

## RESEARCH STATEMENT

### Original Creative Work

#### Citation:

Gaskell, I & Thomas, L 2005, 'A play : the Meke' [commissioned by the Fiji Arts Council for the Fiji delegation to the 9th Festival of Pacific Arts in Palau, 2004], creative work.

#### Research Background

- Field – Performing Arts
- Context – Indigenous performance for the South Pacific Festival of the Arts in Palau, 2004
- Research Question – How can culturally-relevant indigenous performance items be incorporated into a Western theatre form?

#### Research Contribution

- Innovation –The play attempted to achieve a syncretic blend of cultural “texts” within a Euro-American theatre aesthetic.
- New Knowledge –Theatre, from a conventional western perspective, does not exist as part of Fijian culture. A *meke* is a form of community-based dance drama that tells a mythic story by means of presentational movements performed to a chant. The chant, itself, is composed by a shaman (a *dau ni vucu*), who hears it in a kava-induced dream state from his spirit ancestors. As the supreme form of cultural expression, the actual *meke* used and the process of its composition needed to be presented as a play without any suggestion of cultural appropriation

#### Research Significance

- Evidence of Excellence – In the 36-year history of the Festival of Pacific Arts, a gathering of 24 countries held every four years, “The Meke” was the first play to be included as part of Fiji’s official programme. It was commissioned and then approved by the Fiji Arts Council as an appropriate reflection of Fijian culture.

Author: Ian Gaskell

Date: 22/03/2010

<http://acquire.cqu.edu.au>