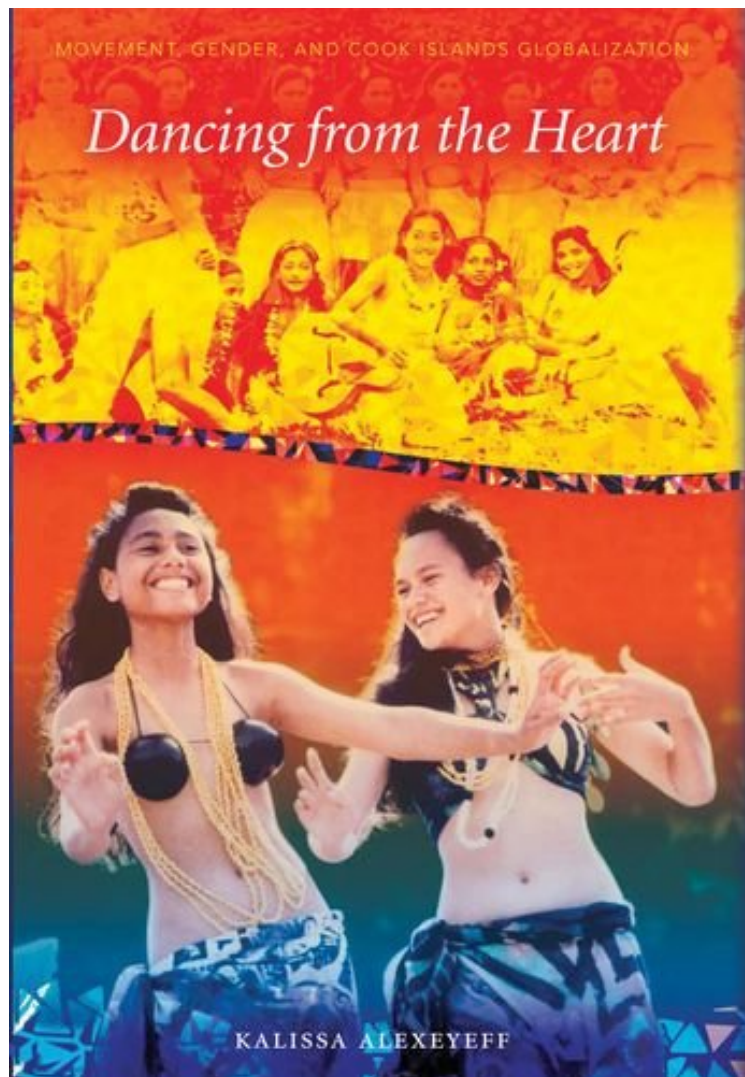


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## Dancing from the Heart: Movement, Gender, and Sociality in the Cook Islands

*Kalissa Alexeyeff*

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**Kalissa Alexeyeff : Dancing from the Heart: Movement, Gender, and Sociality in the Cook Islands** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dancing from the Heart: Movement, Gender, and Sociality in the Cook Islands:

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with love and respect about a people who love their culture and who have managed to preserve it through more than 100 years of missionary rule and colonisation.

*Dancing from the Heart* is the first study of gender, globalization, and expressive culture in the Cook Islands. It demonstrates how dance in particular plays a key role in articulating the overlapping local, regional, and transnational agendas of Cook Islanders. Kalissa Alexeyeff reconfigures conventional views of globalizations impact on indigenous communities, moving beyond diagnoses of cultural erosion and contamination to a grounded exploration of creative agency and vital cultural production. Central to the study is a rich and textured ethnographic account of contemporary Cook Islands dance practice. Based on fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and archival research, it offers an engrossing analysis of how Cook Islands social life is generated through expressive practices. Dance is explored in a variety of settings, including beauty pageants, tourist venues, nightclubs and community celebrations at home and within Cook Islands communities abroad. Contemporary Cook Islands dance practices are also shaped by competing ideas about the past. Debates about precolonial traditions, missionization, and colonialism pervade discussions about dance and expressive culture. Alexeyeff shows how the politics of tradition reflect the competing moral, political, personal, and economic practices of postcolonial Cook Islanders. Throughout the work the stories and voices of individuals are brought to the fore. Their views are juxtaposed with scholarship on tradition, modernity, and social dynamics. Engaging and accessible, *Dancing from the Heart* illuminates specific and intimate aspects of Cook Islands social life while, at the same time, addressing fundamental questions within anthropology and indigenous, performance, and postcolonial studies.

**About the Author** Kalissa Alexeyeff is a McArthur Fellow in the Gender Studies Program at the University of Melbourne.