
4 – FRAMES

Reframing Oceania
Lessons from Pacific Studies
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The Pacific Islands region is full of contradictions.
Vast yet small; weak, yet influential; important, yet frequently ignored.
—Richard Herr and Anthony Bergin 2012

You have lived long and time has passed
The buzzard added
Don’t call the wind that will carry you away
The gull counseled
Don’t talk to the rain that will drown you
And the turtledove concluded
Do not confine to the hut those who inhabit the world.
—Desne Gorodey, in Waddell, Naidu, and Hau'ofa 1993

FRAMING

If global studies is about critically engaging and understanding issues and processes across an interconnected world through multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses, then research in Pacific studies provides a particularly interesting series of histories, rationales, and approaches (T. Teaiwa 2010). The Pacific, or Oceania as it is commonly called, encompasses twenty-
eight nation-states and territories of diverse geographic, demographic, cultural, and economic scales, from the independent atoll nation of Tuvalu with ten thousand citizens at the forefront of the climate change debate, to the continent of Australia with over twenty-two million people in one of the world’s most affluent countries.

My global is Oceania and my research is shaped by Pacific studies as it has been developed from scholarly centers in Hawai’i, New Zealand, Fiji, and Australia with interdisciplinary, comparative, multi-sited, and indigenous tools and frameworks for scholarship, art, and activism (T. Teiwa 2000). This chapter focuses on key aspects of the field because most of my academic career has been spent not teaching courses in established disciplines, but rather developing new courses and a new teaching program in transdisciplinary Pacific studies. For the last six years this has been in Australia, which has a significant neocolonial political and economic relationship with the region, but where there is little interest in teaching about, more specifically, learning from Pacific peoples and islands at any level of national education (see Herr and Bergin 2013). My research, therefore, is motivated by a sense of concern that geopolitical powers such as Australia and the United States need to be as interested in what they can learn from the Pacific as in what they can gain from dominating it.

In thinking about how geopolitical framings in this part of the world have profoundly shaped Pacific states and societies, political scientist Greg Fry wrote of a long-standing Australian practice of “framing” Pacific Island peoples in three senses: “First, drawing geographical boundaries around them for purposes of making generalizations; second, intending to shape the lives of the people so bounded; and third, in the colloquial sense, setting them up for outcomes not of their making” (Fry 1997, 307). This diverse region is regularly reduced to a set of simplistic frames with their origins in European imperial imaginations and cross-cultural island encounters, and powerful contemporary expression through the discourses of underdevelopment that dominate national planning, priorities in tertiary education, regional cooperation, and policy-making. Edward Said’s (1978) critique of Orientalism and its attendant negative representations of the Middle East and East Asia are regularly cited in Pacific studies as reflecting similar processes in Oceania as the result of Spanish, French, British, German, Australian, New Zealand, American, Japanese, and Dutch colonialism.

Since the eighteenth century such framings have taken form in the sometimes contradictory representations of the islands as a paradise inhabited by both noble and ignoble savages; infantilized natives in need of colonial rule and missionary conversion; small, insignificant islands and populations; relatively new independent, underdeveloped, corrupt nation-states; islands of violence, instability, and crisis; sinking nations in the context of global warming—and the list goes on (Jolly 2007; Finin and Wesley-Smith 2001; Wallis 2012). At the end of the twentieth century in particular, after violent clashes between pro- and anti-independence groups in New Caledonia, a civil war in Bougainville, one civilian and three military coups in Fiji, anti-nuclear protests in French Polynesia, a coup and civilian conflict in the Solomon Islands, and riots in Tonga, a series of dramatic images of the whole island region became popular in which it was depicted as on the brink of a “Doomsday Scenario” (Callick 1993); on an “Arc of Instability” or an “Arc of Crisis,” or an “Arc of Responsibility” and an “Arc of Opportunity” (Wallis 2012); as “the Hole in the Asia-Pacific Doughnut” and “the Eye in the Asia-Pacific Cyclone” (Fry 1997). Greg Fry argues that this framing is created by “the heartland of rational thinking—the intersecting worlds of the bureaucrat, the politician, the foreign affairs journalist and the academic economist” (1997, 305). In the meantime, representations still abound of Pacific islands as pristine, sun-drenched havens for tourists. The mundane or creative reality in the middle is rarely visible in popular media or in the foreign affairs and development policies of Pacific powers such as Australia, which dominates the most populous, largest, and well-endowed islands in the southwestern Pacific (K. M. Teiwa 2009, 2012).

In the twenty-first century, combining older historical visions and contemporary anxieties, Pacific journalists and travel writers, from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to American writer Paul Theroux, still delight in the juxtaposition of a palm-fringed paradise and laid-back natives, against a perceived reality of coups, conflicts, and crises (Finin and Wesley-Smith 2001). Scholars and activists across the region have countered such framings by arguing for Pacific Islanders to construct their own representations and articulate their own knowledge approaches, especially with respect to place-based claims of cultural identity, political sovereignty, and self-determination (see, for example, Smith 1999). What is interesting about emplaced resistance is that it is shaped by Islanders’ connections to both land
and sea, and predicated not on static but rather on mobile and dynamic identities and networks that extend across time and space (Jolly 2007; Hau‘ofa 2008; Clifford 2000).

The process of framing by deficit, and dominant assumptions about power, scale, and the things that matter globally, feeds these views of the Pacific, with real consequences for Islanders’ sense of agency, efficacy, and sovereignty. These are most explicit in the southwestern Pacific, defined and racialized in 1832 by Jules Dumont d’Urville as Melanesia (“black islands” in Greek) as distinct from Polynesia (“many islands”) and Micronesia (“small islands”). Pacific studies research in Australia, the former colonial authority in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru, is driven primarily by a pragmatic and strategic rationale and funding system shaped by the federal government’s foreign affairs and aid and development interests and priorities. These often wane in times of creativity and stability, are most engaged, patronizing, and interventionist in times of crisis, and are inclined to reward policy-relevant research that is of direct Australian “national benefit.” Enabling this rationalist approach to Pacific research are two terrestrial-centric optical illusions, the first of which brings the islands into relief against a massive blue space, and the second of which focuses only on the blue, and usually presumed empty, space between the three important shores of Asia, Australia, and the Americas. The latter is reflected in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) logo below; APEC is a regional economic forum dedicated to enhancing growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, and regularly highlighted in Australian media and foreign affairs.

Such depictions of Oceania as an empty blue space are not confined to Pacific Rim imaginations. They are a regular feature of visual representations of the globe based on Mercator projection maps, which present continental spaces north of the equator as larger, thus amplifying their geopolitical importance. Margaret Jolly, in her exploration of historical cartographies of Oceania, also draws on Greg Fry’s approach, stating that “in any image of Oceania there is always a ‘frame,’ an ‘edge’ . . . and . . . as with photography, the point of view is crucial” (Jolly 2007, 524–25). She critiques discourse that views the Pacific Rim as “the high ground of strategic economic and geopolitical interest and of moral presumption” (ibid., 535).

Pacific studies scholars such as the late Professor Epeli Hau‘ofa have challenged discourses of belittlement and absence that regularly frame regional and international views of Oceania. Hau‘ofa argued that the Pacific was not constituted by tiny “islands in a far sea,” but was rather a “sea of islands” and the ocean a highway, long traversed by ancient mariners (1993; and see Wendt 1976). He acknowledged that Europeans did not invent the practice of belittlement but stressed that contemporary international discourses depicting island states and territories as too small, too poorly endowed, and too isolated from metropolitan centers to rise above conditions of dependence on wealthy nations erase histories of imperialism, innovation, and resilience, and inflict lasting damage on Islanders’ images of themselves (1993, 4).

Hau‘ofa further identified the literary, visual, musical, and performing arts as arenas in which Pacific Islanders could express a powerful regionalism and weave their creative ideas drawing upon local and introduced materials and concepts (see also Metzger, chapter 13, this volume). Directly addressing histories of colonialism, (under)development, dependence, and globalization, he challenged the logics of territorial scale, demographic size, and geopolitical might to reframe dominant perspectives of Pacific peoples and islands, thus inspiring countless artists, scholars, and students who now trace
their intellectual activism to his 1993 essay "Our Sea of Islands." The title of a collection of his works, *We Are the Ocean* (2008), sums up the philosophy of Pacific autonomy, resistance, and creativity he applied while building the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji.

Both indigenous Pacific Islander and Pacific studies scholarly frameworks and motivations thus offer some productive insights for the field of global studies. Here I understand global studies, in distinction to international studies or international relations focused primarily on the interactions between states, as a field concerned with exploring globally shared issues and the nature and effects of globalization. These are not assumed to be all-encompassing or linear but rather as involving subjects that are multi-scalar, partial, emergent, and relational. Furthermore, as argued by Arif Dirlik, the global we speak of today is more than a world dominated by U.S. corporations. Rather it involves alternate cultural and political claims on the modern, thus reconfiguring the temporalities and spatialities of capitalist modernity (2005, 158). The geographically large, diverse, deeply connected, and yet often invisible region of Oceania offers one such compelling alternative.

**THE BIG PACIFIC**

In an unprecedented speech at the 2012 post-forum talks of the Pacific Islands Forum in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton announced an expanded role for the U.S. Navy and renewed American engagement in the Pacific. Clinton led the largest and highest-level U.S. delegation in the event’s forty-one-year history, with fifty officials, including Navy admiral Samuel Locklear, the head of the U.S. Pacific Command, and Coast Guard rear admiral Charles W. Ray.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), created in 1971 as a vehicle for dialogue and cooperation between members, comprises fifteen Pacific states: Palau, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, and Samoa. A sixteenth member, Fiji, was suspended from the forum in 2009 after Commander Frank Bainimarama overthrew the elected government in a 2006 military coup. The forum has become the
primary vehicle for discussing shared regional political and economic challenges and strategies with powerful donor states such as Australia regularly using the gathering to introduce and implement their own visions for the region.

Several international media stories on the 2012 meeting emphasized the remote and insignificant nature of the Pacific Islands, reporting that just 11,000 people lived in the Cook Islands (a parliamentary democracy in free association with New Zealand), a population roughly the size of the U.S. Foreign Service, as one reporter pointed out. Shaun Tandon of Agence France-Presse (AFP) wrote about the "Island welcome for America's rock-star diplomat."

Wherever the US secretary of state goes, certain things inevitably follow: super-serious security guards with Beretta's, secure communications from top-tier hotels, and a punishing pace of stuffy meetings and formal dinners. But for two-and-a-half days Hillary Clinton's universe was forced to adapt to a tiny and remote island in the middle of the South Pacific, with sometimes curious results... The Cook Islands offer misty vistas and pristine beaches galore, but for an entourage accustomed to luxury hotels, a clear lifestyle change was in store. Clinton's aides, security guards and accompanying press were spread out to locations across the main island of Rarotonga, including rented-out private homes. Officials used to the ultra-sleek rooms found themselves taking outdoor showers under the sun. (Tandon 2012)

The visiting reporters were not the only observers baffled by the significant U.S. presence in the Cook Islands. Fergus Hanson of the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, stated to the Christian Science Monitor that it was "serious overkill to send the world's most senior diplomat to the after-party of an obscure regional meeting" (Ford 2012). But "obscure" from whose perspective and by what definition?

Hanson's statement and the amused tenor of much of the reporting on the U.S. participation in these regional talks reflect that dominant concept of power predicated on framings of size, scale, and global relevance from a Euro-American and North Atlantic perspective. So this large U.S. delegation had to explain to the world why the "small" Pacific was so relevant.

Clinton told the Pacific Islands Forum that the United States considered the region strategically and economically vital and becoming more so. Admiral Locklear reinforced the point, saying that "five trillion dollars of commerce rides on the (Asia-Pacific) sea lanes each year, and you people are sitting right in the middle of it... We will enhance the US Navy and coastguard Ship Rider program so that we can more effectively combat the illegal activity and enforce conservation measures and build nation capacity to do the same." Clinton added: "I know there are those who see America's renewed engagement in the Pacific perhaps as a hedge against particular countries... The Pacific is big enough for all of us... We all have important contributions and stakes in this region's success, to advance your security, your opportunity and your prosperity" (Flitton 2013).

The United States has actually dominated naval and military affairs, foreign policy, culture, and education in parts of the Pacific for several decades through its incorporation of Hawaii as the fifteenth state; its territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa; and the former trust territories of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Marshall Islands. Citizens of those islands would not find American interest or indeed dominance in a political and military context surprising at all. A "Compact of Free Association" between Palau, the FSM, the Marshall Islands, and the United States guarantees U.S. naval and military dominance over the region in exchange for economic assistance and the right of its citizens to travel freely to and reside in United States, accessing educational and health services (also see Shigematsu and Camacho 2010).

While the Pacific is regularly viewed as the home of small, insignificant states, the Pacific Ocean, which is what Secretary Clinton referred to, covers about one-third of the whole planet and is larger than all land masses combined. The "us" in her speech referred to the superpowers of the United States and China. The latter is increasingly viewed by Western countries as undermining their interests and their vision for a sea of democratic, neoliberal Pacific states: these states are now being tempted by China's untied aid and increased business and diplomacy (Wesley-Smith and Porter 2010). In January 2013 the Australian Department of Defence released a draft white paper which The Australian reported as raising the specter of competition between China and Australia for the hearts and minds of small and "impoverished Pacific nations" (Stewart 2013). China is now the third largest donor in the region after Australia and the United States.

While such geopolitical duels are of great interest to those nationalist groups highlighted by Fry, they privilege the Pacific as a space that continues to be a field for playing out foreign interests and representations rather than one that generates its own knowledge and integrity, or one that might have a very different relationship with Asia outside of "international relations."
discusses indigenous studies as challenging Euro-American modernity and, moreover, as questioning modernity’s ways of knowing. Islander scholars, educators, and artists are increasingly using the terms “Oceania” (to foreground the ocean), “Moana” (“the sea” in most Polynesian languages), and “Pasifika” (a pan-Pacific way of pronouncing the word) to counter hegemonic framings by what some call, with tongue in cheek, “outlanders” (Borofsky 2000; Jolly 2007).

Pacific Islands studies has evolved out of three related and sometimes overlapping rationales for area studies. The first involves those pragmatic and strategic motivations for states to understand their immediate region and the geopolitical spaces between their allies and enemies. Language studies have been a big feature of this work. Second, linking area studies to intellectual and scientific pursuits is what Terence Wesley-Smith (1995) called “the laboratory rationale” involving fields such as anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and history mapping and illuminating human historical, sociocultural, and political characteristics and events. The Pacific, with its perceived isolated islands and societies, is seen to constitute ecological and human laboratories for studying a wide range of phenomena (Deloughey 2009). And finally, Wesley-Smith describes a more recent “empowerment rationale” reflecting Pacific Islander decolonisation, resistance, and transformation of the impacts of colonialism, development, and globalisation in scholarship, activism, and the arts.

**Routes and Roots**

Much of my research has explored how a reframing of concepts about small islands through ethnographic work and deeper engagement with Pacific histories can illuminate our assumptions about size and scale in a regional and global context. My research on Banaba, also known as Ocean Island and the home island of my great-grandfather, for example, reflected on how a two- and-a-half-square-mile raised coral atoll in the central Pacific, just eighty meters above sea level at its highest point, was of critical significance to the British Empire and its outposts of Australia and New Zealand for most of the twentieth century (K. M. Teaiwa 2005). The entire island was made of high-grade phosphate rock, a key ingredient in fertilizer and at the time a crucial input for developing and sustaining global industrial agriculture.
Mining Banaba, therefore, was seen to be for “the good of mankind,” and the renowned Australian photojournalist and travel writer Thomas McMahon described it as “Let’s-all-be-thankful-island: a little spot in the Pacific that multiplies the world’s food” (McMahon 1919).

But Banaba was inhabited and the mining resulted in a clash of worldviews, the decimation of a landscape that had taken tens of thousands of years to form, and the displacement of indigenous peoples whose ancestors had arrived two thousand years before Europeans came to the Pacific. The island was reframed by prospectors, mining companies, superphosphate manufacturers, and farmers as a critical agricultural resource, overwriting the Banaban concept of the island as te oho, a term that incorporates and links both land and people in embodied, conceptual, and spiritual ways. In the Banaban language you do not say “my land” or “our land,” you say “me/land” or “we/land.” It is similar across the region whether you’re Maori in New Zealand and talking about whenua, jenai in French Polynesia, or samoa in Fiji. In 1945 the Banabans were removed to Rabi Island in Fiji, where most of them have lived ever since, and by 1980, twenty-two million tons of te oho had been mined and shipped to fertilize other landscapes and fuel a vast chain of global agricultural commodities.

So the second lesson for global studies from Pacific studies is that place always matters, and it matters with a deep sense of kinship and history. Land and sea are specific materially, culturally, and spiritually grounded and often animated spaces. The Banabans protested and challenged the British Empire for decades, a challenge that culminated in a decade-long court case in the British High Court where they sued the Crown and the mining company, which was co-owned by the British, Australian, and New Zealand governments. Young male and female warriors of the Banaban Dancing Group led their cause, representing both old and new cultural identities and, in their minds, evidence of their critical survival and creative existence. They lost their case but gained global attention and their dancing is now iconic across the Pacific Islands (K. M. Teaiwa 2012a).

As Chris Ballard has argued, it is often hard for people whose “ties to land consist of casual contacts with...infrequently tended suburban gardens” to conceive of the relationship between Pacific communities and the lands and resources they consider theirs (2015, 47). There is a similar lack of understanding of how time might be experienced less as chronological but rather as relational and genealogical with contemporary Pacific societies feeling as connected to their ancestors and ancestral atua, akua or gods, as your average Americans might feel to their grandparents. While parts of the region are increasingly urbanizing, the genealogically animated landscape, both terrestrial and marine, still grounds cultural identities. Across the region, the authority and capacity of the state are limited, and customary rights, especially to land, continue to complicate national and foreign desires to exploit abundant natural resources.

These ties to place, however, do not fix or lock Pacific peoples in static cultural realities. Mobility actually constitutes a primary ontological and epistemological condition for people who regularly move between villages, towns, regions, and islands and across national borders. James Clifford, in reflecting on old and new forms of mobility in New Caledonia, for example, asked: “[H]ow is ‘indigeneity’ both rooted in and routed through particular places?” and “[A]re there specifically indigeneous kinds of diasporism?” (Clifford 2001, 469; and see Harvey and Thompson 2005).

The Pacific has been profoundly shaped by both travel and emplacement. Cluny Macpherson aptly described the settlement of the entire Pacific from Southeast Asia across to the far-flung islands of Polynesia over a period of about six thousand years as the “Pacific Diaspora” (Lal and Fortune 2000). Archaeologist Matthew Spriggs, for example, writes of how navigators in eastern Polynesia had a very clear sense of the other islands in their sphere across 3,600 miles, the width of the Atlantic, long before European sailing and technology entered the region. But before humans arrived in the east, in the western Pacific there was a significant degree of interaction between societies that had been there for much longer.

Spriggs writes that the first evidence in the world of a human “blind crossing” happens in the Pacific between the north coast of the former continent of Sahul (what is now New Guinea, Australia, the Aru Islands in eastern Indonesia, and Tasmania) and the islands of Manus around twenty-six thousand years ago:

[When people set off on that 200–350 km journey they could not see where they were heading to, and for about 60–90 km in the middle of the journey they could no longer see where they had come from...that Ice-Age episode of human voyaging is of greater significance than humans landing on the Moon. We have always been able to see the Moon, but these early voyagers were truly alone for that 60–90 km or so. (Spriggs 2009, 10–11)]
The next blind crossing happens twenty-three thousand years later, when bakers of the Lapita culture, rising out of a mixture of Papuan and Austronesian cultures and identified by the specially designed clay pots they carried, colonize 4,600 kilometers of the Pacific Ocean within eight to ten generations (Kirch 1997). Spriggs writes that during this period you might have met the same man or woman one year in Tonga, and the next on New Britain or in Vanuatu. Thus, three thousand years ago people from the New Guinea islands and out as far as Tonga and Samoa were more interconnected than at any time until the age of mass transportation began some two centuries ago. The Lapita culture is the cultural heritage of almost all Pacific Islanders today, and thus provides a powerful evidence base for shared values and connections (Spriggs 2009, 14).

So why should we think that any of these activities and ideas spanning tens of thousands of years are relevant today? Because they still are for Pacific Islanders, not as vestiges of primitive traditions but as an ontological aspect of contemporary life and cultural expression. Indeed, shared heritage and shared ancestors are recorded and archived in Pacific oral traditions, and many communities today can trace their ancestry with cultures across vast oceanic distances—between, for example, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji, the Cook Islands, and New Zealand, between Hawai‘i and Tahiti, and so on. And Islanders still invoke origin stories in their daily lives that link them not just to ancient traveling ancestors, but to the origins of the cosmos and the birth of land, sea, plants, and animals that constitute kin, what Roberts and colleagues call a "metaphysical gestalt" (Roberts et al. 2004; and see, for example, Jolly 2007 and Meyer 2001). Even more interesting to anthropologists is how all this goes on in one form or another even after the conversion to Christianity of the majority of Islander populations over the last hundred years. Rather than substitute one religious system for another, Pacific Islanders incorporated and indigenized Christianity, expanding their range of spiritual, political, and economic choices and tools.

Over 20 percent of the world’s languages are spoken in Oceania so the shared heritage is also marked by real linguistic and sociopolitical diversity. The region is thus shaped by cultural forces both unifying and divergent that continue to influence identity, action, and discourse. Politically, these include the formation of regional subgroupings, such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the newly established Polynesian Leaders Group in addition to the Pacific Islands Forum. But at the base of regionalism is a very real shared sense of kinship, what Fiji’s late president Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara called "the Pacific Way." Under this Pacific Way, there is generally a shared understanding of the importance and nature of dialogue in the process of decision making, of a shared sense of temporality, of the place of ancestors, relations to land and sea, and of the centrality of culture to people’s sense of identity and belonging. The Pacific Way has been critiqued from within and outside the region as elitist and ignorant of increasing class and gender issues on the ground, but the idea persists (Lawson 2010).

In the 1980s, the Eleventh Pacific Science Congress met in Dunedin, New Zealand, to address issues of multi-sited indigenous Pacific mobility and identity (Chapman 1985). Among other things, scholars discussed how human identification and activity across the region was marked by both the rooted and stable, as well as the traveling and dynamic. The apparent binary was not oppositional or paradoxical but simultaneously at work in shaping identity and fueling and sustaining social life. Pacific identities were maps connecting specific places and traversing vast oceanic spaces. With respect to current anti-essentialist sentiments amongst postmodern, postcolonial, and cultural studies scholars, the Pacific offers histories that recognize both autochthony and movement, roots and routes, emplacement and flow. Matt Matsuoka, in speaking recently about “the world ocean” at the Australian National University (ANU), characterized this mobile Pacific reality as “translocality” and as constituting “translocal assemblages” (Matsuoka 2012).

So the third lesson from Pacific studies for global studies is that while place matters, multiple places can be connected via people in a dynamic network of meaningful relations that extend across deep time and vast space. But despite all this movement, scientists, artists, and other scholars have traditionally approached the islands as insular cultural and ecological laboratories. The focus on travel and migration is a relatively recent scholarly move that emerges out of archaeology, linguistics, geography, sociology, postcolonial literature, and Pacific cultural studies (Diaz and Kauaum 2001). Nevertheless, those discourses of boundedness, smallness, peripherality, instability, and the helplessness of small island states and their peoples still persist (Fry 1997; 2004; Cole 1993; Wallis 2012).

The language of development “experts,” aid agencies, and good governance projects coming out of countries like Australia in particular often ahistori-
cally conflates powerlessness with peripherality. It is conveniently forgotten that half of World War II was fought across the lands of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), and the islands of Micronesia; that the United States and France needed the Marshall Islands and French Polynesia to test their nuclear weapons; that Australia and New Zealand desperately needed phosphate from Nauru and Banaba to develop their agricultural industries; and that the fortunes of many a British, Australian, Dutch, German, French, New Zealand, and American company were made on copra, cotton, sugarcane, sandalwood, bêche-de-mer, whales’ teeth, copper, gold, guano, and other Pacific island resources, including labor. Today, former colonial states still use the Pacific to extract key resources and as a buffer zone between geopolitical powers. The Australian government also uses Papua New Guinea and Nauru as detention and processing centers for refugees it does not want on its own shores. The region of West Papua is still under an often brutal, contemporary Indonesian colonial rule, a reality some Oceanic states choose to ignore. Pacific islands are central, not peripheral, to colonialism, globalization, development, and capitalist expansion (also see Lockwood 2004).

It was in response to all this that Epeli Hau’ofa wrote his now famous piece on critical and creative Pacific regionalism as resistance to imperialism, neo-colonialism, and globalization. Partially inspired by Caribbean poet Derek Walcott, by a revelation Hau’ofa had in Hawai’i encountering the majestic Mouna Kea on the big island of Hawai’i, and by the faces of his disenchanted USP students, he framed the Pacific to inspire and empower Islanders (Hau’ofa 1993). Like Walcott he affirmed the sea as “history,” reminding everyone that the ancestors traversed a tremendous expanse of water long before the Spanish arrived and named it “Pacific.” Hau’ofa’s vision was to recognize what he called the ancient and contemporary processes of “world enlargement,” carried out by thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders, “criss-crossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook’s apotheosis” (ibid., 6) and see Wilson and Connery 2007.

CULTURE AND INDIGENITY

There are many island regions, but the Pacific, I argue, is unique in a number of ways, not least because of its geographic expanse. The majority of its people are “indigenous,” but not always in the “Fourth World” sense where “indigenous” is assumed to mark minorities among a majority, settler context and within a bounded nation-state. In her quest to unpack indigeneity as a contingent, interactive, and historical product, Francesca Merlan discusses a “critical” definition of indigeneity as referring to first-order, small-scale connections between group and locality connoting belonging and originarity, and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification. She writes: “Indigeneity as it has expanded in its meaning to define an international category is taken to refer to peoples who have great moral claims on nation-states and on international society, often because of inhumane, unequal, and exclusionary treatment” (Merlan 2009, 304).

She then discusses Martinez Cobo’s definition for the United Nations, presenting indigenous communities, peoples, and nations as “those which have a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies ... consider themselves as distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories ... and are determined to preserve and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples” (ibid., 305). This definition is also reflected in the International Labour Organization’s 1989 description of indigenous peoples as tribal and distinct from other sections of society, descended from precolonial populations, and retaining some or all of their own institutions (ibid., 305).

Merlan also talks of another, “relational” definition of indigeneity characterized by relations between particular groups and the state, especially with respect to historical tensions between indigenous and settler groups and the power imbalances ensuing. Under this scheme indigeneity is defined against that which is considered not indigenous, an approach that characterizes, for example, Dyck’s term “Fourth World” (ibid., 305). Most of these definitions and understandings focus on the moral and ethical relations between minority indigenous populations and the state within a sea of settler and dominant populations. Merlan only discusses Aboriginal Australian, Hawaiian, and Maori examples because most of the rest of the Pacific would not fit those international definitions of indigeneity that presuppose a tension and set of ethical issues between indigenous peoples and their respective, usually liberal democratic, nation-states.

The problem here includes one of optics and framing with the nation-state as the major unit of analysis. While contemporary state boundaries have often been drawn around and straight through pre-existing linguistic
and cultural spaces, it is also the case that most Pacific states and territories have what would qualify in terms of precolonial continuity and attachment to place, as predominantly indigenous populations and governments. They may not always be minorities in their own home countries, but as a regional whole, the Pacific suffers from structural challenges and invisibility, similar to indigenous minorities. As a bloc, for example, the Pacific Islands could be framed as a “Fourth World” against the Pacific Rim countries of East and Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Americas, particularly North America.

A fourth lesson for global studies then, is that the Pacific allows us to explore how structures of imperialism and inequality might be experienced by entire regions with small formerly or currently colonized, indigenous, interconnected populations and governments. Furthermore, unlike many populous countries whose citizens have been displaced and disconnected from their historical lands, the Pacific allows us to imagine what kinds of creative survival strategies are developed by Island peoples with strong, extended kinship structures who also still have that deep connection to and knowledge of their environments. In countries such as New Zealand and Hawai‘i where there are majority settler populations, these strategies are particularly well articulated in scholarship, activism, education, and the arts.

Antony Hooper (2005) argues that it is culture that sets Pacific Islanders apart from most other populations. He says that what is construed as culture in the Pacific is constructed in ways that are distinct from the kinds of construction prevalent in, for example, larger Asian countries. Culture for him impinges on the “harder” structures of political and economic organisation much more directly and effectively. There is, for example, in every Pacific country, a large and vigorous traditional sector. It does not consist, as is the case in many other regions, of minorities or a few rural groups with little influence on national economic and political affairs. In most cases 80 to 90 percent of land resources are under customary tenure, and the traditional sector accounts for a significant percentage of national GDP.

Furthermore, Hooper writes that the systems of customary tenure are commonly entrenched in constitutional or other legal structures which attempt to insulate them, either absolutely or in large degree, from the operation of market forces and state coercion. While this is changing and the

market has figured out ways around customary tenure in countries such as PNG, Vanuatu, and Fiji, custom, or kastom in Melanesia, still controls a large proportion of the economic resources that are “basic for development in any of its conventional senses” (Hooper 2005, 3). In these circumstances development is not, argues Hooper, simply a matter of engineering a transition from subsistence to dynamic monetary economies:

The economic mode of Pacific traditional sectors is not “subsistence” if by that is meant “mere subsistence” — nor has it ever been. There is instead a wide variety of reciprocal exchanges and redistributions that integrate whole districts in networks of mutual obligation and concern going beyond “mere subsistence.” Such transactions are more than “mere economics.” They are, in the well-worn phrase, “embedded in the society,” carrying within them a large moral and ideological force. (Ibid., 3-4).

Hooper then discusses how culture also impinges on national politics. Most Pacific countries are democratic and politicians are elected by people whose livelihoods depend primarily on traditional sectors. Matters of custom and tradition thus carry considerable political weight. He writes, “Pacific countries have constitutions which assert national legitimacy in terms of their distinctive culture and traditions, and these are given at least as much attention as universal notions of democracy and individual rights. In these ways, culture in one form or another is right at the heart of national economic and political life” (Ibid., 3). Combining this with how significantly connected Islanders are via kinship, cultural, and other exchanges over hundreds of years (thousands in the western Pacific), this sense of “unity” lends itself to a particular mode of regionalism and expressions of decolonization and resistance based not primarily on shared experiences of class, as they might be in industrialized countries or former settler colonies, but on indigenous values and worldviews (see Barge 2007).

Of course there are specific exceptions to this generalized overview, and you can only take the argument of “Pacific exceptionalism” so far. Some Pacific experiences are not at all unique, and there are critical differences between Pacific societies. Furthermore, the layers of intersecting political, social, and economic interests can complicate and hinder systems of justice and governance. However, as a counter-framing exercise, and given the relative invisibility of this region in global studies, it is worth highlighting what is indeed distinctive and similar across Oceania.
One of the most powerful expressions of Pacific regionalism is embodied in the University of the South Pacific (USP), modeled on the University of the West Indies (UWI). It is a multinational university owned by the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The main campus in Suva, Fiji, educates the largest number of Pacific students in the region, and satellite centers in member countries provide extension services for an even larger number of students. USP’s mandate has always been to train students in key disciplines for filling the civil service ranks of its member states, such as business, accounting, management, communications, the natural sciences, development, sociology, English, literature, history, and politics. Disciplines like anthropology, cultural studies, or the arts have not been considered as pragmatic or as urgent as the technical training required to run developing states. While USP hosted an Institute of Pacific Studies for many years and literary expression, at least, thrived, Pacific studies was not converted into a teaching program until 2006. This is in stark contrast with Caribbean studies, which has been popular and central to the scholarship of UWI faculty.

I was born and raised in Fiji and grew up on the USP campus as both my mother and elder sister worked there for a number of years. Professor Epeli Hau‘ofa had been the head of the School of Social and Economic Development at USP and was initially accepting of a fatalistic, geopolitical approach to island nations. This transformed after he began to pay attention to the reactions of his students to his lectures on the dependency and smallness of island states. He wrote in his now famous essay, “Their faces crumbled visibly; they asked for solutions, I could offer none.” He began to ask himself: “What kind of teaching is it to stand in front of young people from your own region, people you claim as your own, who have come to university with high hopes for the future, and you tell them that our countries are hopeless? Is this not what neocolonialism is about? To make people believe that they have no choice but to depend” (1993, 7)?

Throughout his essay, Hau‘ofa reimagines the Pacific as not so small isolated islands, but as a sea of islands in a vast and ever-expanding Oceania. He cites indigenous cosmologies which include worlds far above, beyond, and below the surface of land and sea as evidence of a vast and ever-expanding indigenous worldview, boldly displayed in Pacific oral, visual, and performing arts. This worldview was ever expanding, he said, until Islanders arrived in universities to be told that their islands and cultures were small and dependent. He then declared that “[s]mallness is a state of mind” (1993, 7) and urged Islanders to move beyond the individuality of islands or states to a perspective in which Oceania was seen in terms of a totality of human, environmental, and historical relationships. He boldly (and controversially) imagined Pacific cultures at their most positive and impressive, where contemporary travels and migration were on a continuum with ancient mobility and exchange (Ibid.; and see Lee and Tupai 2009). If the world of Oceania today did not always include the heavens and the underworlds, it did now include cities in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, where large numbers of Polynesians, in particular, now reside. The essay became a work of such scholarly and popular discussion that USP published a series of nineteen responses that examined “Our Sea of Islands” from every conceivable angle, some of which strongly critiqued it as fanciful and impractical (Waddell, Naidu, and Hau‘ofa 1993).

In 1985 Hau‘ofa petitioned the vice chancellor of USP for a building that “creative people could call home” (personal communication 2004; K. M. Teaiwa 2001). This was viewed as a request for some kind of “Bohemian” and denied. When other ideas surfaced for a formal program in Pacific arts, Hau‘ofa resisted, believing that such a space would not be autonomous if linked to formal studies. Although a successful writer, he felt that writing was a personal and solitary kind of activity tied too much to the self or ego. Moreover, writing, at least on paper, was not a feature of Oceanic culture until the arrival of missionaries, and he wanted to support forms of expression that were “our own” (Ibid.). His aim was to create a space for collaboration and for the production of creative arts among a community of artists.

In 1997 Hau‘ofa established the Oceanic Centre for Arts and Culture (OCAC), which took a specifically grassroots, informal, anti-global, and pro-Pacific stance. In the South Pacific, as many Islander scholars joke, culture was not something one studied in a university but lived, danced, or sang on a daily basis, and so the OCAC offered no formal classes. Hau‘ofa had written Tales of the Tikongs (1981), a satire in which the institutions and forces of native government, the church, tradition, colonialism, aid, and development
were skillfully mocked. One of his central characters, aptly named Ole Pasiﬁkiwe (Old Paciﬁc Way), symbolized the vast array of creative strategies that Islanders had developed over centuries, now hastily discarded for money and shortcuts to Western-style progress. Hau’oﬁa considered the arts (from sculpture and architecture to tattooing, music, and dance) to represent the archives of Paciﬁc knowledge and philosophy, the pinnacle of their creativity, and he imagined the arts center as an open space for reconnecting with those roots (Hau’oﬁa 2008).

What began as four small rooms and a veranda, in 2013 comprises over ten offices, a metal workshop, an open-air painting and carving studio, a recording studio, a display stage, two galleries, a replica of a traditional Fijian bure (house), a reception area, and an open-air performance space. Permanent staff includes a director, two administrators, three lecturers, several teaching assistants, technical support, performing arts director, artistic director, choreographer, music coordinator, and visual arts coordinator. In addition, the community of artists has expanded to include a large number of painters, carvers, musicians, and the dancers of the Oceania Dance Theatre (ODT). In any given year, the OCAC runs public art and dance workshops; hosts several exhibitions, dance, and theater productions in Fiji and overseas; and hosts visiting artists and choreographers from across the region. For a fee, performances by the ODT have become a standard feature of university social events, and while this commercialization departs from Hau’oﬁa’s vision, it has professionalized the artists and dramatically raised their profile.

Dancers at the ODT are exposed to choreography from a wide variety of Paciﬁc genres, which they have blended under the direction of Samoan director Allan Alo from 1999 to 2011 and Hawaiian-Samoan choreographer Peter Rockford Espiritu most recently. The aim has always been to create a new, remixed, unifying, and contemporary “Oceanic” style drawing on ancient values and motifs, rather than to re-present traditional dance genres or reinforce ethnic and national cultures. When the dance program began in 1998, it relied on the abilities of existing performers in Suva, many of whom, like myself, had basic training in ballet and gymnastics and had danced in the tourism industry. I eventually became a founding member of the theater and collaborated with Alo on two productions: The Boiling Ocean I and The Boiling Ocean II. In the early 2000s, the ODT struggled to attract versatile dancers and had a rather eclectic company with varying performance skills. Today, however, young people with dance potential are trained in several Paciﬁc styles with a strong emphasis on ballet, Pilates, and modern dance technique, and the program has become highly disciplined. ODT performances are supported by all resident artists, including visual artists and musicians, all of whom contribute to the calendar of Paciﬁc-themed productions (K. M. Teaıwa 2011).

In Hau’oﬁa’s original vision, the Oceania Centre embodied a resistance to multiple pressures—institutional, ethnic, national, and international—and at the regional level it resisted the term “Paciﬁc.” He said: “When the powers that be use the term Paciﬁc they usually refer to the Paciﬁc Rim and islanders are excluded. Oceania, the word itself, means the sea... The notion of Oceania cannot be contained. Metaphorically, for creative purposes, it’s tremendous. For the mind it is a liberating concept, the idea of limitlessness

Sorapelu Tipo Fatiali and performers of the Oceania Dance Theatre (University of the South Pacific) and Pasifika Voices in Ta’aroa: Pacific Ballet of Creation, directed by Allan Alo, choreography by Katalina Fotofili. Photo by Jeremy Duxbury.
... we can at least dream into eternity” (personal communication 2004). His Oceania thus aspired to be global, a world almost 70 percent covered by ocean which has hitherto focused mainly on terrestrial needs and activities or simply used the ocean as resource. He maintained that this imagination and aspiration in actuality is a practical exercise: “creativity is what keeps us alive” (ibid.).

James Clifford described Hau'ofa's legacy as an “alter-globalization” concerned with reinventing the Pacific in the face of neocolonialism and globalization, rejecting the narrow confines of ethnic politics, and projecting a vision of “indigenous cosmopolitanism” (2009, 139; and also see Porte 2010). In 2011, a year after Hau'ofa's passing, Pacific Worlds, the first-ever undergraduate Pacific studies course, was established at USP; it is now a required course for every single one of the university's twenty thousand students, regardless of degree or discipline. It is taught by the staff of the renamed Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies.

CODA

In 2011 President Obama announced that the twenty-first century would be America's “Pacific Century” and for the first time there was an emphasis on the “Pacific” half of the “Asia-Pacific” region implicated in the title. Hillary Clinton's 2011 visit to the post-forum dialogue was viewed by journalists as specifically addressing China's rising interest in the region and indeed the rising interests of more than a few other nations. There were sixty observer countries at that year's post-forum talks, including Britain, Canada, China, Japan, and France.

The space between the United States and China has become the pivot around which geopolitical power will be expressed and cemented this millennium with the largest, albeit oceanic, region on the planet providing the potential not just for political and economic maneuvers but, with the vast improvement in extractive technology, for natural resources from oil to minerals to natural gas. While Pacific countries are terrestrially small, they have large oceanic exclusive economic zones (extending for two hundred nautical miles offshore) that are teeming with fish and other maritime resources. The rush to secure friendship and cooperation from Pacific nations, especially those independent nations with a UN vote, raises many eyebrows because of the sheer imbalance of demographic, economic, and political power between the small island states and almost every other interested party.

On the ground in the Cook Islands, however, Secretary Clinton’s presence was cause for much fanfare and excitement. In true Pacific fashion she was laden with colorful and sweet-smelling garlands and quickly incorporated affectionately into daily vocabulary as “Aunty Hillary.” Echoing the observations of countless travel writers who have visited the Pacific since the eighteenth century, the experience of Agence France-Presse reporter Shaun Tandou in Clinton’s entourage is worth sharing here in his own entertaining prose:

In other countries on assignments with Clinton, I've found myself in vast suites and regretted that I barely had the time to sleep-test their king-size beds. In the Cook Islands, I shared a room with another reporter for three nights in an inn usually frequented by budget travelers from New Zealand, with a menagerie of cats, dogs, and the occasional chicken showing up at the front door.
In a nod to local sensitivities in a country that—unlike the United States—tightly controls firearms, Clinton’s security guards eschewed their usual suits and exposed handguns in favor of loose-fitting aloha shirts . . . Not that there was an obvious security threat in Rarotonga, where the (only) main road rings the island’s coast, and there are two bus routes: “clockwise” and “anti-clockwise.” A travelers’ guide stated that the leading risk on the Cook Islands is falling coconuts, as can attest those who have had the misfortune to be beneath a tree when the Pacific winds picked up. Another friendly warning in the travel advice read, “Roosters on the island are on their own time zone.”

Hillary Clinton is clearly used to rock-star receptions. At her next stop in Jakarta, some of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations literally screamed as they snapped pictures of her. But the excitement in the Cook Islands was as omnipresent as the coconuts . . . Such light moments of “public diplomacy” in such a small island state may not be as consequential as Clinton’s 2006 visit with China’s top leadership, yet her policy prescriptions for staunching Syria’s bloodshed or, for that matter, the U.S. stance on climate change, which poses an existential threat to all low-lying island nations. But there’s surely some hard-to-measure positive impact for the United States and its reputation when one of the world’s most powerful individuals takes the time to mingle with folks in one of the world’s remotest corners. (Tandon 2013)

Nic Maclean, a long-term Pacific journalist and researcher, wrote rather differently of the gathering. He reminded everyone that the 2012 meeting was themed “Large Ocean Island States—the Pacific Challenge,” a very deliberate play on Epeli Hau‘ofa’s concept that had now moved from the realm of scholarly activism and art to policy, motivating a strategic political and economic reframing of the region by Pacific leaders (Maclean 2012). The following year, the largest gathering of Pacific Islanders at the University of Hawai‘i’s Manoa campus occurred to mark Nuclear Survivors Day, promote political and cultural solidarity, and work toward a just and peaceful Oceania (Verán 2013).

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of time and regions of fire deeper still. Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth . . . We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.

—Epeli Hau‘ofa, 1993
5 — GENEALOGIES

Connecting Spaces in Historical Studies of the Global

PRAKASH KUMAR

THE 1980S AND 1990S WERE A PERIOD OF TRANSITION IN THE WORLD of seeds. The decades were marked by the arrival of agricultural biotechnology which made it possible to harvest plants with desirable physical and physiological characteristics by changing their genetic structure at the cellular level. These technologies appeared in the Euro-American arena and were quickly appropriated by a handful of private companies in the West. The backers of agricultural biotechnology soon began trying to disseminate their new biotech crops globally. This endeavor had the potential to alter global farming in a fundamental way, including radically transforming the nature of agriculture in many parts of the "developing" world. The latter had been dominated by the "Green Revolution" since the middle decades of the twentieth century. The Green Revolution, focused as it was on the cultivation of high-yielding "hybrid" varieties of seeds, was bound to crumble if the expansion of biotech seeds gained momentum.

The same transitional decades in India were marked by wide-ranging social movements opposing the technological changes unfolding in Indian agricul-