

**Backing into the Future: Transindigenous Sea, River, Plains, and Skyfaring
Between Faichuuk in the Caroline Islands and Miní Sóta Makhóche in the Eastern Plains.**

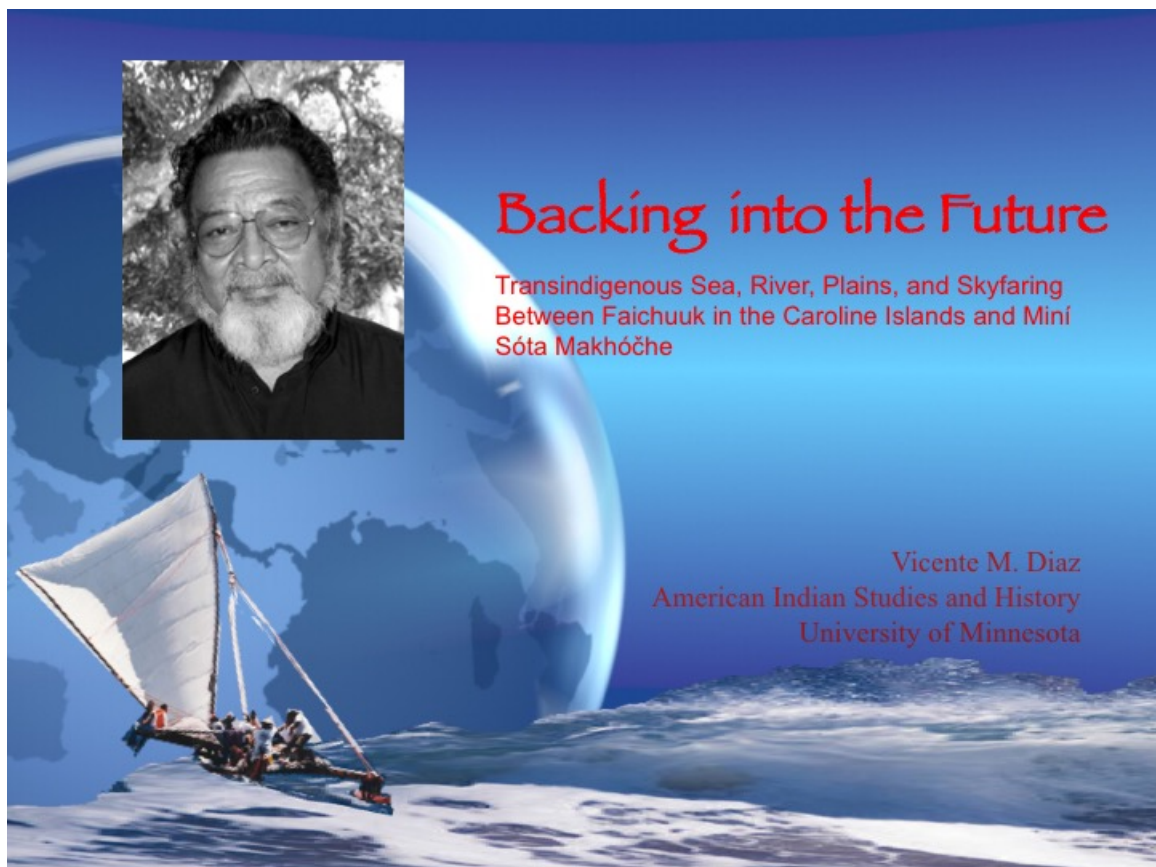
Vicente M. Diaz,

American Indian Studies

Affiliate, History; Heritage Studies and Public History

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

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Kalangan yan Saina Ma'ase to the people of Kaurna lands and other Aboriginal peoples who traditionally transit through them. To the organizers of this conference. Mandy, Ross, thank you for the invitation. Tina, Eva and I also thank you for the warm hosting.

I'm deeply honored to have been asked by your organizers to deliver this year's Epeli Hau'ofa Memorial Lecture.



If you don't mind, I'd like to do so with Teresia Teaiwa, for, when it came to matters of the Pacific region, there was no other person more important an interlocutor for me, and I simply cannot deliver an address in honor of Epeli without Teresia continuing to serve in that capacity.

Teresia and I ran together on a lot of things, but we had our differences. We were both of mixed Micronesian lineage, and given circuitry in the eastern Carolines – hers in Kiribati, mine in Pohnpei – we could have also been related; for example there is a thread in my family stories that include an I Kiribati woman passing through Pohnpei, but ending up in Onoun, in the Central Caroline Islands in the 19th century.

Most likely Teresia and I weren't related, but I offer *that* thread because it is there, and because the possible fact (of being related) would be uncanny, but mostly the thread is useful because it actually helps me this evening draw a line from Epeli Hau'ofa's work through Tere's work, that will extend Pacific critical material from the Central Carolines to Indian Country in what is now called the State of Minnesota. But back to Epeli through Teresia.

Teresia and I also both passed through the Manoa campus, through the study of history and politics and anthropology and parties at the East West Center's Pan Pacific Club, though she did so through an interdisciplinary MA in History, while I did mine in Political Science.

And we both passed through the doctorate program History of Consciousness, she after me.

Crucially it was Teresia who introduced Epeli and I to each other, and it was through her reading of his work that I formulated and continue to formulate the specificities of my reads of Epeli.

In fact, we sat together when he first delivered his "Our Sea of Islands" talk in Hawai'i in the early 1990s. When it came out in print, I remember feeling a bit disappointed, and worried. Disappointed because I thought it only skimmed the surface of what, technically, seafaring could do for operationalizing the terms of expansiveness, but worried because, as a self-described survivor of a postmodern and poststructuralist doctoral program, I fretted over their analytical and political potential to do what Teresia would later describe as the problem of losing the edge of Indigeneity by losing its proper grounds.

Punning the word "Lo(o)sing" was just one example of how she kept productive tensions in critical ideas.

Recognizing this particular rhetorical strategy was also one of the early ways that I recognized intellectual kinship with Teresia. In fact, it was criticism toward such a tendency at overstatement and loss, in Epeli's famous essay on expansiveness as an antidote to colonial belittlement, that Margaret Jolly gently but firmly made at our Edge Conference in Santa Cruz that I organized with J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Teresia in 2000. There, too, I was sitting next to Teresia, shaking our heads in disagreement at Margaret, not over the critical point, but out of frustration at timing: it always seems that, no sooner is a powerful insight proffered by an

Indigenous intellectual figure when criticisms and correctives by non-Indigenous scholars come crashing down.

But the fact was, Margaret's intervention was right, and that fact is now more than ever evident in a new wave of uncritical valorization of oceanic expansiveness that we find invoked today, notably, in a new breed of non-Pacific historians who are plying the ocean of what is now called "Pacific worlds." And a version in popular culture that celebrates expansive oceanness, a point to which I return more fully at the end of this talk.

The critical point, which drives my talk today, is that especially for those of us not from Polynesia, the wave is beginning to feel like a deluge, not unlike the threat of rising sea levels, but whose first line of casualty is cultural and historical specificity born of ecological and narrato-technological or discursive particularity.

My talk is divided into three parts. Part I presents and frames the politics of historiography and cultural critique as they are framed *not in* Epeli Hau'ofa's famous essay, "Our Sea of Islands," but in its lesser-known but utterly important sequel, titled "Pasts to Remember." I believe that to focus only on "Our Sea of Islands" at the expense of "Pasts to Remember" is to miss a central point of Hau'ofa's thinking, to celebrate expansiveness of the ocean, frequently billed as Moana, without also understanding how mobility as seen through traditional seafaring in particular also bids us to "contract" as it were to cultural and historical and even ecological specificity. I'll get back to "contracting" later as well.

Part II offers something of a case study that can illustrate what Epeli was getting at. The case study *instrumentalizes*, we might say, the traditional instruments of a far-reaching seafaring culture through ongoing efforts to build mutually informing and beneficial community relationships between Micronesians and Indigenous Dakota communities through deep Indigenous ecological knowledge in multiple sites and through multiple modalities and practice.

Part III closes with what Chad Allen calls Transindigeneity, which in effect refers to Aboriginal claims and conditions to deep temporal specificity but that have the ability to reach across particularities in creative and powerful ways without losing the essential groundwork of specific islands and their peoples.

Mindful that I'm speaking at one such edge of Oceania, and specifically on Kaurua and other Aboriginal hubs and circuitries, I'm going to argue for *ever more grounding* on specificity but do so by pushing the edges of Oceania farther afield. To direct me, let me commence my tribute to Epli through Teresia by invoking this conference's wonderful poem by Teresia, which I'm going to ask our sister, Katerina, to read.

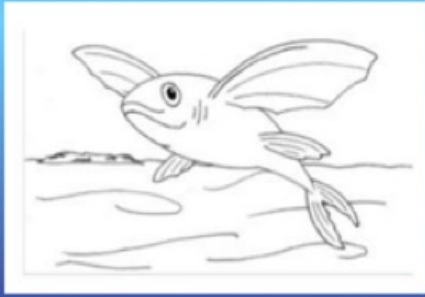
Be te onauti
And fly.
Walking is for
Pathetic bipeds,
And swimming
Only half an option

Men see one horizon
Where you always see two.

Perhaps that is why
fishermen lost and
unable to stomach
any more of the sea
feel fortunate to
catch you
so they may suck on your eyes.

Fish out of water: fly.
Fish, out of water, see two horizons.

Te Onauti (Kiribati for "flying fish")
By Teresia Teaiwa



Be te onauti/ And fly.
Walking is for/ Pathetic bipeds,
And swimming/ Only half an option
Men see one horizon/ Where you always see two.
Perhaps that is why/ fishermen lost and
unable to stomach/any more of the sea
feel fortunate to/ catch you
so they may suck on your eyes.
Fish out of water: fly/ Fish, out of water, see two horizons.

Like Epeli, Teresia wrote creatively as a mode of scholarship, using that creativity to redirect our attention and practices from conventional scholarship, politics and ontologies toward areas of Pacific life from which colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial discourses averted our traditional study and operationalization.

For example, if in *Kisses in the Nederends*, Epeli infamously bade us to sniff up truths from our assholes, Teresia in this poem has us assume the position and form of our non-human kin from the waters in order to leave the terra-ism of land and/but also proceed onto momentary flight and gaze skywards. These were only two examples of the creative dimensions of Epeli's imperative for expansiveness in his famous essay "Our Sea of Islands" which I propose to read now in terms of its sequel, "Pasts to Remember."

Part I. Grounding Moana; Borofsky's book; We are Ocean



Hau'ofa's historiographical essay, "Pasts to Remember," first appeared in 2000 as the Epilogue to Robert Borofsky's edited volume, *Remembrances of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, and was included in the 2008 collection, *We are the Ocean: Selected Works*.

In it, Epeli argued for Indigenous Pacific islanders to tell our own histories, to produce narratives that, he asserted, are “our own distinctive creations” (2000, 459).

“Pasts” followed, but has remained overshadowed, at least in Pacific Worlds historiography, by his more famous “Sea of Islands.” “Sea,” of course, re-presented the Pacific Islands region in more expansive terms than was habitually accorded and operationalized in colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial discourse. In my work I insist on naming all three forms, and I define postcolonial as neocolonial – after independence – with Indigenous complicity. Independence doesn’t guarantee, but only alters the form of original colonial predations, often with exuberant benevolence or love for things native, with native peoples loving complicity.

Back to the point. For so calling attention especially to a deep and ongoing history of islander mobility upon an oceanic world that connected us to, not separated us from, the bigger world, Teresia christened Hau‘ofa’s essay “the most visionary” piece in our field, and indeed, we all gave it a privileged place in our citational practices [section deleted]. But as if to ground the claims he made in the earlier, more famous essay, the present “Pasts to Remember Essay” is decidedly moored in cultural, ecological, and spatial specificity and technology.

In brief, though not the first to do so (read Albert Wendt) Hau‘ofa’s essay explores how Indigenous writers might center Pacific form in the writing of our own pasts, covering three dimensions of form – first, temporality, as in differing and competing conceptions of time; second, spatiality, as in the primacy of one’s proper geographic, cultural, and epistemological center of gravity or home; and, third, on technological form.

The first two forms might necessitate moving away from linear narrativity that centered European or non-Native temporal presences, an example of which is the imagining of Pacific history but only through the lens of European contact and geographic frames of references. Such an imperialist modality, he argued, delimited the multiplicity and relativity of Pacific truths of the past, and so severed Pacific peoples from their rightful homelands. Of the political effects of reducing Pacific pasts to the binary of prehistory versus history proper, Epeli wrote, “when you view most of a people’s past as not history, you shorten very drastically the roots of their culture, or declare their existence doubtful” (456). Displaced from narrative, we are also displaced from our beloved lands, waters, and skyways. He elaborates,

To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa, or to destroy their lands with mining, deforestation, bombing, large-scale industrial and urban developments, and the like, is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood, but also and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and from their ultimate claim for legitimacy of their existence (469).

So, instead of linearity, he argued for circularity; instead of what he called “mainline” history, he suggested the figure of the spiral as drawn from knowledge of local and regional environmental and ecological phenomena, also contained in orality and dance and other expressive genres. As we know from how he ran the Oceania Center at USP, he was all about creativity, about riffing and improvising off deep tradition. In this essay he was bidding us to ground ourselves in our specific traditions of local ecological and environmental knowledge in order to be set free. The operational site of that locality, I submit, is the “sea,” a unit of specificity and relationality between the local and the global, between land and water, between self and other, whose eco-vernacular differences and specificities across “Oceania” have been a-washed-over by exuberant and often shallow and highly tokenized invocations of an expansive Oceania.

This much is clear in how he described what he referred to as “ecologically-based oral traditions” that, in turn, had two foci. The first, a concentration on the people, by which he specifically meant the “...ordinary people, the forgotten people of history, who have coped and are coping with their harsh realities, their resistance and struggles to be themselves and hold together” (457). The second, on what he called the “notion of ecological time” (458) – that aforementioned Indigenous temporality – as it was rooted in nature and traditional ecological knowledge based on it.

In the interest of time, I skip a more detailed discussion of his examples from Tongan and Fijian discourse, in favor of citing some long passages from the text, beginning with the already famous one that cites from Kanaka Maoli historian, Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa. According to Lilikala,

It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown, whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge (Kame'eleihiwa 22-23).

After fleshing out this modality a bit more, especially through the pioneering work of ‘Okusi Mahina (whose work is extended, as you know from last year’s talk by professor Tevita Ka‘ili), Hau‘ofa offers a summary that locates a relationality to the past at the very core of our being, provided, that is, we are grounded so:

That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and to be aware of its presence. What is behind us cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is in front of our minds’ eyes, always reminding us of its presence. The past is alive in us, so in more than a metaphorical sense the dead are alive—we are our history (460).

With such a conception of time immanent in us, Hau‘ofa then shifts us to the ecological grounds proper that center and frame the inquiry:

Where time is circular, it does not exist independently of the natural surroundings and society. It is very important for our historical reconstruction to know that the Oceanian circular time emphasis is tied to the regularity of seasons marked by natural phenomenon such as cyclical appearances of certain flowers, birds, and marine creatures, shedding of certain leaves, phases of the moon, changes in prevailing winds and weather patterns, which themselves mark the commencement of and set the course for cycles of human activities such as those related to agriculture, terrestrial and marine foraging, trade and exchange, and voyaging, all with their associated rituals, ceremonies, and festivities (460-461).

In Hau‘ofa’s essay, the line he draws from circular notions of time through our being to the spatiality of ecological groundwork ends in a discussion of technology that, as you will see, spirals back fittingly to ontology or beingness. He writes:

Of equal importance in the consideration of the relationships between Oceanian societies and nature is the role of technology. The driving force that propelled human activities was the knowledge and skills developed over centuries, fine-tuned to synchronize actions with the regularities of nature. As it provided the vital link between the vital link between society and nature, technology cannot be dissociated from or seen to be independent of either. It was a vital and compatible component of the cycles. [...] For a

genuinely Oceanian historiography, we could use this notion to reconstruct some of our pasts in terms of peoples' endeavors always to adapt and localize external borrowings and impositions, fitting them to their familiar cycles. In this way they actively transformed themselves rather than *just being passively remodeled by others* (461-462).

For short hand purposes, I suggest we think of what he says about technology in terms of how our ancestors *instrumentalized* the environment around them, and therefore, created themselves, into powerful forms of knowledge, beginning with instrumentalizing nature, so to speak, for the purposes of successful and capacious cultural and geographic mobility: this is what's expressed and contained in our seafaring traditions. I suggest, moreover, that we read his essay as a prompt to creatively instrumentalize those instrumentalizations into alternative visions of the present and futures.

Thus, his essay permits us to not only imagine but perform the fluidities of Pacific pasts by using cultural forms and knowledge from our own islands and archipelagos and traditions. This specific grounding in place, marked by cultural and ecological rootedness – deep Indigenous ancestral and ecological verticality – or Native depth, for short – is vital because it is precisely through the fully-embodied and multi-sensored narrative instrumentalization of Indigenous ancestral and ecological verticality, of Native depth – that the other signature legacy of Pacific peoples and islands that Epeli celebrated in “Seas” is enabled and unleashed: Indigenous geographic and discursive spread across temporal horizons, or simply, Native Reach.

Here I'm not just reiterating a theoretical point about roots and routes (that need constant reminding), but rather more specifically drawing from seafaring for more technical substantiation to show and work how native roots and routes are not mutually exclusive but mutually and powerfully constitutive and generative. I assert that if Epeli's “Sea of Islands” foregrounds and also expands upon the history of Native Pacific Reach, then his “Pasts to the Remember” essay—a narratological instrumentalization of Indigenous Pacific cultural and ecological forms and knowledge for the purposes of creating new Pacific pasts – *contracts* the space or field of play in the double sense of *scaling back* to appropriate locale and place – Native Depth – and also *negotiating or transacting* that space into new rounds of expanded Indigenous possibilities. In this essay, Hau'ofa's bid to have us create our own pasts out of the specific cultural forms and ecological knowledge of our specific islands and seas opens to new futurities and new ways to imagine and ground political practice, an urgent matter facing Pacific Islanders in a world that

doubles down on inequality and environmental destruction but through new hegemonic forms of embracing and presenting and thereby commodifying and co-opting Indigenous Pacific culture and tradition in essentialist, ahistorical, ways. [skip caveats]

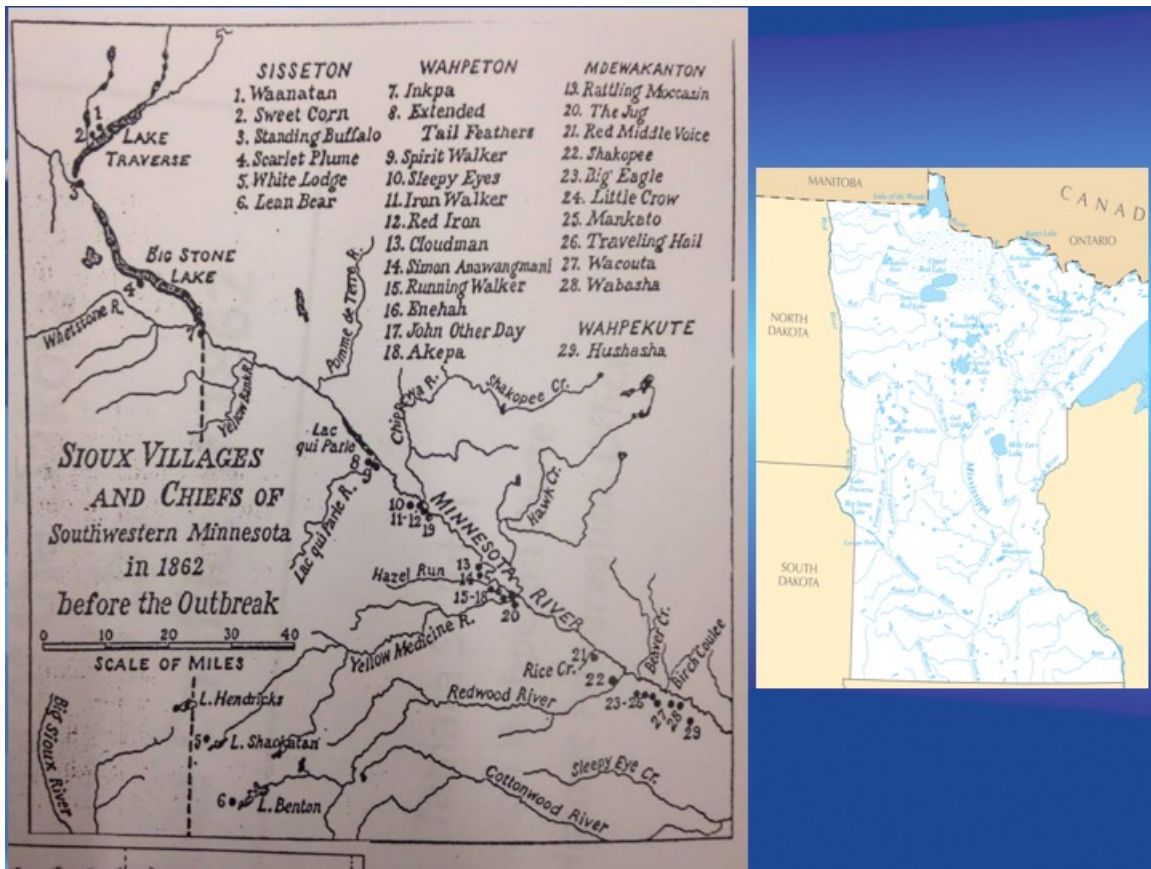
Part II. Backing into the Future: Transindigenous Sea, River, Plains, and Skyfaring Between Faichuuk and Mini Sóta Makhóche in the Eastern Plains.



Part II. Backing into the Future: Transindigenous Sea, River, Plains, and Skyfaring Between Faichuuk in the Caroline Islands and Mini Sóta Makhóche in the Eastern Plains



With antecedents involving Central Carolinians and Chamorros in Guam when I taught at the University of Guam in the 1990s, and Pacific Islanders and Anishinabe communities in Native Great Lakes Region when I taught at the University of Michigan and University of Illinois in the 2000s, the project that I'm now heading at the University of Minnesota involves a long-term program of cultural revitalization of canoe voyaging and knowledge of land, water and skyways in the Caroline islands and in Dakota homelands in rural, western Minnesota.



Dakota Yellow Medicine (Southwest Minnesota)

More specifically, it is spawned by the efforts of a group of displaced Micronesians in rural southwest Minnesota to revitalize outrigger canoe building and sailing using traditional knowledge from their kinship relations in the Central Carolines, but as it also necessarily involves good relations with and ecological and cultural knowledge from Dakota communities who claim the region as their traditional home lands, waters, and skies. As we are learning to negotiate and navigate together, we are also learning how Dakota, too, have a long and deep history and tradition of movement and expression through profound instrumentalized interconnectivity between self and environment that refuses colonial compartmentalization and binary logics. What is quickly developing is a partnership to practice Indigenous Micronesian cultural traditions in Dakota homelands, waters, and skyways without replicating the sins of settler colonial dispossession and disenfranchisement, and what we are beginning to learn is just how necessary it is to include good and generative relations with Dakota as a precondition for being traditionally Micronesian.

In the past decade a Chuukese community of just over one thousand people has sprung up in rural, southwest Minnesota plains.

Sourced from a single individual, a young man who wanted to visit his Peace Corp worker brother who returned to his hometown in Milan, Minnesota, a population exploded in that town alone to over four hundred today. While the number itself is small, the wave of migrants from the state of Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia in the western Pacific is really a deluge in that Chuukese now comprise three quarters of the town's population, whose remaining townsfolk consist primarily of elder folks.



Milan Town Parade, 2016

Milan, Minnesota is one of those rural towns founded by Norwegian and Scandinavian settlers in the mid 19th century. It is not for nothing that Minnesota's professional football team, which had its fair share of Polynesian players in its past rosters, is called the Vikings, and Milan's residents, not without basis, boast of being the Norwegian-American capital of Minnesota, if not of America's heartland.

In its annual fourth of July parade down the single block of main street, the perennial float entry is a replica Viking ship built by the State's civic organization, the Sons of Norway.



Milan Town Parade, 2016

In the summer of 2016, the number of floats doubled. That's my outrigger sailing canoe, built in Guam using traditional Polowatese design and functionality, under the guidance of the late Polowat navigator, Mannas Ikea. That, of course, is another story told elsewhere. [...]

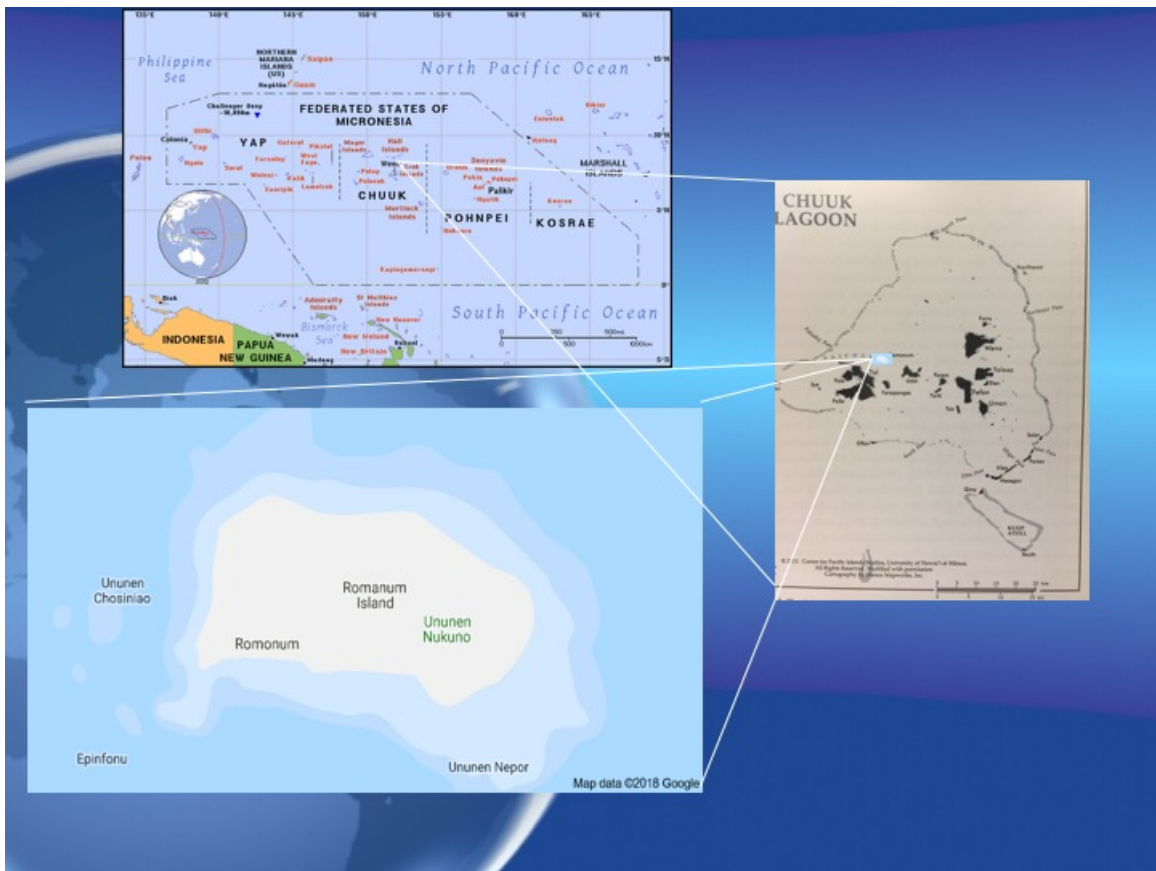
The Chuukese of Milan have begun to refer to themselves as the Milanesians, as this sign of their collectively owned and operated restaurant indicates. Milanesia is a play on the town's name and the standard orientalist taxonomy of Oceania into the more familiar divisions of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. [...] Unlike the conventions, this one is self-imposed and deliberate.

In their recent history here, the Milanesians have traded a self-subsistent lifestyle of fishing and harvesting back in the Chuuk lagoon, for small town life of modest wage earning. The majority of the men work for the Jenni-O Turkey processing plant in the next town, while women hold

menial jobs and work as volunteer assistants for the local government and two churches in Milan and the surrounding towns. It is a young demographic; its leaders are in their late 30s and early 40s, though there are about a dozen elders.

On the whole, rural southwest Minnesota towns are in economic decline, while Milan is the sole exception, and this on account of the still-growing population of Chuukese. Stores can remain open for business, and those that close have been taken over by the Micronesians themselves, such as the newly opened Milanese Café.

If for this reason Milan town stands out in the region, the Milanese also stand in sharp contrast to the profile and reputation of other displaced Micronesians, especially Chuukese, communities in Guam, Hawai‘i, and the US Pacific west coast (California, Oregon, and Washington): the Chuukese of Milan have a relatively good reputation, and tensions with neighbors and townsfolk are relatively minor. There have been no deaths from DUI, stabbings, robberies, the tale of tape for which Chuukese in the diaspora are stereotypically stigmatized.

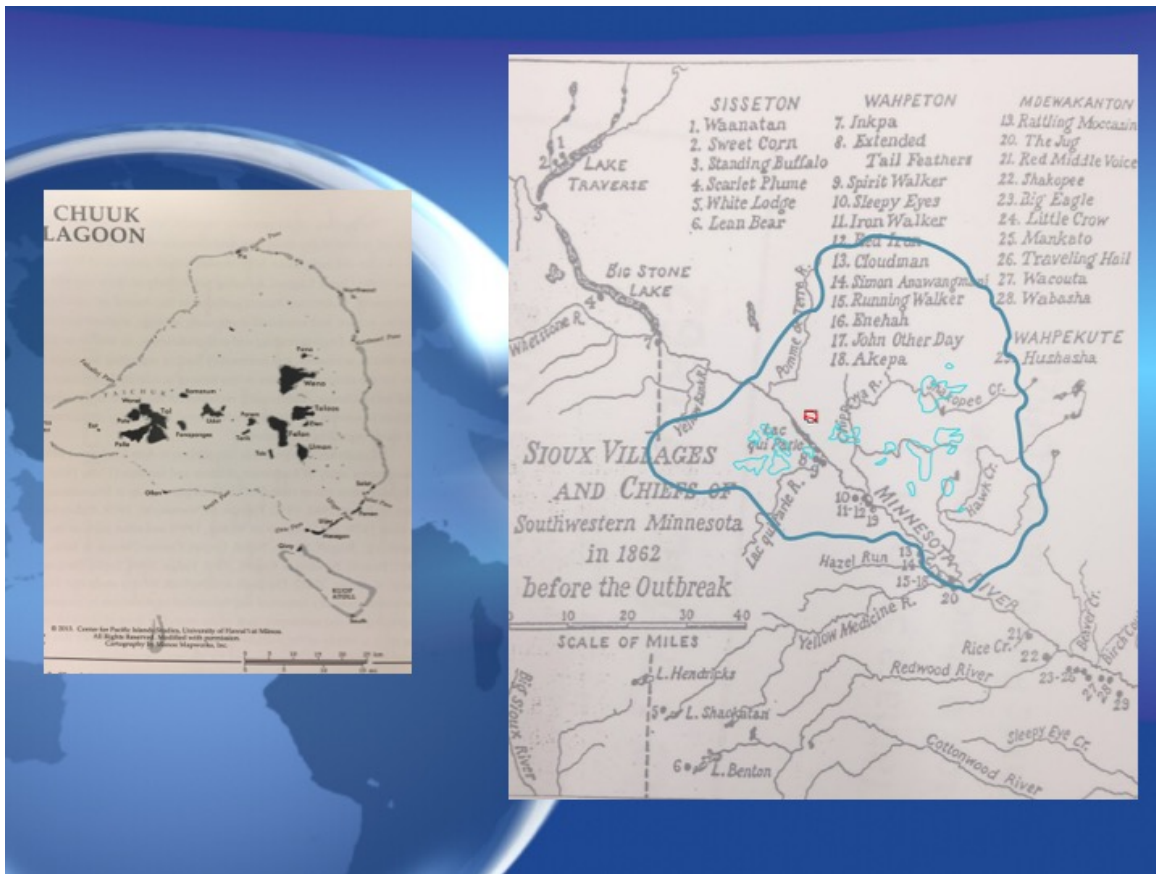


Romanum Island in Chuuk Lagoon in Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia.

The biggest difference stems from the fact that most of the Chuukese come from a single island – Romanum, or, in the vernacular, Ulalu/Ulanu, in the Faichuuk region of the Chuuk Lagoon, which is itself a particularly complex sea of island hubs that is also politically associated with three “outlying” groups of atolls beyond the Chuuk lagoon: the Patew islands to the west, the Namonuito atolls to the northwest, and the Mortlocks, to the south. One particularly auspicious sign – as if written in the stars – in this story is that the leaders of the Re Romanum – the people of Romanum – here I use Milanese and Re Romanum or Re Ulanu interchangeably – have traditional kinship ties to Polowat atoll in the Patiw islands. Polowat of course is world famous for continuing to build and sail outrigger canoe using ancient traditions. Particularly remarkable is that their kinship ties are to the same clan – Hou Polowat – and canoehouse and navigational school – utt Wenemai and School of Werieng – into which I was trained and adopted, thereby making all of us kin. That canoe house and clan might now include in its traditional orbits housing and resources in Minnesota. [...] in the same way that it does in the Chuuk Lagoon.

[...] A very small town with many low rent bungalows, and a small one and a half block downtown, Milan is surrounded by cornfields, soy fields, and these surrounded by the Minnesota prairies. In this sense it is not unlike the island of Romanum in the Chuuk lagoon, in the surrounding Micronesian seas.

Indeed, the Milanese often say being in Milan reminds them of being back home.



Chuuk Lagoon in Yellow Medicine

But western rural Minnesota is still Miní Sóta Makhóche, the traditional homelands of the Dakhóta Oyáte, who still hold firm to this understanding and claim. And the region itself is better understood as the eastern edges of the Great Plains and the great Oceti Śakowiŋ, the seven councils of fire, as the seven nations or bands of the Great Sioux nation call themselves, as they range across the Dakotas and past, and northwards into deep reaches of plains Canada. This was and continues to be the traditional range of the Oceti Śakowiŋ, but as it has also been remapped to their detriment and subjugation by settler colonialism.

Since the 1860s, after bloody warfare and a genocidal campaign of removal, Dakota had been rounded up and removed from the state in their own version of the Trail of Tears forced removal of East Coast Indians to territories westward, across the Mississippi River. But in the late 19th century, many Dakota began to return and now comprise four state-recognized and other non-recognized tribal communities. The two closest to Milan, who still claim the region, known as Yellow Medicine area, in which Milan is situated, are the Upper and Lower Sioux communities, so named for their location up and down the Minnesota River.

In 2016 Milanese expressed to me a desire to build their own outrigger canoes and learn the fundamentals of Carolinian voyaging. As a migrant community, their preferred language is still their Ulalu/Ulanu dialect, but the leaders fear acculturation. And while they have a strong sense of their own island's traditions, they feel that seafaring in particular, would give them a stronger basis on which to build their future.

Thus, we began, whenever possible, to put the canoe in the water, which, in Milan, involves one Lac Qui Parle, a lake fed by the Minnesota river. However, one of the first things we did was to ask my Dakota colleagues in American Indian Studies for advice on how to properly launch the canoe. We said that we wanted to acknowledge being on Dakota lands, waters, and skyways, and ask for permission to launch.

[...] In the Spring of 2017 we had a soft launch at the confluence of the Minnesota and the Mississippi rivers, and then a more formal launch as part of the founding of my department's Native Canoe Program, at the Mississippi River, on the East bank of the river on campus.

At both places we were hosted by Dakota leaders and community people who offered prayer, welcome, and gratitude for reaching out to them. They also taught us, for example, of what Dakota call *bdote* – confluences of rivers, but also of domains, for example, between this temporal world and the sky and afterlife, which is why we now habitually refer to the profound interconnectedness between lands, waters, and skyways and Dakota peoplehood as they are also profoundly interconnected in similar bonds of kinship with the non or other than human beings.

We learned quickly of one particular *bdote*, one confluence, of remarkable standing: where the Mississippi and the Minnesota Rivers converge. In “eastern” Dakota cosmological cartographic mapping of Dakota peoplehood, this is *the* most sacred *bdote*, the portal, from which Dakota themselves sprung from the prior world into this temporal realm and through which they return to the afterlife in the *Woniya Wakan Tanka*, the breath of the Great Mystery, as the sky world is known.

In this sense, the *bdote* also expresses the Dakota concept that what is found in the skyworld reflects all that transpires on land and vice versa. Imaged as a “twist” or spiral as to illustrate perfect symmetry between what's above and what's below, *Kapemni* also draws cosmic energy

from the temporal and spiritual realms of past/present/and future intersectionality to a meeting point through which lives and meaning transit. The bdote is thus the most sacred site of Dakota genesis and departure. But in the 19th century, militarized settler colonialism built in the proximity of the bdote the notorious Fort Snelling [...]. Literally overseeing the bdote, Fort Snelling served as a concentration camp to which and from whence Dakota, following the War of 1862, were rounded up and imprisoned in a particularly brutal winter, and then exiled from the state. In this way, the sacred site of Dakota Genesis and portage also became the site of Dakota Genocide. Launching our canoe at that site came with prayers and pledges to ensure that the process of becoming good Micronesian navigators in Minnesota will not involve anything that contributes to this ongoing legacy of violent erasure.

The initial quest to build and sail traditional Carolinian canoes in Milan is now articulated to an ongoing community development plan for sustainability and resilience [...]

As part of my teaching load, I teach a course on comparative Indigenous watercraft and water traditions of Oceania and the Native Great Lakes, now the River and Plains and Sky Worlds. In classes like this I'm able to continue to work with Micronesian navigators from Polowat. Last fall, I brought the pwo or traditional master navigator, Mario Benito, to co-teach and co-design the classes and projects on campus and in the Milan community and other Anishinabe and Dakota communities. With the Milaneseans, besides sailing, we did Paafu, opening up the "mat" of knowledge of the rising and setting stars as used in Polowat.

So, the course on campus met at the river on weekends, but also went out and visited and paddled with Anishinabe, Dakota, and the Milanesean communities across the state.

DIGITALLY ARCHIVING ANCIENT FUTURES



This work also includes a virtual and augmented reality component, begun in Illinois but that is also another story.

These multi-sited community engaged pedagogy and research play nicely into ongoing activities within the community. The visits to Dakota and Anishinabe communities involved canoe programs and natural resource management.

In Milan, the goal of building canoes and learning navigation quickly became folded into a community-driven process, [...] of developing a master plan for economic, social, and cultural development, the latter of which is now taking the form of a project that plans to create an inter-community team to build an outrigger canoe, a Dakota dug out, and a Viking boat. [not to be underestimated for its Indigenous potential]

Another rapidly developing project involves working with the Lower Sioux Dakota community's Recreation Program to build a canoe launch and traditional structure in their community on the Minnesota River. That idea, in conjunction with the holding of the paafu lesson at the Milanesean

Café, convinced us to proceed more diligently with a plan to build a traditional utt or canoe house in Milan, under the auspices of Mario Benito. This project was greatly facilitated this past semester by collaboration with colleagues and graduate students at the University's School of Design's annual Catalyst Workshop, wherein students are given a particular Design challenge to research and develop in one week. This year's challenge was to "design a traditional Micronesian Canoe House that recognizes its location on Dakota Homelands and doesn't replicate the sins of settler colonialism." (Okay, so I had a little to do with the phrasing of the challenge). Here are some of the images that were produced in a process that is still underway as I speak. In the fall, we are following up these design principles in a Studio production phase that will be crossed listed with my Canoe Course.

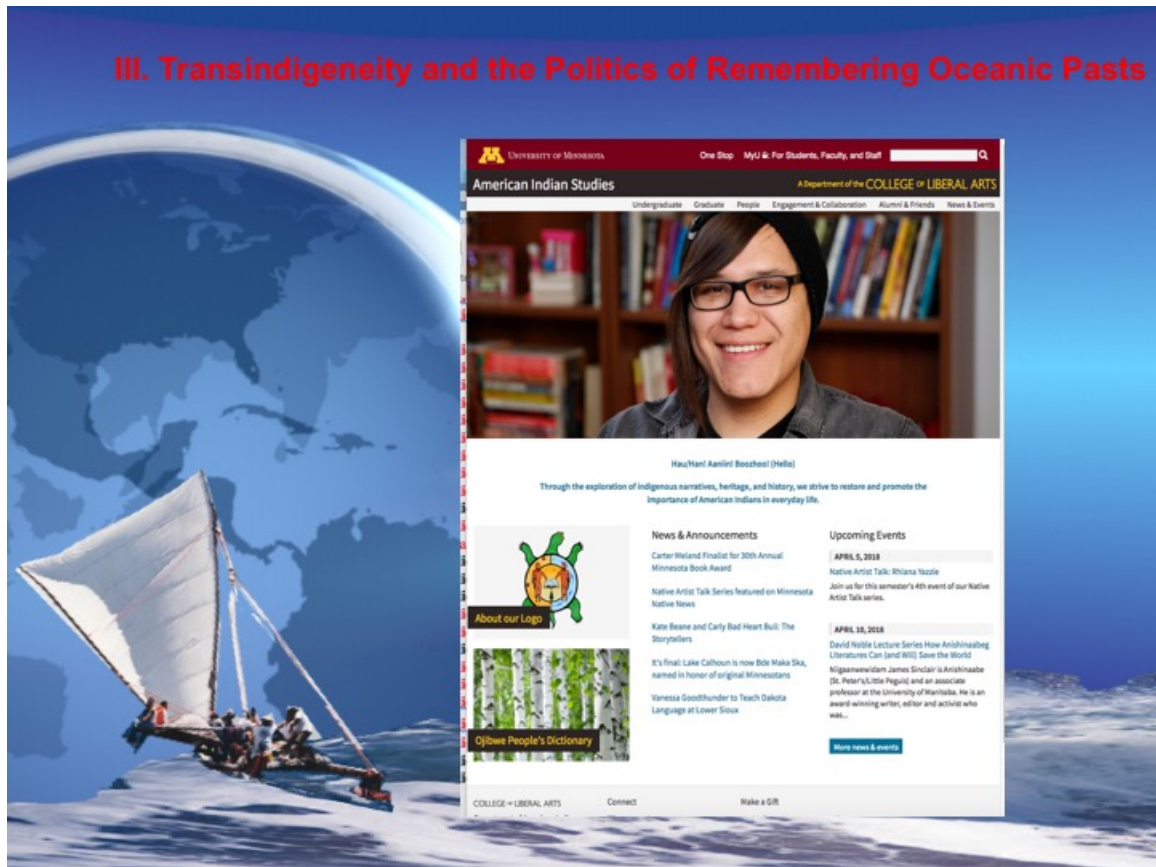
These projects are currently in the process of becoming consolidated into a single, multifaceted, multi-sited, longitudinal, fully and multi-sensoried program. Currently we are in formal consultation phases with the Upper and Lower Sioux tribal councils for a project that we hope will expand the courses and activities to include comparative Indigenous astronomy, ecology, oral history from this region and from Micronesia.

Imagine a course of community based and engaged study in which, in this kind of Native to Native to Settler relations, the Milanese are able to learn the "seas" of their homeland and their new homes: the star and sky knowledge and all the prerequisite ecological and cultural knowledge necessary to locate – to emplace – oneself properly in time/space in Indigenous terms.

Imagine, a course of action, learning, and research in which, by virtue and method of combined Carolinian local seafaring and Dakota rivers and plains knowledge, the Milanese also learn Dakota land, water, and skyways and then proceed in time to backtrack to home waters and skies by similarly engaging in such activities with Indigenous communities along the way. The backtracking could be literal: at some point in the near future they literally return home and then plot the star and sea course with the amassed knowledge of such local seas as would have been carried out traditionally, as a voyage from Romanum to southwest Minnesota might be so imagined and carried out by tracking the shifting variable and looks and feels of each leg along the way. The return to Dakota lands would be a kind of homecoming *as well*, would it not? Beginning by working at both ends of this transindigenous memory map is key, because traditional seafaring works at both ends: shoving off from local waters and skies and knowing where one is by incrementally building – through distinct "legs" of a journey – on knowledge of

the ‘local’ leg – in order to arrive at the final destination, for a journey of the largest distance is actually a series of steps or legs involving the “working” of local knowledge to its interphase with eco-material presented in and from the next leg of a journey. A substantive, instrumentalized version of an old adage that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, traditional voyaging works by establishing a baseline of knowledge from the specificities of the first leg in order lay both a course and the units of analyses by which to take the next leg, and so forth. Here, the local seas surrounding the island of origin and the island of destination are crucial bookends and they need to be incrementally connected through the interconnectedness of the serial and constitutive legs of the journey. Technically these seas are cross checked against a third reference island whose course is charted through legs along a star path. It is precisely the ecological knowledge of the journey’s most important leg -- the first leg, as measured from the moment the canoe shoves off and steers in the direction of the rising or setting constellation that mark the location of the destination island, until the point where the origin island can no longer be seen, as it recedes from view – that becomes the baseline data set for subsequent legs. The multiple and shifting variables that must be assessed and calculated in this first leg at “sea” – not in the ocean – but at sea – include the rate of speed as measured by wake or displacement of water on the bow or off the outrigger pontoon, strengths and direction of currents, which particular waves and swells are at work individually or in tandem or threesome, shifting winds, cloud coverage, mists and rains conditions, etc. It is in this way that good navigators can discern where they are at all points out in the open ocean, that is, by how they work the baseline knowledge established in familiar seas. By knowing the localities of each leg, good navigators can know into whose homes they have entered and are passing through. Reach and Depth are mutually informing. It is in this way that the largest oceans, and the largest islands – Turtle Island, as American Indians tend to call the North American edge of the Pacific – can be traversed indigenously and creatively – without losing site and cultural and ecological specificity.

III. Transindigeneity and Politics of Writing Oceanic Pasts



In writing “Pasts to Remember” Hau’ofa had uppermost in mind the politics of knowledge production, of what was insidious about benevolent interest in Pacific cultural pasts in the work of sympathetic non-islander scholars, and as this was matched by a larger developmentalist political context of colonial belittlement and erasure of Indigenous worlds, but also of postcolonial Pacific complicity.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Hau’ofa was responding to great strides in ethnographic history and historical ethnography in the Pacific, a relatively new paradigm that built upon earlier decades of work by the so-called Canberra School but as it had been inflected by critical ethnographic theory and practice. Uppermost in his mind, too, was a turn in Pacific Anthropology, on the politics of culture and tradition. Having already left Anthropology for creative writing, as Epeli was commandeering USP into a center for Oceanic Performance, his essay acknowledged the value of the work by these non-Native anthropologists and historians, but stressed the need for Indigenous islanders to produce our own histories with our own Indigenous forms.

In lead up to, but also in the aftermath of the publishing of “Pasts to Remember,” and prompted perhaps most of all by Epeli’s passing, “Sea of Islands” had also become so influential as to also become an obligatory citation for all of us to properly situate our work. Of late, the move also includes an especially insidious form of self-legitimization for new sectors and in certain contexts. An example of the former is a whole new tribe of historians writing what they are calling “Pacific Worlds” histories as if they have discovered a whole new world, and then hitch a ride on Hau’ofian expansiveness to the larger history of global flows of peoples, ideas, things, in ways that gut substantive centering on specific islands and islanders (for a fuller, and on-spot, critique of this historiographic trend, see David Hanlon's 2017 essay "Losing Oceania to the Pacific and the World" in *The Contemporary Pacific* (29:2)). In this way, Hau’ofa and our Oceania are tokenized.

At the same time, among a new generation of Pacific Islander scholars and activists and cultural workers, Hau’ofa’s “Sea of Islands” has inaugurated a trend, far more authentic than the new historiography from without, to embrace the terms Oceania and especially Moana, over the term Pacific, for its fluidic sensibilities, and generally I’ve been supportive of this, as in fact, I even participate in forums and organizations and collectives that self-identify as “Moanan” though I am not Polynesian. But the problem here is also when Ocean as Moana conflates one part of the Pacific for the entirety, and loses specificity of seas, or, as when Jolly reminded us in 2000, that most of the Pacific does not deal with the Ocean as do peoples from Polynesia and Micronesia.

In popular culture, the problems with overly exuberant culturalism of Oceanic expansiveness, in my apparently minoritized and demonized opinion, is seen in Disney’s Moana and in broader celebratory discourses of so-called “non-instrument” Wayfinding, whose biggest problem is ahistorical valorization of sailing antiquity that denies the modern conditions of wayfinding’s emergence – like science, corporate funding, state support, modern scholarship – while also erasing Indigenous technological and instrumentalized seafaring knowledge outside Polynesia. I can only summarize here the gist of my criticism. In the film’s narrative structure and iconography, in every dramatic moment where we are afforded an opportunity to actually see how real Indigenous seafaring technique and technology operate, Disney imagineers resolve the pragmatic problem with divine and mystical interventions – a magical wave or the spirit of a grandmother rights an upended canoe or points the way forward – ostensibly to honor the deep spirituality and power (mana) and oneness of Polynesian relationship with Moana the Ocean. That emphases may well be what its Pacific Islander consultants wanted emphasized, but it

strikes me as a step backward given how colonial discourse has long relegated Pacific islanders to the realm of spirituality, physicality, passion, and expression at the expense of its intellectual and even science-like traditions. Locating “wayfinding” – a modern phenomenon or at least a phenomenon of revitalization in the 20th and 21st centuries – in the ancient past and emphasizing mysticism, in my opinion, is a step backwards, though I acknowledge what collaboration with Disney can provide Pacific artists and performers.

So, in view of these post “Sea” essay developments inside and outside Pacific Studies as an academic field, I think that, ironically, Epeli’s “Our Sea of Islands” unleashed a tidal wave of expansive thinking through abstracted or improperly scaled or just plain old tokenized ideas of Oceans, not of his doing, that had the effect of washing over the principle subjects contained in the title of that essay – Our Sea –the pairing of third person plural and collective subjectivity and possession, and that watery zone that is so central in seafaring islands: the Sea. The sea, here, is the appropriate scale and locality of instrumentalized ecological knowledge as understood in Pacific seafaring system. Some of us, and our seas, consistently get washed out by the rush to expansive ideas of oceanic fluidity. It took almost 20 years but I think I now know how our *Melanesian* and Aboriginal land, and lake, and mountain and valley, cousins feel when Oceans, Moana or otherwise, keep getting valorized as the essential marker of the Pacific. This is one of the values of working relationally, with people outside the Pacific, where Pacific Islanders have come to lap.

Our little project of what and how it takes to be Chuukese in Dakota Country and Skies shows the potential of keeping cultural depth and reach, roots and routes, always articulated together. The program of knowledge relations that I presented here, between one group of Natives displaced from their Indigenous homelands by US Military and Postcolonial Development in/and with another Native group who continue to battle displacement on their own homelands by Settler Colonialism, offers a modality that consciously refuses to wash out difference, and consciously does so by embodying and deploying what Chad Allen calls Transindigeneity.

For Allen, transindigeneity is an analytical, ontological, and political category of Aboriginal claims and conditions to deep temporal specificity but that has the ability and capacity to reach across particularities in creative and powerful ways without losing specificity.

One feature of Allen's definition of transindigeneity is the strategic use of creative juxtaposition of Indigenous traditions and histories and experiences that tend to be kept hermetically sealed from each other, precisely to see what political and cultural truths and insights might be unleashed or made possible when they are so juxtaposed. The method was, in part, also prompted by the historical and political circumstances of its production. Allen's work follows a first book that examined blood and citizenship narratives in Indian country and in Māori country in Aotearoa. He is also an active leader in an international field of comparative Indigenous literatures as well as a larger field called Native American and Indigenous Studies, or NAISA, which in the past decade has been advancing forms of Native Studies that so juxtapose material from Indigenous studies in North America and the globe, with strong representation in the Pacific Islands, including Aboriginal Australia.

This is also why Tina and I are in American Indian Studies in Minnesota, a university that is also well represented in both leadership and membership in NAISA, and a department that is among a half dozen large, Research One public universities that have dedicated precious and diminishing resources to Indigenous Pacific Islands scholarship.

Our department, situated on the east bank of the Mississippi River, lies three hours east of Milan, which can be a bit of a hassle in terms of a drive, especially in the snow. And then again, a three-hour drive, even in the heaviest of snow, which in either frozen or melted form, can also be pretty hazardous.

But if properly negotiated and traversed, the drive west to Milan, when understood in terms of a juxtaposed world of Chuukese and Dakota determinations, can also become a potent leg of a journey of historical and cultural authenticity and futurities the likes of which can, I believe, earn Epele's and Teresia's approval. For better or for worst, it is gradually becoming an important part of "Our Sea of Islands" if you like, one whose "Pasts we Remember", also so to speak, lies directly in the future of its narratological and discursive back tracking through the specific ecological and cultural bodies of knowledge of Indigenous land, sea, and skyfaring.

Whatever it is, I hope that the project of pursuing Pacific Studies beyond its oceanic edges, more specifically, by staying true to a course calibrated on always knowing on whose lands are seafaring islanders passing through, and working that knowledge into the conditions of successful and effective travel, will have some traction for the effort to build Pacific Studies in *other* edges

of Oceania that must likewise never come at the expense of the Indigenous travelers of those locales. *If you get my drift.*