salon du Tīfaifai and the Heiva Rima ‘i artisans’ fair in July.  

A second set of internet venues that draw upon tīfaifai as part of the “ambiance” of the islands are sites that display tīfaifai on guests’ beds in promotional materials for small establishments, or, in a few cases, in larger hotels and resorts. Most often, the tīfaifai appear in a photograph of a guest bedroom without any explanation. One pension, however, on the island of Huahine, carries the name “Tīfaifai and Café” as a play on “bed and breakfast,” since placing a tīfaifai on a guest’s bed has been a time-honored gesture of welcome. Ironically, this pension’s website shows no beds decorated with tīfaifai.

In addition to placing unique tīfaifai on each room’s bed in their establishment, as revealed in the photos of their website, the “Pension Tama Resort” of Raivavae, states that it offers guests the opportunity to learn how to make a tīfaifai.

Les activités sont orientées vers la découverte de l’île, mais également vers l’artisanat avec l’opportunité d’apprendre à confectionner un tīfaifai ou à tresser un panier, grâce au savoir-faire d’Eléonore.  

(Activities are oriented toward discovering the island, but equally toward artisanship with the opportunity to learn to make a tīfaifai or to weave a basket, thanks to the knowledge of Eléonore.)

Several of Clarisse Paulin’s tīfaifai, created expressly for visitors’ beds in her pension on the island of Raivavae, were featured in Air Tahiti Magazine in 2013. The photos were included as part of the lengthy article about Raivavae in a section that highlighted “a living arts and crafts culture.” (Figure 4) A third way that potential tourists may encounter tīfaifai on the internet is through the promotion of events that feature tīfaifai-making and exhibitions. Together, both Tahiti Tourisme and the Service de l’Artisanat Traditionnel promote artisan exhibitions that occur year round on Tahiti, many of which feature tīfaifai. The Salon du Tīfaifai, exclusively devoted to the exhibition and sale of tīfaifai, is itself an annual two-week occurrence. (Figure 5)

Finally, a fourth association of tīfaifai with tourism is connected to several resorts and the tourist attraction “Tiki Village” all of which offer a “traditional Tahitian wedding” to tourists. Images of couples, often dressed imaginatively as ancient Tahitians, may include wrapping the pair in a tīfaifai to imitate what has largely become a historical custom, that of enveloping a couple in a tīfaifai. (Figure 6) In “The Polynesian Wedding Ceremony, What You’ll Experience When Marrying in Tahiti” Donna Heiderstadt describes such a destination wedding, ending with the statement: “The vows culminate with the wrapping of the couple in a traditional tīfaifai, a colorful Tahitian wedding quilt, as they are pronounced man and wife.”

It might be argued that internet postings
that describe 法宝ai and their customary roles in island culture serve to support and extend the 法宝ai tradition. Welcoming guests by placing 法宝ai on their beds may be viewed as an extension of honoring guests to a family home by placing a precious hand-sewn 法宝ai onto their beds. Of course, as is true of the wedding ceremonies for tourists that include a 法宝ai wrapping of the couple, tourists are paying for the privilege, whereas within island tradition, payment was never involved. BESTOWED upon relatives as wedding presents, 法宝ai carried with them the love of kin whose creativity, time and resources for purchasing the materials for creating a 法宝ai were embedded within the gift.

Similarly, 法宝ai wrapped around a marrying tourist couple is not gifted to them, and even if a hand-sewn 法宝ai is utilized, it will be used repeatedly with all couples. The heartfelt emotion that is associated with a gift 法宝ai is not part of the experience that tourists have with 法宝ai. Moreover, because pensions and hotels that use 法宝ai on beds know that tourists primarily perceive the textiles as part of Polynesian ambiance, many establishments use imported, factory-made 法宝ai which are less expensive and more disposable than what would be considered appropriate in family traditions with 法宝ai.

What one might expect of a combination of 法宝ai and tourism on the internet are 法宝ai sold as souvenirs. However, people from outside the islands who come to the islands as tourists tend not to purchase 法宝ai. French citizens from France who work several years in the islands, by contrast, often obtain a 法宝ai before leaving as a meaningful reminder of their stay. Their souvenir 法宝ai is not, however, a tourist souvenir.

Textile Artisans and 法宝ai
Although not as numerous as 法宝ai on tourism-related sites, there are references to 法宝ai on the internet by and for people outside of the islands who wish to draw inspiration from 法宝ai for their own textile creations. Their motivations are to create their own versions of 法宝ai as creative expression, while at the same time avoiding appropriation of an island tradition that they respect. As is true of tourism-related sites with 法宝ai information, some of the postings targeted to those who might wish to make their own 法宝ai-inspired textiles provide some background information to 法宝ai.

An emphasis on innovation, combined with the replication of some artistic principles, such as folding and cutting an applique design to sew to a background fabric, encourages a person to be creative, while at the same time drawing on the strongest aesthetic principles of the 法宝ai tradition—the use of color to enhance a design and motifs, symmetry (often of a four-fold nature), and motifs that are meaningful to the creator.

Web sites with information about how to create 法宝ai designs may be created by textile artisans who write about ways to draw inspiration from 法宝ai aesthetic principles and, at the same time, honor the 法宝ai tradition of not appropriating others’ designs without their permission. To those interested in creating a 法宝ai-inspired work, the message is frequently conveyed that they should strive to make an original work through their choice of subject matter and designs. So, for example, citing the inspiration that islanders draw from their own environment, non-islanders are encouraged to draw from what is near to them. As one blogger wrote, “Recently I attended a workshop run by my local guild on 法宝ai quilts . . . We were encouraged to develop our own designs” 19 Even in designs created as patterns for others to use, adherence to the idea of avoiding appropriation of islanders’ designs is conveyed, as exemplified in a 法宝ai-inspired design termed “Texas Style” with longhorns, suns and stars (Figure 7) or that of a design called Scottish Thistle. 20

Describing her workshop “Playing with 法宝ai,” Dijanne Cevaal, author of 法宝ai Renaissance, writes that participants will be “ . . . using the technique of the wonderful Polynesian whole cloth quilts, but using modern inspirations.” 21 She also points out that a design’s reverse (what is left when cutting out the applique design) can be used to create a different 法宝ai. Unlike 法宝ai makers in the islands, Cevaal dyes many of her fabrics and encourages workshop participants to consider that design variant as well. (Figure 8)

In a connection to tourism-related postings, there are occasional trips designed expressly for women (and their families) to visit French Polynesia in order to combine their interest in textiles with a trip to the islands. For example, a 2014 “quilt seminar at sea” was advertised via the internet. 22 The information included the fact that travelers would be visiting the Salon du 法宝ai held in Pape’ete, Tahiti,
and that, among other textile classes on offer, two special classes were to be held aboard ship themed around tīfaifai inspiration. One class was going to paint tīfaifai-like designs on fabric and the other was going to work on pillow cushion sized tīfaifai.

Another trip occasionally offered by Dierdra McElroy, an American who spent part of her childhood on Tahiti, is for travelers interested in textile arts. Also advertised via the internet, her trips include an opportunity for the travelers to create a small appliqué work of wall-hanging size inspired by classic tīfaifai (four-fold, contiguous appliqué designs). Respecting and perpetuating islanders’ ethics, McElroy also urges women to make unique tīfaifai designs that reflect their own experiences in the islands.23

Several short videos about tīfaifai and tīfaifai-making on the internet serve the same interests. For example, a Japanese video encourages tīfaifai artistry for Japanese women who are inspired by the work of local tīfaifai maker Miri Vidal of Mo’orea, an artist who has an internet presence and who welcomes visitors to her home/studio.24

Discussion and Conclusions
The tradition of tīfaifai, once primarily concentrated in the creation and use of tīfaifai by islanders has, through its internet manifestations, expanded to include a virtual presence. Many people who have never heard of tīfaifai may encounter this Pacific art form for the first time by surfing the internet. While information and evidence of time-honored principles and values connected to tīfaifai appear in some postings, as do indications of islanders’ innovations for tīfaifai and tīfaifai-making, much of what appears on the internet regarding tīfaifai is shaped by motivations other than those that island tīfaifai makers themselves pursue.

Ramifications of tīfaifai’s presence on the internet manifested within the islands are just emerging. Many tīfaifai makers do not use computers or, if they sell tīfaifai using the internet as part of their strategy, they relegate computer use to younger members of their families. A few use the internet to view tīfaifai that appear on various websites, concentrated in such areas as Google Images, Pinterest, and Flickr. However, it is primarily people outside of the islands who access internet sites with tīfaifai information, and currently it is difficult to predict just how much a tīfaifai internet presence may influence tīfaifai creation and use in the islands.

Offering tourists sights and experiences that are representative of a different culture is standard practice in cultural tourism. As enacted for visitors, a performance, whether it be a marriage ceremony, the creation of an ambiance through decor, or something else, is not part of “regular” culture for the people whose culture is enacted. However, if the performance takes part within a culture or involves performers who are themselves part of a society represented, then the performance may also be viewed as a new element of a changing culture. Tourism venues for placing tīfaifai on guests’ beds and incorporating tīfaifai into tourists’ weddings lend themselves to tīfaifai performances for tourists. The dissemination of information about these practices that occurs on the internet in both written words and images serves to publicize and encourage these performances.

In perpetuating culture (albeit in altered form), tourism may be said to play a supportive role in the tīfaifai tradition. The trends of displaying tīfaifai on tourists’ beds and using tīfaifai in tourist wedding ceremonies extend traditional uses of tīfaifai into new realms. Furthermore, despite some erroneous and incomplete information about tīfaifai that is sometimes included in tourism information, general explanations and descriptions of tīfaifai by tourism promoters and tourists themselves play a supportive role for acknowledging tīfaifai as a vital Polynesian tradition.

However, the greatest change tourism promotes in the tīfaifai milieu that is reinforced by the internet is the commercialization of tīfaifai performances. One pays for the privilege of having a tīfaifai on a bed in a pension and one pays for being enveloped in a tīfaifai in a wedding ceremony. Although the performances mimic the use of tīfaifai in past and present Māʻōhi culture, they severely undermine the strong principle that the presence of a tīfaifai signals generosity and is not associated with a commercial transaction.

Nevertheles, commercialization of tīfaifai is increasingly a reality in island society. Some families make tīfaifai to sell to other islanders and anyone else who wishes to buy them. Selling tīfaifai has stimulated some changes in tīfaifai-making and led to the development of new designs, changes that many tīfaifai makers regard as part of the expected “evolution” of the art form. In fact, the argument can be made
that if selling tīfaifai was not occurring, far fewer tīfaifai would be made and the art form might be at risk of disappearing. If more visitors are influenced by internet tīfaifai information, this may lead to adaptive changes in tīfaifai made for tourism purposes or for sale.25

The internet sites created to support inspiration for non-islanders making their own tīfaifai might not be considered supportive of tradition. However, an emphasis on innovation is a long-held value to avoid appropriating another’s design. Among island tīfaifai makers, there is an understanding that permission should be sought to copy another’s design. At the very least, introduced changes can alter another’s design. Throughout tīfaifai history, this ethic has been one of the most important forces for supporting innovation within tīfaifai tradition.

To date, the internet’s dissemination of information about tīfaifai to the world appears to play a relatively weak role in its impact on tīfaifai creation in the islands, but the dispersal of information plays a significant role in shaping outsiders’ perceptions and, in some cases, interactions with tīfaifai. In time, knowledge of tīfaifai through the internet, through visitors’ acquaintance with tīfaifai, and through the increasing exposure of non-islanders to tīfaifai in expositions and museums around the world may instigate further changes in tīfaifai creation and use in the islands.

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Tahiti Tourisme. (North American website) http://tahiti-tourisme.com/

Tahiti Tourisme (French website) http://www.tahiti-tourisme.fr/decouvrir-tahiti/culture/artisanat


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Endnotes

1 In addition to my recent research about tīfaifai conducted on the internet, this paper draws upon research about tīfaifai I undertook in three separate periods of fieldwork in French Polynesia in 1978, 2013, and 2014. The word tīfaifai may be employed to refer to one or more textiles.


3 Information on the history of tīfaifai has been compiled by Joyce D. Hammond, 1986 and 2014, as well as by Michèle de Chazeau and Marie-Noëlle Frémy, Le Tīfaifai (Pape’ete, Tahiti: Au Vent des Îles, 2012). Dierdra McElroy, 2002, suggests that German sailors may have introduced islanders to scherenschnitte, a design cut out of paper, as possible inspiration for applique tīfaifai designs http://www.thequiltercommunity.comwcc2f52e-ab233.htm (accessed 30 April 2014).

4 Exceptionally, in Rurutu in the Austral Islands the piece-work style continues to be made alongside the applique style.

5 I use Fare Vāna’a’s orthographic rendition of the word tīfaifai, which uses a long mark over the first letter i. However, when referring to others’ work in which the mark does not appear, I do not add it. I also do not italicize the word tīfaifai when quoting a source that does not italicize it.

6 Tahitians and other islanders born in French Polynesia are also French citizens.

7 By contrast, imported, factory-made “look-alike” tīfaifai sold at low prices in the islands are blamed for decreased island sales by local women. A few islanders simplify applique tīfaifai designs in order to offer competitive prices.


16 The article and its images are available online: https://www.airtahiti.com/ebooks/78/r (accessed 17 May 2014)


20 “Texas Style Tīfaifai with Longhorns, Suns and Stars,” http://www.etsy.com/listing/101738711/hawaiian-quilt-texas-style-quilt (17 May 2014) was created by Elena McDowell. Despite the inclusion of the word Hawaiian in the URL, this is a four-folded design, which is associated with the “classic” applique style of folding in French Polynesia. The Scottish Thistle design is one from the patterns of “The Tīfaifai Collection of Roxanne McElroy,” mother of Dierdra McElroy (see endnote 19).


22 Quilt Seminars at Sea, Tahiti and Society Islands http://www.quiltcruises.com/Tahiti14/ (accessed 14 February 2014)

23 Dierdra McElroy, professional quilt artist http://www.dierdrameclroy.webs.com (accessed 17 May 2014)


25 Tīfaifai made for sale to French people who reside for a few years in the islands as part of their careers have sometimes been made to accommodate their preferences: e.g., designs made with two shades of the same color or the creation of “tableau” or scene depictions in tīfaifai made with appliqued motifs.