The Other One-Third of the Globe

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The Pacific ocean has been called the largest single feature on the globe because it occupies nearly one-third of the earth's surface, more than all the land around the world that rises above the level of the sea. How does one approach history in this immense body of water? The most common way has been unabashedly Eurocentric. Geographer Oscar Spate, for example, opens his three-volume history of the Pacific by declaring that "strictly speaking, there was no such thing as 'the Pacific' until in 1520–21 Fernão de Magalhãis, better known as Magellan, traversed the huge expanse of waters which then received its name." The Pacific is a European artifact, says Spate. In its full extent it was unknown to humanity, including its most widely traveled inhabitants, the Polynesians, until seafarers from another ocean began to sail across this mighty sea and then to chart it. Spate's own aim, as he says in his preface, was to "explicate the process by which the greatest blank on the world map became a nexus of global commercial and strategic relations."[1]

[1] Oscar H. K. Spate, *The Spanish Lake* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. ix, 1. Spate's other two volumes, also published by the University of Minnesota Press, are *Monopolists and Freebooters* (1983) and *Paradise Found and Lost* (1988). In this last volume, Spate does consider the Pacific island populations, but his focus is on their transformations following from their enmeshment in the emerging global commercial and strategic web. Similarly, although Walter McDougall, in his recent *Let the Sea Make a Noise: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), does feature Hawai'i and Ka'ahumanu, its dowager queen of the early nineteenth century, he primarily treats the powers and personalities of the nations along the rim of the northern Pacific.

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In telling that story. Spate covers only three out of the five hundred or so centuries of human experience in the Pacific, and he features a parade of European explorers, adventurers, settlers, and colonial administrators. In contrast, my approach to history in the Pacific is unabashedly anthropological, in the sense that I am primarily interested in how the first people to enter the Pacific managed to explore so much of the ocean and to colonize all the habitable lands they found there, how the societies they founded differentiated and evolved over the millennia, and how the descendants of those people are faring in today's global society. This is my way of sketching the most interesting story of the Pacific: that of its pioneering inhabitants and their descendants. This is one ocean people have really lived in, not simply sailed across.[2]

Colonizing an Oceanic World

The trend of the original human expansion into the Pacific was eastward from Asia, though the process was radically discontinuous. New Guinea was settled early, starting some 50,000 or more years ago, but the colonization of islands farther out into the ocean did not begin until some 3,500 years ago.

The usual geographic division of the Pacific island world into Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia ignores this crucial discontinuity and its linguistic, cultural, and biological consequences.3 A better way to divide the Pacific, one that makes sense of both migrational sequence and sequelae, is to follow archaeologist Roger Green's distinction between Near Oceania and Remote Oceania (Fig. 1).4 Near Oceania consists of New Guinea and adjacent islands, which together with the islands of Indonesia form a

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2 My perspective is infor med by some thirty years' residence on various Pacific islands, as well as by experimental canoe voyages in Polynesian waters and by field projects on how Tahitians, Papua New Guineans, and other islanders have been coping with their inclusion in the world-system. Still, my view remains that of an outsider.

3 For better or worse, we have been stuck with this tripartite division of the Pacific islands ever since the French explorer J. S. C. Dumont d'Urville so divided the region in an address to the Geographical Society of Paris: *Voyage de la Corvette L'Astrolabe . . . pendant les années 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829,* 5 vols. (Paris: J. Tastu, 1830), 2:614–16.

4 Roger Green, "Peopling of the Pacific: A Series of Adaptive Steps, or Punctuated Evolution," presented at Section H, 57th Annual Meeting of Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, 24 August 1987.

FIGURE 1. Oceania, showing the conventional geographical division into Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, and the more prehistorically significant division into Near Oceania and Remote Oceania.

chain of intervisible, or nearly intervisible, land masses separated by only short ocean gaps. Remote Oceania consists of a large number of archipelagos and islands beyond Near Oceania. This is where the open Pacific begins: distances between the islands and archipelagos of Remote Oceania can reach hundreds of miles, and in a few cases thousands of miles.

Near Oceania was made readily accessible to people from Asia during the last glaciation when so much water was taken up by the ice sheets that at times sea levels were 100 or more meters below where they stand today. This joined the main islands of Indonesia to the Asian mainland to make a long peninsular extension of Asia that geologists call Sunda. The drop in sea level also connected New Guinea, Australia, and Tasmania, plus their continental shelves, to form a greater continent that geologists call Sahul, and it narrowed the sea distances between Sunda and Sahul (Fig. 2). To take advantage of this opportunity to settle new lands glimpsed to the east, migrants needed only some rudimen-

FIGURE 2. Sunda and Sahul at the height of the last glaciation, when the sea level was more than 100 meters below that of today.

tary form of watercraft—perhaps rafts of bamboo or wood, or dugout canoes. With the right combination of wind and current, plus perhaps some paddling, adventurous groups made it across the glacially narrowed gaps between Sunda and its offshore islands and Sahul. Nonetheless, however simple the technology, reaching Sahul was a major step in humankind's spread over the globe. A clustering of sites in Australia that have been radiocarbon-dated in the range of 30,000-plus years B.P., along with other sites from New Guinea and Australia dated by other means at between 40,000 and 60,000 years B.P., indicates that Sahul was settled well back in the Pleistocene. It thus represented the first step

in human expansion beyond the linked African and Eurasian continents that had nurtured the species.[5]

This early movement did not extend far into the Pacific. The descendants of these pioneers went on to settle the islands immediately offshore from Sahul as far east as the Solomons, but they apparently never crossed from there to Remote Oceania. Tens of thousands of years passed before this gap was bridged and the settlement of the truly oceanic islands of the Pacific was begun. The seafarers who colonized Remote Oceania are commonly called Austronesians, a label originally coined to stand for all the related languages that spread across the Pacific and Indian Oceans from their point of origin, thought to lie in southern China. From what is now Fujian province, they are thought to have spread to Taiwan (where the aboriginal inhabitants still speak Austronesian languages) between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E., and then south into the Philippines and eastern Indonesia. While some moved west to occupy the rest of Indonesia and the adjacent stretches of the coast of mainland Southeast Asia, others sailed east along the north coast of New Guinea, where at around 1500 B.C.E. they show up in the archaeological record of the Bismarck Archipelago. Within a few centuries these Austronesian voyagers moved east into Remote Oceania, island hopping the length of Melanesia to the archipelagos of Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. In time, ancestral Polynesian culture developed in this mid-Pacific location from its Austronesian roots, and from there recognizably Polynesian seafarers continued eastward to the Cooks, Societies, and Marquesas at the center of East Polynesia. Some of their descendants then dispersed to the islands beyond—sailing over thousands of miles of blue water to reach the islands that form the points of the Polynesian triangle: Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa, or if you prefer, the Sandwich Islands, Easter Island, and New Zealand (Fig. 3).[6]

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[5] Joseph B. Birdsell, "The Recalibration of a Paradigm for the First Peopling of Greater Australia," in *Sunda and Sahul,* ed. J. Alien, J. Golson, and Rhys Jones (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 113–67. Some suggest that evidence of widespread fires in pollen cores may indicate a human presence in Australia as early as 140,000 years ago. John Chappell, "Late Pleistocene Coasts and Human Migrations in the Austral Region," in *A Community of Culture: The People and Prehistory of the Pacific,* ed. Matthew Spriggs et al. (Canberra: Department of Prehistory, Australian National University, 1993), pp. 43–48.

[6] Patrick V. Kirch and Terry L. Hunt, eds. *Archaeology of the Lapita Cultural Complex: A Critical Review,* Research Report 5 (Seattle: Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, 1988); Jesse Jennings, ed. *The Prehistory of Polynesia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

FIGURE 3. Main Austronesian migrations into the Pacific: (1) from the Bismarcks to the mid-Pacific archipelagos of Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa; (2) the "homeland" of the Polynesians, now known as West Polynesia; (3) from West Polynesia to central East Polynesia; (4) from central East Polynesia to Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa; (5) from the Philippines to the western edge of Micronesia; (6) from the main migration sequence north to Micronesia and then west across the region.

The ocean-going canoe was the vehicle that Austronesian speakers employed to expand across the South Pacific and then to find and settle every habitable island in Polynesia, a vast triangular region equivalent in size to much of Europe and Asia combined. Austronesian canoe voyagers also colonized that region of Remote Oceania east of the Philippines and north of New Guinea, known as Micronesia because of the small size of the islands there. Some migrants evidently crossed to western Micronesia

directly from the Philippines; other branched off the main Austronesian migrational trail and sailed north across the Line to the atolls of eastern Micronesia. Still other Austronesian voyagers from Indonesia sailed clear across the Indian Ocean, or around its northern periphery, to become the first people to colonize the great island of Madagascar, where the national language, Malagasy, is recognizably Austronesian. This dispersion of Austronesian speakers reached from a south China–Southeast Asian heartland west almost to Africa and east to within a few thousand miles of the coast of the Americas, a span of 225 degrees of longitude. It made the Austronesian family of languages the most widespread on the globe—until Western European seafarers began their own expansion, thereby spreading Indo-European languages beyond Eurasia.

Austronesian seafarers may have been initially attracted to New Guinea and adjacent islands by opportunities to trade with the local inhabitants. Upon sailing east past the Solomon Islands, they made a discovery that must have amazed and delighted them: all the islands to the east were uninhabited. This circumstance invited successive generations to keep heading east, and then north and south, until they finally ran out of islands. This Austronesian expansion to previously uninhabited oceanic islands involved crucial adaptations in four areas: nautics, subsistence, social structure, and world view.

To build a successful ocean-going sailing craft, some means must be found to counteract the overturning force of the wind upon the sails. Europeans widened the beam of their vessels and added ballast to gain the necessary stability. Austronesians in effect greatly expanded the beam of their slim canoe hulls by extending a float to one or both sides to make an outrigger canoe, or by joining two hulls to make a double canoe. Because of the double canoe's greater stability and capacity, the Austronesians are believed to have favored it for moving across the South Pacific and then expanding to the many islands of Polynesia. Of course, these migrants also had to become expert sailors and navigators. Moving eastward across the tropical South Pacific meant sailing against the direction from which the trade winds blow. Rather than attempting to sail into the trades, these seafarers apparently learned to wait for periodic westerly wind shifts and then to use these favorable winds to probe to the east. To conduct their voyages of exploration and colonization, and to maintain communication between scattered outposts, they had to be able to orient

themselves precisely and find their way from island to island. They did so by means of naked-eye observations of the stars, sun, ocean swells, birds, and other natural phenomena, and by ingenious methods of dead reckoning, and by observing telltale cloud formations, distinctive variations in the swell pattern, or the daytime ranging of land-nesting birds to detect land before it could be seen directly.[7]

These seafarers did not live solely off the wild food resources of the sea and the islands they found. Fishermen and food gatherers could not have flourished in any great numbers in Remote Oceania. To be sure, the oceanic islands and their offshore waters offered a wealth of fish and bird life upon which bands of colonists could initially feast, but they furnished little in the way of wild vegetable foods to sustain large settled populations. These sailors therefore had to be expert farmers as well. They also had to develop means for carrying on their canoes a wide range of plants, such as the breadfruit, taro, yam (*Dioscorea*), and banana, as well as the domesticated pig, dog, and chicken, in order to provide the subsistence base needed for successful colonization.[8]

Such features of Austronesian social structure as the principle that the senior first-born male of the lineage descended most directly from the founding ancestor was the chief also seem to have been adaptive for oceanic expansion. Small groups of hierarchically organized kinsmen possessed ready-made cohesion and leadership that must have been crucial for the success of hazardous missions of exploration and colonization. Furthermore, primogeniture encouraged migration by the younger sons of a chief who had no hope of succession to leadership at home. Instead of rebellion or fratricide, they had a more constructive outlet for their ambitions. They could create a new chiefdom of their own by recruiting followers, building a voyaging canoe, and then setting sail into unknown seas to find and settle a new island.[9]

Above all, the way these seafarers viewed their world undoubt-

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7 Ben Finney, Voyage of Rediscovery (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

8 Douglas E. Yen, "Agriculture and the Colonization of the Pacific Islands," in *Pacific Production Systems: Approaches to Economic Prehistory,* ed. D. E. Yen and J. M. J. Mummery (Canberra: Department of Prehistory, Australian National University, 1990), pp. 258–77.

9 Ben Finney, "Voyagers into Ocean Space," in *Interstellar Migration and the Human Experience,* ed. Ben Finney and Eric Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 164–79.

edly encouraged them to seek new lands far out into the ocean. Instead of envisioning the world as a series of continents inconveniently separated by great stretches of water (as I was more or less taught in school), experience had shown these seafarers that the world was covered with water through which bits of solid land poked. Sail in any direction and you will find land. Sail to the east, out into the open ocean where only you have the technology and skills to go, and you will find uninhabited lands. This was their unbeatable formula for oceanic expansion—until they reached the easternmost oceanic islands of Hawai'i, the Marquesas, and Rapa Nui. Beyond them was only empty ocean until the already occupied Americas.

Diversity and Adaptation

Part of human diversity in the Pacific must stem from this differential settlement of Near and Remote Oceania. For example, consider the contrast between the short, stocky highlanders of New Guinea who speak languages unrelated to Austronesian and live in societies led by upwardly mobile "big men," and the tall, lighter skinned Polynesians who speak Austronesian languages and live in societies ruled by hereditary chiefs. This contrast seems more likely to be a function of these two very different migrations into the Pacific than the result of local differentiation from a common source. But between these extremes the picture is decidedly mixed. Austronesian speakers are found here and there along the coast of New Guinea and on some of the other islands of Near Oceania, and on all the Melanesian islands of Remote Oceania. Some of these Austronesian speakers are as dark as some of their non–Austronesian-speaking neighbors, and social organizations are highly variable. These circumstances must reflect a complex history of mixing between "old Melanesians" and more recent migrant populations.

Well before Austronesian seafarers entered the Pacific, the descendants of the first settlers of Sahul had already undergone radical transformations. Some of the diversity of the aborigines of New Guinea, Australia, and Tasmania may have reflected separate migrations to Sahul from various Southeast Asian sources. Still, many of the linguistic, cultural, and physical differences among the descendants of the first Sahulians must have come from their wide dispersion over such a vast and varied continent, and the later separation of Tasmania and New Guinea from Aus-

tralia as sea levels rose in the Holocene. Dispersion to a wide range of environments, followed by long-term separation, would have allowed ample opportunity for the founder effect, random drift, and evolutionary adaptation to work on biological and cultural forms. Consider the differences among the scattered hunters and gatherers adapted to the temperate forests of Tasmania, the bands of Aborigines attuned to a wandering life in the dry interior of Australia, and the dense, sedentary populations of neolithic farmers in the mountainous valleys of the New Guinea interior.

Because of the relatively recent occupation of Polynesia by a single migratory movement and the region's comparative isolation until the coming of Europeans, the individual island and archipelago societies there are much more homogeneous in language and culture than those of Micronesia and, above all, Melanesia. Nonetheless, the Polynesians' adaptation to a wide variety of island types—coral atolls barely above sea level, lush volcanic islands, and a few comparatively huge continental chunks—provides a fascinating panorama of variations from a common ancestral theme.

Some islands of Polynesia were apparently too small, dry, or barren to sustain permanent settlement. For example, archaeological remains indicate that some dry equatorial atolls, as well as a few minuscule high islands scattered throughout the region, once hosted small groups of Polynesians who either died out on these so-called "mystery islands" or set sail in search of more fruitful lands. The better watered coral atolls of the northern Cook Islands and the Tuamotu archipelago sustained permanent settlements, although the limited size and agricultural potential of most meant that the population of individual islands typically numbered only a few hundred. High, volcanic islands with well-watered and fertile soil on which the full range of Polynesian crops could be grown sustained populations numbering anywhere from a few thousand on the smaller islands to many tens of thousands on the larger islands.

The impact of these neolithic farmer-fishermen on the hitherto uninhabited islands of the tropical Pacific was considerable. On island after island the extinction of numerous bird species, particularly flightless ones, coincides with the arrival of Polynesian colonists. The clearing of forests for agriculture and the introduction of the rat, with its predilection for feasting upon the eggs of ground-nesting species, may in some cases have been more harm-

ful than direct human predation. Agricultural clearing, particularly for slash-and-burn farming, deforested the slopes of the high islands and also rearranged the landforms. Soil washed down from slopes stripped of forest cover filled in embayments and extended the narrow coastal plains. Often, however, this was to the advantage of the settlers, who thereby gained more flat land for intensive agriculture, including the development of irrigated taro cultivation.[10]

Temperate Aotearoa provided a unique environmental challenge for Polynesian colonists, whose descendants are now known as the Māori. There was no lack of land or rain; the well-watered, heavily forested islands must have seemed unbelievably huge to people used to the comparatively tiny islands of the tropical Pacific. The problem was that Aotearoa was too cold for the tropical crops of the Polynesians. At the northern end of the northernmost island of Aotearoa, taro and to some extent bananas could be grown, but these plants shriveled as the colonists probed southward. To the rescue came the sweet potato, a South American tuber that had somehow spread to Polynesia. According to Māori tradition, it was introduced to Aotearoa sometime after original settlement. This new tuber proved to be much more resistant to the cold than the crops the colonists had been trying to grow, allowing them to push their settlements farther south.[11]

Once the growing island populations began to noticeably affect the environment and test the limits of each island's resources, did the people begin to practice measures designed to protect their environment and limit their own numbers? Since the pre-European systems were shattered long before such questions were posed, it is perhaps not surprising that they are difficult to answer. Certainly, there is evidence of a wealth of seasonal and ad hoc prohibitions placed upon exploiting particular species. And there were some ingenious practices, such as the custom of the united population of the twin atolls of Manihiki and Rakahanga in

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[10] Atholl Anderson, *Prodigious Birds: Moas and Moa Hunting in Prehistoric New Zealand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David W. Steadman, "Extinction of Birds in East Polynesia: A Review of the Record, and Comparisons with Other Pacific Islands Groups," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 16(1989): 177–205; Patrick Kirch, "The Impact of Prehistoric Polynesians on the Hawaiian Ecosystem," *Pacific Science* 36 (1982): 1–14.

[11] Janet Davidson, *The Prehistory of New Zealan*d (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1984); Douglas E. Yen, *The Sweet Potato and Oceania,* Bulletin 236 (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1974).

the Northern Cooks to live alternately on one and then the other island, always keeping one in fallow so that fish stocks and vegetation could recover. Similarly, there is fragmentary evidence of various methods of population control. These ranged from severely regulating births by abortion, infanticide, and various marital arrangements to actually driving weaker clans into the sea, or at least pressuring them to take to their canoes and leave the island to the rest of the people. Whether these measures reflected a conscious conservation ethic, or whether they were calculated for individual family, clan, or tribal survival, the fact remains that on island after island the Polynesians were able to build thriving, self-sufficient societies.[12]

One spectacular case stands out, however, where any measures of conservation or population control failed utterly. Rapa Nui is the loneliest outpost of Polynesia, lying some 1,500 miles from the nearest permanently inhabited islands in the Tuamotus and some 2,300 miles from the Chilean coast. Those Polynesians who first colonized Rapa Nui around 1,500 years ago apparently found it thickly covered by tall palm trees. In clearing land for farming and in cutting trees to build houses and canoes, as well as rollers and scaffolding to move and erect their giant stone statues, the people of Rapa Nui progressively desiccated their island so that crops could be grown only in small areas sheltered from the omnipresent wind. The famine-stricken people fought one another, overthrew the great statues and the socioreligious order they represented, and dropped in number from an estimated 8,000–10,000 to 2,000–3,000. Ironically, in "crashing" their island, the people of Rapa Nui also eliminated any possibility of escape, for there was not enough wood left to build voyaging canoes.[13]

One theme that has fascinated students of Polynesia is how societies founded by small bands of seafarers developed into large and highly stratified chiefdoms with complex cultures. Anthropologists see, or think they see, on atolls and small islands societies that essentially conserve, or at least strongly reflect, the

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[12] Peter H. Buck, *The Ethnology of Manihiki-Rakahanga,* Bulletin 99 (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1932); Raymond Firth, *We the Tikopia* (London: George Alien and Unwin, 1936), pp. 414–15; James T. Tanner, "Population Limitation Today and in Ancient Polynesia," *Bioscience* 25 (1975): 513–16.

[13] Patrick C. McCoy, *Easter Island Settlement Patterns in the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric Periods,* Bulletin 5 (New York: Easter Island Committee, International Fund for Monuments, Inc., 1976); Paul Bahn and John Flenley, *Easter Island, Earth Island* (London'. Thames and Hudson, 1992).

ancestral social organization carried into Polynesia by the first explorers. On these small islands, where the populations typically numbered only in the hundreds, the ruling chiefs were not greatly separated from the common people. They were regarded as senior kinsmen, stewards of the land and the bounty of the sea, whose duty was to look after the people and intercede with the gods and nature on their behalf. This ancestral pattern became transformed—some might say warped—on the larger islands and in some archipelagos, where populations expanded into the tens of thousands and in some cases hundreds of thousands.[14]

An extreme example was ancient Hawaiian society, one of the largest and most stratified in all Polynesia. Population estimates for the entire archipelago range from a quarter-million to upwards of a million. An endogamous chiefly class ruled over the mass of common people who were generally without direct kinship links to their rulers. Within the chiefly class, politically astute and militarily skilled men who were not necessarily of the highest genealogical rank vied for leadership, organizing chiefdoms that controlled a district of an island, an entire island, or in some cases several islands. The aggrandizing bent of these ambitious chiefs, their control of resources including intensive irrigation systems, and their retinues of administrators, priests, soldiers, and servants of various kinds might seem utterly alien to the modest chiefdoms of the smaller islands of Polynesia. Yet a case can be made that the class stratification and complexity of Hawaiian society represent a logical, if exaggerated, example of how a social system adapted for oceanic exploration and colonization can be transformed when small colonizing groups grow into great populations on large and fertile archipelagos.

Intruders from Another Ocean

The Pacific islanders were not totally isolated from the rest of the world before their encounter with Europeans. The introduction of the sweet potato to eastern Polynesia indicates a maritime connection with South America, although at present we do not know whether the tuber was carried to Polynesia by South American

[14] Irving Goldman, *Ancient Polynesian Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Marshall Sahlins, *Social Stratification in Polynesia* (Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1958); Patrick Kirch, *The Evolution of Polynesian Chiefdoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

raft voyagers, or whether some intrepid Polynesian seafarers; sailed all the way to South America and then returned to their islands carrying it with them. Disabled Japanese fishing vessels may have occasionally drifted into Polynesian waters in earlier times, as we know they did in more recent centuries, and wayward Chinese junks may also have made landfalls on some oceanic islands. There is some archaeological evidence of continuing contact between Belau (Palau) on the western edge of Micronesia and the Philippines, and there was no natural border between New Guinea and the islands of eastern Indonesia that prevented travel and trade. Nonetheless, the island societies of Remote Oceania remained neolithic outposts that were largely isolated from the outside world until seafarers from another ocean began to intrude into the Pacific.

Magellan's voyage across the Pacific marked the beginning of the end of this isolation, although the full opening of Oceania to the outside world took several centuries. The Europeans' limited capability for long-range voyaging and even more limited ambitions for exploring for its own sake prolonged the process. Magellan and his crew were unprepared for the immensity of the Pacific.They had expected to cross it in a matter of weeks. Instead it took them an agonizing three months and twenty days to sail across a sea that seemed to a stunned chronicler to be "so vast that human mind can scarcely grasp it."[15] Magellan, as well as most of the other European navigators who followed over the next two centuries, did not want to explore the Pacific, much less to settle it as the Austronesians had done. Like the proverbial chicken, the Europeans simply wanted to get to the other side, typically to reach rich Asian ports. The few expeditions that did set out to find fabled islands or the hypothesized Southern Continent of cosmographers did not develop into sustained exploration programs. Exploration of so vast a region strained European seafaring technology and abilities. Further, the Spanish and Dutch—the main sea powers active in the Pacific at that time—had more than enough on their hands with their American and Asian possessions. Officials were understandably hesitant to fund speculative exploratory ventures into the South Seas.[16]

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[15] Maximilian Transylvanus, in a letter to the cardinal-archbishop of Salzburg written in 1522, cited by John Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1974), p. 109n.

[16] John Beaglehole, *The Exploration of the Pacific* (London: A. and C. Black, 1934).

To be sure, European navigators did bump into Pacific islands here and there on their passages across the ocean. Only Guam, however, received much sustained attention. Magellan's landfall proved to be an ideal place to stop on the Manila galleon route, and the Chamorro people there became the first Pacific islanders to suffer systematically from colonial occupation. More typical of those first centuries was the situation in Polynesia. European ships, including the galleons plying between Mexico and Manila, managed to sail clean through Polynesian waters for two and a half centuries without anyone noticing that they were passing through an island realm populated by peoples of a common cultural heritage. What landfalls were made here and there in Polynesia did not result in the linguistic and cultural inquiries that would have led to recognition of the cultural unity of the widely dispersed Polynesians. Nor did they lead to any sustained relations between the Polynesians and the outside world.

All this changed in the late eighteenth century when the rival sea powers of Britain and France used vastly improved ships, navigation methods, and provisioning to send into the Pacific expedition after expedition charged with conducting scientific research as well as gaining geopolitical advantage. Cook's three voyages into the Pacific stand as monuments to this new approach. Cook demolished the myth of the Southern Continent and the possibility of easy access to Asia via a northwest passage. Moreover, he charted the location of one oceanic island after another, laying the groundwork for the first accurate map of the Pacific. Cook was the first to realize the cultural unity and extent of Polynesia, in the sense that he recognized that the islands within the triangle formed by Hawai'i, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa were all inhabited by people closely similar in appearance, language, and culture who formed what he called the "most extensive Nation spread over the face of the earth."[17]

Not surprisingly, many islanders do not agree that such enlightened "discoveries" were necessarily good. A Christmas card I received a few years ago from the Hawaiian Studies Department at the University of Hawai'i depicts the faculty and students in protest. One of the placards they carried reads "Remember Captain Cook," meant in the sense of "Remember Pearl Harbor."

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[17] Ben Finney, "Captain James Cook and the European Discovery of Polynesia," in *Maps and Metaphors,* ed. Robin Frazer and Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), pp. 19–34.

They have a point. In addition to introducing previously unknown and devastating diseases. Cook and company made Hawai'i and so many other islands accessible to the parade of sea captains, whalers, missionaries, and colonists who followed, by so accurately fixing their locations on the map.

The succession of traders, whalers, plantation owners, mining companies, and tourism developers attracted to the region, and the activities they undertook or stimulated, served to pull the Pacific islanders into the world economy in a peripheral, dependent status. World-systems theory and its cousin dependency theory provide ways for analyzing how this took place. Yet it is also obvious that the strategic ambitions of the various core countries and their Pacific surrogates of Australia and New Zealand were more often crucial in island takeovers and the events that followed. For example, consider France's early grab for the Marquesas and Tahiti as points in a French global empire; Germany's tardy rush for Pacific colonies; the late nineteenth-century extension of U.S. "manifest destiny" to Hawai'i, Samoa, and Guam; Australia's covering of its northern flank by controlling the eastern half of the great island of New Guinea; the Pacific-wide clash of American and Japanese empires in World War II; and the subsequent use by the United States, Britain, and France of their various Pacific dependencies as "nuclear playgrounds" to test their deadly weapons.[18] Whether one wants to emphasize economic or political imperialism, the inevitable result of the voyages of Magellan, Quiros, Bougainville, Cook, Krusenstern, Wilkes, and other explorers was to bring the Pacific islands and their inhabitants into the larger world system, for better or for worse.

The New Pacific

What has happened to the Pacific islanders as a result of their progressive entanglement with global society? The picture is mixed according to region, colonial history, resource distribution, and other factors. For lack of space I can only lightly sample, starting with Polynesia.

To begin with, the Polynesian populations were hard hit by

[18] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987).

imported diseases. For example, in the century that followed Cook's opening of Hawai'i to the outside world, the number of Hawaiians declined to less than 50,000, a horrendous drop whether the pre-Cook population was 250,000 or closer to 1 million, as current revisionists advocate. Even harder hit were the Polynesians living on lonely Rapa Nui at the time of European contact. By 1877, 150 years after Roggeveen first sighted the island on an Easter Sunday, only around 100 members of the original population remained. After a slow decline, the population had plunged precipitously starting in 1862 and 1863 when slave raiders carried off more than 1,000 people to Peru. Most quickly sickened and died there, and the handful who were returned after an international outcry brought back smallpox, measles, and various respiratory diseases that almost succeeded in finishing off those who had escaped the slave raiders.[19]

During the nineteenth century, France, Britain, the United States, Germany, British New Zealand, and Chile took over the various Polynesian archipelagos, either through outright annexation or by imposing protectorates of various sorts. White settlers were most numerous in Hawai'i and Aotearoa, and the Hawaiians and Māori ended up losing most of their lands. They became minorities on their own islands, forced to compete with the more numerous descendants of later migrants.

Other Polynesians kept control of most of their lands and have recently organized independent or quasi-independent nation-states. Because of the lack of local economic opportunities, however, many of them have left their islands. Over one-third of the 300,000-plus Samoans and more than half of the citizens of the smaller islands and archipelagos of Tokelau, Niue, and the Cook Islands live overseas in New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and even in Europe. According to some analysts, this out-migration has radically "underdeveloped" these islands, turning them into consumer dependencies disproportionally populated by older people and young children supported largely by remittances sent by the economically active islanders living overseas.[20]

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[19] David E. Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai'i, 1989); Grant McCall, *Rapa Nui: Tradition and Survival on Easter Island* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), pp. 47–64.

[20] Paul Shankman, *Migration and Economic Development: The Case of Western Samoa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976).

Until recently, the migrant Polynesians may have envied their cousins in Tahiti and the other islands of French Polynesia, an overseas territory of France, because they did not have to leave to find well-paying jobs. But their arguably good economic fortune depended upon a dictated Faustian bargain to let France use their islands for nuclear testing. Along with the testing came radioactive pollution, real or imagined; a heavy military presence; inflation; rural-urban flight; and a heavy import-dependency, extending even to basic foodstuffs. Now, with the post-Cold War end of testing, the annual "atomic rent" of around US$1 billion that France was pouring into the islands is drying up, leaving French Polynesia bankrupt. Some local politicians have demanded that France resume testing or keep subsidizing local standards of living, which until recently rivaled those of the metropole. Others say that this may be the time for a clean break from France.[21]

World War II had a greater impact on Micronesia than on any other part of the Pacific, and the strategic concerns of the victorious United States have continued to dominate all but the tiny nations of Nauru and Kiribati at the extreme southeast corner of the region. On the eve of the war Japan controlled much of the region. As soon as hostilities began Japan took over the few islands there that it did not already rule. Three years later, the victorious United States elected to hold on to the former Japanese possessions of the Marshalls, Carolines, and Northern Marianas (which in World War I Japan had taken from Germany which had bought them from Spain). This arrangement was sanctified by the United Nations as a "strategic trust."

Implementing this strategic trust has involved, among other things, using Bikini and Eniwitok atolls in the Northern Marshalls to test nuclear weapons early in the Cold War; a dislocating extension of U.S. economic and social programs starting in the Kennedy administration; and a marked reluctance to allow any political evolution that would result in full independence of the whole or any of its parts. The people of the Northern Marianas eventually voted to be a U.S. Commonwealth like Puerto Rico, and the Marianas have since become a tourist center for the nearby Japanese. The people of the Marshalls and Carolines have become quasi-independent, giving the United States strategic privileges in

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[21] Bernard Poirine, *Tahiti: Stratégic pour l'après nucléaire* (Arue, Tahiti, French Polynesia: Bernard Poirine, 1992); Ben Finney, "Nuclear Hostages," in *From Sea to Space* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University, 1992), pp. 66–97.

return for a handsome settlement. However, the settlement is already beginning to run out, leaving them import-dependent and without an economic base.[22]

In Melanesia, the highlands of the great island of New Guinea offer an intriguing glimpse of what might have happened if the Pacific peoples had been able to enjoy some of the fruits of the outside world without its devastating diseases, rapacious traders, and intrusive colonial administrators. The New Guinea highlands remained truly a blank upon the world map until the 1930s. At that time gold prospectors, missionaries, and government patrol officers found dense populations of stone-age farmers living in fertile valleys and foothills along the island's mountainous spine. Some evidence suggests, however, that these seemingly untouched people may not have been totally isolated, and that the population of more than 1 million was probably considerably larger than it would have been if Europeans had stayed in the Atlantic.

Hunters and gatherers first penetrated the New Guinea highlands tens of thousands of years ago. Indirect evidence of agriculture there—probably the cultivation of irrigated taro—may go back as far as 9,000–10,000 years. According to an intriguing hypothesis, however, the population was nowhere near as large as the number found living there in the 1930s—until the sweet potato was introduced in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The tuber apparently did not travel to New Guinea across the Pacific island by island; rather, it came from Spanish America, probably via Iberia and the Indian Ocean, to the spice-rich islands immediately to the west of New Guinea, and from there over local trade routes to the highlands. There the farmers found this new crop much better suited to the cool conditions of the highlands than the lowland tropical crops they had been growing. It gave greater yields, and it could be grown higher up in the mountains than taro, bananas, and other lowland staples. The availability of this new food led to a marked population expansion, analogous to what occurred when another South American crop reached Ireland.[23]

Because the colonial frontier was so late in reaching the high-

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[22] P. F. Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia* (New York: Random House, 1991); Gary Smith, *Micronesia: Decolonisation in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands* (Canberra: Peace Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1991).

[23] James B. Watson, "The Significance of a Recent Ecological Change in the Central Highlands of New Guinea," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 74 (1965): 438–50.

lands, the people there were spared some of the worst effects of contact with the West experienced by islanders in earlier centuries. For example, during World War II when highlanders on the eastern side of the island began to die from an epidemic of shigella dysentery spread by Japanese troops, the speedy introduction of village sanitation measures and the airlifting of tons of sulfaguanidine tablets stopped the epidemic. Otherwise, mortality rates might have reached 25% or more, as occurred in earlier centuries when untreated scourges were visited upon the more accessible islanders. Soon after the war coffee was introduced as a high-value cash crop in the eastern highlands. This enabled the inhabitants, many of whom had been born in the Stone Age, to earn good money from their own plantations. Since then, they and their successors have greatly expanded their holdings and have bought out the Australian coffee plantations. The industry is now in the hands of highlands capitalists controlling multimillion-dollar enterprises. Not surprisingly, these beneficiaries of the world-system express little regret about their brief and relatively benign colonial experience.[24]

The peoples of New Guinea were never united into states or even large chiefdoms. Instead, they were politically divided into a multitude of separate village, clan, and tribal units and belonged to hundreds of distinct language communities. The late nineteenth-century extension of colonialism to the island caused it to be divided among three powers. The Dutch took over the western half of the island, the Germans the northeast quarter (plus adjacent islands, including Bougainville in the adjacent Solomon Islands chain), and the British and Australians the southeast quarter. In the early 1960s Indonesia made the western half of the island into an Indonesian province now called Irian Jaya, to the dismay of local elites whom the Dutch had been hastily preparing to administer an independent West New Guinea. In 1975, the Australian-administered eastern half (the Germans had surrendered

[24] Ben Finney, *Bigmen and Business: Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth in the New Guinea Highlands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1973); Ben Finney, *Business Development in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea,* Research Report 16 (Honolulu: Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, 1987). Some Marxist commentators, while searching for a "Melanesian socialism" in the highlands, had initially excoriated these indigenous capitalists as "big peasants" or even as "kulaks." More recently, some of these scholars have even accepted that the entrepreneurs actually did a fairly good job of articulating local economies to the world-system. Mike Donaldson and Kenneth Good, *Articulated Agricultural Development: Traditionalist and Capitalist Agricultures in Papua New Guinea* (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Group, 1988).

their quarter to Australia in World War I) became the independent nation of Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea initially confounded those pessimists who had predicted that such a heterogeneous nation without any indigenous tradition of large polities would immediately fall apart. Now, however, the country is under siege by regional secessionists driven by the unequal distribution of the country's fabulous mineral wealth as well as by its radical cultural diversity. For example, revolutionaries from the offshore island of Bougainville became furious that the mineral revenue from their island was used mostly to finance the national government. In response, they shut down the world's largest open-pit copper mine, located there, and are now fighting the central government for their independence.[25]

The great island of New Caledonia has rich nickel deposits. These, along with France's ambitions to retain a chain of territories spread around the globe, have helped to keep that island French despite the desire of many of its native Melanesian inhabitants to form the independent nation of Kanaky. The presence of a large colonial French population in New Caledonia, along with a sizable number of Polynesians brought in to work in the nickel industry, has further complicated New Caledonia's political evolution. Similarly, in Fiji the presence of an ethnically South Asian majority, descended from workers brought in to grow and process sugarcane, has made democratic political evolution problematic. For almost two decades there was some degree of cooperation between ethnically Fijian and South Asian politicians. Recently, however, military coups by the Fijian-dominated army have led to a Fiji-for-Fijians regime. The new regime is being watched with interest by islanders from other Pacific countries and territories with large nonindigenous populations.[26]

Pacific Basin, Pacific Rim, or Pacific Islands?

During the last decade or so it has become increasingly popular outside this island world to talk about the "Pacific Basin" or the "Pacific Rim." This trendy conception is focused not on the ocean

[25] Yaw Saffu, "The Bougainville Crisis and Politics in Papua New Guinea," *The Contemporary Pacific* 4 (1992): 325–43.

[26] Deryck Scarr, *Fiji, Politics of Illusion: The Military Coups in Fiji* (Kensington, Australia: New South Wales University Press, 1988); John Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky? The Political History of a French Colony*, Pacific Research Monograph 16 (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, 1987).

and its peoples, but rather on the nations around the edge and the increasing trade between them that is shifting the global economy's center of gravity away from the Atlantic.[27] This attitude turns the ocean in the middle into an immense inconvenience that adds to shipping time and jet lag. While contemporary travelers hurtling from one rim to the other sealed within long metal tubes suffer little in comparison to the starving, scurvy-ridden sailors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many of them certainly wish the ocean was smaller so that they could get on with their transoceanic activities, and without so many mind-boggling changes of time zones.

Where does this basin/rim conception leave the Pacific islands and islanders? With the exception of mineral-rich and—temporarily at least—timber-rich New Guinea and a few other well-endowed islands, the Pacific is not all that attractive to rim investors. Similarly, island populations are too small to provide a large market and too well off to provide cheap labor, so they do not loom large in basin manufacturing schemes. Thus, at the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) "Pacific Rim Club" forum of presidents and prime ministers held in Seattle in November 1993, not a single Pacific island state (save for European-dominated New Zealand) was represented, although Papua New Guinea was elected to membership at the meeting.[28] What about the rest of the Pacific islands? Are they fated to be rest and recreation stops for the increasingly affluent rimmers, while their peoples either migrate to the rim or stay to live off remittances, foreign aid, and financial crumbs from the tourist tables?

Rather than become mired in such "rimonomic-speak," I would prefer to close this essay by highlighting some Pacific island developments that reflect how the islanders themselves are attempting to shape their lives so that they may thrive and not just survive in the global system into which they have been thrust. By no means have all Pacific islanders passively accepted their "peripheralization" to the world-system or the "underdevelopment" process that formulation implies. The coffee capitalists of the Papua New Guinea highlands provide a case in point. In a way, so do those Samoans, Tongans, and other Polynesians who moved

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[27] Arif Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure," *Journal of World History* 3 (1992): 55–79.

[28] Thomas Friedman, "Leaders Seek Strong Pacific Community," *New York Times,* 21 November 1993:1,14.

from their home islands to the margins of the Pacific. Instead of looking at this outmigration as a desperate search for money that cripples the home islands by stripping them of their young and able citizens, think of it in terms of the continuation of a structure of the *longue durée* in Austronesian history. The Polynesian migration, put on hold when the oceanic islands became filled, has now resumed thanks to the incorporation of these islands into the world-system. Large Samoan communities can be found in Auckland, Sydney, Honolulu, San Francisco, and other major cities. Substantial amounts of money, goods, and people flow back and forth between these overseas outposts and the homeland (Fig. 4). Tongan emigration, though on a somewhat smaller scale, seems more targeted (Fig. 5). Extended families based on Tonga are famous for training their talented members and placing them in good jobs around the world. The Samoans, Tongans, and smaller migrating Polynesian groups are on their way to becoming transnational populations.[29]

Even in Hawai'i and Aotearoa, where the indigenous Polynesians were first swamped by emigrants from Europe, America, and Asia and then submerged in alien polities, the people are now stirring. The Hawaiians and Māori have embarked on vigorous cultural renaissance movements. They are relearning their languages, reviving their dance and art forms, and reconstructing their ancient voyaging canoes and sailing them over the routes by which their islands were first settled. Even more, they are vigorously contesting colonial arrangements and seeking a return of their "stolen lands," as well as separate status as sovereign entities within their current polities. Some are agitating for total independence.[30]

Although some Pacific islanders are accused of being more concerned with dreaming about an idealized past than with facing up to the realities of today's world, my reading is that all or

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[29] Geoffrey Hayes, "Migration, Metascience, and Development Policy in Island Polynesia," *The Contemporary Pacific* 3 (1991); 1–58; Robert Franco, "Hawaii's Changing Role in Samoan Movement: Fa'afetai and Mahalo," *Pacific Studies* (in press); Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée," *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilizations* 13 (1958): 725–53.

[30] Donna Awatere, *Maori Sovereignty* (Auckland: Broadsheet Press, 1984); Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993); Michael K. Dudley and Keoni Kealoha Agard, *A Call for Hawaiian Sovereignty* (Honolulu: Na Kane o ka Malo Press, 1990); Ben Finney, "Myth, Experiment, and the Reinvention of Polynesian Voyaging," *American Anthropologist* 92 (1991): 383–404.

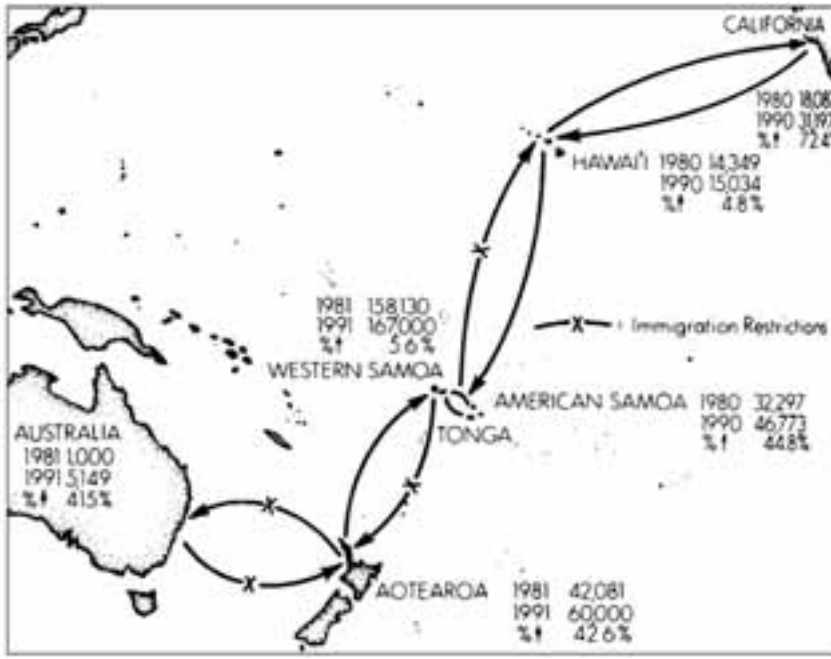

FIGURE 4. Samoan communities from Australia to California, 1980–90 (U.S. census years), 1981–91 (British Commonwealth census years). (From Robert Franco, "Hawai's Changing Role in Samoan Movement: Fa'afetai and Mahalo," *Pacific Studies* [in press].)

virtually all of them want to participate in the wider world, but on their own terms rather than on those set by outsiders. How are they to work out satisfactory ways of living, particularly on the smaller islands anchored far out to sea?

Those who first tested the waters of the Pacific had to develop a new technology to sail where no one had gone before, to discover and settle the islands they found scattered over the ocean, and to develop thriving societies on the fertile but biotically impoverished oceanic islands on which they settled. Those now leading the renaissance in Polynesian voyaging are betting that the innovative approach to oceanic exploration and living pioneered by their ancestors may provide inspiration for their future.

Almost twenty years ago the *Hōkūle'a,* a reconstruction of an ancient double-hulled voyaging canoe, was launched in Hawai'i. It has since been sailed on a series of long, traditionally navigated voyages throughout Polynesia, combining experimental research

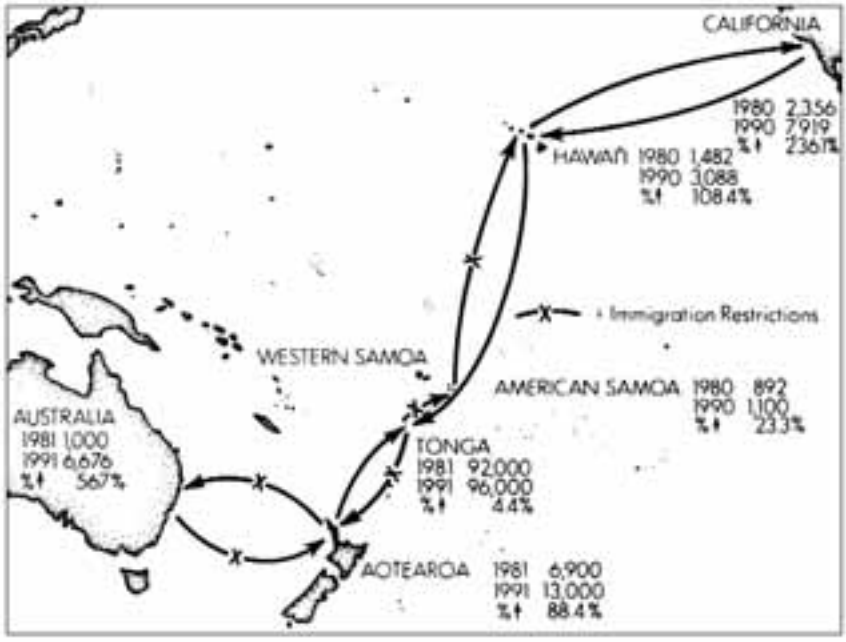

FIGURE 5. Tongan communities from Australia to California, 1980–90 (U.S. census years), 1981–91 (British Commonwealth census years). (From Franco, "Hawaii's Changing Role in Samoan Movement.")

into the ancient migrations with cultural revival. This initiative has stimulated people throughout the islands to reconstruct their own voyaging canoes and to think about the technology, skill, and courage that went into the founding of their widespread nation. Nainoa Thompson, the Hawaiian navigator of *Hōkūle'a*, relearned te art of guiding a canoe by naked-eye observations of the stars, ocean swells, and other clues provided by nature. Under his leadership, this movement now seeks to employ this voyaging experience to get Polynesian youths to consider their problematic future and not just their distinguished past.

Hawaiian students have begun to analyze in scientific as well as cultural terms the original Polynesian expansion into the Pacific and the colonization of the islands. With that background in mind, they next want to tackle the problems of fashioning a sustainable lifestyle for the islands in today's crowded, interconnected, and fast changing world. The Pacific needs more such initiatives.