

dynamics of cultural identity, and, in a Pacific context, debates about contested issues of authenticity. This said, the film remains puzzlingly thin with regard to ethnographic information.

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Kau Faito'o: Traditional Healers of Tonga. 27 minutes, VHS, color, 2001. Directed by Melinda Ostraff; produced by Melinda Ostraff, Joseph Ostraff, Brian Wilcox, and Wendy Wilcox, with research assistance from Amelia Niumeitolu and Ashley Knudsen; written by Michael Van Wagener, Melinda Ostraff, Joseph Ostraff, and Loa Niumeitolu Saafi; English narration by Loa Niumeitolu Saafi, with English subtitles for Tongan interviews. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown, MA. <<http://www.der.org/films/kaufaito-healers.html>> Sale US\$145.00, rental US\$50.00.

Kau Faito'o is a descriptive ethnographic film depicting a variety of healers (*kau faito'o*), and healing methods (*faito'o fakatonga*) as practiced at the turn of the millennium in Tonga. Viewers get a clear sense of Tongan culture as well as insights about specialists in birth, fertility and infancy, massage and bonesetting, and medical plant knowledge. What makes this film a little different is the production crew, which includes Tongans doing writing, narration, and research, under the sympathetic direction of Melinda Ostraff. Filmed entirely in Tonga, the production values are very good. Clear sound quality, good light-

ing, and visuals are augmented with clean editing, eloquent narration, and subtitles providing adequate translations without distracting from the events occurring on the screen. The film is engaging and enjoyable to watch.

The scene opens at the blowholes of Tongatapu, with narrator Loa Niumeitolu Saafi describing the story of Maui who, with his magical hook and great strength, fished the islands of Tonga up from the bottom of the sea before the first Tongans arrived some 3,500 years ago. Of her people she says: "Tongans are a proud people with familial bonds to the land. We believe that through loyalty to kinship and the mercy of God we will continue to retain and own our sovereignty. Our independence has helped us maintain and nurture sacred practices." The opening description of Tonga as a place with a turbulent history but also protective cultural attributes offers the standardized image of Tonga that was cultivated and honed during the long twentieth-century reign of Queen Sālote. Social practices grounded in Tongan notions of kinship and respect for elders and the "old ways" enabled the small nation to survive challenges ranging from ocean voyaging, battles between chiefly factions, and the arrival of trade ships and Christian missionaries in the seventeenth century, to exposure to outside commerce and rapid monetization in the twentieth century. Images of people reef fishing, beating barkcloth, and making plant medicines are contrasted with scenes of Tongan soldiers on parade, traffic in the capital, and rap music on car radios. The theme of traditional

healing as ancient art under siege from modernity is clear and persistent.

Seven healers (Kiu Anitoni, Kolo Tonga, Lamona Tongia, Faleata Vea, Viliama Ate Maile, Mele Mahi, and Amelia Kane) are shown in action. Three midwives demonstrate massage techniques and talk about how they determine position and predict the sex of a child, manage a labor, diagnose problems such as fonua momoko (cold uterus), and balance their advice with that of hospital-based clinicians. A fertility specialist listens to a mother whose son and daughter-in-law have been unable to conceive. She describes how she can determine the cause of infertility by massaging the stomach and body. For example, if the body is warm, and the stomach is not, the woman has fonua momoko. The fertility specialist makes an herbal drink to be taken orally for five days, in conjunction with daily bathing, applications of coconut oil, and dressing warmly. A maker of traditional medicines tours his garden, identifying some eleven plants and their applications, including children's upset stomach, cankers, and disturbed spirits. A man harvesting bark for medicine is shown to be doing so in a manner that protects the tree for future harvesting, and men and women both are shown making medicines. An infant specialist is shown checking the fontanelle, umbilicus, and breasts, and administering a tonic. In what is likely to be the most uncomfortable segment of the film, a massage and bonesetting specialist is shown treating a toddler with an injured elbow and a teenager with an (uncasted) broken leg. In both cases, it is obvious that he is causing discomfort. Here the

Tongan ethic of stoicism and the ability to withstand pain is commented on and justified: "A little discomfort now will pay off with a healthy arm in the future." "In ancient times, infection or a poorly mended bone could cause crippling, which could be life threatening." The coconut oil used to massage a leg with obvious open skin wounds is described as containing "botanical extracts which kill infection and promote healing," while "massage increases circulation and reduces time required for healing."

Key aspects of traditional healing include the idea that the recipes have been honed over centuries and passed down through families. The power to heal is described as gender neutral (including midwifery), a gift from God, and therefore different from the more transactional approach of biomedicine. Treatment is public, may have an audience, and is free (the fact that this is also true for hospital and government health clinics is not mentioned). Payment is described as shameful, and while thank-you gifts are acceptable, healers do not make their living with their gifts. Healing knowledge is gained through apprenticeship and cooperation with an elder. Threats to the viability of traditional healing are located in the realm of changes wrought in conjunction with modernity. Cash cropping, for instance, is described as reducing the availability of medicinal plants that formerly were found growing in fallow land. Conventional scientific medicine is described as trying "to disregard native healing practices." Education and Christianity are not mentioned as threats, although they clearly have been important factors.

Internal migration is also an unacknowledged problem: in the Ha‘apai village where I do a lot of my work, many people continue to make their own medicines and would use traditional healers more, if so many had not already moved to the capital.

The film suggests that despite the advances of modernization, the “new ways do not satisfy all our needs” and a niche for *faito‘o fakatonga* continues to exist. The hope for an enduring traditional medicine is said to lie in Tongan culture itself, and with the elders who, as repositories of wisdom and experience, hold a place of respect in the community: “Perhaps it is our kinship and respect for our ancestors that carries over into respect for the old ways,” says Saafi, concluding that “it is certain that *kau faito‘o* are as much a part of our culture as the ocean and like our ocean, it is hard to imagine life without our *kau faito‘o*.”

I have used this film for teaching in medical anthropology and Polynesian cultures classes. It works well in both, with some caveats. Technically, it is a fine film. Well written, beautifully narrated, respectful, and full of images of everyday life in Tonga, it has the advantage of letting Tongans speak for themselves. Demonstrations of healers at work are unprecedented, and they all come across as sincere, caring, and skilled individuals. What I do find troubling is the hackneyed Tongan-culture-at-the-brink motif and the emphasis on history as the only source of contemporary healers’ authenticity. This is not, therefore, what I would consider the *perfect* film about traditional medicine in contemporary Tonga.

Kau Faito‘o would have benefited

enormously from inclusion of other voices, particularly *clients* of traditional healers; the nonspecialists who make their own, household medicines; and the nurses and doctors referred to only obliquely through references to “the hospital” and “western medicine.” Although ethnobotanical research on Tongan medicinal plants has a long way to go, there is some data that would have made some of the statements (ie, about botanicals that prevent infection, or treatments for abdominal pain) more credible, especially in the face of what might seem like superstition (eg, medicine for evil spirits). Furthermore, the film’s calls on history as justification are selective. In the seventeenth century, for example, Tongans were regarded as skilled at surgical techniques but they looked to Fijians for botanical knowledge. That has shifted quite radically. In contrast to today, as recently as the nineteenth century a payment at the end of a course of therapy was absolutely required, or the treatment could rebound. Christianity has clearly affected Tongan forms of reciprocity in this arena. A less defensive perspective could have framed the potential for contemplation of the complex interweaving of local knowledge (eg, about plants or human anatomy), belief (about God, or the relationship between position and sex of a fetus), beneficial social practices (spending time with new mothers, offering a venue for discussing fears) and therapeutic outcomes (a healthy limb). Thus, what is missing for me is the complexity of the lives of contemporary *kau faito‘o* and of *faito‘o fakatonga* as a whole. As the midwives themselves demon-

strated, and several ethnographers have shown, Tongans utilize a highly pluralized set of medical therapies. It would have been nice to see that.

Students to whom I have shown the film interpret it as representing traditional healers as bastions of an aspect of Tongan culture that is at risk of being lost, as *kau faito'o* are bypassed by modern, foreign ways. They interpret the closing point, that *kau faito'o* are as inalienable as the sea, as a plea for an end to the professional disregard for *faito'o fakatonga* and the healers who apply it. While the description of healers holding ancient knowledge that is fading away fits within a particular genre or perspective on "traditions" in general, this approach is an oversimplification and misrepresentation of the reality of Tonga today, and in my opinion, is the biggest problem with the film. My own experience is that what makes Tongan traditional medicine "traditional" is the ability of Tongans themselves to control the medicines and treatments, and the freedom to adopt, adapt, or be inspired to create new medicines or therapies as necessary, as their ancestors did before them. And this *is* happening in Tonga: *kau faito'o* are themselves adapting their practice to the new needs of their kin and community. There are now traditional medicines for the very modern diseases of hypertension, diabetes (type II), the homesickness children feel when sent back to Tonga by parents living overseas, and so forth. *Faito'o fakatonga* is an evolving set of skills and knowledge, a very real and living form of cultural practice that combines old and new idioms. But in the film this contemporary creativity is subsumed in favor of a claim to credi-

bility through history. Furthermore, *kau faito'o* are not as disregarded by the medical profession as the film makes them out to be. Tonga has been training doctors and nurses since the nineteenth century, and Tongan society being what it is, the odds are good that a traditional healer has a relative, neighbor, school chum, or so on who is now a doctor or nurse. Two members of the very crew that made this film, for example, are relatives of one of the best known, longest practicing doctors in Tonga, Siaosi Niumeitolu (who passed away not long after this film was finished). People know about healers and learn the repertoire of locally available therapies as well as they learn each other's names. While it is true that, in general, physicians have preferred that people see a physician, and at times have actively disparaged some traditional healing techniques, it is also true that medical practitioners in Tonga have become more and more open to traditional healing techniques. Rather than blanket disregard, physicians in current practice tend to take the attitude that some treatments do work, and some healers are effective, at some things. The current minister of health has described to me his goal of registering traditional healers as part of the wider medical system (perhaps inspired by a similar policy in Tahiti). Another Tongan, the head of the School of Public Health at the Fiji School of Medicine, is in the process of setting up a specialization in traditional healing techniques. Rather than dying away or suffering from isolation, *faito'o fakatonga* seems to be coming out of the closet.

Kau Faito'o: Traditional Healers of Tonga has a romanticized, late-nineteenth-century atmosphere, evident in

both the script and visuals. The filmmakers are clearly concerned that traditional medicines are undervalued and at risk of loss due to rapid modernization. While I disagree with their analytical perspective, I agree with their final argument, that traditional medicines and healers should be understood as a significant aspect of Tongan culture writ large, as important in the future as in the past. I also agree that Tongan traditional practices are immensely robust when it comes to “existing alongside the new.” Ultimately, and regardless of the caveats offered here, this film is a must-have for anyone wishing to teach about Tonga, or about medical anthropology in Oceania. While not fulfilling the ideal of the perfect medical anthropological or ethnographic film, it is still very good, certainly the best that we have available.

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Wasawasa. 2002. Composed and recorded by Sailasa Tora. Produced by New Sounds Oceania, <Oceania@usp.ac.fj> with assistance from the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, University of the South Pacific, Suva. SAG 01/995 660. 1 CD, 42 minutes, 12 tracks, 8-page booklet with art and descriptive notes. F\$30 plus F\$10 shipping.

I have a special place in my heart for Fijian music—the guitar-driven harmonies sung around the kava bowl in the village or their modern, keyboard-driven, urban club descendants; the percussion-inspired chants accompanying the meke dance; and the uplift-

ing vocal blends of the schoolchildren at their morning assembly or the congregation at their religious services. To try to quench my thirst for this music since leaving Fiji, I've downloaded favorite new renditions from the Internet, begged friends to send CD releases, and even incorporated representative samples into the repertoire of my Honolulu-based Pan-Pacific group, the kava boys band. That being said, I admit that I agreed to write this review with a hope of sharing the feelings that Fijian music inspires in me through writing about a new compilation of what I knew as Fijian music. But, to my surprise, the mesmerizing and inspirational music of *Wasawasa* by Sailasa Tora is unlike anything, Fijian or otherwise, that I have ever heard before.

Though produced by New Sounds Oceania (the new recording studio of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture at the University of the South Pacific in Suva), *Wasawasa* might be regarded by some as neither “new sounds” nor “sounds Oceania.” Under the group name Kabe in the year 2000, Sailasa Tora released an album entitled *Kacikaci Vakatama*, which included songs found on *Wasawasa* such as “Kacikaci Vakatama,” “Wasawasa,” and “Na Vatu Kwe” (per *arTok*, the Pacific Arts Online website: <<http://www.abc.net.au/arts/artok/music/S193457.htm>> 20 Sep 2000). Subsequently, George “Fiji” Veikoso released a cover version of “Na Vatu Kwe” as the opening chant on his *Transitions* CD. But, while songs on *Wasawasa* may be recognizable from previous releases, the type of music itself strikes the ear as a unique new blend of sounds.

Regarding the origins of these