

transgenderism, locality, and the Miss Galaxy beauty pageant in Tonga

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The Miss Galaxy beauty pageant held annually in Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga, is, at first glance, a show of transgendered glamour, but it is equally a display of translocality. Through the performance of an exotic otherness (through costumes, names, dances, etc.), the socially marginalized contestants claim to define the local, in ways that may oppose the received order, in which the difference between locality and nonlocality is controlled by the privileged. The juxtaposition of gender transformation and translocality in the same event reinforces their stereotypical linking in the eyes of both transgendered and mainstream Tongans. For transgendered persons, this linking provides an escape route from local dynamics of social exclusion and poverty, but it also potentially offers mainstream persons a pretext to marginalize transgendered persons from their local groundings. Privileged transgendered persons are less vulnerable to these dynamics of exclusion and use tokens of translocality to assert their social standing vis-à-vis both underprivileged transgendered persons and society at large. [transgenderism, beauty pageants, locality, globalization, resistance, language use, Tonga]

Every year at the conclusion of the month-long Heilala Festival in Nuku'alofa, Tonga (Western Polynesia), "men who act like women" organize the Miss Galaxy beauty pageant—an extravagant and glamorous show of fashions, bodies, inventiveness, fantasy, and humor. Since its inception in the early 1990s, Miss Galaxy has become increasingly spectacular, assertive, and innovative. Held in one of the most prominent public venues in the country, the pageant is the subject of a considerable organizational mobilization: organizers and sponsors sell tickets in advance, a designated hospitality business sets up a bar and brings in waiters and waitresses, disc jockeys secure and test sound systems, organizers decorate the hall, and workers set up seating for several thousand people. For several weeks before the two-day show, families and friends assemble and fit the contestants' often elaborate outfits while contestants rehearse individual performances, group songs, and dance steps.

The pageant showcases transgendered males, whom Tongans refer to as *fakaleitī* or *leitī*, who form a small but visible minority in Nuku'alofa and elsewhere in the kingdom. The word *leitī* is borrowed from the English word *lady* and is applied only to transgendered males, whereas *faka-* is a polysemic prefix ubiquitous in Tongan. In this context, it means "in the fashion of." For a number of complex reasons (see Besnier 1997:19-20), transgendered men prefer to call themselves *leitī*. More rarely, non-transgendered Tongans speak of *fakaleitī* as *fakafefine* (lit., "in the fashion of a woman"). In this article, I will use either "fakaleitī" or "leitī" depending on the context, keeping an eye on the subtle voice shifts that word choice can entail (statements

in which the first form appears take the perspective of mainstream society while the second form implies a transgendered point of view).¹

Like their transgendered counterparts in other societies of the Western Pacific, *leitī* come from all strata of Tongan society. It is, however, primarily the low-ranking, younger, and poorer *leitī* (qualifiers that often overlap in reference) who most often make themselves socially conspicuous in both everyday contexts and special events like the pageant. With a few exceptions, high-ranking, older, and wealthier *fakaleitī* stay out of the limelight and do not get involved in the pageant. Tongans (both *leitī* and others) often state that there are no high-ranking transgendered persons or that it would be inappropriate for a high-ranking person to act like a *fakaleitī*. The discussion that follows will shed light on the apparent social skewing of *fakaleitī* identity in Tongan society.

Defining the identity in question is difficult for several related reasons that are certainly not unique to this category: its manifestations are highly variable, its boundaries are porous, and it is not identifiable with a set of necessary and sufficient characteristics. An underlying agenda of my analysis is to demonstrate that the question “What is a *leitī*?” is perhaps not the best question to ask. Instead, I argue that it is more fruitful to identify the social, economic, symbolic, performative, and linguistic dynamics that constitute particular *leitī* lives and experiences. (To this list one should add historical dynamics, although the data on that front are unfortunately scanty.) Although this strategy calls for a much denser analysis, it better captures the fact that *leitī* identities, as well as identities in general, are formed through the often turbulent interplay of material and symbolic forces, structure and agency, and the local and the global.

Nevertheless, certain characteristics are stereotypically associated with *fakaleitī* presentations of self, bodies, and contexts: a feminine comportment (e.g., an emotional way of talking, an animated face, a swishy walk); a greater affinity with women than men (e.g., in friendship); being responsible for domestic work in the home (e.g., laundry, cooking, flower gardening, child minding, caring for elderly parents); in urban contexts, employment in professions regularly associated with women (e.g., seamstress, house girl, primary school teacher); a tendency to associate with domestic, rather than public, spheres; some experience with cross-dressing; and engaging in sexual relations with “straight” men, in other words, with men who are not identified as *fakaleitī*.

The problem with these characterizations is that they do not all apply to persons whom Tongans identify as *fakaleitī*, and some are relevant to men who are not regularly identified as *fakaleitī*. Furthermore, many of the features listed here are stereotypes, although, like all stereotypes, they are grounded in a reality of one sort or another. Finally, many of the above characterizations raise more questions than they answer: What is feminine comportment, for example, and in what way is a particular profession or work activity associated with women in a context in which work is only vaguely gendered (but see Gailey 1987)? In my analysis, I address at least some of these questions and argue for an understanding of *leitī* identities that bypasses the search for a precise definition.

Even though many mainstream Tongans count *fakaleitī* among their relatives, co-workers, or acquaintances, most know little about *fakaleitī* lives outside of kinship-centered events, working hours, and casual interactions. According to the mainstream Tongans with whom I have spoken, knowing more does not figure high on their lists of priorities.² For most Tongans, the Miss Galaxy pageant is the one context

in which, once a year, fakaleitī identity demands their attention, and it is through the pageant that many Tongans form knowledge of the identity.

In this article, I address and contextualize this knowledge. I demonstrate that, far from simply animating a definition of who they are in the local context of Tongan society, fakaleitī participate in the Miss Galaxy pageant to situate their identities actively in both a local context and a much larger frame of reference. Based on a detailed analysis of the 1997 Miss Galaxy pageant (and more generally of five other pageants held between 1994 and 2001 in Tonga and the Tongan diaspora), the discussion I present falls in line with recent analyses of beauty pageants and contests as ethnographically rich events in which symbolic and material structures are formed and challenged—usually on multiple levels—revealing how power, marginality, modernity, and tradition form and operate (Assayag 1999; Banet-Weiser 1999; Brownell 2001; Cohen et al. 1996; Durham 1999; Lavenda 1988; Livingston 1990; Russell 1997; Schulz 2000; Wilk 1995; Wu 2001). The tensions that the Miss Galaxy pageant articulates relate to the meaning of locality and its relationship to categories with which locality is commonly contrasted. I focus in particular on the way in which the pageant affords participants an opportunity to adopt certain tokens of an imagined and vaguely defined nonlocality that can be advantageous for some fakaleitī in certain contexts. This opportunity, however, also potentially threatens fakaleitī's local grounding. As I argue presently, the pageant demonstrates how some people can assert themselves as being part of a greater context without danger while other people do so at a risk. My aim in this article, therefore, is to arrive at a more fine-grained assessment of what it means for something or someone to be identified as local, a project that has occupied a small but growing corpus of researchers (e.g., Louie 2000; Lovell 1998; Schein 1999).

Locality is not a straightforward and unambiguous category. It has a number of possible antonyms (nonlocal, translocal, global, foreign, Other). Further, it is syntagmatically related to a number of other categories, such as "place" and "belonging," but the nature of these related categories and their relationship to locality raise thorny questions (e.g., Feld and Basso 1998; Lovell 1998). In many contexts, locality is defined in opposition to modernity, hybridity, cosmopolitanism, and migration; extraneous values and symbols, other languages, body practices, and forms of exchange; and threatening diversity and worrisome fragmentation. As a vast body of literature has demonstrated, however, these contrasting categories can just as easily be localized as they can remain exemplars of what the local is not. The working definition of locality that I employ is necessarily vague, and my discussion is designed in part to identify the tensions that constitute locality, at least in one ethnographic context.

In the discussion that follows, I open with an overview of Tonga as a diasporic society. Local dynamics of rank and status are determined in reference to a broad transnational context, sustained by the constant flow of goods, people, and ideas between widely dispersed communities. Language and, in particular, the choice between Tongan and English (the language of both the colonial past and the transnational present and future) figure prominently among the tools that Tongans exploit to negotiate and argue the meaning of "being Tongan." Next, I contrast the Miss Galaxy pageant to another, nontransgendered annual pageant—the Miss Heilala pageant. I show that, although Miss Heilala participants are expected to perform a reified, locally grounded version of Tonganness, Miss Galaxy participants make every effort to perform the opposite. A powerful illustration of these efforts is the fact that English is the default code of interaction in the Miss Galaxy pageant. The adoption of English and the embracement of the symbolic associations of that language are congruent

with both the audience's stereotypical expectations of fakaleiti and the latter's own desire to distance themselves from certain local dynamics that place them at a symbolic and material disadvantage. It is a precarious strategy, however, because of the difficulties that this choice of code represents for many of them and the fraudulence that audiences insist on seeing in it.

Tonga and the Tongan diaspora

The ethnographic context of my article is Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga and a town of about 25,000 inhabitants. Tongan society is geographically and historically grounded in an archipelago stretching in a north-south direction, butting against the international date line in the South Pacific, and peopled by 97,500 inhabitants. Tongans are also spread diasporically around the Pacific Basin, notably in New Zealand, Eastern Australia, Hawai'i, California, Utah, and British Columbia, where a combined total of over 50,000 persons of Tongan descent live in loosely organized enclaves. Substantial migration from Tonga began in the early 1970s. Thereafter, the numerical, social, economic, and cultural importance of migration increased dramatically within a short period of time (Campbell 1992a). At the turn of the millennium, Tonga is a quintessential "transnation, which retains a special ideological link to a putative place of origin but is otherwise a thoroughly diasporic collectivity" (Appadurai 1996:172).³

Tongan society has been one of the most stratified and politically centralized societies of Polynesia since its early 19th-century unification under the rule of a sacralized king. A British protectorate between 1900 and 1970, today Tonga is an independent and self-described constitutional monarchy, although political and economic power is largely vested in the sovereign and his family on the one hand and in an elaborate structure of land-owning nobility on the other. Some socioeconomic mobility, however, has always been possible, even in the lower rungs of society, through, for example, strategic choices of affiliation with one of the many Christian denominations (Decktor Korn 1978). Since the 1970s, diasporic fragmentation and demands for political reform have challenged the political, economic, social, and cultural bases of stratification and centralization but have not managed to undermine these bases significantly (Gailey 1992; Marcus 1993; Morton 1998).

High degrees of stratification and centralization structure both the island-based society and the diaspora. Close relations between the island nation and the diaspora are sustained through intensive multidirectional flows of goods, money, and people, and Tonga remains solidly grounded, in people's perceptions, as the epicenter of Tongan society. Nevertheless, contemporary Tongans everywhere are intensely aware of themselves as part of a transnational context. They depend on this context for their livelihoods, and it is on these terms that they define themselves culturally and socially. In this context, claims and contestations of both local grounding and cosmopolitanism are central concerns to many Tongans.

In the last decade or two, the people of Tonga have witnessed rapid socioeconomic changes that are intimately linked to the increasingly diasporic nature of the society. Particularly in Nuku'alofa, capitalism reigns and most town dwellers cling to low-paying employment in the service industries, including a fledgling tourism industry, the bureaucracy, and small-scale cottage ventures. Kinship based economic links with the outside world, which have created new avenues of social mobility, have also facilitated the emergence of an entrepreneurial middle class based in Tonga but sustained from overseas. Tonga now has a relatively wealthy minority that partially overlaps with the old rank-based power structure.

In the context of the rapidly increasing transnationalism of their society, many Tongans see the maintenance of the quality of "Tonganness" and the definition of this quality as areas of concern (Morton 1996; Small 1997). Tongans often refer to this quality as *anga faka-Tonga* (behavior in the fashion of Tonga) or, when speaking English, "the Tongan way," echoing comparable phrases used in neighboring societies (e.g., *fa'a-Sāmoa* or "the Samoan way" in Samoa). The quality is concretized most forcefully in high culture, including the performing arts, the manufacturing and exchange of valued goods (principally tapa-cloth and mats), ceremonies affirming hierarchy and kinship, and of course language. But Tongans frequently talk about *anga faka-Tonga* when referring to culture in the broader anthropological sense, particularly when the context calls for a contrast between locality and nonlocality. Tonganness is deeply tied to place, but in conflicting ways. For example, overseas Tongans and locally based but cosmopolitan Tongans lay claims to Tonganness that other Tongans who feel that they have remained closest to their culture and origin sometimes challenge (Morton 1998).

The tensions associated with the definition and maintenance of local identity, as well as related dynamics, are perhaps best animated in the competition between the two dominant languages—Tongan and English. Almost everyone in Tonga knows at least rudiments of English, which is taught in school. But the degree of one's linguistic comfort with the language is part of an aggregate of features closely linked with the structuring of social inequality in Tonga. First, English is a prestige language. Linked to the colonial past, it functions as the dominant language of employment, education, contact with the outside world, and new forms of social dominance such as entrepreneurship. Elite Tongans of either rank or wealth are more likely than nonelite Tongans to have resided in English-speaking countries under favorable circumstances (e.g., pursuing their educations or traveling), and therefore they have had opportunities to become fluent speakers of English. They are also intimate with the privilege and cosmopolitanism that English indexes among Tongans.

In contrast, nonprivileged Tongans are often reluctant to speak English, ostensibly, according to explanations that many Tongans offer, because they fear making linguistic errors. In practice, it is not so much a matter of deficient grammatical competence as it is a matter of not having the social self-assurance to assert oneself credibly as a privileged and cosmopolitan person without fearing shame (*mā*) and exposing oneself to ridicule. Although many nonelite Tongans have resided overseas, they have invariably been employed in menial job contexts in which communication with native speakers of English is probably confined to job-related topics (e.g., understanding directives). In communities such as Auckland and the San Francisco Bay Area, the lives of many less-than-privileged first-generation migrant Tongans continue to be predominantly Tongan centered and Tongan speaking. "There [is], in Northern California, a Tongan world within a world" (Small 1997:70). As is the case in many migrant communities, it is only the generations born overseas that acquire fluency in the dominant language of the country in which they live.

The prestige most Tongans associate with control of the English language is counterbalanced by the high level of allegiance they feel toward their own language. In many contexts, Tongan is used in resistance to the hegemony of English. For example, it is used widely in the workplace, however steeped this workplace may be in the English language and associated symbols. In Nuku'alofa streets, youngsters never fail to crack loud jokes in Tongan at the expense of foreigners (*Pālangi*), whom they assume do not understand the language. But commitment to Tongan is also frequently asserted in contexts in which English is not a competing code, as in oratory, ceremonialism, and

song-and-dance concerts. Thus, Tongan is not exclusively a code of resistance. Tongan and English are embroiled in a potentially complex structure of competing prestige, along with the categories with which each language is associated (e.g., modernity vs. tradition), and this structure figures prominently in the analysis that follows.

the Miss Galaxy beauty pageant

The Miss Galaxy beauty pageant is one of several comparable events held throughout the year in Nuku'alofa. Indeed, minor pageants are organized on a more or less impromptu basis and held in dingy discos around the capital. Miss Galaxy is, however, by far the most high profile. Like other important events in Tonga, the pageant has a high-ranking or otherwise prominent patron, who in recent years has been recruited from within the ranks of the royal family. Half of the board of six or seven judges is comprised of nontransgendered Tongan dignitaries (e.g., high-ranking army officers, intellectuals, and the winner of the Miss Heilala pageant that precedes the transgendered pageant) while the other half are "distinguished" expatriates (e.g., spouses of diplomats and businessmen and visiting anthropologists).

The history of the pageant is difficult to construct because people's memories are blurred and because the early events (more or less underground affairs until the early 1990s) went largely unnoted in public records.⁴ Fakaleitī pageants appear to have emerged in the 1970s. The early pageants probably resembled the lesser pageants of today in size and level of organization. They gradually gained notoriety, until 1991, when the first Miss Galaxy pageant was held in the capital's only international hotel.⁵ Along with increasing popularity and visibility came greater respectability and assertiveness—an evolution that some Tongans bemoan. Finding that fakaleitī today "take themselves too seriously," some Tongans long for prior incarnations of the pageant when "it was all a good laugh" at the expense of fakaleitī. As I will illustrate, a tension between seriousness and humor permeates the entire pageant as does a tension between humor that the contestants control and humor at their expense (cf. Lavenda 1988).

The number of contestants averages from ten to 15. Because there is a good possibility that the audience will ridicule the contestants at some point during the pageant, only younger or underprivileged leitī with little symbolic capital to lose participate. In 1997, one contestant declared his age as 18 years old, three each as 19 and 20 years old, one as 21, and three each as 24, 25, and 26 (but contestants often lower their ages, sometimes considerably, as humorous claims to youthful innocence). One was a hotel cook, three worked in beauty salons (as either stylists or general helpers), one was employed overseas as a hospital receptionist, and the remaining six were housekeepers or unemployed. Although some older but poorer fakaleitī do compete with agendas of generating humor, older and privileged individuals do not need to risk losing face for a crack at a moment of visibility. These individuals take on respectable roles as emcees, organizers, and coordinators—roles to which some are entitled anyway because it is thanks to their influence in wider Tongan society that the pageant can take place at all; securing a high-profile venue, convincing prominent members of society to act as patrons or judges, and attending to the practical details of the event all require connections and *savoir faire*.

Contestants are sponsored by various businesses and organizations, including guesthouses, dance halls, hair salons, taxi companies, and rugby teams. Contestants are sometimes employees of the businesses that sponsor them or are closely related to key people in the sponsoring organizations. The expense and effort involved in sponsoring and outfitting a contestant are not insignificant. The material returns to the winner,

however, are attractive to contestants and their families (and perhaps to the sponsors), many of whom are poor. The winner generally receives a cash prize (e.g., T\$500) and, more importantly, a round-trip airline ticket to Auckland. As *leitī* often joke, the latter usually becomes a one-way ticket to “overstayer” (i.e., illegal immigrant) status in New Zealand and thus to an industrial-society scale income for the family—at least while the winner can elude immigration authorities. As a result, competitiveness and animosity between contestants can be fierce, complete with the glass of red wine “accidentally” spilled on the winner’s gown after the contest. Here, like the marginalized in all societies, Miss Galaxy contestants are quick to remind one another that *leitī* identity is transversed by other parameters of difference and conflict, including individualistic competitiveness.

Contestants appear on stage in various costumes that include evening dress, “island wear *pule taha*” (ankle-length skirt and matching short-sleeved top, worn with a tasseled fiber belt), and “their own creations” (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).⁶ Each appearance on stage is ostensibly designed to allow contestants to present themselves as attractive and feminine persons, following familiar patterns of beauty pageants around the world. The core of the pageant consists of several judged events, including an individual talent display, a brief interview (of the what-would-you-do-to-save-the-world? type), and catwalk parades. Interspersed are entertainment routines, which may include a hula performance by the emcee, a rock-and-roll standard sung by a local talent, a dance routine performed by all contestants to a popular Tahitian or disco tune, or a short classical and torch-song concert by nontransgendered performers.

The contestants and their friends or relatives usually assemble outfits from scratch. Over the years, what could be identified as camp sensibility has been featured with increasing prominence—gowns have become more dramatic, miniskirts more diminutive, and exaggeration and artifice *de rigueur*, although not all participants and audience members are in positions to give these patterns nonliteral readings.



Figure 1. The contestants at the end of the pageant posing around the newly elected Miss Galaxy 1997, the incumbent, and the emcee.



Figure 2. Vanessa strikes a glamour pose for the judges during the *pule taha* event.

Figuring prominently in the preparations for the pageant are the several sewing shops around town, owned by or employing several *fakaleit̄* garment makers. The local clothing retail shops have little to offer that is flamboyant enough to wear on the Miss Galaxy stage. The most problematic part of assembling an outfit is locating pumps large enough to fit the sometimes-formidable foot sizes. At the end of each of my fieldwork visits, many of my *leit̄* friends ask me to send them ladies' shoes from overseas, knowing that large-sized pumps are available in New Zealand specialty shops that cater to the sizeable transgendered Māori and Pacific Islander ("PI") populations. Contestants who are unable to obtain high-heeled shoes because of their poverty or lack of strategically located exchange networks often walk the catwalk on tiptoes during relevant routines.

The audiences of Miss Galaxy pageants consist principally of middle-class Tongans, most of whom arrive dressed to the hilt.⁷ Completing the ranks are expatriate residents, Peace Corps Volunteers, and a few tourists—many of whom come to see what they think is an event of outstanding exoticism. Rural or poorer Tongans (other than relatives of the contestants) are held at bay by the cover charge (in 1997, T\$10 for each of two evenings). They attend other Heilala Festival events instead, such as choir competitions or concerts of traditional music and dance that are either free or command a more modest door fee.

the real misses' pageant

The Miss Galaxy pageant is usually part of the Heilala Festival, which is named after the fragrant heilala flower celebrated in Tongan classical poetry. The Festival is timed to coincide with the reigning king's birthday on July 4th. The official representation of the event (as presented in tourist brochures, press reports, and publicity campaigns) touts it as a way to stimulate tourism: "The main objective of the festival is to attract visitors to Tonga," stated Semisi Taumoepeau, Tonga's Director of Tourism

(Matangi Tonga 1999:3); however, the few tourists who do venture to Tonga for the celebrations are provided little context to understand them. For example, program details can change at the last minute, and one needs to be grounded in a local information network to know where and when to show up. In addition, at most events, very little accommodation is made for the benefit of audience members unfamiliar with the language and social context. This lack of accommodation to outsiders is in tune with general patterns extant in Tongan society at large.

In practice, the Heilala Festival is a complex event involving several agendas simultaneously. In particular, it is an occasion on which the state (which is made up of several distinct entities) displays itself to the people. The sovereigns parade through the city while lesser royals and sundry officials act as judges and patrons in various events. Furthermore, the festival is a pretext for overseas Tongans to travel to the islands (principally to Nuku'alofa) to celebrate Tongan identity and to reinforce ties that in the increasingly diasporic nature of the society are viewed as threatened. In short, the festival foregrounds what it means to be Tongan in a modern context and affords both local and diasporic Tongans the opportunity to negotiate this meaning.

The festival celebrations include a float parade through Nuku'alofa, choir competitions between church and school groups, dance performances, brass band performances, military and police parades, art and craft exhibitions, and school sports competitions (see Figure 4). Expatriates and elite Tongans hold tennis and golf tournaments and a mini-triathlon, and they vie for invitations to mix with royalty and VIPs at cocktail parties. The *pièce de résistance* of the Festival is a beauty contest—the Miss Heilala pageant—showcasing “real misses” (*misi mo'oni*), as *leitī* often call them. The centrality of the pageant to the festival is evident in the layout of the published festival program for 1999, which consists principally of a list of contest events and other happenings and prominently features an entry form for the pageant (Figure 5).

The winner of this pageant—selected by a jury consisting of members of the royal family, pillars of Tongan society, and distinguished expatriates—goes on to represent Tonga at beauty pageants in the Pacific region circuit that feeds in turn into the Miss Universe circuit. Although so far no Miss Heilala has managed to compete beyond the regional competition, the winners and their sponsors and relatives acquire substantial local visibility and material rewards, including cash prizes, overseas trips, the attention of high-ranking Tongans, and various follow-up engagements.

The Miss Heilala pageant articulates many tensions subjacent to Tongan society, such as the tensions between tradition and modernity and between the local and the global. The pageant places on trial ideals of beauty, competence, decency, and worthiness in a young woman as well as generally. These ideals are the subjects of conflicting opinions, as Teilhet-Fisk (1996) skillfully demonstrates. One aspect of the Miss Heilala pageant is particularly relevant to understanding its transgendered counterpart: In order to be taken seriously, Miss Heilala contestants must be able to put on acceptable performances of Tonganness (in tune with the overall purpose of the Heilala Festival) through “correct” bodily and linguistic habitus, competence in reified symbols of high culture, and the espousal of values and priorities that are consistent with dominant local discourses.

This implicit prerequisite is particularly relevant to the increasingly frequent participation of members of migrant communities and first-generation young women born overseas, some of whom are of mixed parentage and some of whom may hold tenuous or unenthusiastic allegiances to Tongan identity in most other contexts. These contestants' families often have access to greater wealth and more-varied resources than most local contestants' families, thus ensuring nicer clothing, better

People

Fakaleitis

Miss Galaxy show a fashion extravaganza

Miss Galaxy 1997 is Vaisima Langi (18) from Ma'ufanga. Vaisima entered this year's pageant as Miss Euro-Pacific Store, and was one of the 11 fakaleitis who contested the title at the Queen Salote Memorial Hall on July 9-11.

The contest for young men who dress up as women, has become a popular event during Tonga's annual Heilala Festival. The two night show attracted an audience which included people from all walks of life—from grandmothers to children, business people, members of the Royal family, and overseas visitors, including academics, filmmakers and photographers. Among the visitors who came to Tonga to watch the event was the chairman of anthropology from Victoria University, Wellington.

Contestants were judged for their talent in entertainment as well as for their creativity in fashion design.

The shows and fashion extravaganza, hosted by leading Tongan entertainer Joey Mataele, was full of fun that had the audience laughing for hours.

In second place was Miss Lady Maria, Sonia Innes Trula Morgan (Soni Kivalu, 20), from Vava'u, and in third place was Miss Emma Krystle Bar, Tatiana Krystle (20) from Kolomotu'a, Tongatapu. ▲

Strong message from King's granddaughter

Miss Galaxy 1997 was crowned by the Hon. Lupepau'u Tuita, the patron of the Tonga Fakaleiti Association, at the Queen Salote Memorial Hall on July 11.



Hon. Lupepau'u

Lupepau'u is the eldest daughter of Princess Pilolevu Tuita. She enjoyed the show put on by the fakaleitis but expressed her disappointment with the Board of Directors of the International Dateline Hotel for refusing to allow the Miss Galaxy Pageant to be held at the hotel this year. She said that if this was the attitude of leaders toward a minority group such as the fakaleitis, "then I wonder what the future politics of Tonga will be like, when the interests of a minority group is disregarded."

It was a strong message from the granddaughter of the King, and Joey Mataele, the organiser of the show told the cheering crowd that he would make sure that the Board of Directors of the International Dateline Hotel had a copy of Hon. Lupepau'u's speech. ▲



Entertainer
Brenda Lee (Brian Whippy)



Miss Lady Maria Boutique
Sonia Innes Trula Morgan
(Soni Kivalu)



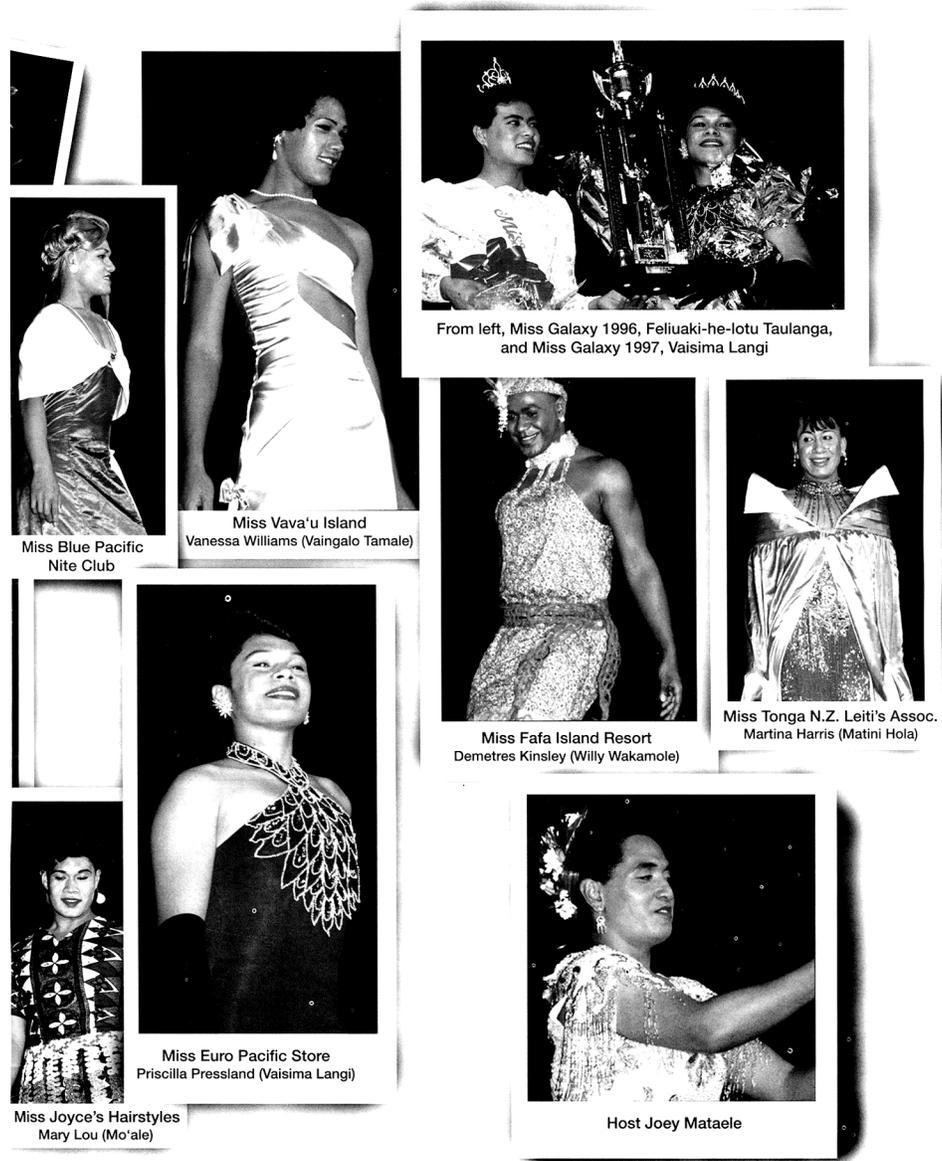
Miss Blue Pacific Nite Club
Amanda Delahoy (Moeaki Malimai)



Miss Fasi Ma'ofanga Rugby
Aodushi Kiroshoto
(Sosefo Folikaki)

Figure 3. Magazine coverage of the 1997 pageant (*Matangi Tonga* 1997:38-39). Reprinted with kind permission from Vava'u Press.

coaching (at least for the Western-style tests), and greater individualistic confidence (Teillet-Fisk 1996:190). Contestants with one Caucasian parent often have the advantage of looking more attractive in Tonga, where light skin tones are as prized as they are in many other parts of the postcolonial world (see, e.g., Burke 1996; Rahier 1998; Schulz 2000; Wilk 1995:129).⁸ These young women travel to Tonga during their holidays with an entourage of relatives, often at great expense. Some even bring American or



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Figure 3 cont.

New Zealander girlfriends who form a fair-skinned retinue that contributes enormous symbolic capital, judging by young Tongan men's gaping mouths as the women are paraded on floats through Nuku'alofa streets.

Where overseas-based contestants are at a distinct disadvantage is in their ability to perform Tonganness. For example, their competence at dancing the tau'olunga—a graceful and intricate solo dance that constitutes a major component of the contest because it epitomizes Tongan virginal femininity (Kaepler 1985)—is often considered

Photo News



Heilala Festival 1999



Miss South Pacific



The last Heilala Festival for this century finished with the Miss Heilala Grand Ball on August 20, and the announcement of the Miss Heilala for 1999, Fonoti Taumoepeau (above).

Fonoti entered the contest as Miss Tonga Visitors Bureau and won return tickets to Sydney, a cash prize of \$1,000 and other prizes. The first runner up was Miss Y2K, Melisa Todd, the second runner up was Miss Dateline Hotel, Tu'imala Setefano, and the third runner up was Miss Teta Tours Australia, Eliza-Anne Lemoto.

The representatives of the Tongan communities from Hawai'i, New Zealand and Australia, enriched the Miss Heilala festival bringing overseas entrants. But again the title stayed in Tonga.

Figure 4. Magazine coverage of the 1999 Heilala Festival (*Matangi Tonga* 1999:2-3). Reprinted with kind permission from Vava'u Press.

minimal by judges and audiences alike. Similarly, judges and critics find that some overseas-based contestants are not proficient in spoken Tongan. These factors represent serious disadvantages in a context of which the unarticulated subtext is to demonstrate that locality, despite its associations with relative poverty and disadvantage



Fonoti is the daughter of Semisi Taumoepeau, Tonga's Director of Tourism

Guest traditional dancer at the festival was Miss South Pacific—Miss Samoa, Cheri Moana Robinson (pictured, far left).

Simote Po'uliva'ati, the new president of the Tonga Tourist Association, was pleased with the outcome. "Our aim was for this Heilala Festival to be different from other festivals, and the sponsors were happy, so was the audience."

Semisi Taumoepeau said, "the main objective of the festival is to attract visitors to Tonga, and despite the change in the date from July to August 12-21 there were a number of visitors who came specifically for the festival." ▲



July – September 1999

3

Figure 4 cont.

on the world scene, ultimately triumphs over cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and the industrial world. As a result, most winners have been solidly local (but just as solidly grounded in the new bourgeoisie).⁹

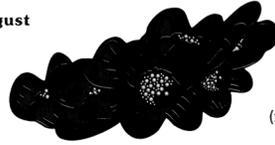
In numerous ways, the Miss Galaxy pageant is the antithesis of the Miss Heilala pageant. For example, the atmosphere of Miss Galaxy is somewhat carnivalesque—

Heilala Festival

1999 Heilala Festival, 9–21 August

Monday 9 August to Friday 13 August
Orientation, rehearsal and Tourism Awareness Week.

Friday 13 August
10 a.m.
Opening of Art & Crafts Exhibition, Tonga National Centre.
7 p.m.
Night of the *Ngatu* Creation (First appearance of the



Miss Heilala Contestants in their *Ngatu* Creation and Contemporary Puletaha. Location to be announced.)
10 p.m.
Opening of Block Party on Taufa'ahau Road (from Mala'e Pangai to the Catholic Basilica.)

Saturday 14 August

10 a.m.
Miss Heilala Contestants goodwill visit to Alonga Centre.
8 p.m.
MHPC Social Evening at Billfish Restaurant.

Sunday 15 August

10 a.m.
Tourism to be recognised in church services throughout Tonga. Miss Heilala Contestants to attend several services in Nuku'alofa.
8 p.m.
Special 'Praise in Song' programme at the International Dateline Hotel.

Monday 16 August

10 a.m.
Bartender of the Year Competition.
11 a.m.
Miss Heilala Talent Quest at Queen Sālote Memorial Hall (2nd Judging Event).

Tuesday 17 August

2 p.m.
Final Chef of the Year Competition at the International Dateline Hotel.
9 p.m.
Miss Tau'olunga Contest at Queen Sālote Memorial Hall (3rd Judging Event).

Wednesday 18 August

7 p.m.
Miss Heilala Sarong Swim Wear, Best Decorated Coconut and Fashionable Contemporary Island Creation at the International Dateline Hotel (4th Judging Event).
Cultural Events at Queen Sālote Memorial Hall: Miss Tau'olunga Junior; Floorshow Competition; Drumming Competition.

Thursday 19 August

11 p.m.
Float Parade from St. Andrew's School grounds, Taufa'ahau Rd, Sālote Rd, Royal Palace/Pangai, Tu'imatamoana for prizegiving and awards.

Friday 20 August

7 p.m.
Annual Miss Heilala Ball (final judging event and crowning of 1999/2000 Miss Heilala).
10 p.m.
Closing Block Party from Faua Wharf to Queen Sālote Wharf, special programmes in hotels and nightclubs.

1999 Miss Heilala Beauty Pageant
Official Entry Form, August 13–21
Registration closes at 4.30 pm
Friday, July 30. All forms must be completely filled and submitted to Tonga Visitor's Bureau, P. O. Box 37, Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Phone +676 25334, fax +676 23507, email tvb@kalianet.to

CONTESTANT'S NAME _____
FAMILY NAME IN CAPITAL LETTERS

DATE OF ENTRY _____

AGE _____ OCCUPATION _____

WEIGHT _____ HEIGHT _____

REPRESENTATIVE OF _____
NAME OF SPONSOR

CONTACT TEL. _____
HOME WORK

I, _____ AM SPONSORING

CONTESTANT'S NAME

FOR THE 1999 MISS HEILALA BEAUTY PAGEANT.

SIGNATURE _____
NAME OF SPONSOR

SIGNATURE _____
CONTESTANT'S NAME

Figure 5. Published program of the 1999 Heilala Festival, showcasing the Miss Heilala pageant as the most important event of the festival ('Eva, *Your Guide to Tonga* 1999:6). Reprinted with kind permission from Vava'u Press.

complete with reversals not only of gender but of language and humor—in sharp contrast to the dignified but predictable ambience of the Miss Heilala pageant, which many describe as tedious. In addition, despite its tremendous rise to public prominence in recent years, the Miss Galaxy pageant continues to be thought of as underground.

Even though audiences unanimously consider it more interesting, entertaining, and beautiful than the “real misses’ ” show, the Tonga Visitors’ Bureau does not mention it in its official Heilala Festival program. In 1997, influential officials who considered the Miss Galaxy pageant un-Christian prevented the pageant from being held in the government-owned main hotel, which had been its venue for several years. As an example of what Morris aptly calls the “transnational circulation of prohibition” (1997:56-61), inspired in this case by Evangelical Christianity from overseas, officials illustrated the potentially precarious status of the pageant by prohibiting it from the hotel.¹⁰

The most striking contrast between the two events is the fact that, although Miss Heilala contestants are expected to perform a local identity that a significant number find difficult to perform, Miss Galaxy contestants perform a nonlocal identity, even though the pageant is part of a festival celebrating what it means to be Tongan. The different parties involved present this nonlocality in various ways, but it usually involves a mixture of cosmopolitanism, modernity, upward mobility, and Westernness that is not bound by the strictures of local power dynamics, moralities, and economic realities. Many Miss Galaxy contestants lacking the resources and consequent exposure to the outside world, however, find it as difficult to enact this nonlocality as some Miss Heilala contestants find it taxing to dance the tau’olunga competently and speak credible Tongan.

nonlocality in the Miss Galaxy pageant

What I designate “nonlocality” pervades the entire atmosphere of the Miss Galaxy pageant.¹¹ It is a feature of the pageant that organizers and contestants take great pains to elaborate, and that the audience expects, although these expectations are mitigated by the view that this nonlocality is fraudulent for most contestants.

The most immediate and spectacular manifestation of nonlocality is the name of the event itself. Both funny and poignant, the use of “Miss Galaxy” lays claim to an ambitiously cosmopolitan context and plays on hyperbole in the same fashion as some of the campier aspects of the pageant (e.g., the more extravagant costumes and performances) by creating humor while attempting to retain control of it. But nonlocality also saturates other aspects of the pageant. For example, in one of the events contestants are required to appear in “national” costumes as representatives of foreign “countries” (e.g., Miss Rarotonga, Miss Switzerland, Miss South America), despite the fact that most contestants have no connection whatsoever to these places. Participants refer to the nonlocal in many other ways: At the organizing stage for instance, they provide their ages, vital statistics, occupations, and personal aspirations—information that one of the organizers enters on biodata sheets.¹² Clearly, what participants in the pageant aim for by emulating international pageant practices is the appearance of a glamour the reference of which reaches beyond the confines of the local context. The extent to which participants are aware of the inspiration for this glamour depends on their relative worldliness. Although some *leitī* involved in the programming of the show have had the opportunity to watch televised international pageants, others must rely on secondhand reports of such events, what they can infer about them from watching the Miss Heilala pageant, and their imaginations.

In addition to bearing the names of the countries they represent, Miss Galaxy contestants go by female-sounding stage names of their own choosing; they often use these names in everyday contexts (see photo captions in Figure 3). These names are generally coinages that bear linguistic similarity to the bearers’ original Tongan names (e.g., Suzie from Sosefo) and are either English names (such as Priscilla Pressland) or

names chosen for their exotic sounds (e.g., Aisa De Lorenzo or Aodushi Kiroshoto). But the stage names are never Tongan names. The nonlocal flavor also pervades the stage decorations (in 1997 there were flower arrangements and rather unfortunate bouquets of phallic-shaped multicolored balloons), the background music (for the opening event, a medley of triumphalist classical themes like the William Tell Overture), and the singing and dancing numbers. When events are explicitly designed to add local color (e.g., a tau'olunga performance or a popular Tongan tune sung by one of the organizers), they are bracketed entertainment routines designed to fill time while contestants are getting changed backstage. When a contestant does decide to perform a Tongan dance for a judged event, it is generally a spoof.

Perhaps the most powerful index of nonlocality is language use. Throughout the pageant, the dominant language is English. When contestants first present themselves, for instance, they do so in English:

Aisa: ((walks up to the mike)) Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Aisa De Lorenzo, I'm eighteen years of age, and I represent, ((pause, raises arms triumphantly)) BLUE PACIFIC TAXIS! ((walks down catwalk))
[1997:Sony:2 1:07:36–1: 08:20, see Figure 6]¹³

Each contestant will have memorized and rehearsed her lines prior to the pageant and will take utmost care to pronounce them correctly and loudly. This does not prevent occasional slip ups, which the audience will immediately ridicule boisterously. The important point is that, for most contestants, speaking English before a large and distinguished audience of elite Tongans (many of whom are bilingual) and foreigners represents a serious challenge. Many leiti, particularly pageant contestants, speak only minimal English because poverty and marginality have hindered their access to opportunities to learn the language. A significant number have not traveled overseas, and those who have resided in industrial countries have not done so under privileged conditions.



Figure 6. Aisa De Lorenzo introduces herself.

By centralizing the English language and its associations in the pageant, *leitī* position themselves on the side of prestige, worldliness, and postcolonial dominance and in opposition to the use of Tongan and its localized connotations. But their sociolinguistic behavior, both in and out of the pageant, adds further complexity to the situation. Indeed, despite the obvious difficulties that *leitī* experience in speaking English during the pageant, many Tongans expect them to speak English more readily on a day-to-day basis than nontransgendered Tongan men for a number of reasons. First, Tongans generally see *fakaleitī* as self-assured and brash creatures who know no shame (*ta'emā*).¹⁴ Although in actuality a significant percentage of *leitī* are self-effacing, the demeanor of others underscores this stereotype. One illustration of this shamelessness is the participation of some *leitī* in a pageant that constitutes the prime reinforcement of popular *fakaleitī* stereotypes: Contestants' behavior in the pageant can be moderately outrageous and certainly exhibitionistic. Second, stereotypes of *leitī* depict them as oriented toward modernity, the West, transnationalism, and social change. Once again, the extent to which this stereotype reflects reality varies among individuals, but the uncompromisingly nonlocal design of the pageant falls in line with this stereotype, both establishing it and confirming it. Viewed in this light, the prominence of English in the pageant is hardly surprising because English is the language of nonlocality. Finally, Tongans tend to view the use of English as having feminine undertones: As in many other societies in which a language of modernity competes with a code of traditionalism (see Gal 1979), the former is associated with women's aspirations for upward mobility and emancipation from the strictures of tradition. When I questioned them about this topic, most Tongan men and women I knew explained that women speak better English overall than men because of the fact that girls study harder in school and that women are talkative by nature. These familiar-sounding assertions demonstrate that the gendering of language use is tacit and embodied in practice rather than explicit and grounded in overt consciousness.

As a result of this gendering, men who speak "too much" English do so at the risk of compromising their masculinity in the eyes of society. This concerns *fakaleitī*, who willingly go to great lengths to disassociate themselves from their masculine attributes. Interestingly, it also concerns Tongans born overseas: Their awkwardness in performing Tongan maleness (including speaking Tongan as a preferred language) frequently brands them as *fakaleitī*-like, regardless of whether they present any identifiable signs of effeminacy in their comportment. The use of English has many associations in addition to nonlocality: it potentially indexes deficient Tonganness, deficient masculinity, femininity, and transgendered identity—traits that may or may not overlap but that are all readily lumped together. Thus, failure to perform Tonganness may easily become a sign of imperfect masculinity and vice versa unless it is mollified by convincing mitigating factors, such as elite status or wealth.¹⁵

Patterns of language use in the Miss Galaxy pageant, as well as the overall nonlocal ambience to which these patterns contribute, are not without irony. As discussed earlier, most contestants live in relative poverty. In tune with their underprivileged status, many *leitī* speak English poorly, despite the fact that they are allegedly less constrained by fears of shame than other Tongans. Sustaining the level of nonlocality expected of them is difficult for many contestants, who switch to Tongan once they have delivered simple memorized lines. But English still remains dominant in the pageant: it is the language that the emcee uses to address the audience and, when he addresses the contestants, he does so first in English and then in Tongan (usually in *sotto voce*). These practices keep English in the foreground at the expense of Tongan.

The difficulty contestants have in maintaining English as their working language during the pageant places them in an awkward position. For example, in the interview event, contestants are given the choice of answering in English or Tongan, and most contestants choose the latter. In 1997, one contestant chose English, and the audience initially reacted with a loud murmur of temporary admiration for her courage. It took little time, however, for her to stumble, as she searched for an English word while waving her hand campily. The audience, apparently satisfied by the expected proof of the fraudulence of her claim to cosmopolitanism, began hooting and ridiculing, forcing her to abort her brave attempt:

- emcee: What would you say about being a hairstylist, or- being-a working- what- what does it mean, like, to be working at Joy's Hair Styles? ((sotto voce, summarizes the question in Tongan)) *Ko e ha e me'a 'oku ke fai 'i he hair salon?*
- Masha: ((takes cordless mike)) Well thank you very much. ((audience laughs, then shouts with admiration and encouragement)) If you want your hair to be curled, ((beckons with her hand)) come over. ((audience explodes in laughter and whooping, Masha laughs and then becomes serious and requests silence with her hand)) Uh, I like it very much, and uh- I enjoy working there, with uhmm- ((pauses, word-searches, waves her hand, audience explodes in laughter, drowning the remainder of the answer)) blowers, ((unable to finish, mouths)) (thank you). ((hands mike back and returns to her position)) [1997:Sony:4 0:02:45-0:03:55]

Contestants are thus in a difficult position: if they answer in English and make mistakes, the audience will laugh at them; if they answer in Tongan, the audience will see it as evidence that they are unable to carry off the artifice of nonlocality. The ridicule that greets the choice of Tongan is congruent with many other aspects of mainstream Tongans' attitudes toward fakaleitī, both at the pageant and in day-to-day interactions. Most mainstream Tongans I know consider the fakaleitī identity essentially bogus: Here are men pretending to be women, and not just women but cosmopolitan



Figure 7. Masha Entura searches for the English word she needs to answer her interview question.

sophisticates; yet, they cannot hold simple conversations in English. At the pageant, it is not uncommon for drunken men or women to try to rip contestants' outfits and expose them for what they "really" are, namely persons with male anatomy. Nothing generates greater hilarity than contestants losing their bras in the middle of performances. In day-to-day interactions between fakaleitī and mainstream Tongans, the latter often express mock annoyance at the fraudulence of leitī self-presentation and identity, whereas leitī argue back that they are "real women."¹⁶

between locality and nonlocality, between femininity and masculinity

One might ask why the Miss Galaxy pageant should be constructed as a performance of nonlocality. When posed to leitī and some non-leitī members of Tongan society, this question elicits straightforward answers: sophistication and glamour; it is all a playful pretense; it allows one the freedom to explore new outfit ideas unconstrained by the blandness of dominant local dress codes. Without downplaying the validity of these aesthetic and ludic motivations, I propose that in order to give a full explanation I must appeal to a broader context.

Many mainstream Tongans have told me that, in everyday contexts, the only men who have sex with fakaleitī are older male tourists and marginal members of Tongan society, such as old widowers (Besnier 1997). Thus, when an older Pālangi man approached the runway during the 1997 pageant to give one of the contestants a *fakapale* (banknote stuck to clothing or oiled bodies of performers to show appreciation), the audience broke out in anxious sniggers because this gesture suddenly sexualized fakaleitī identity in embarrassing ways. Yet it takes very little time in the company of leitī to realize that their sexual activity is not limited to tourists and marginal Tongans. First, tourists with an interest in fakaleitī are far too few to cater to all sexually active Nuku'alofa leitī. Second, a walk through the streets in the company of a leitī demonstrates clearly that many Tongan men see themselves as a leitī's potential sexual partner. One of the most common interactional styles between "straight" men and leitī is sexual and gender-based banter. This banter frequently touches on the alleged fraudulence of leitī identity, but it focuses with equal frequency on the possibility of sexual relations. For many men, this possibility ends with the banter. For a number of others, it leads to sexual encounters that do not jeopardize "straight" men's masculinity and heterosexuality, although trysts are generally not talked about. For a very small minority, it leads to romantic attachment and possibly exclusive sexual liaisons.

For many underprivileged leitī, however, sexual relations with "straight" Tongan men leave much to be desired. For one thing, these relations are generally onerous. In many cases, trysts have to be backed up with liquor, entertainment, and monetary gifts at the expense of the leitī—in part because alcohol and material advantages absolve the boyfriend of responsibility for desiring what is after all another male body. A sexually active fakaleitī may thus have to spend a lot of money "to take care of all his boyfriends' needs" (to quote a recurrent phrase from leitī conversations [always in English]), and as a result some leitī are not sexually active. These exchange dynamics define sexual relations between men and fakaleitī as distinct from pre- or extramarital relations between men and "real" women (in which the woman stereotypically provides sexual favors while the man provides economic resources), and thus these dynamics only serve to emphasize the fact that fakaleitī are not real women (see Besnier 1997 for further discussion).

In addition, everyone involved is aware of the inevitability of "straight" men's eventual marriages to women and they know that men's sexual encounters with leitī

(as well as loose women) in pre- or extramarital contexts are ultimately meaningless adventures over which the specter of exploitativeness hovers (compare Kulick 1998). Defined here and elsewhere (Borneman 1996) as the union of opposing halves and as a life-giving and life-maintaining act of completion and closure, marriage both generates and confirms *leitī*'s social marginality and the meaninglessness of their desires and aspirations in the dominant ideology. It also renders inconsequential the desires that "straight" men may orient toward them. The serious affective bonds that can arise between "straight" men and *leitī* occasionally undermine this meaninglessness, but this possibility constitutes a hidden discourse that no one (other than perhaps the *leitī* concerned) will talk about. *Leitī* themselves often talk disparagingly of other *leitī*'s sexual and affective relations, describing them as *palakū* (ugly). Ironically, more privileged *leitī* are in a much better position to establish regular sexual liaisons that are not based on unreciprocated exchange patterns, perhaps because privilege enables them to be more assertive in their relations with "straight" men.

It is in this general context, in which the dignity and welfare of *fakaleitī* potentially fare poorly, that subscribing to nonlocality provides useful symbolic resources. It enables *leitī* to claim that they are exempt from local regimes of morality and exchange (including marriage) that marginalize and degrade them. Presenting oneself as part of a larger context is a defiant attempt to limit the scope of locally grounded morality and interpersonal dynamics. Perhaps more importantly, this strategy supports the occidentalist idealizations that many *leitī*, particularly those who do not have first-hand experience of industrial countries, harbor about the West.¹⁷ According to these idealizations, a *leitī* in the West can marry a man or at least enter into a marriage-like relationship, which most *leitī* (particularly underprivileged ones) see as a desirable solution to their exclusion from marriage in Tonga. But Western men are not simply potential marriage partners; they also represent financial security because Westerners are wealthy by definition. This security looks especially attractive when money, liquor, and feminine youthfulness run out, as do the attentions of "straight" Tongan men. Placing oneself under the economic protection of a Westerner represents a reversal of the directional flow of resources characterizing relations with "straight" Tongan men. This reversed flow can begin to resemble the stereotypical economic configuration of heterosexual relations and consequently make the *leitī* "feel like a real woman," as some of my *leitī* informants put it.¹⁸

The harsh reality of the lives of most Miss Galaxy contestants, however, is that the association with nonlocality often remains confined to the symbolic realm. Most will not be able to migrate overseas. Those who will are unlikely to find the better circumstances that they think are available in the West. Tongan *fakaleitī* who migrate to New Zealand, for example, become PI "queens" or *fa'afāfine*—the Samoan equivalent of *fakaleitī* and a term that has been incorporated into New Zealand English (often in butchered form) to refer to all PI transgendered men. In New Zealand, they may join the ranks of transgendered prostitutes lining certain streets of Auckland and Wellington, or at most they will eke out a living through multiple, poorly paid part-time jobs. The reality of their lives pales in comparison to the occidentalist fantasies of the West that many noncosmopolitan Tongan *leitī* buy into.

The containment of *leitī*'s occidentalist constructions of Otherness within the realm of fantasy is supported by more than the material unattainability of these fantasies. Indeed, *leitī*—particularly those who have resided overseas—frequently express disgust and disappointment about many aspects of what the West has to offer. In New Zealand, for example, most *leitī* want nothing to do with Western drag queens, transgendered persons, or gays and lesbians (categories with which mainstream New Zealanders

naïvely lump PI fa'afāfine, often with the most liberal of intentions). Like transgendered Tausug in the Southern Philippines (Johnson 1997:207), most Tongan leitī express unmitigated scorn for what they interpret as the foregrounding of sexuality in Western gay identity (e.g., in lesbian and gay pride parades or in same-gender couples living together openly) and are scandalized at the thought of nonfeminine-acting men having sex together ("God created man and woman," they say sanctimoniously).

Similarly, although the pageant always includes one or two overseas-based faka-leitī or transgendered persons from other Pacific Islands (e.g., Samoa, Fiji, Cook Islands), local leitī (and other Tongans) often find the nonlocality that these contestants embody to be at odds with their own vision of Otherness—even though the overseas contestants have an easier time performing Otherness than local contestants. For example, when one overseas Tongan contestant showed up to rehearsals in 1997 with a goatee (which she shaved before the pageant), local leitī were scandalized. And when the same contestant chose lip-synching as her talent during the pageant, she received nearly unanimous zero scores from the judges. (Her choice also led to tense moments as technicians unfamiliar with lip-synching rushed on stage, thinking she had switched off the mike by mistake.) In 1999 and 2000, the overseas transgendered contestants who won the contest clearly had had access to hormones and perhaps a surgeon's scalpel to help them achieve their feminine appearances. Although they impressed some of the judges, they generated scorn among many local leitī, among whom they were the subject of furious gossip. The referent of leitī's performed nonlocality is, therefore, not the reality of what the West offers but, like Occidentalism in general, a self-contained, self-referential reality, the terms of which are determined in local standards of aesthetics and social action (cf. Johnson 1997:193–210).

Nevertheless, in the local context the relationship between nonlocality and modernity on the one hand and locality and tradition on the other is uneasy. Indeed, many Tongans who are locally grounded in structures of wealth, rank, or power have secured a stronghold in transnational endeavors. Today they are enthusiastic migrants and consumers of tokens of capitalism and cosmopolitanism while remaining solidly grounded in local structures of traditionalism from which they also derive benefits.¹⁹ When these individuals publicly embrace modernity and cosmopolitanism (e.g., by using English in daily conversation), no one accuses them of rejecting locality and traditionalism. Even if they were criticized, they would have little to worry about. Wealth and power ensure their hegemony over the local context and enable them to dictate what counts as local in the first place. In contrast, when a poor or low-ranking Tongan embraces transnationalism, modernity, and the English language too candidly, the act is widely seen as a rejection of locality and tradition and exposes them to ridicule. Miss Galaxy contestants' performed nonlocality fits into this category. Whatever the contestants' intentions, they risk being perceived as arrogant and as attempting to rise above their stations despite the tangible lack of material grounding to substantiate these claims of upward mobility.

Like all ideological linkages that disadvantage some and benefit others, these judgments are not immune to contestation on the part of the marginalized. This was powerfully illustrated by a minor humorous incident in the 1997 pageant; one of the contestants, the quick-witted 'Āmini or Lady Amyland, sponsored by Joey's Unisex Hair Salon, turned the tables on the audience during the interview event (and perhaps on society at large, if only for a fleeting moment).²⁰ Before she had a chance to answer the emcee's question, Lady Amyland was heckled by a drunken leitī in the audience who urged her to answer her interview question in English (*faka-Pālangi*). The heckling drew some laughter because many knew that Lady Amyland's English was poor

and that she would make a fool of herself if she tried. But Lady Amyland had the last word:

- emcee: Miss Joey's Unisex Hair Salon! What do you have to say to promote Joey's Unisex Hair Salon? ((lowers voice, translating into Tongan)) *Ko e hā e me'a 'oku ke fai ke promote ai 'a e-* ((rolls eyes, searches for Tongan word)) *fakalalakala ai 'a Joey's Unisex Hair Salon.*
- heckler: *Faka-Palangi, 'Āmini!*
- audience: ((laughter))
- 'Āmini: Sorry excuse me, I'm a Tongan () ((rest of answer drowned by deafening laughter, vigorous applause, cat-calls)) [1997:Sony:4 0:05:42–0:06:26, see Figure 8]

Lady Amyland answered the heckler by reaffirming her Tongan identity and therefore her duty and privilege to answer the question in Tongan—an unexpected move that the audience found extremely humorous perhaps because the claim was embedded in a context in which everything is done to foreground nonlocality.²¹ What Lady Amyland did here was part of a wider tacit ongoing project of at least some contestants to take greater charge of the pageant and its effect on the audience. This project consists of stripping the audience (and society at large) of its privilege to ridicule contestants and take control of the boundary between humor and seriousness. It is this project that some audience members bemoan when they complain about fakaleiti taking themselves “too seriously.”

But the project goes further, and its meaning becomes clear when viewed in light of the previous analysis. Note that Lady Amyland asserted her claim to Tongan identity not in Tongan but in English; the covert message is that one can assert one's Tonganness while controlling the tools with which one does so and while using tools that are not part of the sanctioned repertoire. In addition, the preface of her repartee (“Sorry excuse me”) was an inside joke that mainstream audience members were unlikely to make sense of, a reference to another leiti's awkward attempt, a few years



Figure 8. Lady Amyland savors the effect of her quick-minded repartee to a heckler.

earlier, to speak English to a prospective Pālangi date. The overall effect of Lady Amyland's repartee contests the power of dominant forces to dictate what counts as markers of locality and what does not, asserts that claiming to be part of the "galaxy" does not necessarily mean denying one's local identity, reminds people that the Miss Galaxy pageant belongs in a festival designed to celebrate Tongan identity, and proclaims that being a leiti does not mean giving up one's place in Tongan society.²²

inequality inside and outside

So far I have focused on the subtle but consequential struggles that pitch leiti and non-leiti Tongans against one another both in and out of the pageant. Not all leiti, however, are on equal footing socially, materially, and symbolically, as I have already indicated. Although pageant contestants who are principally involved in these struggles are located at the lower end of the socioeconomic and prestige ladders, more privileged leiti are also involved in the production of the show, some quite centrally so. And the same struggles that characterize relationships between fakaleiti and mainstream Tongans are also at play in the relationships between more and less privileged leiti.

Interactions between contestants and the fakaleiti emcee provide copious illustrations of this struggle. The main organizing force behind the pageant, the emcee, is a member of an economically successful family who was part of the first wave of entrepreneurs, and she works hard to make the pageant possible, relying on her powerful social connections and cosmopolitanism. At the same time, her position during the pageant and related situations is ambiguous and shifting. Joking sometimes with the contestants and sometimes at their expense (thereby undermining some contestants' efforts to seek control of humor), she engages in a complex play of allegiances and collusions, which mirrors and informs her general position vis-à-vis both other leiti and Tongan society at large.

Again, the analysis of verbal interaction provides useful heuristic tools for understanding these dynamics. Three days before the first night of the 1997 pageant contestants were, as always, unprepared and had not memorized their lines and choreography, having found it more interesting to spend rehearsal time gossiping and bickering. With dramatic displays of exasperation, the emcee demonstrated and explained the steps once again—her voice impatient and stern—to a contestant who still had not learned them:

- emcee: *Sio mai! 'E 'ikai ke toe 'alu kimoutolu ki he tafa'aki ko ē ki he tafa'aki ko ē, no! Ko ho'o a'u mai pē ki mu'á, curtsy kia Lupepau'u. Curtsy, then you do the round. One, (.) Take it from the first one. Foki pē ko iá, fakafoki, nod, turn around, go. Ē? Mahino ia? Next!*[1997:Sony:1 0:25:00–0:26:05]
- emcee: *Look here! You should not go from one side to the other any more, no! When you arrive to the front, curtsy to Lupepau'u. Curtsy, then you do the round. One, (.) Take it from the first one. When you've returned here, turn around, nod, turn around, go. See? Have you understood? Next!*

Of note in this typical extract is the rapid code-switching between English and Tongan, which is considerably more fluent than anything that the contestants could produce and clearly sets the emcee apart from them. Her status as a privileged Tongan gives her greater access to English and its symbolic and material associations, and the rapid code-switching pattern subtly reinforces this privilege. What is also evident from the video recording of this interaction (as well as other comparable instances) is that the contestant, whose rehearsal performance she is correcting, does not understand

the instructions. Turning quizzically to other contestants and rolling her eyes, her body language is that of a lower-status person failing to understand the orders of a superior, and her subsequent persistent mistakes confirm this interpretation (see Figure 9). Thus the use of English (and its symbolic associations) ensures that the structures of inequality at play in greater Tongan society are just as relevant to relationships between fakaleitī of different statuses. Ironically, English and other symbolic categories that go with it have become stereotypes of leitī identity in Tongan eyes; yet these are the tools that help create marginality among the marginal.

The dynamics I describe here illustrate ways in which patterns of inequality, other than those directly associated with transgenderism, are as relevant to interpersonal dynamics within the ranks of fakaleitī as they are to Tongan society as a whole. In particular, the many forms of power found in the structure of Tongan society at large also exist in structure hierarchies among leitī. As Ortner (1995) justly remarks, the marginalized have their own politics through which the very concept of marginalization is negotiated and contested. Furthermore, I have provided glimpses into why the category “fakaleitī” is so difficult to define and that searching for its definition is misguided. Like gender (di Leonardo 1991) and all other social categories, the category is transversed by other identity dynamics at play in Tongan society, including wealth, rank, connections, relative access to the outside world, and the linguistic competence associated with these dynamics, all of which result in conflicting definitions of what it means to be a leitī. These conflicts can be played out, often at the microinteractional level, between individuals, contexts, allegiances, and different symbols and their associations.

locality performed and transformed

I have argued that through the Miss Galaxy pageant Tongan leitī have opportunities to dislocate themselves from Tongan society while at the same time remaining in place in a geographical and social sense. This imagined mobility forms a useful fantasy space



Figure 9. Mo'ale reacts to the emcee's code-switched instructions with puzzlement during rehearsal.

in both symbolic and sometimes material terms (particularly for the winner). First, it constitutes “an indirect discourse of complaint” (Kelsky 1996:184)—a criticism of structures and processes that marginalize participants in everyday life. Second, it provides meaning to lives even when it remains confined to fantasy, allowing *leitī* to “surmount the spatial constraint of locality, [and] enter the global scene by means that deny geographic immobilities” (Schein 1999:361). Like the Congolese *sapeurs* whom Friedman (1994) analyzes, Miss Galaxy contestants utilize nonlocal clothing, as well as language, names, mannerisms, performances, and in many ways gender to constitute selves that foreground their superiority over and autonomy from the rest of society. Third, it provides rich grounds for aesthetic, humorous, and interactional play, all of which can contribute to local prestige. The metaphorical enactment of mobility, however, is also potentially risky, as audiences can retort that dislocation and local grounding are mutually exclusive—leaving *leitī* in the lurch because most cannot enact dislocation materially. The pageant is thus a context in which the meanings of these dynamics, as well as the meanings of the nonlocal, the transnational, the modern, and their opposing categories, are argued over. As many scholars have shown, modernity and related dynamics are transformative of the relationship between social life and the imagination, but the way in which this transformation operates is far from straightforward. In particular, the transformation means different things and has divergent consequences for different groups and different people within groups.

In this article, I have explored the tension between locality and nonlocality, as well as the relationship between these categories and related concepts. I have demonstrated that the extent to which these two seemingly antithetical categories are mutually exclusive is a field of contestation. The dynamics that constitute each category (such as language) can also become the subjects of negotiations that can take on subtle, covert, and microscopic forms. My ethnographic research further shows that the participation in struggles over the meaning of locality and nonlocality is not confined to those for whom the struggles are most relevant (i.e., migrants; the overseas born; and, in other ethnographic contexts, refugees, stateless persons, labor migrants, etc.). These struggles can be waged in highly localized events and involve participants whose desires for transnationalism and cosmopolitanism are severely hampered by economic conditions. In short, here as well as elsewhere, the local can only be understood in reference to a broader context, even if this context is only imagined.

I have not attempted to analyze transgenderism as transcendent of contexts and manifestations (as an “it” entity, to use Herdt’s [1991] apt term). Instead, I have focused on the performance of transgenderism in one specific situation; I have also focused on the relationship between this performance, the performances of other identities (locality in particular) in the same context, and the performances of transgenderism and regular gendering in other contexts. The choice of a beauty pageant is of course not haphazard—performative in the most literal sense of the term, the beauty pageant is an obvious arena in which these relationships should be explored. A focus on the Miss Galaxy pageant, however, should not be interpreted to imply that it is the only aspect of *leitī*’s lives that deserves attention. It would be incorrect to take the pageant as the key symbol of *leitī* identity—obliterating the important and sometimes difficult circumstances of many of the contestants’ daily lives, in which poverty, marginalization, and economic and symbolic exploitation are realities. Many audience members forget the realities of *leitī* lives when they equate *leitī* identity with the ephemeral glamour of the Miss Galaxy stage. For the audience, it is easy to focus exclusively on the effervescent elegance of evening dresses and the outlandish imaginativeness of coconut-frond outfits and to miss the stains on the hand-me-down ball

gowns, the carefully patched rents in the secondhand *pule taha*, and the lack of high-heel shoes that contestants carefully hide by walking on tiptoes. Central to an ethnographic understanding of *leitī* is a critical deconstruction of connotations and their reinforcing effects on the invisibility of most aspects of *leitī* identities beneath the glamour of makeup and catwalk prancing, the shields of foreign-sounding stage names, and the humor of frame-breaking antics and visible crotch bulges in otherwise glamorous evening gowns.

The analysis I have presented relates to current debates about the globalization of sexual identities. In a clear statement concerning the globalizing hypothesis, Altman (1997, 2000) demonstrates that globalization enables a shift, in many parts of the world, from transgendered to homosexual identities. The former are defined in terms of gender, serve to reinforce gender dichotomies, and are steeped in locality and tradition; the latter are defined in terms of sexuality, pose sociopolitical challenges to the received order, are oriented toward modernity, and are embedded in a global gay and lesbian community headquartered in the urban West. *Fakaleitī* present problems for this hypothesis, which is already problematic in its assumption of a simplistic contrast between local tradition and global modernity (Rofel 1999:454–457). Not only do most *leitī* adamantly reject any connection between themselves and Western gay and lesbian identities, but they are also highly selective in their adoption of symbols and indexes of a globalizing modernity as constitutive of their transgendered (and not, on the whole, homosexual) selves. One phenomenon connected to the globalizing flow of ideas is the adoption in certain quarters of Tongan society of antigay discourses from American Evangelical Christianity and other conservative forces that are implemented locally in attempts to repress *fakaleitī*, thereby conflating gay and *leitī* identities. Other scholars have taken note of the comparable ease with which discourses and structures of repression, regulation, and control travel and become localized (Hoad 1999; Morris 1997; Rofel 1999), lending support to a Foucauldian view that disciplinary power precedes and helps define the disciplined object rather than the reverse (Halperin 1995).

As have many other scholars in recent years (e.g., Butler 1990; Johnson 1996; Kelsky 1996; Robertson 1998; Weston 1993), I have explored how gender, and by extension transgenderism, “is thought of as a process of structuring subjectivities rather than as a structure of fixed relations” (Morris 1995:568). In particular, I have analyzed ways in which transgenderism is intertwined with another type of crossing, translocality, the nature of which is as slippery as that of transgenderism. The pageant, and *leitī* identities in general, are only partly concerned with gender. When Tongan traditionalists make fun of straight overseas Tongan men by calling them *fakaleitī* (because they do not have full command of Tongan), they are putting their fingers on the fact that the embrace of Otherness (as indexed through language choice among other things) may be as central to *fakaleitī* identity as the claim that one is of another gender. Understanding *leitī* identities requires an exploration of the meanings of tensions between cosmopolitanism and locality, modernity and tradition, competing languages, and the symbolic and material associations of each of these categories.

notes

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1. Tongan society also contains transgendered females (*fefine faka-tangata*) who form a considerably less visible minority, quite separate from fakaleiti, and who would certainly not organize a beauty pageant. My ethnographic silence about this other category derives from the difficulties I continue to experience, as a non-native male anthropologist, in approaching the persons concerned (see Besnier 1994 for more details).

2. The extent of this familiarity with fakaleiti is of course age, gender, and experience dependent. For example, a young woman out to see the world and have a good time is likely to count leiti among her best friends, whereas older men typically have little understanding of what it means to be a fakaleiti.

3. Tongan society and culture are the subjects of substantial anthropological and historical research by, for example, Aoyagi (1991), Bataille-Benguigui (1994), Bott (1982), Campbell (1992b), Douaire-Marsaudon (1998), Gailey (1987), Grijp (1993), Kaeppler (1993), Lawson (1996), Marcus (1980), Morton (1996), Moyle (1987), and Wood-Ellem (1999), to cite only recent monographs. Heinemann (2000), James (1994), and Yamaji (1999) present analyses of transgendered Tongans that differ from mine in that they leave untouched the roles of locality and nonlocality in the formation of the leiti identity. The literature on transgenderism in other regions of Polynesia is now too vast to cite in full, and some recent works transcend the definitional and functionalist focus that I am arguing against here.

4. The relevant forms here are the national and commercial press and radio programming. The only serial publication, until the mid-1980s, was a weekly governmental newspaper published simultaneously in Tongan and English as *Koe Kalonikali 'o Tonga* and the *Tonga Chronicle*. *Taimi 'o Tonga*, a newspaper, was first published in 1986, and *Matangi Tonga*, a quarterly magazine, in 1989, supplemented by minor serials. The nongovernmental press tends to give the Miss Galaxy pageant greater coverage than the official newspaper, which has begun announcing the event in its back pages only in recent years. I do not know the extent of coverage on the radio or on the limited television channels.

5. The numbering of the pageants is the subject of some disagreement between informants, possibly because "Miss Galaxy" has become a generic appellation for all transgendered pageants.

6. The swimwear event, which was part of earlier programs, has been dropped because it provoked too much rowdiness in the audience.

7. Tongan men often disparage Tongan women for never managing to look as good as fakaleiti contestants. Elsewhere, Tongans often characterize fakaleiti as doing women's work but doing it better and more efficiently than women. In a similar vein, leiti themselves explain "straight" men's sexual interest in them by claiming that they are far superior to real women as "female" sexual partners. These remarks echo comparable discourses about other transgendered contexts (e.g., Whitehead 1981:107 on Native North America) and illustrate in dramatic fashion the usefulness of some aspects of Butler's (1990) approach to gender performativity, such as the claim that imitation (e.g., drag) is always more real than the imitated.

8. The discourse of skin color in Tonga is not one of race in any straightforward sense (cf. Schulz 2000:125 on Mali). First, Tongans do not necessarily find Western women more attractive than Tongan women. In fact, many female tourists and expatriates fail dismally to meet Tongans' criteria for attractiveness, which require, for example, a woman to exhibit Rubenesque curves. Furthermore, the most attractive fairness of skin is one that is also slightly swarthy—not

the Northern European kind that has been most common in Tonga since missionary times. Finally, the value attached to fair skin has historical roots in times before there were Europeans to conjure any possibility of racial difference; then, as now, a fair complexion was an index of rank.

9. The wording of the magazine story on the 1999 pageant is particularly telling of both the inevitability of the outcome of the contest and the marginality of nonlocal participants. “The representatives of the Tongan communities from Hawai’i, New Zealand and Australia, enriched the Miss Heilala festival bringing overseas entrants. But again the title stayed in Tonga” (*Matangi Tonga* 1999:2, punctuation as in the original).

10. Ironically, since then the pageant has been held in the Queen Sālote Memorial Hall, a much grander venue that seats more than the hotel’s floor-show terrace does. Its raised stage and catwalk also much more effectively insulate contestants from the harassment of drunken audience members. In 1997, the pageant’s patron—Princess Lupepau’u Tuita, the King’s then-20-year-old granddaughter with a University of Auckland BA in Anthropology—delivered an articulate and pointed speech about the contest being barred from the hotel, subtly criticizing anti-leiti sentiments among government officials (see Figure 3, lower-left insert).

11. The term *nonlocality* is abstract and stylistically awkward, but the alternatives (the Other, the foreign, difference, the exotic, the global, the Western, transnational identity, whiteness, and so on) are too specific (and in some cases misleading) to capture a category that remains crucially vague in the social practices concerned and that is defined in terms of what it is not. In fact, both vagueness and antithesis are essential features of pageant contestants’ strategic deployments of nonlocality. Johnson (1997) grapples with a similar situation in an analysis of the Tausug transgendered construction of “America” in Jolo (Southern Philippines), which does not refer to a particular place but to a shifting, negatively defined entity evoking a variety of historical and symbolic associations.

12. Some of the information provided is fake or unrealistic while other details are designed to be humorous. For example, contestants regularly claim high-status feminine occupations such as nurse or public relations [*sic*], as well as future plans to become a computer operator, a flying attendant [*sic*], or a good wife. Johnson (1997) and Reid (1999) describe the same practice of emulating international beauty contests in Tausug transgendered pageants and in urban South Africa, contexts that exhibit fascinating similarities to the Tongan one.

13. The textual fragments cited in this article are transcribed as faithfully as possible from video recordings using conventions developed by conversation analysts (Atkinson and Heritage 1984) and widely used in linguistic anthropology. The conventions relevant to the fragments cited here are:

,	continuing intonation, not necessarily at the end of clauses
.	falling intonation, not necessarily at the end of sentences
?	rising intonation, not necessarily in questions
!	animated tempo
(.)	pause
word-	cut-off or self-interruption
WORD	very loud voice
(word)	not intelligible, conjectured transcript
((comment))	transcriber’s comment

In addition, utterances in English are in roman font and utterances in Tongan are in italics (translations notwithstanding).

14. A Tongan businessman told me that he had employed a fakaleiti to sell his products door-to-door precisely because fakaleiti are perceived as worrying little about shame in addition to being gregarious and talkative. These traits are particularly useful in a society in which approaching strangers and selling things continue to be viewed as shameful, despite recent changes. Tongans thus do not judge these traits negatively in all contexts.

15. Many of the symbolic associations I describe here echo patterns found in other societies. One is reminded, for example, of Willis’s (1977) celebrated analysis of working-class masculinity among adolescents in English schools, Bourdieu’s (1985) analysis of social class and

refinement in France (particularly as it relates to gender), and Ortner's (1991) study of social class and gender in New Jersey.

16. Devereux (1937) noted similar patterns among the Mohave in their attitudes toward their transgendered people.

17. Following Lindstrom (1995:35), I use the term *occidentalism* as the equivalent of what Carrier (1992:198) terms "ethno-occidentalism." In other words, I use the term to refer to non-Western visions of the West that are characterized by the same reifications and constructions of difference and similarity as orientalism. Of course, orientalism and occidentalism operate within the context of distinct power dynamics.

18. The serious disadvantage of Western men, particularly older Western men thought to be likely catches, is that they lack the brawny masculinity of real Tongan men—which is what leitī desire sexually "since real women desire real men, and leitī are real women," as my leitī informants argue. For one thing, Western men speak English, which automatically renders them effeminate in the eyes of many Tongans.

19. Many successful entrepreneurs, government officials, and persons of rank have secured for themselves and their families permanent residence status in Australia, New Zealand, or the United States, and they commute between Tonga and these countries. At the same time, access to the West is becoming increasingly difficult for poor Tongans. For example, in 1999 Australia and New Zealand imposed stringent new restrictions on visa issuance, even for visitors' and medical visas, in the form of substantial monetary bonds (e.g., A\$5,000) to ensure that holders do not overstay. Immigration authorities forfeit these bonds for the most insignificant reasons—for example, a change of travel plans.

20. In the following discussion I have not attempted to hide the identity of those concerned because my analysis is based on a public event.

21. The humor already began with the heckler, who spoke in Tongan despite the fact he urged the contestant to speak English. The heckler also referred to the contestant by his everyday male name ('Āmini) rather than her stage name (Lady Amyland).

22. I do not wish to imply that Lady Amyland's act of resistance was the result of a carefully engineered strategy on her part. For one thing, she was probably drunk, as many contestants are. One knows from Scott (1985, 1990), however, that everyday acts of resistance need not be the outcome of calculated designs.

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