

## 23 TRANSNATIONALISM, GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE

Read: Katherine Verdery, 1998. Transnationalism, nationalism, citizenship, and property: Eastern Europe since 1989  
Eriksen, 2002. Identity politics, culture and rights 143-161; The non-ethnic: 162-178. In Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Pluto Press (34)

- I. Today we'll look at two very different case studies illustrating globalization processes
  - A. Analysis of transnationalism and ethnonational identity in Tonga
  - B. Analysis of Croatia and the Canadian Croatian diaspora to illustrate some of Verdery's points
  - C. Wednesday's lecture will be more theoretical
- II. Transgenderism is widespread in Tonga and elsewhere in the S. Pacific<sup>1</sup>
  - A. Traditional patterns of cross-dressing—not brand new
    1. Beauty contests with prizes are held
    2. In Tonga: a yearly Miss Galaxy pageant
      - a. Seems to be a display of transgendered glamour
      - b. But equally the contest is a show of *translocality*
        - 1) Modernity and hybridity are performed; cosmopolitanism, migration, non-local values, symbols, languages, body practices, etc
      - c. Translocality is opposed to *Locality* (here meaning Tonganness)
  - B. The stereotype of local transgendered men, called *Fakaleiti*, is:
    1. Feminine comportment
    2. Greater affinity with women than men
    3. Being responsible for domestic work in the home

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<sup>1</sup> Information from Niko Besnier, Transgenderism, locality and the Miss Galaxy Beauty Pageant in Tonga. *American Ethnologist* 29. 3: 534-566, 2002.

4. Employment in professions regularly associated with women
  5. Being associated with domestic rather than public spheres
  6. Cross-dressing
  7. Engaging in sexual relations with “straight” men
- C. The Miss Galaxy beauty pageant in Tonga
1. Is the antithesis of the traditional Miss Heilala pageant
    - a. Which involves real women performing Tonganness
    - b. With speech, body postures
    - c. Tongans will return from New Zealand, Australia, California to participate in the Miss Heilala pageant
      - 1) But they are likely to be judged as poor dancers, not proficient in spoken Tongan
    - d. In the Miss Heilala contest, locality is supposed to triumph over cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, the industrial world
  2. Contrasts between the two pageants:
    - a. Miss Galaxy is carnivalesque (as opposed to the serious—at times tedious—Miss Heilala)
    - b. Miss Galaxy is for fun
    - c. Miss Galaxy characterized by a “camp” sensibility
      - 1) Is an event of outstanding exoticism
    - d. Nonlocal clothing, language, names, mannerisms, performances—nonlocal gender itself
    - e. Examples of nonlocality:
      - 1) Contestants appear in “national” costumes
      - 2) Miss Rarotonga, Miss Switzerland, Miss South America

- 3) Contestants are emulating beauty pageants everyone watches on TV
  - 4) Their names: Lady Amyland, Suzie from Sosefo, Priscilla Pressland, Aisa De Lorenzo, Aodushi Kiroshoto
    - a) Chosen for exotic sounds
  - 5) Background music: William Tell Overture, etc.
  - 6) Language: supposed to speak English as much as possible
  - 7) Fakaleiti are in general expected to speak English more readily than nontransgendered men
  - 8) Fakaleiti are seen as self-assured and brash, shameless (even though many are self-effacing)
- f. Clearly, the stereotypes depict the Miss Galaxy contestants as oriented toward modernity, the West, transnationalism
3. The interplay of gender and modernity revealed in this contest:
- a. In general in Tonga, speaking English has feminine undertones
    - 1) Competes with a code of traditionalism
  - b. Because in general a language of modernity is associated with women's aspirations for upward mobility and emancipation from the strictures of tradition
  - c. Familiar notions that girls study harder, and women more talkative by nature
  - d. So, all men who speak "too much" English do so at the risk of compromising their masculinity
  - e. Tongans born overseas are awkward in performing Tongan maleness
    - 1) They are often branded as fakaleiti-like regardless of lack of effeminacy
  - f. In general, the use of English indexes (points to) a deficient Tonganness, masculinity

4. **DISCUSS:** differences between these stereotypes and the situation described by Marisol de la Cadena for Peruvian Indians?
5. An extra ingredient: the complicated identity of the Fakaleiti with respect to gender, class, and translocality

D. What are the Fakaleiti hoping for?

1. These men are socially marginalized in many ways—economically, socially
2. The link-up to international glamour provides a (temporary) escape route from local dynamics of social exclusion and poverty
3. Temporarily they can try to constitute selves that foreground their superiority over, and autonomy from, the rest of society
  - a. Can't actually travel
4. Performing/subscribing to nonlocality provides symbolic resources
5. Enables them to claim that they are exempt from local morality and forms of exchange that marginalize and degrade them (like marriage)
6. Many of them idealize the West
  - a. See it as a source of desirable marriage partners, financial security, etc.
  - b. A source of partners who will take care of them, rather than their having to financially take care of their Tongan boyfriends (who are "straight" Tongan men)
  - c. Obviously a fantasy, not the reality of what the West offers
7. They reject hormones to increase feminine appearance
8. As elsewhere in the Pacific, they reject gay identity
  - a. "God made man and woman," they say
9. They scorn what they see as the foregrounding of sexuality in Western gay identity (e.g., gay pride parades)

E. Conclusion:

1. Some authors say that globalization brings challenges to the received order
  - a. Modernity, etc.
2. But although we see the fakaleiti temporarily enacting a glamorous translocality
  - a. We also see them rejecting Western gay and lesbian identities
3. “The modern,” “the West” are reconfigured, and local meanings are worked into the meanings that arrive from elsewhere
4. Globalizing homogenization and heterogenization—here they occur simultaneously, which is most often the case

### III. The Croatian case<sup>2</sup>

- A. Croatia: following the 1989 collapse of communism and Yugoslavia
  1. Verdery: political parties had no recognizable political platforms
  2. The democratic process was very unfamiliar, to say the least
  3. Rejection of communism, an opening for discourses relating to pre-Soviet era
- B. National symbols proved so potent that no political group could entirely avoid them
  1. Nationalism was turned into political capital, and it increased—which surprised everyone
  2. Rewriting of constitutions began
  3. In socialist-era constitutions, all socialist citizens had been on equal footing
  4. This system of civil status collapsed—ambitious politicians manipulated the very definition of citizenship
- C. Verdery’s discussion of Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Slovenia
  1. Nationalities were turned into majorities and minorities

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<sup>2</sup> Information from Daphne Winland, The politics of desire and disdain: Croatian identity between “home” and “homeland” *American Ethnologist* 29. 3: 693-718, 2002.

2. New, *differential* citizenship rights
  3. Particularly restrictive citizenship procedures were developed in the Baltic states
  4. Disenfranchising large numbers of the resident Russians
  5. In Estonia's 1992 elections, nearly 40% were forbidden to vote, most of them Russians
    - a. Estonian citizens were defined by native Estonian language and descent
  6. We can call this "Constitutional nationalism"
    - a. A nationalism that privileges members of one ethnonation over others
- D. Croatian independence in 1992 fulfilled a one-thousand-year-old dream
1. Recuperation, revivals, festivals, etc., Croatian icons, monuments, folk songs
- E. An estimated half of all Croats live outside the homeland
1. Diaspora Croats desired a free Croatia, but independence has created conditions for the emergence and exacerbation of the often fraught relationships within and between groups
  2. Desire for the homeland is not necessarily coterminous with the desire to return to it
  3. Not much scholarship has been done on the roles of homeland peoples
    - a. And how they change as a result of interaction with diasporic peoples
  4. Remember point made earlier in semester that ethnicity is a relationship?
  5. Clearly everywhere diasporas construct notions of homelands in ways often very different from homelanders' constructions
    - a. This leads to ambivalence and tensions
- F. History: Croats immigrated to Canada earlier in century for economic reasons

1. Endured hardships there, were the target of stereotypes of racial inferiority (applied to all E. Europeans)
  2. The early ones had leftist leanings
  3. They labeled the Croats who came to Canada after World War II as “war criminals”
  4. “Ustase”—the Croatian fascist separatist organization during WW II committed atrocities
  5. These later arrivals resented the earlier left-leaning ones
    - a. Saw them as naïve about communism
- G. Tensions within Croatia played out in Canada too
- H. Canadian state’s policy of official multiculturalism
1. Point we’ve encountered often—the state wields power, influences the nature of ethnicity
  2. Croatian heritage language programs, music and folklore groups flourished
  3. They had to play the politics of recognition according to terms set by the Canadian state
  4. Foregrounding ethnocultural traditions as part of the Croatian contribution to the (cultural) fabric of Canadian society
- I. Over the years Toronto Croats had seen themselves as a victim diaspora
1. Saw their countrymen Croats in communist Yugoslavia as their oppressed brethren
  2. Independence brought changes
    - a. To already unstable and ambivalent bases of loyalty, affiliation and identity
- J. Homeland Croats had endured enormous upheavals sociopolitical, economic, personal nature
1. Needed to come to terms with the transition from communism and come to see themselves as citizens

2. Many said yes, we should valorize Croatian culture and heritage
3. But a large number of critics inside and outside disapproved of the direction of post independence political, economic and social processes

K. Initial euphoria at Croatian independence

1. But soon the nationalist policies and practices of President Tudjman's regime were criticized
  - a. Many believed it to be autocratic and corrupt

L. Tudjman's support came from diaspora Croats

1. Many were and continue to be strongly nationalist
  - a. Diaspora Croats (more recent emigrants) represent sentiments and qualities valorized by nationalist elites at home
2. An illustration of Verdery's citation of Anderson's "politics without accountability"
  - a. Émigrés and refugees who contribute funds to violent nationalist organizations in their home countries while living peacefully in a suburb or Paris or Montreal<sup>3</sup>

M. Diaspora Croats' participation

1. Vote in federal elections...Croatia is a multi-sited nation-state that is maintained through transnational means
  - a. Diaspora Croats were politically and economically involved
2. They were interested in promoting the reproduction of images depicting a romantic and idealized social, cultural, and political landscape
3. But these diasporic Croats' nationalist sentiments were resented by many homelander
4. Who did not share the ethnonational vision of Croatia
5. Regional differences hardened, and came to be defined in cultural terms

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<sup>3</sup> Verdery, p. 293

- a. People held very firmly fixed notions of regional identity—impervious to change
- b. “The snob from Zagreb,” etc.
- c. Some nationalists said that some Croats could never be “good” Croats
  - 1) If they’re unpatriotic, if they don’t valorize the Croatian past, then they’re “bad”
  - 2) Are said to be “Yugonostalgic”
  - 3) Are called “Yugo-zombies”
- d. Those targeted tended to be intellectuals and journalists

N. Conclusions:

- 1. Verdery’s point: diaspora and homeland relations and identities are mutually constituted
- 2. The classic modernist logic that diaspora patterns of identification function to undermine the cultural and territorial goals and political vision of the nation-state
  - a. Is wrong
- 3. One must study the impact of diaspora-homeland relations on identity formation
  - a. Examine the local in relation to transnational connections
- 4. Keeping in mind that the homeland dimension is more than just the object of diaspora imaginings
  - a. Rather, it’s a crucial site of diaspora identity politics
- 5. Diaspora and homeland relations must be analyzed in their historical specificity

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