



CENTER FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS STUDIES  
TEACHING OCEANIA SERIES  
VOLUME 2

# GENDER IN THE PACIFIC



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAII®  
MĀNOA



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# Credits

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# Preface

Despite the impressive recent growth of Pacific-related course offerings at colleges and universities there has been little sustained discussion about teaching and learning in this dynamic field of study. This pedagogical silence reflects in large part a general lack of literature on wider philosophical questions about what Pacific Studies is or should be. At the Center for Pacific Islands Studies (CPIS) we are committed to scholarship that is of and for the Pacific, and not merely about it. This means a decolonized approach to inquiry that emphasizes reflexivity and privileges indigenous epistemologies, interests, and perceptions. It also means scholarly practices that are regional, comparative, interdisciplinary, grounded, and creative (Wesley-Smith 2016; Teaiwa 2010).

Teresia Teaiwa suggests that our ultimate objective should be "deep learning," a type of learning that goes beyond the superficial accumulation of information and towards a fundamental transformation of the way learners understand the world around them (Teaiwa 2011). In Pacific Studies this has come to mean a pedagogy that empowers students and allows them to see the possibility of positive change in a postcolonial world defined in large part by economic, political, cultural, and epistemic inequalities. The course materials we provide students

(and rely on ourselves) are obviously key to the success or otherwise of this educational quest.

The journey towards deep learning in Pacific Studies usually begins in the undergraduate classroom, where interests are piqued, passions stirred, curious minds engaged and challenged. And there is not much room for error. As Teaiwa points out for Victoria University of Wellington only a small proportion of the students taking Pacific Studies classes each year will become majors and pursue further study in the field. Similarly, for student taking PACS 108 *Pacific Worlds* at the University of Hawai'i, this may be their only structured learning experience focused on this vast and complex region. Teaiwa notes the importance of cooperative learning in the Pacific Studies classroom, where students and instructors share responsibility for the learning process. But, even if we embrace her canoe metaphor, and imagine ourselves bound together with student learners in a common intellectual voyage of discovery we are still obliged to rely to a large extent on written or visual texts to guide the journey. It has become increasingly apparent that suitable materials are hard to come by, out-of-date, or simply not produced with an undergraduate Pacific Studies audience in mind.



A consistent theme in student evaluations of *Pacific Worlds* since its introduction at UH Mānoa in 2009 has been the quality and appropriateness of the required readings. Given the absence of a general textbook for an introductory survey course such as this, instructors are obliged to pull together readings from a variety of sources including academic journals, edited collections, official reports, and newspaper articles. A 2015 survey of syllabi used by different instructors in this multi-section course over a 5-year period revealed some of the perils involved in this process: many of the broad themes covered in the course were poorly supported by readings narrowly focused on a particular aspect of the subject matter, framed by disciplinary concerns, dated, too advanced in tone or content, or otherwise inaccessible to learners just beginning their educational journeys. As report author and MA candidate Andrea Staley commented, the inevitable result is that students "either do not understand and retain the content" or decide not to engage with the assigned readings at all (Staley 2015).

Spearheaded by CPIS Associate Specialist Julie Walsh, the *Teaching Oceania* project is designed to create materials suitable for interdisciplinary undergraduate classes in Pacific Studies and make them widely available. The materials are produced by those who steer the learning canoes, Pacific Studies instructors working together collectively on broad topics for which existing resources are sparse or inadequate. The materials are made accessible in digital form, allowing for visual media to supplement and enrich

written components, for interactive elements to be included, and to facilitate periodic updates as well as wide circulation. Making the material available in digital form has the added value of appealing to a generation of students well versed in digital media of all types, although the debate among educational specialists about learning styles among "digital natives" or "digital residents" is by no means resolved (Prensky 2001).

*Teaching Oceania* was launched with a two-and-a-half-day workshop held 16-18 February 2016 at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC) and on the UH Mānoa campus. Supported by funding from CPIS' National Resource Center grant and co-sponsored with KCC, and Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, the workshop was attended by 25 participants from 12 different campuses in the US and 7 countries around the region. Participants worked together in groups addressing 4 broad topics, Arts and Identity, Gender, Militarism and Nuclear Testing, and Health and Environment. Under the supervision of Julie Walsh, the resulting draft materials were further edited by Professor Monica C. LaBriola (UH - West O'ahu) with media selections enhanced by Professor Alex Mawyer (UH Mānoa). Final texts were copy edited by the center's Jan Rensel while layout was designed and completed by Andrea Staley and Teora Morris, both CPIS BA alumnae.

Terence Wesley-Smith  
Professor and Director, Center for Pacific Islands Studies



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# Teaching Oceania Series

The Teaching Oceania series is designed to serve the needs of undergraduate students of Pacific Islands Studies across Oceania and elsewhere. The Center for Pacific Islands Studies invites collaborative proposals for additional volumes in this series. Monica C. LaBriola (UH - West O'ahu) serves as Series Editor to ensure consistency of style, accessibility, and organization of the series.

The Teaching Oceania series is defined by:

- a regional perspective
- a collaborative process. The current texts have been written by teams of 4 or more scholars with an aim of regional representation to appeal to a broad audience through diverse examples
- a theme or topic that is not yet accessible to undergraduate students through current literature
- a Pacific Islands Studies approach, that is: interdisciplinary, creative, comparative and grounded
- attractive, relevant images, video, audio, and interactive features
- accessibility in multiple formats, interactively as iBooks, and broadly as PDF files
- free access to the texts at permanent links on the University of Hawai'i Scholar Space [Center for Pacific Islands Studies Community](#)

For inquiries and more information contact, please feel free to contact us.

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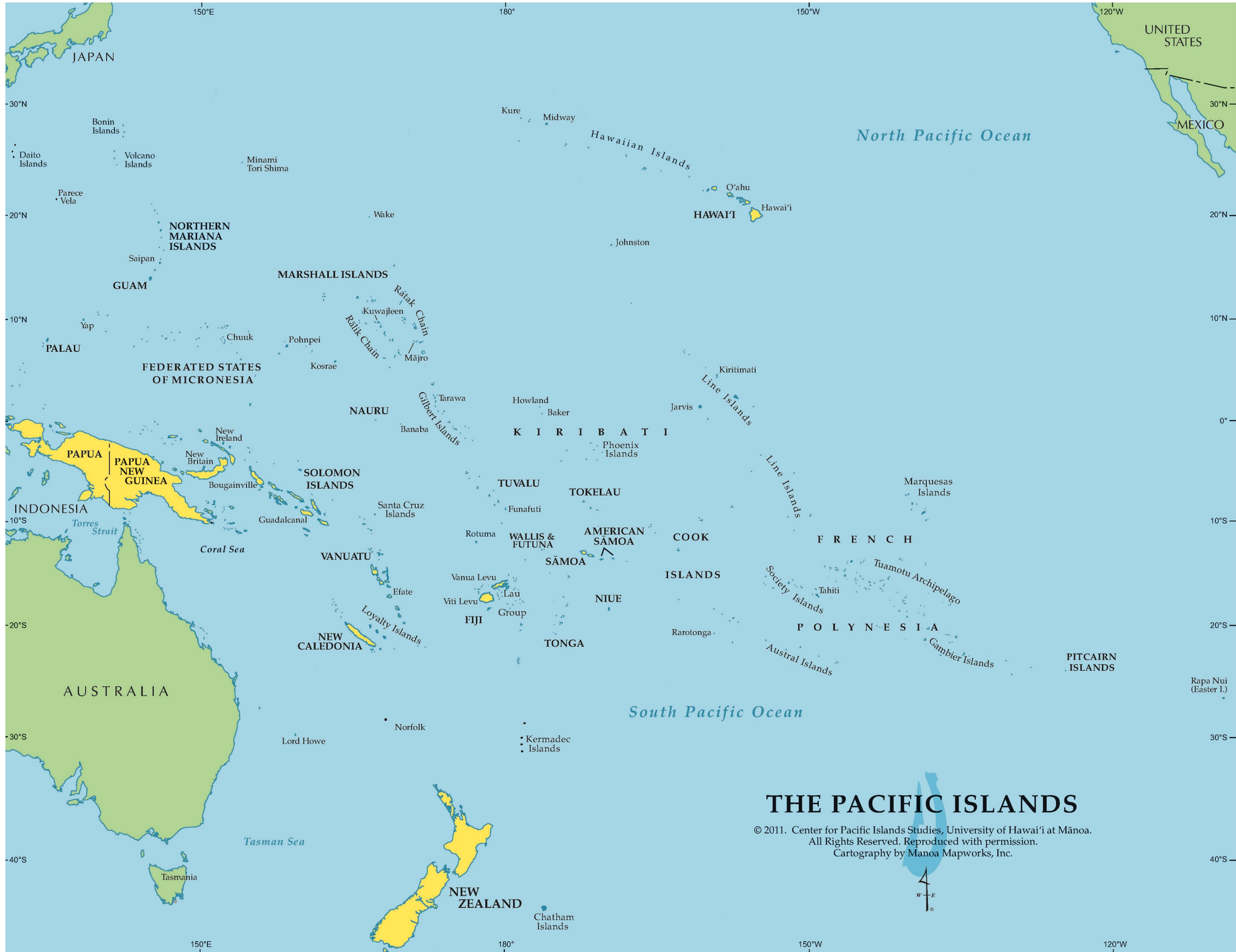
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## Other Volumes

1. Militarism and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific
2. Gender in the Pacific
3. Health and Environment in the Pacific





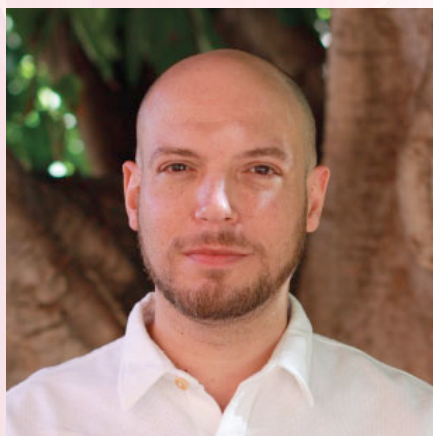
# THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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Greg Dvorak is an associate professor of Pacific and Asian cultural studies and history in Tokyo at Hitotsubashi University, and an adjunct lecturer at Waseda University. He teaches courses in Pacific Islands Studies with a particular focus on militarism, war memory, cultural identity, gender, decolonization, and contemporary art. His forthcoming book from University of Hawai'i Press, *Coral and Concrete*, deals with the intersection between American and Japanese empire in the 20th and 21st century in the Marshall Islands.



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Tēvita 'Ō. Ka'ili is from Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu, with genealogical ties to Tonga, Sāmoa, Fiji, and Rotuma. He graduated from the University of Washington (Seattle) with a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology. Tēvita is the author of the book *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations* (University of Arizona Press, 2017). He is a scholar of the Indigenous Moana-based tā-vā (time-space) theory of reality. Tēvita is currently an associate professor of Cultural Anthropology and chair of the Department of Culture and History at Brigham Young University-Hawai'i.



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# Authors and Contributors



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Special thanks to Ku'uipo Losch for her significant contributions to this work.

The editors would also like to acknowledge the diligent and generous efforts of Rusty Keele (Weber State University), who identified errors and corrections for this current volume (2020).



# Introduction and Overview

## Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

1. Define patrilineal and matrilineal descent and describe how societies organized around these patterns of kinship inform and shape gender roles in the Pacific
2. Explain the role of gender in the division of labor in Pacific Island societies
3. Identify and distinguish between biological sex and gender identity, how these concepts overlap or do not overlap in practice, and how they may be different across cultures and societies
4. Exhibit an understanding of third-gender identities and their roles in Pacific Island contexts
5. Articulate how cross-cultural encounters have impacted gender roles in Oceania and how Pacific Island societies have engaged with introduced gender constructs



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## Introduction and Overview

### Gender in the Pacific

Key to appreciating the complexity of gender in the Pacific Islands and many other areas of the world is the fact that, while sex refers to an individual's anatomy at birth, **gender** is a social and cultural construct that informs an individual's personal and social identity along with the role(s) an individual plays or performs in society. Although many people believe that gender roles and identities are biologically determined or even bestowed by God, most contemporary scholars agree that they are in fact socially constructed. In other words, cultures and societies—not biology—define and reinforce gender, gender identities, and gender roles. What's more, the qualities a society considers representative of male, female, and other genders (sometimes called **third genders**, genders that do not conform to a simple male-female binary) are actually determined and reinforced by what that particular society considers appropriate and acceptable for each. As a result, what one society accepts as male/masculine or female/

feminine could be completely different in another. This also means that gender identity does not always match a person's biological sex in the ways a society might expect or demand. In response, individuals may alter their appearance or activities to more closely match the gender with which they identify. Significantly, a large number of Pacific Island cultures embrace these individuals and their unique expressions of gender identity, and the realities and issues of gender in the region far exceed European stereotypes familiar from Western art or literature, which have often focused on idealized and sexualized representations of Pacific bodies.

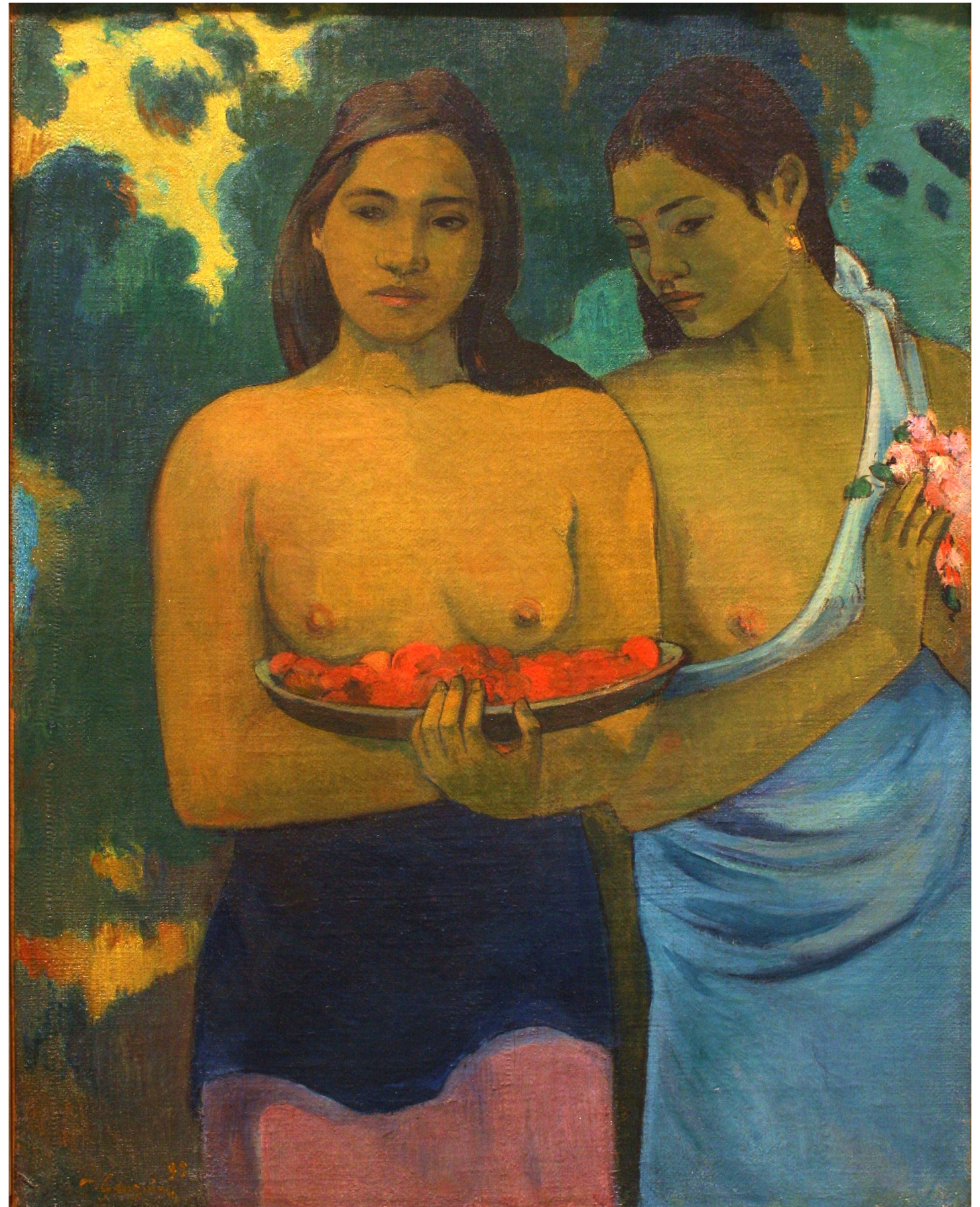
This short introduction to gender in the Pacific Islands region also known as Oceania aims to spark critical thinking and discussions about diverse gender identities and roles, as well as some of the ways they are shaped and influenced by culture, place, and encounters with other people and cultures. Perspectives from Pacific Studies, history, and



anthropology—as well as cultural experts in Tonga, Kiribati, Fiji, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Guam, American Sāmoa, Pohnpei, and the Marshall Islands—offer a comparative, transdisciplinary, and collaborative perspective and approach.

Section 1 considers what Pacific Island oral traditions reveal about indigenous cultural values in terms of gender and gender roles. Section 2 looks at how ideas about masculinity and femininity influence the gender division of labor and popular representations of men and women in Oceania. Section 3 examines the relationship between gender and place across the Pacific, while Section 4 provides an overview of the interplay between gender and leadership in Oceania. Finally, Section 5 provides a detailed look at diverse third-gender identities and their roles and place in cultures across Oceania, and a brief Conclusion suggests topics and areas for further consideration.

**Image 1.**  
Paul Gauguin's Two Tahitian  
Women (1899).





# Gender and Oral Traditions

All Pacific societies have oral traditions including **mythologies** or myths that explain the origins of deities, humans, plants, animals, and marine life, and record and perpetuate historical events and cultural values. These stories are generally sacred and feature supernatural beings, culture, heroes, or tricksters. **Cosmologies** are worldviews about the origins of the universe, which convey fundamental cultural values. Across Oceania, cosmologies expressed in vivid mythologies reveal a great deal about indigenous cultures and cultural values including gender; these mythologies in turn inform and frame traditional and contemporary beliefs about gender categories, roles, and relations.

Tongan oral tradition, for example, includes several stories about important male, female, and third-gender figures. Among these is a creation story that tells of three main deities—Hikule'o, Tangaloa, and Māui—who are also siblings. **Hikule'o** is the eldest and has both male and female characteristics; **Tangaloa** is the middle child and a male god; and Māui is the youngest and a male god. Of the three supernatural beings, the third-gender Hikule'o is the most powerful and has the most **mana** (political or spiritual power). She lives in Pulumotu, the Tongan spiritual homeland, and is the goddess of fertility and agriculture; her brother, Tangaloa, is her earthly representative. In traditional



**Image 2.**

Tangaroa as represented in the Cook Islands by traditional carvers.



**Image 3.**

Hikule'o, Goddess of the Tongan spirit world called Pulumotu, Tongan Male-Female (Third Gender) Deity. The wooden carving originated in Ha'apai, Tonga (above).

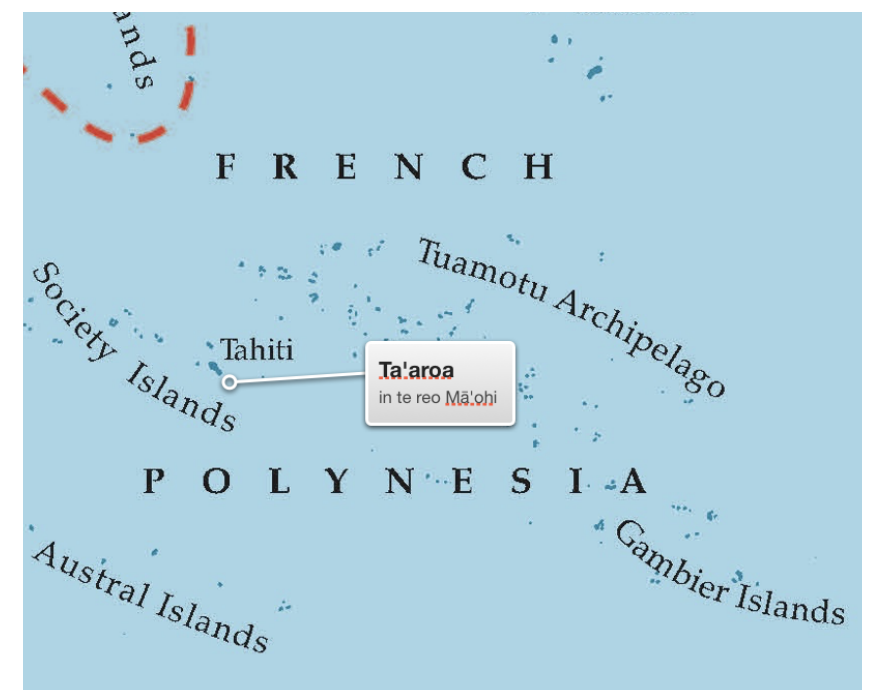
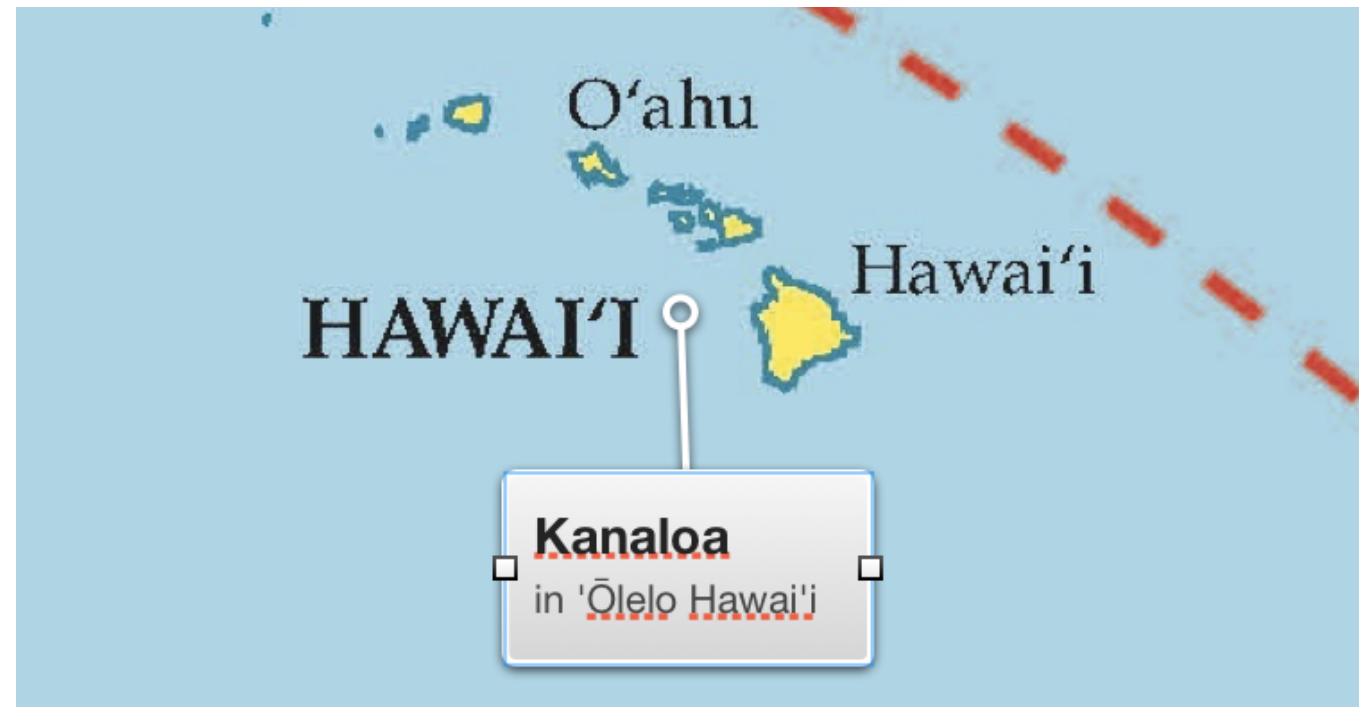
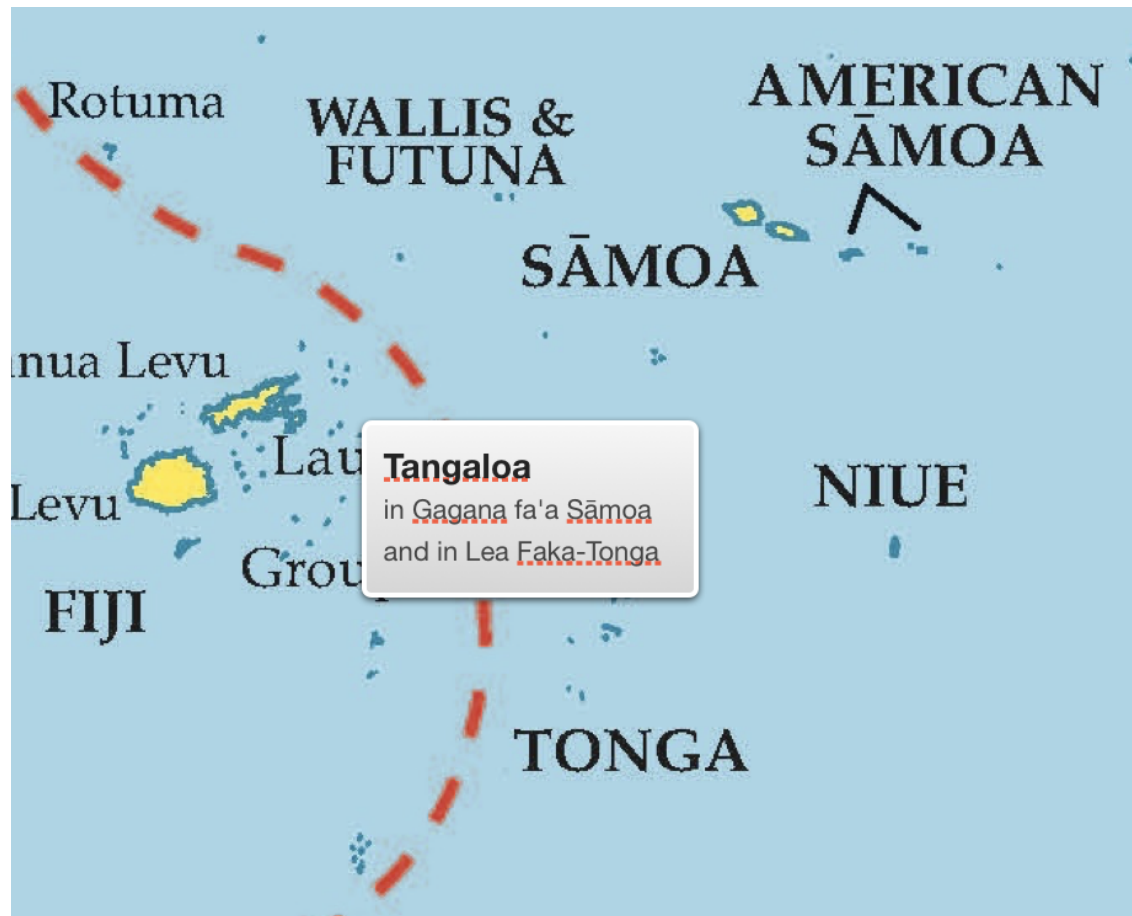




**Map 2.** Map of just some of the dialect variations of Tangaroa found in Oceania. See the next page for a close-up look of these variations.

Tongan culture, the annual tribute and offering of first fruits or 'inasi went to the Tu'i Tonga (King of Tonga), a descendant of Tangalaoa and the earthly representative of Hikule'o. Together, this Tongan mythology and the rituals that surround it illustrate an important Tongan cultural

value in terms of gender and gender categories—that is, the high regard and veneration given to third-gender individuals in ancient and contemporary Tongan society. Other beliefs about gender and gender roles are found in oral traditions around Oceania.



**Map 2b.**  
Spelling variations of Tangaroa found in Oceania from Sāmoa, Tonga, The Cook Islands, Aotearoa, French Polynesia and Hawai'i.



## I Tinituhon

Uploaded by Guampedia

Tuesday, September 6, 2011 at 9:58 PM EST

#I Tinituhon #Puntan and Fu'una #Andrew Artero

#Rita Nauta #guam #guahan #guam history

#guam legend #guam creation myth #cultural belief

#cultural practices #chamorro culture

## Activity

Video 1.

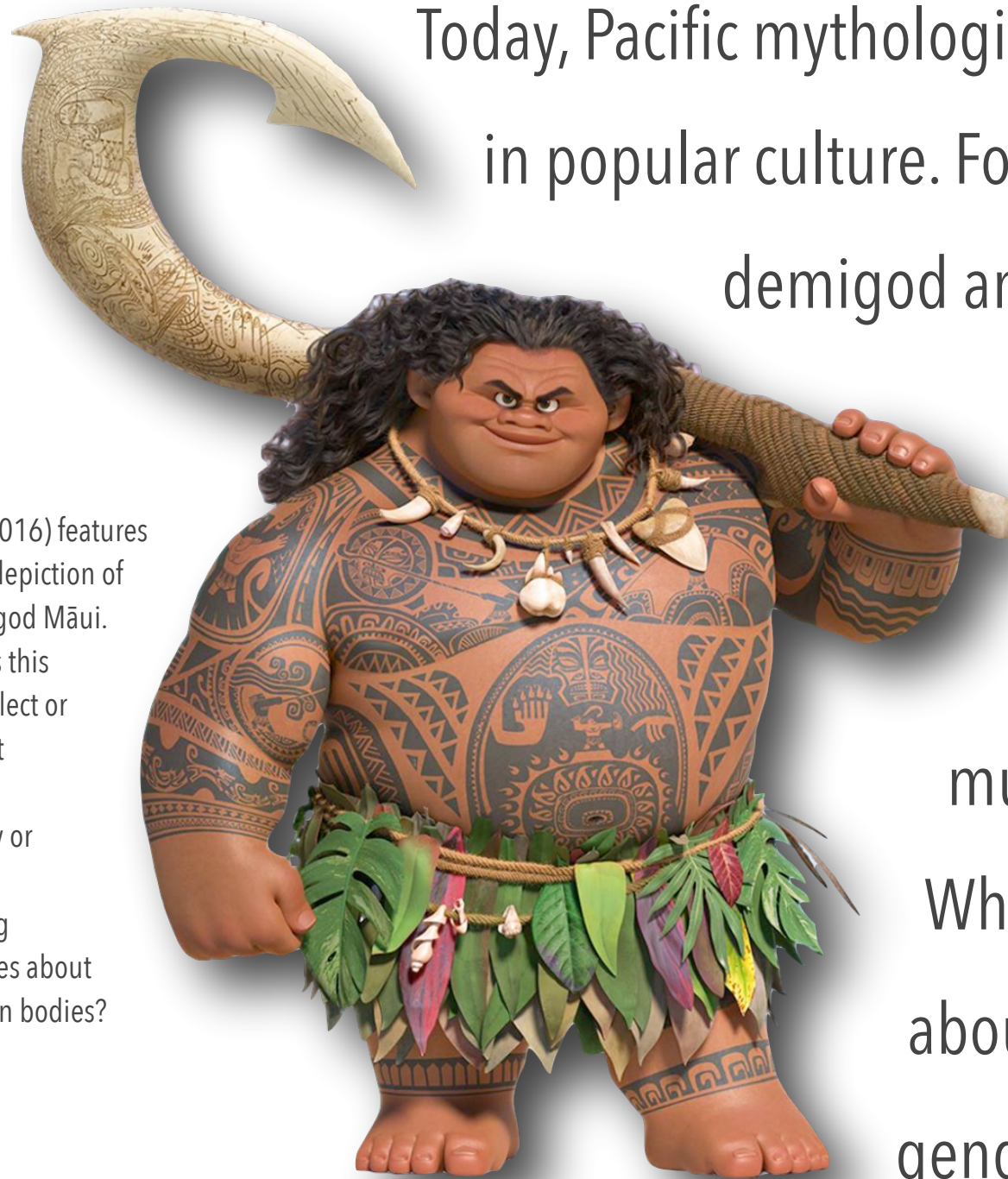
To view *I Tinituhon* (origin story), which depicts Guam's creation myth of Puntan and Fu'una (2011), click [here](#).

Watch the film representation of *I Tinituhon*, a Chamorro creation story. What does the story reveal about Chamorro beliefs concerning gender and gender roles?



# Activity

Today, Pacific mythologies influence the construction of gender in popular culture. For example, the pan-Polynesian demigod and trickster god Māui is often represented as a hyper-masculine male; the Disney animated film *Moana* depicts Māui as a large muscular male covered in tatau (tattoos). What does this portrayal of Māui suggest about contemporary Western views of gender in the Pacific Islands?



**Image 4.**  
*Moana* (2016) features Disney's depiction of the demigod Māui. How does this image reflect or not reflect cultural sensitivity or broadly circulating stereotypes about Polynesian bodies?



## Gender in Labor and Ideology

### *Gender Divisions of Labor*

The outward functioning of a society depends on members playing different and complementary roles. In many societies, jobs, responsibilities, and roles are assigned or assumed according to sex—with men and women performing specific and distinctive jobs. At certain points in history, for example, males in some societies were expected to do work outside the home while females worked inside or in close proximity to the home. Meanwhile, in many societies, war and aggression have long been considered the domain of men, while peacemaking and nurturance have been seen as women's realm. Interestingly, once people began associating certain jobs or types of work with a particular sex, these duties came to define what was considered male/masculine or female/feminine work. Scholars describe this interaction between work, social function, and society's perceptions as the **sexual or gender**

**division of labor.** In Pacific Island societies and in other parts of the world, this division in many ways defines and determines people's jobs, social positions, and identities.

In *The Cambridge History of Pacific Islanders*, Jocelyn Linnekin explores gender divisions of labor in the Pacific Islands (Linnekin 1997). Although Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia comprise many diverse cultures and societies, Linnekin identifies a few interesting generalizations about gender and gender divisions in these regions and across Oceania. For example, women in Melanesia are often expected to do hard field labor, while women in Polynesia are typically not. There are always exceptions to these kinds of rules, of course; Linnekin acknowledges, for example, that in a northern atoll of the Cook Islands in Polynesia, women are customarily responsible for cultivating wetland taro. The documentary *Happy Birthday, Tutu Ruth* (Kirk 1996)



provides a contemporary example from Polynesia of a Native Hawaiian woman, the late Ruth Kaholoa'a (1905–2002), who single-handedly raised and provided for her thirteen children—earning money by gathering 'opihī (limpets), working on coffee and macadamia nut plantations, cultivating kalo (taro) for food, and taking care of chores in the home. These and other examples show that, while gender divisions and roles may follow general patterns, Oceania's diversity means these roles also vary across societies.

At the same time, divisions of labor that seem on the surface to be about gender are frequently also about age or social class. In many societies, for example, girls and boys are not expected to do exactly the same kind of work as men and women. Meanwhile, in societies organized hierarchically by birth or merit, it may not be appropriate for an individual of a chiefly class to perform the same job or role as an untitled individual.



**Image 5.** The film *Happy Birthday Tutu Ruth* is an account of Ruth Kaholoa'a, a 90 year-old great-great-grandmother who continues to cultivate taro in Hawai'i. Some of her 13 children describe their parents and their upbringing. Directed by Ann Marie Kirk, 1996. Full film [here](#).

Gender divisions of labor and intersections of age and social class were of interest to anthropologist Margaret Mead when she first came to Oceania in the 1920s to study a community in Ta'u, Sāmoa. Although her ethnographic work in Sāmoa created a sensation around issues of teenage sexuality and sparked deep controversy when the veracity of some of her claims were challenged after her death, Mead's descriptions of how Ta'u society socializes children into distinctly gendered roles are rarely disputed. Mead indicated, for example, that while both girls and boys of age six or seven help look after younger children, at around age eight or nine boys have the



**Video 2.**

In the film *O Tamaiti (The Children)* a young boy plays guardian and protector to his siblings, but even all his efforts can't prevent the death of the new baby. Directed by Sima Urale (1997). Full film [here](#).

opportunity to join reef-fishing expeditions. Then, as boys get older, they gain new responsibilities in the gardens and with the preparation of food. Girls, meanwhile, may not be able to pursue such a wide array of opportunities outside of domestic contexts as they mature (Mead 1961).

Importantly, gender divisions of labor can and do change over time. Contact with Europeans, the arrival of Christianity, colonization, and **globalization** have all

brought about sometimes subtle and at other times dramatic transformations in what Pacific Islanders now understand to be customary or acceptable gender divisions of labor. What's more, contemporary ideas about human rights and women's rights are changing many people's beliefs about the smooth and harmonious functioning of society—even as more people come to see that gender is not always a useful, fair, or appropriate way of dividing labor.



**Image 6.**  
Two women collecting  
coconut husks in  
American Sāmoa.

## Activity

Think of examples from your own culture or personal experience in which clear gender divisions of labor are present. Are there other examples where people no longer seem to accept gender as the main category for dividing labor?





**Video 3.**

To view the full trailer for *Three Wise Cousins* (2016), click [here](#).

*Idealized Representations of Masculinity and Femininity*

Gender roles, norms, and expectations are shaped by the demands of local communities, traditions, and external pressures; and yet the construction of gender in any society relies largely on ideals of how men or women are expected to behave. Idealized representations of **masculinity** and **femininity**, beliefs and

understandings about what men and women are or should be, often morph into persuasive directives for what presumed “real” men and “good” women should do and how they should act.

R W Connell, Jeff Hearn, and Michael Kimmell have argued that each society has its own version and vision of an ideal masculinity; this ideal is then held as



the benchmark by which the mastery of manhood is measured (2005). They called this “hegemonic masculinity”—that is, the dominant masculinity in a culture that renders most other ways of being a man and expressions of masculinity illegitimate, invisible, or even feminine. The irony of hegemonic masculinity is that, regardless of how much men strive to achieve the ideal, they will never measure up to the standard.

In Oceania, beliefs about masculinity are often revealed in popular culture representations of Pacific Islanders, including television shows and films. The 2016 New Zealand film *Three Wise Cousins* (Vaiaoga-loasa), for example—in which a young New Zealand-born Samoan tries to impress the woman of his dreams by becoming a “real island man”—illustrates this tendency as the main character demonstrates that he can provide for his family by growing food, living off the land, and performing cultural rituals with confidence. While these ideals of

**Image 7.**

Recently scholars have been reexamining representations and stereotypes bearing on Pacific Islander male athletes (Uperesa and Mountjoy 2014).



masculinity can be oppressive, it is only recently that the burden on boys and men to conform to masculine ideal types has been recognized and discussed in academia.

Meanwhile, popular ideas about and representations of “real island girls” and “real island women” can also be highly problematic. In the 2006 New Zealand film *Sione’s Wedding* (Graham) (also known as *Samoan Wedding*), for example, the character Princess represents a “real island girl.” She has long hair, olive skin, a slim yet curvaceous figure, wears a flower in her ear, and is elegantly dressed in island prints. Princess also is sexually forward rather than shy or submissive—and thus gives the impression that this is how “real island girls” are or should be. Several indigenous women authors have responded negatively to the film’s portrayal of women. One of the main issues of contention is that stereotypical images of Polynesian women have come to dominate popular visual representations

of Pacific Islander women—thereby supplanting and overriding diverse identities and experiences of femininity (Tamaira 2010). In addition to promoting particular ideas about women and women’s roles in society, these and other portraits of Pacific femininity also encourage an idealized version of female beauty that does not represent all Pacific Islander women. Indeed, this “hegemonic femininity” is also oppressive and homogenizing in that it negates the multitude of ways femininity is expressed, performed, and embodied across Oceania and beyond.



**Video 4.**

To view the full trailer for *Samoan Wedding* (2006), click [here](#).



# Activity

Consider how cross-cultural encounter and globalization might impact conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity. Can you think of specific examples that demonstrate these influences?



**Image 8.**

Community leaders engage with gender specialist, Abhilasha Sharma (second on right), during a family violence prevention workshop at the Tuniva Learning Center as part of Pacific Partnership 2015.

## Gender and Place

While it is true that culture, society, and cross-cultural encounter are key to the construction and reconstruction of localized gender identities and roles in Oceania and elsewhere, additional factors are also important. In Pacific Island societies and cultures with deep connections to land, sea, and other natural environments, gender and place are also deeply linked and inform each other in powerful and meaningful ways. In fact, men and women in Oceania have always had distinct and varying roles, obligations, and relationships specific to the physical places to which they are connected. In some island groups in Micronesia, for example, men were traditionally involved in the labor, responsibilities, and social activities associated with the sea; these included fishing, canoe building, navigation, and other ocean activities. Women in these societies, meanwhile, generally fulfilled their social and cultural responsibilities through ties and obligations to the land,

including crop cultivation and decisions about land use and distribution.

Interactions between gender, place, and power operate distinctively across diverse Pacific Island cultures. As in most societies, place in Oceania not only has an impact on the construction of gender in terms of labor and sociocultural interactions and relations; it also has significant influence on the distribution of power and authority between and across genders. In fact, the power structures that arise directly from connections to place have a major bearing on the gender roles, responsibilities, and identities of men, women, and third-gender individuals. In many hierarchical societies, for example, chiefly titles and responsibilities are tied specifically to the lands from which they originate. In these societies, the distribution of power between men and women is directly connected to people's gender and connections and obligations to specific islands, villages,





or parcels of land. In many **matrilineal** societies in Melanesia and Micronesia, women hold the power to ascribe titles and distribute land and other resources. Although women in these societies are sometimes thought to lack any real authority, the titles and accompanying obligations women bestow mean they have more power and authority than might be readily discernible. (See Section 5 for more on gender and leadership.) Though Pacific Islanders in various places have their own concepts of gender and how it relates to power and place, these concepts are neither stagnant nor unchanging. Rather, they have evolved over time and in response to the changing needs of particular cultures and societies. The arrival of outsiders and the many forces that transformed religious, political, economic, and other indigenous structures affected the relationships between gender and place in complex ways to accommodate change and growth. At times, those alterations reflected

**Image 9.**

In several of the islands in what is now Yap state in the Federated States of Micronesia, villages contain a "women's house." This is a place where women live during their menstrual cycle and where they do things considered women's work such as weaving. Full article [here](#).

islander collaboration or complacency with certain changes and impositions; at others, they involved domination over Pacific Islands and Islander resistance to colonial powers. These diverse responses to imperialism and colonialism offer useful lenses for looking at the complex interactions between gender, place, and power.

Much as Pacific Islander concepts of gender have been informed and guided by connections to place, Islanders perceive and interact with place according to their own conceptualizations of gender. In fact, in many Pacific cultures, physical places and spaces are themselves regarded as gendered. For example, several villages in what is now Yap State in the Federated States of Micronesia have a **women's house** where women live during their menstrual cycle and engage in weaving and other activities typically regarded as women's work. Similarly, men in many Micronesian and Melanesian societies have their own place in the village or **men's houses** that serve as spaces for men to work and

socialize. Within these contexts, space and place embody the gender beliefs, attitudes, and practices of particular communities as well as their connections to particular physical settings.

Pacific Islanders have also assigned concepts of gender to the elements of nature that are important features of their home environments. In the Marshall Islands, for example, the coconut tree is seen to embody and represent the male gender. Meanwhile, in those same islands and in many other parts of Micronesia, seascapes beyond the reef are generally considered men's domain, whereas areas within the reef and lagoons are seen as women's spaces. While activities associated with those physical spaces contribute to what appear to be sharp distinctions between men and women, other pursuits—particular types of fishing and cooking, for example—may bring women and men together in the same space and thereby blur what otherwise seem like rigid separations of gender roles and gendered spaces.

Pacific Islanders have used gender not just to conceptualize and engage with place, but also to explain transformations in the world around them that have occurred as a result of colonialism and other outside influences. For example, Rotuman scholar Vilsoni Hereniko used coconut trees in the tourist district of Waikīkī on the island of O'ahu in Hawai'i as a metaphor to critically engage with the

impacts of colonialism in Hawai'i in particular. In his 1994 essay "Representations of Cultural Identities," Hereniko offers a critical commentary on the removal of nuts from coconut trees in Waikīkī for safety reasons. By likening coconut trees to castrated males and coconuts to amputated male reproductive organs, Hereniko critiques an imperial tourist industry that strips coconut trees of their cultural value and practical worth—leaving them sterile and unable to provide food, lumber, and leaves for weaving to sustain Pacific Islanders as they have done for centuries. Instead, the trees are mere decorations that have been physically transformed to meet the expectations of tourists who imagine Hawai'i and the Pacific as a picture-perfect paradise.

Hereniko's coconut analogy reveals that Islanders and outsiders assign gender to place and the environment



**Image 10.**

In many Micronesian and Melanesian societies, men have their own place in the village or "men's houses" that serve as similar spaces for socializing and labor. Full article [here](#).



differently. Just as some Pacific Islanders see the coconut tree as male or a particular house or part of the ocean as exclusively reserved for women, outsiders have assigned their own gender attitudes, beliefs, and practices to Pacific island spaces and environments. In many cases, outsiders seeking to colonize parts of Oceania have defined or described Pacific places and people as female or feminine. Chamorro scholar Keith Lujan Camacho suggests, for example, that in the first half of the twentieth century the United States military feminized Guam and its indigenous people in an effort to establish and maintain its own (masculine) hegemony on the island. Quoting Butler in a US Navy newspaper editorial, Camacho argues that these efforts are revealed through the American use of the pronoun “her” to describe and characterize Guam in terms of female beauty, sexuality, and allure: “The real beauty of Guam lies in her emerald hillsides made greener by everlasting summer, her wavering palm fronds kissed by trade winds, her clean, shining beaches continually courting the ebb and flow of tides, her flower-scented groves and tinkling leafy lanes that cast haunting shadows of tranquility” (James 1998, 97). Chamorro scholar Anne Perez Hattori (2004) further posits that depictions of the island and its people as feminine actually facilitated the male-centered US military’s establishment and

maintenance of masculine structures of power and hegemony on Guam and in other parts of Oceania.

Just as gender is complex, variable, and in part constructed according to specific places and environments, so too are Pacific Islander responses to new, parallel, competing, and diverse notions of gender and place. In Oceania, gender and place have many deep and complex connections; that said, conceptualizations of and interconnections between gender and place are continually evolving, reacting, and persevering in relation to each other and to changes over time. When outsiders arrived in the Pacific Islands, they brought their own ideas about gender, place, and power—and dramatic physical and conceptual transformations to the places Islanders called home ensued as a result. While some of these were comparable to those that already defined gender roles and relations in Oceania, others clashed with indigenous ideas about gender. Nevertheless and despite the sometimes overwhelming influence of outsiders and outside forces, Pacific Islanders have continually sought and found creative and inspiring ways to maintain and adapt their gender beliefs, expectations, and enactments to the ever-changing physical, social, political environments they continue to call home.

**Image 11.**

Māori men performing a haka taparahi, a posture dance. Their leader carries a wooden taiaha, a fighting staff used in close combat, or in wero, a ceremonial ritual of encounter.



## Activity

What message do you think the image is trying to communicate? What assumptions might you make about gender roles in this image?



# Gender and Leadership

The relationship between gender and leadership in the Pacific Islands is often misconstrued in light of Western assumptions about gender equality. In Oceania as in much of the world, public leadership has historically been predominantly, although not exclusively, the domain of men. In many Pacific contexts, gender roles are strictly maintained, with women operating primarily in the domestic sphere; as a result, women are frequently absent from traditional and contemporary public leadership roles that require skills and resources many women do not have the opportunity to cultivate.

Nevertheless, women in Oceania play important support roles in leadership and decision making even when men dominate public leadership positions. Moreover, women's participation in leadership and decision making varies widely across the region, and is largely dependent on culture and social organization.

Women in some matrilineal societies, for example, have a more prominent place in decision making than women in most patrilineal societies. What's more, the status of women in contemporary institutionalized leadership roles often has a direct correlation with the status of women in traditional leadership roles. In fact, women's participation in contemporary politics and governance in places where women hold chiefly titles such as Fiji, Sāmoa, and the Marshall Islands surpasses women's involvement in public life in much of Melanesia, where status is primarily achieved through the accumulation and distribution of resources to which women have limited access.

Given the complexity of traditional social hierarchies in Oceania, a number of factors influence leadership and authority in particular societies. First, authority and leadership potential are often connected to a person's inherited status or position within an

island, community, or lineage group. Land and land rights also play an important role in bestowing certain individuals with authority and the power to lead. Meanwhile, contemporary (ie, Western-inspired) governance has added extra layers of complexity to Pacific structures of authority, as community members of various social ranks vie for power by way of election into public office. Finally, leadership and authority in the Pacific Islands are very often tied to gender—and men generally have more opportunities to become leaders than women do. While these and other factors are important to any discussion of leadership in the Pacific Islands, the remainder of this section will focus on the relationship between gender and leadership in the



**Image 12.**  
Village matai (chiefs) meet inside a fale (Samoan guest house) in American Sāmoa.

geographic subregion known as Micronesia. According to a popular expression in parts of Micronesia, “a man and woman are like the equal halves of a coconut fond”; in other words, men and women are equal in many ways because their social roles are dependent on and complement each other. This expression also explains that, although chiefs in Micronesia are almost always men, women are also valued for their role in maintaining domestic affairs, and for helping male leaders behind the scenes with important decisions. Significantly, while men are usually more visible as leaders and as spokespeople for their islands, communities, and





**Image 13.**  
Anote Tong, President of Kiribati from July 2013 to March 2016, meets with U.S. Navy officials.

lineages, women play an important role in influencing and in some cases steering men's decisions and actions.

Customarily, chiefly status in much of Micronesia is determined by seniority in land tenure; this means landowners are usually also chiefs and vice versa. Although chiefly status has shifted on occasion as a result of political processes such as victories on the battlefield

and, more recently, in the courtroom, chiefly rank and title are more often passed down through matrilineages. This means titles to land and social position are typically passed down and inherited through women (ie, through mothers and sisters). Similarly, leadership roles are passed through women and retained within

matrilineages—with the highest position of authority typically going to the most senior male of the matriline.

While women play an important role in decision making about land, rank, and inheritance, customarily they did not take on public leadership roles in their communities or lineages. Women chiefs were uncommon in traditional Micronesian communities, and it was uncommon for women to engage in diplomatic affairs. Nevertheless, while Micronesian women have rarely been chiefs, leaders, or public figures (with exceptions), they have always been the keepers of land and titles—and thereby have comparable, if not equal, social standing to men in many Micronesian societies.

In some cases, women have assumed leadership roles as chiefs. In the Marshall Islands, for example, an *irooj* is a chief but the title is reserved for men; *lerooj*, meanwhile, is the comparable title for a woman who is chief. According to custom but with some exceptions, *irooj* and *lerooj* inherit their title and rank through their mother as the most senior member of their matrilineage. Meanwhile, the *iroojlaplap* or paramount chief is the highest-ranking member of the highest-ranking matrilineage—although there is no equivalent title for women and the title *iroojlaplap* has always been

reserved for men. On Pohnpei, women have also been able to attain chiefly status, but only through marriage to a chief and not by inheritance. As a result, when a chief passes away or is stripped of his title because he does not live up to his people's expectations, his wife loses her chiefly status and title as well.

Although traditional leadership structures and processes remain in place in much of Micronesia today, the dynamics of leadership have also shifted with the introduction of modern political structures. When the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau achieved independence in the late twentieth century, the new nations created federal government institutions as a part of larger strategies of independence and self-rule. Today, elected mayors, governors, senators, and presidents govern all three nations at the local, state, and national levels. Much like chiefly status and authority, men have been the primary holders of these leadership positions—with some notable exceptions, several of which are discussed below.



**Image 14.**  
Amata Kabua, Chief and  
first President of the  
Marshall Islands.

Unlike the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia is made up of four states—Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae—each of which has its own governor. As they do not have states, Palau and the Marshall Islands do not have governors as part of their governance structure.



While the introduction of contemporary Western-style governance in Micronesia and Oceania more generally has not fully displaced or replaced traditional structures of authority, it has had an impact on the relationship between leadership and gender in some places. Meanwhile, traditional beliefs about gender and leadership have influenced modern governance in Micronesia and across the region. For example, while women in Micronesia have held prestigious jobs as department heads or leaders of nonprofit organizations and businesses, they have rarely held elected public office at the highest levels. This may be a reflection of history and culture in these societies, as women in most Micronesian societies often play important support roles but are rarely included in traditional public leadership.

The major exception to this is the Marshall Islands, where prominent women have held key appointed and elected public offices since the country gained independence in 1979. Appointed officials have included Secretary of Interior Carmen Bigler, Secretary of Education Biram Stege, Secretary of Health Julia Alfred, and Public Service Commission Chairperson Marie Maddison. Elected officials have included Mayor Ione deBrum (Epoon Atoll); Mayor Veronica Wase (Likiep Atoll); Senator Evelyn Konou (Jālwōj Atoll); Senator

Abacca Anjain Maddison (Roñlap Atoll); Senator Amenta Matthew (Utrōk Atoll); Senator Daisy Momotaro (Jālwōj Atoll); and Senator Hilda Heine (Aur Atoll).

In 2015, the Marshall Islands Nitijeļā (Senate) elected Dr. Hilda Heine as the first woman president of the Marshall Islands and of any country in island Oceania (not including Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia). While President Heine does not hold chiefly rank, her election to the presidency may be in part a reflection of the culture and history of the Marshall Islands, where women have considerable influence and have been able to attain customary positions of authority and leadership in ways they have not in many other Pacific places. Meanwhile, growing exposure to women in prominent leadership positions abroad through the media and by Marshall Islanders living in United States may have served to accelerate Marshall Islanders' acceptance of a woman as their highest-ranking elected public official. Time and future elections will reveal if Dr. Heine's presidency will inspire more women across Micronesia and greater Oceania to become more directly and overtly involved in leading their lineages, clan, villages, islands, and nations into the future.



# Hilda C. Heine, Ed.D.

President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

**"Dr. Hilda C. Heine is a Marshallese educator and politician, currently serving as the eighth President of the Marshall Islands, the first woman to hold the office. Prior to assuming office, she served as the Minister of Education. She was the first individual in the Marshall Islands to earn a doctorate degree, and the founder of the women's rights group Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI)" [1].**

**Dr. Heine is also the first female leader of any independent Pacific island nation [2, 3]. "President Hilda C. Heine is one of the three women elected to the Nitijela following the November 2015 general elections representing Aur Atoll for a term of four years. She previously served as the Minister of Education in the administration of former President Christopher J. Loeak. Prior to entering politics, President Heine was the Program Director of Pacific Comprehensive Assistance Center at the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in Majuro from 2006 to 2011 and Director of Policy and Capacity Building and Scholar of Freely Associated States (FAS) Education, consecutively, for PREL and based in Honolulu from 1995 to 2006. Before relocating to the State of Hawai'i, President Heine served the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands starting as a classroom teacher, school counselor, school administrator, and college President before being named as Secretary of Education.**



**Feature 1.**  
President of the Republic of the  
Marshall Islands, Hilda C.  
Heine, elected January 2016.



# Hilda C. Heine, Ed.D.

President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

continued...

During her tenure as President of the College of the Marshall Islands and as Secretary of Education, President Heine supervised the transformation of the College from a continuing education program into a fully operational community college. President Heine currently serves as an advisor, officer and member of multiple taskforces, committees, and working groups. As Minister of Education, President Heine headed the RMI Teacher Standards and Licensing Board and Chaired the Human Resources in Health Task Force. President Heine was awarded an honorary doctorate degree from the College of the Marshall Islands.

President Heine was born on Jaluit Atoll to Reverend Bourne and Kathy Heine in 1951 where she grew up and attended a public school and moved to Majuro to pursue her secondary level education at the Marshall Islands High School. Following high school studies, President Heine attended school in the United States where she earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Oregon in 1970, a master's degree at the University of Hawaii in 1975, and an Educational Doctorate (EdD) at the University of Southern California in 2004. President Heine and her Husband, Thomas Kijiner Jr., have 3 children and 5 grandchildren, and both live in Majuro. President Heine co-authored a number of publications and reports and reads historical and contemporary writings with special emphasis on education and social administrations in small islands developing states" [4].

## Sources:

1. Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilda\\_Heine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilda_Heine))
2. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-27/hilda-heine-elected-first-ever-female-pacific-leader/7118664>
3. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/295053/hilda-heine-elected-marshalls-president>
4. <https://www.uog.edu/news-announcements-migrated/uog-spring-2016-commencement-on-may-22.php>



**Image 15.**

In the construction of Māori whare (meeting house), wood carvings with spiraling designs are alternated with geometric and angular weaving patterns to depict cultural stories, cosmologies and the necessary balance between the genders.



## Activity

Explain the difference between a patrilineal and matrilineal society and how gender roles and relations might differ in each.



# Gender Diversity in Oceania

## *Third Genders*

Many cultures in Oceania acknowledge genders beyond the biological categories of woman/female and man/male. In fact, it is common in many Pacific places for some biological males to take on typically female characteristics, affects, and roles and for some biological females to take on those typically considered male. While this is often described in English as **transgenderism**, these roles and identities in indigenous Pacific conceptualizations might better be described as **third gender**, both genders, or in between. Third-gender categories share common characteristics across Pacific islands and island groups, and yet they are also distinctive and unique to place. Importantly, third-gender categories and articulations continually change and adapt to forces such as missionary activity, colonization, modernization, and globalization.

Just as expressions and interpretations of gender differ across Oceania, so do the labels and markers used to identify and describe them. In fact, many Pacific Island cultures have indigenous or localized terms, roles, responsibilities, and concepts that apply uniquely to people who identify as other than exclusively man/male or woman/female. Language can be an important clue to understanding the complexity of cultural traditions and the influences of modernity, exchange, missionization, colonialism, and globalization as they relate to gender categories and identities. In fact, terms that describe the wide range of gender identities in Oceania reveal how various societies view or name certain social phenomena even as they ignore or hide others. These words can also provide insight into the confusion and blurring that takes place today between gender and sexual orientation. In some Pacific cultures, for example, terms customarily used to refer to third-gender individuals are now used



# Guavas and Bananas

Living Gay in Papua New Guinea



## Video 5.

Still from the film, *Guavas and Bananas: Living Gay in Papua New Guinea* (2014). "In Papua New Guinea where homosexuality is illegal, Hanuabada village is one of few places where gay and transgender men can live in safety. Elsewhere gays are targeted and physical and sexual assaults are common." View the full film by clicking [here](#).

interchangeably to identify or describe individuals who desire or have sexual relationships with people of the same sex (eg, **homosexuals**).

While unique expressions of third-gender roles and identities vary across Oceania, these identities are an accepted and highly respected social category in many Pacific societies. In pre-contact Hawai'i, for example—

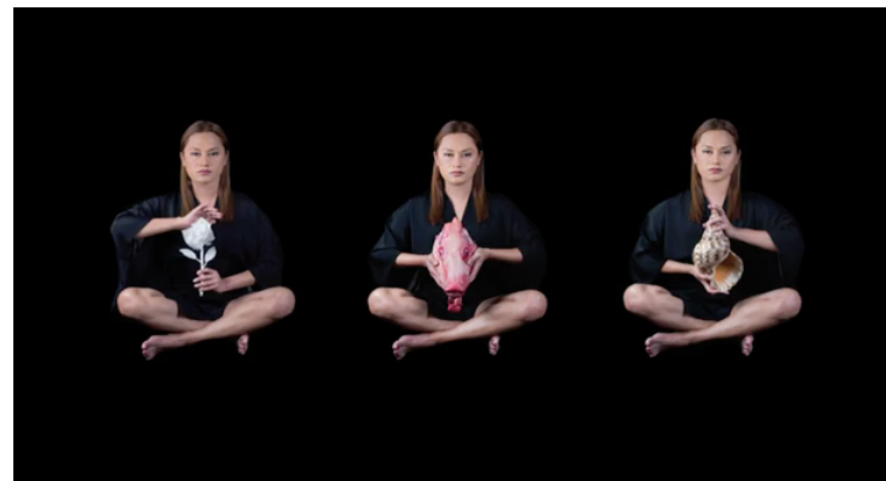
before Euro-American missionaries and colonizers imposed their own gender ideologies and ideals on indigenous Islanders—**māhū** embodied both female and male traits, were considered special conduits for the gods who had healing powers, and could serve as mediators. Māhū could also play an important role in families with a shortage of women and girls; in fact, they most often



lived among and were essentially considered women. Today, māhū are understood an integral part of Native Hawaiian society and culture; their communities usually embrace them, and some serve as charismatic cultural and community leaders.

Much like māhū in Hawai'i, **fa'afāfine** (literally "in the manner of a woman") are third-gender individuals in Sāmoa who are biologically male but live their lives as women, behave like women, and embody both male and female characteristics. Though some discrimination exists toward fa'afāfine, they are for the most part widely accepted and even celebrated in Samoan contemporary life. Fa'afāfine are considered an integral part of Samoan culture—especially when it comes to serving their families and upholding the social fabric of the community. Today, fa'afāfine are increasingly becoming known as writers, artists, and activists who affect social change.

Fa'afāfine may also be Sāmoa's only term comparable in meaning to homosexual, but the two are actually quite different. In fact, whereas homosexual men have romantic relationships with other men who identify as male/men, fa'afāfine usually engage romantically with typically masculine men who consider their relationships with their third-gender partners equivalent to



#### Video 6.

*Kumu Hina* (2014) is a powerful feature documentary about the struggle to maintain Pacific Islander culture and values within the Westernized society of modern day Hawai'i. It is told through the lens of an extraordinary Native Hawaiian who is both a proud and confident māhū, or transgender woman, and an honored and respected kumu, or teacher, cultural practitioner, and community leader. Full film [here](#).

#### Video 7.

*Pacific Beat Street: What is a Fa'afafine?* Pacific Beat, circa 2010. Full film [here](#).

#### Video 8.

*Assume Nothing: Shigeyuki Kihara* is an interview with fa'afāfine artist Shigeyuki Kihara. Directed by Kirsty MacDonald, 2009. Full film [here](#).



heteronormative relations with women. This is just one illustration of the profound difference between gender identity and sexual orientation in Oceania, as neither fa'afāfine nor their partners identify as homosexual.

Similar to Samoan fa'afāfine, Tongan **fakafefine** (literally, "in the manner of a woman") or fakaleitī (literally, "in the manner of a lady") are third-gender individuals who are biologically male, live their lives as women, and embody both male and female characteristics. For the most part, fakafefine dress, speak, and behave like women. Within Tongan society, fakafefine are considered an important part of Tongan culture; they are valued for their abilities to perform male and female tasks, for example, and for their expertise in fashion and performing arts in male and



female roles. Despite some discrimination, fakafefine are widely accepted and celebrated in events such as the Miss Galaxy Pageant, an annual fakafefine beauty pageant that is well attended by all members of society including prominent members of the Tongan royal family. Similar third-gender beauty pageants are held in several other Pacific Islands including Sāmoa, Cook Islands, Tahiti, Fiji, and in places with large Pacific Islander populations such as in Auckland in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

In the Marshall Islands, **kakōl** are men who typically live among women and exist within the female sphere of social activity and work. Unlike many of their

#### Video 9.

The film *Like a Lady: The Fakaleitis of Tonga* (2011) follows the journey of a gay Peace Corps volunteer adjusting to "how to be gay in Tonga" with the help of his friends, the fakaleitis. Directed by Tess Martin. Full film [here](#).

third-gender counterparts in other parts of Oceania, kakōl do not typically cross-dress fully or identify as women. Instead, most kakōl prefer to reveal their gender identity by wearing one item of women's clothing, painting their fingernails, using female expressions, or growing their hair long. As kakōl are thought to incorporate the strengths of both sexes, they serve an important role balancing and negotiating the worlds of men and women. Much like māhū, fa'afāfine, and fakafefine, kakōl tend to have romantic relationships with typically masculine heterosexual men rather than with other kakōl.

Despite the widespread acceptance of gender diversity and various kinds of intimacy between same-sex individuals in precolonial Oceania, colonialism, missionary activity, and other influences seem

to have rendered third-gender men who dress or live as women the most visible examples of gender diversity in the contemporary Pacific (Besnier 2014). In contrast to men who identify as third-gender feminine, biological women who identify as third-gender masculine tend to remain on the margins of society in most Pacific places. Women who live as men, including fa'afātama in Sāmoa and māhūkāne in Hawai'i, are socially accepted but do not have as clear a role or the same social prominence as men who live or identify in Sāmoa and māhūkāne in Hawai'i, are socially accepted but do not have as clear a role or the same social prominence as men who live or identify as women, and are generally not incorporated into male social circles or delegated leadership roles typically attributed to men. It is worth considering how internal and external influences

such as religion, colonial legal frameworks, and

**homophobia** have contributed to this marginalization, even as they have compelled third-gender males to emphasize their femininity in ways they might not have in precolonial times.

**Video 10.**

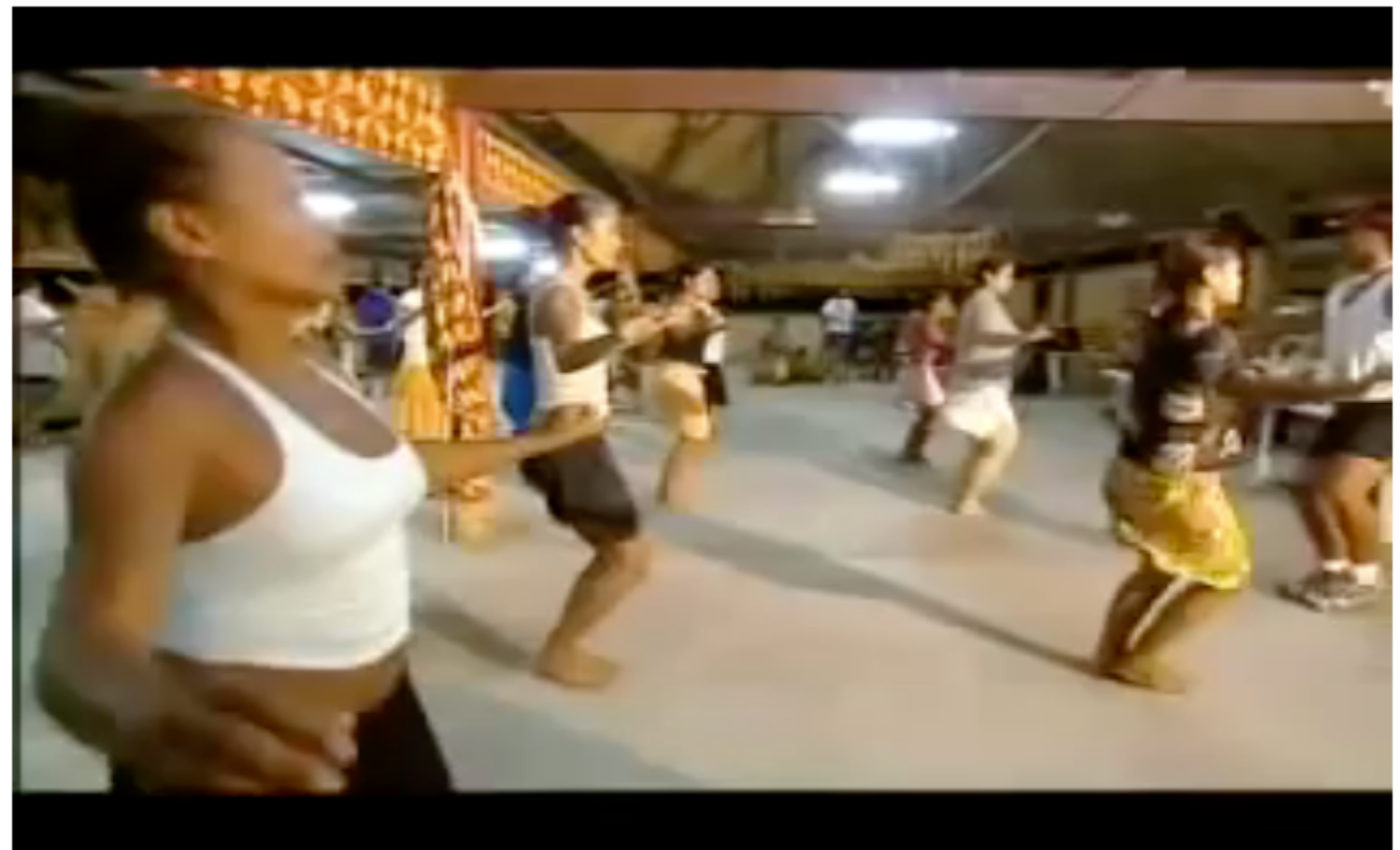
Still from a local news segment on TV New Zealand (TVNZ) (2015). "An age-old tikanga is being revived by Ngāti Waewae. Following in the footsteps of their female ancestors such as Papakura and Nihorere, the women of the hapū are taking up the taiaha and putting down the challenge, literally." Full film [here](#).





# Activity

Reflect on how Western concepts of gender and transgenderism might distort or obscure indigenous Pacific concepts of gender diversity by framing it within Western or global LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex) labels?



Video 11.

To view the film *The Third Sex: Tahiti* (2005), click [here](#).

### *Fa'afāfine Slang*

Samoan fa'afāfine use a secret coded language variety to communicate with each other; this language has some similarities with **Polari**, a language variety popularized in gay and other communities in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century. While little research has been done on the specific origins or history of fa'afāfine slang, it may first have emerged as early as the 1830s when newly arrived Christian missionaries tried to ban or erase the fa'afāfine lifestyle. In response, fa'afāfine sought refuge in growing port cities such as Fagatogo (Pago Pago) and Apia, where they developed covert words and expressions to help them communicate with one another even as they hid their identities and activities from the broader public. Fa'afāfine formed communities in these places, which they later codenamed Beverly Hills (Fagatogo) and Hollywood (Apia); these became safe havens where fa'afāfine could live together as family during colonial times.

Slang allowed fa'afāfine in these covert communities to freely and openly discuss everyday activities such as chores and sewing, their mother-daughter style relationships with one another, and their nighttime adventures with men of status (Sele 2007). The secret language gave fa'afāfine a way to conceal their lifestyle and activities, protect their identities and those

of their sexual partners, and avoid overtly violating laws and social norms. As a result, fa'afāfine slang contributed to the maintenance of a safe space where fa'afāfine could be themselves and discuss their lives and relationships with ease.

### Fa'afāfine Slang Morphology

Fa'afāfine slang shares some commonalities with Polari and other coded vernaculars in terms of its uses and how new words are formed (**morphology**). For instance, fa'afāfine create words by using back slang or reversing the spelling of written words in their speech. In fa'afāfine slang, this usually applies to two- and three-letter words such as eo (you), which becomes oe; u'a (me), which becomes a'u; and ula (go), which becomes alu. Even more prevalent in fa'afāfine slang is a form of back slang that reverses syllables rather than letters. For example, leai is a two-syllable Samoan word that means “no” in English; in fa'afāfine slang, leai becomes aile but still carries the original meaning of the word.

### Fa'afāfine Slang: Rhyming

Rhyming is another important feature of fa'afāfine slang. While the inclusion of a rhyming suffix is similar to Polari, suffix use in fa'afāfine conversation has its own rules. Fa'afāfine slang rhymes are unique in that every



response to a statement or question should contain a rhyming suffix. Rhyming usually starts when a speaker replies to a statement with a word that rhymes with the last word of the original speaker's statement. Then, all participants continue the rhyme as a form of amusement and entertainment. Sometimes the rhyming words are meaningless, but when the rhymes refer or relate to rude or offensive words or have a sexual connotation, the conversation tends to become animated and rowdy.

*Fa'afāfine Slang: Code Switching and Other Influences*

Like any vernacular, fa'afāfine slang changes as speakers incorporate new words and expressions appropriate for contemporary contexts. One of the ways fa'afāfine do this is through code switching. While not unusual in typical Samoan language conversation, code switching between Samoan and English is common in fa'afāfine slang. Similar to Polari, which uses English as a base for some words, fa'afāfine slang tends to coin new words and phrases using Samoan language words in combination with English language rules. Undoubtedly, users continue to adopt and adapt fa'afāfine slang. For example, contemporary fa'afāfine slang seems to have been influenced by the American children's television show "ZOOM," which featured a pig-

Latin type language. Today, most students in Sāmoa speak some form of fa'afāfine slang or utilize certain words or expressions in their everyday conversation—even if they do not identify as fa'afāfine.

<b>Samoan Word</b>	<b>Syllables</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Fa'afāfine Slang</b>
le ai	le + ai	no	<i>aile</i>
sau	sa + u	come	<i>usa</i>
tamā	ta + mā	father	<i>māta</i>
mata	ma + ta	eye	<i>tama</i>
tupe	tu + pe	money	<i>petu</i>
uma	u + ma	finish	<i>ma'u</i>
fai	fa + i	do	<i>ifa</i>

<b>Samoan Word</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Suffix</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>
Amelika	America	-lika	<i>makelika, afelika, sulika...</i>
Afega	Village	-ega	<i>makalega, meakega, alega</i>
Viiga	Praise	-iga	<i>kiga, liga, meakiga, seliga</i>

# Activity

Consult the list of terms for third and other gender identities in various Pacific Island places (pages 38-40). How do these names and categories and their definitions in English indicate cultural values and biases? Are there other words or concepts you would add to this list—or things you would change?

## Third Gender Terms



**Akava'ine** (Cook Islands Māori): An individual, usually male, who behaves or lives as a woman; may refer to a third-gender individual and may be comparable to transgender men who live as women.



**Fa'afāfine** (Sāmoa): A third-gender individual born biologically male who embodies male and female gender traits; such an individual is a recognized and integral member of traditional Samoan culture.

**Fa'afātama** (Sāmoa): Contemporary Samoan word for a third-gender individual born biologically female who identifies as male; often referred to as "tomboy" in American Sāmoa.



# Third Gender Terms



**Fafafine** (Niue): A third-gender individual who may be born biologically male and embody male and female gender traits.



**Fakaleiti/Fakeleti** (Tonga): A male who behaves in the manner of a woman and may be considered third gender.



**Kakōl** (Marshall Islands): A male who behaves or dresses in the manner of a woman and lives and functions socially among women and in the world of women.



**Māhū** (Hawai'i): In Native Hawaiian culture, an individual who may be considered third gender with characteristics of both sexes; usually a man who lives as a woman. In contemporary Hawai'i, the term is also used to describe people who are transgender, transvestites, or gay.

**Māhūkāne** (Hawai'i): A female who lives mentally and/or physically as a man.

**Aikāne** (Hawai'i): In traditional Hawaiian culture, an intimate same sex friend of a chief. This person often, though not always, had a sexual relationship with the chief.

**Māhūwahine** (Hawai'i): A newly coined term (2003) that describes such gender identities as transvestitism, transgenderism, and transsexualism.



**Pinapinaaine/Binabinaaine** (Tuvalu and Kiribati): A male who regards himself or is regarded by others as a female.

# Third Gender Terms



**Māhū/Māhūvahine** (Tahiti): An individual who is biologically male but identifies and lives as a female and is perhaps considered third gender.



**Vaka sa lewa lewa** (Fiji): Males who present themselves or live as females; may also refer to third-gender individuals comparable to transgender females who live as males.



**Whakawahine** (Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori): Males who are born effeminate or live as females either through sex reassignment surgery or hormone therapy; may also refer to a third-gender individual.

**Takātapui** (Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori): Devoted same sex partner; in contemporary Aotearoa, this has become an umbrella term for Māori LGBTI people.



**Mamfbrita** or **Palao'āna** (Guam): Chamorro words that refer to a person born biologically male but who embodies the appearance of and behaviors common to females.



**Mengol a otaor** (Palau): Homosexual.



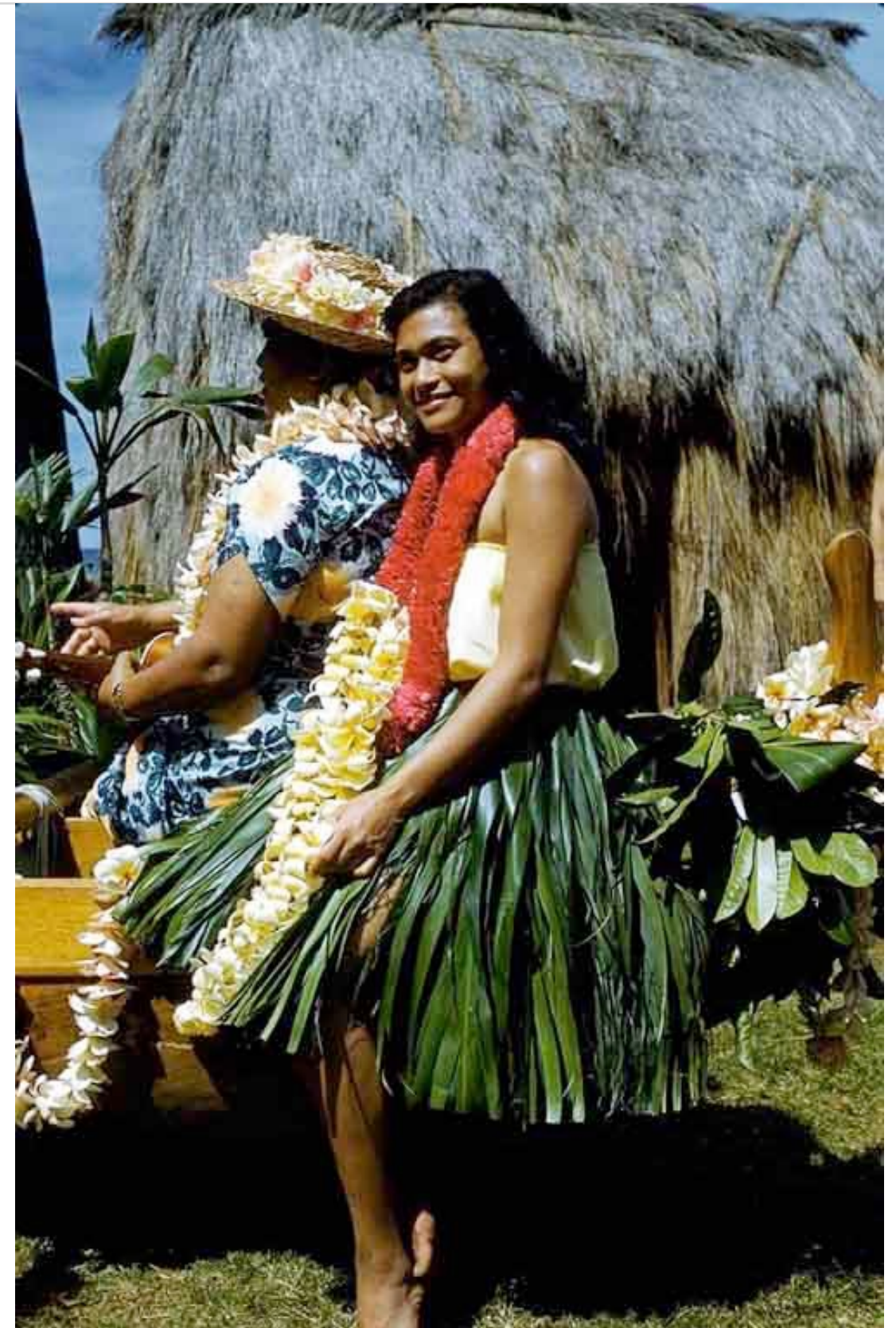
**Wininmvan** (Chuuk): Homosexual.



## Conclusion

### Gender in the Pacific

Gender roles and identities in the Pacific Islands are multilayered, complex, and quite diverse—and in many ways defy Western assumptions about gender and sexuality in the Pacific Islands and beyond. This short book has provided an overview of just a few of the key concepts associated with gender in Oceania: gender in place and mythology; the gender division of labor; the relationship between gender and structures of authority; and gender diversity and third genders in the Pacific. As you continue to explore issues connected to gender in the Pacific Islands, consider the relationship between gender and some of the following: the arts and material culture, exoticism, marriage and family, domestic violence, religion, militarization, the environment, migration and diaspora, protest and resistance movements, and many others. Finally, continue to think about and find examples of the many ways gender in the contemporary Pacific embodies sometimes conflicting indigenous and introduced notions of what it means to be a man, woman, or third-gender individual in today's Oceania.



**Image 18.**  
Girl smiling with lei.

---

# Glossary

## **Cosmology**

An account of the origins of the universe; in Oceania, cosmologies are generally based on mythologies and other oral traditions.

Section 1 - Gender and Traditions (see page 4)

Related terms: mythology

## **Fa'afāfine**

In Sāmoa, a third-gender individual born biologically male but who embodies both male and female gender traits and may identify as female.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 32)

Related terms: Third-gender, Transgender

## **Fakafefine**

In Tonga, third-gender individuals born biologically male, who live their lives as women, and embody both male and female characteristics.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 33)

Related terms: Third-gender, Transgender

## **Female**

A biologically female person, animal, or plant.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: Sex, Male

## **Feminine**

Having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with women.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: femininity

## **Femininity**

Characteristics, roles, and behaviors generally associated with girls and women; may also be adopted by third-



gender individuals who identify as female; socially constructed gender ideal that varies between cultures and societies.

Section 2 - Gender in Labor and Ideology (see page 13)

Related terms: feminine

### **Gender**

A social and cultural construct that informs an individual's personal and social identity and the role(s) that person plays or performs in society; does not automatically or necessarily align with the person's biological sex or gender identity.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: Gender identity

### **Gender identity**

An individual's personal experience of gender, which does not automatically or necessarily align with biological sex or social gender norms.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: Gender

### **Globalization**

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology.

Section 2 - Gender in Labor and Ideology (see page 11)

### **Hikule'o**

In Tongan mythology, Hikule'o is a powerful god that has both male and female characteristics. She lives in Pulotu, the Tongan spiritual homeland, and is the goddess of fertility and agriculture; her younger brothers are Tangaloa and Māui.

Section 1 - Gender and Traditions (see page 4)

Related terms: Mythology, Tangaloa

### **Homophobia**

Feeling or expression of hatred, prejudice, or contempt for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 34)

**Homosexual**

A person who is sexually attracted to people of one's own sex.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 31)

**Kakōl**

Marshallese men who typically live among women and exist within the female sphere of social activity and work.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 33)

Related terms: Third-gender, Transgender

**Māhū**

In Native Hawaiian culture, an individual who may be considered third gender with characteristics of both sexes; usually a man who lives as a woman. In contemporary Hawai'i, the term is also used to describe people who are transgender, transvestites, or gay.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 31)

Related terms: Third-gender, Transgender

**Male**

A biologically male person, plant, or animal.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: Sex, Female

**Mana**

A word meaning divine or supernatural power, authority, or power to lead in many Pacific languages including Hawaiian, Tahitian, and Māori.

Section 1 - Gender and Traditions (see page 4)

**Masculine**

Having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: masculinity

**Masculinity**

Characteristics, roles, and behaviors generally associated with boys and men; may also be adopted by third- gender individuals who identify as male; socially constructed gender ideal that may vary between cultures and societies.

Section 2 - Gender in Labor and Ideology (see page 13)

Related terms: masculine



## **Matrilineal**

Societies in which children are born into the same descent group (eg, clan or lineage) as their mother. In Oceania, this generally means children also inherit land and rank from their mother.

Section 3 - Gender and Place (see page 18)

Related terms: Patrilineal

## **Men's house**

Structure or space reserved for men's activities, events, meetings, rituals, and ceremonies.

Section 3 - Gender and Place (see page 18)

Related terms: Women's house

## **Morphology**

The linguistic study of the forms of words.

See Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 36)

## **Mythology**

Oral traditions that often times explain the origins of deities, humans, plants, animals, and marine life and record and perpetuate historical events and cultural values.

Section 1 - Gender and Traditions (see page 4)

Related terms: Cosmology

## **Patrilineal**

Societies in which children are born into the same descent group (eg, clan or lineage) as their father. In Oceania, this generally means children also inherit land and rank from their father.

Section 3 - Gender and Place (see page 18)

Related terms: Matrilineal

## **Polari**

A secret/coded form of slang first popularized in gay and other communities in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 36)

## **Sex**

Generally refers to an individual's reproductive biology/anatomy at birth, be it male or female.

Introduction and Overview (see page 2)

Related terms: Female, Male

### **Sexual or gender division of labor**

Society's allocation of various tasks and jobs between males and females.

Section 2 - Gender in Labor and Ideology (see page 9)

### **Tangaloa**

Tangaroa (also Takaroa, Tangaroo, Ta'arua, Kanaloa etc.) is one of the great gods, the god of the sea, found in several mythologies of the region of Polynesia.

Section 1 - Gender and Traditions (see page 4)

Related terms: Mythology, Hikule'o

### **Third gender**

General category encompassing a variety of gender identities that do not conform to individuals' biological sex at birth and/or social gender norms; gender identity that is neither exclusively male nor female.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 30)

Related terms: Transgender, Fa'afāfine, Fakafefine

### **Transgender**

Individuals whose gender identity does not align to or conform to their biological sex at birth.

Section 5 - Gender Diversity in Oceania (see page 30)

Related terms: Fakafefine, Third-gender, Transgender

### **Women's house**

Structure or space reserved for women's activities, events, meetings, rituals, and ceremonies.

Section 3 - Gender and Place (see page 18)

Related terms: Men's house



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### **Suggested Additional Media**

Clip from the documentary *Ke Kulana He Mahu: Remembering a Sense of Place*. The full-length DVD is available at the Sinclair AV Center, call number: DVD 7545. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3mPwO7OHv8>

Drag Kings. From the now-defunct New Zealand news magazine show *Pacific Beat Street*. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZBbl\\_AA3rk&list=UUttrANNos7PfPduh0pAdKNGA&index=1&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZBbl_AA3rk&list=UUttrANNos7PfPduh0pAdKNGA&index=1&feature=plcp)

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Takatāpui From the now defunct show by the same name the web site says it was "world's first indigenous gay, lesbian and transgender series." All three episodes are online: <http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/takatapui-2004>



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- Image 3. Hikule'o, Goddess of the Tongan spirit world called Pulotu, Tongan Male-Female (Third Gender) Deity. The wooden carving originated in Ha'apai, Tonga. Photo: P F C 2, 2009. Retrieved from [https://c2.staticflickr.com/4/3043/3267535579\\_277cbd25d8\\_z.jpg?zz=1](https://c2.staticflickr.com/4/3043/3267535579_277cbd25d8_z.jpg?zz=1). (Found on pg. 4).
- Image 4. Moana (2016) features Disney's depiction of the demigod Māui. How does this image reflect or not reflect cultural sensitivity or broadly circulating stereotypes about Polynesian bodies? Musker, John and Ron Clements, Directors. 2016. Moana. Disney World Pictures Productions. CC BY-SA 3.0 US.

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Image 5. The film Happy Birthday Tutu Ruth is an account of Ruth Kaholoa'a, a 90 year-old great-great-grandmother who continues to cultivate taro in Hawai'i. Some of her 13 children describe their parents and their upbringing. Kirk, Ann Marie, director. 1996. Happy Birthday, Tutu Ruth. Documentary, 27 minutes. Honolulu: Pacific Islanders in Communications. Retrieved from [http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cvideo\\_work%7C2287262/happy-birthday-tutu-ruth](http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C2287262/happy-birthday-tutu-ruth). (Found on pg. 9).

Image 6. Two Women Collecting Coconut Husks, Sāmoa. CC0. Retrieved from HaikuDeck.com. (Found on pg. 11).

Image 7. Recently scholars have been reexamining representations and stereotypes bearing on Pacific Islander male athletes. Uperesa, Fa'anofo Lisaclaire (Lisa), and Tom Mountjoy, editors. 2014. Global Sport in the Pacific. Special issue of The Contemporary Pacific (26) 2. (Found on pg. 13).

Image 8. ARAWA, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (July 2, 2015) (Second from right) Abhilasha Sharma, a gender specialist with Counterpart International, talks with Bougainville community leaders during a family violence prevention workshop

at the Tuniva Learning Center as part of Pacific Partnership 2015. Leaders from Bougainville and the hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) conducted the workshop as part of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Mercy is currently in Papua New Guinea for its second mission port of PP15. Photo: Sr. Airman Peter Reft, 2015. Public Domain. Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:OgreBot/Watercraft/2015\\_July\\_17-21#/media/File:Bougainville\\_and\\_Pacific\\_Partnership\\_leaders\\_conduct\\_family\\_violence\\_prevention\\_workshop\\_150702-FYW474-026.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:OgreBot/Watercraft/2015_July_17-21#/media/File:Bougainville_and_Pacific_Partnership_leaders_conduct_family_violence_prevention_workshop_150702-FYW474-026.jpg). (Found on pg. 15).

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Image 11. Māori men performing a haka taparahi, a posture dance. Their leader carries a wooden taiaha, a fighting staff used in close combat, or in wero, a ceremonial ritual of encounter. CC0. Retrieved from HaikuDeck.com. (Found on pg. 20).



- Image 12. Village matai (chiefs) meet inside a fale (Samoan guest house) in American Sāmoa. Photo: National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior. Public Domain. Retrieved from [https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/cultural\\_diversity/National\\_Park\\_of\\_American\\_Samoa.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/cultural_diversity/National_Park_of_American_Samoa.html). (Found on pg. 22).
- Image 13. Anote Tong, President of Kiribati from July 2013 to March 2016, meets with U.S. Navy officials. HaikuDeck. CC0. Retrieved from HaikuDeck.com. (Found on pg. 23).
- Image 14. Amata Kabua, Chief and first President of the Marshall Islands. Photo: Department of Public Affairs, Public Information Office. Fair use. Retrieved from <http://digicoll.manoa.hawaii.edu/tphotos/Pages/viewtext.php?s=browse&tid=4253&>. (Found on pg. 24).
- Image 15. In the construction of Māori whare (meeting house), wood carvings with spiraling designs are alternated with geometric and angular weaving patterns as to depict their stories, cosmology as well as the necessary balance between the genders. Photo: Phil Whitehouse. CC BY 2.0. Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Waitangi-Meeting-House-interior.jpg>. (Found on pg. 27).
- Image 16. Miss Galaxy Queen. Photo: Melemanea, 2008. Retrieved from [http://www.matavuvale.com/photo/2150904:Photo:106706?](http://www.matavuvale.com/photo/2150904:Photo:106706?context=album&albumId=2150904%3AAlbum%3A106848)  
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- Video 10. Ngāti Waewae women reviving local tikanga of wero. Click image to view this local news segment of Māori Women Performing the Haka. Te Karere (TVNZ), 2015. Retrieved from [https://youtu.be/lzv\\_ynXxiXk](https://youtu.be/lzv_ynXxiXk). (Found on pg. 32).
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# Cosmology

An account of the origins of the universe; in Oceania, cosmologies are generally based on mythologies and other oral traditions.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Mythologies

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Oral Traditions

## Fa'afāfine

In Sāmoa, a third-gender individual born biologically male but who embodies both male and female gender traits and may identify as female.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania



## Fakafefine

In Tonga, a third-gender individual born biologically male, live their lives as women, and embody both male and female characteristics.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania

# Female

A biologically female person, animal, or plant.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Introduction and Overview



# Feminine

Having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with women.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Introduction and Overview

# Femininity

Characteristics, roles, and behaviors generally associated with girls and women; may also be adopted by third-gender individuals who identify as female; socially constructed gender ideal that varies between cultures and societies.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Masculinity

---

**Index**

[Find Term](#)

Gender in the Pacific - Gender in Labor and Ideology



# Gender

A social and cultural construct that informs an individual's personal and social identity and the role(s) that person plays or performs in society; does not automatically or necessarily align with the person's biological sex or gender identity.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Gender identity, Sex

---

## Index

[Find Term](#)

[Gender in the Pacific - Introduction and Overview](#)

## Gender identity

An individual's personal experience of gender, which does not automatically or necessarily align with biological sex or social gender norms

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Gender

---

**Index**

Find Term



# Globalization

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

## Index

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender in Labor and Ideology

## Hikule'o

In Tongan mythology, Hikule'o is a powerful god that has both male and female characteristics. She lives in Pulumotu, the Tongan spiritual homeland, and is the goddess of fertility and agriculture; her younger brothers are Tangaloa and Māui.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Tangaloa, Third gender

---

**Index**

[Find Term](#)

**Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Oral Traditions**



# Homophobia

Feeling or expression of hatred, prejudice, or contempt for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

# Homosexual

A person who is sexually attracted to people of one's own sex.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania



## **Kakōl**

Marshallese men who typically live among women and exist within the female sphere of social activity and work.

---

### **Related Glossary Terms**

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

**Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania**

## Māhū

In Native Hawaiian culture, an individual who may be considered third gender with characteristics of both sexes; usually a man who lives as a woman. In contemporary Hawai'i, the term is also used to describe people who are transgender, transvestites, or gay.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania

# Male

A biologically male person, plant, or animal.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

## Index

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Introduction and Overview



## Mana

A word meaning divine or supernatural power, authority, or power to lead in many Pacific languages including Hawaiian, Tahitian, and Māori.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Oral Traditions

## Masculine

Having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Introduction and Overview

## Masculinity

Characteristics, roles, and behaviors generally associated with boys and men; may also be adopted by third-gender individuals who identify as male; socially constructed gender ideal that may vary between cultures and societies.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Femininity

---

**Index**

[Find Term](#)

Gender in the Pacific - Gender in Labor and Ideology



## Matrilineal

Societies in which children are born into the same descent group (eg, clan or lineage) as their mother. In Oceania, this generally means children also inherit land and rank from their mother.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Patrilineal

---

**Index**

[Find Term](#)

Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Place

## Men's house

Structure or space reserved for men's activities, events, meetings, rituals, and ceremonies.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Women's house

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Place

## Mythologies

Oral traditions that often times explain the origins of deities, humans, plants, animals, and marine life and record and perpetuate historical events and cultural values.

---

### Related Glossary Terms

Cosmology

---

**Index**

Find Term

Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Oral Traditions



## Patrilineal

Societies in which children are born into the same descent group (eg, clan or lineage) as their father. In Oceania, this generally means children also inherit land and rank from their father.

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### Related Glossary Terms

Matrilineal

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## Polari

A secret/coded form of slang first popularized in gay and other communities in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century.

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### Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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## Sex

Generally refers to an individual's reproductive biology/anatomy at birth, be it male or female.

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### Related Glossary Terms

Gender

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## Sexual or gender division of labor

Society's allocation of various tasks and jobs between males and females.

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### Related Glossary Terms

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Gender in the Pacific - Gender in Labor and Ideology

# Tangaloa

Tangaroa (also Takaroa, Tangaroo, Ta'arua, Kanaloa etc.) is one of the great gods, the god of the sea, found in several mythologies of the region of Polynesia.

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## Related Glossary Terms

Hikule'o

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**Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Oral Traditions**

## Third gender

General category encompassing a variety of gender identities that do not conform to individuals' biological sex at birth and/or social gender norms; gender identity that is neither exclusively male nor female.

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### Related Glossary Terms

Hikule'o, Transgender

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# Transgender

Individuals whose gender identity does not align to or conform to their biological sex at birth.

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## Related Glossary Terms

Third gender

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Gender in the Pacific - Gender Diversity in Oceania

## Women's house

Structure or space reserved for women's activities, events, meetings, rituals, and ceremonies.

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### Related Glossary Terms

Men's house

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Gender in the Pacific - Gender and Place