

CONTEXTUALISATION OF DANCES IN TOURISM: A TONGAN CASE STUDY

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Dances, as social practices, are closely linked to the political and social systems in which they are produced. This is particularly true of Polynesian dances that have (or had) religious as well as political functions (Kaepler 1993: 49, 75; Moyle 1991: 43, Tcherkézoff 2004: 305). As anthropologists have stressed, dances can be powerful political tools (Reed 1998). In Tonga, for example, where “we find a living dance tradition that is functionally interwoven with other aspects of the culture” (Kaepler 1993: 75), dance performances are used to celebrate the current political system. Adrienne Kaepler (1993: 52) has explained: “[N]ot only does the poetry impart such information, but much of it is reinforced visually” as the “physical arrangement of the individual performers visually portrays important concepts of the social structure”. As a consequence, social change inevitably modifies the practice of dances.

It has been repeatedly noted that the political and religious dimensions of Polynesian performances have been profoundly modified or challenged since the European colonisation of Polynesian archipelagoes. Kaepler (2002: 8) has noted that “in many Pacific Island societies, movement/sound sequences that originated in rituals performed in sacred spaces (or temples) were transformed from religious ‘work’ into ‘music’ and ‘dance’”. These movement/sound sequences have even in some instances become a mere “form of entertainment” throughout Polynesia (Kaepler 1993: 75).

This is particularly true of dances performed during festivals. Festivals are one of the many contexts of dance performance in Polynesia today (Kaepler 1988). They are organised

on various scales—national, regional, international—and for different purposes—for example, to attract tourists, promote regionalism, celebrate independence) (Kaepler 1988: 121). In these contexts, sound-movement sequences lose some of the meanings they had in other social contexts of performance. For example, while Tongan *lakalaka* or theatrical Cook Island dance-dramas convey important cultural values for their home audiences, their meanings and “grammars” cannot be understood by non-Tongans or non-Cook Islanders who are part of festival audiences since they do not share the necessary competencies. As a consequence, outsiders “admire them [the Cook Island dances] primarily for group display, interesting sounds, and incredible hip movements” (Kaepler 2002: 12). These sound-movement sequences have become spectacles.

The process through which movement sequences become dances, or meaningful performances become spectacles, shares aspects with more general processes described by anthropologists of art through concepts such as “appropriation” (Errington 1994) and “aestheticization” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 76). Through these processes, the so-called “ethnic” art objects lose their social meanings and functions to become appreciated only for their formal and aesthetic dimensions. As far as dances are concerned, such a process was described by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her analysis of the Los Angeles Festival of 1990. This festival included staged cultural performances by Samoan, Tongan and Japanese artists. By shifting the context of these cultural performances, the “performances that are semantically dense for their home audiences acquire the desirable quality of free-floating signifier when produced for avant-garde reception” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 235).

Although tourism is just one of the many new contexts in which dances are performed in the Pacific today, it has received less attention than other contexts of performance, such as “community events” and “ethnic displays” (Donner 1992) or festivals (Kaepler 2002, 2010a). This may be because the changes made for tourist stages are judged unimportant or insignificant. The few researchers who have analysed the transformations imposed on dances

performed for tourism (see, for example, Trimillos 1988) tend to reduce this process to very simple operations. In their view, the dances are simply shortened, the music made quicker or less elaborate. To sum up, as Daniel (1996: 794) has written:

[I]n tourism, time is condensed to fit the economic interests of entrepreneurs as well as the concentration time limits of tourists. Space is decorated with elaborate costumes and designed stage sets that project specific visual images. Dance forms are condensed structurally and improvised sections of accompanying music are shortened or replaced by set or through-composed lyrics.

To my mind, this process deserves a deeper analysis: is it governed by the same mechanisms as those described in the case of festivals, i.e., do sound-movement sequences become spectacles? Do they mainly rely on their entertainment/visual aspects? Are dances only interpreted by their new audiences in terms of their aesthetic properties? Are they entirely cut off from their original social function and meanings? Do they become merely a symbol of otherness for Western tourists? Although the questions are similar, the answers they receive may be different since the venues and intentions of tourist performances and festivals performances are quite different in certain respects.

Tourism and festival events, while having many points in common, are not exactly the same. For example, compositions performed during festivals are likely to be written and choreographed for this particular occasion and are one-off performances whereas compositions used in tourist contexts are likely repeatedly performed in various shows. The audience differs as well. It is true that during festivals Pacific Islanders do “become tourists to the performance-venue” (Kaepler 1988: 122) when the venue is not in their home country (while tourists from outside the Pacific might be discouraged from attending by the temporary overpopulation of the festival venue). However, they are not simply spectators, as other tourists would be, they are also performers of their own “culture”. In addition, the motivation for tourists (non-Pacific Islanders) to attend a dance show is usually the quest for novelty or

for the “exotic other”. In the case of Pacific festivals, the person seen by other Pacific Islanders is not so much an exotic other as someone with whom the members of the audience might wish to assert, in particular circumstances and beyond their actual differences, common values as opposed to Western values, for instance the “Pacific Way” ideology (Babadzan 2009: 18-23). In some cases, festivals focus less on the cultural specificities of Pacific groups or nations than on their commonalities. During the Eighth Festival of Pacific Arts in Nouméa (New Caledonia): “Cultural specificity could still be seen in the more ‘traditional’ performances, but it appeared that the ‘popular’ music groups were more interested in regional and generational identity.” (Kaepler 2002: 8). Clearly, tourist performances are quite different; issues of commonality and specificity have little meaning, and the idea is to profitably engage utter strangers. These warrant fuller examination.

Relatively few anthropologists have examined the social dimensions of a shift from ceremonial contexts of performance to tourist stages. K. Alexeyeff (2009), R. Henry (2000) and J. Sissons (1999) have analysed how tourist dances become vehicles for discourses about authenticity and identity, or for nation building. Rather I address another question, that of the transformation of the meanings and social functions of dances through the staging process. Kaepler (1977) and M. Lassibile (2006) give some insight into this change of context. Lassibile (2006) has argued that woDaaBe dances (WoDaaBe are a Peul sub-group from Niger), when staged during European festivals or tourist shows in Niger, do not lose all their political, economic and aesthetic properties. They merely take on new ones. Kaepler (1977) has devised four categories to classify Polynesian dances, from the most traditional to the most acculturated (“airport art Polynesian dance”). She defines the latter as “dance in which the casual observer can be entertained or astonished without understanding and may, in fact, lead to misunderstanding of Polynesian culture rather than appreciation in cross-cultural perspective” (Kaepler 1977: 82).

In my opinion, Kaepler has raised crucial questions that have received little or no attention. The three questions she asks are:

(1) what are the processes that changed the complex integrated performances of poetry, music, and movement into tourist attractions; (2) what is the relation of non-traditional dance to the traditional dance styles; and (3) are these non-traditional dance forms meaningful in any way to the Polynesians in addition to providing jobs and money? (1977: 73).

Kaepler answers the first question by saying that dances are performed for their visual dimension, not their meanings, writing, “[I]n order to be marketable to outsiders, the production must stand on its visual performance” (1977: 75). Nonetheless, in a nuanced way, she concluded by noting that “at the same time, non-traditional dances both folk and airport, serve new social, economic and political functions and offer a medium for creativity that is at once distinctively Polynesian” (p. 83). I want to take this question further: what do the meanings and functions of dances become in tourism? What new meanings are added to them (if any)? How far is their visual dimension pushed to the fore? This takes us back to the third question raised by Kaepler: Are tourist dances meaningful for their performers? One could add: are they in any way meaningful for the tourists as well?

This brings us to a last but fundamental question. Kaepler (2002) noted that “it remains to explore how Festival audiences create meaning from performances for which they have little background to understand” (2002: 15). The “beholder’s share”, i.e., “what he or she brings to a performance”, which is also what “determines how the performance is decoded—as ritual, as theatre, or as spectacle” (2010b: 186), has only been evaluated from a theoretical point of view. From this point of view, spectators are thought to be unable to create meaning from what they attend as “music or dance cannot be understood cross-culturally without understanding individual music/dance traditions in terms of the culture in which each is embedded” (p. 188).

From this it can be deduced that tourists and non-tourists have radically different experiences while attending a dance or movement sequence produced in a particular cultural context: the first are “beholders” who have the competence to decode the message whereas the second are “spectators”. In Tonga, tourist dance performances, called “floorshows”, are attended by both Tongans and non-Tongans. Tonga is thus an appropriate location in which to evaluate whether the non-Tongan tourists’ experience is radically different from that of a Tongan. One of this paper’s objectives is to provide answers to this question using Tongan ethnographic material.

THE TONGAN CONTEXT

To address the issues raised by the questions I have posed, I will first develop a comparison between ceremonial dances and tourist dances. The term “ceremonial” refers to dances performed in social situations in which they are endowed with special functions and meanings, such as honouring the chiefs and nobles or celebrating a Tongan national event, which are called *kātoanga*. What I call a tourist dance is one whose main purpose is to entertain tourists. Whereas one can confidently assert that most Tongan dances are meaningful and fulfill particular social functions when performed for a coronation, for example, what these meanings and functions become within tourism is uncertain and open to question. Fortunately, both ceremonial and tourist dances are very much alive in Tonga today.

Tongan society is reputed to have undergone less extreme changes than some other Polynesian societies which were subjected to direct European colonial rule, such as New Zealand or Hawai‘i (Van der Grijp 2001). One of the particularities of Tonga is that it was never directly colonised (although it was for many years a British protectorate) and few Europeans settled in this archipelago. Although one should not overestimate the continuity of Tongan political history (Douaire-Marsaudon 1998: 17-18), the present Tongan political

system is the result of a transformation of pre-colonial chieftainship into a constitutional monarchy (Van der Grijp 2001: 180).

Dances still play a major part in kingdom-wide *kātoanga*. Tongan dances have been well-documented, thanks in particular to the major work of Kaeppler (see for example 1993, 2001, 2007), as well as by A. Linkels (1992), E. Shumway (1981) and K. Velt (1991). It should be noted that there is in fact no specific word for dance in the Tongan language. The word *faiva*, which “refers to any kind of task, feat, craft, or performance requiring skill or ability, or anything at which a person is clever” (Kaeppler 1993: 30-31), is used locally to refer to what we would call a “performance” or “dance”. I would rather use the vernacular word *faiva* instead of dance because most Tongan dances, like other Polynesian dances, are actually elaborate expressive practices, simultaneously incorporating music, dance and poetry (see Moyle 1991: 49).

My analysis uses ethnographic material collected during two three-month periods of fieldwork in Tonga: the first one in 2008, the second in 2009. While in Tonga, I was also able to regularly attend floorshows. These are dance shows generally composed not only of Tongan *faiva*, but also of other Polynesian dances, in particular dances of Hawaiian, Tahitian, Samoan and Māori origin or derivation. Most floorshows take place in hotels or resorts and are accompanied by a Tongan buffet. In order to grasp spectators’ reactions, I mainly made use of observation—reiterated over many nights—and questionnaires. I used same questionnaires—two pages in length and posing 16 questions—at all venues.

Questions concerned all the different types of dances performed, thus giving me the opportunity to analyse the spectators’ appreciation of tourist performances in general. In addition, in order to make a specific comparison between ceremonial and tourist dances, I took a closer look to one particular *faiva*: the *lakalaka*. Shumway has written:

... in Western terms it is a multimedia art form combining the eloquence of poetry with the beauty of choral music and the grace of dance. It might very well be called an art-song-dance

in the same sense as the Western art-song since each of the elements is of the highest order individually and, when combined, they enhance each other and multiply the power of the form to evoke aesthetic satisfaction. (1981: 468)

Lakalaka are usually performed by groups with hundreds of participants. Kaepler (2005: 219) has called *lakalaka* one of the major “formal” *faiva* genres. Among the nine existing types of Tongan *faiva*, it is the one the most performed at important social events (*kātoanga*) such as coronations, royal anniversaries or birthdays. *Lakalaka* have recently been recognised by UNESCO as masterpieces of “Intangible Cultural Heritage”. Material acquired through participant-observation was used for the study of *lakalaka*.

In 2008, I was able to participate as a dancer in a *lakalaka* for the coronation of King George Tupou V. During the week celebrating the event, different *lakalaka* were performed to honour the new King, most of them by people belonging to the same village, though some groups were also constituted on the basis of a school or church. The one in which I took part was prepared by the inhabitants of Kolomotu‘a (literally, ‘old town’), one of the main quarters of the capital city Nuku‘alofa. Rehearsals started several months before the event.

For reasons I will explain later, *lakalaka* are rarely performed in floorshows. There are nonetheless a few exceptions. Among the six different floorshows I frequently attended in 2008 and 2009, only two included *lakalaka*, one being located in the Hihifo (western) district, while the other is the Tongan National Cultural Centre's. These two floorshows will be used as examples in the analysis of *lakalaka* in tourist contexts.

I begin with an examination of the social functions and meanings of *lakalaka*, and the aesthetic criteria used to judge them, in ceremonial contexts, drawing on the preparations for and event of King George Tupou V’s coronation. Then, I analyse tourist performances, first from a general perspective, to see how they contrast with ceremonial dances, and then with a particular focus on *lakalaka*.

LAKALAKA FOR KĀTOANGA

The *lakalaka* has not always had the social importance it possesses today. Its current salience is inseparable from the unification of the country by George Tupou I (also known as Tāufa‘āhau I), who became king of the whole of Tonga in 1845. Shumway (1981: 467-68) has argued that George Tupou I’s reign was accompanied by three major developments that had repercussions on national life: (i) Christianity was adopted as the national religion, (ii) land was divided among the nobles recognised by the King, and (iii) the people’s emancipation in 1862 and promulgation of the constitution in 1875 nurtured an unprecedented feeling of nationalism. *Lakalaka* played a major role in the celebration of this new nation and its kings (Tupou I and his descendants) although it only emerged in its current form at the end of Tupou I’s reign and only gained importance during the reign of Queen Sālote Tupou III (1918-1965), who was Tupou I’s granddaughter (Kaepler 2007: 73). Shumway (1981: 458) wrote:

Of the many genres of performing arts in Tonga the *lakalaka* is the most prestigious and perhaps the best expression of what it means to be Tongan. It is presented as a gift by a whole village on important occasions to commemorate a national event or to honour the royalty or nobility. It is not only a thing of aesthetic beauty but also a reaffirmation of loyalty to the throne and of the goodness of the Tongan way of national life.

Queen Sālote is still renowned for being the best *punake* ‘poet, composer and choreographer’ Tonga has ever known. Most of the *lakalaka* performed for royal occasions today were composed by her (see Wood-Ellem 2004).

Preparing a *lakalaka* requires months of rehearsal for the people involved. The preparation of Kolomotu‘a’s *lakalaka* in 2008, for example, started several months before the coronation itself. Villagers willing to participate gathered twice a week in a hall in Kolomotu‘a to rehearse under the supervision of the *punake*, Tangifetaua Koloamatangi. The women were taught the movements by his daughter Aneleisia VI. Rehearsals provided the opportunity to remind everyone who the highest-ranking people in the village were. During

the final rehearsals in particular, the *punake* started to position the dancers. Nobles or high-ranking people were placed in the first row of dancers, divided into female and male sides. The highest ranking people are positioned in what are considered the most central places in this front row (see the Figure 1 below).

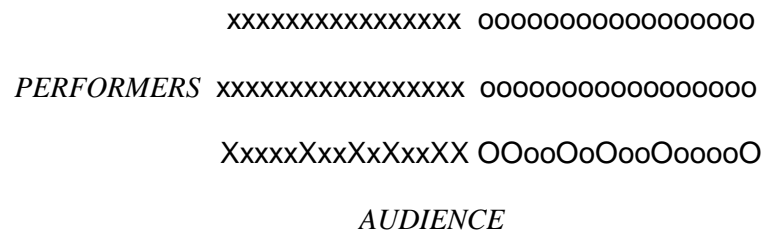


Figure 1. Arrangement of dancers before the audience.

KEY: x= women
 o= men
 X= highest-ranking women
 O= highest-ranking men

The highest ranking female and male dancer, both called *vāhenga*, stand side by side in the central positions. Immediately next to them, stand the *ta’ofi vāhenga*, who are the second highest-ranking people. Then positions number five, seven, ten, and the last one in the row are also reserved for the most notably high-ranking performers. For important *kātoanga*, the *vāhenga* are often close relatives of the king himself. In the *lakalaka* performed by Kolomotu‘a, the female *vāhenga* was Sālote Lupepau‘u Tuita, one of the King’s nieces. She is the eldest daughter of Sālote Mafile‘o Pilolevu Tuita, the King’s sister. According to Tongan kinship principles, sisters are superior in rank to their brothers or, more generally speaking, “females have higher status than male kinsmen of the same generation” (Kaeppler 1971: 177). This superiority is extended to the following generation so that a brother’s children must show respect to their father’s sister’s children. The eldest daughter of a man’s sister’s children (as Lupepau‘u Tuita is to King George Tupou V) is said to be *fahu* to him. Her high rank requires that she stand on a layer of mats and *tapa* ‘bark cloth’ during the performance.

Before the day of the performance, Lupepa‘u Tuita rarely came to the village rehearsals but when she did, this was the opportunity to openly celebrate her status. Special

drinks and entertainment were prepared for her. She was greeted with the sound of a loud “*tue tue!*” shouted by the women and installed on a layer of mats and *tapa* or, when the architecture of the hall permitted it, she was installed in a raised part of the room. Through these protocols, as Kaeppler (1993: 58) has remarked:

... an individual is pleurably enculturated into the time-honoured values of this society, that is, he learns of the social roles and relative importance of chiefs, *matāpule*, and *tu‘a*, the statuses ascribed by birth and what mobility is possible by achievement, and the social values regarding male and female in movement patterns and in family ranking and avoidance patterns.

The content of the poem sung itself pays tribute to the king and his family. All *lakalaka* start with a *fakatapu*, which is a stanza directly addressed to the nobles sitting in the audience. It is a way of dedicating the performance to them and of asking permission to perform it. The rest of the text is generally a recital of historical events concerning the royal family or genealogy. Take the fourth stanza (after the *fakatapu*) of Kolomotu‘a’s *lakalaka* (*Ta‘anga ma‘a e ‘Ikale*) as an example. I use a translation from Tongan to English by Melenaita Taumoefolau (in Wood-Ellem 2004: 279-80). In addition, I use explanations I was given by the *punake* in charge of this *lakalaka*’s preparation in 2008.

<i>Ofo mai e ‘Ulukaulupe</i>	Awake now, ‘Ulukaulupe
<i>Kae lau ‘a e hisitōlia</i>	While the history is read,
<i>He pupunga tapu ‘o Pangai ē</i>	Sacred constellation of Pangai
<i>‘Oku kei fakaholo e kaniva</i>	Still lining the galaxy,
<i>He maama e ‘Otu Felenité</i>	The radiance of the Friendly Isles
<i>‘Oku tapa atu ‘i ‘Ōseania</i>	Flashing through Oceania
(...)	(...)
<i>Ko hoto kakala tapu ke ‘ave</i>	It is my garland never to be yielded
<i>Tauleva ‘o ‘ikai ke hu‘ia.</i>	I shall wear it forever.

‘*Ulukaulupe* is a word from formal language used to refer to members of the Royal Family, particularly to young ladies. Here, it was probably a way of speaking about the Queen herself.

The constellation is a metaphor employed to refer to the Royal Family and its legacy, celebrating Tonga as the last remaining monarchy in the Pacific. The Royal Family is presented as making Tonga sparkle throughout the Pacific Ocean (“Friendly Isles” was the name given to the archipelago by Captain James Cook). In the last two lines, the Queen asserted her will to remain a proud representative of the royal lineage (evoked through the garland of flowers).

Social values and aesthetic appreciation were inextricably intertwined. The text is a poetic and aesthetic means of honouring the King. The way the dancers were positioned had an impact on the visual effect of the dance. Not only did the presence of nobles in the first row give prestige to the performance, it also enhanced its beauty. High-ranking people are indeed reputed to be “naturally” better dancers than others. I now take a closer look at the criteria used to judge the beauty of performances from a Tongan point of view.

Kaeppler (1993) has pointed out some of these criteria, which are similar for most *faiva* genres. A good performance should generate a feeling of inner warmth and excitement called *māfana*. It can then be qualified as *mālie*, meaning ‘beautiful’ or ‘superb’. Such a feeling depends on various aspects of the performance: first, the quality of the poem, the relevance of its metaphors and the delicacy of its symbolism. People are never referred to directly but alluded to through the names of places or flowers. Understanding Tongan poetry requires a good knowledge of conventional symbols, history and genealogies: “The ability to follow and understand the allusions, which are often phrased in archaic language, is cultivated by only a small sector of the society” (Kaeppler 1993: 35).

Movements must be made to reflect the words and in turn reflect the choreographer’s skill in choosing appropriate (but also original) ones. According to some Tongans, the quality of the performance relies on the variety of movements; the more a choreographer uses different movements, the more he or she shows how vast is the extent of his or her knowledge. In addition, the performance must suit the context. The *fakatapu* should honour

nobles present in the audience and the poem comment on the event. The performers' skills, as individuals as well as a collective body, contribute greatly to the performance's beauty as a whole. Dancers must step from side to side simultaneously and be synchronised in their movements. The women's gestures must be graceful and the men's movements a show of their strength. They must dance enthusiastically to create a feeling of *māfana* 'excitement, enthusiasm' among the spectators. The more *māfana* performers feel, the more likely they are to communicate this to their audience. Moreover, many people assert that the choir singing behind the dancers, called the *langitu'a*, plays a major part in the beauty of the performance. When the singing is not of good quality, then the dance cannot be *mālie* either.

Costumes are another important visual element in the appreciation of the performance. For the coronation, performers wore a shirt (most of the time a white one) and a *ta'ovala* 'matting worn around the waist' covered by a skirt made of *si* (*Cordyline terminalis*) leaves (called *sisi*). They adorned themselves with finely woven garlands of *kakala* 'fragrant flowers' as well as bracelets made of leaves (generally *maile* [*Alyxia oliviformis*]) around the ankles and wrists. The Kanokupolu *lakalaka* dancers have a tradition of wearing a large piece of *ngatu* 'bark cloth' around the waist, instead of the usual *ta'ovala*.

When the performers reach the point of arousing an aesthetic emotion in the spectators, they are rewarded in different ways. The word "mālie!" is loudly and repeatedly shouted by certain people: when nobles or the king himself are in the audience, *matāpule* (talking chiefs) have the responsibility of vocalising their appreciation. Another way for a spectator to express enthusiasm is by giving a token of appreciation to the most talented dancer(s), an action called *fakapale*. The token (*pale*) might be a piece of *ngatu*, a *kahoa* 'garland of flowers', a scarf or a larger piece of material. Nowadays, banknotes are commonly given. The proper way for the dancer who receives a *pale* to act is to give it later to the person he was dancing for (generally the highest-ranking spectator). A feeling of *māfana* can also move a spectator to stand up and make some dance movements at the side of or behind the

dancer. The different ways of expressing an aesthetic emotion in Tonga are similar to those that can be observed in other Polynesian cultures (Alexeyeff 2009: 80, Moyle 1991: 8).

As I have noted above, the appreciation of a *lakalaka* depends partly on one's ability to understand the message of the performance. *Lakalaka* have a strong communicative dimension that is both verbal and non-verbal. This again raises questions regarding the staging of *lakalaka* for tourism. In this event, *lakalaka* are no longer addressed to the King or his family, but to tourists who, insofar as they cannot speak Tongan, will not understand the meaning of the song. The social function of the *lakalaka*, reuniting a whole village to celebrate the hierarchical principles of Tongan society, is essentially altered. In the same way, if tourists cannot understand the song, how can they appreciate the appropriateness of the movements? Most of the aesthetic features of *lakalaka* would then be impossible for tourists to understand. What are the criteria used by the latter to judge what they see and how different are they from those used by Tongan spectators? To answer these questions, I first draw a general comparison between ceremonial and tourist dances to determine what criteria tourists use to judge the performances they attend, and then I address more specifically the changes in the *lakalaka*'s purpose and meaning in the context of tourism.

TOURIST PERFORMANCES

When staged as floorshows, *lakalaka* are made shorter than in their usual ceremonial context. Instead of lasting from 10 to 30 minutes, the performance is reduced to less than five minutes by, for example, presenting only two stanzas and/or performing each stanza only once (instead of twice in a ceremonial context). The group of dancers is also much smaller than in a ceremonial context. Whereas, according to some informants, the Kolomotu'a group numbered as many as four hundred performers,¹ *lakalaka* on tourist stages are generally performed by no more than 10 to 15 dancers, all aligned in the same row. This is also true for other group

faiva, such as *mā'ulu'ulu* or *sōkē*, performed by hundreds of dancers on ceremonial occasions but only ten or so on a tourist stage.

Costumes also differ quite considerably from one context to the other. Floorshow dancers generally use the same costumes for all the Tongan *faiva* performed. At the National Cultural Centre for example, girls wore an off-the-shoulder top made of a piece of *ngatu* (painted bark cloth) and a colourful *manafau* 'grass skirt', actually made of plastic (except for the *tau'olunga* 'female solo dance'). This kind of costume can be made quite easily and used repeatedly on many nights. In contrast, making the clothing and the accessories for a ceremonial dance is time-consuming. Cutting leaves, picking flowers and sewing shirts must be initiated far in advance to be finished on time. In order to explain the differences between costumes used on tourist stages and in other contexts, performers argue that they cannot use perishable materials as costumes are used repeatedly and must last for some time.

As a result of the costumes' sophistication and the number of dancers, the visual effect of a *faiva* is far more striking at a *kātoanga* than a floorshow; hundreds of people, first walking together onto the place of performance (*Mala'e Pangai* in the case of the Coronation), and then performing in perfect unison, is an impressive sight. Even someone who knew nothing about Tongan aesthetics would find the performance more gripping and the costumes more elegant in this context. But what, in the context of floorshows, do spectators think of the visual effect of the dances and the costumes? What are the criteria used by tourists to judge and express their appreciation of *faiva* during floorshows? How much do these differ from or coincide with those of Tongan people?

My data concerning the visitors' feelings and their appreciation of the dances was gathered through questionnaires, passed round after the floorshow, as well as by frequently attending these shows as a participant observer. In my analysis, I separated data from and about Tongans or Tongan immigrants living overseas (who often attend floorshows while visiting family in Tonga) and data concerning non-Tongan tourists, who were mainly

Australians, New Zealanders and Americans, along with a few Europeans. The data comes from approximately 120 questionnaires completed in 2009, at six different locations (all floorshow venues) on Tonga's main island of Tongatapu.

The first significant result from the analysis of these questionnaires was that non-Tongan audiences were indeed sensitive to the dancers' enthusiasm. To the question of what they had liked most and what they would remember about the show, an Australian visitor replied the "energy and happiness of the music and dances", a New Zealand visitor spoke of the "group pleasure and fun while they are performing", an English visitor remarked the "enthusiasm of the musicians and dancers", and another New Zealand visitor remarked on their "wonderful smiling faces". Although the word *māfana* was not used and this inner state not recognised explicitly, the fact that performers were *māfana* greatly influenced the tourists' perception and appreciation.

With regard to the visitors' aesthetic experience, the features noted by Tongan people and by tourists are quite similar. Foreigners often asserted they had appreciated the gracefulness of the women's movements and an Australian visitor commented on the "men's energy and expressions", another on the "energy, smile and colours" and yet another on their "strength, grace [and] joy". These are the same features noticed by Tongan people. What struck the tourists most in the *lakalaka* performance was, as an Italian visitor said, the "very harmonious singing". *Lakalaka* are indeed the only items sung *a capella*, all the others being accompanied by musical instruments, quite often electrical ones.

Along with these similarities between Tongans' and non-Tongans' experiences, some differences should nevertheless be highlighted. When judging the shows, Tongans tend to refer to the "proper way" to perform dances. There is also a sense of identity that plays a role in their appreciation. Unlike tourists who cannot distinguish Tongan *faiva* from other Polynesian dances performed during the floorshow, Tongan spectators claimed that the

former, being “more gracious”, were “more beautiful”. *Lakalaka* are particularly likely to arouse this feeling of pride and identification.

Although many non-Tongan tourists were aware by the end of the show that there was some kind of relationship between gesture and song (in particular for *tau‘olunga*, *mā‘ulu‘ulu* and *lakalaka*), they were unable to appreciate the subtleties of this connection. Nevertheless, Tongan visitors were not necessarily more qualified to grasp these subtle meanings. This was particularly true for young people of Tongan descent who have grown up in Australia, New Zealand or the United States, or for any Tongan who is not familiar with Tongan poetry and its symbolism. It is likewise true of young Tongans who reside in the capital city. While I was in Tonga, I gave some language classes in a Nuku‘alofa high school. The students there were preparing a *lakalaka* for the Coronation, so this was a good opportunity to talk with them about their feelings towards and knowledge of traditional Tongan *faiva*. Most of them told me that Queen Sālote’s compositions were obscure to them because they contained metaphors and sometimes even words they could not understand. Their comments confirm Shumway’s (1981: 469) observation that “only a comparatively small minority is capable of comprehending the totality of a *lakalaka*.... the enthusiastic response of the majority to the *lakalaka* seems to lie more in an appreciation of its visual and oral aspects as such rather than in a full understanding of the poetry”. Thus, it appears that the aesthetic experience of non-Tongans is not radically different from that of Tongans.

In the course of the floorshows non-Tongans get to know the Tongan way of expressing appreciation. Tongan viewers are likely to practice *fakapale* ‘adorning a dancer’, to express their enthusiasm for a dance or their gratitude when a dance dedicated to them by the master of ceremonies, who controls the show. Today, people often use banknotes for *fakapale*. Some tourists feel uneasy at the sight of spectators sticking money on the dancers’ oiled bodies, an act they are apt to equate to the kind of tipping practised during stripteases

(Condevaux 2010). Others, however, who are willing to follow the example given by local people, and would get up on stage and slip a bill into the dancers' garlands or necklaces.

Although floorshows are too short for tourists to understand the criteria of Tongan aesthetic appreciation and the rules organising its expression, they nonetheless have an opportunity to take first steps in that direction. The criteria used by Tongans and non-Tongans to judge these performances converge: they focus on the women's gracefulness, the men's demonstration of strength and energy, the synchronisation of movements and harmony of the chants. However, although the aesthetic experiences of Tongan performances on tourist stages are in ways comparable to non-tourist performances, what about the *faiva*'s social functions and meanings? Are these all silenced for the benefit of the aesthetic aspects? I will address this issue with a particular attention to *lakalaka*.

LAKALAKA FOR TOURISTS

To repeat, relatively few floorshows include a *lakalaka* performance in their program. The major reason put forward by the choreographers or managers of the shows is that *lakalaka* are too long and too slow to meet tourists' expectations of lively entertainment. The Tongan National Cultural Centre, located near the capital city of Nuku'alofa, is one of the exceptions. This Centre was created in 1988 as a place devoted to both tourists and to Tongan residents, and to entertainment as well as to cultural preservation (Kaeppler 1999: vii). Although it was partly privatised between 2008 and 2009, the goal of cultural preservation remains relevant today. Most of the *faiva* performed at the centre are based upon compositions by Queen Sālote Tupou III, since her body of work is considered to be a major part of the Tongan cultural heritage. Another Tongatapu floorshow occasionally included a *lakalaka* in its programme in 2009. It was performed at Liku'alofa, a resort on the island's west coast (Hihifo). There, the *punake* had decided not to interpret one of the Queen's compositions, but to compose a *lakalaka* entirely written and choreographed for the resort's floorshow. I address

the transformation of the *lakalaka*'s functions and social meaning by examining the performances at the two venues—the National Cultural Centre and then Liku‘alofa resort—which provide a marked contrast.

The Tongan National Cultural Centre

The preparation of a *lakalaka* for a floorshow does not demand the same collective involvement as that for a kingdom-wide *kātoanga* like the coronation of Tupou V described above. During floorshows, young dancers' social ranking rarely influenced the way they were positioned for the dance. Consequently, rehearsals did not make people conscious of the hierarchical principles of Tongan society and of the kind of attitudes one should adopt when interacting with an '*eiki*' 'chief' or a '*nōpele*' 'noble'. The National Cultural Centre's *punake* 'poets, composers, choreographers' endeavoured nonetheless to instil in their young employees what they considered to be the most important Tongan values. Dancers and waiters had to dress properly and learn how to behave properly with high-ranking people.

Visitors, who only see the final product on stage, were of course unaware of this. In addition, as I said before, they could not understand that the message of the song pays allegiance to the King and nobles. Kaeppler (1993: 49) explained,

The complex visual and auditory product communicates social values in an artistic form—but only to those who have the cultural knowledge to understand what is being communicated. A tourist, for example, will not receive the same messages as a Tongan when watching a traditional Tongan dance.

Tourists would thus only see an aesthetic product without any social meaning. I suggest a slightly more nuanced viewpoint.

The explanations accompanying the performance are intended to be a reminder of the *lakalaka*'s social functions and meanings. At the National Cultural Centre, the *lakalaka* is introduced as "the noblest and most majestic of our Tongan *faiva* [dances], an indispensable

item in all big celebrations in the kingdom”. Among the *lakalaka* performed there are always some composed by Queen Sālote, and the master of ceremonies sometimes chooses to introduce them by acknowledging her talent as a composer and reminding the audience that she was one of the most cherished monarchs in modern Tongan history. Despite its recent privatisation, the National Cultural Centre is still a place where the Tongan political system, based on the noble/commoner dichotomy, is highly respected.² One of the managers told me that if he had to promote Tonga for tourism, he would stress the fact that Tonga is a monarchy and that “people are happy to serve His Majesty the King and the Nobles”. By verbally expressing the importance of Tongan hierarchical principles, these explanations honour the current political system. They partly compensate for non-Tongan speakers’ lack of understanding by expressing—in non-poetic language though—ideas contained in the song.

Although meaning may be at least partially restored, these *lakalaka* presented at the Cultural Centre in the social context of tourist interaction, were not being performed as they were intended. They had been composed by Queen Sālote, either for ceremonies concerning her own or her close relatives’ life events or for anniversaries of historical events.

Liku‘alofa Floorshow

By contrast, at the Liku‘alofa floorshow, the *lakalaka* performed was composed especially for this venue and occasion by the Hon. Pasemata Vī Taunisila, the daughter of Viliami Leilua Vī. The latter held the noble Ve‘ehala title from 1946 to 1986 and was a renowned *punake* (see Kaeppler 2007: 57). The Hon. Pasemata Vī’s composition manages to recall the traditional function and meanings of the *lakalaka* while adapting it to the tourist context. This *lakalaka* pays tribute to the King’s genealogical line while meeting the requirements of its new social context of performance. Using a composition directly addressed to guests in a tourist show is not unusual or new: there are other types of *faiva*, like *mā‘ulu‘ulu*, that are choreographed on poems written for visitors; in the late 18th century, at the time of Captain

James Cook, foreigners were already being welcomed with music and dances (Cook 1784: 248-55, 292-98).

A close consideration of one contemporary composition directed at visitors provides an appreciation of how the composer reaches the finely balanced result that is both aesthetically satisfying and adapted to the tourist context. My analysis is based on a translation by Aneleisia VI, to whom I am indebted for her kind help. She also helped me to understand the meanings of metaphors and symbols used in the poem. I, however, take full responsibility for any unwitting misinterpretation and do not claim that the translation renders the poetic dimension of the original text. I will focus here on the first two stanzas of the poem. The first one is a *fakatapu* dedicated to the King's ancestral lineage.

<i>Tapu o e Tu'i Ha'amo'unga</i>	Paying respect to Tu'i Ha'amo'unga
<i>Taha'anga 'o e ongo Kauhala</i>	which binds together the two <i>Kauhala</i> ,
<i>Kano 'o 'Upolu hono kelekele tupu'a</i>	with <i>Kano 'o 'Upolu</i> as its roots,
<i>Ka e 'ata keu aoao kakala</i>	Let me pick flowers please
<i>Liku'alofa mo hono fisi'inaua</i>	For Liku'alofa, its foams,
<i>Fakataputupulangi 'a hono 'ea fakalata.</i>	and its never-ending nice weather.

The first line is a way of asking the King's permission to perform this *lakalaka*, as Tu'i Ha'amo'unga was one of King George Tupou IV's (the current King's father) metaphoric names. The second line stresses the fact that the former King united in his person the three major lines of Tongan royal history. Thanks to the matrimonial strategies of his mother and grandfather, he was indeed able to claim ancestry in the three main royal lineages: that of the Tu'i Tonga, the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and the Tu'i Kanokupolu (Van der Grijp 2001: 180). He thus linked the two *kauhala*: the *kauhalalalo* (to whom the Tu'i Kanokupolu belonged) and *kauhala'uta* (to whom the Tu'i Tonga belonged).³ With the third line, the composer enhances the prestige of Kanokupolu (a village in the Hihifo district where the

floorshow is performed) by highlighting that the King's genealogical line has its roots in this west coast village which was the first seat of the Tu'i Kanokupolu.

The last three lines are again a way of asking for permission to compose and perform in a poetical form; the composing of the *lakalaka* is metaphorically rendered by the expression to "pick flowers". This first stanza is thus a genuine *fakatapu*, acknowledging the pre-eminence of the King's lineage and, simultaneously, praising the village of Kanokupolu (where the floorshow takes place). The second stanza is a kind of second *fakatapu*, honouring not the King this time, but the visitors. The poetry goes as follows:

<i>Fakamalo atu he 'ahia kuo lava</i>	Thank you for coming,
<i>Kuo tonu ho 'o fili ki he Liku 'o e 'ofa</i>	You were right to choose the Beach of Love,
<i>'O kanoni 'aki 'a hono 'etimosifia</i>	and it's all better because of its atmosphere,
<i>Kauhala palavi 'i hono 'one 'one siliva</i>	Let me take a short stroll on the silver sand,
<i>Kau fakame 'ite he faiva lakalaka</i>	And let me entertain you with a <i>faiva lakalaka</i> ,
<i>Paotoloaki e tala mei he tutualoa.</i>	Clinging on tightly to my cultural heritage.

After thanking the visitors for coming, in the first line, the author asserts that coming to this resort in particular was the best choice they could have made. *Liku 'o e 'ofa* 'the beach or cliff of love' is indeed a poetical way of referring to the name of the resort (*Liku'alofa*) by slightly changing the form. By doing so, the composer raises the visitors' status, dedicating to them what is normally intended for the highest-ranking people in Tonga. This stanza's originality lies in the comment the author makes on what she is doing. Through this performance, she claims, she becomes the guardian of the *tutualoa*, a word referring to the 'things of the past' or the 'cultural heritage'. Of course, this message, sung in Tongan, cannot possibly be comprehended by non-Tongan speakers. Again, this is partly compensated for by comments made in English by the master of ceremonies.

* * *

Anthropologists have produced numerous studies of the processes of dislocation and decontextualisation of artefacts within the flows of globalisation (Appadurai 1986, Maquet 1993). Utilitarian or, more frequently, ritual objects are moved away from the original social contexts where they used to be meaningful. Outside this context, whether they are in Western art museums or private collections, they are mainly appreciated for their formal characteristics (Errington 1994) and/or for their “exoticism” (Van der Grijp 2009). This is also true of objects—art or handicraft—sold to tourists: they are brought home as proof of their having been “out there”, of their encounter with the Other.

The dislocation of “expressive practices”, such as dance in tourist contexts, has been studied far less than the dislocation of objects of material culture. K. Alexeyeff (2009) and R. Henry (2000), in studying tourist dance performances, have focused on the discourse of authenticity and tradition, and on processes of identification generated by such dances. But the research questions raised by Kaeppler in the 1970s have remained relatively unexplored. What, for example, happens to the social meanings and functions of dances when the latter shift from one context to another? In this paper, I have analysed this transition by means of a Tongan case study.

I cannot conclude from the material examined in this paper that the dances are made more visual “out of context”. On the contrary, the visual effects of *lakalaka* are much more striking in the coronation context than in the reduced space of a floorshow. Nevertheless, the visitors’ aesthetic experience is mainly based on visual appreciation. But the inner state of *māfana*, so important for Tongans, influences tourists’ appreciation as well, although they express it in their own words, such as “enthusiasm” or “happiness”. Although anthropology has long shown that aesthetic criteria vary from one cultural context to another, an aesthetic performance produced in a given context can be appreciated by people not belonging to this social environment according to criteria close to those used by local people.

Moreover, this new context does not necessarily lead to cultural misunderstandings. The initial meanings and functions of *lakalaka*—although they cannot remain exactly the same—are recalled through accompanying speeches and comments in English. Furthermore, fresh meanings related to the new context are added. *Lakalaka* become vehicles for honouring not only the King and the nobility, but also the foreign and Tongan visitors. In particular, using the poem examined in some detail, it is apparent that entertaining tourists cannot be reduced simply to a matter of a meaningless, money-driven activity. It also becomes a matter of cultural preservation (see the last lines of the second stanza), a way of enhancing, by means of Tongan aesthetics, both the prestige of the place where the resort is situated and the status of the tourists. It aims at integrating visitors, through words at least, into an existing social system, by giving them a prestigious position as “guests”.

There is thus a major difference between what artefacts and dances become when produced for tourism. Dances are not only sold in the same way as are objects of material culture, but are performed in a specific context constituted by the co-presence of various social actors: performers as well as Tongan and non-Tongan members of the audience. Within this social context, performers and especially the master of ceremonies control what can be said about and what can be done with cultural productions. Through the interaction generated, the actors all give some kind of meaning to the dances. “Making money” is only one of the reasons performers gave to their activity, although it is certainly one of their aims. They also perform to raise money for worthy projects. But money does not figure in ceremonial contexts, where *pale* (both money and other items) are generally donated afterwards to other people. They also gave other reasons for engaging in performances, such as preserving their culture and celebrating the social hierarchy, and gaining confidence and pride in their cultural identity. And they view it as a culturally appropriate way for welcoming tourists. For tourists, dances are not only aesthetically and visually pleasing. Visitors feel they acquire some insight into the local culture through the exchanges generated. These new meanings are not only

verbalised through discourse, they are enacted in the performance itself, although this cannot be explicitly understood by tourists. Consequently, I would argue that tourist dances are not decontextualised as are material objects when removed from their social context of production. They are rather recontextualised as they can be adapted to fit their new context of performance and be given fresh meanings, while retaining, to a certain degree, their original function.

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NOTES

1. The biggest *lakalaka* performed are probably those executed by schools. They can involve more than a thousand young dancers.
2. The National Cultural Centre, now partly privatised, used to be under the direct control of the Ministry of Tourism, supervised by a noble.
3. In Tongan history, royal lineages have been segmented on various occasions. One of these segmentations occurred when the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, in charge of civil and military governance, created a new title for his son Ngata. The two lines thus created, one being that of the chiefly title holders appointed by the Tu'i Tonga (the "sacred" ruler who was in charge of religious duties) and the other the chiefly title holders appointed by the Tu'i Kanokupolu, were respectively named Kauhala'uta 'inland road people' and Kauhahalalo 'low road people'.

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Abstract:

Dance and music performances are closely linked to the political and social systems in which they are

produced. Although anthropologists have studied what the social meanings of dances become when the contexts of performance change, this question has received little attention as far as tourist dances are concerned. My Tongan case study shows that this shift of context is not a simple matter of decontextualisation or aestheticisation. Initial meanings and functions—although partially changed—are recalled, while new ones are added to the performances.

Key words: tourism, performance, Tonga, *lakalaka*.